

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.

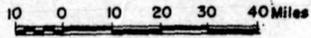
(a) The tract of Darjeeling, which is now the northernmost district of North Bengal, composed of a long strip of terai and lofty mountains, remained for a long period as a part of the dominions of the Raja of Sikkim, and was first attracted by Captain Lloyd who was in a Government mission to deal with 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} after 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} factorising 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 ^{was} founded 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.

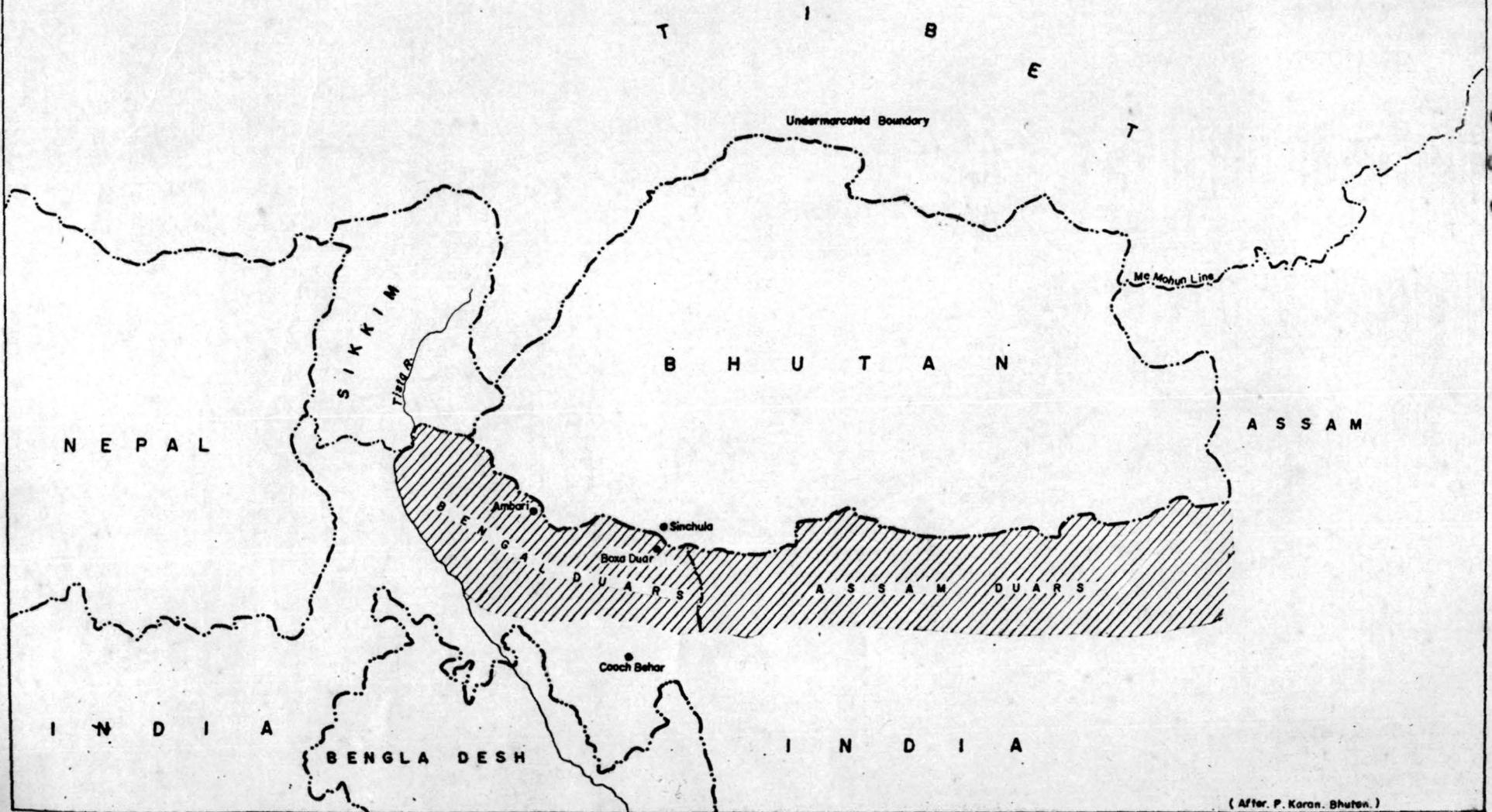
(b) The area comprising the 'Duars' of the District of Jalpaiguri also has an interesting political history. For a long time a great tussle^{was} witnessed between the princely state of Cooch Behar and Bhutan regarding their border rights. The Bhutaness^{es} were responsible for making a state of lawlessness (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.



(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 Hunter⁽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 deminish 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

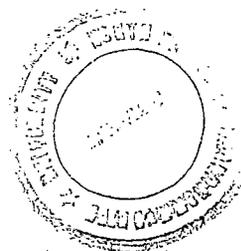
Cooch Behar and the East India Company. According to Mr. Metcalf⁽²⁸⁾ Cooch Behar was " a swampy and unhealthy spot, miserable and filthy town, narrow paths, jungle patches and dirty ditches, still 1864" when he visited the town on official business, but by 1874 Cooch Behar attained a better prospect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

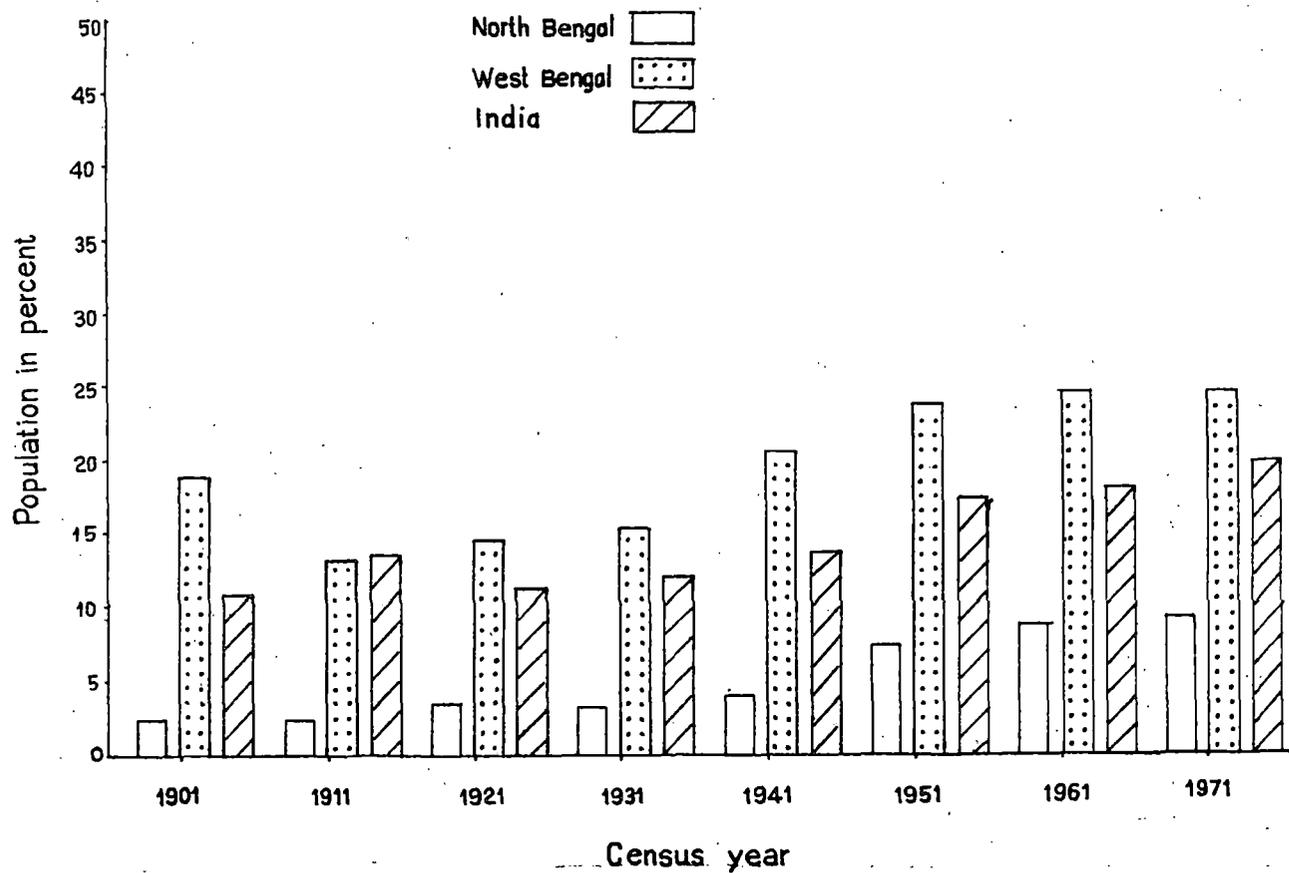
Showing the percentage variation of urban population since 1901 of India, West Bengal & N. Bengal.

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.

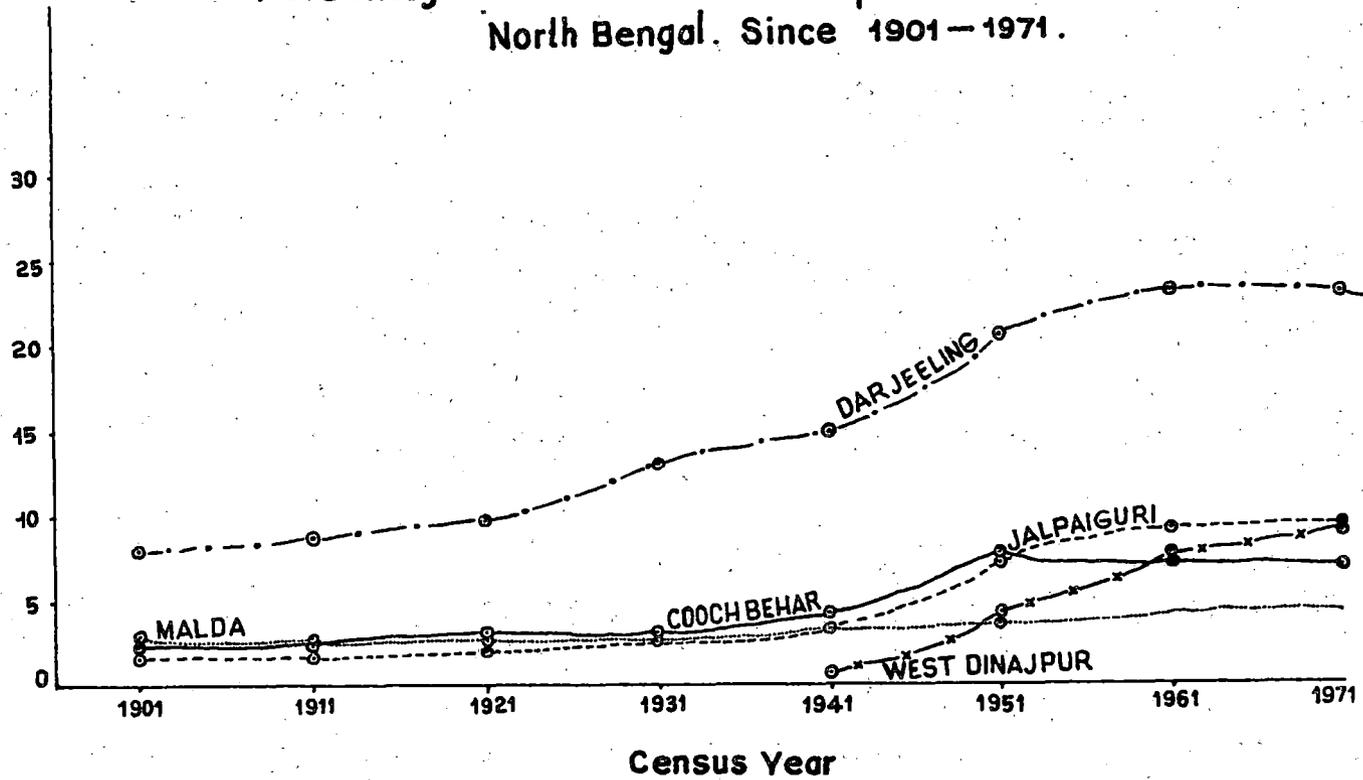
The table (2) reveals that during the period of seven decades, except ^{for} Darjeeling district; all other districts exhibit a pitance

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

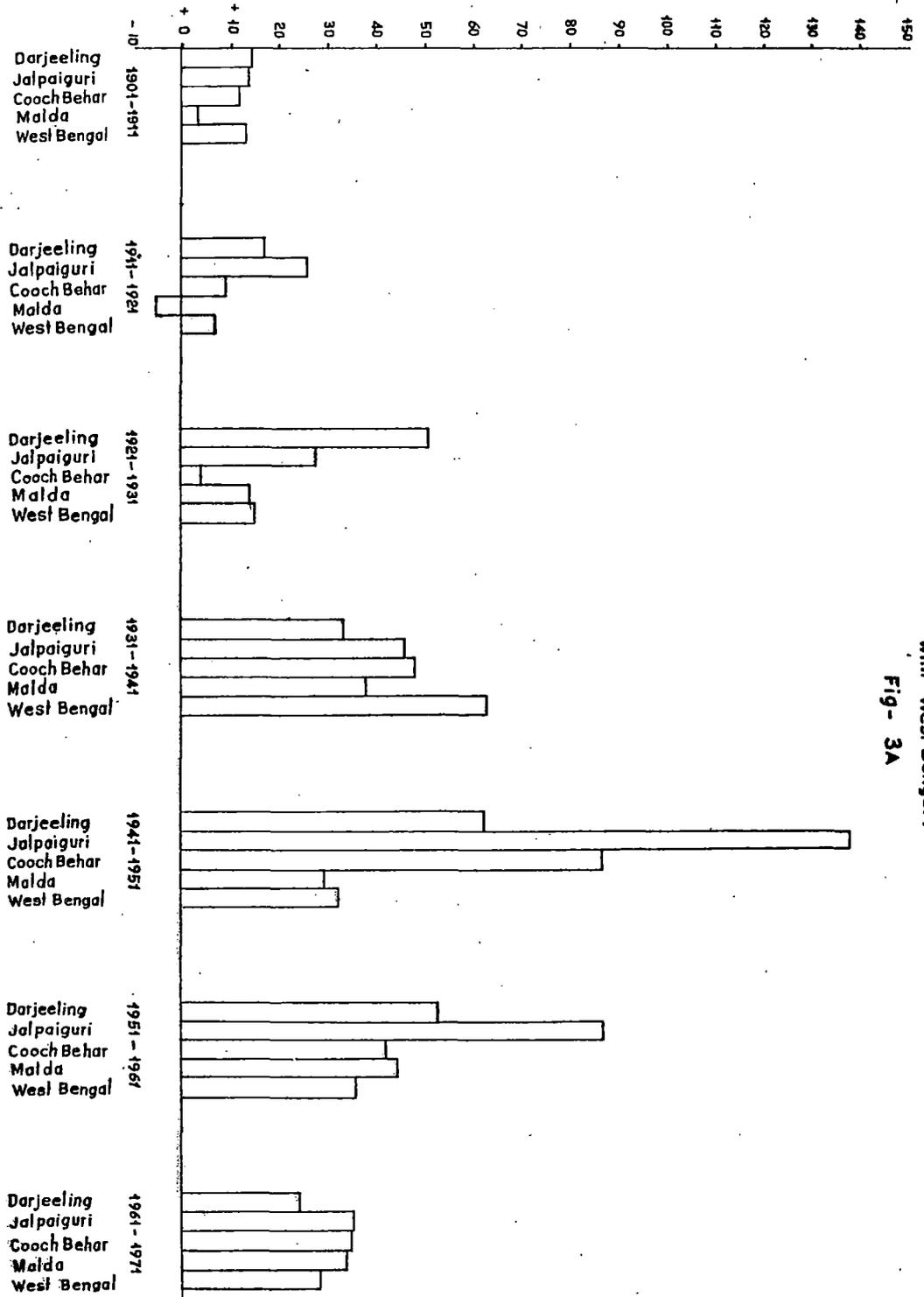
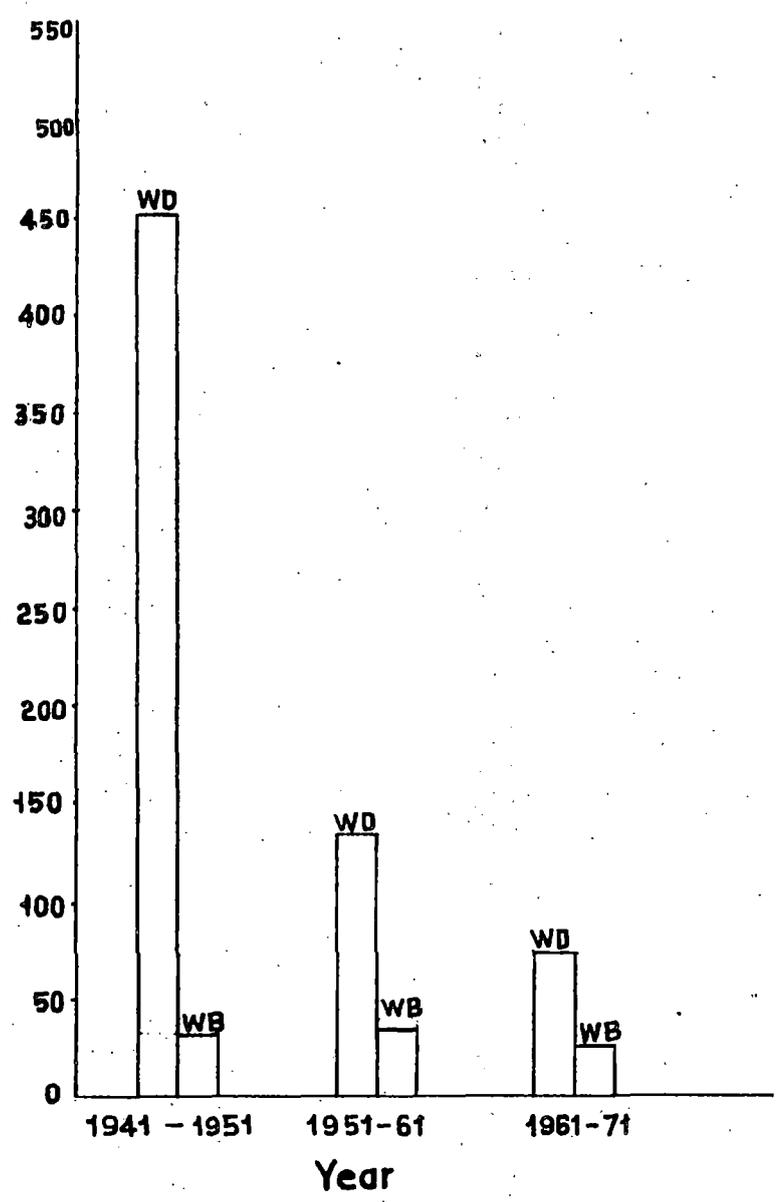


Fig. 3b



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	65.0	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

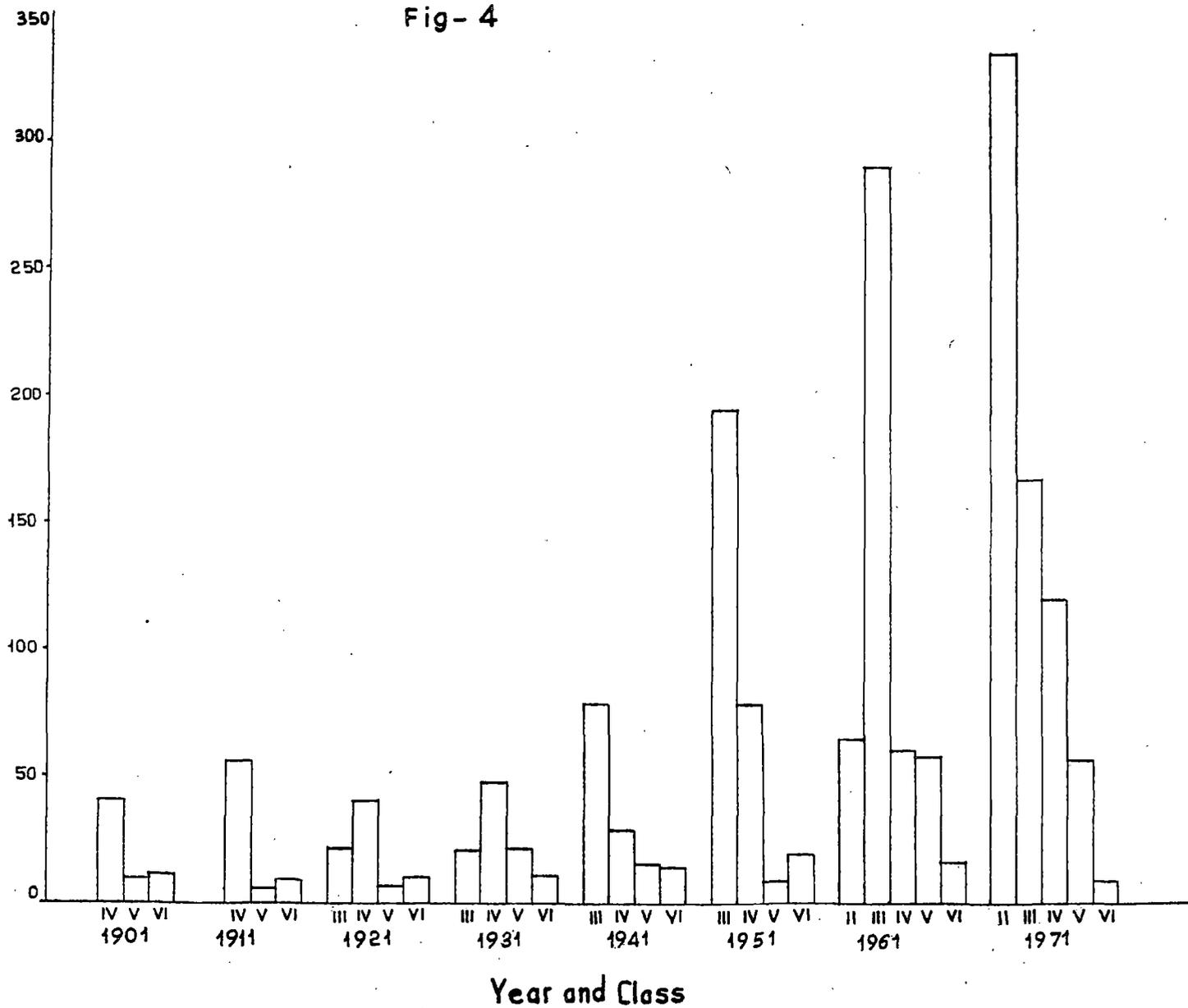


Table 4 (b)

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, whereas Mal, Gangarampur and Islampur moved to class V, while Maldibari and Old Malda, having 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	+15,485	+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	+	2,728	+ 64.00
			1971	9,167	+	2,187	+ 31.3
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.

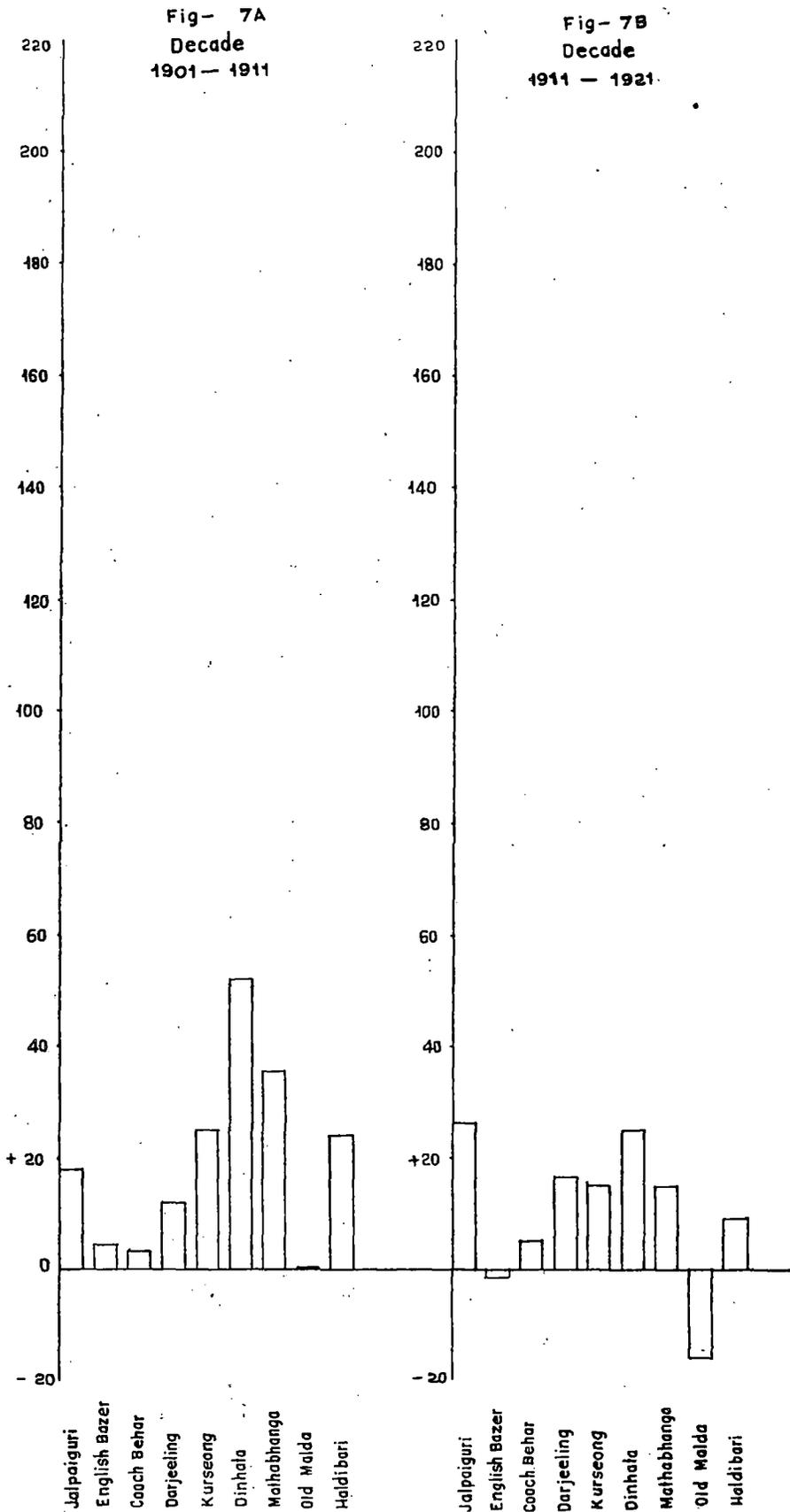
District	Name of Town	Civic Status	Year	Persons	Decade variation	Percentage of Decade variation
Malda	Old Malda	Municipality	1901	3,743		
			1911	3,750	+ 7	+ 0.19
			1921	3,145	- 605	- 16.30
			1931	2,779	- 366	- 11.64
			1941	3,845	+ 1,066	+ 38.36
			1951	4,498	+ 653	+ 16.98
			1961	4,885	+ 387	+ 8.60
			1971	6,691	+ 1,806	+ 37.0
Cooch Behar	Haldibari	Town Committee	1901	1,112		
			1911	1,380	+ 268	+ 24.10
			1921	1,532	+ 152	+ 8.84
			1931	1,246	- 286	- 17.04
			1941	1,563	+ 317	+ 25.84
			1951	3,162	+ 1,599	+101.66
			1961	4,371	+ 1,209	+ 38.24
			1971	5,098	+ 727	+ 16.7

Table - 7 Contd.

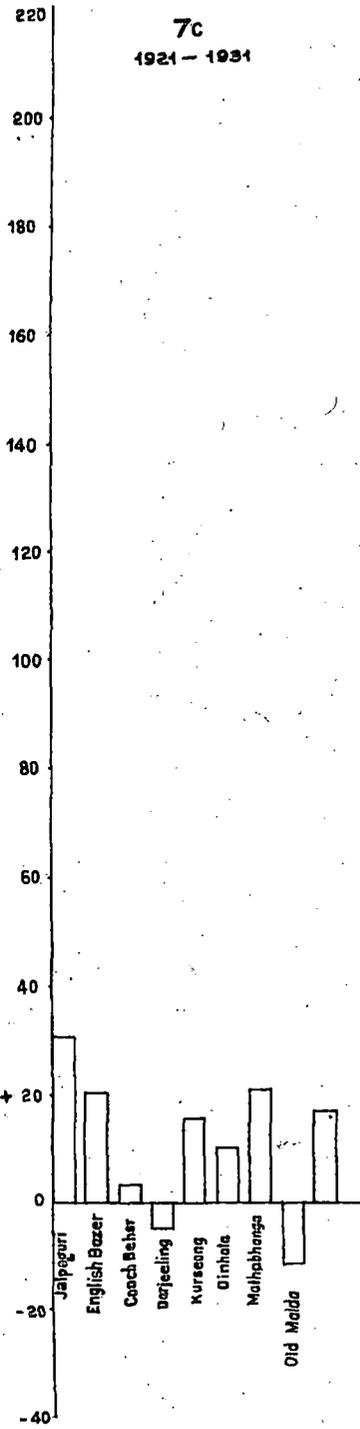
District	Name of Town	Civic Status	Year	Persons	Decade variation	Percentage of Decade variation
Cooch Behar	Tufanganj	Town Committee	1941	1,412		
			1951	2,316	+ 904	+ 64.02
			1961	3,473	+ 1,157	+ 50.96
			1971	4,209	+ 164	+ 4.7
Cooch Behar	Nekhiganj	Town Committee	1941	1,293		
			1951	1,356	+ 53	+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

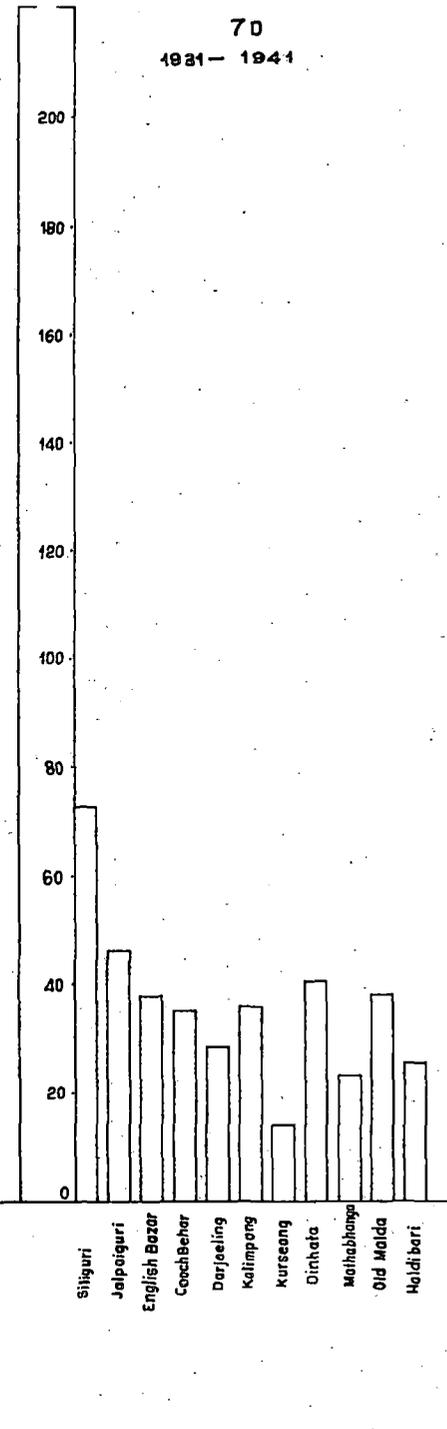
Decadewise Growth of Urban population of North Bengal



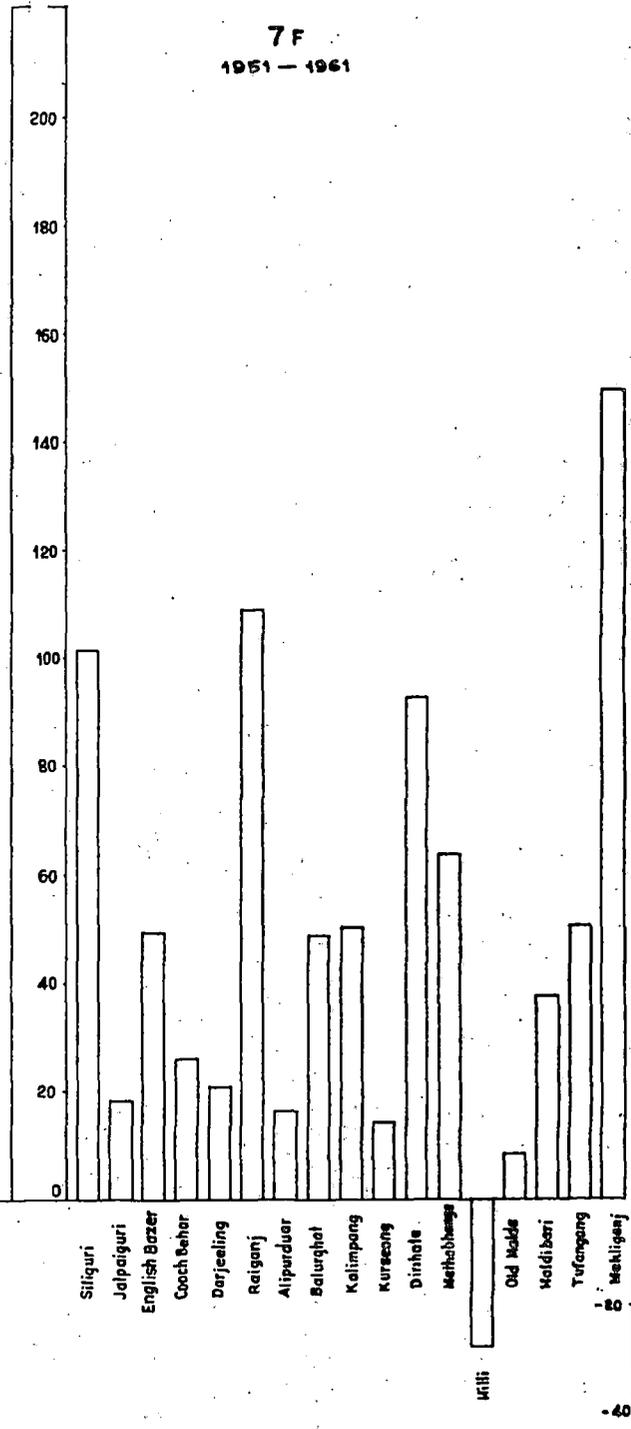
7c
1921 - 1931



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

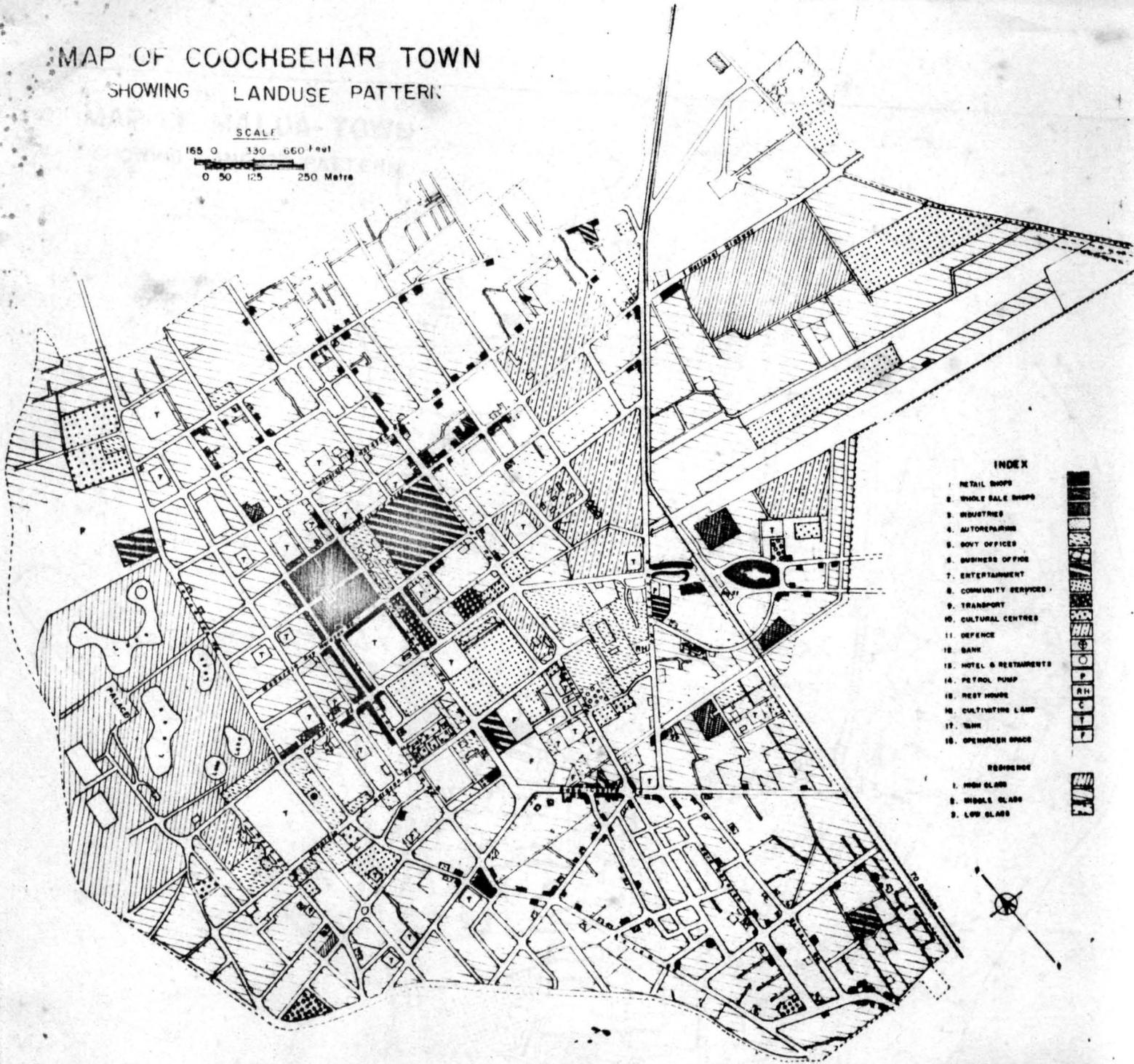
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MAP OF COCHBEHAR TOWN SHOWING LANDUSE PATTERN

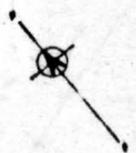


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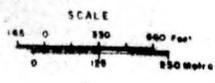
RESIDENCE

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



MAP OF MALDA TOWN

SHOWING LANDUSE PATTERN.



TO OLD MALDA RLY STATION

