SECTION - I
INTRODUCTION

"Interaction creates social bonds between individuals. It is through interaction - verbal and nonverbal message, exchange of goods, favours and friendship - that the objectives of nations, subcultures, families and communities are established and perpetuated. Within these groups, shared objectives, values and attitudes, provide norms for individual behavior. They restrict the individual choices to those that are socially acceptable and thereby influence the patterns and arrangements that result, from human behavior. The concept of inter-action is evident in both the behavior of small groups and the integration of larger political entities."

To-day the rural and urban population is growing worldwide and has assumed complicated dimensions. The growth of population in rural and urban areas poses special problems and whose study is of special significance to the Geography and the Geographers. It is more so, in an Hill areas like, United Khasi Jaintia Hills, which has serious problems in the form of transport bottle necks, deforestation, primitive methods of cultivation, dependence on agriculture, absence of Industry and other such socio-economic modes of development.

The present study on rural-urban interactions and linkages takes into account rural-urban relations in its existing pattern in the United Khasi & Jaintia Hills. Such a study, is of significant importance, as it provides planners with useful informations regarding interactions and linkages. It is necessary to know the interaction particularly in
its economic dimension so that it can be assessed whether farmers are getting remunerative prices for their product or whether they have necessary marketing or credit facilities. Similarly, its impact on urban areas and the resultant problems posed to urban areas, such as traffic congestion, lack of space for commercial or residential use etc. The movement of men and materials from rural to urban and urban to rural areas and their causes has also been taken into considerations. All these combines to give cumulative effect and study of such nature is of special importance to Geographers.

Study Area:

The Study Area² includes three districts of Meghalaya State, namely West Khasi Hills, East Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills. It covers an area of 14463.6 Sq. Km. with 2538 rural and 5 urban settlements (1971 census). It has an overall density of 42 persons per Sq. Km. In this region there is only one urban centre for more than 500 rural settlements; whereas, in India there is one town for every 200 rural settlements. The area under study, has a camel back shaped physical features, that is, in the centre, it is more than 1800 metres ASL (Shillong Peak) and in the fringe area it is less than 50 metres ASL. The study area is characterized by poor and inadequate transportation and communication net work, low per capita income, low per capita consumption
of electricity and traditional methods of cultivation, known as Jhum or Slash and burn cultivation. The area is comparatively rich in mineral resources. Coal, Limestone, Kaoline, Sillimanite are few of the potential unexploited resources. (Fig. 1)

The administrative head of the district is the Deputy Commissioner, who has overall responsibility for the law and order and for developmental activities. The district has been further divided into blocks. As such in the study region - there are three districts viz East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills. East Khasi Hills district has been divided into nine blocks, West Khasi Hills district and Jaintia Hills district has been divided into four blocks each. Those blocks are known as Community Development (C.D.) blocks. As such, the study area has seventeen Community Development blocks.

Besides the District Commissioner, there are other agencies which cater to the developmental needs of the study region. However, the present analysis concerns itself with the Block development aspects only.

Most interesting feature of the state is that the development planning is and has been carried out on the basis of the existing community development blocks. Till 1981, there were 13 community development blocks. These
were:-

1. Laskin Community Development Block - Jaintia Hills
2. Khlieriat Community Development Block - Jaintia Hills
3. Thadlskein Community Development Block - Jaintia Hills
4. Bhoi Area, Community Development Block - East Khasi Hills
5. Mawrynkneng Community Development Block - East Khasi Hills
6. Myllien Community Development Block - East Khasi Hills
7. Mawphlang Community Development Block - East Khasi Hills
8. Pynursla Community Development Block - East Khasi Hills
9. Shella Bholaganj Community Development Block - East Khasi Hills
10. Mawsynram Community Development Block - East Khasi Hills
11. Mairang Community Development Block - West Khasi Hills
12. Mawkhyrwat Community Development Block - West Khasi Hills
13. Nongstoin Community Development Block - West Khasi Hills

But there were many overlapping and difficulties in identifying the boundaries of the districts and C.D. blocks. However, these were rectified. Thus, instead of 13, 3 more Development blocks were created for practical convenience.

The 3 Community Development blocks which were created were:

1. Amlaram Community Development Block - from a Sub-division in the Jaintia Hills district.
2. New Mawkynrew Community Development Block included 14 villages of Mawrynkneng Community Development block and 55 villages of Pynursla Community Development block.
3. Nongpoh community Development block included 174 villages of the Bhoi-area and 61 villages of Mairang Community Development block.
Historical Background:

There was no Meghalaya when the British came to hills of this region 150 years ago. There was no consolidated political jurisdiction in these hills. It was rather divided into numerous local chiefdoms who were often at war with each other and 'Might is the Right' was the order of the day.

British took the advantage of the existing situation and defeated the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos at different stages. After having surrendered their area, they brought this area under their effective control by 1833-35. It is said that the ethnic significance of the term 'Jaintias' emerged only because of the political policies of the British. This was because the differences between social and cultural life of Khasis and Jaintias was negligible. The Jaintia or sutnga state, the territorial jurisdiction of which extended upto Jaintiapur, now in Bangladesh, was then one of the Khasi States. When the Jaintia Chief was defeated by the British the whole state was made a British territory and its people were forced to pay taxes to the British. This resulted in the political and territorial separation from the rest of the then Khasi States. On the other hand, the other Khasi Chiefs, twentyfive in number though subdued remained more or less semi-independent through treaties and agreements. They did not have
to pay any tax to them. Only those Petty Chiefs who were known as British Subjects had to pay taxes. The Jaintias and the Garos were in the same class and they had to pay taxes.

The main Objectives of the Study are:

1. to study the spatial distribution of rural and Urban Settlements which have been influenced by ecological and socio-economic attributes.

2. to study the different socio-economic factors governing rural-urban interactions and inter-settlement linkages.

3. to study the pattern of inter-urban and rural-urban interaction and pattern of linkages in different spatial units of the study region.

4. to suggest a tentative development scenario for the creation of an egalitarian society in this remote corner of India.

In order to analyse the above objectives following hypotheses have been considered. These are -

1. The movement of people from rural to urban areas and vice versa embodies interaction over space in response to the economic circumstances.

2. Towns provide various central and social services including new innovations to the surrounding rural areas. Hence they (towns) work as catalysts of social change.

3. The negative impact of distance and positive impact of income on the use of Urban facilities
like markets and shopping, credit facilities, education, health and recreation facilities in the urban areas particularly Shillong U.A. etc. is highly significant, as it continues to have predominant influence on the rural areas and their development.

**Method of Study:**

Any efforts to identify and analyse the above mentioned objectives are seriously handicapped by the lack of necessary data and the unreliability of the data. The main sources of the data are: (1) Census Reports 1961 and 1971 and 1981; (2) Agricultural Statistics of 70-71 and 1982-83; (3) Rural Debt and investment Survey 1971-72 Reserve Bank of India; (4) Report on Socio-Economic Survey of United Khasi and Jaintia Hills 1966-67, Govt. of Assam; (5) Field study. A major problem with these data was that they provided only the usual type of statistics which were not adequate for our purpose. Again these statistics did not present the data for the entire district or block, as the collection of these data was usually, confined to the villages that were accessible through roads. Usually the less advanced and most primitive villages were left out. Considering, the geographical characteristics of the region, which distinguish it from the rest of India, Surveys organised on all India basis with a national framework in mind, failed to provide true and real picture of the region. In addition,
there was a total lack of any farm-level micro-study which might elicit the necessary data for our analysis. Hence the author has conducted intensive field studies to identify and analyse the problems as stated above to substantiate his analysis. With such limitation, type and availability of data, this study attempts to highlight certain conclusions which may be useful for geographers and more informative to the planners.

Organisation of the Study:

With such limitations, as noted above, the author, had to start his work from the grass roots, i.e. intensive field study because major source of informations and these were, to some extent possible, substantiated by secondary sources. In order to facilitate such a study possible the analyses has been divided into two different sections, which highlights the theoretical/background and analytical sections. The chapterisation scheme that has been followed highlights the constraints and are as follows:

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REFERENCES


2. Earlier it was known as United Khasi & Jaintia Hills District.

3. If Shillong "Urban" Agglomeration is not considered collectively.