

URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH BENGAL

ITS PROCESS, CHARACTER & FUTURE TRENDS

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P R E F A C E

AREA:

Keeping the snowcapped peaks of the Himalayas with her turbulent rivers on the north, and the flat agrarian plains on the south with a strip of deep forest at the foothills covering the entire duars and terai, North Bengal with her 21,116 Sq.Km. area is an administrative division of the State of West Bengal, India. The five districts of North Bengal viz. Cooch-Bihar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, West Dinajpur and Malda have altogether twenty eight urban centres according to the census of India, 1971.

Methodology :

The object of the research work embodied in this thesis is to study the "Urban Development in North Bengal - its process, character and future trends." To bringout the salient urban character of those twentyeight urban centres, the author has visited each urban centre personally during his fieldwork which took two and half years from May 1973 to October 1975.

The extreme dearth of data and source materials have compelled the author to visit the urban centres personally and to collect information directly from those institutions which are

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related with the urban functions of a town. The present work consists of the following:-

1. Field work.
2. Data Collection.
3. Source materials.

(1) Field-work: For the landuse maps of the major towns of North Bengal and for collection of data the author has done some field work for over two years (1973-1975).

Landuse Maps: As the Mouza sheet maps of Settlement Department of West Bengal which showed the divisions of all plots of a town neatly, were not available for all towns because of its restriction in selling due to Government's political reason or policy, the author has to depend on the municipal maps of 16 inch to 1 mile and 32 inch to 1 mile scale for the towns like Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, English Bazar, Balurghat, Siliguri and Dinhata. And in case of Jalpaiguri the author has prepared the landuse map based on the Mouza sheet maps which has been purchased from the Deputy Commissioner's office of Jalpaiguri.

The mouza sheet maps were seventeen in total, and the maps were of various scale from 16 inch to 1 mile to 64 inch to 1 mile and the author has to convert all those maps in a uniform scale.

of 16 inch to 1 mile by pantograph and then prepared the landuse map. The author has made the landuse map personally walking through ~~the~~ each and every street and lanes of each town, noting the utilisation of lands and marking the use with the help of the index or legends, prepared by him with the consultation of his guide.

Data Collection:

Due to the dearth of readymade data the author visited personally many a good number of organisations during the field work to bringout the central functional activities and the actual industrial pictures of the urban centres of North Bengal.

In case of central functional activities, the author visited the Government offices like Hospitals, Post and Telegraph Department, State Electricity Board's offices, Banks and Insurances like State Bank of India, Central Bank of India, etc., General Insurances, Educational institutions, Recreational and Cultural organisations like Cinema houses, Libraries, etc., Bata shops, Co-operatives and the Hotels, etc., for various informations and has followed a questionnaire (see Appendix-1) and has compiled those informations to bringout the desired result.

To findout the relationship between the administrative hierarchy and the functional hierarchy of the towns of North

Bengal, the author has followed two simple mathematical methods of (i) arithmetic mean and (ii) Weight-mean.

The author has followed a questionnaire (see Appendix-2) to bring out the actual picture of the industrial units located in the urban centres of North Bengal.

To bring out the salient features of the Local Urban Governments as well as the urban amenities available in the towns of North Bengal, the author has personally visited all the Local Self Governments like Municipalities, Town Committees and the Ancha Panchayats of the towns of North Bengal.

For collection of data on the advance made by the different banks, the author personally visited each and every branch of the nationalised Commercial Banks, located in North Bengal and has compiled those data to present a comprehensive picture of the role of the financial institutions in the development of urbanisation.

Source Material:

Finally the author has consulted a good number of reports and gazetteers and the Maps of P.W.D. (Roads) as the source of materials and for this he has visited the district libraries and Government Record Rooms of the individual district head quarters.

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Besides, as this work is really a human responsive, so the author met personally many persons of repute for their kind information and personal knowledge to explore the concealed past of those urban centres.

A B S T R A C T

North Bengal is a very popular term to-day describing the five northern districts of West Bengal e.g. Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, West Dinajpur and Malda covering a total area of over 21,611 Sq.Km. . The region has a glorious historical background and characterised by her peculiar physical set-up, it presents a picture of urbanization which closely reflects its physical, socio-economic, cultural and even political aspects. The work has been systematically treated in the following chapters.

Physically the five districts of North Bengal differ from each other. While the southern most district i.e. Malda, is completely a riverine plain, the northern most district, Darjeeling, is a mountainous region, situated on the Himalayan Chains, and Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri are distinctive with their mixed plain landscape. Besides, the slopes and height are two determining factors in the distribution of residential and commercial areas in the hill towns of Darjeeling district, while flood is a great handicap in the districts of Jalpaiguri, Malda and Cooch Behar.

Speaking about the historical background, it has been shown that some of the towns of North Bengal have a prolonged historical record as proved by their existence for centuries. They are

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Gour, Old Malda, Cooch Behar, English Bazar, etc., particularly Cooch Behar and English Bazar are two scintillating imprints of the history of this region.

From the point of view of demography, we can divide North Bengal, broadly, into two phases. One is the pre-partition period and the other is the post-partition period. On an analysis of the census reports of the pre-partition period, it is found that a few towns were present in this zone while most of the others have originated during the post-partition period. Further analysis reveals that the urban growth in this region is not so much the product of economic development and a pull from rural to urban areas, but rather a push of population from the areas of social unrest and dispute. In this context one may refer to the case of partition which has given rise to the in-migration of a large refugee population to this region from the erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. North Bengal contains a little urban population 9.26 percent of the total population.

The classification of the towns, specially, on the basis of their functional character, is now an important practice for geographers. The importance as well as the evolution of a town can be determined in terms of its functional organisations. The different types and sizes of the towns have direct relation with their different combination of socio-economic features. In North

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Bengal the administrative function generally determines the size of her towns. Almost all the towns in North Bengal, except a few came into being as administrative head-quarters. In course of time, increase in administrative functions increased the importance of the towns which gradually added to them commercial and other activities. All such activities provided economic support to the growth of the towns of this region.

The landuse survey is an essential tool as determining the spatial character or the physiognomy of a town, ultimately bringing out its morphological character. This morphology may be considered as the structural and visible skeleton of a town, while the landuse pattern reveals the manmade fabric in which the urbanites carry on their activities. The landuse-pattern of the towns of North Bengal shows haphazard^a distribution of the residences and commercial activities. The landuse map of Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Siliguri, Dinhat, Balurghat and English Bazar give an insight into the pitiable plight of the unplanned growth of these towns.

When the forces conducive to urban growth are not equally assembled in all the places, urban centres in a region not flourish at the same rate, thus giving rise to the existing hierarchy. Considering the towns in general, the central func-

tions of the principal towns do not extend far beyond their municipal limits. In North Bengal, the administrative set up has actually been instrumental in elevating the economic and cultural aspects of the urban centres.

Almost all the communities usually recognize the demand for urban amenities in some fashion. The civic amenities are generally an expression of a common style of living. Though the municipalities of the towns of North Bengal generally pledge to render all sorts of urban amenities to its tax-payers, the idea of creating a quite and full fledged urban society is still a far cry in the region under study. The Local Self Government Bodies should take more initiative at least for the sake of creating a healthy urban environment.

Finally the existing nature of the problems arising out of the interaction of various forces need to be assessed for visualizing the future of urbanization in North Bengal. The regional economy of this region presents greater scope for further development of urbanization in the region under study.

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Chapter 1

The Physical (~~Background or~~) Setting :

Physically North Bengal, comprising five northern districts of West Bengal, India, has the dominating characteristics of the plains of Bengal delta.⁽¹⁾ Excluding the northern hills, the region is a flat land, composed mainly of alluvium, and characterised by a uniform livelihood based on the monsoon crops or rice. Even then, the physiography of North Bengal presents a good deal of variety which, being the scope of the present study, is given in brief as far as it is related to the existing urban setup.

North Bengal may be divided into three physiographic divisions. They are (a) The hills on the extreme north, (b) The Duars and the Terai in between the hills and plains, and (c) The plains.

(a) The Hills on the extreme North.

Covering about $\frac{1}{5}$ th of the total area of the region in the north, the lofty mountains rise with heavenly solemnity. At their feet lie a large number of vast, sandy or dry river ^{valleys} basins which usually become violent during the monsoons. The mountains rise abruptly, from the back of the Terai, to a height from ^{mt.} 100 feet to ^{2333 mt.} 7000 feet within ^{the} stretch of a few miles, and the landscape presented here is highly complex with intricate systems of ridges and spurs, steep slopes, extremely deep, narrow valleys through which rivers and streams thread their way, the latter become violent during the

rains. The innumerable waterfalls or jhoras cascading down the slopes have scarred them, giving rise ^{to} occasional landslides and landslips which are dominant features of the landscape. A large portion of the area, covered by those mountains is uninhabited. Settlements are mostly of the isolated nature. The tea gardens and the projection of the National Highway keep life pulsating at favourable spots.

(b) The Duars and the Terai.

Terai in the district of Jalpaiguri is known as Western Duars which is a submontane land, 22 mls. in breadth⁽²⁾ and covered almost by forest and dry, sandy river beds, acting as one of the main gateways to Bhutan. Excluding the Buxa hills (2000ft) the region is more or less a flat land. Soil is mainly recent alluvium composed of sand, sand clay and gravels. The Terai in Darjeeling, geographically a part and parcel of this region, pleads its geological neutrality. It is mainly composed of alternating beds of gravels, sand and boulders, brought down from the hills and deposited by the torrential rivers on reaching down the plains where their velocity as well as carrying capacity are measurably lost. The unhealthy climate as well as the dense jungle prevailing here and there together played negative roles in attracting the settlers to this region.

(c) The Plains :

The plains of North Bengal, covering about $\frac{4}{5}$ ths of the total area of the region, mainly consist of Cooch Behar, West Dinajpur,

Malda and partly of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts. The region forms a part of the "Ganga - Brahmaputra Doab" of spate⁽³⁾ or the strick-land's Para-delta⁽⁴⁾, the map or part of which lies to day in Bangladesh. The unit represented a large flat plain mainly composed of old and recent alluvium , sand loams drained by so many large and small rivers, characterised by recurrent floods.

The altitude is insignificant here, varying from about 300 metres to 100 metres from north to south. The chunk of land in continuum presents a monotonous landscape, characterised by agrarion fields with scattered homesteads, leaving some lift here and there.

Historical Background :

The political history of this region is highly interesting. The existing five districts had formed part of princely states and the British Indian Territory from time to time, and a long period of dissection and unification, wars and conflicts, ultimately brought them into the present shape. At present the region seems to be unique in India in view of its strategic location surrounded by two sovereign countries Nepal and Bangladesh on the north west and east by Bhutan on the north and northeast. On the west is the state of Bihar and on the east is the state of Assam.

It will not become out of the place here to discuss some-

the thing about political emergence of this region and to see how the districts evolved. The treaty of 1835 between the East India Company and the Raja of Sikkim, the treaty of 1865 between the East India Company and the Raja of Bhutan, the Partition of India in 1947, and lastly the States Reorganization Act of 1956 have gradually added to the flesh, bringing North Bengal into its existing position. Tracing back its earlier history one encounters a number of interesting events.

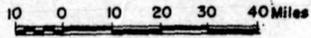
(a) The tract of Darjeeling, which is now the northernmost district of North Bengal, composed of a long strip of terai and lofty mountains, remained for a long period as a part of the dominions of the Raja of Sikkim, and was first attracted by Captain Lloyd who was in a Government mission to deal with the border dispute between Sikkim and Nepal in 1829⁽⁵⁾. Captain Lloyd was overwhelmed by its natural beauty and was charmed by its advantages as a site for a sanatorium. At that time Darjeeling was almost deserted. Darjeeling gained its importance into the eyes of the British not only for its healthier climate suited for a sanatorium, but also for the strategic reasons, especially as a gateway to Nepal. Mr. Grant, who was the partner of Captain Lloyd in that political mission, reported to the Governor General of India, pleading on behalf of Darjeeling both as a centre suited for being a sanatorium as well as from a military point of view, and recommended its occupation.

According to the report of Mr. Grant a survey was executed and was approved. In accordance with that report General Lloyd (formerly capt. Lloyd) was instructed by his superior authority to start negotiations with the Raja of Sikkim and subsequently a deed was executed by the Raja of Sikkim in 1835. In terms of the deed, the tract of Darjeeling was presented to the East India Company by the Raja of Sikkim. At the first stage the offer was solely unconditional, though, later on, in the year 1841, the British East India company granted the Raja an allowance of Rs. 3000 per annum as the value of that land and it was increased to Rs. 6000 per annum in 1846⁽⁷⁾. But following the imprisonment of Sir Joseph Hooker and Dr. Campbell, the then superintendent of Darjeeling, by Sikkim Government in 1849⁽⁸⁾, the relation between Sikkim and East India company reached to a climax, and though both of them were released unconditionally at last, punitive action was taken by the East India Company, a measure of which the annual grant of Rs. 6000 to Raja of Sikkim was withdrawn, besides that the terai as well as the part of Sikkim hills bounded by the Ramman and the Great Rangit rivers on the north, by the Tista river on the east and by the Nepal frontier on the west⁽⁹⁾ were annexed to the British territory. Since then Darjeeling remained as a part of British India, included in the Bengal Province.

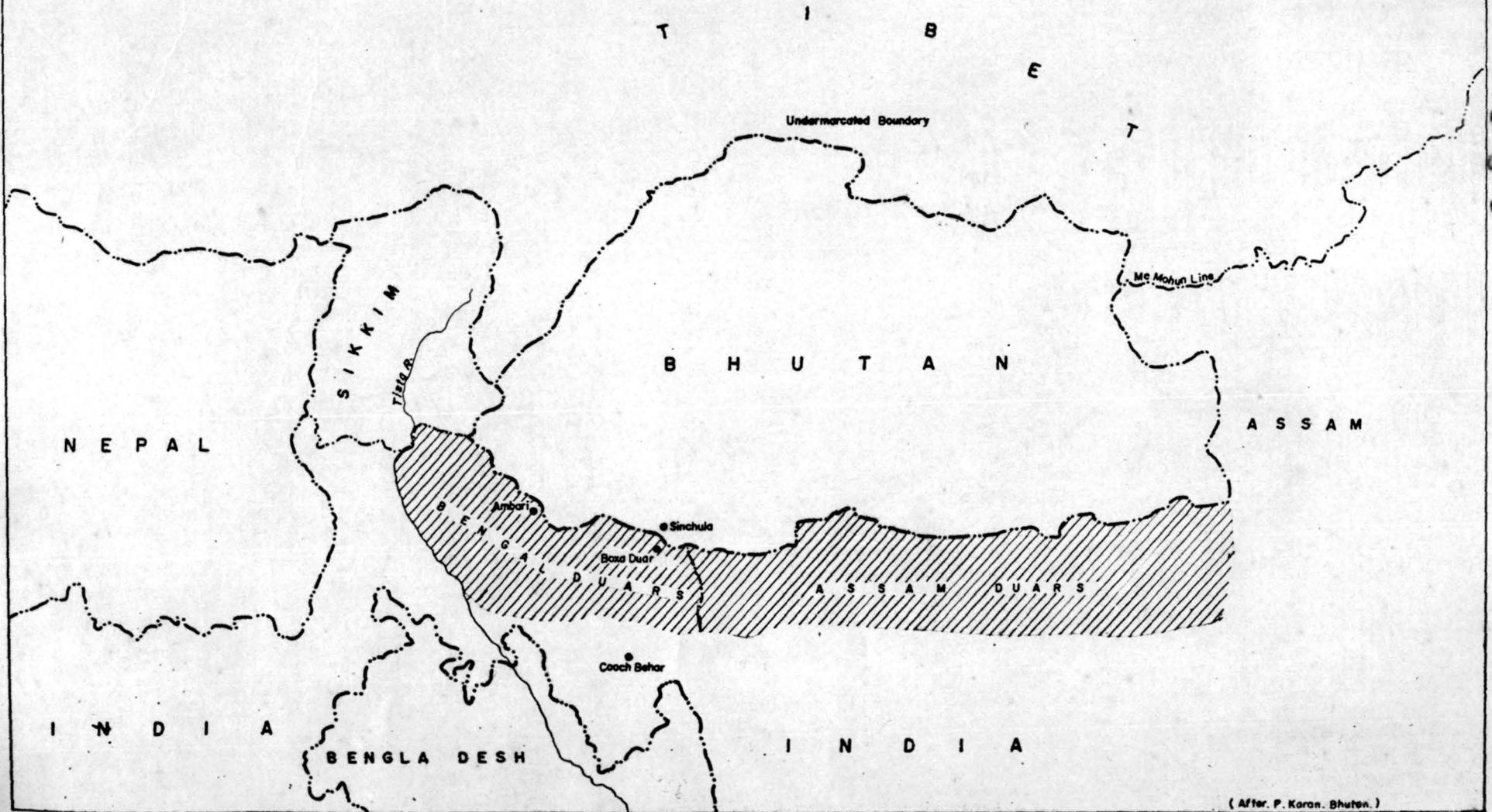
(b) The area comprising the 'Duars' of the District of Jalpaiguri also has an interesting political history. For a long time a great tussle^{was} witnessed between the princely state of Cooch Behar and Bhutan regarding their border rights. The Bhutaness^{es} were responsible for making a state of lawlessness (anarchy) along the northern border of Cooch Behar as well as of Darjeeling and to prevent Bhutan from making such incursions into the borderlands, the British India had no other alternative but to annex the Bhutan Duars which was then known as the Athara Duars, including some hill portions. As a consequence of these small expeditions^s were sent to Bhutan in 1864⁽⁹⁾, which resulted in the treaty to be signed at sinchula between the Dev Raja of Bhutan and British Government of India in 1865⁽¹⁰⁾ by which the Raja of Bhutan gave up the demand on some of her hill territories (Dalimkote) now forming the Kalimpong sub-division, as well as the Bhutan Duars, and the passes. The later represented the Bengal Duars and Assam Duars. A district was formed, known as "western Duars", under a Deputy Commissioner, with Kalimpong included^d in it first as a sub-division. In 1866⁽¹¹⁾ Kalimpong was transferred to Darjeeling district and in 1869 the western Duars was annexed to the district of Jalpaiguri which now belongs to the State of West Bengal.

(c) The District of Cooch Behar presents a more complicated case than the former two. During the reign of Maharaja Nara Narayan⁽¹²⁾

MAP SHOWING THE PORTION ANNEXED WITH NORTH BENGAL



- International Boundary
- State Boundary
- ▨ Portion annexed from Bhutan.



(After P. Karan. Bhutan.)
Prepared by :- S. Mukharjee.

(1555 - 1587 AD.) Cooch Behar alone was an extensive kingdom consisting of almost the whole of North Bengal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, and the whole of ~~modern~~ ^{the} Assam and eastern States of India extending upto the coast of the Bay of Bengal. But gradually the other States shook off their allegiance one by one and Cooch Behar shrank in size to a small district.

The State of Cooch Behar remained sovereign upto the 1772, and became a feudatory state under the British East India Company following the treaty of 1773, between the East India Company and the Cooch Behar State. According to the 3rd Article of the treaty of 1773⁽¹³⁾ "that the Raja will acknowledge subjection to the will of the English East India Company upon his country being cleared of his enemies, and will allow the Cooch Behar country to be annexed to the province of Bengal," Cooch Behar was annexed to the British territory.

In August 1947, ^{the} British left India, and India gained its Independence at the cost of political dissection of Bengal and the Punjab. According to the Radcliffe award, Bengal was divided into two parts; one is known as West Bengal within which five districts of North Bengal lie, and the other part remained for a long time as the ^{Eastern} part of Pakistan which in 1970 became the Independent Republic of Bangladesh. But even after the Independence, the State of Cooch Behar remained as a feudatory state, and was out of ^{the} Indian

union. It was on January 1950 that Cooch Behar merged with the Indian Union. Thus from 1947 to 19~~49~~⁴ Cooch Behar was out of the political map of North Bengal~~as~~ well as of West Bengal.

The fourth district of North Bengal is born as a result of Radcliff's award of partition, named West Dinajpur, consisting of the western part of the Old Dinajpur district of undivided Bengal. At that time the district had only one sub-division styled as Balurghat sub-division, containing the following police stations : (1) Balurghat, (2) Kumarganj, (3) Gangarampur, (4) Topan, (5) Raiganj, (6) Hemtabad, (7) Banshihari, (8) Kushumandi (9) Kaliaganj, and (10) Itahar. In 1948 Raiganj was formed into the second sub-division in the district, making its name as the headquarters. In 1948 Hili was added to the district of West Dinajpur. But from 1947 West Dinajpur remained cut off from the northern most districts of West Bengal . In order to remove that anomaly, a strip of land was transferred from the Purnia district of Bihar to West Bengal (Bihar West Bengal Act of 1956). At first this tract of land was annexed to the district of Darjeeling. Subsequently, however, the area consisting of Chopra, Islampur, Goalpakhar, and Karandighi, Police stations, was added to the district of West B~~eng~~^{area}ipur. Again in 1956, the^{area} lying to the north of the Mahananda River was transferred to the Darjeeling district, thus making the river as the northern limit of the district of West Dinajpur, and

a new sub-division was created in the name of Islampur sub-division comprising the following Police stations like, Chopra, Islampur, Goalpokhar and Karandighi. As a result of all these changes the district of West Dinajpur now forms a continuous stretch of land with the remaining part of North Bengal.

The facts stated above give an outline of political history of the region which has its direct impact on the growth of urbanization.

History of Urban Development in North Bengal:

According to ^{the} census of India, the history of urban development in North Bengal is of recent date where a good number of towns have emerged as urban centres only since 1951. But number alone does not define urban development; cultural ^t traits as reflected in a few centres may carry more importance than mere numbers. As it will be seen, North Bengal has a past history of urbanization, though little in view of the ~~members~~ of centres, yet noteworthy.

The region under study, ^t retains its cultural prosperity from a long time and the ^P princely ^S states, ~~P~~revailing over this region since antiquity helped greatly in the establishment of some urban centres in the form of capitals, or royal citadels which still exist in the ^{shape} ~~forms~~ of historical relics.

Gour, for instance, found in ruins to day in the district of Malda, once attained great splendour during the reign of Pata

and Sena dynasty (750 A.D.-1203 A.D.)⁽¹⁴⁾. The Pala and Sena kings bore the title of Gaudeswara⁽¹⁵⁾. Panini mentions the name of Gondapura which dates back to 500 B.C.⁽¹⁶⁾ The recorded history of Gour, however, begins in 1198 when it was conquered by the Muhammadans, who kept it as their chief seat of their power in Bengal for the following those ^{centuries} countries⁽¹⁷⁾. In the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khilji (1213 - 1227 A.D.)⁽¹⁸⁾ the capital or the seat of ^G government was actually removed from Devkot, now located in the district of West Dinajpur, to Gour, and the final desertation of Gour did not take place till the seat of ^G government was shifted later on by the Mughal Viceroys to Dacca, and still later to Murshidabad⁽¹⁹⁾.

According to Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, who visited Gour in 1810,⁽¹⁶⁾ the city with its suburbs covered an area variously estimated at from 22 to 30 sq. miles, and the dimensions of the city proper were about 7½ miles in length from north to south and from 1 to 2 ~~sq.~~ miles in breadth, giving a total area of 13 sq. miles. By far the greater portion of the city appears to have been densely inhabited. Broad roads from east to west traversed the northern portion at irregular intervals, and there were also water channels affording easy communication between different parts of the city, as well as a regular system of drainage for carrying off the rain water to ~~the~~ large natural and artificial reservoirs⁽²⁰⁾. Thus we find that,

Gour, perhaps the first urban centre or city of North Bengal, grew up as the royal capital of Bengal kings^{gs} and Muhammadan rulers^{sn}, and "after the Afgan kings^g of Bengal established their independence, they founded^m about 1350 another capital called Firozabad at Pandua⁽²¹⁾ which became the capital during the reign of Shams-ud-din-Ilyas Shah (1342-58)⁽²²⁾. But Pandua remained capital for a short term; ^{The capital} which was shifted again to Gour in the later periods. When Pandua was the capital of Bengal, Old Malda, then known as Maldah, flourished as a port town and remained as^{the} most important urban centre in the district prior to the coming of the British in 1680. James Rennell⁽²³⁾ found it as a pretty city, not ^a far removed from the north bank of the Ganges and on a river that communicates with it, and according to Hunder^t⁽²⁴⁾ "Maldah is situated at the confluence of the Kalindi with the Mahananda. It has an admirable position for river traffic, and probably rose to prosperity as the port of the Muhammadan capital of Pandua."

On the other side, in the northern part, Cooch Behar grew up as the capital of the Koch Kings who founded the kingdom in 1510⁽²⁵⁾ and "during the reign of Maharaja Nar Narayan (1555-1587 A.D.) Cooch Behar alone was an extensive kingdom"⁽²⁶⁾. Cooch Behar exists now with her past decaying glory, the town deteriorating to a medium-size centre. Thus before the intervention of the British merchants

as the agents of the British East India ^e company, Gour, Maldah, and Cooch Behar were the three historical places where township grew up at royal patronage and choice. Out of these three towns or cities, only Old Malda (Or Maldah) was developed as from the commercial point of view, while two others developed on the basis of their defensive position or location.

The English merchants representing the British East India Company appeared on the scene of this region in about 1680, and established their first factory in the town of Old Malda in 1680 A.D. " In December that year (1680) ¹⁵ is bighas of land was purchased on the otherside of the river (Mahananda), at a distance of about 12 miles from the town of Old Malda, from the local Zaminder Raja Rai Choudhury for three hundred rupees. The plot of land was situated by the river Mahananda in the village of Mucdampur (now a residential part of English Bazar town). A new factory was built on this plot of land. This new factory became the principal factory in the course of time and the settlement that sprang around it was given the name Englezabad by the English themselves" (27). With the rise of English Bazar the importance of Old Malda began to diminish and in the course of time it turned into a satellite of the former.

The state of Cooch Behar came under British East India Company following the treaty of 1773 made between the state of

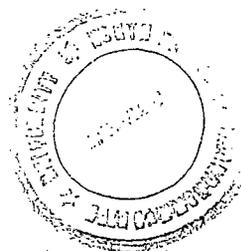
Cooch Behar and the East India Company. According to Mr. Metcalf⁽²⁸⁾ Cooch Behar was " a swampy and unhealthy spot, miserable and filthy town, narrow paths, jungle patches and dirty ditches, still 1864" when he visited the town on official business, but by 1874 Cooch Behar attained a better prospect and Mr. Metcalf was struck by altered aspects of the town and suburbs.

Darjeeling came under British occupation in 1835⁽²⁹⁾. "The hill station or sanatorium of Darjeeling owes its origin (like Simla / Masuri, etc.) to the necessity that exists in India of providing places where the health of Europeans may be recruited by a more temperate climate"⁽³⁰⁾ and "once established Darjeeling rapidly increased and there were not a hundred inhabitants when the ground was transferred, and by 1849-50 the population increased to four thousands"⁽³¹⁾, and since Dr. Hooker's time prosperity of Darjeeling has received a further development from the tea industry⁽³²⁾. Kalimpong was taken by the British in 1865 according to Sinchula treaty⁽³³⁾ and Jalpaiguri got importance only in 1869 when the district of Jalpaiguri was formed, and since then it has been rapidly advancing in size and importance⁽³⁴⁾.

The overall picture makes it clear ^{that} there were at least four centres of repute - Gour, Malda, Pandua and Cooch Behar which developed earlier to the beginning of British rule in India. Three of them developed as capitals of old kingdoms while the fourth

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Malda (Old Malda) developed as the port town of the old capital of Pandua. The towns like Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, etc., were insignificant places acquiring importance long after the establishments of British settlements which, in the form of a factory, started as early as 1680. Of course it is to be noticed that during this prolonged period of British rule, roughly covering more than two centuries, only a few places emerged as urban centres in the entire region, (covering about) which was mainly due to the policy adopted by ^{the} then rulers. They chose only those places which either had locational advantage in respect of trade, climate, or fulfilling their administrative needs, though strategic considerations in certain cases, particularly for that of Darjeeling and Kalimpong, made some exceptions.

How far, the economic factors influenced the British policy in setting up better communication and new settlements in this remote zone can be found in Hunter's comment (35) in his Statistical Account of Bengal, where he wrote, "the importance of the coal-supply for the trunk railways of India has hitherto rendered the examination of the fields to the south of the Ganges more pressing from an economic point of view than the exploration of an out-of-the-way corner of India like Darjeeling". And the purpose in setting up the North Bengal State Railway which was proposed to be 211 miles long covering the distance from "the

Ganges through the Patna, Rajshahye, Bograh, Dinajpur, Rungpore and Jalpaigoree districts to the foot hills of the Darjeeling Hills" was "to tap the principal jute, rice, and tobacco exporting districts. It was to serve the tea-growing country at the foot of the Himalayas"(36).

The comment made by G.M.Desmond (1975)(37) on urbanization in South and South-east Asia fits wonderfully with the earlier conditions of this region, particularly where he remarks that "the urban network which dominates this region to-day was established during the period of European colonization from the sixteenth century and continuing up-to (and beyond) the middle of the present century. Mainly chosen for use as ports through which indigenous raw materials and European manufactured goods could flow or as administrative towns in some interior locations, the urban centres established or substantially developed by colonial powers remain the largest and most influential cities in the region". In fact the towns established or developed by the British are still playing a major role in the growth of urbanization of this region, and they are still mainly administrative in their functions for which they were principally meant.

Urban Development : From 1904 onwards :

The urban study in India is still mainly confined to cities and large towns, and a region like North Bengal has earned

little importance so far from this angle as it lags far behind many others in respect of urban growth. The state of urbanization in India during the early decades, particularly from 1901 onwards, was also not satisfactory. In fact, the urban concentration was mainly confined to the areas rich in economic resources while rest of the country remained almost rural. If urbanization is meant by an increase in the proportion of urban population to total population over a period of time (Bose 1974)⁽³⁸⁾ then it can be said that urbanization in North Bengal is still slow. The table given below will substantiate this fact.

Table 1

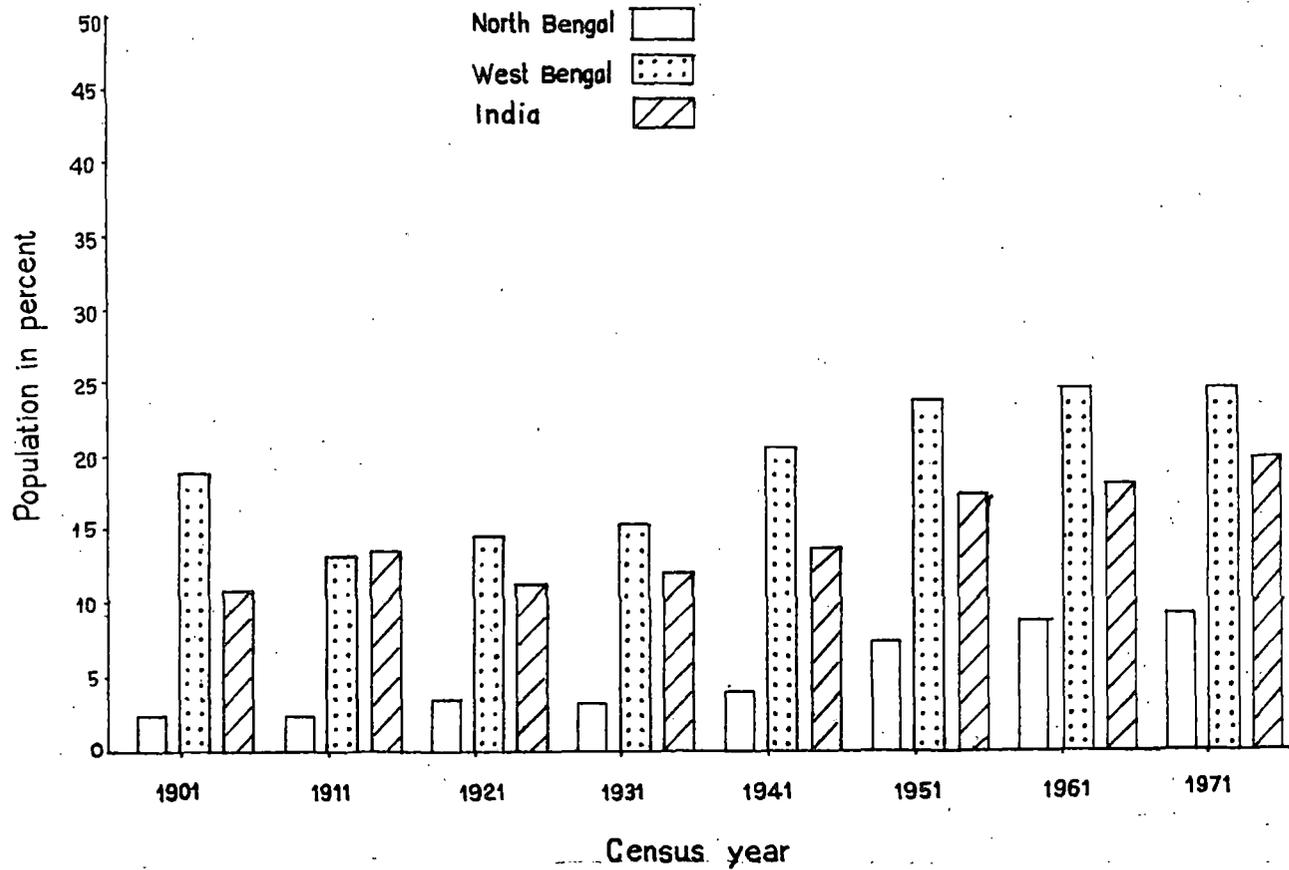
Showing the percentage variation of urban population since 1901 of India, West Bengal & N. Bengal.

CENSUS YEAR	INDIA	WEST BENGAL	NORTH BENGAL
1901	N.A. 10.8	N.A. 18.8	2.29
1911	N.A. 10.3	N.A. 13.05	2.31
1921	N.A. 11.2	N.A. 14.4	3.37
1931	N.A. 11.9	N.A. 15.32	3.20
1941	N.A. 13.8	N.A. 20.4	4.12
1951	17.3 17.2	N.A. 23.8	7.27
1961	17.98 17.9	24.45 24.4	8.82
1971	19.87 19.9	24.59 24.7	9.26

Source : The data of North Bengal given in this table, and the figures of India & W. Bengal have been compiled taken from: Census of India 1961, Vol-XVI, Part II-A, General Population Table, and, Census of India 1971, Part II-A(i), General Population Table.

Fig- 1

Percentage variation of Urban Population of India, West Bengal and North Bengal since 1901-1971.



The table (1) giving the percentage growth of urban population of North Bengal^{State} as compared with that of India and West Bengal during the period from 1901 to 1971 reveals that from 1901 to 1941 the urban population of North Bengal was too negligible and almost the entire population was rural, the latter containing about 95 percent of the total population whereas during the following decades 1951 to 1971, the percentage of urban population of North Bengal was less than half of the average urban population of India as well as of West Bengal. Both in 1961 and 1971 the state of West Bengal had roughly 25 percent of the total population as residents of urban areas while in the regions covered by the five districts of North Bengal, the figure is merely a third of the state's average. This shows how slow has been the ^{rate} of urban growth in North Bengal. Practically, the rate of urban growth in North Bengal ^{was} almost in a freezing state or in a stagnant position atleast up to 1941, after which the condition has considerably improved.

The figure 1, showing the bar-graphs, ϕ representing the percentage of urban growth of India, West Bengal and North Bengal makes this picture more vivid. The Table 1_x gives a general idea about the progress in North Bengal; but while studying a backward region like North Bengal, it is necessary to have a real picture of urban growth in respect of its five constituent districts.

This is available from the table (2). In this connection it is equally necessary to point out that out of the five districts, Cooch Behar became one of the districts of West Bengal only in 1950, while the district of West Dinajpur was formed only after the Partition of India (1947) and it actually got its complete shape only in 1956.

Table 2

Showing districtwise percentage of urban population to total population between 1901 and 1971

District	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1921</u>	<u>1931</u>	<u>1941</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1971</u>
Darjeeling	8.04	8.78	9.82	13.09	14.87	20.55	23.16	23.05
Jalpaiguri	1.77	1.72	2.08	2.55	3.27	7.21	9.11	9.60
Cooch Behar	2.48	2.67	3.09	3.06	4.19	7.50	7.01	6.84
West Dinajpur	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.83	4.29	7.48	9.37
Malda	2.88	2.58	2.51	2.73	3.21	3.75	4.15	4.21

Source : The figures, given in this Table have been compiled from : Census of India 1961, Vol - XVI, Part II-A, General Population Tables.

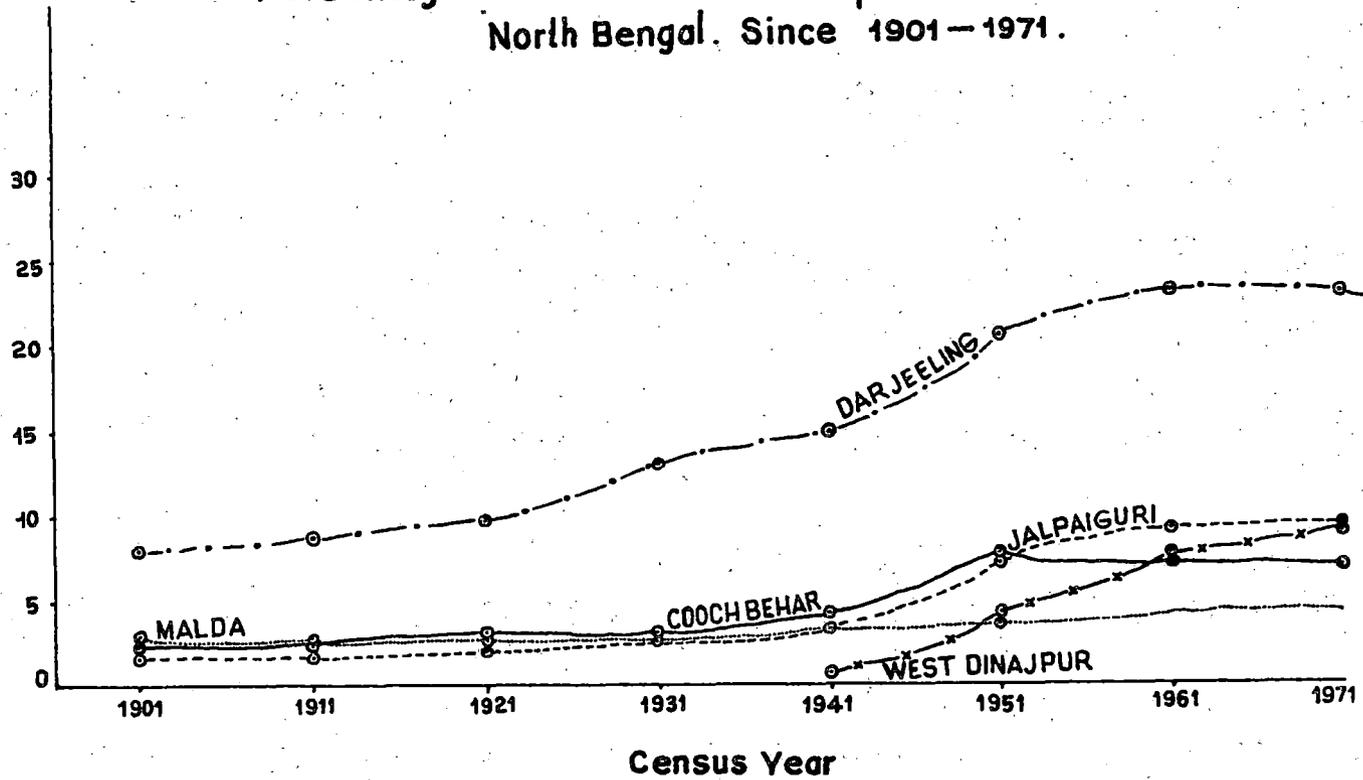
The table (2) reveals that during the period of seven decades, except ^{for} Darjeeling district; all other districts exhibit a pitance

of urban growth, atleast upto 1941, and urban growth in the district of West Dinajpur was nil till 1931. During the succeeding decade four out of five; namely, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and also West Dinajpur made a record increase for all time whereas Malda registered an extremely low ^arote of growth. This trend has not been euqally maintained everywhere in the last decade. Besides West Dinajpur, the rate of progr^ess has considerably slowed down and in two cases - Darjeeling and Cooch Behar a decline is visible. The table, further, shows that all the districts of North Bengal, barring Darjeeling, had more than 95 percent of rural population, while the lowest percentage of urban population is found in the District of Malda. This is by far lower than what Darjeeling had in 1901, being less than 5 percent and about 8 percent respectively. ✓

The figure 2, ^xpresents this picture more clearly. The curves representing the each district and their percent of urban population in the each decade from 1901 to 1971, shows that the, ^xdistrict of Darjeeling remained at the top of the list with progressive growth from 1921 to 1961. It is the only district reaching nearly the average of West Bengal's (24.45) urban population. Urban growth in three other districts - Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, ^xand Malda has been extremely faltering in nature with little ^o improvement till 1941. But within the next decade a higher growth was recorded which, however, did not remain steady

Fig- 2

Percentage variation of Urban Population of Five District of North Bengal. Since 1901 - 1971.



in all the cases during the succeeding two decades. As for instance, in the district of Malda, as well as in Jalpaiguri the increase of urban population in 1971 is negligible. In the former district, the ^{nu}number of urban centres (only two) having remained unchanged has become one of the main factors for the ^{low}two-rate of increase, no doubt. On the other hand, the district of West Dinajpur witnessed the most remarkable growth of urban population between 1951 and 1971. Where^{ile}, in 1941, 0.83 percent of its total population were living in urban areas, the curve shows that by 1971 urban development in this district has reached almost the same level ^{as} of Jalpaiguri district.

Two important facts^s emerge^s from all these : Firstly, that most of the districts exhibit a very low percentage of urban population till 1941, and out of five districts, three present an increasing trend, in the development of urbanization. Secondly, that, besides one case of West Dinajpur, progress has been quite insignificant during last decade than in comparison to the decade immediately after the partition.

In analysing the urban population one cannot ignore immigration of refugees after the Partition of India in 1947 which—as one of the main factors for increasing the percentage of urban population in the districts of North Bengal, particularly during the 1951 and 1961 census years. As represented in figure 2, the curves representing the districts, broke the normal trend and

jumped to an unexpected point within the decade (1941 - '51) most affected by the Partition. This becomes more clear where the towns of North Bengal taken for discussion, *individually*.

The Table (3) presents the decennial growth of urban population of each districts of North Bengal as compared with that of West Bengal.

Table 3

Percentage variation of urban population of the five districts of North Bengal and West Bengal.

(+ for increase, - for decrease)

State/ District	1901-11	1911-21	1921-31	1931-41	1941-51	1951-61	1961-71
West Bengal	+13.7	+ 7.2	+15.0	+63.7	+32.5	+36.0	+28.4
Darjeeling	+14.9	+16.7	+15.4	+33.7	+62.4	+53.0	+24.6
Jalpaiguri	+14.3	+26.0	+28.0	+46.4	+138.2	+87.2	+35.7
Cooch Behar	+12.3	+ 9.2	+ 1.2	+48.7	+87.7	+42.4	+35.3
West Dinajpur	-	-	-	-	+503.3	+135.3	+75.4
Malda	+ 3.8	- 4.8	+14.4	+38.0	+29.7	+44.4	+33.9

Source : Census of India 1961. Vol - XVI, Part II - A, General Population Tables.

The Table(3) indicates that during 1901-11, the decennial growth for the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri were

higher (14.9 and 14.3) than that of West Bengal (13.7), while the district of Cooch Behar (12.3) gained a little less than West Bengal and the district of Malda recorded a very small increase (3.8). In 1911-21, except the district of Malda which suffered a fall of - 4.8 percent, others, such as Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar scored higher percentage of growth (16.7, 26.0 and 9.2 respectively) than that of West Bengal (7.2). The district of West Dinajpur had no urban population during that decade. In 1921-31, the picture is almost the same with two exceptions; first, the decennial growth rate for the district of Cooch Behar decreased to 4.4 percent and, second, Malda scored a high increase of 14.4 percent. But in the following decade growth rate in all the districts of North Bengal fell below the state's average rate of growth (63.7 percent). This is the only decade when the state's average reached its peak for all time, falling appreciably later on which is much below the average for most the districts of North Bengal in the succeeding two decades. Of course, it should not be lost sight of that the percentages scored by North Bengal districts carry a rather wrong impression much magnified by ~~in fact~~; due to the reason that the total urban population of any district has always been extremely small and any slight increase raised the percentage appreciably. Such a misleading idea can only be removed by comparing the urban population with the total population as shown

previously on table (1 and 2) giving the real picture of urbanization of North Bengal.

A comparative study of the differential growth rate of the districts of North Bengal shows some interesting features. The decennial growth rate of West Dinajpur district is too high in comparison to the decennial growth rates of other districts, particularly during the decades of 1941-51 and 1951-61 (fig 3(a)) and fig 3(b)).

Among the four districts, Jalpaiguri witnessed the highest percentage of decennial growth of urban population during the decades of 1911-21, 1941-51, and 1951-61, whereas the districts of Darjeeling and Cooch Behar had the highest decennial growth during the decades of 1921-31 and 1931-41 respectively. As a whole the districts of North Bengal, except Malda, had their highest growth rate in 1941-51 ~~while the latter had the highest increase in 1951-61.~~

The most phenomenal increase, however, took place in the district of West Dinajpur with 503.3 percent in 1941-51 and in the succeeding decades i.e. in 1951-61 and 1961-71, the highest increase of 135.3 and 75.4 percent respectively, was recorded by it. The growth is quite significant in view of the fact that prior to 1941-51, the district had no urban population and Hili appeared as the first urban centre in 1941. As a matter of fact,

Comparison of Decade Variation of Urban Population (in percentage) of four District of North Bengal with West Bengal.

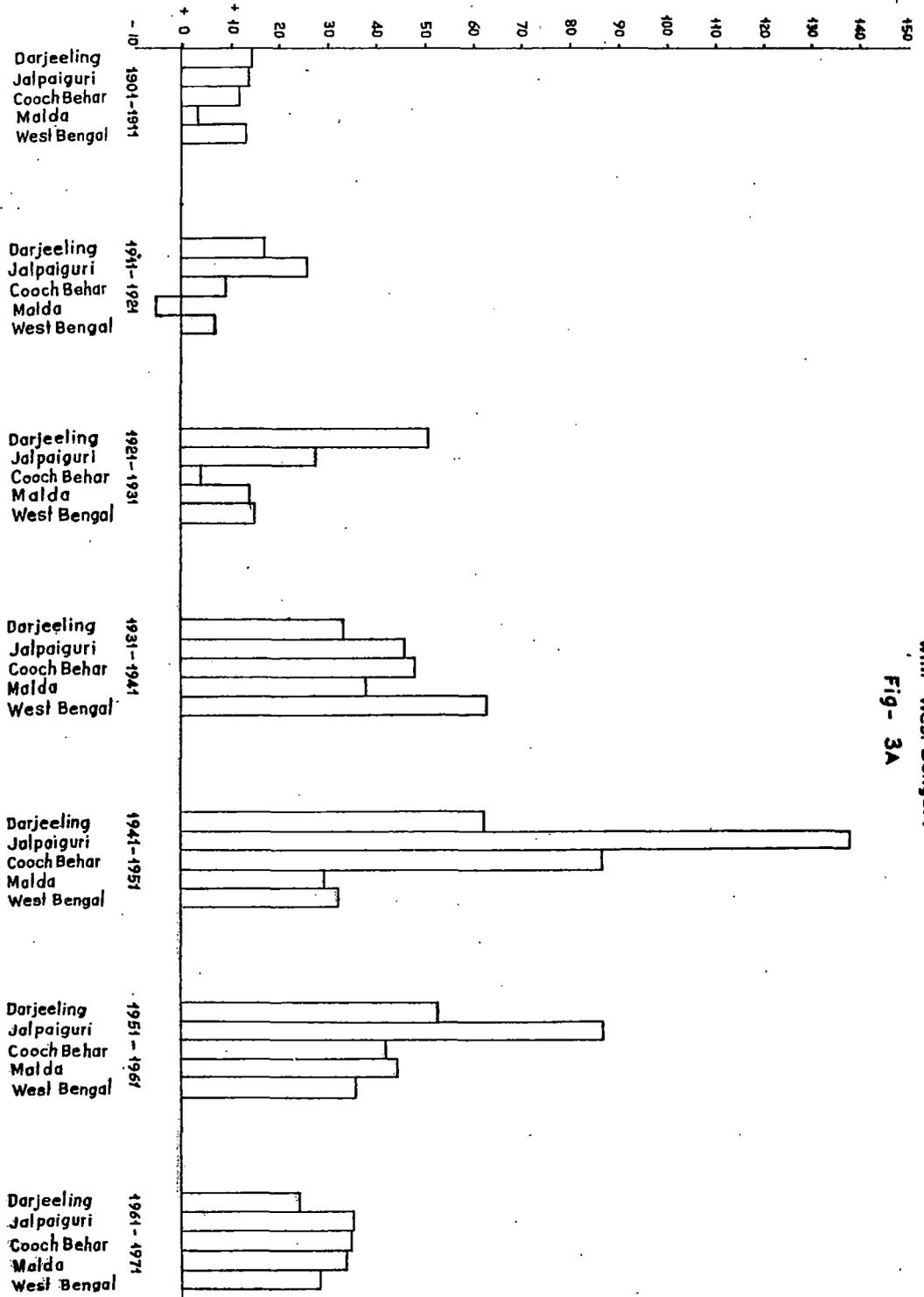
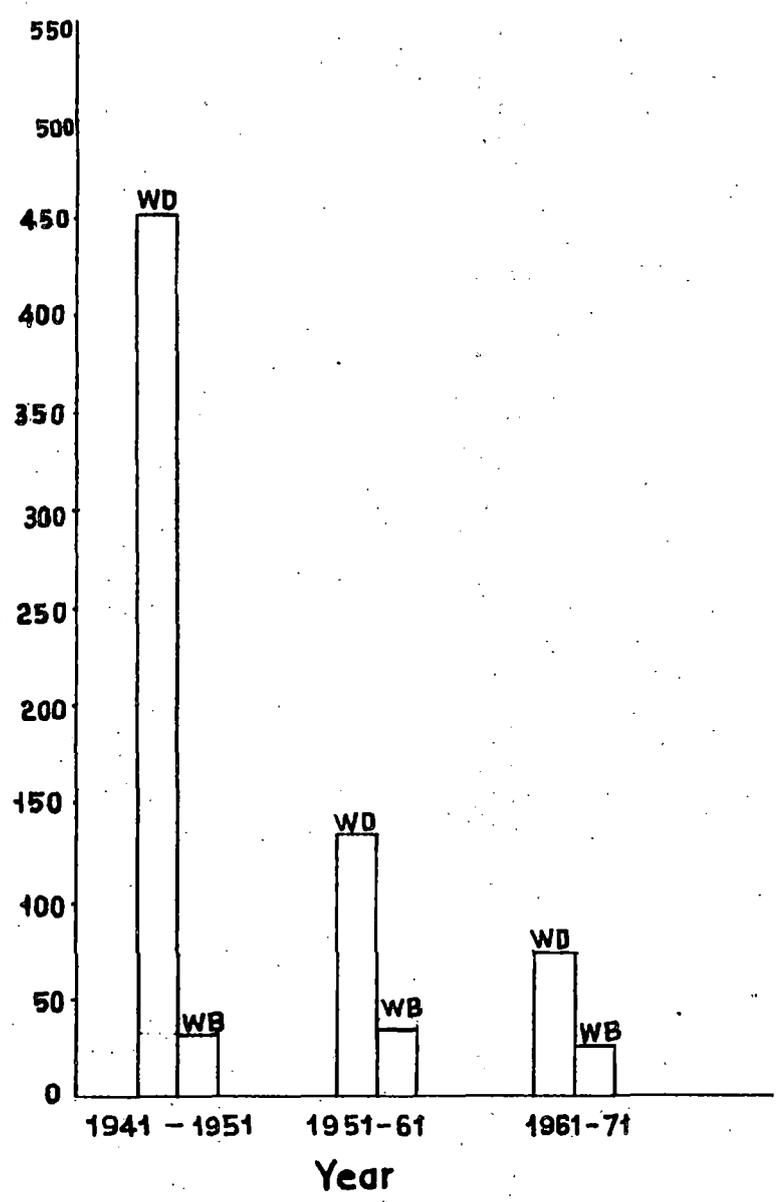


Fig - 3A

Fig. 3b



Decade variation of Urban Population (in percentage) of West Dinajpur Dist. and West Bengal .

the refugee influx from the erstwhile East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) from 1947 onwards, accompanied further by the economic growth during post-independence period, have jointly contributed to such an unprecedented rate of urban growth.

Growth of Urban Population Among the six classes of Towns in North Bengal from 1901 X

The pattern of urban growth obtaining in the towns of the region cannot be complete without referring to the different classes of urban centres.

The Census of India makes six classes of urban centres, taking population as the principal criterion for distinguishing between the different classes. They are as follows :

<u>Class of Town</u>	<u>Population</u>
Class I	100,000 and over
Class II	50,000 to 99,999
Class III	20,000 to 49,999
Class IV	10,000 to 19,999
Class V	5,000 to 9,999
Class VI	below 5000

Based on this classification, the distribution of urban population in the region belonging to the towns of individual classes

Annex

may be shown for different decades from 1901 to 1971 (Table 4(a))
 The following table 4(a) will give the distribution of urban population of North Bengal in six urban classes_x from 1901 to 1971.

Table 4(a)

Showing the distribution of urban population of North Bengal among the six urban classes_x since 1901.
 (Population in ,000)

Size-Class	Census years							
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971
I	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
II	-	-	-	-	-	-	65.6	334.7
III	-	-	22.2	21.2	78.3	196.1	290.5	167.3
IV	41.0	55.6	40.0	47.7	29.0	78.0	60.0	120.0
V	9.7	5.6	6.4	22.3	15.4	8.3	56.8	56.5
VI	11.8	8.7	9.0	9.0	14.6	19.1	16.1	8.0

Source : Compiled ^{On the basis of} Census of India 1961. Vol-XVI, Part -II-A, basis of General Population tables (West Bengal & Sikkim)

It is important to note that there is no class I town in North Bengal from 1901 upto this date (1976) and the class II towns appeared first in 1961. In 1971, the latter contained the largest

portion of ~~the~~^{the} urban population, where-as in the previous decade it is the class III towns which had the majority. The urban population in class III towns, in fact, increased gradually from 1941 upto 1961, decreasing afterwards. On the other hand, the class IV towns show a trend of unsteady growth throughout the eight census years. The class V towns have shown almost the similar trend with signs of stagnation ~~and~~ during the last two decades. The picture is still poorer with the class VI towns, taking a very small share of the total urban population and with little improvement in any decade during the entire period. In general the class IV towns, as a whole, were at the top in respect of total urban population up-to 1931, but afterwards, they were replaced by the class III towns which retained their position till 1961 while in 1971, the class II towns emerged as the principal centres of concentration.

The figure 4 will support the foregoing statement. The bars presenting the volume of urban populations of the class IV towns, are higher than other bars upto 1931, and from 1941, the bars representing class III towns are higher than the other bars, while in 1971, that representing class II towns was the tallest.

The table 4(b) represents the classwise growth of urban population more illustratively as it presents the percentage of decennial growth rate of urban population in each class of towns of North Bengal.

Classwise Growth of Population of the Town of North Bengal .
Since 1901-1971 .

Fig- 4

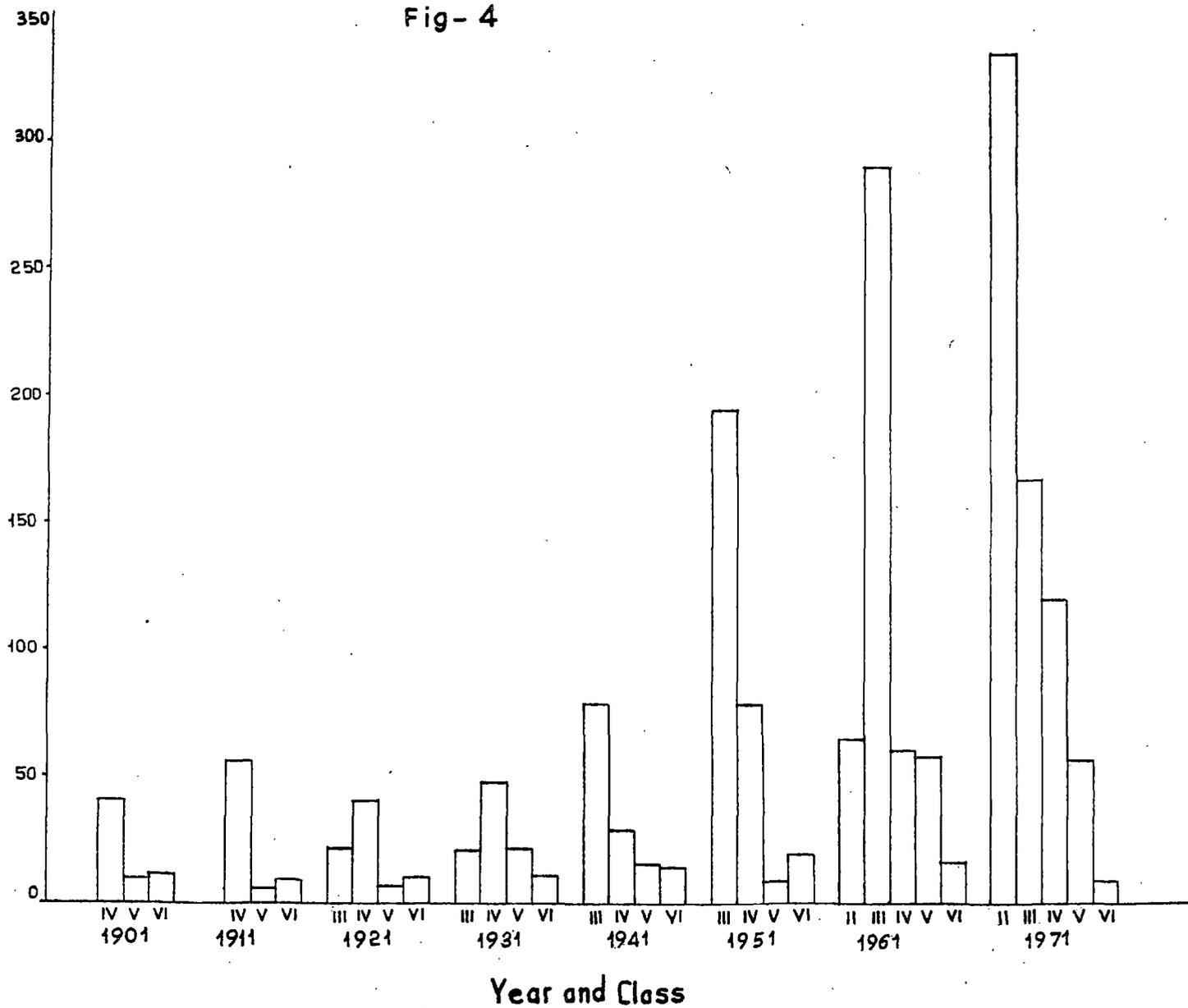


Table 4 (b)

Total Population in six classes of Towns in North Bengal since 1901 to 1971 and the variation of population (decadewise & percentage)

II Class Town	Year	Total Population	Decade Variation	Percentage of Decade Variation
	1901	-	-	-
	1911	-	-	-
	1921	-	-	-
	1931	-	-	-
	1941	-	-	-
	1951	-	-	-
	1961	65,471	-	-
	1971	334,750	+ 269,279	+ 411.29
III Class Town	Year	Total Population	Decade Variation	Percentage of Decade Variation
	1901	-	-	-
	1911	-	-	-
	1921	22,258	-	-
	1931	21,185	- 1073	-4.82
	1941	78,323	+ 57,138	+ 269.70
	1951	196,135	+117,812	+ 150.41
	1961	290,532	+ 94,397	+ 48.12
	1971	167,330	-123,202	- 42.40

Table 4 (b) Contd.

IV Class Town	Year	Total Population	Decade Variation	Percentage of Decade Variatio
	1901	41,049	-	-
	1911	55,637	+ 14,588	+ 35.53
	1921	40,038	- 15,599	- 28.03
	1931	47,706	+ 7,668	+ 19.15
	1941	29,006	- 18,700	- 39.19
	1951	77,990	+ 48,989	+168.87
	1961	60,781	- 17,209	- 22.06
	1971	120,040	+ 59,259	+ 97.49
V Class Town	Year	Total Population	Decade Variation	Percentage of Decade Variatio
	1901	9,708	-	-
	1911	5,574	- 4,134	- 42.53
	1921	6,445	+ 871	+ 15.62
	1931	22,294	+ 15,849	+245.91
	1941	15,447	- 6,847	- 30.71
	1951	8,346	- 7,101	- 45.97
	1961	56,762	+ 48,416	+580.11
	1971	56,554	- 208	- 0.36

Table 4 (b) Contd.

VI Class Town	Year	Total Population	Decade Variation	Percentage of Decade Variation
	1901	11,814	-	-
	1911	8,706	- 3,108	- 26.30
	1921	8,945	+ 239	+ 2.74
	1931	8,972	+ 27	+ 0.30
	1941	14,666	+ 5,694	+ 62.96
	1951	19,115	+ 4,449	+ 30.33
	1961	16,123	- 2,992	- 15.65
	1971	7,986	- 8,137	- 50.46

Table 4 (c)

Showing the number of six classes of towns in North Bengal since 1901 - 1971

	Year	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971
Class	I	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Class	II	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5
Class	III	-	-	4	1	3	6	8	5
Class	IV	3	4	3	3	3	5	5	8
Class	V	1	1	1	3	2	1	7	8
Class	VI	5	4	4	4	6	6	4	2
Total		9	9	9	11	14	18	25	23

Table 4(c)

Showing the distribution of towns in each size class since 1901

Class of Towns	<u>Census Years</u>							
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971
I	-	-	-	-				
II	-	-	-	-			1	5
III	-	-	1	1	3	6	8	5
IV	3	4	3	3	3	5	5	8
V	1	1	1	3	2	1	7	8
VI	5	4	4	4	6	6	4	2
Total:	9	9	9	11	14	18	25	28

Source : Census of India 1961, Vol - XVI, Part II-A, (W.B. & Sikkim)

General population table - page 211.

Thus, only the class III towns exhibit a steady increasing trend, while others remained in almost a stagnant position (table 4(c)) upto 1961. The class II and class V towns witnessed a considerable increase in number in 1971 and 1961 respectively.

In 1971, the number of class II towns increased from 1 to 5, and in 1961, the number of class V towns increased from 1 to 7.

Regarding the total number of towns, North Bengal shows a very slow rate of growth. From 1901 to 1921, the number of towns remained static. In 1931, only two new towns^{were} added to the former strength of 9. In 1941, the strength increased to 14, with an addition of 3 more towns. In 1951, the total number of towns in North Bengal became only 18. In 1961, seven new towns appeared, increasing the total number to 25, ~~in 1951~~. This is the highest increase during the seven decades, and in 1971, the total number of towns in North Bengal were 28. The table 4(d) will show how slow has been the rate of progress in the number of towns in North Bengal in comparison to the State of West Bengal.

Table 4(d)

Showing the total Number of towns of West Bengal and North Bengal in 1971 with their class-wise distribution.

	Total towns in 1971	Class-wise distribution					
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI
West Bengal	229	13	20	48	55	78	16
North Bengal	28	0	5	5	8	8	2

Source: Census of India : 1971, Part II-A(i), General Population Table, page - 46.

From 1921 - 71, during this span of half a century, the total number of towns in North Bengal increased from 9 to 28, revealing a very slow growth of urbanization. Particularly, upto 1921 the urban growth was almost absent and most of the towns were either under the British India or under the Royal Kingdom of Cooch Behar. The class VI towns, representing roughly the 50 percent of the total towns (in 1921) had a very small urban population ranging from 8706 to 11814 persons (table 4(b) in total, and among the class VI towns existing between 1901 to 1921, majority had an urban population of not more than than 2000 persons each. These towns existed on their importance as trade - centres. In fact the towns like Old Malda, Dinhata, Mathabhanga were important trade-centres which had a good market outside North Bengal for their locally produced or manufactured goods.

The class II towns, like Darjeeling, Cooch Behar, English Bazar, and lately Jalpaiguri (1911), were either the princely capitals (Cooch Behar), principal trade-centre (English Bazar) or important administrative centres (Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri). From 1931, the number of towns first began to increase. Between 1931 to 1951, a span of twenty years, the strength of class III towns increased from 1 to 3, while the number of class VI towns increased from 4 to 6, i.e. the rate of increase between the topmost and the lowest rank remained same. Between 1941 to 1961, the total

strength of the towns of North Bengal increased from 18 to 25, expressing a leap which broke the previous slow trend of growth. Again the rate of increase during 1961-71 decade reveals a retreat to the previous trend of increase. Here, for a comparison of urban growth of North Bengal, we can say that while the percentage of urban population was 4.1 in 1941, it was 7.3 in 1951, exhibiting a noteworthy increase, but the difference in percentage of urban population between 1961 and 1971 was not so large, such as 8.8 in 1961 and 9.3 in 1971. It can, therefore, be said that, basically the growth of urbanization in North Bengal has always remained at a low level, and the trend is still continuing with a slight change in one decade (1951-61) and that too was primarily due to the influx of people from the adjoining State of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan).

Change in the class status of Old Towns and appearance of New Towns since 1901 :

The table 5, gives, ^achronological idea of towns in North Bengal indicating their change in class-status or up-grading, as well as the appearance of new towns in different decades.

Table - 5

Showing the upgrading of Old Towns to New Class and appearance of New Towns since 1901. (* indicates the appearance of the town in that particular census year)

Class of Town	1901	Class of Town	1911	Class of Town	1921	Class of Town	1931	Class of Town	1941	Class of Town	1951	Class of Town	1961	Class of Town	1971
I	-	I	-	I	-	I	-	I	-	I	-	I	-	I	-
II	-	II	-	II	-	II	-	II	-	II	-	II	Siliguri	II	Siliguri Jalpaiguri Cooch Behar Balurghat English Bazar
III	-	III	-	III	Darjeeling	III	Darjeeling	III	Darjeeling Jalpaiguri English Bazar	III	Darjeeling Jalpaiguri English Bazar Cooch Behar Siliguri *Alipurduar	III	Darjeeling Jalpaiguri English Bazar Cooch Behar Alipurduar Balurghat Raiganj Kalimpong	III	Darjeeling Alipurduar Raiganj Kalimpong
IV	Darjeeling Cooch Behar English Bazar	IV	Darjeeling Cooch Behar English Bazar Jalpaiguri	IV	Cooch Behar English Bazar Jalpaiguri	IV	Cooch Behar English Bazar Jalpaiguri	IV	Cooch Behar Kalimpong Siliguri	IV	Kalimpong Kurseong *Balurghat *Raiganj	IV	Kurseong Dinhata *Maynaguri *Dhupguri *Kalimpong	IV	Kurseong Dinhata Maynaguri Mal Dhupguri Gangarampur Islampur *Alipurduar Junction
V	Jalpaiguri	V	Kurseong	V	Kurseong	V	Kurseong *Kalimpong *Siliguri	V	Kurseong *Hili	V	Hili Dinhata	V	Hili *Domohani *Mal *Falekata *Gangarampur Methabhangra *Islampur	V	Domohani Falekata Haldibari Methabhangra *Guriahati Hili *Dalkhola Old Malda
VI	Kurseong Dinhata Methabhangra Haldibari Old Malda	VI	Dinhata Methabhangra Haldibari Old Malda	VI	Dinhata Methabhangra Haldibari Old Malda	VI	Dinhata Methabhangra Haldibari Old Malda	VI	Dinhata Methabhangra Haldibari Old Malda *Tufanganj *Mekhliganj	VI	Methabhangra Haldibari Old Malda Tufanganj Mekhliganj	VI	Haldibari Tufanganj Mekhliganj Old Malda	VI	Tufanganj Mekhliganj

It is found that, Jalpaiguri and Kurseong had respectively moved from class V and VI to class IV and V in 1911. In 1921, Darjeeling moved to class III from her previous position. In 1931, the picture remained almost unaltered except^{for} the appearance of two new towns, such as Kalimpong and Siliguri, in the class V category. In 1941, four towns moved to a higher class. They are Jalpaiguri and English Bazar moved from class IV to class III, and Kalimpong and Siliguri from class V to class IV. During this time three new towns appeared, namely, Hili, Tufanganj, and Mekhliganj, of which Hili belonged to class V, and the other two to VI. In 1951, again four towns moved to a higher class and three new towns appeared. Among the up-graded towns, Siliguri and Cooch Behar moved to class III, whereas Kurseong and Dinhata came up to class IV and V respectively. Among the new towns, Alipur Duar became a class III town and Balurghat and Raiganj were bettered their position, changing to class IV. In 1961, six towns moved to an upper class while eight new towns appeared in the region. Among the up-graded towns, Siliguri became a class II town, Kalimpong, Balurghat and Raiganj moved from class IV to class III, Dinhata moved to class IV, and Mathabhanga moved to class V. Among the new towns, Maynaguri, Dhupguri, and Kaliaganj were placed in class IV, while Domohani, Mal, Palakata, Gangarampur and Islampur were classed as class V towns. In 1971, ten towns in total were

up-graded from their previous classes and only three new towns appeared in this census year. Among the towns which were up-graded, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Balurghat and English Bazar moved to class II, Kaliaganj moved to class III, where-as Mal, Gangarampur and Islampur moved to class V, while Maldibari and Old Malda, being remaining in class VI for long six decades (1901-11 to 1951-61), moved to class V.

The foregoing discussion reveals that Siliguri, no sooner had it appeared as an urban centre, started to grow faster and moved to the next higher class in succeeding census years from 1931 onwards upto 1971. Among the district towns functioning as class II towns in 1971, Balurghat is the only town which moved to that class (class II) within two decades from the year of its appearance. But the most important aspect revealed here is that no town has degraded in status during any of the decades between 1901-71. This is, apparently, very significant in view of the fact that all of them began as small centres and without losing their status in any period, each had strived hard to maintain its precarious existence in an undeveloped region and has succeeded, in most of the cases, in improving their lot.

Urban sex-ratio - signifying urban trends in North Bengal :

The study of urban sex-ratio is another characteristic phenomenon for defining the state of urbanization of any region.

Table 6

The following statement shows changes in the porportion of the sexes during 1901-1961 in West Bengal and North Bengal.

(Females per 1000 males)

State/District	1961	1951	1941	1931	1921	1911	1901
West Bengal							
Total	878	865	852	890	905	925	945
Rural	943	939	945	961	971	982	994
Urban	701	660	559	578	591	614	652
Darjeeling							
Total	864	863	884	881	898	871	876
Rural	909	903	912	906	912	893	894
Urban	731	721	736	728	777	666	690
Jalpaiguri							
Total	854	825	826	830	856	829	843
Rural	863	833	846	838	862	835	849
Urban	763	679	594	581	616	559	581
Cooch Behar							
Total	890	855	879	886	877	873	881
Rural	899	867	893	896	888	885	892
Urban	774	713	608	621	575	529	540
West Dinajpur							
Total	906	884	910	923	929	920	918
Rural	914	890	913	923	929	920	918
Urban	821	771	583	-	-	-	-
Malda							
Total	965	966	983	989	991	1,004	1,007
Rural	969	971	988	995	996	1,008	1,012
Urban	873	853	827	814	802	861	854

The urban sex-ratio expresses howfar the residents of an urban centre are actually urban oriented or have become urban-minded. The distribution of females per 1000 males population in the districts of North Bengal as well as of West Bengal between 1901 to 1961 may summarised in the following manner.

In 1901 and 1911, West Bengal had more females per 1000 males, than the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, while Darjeeling and Malda had more females per 1000 males, than the state of West Bengal. In 1921, only Cooch Behar had a lower number of females per 1000 males, in respect of West Bengal's average of 614 females per 1000 males. But from 1931 to 1961 all the districts of North Bengal had a larger number of females for every 1000 males, than the state's average.

On ~~a~~ further analysis it becomes clear that number of females per 1000 males was between 500-700 in most of the districts of North Bengal, namely Darjeeling (690), Jalpaiguri (580) and Cooch Behar (540) in 1901. The district of Malda is the only exception with 854 females per 1000 males. The district of Malda exhibits steadiness in respect of the number of females per 1000 males, from 1901 to 1960, where the other four districts rather made increase in the later period, particularly from 1941 onwards. The districts of Cooch Behar and West Dinajpur had shown a considerable increase. In Cooch Behar district the number of females per 1000 males increased from 540 in 1901 to 774 in 1961, in the district of West Dinajpur, the increase has been more rapid, from 583 in 1941 to 821 in 1961. In fact, excluding the district of Malda and West Dinajpur the other districts of North Bengal, such as Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar have not yet reached

a state of balance in the ratio of males and females. The dominance of males in the urban areas of the districts of North Bengal may be taken as an indicator of the instability of urban life where the town-dwellers largely maintain link with the rural areas. Servicemen living in the urban centre or town but their families remain in their rural homes. Another reason likely to be related with low number of females per 1000 males is that, still now North Bengal towns ^{offer} after very little in the form of urban amenities to attract the families. Acute housing problems and high cost of living make life more difficult in most of the towns than in villages. Besides, the majority of the working population in these towns belong to the lower income group who cannot afford to support their families in the urban areas. A large section of these people are engaged in activities having little job-security. All these together act as strong deterrants ^{of} ~~to~~ family life at their working place.

X Growth of Individual Towns : Selective Case Study :

Growth Of Individual Town: Selective Case Study

Turning to the growth of individual towns a general trend may be observed that most of them recorded maximum growth during 1941-51 and 1951-61 which is markedly noticeable especially among the towns existing since 1901. They are Jalpaiguri, English bazar, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Kurseong, Dinhata, Mathabhanga, Old Malda and Haldibari. Among them, however, Jalpaiguri, Kurseong and Dinhata had a better record in the early part of the century. On the other hand, seven towns witnessed a decrease in population. They are Englishbazar (-1.8 in 1921), Darjeeling (-4.8 in 1931), Kalimpong (-6.7 in 1971), Domohani (-15.0 in 1971), Hili (-27.7⁷ in 1961), Old Malda (-16.3 in 1921 and -11.6 in 1931) and Haldibari (-17.0 in 1931). Among the class II towns, Siliguri and Balurghat witnessed maximum growth within a short period. Siliguri beginning its urban career in 1931, recorded 209.7 percent increase during the succeeding decade, and Balurghat gaining urban status in 1951, increased its population by 148.5 percent during 1961-71.

No other town of North Bengal has such a faster rate of growth than the two mentioned above. Practically, the growth rate of Siliguri is ^uunprecedented for any other town of West Bengal. The ^{growth} of Siliguri makes a case-study for itself. It is true that, partly, this growth has been due to the influx of refugees. But its growth during the last two decades is the result of its own activities which gained primary momentum from its extremely advantageous location, as the principal gateway to traffic bound for

either north and south or east and west. Such nodality is not enjoyed by any other town of the region.

From figures 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e, 7f and 7g, one may get an idea about the growth pattern of each town of North Bengal during the seven decades, 1901-1971. During 1901-11, among nine towns, Dinhata has the largest growth rate of 51.9 percent (fig 7a), when Old Malda recorded only 0.2 percent increase; Jalpaiguri had an increase of 26.0 percent and Cooch Behar increased by 5.7 percent while Englishbazar and Old Malda suffered a decrease of -1.8 percent and -16.3 percent respectively during the decades of 1911-21 (fig 7b). In the following decade Jalpaiguri again had the largest urban growth 30.6 percent, but Cooch Behar again had the lowest growth rate of 3.3 percent. Englishbazar improved her position greatly with an increase of 20.6 percent, whereas Darjeeling and Old Malda suffered decrease of -4.8 percent and -11.6 percent respectively (7c). The succeeding decade gives a different picture. Siliguri (fig 7d) had the highest growth rate of 72.8 percent and Jalpaiguri came next to Siliguri with 46.6 percent of decennial growth and Dinhata got the third place with 40.5 percent, while Darjeeling and Old Malda overcoming their former decline, gained 28.5 percent and 38.4 percent respectively during the decade of 1931-41. The next decade saw Siliguri with the highest growth rate of 209.7 percent,

Table - 7

Towns of North Bengal classified by population in 1971 with
variation since 1901

District	Name of the Town	Civic Status	Year	Persons	Decade Variation	Percentage of Decade variation
Darjeeling	Siliguri	Municipality	1931	6,067		
			1941	10,487	+ 4,420	+ 72.85
			1951	32,480	+21,993	+209.72
			1961	66,471	+32,991	+101.57
			1971	97,484	+32,013	+ 50.0
Jalpaiguri	Jalpaiguri	Municipality	1901	9,708		
			1911	11,469	+ 1,761	+ 18.14
			1921	14,520	+ 3,051	+ 26.60
			1931	18,962	+ 4,442	+ 30.59
			1941	27,766	+ 8,804	+ 46.60
			1951	41,259	+13,493	+ 48.60
			1961	48,748	+ 7,479	+ 18.13
1971	55,159	+ 6,421	+ 13.17			

Table - 7 Cont d.

District	Name of the Town	Civis Status	Year	Persons	Decade Variation	Percentage of Decade variation
Malda	English Bazar	Municipality	1901	13,667		
			1911	14,322	+ 655	+ 4.79
			1921	14,057	- 265	- 1.85
			1931	16,907	+2,850	+20.27
			1941	23,333	+6,426	+38.01
			1951	30,663	+7,330	+31.41
			1961	45,900	+15,237	+49.69
			1971	61,385	+15,435	+33.62
Cooch Behar	Cooch Behar	Municipality	1901	10,453		
			1911	10,841	+ 388	+ 3.66
			1921	11,461	+ 620	+ 5.72
			1931	11,837	+ 376	+ 3.23
			1941	16,000	+ 4,163	+35.17
			1951	33,242	+17,242	+107.76
			1961	41,922	+ 8,680	+ 26.11
			1971	53,684	+11,672	+ 28.0

followed by Cooch Behar with 107.8 percent. No town suffered decrease in this decade and Mekhliganj is the only town which had less than 5 percent increase. Haldibari had an increase of 101.6 percent taking third position (fig 7^e).

Between 1951-61, the town of Mekhliganj had the highest decennial growth of 150.3 percent and Raiganj was placed second with 108.7 percent, while Siliguri got the third place with 101.6 percent (fig 7^f). In the last decade, Hili suffered a fall of -27.7 percent. The 1951-61 decade is an exceptional one in view of the fact~~x~~ that Mekhliganj, a class VI town surpassed all other towns of the region including the class II town~~x~~ (Siliguri) in respect of decennial growth rate. However, it is necessary to mention that although Mekhliganj had an increase of only + 2,038 persons, Siliguri during the same period added 32,991 persons into her earlier total 1951-61, Table 7^h. But growth rate becomes higher for Mekhliganj as its total population was much lower than Siliguri.

In 1961-71, Balurghat (fig 7^g)~~x~~ the district town of West Dinajpur district, recorded highest rate of growth with 148.5 percent, followed by Dhupguri having 58.0 percent, Gangarampur 55.0 percent, and Siliguri with 48.9 percent.

In comparison, Hili had the lowest growth rate^d 1.1 percent, and Kalimpong and Domohani witnessed decrease of -6.7 and -15.0 percent respectively.

Table - 7

Towns of North Bengal classified by population in 1971 with
variation since 1901

District	Name of the Town	Civic Status	Year	Persons	Decade Variation	Percentage of Decade variation
Darjeeling	Siliguri	Municipality	1931	6,067		
			1941	10,487	+ 4,420	+ 72.35
			1951	32,480	+21,993	+209.72
			1961	65,471	+32,991	+101.57
			1971	97,484	+32,013	+ 50.0
Jalpaiguri	Jalpaiguri	Municipality	1901	9,708		
			1911	11,469	+ 1,761	+ 18.14
			1921	14,520	+ 3,051	+ 26.60
			1931	18,962	+ 4,442	+ 30.59
			1941	27,766	+ 8,804	+ 46.60
			1951	41,259	+13,493	+ 48.60
			1961	48,748	+ 7,479	+ 18.13
			1971	55,159	+ 6,421	+ 13.17

Table - 7 Contd.

District	Name of the Town	Civis Status	Year	Persons	Decade Variation	Percentage of Decade variation
Malda	English Bazar	Municipality	1901	13,667		
			1911	14,322	+ 655	+ 4.79
			1921	14,057	- 265	- 1.85
			1931	16,907	+2,850	+20.27
			1941	23,333	+6,426	+38.01
			1951	30,663	+7,330	+31.41
			1961	45,900	+15,237	+49.69
			1971	61,335	+15,435	+33.62
Cooch Behar	Cooch Behar	Municipality	1901	10,453		
			1911	10,841	+ 388	+ 3.66
			1921	11,461	+ 620	+ 5.72
			1931	11,837	+ 376	+ 3.28
			1941	16,000	+ 4,163	+35.17
			1951	33,242	+17,242	+107.76
			1961	41,922	+ 8,680	+ 26.11
			1971	53,684	+11,672	+ 28.0

Table-7 Cont d.

District	Name of the Town	Civic Status	Year	Persons	Decade variation	Percentage of Decade variation
Darjeeling	Darjeeling	Municipality	1901	16,924		
			1911	19,005	+ 2,081	+ 12.30
			1921	22,258	+ 3,253	+ 17.12
			1931	21,135	- 1,073	- 4.82
			1941	27,224	+ 6,089	+ 28.51
			1951	33,605	+ 6,381	+ 23.44
			1961	40,651	+ 7,046	+ 20.97
			1971	42,873	+ 2,222	+ 5.5
West Dinajpur	Raiganj	Municipality	1951	15,473		
			1961	32,290	+ 16,817	+108.69
			1971	43,191	+ 10,901	+ 33.9
Jalpaiguri	Alipurduar	Municipality	1951	24,386		
			1961	28,927	+ 4,041	+ 16.24
			1971	36,667	+ 7,740	+ 26.8
West Dinajpur	Balurghat	Municipality	1951	18,121		
			1961	26,999	+ 8,878	+ 48.99
			1971	67,088	+ 40,089	+148.5

Table - 7 Contd.

District	Name of the Town	Civic Status	Year	Persons	Decade variation	Percentage of Decade variation
Darjeeling	Kalimpong	Municipality	1931	8,776		
			1941	11,953	+ 3,182	+ 36.26
			1951	16,677	+ 4,719	+ 39.46
			1961	25,105	+ 8,428	+ 50.34
Jalpaiguri	Mainaguri	Non-Municipality	1961	10,950		
			1971	15,803	+ 4,853	+ 44.40
Jalpaiguri	Domohani	Non-Municipality	1961	9,064		
			1971	7,706	- 1,358	+ 15.0
West Dinajpur	Kaliaganj	Non-Municipality	1961	14,473		
			1971	21,169	+ 6,691	+ 46.2
Darjeeling	Kurseong	Municipality	1901	4,469		
			1911	5,574	+ 1,105	+ 24.73
			1921	6,445	+ 871	+ 15.63
			1931	7,451	+ 1,006	+ 15.61
			1941	8,495	+ 1,044	+ 14.01
			1951	11,719	+ 3,224	+ 37.95
			1961	13,410	+ 1,691	+ 14.43
			1971	16,425	+ 3,015	+ 22.5

Table - 7 Contd.

District	Name of Town	Civic Status	Year	Persons	Decade variation	Percentage of Decade variation
Cooch Behar	Dinhata	Town Committee	1901	1,207		
			1911	1,833	+ 626	+ 51.86
			1921	2,290	+ 457	+ 24.93
			1931	2,516	+ 226	+ 9.87
			1941	3,536	+ 1,020	+ 40.54
			1951	5,843	+ 2,312	+ 65.38
			1961	11,306	+ 5,453	+ 93.33
			1971	11,737	+ 431	+ 3.8
Jalpaiguri	Dhupguri	Non-Municipality	1961	10,637		
			1971	16,808	+ 6,171	+ 58.0
West Dinajpur	Gangarampur	Non-Municipality	1961	9,671		
			1971	14,809	+ 5,138	+ 55.0
Jalpaiguri	Mal	Non-Municipality	1961	9,035		
			1971	10,951	+ 1,866	+ 20.5

Table - 7 Contd.

District	Name of Town	Civic Status	Year	Persons	Decade variation	Percentage of Decade variation	
Cooch Behar	Mathabhanga	Town Committee	1901	1,233			
			1911	1,740	+	457	+ 35.62
			1921	2,003	+	263	+ 15.40
			1931	2,431	+	428	+ 21.07
			1941	3,007	+	576	+ 23.69
			1951	4,256	+	1,249	+ 41.54
			1961	6,984	+	2,724	+ 64.00
Jalpaiguri	Falakata	Non-Municipality	1961	6,413			
			1971	7,194	+	781	+ 12.2
West Dinajpur	Hili	Non-Municipality	1941	6,952			
			1951	8,346	+	1,394	+ 20.05
			1961	6,082	-	2,314	- 27.73
			1971	6,096	+	64	+ 1.1

Table - 7 Contd.

District	Name of Town	Civic Status	Year	Persons	Decade variation	Percentage of Decade variation
Malda	Old Malda	Municipality	1901	3,743		
			1911	3,750	+ 7	+ 0.19
			1921	3,145	- 605	- 16.30
			1931	2,779	- 366	- 11.64
			1941	3,845	+ 1,066	+ 38.36
			1951	4,498	+ 653	+ 16.98
			1961	4,885	+ 387	+ 8.60
			1971	6,691	+ 1,806	+ 37.0
Cooch Behar	Haldibari	Town Committee	1901	1,112		
			1911	1,380	+ 268	+ 24.10
			1921	1,502	+ 122	+ 8.84
			1931	1,246	- 256	- 17.04
			1941	1,563	+ 322	+ 25.84
			1951	3,162	+ 1,594	+101.66
			1961	4,371	+ 1,209	+ 38.24
			1971	5,098	+ 727	+ 16.7

Table - 7 Contd.

District	Name of Town	Civic Status	Year	Persons	Decade variation	Percentage of Decade variation
Cooch Behar	Tufanganj	Town Committee	1941	1,412		
			1951	2,316	+ 904	+ 64.02
			1961	3,473	+ 1,157	+ 50.96
			1971	4,209	+ 164	+ 4.7
Cooch Behar	Nekhiganj	Town Committee	1941	1,293		
			1951	1,356	+ 53	+ 4.47
			1961	3,394	+ 2,038	+150.29
			1971	3,777	+ 383	+ 11.3

Source : Census of West Bengal and Sikkim, Part II A, 1961, Vol. XVI, Union Table A-IV.

Decadewise Growth of Urban population

of North Bengal

Fig- 7A
Decade
1901 - 1911

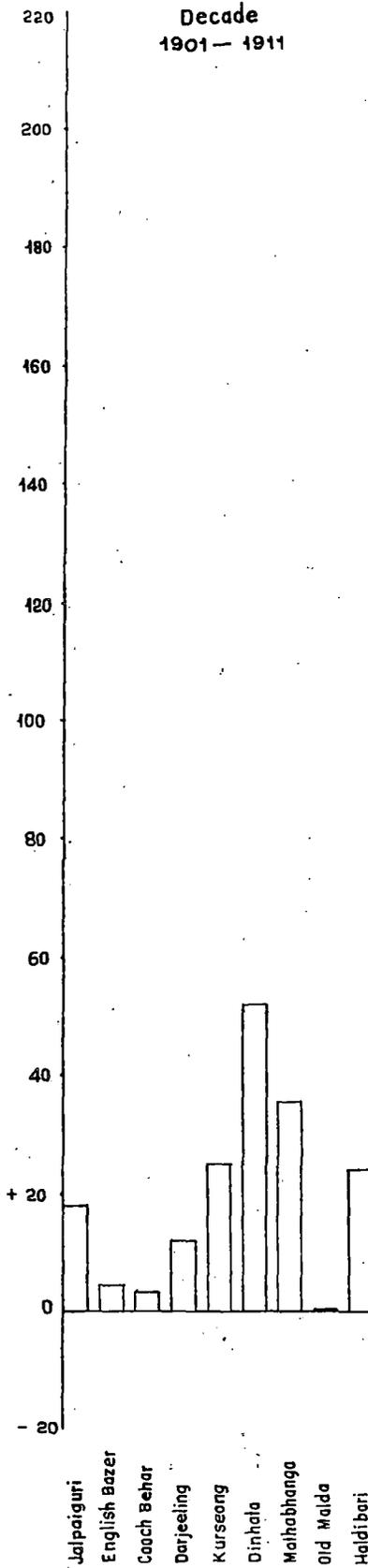
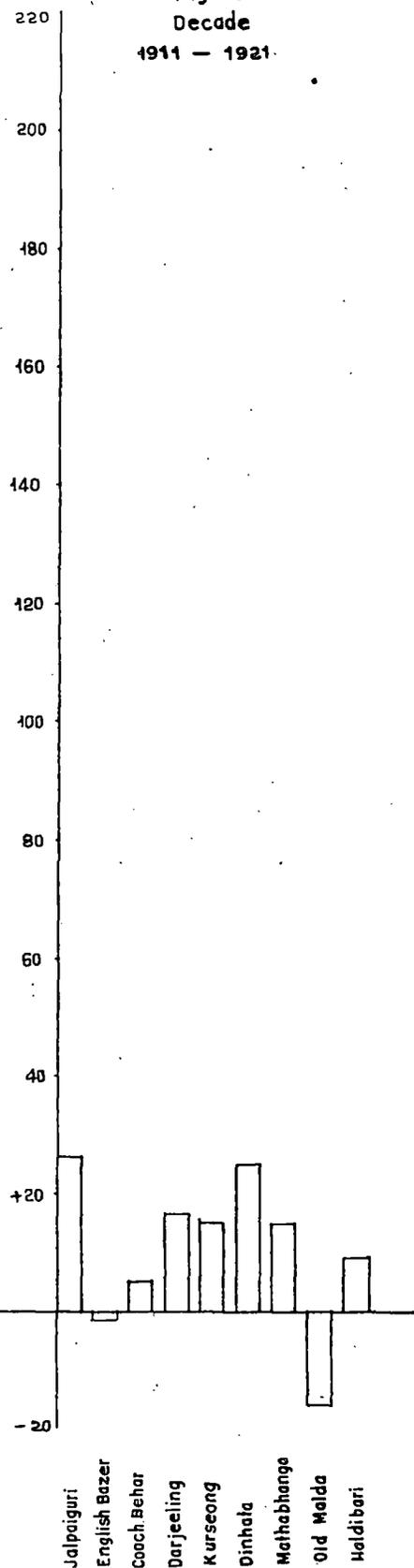
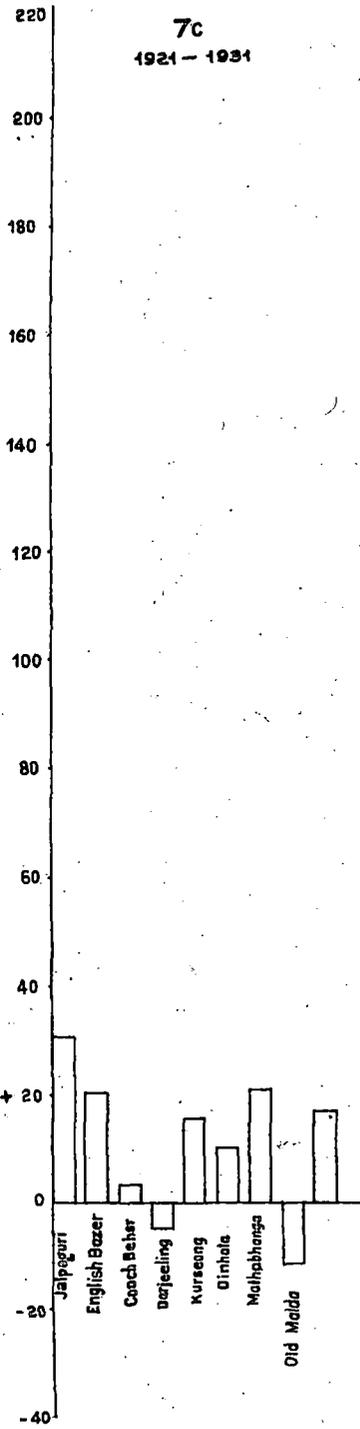


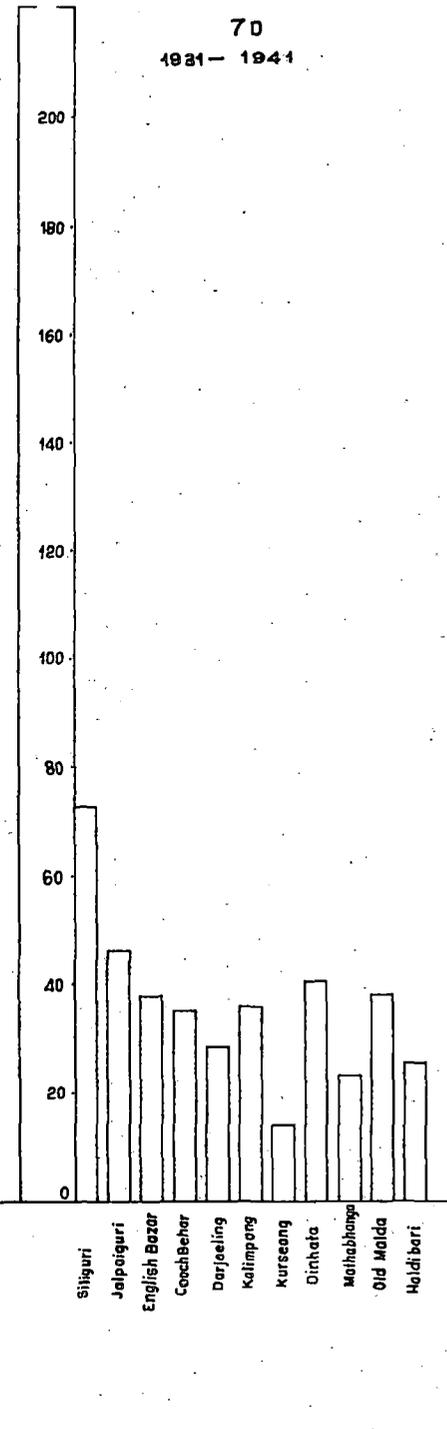
Fig- 7B
Decade
1911 - 1921



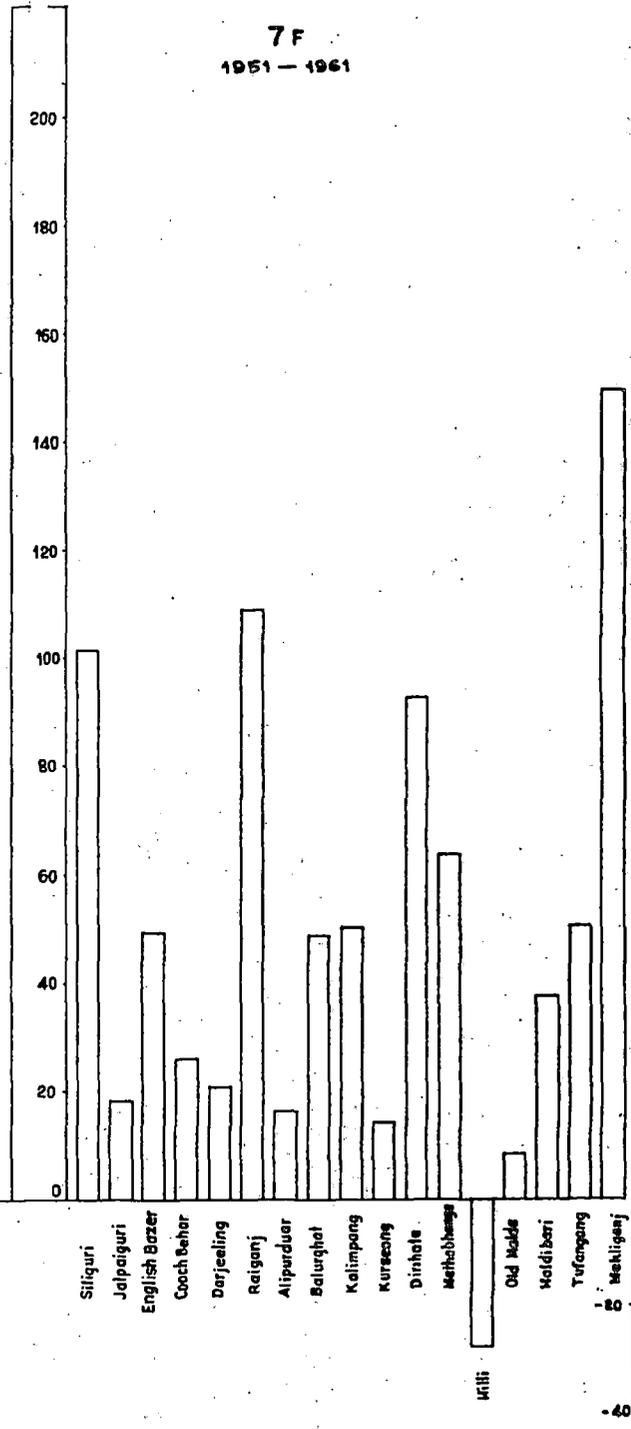
7c
1921 - 1931



7d
1931 - 1941



7F
1951 - 1961



Absence of Urban Concentration :

Urban development in North Bengal during the long period of seven decades, 1901-71, has failed to give rise to any urban concentration. The urban population of North Bengal comprising five districts represents only 9.26 percent of the total population in 1971 (table 1), which means that nearly 90.74 percent of population of this region are still living in rural areas. In fact, the towns appear as isolated settlements mostly at considerable distances from each other, separated by wide agricultural or forested tracts. Functionally they are generally administrative centres and thus exert little pull on the people living in the rural areas. Whatever increase in their population have been made by the majority of these towns during the space ^{of} the last seventy years that has mainly come from natural increase as well as the displaced persons who sought urban centres as places for living in. Looking back to the history of urban growth of this region, it is found that the maximum increase of urban population took place during the last two decades of 1941-61. The slow growth of urbanization is revealed by another factor that the whole region under study is still devoid of any class I town, whereas, the region had the privilege of having thriving nine towns since 1901. Though most of them were class VI towns, a few of them like Englishbazar and Cooch Behar had the scope to flourish. This is

partly corroborated by Hunter who writes in his "Statistical Account of Bengal" as follows: "Being situated in a Mulberry-growing country it (Englishbazar) was chosen at an early date as the site of one of the company's (East India Company) factories"⁽³⁹⁾ and among "the most important seats of commercial, in the district where trade is extremely carried on in food stuffs are Englishbazar, Maldah, etc"⁽⁴⁰⁾. In the "Completion Settlement Report of Cooch Behar state"⁽⁴¹⁾ Beckett wrote: "Cooch Behar grown tobacco finds its way to Burmah to ~~be~~ returned afterwards in Burmah made cheroots, indeed at the present moment very fair cheroots are being manufactured in the town of Cooch Behar at the Artisan school. The broad Tista river runs through this pergunah and affords ⁱⁿ many cases means of transit for the exports of tobacco and other agricultural products." References of this nature from people who studied and surveyed the economic as well as the social condition of this region with great sincerity and much care, are the proofs of the erstwhile economic prosperity of those towns. But in course of time, those places lost their economic importance due to various physical as well as political reasons. As a result, the towns of North Bengal excepting a few, grew into shapeless congregations of residences with little variety of functions. The landuse character of towns of the five

districts give such a picture where residential areas occupy an abnormally high percentage of the total lands.

The prevailing residential character which one can easily find in the towns of North Bengal particularly among those belonging to class IV to VI, accounting for no less than 18 out of 28 towns in 1971, exhibit an urban trend which turn the towns into a residential slum or "urban village" a term coined by the Western Geographers mainly for the Asiatic Countries, if proper development programmes are not taken in time to ~~boost~~up their economic growth. Ofcourse, very recently, as per the governments direction, the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) and Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMPO) are taking keen interest about the towns of North Bengal.

(1111)

CHAPTER-I

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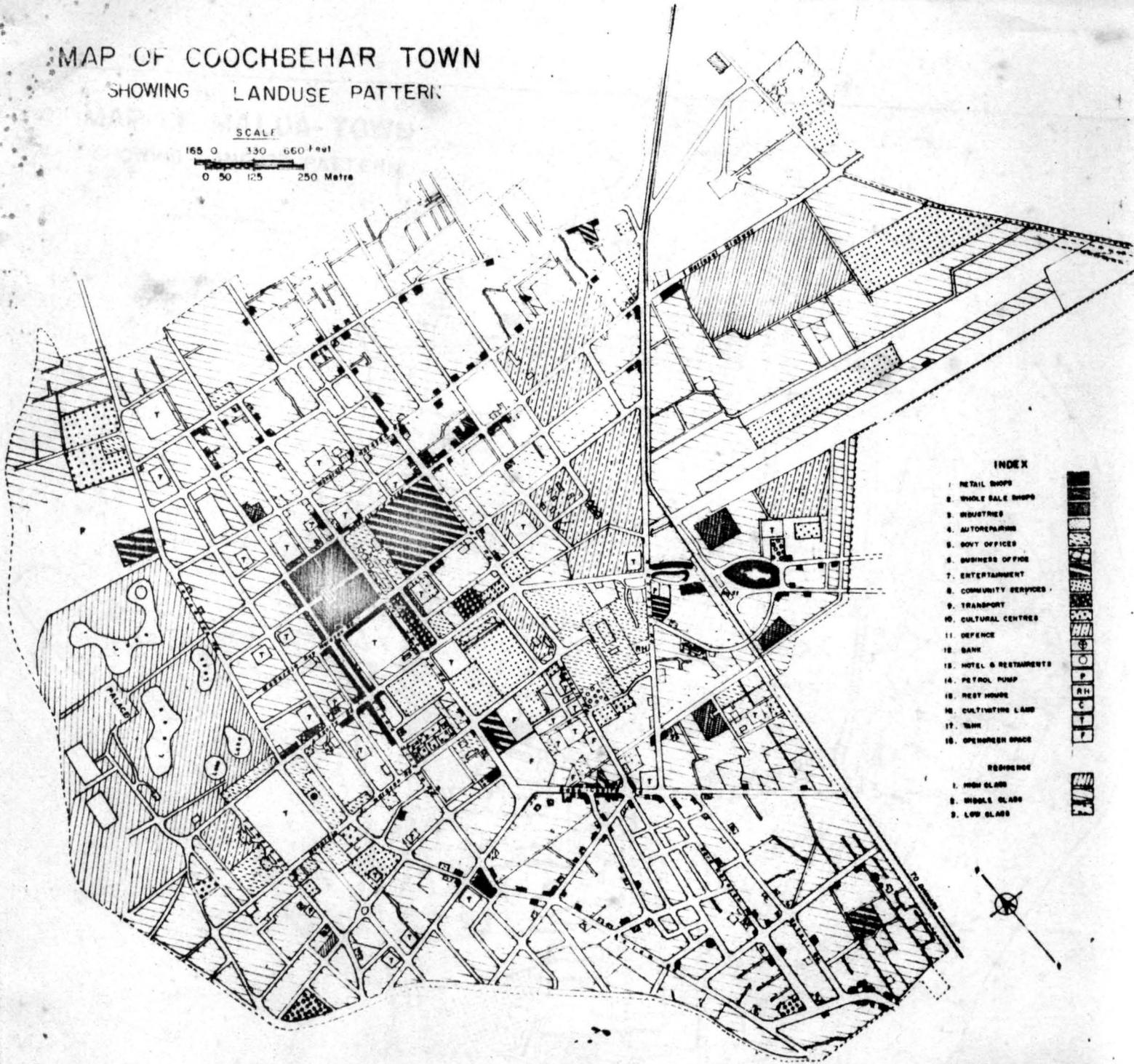
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MAP OF COCHBEHAR TOWN SHOWING LANDUSE PATTERN

SCALE
165 0 330 660 Feet
0 50 125 250 Metres

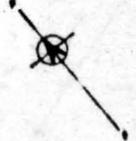


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- 14. PETROL PUMP
- 15. REST HOUSE
- 16. CULTIVATING LAND
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- 18. OPEN GREEN SPACE

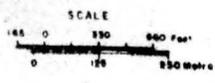
RESIDENCE

- 1. HIGH CLASS
- 2. MIDDLE CLASS
- 3. LOW CLASS



MAP OF MALDA TOWN

SHOWING LANDUSE PATTERN.



TO OLD MALDA RLY STATION



CHAPTER II

MORPHOLOGY AND LANDUSE PATTERN OF THE MAJOR TOWNS
OF NORTH BENGAL

Morphology reveals the structural and visible skeleton of a town or the internal structure of the town. It encompasses the interpretation of the man-made fabric comprising the physical and social elements of a town, and interrelationships in respect of their location which ultimately explain the development process in the growth of the landuse pattern. Miss Taneja (1970)⁽⁴⁾ has compared the process of formation of city with the development of an organic form finding some similarities between these two systems in respect of their process, structure and stage.

In analysing the morphology of a town, the road pattern and the characteristics of the buildings representing the functions they carry on, are two important tools, specially the roads being the skeleton of the urban organism and the most important criteria for the development of transportation, have a direct impact on the centripetal and centrifugal forces which are responsible for the concentration and decentralization of the built up area in a town.

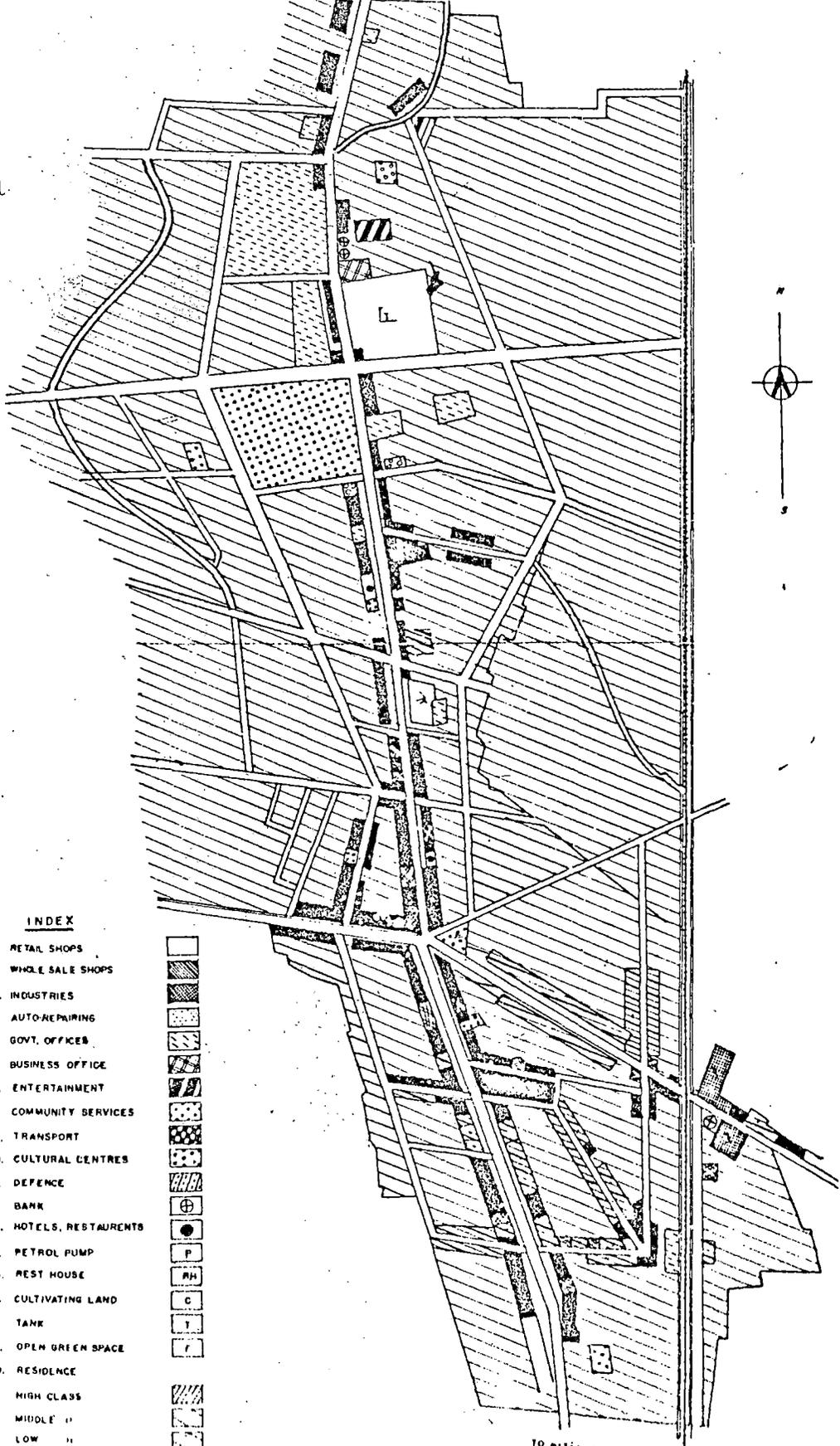
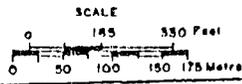
The development of roads also depend upon the interrelationships among the various nuclei of human settlements as well as the physical setup of that place. The influence of physical landscape in the development of street layout is prominent in the hill towns of

North Bengal, while the plains get the optimum facility in respect of slope and space in the formation of roads. The hill towns encounter hindrances put forth by the same factors. Besides due to unplanned growth, the roads in almost all the towns of North Bengal, excepting Cooch Behar, present a confused and complex type of network resulting from narrow lanes of labyrinthine nature. The roads in Cooch Behar town are grid-patterned, hence left scope for a systematic development of the town.

Among the various centripetal forces, the administrative functions and the residences of the private rulers have taken important roles in giving rise to the concentration of population and growth of various functions which gradually brought the towns into existence. In the case of hill towns, the administration and the British policy are jointly responsible for the concentration of population. In the case of Cooch Behar, it is the king's residence which is responsible for the growth of the urban settlements. In other towns, the administrative functions have played the most important role in the formation and development of urban centres. Of course, there are some towns where the market and port facilities together have provided the centripetal force, for example, Dinhata, Kalimpong, etc.. The former one being situated on the bank of a river enjoyed a good navigational facility and as a major tobacco growing area served the merchants coming from as far as Burma⁽²⁾.

MAP OF DINHATA TOWN

Showing the landuse pattern



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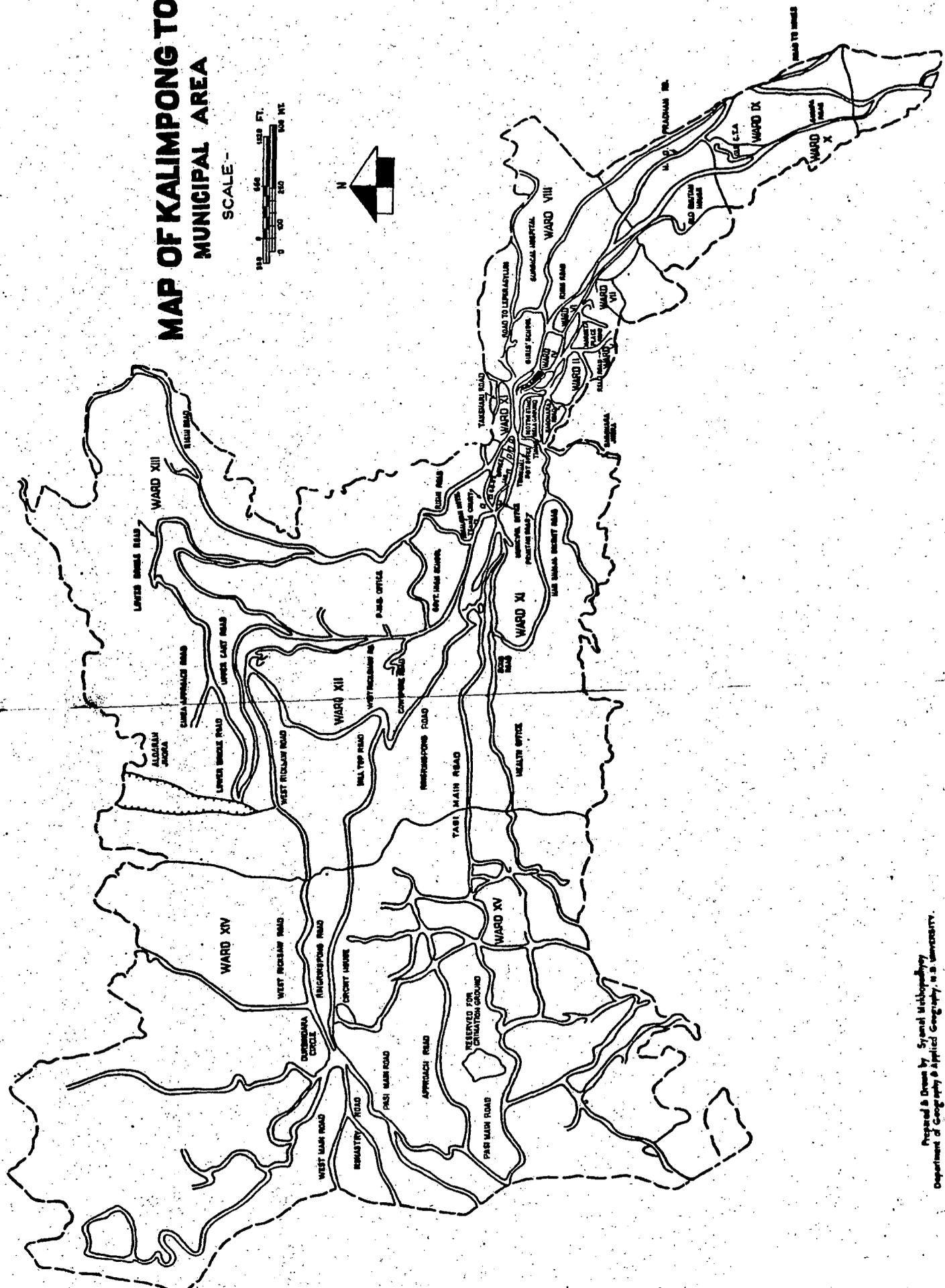


- HIGH CLASS
- MIDDLE "
- LOW "

TO BITALDA

MAP OF KALIMPONG TOWN MUNICIPAL AREA

SCALE--



Prepared & Drawn by Syamal Kishore Das
Department of Geography & Applied Geography, I.I.T. Kharagpur.

There is another town in Cooch Behar district, Mekhhliganj, which also was an important trade centre⁽³⁾ during the rule of Koch Kings. At that time, the Mogh (Burmese) traders used to come to this town for collecting tobacco and cotton fabrics. This town also had a good navigational facility. The transactions were made through Tista by boat to Kaliganj of Rungpur where from the goods were ^{taken to} Chittagang for transshipment to Rangoon⁽⁴⁾. But in/course of time, the rivers lost their navigability and the towns deprived of the trade turned to tiny sub-divisional administrative headquarters. Similarly, Kalimpong was connected with Tibet, ^{by} a direct trade-route closed very recently. The trade between Tibet and India via this place gradually converted it into ^a twon.

Unlike many other towns or cities, in the towns of North Bengal, the centrifugal forces had not been operative in the same manner that is the congestion in the heart of the town, or the choice of alternative places for a better living or the outward shiftings were not the root cause for the spatial expansion of the towns. What actually happened here is the immigration of displaced persons from erstwhile East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) and not the usual rural to urban migration, at least in the beginning, ~~resulting~~ in urban development beyond their municipal boundaries in unison with the extention of road-neatwork. Practically, North Bengal has witnessed a great leap in the growth of population between the

pre-Partition (1941) and the post-Partition (1951) period. After the Partition, the refugee influx dramatically changed the demographic picture of the towns of North Bengal. Many of them, having previously a very small population-size, turned into large centres, the people from the other side of the boundary constituting the major part of the total residents. The changes in the land use taking place at the same time resulted in the shifting of residences to the periphery of the towns. The political factor played a more vital role than the pure economic or social factors in respect of the growth and expansion of the towns during the recent decades. Further, it may be noted that though the first *raison d'etre* had taken a leading role in the growth of the towns of this region, the most towns of North Bengal do not exhibit any distinct process of growth patterns formulated by E.W. Burgess⁽²⁾⁽⁵⁾, Homer Hoyet⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾ and Harris and Ullman⁽⁵⁾⁽⁷⁾, specially in respect of residential distribution, as the ^{act}spatial expression of residences lack the distinctive economic - class segregation.

Among the six principal towns, such as Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Balurghat, English Bazar and Siliguri, five are District Headquarters while the last one is a Sub-Divisional town. Besides, there are twenty two urban centres in North Bengal but only a few exhibit true urban character and the rest are nothing but a conglomeration of residences of various size, ^{and} shape, and built

with a string of shops occupying the main road fronts, catering to the needs of the town-dwellers. As a matter of fact, except the main thoroughfare which in most cases is a part of the National Highway or State Highway, running through the heart of the town, the remaining areas are densely filled in by residences dotted with some community, administrative, recreational centres or small industrial units.

Practically no towns of North Bengal, whether district town or a small urban centre, present any distinct functional zone due to their small size and unplanned growth. There are, however, a few exceptions where some sort of planning in the spatial distribution of various functions may be traced; Cooch Behar is one of them with its administrative, commercial and recreational (Parks mainly) zones were clearly defined at its earlier stage of development. But this earlier attempt at planned development has become completely blurred in the successive decades by unchecked growth and encroachment following unexpected increase of population coupled with the withdrawal of the Native Ruler's constant supervision. In fact, the Kings of this native State were responsible for the planned growth of this town and the British Agents of British-India Government, had remarked that "Cooch Behar progressed further than Jalpaiguri, a British settled district in the same region, during 1869 to 1873", and still some parts of the town are bearing the imprints of past planning, like the administrative zone surrounding Sagardighi, the

park with a considerable big area, the old academic institutions etc., On the other hand, Darjeeling, originally developed as a completely European settlement, possesses some zoning, the retail market, the Mall, the old administrative sector, etc. Here also the increase of population in the latter periods, accompanied by the unplanned growth has largely altered the original appearance of the town. Among the other towns, Siliguri has followed some zoning, particularly in case of commercial and industrial centres. The most important factor for the haphazard growth of the towns of North Bengal, perhaps, is that no town in North Bengal developed with an introspective view of future population growth. The Partition brought in such a rush of refugees that the towns, all of a sudden, felt an impulse of growing almost overnight. Commercial and other related functions multiplied rapidly and urban expansion took place along the main roads, people making their houses wherever they got land, irrespective of its locational advantages, or ignoring the factor of site and situation. As a result, the development was of a haphazard and confused manner where the Government had no capacity to handle the problem. In the later periods attempts have been made to improve the scene with effective measures introduced in different fields of the urbanscapes and the region as a whole, through an improved and modernized communication network. The result has been quite impressive in view of the fact that

already a good number of the urban centres of this region have taken the role of influencing their surrounding areas, resulting in rural-urban migrations.

The landuse maps have been prepared based on municipality maps and only in case of Jalpaiguri town the mouza sheet maps of Settlement Survey Department have been used.

LANDUSE PATTERN

Before going to analyse the landuse pattern of the selected towns of North Bengal, it^{is} to be noted that except Darjeeling, none of the towns of North Bengal does exhibit combined Anglicised and indigenous growth. Though Cooch Behar reflects some British influence in its architecture and layout for which the town-plan was prepared by a British Engineer^{Colonel (8)}, it had practically been built-up by the native Kings.

Darjeeling, because of its British-creation and being the summer capital of British India was developed in some planned way. But the distinction between the two phases of development excluding the residential distribution, is less prominent excepting in the Mall which is originally a replica of British-Planning.

The road-network reveals it clearly that the growth of the towns followed least planning. Almost all the the towns have two or

three major roads. These are the principal arteries of the towns. Most of the commercial and business functions have clustered along these roads, interspersed by residences. The shortage of open green space inside the residential areas is extremely felt. The sidewalks are encroached upon by unauthorised stalls. All these have brought the decadence of townscapes and are creating an unhealthy atmosphere. The co-existence of so many non-related units reveal the result of the unplanned growth of the towns of North Bengal. The main market or Bazaar, "is not quite equivalent to the Central Business District (Down-town) of an American city"⁽⁹⁾⁽¹⁰⁾. Out of the 28 urban centres in North Bengal, only Malda, Siliguri and Darjeeling have fully planned markets built up recently. Particularly in Malda and Darjeeling, the planned markets are the very recent landmarks in their landuse mosaic, while Cooch Behar exhibits a quasi-planned central market which was, at initium, a completely planned one, but the later growth followed no planning. The goods of perishable and non-perishable character are assembled in this market within the specified sectors, the latter specializing in one kind of article. The markets are characteristically located in the heart of the towns.

The expansion of the towns of North Bengal show a general spatial trend without much of vertical expansion. Only Siliguri, is

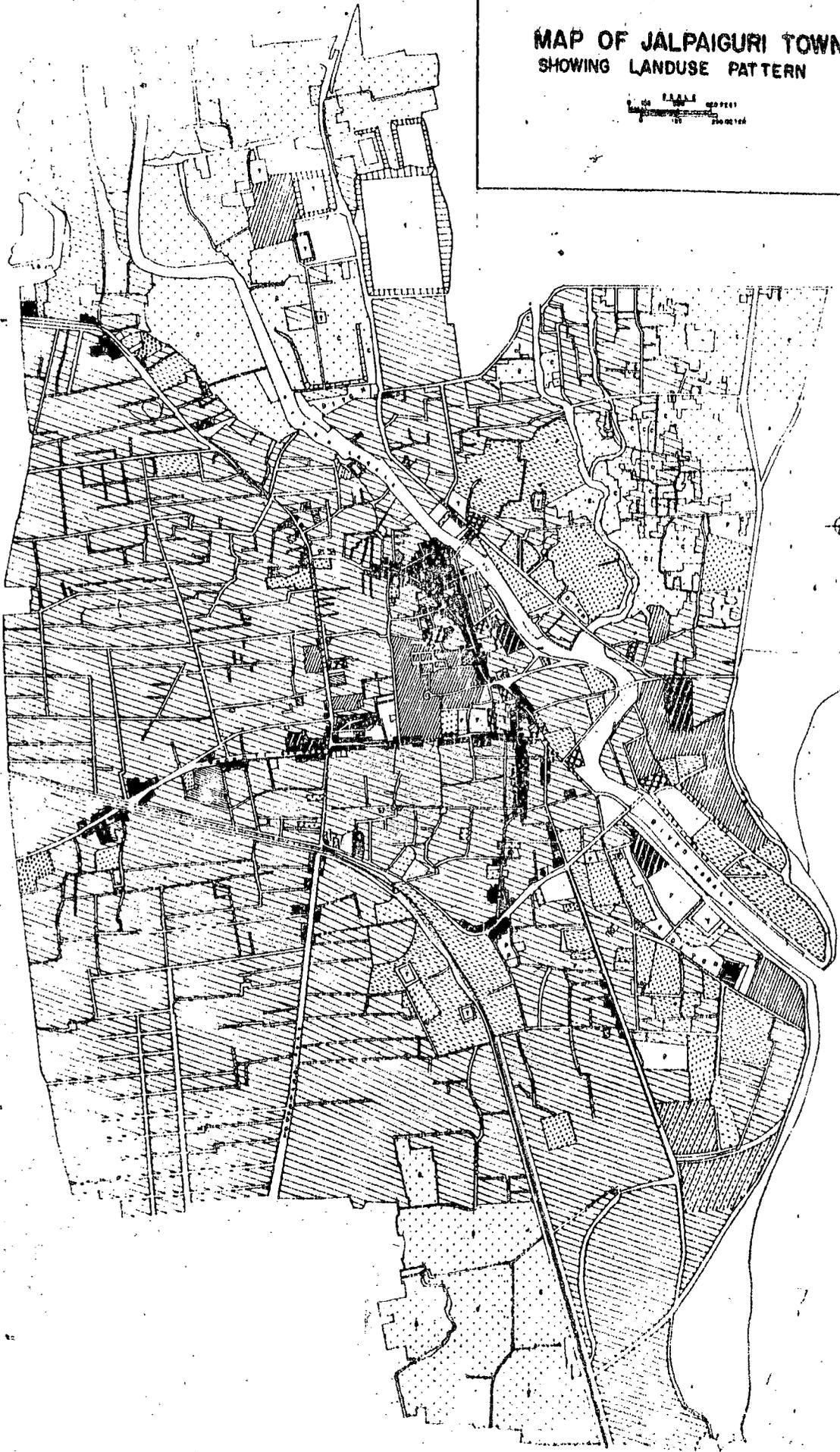
exhibiting a vertical development or expansion, particularly along the Hill Cart Road ~~is~~ ^h the recent years. The vertical expansion in most of the towns ~~is~~ limited to four-storey and rarely five-storey buildings and in general the upper floors are used for residential purposes while the ground floors are usually occupied by commercial units.

The landuse-maps of the selected towns reveal these characteristic features of the towns. Out of 28 urban centres, seven have been selected on the basis of their administrative as well as commercial importance. It has already been mentioned that excepting the administrative headquarters, most other towns have no striking features in respect of their landuse pattern. So, from the point of view of administrative importance, five district headquarters of the respective districts of North Bengal have been selected for detailed landuse study. They are / Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Balurghat, ^{and} English Bazar. Besides, from ^a commercial point of view, two more towns - Siliguri and Dinhata - have been selected for the same purpose.

The Landuse Pattern : Jalpaiguri Town :

Once an important centre of North Bengal, the town of Jalpaiguri has turned almost into a sleeping residential centre after the

MAP OF JALPAIGURI TOWN
SHOWING LANDUSE PATTERN



Partition, mainly due to the orientation of transportation, particularly of the railway route. The river Karala which is still flowing through the town, dividing it into the eastern and the western quarters, played an important role in the growth of this township. The river, being connected with the river Tista and having a perennial course, helped greatly ⁱⁿ the movement of merchandise and people.

The town came into existence when it became the administrative headquarters of the district, bearing the same name, in 1869. Prior to that the area was under the native Kingdom of the State of Cooch Behar. Since 1869 upto the present date, the population has increased ^{by} over fifty five thousand.

Since its inception Jalpaiguri became the centre of the ^a tea-magnates and this gradually turned it into ^{the} leading place of elites. The reputation for its cultural activities has not waned in spite of economic deterioration. During the Post-Independence period, ^{it} has been made the administrative headquarters of the Political Division comprising the five districts of North Bengal. The presence of a large number of white collar-workers coming from different parts of the State of West Bengal was followed ^{by} an increase in the other activities like commerce, recreation, education, etc..

The market centre and the Nawab Palace, are the two principal nuclei around which the town first developed and later on extension

took place on all four sides. The growth towards, the south, however, has been more than on the north, the latter originally having been largely forested or marshy lands. The preponderance of agricultural lands is still, more on the north and northwestern part than elsewhere. The Railway, the Siliguri-Jalpaiguri Road and the river Karala, provide the three main transportation routes along which the maximum growth has taken place. In the absence of planning the town has developed in a most haphazard manner which is more prominent in its road-network. Zoning is entirely absent. The central area of the town is occupied by commerce which is mostly located along the main thoroughfares, and the gaps are filled in by the residences. The remaining areas are covered by residences. In spite of that, a trend of concentration and decentralisation of certain functions is noticeable.

Jalpaiguri

The landuse map of Jalpaiguri town brings out the following characteristics regarding the spatial distribution of different uses of land. The town presents almost a mixed type of landuse. The commercial centres have developed on the western bank of the river Karala, with an extension in the south and westward direction. The community services, the public offices etc. have confined

themselves mainly to the eastern and south-eastern part of the town, while the industries, taking the advantage of the State High-Way, have developed on the northwestern part. The residences have occupied maximum land on the western part of the town. The extreme/north, northeast, and southern parts of the town are less inhabited because of the preponderance of fallow or agricultural lands.

On the basis of landuse, the urban area of Jalpaiguri Town may be divided into the following major groups: (A) Commercial Centres; (B) Autorepairing and Industrial Centres; (C) Community Service Centres and Public Offices; (D) Cultural and Recreational Centres; (E) The Residential areas. (Map No. 4)

(A) The Commercial Centres

The commercial activities of this town have developed within the triangle formed by three roads, namely the road following ^{the} river Karala, the D.B.C. Road and the Temple Road.

(I) The Central Market

The central market is located in the northern part of the town, between the Merchant Road and M.G. Road. The market has

developed by the side of the river Karala, showing a sprawl towards the south-west. The navigational facility in the past, resulted in the location of the market here. The market shows unplanned growth. Most of the stalls are small, stuffed with goods ranging from vegetables, fish, meat, to luxurious articles, including garments and gadgets of different kinds. The market is partly under sheds and partly in the open air. The stalls have followed some sort of specialization in the distribution. The inner lanes of the market are extremely narrow and crooked for vehicular traffic. The market is characterised by the presence of a religious centre which is almost common in every market centre of the towns of North Bengal. The market, connected by all the major thoroughfares, enjoys good accessibility. The whole-sale business is mainly concentrated within this market and in its vicinity. There is another market present along the Goomti No-4 Road, consisting of some retail stalls mainly catering to the needs of the residents of the localities.

Similar minor shopping ribbons have developed along the Merchant Road, the Thana Road, the D.B.C. Road, the Temple Road and the M.G. Road. The most compactly built-up commercial areas are those located along the Merchant Road and the D.B.C. Road. Most of the retail stalls comprising stationery-goods, book stall, restaurants, hotels, readymade garments, etc., are located along these roads.

There are some isolated shopping spots developed mainly along the Station Road, the Siliguri - Jalpaiguri Road, and the Hospital Road.

The business offices, like the General Insurances, Tea Garden Companies and Road Transport and offices of other organizations, are situated either in the central market area or along the D.B.C. Road and the Hospital Road.

(B) The Autorepairing And Industrial Centres :

While the autorepairing units are functioning adjacent to the Railway Station, the industrial units are to be found mainly along the Siliguri - Jalpaiguri Road and at the junction of Coomti No.4. The important industrial units operating here include, Aluminium manufacturing units, Saw Mills, Trunk and Suitcase manufacturing units, etc., and they have developed along the main thoroughfares. The Siliguri - Jalpaiguri Road and the State highway provide the most important example in this respect.

(C) The Community Service Centres and Public Offices :

The health institutions like hospitals, etc., have clustered along the Hospital Road, on the west bank of the river Karala. The hospitals, consisting of Sadar Government Hospital, Chest Clinic, Nurses' Quarters, Doctors' Residences, occupying a considerable of the

area, introduce a variety in the landuse mosaic of this town. The location of the hospital, ^{although} having some sort of calmness, suffers greatly due to the low elevation of the ground, mainly during the rains and this was severely felt during the flood of 1968. Besides this main hospital enclave, one nursing home is located amidst one of the residential areas.

The academic institutions have scattered locations, with minor clusterings here and there. On the eastern part, the girls' college and schools are located along the same road; two of the boys' and girls' schools are located along the Siliguri-Jalpaiguri Road. The Junior B.T.College is located along the same road while the B.Ed. college is located near the Police lines in the far south-east. The Government Boys' School is located amidst a residential area, while the colleges are located either along the D.B.C.Road or away from the heart of the town. Other academic institutions are in the heart of the residential areas, following no planning in their siting.

The town, being the administrative headquarters, presents a number of Government establishments, most of which have concentrated in the southeastern part of the town along the Kachari Road. Among the government offices located along the Kachari Road, the Commissioners' Office, the Deputy Commissioners' Office, the District Court, the Deputy Inspector General of Police's Office, are noteworthy. The

other Government offices established lately are mostly in the residential areas, or along the main thoroughfares.

(D) The Cultural and Recreational Centres :

The Recreational and Cultural functions of an urban centre are no less important than its economic functions. In Jalpaiguri Town, the cinema houses, the religious centres, the open green fields and a few libraries represent the main recreational and cultural elements. Characteristically, they do not form any zone but are scattered following the main thoroughfares. While the cinema houses are located along the D.B.C. Road, the open green space of playing field (Stadium, etc.,) are located near the river Karala. The temples, etc., are on the Temple Road, the Merchant Road and the Hospital Road. The Ram Krishna Mission, an important cultural as well as religious centre, is squeezed within a residential area to the south of the Railway Station. A small but beautiful park on the embankment of the river Tista, named Jubilee Park, has been opened very recently at the southern end of the Kachari Road. Besides this (during ^{and before} 1974-75 year), there is another little children's park maintained by a private organization. The District Library and a few other smaller ones are sprinkled within the residential areas.

(E) The Residential Areas

The residences take up the major portion of the urban land area, making encroachments everywhere. However, the landuse map reveals that they have mainly developed on the two sides of the railway line and along the Jalpaiguri - Siliguri Road. The western part is more densely built up than the other. The economic - class segregation of residences is absent, and some of the high class residences are also found within the middle class residential areas.

The High Class Residences :

The residences of the high class Government officials are located along the Kachari Road. On the far northern side, the residences of the Raikots, who once belonged to the most elite class of the society, are located. The Nawab Palace is located along the Merchant Road, while several high class residential pockets have appeared on the both sides of the Siliguri - Jalpaiguri Road. The high class residences belong mainly to the traditionally rich families and the emerging class of industrialists.

The Middle Class Residences |

Most of the residential landuse of this town falls under this

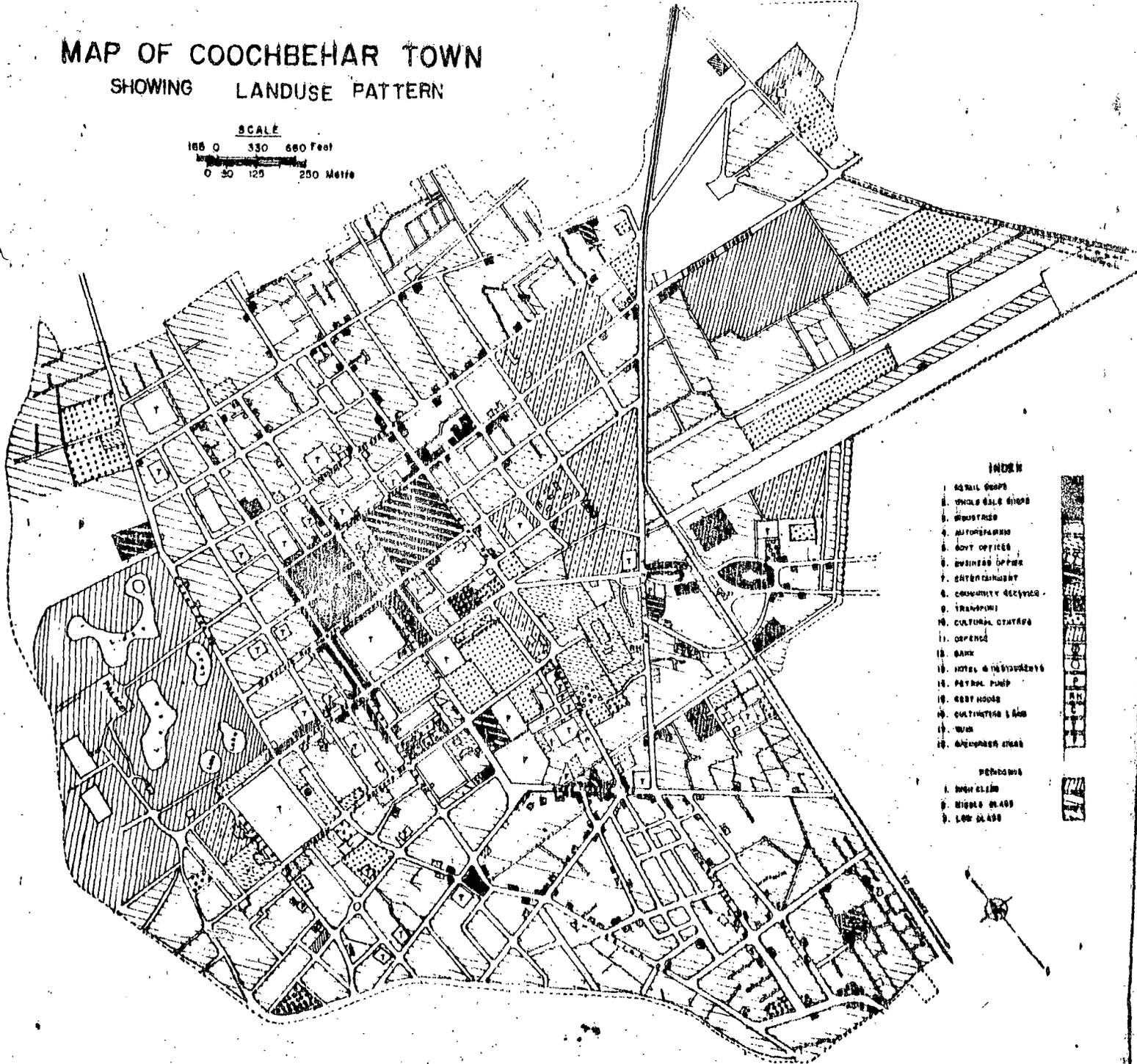
category. The town, being ^a principal centre of administration, provides desk-jobs to a large number of its inhabitants. The western part of the town has ^{the} most densely built-up residential sector. Though a number of the two or three storeyed buildings break the monotony of the skyline of the town, most ^{of} these large houses, let to the various government offices have introduced a different element to the residential character of these sectors. In the north and northeastern part of this town, however, residential development is less conspicuous. There cultivating land still occupies a considerable portion of the land and often paddy lands intervene, leaving wide gaps between residential lots. The typical residential pocket of any particular community is absent in this town. The Government quarters belonging to the lower group are mainly located on the east of the railway line, and in the southern sector.

The Poor Class Residences :

Unlike the big cities or towns, where the low class residences for the poor or labour ^{class} are to be found near the hub of the town, here the picture is different. The poor class residences ^{are} mostly pushed to the periphery of the town. The largest of these pockets is found in the extreme northwestern part of the town. Here the houses are mostly in poor condition, The people are either cultivators or

MAP OF COOCHBEHAR TOWN SHOWING LANDUSE PATTERN

SCALE
 180 0 330 660 Feet
 0 90 120 250 Metre



- INDEX**
- 1. RAIL STATION
 - 2. CHURCH
 - 3. MARKET
 - 4. AIR TERMINAL
 - 5. GOVT OFFICE
 - 6. BUSINESS OFFICE
 - 7. ENTERTAINMENT
 - 8. COMMUNITY CENTER
 - 9. TRAINING
 - 10. CULTURAL CENTER
 - 11. OPENED
 - 12. BANK
 - 13. HOTEL & RESTAURANT
 - 14. PETROL PUMP
 - 15. GOVT HOUSE
 - 16. CULTURAL CLUB
 - 17. PARK
 - 18. AMUSEMENT
- PERMANENT**
- 1. HIGH CLASS
 - 2. MIDDLE CLASS
 - 3. LOW CLASS



Prepared by the Survey of India, Bangalore

milkmen or engaged in some low class job in the town. The Harijans (Sweepers) have mainly clustered near the Railway Station. A few more poor class residential pockets exist in the southern part.

2. The Landuse Pattern : (II) Cooch Behar Town (Map No. 5)

The capital of the Princely State of that name, the present Cooch Behar Town was built on a planned layout : The setting of various functional activities like, markets, hospitals, academic institutions, parks, administrative blocks, etc., were pre-determined and so that most of these are located along the major thoroughfares accessible to the residents of the town. But with the increase of population, the estimation, based on which the town was built, became invalid and this gave rise to the unplanned growth as noticed in the other towns of the region. This haphazard growth took place mostly in the later phase of the development of the town, particularly in the post-Partition era. Looking at the landuse map of Cooch Behar, one finds that the street lay-out has a checker-board pattern, every road meeting at a right angle with the other roads. This trend is still very much pronounced in the main built-up area surrounded by the Maharaja S.N. Road on the north, Nara Narayan Road on the east, Kalica Das Road on the southwest and the Palace itself on the west.

Cooch Behar

The landuse map of Cooch Behar Town brings out the following salient features in respect of its spatial distribution of different users of land. The central market is located almost in the central part of the town, with an outlier in the south. The central square bounded by four principal roads, is almost completely built-up, having the buildings of various institutions and organizations, from transport to community services. A few concentration of various services can be found along the Sagardidhi Square in the southwestern part of the town and in the northeastern part along the railway line. The town lacks any large or medium size industrial complex but the small - sized units are extremely isolated in respect of their locations. The Palace, being located on the western part of the town, attracted the high class residences while the middle class residences have developed mainly in the north and the south. The town has a greater tendency to expand south and south eastwards which are mainly residential areas.

The principal types of landuses of Cooch Behar Town are as follows : (A) The Commercial Centres; (B) The Autorepairing and the Industrial Centres; (C) The Community Services and the Public Offices; (D) The Cultural and The Recreational Centres; (E) The Residential areas.

(A) The Commercial Centres

The Central Market Centres

It was basically a planned market. The market is located in a square surrounded by the Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Road on the north, the Maharaja Rupendra Narayan Road on the south, the Silver Jubilee Road on the east and the Viswa Singha Road on the west. Here most of the stalls are retail in character, dealing with a variety of articles ranging from vegetable, fish, meat, groceries to stationery and cosmetics. A part of the market is occupied by the wholesale depots which are mainly concentrated along the main western entrance of the market. The market is partly roofed and partly in the open air. The vegetable and fruit shops occupy the central part, while the stationery and others are located around the former. A new section, mainly dealing with readymade garments, has been added to this market. The market, being well connected with all other major roads, enjoys good accessibility.

On both sides of the four roads, which run around the central market centre, various types of shops are located. While on both sides of the Rupendra Narayan Road, the shops are mainly retail stores dealing in goods of daily use, the Viswasingha Road on the west, the Nripendra Narayan Road on the north and Silver Jubilee

Road on the east are mainly occupied by both retail and wholesale stores. Another small market is located in the southern part of the Kalica Das Road.

Besides the principal shopping centre, a number of shopping ribbons consisting of some retail stores of readymade garments, hotels, restaurants, bar, medical stores and some commercial business offices are located along the Viswa Singha Road, the Sunity Road, the Silver Jubilee Road, the Bangchatra Road, ^{and} the Nripendra Narayan Road. Small retail shopping pockets also are found distributed throughout the town, mainly at the junction of two or more roads near the residential areas.

The Railway Station is located along the Nara Narayan Road and the Bus Terminus and the Taxi stands are located along the Silver Jubilee Road.

(B) The Industrial And the Autorepairing Centres :

The industrial units have developed in a very isolated manner, and they are mainly located along the railway line, the Silver Jubilee Road, the Maharaja Prana Narayan Road, the Bangchatra Road, the Kalica das Road, the Vivekananda Road, etc., A weaving factory is functioning on the Sunity Road.

The autorepairing units are mainly concentrated along the eastern part of the Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Road, Silver Jubilee Road and the Magazine Road. A number of clay-modelling units, ^{the} appear on the road lying to east of the Bus Terminus.

(C) The Public Offices and the Community Service Centres.

The main cluster of public buildings is located around the Sagardighi Tank comprising the heart of the town. The complex contains the Judges' Courts, the Deputy Commissioner's Office, the Superintendent of Police's Office, the Old Record Room, the Municipality Office, the Treasury Office, the Sub-Divisional Officer's Office, the Settlement Office, etc. Among the other important Government offices, the Central Excise, the Post and Telegraphs, the Food and Supplies, the State Electricity Board, the Public Works Department, the District School Board's Office, etc., are located along the Maharaja Jitendra Narayan Road, the Silver Jubilee Road, the Sunity Road ^{and} the Viswa Singha Road. The Forest Office is located further away from this complex on the National Highway No.31, at one end of the town. The different nationalised banks, including the State Bank of India ^{are} within this complex. The new offices which have been opened in the later periods, find their location in the residential parts of the town.

Among the Community Service Centres, the Jitendra Narayan Hospital established by one of the Maharajas of Cooch Behar, is located along the junction of the Silver Jubilee Road and the Sunity Road. Another charitable hospital is located along the Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Road. The Jitendra Narayan Hospital is located almost in the heart of the town. The hospital has sufficient open space inside its compound. The nursing homes are located within the residential areas.

The important and old academic institutions are located along the Maharaja Jitendra Narayan Road, while the girls' schools and other academic institutions are located along the Maharaja Jitendra Narayan Road, the Kesab Sen Road, the Nripendra Narayan Road, and the others are sparsely distributed over the town.

(D) The Recreational And Cultural Centres

The open spaces, like parks and play grounds of an urban centre, may be compared with the lungs of human body. The recreational and cultural centres should not be concentrated in any particular area of ^{the} town, so that they may serve all the residents of the town. In Cooch Behar Town ^{there is} the Narendra Narayan Park, which, barring the Botanical Garden of Darjeeling, is the only large and beautifully-laid park among the towns of North Bengal. It was

established during the reign of the Cooch Behar Kings when it used to be the only medium of entertainment to the people of this town. But with the increase of various new medias, like cinema, etc., it has lost its attraction as well as its glamour also. There are altogether twelve parks, covering 25 acres of land of this town. Besides these parks, the Sagardighi Square, being away from the commercial chaos, and well-decorated, is a good place of recreation, and particularly during the summer evenings it attracts a lot of town-dwellers. The theatre Halls, cinema houses and the play grounds are located along the bank of Sagardighi, the Silver Jubilee Road, the Bangchatra Road, the Kesab Sen Road, the Nar Narayan Road, the Magazine Road, etc. Cooch Behar can be called a town of tanks, as one will find at least one tank in every residential and commercial area. No other town of North Bengal possesses this character.

The Ramkrishna Mission, the Brahma Samaj, the Rabindra Sadan, the Madan Mohan Temple, the District Library, and other important cultural clubs or religious centres are located along the Asram Road, the Sunity Road, the Maharaja Jitendra Narayan Road, and the Debibari Road.

The land use in Cooch Behar town, specially in the old built-up area, shows a grid pattern revealing the linear form of growth along the major thoroughfares. The palace itself was the back-bone of communications and most of the important establishments are located along these roads.

(E) The Residential Zones :

The residential zones are not characterised by economic class segregation, hence one may find isolated high class residences in the heart of the middle class residential areas. Most of these high class residences are old but still in good shape.

Except in the northeastern part along the National Highway No. 31 and the southwestern part along the Hitendra Narayan Road and Maharaja Jitendra Narayan Road, where some high class residential pockets exist, the remaining other residential areas of this town is filled in by middle class residences with isolated poor class residential patches here and there.

The High Class Residences :

The Palace itself played an influential role in the allocation of high class residences. A cluster of high class residences are found along the Hitendra Narayan Road skirting the southern boundary of the Palace. Along the National Highway No. 31, the residences of high class Government officials, like the S.P.'s Bungalow, the Divisional Forest Officer's Bungalow, the Additional Deputy Commissioner's Bungalow and the Deputy Commissioner's Bungalow are situated. Besides these pockets, there are some other high class residences appearing in isolated fashion all over the town, forming no particular zone.

The Government quarters are mainly located along Maharaja Jitendra Narayan Road, the Silver Jubilee Road, the Magazine Road, at the crossing of the Nripendra Narayan Road and the Vivekananda Road.

The Middle Class Residences :

The town being an administrative centre and being devoid of large industrial establishments, has most of the inhabitants belonging to the middle class in respect of their economic status. The residents representing this major economic class live around the central part of the town which is bounded by Maharaja Sibendra Narayan Road on the north, Kalica Das Road and Bangchatra Road on the south, Nara Narayan Road on the east and Silver Jubilee Avenue on the west. From this area, the residential sprawl has further taken place^{to} the south and west. The new residential areas have been formed by the refugee population who came from the erstwhile East Pakistan. The most compactly-built residential areas are found within the zone surround by the Kalica Das Road, the Asram Road and the embankment. The new town, on the west of the Asram Road, also represents another compact built-up area. In contrast, residences have a thinner distribution along the Maharaja ~~Hitendra~~ Narayan Road^{and} the Magazine Road extension.

The Low Class Residential Areas :

The residences of this class appear in scattered formations. Most of them, however, are on the northern and the eastern part of the town. The most compact poor/class residential area is located between the Nripendra Narayan Park and the Military Barracks, surrounded by the Rup Narayan Road. on the south Prana Narayan Road on the west and Nripendra Narayan Road on the north. The residents are mostly sweepers and are employees of the Municipality or doing other low jobs. There is another poor/class residential pocket situated near the Plywood Industry and along ^{the} railway line. Their rehabilitation is a long standing demand.

3 Landuse Pattern : Darjeeling Town (Map No.)

Darjeeling originally built as the replica of an English town, presents a different urbanscape in respect of its landuse pattern. The built of the town creating an atmosphere of Home towns naturally had immense attraction for the Europeans. Besides, the number of schools run by different European Missionaries for educating the children of the European residents of British India gave it a special character. The year-round cool climate and the

MAP OF DARJEELING TOWN SHOWING THE
LANDUSE PATTERN



grandeur of the Himalayas made it a holiday resort from the very beginning of its life and this reputation has not waned till now. No town of its size in India can boast of so many Hotels, many of them being posh with complete arrangements for rich foreign tourists, Darjeeling is, par excellence, a tourists' paradise. The development of the town as one of the principal tourist centres of India, as rightly expressed in its name - "the Queen of the Hill stations"-has found full expression in its landuse. Thus the functional character originating from its special role in serving a floating community of different nationalities of the world, as well as its role as a seat of higher learning, makes it different from the towns in the plains in many respects. Added to this, the physical set up, with variations of slope and altitude, has vitally affected the distribution of different functions. The entire development is rather controlled by the physical factors like altitude and slope, as both of them define the degree of sunny aspects. The towns has developed in a tier/system, ^{the} higher the tier, ^{the} higher being the social status. The higher tiers are mostly occupied by the Governor's house, the palaces or mansions, the big hotels, the important Government offices, the Clubs, the Missionary Colleges and Schools and the posh market while the lower terraces or tiers contain the principal market complex, the houses of the middle class

population, the ordinary hotels, the schools etc. The poorer section of the residents are shelved out on the still lower terraces. But an extreme scarcity of space has acted as the chief control in giving rise to a high degree of crowding and vertical expansion of the town, not so far witnessed in the towns of the plains. The typical linear growth of the town having been pre-determined by the run of the range on which it is situated has further been accentuated by space - shortage. Every inch of growth is oriented to the main roads, running parallel to each other. Diagonal accessibility for vehicular traffic is out of question. The town in the shape of a pre-historic reptile sprawls from east to west and northwest with its closely knit mass of buildings, the latter being taller and taller from the middle tier upwards, interspersed with fast~~ly~~ vanishing green~~s~~ of tall pines. In spite of the crowded character of its physical build, the neat order of difference in landuse is prominently revealed through the distribution of different functional zones. The heart of the town or the main centre around which later developments took place, may still be distinguished. This lies between and around the Nehru-Ladenla Road on the south and the Cart Road on the north. The town has unevenly spread out from this central core, with maximum extension east and northwest ^{ward} along the Cart Road and the Labong Cart Road.

The urban landuse of the Darjeeling Town makes an interesting study in view of its different physical background. The town in appearance looks like a reptile, while the eastern and the southern parts are occupied by two cantonments. The commercial centres have developed in the central part of the town. The shortage of space and slope-factor are responsible for the growth of a mixed type of landuse. Even then, the community services are mainly confined to the northern and the southern parts of the town. The maximum concentration, is within the place which is bounded by the two cantonments on the east and the south and by the Governor's House in the north. On the Mall, a number of services of different types are compactly located. The town has grown more on the eastern and southern sides. The residences have occupied the flat spaces of the south-western and the northern part with an extension eastward. From the point of view of landuse, the town can be divided into the following sections:

- (A) The Central Commercial area.
- (B) The Industrial and the Autorepairing Centres.
- (C) The Government Offices and the Community Centres.
- (D) The Recreational and the Cultural Centres.
- (E) The Residential Areas.

(A) Commercial Centres

The central market centre, forming a part of the original core of Darjeeling Town, has developed on both sides of the Bazar Cart Road and is bounded by Sonam Wangdi Road on the west and the M.D.Lama Road on the east. This is, by and large, the principal market of the town in contrast to that of the plains where subsidiary retail markets are common features, in most of towns. The market is easily approachable from all parts and its location near the Bus and the Taxi Stand has greatly eased the transportation problem, where every item or usable article is to be fetched from the plains. The market does not wear a prosperous look. The restriction of space has not allowed it to grow in a big way. The shops dealing in merchandise of various descriptions consisting mostly of daily needs - perishable and non-perishable - are arranged very thickly along the main road as well as the lanes and the by-lanes; vegetables, fish, meat, garments, utensils, etc, all are available here. There is virtually no order in their arrangement; goods of contrasting types appear in shops standing side by side. The shops are generally small in size, housed in the lower storey of the buildings, ^{the} majority of which are badly in need of repair. Besides the permanent shops, ^a large number of semi-permanent stalls and ground-stalls with articles spread on the pavements, make another

picture of this market. The new super-market which is already under construction below the Eden Hospital, near the Motor Stand, will definitely enliven the otherwise dull atmosphere of the market area. The wholesale establishments located within this market area are quite smaller in member.

(B) The Industrial and the Autorepairing Centres :

Industry in ^{the} true sense of the term, takes a very minor role in the functions of the town. Those present are of moderate scale, and few in number and are not concentrated in any particular area of the town. The scattering, as defined by the land shortage, is obvious. Most important among the industries are the woollen garment-making and the knitting units, the Tibetan Handicrafts and the Darjeeling knitting co-operatives. The first one is located between St. Joseph and the Lebong Cart Road, while the latter is located in the lower tier of the Zila Parishad building, where the land is cheap. Apart from these, a few char-coal units are located along the R.N.Sinha Road. The two saw mills of medium size are located along the Cart Road, south of the Darjeeling Railway Station.

The autorepairing units are located along the Lochnagar Road and near the Bus and the Taxi terminals.

(C) The Administrative and the Community Service Centres X

The growth of Darjeeling has largely been ^{governed} governed by three factors, viz. its climate, its ^{scenic} beauty and its strategic location as well as political status. The landuse map of the town of Darjeeling reveals this distinctly. For instance, the two cantonments, the Jalapahar cantonment and the Lebong Cantonment, occupying together about ^{2.17 square kilometres} ~~555-covert-into-sq.km.~~ mile of the total land area of the town, are located on both the east and west ^{end} end of the municipal area. Of them, the Jalapahar Cantonment is located on the highest tier and the Lebong Cantonment is located in the middle tier.

The main administrative cluster is located along the Lebong Cart Road. Here the important Government ^{offices, like the} Deputy Commissioners', ^{office} the Hill Development Office, the District Judge's Court, etc., are situated. The other Government ^o offices have mainly developed along the Cart Road ^x near the Bazar area, the Laden La Road, the Gandhi Road, the Robertson Road, etc. Some are also situated around the Observatory Hill and the Mall.

Similarly, ~~the~~ scattering is also observed in the case of the community service centres, though they are concentrated ^{more} ~~more~~ on the higher than the lower tiers. For instances, ^{s'} the District Hospital, the Planter's Hospital, the Eden Hospital, and the Deshbandhu Chest

Clinic are located in and around the middle tiers.

The landuse map of Darjeeling town reveals academic functions till now, as one of the major functions of the town. This is also true about the English-medium schools and colleges run by the Missionaries. Though scattered in location, they invariably occupy the higher and the highest tiers of the town. This further includes the recently-established Himalayan Mountaineering Institute.

(D) The Cultural And Recreational Centres

Being a resort town, the cultural and recreational activities have developed here to a great extent, leaving inprints of British culture and living. The town of Darjeeling is mainly a summer-resort for this country's people while, it is a winter-resort for most of the Europeans. Among the cultural associations, the Gymkhana Club, the District Library, the National History Musium, the Hayden Hall, the Christian church, etc., are located around the Mall and mostly are on higher tiers. The religious institutions belonging to different communities like the Hindus, the Muslims and others, are located on the middle tiers, occupying either the road front or occurr in the heart of the residential areas.

Among the recreational centres the Zoo, ^{the} Botanical Gardens, the Shutterry Ground, the Cinema houses, ^{the} Victoria Park, are located

on the higher terraces. Above all, the 'Mall', giving ^a wonderful view of the mighty Himalayan peaks and the glistening gold of the Kanchenjunga under the rising sun adds a special feature to the urbanscape of Darjeeling where the people arriving from different parts of the world assemble for the heavenly view.

(E) The Residential Areas :

The compact residential areas as in the plains are not so common in the landuse map of the town of Darjeeling. The slopes and altitude accompanied by the shortage of flat space has made the residential pockets mostly isolated in their appearance. The high class residences are to be seen on the higher terraces, while the middle class and poor class residences are to be found on the middle and far lower terraces.

Highclass Residences :

The highclass residences are mainly located surrounding the Jalapahar Cantonment area, particularly on the west of Jalapahar Cantonment. The Governor's House, the Deputy Commissioner's Bungalow, etc., are located on the Birch Hill, situated on the northern part of the town. Surrounding ^{the} Mall, a few highclass residential pockets have developed.

Middle Class Residences :

Most of the middle class residences are located in the north and east of the Botanical Garden area and along the R.N.Sinha Road. Most of the houses are more than double-storied but the total space used by every house is too limited. The occupants are generally service holders or businessmen. Another densely built-up residential area is located on the C.R.Das Road.

Poor Class Residences :

The poor class residential pockets are mostly located away from the heart of the town, along the Cart Road, the Tenzing Norkay Road, and the C.R.Das Road. These, known as "Bastis" or slums, have developed on the lower tiers. Most of residents are working class people, covering a wide variety of occupations.

The characteristics of the residential areas is that while the elites have made edifices on large plots, keeping some open space, for creating beautification in their gardening surroundings, the middle class or lower class of people are living in a sub-standard condition in respect of space. The high land prices and the high house rent have are mainly responsible for this.

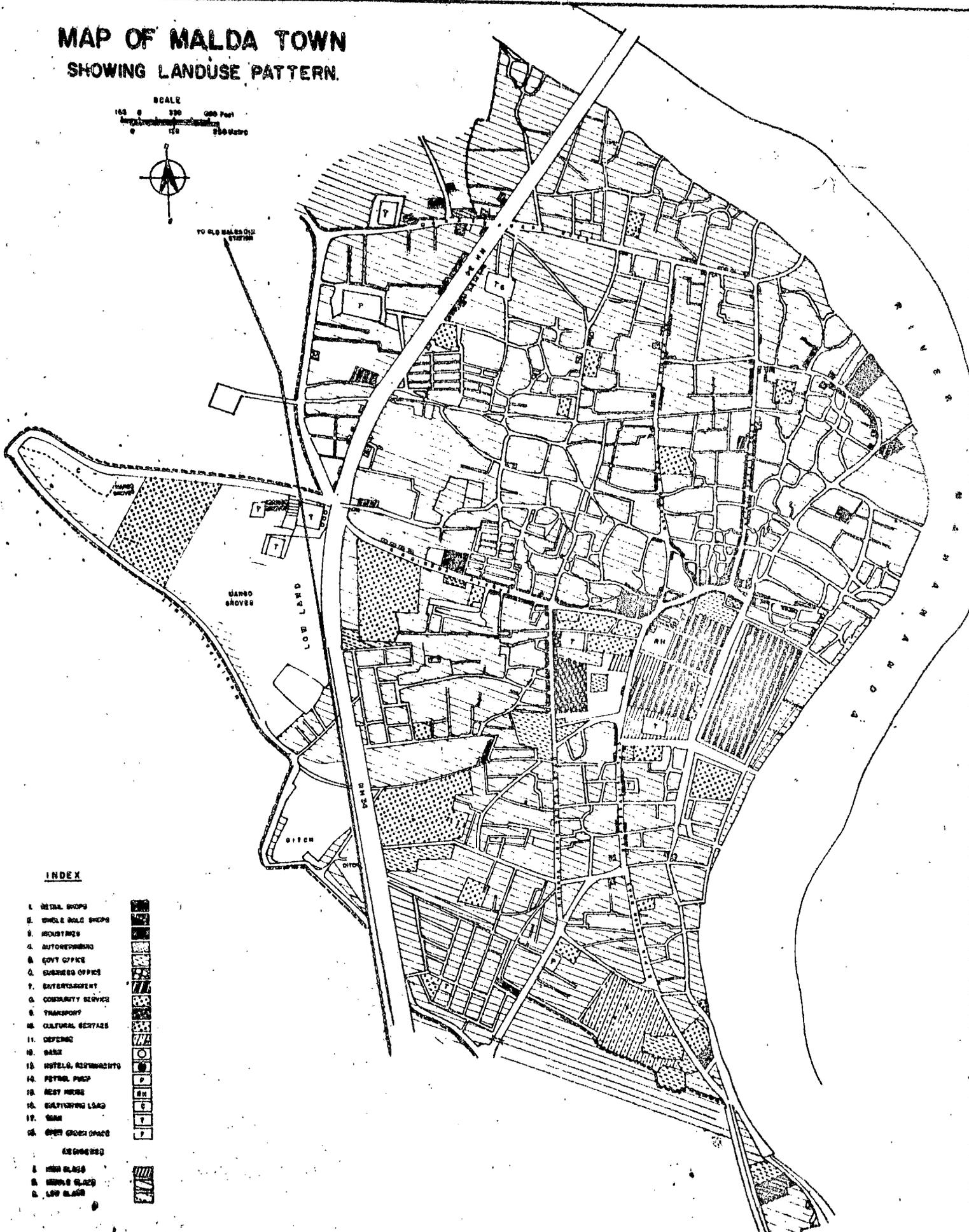
MAP OF MALDA TOWN

SHOWING LANDUSE PATTERN.

SCALE
 100 0 200 400 Feet
 0 100 200 Meters



TO OLD MALDA C/O STATION



INDEX

- 1. RETAIL SHOPS
- 2. WHOLE SALE SHOPS
- 3. INDUSTRIES
- 4. AUTOREPAIRING
- 5. GOVT OFFICE
- 6. BUSINESS OFFICE
- 7. ENTERTAINMENT
- 8. COMMUNITY SERVICE
- 9. TRANSPORT
- 10. CULTURAL SCYTAES
- 11. DEFENSE
- 12. BARR
- 13. HOTELS, RESTAURANTS
- 14. PETROL PUMP
- 15. REST HOUSE
- 16. CULTIVATING LAND
- 17. WARM
- 18. OPEN GREEN SPACE



LEGEND

- 1. HIGH CLASS
- 2. MIDDLE CLASS
- 3. LOW CLASS



(4) Landuse Pattern : English Bazar

English Bazar is another town on the plains, situated in the extreme south of the region on the major transportation route between South and North Bengal.

The landuse maps of Malda do not show much difference in its character of urban landuse from those of others. The commercial centre is located almost in the heart of the town, and has further expanded northwards along the two main thoroughfares, on both sides of which the residences have developed. The rest of the land presents a mixed landuse pattern. Among these, the community services, the public offices, etc., are mostly confined to the southern part of the town, and less to the north, where the residences of middle class have occupied a major part of the land. The industries are mainly confined to the north and northeastern periphery of the town and the autorepairing units have clustered along the National Highway No.34 in the north. The roads running in every direction and presenting a most confused picture, have occupied a considerable part of the land. The residences are more in the north which is the oldest

part of the town, than in the south. A new expansion of the town is taking place in the extreme west, beyond the railway line.

The principal divisions of the urban landuse are as follows:

A) The Commercial Centre; B) The Industrial and Autorepairing Units; C) The Public Offices and the Community Services; D) The Recreational and the Cultural Centres; E) The Residences.

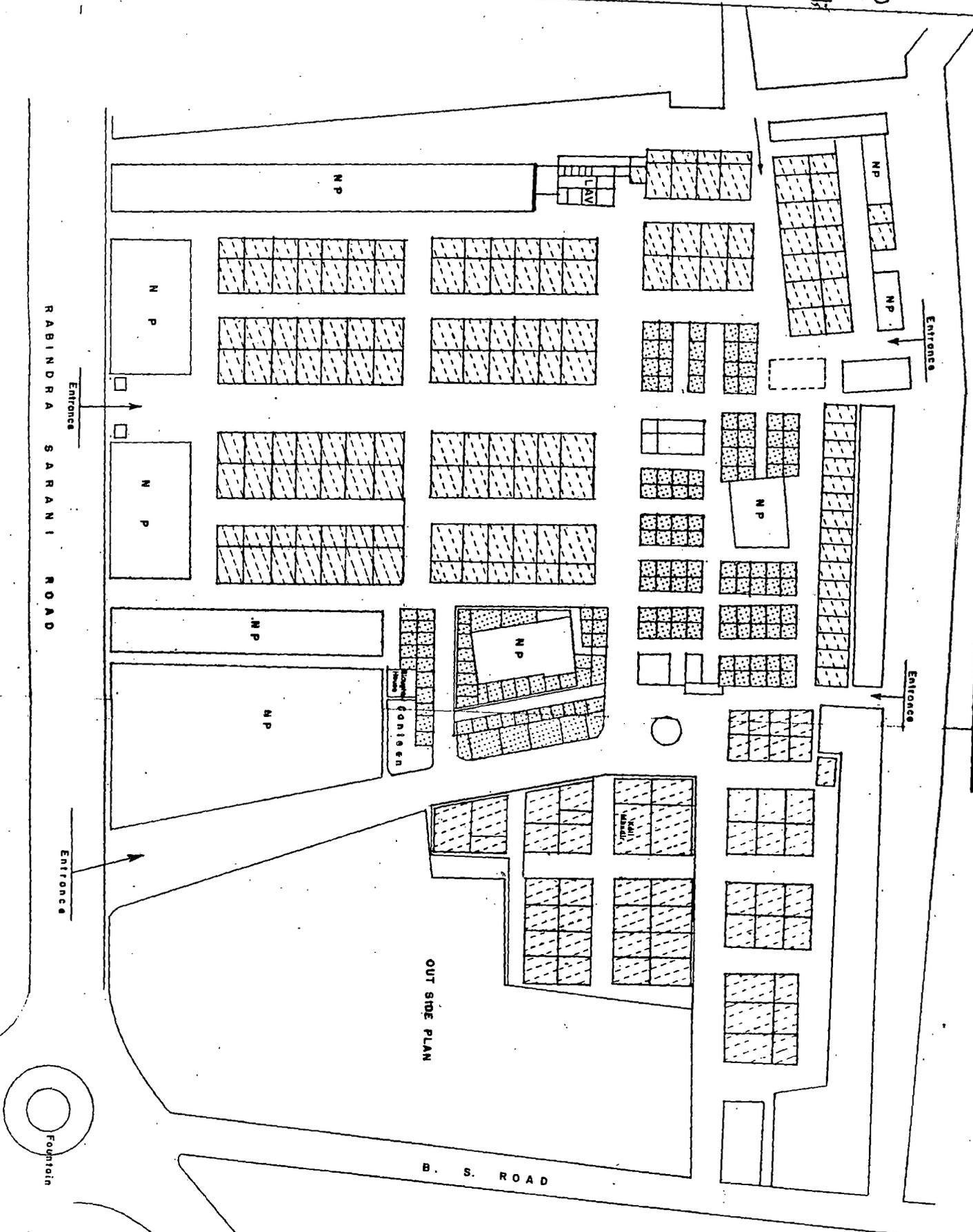
A) The Commercial Centres :

In English Bazar, the commercial activities have clustered along the three major roads in the northern part of the town. These are Rabindra Avenue, Benoy Sirkar Road and Netaji Subhash Road.

The Central Market Centre :

The main retail market is located at the junction of Rabindra Avenue and Benoy Sirkar Road, almost in the heart of the town. The Chittaranjan Municipal Market is also located here. The main retail market covers all sorts of goods, most of which are green vegetables and fish, meat, etc. Besides these, the different types of retail stores dealing in goods ranging from leather to groceries have assembled here for the facility of direct accessibility.

PLAN OF DESHBANDHU CHIT TARANJAN MUNICIPAL MARKET AT MALDA



INDEX

Sector I	Stationery and Clothing
Sector II	Vegetable & Groceries
Sector III	Stationery
Non Plan	N.P.

The road-fronts are occupied by "pucca"-buildings bearing their respective sign boards. Most of the people of the town visit this market almost daily. There is another market offering retail goods comprising green vegetables, fish, meat, etc., located on the west side of the Rathbari Road. Very recently, a planned wholesale market has been opened here, replacing the old open market on the southern part of the town.

Other minor shopping centres have sprung-up along the Netaji Subhash Road, the Benoy Sirkar Road and Rabindra Avenue. Most of the important hotels, restaurants, sweet-meat stalls, cinema house, and, last but not the least, the various types of retail stationery stores, are located along these roads. The shops occupying the road front display their stores with colourful arrangements. Besides these main concentrations, as the sign of unplanned growth, some isolated shopping clusters are to be found in the town of English Bazar. Most of these shops are characteristically located within the residential areas to cater to the needs of the nearby dwellers.

In ~~the~~ ^{of} town, English Bazar, from 1972 onwards, three planned markets have appeared, replacing the old unplanned congested markets as a part of the redevelopment programme. One of them, the Chittaranjan Municipal Market, is located in the centre along the Rabindra

Avenue. Another is located on the Baladeba Giri Road, while the last one is located near the Rathbari Road in the southern part of the town. The Chittaranjan Municipal Market (map shown) has been divided into several sectors, each sector (such as sector I, II and III) specializing in one type of goods, like, clothing, gadgets, fish and meat, etc.

The wholesale shops have clustered along the Saraju Prasad Road in a chain on the north-eastern part of the town.

(B) The Industrial And the Autorepairing Units :

The industrial units, most of which are wood-based industries, have concentrated along the Bundh Road in the western part and in its extension, the latter joining the Netaji Subhash Road, in a semicircle in the northwestern part of the town, while the autorepairing units have occupied the front of the National Highway No-34, remaining confined mainly between the junctions of Manaskamana Road and the National Highway No-34 in the north, and the Rabindra Avenue and National Highway No-34 in the south. Besides, a few small autorepairing units are also found amidst the retail chain. The reason behind the clustering of the autorepairing units along the National Highway No-34 is that they can offer immediate service to the heavy Vehicles using the route. Besides, the location of two large

petrol pumps are also responsible for this sort of clustering. A few other industrial units are located along the Manaskamana Road and on the Rabindra Avenue which runs through the centre of the town.

(C) The Public Offices and the Community Centres :

The administrative centres do not follow any arrangement in their distribution. They are ^{scattered} all over the town from north to south and from east to west in a most confused manner. The main reason behind this growth is that, most of the Government offices are situated in rented houses and most of them have been established in the post-independence period. However, the important Government offices are located along the Netaji Subhash Road, in the north, the Rabindra Avenue, the Jibankrishna Sanyal Road, the Bipin Ganguly Road on the south-east and on the right-hand side of the National Highway No. 34. One of the oldest nuclei of this town, ^{containing} the District Magistrate's Office, the Municipal Office, etc., is located along the Netaji Subhash Road, in the heart of the town, while the State Electricity Board's Offices, the Post and Telegraph Office, the Land Reform Office, etc., are located along the Rabindra Avenue. The Police Station, Water Works, Forest Office, the District Handloom

Office, etc., are located along the Jibankrishna Sanyal Road. In the south and the Public Works Department's Office, the Jail, the Settlement Office, etc., are located along the Baladeba Giri Road and the Bipin Ganguly Road, in the extreme south and south-eastern part. The scattered location of the offices further reveals the sprawl of the town in both north-ward and southward direction, of which the southern extension has got the largest concentration of the public offices.

The community centres are mostly composed of academic institutions and hospitals. Like the administrative centres, the community service centres also have followed an unplanned growth and mostly are situated in the southern part of the town. The New Hospital is located on the National Highway No-34, while the old one is situated on the Rabindra Avenue Extension. Among the academic centres, the Malda College is on the Rabindra Avenue. The newly built Malda Women's College has come up close^{to} the new hospital. The B.Ed. College is situated along the Cemetery Road. But the Polytechnic is situated away from the heart of the town, along the Manikchak road. Among the other academic institutions, the schools of both the boys' and girls' are located along the Rabindra Avenue the Benoy Sirkar Road, the Ramkrishna Mission Road and near the Bundh Road, which are located either in the central part or in the northern or southern part of the town.

(D) The Recreational And the Cultural Centres

For a long time, the cinema houses were the only recreational centres in the town of English Bazar but recently, the creation of a park and a swimming pool has enlarged the scope.

The cinema houses and the theatre hall are located along the Rathbari Road, the Netaji Subhash Road, the Bundh Road and at the junction of the Manaskamana Road and the National Highway No-34, in the northeastern and northwestern part. Among the cultural institutions, the Ramkrishna Mission, District Library, Town Hall etc., are located along the Ramkrishna Road, on the eastern side of the sports ground, and other small religious institutions are scattered in their locations. The cultural and religious institutions often do not fit in with the environment, since in most of the cases a church has grown side by side with a saw mill, or a temple is found amidst the retail shops. This actually reveals the state of unplanned growth or the absence of any sort of landuse control in the town of English Bazar.

(E) Residential Zones

It has already been pointed out that the economic-class-segregation is almost absent in the spatial expression of residences in the towns of North Bengal. Some sort of religious segregation,

however, may be noticed in the case of the Muslim residents who are mostly confined to the central part of the town.

Besides, the towns do not exhibit much of vertical development, i.e. the skyline of most of the towns is homogeneous, with one-storey buildings, having isolated two or three-storey buildings, most of which have occupied the main thoroughfares, letting the ground floor for commercial purposes. In general, the residential areas have expanded spatially following the major roads.

Highclass Residences :

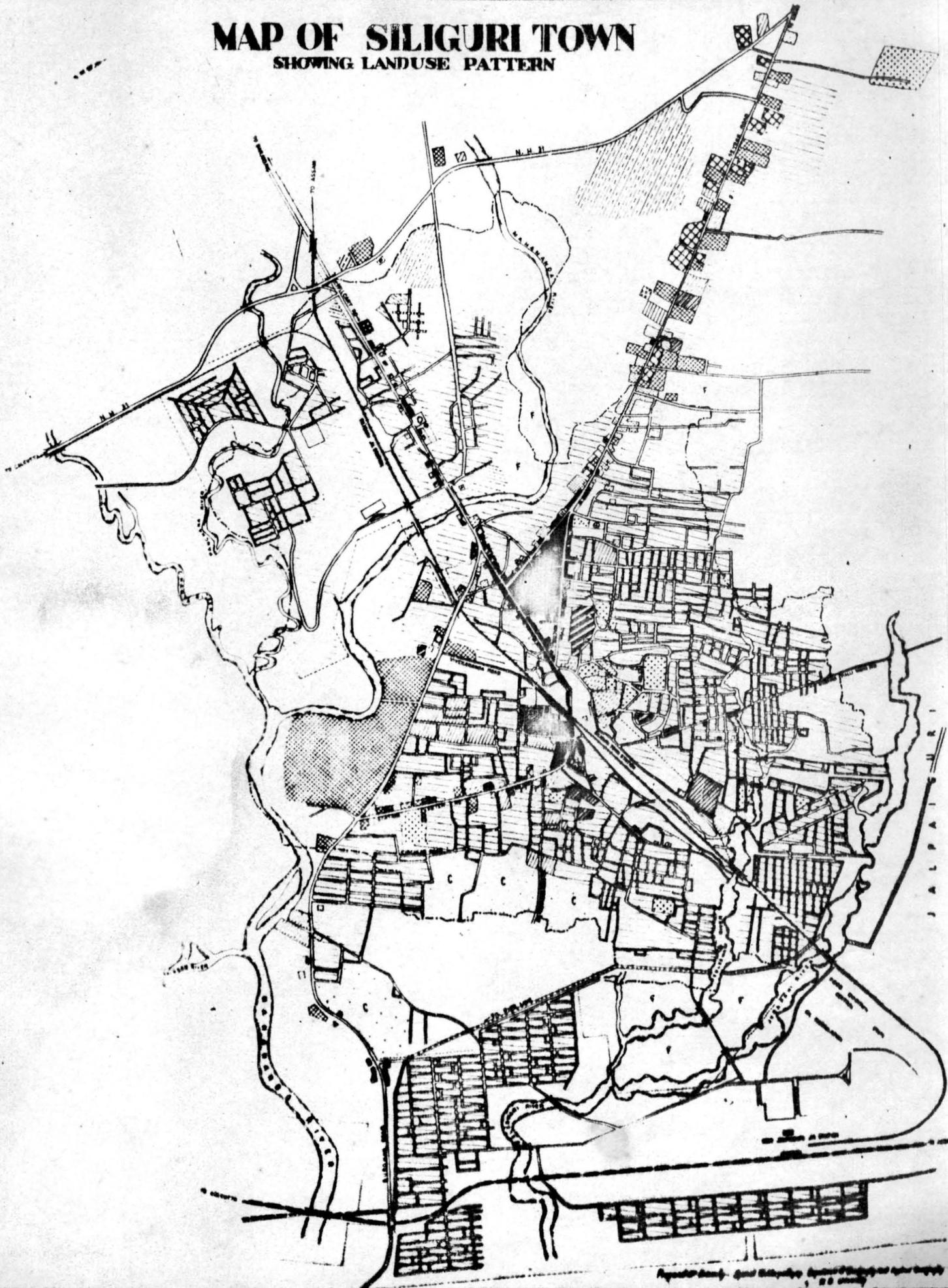
The most striking highclass residential pocket is found on the north of the Ramkrishna Mission Road. This pocket contains the quarters of the highclass Government Officials, like the District Magistrate, the Superintendent of Police, etc. Excepting the distinct ~~existing~~ highclass residential pockets, some highclass residences have also developed in a scattered fashion mainly on the west of the Netaji Subhas Road, along the Bundh Road on the east, the Jiban Krishna Synnal Road, the Bipin Ganguly Road on the south and on the eastern part of the Rabindra Avenue.

Middle Class Residences :

Most of the residences of the town of English Bazar fall in

MAP OF SILIGURI TOWN

SHOWING LANDUSE PATTERN



this category. The most compact middle class residential area is found on both sides of the Netaji Subhas Road in the north. Here the houses exist leaving no space between the two houses. The next compact middle class dwelling area is known as Mucdampur, extending along the two sides of the Bipin Ganguly Road and the Baladeba Giri Road, ^{and} the Singatola Road in the south. Lack of open greenspace among the middle class residential areas is noticeable. The Muslim community has clustered along the Hyderpur Road and the Dosadpara Road in the central part of the town.

The Government Quarters belonging to middle class job ^{are} holders, ^{are} located along the National Highway 34. There are two Housing Estate colonies, built by the Government. The buildings show uniformity in architectural aspect and are generally single-storied. Another Housing Estate which is in the extreme west, is under construction. They have added a special distinction to the town of English Bazar, and the future sprawling might taken place in this direction.

Poor Class Residences :

Though typical industrial slums ^{are} absent in this town, the poor class residences have a close similarity with these in respect of their housing conditions, civic amenities, and the geographical

location. In general, the poor class residences are found all over the town, appearing in tiny lots on poor ground. One of the main concentrations has developed along the Gour Road on the extreme west and another by the side of the river Mahananda. Generally they occupy the low lands of the town, making small huts.

Land use Pattern : Siliguri Town (Map No - 7)

Siliguri, the sub-divisional headquarters of the district of Darjeeling, became a commercial magnet in its later phase of development which started from the decade of the 60's and is still continuing at a faster rate than before. Prior to 1962, the town had an insignificant place among the other towns of this region. But the development of ^{the} communication network including both railways and roadways and the strategic importance, enhanced since the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962, have boosted up its economic growth. The phase is still continuing. The New Jalpaiguri Railway Station having all three gauges (viz. broad, metre and narrow gauges) connecting the town with ^{the} rest of India, and the National Highway maintaining the link between the Eastern and Western India via Siliguri, have equally contributed to the unprecedented growth of this town. On the other hand, the large scale development

of the defence establishments located in the outskirts of this town had a great impact on the growth of this centre as the principal market of the locality. On the top of these, the tea-gardens situated far and near to the town, depend on Siliguri for their onward movement.

The urban landuse of Siliguri reveals many of these aspects of her hectic activities. The heart of the town has developed around the Hill Cart Road which maintains direct connection between the hills and the plains. The shops occupying the ground floors of the buildings, located on the road front along the Hill Cart Road, well-decorated with show-rooms dressed with luminous-neon advertisements, present an appearance of a posh area. During the day, the commercial core remains always busy and crowded with people and unending streams of vehicles of all sorts. The retail shops have given rise to ribbon-growth along the Bidhan Sarani the Sevoke Road and along the Station Feeder Road, all of which emerge from this core area. The defence establishments are mostly found on the periphery of the town and along the National Highway No.31 and in the farther western part of the Sevoke Road.

The town exhibits a concentration of industrial and auto-repairing engineering units along the Sevoke Road. The transactional facilities have played an important role in locating these

units along these roads.

The railway marshalling yards have occupied a considerable part of the town and mostly are located on the southern and northern ends. The town has sprawled on all sides beyond its municipal limitations, and the latest growth is taking place along the National Highway No-31 heading westward ^{to} Bagdogra. The space between Siliguri town and Bagdogra, truly speaking, has taken a suburban look, already filled by a few very Highclass residential pockets and the big educational institutions like the University, Zonal Board Office, the Headquarters of the WBSEB, one of the renowned Missionary Schools, and Government establishments. A compact linear sprawl is slowly taking shape along the entire length of the National Highway.

Siliguri

The landuse map of Siliguri brings out the following characteristics regarding the spatial distribution of different users of urban land. The commercial centre has developed almost in the heart of the town within the triangle of three principal roads with an important outlier further south. Surrounding these two, residences have developed, spreading in all directions, more towards the south and east than north or westwards. Lands devoted to other uses,

such as community services, government offices, etc., are found within the residential zones but in many cases these are confined to the main thoroughfares. The most important industrial zone has developed in the western part of the town, taking the advantage of river-frontage, and a number of small outliers have already emerged alongs the Sevoke Road in the north, spreading beyond the municipal boundary. Except in the railway colonies, covering large portions of the urban land both inside as well as outside the municipal boundary of the town, the roads, running in every direction, have taken a lot of land. On the whole, the landuse is extremely mixed in character barring the cases mentioned above.

The landuse of the town of Siliguri may be divided into the following categories :

A) The Commercial Core/Areas; B) The Industrial and the Autorepairing Areas; C) The Community Services and the Government Establishments; D) The Recreational and the Cultural Centres; E) The Residential Areas.

A) Commercial Areas

Central Market Area :

The central market area is located within the triangle formed by the Hill Cart Road, the Sevoke Road and the Bidhan Sarani. Both

the wholesale and the retail markets are located here, while the stationery and other types of stalls have captured the road front of the Hill Cart Road and the Sevoke Road, the wholesale depots are mainly located along the Bidhan Sarani. The big hotels, restaurants, entertainment halls, book stalls, and sophisticated readymade garment stalls with showroom representing famous textile companies, are mostly located on both sides of the Hill Cart Road and Sevoke Road.

The New Market, located within this triangle, is a planned development. It is divided into several sectors for particular specialized stalls, like fish, meat, etc., on one side, the green vegetables and groceries on other side, with the stationery stalls, readymade garments stall, etc., placed between these two sectors. The market enjoys a good accessibility.

The retail zone of this town has extended along the Hill Cart Road in a northwest to southeast direction, from the Mahananda Bridge upto the crossing of the Bidhan Sarani. Again, from the Hill Cart Road, in the southeastern part, it has proceeded along the Station Feeder Road upto the crossing of Babupara Road. Beyond that the shops become thinner or less frequent.

Along the Station Feeder Road, another old market is located. This area is the oldest built up area of this town and is the old commercial core. Most of the wholesale depots of the town are located

here and a retail market of perishable and nonperishable goods is also present for the benefit of the nearby residents. Besides, these two retail concentrations isolated retail stalls are located here and there along the major thoroughfares running through the residential areas.

(B) The Industry And the Autorepairing Units

The maximum concentration of industrial and autorepairing units has taken place along the Burdwan Road and the Sevoke Road. Most of the plots of land along the Sevoke Road are occupied either by the autorepairing or by the industrial establishments, the latter being mostly wood-based or engineering units. A few industrial units are located along the National Highway No.31. The industrial and the autorepairing units have a tendency to concentrate in a particular zone which is characteristically on the periphery of the town, while the other activities have not given rise to any concentration so far like the other towns of North Bengal, revealing the typical unplanned growth.

(C) The Public Offices and the Community Service Centres

No town of North Bengal has shown such a haphazard location

of administrative or Government centres as the town of Siliguri. Most of the Government Offices are scattered all over the town. The only pocket showing a slight concentration is noticed along the Kachari Road, which is on the north eastern side, by the Railway Station, where the Sub-divisional Court, the Post and Telegraph offices, the Departmental Telegraph office and the Sub-divisional officer's Office, etc., are situated. All others are located mostly along the major thoroughfares like the Hill Cart Road, the Burdwan Road, the Station Feeder Road, the Bidhan Sarani, the Sevoke Road, etc., and, in many cases, in the heart of the residential areas, wherever houses could be rented for the purpose. Similarly, the community service centres are distributed all over the town, but most of them are located in the eastern part. The Hospital complex has developed along the Kachari Road. The college, the girls and the boys schools are located on the east of the Kachari Road. Other academic institutions are characteristically located inside the residential areas or along the major roads. The Nursing homes are mostly located on the two sides of the Bidhan Sarani and amidst the residential areas.

(D) The Recreational and the Cultural Centres

Unlike other towns, like Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling, Siliguri deserves less credit in respect of recreational

and cultural activities. The cinema houses are the only medium of entertainment and are located mostly along the Hill Cart Road, the Burdwan Road, and the Station Feeder Road. The cultural institutions like Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Bhawan, library, theatre hall etc., are located either along the Hill Cart Road or on the east of the Kachari Road. The only playground is located on the east of the Bidhan Sarani and the only small children's park is situated on the north of Subhas Pally main road.

(E) The Residential Areas

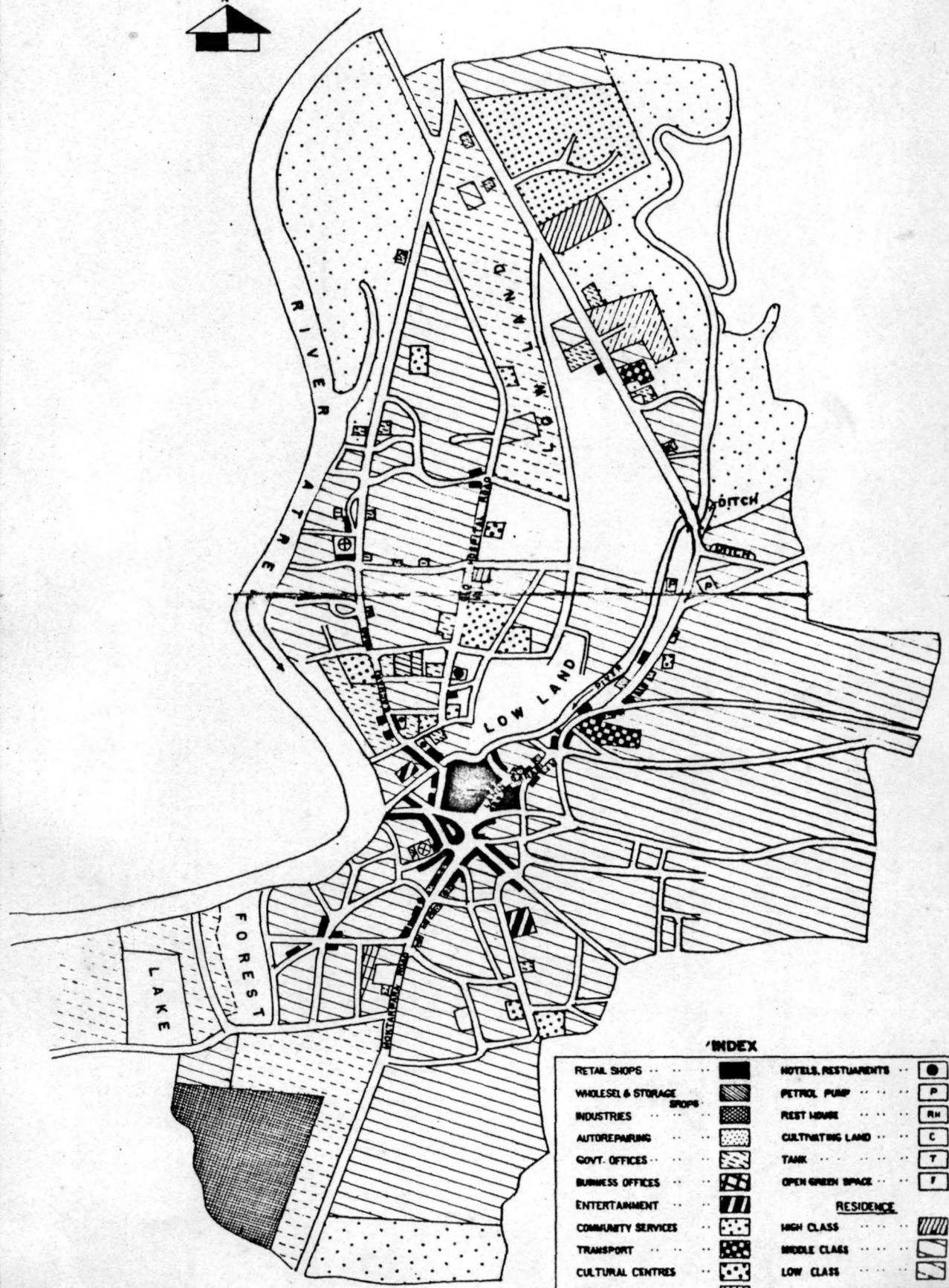
Though Siliguri witnessed a quick development in the commercial field, following which an elite or economically rich class of people have emerged in this town, yet they do not show any specific choice in regard to housing sites. As such, economic class-segregation is also absent in this town and lack of planning is extremely vivid in the growth of residential areas.

The High Class Residences

Excepting some Government Officials quarters, a few high class residences are located here and there. Quite a number of the

MAP OF BALURGHAT TOWN

SHOWING THE LAND USE PATTERN



INDEX

RETAIL SHOPS		HOTELS, RESTAURANTS	
WHOLESALE & STORAGE SHOPS		PETROL PUMP	
INDUSTRIES		REST HOUSE	
AUTOREPAIRING		CULTIVATING LAND	
GOVT. OFFICES		TANK	
BUSINESS OFFICES		OPEN GREEN SPACE	
ENTERTAINMENT		RESIDENCE	
COMMUNITY SERVICES		HIGH CLASS	
TRANSPORT		MIDDLE CLASS	
CULTURAL CENTRES		LOW CLASS	
DEFENCE			
BANK			

high class residences, however, have developed on the Sevoke Road, and the Babupara Road and others are distributed unevenly in the various middle class residential areas.

The Middle Class Residences

The most compact middle class residential areas are situated in the eastern and southern part of the town. These are located mainly along the Bidhan Sarani, Subhash Pally main Road, Babupara Road, etc. In the western part, along the Burdwan Road, a densely built up middle class residential area is located. Along the Hill Cart Road in the northern part, middle class residences along with some high class residences are growing up, and gradually filling the vacant lands.

A considerable part of the residential area, particularly in the northern part, is covered by railway colonies. The Housing Estates for Government employees are located along the Station Feeder Road and Kachari Road.

Poor Class Residences

The maximum concentration of poor class residences are

located on the side of the river Mahananda and by the Railway Colony along the Hill Cart Road. The houses are characteristically located in the lowlands.

Landuse Pattern : Balurghat Town (Map No. 18/10)

Balurghat was an important administrative centre of Dinajpur district in undivided Bengal and after Independence, Balurghat became the administrative headquarters of the district of West Dinajpur in West Bengal. Prior to the partition of India, the small populace, the few administrative units and a completely agrarian background characterised the rustic life of this town. During the post - Independence period the town witnessed a rush of refugee population from the neighbouring country Bangladesh, then East Pakistan, and this was further accompanied by administrative changes when urban growth took place.

At the early stage, the town grew up on the bank of the river Atrai, which was the main internal water route in this region and the market centre gradually extended eastward, taking a circular shape. As the western and southern part are blocked respectively by the river Atrai and the international border, the town expanded northward and eastward.

The street layout followed no planning. The existence of a large amount of lowlands and agricultural fields inside the municipal area reveal that the town still requires great deal of planning to make it worth living in. The absence of railway lines and maximum dependence on road-transport left the town almost devoid of industrial ventures.

The principal types of the landuse of Balurghat ^{Town} ~~area~~ are as follows :

- A) The Commercial Centres; B) The Industry and Autorepairing Centres; C) The Public Offices and the Community Services;
- D) The Cultural and the Recreational Centres; E) The Residences;

A) The Commercial Centres

The Central Market

The central market centre, forming a part of Balurghat town, has developed on the western bank of the river Atrai and takes a circular form. From there, the other roads emerge in all directions and the retail and other shops have occupied the road fronts. The stalls in the market are mainly retail and wholesale in character and district zoning is absent due to unplanned growth. Most of the stalls are in one-storey buildings and occupy the road-fronts. The Lenin Sarani, running through the

heart of the town in a south to north direction, is the busiest area of the town where most of the commercial units as well as the important Government offices are located. The shop is visible mostly along the Moktarpara Road, Bhosila Road, Congress Para Road and Dhamarhat Road, in the southern and south-eastern part of the town.

B) The Industry and the Autorepairing Centres

The industrial landuse is very insignificant in this town. The autorepairing centres are situated in the central area of the town along the Lenin Sarani. The industries, represented mainly by brick-manufacturing units and some other small units, are scattered in their location; the brick-fields are characteristically located at the periphery of the town.

(C) The Public Offices and the Community Services

The landuse map of Balurghat town shows that, excluding residential areas, public offices and the community services have occupied the major part of the urban land. The town, being the

district headquarters, has attracted a good number of Government offices which are located in a scattered manner throughout the town. The only concentration is found in the south western part where the District Magistrate's Office along with its sub-offices is located. The community service centres have not formed any zone; rather they are located along the different major thoroughfares.

D) The Cultural and the Recreational Centres

The cultural and recreational centres are few in number. Among them the cinema houses are located in the southwestern and eastern part of ^{the} town. The theatre hall, the library, etc., are located along the Old Hospital Road, in the south western part.

E) The Residences

The major portion of suitable land is occupied by residences. While the southern and eastern part are densely inhabited, the northern part exhibits less concentration because of the existence of lowlands and cultivated lands. The high class

residences are few in number and are sprinkled amidst the middle class residences. The eastern, western, and southern part are thickly inhabited by the middle class people who mainly came to this town during the post-Independence period. The poor class residences are located in the low-lands, which often become water-logged during the rainy season.

Comparative Analysis of Landuse of the Towns of North Bengal

The general pattern of urban landuse in the towns of North Bengal is more or less the same, but the actual proportion of land used by individual users differs widely.

The table-1 gives the distribution of land under each category like Residences; Community Services and Public Offices; Entertainments and Cultural Activities; Retail and Wholesale business, etc. Transport; Industry and Autorepairing; Defence; Forest, Tea Gardens and Railway Colony; Cultivation, Fallow, Tanks, etc.

The data given in this table have been worked out from the landuse maps of the individual towns, namely, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, English Bazar and Siliguri, with the help of Planimeter.

The table reveals that the maximum portion of the urban land in almost all the towns has been occupied by residences. Among the five towns, land devoted for this purpose is higher in Jalpaiguri (7.10 Sq.Km) and in English Bazar (2.65 Sq.Km.) than in the other towns in respect of their total municipal area. The land occupied by Industry and Autorepairing and Transport is too insignificant except in Siliguri where 1.08 Sq.Km. and 74 Sq.Km. respectively, are occupied by these two functional activities. The table further reveals that among the five towns, the land occupied by entertainment and cultural activities is maximum in Darjeeling, with 1.22 Sq.Km. against its total area of 12.63 Sq.Km., while Cooch Behar's place is next to Darjeeling in respect of land occupied by such activities (.40 Sq.Km.) against its total area of 8.40 Sq.Km. Siliguri has the minimum land (.10 Sq.Km) occupied by these activities against its total area of 15.54 Sq.Km.

In respect of the land used by community services and administrative activities, Cooch Behar tops the list having 1.32 Sq.Km. against its total area of 8.40 Sq.Km., and Malda or English Bazar is next to Cooch Behar with 1.24 Sq. Km. against its total municipal area of 4.66 Sq.Km. On the other hand, defence has taken the highest portion of land in Darjeeling with 2.17 Sq.Km, and Siliguri is next to Darjeeling with 1.50 Sq.Km. The same table(8) also shows the percentage of the total municipal land of each town utilized by different functional organisations.

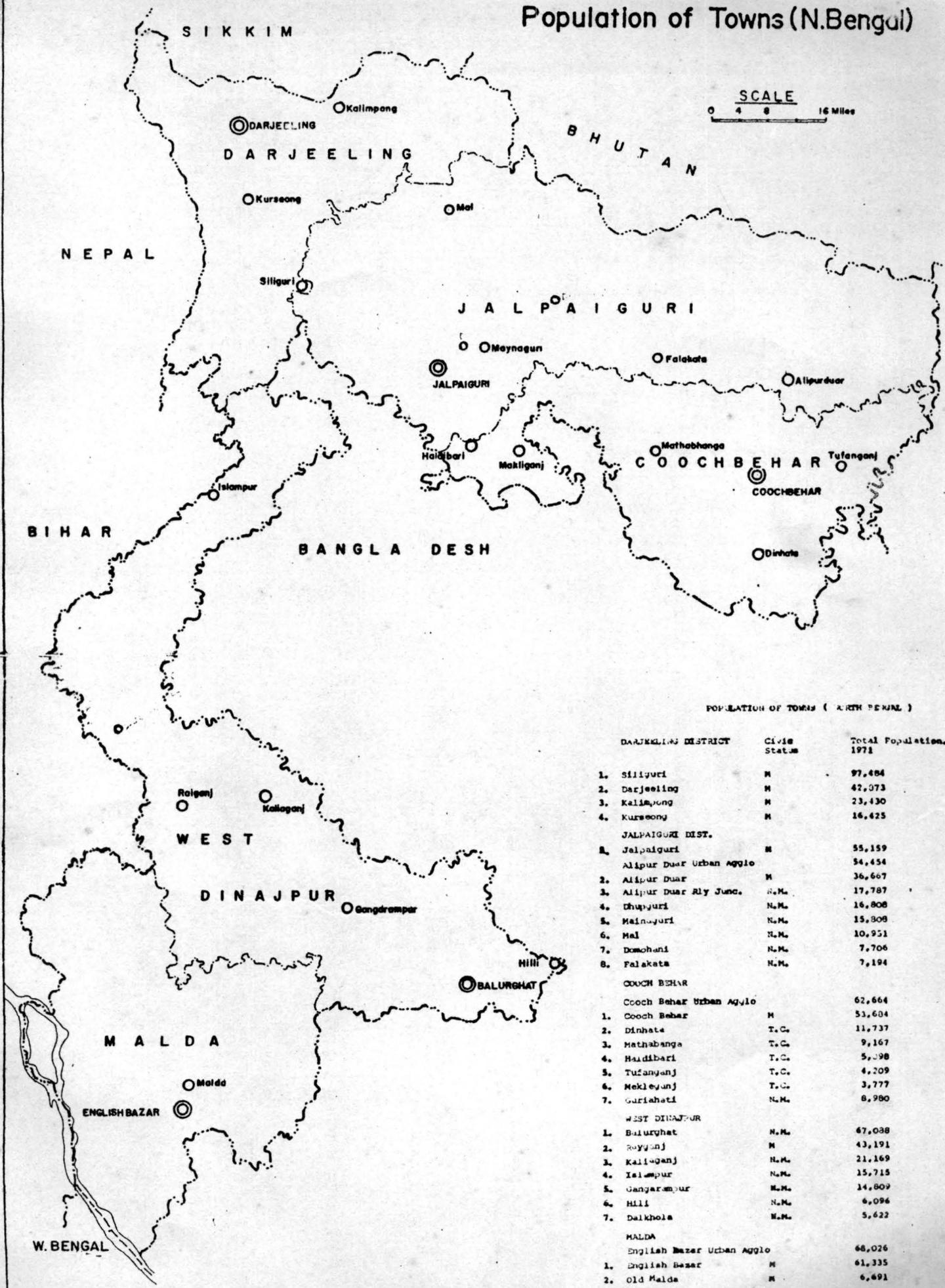
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CHAPTER III

CENTRAL FUNCTIONS & THE HIERARCHY OF THE TOWNS OF NORTH BENGAL

Broadly speaking, urban functions can be defined as those functions which are absent in the rural areas. Every urban place is characterised by some urban functions, ranging from grocers shops to large industrial/commercial establishments along with the seats of various public organizations like Government offices, University, College^s, etc. The urban place thus acts as a container of the physical structures and the seat where the functions, processes and purpose gradually take shape and are carried on through time. But an urban place is not merely a container; it acts as a magnet, for pulling and attracting people as well as different institutions from outside. As a matter of fact, it is the central functions which build up the magnetic character of an urban centre. Since all urban functions are not central functions, though all central functions are urban functions, it is necessary to find out how the central functions are formed. The type and variety of central functions vary from place to place according to the resourcefulness of that urban centre or the region in which they are found. The central functions of a developed region may not be the same as the central functions of an undeveloped region. As for instance, in a developed region the central function largely consists of number of advanced urban functions; like, circulation of a number of daily newspapers,

NORTH BENGAL Population of Towns (N.Bengal)



POPULATION OF TOWNS (1971)

DARJEELING DISTRICT	Civic Status	Total Population, 1971
1. Siliguri	M	97,484
2. Darjeeling	M	42,073
3. Kalimpong	M	23,430
4. Kurseong	M	16,425
JALPAIGURI DIST.		
1. Jalpaiguri	M	55,159
Alipur Duar Urban Agglo		54,454
2. Alipur Duar	M	36,667
3. Alipur Duar Rly Jung.	N.M.	17,787
4. Dhapjuri	N.M.	16,808
5. Mainjuri	N.M.	15,808
6. Mal	N.M.	10,951
7. Domohani	N.M.	7,706
8. Falakata	N.M.	7,194
COOCH BEHAR		
Cooch Behar Urban Agglo		62,664
1. Cooch Behar	M	53,604
2. Dinhat	T.C.	11,737
3. Mathabhanga	T.C.	9,167
4. Haidibari	T.C.	5,398
5. Tufanganj	T.C.	4,209
6. Mekleyanj	T.C.	3,777
7. Guriahati	N.M.	6,980
WEST DINAJPUR		
1. Balurghat	N.M.	47,038
2. Royganj	M	43,191
3. Kaliganj	N.M.	21,169
4. Islampur	N.M.	15,715
5. Gangarampur	N.M.	14,809
6. Hilli	N.M.	6,096
7. Dakkhola	N.M.	5,622
MALDA		
English Bazar Urban Agglo		68,026
1. English Bazar	M	61,335
2. Old Malda	M	6,691

(morning and evening), better audio-visual mediums (like television) and communications (like good telephone network), research institutions, specialist physicians, large, well-equipped modern hospitals, stage production, radio station, social clubs with auditoriums, etc., which often remain absent in the urban places of an undeveloped or underdeveloped region. One is not required to go far to find out the reasons for this type of dissimilarities which actually reflect the socio-political conditions prevailing in a region or country.

Central place, as defined by Walter Christaller, is the place which has got some importance in respect to its surrounding region and by its capability can render some external services to its supplementary region and the place may be from a tiny settlement to a big metropolis. Gradmann has called this as the "chief profession"⁽¹⁾ of a town, and according to Christaller "which are decidedly important to the meaning of the town".⁽²⁾ Christaller has indicated the centrality of a place as "the surplus of importance"⁽³⁾ in respect to the total importance of the total area where "the importance is no sum at all, but is rather the combined economic efforts of the inhabitants".⁽⁴⁾

Christaller's work advocates a theoretical conception regarding the spacing of the urban centres in a rigid geometrical form based upon performing central services and exchanging central goods. According to Christaller, the centrality "must be expressed in

quantity"⁽⁵⁾ and "the value thus obtained must be combined in order ~~to~~ somehow if one is to express the entire importance of the place."⁽⁶⁾ He took telephone as the single important factor for determining the central importance, as in his opinion "nothing to-day is as necessary or as characteristics of importance as the telephone."⁽⁷⁾ But his geometrical set-up (Hexagonal) of the central places ranging from lower to higher order and his telephone index received much criticism from the later scholars who worked on central places in different countries. According to them Spate (1967), Brush (1953), Kar (1960), Folke (1968), Singh (1971), the locational pattern of the central places and the indicators of centrality vary from one region to another depending on their different socio-political back-grounds and economic conditions. In a country like India where administration so long has exerted maximum influence upon the growth of the towns, the spacing of the towns or central places do not follow any established law of geometrical pattern (Kar, 1960) found in Southern Germany. The works of Kar, H.R. (1960), Singh, O.P. (1971), Folke, S. (1968), G.H.K. Spate (1967) are important contributions to the development of centrality in India. Kar (1960) worked on the central places of lower West Bengal, India;⁽⁸⁾ Singh has defined the centrality based on a new method i.e. the "Absolute centrality Index" or H.C.I devised by him⁽⁹⁾, while Folke's work is based on "the process

of spatial integration in two south Indian districts, is investigated by means of the central place systems and the pattern of spatial interaction. (10)

In North Bengal, the typical geographical setting as characterised by the steep mountains and turbulent rivers on the one hand and the flat riverine plain on the other hand, with a long strip of deep forest in between, accompanied by poor transportation and ill-developed economic condition and political negligence have pushed the urbanization to a back route. Of course, the Partition of India (1947) has changed the size of the individual towns of this region due to refugee-influx from the erstwhile East Pakistan, (now Bangladesh), but the economic progress lagged far behind the rate of population growth. Besides, over-dependence on Calcutta, the primate city of Eastern India, has retarded the normal growth of the towns of this region. The investigation made by Kar (1960) (11) has revealed force-fully the influence of Calcutta on the whole Eastern India. Prior to the Independence, the towns of North Bengal, excepting the administrative headquarters remained entirely confined within their own boundaries and their function rarely extended beyond that. Only the administrative headquarters particularly for judicial and administrative purposes exerted some influence on their surrounding areas. The situation gradually changed, after the independence. But the towns never

developed into economic cultural or political centres as such, till some time after the Independence. The overwhelming influence of Calcutta has already been mentioned. The raw materials had their natural flow towards the Mother City. Even tea, the only product processed in the region, and that too in the tea gardens which never could give rise to any urban centre, had its principal market in Calcutta. Thus the transportation lines developed prior to the independence to facilitate the movement of those goods and oriented from north to south and the main route went through the present Bangladesh connecting the collecting points in the region with Calcutta at the minimum distance. The role of the urban centres located along this principal and the only commercial artery was primarily as midpoints of collection and transmission; they were economically too weak to hold back the collected goods for giving rise to secondary activities. The Partition of Bengal in 1947, however, changed the situation. The northern district of West Bengal lost direct connection with Calcutta and it was not until 1953 that direct rail connection was established. By that time roads were also constructed. The railway and roads being oriented from west to east in the three northern districts for the first time made movement easier and quicker. The urban centres were more accessible than even before and having been connected by the major roads and the railway line

recorded a high rate of growth. Hitherto most of the urban centres maintained their precarious existence primarily as administrative centres. Their linkage whether economic, cultural or political with the countryside was too weak to be mentioned. But once the communication routes were established, the existing towns woke up from their age-long slumber, and readily forged ahead in building up their career anew. Besides administrative functions, they started activities in newer fields and within space of decades some of the urban centres emerged as high order central places. This is more true about the existing large towns which offered a greater degree of infra-structural facilities than the smaller ones. It is also true that a number of new towns taking the same advantage emerged during this period.

Urban growth during the post-independence period cannot be fully realised without referring to the growth of political importance of the region. The international boundary line on the east and north making it a neighbour of at least three foreign countries has added to the strategic significance of the region. As a result, administration had to be tuned up accordingly. New district headquarters had to be created, new roads and railway lines were constructed and different measures had to be taken to guard against any eventuality.

In general the life of an urban centre is formed of two broad types of economic activities. One is internal and the other is external in nature. While the former one caters to the demand of the resident urbanities, the later one renders the service to the complementary region (ERGANSONGE BIET; Christaller, 1966)⁽¹²⁾ of that urban centre. The higher judicial and administrative institution, the higher educational institution, like University, Engineering or Medical College, the larger hospitals with more specialised services, the zonal offices of the Commercial Bank and insurance can be classified as the external services. Often it is found that "these external services are essentially the internal services on a large scale and take origin as an internal services in response to the need of the urban residents (Bhattacharya, 1972)⁽¹³⁾". For example, the functions of financial institutions, like bank, insurance houses, etc. can be cited, as a bank may open a branch in a town for its residents at initium and later on can extend its service to meet the need of the complementary region of that town.

In otherwords, one can define the central services of a town as the services or functions, characteristically external in nature which the respective town renders to the people of its supplementary region or those functions for which the residents of the complementary region of an urban centre depends upon that

urban centre. Thus the place is a central place and functions are central functions. The functions or services which can be included in this group are the seats of higher administration, like, District Magistrates' or Deputy Commissioners' or Sub-divisional Officers' Office, District Court/Sub-Divisional Courts; the seats of higher learning, like, scientific institutions, University, Medical College, hospitals with specialised services, communication, shopping, recreation of higher form, News papers and divisional or zonal offices of financial organizations like Bank, Insurance house, wholesale trade etc.. On the other hand, the services which can be classified as internal, are primary and junior schools, retail shops, hospital with only outdoor facilities, and the Local Self Government services, like, municipal or panchayat etc..

As the size of each town differs from one^e another based on their site and situation, the degree of central function also may vary from town to town. Of/course, the concentration depends largely on the accessibility of that place in respect to its surrounding region and hence communications and transportations network play an important role in increasing the scope and variety of the central functions of a central place, besides determining spatial extent of a central service. Certain services like shopping, recreation or entertainment, school education etc. belong to the category of external services, no doubt, but their spatial extent

is absolutely dependent upon the nature of transportation. As a general rule, the larger the size of the place, greater is the variety of central services. In North Bengal where administrative function is the *raison d'être* of most of the urban centres, the higher central functions will be found in the higher administrative centres.

In an industrially backward region the administration exerts maximum impact on building up the economic and cultural status of an urban centre. They normally get priority over other centres in respect of transportation development and in consequence the various types of central functions are naturally attracted to these centres more than the others, not so fortunate in that way. The utilization of the resources of the supplementary region of an urban centre often largely depends on the administrative status of that centre. The higher order central functions like, bank, insurance with their zonal offices, transportation headquarters, higher education centres, etc, usually tend to concentrate in the higher administrative centres either for keeping a direct or indirect link with the various administrative establishments or for enjoying better transportation facilities to extend their services to the bigger supplementary region. It is observed that with the increase of administrative status, the supplementary region of the respective urban centre would increase in size.

Of course, if there is a well-developed industrial centre in such a region the dictum may not apply. Under this process the administrative hierarchy ultimately defines the functional hierarchy of the urban centres, such as the centres with district headquarters or the district town will, as a rule, have a greater complementary region than a sub-divisional town which is administratively less important. There are exceptions, no doubt, but that is also mainly due to the better site and situation factors.

The urban hierarchy of this nature are to be found in North Bengal where most of the towns have irregular spacing and display no rigid geometrical location like the hexagonal arrangement of Christaller (1966). Though Stewart (1958)⁽¹⁴⁾ says that "roughly similar local transport facilities seem to be dictate similar spacing of lowest order towns performing equivalent functions in both areas" and "the administrative hierarchy, for example, is largely unrelated to the economic and has its own value," yet this theory does not apply to the region under study where the functional hierarchy, as said above, is largely governed or as if somewhat predetermined by administrative status of the towns.

Every town is in a way distinctive in its attributes, and hence the assessment of central functions must include the economic and social condition of the respective urban centres. Besides, the region being economically backward, the towns do not possess all the

central functions stated by Christaller, but only some of them. Of them also some are very rare. Sophisticated mass-communication media like radio station, developed transportation like air ways high grade technical and general educational institutions, like, Medical College, Engineering College, University etc., regional head quarters of commercial organizations, like, the zonal office of the Commercial Banks, etc., are found only in a few of the towns. The most important media for mass communication the daily newspaper, is entirely absent and only the weeklies and fortnightlies are published from some selected towns, like, Siliguri, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Kalimpong, Alipurduar, Balurghat, etc.. Some other functional units like, high schools, post office, health centres, and entertainment centres like cinema houses are very common among the central services which have been accepted here, as the primary indicator of central services or external services.

Central Services as Offered by the towns :

The following are the functions or services taken as the indicator of central functions obtaining in the towns of the region under study :

- (A) Institution of administration
- (a) District Headquarters.
 - (b) Sub-Divisional Headquarters.
 - (c) Police Station Headquarters.

(B) Institution of Communication

- (a) Post Office with telephone & Telegraph facilities.
- (b) Radio Station/Microwave station, etc.
- (c) Departmental Telegraph office.
- (d) Internal communication by Telephone lines.

(C) Institution of Finance

- (a) Bank.
- (b) Insurance, etc.

(D) Institution of Education

- (a) University.
- (b) Medical/Engineering College.
- (c) College.
- (d) Training centres.
- (e) Schools, etc.

(E) Institution of Health

- (a) Hospital with bed strength.
- (b) Nursing home.
- (c) Veterinary hospital.
- (d) Other hospitals, etc.

(F) Recreational Institution

- (a) Cinema house.
- (b) Theatre Hall, etc.

(G) Transport

- (a) Airways.
- (b) Railways.
- (c) Roadways, etc.

(H) Cultural Activity

- (a) Public library.
- (b) Local Newspaper.
- (c) Cultural clubs with auditoriums.

(I) Baza and co-operatives

- (a) Baza shop of different types based on annual sale-range.
- (b) Co-operative stores.

(J) Hotels with lodging facilities.

The type of establishment stated above have again been sub-divided into a number of sub-headings in order to bring out the hierarchical order of the towns. Among the services mentioned, a few requires some explanatory notes. First, hotels with lodging facilities have only been chosen as this particular indicator reveals the commercial importance of an urban centre or its importance as a place of tourism (like, Siliguri, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, etc). It is true that a hotel always provides housing accommodation to the travellers. But in this area under study there are hotels which do not provide such facilities, although registered as an hotel. Hence, the distinction has to be made between those offering

bed and those not, the latter falling under the category of Eating Houses. Almost all such hotels with bed have concentrated mostly in the district headquarters, and particularly in those which are either tourist centres, or both tourist and commercial centre at the same time. This particular fact further strengthens our view that the concentration of higher order external services is closely related with the administrative hierarchy. Second, the "Bata Shop" has been taken as an indicator after Bhattacharya (1972)⁽¹⁴⁾ as it is the only commercial concern in India maintaining its branches all over the country. A Bata shop thus carries some special importance as an urban phenomenon as its grades and number differ with importance of the town. Besides, this is brought forward in the classification of the shops into types based on the annual sale-range, which alone defines the commercial importance of the towns they are located in. Third, the hospitals have been classified according to their bed strength as the availability of hospital services can not be gauged properly by any other factor.

As Christaller has expressed the "Centrality must be expressed in quantity"⁽¹⁵⁾ and as mere size does not reveal the importance of centrality of a place distinctly, a score point/value (Föpke 1968)⁽¹⁶⁾, (Bhattacharya 1972)⁽¹⁷⁾, has been prescribed for each of the central functions considering their importance and number of occurrences in a particular central place. The addition of

the score values establish the ^{actual} importance of the place ~~actual~~ and its capacity in discharging the external services.

Table - 1

Central Functions of the towns of North Bengal
(1973 to 1975)

(A)	(B)	(C)
Name of the Central Function	Sub-heading of the central functions classified in column(A)	Score points for the central functions mentioned in column (B)
(A) Institution of Administration	District Headquarters (D.M.)	5
	District Head quarters(D.C.)	4
	Sub-divisional Headquarters	2
	Police Station Headquarters	1
(B) Institution of communication	<u>POST OFFICE</u>	
	Head post office with telegraph and Telephone (2nd class/H.S.G)	4
	Sub-post office with Telegraph and Telephone (L.S.G.)	3
	Sub-Post Office with Telegraphy and Telephone	2
	Sub-Post Office with either Telegraph or Telephone	1

Table - 1 Contd.

Radio Station	6
Microwave Station	5
Departmental Telegraph and Telephone Office	4
<u>Internal communication by Telephone lines :</u>	

Number of telephone lines :

below 50 lines	1
51 - 100	2
101 - 250	3
251 - 500	4
501 - 1000	5
1001 - 2000	6
2001 - 3000	7

(C) Institution of Finance :

<u>Bank :</u>	
State Bank of India (Branch Office)	5
Commercial Bank (Zonal Office)	4
Commercial Bank (Br. Office)	3

Insurance :

Life Insurance Corporation of India	
L.I.C. Division Office	5
L.I.C. (Head Office)	4
L.I.C. (B.O)	3

Table - 1 Contd.

	L.I.C. (E.O)	2
	L.I.C. (D.C)	1
	National Insurance (General)	
	Division Office	4
	Branch Office	2
	Other General Insurance	1
(D)Institution of Education :	University	7
	Medical College/Engineering College	5
	College	4
	Polytechnic	3
	Training Centre	2
	High School	1
(E)Institution of Health :	Government Hospital with beds.	
	<u>Number of beds :</u>	
	0 - 50 beds	1
	61 - 100	2
	101 - 250	3
	251 - 350	4
	351 - 450	5
	Nursing home	4
	Veterinary Hospital	2
	Other Hospital	3
	Nurse Training Centre	1

Table- 1 Contd.

(F) Institution of Recreation :	Cinema House	4
	Theatre Hall	2
(G) Transport :	Airport with daily flight	7
	Airport with three flight a week	6
	Railway (Terminal)	5
	Railway (Station)	4
	Roadways(Terminal)	3
	Roadways(Station)	2
	(Bus-Station)	
(H) Cultural Activities :	Public Library	4
	News paper (weekly)	2
	Newspaper (fortnightly)	1
	Cultural club (with auditorium hall)	2
(I) Bata and Co-operatives:	Bata shootype (according to sale range)	
	K (Rs. 4,50,000 - 6,00,000)	5
	J (Rs. 3,50,000 - 4,50,000)	4
	I (Rs. 2,00,000 - 3,50,000)	3
	H (Rs. 2,00,000)	2
	G (Rs. 1,74,000)	1
	<u>Co-operative Store :</u>	
	Sasabayika (Departmental Retail Store)	4
	Wholesale Consumers' (Head quarters)	3

Table - 1 Contd.

	Wholesale consumers (Br.)	2
	Primary Consumers Store	1
(J)Hotel with lodging facilities.	Three Star Hotel	6
	Two Star Hotel	4
	Tourist Lodge	3
	Other Hotel	2

Note : (A) D.M : District Magistrate's Office

D.C : Deputy Commissioners Office

(B) H.S.G : Higher Selection Grade

L.S.G : Lower Selection Grade

(C) H.O. Headquarters

B.O. Branch Office

D.C. Development Circle.

It is necessary to point out here that in selecting the 'indicators' of central functions, care has been taken not to include those which do not exist in the towns of this region. Thus, many of the higher order functions existing in larger towns or cities elsewhere do not find any place in the present list.

A careful analysis of the services offered by these towns will reveal that in general the services under each category belong to middle to low or lower order in the scale of importance. For

instance, in the administrative sphere the function is confined to the jurisdiction of the district at the most; in the sphere of communication not a single class I post office has been found; the number of telephone lines do not cross the mark 3000 in any of the towns; the index of commerce is also not at all higher in view of the fact that no branch of Reserve Bank has yet been established in the region, while the State Bank has remained to the grade of a "Branch Office" and that too is highly restrictive in its appearance; the poverty of the educational services is pronounced by the absence of any research institution in the entire region and the limitation is further magnified by the lone presence of one University, one Medical College and one Engineering College in the region as a whole (Table 1). The same picture emerges when services of other types are considered. Even the large hospitals are moderate in size; cinema halls are of mediocre size without modern amenities like air conditions etc. while the theatre halls are very poorly equipped. In the sphere of transportation, air service plays an insignificant role, while the road and railway terminals have not yet developed into the originating points for long distance passenger traffic. The absence of any daily newspaper or any reference public library portrays the cultural backwardness of the region. Even the "Bata Shops are of medium to small in size; the samebayika, if present at all, is too poor to be called a departmental store and the highest status of the Hotels is confined to three-star.

Table - 2

Showing the population, Administrative status, Total score and Hierarchical order of the towns of North Bengal

1	2	3	4	5
Name of the Towns	Population	Administrative Status (1971)	Total score value	Hierarchical order of the towns.
Siliguri	97,424	S.D.	273	5
Darjeeling	42,873	D.T.	197	4
Kalimpong	23,430	S.D.	76	2
Kurseong	16,425	S.D.	61	2
Cooch Behar	53,634	D.T.	172	4
Dinhata	11,737	S.D.	48	1
Tufanganj	4,209	S.D.	27	1
Mathabhanga	3,167	S.D.	40	1
Mekliganj	3,777	S.D.	16	1
Haldibari	5,098	P.S.	17	1
Guriahati	8,920	-	06	1
Jalpaiguri	55,159	D.T.	175	4
Alipurduar	36,667	S.D.	91	2
Maynaguri	15,808	P.S.	32	1
Dhupguri	16,803	P.S.	31	1
Falakata	7,194	P.S.	28	1
Malbazar	10,951	P.S.	29	1
Domahani	7,706	-	15	1

Table - 2 Contd.

1	2	3	4	5
Balurghat	67,038	D.T.	87	2
Raiganj	43,191	S.D.	94	2
Kaliaganj	21,169	P.S.	54	1
Islampur	15,715	P.S.	53	1
Gengarampur	14,809	P.S.	29	1
Hili	6,096	P.S.	22	1
Dalkhoia	5,622	P.S.	25	1
English Bazar	61,335	D.T.	145	3
Old Malda	6,691	P.S.	19	1

<u>Score range</u>	<u>Order</u>	
0 - 55	1st	D.T. - District Town
56 - 111	2nd	S.D. - Sub-divisional Town
111 - 165	3rd	P.S. - Police Station
166 - 220	4th	
221 - 275	5th	

In order to find out the importance of a town and its graded order in terms of the totality of the services it offers, a schematic procedure has been followed where each of the function or service has been evaluated on the basis of points. Thus, the total score made by town on the basis of the points it earns for particular services it offers, determines its place in the hierarchy of the urban centres. For this purpose a frame has been suggested (Table-2) establishing different order of towns in the hierarchy. In the present case urban places belonging to five different orders emerged.

(Table - 3)

Name of the central places grouped in individual order

SL No.	1st Order Central places	2nd Order Central places	3rd Order Central places	4th Order Central places	5th Order Central places.
1.	Guriahati	Alipurduar	English Bazar	Darjeeling	Siliguri
2.	Dinhata	Balughet		Jalpaiguri	
3.	Tufanganj	Raiganj		Cooch Behar	
4.	Mathabhanga	Kurseong			
5.	Mekhliganj	Kalimpong			
6.	Haldibari				
7.	Falakata				

Table-3 Contd.

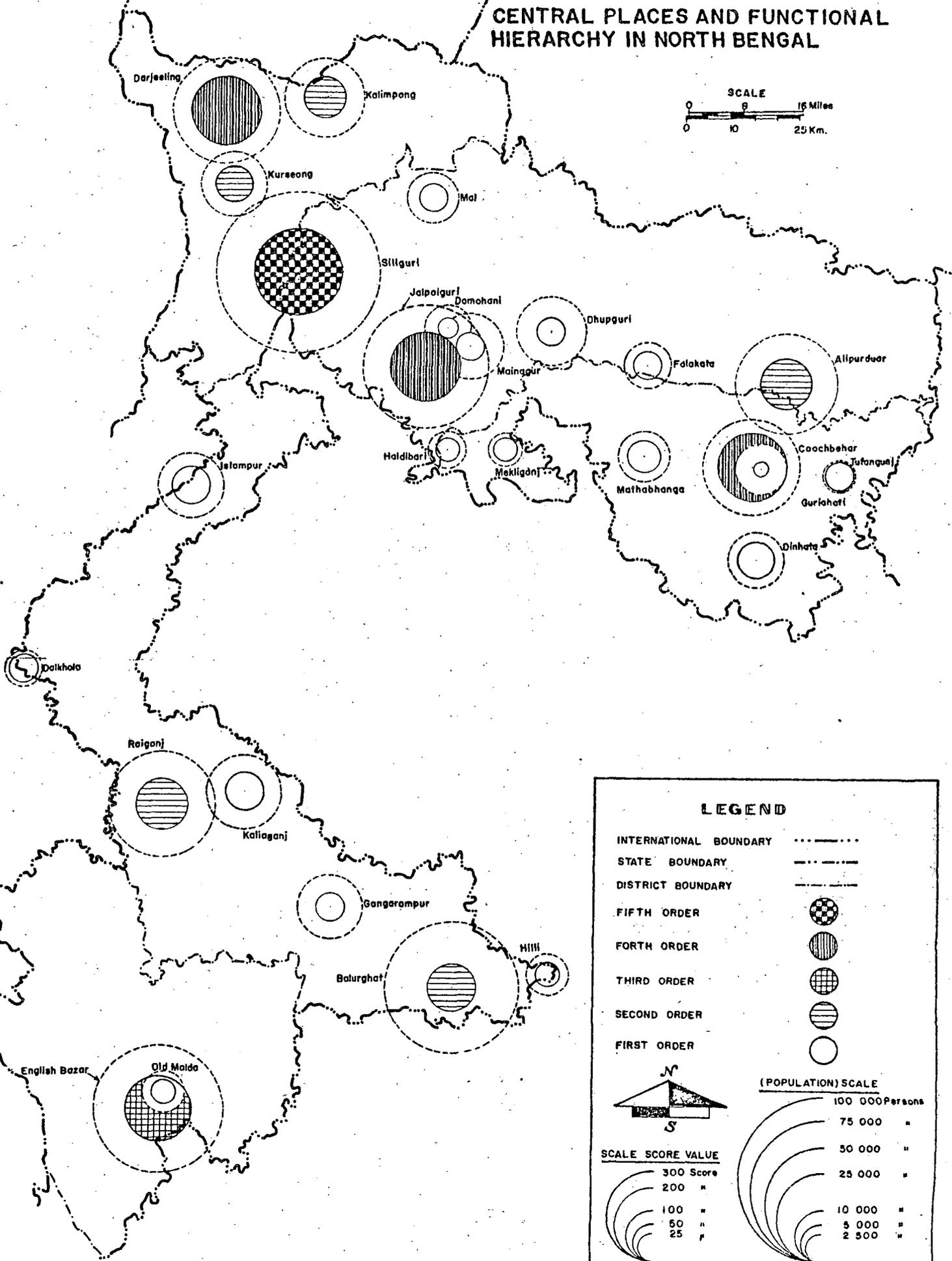
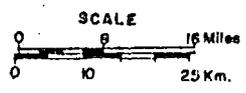
8. Dhupguri
9. Maynaguri
10. Malbazar
11. Domahani
12. Kaliaganj
13. Islampur
14. Gangarapur
15. Dalkhola
16. Hili
17. Old Malda.

Table - 3 shows that only one central place is in the 5th order, three central places are in the 4th order, one central place is in the 3rd order, five central places are in the 2nd order, and the remaining seventeen central places are in the 1st order. The schematic analysis clearly brings to light the extreme irregularity in the hierarchical distribution of the central places in North Bengal. (Map No. P-161)

The order of the central places based on the score of their external services, shows (Table-2) that, at the top of the ladder is siliguri, scoring 273 points, offering all the central services described in Table -1. This is, by far, the unique case as no other centre offers all the services taken for consideration

88° 00' 88° 30' 89° 00' 89° 30'

CENTRAL PLACES AND FUNCTIONAL HIERARCHY IN NORTH BENGAL



LEGEND

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY - - - - -

STATE BOUNDARY - - - - -

DISTRICT BOUNDARY - - - - -

FIFTH ORDER

FORTH ORDER

THIRD ORDER

SECOND ORDER

FIRST ORDER

(POPULATION) SCALE

100 000 Persons

75 000 "

50 000 "

25 000 "

10 000 "

5 000 "

2 500 "

SCALE SCORE VALUE

300 Score

200 "

100 "

50 "

25 "

here. In order of position Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, and Cooch Behar the three district headquarters of the respective districts come next and are classed as 4th order central places. English Bazar, another district town of the district of Malda, alone represents the 3rd order central places. Next to English Bazar are 2nd order central places represented by Belurghat, Raiganj, Kalimpong, Kurseong and Alipurduar. Among them the first one is a district headquarters and the others are sub-divisional headquarters. Mostly, there are seventeen towns falling to the bottom of the scale. These are 1st order central places, consisting of sub-divisional headquarters and police stations. The great variation between the highest and ^{the} lowest score values is indicative of the wide variation in the number and types of services available from different towns of North Bengal. The central places in North Bengal do not present any constellation pattern in respect of their hierarchical distribution or set up, and it has often been noticed that some central places, having sub-divisional administrative status, have surpassed their district headquarters. The average score value of the central places, ground according to their administrative ranks, viz, District towns, sub-divisional towns and police station towns presents two interesting points: (1) functional hierarchy increasing with the increase of administrative status (Fig 1) and 2) central places - having sub-divisional

status, score nearly half the average score of the district towns and the average score of the police station central places is less than half of the average score made by the sub-divisional towns. The average score mentioned above has been calculated on the basis of the formula given below :

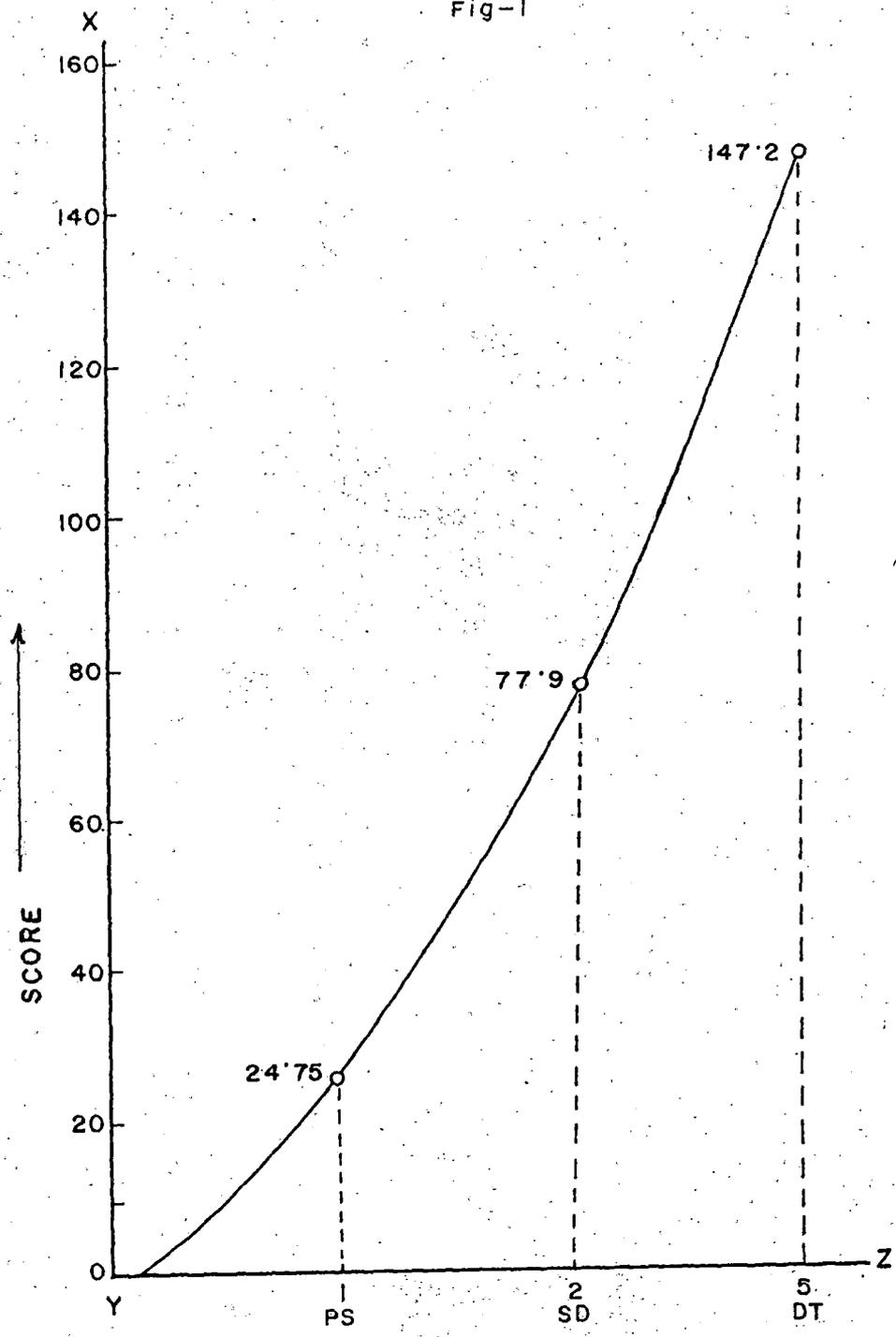
$$\frac{\sum \text{Of score of central places belonging to same administrative hierarchical unit}}{\sum \text{of total number of same administrative hierarchical towns.}}$$

It differs from the curve which has been drawn based on the weighted mean score of the central places of same administrative hierarchy based on the following simple formula.

$$\frac{\sum \text{of score X population of the respective central place}}{\sum \text{of population of the central places of same administrative hierarchy}}$$

According to this formula the mean score value between the district towns and the sub-divisional towns differ to a little degree (Fig-2). When District towns score 149.3, the sub-divisional towns score 147.9, but the Police Station central places remain almost in the same position, scoring only 29.8.

Fig-1



Showing relationship between administrative hierarchy and functional hierarchy.

PS - Police Station, SD-Sub-Division, DT- District Town

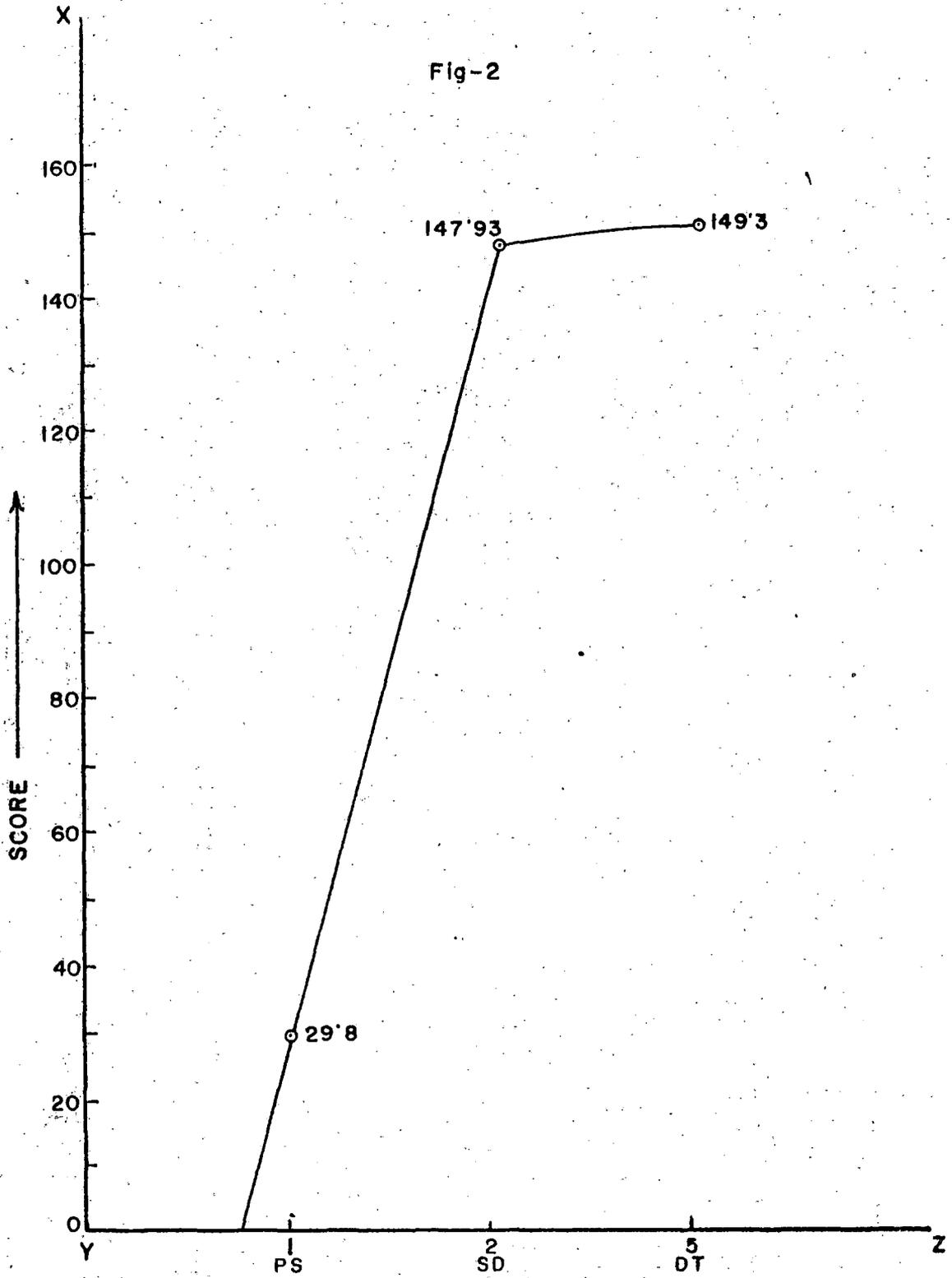


Fig-2

Showing the average (weighted mean) score of the Central Places of same administrative hierarchy in respect of their population.

PS - Police Station, SD - Sub-Division, DT - District Town.

These two figures show two important points : (1) The average score, whether it is general average or weighted mean, supports the hypothesis established in the foregoing paragraphs that in North Bengal, the functional hierarchy or external service capacity increases with increase of administrative importance and (2) the size of the towns (i.e, the population) plays an important part in rendering the external services. It, therefore, may be concluded that the weighted mean of the sub-divisional towns is almost nearer to the district town when the population is taken into consideration.

The hiatus between the weighted mean of the central places of sub-divisional status and those of the police station status is due to the small size of the population, as well as the concomitant poor score values of the latter. As for instance, among the central places of police station status, Kaliaganj scoring the highest points (54), has the largest population (21,169).

Table-4

Showing the resemblance between size and the central external services of the urban centres.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Name of the urban centres	Population (1971)	Order according to size	Hierar- chical score	Order according to hierar- chical score	Serial number according to total points scored
Siliguri	97,484	1	273	5	1

Table-4 Contd.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Balurghat	67,088	2	87	2	8
English Bazar	61,335	3	145	3	5
Jalpaiguri	55,159	4	175	4	3
Cooch Behar	53,684	5	172	4	4
Raiganj	43,191	6	94	2	6
Darjeeling	42,873	7	197	4	2
Alipurduar	36,667	8	91	2	7
Kalimpong	23,420	9	76	2	9
Kaliaganj	21,169	10	54	1	11
Dhupguri	16,308	11	31	1	16
Kurseong	16,425	12	61	2	10
Mayneguri	15,808	13	32	1	15
Islampur	15,715	14	53	1	12
Gangrampur	14,809	15	29	1	17
Dinhata	11,737	16	48	1	13
Malbazar	10,951	17	29	1	17
Mathabhanga	9,167	18	40	1	14
Guriahati	8,980	19	06	1	26
Domohani	7,706	20	15	1	25
Falakata	7,194	21	28	1	18
Old Malda	6,691	22	19	1	22

Table-4 Contd.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Hili	6,096	23	22	1	21
Dalkhola	5,622	24	25	1	20
Haldibari	5,098	25	17	1	23
Tufanganj	4,209	26	27	1	19
Mekhliganj	3,777	27	16	1	24

Table -4 reveals further, that with the fall in size, the central service capacity of the urban centre diminishes appreciably. This trend particularly is most distinct among the lower order central places. The two central places such as Balurghat and Gurihati, however, record marked differences between their respective size and central service capacity and as such become exceptions to the rule. But, the reasons are not far to seek. Balurghat, though a district headquarters, lies almost out of the way, in a corner of the district, and with a poor transportation system and without any railway link, it remained away from the mainstream ^{of} development in contrast to the others. This has equally been reflected in its central functional activities offering a lesser amount of services as compared with the centres of similar administrative status.

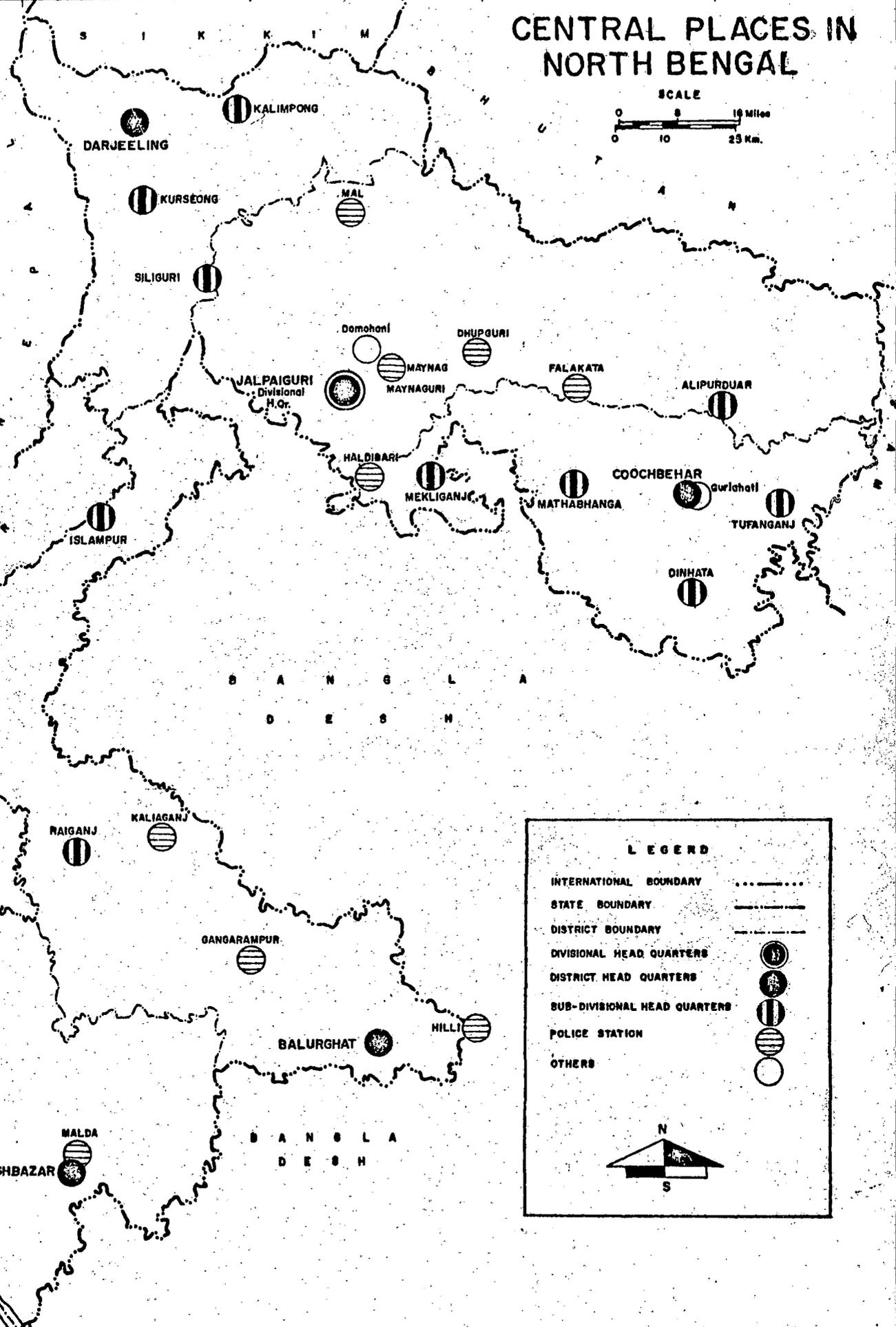
88° 00' 88° 30' 89° 00' 89° 30'

CENTRAL PLACES IN NORTH BENGAL

SCALE



27° 00'
26° 30'
26° 00'
25° 30'
25° 00'



LEGEND

- INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY-.....
- STATE BOUNDARY -----
- DISTRICT BOUNDARY - - - - -
- DIVISIONAL HEAD QUARTERS
- DISTRICT HEAD QUARTERS
- SUB-DIVISIONAL HEAD QUARTERS
- POLICE STATION
- OTHERS

N

S

On the other hand, Gariahati, declared as a separate urban centre of the district of Cooch Behar, in fact, lies within the distance of a few minutes walk from the district headquarters of Cooch Behar (i.e. Cooch Behar district town). As a result it completely depends upon the town of Cooch Behar for most of the central services, like, hospital, education, entertainment, library, transport and so on. The central services of this town are, therefore poorly developed, giving it a score-value of only 6 points.

Dynamic aspect of hierarchy

The number and variety of central services, defining the hierarchy of the urban centres, expressed in the total score value of each central places as given in the table-2. lends strong support to the hypothesis that, with a few exceptions, the degree of external services increase with the increase of administrative status. Excluding Siliguri, for the time being, one can find that only one district town with a total score of 87 points has been surpassed by two sub-divisional towns such as raiganj and Alipurduar and there are two other sub-divisional towns such as Tufanganj Mekhliganj, with scores of 27 and 16 points which fall below the rank of six and ten police station towns respectively. Apart from these diviations, the remaining towns have almost followed the trend defened above.

According to the score value earned by each town it has already become clear that Siliguri, though a sub-divisional town, has attained the highest hierarchical position, i.e. 5th order, and has surpassed all other towns including all the district headquarters of this region. The reason behind this spectacular growth of Siliguri is its locational advantage which contributed to the expansion and multiplication of its central services through concentration of seats of a large variety of higher offices or establishment of public institutions, among which the headquarters of a number of financial organizations like banks insurance; higher learning institutions like a University and a Medical College; an airport, terminals of railways and roadways, are noteworthy. Siliguri has witnessed this rapid growth only during the recent years, particularly since 1962. Prior to that it was like any other sub-divisional town of the region, coming next in functional importance to that of the district headquarters.

The strategic location of Siliguri has proved to be an important factor, adding special weight to the development of this place as the principal market centre for the use of the defence personnel. The towns of Darjeeling, Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri are all grouped in the 4th order central places and are characteristically superior to their sub-divisional towns because of their administrative status, and most of the important seats of finance,

health, education and transportation ^{are} have concentrated in these towns. The highest score of Darjeeling among all the district towns of the region is primarily due to her fame as an international/tourist+centre, resulting in the presence of ^a large number of good hotels with lodging facilities among which three-and two-star hotels are also included. Besides, being the only large town in the hills, Darjeeling exerts more influence on its surrounding or complementary regions than the urban centres of the plains.

Raiganj, a sub-divisional town with good transport links, has scored higher than the district town of Balurghat. The sub-divisional towns, like, Dinhat, Tufanganj, Mathabanga, Mekliganj ^h cut a very sorry figure in terms of total score and have been grouped in the 1st order central places. All of them are small-size towns with a large degree of dependence upon Cooch Behar district town.

Old Malda, Kalimpong and Haldibari represent Christaller's "displaced central places of historical times" (19). Old Malda, once a flourishing town in Bengal, being located too near to English Bazar, has lost its economic independence in course of time. On the other hand, Kalimpong and Haldibari have lost their importance as principal markets since when the political boundary of the country changed. Haldibari, prior to the Partition of Bengal, was an important jute-collecting centre in the North Bengal. The existing empty

large jute godowns of the town, and the existence of a railway line for transportation of the collected jute at one time, make its present poverty amply clear. Losing its prior economic position, Haldibari gradually changed and degraded from an important collecting centre to a small residential settlement. Lastly, the border conflict since Partition has almost sealed its future prospects. On the other hand, Kalimpong, for a long time, was the terminus of the mule trade route from Tibet into India via the Jalap La pass. At that time Kalimpong flourished as a trade centre. But with the closure of that trade-route, after the seizure of Tibet by China (1957), the importance of Kalimpong declined as a commercial centre.

The central places of North Bengal hardly fit in with Christaller's pattern. In fact, "It has been doubted whether these many steps (the seven or more ranks of central places (M-, A-, K-, G-, P-, L-, etc) of a full central place hierarchy devised by Christaller may be recognized in a highly developed countries. Geographers have in a number of developing countries in the past years increasingly observed that (a) the number of hierarchical steps of central places is far from the full range of theoretical requirements of W. Christaller and that (b) the standard of economic and social developments in various regions is of imminent influence on the formation of central place hierarchies" (19).

Spacing of the towns of North Bengal

So far the spacing is concerned, the region under study presents no constellation pattern, as urban development has not taken place in response to the economic functions of the region. In otherwards, the poor economic growth did not have any real impact on the urban expansion; on the contrary urbanization has been rather imposed upon the administration's framework. It becomes more clear when one tries to study the districts separately. From Cooch Behar to Malda - out of these five districts none has the central places of all the five orders. While in the district of Cooch Behar we find only the 4th order and 1st order central places, Darjeeling district has no 1st order and 3rd order central places. Besides, the spacing between the 1st order central places are not same even in any of the districts except the district of Cooch Behar which shows an exception, though partially. The 1st order central places like, Dinhat, Tufanganj and Mathabhanga of the district of Cooch Behar are located with almost equally spaces between them. The region having homogeneous physical and economic background exhibits this sort of relationship. But the 1st order central places of the other districts differ greatly in respect of their spacings. While the distance between Mal - bazar - Maynaguri, and Mal bazar - Dhupguri are almost same (20 mls), spacing between Domohani - Maynaguri (8 mls) and Domohani-Dhupguri

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(14 mls) is widely different. The district of Darjeeling, being a hilly region, presents irregular spacing which is so natural according to her physical setup. But in West Dinajpur the picture is again the same. Here also the distances between the 1st order central places are not regular. The spacing between Dalkhola - Kaliaganj (23 mls) and Dalkhola - Islampur (36 mls.) may be cited as typical examples. The two central places of the district of Malda belong to two different orders, 3rd and 1st order. So the question of spacing does not arise here.

Among the 2nd order central places, two are in Darjeeling (such as Kalimpong and Kurseong); one is in Jalpaiguri (Alipurduar), and two are in West Dinajpur (such as Belurghat and Raiganj). So one can hardly measure the spacing here. The three 4th order central places, are located in the three districts of Cooch Behar, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, represent their headquarters and the lone 5th order central place, Siliguri, is located in the district of Darjeeling. Here, too, the spacing can not be measured. It reveals that the central places did not form in an orderly fashion, i.e. there is no order-wise succession.

Cooch Behar itself is a 4th order central place but the rest of the centres within the district are 1st order central places, while 2nd and 3rd order places are absent. This schematic analysis leads to the conclusion that the administration played a major role

in the growth of the towns. So, when the district headquarters have reached upto 4th hierarchical order the other central places remained mostly in the lowest order in the hierarchical scale, revealing their weak economic background. The general absence of any medium or large industrial establishments, making the region virtually dependent on agriculture, which itself is not developed either, has left little scope for urbanization. It is the administrative function which has given rise to the present system of urban centres in the region and the development of the communication system having so far been oriented to the existing pattern of urban development, has failed to generate sufficient force for creating new urban centres. As a result, the growth of the urban centres remains haphazard, lacking systematic spacing or orderwise succession.

(xxii)

CHAPTER - III

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Chapter IV

URBAN REGIONS OF NORTH BENGAL

Almost every urban centre has some sort of influence on its surrounding region in respect of its urban activities. The region thus commanded or being dependent upon that urban centre is called the urban region or hinterland of that urban centre. The domain of the term "urban region" is so vast that it includes everything from the mere production of surplus food to the latest cultural pursuits like newspapers, etc. The application of the term urban region has a limitation i.e., it is limited to a certain distance from the parent urban centre. Of course, this limitation varies according to the servicing capacity of the urban centre and the degree of the accessibility in the form of transportation network between the urban centre and the rest. Thus the urban region of all the urban centres is not same in total area and it varies subject to the resourcefulness of that region as well as of the urban centre.

Every urban centre has a relationship with its surrounding rural areas and with the passage of time, a demand for a new socio-geographical unit in the place of the existing administrative unit develops. This socio-geographical unit is known as the urban region which develops on the basis of an exchange-service relationship between the urban and the rural areas, often crossing the administrative boundaries of each. As any urban centre (town/city)

is a product originating from the rural-surplus, the urban region is not the product of any planner or architect; rather it exists within the society, and the interrelationship between any urban settlement and its surrounding area is a matter of serious consideration for the modern social sciences. The English poet John Donne wrote "No man is an island". Man as a social animal has to depend upon others for many things. Similarly, the city and its intimate region or a town and the surrounding rural areas, being his place of inhabitation, become dependent on each other on bilateral terms where a 'give and take policy' is active. Beside, this interrelationship can not be measured by quantitative methods alone, rather it would require a search for cultural inter-links, which is characteristically a qualitative aspect.

In discussing urban region Smalles (1963)⁽¹⁾ wrote "when within any urban area, we recognize, industrial belts, shopping areas, residential quarters and such like, we are expressing the internal structure of the towns in terms of different uses of urban land. It can also be described in terms of the physical forms and arrangement of the spaces and buildings that compose the urban landscape or town scape, as it may be called. Differences in either or both these intimately related aspects of urban morphology, function and form, give a basis for the recognition of urban region"^(a) He has sub-grouped these urban regions, follows : (a) The core;

(b) The integuments; (c) Azonal factors; and (d) Enclave".

Precisely, smalles tried to confined the urban region within a city and not beyond it. While according to Dickenson (1964)² "every urban settlement, large and small, is in some degree a headquarters of trade and institutions, for the very essence of urban character is the provision of goods and services for a tributary area" and "among the basic activities, which are mainly industrial in character -- though they may well include other activities such as commerce, finance, administration recreation (tourism) and education there are some activities which mainly serve and draw from a more or less extended and continuous area around the urban centre, the range of association depending on the nature of the goods or service and on the competition of neighbouring centres. The term, trade area, sphere of influence, hinterland (German, the land behind), umland (German, the land around), and urban field are variously used to define this area". In other words, according to Dickinson, a city always has a region which is dependent on the city for economic, cultural, social, entertainment and administrative purposes, where the city/town itself becoming the focussing centre of the activities of the surrounding region.

The concept of urban region is thus, based on a flow of functions between the urban and the rural areas has been described

by social scientists as the Rural-Urban interrelationship. In fact, no town is a parasite since it renders at least some non-agricultural services to the rural people, while the urbanities have to depend upon the rural people for their food as they do not grow their own. As a result, an interrelationship harmonises the urban-rural link, leading towards social solidarity. This solidarity has been furthered by speedy communication systems. The societies of the pre-industrial age obviously could not enjoy such a situation. The close links between the rural areas and this has largely been due to the improved communication networks, leaving no area far beyond contact. The development of communication, apart from increasing accessibility, has also minimised the distance or journey-hours from the rural areas to the towns/cities, and the easier accessibility has brought the urban areas, with their modern urban amenities and entertainments, to the reach of the villagers. The country people have developed a sense of material needs, and for these, they visit the neighbouring urban centres, located within a 1 to 2 hour journey. The shops offering clothings, utensils and various other daily necessities, the institutions offering medical and educational facilities, which are available in the urban centres, are a great attraction for the villagers, who feel a greater urge to visit the towns: Above all, the cultural link between the urban and the rural areas is an important

~~described~~ factor in the growth of the urban region. The rural culture usually differs from an urban culture. The basic economic-occupational difference and the age-old traditional conventions and superstitions have kept the rural areas far away from modern civilisation, which is particularly true in countries like ours. The urban centres, being the seat of modern cultural activities, have a role in indoctrinating the rural folk as well as associating them with the modern way of life. The modern transportation has brought the rural areas culturally close to the urban centres.

It is however, quite a difficult job to demarcate the urban regions in an area where urban development is still at a low level, and such is the case of North Bengal, where out of the total population only 9.26 percent are urban and 90.74 percent are rural (Census of India - 1971), and where no large industrial complex has grown up yet except the tea gardens, which are mainly located away from the urban centres, having no direct impact on the urban growth of this region. In spite of that, some sort of urban region is bound to be slowly taking shape with the increasing importance of administrative centres mainly the district headquarters based on the improvement of transport networks resulting in the beginning of a trend to ^{the} hierarchy of urban centres of this region. The region under study has some similarities, indicated by

Nonn (1975)⁽³⁾ in his article "Concerning the Notion of 'Sub-Region: The French Case". This is in respect of the service facilities available in the towns, irrespective of their size, and insufficiency of a hierarchical organization. In fact, the urban centres of North Bengal, being the product of a colonial setup, had administration as their main function and in the absence of a good transportation network, they could not extend their sphere of influence into the countryside for a long time. It is a very recent phenomenon, particularly of less than two decades (1950-1970), that the road network has developed to a considerable extent and brought the urban centres into close contact with their surrounding rural areas, thus integrating them into inter-dependent units.

The Present Urban Condition of North Bengal for the development of Urban Regions

While discussing the present urban condition of North Bengal, one should keep in mind that the present urban setup of North Bengal is the product of externally imposed systems which had been initiated by the British, and thus is characteristically colonial. During the British rule in India, the region got some administrative importance and for that reason a few administrative centres were

created, which subsequently increased their functions and populations and brought some more centres into existence. Administration as a function is still playing a major role in the urban development of this region. But the remoteness from the heartland of commercial and industrial activity mainly centred in and around Calcutta, the existence of a slow and insufficient transportation network and the presence of a primarily subsistence agricultural practice over the whole region, have together given rise to a very low-grade urbanization which can better be described as "subsistence urbanization"⁽⁴⁾ (Breese, 1969). Most of the people are still living in an environment providing either limited urban facilities or none at all. In essence, 'subsistence urbanization' indicates an urban condition where the urban centres are mainly confined within their own limits, containing very limited service capacity for the surrounding region. Out of the 28 urban centres (Census of India 1971), representing barely 9.26 percent of the total population of the region, only a few have got commercial importance, and the lack of large industrial activities has limited the scope of employment, the latter being mainly confined to the white collar services. As a result the urban centres have failed to make any remarkable imprint on their surrounding countryside. Besides, a good number of places which have been declared as urban centres display no such urban potentialities for which the people of the

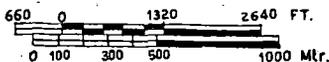
surrounding countryside can depend on them. Only the administrative headquarters have some influence on their surroundings and, as exceptions, one or two urban centres, because of their nodal position (like Siliguri and Raiganj), attract people from their surroundings and far beyond. Otherwise, most of the towns of North Bengal are so tiny in their size and function that they can hardly meet the commercial needs of their people. As a result, the background for the development of urban regions remained weak. The little commercial interaction and the lack of occupational opportunities became two main bottlenecks in the growth of a defined urban region. The present urban conditions do not help the growth of urban regions as in the western countries, where the maximum commercial interaction between the rural and the urban centres are conducive to the growth of them. Besides, the region under study lacks any big city or metropolis which can cater to the needs of a large population. Most of the towns of North Bengal belong to the category of fifth to third order towns in respect of their population-size. But a few of them, which are either administrative headquarters of the districts or big commercial centres, have extended their sphere of influence, often to beyond their administrative jurisdictions. Thus, an urban region based on administrative and commercial activities is slowly emerging in a number of instances. The present urban condition which prevails over North Bengal, like any other region of a

developing country, presents some differences from the type of urbanization which we witness in the advanced countries. These differences can be summarised as (1) differences in the forces inducing urbanization; (2) differences in the ratio of population to resources and levels of living; and (3) differences in the basic outlook and value-systems.

The Urban Regions in North Bengal

Keeping the background mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, the 9.26 percent urban population has some direct or indirect relationship with their surrounding countryside, which consists of 90.74 percent rural population. Since most of the urban centres have developed as administrative centres, the urban region or hinterland of an urban centre generally extends to the limit of its administrative or judicial jurisdiction. It should be borne in mind that people hardly come for the purpose of marketing alone. In fact the purpose of marketing is always there even when the villager visits the town for either judicial or administrative purposes. On the other hand, the purpose of visiting a commercial town is generally motivated by commercial needs, but these types of market centres or commercial towns are rare. The existing rural areas of North Bengal are so backward that except for a few grocer, shops and

ROAD MAP OF MALDA TOWN



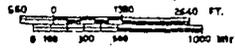
Reference

National Highway	---	
State Highway	---	
Major District Road	---	
Other District Road	---	
Village Road	---	
Bridge	---	
Ferry	---	

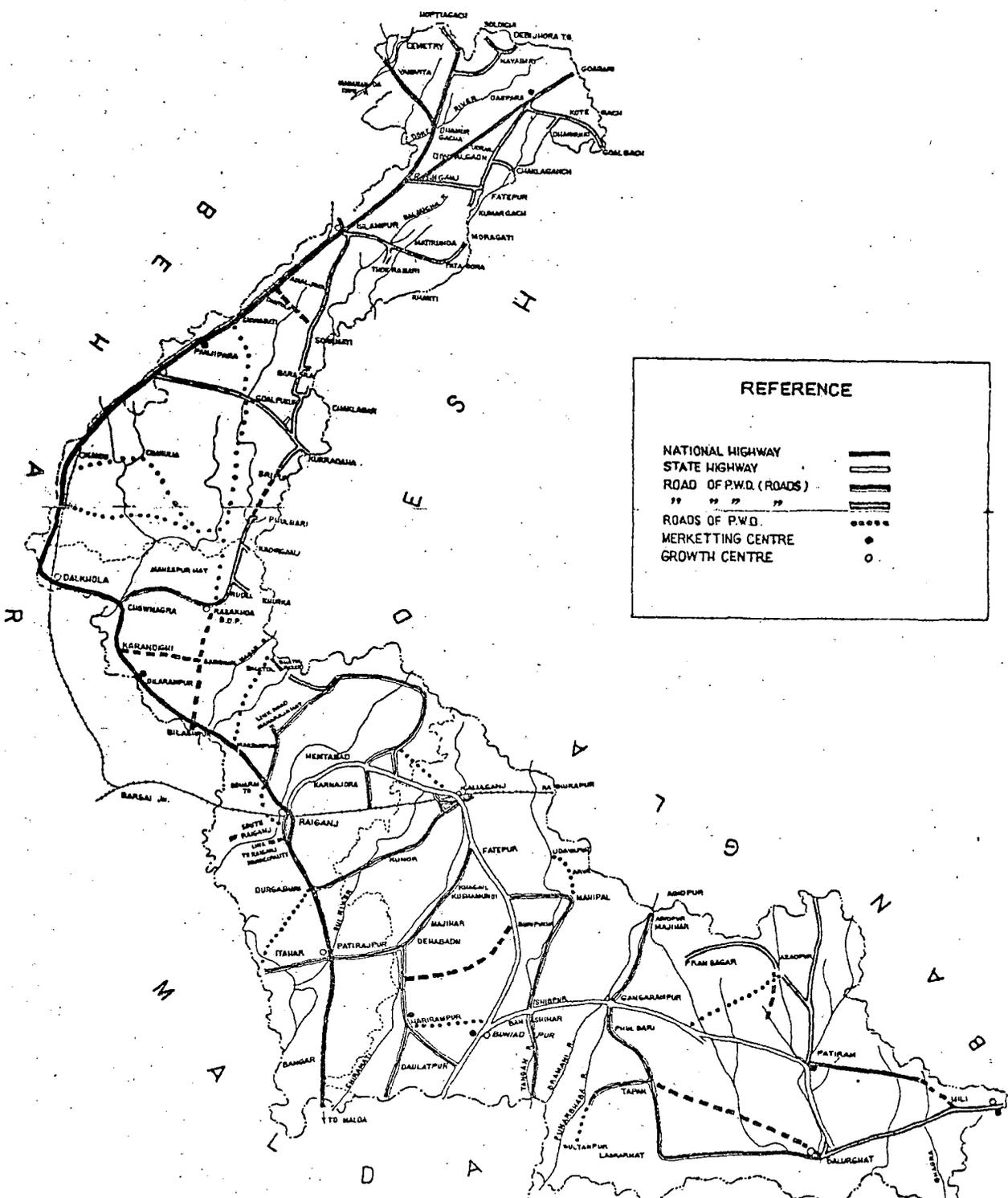


other types of small shops, one would find no other commercial units. Thus for most of his needs, a villager must go to a nearby urban centre. Besides, for the health services and higher education like High Schools or Colleges, villagers have to go to the nearest urban centre where at least a primary health centre and at least a middle or high school are located. For major medical treatment, the villagers have to go to the district hospitals located in the district towns. In short, the rural people have no other alternative but to depend upon the urban centres for services like administration, judicial affairs, health, education, markets and entertainment. Such degree of dependence increases further with those urban centres which are district or sub-divisional towns, because whatever development has taken place in the region that has mainly become concentrated in those urban centres. As the degree of interaction between the urban and the rural centres depends upon the rate of accessibility, the towns with better transportational network have greater spheres of influence upon their countryside. In fact, in North Bengal the transportation is too poor so far as the railways are concerned. Only one railway line i.e. the Northeast Frontier Railway, runs through this region and, having a few local trains running between certain urban centres, serves the villagers very little when they often feel the necessity of visiting the near-by town, particularly for different types of services. Besides, these trains run twice daily - once in the morning at the office-hours and

ROAD MAP OF WEST DINAJPUR DISTRICT



DARJEELING



REFERENCE

NATIONAL HIGHWAY	
STATE HIGHWAY	
ROAD OF P.W.D. (ROADS)	
" " " "	
ROADS OF P.W.D.	
MARKETING CENTRE	
GROWTH CENTRE	

BANGLA DESH

then in the afternoon. The train-service, therefore, meets only the needs of the service-holders and students who come to the district town or other towns everyday at a certain hour. People from the rural areas usually travel by buses plying between different urban and semi-urban centres at definite intervals. The road-network has developed in the region linking almost all the urban centres with their surrounding countryside and, particularly, the National Highway 31, running from north to south, touches almost all the important towns of this region. As a result people depend more on the bus-services than on other means of transportation. The air-service as far as it exists, is mainly for Calcutta and has no impact on the growth of the urban regions.

Thus, it is only the bus-services which can determine the rate of interaction between the urban and the rural areas, and with the help of bus-services one can identify the urban region of any urban centre of North Bengal since it is the roadways through which the urban influences funnel out into their hinterlands. For this purpose the most important factor that has to be taken into consideration is the intensity of bus-services in respect of number of trips to surrounding regions. The more the number of trips, the more it will lead towards a better urban rural unison in all spheres of life, making an outlet for the out-flow of urban goods and in-flow of rural products, which ultimately help in the transformation

of human attitudes, behavioural patterns and social value-systems. In other words, road-transportation in North Bengal is slowly bringing the outer rural areas in to close contact with the urban centres.

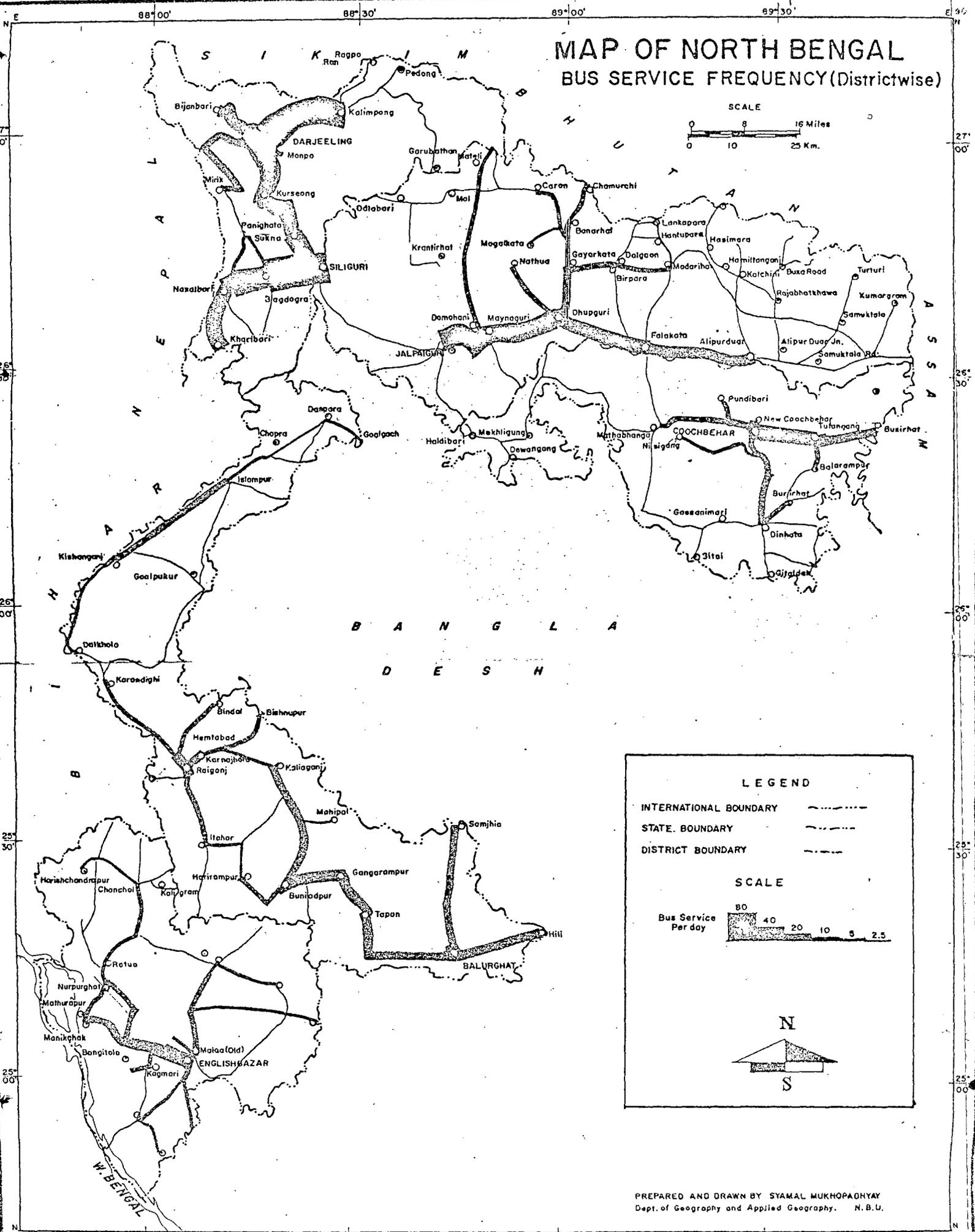
Method of Data Collection

In order to analyse the bus-services and their impact on the growth of the existing urban regions in North Bengal, data have been collected from all the urban centres by an "origin-to-destination" method, i.e. how many buses ply daily from one originating centre to its surrounding region, and, where they go. Pased on the data, the map showing the bus-service-frequency has been prepared. Further, to define the actual urban regions, the inter-district or inter-state express-bus-services have been eliminated, as they do not serve the actual needs of inward-outward movement between the urban and the rural areas. Two inter-district bus-services, however, included are Siliguri-Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar-Alipurduar, because they have a direct impact upon the four urban centres in respect of trade, services and marketing.

Data Analysis

The map (No 17), showing the bus-service frequency of North

MAP OF NORTH BENGAL BUS SERVICE FREQUENCY (Districtwise)



LEGEND

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY ————

STATE BOUNDARY ————

DISTRICT BOUNDARY ————

SCALE

Bus Service Per day

80 40 20 10 5 2.5

N

S

Bengal, reveals that the interaction between the urban and the rural areas is maximum along certain routes and minimum along other routes. Another important fact which the map presents is that only a few centres have command over their surrounding regions.

The routes along which urban-rural interactions is maximum are (1) Siliguri - Bagdogra, with extension upto Maxalbari; (2) Darjeeling - Kalimpong; (3) Jalpaiguri - Maynaguri - Dhupguri; (4) Cooch Behar - Tufanganj - Buxirhat; (5) Cooch Behar - Dinhata; (6) English Bazar - Menikchak - Mathurpur Chain; (7) Balurghat - Hili; (8) Balurghat - Kaliaganj; (9) Raiganj - ^KMaran^aejhora; (10) Raiganj - Itahar.

Minor interactions are mainly concentrated along (1) Darjeeling and its surrounding region, including important settlements like Sukhiapokhri, Mirik, Bijanbari, Mungpoo, etc. (2) Jalpaiguri and its surrounding Doorgs region, including semiurban centres like Gayarkata, Birpare, Dalgaon, Banarhat, Madarihat, Malbazar, Metali, etc; (3) Cooch Behar - Mathabhanga, including Pundibari, Nishiganj; (4) Raiganj and its surrounding area, including large settlements like Bishmupur, Kaliaganj, Kerandighi, Hemtabad; (5) Islampur - Dalkhola (6) Islampur - Daspara, etc.

Along the Siliguri - Bagdogra route, the buses make more than one hundred trips perday, including up and down services. Actually the entire region from Kharibari to Siliguri depends on

Siliguri for various services, of which market and judiciary needs make the most important part. Siliguri offers a larger market than any other town of this area and the impact of Siliguri both as a commercial centre as well as a transportation - terminal for both the railways and roadways is increasing day by day. The influence of Siliguri upon its surrounding region as a terminal apoint has extended beyond its administrative jurisdiction. People, even from Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri, have to come to Siliguri to avail of the Mail train from New Jalpaiguri Railway Junction, located near by Siliguri town. This is one of the biggest important reilway junctions of the Eastern India, having all the three broad, metre and narrow gauge railway lines, maintaining direct links with the Darjeeling Hills on the one hand, and the plains beyond the State, on the east and west. In the district of Jalpaiguri, the maximum interaction takes place along the Jalpaiguri - Maynaguri - Dhapguri route, giving rise to heavy traffic between the town of Jalpaiguri and the outlying centres as well as rural settlements, from where people come to the district town every day, mainly for judicial or administrative or educational (for higher learning like, colleges, etc.) purposes. Jalpaiguri, with its large market, caters to the needs of a larger area than the sub-divisional headquarters Alipurduar, which also attracts people from its own surrounding rural areas for the same reasons. Cooch Behar, being a district town, is the only

urban centre which has a visible sphere of influence upon its surrounding region served by the Cooch Behar - Rufanganj - Buxirhat route and the Cooch Behar - Dinhat route, by which people come to Cooch Behar for judicial, administrative, health, education and marketing. Besides, a good number of job-holders and students mostly going to colleges, travel daily from the neighbouring areas to Cooch Behar Town. Similarly English Bazar, the district town of Malda district, extends its sphere of influence along the Englishbazar - Manikchak - Mathurpur route, and in the district of West Dinajpur, the Balurghat - Hili, Balurghat - Kallaganj, Raiganj - Karnajhora, Raiganj Itahar are the main bus-routes along which the maximum urban-rural interaction takes place. The purposes of visits of the hinterland people to Englishbazar, Balurghat and Raiganj are the same as in the other district and sub-divisional towns of North Bengal i.e. the hospitals, educational institutions and the markets attract people from the outlying distant areas. In fact, very few people come for entertainment, as most of the large settlements have at least one cinema hall however small it may be and actually rural people are so poor that it is beyond their capacity to bear on expenditure for this purpose. Only on special occasions like religious festivals, etc. the rural folk come in groups to visit the town. This happens during the main Hindu Festivals, especially when thousands of ruralites visit the towns like Siliguri, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, etc.,

for going to the Puja-Pandals, where the deities are placed on exquisitely-built platforms.

But-service frequency of the next order is found in the case of Darjeeling which, as a district town, commands its surrounding region, consisting of centres like Bijanbari, Sukhiapokhri, Mirik, Mungpoo, etc., from where the green vegetables, poultry products and milk come to the district town, while the rural folk come to purchase readymade garments, stationary goods and for entertainments. The frequency is also rather small between the town of Jalpaiguri and the Duars area. Cooch Behar - Mathabhanga or Cooch Behar Nishiganj reveals less frequency since people from these centres come to the district town mainly for administrative and judicial purposes. Raiganj, as a commercial and administrative centre, has developed some sort of sphere of influence on the area lying around it. The people of the surrounding countryside depend on Raiganj for its larger market, greater medical facilities and the like. The region served by Raiganj town includes important settlements like Bishnupur, Katiaganj, Karandighi, Hentabad, and Itahar. Islampur, another sub-divisional town, enjoys a hinterland because of its administrative and judicial activities.

The foregoing analysis reveals that the centres which have developed a trade area or hinterland or urban region, are mainly administrative headquarters, like district towns such as Darjeeling,

Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Balurghat and English Bazar, and Sub-divisional towns such as Siliguri, Raiganj, Alipurduar, Islampur, etc. On the other hand, a good number of urban centres including some sub-divisional towns, are playing a negative role in this respect. As has already been mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, the activities of the latter group are mainly confined within their own local administrative limits and have remained at too a low level to come into the use of the people living in their surrounding countryside. The other characteristics of the urban regions of North Bengal towns may be summarised as follows : (i) Most of the towns have urban regions limited within the respective district boundary; (ii) The administrative and market potentialities are the two main factors which have given impetus to the growth in existing urban regions in North Bengal; (iii) In most cases, the journey from the parent town to the surrounding centres or vice-versa, is of one to two hours duration, and rarely is over two-and-a-half hours.

CHAPTER-IV

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CHAPTER - V

LOCAL URBAN GOVERNMENTS AND URBAN AMENITIES IN THE TOWNS OF NORTH BENGAL

Dating back to its origin, the role of urban Government becomes more crucial with the rapid expansion of urbanization which resulted in a deep crisis in the urban environment. The term urban Government means a Local Self Government which is a responsible institution committed to ensure well being of the urbanities within the jurisdiction of urban area.

Characteristically, the urban government is an administrative institution of a particular locality (i.e. of an urban centre), having a limited known area of Jurisdiction, representing the inhabitants of that area and elected by them, enjoying considerable autonomy provided by the Acts and regulation, having the power of imposing tax on the services it renders, and spending the income on local services, thus separating it from the State or Central Government's services⁽¹⁾.

Condition in North Bengal

The picture of urban Government in this northern part of West Bengal is a bit different in respect of that of the southern part of the River Ganges. The region remained backward for a prolonged period because of its remote location from other parts

of the state as well as less urban character. The lack of well documented reports and old records made it quite a hardship to shed light on the nature and activities of the local government of this region prior to British rule. A few administrative centres were created in this region to run the administration and with the establishment of these administrative centres, some sort of local bodies like union Board and District Boards were created to supervise some local services and to decentralize the administration. But how far the services of these local bodies was able to do well for the inhabitants of those localities is a matter of research. ^{What} ~~What~~ we can assume is that the services ^e performed by these local bodies were no more better than that of the present day.

The affect of the partition brought change in the demographic picture of this region. Population in the urban area increased abruptly with the refugee influx and the role of the urban governments gained more importance followed by the increasing liabilities. While a few towns existed in North Bengal in the pre-partition period, the post-partition period witnessed a mashroom growth of towns and according to census of 1971 there were 28 urban centres in North Bengal. Out of these twenty eight urban centres, only twelve towns have municipality, eleven are under Anchal Panchayat and four are under town committee and one is a railway town.

Table -13

Showing the towns with their local Governments.

SL NO	1 Name of the District	2 Name of the towns	3 Nature of urban government
1.	Cooch Behar	Cooch Behar	Municipality
2.	Do	Dinhata	"
3.	Do	Tufanganj	Town Committee
4.	Do	Mathabhanga	"
5.	Do	Haldibari	"
6.	Do	Mekhliganj	"
7.	Do	Guriahati	Anchal Panchayat
8.	Jalpaiguri	Jalpaiguri	Municipality
9.	Do	Alipurduar	"
10.	Do	Maynaguri	Anchal Panchayat
11.	Do	Dhupguri	"
12.	Do	Falakata	"
13.	Do	Malbazar	"
14.	Do	Domahini	"
15.	Darjeeling	Darjeeling	Municipality
16.	Do	Kurseong	"
17.	Do	Kalimpong	"
18.	Do	Siliguri	"

Table - 13 Contd.

Sl No	1	2	3
19.	West Dinajpur	Salurghat	Municipality
20.	Do	Raiganj	"
21.	Do	Kaliaganj	Anchal Panchayat
22.	Do	Gangaraapur	"
23.	Do	Hili	"
24.	Do	Islampur	"
25.	Do	Dalkhola	"
26.	Malda	Englishbazar	Municipality
27.	Do	Old Malda	"

The foregoing table shows that many a good number of towns (eleven in total) which have been declared urban according to the Census of 1971, have such local Governments which are basically rural in character.

The general outline of functions and responsibilities of these local Governments of urban centres is same. It exists to provide and promote the civic amenities for offering a better urban-livelihood. But the service or functions varies markedly based on their nature and size. In fact, the function of an

Anchal Panchayat differs greatly from the function of a Municipality.

Before going to describe the functions of those local bodies, a brief account of their nature of formation, perhaps, will help us to understand their functional capacity.

The municipality usually consists of several commissioners whose number varies according to the strength of the population (based on the criteria given by the ministry of Local Self Govt. of West Bengal vide Govt. order no-9586/M-1M-65/58 (3) dated 30.10.1958) to give a proper democratic representation. The commissioners represent their wards from which they are elected. A Chairman and a Vice-Chairman are elected by the commissioners from among themselves for a period of four years. The Chairman usually supervises the entire function of the municipality and thus holds the most responsible position in the municipal administration.

The town committee, according to its constitution, is a nominated body whose number of members varies from three to nine⁽²⁾, headed by a Chairman and Vice-Chairman who are also nominated⁽³⁾ members. Usually the Executive Administrative Officer of the town becomes the Chairman of the town committee by virtue of his post. An Anchal Panchayat is constituted for a group of contiguous gramsavas, consisting of several members (varies according to

the number of gramsaves) directly elected for a term of four years. Anchal Pradhan and Up-Pradhan are elected by the members of Anchal Panchayat.

The function of a municipality comprises various fields from street scavenging to impart education. A brief description of the functions of a municipality is given below.

The municipality contains a number of sections like sanitary, health, engineering, education and general, each headed by an executive personnel under the direct supervision of the Chairman. Each section mentioned above has the following responsibilities :

Health : To supervise and regulate offensive and dangerous trades to prevent the food adulteration; inoculation and vaccination for the prevention and control of contagious and infectious diseases; to supply drinking water⁽⁴⁾.

Sanitary : To clean municipal roads and public places, disposal of garbage, night soil; preparation of compost manures; cleaning of drains, service latrines etc. and to keep the town clean⁽⁵⁾.

Engineering or Public Utilities : Construction, maintenance and improvements of roads, culverts and drains; cremation and fire services; sanction of building plans; lighting the public streets, etc⁽⁶⁾.

Education : To establish, maintain, pre-primary or primary ~~XXXXXX~~ schools with all amenities like water, latrine, urinal, electricity, etc⁽⁷⁾.

Development : Construction, and maintenance of markets, shopping centres, slaughter houses, washing places, wells, parks, etc. and preparation of comprehensive plans for proper development and growth of the town⁽⁸⁾.

General : To look after the administrative machinery for proper discharge of duties⁽⁹⁾.

The function of Town Committee is not so wide like a municipal organization even though it has some sort of resemblance with the municipal services. The main functions⁽¹⁰⁾ of a town committee are given below :

- (1) To provide chowkidari service.
- (2) To construct tanks, roads, bridges, ghats, wells, drains and privy.
- (3) To maintain and repair the above things being the property of the town committee; to keep the town clean.
- (4) To supply water and to arrange for lighting the street and watering the roads.
- (5) Erection and maintenance of offices and other buildings required for the purpose of the town committee.
- (6) Other works of public utilities calculated to promote the health comfort or conveniences of the inhabitants.
- (7) To maintain a fire brigade.

Main functions of the Anchal Panchayat are sanitation and conservancy; construction^{and}/maintenance of public streets; supply of

water; primary education; lighting of public streets in built-up areas; construction of drain and drainage works and provision of public latrines, etc. But throughout India the Panchayats have no work schedule. The works vary from State to State based on their nature of Panchayats apart from those mentioned above which are almost common in all the Panchayats of India.

An analytical approach towards the urban administration in North Bengal will reveal that, actually the urban administration in this region presents a different picture regarding its functions or services which list a volume of work only in black and white. Though the municipalities of the towns of North Bengal generally pledge to render all sorts of urban amenities or civic utilities to their tax-payers, in fact, the idea of creating a full-fledged urban society is still a far cry in this region. Practically, still now many a good number of municipalities have no piped water supply system for supplying drinking water to its residents. Towns like Raiganj, Balurghat, Siliguri fall in this group. The service function of town committee is strictly limited to certain fields like Chowkidary, conservancy etc. and practically no Mchhal Panchayat in North Bengal has conservancy service, pipe water, general health section, even some has no street light facility.

Of course, the establishment costs of almost all urban

Governments absorb a considerable amount of money in the fields of expenditure. In Cooch Behar municipality it was 22% of the total expenditure in 1973-74, in Darjeeling municipality it was 66% in 1972-73 and in Alipurduar municipality the cost of establishment in the year 1973 increased by Rs. 650/- roughly than the year 1971-72. In Town Committees and Anchal Panchayats the establishment cost takes a lion's share in the fields of expenditure. So, most of the urban Local Governments depend mainly on the Government Grants to meet the expenditure on development works. The political infiltration is also another reason for the sluggish administration of the Local Governments. In fact, the organizations being elected bodies have become political platforms and are concerned much less with keeping their pledges made at the time of election.

The financial condition of the urban Governments and their actual functions, in practice, can be revealed by detail analysis of their income and expenditure statements. The dearth of available data and information makes it almost impossible to give a full financial picture of all the local bodies of the urban centres of North Bengal. A selective study, taking a local body from each of the representative groups of local Government viz Municipality, Town Committee, and Anchal Panchayat would, however, serve the purpose.

Case Studies : The case studies of the following urban centres are mainly based on their statements of income and expenditure. We shall try to derive from their income and expenditure statements, what kind of services they are rendering to their rate payers, and what percentage of the total expenditure they devote to development works; how much is absorbed by the general administration; how much they obtain as grants from the Governments and the nature of grants; the existing drawbacks catering to the public demands and possible means of improving the situation.

Data : The data presented in this paper mainly constitute the statement of income and expenditure of the local bodies, collected by the author himself through personal visits to those institutions. The statement of income and expenditure has been taken for three years from 1971-72 to 1973-74, except in the case of the panchayat where the figures for continuous three years were not available.

Jalpaiguri Municipality : The municipality of Jalpaiguri was established in the year 1885. The total area at present is 10.075 sq.km. The total population of the town, according to the Census of India 1971, is 55,345 persons which indicates an increase of 14% during the last decade. Total number of rate-payers is 5247 persons (up to 1973); total number of wards - 19; total number of commissioners - 19 (as per single member constituency). The town is the

second most important town of North Bengal, but being the divisional Headquarters of North Bengal, ^{it} enjoys the highest administrative status.

Source of Revenue :

- (a) Rates on holdings, (b) Conservancy rates, (c) Water rates
- (d) Lighting rates, (e) Tax on profession and trade; (f) Food license; (g) Rickshaw license; (h) Cart Registration; (i) Rent of land and houses; (j) Pound rent; (k) Sale of composed manure; (l) Fees from market and slaughter-house; (m) Fees from building plan; (n) Grant-in-aid from government.

Mode of Taxation :

- (a) Rates on holding - 10%
- (b) Conservancy rate - 7% (based on the total annual valuation of holding)
- (c) Water rates - 2½% (based on the total annual valuation of holding)
- (d) Lighting rates - 2% (based on the total annual valuation of holding)

Table - 2

Showing the income of the Jalpaiguri Municipality from 1971 - 74 March.

(Amount in Rs.)

Source of Revenue	1971-72	Percentage	1972-73	Percentage	1973-74	Percentage
A. Consolidated rate	544637.0	48.3%	602012.0	38.7%	649481.0	51.3%
B. License fee and other taxes	66175.0	5.9	54060.0	3.5	56333.0	4.5
C. Govt. contribution & other grants	427606.0	37.8	799711.0	51.4	490385.0	38.7
D. Miscellaneous	90986.0	8.0	99622.0	6.4	69165.0	5.5
Total :	1130405.0	100.0	1555405.0	100.0	1265914.0	100.0

(Source : figure compiled from the detail statement of sources of revenue. Annual reports of Jalpaiguri Municipality).

The table - 2 shows that throughout ^{the} three financial years, from April 1971 to March 1974, the consolidated rates comprising rates on holding, conservancy rate, water and lighting rate; ^{and} Government's contribution and other grants are ^{the} two main sources of income for this Municipality, contributing over 80% of the total income.

The license fees and other taxes, consisting of those on profession and trade; House connection fees; warrent fee, and fees on market and slaughter houses, make a very small part of the total income in the respective years. From the table-2, it is found that the highest percentage covered by this section was only 5.9% in 1971-72.

The miscellaneous items comprising interest, pound, rent on land and houses, sale proceeds of compost manure, advance, deposit etc (and miscellaneous itself) contributed something more than license fees and other taxes. But in never came to more than 8 percent of the total income of this municipality in those respective years.

The Table-2 indicates that the earning from different sources did not increase uniformly while in 1972-73 all except Government contribution decreased from 1971-72; in 1973-74 the consolidated rate and license fees and other taxes improved their position, but the Govt. contribution and the miscellaneous items suffered a setback.

The reason behind the increase of consolidated rate in 1973-74 is that nearly Rs. 60,000 was collected more as current collection in that year (Table ¹⁵-3).

Table-3/15

(Amount in Rupees)			
Source of Revenue	1972 - 73	1973 - 74	Amount increased
Rate on holding	201317.0	224213.0	22501.0
Conservancy rate	129021.0	150052.0	21031.0
Water rate	47783.0	56260.0	8477.0
Lighting rate	38556 .0	45190.0	6634.0

(The arear figures have not been added within the current figure)

Table-4 16

Showing the expenditure of Jalpaiguri Municipality for the following financial years 1971-72, 1972-73 and 1973-74.

(Amount in Rs.)

Sl No.	Heads of Expenditure	1971-72	Perce- tage (%)	1972-73	Perten- tage (%)	1973-74	Perten- tage (%)
1.	Conservancy	410900.0	35.1	410148.0	26.3	404164.0	31.7
2.	Water Supply	39641.0	3.4	44143.0	2.8	61765.0	4.8
3.	Drainage	96036.0	8.2	101103.0	6.5	101380.0	7.9
4.	Roads	173091.0	14.8	527599.0	33.8	227251.0	17.8
5.	Lighting	26006.0	2.2	33114.0	2.1	75934.0	5.9
6.	Health measures	10817.0	0.9	8663.0	0.6	10173.0	0.8
7.	Primary education & grants to other institutions	79693.0	6.8	81313.0	5.2	70959.0	5.6
8.	Market and Slaughter House	8597.0	0.7	8841.0	0.6	10434.0	0.8
9.	Miscellaneous	129145.0	11.0	133834.0	8.5	117122.0	0.2
10.	General Administration.	197673.0	16.9	210974.0	13.6	197620.0	15.5
Total :		1171599.0	100.0	1553782.0	100.0	1276302.0	100.0

Looking at the expenditure account (table-4)¹⁶, it is interesting to observe that the Conservancy and Roads jointly absorb not less than 50% of the total expenditure throughout the three financial years and the general administration took not less than 13.6% of the total expenditure in the three respective years. So, we can say that conservancy roads and general administration jointly absorb, roughly, $\frac{2}{3}$ of the total expenditure which reveals the plight of other services like, water, lighting, education, health, etc. which are considered no less important than the foregoing services. Practically the breakdown in the table-4¹⁶ shows that none of these services absorbs 10% of the total expenditure and specially in health service, it is less than 10% throughout the three financial years. Although the situation improved to a small extent during 1973-74 financial year, yet the services require more attention upto now.

While on ^{the} one hand the income statement of Jalpaiguri Municipality shows that the organization depends too much on the Government grant, on the other hand, the expenditure statement reveals that some fundamentally requisite services are far from the expected standard, and the authority should seek some rational approach to overcome these shortcomings.

(B) Town Committee Tufanganj : The Town Committee of Tufanganj town was established in April, 1939, under the section of Act no. IV

of Cooch Behar Town Committee Act of 1903⁽¹¹⁾. The area of the town committee remained the same (i.e., 34 sq.ml) from the date of establishment and in spite of further expansion of the township with the increase of population, the area remained static. As per Census 1971, the town contains 4209 persons. By virtue of post, the Sub-Divisional Officer of the town is the Chairman of the town committee. The body is a nominated one. The total number of members varies from three to nine. The town, being one of the sub-divisional headquarters of Cooch Behar district, is mainly an administrative centre. The industrial and commercial pulse of the town is weak.

Funds or Source of revenue : According to the Act No. XV of the Town Committee Act of Cooch Behar State of 1903, money, taxes, rents and profits received by the Town Committee of any place, all fines, fees, and penalties paid or levied under this Act, in addition to such sums as the His Highness the Maharaja* may assign from state funds to any town committee constituted under this Act, shall constitute a fund which will be called the town committee fund⁽¹²⁾. The maximum limit of assessment on holding remained within Rs.84.0 only per annum from its establishment, as per the rule of the Act of 1903⁽¹³⁾

* After the merger of Cooch Behar State with the Indian Union, the Government of West Bengal is giving financial assistance to the Town Committee.

Table-517

The following is the statement of income of Tufanganj Town Committee for the last three financial years viz 1971-72, 1972-73, 1973-74.

(Amount in Rs.)							
S1 No.	Source of Revenue	1971-72	Percentage	1972-73	Percentage	1973-74	Percentage
1.	Consolidated rate	9133.0	14.29	9645.0	13.7	12739.0	12.5
2.	License and other taxes	20865.0	32.63	22390.0	31.7	19180.0	18.1
3.	Govt. Contribution	26624.0	41.64	28118.0	39.8	60613.0	57.3
4.	Miscellaneous	7320.0	11.44	10554.0	14.8	12929.0	12.1
Total :		63942.0	100.0	70707.0	100.0	105461.0	100.0

(Source : Annual Administrative Report, Tufanganj Town Committee)

It will be seen from the table-¹⁷5 that the Government grants constitute more than 40 percent of the town committee's income with a slight fall in 1972-73, while the consolidated rate comprising Chowkidari Tax, latrine tax and lighting tax failed to earn much, the highest percentage in this field is only 14.29 percent in 1971-72. On the other hand, the license fee and other taxes contributed more, such as 32% in 1971-72, than consolidated rate throughout the three financial year. The income from

miscellaneous items, however, shows an increase from 1971-72 onwards.

The Table - V shows that this organization (like the Jalpaiguri municipality) depends too much on Govt. grants and the local sources of income play a rather insignificant role for the augmentation of its funds.

Table - 18

Showing the expenditure statement of Tufanganj Town Committee.

Sl	Heads of expenditure	1971-72	Percentage	1972-73	Percentage	1973-74	Percentage
1.	Establishment cost (general).	15851.74	26.9	16972.53	18.6	17582.04	17.8
2.	Chowkidar Establishment.	7126.04	12.6	7903.03	8.6	8418.57	8.6
3.	Conservancy Establishment.	23725.83	41.7	26775.62	29.2	28547.31	29.4
*4.	Original works.	8972.21	15.9	38330.94	41.8	42111.94	43.0
5.	Miscellaneous	1625.77	2.9	1640.84	1.8	1318.75	1.3
Total :		56700.59	100.0	91622.96	100.0	97978.61	100.0

The most remarkable feature of this breakdown is that, while the expenditure on general establishment decreased gradually,

* Original works comprise construction of roads, buildings, sinking of tubewells; Drainage; light charge; Watercharge, establishment, etc.

(26% 18% and 17% in the respective years) from 1971-72, the town committee devoted more funds to original works which increased by 26% in 1972-73. The expenditure on conservancy however, declined by 13% during that period.

It can be noted that inspite of the absence of development fund from the government, the town committee tried its utmost to utilise its major portion of income on the development works.

(C) Falakata Anchal Panchayat : The Anchal Panchayat of Falakata, the latter being a police station headquarters of Jalpaiguri district, has no such administrative importance like two other towns viz Jalpaiguri and Tufanganj. The Panchayat was established in June, 1961 according to the Panchayati Act of 1958. The town, with a population of 7194 persons and an area covering 16.36 sq. miles of which 0.189 sq miles comprise the proper town area, plays an important role for the surrounding country-side from the commercial point of view. The total number of rate-payers is 2506. The anchal Panchayat is an elected body headed by a Pradhan who is usually elected by the other members from among themselves for a period of four years. The activity of Anchal Panchayat as a local Self Government is very limited specially in an urban area. The Panchayat provides no conservancy service or street lights in this town. The street light service, once initiated, has been withdrawn since 1970 due to very poor response from the rate-payers in

Paying light taxes. The following table will show the sources of revenue of Falakata Anchal Panchayat for the year 1974-75 March.

Table-7¹⁹

Showing the income statement of Falakata Anchal Panchayat.

(Amount in Rs.)		
Sl No. Source of revenue	1974-75	Percentage
1. Tax on housing and holdings : (combining current & arear).	651.88	36.87
2. Tax on business and license fees: (combining current & arear).	1764.25	18.61
3. Cattle certificate.	305.00	3.21
4. Government grants.	6756.00	71.3
(A) Chowkidari & dafadari		
(b) Secretary's pay.		
Total :	19477.13	100.0

The interesting feature which the table-7¹⁹ shows is that Government contribution constitutes 50 percent of the total income of this Anchal Panchayat, and the tax on housing and holding secures second place, obtaining 34.5 percent of the total income. Others are insignificant as the sources of revenue.

Table-8²⁰

Showing the expenditure of Falakata Anchal Panchayat for 1974 - 75.

(Amount in Rs.)

Sl No	Heads of expenditure	1974 - 75	Percentage
1.	General establishment (Combining pay to chowkidar and dafader, secretary and stationery and allowances)	10717.65	83.8
2.	Tax collection commission (to staffs)	976.00	7.6
3.	Development works	1100.00	8.6
Total :		12793.65	100.0

²⁰
The table -8 shows that the general administration absorbs more than 80 percent of the total expenditure of this Anchal Panchayat which reveals the plight of the other services, specially of development work which constitutes only 8.6 percent of the total expenditure. Ofcourse, the Government's grants for development work towards this organisation is too tiny, so the shortage of own fund coupled with inadequate Government development grant made this organization unable to spend more for development work.

This Anchal Panchayat gets from the State Government only Rs. 1297.0 as development grant, and practically no organization would venture to step forward for any kind of development work with that picayunish grant.

The financial picture given above of three different types of urban Local Governments gives a general idea about the condition prevailing in North Bengal. Barring a few, almost all the local urban bodies of this region are suffering from a inverse pyramidal set-up where costs for staff maintenance is much higher than the actual expenses on civic services. Simultaneously, these organizations, like Town Committees and Anchal Panchayats are facing an acute financial stringency due to the lack of local sources for earning more revenue as well as limited Government grants. This has a direct impact on the servicing capacity of the civic bodies. The urban residents get little from their hands what is called urban amenity, and as such living conditions become unbearable. Lack of sanitation, and absence of underground sewerage, scarcity of purified drinking water, good roads, hospital and shopping facilities along with unplanned growth giving rise to slum conditions everywhere, add to the misery of the dwellers. The appalling condition can be improved only when the civic authorities take a serious view of the situation. But here also the principal handicap is an inadequate fund.

As the existing sources of revenues ~~along~~ cannot provide the required fund, the local bodies usually seek Government help in the form of grant-in-aid. It is imperative, therefore, that the pattern of this assistance should be made more liberal in regard to the schemes like water supply, sewerage and drainage, primary schools and primary health etc.

The report of the committee of Ministers constituted by the central council of local self government (November 1963) recommended ⁽¹⁴⁾ that :

- (1) There should be a basic "general purposes" grant for each local body other than the bigger municipalities and corporation;
- (2) The local bodies eligible for such grant within each category (municipality, local board, panchayats, etc) would be classified into few simple divisions based on population, area, resources etc, and the grant itself related to these factors as well as to the size of the normal budget of the local bodies.
- (3) The basic grant should be such that, after taking into account its own resources, the local body will have fairly adequate finance for discharging its obligatory and executive functions.

But, ^{it} is known to us that the Government, itself going through economic crisis, has no such capacity to provide enough money for all these services. Hence, the local bodies have to tap every new avenue to increase its fund. This can be achieved in

two ways :

(1) either by cutting the expenditure on establishment or by creating new taxes or organizing the existing tax collection department in such a manner as to yield more income.

Regarding the expenditure on general administration, it has already been said that, the expense in this field is more than the actual and many authors writing on local Governments have harped on the same string. The local body should not forget the economic capability of the tax-payers while imposing the new tax. A larger burden of tax levied on the tax payers may create difficulties for the local bodies to collect it. Besides, now-a-days the different political bodies will put political pressure on the local body to lift such new taxes if imposed. An example may be cited here. Recently the Siliguri Municipality tried to introduce a toll tax upon the vehicles crossing the Mahananda river, but the local body had to lift it in the face of a strong opposition from the interested sections.

The realisation of property tax through proper assessment, often absent due to undervaluation of the property or the inefficiency of the elected body "to cope with the complicated problem of valuation of property"¹⁵, may help the local body in improving

its financial condition. For this ~~the report~~ of the Committee of Ministers under the Chairmanship ^{of} Dr. R. Zakaria⁽¹⁶⁾ recommended to setup an independent valuation machinery to look ^{into} ~~after~~ the assessment work at regular intervals.

The reports of the collection department's of many local bodies reveal that the collection (of rate) often fall below 50 percent of the total assessment. Every year a large sum is left due. For example, in Jalpaiguri Municipality the percentage of collection of total demand were 64 (percent) and 51 (percent) in 1969-70 and 1970-71 respectively and in recent years it has fallen below 50 percent of the total demand. A well-developed collecting ^{system} can shorten this gap to a considerable extent and better its financial condition. Report of the committee on "Augmentation of Financial Resources of Urban Local Bodies" recommended that a "separate cadre of municipal executives"⁽¹⁷⁾ should be created. According to the report of that committee it is expected that this independent cadre of Municipal executives would be the fittest to realize the municipal dues than the existing bodies. This system has been proved successful to increase the percentage of collection in Kerala and Madras. The committee constituted by the central council of Local, Self Government, (1963) on "Augmentation of Financial Resources of Urban Local Bodies", also recommended other steps which can be taken to

Some of them applicable to the towns of North Bengal are given below in brief : (i) Constitution of an Urban Development Board⁽¹⁸⁾ as the consultant organization for the local Bodies. If this board is established it can help the local body in the matter of finance, implementation of schemes, borrowing loan from abroad, etc.

(ii) The local bodies can seek loan from Life Insurance Corporation of India for implementation of their schemes, particularly which are related with health measures, resulting in "better health longevity of the policyholders"⁽¹⁹⁾. (iii) Imposition of Entertainment tax⁽²⁰⁾: "the State Government should earmark 25% of the proceeds of this tax for the urban local bodies".

The directive principles of State policy pleads for a "full enjoyment of liesure, social and cultural opportunities (Article - 43, part IV)", and the standard of living of its people (Article-4, part IV of indian constitution)", and the Government of India being a welfare Government it is expected that there should be a co-ordination between the Local Self Government and the respective State Government agencies to fulfil those desires of the constitution. Simultaneously, as Freeman has expressed" Local Government exists to preserve and protect the rights of the individuals and to contribute to the nation as a whole"⁽²¹⁾, the local urban bodies have a specific role to perform fair, sincere and faithful discharge of their duties by

keeping the institution out of mal-administration, corruption, internal political conflict and above all indifference to their responsibilities. If this becomes the motto of the local bodies then, I hope, the condition of the local bodies of North Bengal as well as the rate payers, will improve, though slowly but with confidence.

Urban Amenities in the Towns of North Bengal

Man even at the most modest scale of living requires some sort of social facilities and the scope for cultural activities, which turn out to be the part and parcel of his daily life, especially when he is an urbanite. Almost all the communities usually recognize the demand for urban amenities in some fashion. The civic amenities are generally an expression of a common style of living. Although the municipalities of the towns of North Bengal generally pledge to render all sorts of urban amenities or civic utility services to its tax-payers, in fact, the idea of creating a quite and full-fledged urban society is still a far cry in this region. As still the minimum urban amenities, which are essential for a urbanite, like, electricity, piped water supply, streetlight, Government housing estates, sanitary and conservancy services, are restricted to the limited circle of the society, the people or tax-payers who are not financially

well-to-do generally have no scope to enjoy these facilities, especially those which are directly related to the purchasing power of the buyer. Of course, the whole underdeveloped region of the world is facing the same problem, except where the Government has taken a greater responsibility of social welfare. People rush to the big cities and towns only because of the lure of amenities available there much more than smaller towns or the semi-urban areas. So, also to check the human congestion in the big cities, the planning bodies and the Local Self-Government agencies should recognize the importance of amenities in decentralizing the population.

As the towns of North Bengal are mostly administrative in origin, so the degree of amenities vary from town to town according to their administrative status. These towns, which are district administrative headquarters, are enjoying more urban amenities or civic utility services than the other towns which are sub-divisional or only police station. According to administrative status, Siliguri is the only exception in this regard. Out of 28 urban centres in North Bengal, only twelve (12) towns have municipalities, and others have Anchal Panchayats mentioned in the table-6, by '(M)' and '(A.P.)' respectively. Dearth of available data and information is a great handicap in bringing out the clear picture of the existing civic utility services.

Most of the organizations, providing the utility services, are quite reluctant to give correct information about their activities. In fact, the organizations being elected bodies have become political platforms and are concerned much less with keeping their pledges made at the time of their elections. The following table will show the distribution of urban population in the districts of North Bengal.

Table -21

Sl No.	Name of the District	Total Population (According to census 1971)	Urban Population (According to census 1971)
1.	Darjeeling	731,777	180,212
2.	Jalpaiguri	1,750,159	168,030
3.	Cooch Behar	1,414,133	96,652
4.	West Dinajpur	1,859,887	173,690
5.	Malda	1,612,657	68,626
Total :		7,418,663	686,660

(1) Sanitary and Conservancy Service :

The following table shows that though the municipal towns of North Bengal are over crowded the number of tax-payers are extremely limited. As a consequence, a vast number of people have been left out of municipal facilities, though lured by urban amenities they are compelled to reside in the towns. Besides, it is to be noted that still now, a large number of privy or service latrines exist in more towns.

Table-22

Showing the Municipal towns with their total population, total number of tax-payers, total number of sanitary and Privy latrines.

Municipa- lities	Total Number of population	Total number of tax-payers. (and the year in bracket)	Total number of sanitary latrines	Total number of privy/service latrines
Darjeeling	42,373	2672 (72-73) ad - report	124 (+) Total seat 788	109 (+)
Kalimpong	23,436	1631 (Sept. 1974)	21 (+)	1 (+)
Kurseong	16,425	1383 (Nov-1974)	703	429
Siliguri	97,484	8313 (1971)		
Jalpaiguri	55,159	5247 (Dec-73)	2000	2374
Alipurduar	36,667	5534 (1972-73) Ad - report	450	5050
Cooch Behar	53,684	7500 (1974)	3000	4000

Table-22Contd.

Municipa- lities	Total number of population	Total number of tax-payers. (and the year in bracket)	Total number of sanitary latrines	Total number of privy/service latrines
Dinhata	11,737	N.A.	N.A.	200
Balurghat	57,088	4768 (Ad.report 1972-73)	703	1981
Raiganj	43,191	6300 (Aug-1974)	N.A.	N.A.
English Bazar	61,335	N.A.	2775	7974
Old Malda	6,691	N.A.	75	1000

(1) (+) Only public latrines maintained by the municipality.

(2) N.A. Not available.

(3) Tax-payers according to administrative report/current number available in the office.

This is solely an unhealthy symptom specially where houses stand proximal to each other. Though further extension of privy latrines have been banned in a few municipalities, even then some of the municipalities of North Bengal have no such prohibition. Sanitary and privy or service latrines both exist in the Anchal Panchayats,

but as the organisation maintains no record, it is quite a hardship to find out the exact number of sanitary and privy latrines. However, according to the versions of the several Anchal Pradhans, it can be said that most of the latrines are privy in nature and excluding of Government quarters, merely one percentage of the total population has sanitary latrines.

Almost all the municipalities of North Bengal maintain a sanitary department which supervises the conservancy services; conservancy service encompasses a number of services like street scavenging, night soil dumping, drainage repair and cutting (where only kachha drains prevail), daily sweeper service, toilet cleaning (specially in the hill towns), market cleaning, garbage dumping, burning ghat cleaning, etc. The Anchal Panchayat makes no conservancy service and the residents of a specific panchayat has to hire a private sweeper on contract basis to remove the night-soil or garbage or to keep his home clean. Only in rare cases like removing dead and rotten animal; panchayat engages a sweeper. The existing strength of the sweepers (Table-23) of a few municipalities proves that the conservancy service is not up to the mark against the total population rate payers of the town. Especially the towns with their littered streets and markets and lack of responsibility of the authority in removing garbage from the road-side and keeping the drains clean, reveal the plight of

This service as well as of the rate-payers of those towns.

The absence of conservancy services has made the towns under-panchayat, quite unhygienic.

Table-23

Table showing the municipalities with their tax payers and total number of sweepers.

Sl No.	Municipalities	Number of sweepers	Rate payers
1.	Jalpaiguri	263	5247
2.	Balurghat	73	4763
3.	Raiganj	73	6300
4.	Kalimpong	66	1631
5.	Siliguri	250	8313
6.	Alipurduar	14	5524
7.	Cooch Behar	209	7500

Further, it can be noted that except Darjeeling, no town of North Bengal has permanent cemeteries within the municipal area, and the towns of plain have only burning ghats, open on river side. The drainage condition of the municipal as well as of the panchayat towns is very poor. Nevertheless a large number of towns have no

adequate drains to drain out the rain water. Because of the absence of provision for adequate drainage within the towns, the dirty water flows directly to the street from the houses and shops resulting in most undesirable condition for the roads and the residents. Due to the absence of drainage the roads become muddy or water logged in rainy season and full of dust during the winter and summer causing untold sufferings to the pedestrians.

Excepting Cooch Behar and Darjeeling, which have drains, most of which are open in nature on both sides of all the roads, most of the municipal or non-municipal towns rarely have drains on both sides of all of their roads. Especially big towns like Malda (English Bazar) and Raiganj are almost devoid of good drainage net-work. As the conservancy services can be treated as essential services to make town-life healthier, it is questionable how far the actual progress has been made by the municipalities of North Bengal in tune with the increase of population in those towns. Though the financial bondage is one of the main bottlenecks in mechanizing the conservancy services, the author believes that expenditure should not be questioned in rendering this minimum civic amenity to the rate-payers.

Water Supply :

Water supply is an essential service for the growth of a town. Though townhalls or waterworks, now-a-days, are not considered

of the pride in a community of a developed country, most of the towns of North Bengal, are still now lacking in this facility. Out of 28 urban centres, only 6 towns have pipewater supply system. Tube-wells and ringwells are the main source of the supply of drinking water for the rest of the towns. The sources can be divided into three types, first, the pipe-water supply usually looked after by the Public Health Engineering department, secondly, the tube wells or ring-wells usually supervised by the Municipality or Anchal Panchayats or Rural Water Supply, and thirdly, lakes from which water is carried down by pipe line to the reservoir and therefrom to the town. Of course, only the hill towns like Darjeeling and Kalimpong have to bring water from the lakes. The Monsoon plays an important role in this respect. The permeability of the springs, which are the main sources of water supply, depends largely on the rains of the monsoons. Almost none of the panchayats have provision of pipewater supply, excluding private arrangements especially in the Government quarters or hospitals. The main sources of supply of drinking water in those towns are ring-wells and tube wells.

Table - 24

Showing average daily supply, per capita consumption, and direct house connection.

Sl. No. Municipal towns.	Total population of the town.	Average daily supply of water	Average percapita consumption.	Direct house connection.
1. Cooch Behar	52,684	5,22,000 gallons	9.83 gallons	950
2. Jalpaiguri	55,159	1,68,000 gallons	3,04 gallons	376
3. Darjeeling	42,873	9,60,000 gallons including public toilet	22,20 gallons	2112
4. Kurseong	16,425	1,30,000 gallons	7,97 gallons	N.A.
5. Kalimpong	23,436	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
6. English Bazar	61,335	8,00,000 "	13,04 gallons	751
(average of winter and summer supply 9,00,000 + 7,00,000)				

N.A. Not available.

The above table (4) shows that the percapita consumption or per head supply of water is far from adequate while in some are too poor in respect of the requirement of the people of those towns.

The source of this water is different from town to town. The Jalpaiguri municipality supplies the water through three deep tubewells only. The highest per head supply of water is at Darjeeling, 22.20 gallons, and the lowest perhead supply of water is at Jalpaiguri, i.e. 3.04 gallons. So the people maintain personal tubewell or ringwell to meet the minimum requirement. Further, it can be noted from the above table No. that in comparison to the total population, Kurseong (16,425) has a better volume of perhead supply (7.97) gallons) than Cooch Behar (53,634) with its perhead supply of 9.83 gallons perday. The volume of per day supply of water also varies in winter and in summer especially in the towns located in the south of this region. The waterworks of English Bazar shows a fluctuation of supply of water between winter and summer seasons. While in summer the total volume of parday supply is 9,00,000 gallons, in winter it is 7,00,000 gallons. The difference is 2,00,000 gallons. But this variation is absent in the hill towns where the inadequate supply is the main problem, particularly during the tourist season (April-May and October-November) and if any variation in the volume of supply exists, it is simply due to the less or heavy rainfall in that area. The number of direct house connections shown in the above table- reveals what a little fraction of the total population of those towns are enjoying this facility. In English Bazar out

of 7311 holding only 10.27% are enjoying this service, while in Darjeeling 63.53% are getting this facility against the total holding of 3342 of that town. Of course, it has already been said that the amenities, like, direct house connection of water supply electricity, sanitary latrines are too costly in this region. So, the availability of such facilities is directly related to one's economic status. As a result, most of the people have no such provision to bear the cost involved. Further, out of 28 urban centres a good number of important towns have no pipe water supply system, like Siliguri, Balurghat, Raiganj, Maynaguri, Dhupguri, Alipurduar and Old Malda. Only Balurghat, Alipurduar and Old Malda have got sanction regarding the installation of pipe water supply system. The rest other towns have tubewell as their source of supplying drinking water. But the tubewell water is detrimental to health, as the purification process is absent in this system. A hygienic water supply system is the burning question in the towns of North Bengal.

Electricity for public and private consumption (Public safety or street lighting)

At present West Bengal State Electricity Board is supplying electricity to the towns of North Bengal except Darjeeling where the municipality itself supplies power to the people. Of course,

Bihar State Electricity Board also contributes especially to the towns of southern part of this region, like Balurghat etc. Almost all the Municipalities, Anchal Panchayats and Town Committees provide street lighting except Falakata Anchal Panchayat, and Dalkhola. The former one has no such service for the last three years (1971-74) and the latter town panchayat has sanctioned a proposal for rendering this service. The following table will show the present position of street lights in the towns of North Bengal.

Table -

Showing the distribution of total population, and number of streelight in the towns of North Bengal.

Civic Status	Name of the town	Total population (1971)	Total no. of street light
M	Cooch Behar	53,684	839
M	Dinhata	11,737	242
T.C.	Tufanganj	4,209	89
T.C.	Mathabhanga	9,167	105
T.C.	Mekhliganj	3,777	105
T.C.	Haldibari	5,098	30
M	Jalpaiguri	55,159	652
M	Alipurduar	36,667	330
A.P.	Maynaguri	15,808	102

Table-6 Contd.

Civic Status	Name of the town	Total population (1971)	Total no. of street light.
A.P.	Dhupguri	16,808	29
A.P.	Falakata	7,194	Nil (June 1971)
A.P.	Malbazar	10,951	N.A.
A.P.	Domahani	7,706	30
M	Darjeeling	42,873	1560
M	Kalimpong	23,430	N.A.
M	Kurseong	16,425	391
M	Siliguri	97,484	1938
M	Balurghat	67,088	437
M	Raiganj	43,191	650
A.P.	Kaliaganj	21,169	162
A.P.	Islampur	15,715	52
A.P.	Hili	6,096	50
A.P.	Gangarampur	14,809	16
A.P.	Dalkhola	5,622	(Proposed-40)
M	English Bazar	61,335	740
M	Old Malda	6,691	80

Note : N.A. Not available. M. Municipality. P.C. Town Committee.
A.P. Anchal Panchayat.

The table-6 shows that the number of street lights is still inadequate in a number of towns and some of them have a very small number, such as, Hili with its sixteen street lights only and Dhupguri with 29 street lights. As a matter of fact, a vast area of those towns remain in darkness which is detrimental to public safety. Besides, some of the towns have no street lights at all, such as Falakata and Dalkhola. At Falakata the service has been stopped since 1971 due to pecuniary crisis of the Panchayat, and at Dalkhola, a scheme to provide street lighting to the people has been proposed. The number of street lights according to proposed scheme is 40. Furthermore, it can be noted, that the number of street lights in the district Headquarters towns are not satisfactory, especially the total number of street lights at Balurghat, Malda, Jalpaiguri is far from adequate. The highest number of street lights is at Siliguri (1938) and lowest at Gangarampur (16). More street lights are required to meet the demand of public safety. Maintenance of street lights is extremely poor. In many towns the light posts are without lamps for a considerable period and the civic administration remains callous about their duties in this respect. In fact, the existence or presence of a street light helps to a great degree to check the undesirable activities or accidents, but as the authority feels not so much concerned about this, the anti-social activities or crimes at night are increasing

day by day in the towns of North Bengal. The suffering, due to the absence of a street light, increases greatly during the rainy season. The roads, being devoid of good drainage system, become muddy and quite unsuitable for either pedestrian or for vehicular traffic and in general they become death-traps for both.

Health Service.

Although, many a good number of service essential to the community are administered by the local self government bodies, some important services are controlled by national government, such as, electricity, communication, unemployment, hospital and general health and fire service etc. Even then, some sort of preventive and curative measures are usually taken by the municipalities. For this service a separate wing exists in all the municipalities of North Bengal. This section looks after the health schemes of the municipalities, like spraying mosquito-killer or gamaxin powder, disinfection of wells, vaccination and inoculation services, for which every municipality employs some people specially to adopt precautionary measures against the epidemics like, Cholera, Typhoid, Diptheria, infectious diseases like small-pox, besides, every municipality further takes preventive measures against food adulteration etc. ofcourse, in most of the urban centres of North Bengal, the Public Health Department, an independent organization

of Government of India, mainly supervises the services related to the general health of the people of the towns. In the towns where Panchayat is the Local Self Government body, a sanitary inspector of the Public Health Department, looks after the general health service of that town. It is also the same in case of the towns which have town committees. Anyway, the following table - will, in brief, give an idea about the present condition of the hospital services available in North Bengal. The Number of Nursing Homes are very few. Specially well-equipped nursing home is a rare institution in this part of West Bengal. To this date only Cooch Behar (2) Jalpaiguri (1) Alipurduar (2) Kalimpong (1) and Siliguri (9) have nursing homes, run by the local medical practitioners.

Table-7

Civic Status	Name of the Town	Total population (1971)	Total no. of hospital	Total no of bed and year of collection	Average number of people per bed	Bed per 1000 population
M	Cooch Behar	53,684	2	420 (1973)	127.81 persons	7.85
M	Dinhata	11,737	1	25 "	469.48 "	2.13
T.C.	Tufanganj	4,209	1	10 "	420.90 "	2.37
T.C.	Mathabhanga	9,167	1	25 "	366.68 "	2.72
T.C.	Meknliganj	3,777	1	25 "	151.08 "	6.51
T.C.	Haldibari	5,098	1	24 "	212.41 "	4.70
M	Jalpaiguri	55,159	1	401 "	137.55 "	7.27
M	Alipurduar	36,667	1	125 (1974)	293.33 "	3.40
A.P.	Maynaguri	15,808	1	60 "	263.46 "	3.79
A.P.	Dhupguri	16,808	1	20 "	846.40 "	1.18
A.P.	Falakata	7,194	1	20 "	359.70 "	2.78
A.P.	Malbazar	10,951	1	20 "	547.85 "	1.82
A.P.	Domahani	7,194	1	4 "	179.85 "	0.55
M	* Darjeeling	42,873	3	238+ "	180.138 "	5.55
M	Kaliapong	23,430	1	270 "	86.77 "	11.52

Table-7 Contd

Civic Status	Name of the Town	Total population (1971)	Total no. of hospital	Total no of bed and year of collection	Average number of people per bed	Bed per 1000 population
M	Kurseong*	16,425	2	46+ (1974)	357.06	2.97
M	✓ Siliguri	97,484	1	136 "	716.79	1.39
M	Balurghat	67,088	1	250 "	263.35	3.72
A.P.	Raiganj	43,191	1	100 "	431.91	2.315
A.P.	Kaliaganj	21,169	1	50 "	423.38	2.358
A.P.	Islampur	15,715	1	20 "	785.75	1.358
A.P.	Hili	6,096	1	20 "	304.80	3.281
A.P.	Gangareampur	14,809	1	20 "	740.45	1.350
A.P.	Dalkhola (+)	5,622	1	—	—	—
M	English Bazar	61,335	2	258 "	237.73	4.202
M	Old Malda	6,691	1	10 "	669.10	1.495

* Only the bed strength of the Government hospitals has been mentioned in the table. But both the towns have one more hospital (privately run), of which the bed strength has not been added, as the data were not available.

(+) The town has one health centre which gives only out door treatment, the P.H. Centre is at Karandighi, the administrative centre of this region.

M - Municipality, T.C - Town Committee, A.P. Anchal Panchayat.

The figure regarding the availability of hospital beds for people varies from town to town. It is highest in Kalimpong with one bed for 86.77 persons and the lowest in Domohani with one bed for 1798.5 persons. And the number of beds per 1000 persons is also the highest in Kalimpong, 11.52, and the lowest in Domohani, 0.55. It can be noted that the available medical facilities are usually more in the towns which are administrative headquarters and less in other towns, excepting Kalimpong.

The Health service in the small towns is generally very poor. The number of beds per 1000 persons or the average number of persons per-bed will be able to prove the statement. As the health service is a vital one in the growth of a town, the towns of North Bengal require more medical facilities to make a healthy environment. Of course, a scheme for further extension has been proposed by many a good number of hospitals, like increase of existing bed strength, construction of staff quarters, water supply to the hospital, etc. and if the schemes are implemented timely, then it will certainly better the existing conditions of health service in the towns of North Bengal.

In fact, in a country like India, where most of the people are below the capacity to provide money for expensive medical treatment, the Government hospitals are the main source of medical service, while in developed countries, the case is to some extent different. The people rush to the hospital for getting free

facilities, as a result the hospitals, with their minimum strength, are facing such a vast number of patients as to create almost squalor or unhealthy atmosphere in the hospitals. In most of the hospitals many patients lie on the floor due to lack of bed. It is sufficient to say that a free and full medical service is essential to make the citizen as well as the town prosperous. The service of the hospitals is not confined to the municipal bounds of the towns alone. Patients come from distant areas and Health Service Centres always forward the critical cases to the nearby subdivisional or district hospitals.

Like the health service, education is also considered compulsory in the urban-life. How far education retains reputation, can be proved by giving example of hill towns of North Bengal, where many a good number of students come from all over India to have a good academic carrier. Of course, this is limited to the convents or missionary schools which are mainly patronized by the rich people of the country. In case of higher education, the towns of North Bengal have nothing noteworthy, excepting a University barely 14 years old, an Engineering College, a newly made Medical College and a number of colleges unevenly distributed among the towns of North Bengal, as a result a considerable number of students have to travel a considerable distance roughly every day to attend the college. The schools are crowded with students

and almost an unhealthy academic environment prevails in almost all the institutions.

The Primary School exists in all the urban centres of North Bengal, and almost all the municipalities of North Bengal maintain primary schools at their own cost. The primary schools provide free + education. The schools can be classified as co-educational, ^{for} girls and boys, but the number of schools are not satisfactory. In some towns a primary school for the wards of the conservancy workers also exists. Besides, the District School Board also manages a number of primary schools in the towns of North Bengal.

Every town of North Bengal has Higher Secondary and High Schools . The number varies from seven (7) to one (1). All the towns, barring a few have Boys' and Girls' schools separately. Mainly in the small towns the co-education system exists and that is mainly due to the lack of the number of high schools. Colleges are mainly concentrated in the larger urban centres. But because of the limited capacity both in space and teaching staff, the colleges in many cases also have to take 2 to 3 shifts in a day.

The Technical and Medical institutions are very small in number. The only Engineering college is situated at Jalpaiguri and the only Medical College is located a few miles apart from Siliguri, nearer to the University Campus of this region.

The most important feature of the educational institutions of this region is the English medium schools run by different missionary organizations. Most of them are situated in the three hill towns of North Bengal and some of them are pretty old maintaining a high academic standard. Established during ^{the} British regime for educating the children of the English or European residents in India, these schools do not properly serve the region under study. Besides the high level of expenditure is another barring factor for making this service available to the middle class people of the region. These schools mainly cater to the students coming from all over the country and mainly to those belonging to better off community of the society. Ofcourse, lately merit is being considered as an essential factor for admission.

Table-8

Showing the distribution of academic institutions in North Bengal

Name of the towns	Total no. of schools (H.S.S; H.S. Jr. H.S. primary)	Total no. of colleges	Total no. of Technical institution	Total no. of medical institution	University
Cooch Behar	33	3	2	X	X
Dinhat	14	1	X	X	X
Tufanganj	15	1	X	X	X
Mathabhanga	11	1	X	X	X

Table- Contd.

Name of the towns	Total no. of schools (H.S.S;H.S. Jr.H.S. primary	Total no.of colleges	Total no.of Technical institution	Total no.of Medical insti-tution	University
Mekhliganj	4	1	X	X	X
Haldibari	9	Proposed	X	X	X
Jalpaiguri	62	4	2	1	X
Alipurduar	43	1	X	X	X
Maynaguri	10	Proposed	X	X	X
Dhupguri	15	X	X	X	X
Falakata	9	X	X	X	X
Malbazar	12.	X	X	X	X
Domahani	37	X	X	X	X
Darjeeling	63	4	X	X	X
Kalimpong	24	1	2	X	X
Kurseong	24	1	X	X	X
Siliguri	69	2	1	1	1
			(Near to the town 40 minites Journey)		(Near to the town 30 minutes journey)
Balurghat	33	3	X	X	X
Raiganj	58	2	1	X	X
Kaliaganj	11	1	1	X	X

Table- Contd.

Name of the towns	Total no. of schools (H.S.S;H.S. Jr. H.S. primary)	Total no. of colleges	Total no. of Technical institution	Total no. of Medical institution	University
Islampur	17	1	X	X	X
Hili	14	X	X	X	X
Gangarampur	15	X	X	X	X
Dalkhola	6	X	X	X	X
English Bazar	87	3	2	X	X
Old Malda	12	X	X	X	X

Note : H.S.S - Eleven Class School

H.S. - Ten class School

Jr.H.S- Eight Class School

Primary-Four Class School

Recreation and Cultural Activities :

Recreation acts as a remedial feature in the life of the urbanites to overcome the day to day drudgery. An urbanite needs more recreation than a farmer who at least can enjoy nature.

Recreation varies according to cultural pursuits and financial condition. It is generally accepted that some sort of entertainment and relaxation is necessary from both the psychological and physiological point of view. Hence, sociological impact of the role of recreation in urban life is unavoidable. The inability of most of the people of the towns of North Bengal to enjoy their leisure in a proper way gives an impression of cultural backwardness. It is, however, true that most of the urbanites residing in the towns of North Bengal have rather limited financial capacity. A large number of people comprising mainly low income group are naturally debarred from enjoying such type of recreation as periodical excursions, site-seeing, going on special types of tour etc., In the the developed countries public parks provide the minimum sort of recreation where one can relax for a few hours at least. In North Bengal, park is a very rare thing as most of the towns, with a few exceptions, have no such public parks or gardens.

Other direct sources of recreation one may consider Cinema House, Theatre Hall, Public Halls, Public Libraries, Museums, Zoo etc. Picture showing house or in other words the cinema is the only available source of recreation. Almost every town has atleast a cinema house, however, small it may be. But the number of cinema houses is insufficient in respect of the

populace. Besides, excepting a few cinema houses, most of them are ill equipped; seeing a picture becomes rather a strain than enjoyment. The lack of air cooler and the excessive heat in the summer make them uncomfortable places. In spite of that people go there, as they have no other way for using their leisure time. The libraries are few in number. Only the District Headquarters towns, including a few other important town, possess libraries. But only a small fraction of the total people uses them. Apart from the high rate of illiteracy they are not made popular for serving the common interest of the people.

The permanent theatre or stage is absent in the towns of North Bengal. Only occasionally, a club or a drama-team presents theatrical show on a commercial basis. A small number of towns, however, have permanent theatre halls. In some towns the existing cinema houses are used for theatrical purpose, whenever required by the interested parties. The economic serfdom of the people, the indifference of the municipalities and the Government, and the economic backwardness of this region have combined effect on the recreational dullness in the towns of North Bengal.

All other recreational organs, like Public Hall (except Kalimpong) do not exist in the towns of North Bengal.

The cultural activity of a town cannot be traced through a statistical method as usually. a fraction of the total population

of a town carries out this function. In the towns of North Bengal many a good number of organizations carry out the cultural activities by organizing conference on literature, by publishing little magazines and journals, by performing social works, etc.

The culture δ retains its highest form with the development of urbanization. It is not the size of the town alone, but also the long tradition in certain spheres of activities that ultimately builds up the cultural side of the urban centre. North Bengal towns are generally small in size; many of them are at the same time quite new. Even the earliest of them are not more than a hundred years old. As such the cultural tradition cannot be deeprooted and has little to offer. Nevertheless, typical cultural behaviours are witnessed in everytown, having both religious and non-religious origins.

First of all, the towns have a good number of clubs providing cultural programmes, Most of these clubs organize only games and a few specilize in drama etc. These clubs are the main centres which preserve the cultural aspects of a town. But often political infiltration rains the ideals of these institutes and inspite of doing good for the society, they become the society's probelem. The increasing unemployment resulting from a staguent economy made a larger number of youth victims of juvenile delinquency. Hence, juvenile offences are now-a-days superseding all other social

problems of the towns of North Bengal. Apart from these, the clubs in many cases organize religious festivals on different occasions on a competitive basis. Large sums are spent on such items and the towns take on a grand festive look with colourful decorations. The following table-9 will help to explain the existing recreational and cultural facilities available in the towns of North Bengal.

Table-

Showing the distribution of Cinema, Theatre, important Library in the towns of North Bengal.

Name of the towns	Total no. of population	Total no. of Cinema house	Total no. of Theatre halls	Total no. of Public Library and others
Cooch Behar	53,684	4	3	2
Dinhata	11,737	1	1	1
Tufanganj	4,209	1 (+)	-	1
Mathabhanga	9,167	2	1	1
Mekhliganj	3,777	-	1	1
Haldibari	5,098	-	-	-
Jalpaiguri	55,159	3	1	1
Alipurduar	36,667	2	1	1
Maynaguri	15,808	1	1	1
Dhupguri	16,808	1	-	-

Table- Contd.

Name of the towns	Total no. of population	Total no. of Cinema house	Total no. of Theatre halls	Total no. of Public Library and others
Falakata	7,194	1 (+)	-	1
Malbazar	10,961	1	-	1
Domohani	7,706	-	1	-
Darjeeling	42,873	2	1	1
Kalimpong	23,430	1	1	1
Kurseong	16,425	1	-	1
Siliguri	97,484	4	1	1
Balurghat	67,088	2	2	1
Raiganj	43,191	3	-	1
Kaliaganj	21,169	2	1	-
Islampur	15,715	2	-	-
Hill	6,096	1 (+)	-	2
Gangarampur	14,809	2 (Temporary)	-	1
Dalkhola	5,622	1	-	-
English Bazar	61,335	3	1	1
Old Malda	6,691	X	1	1

(+) Where cinema house is used both for picture and drama performance.

N.A. Not Available.

N.B. Besides the figure given in the column 5, there are many libraries which serve only a small fraction of each locality, and the educational institutions have their own libraries.

The communication service in the towns of North Bengal is not satisfactory. The number of post offices will prove this statement. Almost all the towns, especially the small ones, have one to two post offices against a large number of population. The telephone is considered a costly amenity and the use is mainly limited within the commercial and official services. Very few people can keep telephone for personal use due to its high cost of maintenance. The number of telephone lines in each town of North Bengal will show how limited is its service within the town. Telephone is mainly used in this region for making trunk-calls on business matters. Ofcourse, the small size of the towns provide ample scope to the residents to contact the person wanted without much trouble. Even then, valuable time can be saved by using telephone at least by private medical practitioners, etc. But the lack of sufficient number of public call booths and lack of telephone-mindedness have direct impact on the restricted telephone service in the towns of North Bengal.

Table-10

Showing the distribution of post office and telephones lines in the towns of North Bengal.

Name of the urban centre	Total number of population	Total number of post offices (including Head post office and sub post offices)	Total number of Telephone lines in the specific year
Cooch Behar	53,684	7	470 (1973)
Dinhata	11,737	2	130 (1973)
Tufanganj	4,209	1	27 (1973)
Mathabhanga	9,167	1	49 (1973)
Mekhliganj	3,777	2	18 (1973)
Haldibari	5,098	1	25 (1973)
Jalpaiguri	55,159	9	366 (1973)
Alipurduar	36,667	3	233 (1974)
Maynaguri	15,808	2	91 (1974)
Dhupguri	16,808	2	39 (1974)
Falakata	7,194	1	38 (1974)
Domohani	7,706	1	N11
Malbazar	10,961	1	133 (1974)
Darjeeling	42,873	6	767 (1974)
Kalimpong	23,430	1	235 (1974)
Kurseong	16,425	2	233 (1974)
Siliguri	97,484	9	2200 (1974)

Table- Contd.

Name of the urban centre	Total number of population	Total number of post offices (including Head post office and sub post offices)	Total number of Telephone lines in the specific year
Balurghat	67,088	4	206 (1974)
Raiganj	43,191	1	185 (1974)
Kaliaganj	21,169	1	110 (1974)
Islampur	15,715	1	76 (1974)
Hill	6,096	2	22 (1974)
Gangarampur	14,809	1	39 (1974)
Dalkhola	5,622	1	46 (1974)
English Bazar	61,335	7	458 (1974)
Old Malda	6,691	1	25 (1974)

Source : Post & Telegraph Department, Government of India and the Telephone Exchange located in the urban centres of North Bengal.

The table-10 reveals that out of 28 urban centres, more than 15 have one to two post offices for a population, ranging between roughly 23000 and 3000. The total number of telephone lines is ~~the~~ highest at Siliguri town, 2200, for a population of 97,484 and the lowest is at Mekhliganj (13 only) for 3,777 persons. The communication service is entirely a Central Government service. So Government's liberal policy towards this end is the only way to remove this present state of shortcoming.

Internal Transport System :

The role of transport in the urban-life can be compared with the arteries in a human body. The internal transport system performs that duty within the town by providing link among the different parts of a town. The streets play the major role in this respect. As far as the street pattern of a town will be scientific, the dynamism of that town will increase. Excluding the Hill Cart Road of Siliguri, all other roads of the towns of North Bengal are quite unsuitable for the present state of traffic-flow.

In general, the road pattern in the towns of North Bengal shows a great diversity. In the absence of any street planning, except in Cooch Behar Town, the roads have developed in the most confused and haphazard manner in almost all the towns. This is mainly due to their unplanned growth. Only the road pattern of Cooch Behar town is a planned one and it is grid-patterned, i.e. the roads are rectangular to each other at every crossing point.

In most of the towns like Malbazar, Dhupguri, Maynaguri, Islampur, Dalkhola, Gangsarampur, etc. only one or two roads are metalled in nature and in most cases that road is either a part of National Highway or a State Highway which passes through the town. The municipal towns contain a considerable length of metalled roads.

But in Raiganj and Balurghat the percentage is very poor. Within Raiganj Municipal area it is only 6.20 km., within Balurghat Municipal area it is 24.59 km. only, and in English Bazar Municipality it is only 22.08 km.

Table-31

The table showing the distribution of length of metalled and unmetalled roads in the municipalities of Jalpaiguri, Balurghat, Raiganj, Darjeeling, Cooch Behar, and English Bazar.

Name of the town	Total length of roads in km/als	Total length of metalled roads in km.	Total length of unmetalled roads in km.
Jalpaiguri	48.502 km	31.50 km	17.002 km
Raiganj	71.24 km	6.20 km	64.59 km
	(up to date - Aug-1974)		
Balurghat	44.42 km	24.59 km	19.33 km
Darjeeling	63.494 km	22.09 ⁴ km	41.4 km
Cooch Behar	68.09 km	51.98 km	16.11 km
English Bazar	56.75	22.08 km	34.67 km
Siliguri	102.28 km	44.09 km	58.19 km

Regarding the means of internal transport the Rickshaw is playing the major role. Next is the Bicycle. Only recently auto-rickshaw has been introduced in the big towns of North Bengal, though their service inside the town is very limited. They mainly ply between the parent towns and its commuting zones. Though the number of rickshaw has not been collected, it can be said that, the numbers are not insufficient because of the fact that most of the people are pedestrians. Few people use rickshaw to go to a place except when he is in a hurry.

No towns of North Bengal have city bus service. Only a partial city Bus service exists at Jalpaiguri town. But neither the municipality nor the Government has any contribution in this respect. The Duars buses, while passing through the town, give such sort of service at a cost of 15 paise per head. But the service exists only on a particular road, surrounding the town. In case of ^{the} other towns, the rickshaws are ^{the} main source of internal transport. In the hill towns of North Bengal people are mainly pedestrians, as the hill towns by their nature permit no internal transport service; only the people of the commuter's zone use taxi to come into the town.

In fact, the economic condition of the people and the size of the individual urban centres of North Bengal cannot support a costly service like internal transport. In spite of that, as the

internal transport contributes to the further expansion of an urban centre, the Local Governments can take the venture to introduce the city bus-service or something like that to decentralize the existing population congestion in the hub of the town.

Shopping Facilities :

Except Malda, Darjeeling and Siliguri, no other towns of North Bengal have planned market. The English Bazar municipality has its own market named Chittranjan Municipal Market. This is a retail market, selling or specializing in articles like groceries to clothings. Besides this, that town has two other municipal market, one is a wholesale market and other is on the way of completion. In Siliguri, the New Market, located in the heart of the town near Hill Cart Road, is the only planned market. There are two other markets, a whole sale market located in the old part of the town and another is Seth Srilal Market, an extension of the New Market.

In Cooch Behar, Bhabani Bazar or Market is the only big permanent market comprising both the retail and whole sale goods. various kinds of shops, most of which mainly are stationeries, exist, surrounding this market like a ribbon.

Almost all towns of North Bengal have one central or big market. Besides this, many a good number of isolated shops are

scattered throughout the towns for catering to the immediate but minor needs of the nearest localities. Usually they develop on the street-crossing of the residential areas normally within a walking distance. This is the most common feature witnessed throughout North Bengal. These stores are mainly composed of groceries, coal-depot, stationeries, betel shops, tea-stalls, restaurants, etc. They maintain no chain and occasionally a residential house fills up the gap between two stores.

Because of their unplanned growth, the shops are not evenly distributed. All sorts of goods are not always available in these shops; people must have to depend on the central market for their larger requirements. The central markets in the towns of North Bengal are always within a reasonable distance and people can use them frequently. Unlike the big towns or cities, the week-end marketing tendency is absent in these towns. Most of the people visit the central market to purchase all necessary commodities for a whole month, and the isolated shops located in all the residences or near to the residential areas meet their casual needs. In fact, the economy of the people does not permit frequent marketing. Besides, all sorts of goods, mainly the luxury and modern materials or goods for entertainments like, pressure-cooker, electrical goods, record player, choice books, high-quality cosmetics are not always available in all the towns of North Bengal. In fact, it

solely depends on the culture and interest of the individuals of each town. What is available in Siliguri, is not available in Gangarampur or Islampur or in any other town of that standard. As a matter of fact, the non-basic function of a town mainly depends on the economic condition of the people of the respective town. Majority of the people belong to almost the same economic condition, so the choice of purchasing high quality commodities differs from those who are belonging to the higher echelons in the locality. These persons whenever they need to use the sophisticated goods are to procure the same from distant places.

Housing :

The housing is very poor in the towns of North Bengal. Most of the people have to construct their house at their own cost. The Government's contribution is very negligible. The existing housing-estates, in a few towns, cover less than a fraction of 1 percentage of the total population. Most of the towns have no housing estates. Even all Government employees do not get Government quarters.

A house is the replica of one's economic condition and as majority of the people belong to middle-income group, they

cannot provide enough money to make a fulfilled house. So, often it has been noticed, that a family consisting of 8 to 10 persons, live in a house which is quite unsuitable for them, but people have to live in such a condition as they have no other alternatives.

Many a good number of families live in the rented houses. The rent varies according to the amenities, like electricity, tap water, locational facilities available, and rent is usually high when the houses offer all these facilities. Besides, the location factor is very important. The rent of a house usually increases with the minimization of distance in respect of location of Bus Stand, Market place, Shopping Centres or Education Institutions etc. But as the earning of majority of people are only enough to maintain their daily-life, they cannot afford a high rent. As a result, a large number of families live in sub-standard houses which lack electricity, pipe-water supply, well furnished and adequate rooms, specially bedroom well furnished toilets, etc. Unlike the Local Self Government of many other towns of India, municipalities or Local Self Government bodies of this region have no scheme on housing. Even, the State or Central Government's role in this respect is not noteworthy. No private housing estate organizations or housing co-operatives exist in the towns of North Bengal.

So, a well furnished small house is a far cry as well as the most crying need in the urban environment of North Bengal. Of course, it has already been noted that a house is the right expression of one's economic condition, because almost every individual likes to make his house according to his best liking.

But as long as the present economic backwardness prevails in the economic atmosphere of this region, this sorry plight of housing will remain.

Table -II

Showing the distribution of Housing Estates in the towns of North Bengal

<u>Name of the Town</u>	<u>Number of flats</u>
Darjeeling	48 (Flats)
Siliguri	126 (Flats)
Jalpaiguri	160 (+ 35 for fire servi
Cooch Behar	48 (+ 35 for fire servi

Source : Assistant Engineer's Office of Housing Estate Siliguri.

Conclusion :

So long the attempt has remained confined in dealing with the available urban amenities in the towns of North Bengal. Unlike the

European Countries, where the difference between rural and urban has almost lost meaning, because of the fact that some basic civic amenities like pipe-water, electricity, etc. have been sent everywhere¹, North Bengal's urban centres themselves have not yet gained the full urban status, particularly in respect of civic amenities available in the towns. But a proper analysis is a requisite to find out the real causes responsible for this condition.

The role of a Local Body is to look after the interests of its rate-payers. But, often it has been noticed that the Local Self-Government body's (like municipality or town committee or panchayat) function is not satisfactory. Their main problem is the shortage of fund or financial crisis or lack of Government's grants⁽²²⁾. In fact, annual administrative reports of a few municipalities of North Bengal, have given the same complaint⁽²³⁾. A few lines may be reproduced from the annual administrative report of Darjeeling Municipality (1972-73). It is not at all possible for this Municipality to keep and maintain the roads in good condition unless adequate fund is made available to this municipality by the Government in the shape of compensation or grant. This municipality has, in fact, persistently been requesting the State Government as well as the Union Government for a recurring grant since several years⁽²⁴⁾. The picture will be more clear with the statement of the Chairman of Alipurduar Municipality : "The financial position of the Municipality which has to depend on direct taxation has

seldom been satisfactory..... The minimum amenities expected by the rate-payers cannot be extended to them, financial position being not encouraging..... It has been sufficiently clear that Municipalities cannot maintain the service at the minimum standard leaving out the question of any development, for maintenance alone, at any level of efficiency, there is no scope for further enhancement of taxes and such as, adequate amounts should be made available to the Municipality in the shape of grant-in-aid. The development scheme should be undertaken at Government cost, exempting municipalities from payment of any share of contribution towards the same as against $\frac{1}{3}$ rd share of cost now being borne by municipalities (25).

But, according to P.W.Freeman, Local Self Government has to meet the challenge of rising standards of social amenity, education provision and general living condition (26). So the Local Self Government organizations of urban centres of North Bengal should exploit all main available resources to increase the standard of amenities. Though it is admitted that some sort of Government help in the form of grants is essential for development work, but a benefit of the doubt arises in the case of disbursement of money collected through taxes imposed on the rate payers particularly when an imbalance in revenue income and revenue expenditure is noticed in the municipal budgets (27).

However, it can be said, that a small rate charged for electricity per unit, more beds and cheap medical facilities in the hospitals, sufficient number of schools and colleges to reduce the rush of students in one institution, the improvement as well as expansion of existing recreational facilities and cultural activities, creation of new parks in the towns, introduction of new means of internal transport in big towns, expansion of roads for smooth traffic-operation, even distribution of shops throughout the area, betterment of house conditions by setting up private or Government housing co-operative are a few among the lots of development works which will be conducive to the increase of standard of amenities in the towns of North Bengal. To better sanitary system by demolishing the service latrines and introducing conservancy service in all urban centres and protected pipe water supply must be treated as compulsory schemes for the betterment of health of the urban population of North Bengal and all these can be made available if the financial position of the Local Self Governments permit to shoulder the responsibilities. Hence, National Government should take steps to ensure that adequate allocation of funds is made for the above purposes in the National Five Years Plans (28).

CHAPTER-V

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CHAPTER - VI

FUTURE PROSPECT OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH BENGAL.

Geographically North Bengal forming, a part of the Indian territory, falls in that group of countries which are known as developing countries of the world. The character of urban development in these countries are more or less the same with few exceptions. North Bengal being a part of that group presents an urban picture which may have some similarities with some regions or sub-regions of other countries in respect of socio-economic aspects. But unlike other regions of India, North Bengal possesses some extra geographical qualities. The region, providing the corridor between Eastern and Western India, got much importance in the post-Independence period and this increased further with her geo-political situation created by the existence of a number of states like Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and China bordering the region on the south and north.

The strategic location of the region particularly emphasized the need of better transportation which subsequently developed rather quickly, bringing in its wake trade and commerce as well as the urbanization during the post-independence period. Besides, the establishment of defence areas and the setting up of new small-to medium-scale industries, though insufficient in response to various growing needs have equally contributed directly or indirectly the

growth and development of urbanization in this region.

In the foregoing chapters we have discussed about the historical and the physical set-up of North Bengal as the back ground of her urban development. The important urban characteristics like morphology, hierarchy, urban region, urban amenities and the role of Local Urban Government of all the towns of North Bengal as a whole and specifically large centres have also been discussed. Now an attempt may be made to foresee the future of urban development in North Bengal.

It is revealed from the chapters dealing with the various urban aspects of North Bengal that the towns have at least overcome the period of infancy and are marching towards maturity. At least some of the towns of North Bengal have already witnessed this change while in others the change is under process. In some of the towns like Siliguri, Raiganj, the commercial function has superseded the administrative, the latter having maximum impact on the growth of these towns during the stage of urban infancy.

For a long period, the towns of North Bengal were more administrative out posts and their growth was determined by their administrative status only. But with the increase of their size, the towns are developing a new trend or character, such as, they have changed from administrative to commercial centers, irrespective of their hierarchical scores obtained by their central functional

activities. The region, being devoid of large scale industrial development, is experiencing a commercial boom, accompanied with highly developed communication network and this is largely reflected in the changing character of towns like Siliguri, Raiganj, Malbazar, etc.

The towns of North Bengal are changing both quantitatively and qualitatively. While on the one hand they are experiencing the enlargement of their size in respect of population, on the other hand they are coming out from their previous bondage of administrative influence. The changing quantitative aspect is shown in the following table-M.

Table - 32

Showing small Towns in North Bengal, their number and Total population in 1961 - 71.

Year	Total No. of Towns	Total population	Decade variation	Percentage of decade variation
1961	16	133,666		
1971	19	215,749	+82,083	+61.4%

Source: Census of India 1961, Vol-XVI, Part II-A, and 1971 consisting of class IV to VI towns of Indian Census.

The table-32 shows that, while the number of total small towns increased from 16 to 19, the population increased by 61.4% i.e. an increase of 82,083 persons in 1971. It thus exhibits that the small towns are coming out from their stagnation and witnessing though slow but a steady growth.

Zonal development:

Of course the development is not uniform all over this region; one would rather find a zonal concentration of the urban centres. A look at the map of North Bengal shows that, out of 28 urban centres, 19 urban centers have developed in the northern part while the southern part, comprising West Dinajpur and Malda districts, presents only 9 urban centers in all for the period between 1901 to 1971.

Table-23

Showing Zonal Concentration of Urban Centres in North Bengal

Total Urban centres
in North Bengal in
1971

Number of Urban Cen-
tres in Northern part,
comprising Darjeeling,
Jalpaiguri and Cooch
Behar districts.

Number of urban
centres in south-
ern part, com-
prising West
Dinajpur and
Malda districts

28

19

9

The table-23 shows that the region comprising the northernmost districts of North Bengal witnessed a greater development in comparison to her southern part. The reason behind this concentration can be analysed thus: most of the districts located in the north are old and enjoyed a better communication system and stability than the southernmost districts of this region. Besides, the European influence in the growth of the urban centres was confined to the northern part and in the post-independence period the new strategic importance of this part substantially improved the transportation network following which the trade and commerce registered a quick development. Siliguri has become the pivotal centre of the urban growth in the northern part of North Bengal. The tremendous growth of commercial activities accompanied by industrial ventures has led this town to the top of the ladder. In fact, Siliguri is the only town which is representing the whole North Bengal in the field of commercial and industrial entrepreneurship.

Regional Economy Strengthened through Bank-Loans:
Agricultural Development.

Though no plan has yet been formulated for the further development of this region as a whole, the agrarian development has started to take place. Some progress has already been recorded through agricultural development planning. This has been possible through bank-loans provided largely for improvement in the various

fields of agricultural activities. Taking it as a fact that the progress of urbanization depends on the economic specialization through developed technology, the banks are sanctioning short and middle term loans to the farmers for purchasing pump set, tractor, power-tiller, better fertilizer etc., thus renovating the existing traditional agricultural system of this region. The branches of various nationalised commercial banks of India, the United Bank of India, the United Commercial Bank of India, the Punjab National Bank of India, the Allahabad Bank of India, and others like the Union Bank of India, Indian Bank of India, the Overseas Bank, etc. maintain one or more than one branches in almost all the important towns of North Bengal. The table-34 will give us an idea about the agricultural loans sanctioned by the different branches of the different nationalised banks. The complete picture in this regard, however, can not be obtained since many of the Banks did not feel free to part with the data. The figures of investment made by the individual branches of the Commercial Banks located in the various towns of North Bengal have been collected by the author during the field work on different occasions between 1973 and to first half of 1975. They are shown here below:

Table - 34

The amount of agricultural investment made by the branches of different nationalized banks of India.

Districts	Investment in Agriculture (in Rupees)	Period
Darjeeling	16,13,000.00	1973-75
Jalpaiguri	4,53,000.00	1973-74
West Dinajpur	17,24,000.00	1972-74
Malda	89,61,000.00	1971-73
Cooch Behar	Not Available.	
Total	127,51,000.00	

Source: Figures collected from the sanctions given to priority sectors by the individual branch of nationalised banks

Though the table-34 represents a part of the total loans sanctioned by the different nationalised banks, it is important to note that more than 127 lacs of rupees have been sanctioned during the past few years for purchasing power tiller or tractor, irrigation pump set, chemical fertilizer and as working capital to the farmers and cultivators of this region. As a result of this the production in the agricultural sector has increased which would help to build

up a stable agrarian economy in this region. In fact, the regional development projects taken up by the Government of West Bengal, particularly in the agricultural sector, have lately been started in this region and if the programmes materialise, the region may witness a better urban future in course of time.

Industrial Development:

In spite of the existence of good industrial potentialities in respect of raw materials available in her forests, hills, and in agricultural field, North Bengal, due to her remote location from other parts of the country, could not see the growth of any large or medium size industries for a long time. But the development of transportation and communication network during the recent years has increased the accessibility of the market centres to a great extent, and the region is witnessing a slow but steady growth of the industrial activities, mainly in the small-scale group. Of course, the industrial growth is mainly confined to certain pockets, mostly are in and around Siliguri town while others are located in a scattered fashion over the whole region. The wood-based industrial units are mostly located in the Duars areas of Jalpaiguri district. The well-connected roads linking Nepal, Bhutan and the State of Sikkim on the one hand, and the other States of India on the other, have reduced the isolation of this part of the country and have brought the markets more nearer than before.

The industries whatever in size, are mostly located in those areas which have some sort of infrastructural facilities, like transport, electricity, etc. Siliguri, Raiganj, Mal Bazar etc. are enjoying a nodal position in respect of their location. Locations nearer the sources of raw materials like forests, Tea Gardens and important agricultural products like rice, maize, jute, tobacco, ginger, cardamom etc., these nodal centres bear good industrial prospect if proper initiatives are taken by both the public and private sectors to exploit the natural resources of this region.

During the fieldwork a number of sample industrial surveys were made to bring out the actual problems which the existing industrial units are facing today. The following points emerged from these surveys which should get the priority in solving the problems of the industries of North Bengal:

- (1) The absence of electricity as the power: Most of the units, beginning from saw mills to oil mills, have to run their units by diesel power in the absence of electricity. As a result the cost of production is high.
- (2) The scarcity of raw materials: Particularly those which are seasonal crops, like the mustard oil seeds, fruits, like mango, etc. and those which are to be obtained through the government quotas, like the chemical compounds necessary for soap producing units and

textile yarn used by the handloom units. Due to the absence of cold storage or properly equipped godowns a large number of the industrial units producing finished products from seasonal crops go idle during the off-season and others like the soap factory, etc. often have to stop their productions due to the shortage or limited supply of raw materials available through the government quotas.

(3) A high rate of break-in-transportation, absence of Government incentives to develop industries in such a backward region like North Bengal, absence of skilled mechanics, and dependence on Calcutta for finishing products, like the sealing and packing materials, are among the various bottlenecks which the existing industrial units of North Bengal are facing.

However, the nationalised commercial banks are now making investments in small scale industrial units and in road-transport treating them in the priority sectors. This may bring in a better industrial future for the region, atleast in the field of forest-based and agro-based industries which have great potentialities for further development. The following table ³⁵ (4) provides a partial picture of the total loans sanctioned by the different nationalised banks located in the five districts of North Bengal. The total picture is not available since many branches of different nationalised banks did not supply the data on the investment in the field

of small-scale industries and others for personal reasons.

Table-35

Industrial loans/advances made by the nationalised banks, located in North Bengal.

District	Road-Transport (Amount in Rs.)	Small scale Industries (Amount in Rs.)	Period
Darjeeling	11,10,000.00	37,73,000.00	1973-75
Jalpaiguri	6,54,000.00	46,04,000.00	1973-74
West Dinajpur	41,03,000.00	33,90,000.00	1972-74
Malda	21,49,000.00	6,86,000.00	1971-73
Cooch Behar	(Not available)	(Not available)	

Source: Data collected personally from the statement of advances made by the banks in priority sectors.

The idea conveyed by this table, however partial, is quite meaningful. Already an investment of over twelve million rupees has been made on small-scale industries and over eight million on road-transport. The actual investment, for which the figures were not available, would be much larger. Most of the industries receiving loans or advances are wood-based industries, general engineering industries, fruit processing and fruit-preservation industries, chemical or pharmaceutical industries, coffin products, and other agro-based industries, like pine-apple production and canning, aluminium industries, etc. The second most important group of beneficiary is the road-transport in North Bengal, like autorepairing units and fund made available for the purchasing of Bus, Truck, auto-rickshaw, etc. The nationalised banks of India have sanctioned a large amount of loans, through their branches located in this region, to the development of this particular branch (table-35). In Siliguri the industry based on road-transport has developed to a great extent. In fact, the tremendous development of road-transportation in the post-Independence period has resulted in the growth of this industry. Another Government financial organisation known as 'West Bengal Financial Corporation' is playing an important role in the growth and development of industries in North Bengal. The two branches of this financial corporation are located in Siliguri and English Bazar towns. These two units are covering the whole of North Bengal. An idea about the total loan sanctioned by these

two units in the industrial field of North Bengal may be obtained from the following tables (36A and ³⁶36B).

Table-36A

Siliguri Branch as on 31.3.73

Disbursement of loans/advances sanctioned by the West Bengal Financial Corporation in the field of industrial development in North Bengal.

District	Small scale Industries (Amount in Rs.)	Others (Amount in Rs.)	Total (Amount in Rs.)
Darjeeling	13,63,000.00	14,00,000.00	27,63,000.00
Jalpaiguri	12,50,000.00	17,00,000.00	29,50,000.00
Malda	33,000.00	—	33,000.00
Cooch Behar	2,12,000.00	—	2,12,000.00

Table-36B: English Bazar (Malda) Branch upto 1974

District	Small scale Industries (Amount in Rs.)	Others (Amount in Rs.)	Total (Amount in Rs.)
Malda	1,14,000.00	-	1,14,000.00
	83,000.00	-	2,15,000.00
	13,500.00	-	
West Dinajpur	7,50,000.00	-	7,50,000.00

Source: West Bengal Financial Corporation Branch Siliguri and English Bazar (Malda)

It is found that the industries which have got loan from this organization are those mainly concerned with the Plywood, production of rubber goods like tyre, tube, etc., Engineering goods, Iron and Steel structures; Rice mills; Plastic goods; Chemicals, Saw-mills, Distilleries, Hotel, Canning and preservation of fruits, Flour-mills; Automobile repairing units, Ice-candy, Optical Glass, Solvent extraction plants etc. They are located mostly in towns like Siliguri, Cooch Behar, Dinhata, Gairkata, Darjeeling, Malda, Gazal, Kaliachak, Old Malda and Raiganj, etc.

Thus, we find that the nationalised banks and the Government financial organizations are helping with a liberal hand to promote the industrial activities, particularly on the small scale level in North Bengal. If the schemes become ultimately fruitful they will create more employment opportunities as well as will bring in an economic stability contributing to the urban growth in the entire region.

Besides the existing small scale industries, the tea - gardens concentrated in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling provide another aspect of industrial growth in this region. A number of the nationalised commercial banks, namely, the Central Bank of India, the United Bank of India, the State Bank of India, and the Punjab National Bank of India are also advancing finances to the economically sick tea gardens.

The development of the infrastructural facilities, including the availability of electricity and liberal Government loans, may widen the prospect of the small scale industries to a great extent. Yet North Bengal remains virgin for the large-scale industrial ventures. If the energetic entrepreneurs come forward to set up new industries, they may find wide scope in the following fields of industries which can be developed on the basis of available resources of the region.

(1) Agrobased Industries: Pine-apple canning and the production of squash, Jam, Jelly, etc. from mango, orange, tomato etc. Jute baling; Mustard Oil Mills, Rice Mills, Cigarette and Cheroot manufacturing, Sericulture and cotton mills, mainly handloom and power loom units.

(2) Chemical or Pharmaceutical Industries: Drugs manufactured from the medicinal plants; Distilleries; fertilizers; soap, insecticides and pesticides.

(3) Forest based Industries: Match; Ply wood; Paper and Paper-pulp; Wood Board and Tea-Chest; Fibre boards, Constructional timber and Cabinet manufacturing.

(4) General Engineering: Automobile repairing, etc. Equipment for the Tea Gardens and Factories; Aluminium-plate lining for tea-

chests; Fibre glass tray for tea-gardens mainly and Plastic Pipes and fittings for agricultural uses, etc.

Writing about the future urban prospects of North Bengal, one cannot ignore the importance of Defence which can be regarded as an azonal factor in the growth and development of urbanization in this region. In fact, the strategic location of this region is conducive to the growth of defence establishments. Particularly, from the Sino-Indian War in 1962, the Indian Government has given much emphasis on developing the area from the defensive point of view. As a result a large number of defence establishments have grown up in and around the Terai region. The location of defence establishments have exerted much influence on the marketing economy of this region, specially on the towns which are close to them like Siliguri, etc. where a sizeable market for the defence personnel has developed. They have played an important role in the growth of Siliguri as the biggest commercial centre in North Bengal within a short span of time, between 1962 and 1972.

Transportation net-work - its impact on the Urban Development:

Among the factors which are responsible for the rapid growth of urbanization in North Bengal, transportation is, perhaps the foremost as "in any event, it offers a change of speed and mode to fit a diversity of human purposes."⁽¹⁾ The region, under study

is witnessing a phase of transportation development since Independence. The picture can be revealed by citing one example that till 1947, the district of West Dinajpur "had only one pucca (or metalled) road between Hilli and Balurghat, 26 km. in length. The progress since then is appreciable and the total length of black-top road in the district including the Balurghat Municipality, Raiganj Municipality and Zila Parishad (37 Km. altogether) at present is 738 Km. The average growth or increase in length from 1947 to 1972 comes to 30 Km. per year".⁽²⁾ The location of various towns brings out the importance of transportation as the growth factor of urban centres. Most of the towns in the southern part of this region present a linear method of urban growth using "the transportation system as an axis of development to structure the location and form of urban growth potential."⁽³⁾ The towns are located along the National Highway 31 and 34, almost like the old towns situated along the course of the river Ganges. The towns on the break-in-transition point and on the nodal point have flourished to a great extent in this region, for example, Siliguri, Raiganj, Malbazar, etc. The development of transportation network increases the accessibility which is not only "a key factor in spreading the effects of urbanization in the hinterlands but that there exists a grading of the degree of urbanization with accessibility".⁽⁴⁾ Thus, the towns which are enjoying maximum accessibility to their hinterlands, have flourished more than the

others such as, Siliguri, Raiganj, Jalpaiguri, etc. The National Highway No. 31 and 34 and the broad-gauge Northeast Frontier Railways passing through this region are the two main arteries of communication and most of the towns have developed along these two routes. The Defence has played an important role in developing the transport-network in this region. It may be assumed that the developed transportation network, connecting this region directly with Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim on the north and the rest of India by roads and railways, has somewhat decreased the over-all influence of Calcutta upon this region to some extent. The existence of a number of branches of different commercial Banks of other States in Siliguri town reveals that the town has been able to set-up direct commercial links with the other States of India in respect of trade and commerce.

Future Urban Centres

The spreading of transportation network and the increasing accessibility of the towns of North Bengal are fostering the growth of new centres slowly taking urban forms at vantage points. Most of these are located either on the break in-transition point or at some attractive locations. For example, Birpara - a break-in-transportation point in Jalpaiguri district, connecting a number of tea gardens located surrounding this centre and itself serving as a stop-over for the long route express buses; Mirik - which is going to be an attractive tourists spot in Darjeeling district, and

Bagdogra - growing fast from its location on the National Highway No.31 with its largest civil air-strip in North Bengal and strategic importance. In fact, the further spread and development of roads will bring in more centres into prominence which are still hibernating in their secluded existence.

It is to be noted that up to this date no single factor has become the sole booster of the development of urbanization in North Bengal. Rather all those factors, like agrarian development, transportation, commercial and industrial activities, the role of the Governmental financial organizations and of the nationalised banks, and last but not the least, the Defence have collectively contributed to the present urban development of North Bengal. "Urban development is neither an end in itself nor an evil to be avoided. Urban development is one of the means of national development."⁽⁵⁾ The harmonious blending of Government's welfare policies for this region and the private initiatives in setting up new avenues for employment opportunities are essential to bring the stability to the existing developing trend of urbanization in this region. In order to make it more fruitful the planning authority would require "the capacity to use all the strings on the altar - economic, social, political and physical."⁽⁶⁾ It is true that, "smaller towns frequently do not exhibit genuine urban characteristics in terms of social structure or even economic specialisation."

This applies largely to the small towns of North Bengal, and it also can not be denied that a large sector of the urban populace of North Bengal live in a semi-urban environment. In spite of that the towns of North Bengal have registered phenomenal progress. In view of the fact that almost all the big metropolises were at one time small urban centres the problems of North Bengal towns should be dealt with an introspective view so that the mistakes of the past can be avoided. In fact, towns like Siliguri, Raiganj, etc. declared as the cities are likely to receive a greater rush in near future and if the precautions are not taken in time, these centres will become problem cities in respect of housing, employment, urban amenities, etc., having serious impact on the social structure of the region. The most heartening feature is that the Government of West Bengal has already taken some concrete steps to check the unplanned growth of Jalpaiguri and Siliguri town by imposing the "landuse control" upon them. Such piecemeal programmes along with the long term planning are expected to create a better urban atmosphere for this region. There are certain factors affecting future urban characteristics cannot reasonably be included within any planning analysis, even though they are certain to exert an impact. For example, the skill, ability, and pressures for action which can be exerted by elected representatives and appointed officials and private initiatives and major political parties. In the present case the absence of a strong lobby which may fight for the development of this region, is greatly felt. The social res-

ponse like any other factor is not less important in the development of the existing state of affairs in the urban sphere of North Bengal.

In this connection one may refer to India's first two Five Year Plans (1951 - 60) containing little about urban development programmes and the Third Five Year Plan which included the item in a very limited fashion. It is rather in the current plan, the Fifth (1974 - 79), that concrete programme has been taken on promoting the development of smaller towns and new centres. But "the Planning Commissions recommendations, such as development of small towns and location of new industries away from bigger cities were not realised successfully."⁽⁸⁾ It is high time that the public body, related with the urban affairs in our country, should now take proper initiative in solving the long standing problems of the small towns, the latter forming the actual backbone of urban development in any country.

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(1111)

A P P E N D I X - I

TYPES OF FUNCTIONS

NAMES OF BRANCHES

1. Administrative

(a) Whether H. Quarters/S. Division/
P.S. etc.

2. Communication

(a) Post Office - its classification

(b) Internal communication offered
by telephone.

(1) Total No. of telephone lines.

(ii) " " " " " Comm.

(iii) " " " " " Private

3. Finance

(a) Bank (whether branch/H. Office/
Zonal Office; Role in commerce;
Figure of investment in Indus-
try).

(b) Insurance: (Name, Role in Com-
merce, Figure regarding business
with past records).

4. Education

(a) Total No. of School/College/
University etc.

(i) Name of the Institution/Status
nature (whether Girls' or boys')

5. Health

(a) No. of Hospitals: (Name, Status,
No. of beds).

(b) Clinic: (Name, Status, No. of
beds).

6. Transport

(a) Airways/Rly/Roadways: Volume of
passengers; and volume of Cargo
freights - annually, with past
records).

(1111)

A P P E N D I X - II

1. Year of establishment:
2. Name of the Firm: (Whether the ownership has changed or not, if so changed, why?)
3. Size (Employment): (No. of Permanent labour " " Temporary ")
4. Type of Production:
5. Source of Raw Material:
6. Market : (Outward & Inward Market)
7. Production Figure : (Annual production figure with past records).
8. Difficulties facing the industry regarding raw materials, Market or Capital etc.

