CHAPTER - III

DEVELOPMENT OF SHILLONG MUNICIPALITY

Administrative Area:- From records it appears that before the administrative headquarters was established in 1866, the area where the Shillong town stands at present was thinly 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 headquarters was recommended by the Committee set up in 1864. The original decision was to locate the Civil Station on the slopes of Shillong Peak itself. Later on it was decided to build the Civil Station on the slopes of Iewduh. The age old name of the site of this town was Iewduh, but there was another place of this name in Japan and therefore its founders preferred the name Shillong, after the Peak.¹

In 1874, when Sir Robert Cambell was Lt. Governor of Bengal, Assam was separated from Bengal and Shillong became the Headquarters of the new Chief Commissioner's Province of Assam and the establishment of the Secretariat gave further impetus to its growth. As already stated in Chapter-I, 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, was known as the "Green belt" around the town. The opening of a cart road to Gauhati in 1877 hastened the growth of the town.

Shillong was constituted into a Station in 1878, under the Bengal Municipal Act of 1876.² No definite municipal boundaries were determined in 1878.³ Boundaries of the Shillong Station were for the first time notified by the Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1896. Lachaumiere and parts of Jhalupara and Mawprem were included in the Station Committee on 16th April, 1896. Portions of the village Malik was also included in the Station of Shillong on the same date.⁴ In 1904, Shillong Station was divided into five wards, namely, European quarters, Jail Road, Laban, Police Bazar and Mawkhar. The boundaries of the Station were further revised in 1906.⁵ The Lt. Governor J.B. Fuller took special interest for the inclusion of the villages, Haneng Umkhrah within the Station limits because one hundred clerks' quarters were situated

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2. In 1878 the villages of Mawkhar and Laban were included in the Station for municipal purposes only; on the basis of an agreement with the syiem U Hain Manik and under the Chief Commissioner's proclamation of 26.11.78 (L.S.G.- B, June, 1936).
4. Ibid.
there. He also observed that "the clerks who pay no house rent can certainly pay taxes."  

Lachaumiere was included within municipal limits in 1896 in order to regularise an illegal practice. The Assam Bengal Railway offices situated there were taking water from the municipal water supply system. Heneng Umkhrah was included in 1906, to improve the sanitary condition of that place.  

The Shillong Station Committee adopted a resolution on March 10, 1909, that it should be converted into a Municipality under the Bengal Municipal Act, 1884. While forwarding the resolution to the Government, the Commissioner of Surma Valley observed, "I see no objection to the immediate conversion of the Shillong station into a Municipality. I leave out the question of enlargement of its boundaries to the Deputy Commissioner. No one has raised any objection." On the basis of this recommendation, Finance Secretary Kershaw moved the Government of India on 11 January, 1910: "in view of the growing importance of Shillong as the summer headquarters of Government a more advanced form of municipal administration is desirable, the Lt. Governor proposed to convert the Shillong station into a

8. For details see, Dr.V.Venkata Rao - A Hundred Years of Local Self Government In Assam, 1967, P.119  
Municipality under the Act of 1884. The permission of the
Governor General in Council may be obtained to the exten-
sion under the Schedule District Act of 1874, of the Bengal
Municipal Act, 1884, to the K & J Hills.10 The Government
of India's sanction to the above proposal was communicated
on 2nd July, 1910.11 Meanwhile on the basis of an agree-
ment with the Syiem of Mylliem on 6th September, 1910,12
the villages of Malki, Laitumkhra, Mawrem and Jhalupara
were brought under the municipality of Shillong,13 and
Shillong was converted into a municipality on 15th Novem-
ber, 1910; with the following boundaries.14

East - The Mongthymmai river from the Jowai road to
where it meets the Umkhra river. West - From the junction of the Umshirpi and Umkhra
rivers up the Umshirpi to the cantonment, boundary, thence
by the northern and eastern boundaries of the cantonment to
boundary pillar No.39 at the Laban Bridge, thence down the
Umshirpi river to its junction with the Umjasai river,
thence up the Umjasai river to its junction with the Ummaw-
long river, thence up the Ummawlong river to Forest bound-
ary pillar No.4, thence down the fire line to pillar No.1

11. Letter No.89, Home 2-7-1910 from Government of India.
12. L.S.G. - A November, 1913.
of the Riat Laban forest, thence up the hill slope along the fireline to Forest boundary pillar No.9 on the top of the Shillong ridge.

North - The Umkhrarah river to its junction with the Jail Road stream below the Polo bridge, thence by a straight line to masonry pillar on the north of the Haneng Umkhrarah village, thence by another straight line to the Umkhrarah river, where the path from Mawkhar to Mawlai crosses the stream, thence along the Umkhrarah river to its junction with the Umshirpi. South - The Laitlyngkot road from the Forest boundary pillar No.9 to where it meets the fire line of the Laitkor forest, thence down the hill slope along the fire line to the Umshirpi river, thence up the Umshirpi river to where it meets the boundary of the Malki village, thence along the western, southern and eastern boundaries of the Malki village marked with the forest boundary pillars till the Umshirpi river is again reached, thence up the Umshirpi river along the northern boundary of the Laitkor Forest to forest boundary pillar No.11, thence along the Jowai road to where it crosses the NongthammTai river.

The new Municipality was divided into ten wards:

Ward No. 1 Laitumkhra
Ward No. 2 European Quarter
Ward No. 3 Jail Road and Haneng Umkrah
Ward No. 4 Police Bazar
Ward No. 5 Mawkhar
Ward No. 6 Mission Compound and Jaiaw
Ward No. 7 Goallapatti and Southern Mawkhar
Ward No. 8 Jhalupara and Mawprem
Ward No. 9 Laban
Ward No. 10 Malki

In 1912 the procedure followed in the extension of the jurisdiction of the Shillong Municipality was found to be illegal and the Government of India was addressed on the matter. The Government of India included the villages of Mawkhar, Laban, Malki, Laitumkhra, Jhalupara and Mawprem within the Municipality of Shillong in exercise of the powers conferred by the Indian (Foreign Jurisdiction) order in Council, 1902.

The Government of India directed the Assam Government to revise the boundaries of Shillong Municipality.

16. L.S.G. - A November, 1913 (A fresh agreement was undertaken from the Syiem of Mylliem on 9.7.1913).
17. L.S.G. - B June, 1936.
The provincial Government fixed boundaries of the British part of Shillong Municipality. The boundaries of the British portion of the Municipality notified on 23rd October 1914 were:

East - Village of Laitumkhra

West - Cantonment and the village of Mawkhar

North - The Umkrah river from its junction with the Pomdngiem stream down to Polo bridge and in a straight line to a pillar in the north of Heneng Umkrah and thence in another straight line to a point in the Umkrah river where the path from Mawkhar to Mawlai Crosses it.

South - Village of Malki, the Government forest and village of Laban.

In 1917, the northern boundary of the Municipality was revised by the inclusion of the Pasteur Institute. This area was included on the ground that the area was contiguous to the northern boundary of the Municipality, and that no valid objections were raised to the proposal.

A fresh agreement was obtained from the Syiem of Mylliem on 13th February, 1922 for the extension of an Municipal Law that might be passed by the Assam Legislative Council into the villages of Mawkhar, Laban, Malki, Laitumkhra, Jhalupara and Mawprem. The Assam Municipal

Act, 1923, came into force from the 1st March 1924.22

The Government divided the Municipality into territories, namely, Laitumkhra, European Quarters-Block A, European Quarters - Block B, Jail Road, Police Bazar, Mawkhar Proper, Mission Compound and Jaiaw, Mawkhar and Garikhana, Laban and Malki.23

On the recommendation of the Shillong Municipal Board of 23rd February, 1927, the Government excluded the Rifle Range near Laban from Municipal limits and included it within the Shillong cantonment.24 The boundaries of the Municipality after exclusion of the above area was as follows:-

North - South and east - No. alteration.

West - Follow the western boundary upto "junction with the Ummowlong river" thence up the Ummowlong river upto pillar No.22 N.R., thence in a straight line to the east to pillar No.21 N.R., on the Fire line of the Riat Laban Forest, to Forest boundary pillar No.9 on the top of the Shillong ridge.25

After the transfer of Rifle Range from the Shillong Municipality - boundaries of Laban were notified as follows:-26

24. The Rifle Range was excluded from the Shillong Municipality as the Cantonment authorities wanted this Range. Vide Secretary Transferred Deptt.note at P.1, L.S.G. - A September, 1934.
East - The Laitkor Government forest.

West - Follow the boundary to the junction of the Unjasal river with the Ummowlong stream; thence up the Ummowlong stream to boundary pillar No. 22 on the boundary of the Shillong (Rifle Range) cantonment. Thence the boundary of this Cantonment through boundary pillars Nos. 21D, 21C, 21B & 21A to the boundary pillar No. 21 on the fire-line on the Riat Laban protected Forest, thence the fire-line of this forest to boundary pillar No. 9 on the Peak Ride.

North - The Umshirpi river from the western boundary of the Laitkor forest to its junction with the Unjasai river.

South - The Peak Ride from boundary pillar No. 9 to the fire line of the Laitkor Government forest.

In 1930 the Shillong Municipal Board was unwilling to assume the responsibility for the administration of the two outlying areas of Pynthor-Umkrah and Nongthymmai, on financial grounds further it maintained that the absence of legal powers to control the conservancy of the populous areas on the borders of an urban centre entails a continual risk to public health, and the unregulated construction of buildings must result in conditions of congestion - which could not easily be remedied when such areas came within the municipal limit. 27

There was a demand for split up of Laban ward into two, i.e; Laban proper and Lumparing cum Madan Laban. In

In 1931 the Government of Assam divided the Municipality into twelve wards:

1. Laitumkhra 7. Mission Compound and Jaiaw
2. European Quarters 8. South East Mawkhar & Charikhana
4. Jail Road 10. Laban
5. Police Bazar 11. Lumparing cum Madan Laban

There was a proposal to bring the areas on the outskirts of Shillong known Phudmawrie, Mawlai and Nongthymmai under the administration of Shillong Municipality in order to improve the sanitation in these areas. But there was opposition to the proposal. 29

The Shillong Municipal Board was willing to take over Nongthymmai in principle. But it felt that the consent of the Syiem of Mylliem was absolutely necessary for the inclusion of Nongthymmai within the Municipal limits. The Syiem was not in favour of the proposal. 30

From 1939 to 1945, practically nothing was done for the expansion of Municipal limits.

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In the post-independent period and especially after the advent of the District Council, expansion of the Shillong Municipal limits was opposed as the Council was jealous about the protection of tribal lands. Therefore, there was no expansion.

In 1951, the Municipality was divided into 12 wards, but there was a little change - Rilbong was tagged with the Kench's Trace and renamed as Rilbong and Kench's Trace ward. 31

The Shillong Municipal Board suggested the realignment of wards - but the Government did not accept the proposal. 32

In the early seventies the redelimitation of wards was taken up seriously by the Board at the instance of the State Government of Meghalaya. In its meeting held on 29th January 1971 the Board constituted a special subcommittee under the chairmanship of S. Rana, for examining the question of delimitation of the wards of the Shillong Municipality. 33

32. P.S.M., 8.5.1954.
The Board discussed the report of the Committee on 5th July 1971. The Committee adopted certain principles in making its recommendations:

(a) Population, (b) Compactness of the area, (c) Administrative convenience and (d) Clear demarcation of the area.

The meeting accepted the recommendations of the Re-Delimitation Sub-Committee. The Government accepted the proposals of the Committee. On 17th September 1972 the Shillong Municipality was divided into 27 wards. The fresh delimitation has reduced the area of each previous ward almost to half. The multiplication of wards, and the reduction of their size will enable the ward Commissioners to discharge their obligations towards the people very effectively.

The Government in partial modification of its notification of September 1972 and in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 13 of Meghalaya Municipal Act, 1973, the Municipality was divided into 27 separate single-member wards.

Strength and composition: Under the Bengal Municipal Act, 1876, the Station Committee consisted of the

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34. P.S.M., 5.7.1971.
Magistrate as the ex-officio member and such number of members as were necessary.

The Municipal Act, 1884, increased the minimum from seven to nine though there was no change in the maximum of 30; it also laid down that two thirds of the total number of members must be elected. But in Shillong elections were held in 1924 for the first time.  

The Assam Municipal Act, 1923, raised the minimum strength from nine to ten though there was no change in the maximum 30. The actual strength of Shillong Municipal Board was fixed by the Government at 15. The strength of the nominated element was reduced from one-third to one-fifth of the total strength. The reduction in the nominated element automatically increased the influence of elected members.

The Municipal Act, 1956, made no changes in the minimum or in the maximum prescribed in the previous Acts. In the nominated element was reduced to two. H.Hynniewta, a prominent member of the Board condemned the principle of nomination on the ground that it might enable a minority to become a majority and that, it was opposed to the fundamental principles of local self Government.  

board i.e., 13, from 1930 to 1971.

The composition of the Board was as follows during 1885-86 to 1949-50:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Official</th>
<th>Nominated</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Official</th>
<th>Euro-</th>
<th>Indian</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885-86</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-04</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909-10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A critical analysis of the statistical data must lead us to certain conclusions. The Shillong Municipal Board was completely dominated by the officials from 1879-1910. In 1885, ten of the fourteen members of the Board were officials - gradually the official strength was reduced. In 1938 there were only two official members.

All the members of the Board were nominated up to 1923. Since then there has been a drastic reduction in the strength of the nominated element. In 1949 they constituted 16.7 per cent of the total number.

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40. Source - Municipal Report for the years concerned.
Upto 1923 the Shillong Municipal Board did not contain elected members. They constituted 66.7 percent of the total in 1924, and 68.4 per cent in 1950. The European element which was 50 per cent in 1885 was reduced to 33.3 per cent in 1924 and nil in 1950. As a result of the reduction of the European and official members, their influence in the Board vanished.

In 1885, there were 50 per cent Indians in Shillong Municipal Board. In 1924, they were 66.7 per cent of the total. In 1938, out of 18 members 2 were Europeans. In 1950 all the members of the Board were Indians.

Thus the composition of the Board was satisfactory. The strength of the Board was reasonable.