INTRODUCTION

Analysis of urban landscape of a region is a special aspect of settlement studies. The process of urbanization which is primarily responsible for the growth and development of urban settlements and consequently of urban landscape as an important expression of "man-land" relationship has since the last two decades or less been widely regarded as a natural phenomenon being governed and motivated by certain natural laws and principles relating to the areal relations of a set of towns or an individual town examined from two different points of view, each representing a different degree of generalization. Mayer in his review paper "Urban Geography" has rightly stressed on these two points of view indicating the two different degrees of generalization: "On maps of large scale the relation between the internal pattern of the city,...... and the features of the terrain are analyzed; on maps of smaller scale covering a much larger area the external relations of the city as a whole are analyzed. The close-up view reveals the characteristics of the site; the broader view reveals the characteristics of the situation". Analysis of urban landscape in a region created by the interaction of a particular town with its subordinate urban centres is naturally a concept related to the latter degree of generalization explaining the characteristics of situation though it does not, however, completely repel the ecological relationship of site in the process of urban development.

In the above context, "several geographers have attempted to formulate empirically derived principles relative to the general distribution of towns, particularly in relation to their hinterlands or service areas. Walter Christaller's work on central places in Germany stimulated a further examination of this problem in the United States by Edward L. Ullman and others. G.K. Zipf and J.Q. Stewart have worked out mathematical rules pertaining to the distribution and support of population which have attracted wide attention in view of their possible application in the prediction of urban growth." \(^2\) What followed in Mayer's review paper was a listing of "major concepts" in the field of urban geography: urban functions (classifications of types of cities were discussed); supporting and tributary areas (nodal regions); site and situation; distribution of cities (central-place theory, rank-size regularities, and gravity models); economic base; internal form (Burgess's zonal ideas, Hoyt's sectors, and Harris and Ullman's multiple nuclei); urban expansion and the rural-urban fringe; land uses; and size of cities. \(^3\) These, and particularly some of these, concepts have formed the basis of urban analysis and thus, urban geography has now its "young men on new frontiers" and the research of this growing group of men being of

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greater theoretical orientation with increased reliance on quantitative analysis appears at first glance to be markedly different from that of other urban geographers in the recent past, though the differences, however, are in the ways in which research is undertaken rather than in basic objectives and concepts.  

With the above trend of research, to-day, the urban geographer commonly approaches his study from two different angles. First, he considers the urban centres as discrete phenomena in the general fabric of settlement. Concepts and generalizations may be formed regarding their distribution, size, function, or rates of growth. Areas served by urban places may be delimited, and the spatial interactions between urban places, inside or outside the limited tributary areas, may be studied. Second, he studies towns in terms of their morphology, that is, in terms of lay out and build considered as expressions of their independent origin, growth and function. Studies which have focused on this approach to urban geography have given rise to concepts and generalizations related to the character and intensity of landuse within the urban centre and to the spatial interaction of one part of it with another. These interactions are reflected in the amount, direction, time, and character of movement of persons and goods between the urban centre's various functional areas that together make up the urban agglomeration. The first of the above two considerations is obviously related to the viewing of urban landscape of a region in a broader context and thus expresses the concept of urbanization processes with, of course, a geographical perspective.

4. Ibid., p.18.
It is worthwhile to mention that in analysing urban landscape of a region the main attention is given naturally, on the urban centres which cannot be considered as isolated physical or social units. They must be considered primarily as focal areas for activities, not in isolation, but in relation to a number of others with which they are closely linked in a regional context. Therefore, the urban landscape has to be considered primarily as an outcome of the overall interaction of the urban settlements in a region.

In terms of important urban functions, every urban settlement forms part of an economic, social, cultural and political whole, upon which its development depends, and all these relations have geographic expressions. Viewed in this perspective, the urban landscape is, as a matter of fact, the reflection, in general of a two-way relationship of the urban settlements with their surroundings that extends beyond their political boundary. First, the countryside i.e. the region calls into being settlements that we call urban to carry out functions in its service; second, the urban settlement, by the very reason of its existence, influences, in varying degree, its surroundings, or in broader sense, its region, through the spread of its network of functional relations and the expansion of its settlement area.

Thus, it is needless to emphasize that in understanding the problems of a region it is natural to analyse the urban landscape of it as one of the few important considerations.

It is with this view that the present study has been taken up considering Dibrugarh as a regional focus to understand the geographical range and potency of the activities of this urban settlement with its environs in the process of development of urban landscape. The inspiration for the present work aroused in the author when he was initiated to this line of research in the Department of Geography of the Indiana University, Bloomington (U.S.A.) in 1966-67. On his return to the Geography Department of the Guwahati University, his primary concern was selection of a region with a view to analyse the urban landscape in the above line and obviously the choice fell on "Dibrugarh and its environs" as he had better knowledge of the area since 1962. However, it will be appropriate to mention here that the varied aspects of urban landscape cannot be looked into through the work of a single researcher since the complete study in this line would involve participation of a team of workers trained in various allied branches of urban research. As a geographer, the author naturally had to limit his work to only a few of the important aspects of analysis.

Hence, the purpose of the present work is to analyse a few of the many aspects of urban landscape of the region "Dibrugarh and its environs", seen as a whole instead of rather a morphological study of a particular areal unit of it. Naturally, the work in the first step deals with a geographical survey of the historical development and economic foundation in relation to the physical and cultural setting of the region as connected with the origin, growth and diffusion of urbanization processes which are responsible for development of an integrated urban landscape at the regional level. The second step of the work is related to a quantitative study of identifying the potential urban centres which make out the
pattern of urban landscape through their inter-spatial relationship and inter-urban pull. It is needless to say that the prime concern is, however, a geographical peep into only a few of the various aspects of urban landscape of the said region, and hence is with some aspects of location and space; geographical history and physical, cultural and economic aspects are simply outlined in so far as they are relevant to the origin, growth, development and diffusion of urban processes and innovations which determine the locational aspects and use of space in urban landscape development over the region.

The work has been divided into two parts with three chapters in the first and five in the second. The first part is a geographical introduction of the region providing a qualitative base for the second part where a quantitative analysis of the urban landscape has been undertaken.

In chapter I an attempt has been made to define the region both qualitatively and quantitatively bearing in mind the concept of homogeneity viewed from various angles.

Chapter II deals with the historical geography of the region in the context of both spatial and temporal growth of urban nuclei responsible for development of urban landscape in the region.

The geographical setting of the region has been outlined in chapter III where due emphasis is given on physical as well as cultural and economic aspects which provide a base to the quantitative analysis of urban landscape dealt in the subsequent four chapters.

In the second part, chapter IV deals with finding out the potential urban centres of the region using a model of regressional analysis suggested by the author and chapter V
considers the mode of occurrence and pattern of distribution of these centres in the context of the spread of urban landscape in the region.

In chapter VI an attempt has been made to explain the economic space relationship through "basic-non-basic" concept based on stratified sample studies in the three major urban centres of the region.

Chapter VII analyses the inter-urban pull and processes of concentration and decentralization based on demographic mass in terms of urban population potential and it connects the findings with the process of urbanization in the region.

The concluding chapter (VIII) deals with summary of the work and suggestions for development in the context of a sound regional balance through healthy urbanization processes which would render a state of equalization of the forces of unification and diversification in the region. Here suggestion has also been made how the present work would lead to further research for a more integrated understanding of the problems of the region as connected to the urban landscape and urbanization processes.