CHAPTER – II
HISTORICAL SETTING OF SHILLONG


Shillong is the capital of Meghalaya at an altitude of 1561 meter above the mean sea level. On its west and south lies the Bangladesh plain, to the east the Barak valley and to the north the valley of the Brahmaputra (Assam plain). The region enjoys a sub-tropical monsoon climate. The amount of rainfall within the region varies, ranging from between an average 300 to 400 cm, annually. Despite its undulating topography, the rejuvenated parts of the plateau leads to quick soil formation combined with high average annual rainfall that permits thick and quick vegetal growth.

Shillong is situated in the East Khasi Hills District and is linked by National Highway 40 with the state capital of Assam at a distance of 103 km. In the past it was a few cluster of scattered hamlets under the jurisdiction of the Syiem of Mylliem. Since the year 1866, Shillong became the provisional headquarter of the Khasi and Jaintia Hill districts. Again in 1874, Shillong was
made the capital of the Assam province. Between 1905 to 1912 Shillong was turned into summer capital of newly created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Since then Shillong had remained the capital of Assam. However, in 1972, Meghalaya attained its full statehood and Shillong became the capital of the state.

Legends say that in ancient times a man named “SHYLLONG” discovered a deity in the Shillong peak and, therefore, the place derived its name as “SHILLONG”. Among the Khasi people many such legends are current. It has got a number of tiny tablelands sparse between small hillocks. Clear water oozes out from underground sources in several places. Besides there are some perennial rivulets flowing across the city, which provide very good habitation for men and animals. Quite a number of attractive waterfalls are located within and around the city, such as Bishop’s Falls, Beadon Falls, Crinoline Falls, Sweet Falls, Spread Eagle Falls, Elephant Falls etc. The highest peak is said to be the Shillong peak with a height of 6445 ft. above mean sea level. Unlike many cities of India, the atmospheric air of Shillong remains free from dirt, soot’s and smoke. Approximately the humming pine trees mix their gaseous aroma containing curative ingredients for some diseases with the gentle gales that blow through the pine-needles. Rain and showers with occasional hails are welcomed gifts of nature in automatic cleansing and washing out the dirt and dregs as well as in providing rain water for collection from the house tops by every needy person for ordinary house-hold uses. The climate is humid, healthy and salubriously agreeable throughout the year. During winter, the temperature comes below freezing point and snow-flakes and frosts appear to add to the joys and fun of the youngsters. To
Map 2.1

SHILLONG VALLEY

PHYSICAL ASSOCIATION OF SHILLONG TOWN GROUP

speculative minds, the Kaleidoscopic colour variations of the sky over heading Shillong are of absorbing interests.

The British pooled in as much resources as possible for developing and making this hill-town congenial and enjoyable to their modes of living as best as possible. The beautiful Wards Lake, Polo ground, the race-course, the Governor’s residence, the link-roads connecting the neighbouring plains, patronization of the Christian European missionaries with big grants of lands etc., of the establishment of quality hospitals, schools and colleges, churches and so forth are some of the good instances. They could easily discover and imagine with their world-wide experiences that Shillong was a potential virgin soil to model it into a QUEEN OF THE HILL-STATIONS on the one hand and their best strong hold in the EAST-INDIA for propagation of British power and culture. In such criss-cross pulls, anyhow Shillong has become the cleanliest, both naturally and artistically modernized, QUEEN of the cities of India.

A. A Brief Background of Shillong

An analysis of the ecological setting and patterns of the landuse reveals that the ecological conditions are not very favourable for generation of agricultural surplus. The available area for cultivation and the actually cultivated area constitute only a negligible proportion of the total geographical area (Map 2.1). The technique of cultivation as well as the cropping pattern too indicate a highly subsistent nature of agricultural production barring a few areas of notable exception, particularly adjacent to the town. The region has some important natural
resources, the forest resource being the most significant. Some amount of coal, lime-stone, sillimanite and clay is also available in some areas. But there is hardly any evidence of industries linked to such resources. The structure of the work force in the state shows little diversification with more than 80 percent of the work force concentrated in the agrarian sector alone. The development of the rural wage market too is negligible. Broadly speaking, the region, by and large, is characterized by traditional agricultural practices. There is very little evidence of any structural transformation necessitating the development of a large city. The growth of the city and its enormous size bears little symbolic relationship to the rural areas around it.

The city may be envisaged as having an enclave character, a common feature of most cities developed in the hands of colonial administration. The city sustains itself without having to depend on the structural requirement of the region. The cities developed a dependent relationship with the national / global economy and establish similar relationship with its hinterland. Shillong emerged to suit the colonial demands of exploitation of natural resources and for better administrative and defense control over the region. The regional structure, during the period of inception of the city is characterized by fragmentation of space only on politico-administrative line, without any indication towards structural changes in the economy. It is significant that the city which remained under direct British control was surrounded by numerous Khasi Himas, 'states'. Even after independence, the nature of urbanization is characterized by mere growth in the population without affecting the economic transformation of the hinterland in any significant manner.
As far as the implication of the urban growth in Meghalaya is concerned, it may be pointed out that the process of reorganization of space was externally induced leading to complete split in space linked to the national and global economy on the one hand and the hinterland continuing with the economic structure of an essentially tribal social order. The process of under development of the region thus began with this split. This was due to the reorganization of space in the region, which was not a response to changes in the regional structure through socio-economical instrumentalities. Moreover, the hegemonic and dominant character of the city space in relation to its hinterland was inherent in the process and it contributed weak linkages it had with the hinterland. Even after independence, though the city snapped its direct relationship with the metropolitan economy in the dependence structure, it continues to reproduce the process of under development by perpetuating administrative dominance.

Shillong’s present economic base indicates that consequent upon its development as an administrative centre, the city has functions primarily oriented towards administration, trade and other associated roles. Concentration and growth of population has led to the growth of trade as an important function. Through administration and trade, the city has been able to develop only tertiary linkages with the rural areas in the hinterland. As a corollary the city has attracted other tertiary functions, such as concentration of banking services, educational institutions etc. resulting in to a overwhelming segment of the working force in tertiary occupation, thereby reflecting the nature of function the city is performing. The location of many state government headquarters and nearly all Central Government institutions and offices has contributed to the tertiarisation of the
city's economic base. The work force in the secondary section is negligible. The production of the city is mainly geared towards meeting the consumption within the city. The production base of the city bears very little evidence of its fulfilling the requirements expected to be generated in the hinterland.

It may be mentioned that the spatial differentiation in the hilly region, which began with the dependent colonial economy, has produced the city in response to the national space economy to which it is subservient. Urbanization in the region, therefore, is more as a result of superimposed conditions, than that of indigenous growth. Within this framework the specific characteristics of the city may be underlined as follows:

1. The city is located in a hilly terrain and enjoys temperate weather conditions throughout the year, but winter months are very severe. The topography and the weather conditions not permit surplus agricultural growth.

2. The city has grown in the midst of tribal areas which continue to remain under quasi-subsistent and quasi-foraging economic organization and there is no industrial base, or production unit.

3. A very high proportion of the urban population is located in Shillong city only and the city continues to be the nodal point of all secondary and tertiary activities. The work force structure shows a heavy dependence on the tertiary and secondary sectors.
4. The city also supports a sizeable proportion of people of non-tribal origin, most of them being displaced Bengali and migrant Nepalis and Bihari population.

5. The population composition presents a high degree of ethnic diversity and economic disparities across and within varied ethnic segment.

B. Search for a Colonial ‘Station’

During the first quarter of nineteenth century the British East India Company felt threat to its possession of Sylhet and Goalpara, its eastern frontier. Although the question of permanent British annexation of North East India was not decided as yet, David Scott, the first Civil Commissioner and Agent to the Governor-General on the North East Frontier, anticipated the future British commercial prospect in the hills. Fired by the imagination of constructing a line of communication from Rani near Palasbari in Kamrup district of Assam via Nongkhlaw, Maphlang with Sohra, bringing Brahmaputra valley nearer to Surma valley he proposed a road alignment. Accompanied by Major White, David Scott went to Nongkhlaw on 1st November 1826 and got permission from the Khasis for the construction of the road through their territory in exchange of some land in Kamrup district. Some land was granted for the construction at Nongkhlaw, of houses by the British on the terms of 1833 treaty with the Nongkhlaw Syiem, a British political officer with adequate force was posted first at Nongkhlaw. A jail was constructed earlier at Nongkhlaw. At the conclusion of Khasi Wars, Nongkhlaw, the seat of Khasi national resistance, became the first political Head
Quarter of the British in the Khasi Hills. However, this Head Quarter had to be shifted to Sohra for administrative and political reasons.

There was no lime stone east of Rajmahal hills in Bihar for making lime for building construction. So the lure of lime stone brought the different warring Europeans, the British, French, Portuguese, Greeks and the Armenians to the Khasi Hills. Henry Inglish & Co. with their office at Sylhet had wide spread lime stone business interest and established themselves at least 30 years before the East India Company took up their position in the Khasi Hills. With the transfer of office of the British Political Officer from Nongkhlaw to Sohra in 1834-35, the Government ordered the removal of European detachment and abolition of convalescent depot in Sohra in view of unfavourable humid climate. W. J. Allen, Member, Board of Revenue, on deputation to Khasi Hills recommended the removal of the District head Quarters to what is known today as Upper Shillong or to any situation in its vicinity. Sohra was not considered centrally located for strategic purpose. Its transport and communication line proved inadequate during Jaintia uprising in 1860-61. Henry Hopkinson, the commissioner of Assam, took up the cause for early shifting of the District Head Quarters of Khasi Hills from Sohra to Shillong, for it was more central. It was surrounded by populous villages, whereas Sohra is in the "midst of a desert" interrupting communication at any season of the year.

Capt. E. A. Rowlatt, the Deputy Commissioner of Khasi & Jaintia Hills was asked in 1861 to submit a map of his district with a statement of population, area and the supposed height of each area above the sea level as accurately as possible. He was soon asked to proceed and make Shillong (present day Upper
Shillong) his Head Quarters and a small cottage was constructed there. But till early 1862, the final order of the Government of Bengal did not reach the Commissioner of Assam about the Shillong scheme. The Committee which was appointed in 1862 to select a suitable site for the District Head Quarter suggested the location of it and the sanitarium of the high plateau of Shillong and to reserve the valley of Iewduh for a depot for the sick, European troops and for the cantonment. The Shillong plateau is about 275 meters higher than Iewduh with a perceptible difference in temperature. Despite the recommendation of the Site Selection Committee, the Government of Bengal ordered the shifting of Suddar Station of the District of Khasi & Jaintia Hills from Sohra to the Valley of Iewduh. A more detailed survey of Shillong and Iewduh then made by Mr. Barclay was called for and topographical survey department was asked to do it. Meanwhile a large number of people urged upon Col. Hopkinson, the Commissioner of Assam and Maj. H. S. Bivar, the Deputy Commissioner of Khasi and Jaintia Hills to give them sites for building purpose at Iewduh. In anticipation of the approval of the Government of India, the Bengal Government sanctioned the cash purchase and other arrangements, which Col. Hopkinson had made at an expenditure of Rs. 8,433/- for acquiring 2499 acres of land for the station of Shillong.

Col. Houghton was in charge of defining the area allotments and the Commissioner of Assam, Col. Hopkinson suggested the prevailing rate at Murree Hill Station in North West Frontier of India, now Pakistan at Rs. 50/- per acre, which remained in force till 1889. Jungles were cut, some allotments were made to European and Eurasians in the core areas. Most of the migrant business people were allotted land in what is now today known as Police Bazar. Slowly the station
was taking shape. But the Suddar Station of the Khasi & Jaintia Hills had not been shifted from Sohra to Iewduh as the masonry structures of the Cutchery Court was not ready to receive public offices, particularly the Treasury. Soon after the visit of Sir Cecil Beadon, the Lt. Governor of Bengal in August 1865, the construction began in right earnest. The structures were all made of stone.

On the 28 April 1866, Commissioner of Assam, Col. Henry Hopkinson, wrote to the Bengal Government, “Shillong for Yoedo. I will as well drop the name Yoedo which is quite a misapplication to the new Station and it is likely to produce confusion”. Soon after the birth of Shillong, the Head Quarters of the Frontier troops, Head Quarters of the Superintending Engineer, Assam and office of Deputy Inspector General of Police, Assam were also shifted to the new district Head Quarter. The office of the Deputy Commissioner of Khasi and Jaintia Hills along with those employed in court at Sohra were transferred to Shillong. Krishna Kishor Dhar was the chief official of the Deputy commissioner’s court, first at Sohra, and then at Shillong. Almost all the employees, 27 in number were persons from Sylhet.

Col. Hopkinson began to spend a considerable time at his dream town of Shillong. His presence accelerated the growth of the town. He excavated a pond with spring near the D. C’s office which came to be known as Hopkinson’s tank, a source of drinking water for many. It was renamed as Ward’s Lake after Sir William E. Ward, who held the office of Chief Commissioner, Assam for four times at different periods between 1891 and 1896.
C. Shillong as the Capital of British Assam

Col Hopkinson in April 1867 pleaded for the location of the Head Quarters of the Assam Commission at Shillong on political, strategic and climatic ground. But the Bengal Board of Revenue regarded Shillong simply as a mere “peaked ridge”, having a pleasant cool climate, which might fit it to come a sanatorium. The notion of a hill station was detrimental to the location of the Head Quarters. The Governor-General in Council decided that the hill stations – Darjeeling, Sohra and Shillong were inconveniently placed as regards their accessibility to the people of the plains. The matter remained there till 1874, when Government of India constituted Assam into a Chief Commissionership directly subordinate to it. For the first 40 days the Headquarters of the Commissioner remained at Guwahati. On 20 March 1874, the Secretariat was transferred from Guwahati to Shillong for 5 reasons: climatic, political, economic, communication and strategic. Meanwhile Major S.T. Trivor, Secretary, P.W.D. Assam, in anticipation of the sanction of the Supreme Government, purchased from Col. H. S. Bivar for Rs 26,000/- a house and ground at Shillong to be used as the official residence of the Chief Commissioner, which subsequently developed into present day Raj Bhavan. Lord Northbrook was the first Governor General to visit Shillong, accompanied by the Home Secretary, Alfred C. Lyall, in August 1874.

Since then Shillong never ceased to be the capital except for a brief period. Although Assam was united with Eastern Bengal to form a new Province with Dhaka as its capital, except for a few months of 1911-12, most of the Government offices remained in Shillong during this period of 1905-1912. After 31 years of
life, the Chief Commissionership of Assam lost its separate identity on 16 October 1905. The phased transfer of capital to Dhaka was spread over five years. The homecoming from Dhaka to Shillong in 1912 did not take much time.

Shillong was an artifact of the British rule, created for administrative purpose, almost out of nothing. Jungles were cleared, roads laid, houses constructed and offices built for administrative purpose. The town had not sprung up on a natural trade route. It became an administrative centre rather than a commercial outpost. With the shifting of the offices from Sohra to Shillong, came from there a few eminent muslim businessmen hailing from Bengal, who bought property in and around Police Bazar. Golan Haidara, Haji Kasimuddin Molla, Moula Box, Zamatulla, Abdul Gaffar and Saikh Dedar Box contributed much to commercial, religious and social life of early days of Shillong.

By 1878, the British Shillong had 106 house holdings in Thana Road, Jail Road, European ward and a population of 2155 people. An officially nominated Municipal Board was set up and Syiem of Mylliem, Hain Manick, was also a nominated member of the Board. Munshi Md. Ahsanulla was nominated on 24 February, 1879 and continued till 1894. Shillong, an official town had no water works and street light. The water supply scheme of Shillong was completed in 1883-84. By 1895, Rev. J. C. Evans, Kartik Chandra Chatterjee and Saday Charan Das were nominated to the Municipal Board, which got jurisdiction by this time over European Ward, Laban, Mawkhar, Civil or Police Bazar and jail road Quarters.
With the formation of Chief Commissionership of Assam in 1874, came from Guwahati, 33 officials of all categories from head assistant to sweeper, who formed the nucleus of newly organised Secretariat. Most of them got accommodation in Jail Road and Thana Road residential sites and some at Laban, outside the limits of British territory. Shillong covered during the British days, both British and non-British territory. Out of 10 square kilometers of Shillong, 4 square kilometers were British territory and was the only instance, when core employees of a capital of a British Province was in non-British territory. As the Secretariat was in British territory, this did not create any administrative problem. The Station consisted of land either ceded by the Syiem of Mylliem or leased by private parties and areas allowed from time to time by the Syiem of Mylliem.

Social and religious institutions were coming up at Shillong with the transfer of District head quarters from Sohra to Shillong. Bengali Muslim businessmen in the Civil Bazar established soon the Police Bazar Masjid at the entrance of Thana Road on a site donated by Golan Haldar. Anglican Church services were conducted under official patronage at the Government House in 1875 and prior to that in a room in the Cutchery for quite some time till the All Saints Cathedral was built in 1876. It was razed to the ground by the great earthquake and subsequently rebuilt in 1902. Calvinistic Protestant Church under Welsh Mission came in Mawkhar village at the edge of the administrative town of Shillong. The first church was opened in 1874 in Mawkhar and rebuilt in 1886. The Catholic Church came to Shillong with the German Salvatorians under Father Otto Hopfenmuller on 27 February, 1890. At that time there were hardly 20 European and Anglo Indian Catholics in Shillong. With the coming of Father Christopher
Becker in March 1906, the Catholic Church spread in Shillong particularly in Laitumkhrah village. The Unitarian was born in Jowai in 1887. It came to Shillong at Madan Laban and was consolidated by Dr. J. Thomas Sunderland, who came from U. K. in 1896.

Outside the British territory of Shillong in Laban, in 1896 Laban Sanatan Dharma Sabha (Laban Hari Sabha) was established under the presidency of Rai Saheb Prasanna Kumar Battacharje, assisted by Surendro Kumar Chakraborty and Joy Govinda Choudhury, at the heart of British Shillong in Thana Road in 1901. Shillong Hindu Dharma Sabha (Jagannath Mandir) came up on a rent-free leaseland. With the shifting of the District Head Quarters from Sohra to Shillong, Raj Chandra Choudhury and Brojendra Nath Sen brought Brahmo Samaj to Shillong. A Mahila Samiti and Ram Mohan Library were started in 1887 by Hemanta Kumari Choudhury in Jail Road. It was shifted to Laban. Khasi Hills Brahmo Samaj mandir was built up in Laban in 1904 on a plot of land donated by Raj Chandra Choudhury. Nilmoni Chakraborty, a Brahmo preacher, was sent by Sib Nath Shastri. Nilmoni Chakraborty left Shillong in 1889 for Sohra and made Brahmo Samaj movement a village reconstruction programme supported by Dr. Hem Chandra Wallang and by Prakash Chandra Pal. Some Bengali Brahmos mostly hailing from Guwahati and Calcutta established Shillong Brahmo Samaj at Police Bazar in 1874. They built their Mandir at Police Bazar in 1878. The Brahmo Samaj movement in Shillong was confined mostly to upper class Bengali officials, a few Khasis and a few Assamese. Babu Jebon Roy was a friend of the Brahmos.
The Chief Commissioner of Assam did not take any initiative to provide education to European and Anglo Indian children. On the direction of Government of India, the Assam administration opened European and Eurasian girls boarding and day school at Shillong in March 1881 under the management of the chaplain of Shillong. It was closed down and private initiative was encouraged from 1888. The administration encouraged Miss Blake’s Shillong Mixed School for the middle class European and Eurasian children. This school was closed down in 1896 and the Government had to open a school under the supervision of the D. P. I., Assam, near Laban on the old site after the great earthquake of June 1896. It grew up as Pine Mount School for girls. There was a church of England Boarding School for girls just over the Golf Club ground.

The Jail Road infant school started in a hut constructed by the Jail Road Society Hall Committee, which got the land from the Deputy Commissioner. Lt. Col. Howell in 1896 donated by the Government for social and religious purposes. The lease was granted on the same terms on which Shillong Club and Shillong Uncovenented Service Club were granted, their holdings in August 1894 and in October 1896 respectively. The land was in an unsanitary and dangerous condition, when it was given by Lt. Col. Howell. It was improved by the Jail Road Society Hall Committee. A hall was erected for public and religious purposes such as Durga Puja and Saraswati Puja. The hall was used for a Sunday school and for an infant school. Rai Bahadur S. C. Das, was the President of the Committee and Chandra Nath Sarma its secretary. Rai Saheb Mohendra Chandra Dutta, Raj Kumar Nandi, Dakshina Ch. Nandi, Girish Chandra Chakravorty, Sarada Charan Dhar,
Prasanna Kumar Dutta and Prasanna Kumar Choudhuri were other leading members.

Babu Jeebon Roy, born in 1838, founded Shillong Zillah High School in 1875-76. His son, Sib Charan Roy, passed the entrance examination from this school in 1880 from its Sylhet centre. After a decade, it was taken over by Assam government and came to be known as Shillong Government Boys High School. Rev. J. C. Evans was appointed Headmaster in 1891. Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Girls High School was established by the Welsh Mission in 1892. Ms. Bossin William was its Principal till 1896. Jeebon Roy also started Mawkhar Bengali School for Khasi boys and ran it for a few decades. Shillong Bengali Girls School was established in 1883 as a primary school but eventually was raised to Middle Vernacular school level. Prasanna Kumar Bose was its secretary in 1902 and Dinanath Dhar took it over in 1903.

A terrible earthquake occurred in Shillong on 12 June 1897. All masonry buildings including the Government House, Secretariat, church, jail, public offices and private houses were levelled to the ground. All services including Tonga service to Guwahati of M/s Golan Hyder and Sons were disrupted and so also the Shillong water works. The Deputy Commissioner, F. C. Arbuthnott, was fired by the imagination of bringing railways to Upper Shillong, from Sylhet making it the new capital. A scheme was on foot for a railway to Nongjuri and Shella at the foothills and its ultimate connection to Shillong via Laitlyngkot. One can still see the abandoned railway track on a way to Shella village. But the successive Chief
Commissioners, Sir Henry John Stedman Cotton and Sir W. E. Ward were against it for financial reasons. Reconstruction of the city began on old sites.

Even after the earthquake, the reconstructed Assam Secretariat was small enough to be located in a single building in the Secretariat Hill. In 1874, the Public Works Department Secretariat was also located there. This arrangement made for single method of intercommunication between the departments of the Secretariat. Nanda Kishore Dhar, the Head Assistant was called the father of Secretariat. Most of the civil secretariat employees were Bengalis of Sylhet. Among the Assamese, Maulavi Peer Buksh, held the Chief Ministerial appointment and exercised greater deal of influence. The Head Assistant in the general department was the highest paid ministerial officer in the civil secretariat till 1880. Md. Peer Buksh was appointed as the Superintendent of Assam Secretariat (P. W. D.) in 1886. Prakash Chandra Deb, was the first Bengali to become the Superintendent on the retirement of E. Harrison in 1891 in Assam Secretariat (civil). Sarat Chandra Dhar succeeded Prakash Chandra Deb as the superintendent (civil) in 1897. On his retirement, Charu Chandra Goswami was appointed to this office in 1904. In 1906, in the Eastern Bengal and Assam Secretariat, the post was upgraded with higher supervisory power and Charu Chandra Goswami became the first Registrar in 1906, who formed the vital link between the government and the establishment. He was in charge of whole of the Secretariat staff. From time to time, the Registrars performed the duties of the under secretariat as well. The great Registrar, Mahendra Kumar Gupta officiated as under secretary in 1919.
During the period 1864-1915, the core sector of Shillong became and remained non-tribal, essentially Bengali. Like the core town, the composition of Shillong remained undesigned. Shillong was the British creation for administrative and strategic reasons. With the arrival of those who were employed at the office of the Deputy Commissioner at Sohra and with the shifting of the business establishments, mostly Bengali Muslims, who were doing well at Sohra and more so, with the formation of Chief Commissionership of Assam in 1874, came from Guwahati 33 officials of all categories from Head Assistant to Sweepers, who formed the nucleus of newly organised Assam Secretariat. The official town had overwhelmingly a Bengali flavour. It was a historical accident. The neighbouring village of Laban and Mawkhar had Khasi composition. A few Bengali families, with permission of the Syiem of Mylliem settled down in Laban village.

In 1878, at the time of the formation of the Municipal Board, the core town of Shillong had a population of 2,149. In 1881, there were 4288 persons in the town and in the next decade the population increased to 6,720. In 1901, Shillong had a population of 9,621. It increased to 13,639 in 1911. In 1894, the ministerial composition in the Assam Secretariat was Bengali with a few Assamese and very few Khasis. In 1914, the Assam Secretariat establishment had more Bengali Hindus than Assamese, Muslims or Khasis. The main point is that there were not sufficient number of Assamese or Khasi clerks in the Secretariat. In 1914, the Secretariat establishment was composed of 43 Bengali Hindus, 5 Muslims, 10 Khasis and 8 others. The office, as it stood in 1915, was transferred wholesale from Dhaka to Shillong after reformation of Assam in 1912. The Assamese were reluctant to leave their valley for service in Shillong. The Secretariat hardly got an
entrance or an F. A. passed Khasi on Rs. 50/- per month. But with the spread of education, the position changed in the Secretariat. The number of Khasis rose to 13 in permanent category and 3 as temporary by 1917. However, very few of them lived in the core town.

All together Shillong grew without any plan. The growth of the town had been lopsided on an adhoc basis. There was an acute absence of long term strategy in the growth. Frontier administration stamp continued on its face. Those brave men, who came and lived in Shillong, had very little comfort and convenience of human being. In the first phase they lived and worked in small, ill-ventilated asymmetric stone houses and after the great earthquake of 1897, small Assam type structures of wood and reed walls with corrugated iron sheet roofs, dark, dingy and ill ventilated mushroomed. There was no electricity. They were not big persons nor were they highly educated, most of them passed entrance examination for Fine Arts. The dynamics of social and political development did not touch the hills in the early days of Shillong. Those brave men and women who lived there had some commitment. It was an official town. It became in its early years clerk-oriented which had limited vision. There was a distressing shortage of high officers with social commitment. They had little concern for the small men’s hardship, difficulties, hopes and aspiration.

At this moment of despondency in April 1901, Swami Vivekananda came to Shillong. He inaugurated the newly constructed Quinton Hall and gave a clarion call in the meeting presided over by the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Henry Cotton on 27 April 1901 which was reported in U Khasi Mynta (May 1901).
Swami preached new humanism as universal religion, the essence of which being service to humanity, help to the poor and spread of education in the society.

**D. Development of Municipal Government**

Shillong had no local Government for more than decades after its annexation by the British. There was not even a town improvement committee, which existed in the plain districts of Assam. It was in 1878, that initiative was taken by the government for the introduction of local self-government in Shillong. The government suggested to the Deputy commissioner, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, that Shillong might be constituted into a municipality. The latter thought that it might be constituted into a union and not a municipality. Later on, however, the Deputy Commissioner agreed with the Government that Shillong might be constituted into a ‘Station’. The Chief Commissioner agreed with the proposal and directed the Deputy Commissioner to take necessary measures in that direction. In the meanwhile a petition was submitted to the Deputy Commissioner requesting him the inclusion of Mawkhar and Laban within the jurisdiction of the proposed station. But these two areas were not within the British territory. They were under the control of the Syiem of Mylliem, and therefore, there was some difficulty in the extension of the Municipal Act of 1976 to these areas. At the same time the Deputy Commissioner came to the conclusion that these two areas must be brought under Municipal control. Otherwise, there would be no improvement in the sanitation of the localities. The Deputy Commissioner did not contemplate, the inclusion of Mawkhar and Laban within the jurisdiction of the Shillong Station. He was sure that the Syiem of Mylliem, who controlled these areas, would carry out the
instruction given to him. While agreeing with the Deputy Commissioner that the inclusion of these two areas within the jurisdiction of Shillong Station would be objectionable, the Government requested him to suggest the steps that ought to be taken for their inclusion. The Deputy Commissioner, without the consent of the Syiem of Mylliem issued a declaration including these two areas in the proposed ‘Station’. The Syiem of Mylliem protested. He promised to improve the sanitary condition of these two villages. The Deputy Commissioner, gently persuaded the Syiem with a small bribe the Commissionership of the Station Committee – to agree to the inclusion of Mawkhar and Laban within the Shillong Station. The Syiem consented and agreed to pay on behalf of the residents of these two villages, the rates levied by the Station Committee and do anything and everything required by the Deputy Commissioner, provided his ownership and authority were not undermined.

On 26th November 1878, a proclamation was issued constituting Shillong, and its suburbs, Laban and Mawkhar into a Station. Thus, to begin with, the administrative area of the Shillong Station was limited to the British territory of Shillong plus Laban and Mawkhar. Lachumiere was not a part of the Shillong Station. But the Assam-Bengal Railway Company, located in Lachumiere, was taking water free from the Municipal water supply system, with the permission of Col. Grey, the Deputy Commissioner of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Arbuthnott, his successor, thought that the company was not entitled to take water free from the Municipal water supply system. The situation was delicate because he had to interfere with the decision of his predecessor to obviate this difficult situation, Arbuthnott proposed the inclusion of Lachumiere into the Shillong Station so that
the company might be taxed for taking water. But the Syiem of Mylliem objected
the inclusion of Lachumiere in the ground that it was close to his villages of Malki
and Laitumkhrah. Later on, he agreed to the proposal and Lachumiere was
included within the Shillong Station.

There was further extension of the administrative area of the Shillong
Municipality. In 1905, the village, Heneng Umkhrah was included into the
Municipality, because the clerks transferred from East Bengal were residing there
and utilizing Municipal services. Further, the place became unsanitary because of
the congregation of many people there. In 1906, the Government suggested to the
Station Committee the inclusion of Nongthymmai as a part of the Shillong Station,
but the committee did not accept the suggestion. Later on Nongthymmai was
included in the Shillong Station (see Map 2.2).

In 1910, the Government decided to include the areas between Umshyrpi
and Umkhrah rivers near about Shillong within the Municipal limits of Shillong
Station. This was done in consultation with the Syiem of Mylliem, who controlled
the territory. The Syiem called for a Durbar of Mantris, which laid down certain
conditions and the Government of Assam accepted them.

Shillong Municipality: On 20th March 1909, the Shillong Station Committee
resolved that it might be converted into a municipality. The officiating
Commissioner of the Surma Valley was not wholly in favour of the proposal. He
wrote to the Government:
Map 2.2

SHILLONG MUNICIPALITY

EVOLUTION OF WARDS UP TO 1945

--- Municipal boundary
--- Ward Boundary
“I have already indicated that the conversion of the station into a municipality is not without drawbacks. Shillong is the headquarters of the Government and it appears to me highly necessary that the Government should insist on the management of the place being kept at a higher standard, which I am afraid is very rarely maintained in the average municipality of the province. It is absolutely essential that the Lt. Governor should have the power to step in and veto proposals of the municipal board or compel them to carry out necessary works. Inefficient and insanitary management would be intolerable at a place, which is at once a health resort, and the summer headquarters of the Government. Every conceivable precaution must be taken to maintain and safeguard the authority, which is now and must always be exercised by the executive government. In the first place, Shillong should undoubtedly be notified a town of which the Commissioners as well as the chairman are nominated by the local government. It is worthy of note that in Bengal, Darjeeling falls within this category”.

The Government accepted the proposal. The station was converted into a Municipality in December 1910. The Government requested the Commissioner of the Surma valley to nominate a person for appointment as chairman. The Commissioner nominated the Deputy Commissioner of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and he was appointed Chairman of the Board for the first time.

E. Shillong As An Administrative Centre

Until independence was achieved and sometime after that Shillong retained its character of small but important administrative outpost along with that of a less
frequented and so quiet and lovely hill-station. It was sheltered from the movements that agitated the plains and the roads to it being easily controllable with check gates and any political unrest could be stopped from penetrating here. Indeed popular leaders did raise their voice against the location beyond the reach of the common man in the plains, yet they retained Shillong as the capital after independence, but decided to change its restricted character by a process of induction, introducing more of elements of the state. Accordingly, large areas around the nucleus available after the partition of the country and the departure of a large number of British owners, were procured where Government employees from the plains were given lands on loan to be recouped in easy installments. This led to the rapid growth of the “Shillong Urban Agglomeration”, because with the sudden growth of the administrative structure to deal with the new commitments of the welfare state, housing problems had grown acute and the owners of houses could earn good income in rent. There were only 17 Government quarters in 1949 for the clerks. The small defense set-up also expanded. A number of the Central Government surveys like the Anthropological, Botanical, Zoological, Geological etc, established their regional offices here and all these put tremendous pressure on the limited housing accommodation both for the offices and their personnel. The rapid growth of the various administrative set-up led to the expansion of the market and trading institutions and traders. All these together raised rents and the office personnel gladly availed of the offer of the Government of Assam to own their own houses at the state expense and thereby adding to their income from salaries. This resulted in the growth of ‘colonies’ of the people from the plains – outside the core town in the theory, but within it in reality of these the new colonies were mostly of the Brahmaputra valley. only one being of tribal groups from other hills.
A large number of persons displaced from East Bengal were also settled in two major concentrations. The local people, however, were not interested at the beginning in the housing and settlement schemes as they already had their own residence and lands. The tempo of expansion slowly, however, pushed them out of the heart of the township. A return drive for holdings within greater Shillong is a recent phenomenon as the consequence of growth of urbanization and availability of ready money as compensation for the lands acquired for the Barapani project.

The development of Shillong with that of the administration there created three layers or rings which reflect the chronology of the process – the oldest town is Bengali, the post-Independent Assamese and the last the Khasi with another big section would be the growing defence personnel as defence is a rapidly growing organization here. A sprinkling of Mizo is noticeable in the last belt.

The manner of growth and Shillong being the capital of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic state brought together mainly through government services has created a confederal type of association in which different groups have kept themselves socially separate mixing only in their official and trade purposes. English, is the upper level and Hindi in the lower are the links of intercommunication. The status of the British administrators had set the style of the urban culture which continues to be European in form.

Shillong has a start over other capitals in the region. It has an administrative tradition and establishment, whereas Gauhati had to start afresh. Arunachal Pradesh has yet to build its headquarters, Agartala, Imphal and Kohima.
are yet to attain administrative eminence already achieved by Shillong. Still Shillong has to be primarily an administrative centre – for a state, for a district, for district council and for a number of the Central Government and defence organizations.

The present panoramic pinewood view of the town does not seem to have been in existence in the early sixties of the nineteenth century. It then looked as if clad with jungles, the plateau of Iewduh is then said to have been mostly devoid of trees and was very sparsely populated. The bazaar at Iewduh was, however, largely attended and was considered a sacred place. As a whole, nearly all the villages in the district were mere hamlets with less than 500 inhabitants and in many to them, there were not more than 3 to 5 houses. The 1872 census report described Shillong as a sanatorium serving as a military station and headquarters of the district, but was no better than a mere bazaar and its population was too insignificant to be mentioned in the report.

Of the villages in existence by then around Shillong, Laban was worth mentioning. This is why the Khasis even today call Shillong as Laban. The other villages, viz. Mawkhar, Mawprem, Laitumkhrah, Nongthymmai and Mawlai were also said to have existed then, but had very meagre population. The valley of Laitumkhrah, Malki and Pynthorumkhrah were then largely paddy fields. As regards population of the villages, no records were available.

The real expansion of the town actually started since 1874. In 1874, by the proclamation dated the 6th February and 12th September, Assam was separated
from Bengal and converted into a province under the chief Commissioner. Consisting of the districts, now forming the districts of Assam, Sylhet district of Bangladesh, Meghalaya and Nagaland. Shillong was chosen as the seat of the new administration. The foundation stone of the capital was laid down by Col. Hopkinson, the then Commissioner of Assam. Simultaneously, construction of a cart-road between Gauhati and Shillong was undertaken. The road was opened to pony-carts and bullock-carts in late 1875. During that period, the main communication between Shillong and the rest of the country was via Cherrapunjee through Sylhet. It was in 1878 that Laban and Mawkhar were brought under the Municipal control of Shillong under the Agreement No. LXIV with U Hain Manik, the Syiem of Mylliem. On 26th November 1878, a ‘Station’ was constituted at Shillong covering the ceded areas, Jail Road, Police Bazar and European quarters and the non-ceded suburbs, Laban and Mawkhar, under Act V (B. C) of 1876. The administration of the Station was entrusted to a committee consisting of six members, with the Deputy Commissioner as the ex-officio chairman. The committee afterwards was expanded to twelve members, five of the members held their seats by virtue of their official status and the remaining seven were nominated by the Chief Commissioner.

In the 1881 census, Shillong recorded 4,288 persons, including those stationed in the cantonment. The population of the civil station alone was 3,737 and were broadly classified into the following religious groups – Hindu, 1,862 (49.83 percent), Muslim – 311 (8.32 percent) and others – 1,564 (41.85 percent). From the percentage distribution of other major religions in Shillong for the year (Census of India 1881) and that of 1891, it can safely be inferred that 1,564
persons in the other groups in 1881 consisted chiefly of Christians and animists. In 1891, 6,720 inhabitants were enumerated in Shillong together with the cantonment (810:12.05 percent), and increase of 56.7 percent during the last decade. As per census records, the population consisted mainly of Government officials, traders and others.

The devastating earthquake of 1897 retarded the growth of Shillong to a great extent. It levelled to the ground almost all masonry structures in no time. It was followed by incessant rain, dysentery and fever during the latter half of 1897 and during 1898 and 1899. since 1897, all the buildings have been constructed in Shillong of timber, reeds and plaster to get rid of the severity of the earthquake. The construction activities was greatly intensifi ed and so absorbed more and more persons in it. The population of Shillong, therefore, shot up to 9,621 in 1901, an increase of 2,901 persons (43.2 percent) over 1891.

In 1905, the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, now defunct, was created under a Lt. Governor, and Shillong was made the temporary headquarter of the administration. This necessitated the expansion of the offices and creation of many more new departments, resulting in the increase of population and dwellings. As a result, the existing localities became dense and new localities sprang up. Thus, the history of Shillong tells us that before the administrative headquarters was started in 1866, the area, where the town now stands, was sparsely inhabited, but there were a few villages on the lower slopes of the Shillong peak besides Iewduh, the largest weekly market in the district. The selection of Shillong as the new district head quarter by the committee set up in 1864 is now a matter of
history as well as the subsequent decision to build the 'civil station' on the slopes of Iewduh instead of the original decision to locate it on the slopes of the Shillong peak itself.

The civil station was started between the then existing Khasi villages of Mawkhar and Laitumkhrah which became as these were satellites of the new administrative head quarters. In 1874, when Sir Robert Campbell was Lieutenant General of Bengal, Assam was separated from Bengal and Shillong became the head quarters of the new chief Commissioner's province of Assam and the establishment of the Secretariat and office of the Heads of Departments gave further impetus to its growth. In 1874, Lord Northbrook, the Viceroy, visited Shillong. He ordered that certain tracts in the neighbourhood of the town be reserved to protect its water supply and to form a fuel reserve. This, in later years became what is known as the 'Green Belt' around the town. In 1875, however, Shillong could hardly be called a town. Its population was less than that of Shella, the largest Khasi village and less than one quarter of the population of Jowai, the sub-divisional headquarters. However, better communications with the opening of a cart road to Gauhati in 1877 hastened the growth of the town.

Although Shillong was constituted a station under Act V (B. C) 1876 in 1878 and a Town Committee was appointed which was presided over by the Deputy Commissioner, it would hardly be fair to describe it as a typical town in the 19th century. In fact, we may say that it was still a collection of villages with the administrative area in the centre and the satellite Khasi villages, like Mwkhar, Laitumkhrah and Laban located some distance away from it.
In later years, this cluster of villages developed rapidly. The partition of Bengal in 1905 and the formation of the new province of Assam and Eastern Bengal gave fresh impetus to the development of the town as the temporary headquarters of the provincial administration which ultimately shifted to Dacca in 1910. The town developed rapidly. The most remarkable development being in the “civil station” the name under which the administrative area was known in the old correspondence, as a result of the large number of new offices which came up in the town. There was a corresponding development in the satellite villages, especially Laban village where most of the Government employees chose to reside.

It would be interesting to try to obtain a glimpse of Shillong of the Victorian era. The civil station consisted of a few Government offices, mostly on the Secretariat hill over looking the Wards Lake and the bungalows for European officials located in what was called the “European quarters” which was the area encircled by Bivar Road. Mawkhar now a crowded locality in the centre of the town was then an idyllic village with scattered cottages nestling in the shade of stately trees or huge clumps of bamboos. The village path ran through the middle of the village. This is now Mawkhar main road. Tigers, leopards and other denizens of the forest roamed the Mawkhar and Iewduh areas freely even during daylight and it was not unusual for citizens to see these animals while they went about their daily business. Col. Wilson mentioned that he shot two leopards on the same day new Iewduh (Bara Bazar) in the closing years of the last century.
With the years, the Khasi villages expanded outwards and at the same time, the civil station also underwent development. A small market was started near the police station which of late grew out of all recognition, but still retains its original name of ‘Police Bazar’, even by the turn of the century. Mawkhar had grown both in size and expense. The main road was being paved with boulders and out-lying areas like Riatsamthiah, Jaiaw and Mawlai had just come into existence. Laitumkhrah was another idyllic village with fields growing besides the village path which is now Laitumkhrah main road. The area was covered by jungle and tall grass where even in the late twenties wild animals roamed about freely. The last recorded tiger shot at Laitumkhrah was in 1928, when a tiger visited the staff quarters of St. Edmunds’s college. In the thirties, new settlements came up, like Nongthymmai (New village) and ‘Bhagyakul’ which locally was known under the unhappy name of ‘New Colony’.

The development of the town during the reign of King Edward VII received a set-back with the departure of the temporary capital from Shillong to Dacca in 1910, but with the succession of King George V, the partition of Bengal was reversed at the coronation Durbar held at Delhi in 1912. The old chief Commissioner’s province of Assam was revived with its headquarters as previously in Shillong. Since then, the town has not looked back and there has been a history of continued development which reached its highest momentum.

With the years, the surrounding villages expanded upto the limits of the civil station which itself underwent rapid development with the growth of government offices as well as the shopping area at Police Bazar. By the nineteen
twenties, the pattern began to emerge and Shillong became more or less as we know it today, i.e., a mosaic composed of constituent units with the civil station at the centre and the various adjoining areas like Laban, Laitumkhrah, etc. which were earlier its satellites, but which had now expanded right up to the civil station forming one heterogeneous entity. From the nineteen thirties, Shillong began to expand outwardly as there was no further scope for expansion internally within the constituent units.

The historical background and the development of the town cast their influence on the town we know today. Everyone of the constituent units which together form the town retains its individual character and it could be said that each of the various localities has its own unique and unmistakable characteristics.

The administrative area which was the old ‘civil station’ of former days is now in the centre of the town. It has become much more crowded with all the new offices set up during the past few years. The appearance of this area has also changed with time and it has now many imposing concrete buildings, which have been built during the last 20 years. The spirit however remains unchanged and the old secretariat hill, where Colonel Keatinge set up his office, is still the hub of Government activities, although with the passage of time, government offices have expanded right up to the edges of old station and in certain areas have actually spilt over into the adjoining parts of the town. The cantonment still retains much of the atmosphere it originally had since the early years of Shillong and the old bungalows continue to stand secluded in fairly large compounds.
Sitting in the lawns of these bungalows with the pine trees all around and with tall hedges shutting the compound off from the outside world, one experiences the feeling of being transported back to the old Shillong of fifty years ago, and of being far away from the din and bustle of everyday town life. Mawkhar was the oldest location outside the civil station. Here, the Syiem of Mylliem set up his office and court after the civil station was set up. With the years, the importance of the Mawkhar court and office increased while that of the Syiem's old headquarters at Mylliem village declined. The locality still retains its reputation of being the oldest part of the town and many old buildings can still be seen some of which have interesting historical associations.

Laban was from the beginning and still is mainly a residential area for government officers and other employees. Like localities inhabited by government employees all over the world, it is a quiet part of the town. This area underwent its first major development in 1905 when Shillong was made a temporary capital of the new province of Assam and Eastern Bengal for 5 years from 1905 – 1910. In 1912, the province of Assam was revived and since then government employees have settle down in this area in large numbers. The most recent addition were in the nineteen fifties when new areas like Bishnupur, etc., were opened up. In the old days, Laban was the most developed part of the town and villagers in the surrounding areas even today refer to the town as 'Laban'.

The process of growth and development continues today and Laitumkhrah which was a quiet rural area even 40 years ago, is now a crowded, busy locality in the middle of the town. Even newly opened areas, like Nongthymmai are now very
much a part of the town and the town is still expanding outwards swallowing up
the surrounding country side. A couple of decades ago, Mawlai, as the name
implies (Maw-stone, Lai-three) was a satellite village at the third mile post on the
road to Gauhati. Now the village has expanded right upto the Umkhrah stream
which was once the limit of the town and year by year we see Mawlai itself
expanding along the National Highway to Gauhati. It is proposed to set up Town
Committee in three outlying areas which were once satellite villages but are now
very much part of the town.

We find therefore, that every locality has in its own way preserved the
heritage of the past. Each one of the town’s localities retains its own individual
character and anyone living in own part of the town would feel the change if he is
to move to another part some distance away.

The administrative area in the centre of the town retains its role as the
administrative centre of the State, while the older settled areas like Mawkhar and
Laban have an atmosphere of what we may call age, compared to the newer areas
like Laitumkhrah and the newly opened parts, show signs of unmistakable life and
vigour compared to the older parts of the town. As a particular example, one may
quote the continuing growth of Laitumkhrah Bazar and markets in outlying
localities compared to the decline of older markets like Paltan Bazar and perhaps to
some degree even Police Bazar. In this aspect the town resembles a living growth
with some parts already old, while at the extremity it is showing rapid growth and
putting out fresh branches.
In the modern Shillong of today, however, the past lives on in a hundred different ways. The narrow winding streets which were in many areas originally village paths and which even till the late twenties rarely saw a motor car are now crowded with traffic and traffic jams which are the nightmare of larger cities have begun to, make their debut. Old roads and old buildings still stand here and there. Even thirty years ago, one could see traditional Khasi houses with thatched roofs curved like a rhino’s back standing along the main roads of the town. These have now disappeared as they have been pulled down to make way for newer cottages with corrugated iron roofs, and in the later years, to reinforced concrete buildings. Occasionally however, some conservative owner has replaced the old grass roof with a tin one but retained the quaint curved shape of the original, which serves as a reminder of an almost forgotten period in the town’s history. The past also lives on in institutions like the office of the headman which still continues in some localities of the town and which appears to be a hang over of the old days in that it is the continuation of the old institution of the village headman.

As the town grows, and the past recedes ever further away into oblivion, the town will develop towards a homogeneous entity that will be the city of tomorrow. But today, we are thankful for whatever remains of the heterogeneous past which has conferred on each locality of the town a distinct unique character reminiscent of its origin.

After British withdrawal from India in 1947, for the next 25 years, Shillong served as the state capital of Assam. These were the days of expectations, euphoria, frustration, agitations and training period of democratic polity. Shillong
turned out to be the hub of various tribal movements for autonomy. It appears that the Assamese elite like their British predecessors failed to identify themselves with the aspirations of the hill people. Consequently, after the separation of Naga Hills District as state of Nagland in 1963, Lushai Hills District as Mizoram and NEFA as Arunachal Pradesh and Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills Districts as Meghalaya were created as federating units of the Indian Union in 1972. Shillong turned out to be the capital of Meghalaya, instead of Assam, but in the bargain it turned out to be the regional headquarters of a number of Central government establishments. Army, Air Force, Assam Rifles, B. S. F., various All India Surveys such as Anthropological, Botanical, Geological etc., North Eastern Hill University, North Eastern Council, various Scientific bodies like Atomic Energy Commission, Indian Council of Agricultural Research etc. all chose Shillong as their regional headquarters. These developments resulted in influx of a sizeable non-local migrants to the city.

The states were created out of the hill districts after prolonged peaceful and not so peaceful agitations. That left a sizeable segment of the tribal population in cogitation. Partition of British India into India and Pakistan had led to arrival of Bengali refugees in the region, leading to tribal, non-tribal and Bengali and Assamese conflicts. The war of liberation of Bangladesh 1971-72, created a situation in which a sizeable East Pakistanis took shelter in India in general and Meghalaya in particular. It is alleged that atleast some of the refugees never returned to Bangladesh. Since then clandestine migration of the Bangladeshis in the region and in Meghalaya in particular is on. So much so that entire Indo-Bangladesh border is being fenced with live electric wire.
Some or other form of insurgency in Nagaland has been going on since 1947. In course of time, Mizos took to arms. Since 1980s even small a section of the Assamese raised the flag of secession from the Indian Union. Manipur and Tripura had a series of rebel outfit by the last quarter of the 20th century. By the last decade of the 20th century, even the placid Garos and the Khasis began to display symptoms of unrest and a series of underground bodies began to operate in and around the city of Shillong. In this way, the obvious serenity of scenic Shillong has an under current of ethnic unrest, distorting its old image of an oasis of peace.

To sum up, the Chapter provides a brief historical survey of evolution of Shillong. It informs the readers how it was created as an administrative centre for the newly created tribal district. Within no time, its locational advantages were discerned and Shillong was turned into state capital of Assam for the next hundred years. Side by side, its merit as a health resort and cantonment for the armed forces, was key consideration for the British. After independence of India, Shillong began to play an increasing role in the regional context as the metropolitan centre for various forums. At the end, we have noted how Shillong did not remain untouched from various shades of ethnic migration and movements. The next chapter analyses the development of the ethnic mozaic of the city and its aftermath.