

PROCEEDINGS OF  
**NORTH EAST INDIA  
HISTORY ASSOCIATION**



**TWENTYTHIRD SESSION  
TRIPURA UNIVERSITY  
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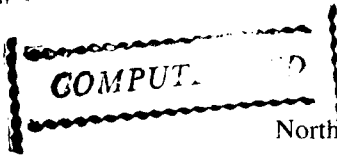
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## Preface

The Twenty-Third Session of the NEIHA was hosted by the Tripura University, and was held at Agartala, Tripura from 26-28 September 2002. The Session was inaugurated by His Excellency the Governor of Tripura. The three days of the Annual Conference was very well attended by historians and other social scientists from different parts of the region and also from other parts of the country and the academic sessions, the most important part of the Annual Conferences of NEIHA, saw the active participation of all NEIHA members present. We place on record our thanks to the Vice-Chancellor of Tripura University for hosting the XXIIIrd Session of NEIHA and also our very sincere thanks to Prof. Mahadev Chakravarti the Local Secretary, and his colleagues in the Department of History and other departments in the University and Colleges who worked untiringly to make the session a success.

This volume is a collection of the papers presented in the various academic panels of the XXIIIrd session and also the proceedings of the business meetings of the session. We regret that the Audit Report and the Treasurer's report could not be printed because these were not received on time. The Association is grateful to the Indian Council of Historical Research for the financial support advanced towards the publication of the Proceedings volume.

May we reiterate a point for the information of members that if the papers presented do not follow the **NEIHA style sheet** for referencing and if the revised drafts do not come to us within the last date announced in the business session it becomes very difficult for the editors and the Editorial Board to function. It was mainly for these reasons and also of course for the considered opinion of the Panel Chairpersons, whose comments on every paper were clearly recorded and the deliberations of the Editorial Board, that a number of papers had to be abstracted or listed. We request all NEIHA members to kindly follow the NEIHA style sheet of reference published in **Appendix F of the NEIHA Proceedings Volume of the XVIIIth Session (Agartala)** and also to send in their revised papers within the last date

decided upon in the business session of every Annual Conference. The task of editing, proof reading etc. of such a large number of papers within a very limited period is very time consuming and we can do the work to the satisfaction of all NEIHA members only with the co-operation of all the paper presenters.

Finally we would like to say a very special word of thanks to the members of the Editorial Board, Prof. J. B. Bhattacharjee, Prof. Mignonette Momin and Prof. F. A. Qadri who made our work much lighter by giving much of their time to sit through the Editorial Board meetings to decide on the status of the papers and also editing and doing the proof reading of the papers. We thank Mr. Pradeep Shaha and his staff of *Modern Offset* for their interest in the work and getting the volume ready in time for release in the 24th session.

Shillong  
11th July, 2003



(Manorama Sharma)



(D.R. Syiemlieh)

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# Origin, Growth and Nomenclature of the Localities of Shillong

*Zahid Husain and  
Jenita Mary Nongkynrih*

## Introduction

Every human settlement consists of a number of localities. The term locality means an area occupied by certain people where more or less similar human and physical characteristics occur. The study of place names or nomenclature has its own geographical significance. In the present case the names of the localities not only throw light on the original inhabitants of the locality but also on various geographical aspects of the localities. Geographers are more interested in investigating the geographical relevance of the name of a place in terms of identifying geographical phenomena associated with it. In this connection, generic approach has been followed to find out the geographical significance of the name of the locality. Therefore, in this paper an attempt has been made to discuss the origin, growth, and nomenclature of the localities of Shillong Urban Agglomeration (hereafter mentioned as SUA). This will also help us to learn about the social and cultural fabric of the town. Shillong, being an important town and a seat of administration, has been studied by different scientists. However, the present topic of research remained almost untouched. Some of the worth mentioning edited books on Shillong are by Goswami,<sup>1</sup> Pakem<sup>2</sup> and Datta Ray and Agnihotri.<sup>3</sup> The published doctoral thesis of Singh<sup>4</sup> is another valuable work on the town. A few relevant articles are of Saha,<sup>5</sup> Hussain<sup>6</sup>, Hussain<sup>7</sup> and others. The publication entitled Shillong Centenary Celebration is also an important book.

The paper is based on the information collected from elderly people of different localities, academicians, and published literature. Before coming to the main topic it would be worthwhile to give a brief account about the origin and growth of Shillong town. This is because the origin, nomenclature, pioneer inhabitants, and growth of localities are directly related with growth of Shillong itself, and vice-versa.

## Origin and Growth of Shillong Urban Agglomeration

The area where SUA is spread today was dotted with some Khasi Villages, namely Laban, Mawkhar, Mawprem, Malki, Laitumkhrah, Mawlai, Nongthymmai, Pynthorumkhrah, etc. Gradually the new township of Shillong engulfed these pre-Shillong villages. According to 1991 Census the SUA comprises of six class I Census towns, whose names and population are – Shillong Municipality (1,30,691), Shillong Cantonment (11,075), Mawlai (30,442), Nongthymmai, (26,816), Madan-Ryting (8,927), and Pynthorumkhrah (14,332). The total population of SUA is 2,22,273 persons, living in 25.40sq. km. area (Fig -1). The population increased by 43.32 per cent during the 1971-1981 decade, followed by 27.23 per cent in the decade of 1981-1991, indicating a decline in rate of growth.

Shillong town is situated amidst the hills of the central Meghalaya plateau. It is located at the junction of 25° 34' N latitude and 91°53' E longitude. The altitude of the Shillong town ranges from 1400m to 1700m. The town is spread on a saucer-like undulating plateau surface flanked by hill ranges on all sides except north.<sup>8</sup> The town has derived its name from the Shyllong Syiemship.<sup>9</sup> As per the Khasi belief the name Shyllong is after the name of a deity LEISHYLLONG, who was believed to have been residing in the sacred grove near the Shillong Peak (1961m).

At the end of the twentieth century the township of Shillong is about 135 years old. The main settlement is located on the Laitumkhrah-Iewduh-Mawkhar plateau surface. The township has expanded rapidly in recent years. This is evident from the construction of houses even on the higher slopes of the Shillong range in the south, whereas in the north the township has extended beyond the saucer like surface, e.g., N.E.H.U. campus at Umshing. The origin and development of Shillong took place in the following way.

The environment of hills and mountains of India naturally attracted the Europeans to live there during their stay in our country in the colonial period. As a result they were involved in establishment of many hill-stations including Shillong. It was Mr. David Scott, the Governor General's Agent on the North-East Frontier, who first of all pleaded for setting up of a sanatorium in the Khasi Hills "to eat the European air". Though he died in 1831, but a few bungalows and sanatoria came up at Mawphlang, Mairang, Nongkhlaw, Laitlyngkot, and also at a site on southern slopes of the Shillong peak, called Pomlakrai plateau.<sup>11</sup> In 1860, out of these places major Edward Rowlatt, Principal Assistant Commissioner,

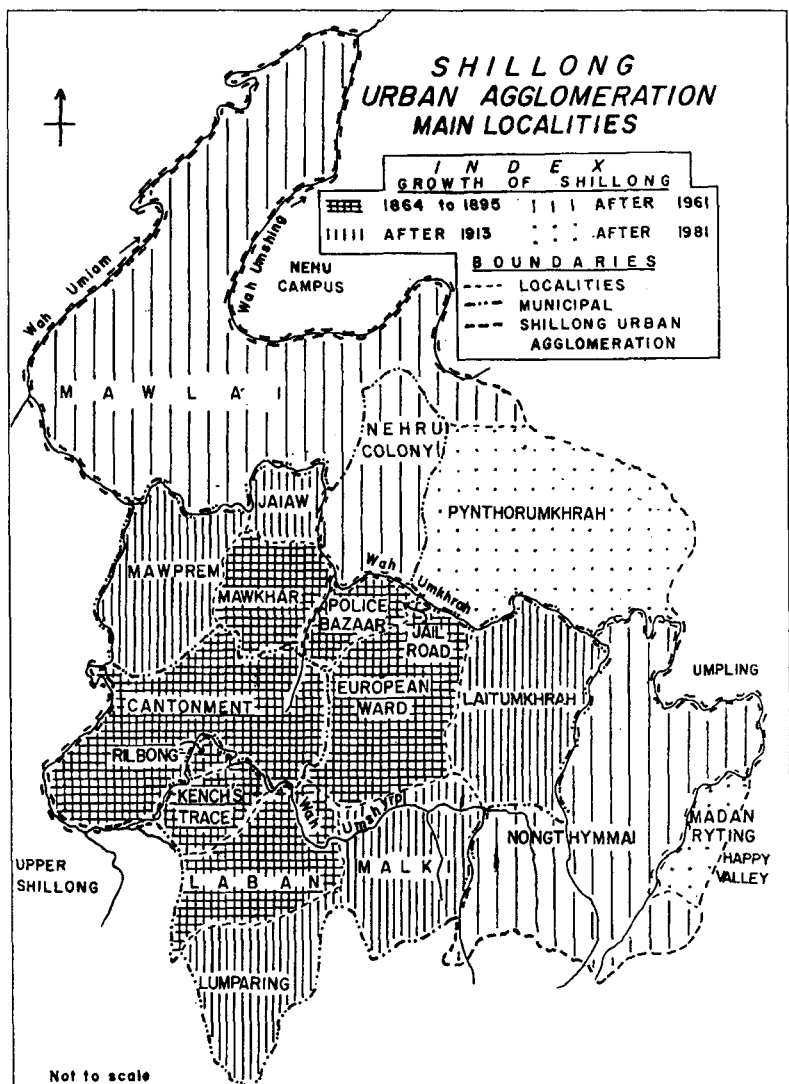


figure 1

preferred the last one as a central place to locate the headquarters of the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District (the first shift was from Nongkhlaw to Cherra or Saitsohpen in 1854). A search committee in 1862 recommended the Pomlakrai plateau for the Civil Station (mentioned Shillong or Chillong) and another plateau surface known as Iewduh for the Cantonment. The former is higher than the later by about 300 metres. Due to various reasons it so happened that both civil station and cantonment were established in and around Iewduh plateau site. Until 28 June 1866 the New Station at Iewduh did not get the name of Shillong because by this name people meant the settlement at Pomlakrai plateau. Initially the land for the new settlement was procured by Agreements of 1863 between the Syiem of Myllem and British Government, whereby the former ceded the *Ri Raj* (Syiem's Land) to the latter. This land was then known as Rowlatnagar, named so after Major Edward Rowlatt.<sup>12</sup>

The Headquarters of the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District was shifted from Cherrapunjee to the new Station in 1864. In 1866 the seat of Military administration was shifted from Guwahati to Shillong. The expansion of the town actually started since 1874 when the Chief Commissioner's office was also shifted from Guwahati to Shillong. Then for about 100 years Shillong served as a capital of the Province of Assam, i.e., from 1874 to 1972, except a brief period between 1911-12 when Dacca was made capital of the province of East Bengal and Assam. In 1878 was established 'Shillong Municipal Station', which included the localities of the British Territory of Shillong and the villages of Laban and Mawkhar. The British Territory included the European Ward, Police Bazaar, Cantonment, and Jail Road. That time the valley areas of Laitumkhras, Malki and Pynthorumkhras were largely paddy fields. In 1875 Colonel Bivar acquired a large estate and named it after himself as Bivar estate, later came to be known as La Chaumiere. In 1895, La Chaumiere was included within the Shillong Station. Another extension took place in 1906 with the inclusion of the Haneng-Umkhras village.<sup>14</sup>

The Shillong Municipal Station was up-graded to a full-fledged Municipality in 1910 as the then British-India Government decided to include the area between the Umshyrpi and Umkhras rivers within the municipal limits of Shillong. Though, there has not been any expansion in the Municipal Boundary since 1930 but a number of new localities located within it have been brought under Municipal jurisdiction. As per the 1911 Census, the population of Shillong was 13,639 persons. In 1912, Assam was made a separate Province with Shillong as its capital. This

led to the development of Shillong in all respects viz , establishment of more offices, medical facilities, official residences etc. The 1921 Census of India, recorded the population of Shillong as 17,203 showing an increase in the population by 26.13 per cent from the last census. The subsequent decade showed a very sharp increase of 54.25 per cent in the population. The ever-expanding population and the growing congestion in the existing localities led to the expansion and growth of Nongthymmai, Pynthorumkhrah and Mawlai localities. After 1947, the existing Government Departments expanded and many new departments were created leading to an increase in job opportunities which ultimately caused the inflow of people both from within the District and from different parts of the Indian Union. During 1951-61, new settlements grew up, viz., Bishnupur, Motinagar, Bhagyakul, Nehru Colony, etc. The pace of growth of population in Shillong continued and tremendous all round progress took place during 1961-71 decade. In later years many more new residential colonies came up for government staff, e.g. AIR, P&T and the NEHU campus, etc.

For a long time Shillong also served as the administrative center for whole of Northeast India. The creation of the state of Meghalaya out of Assam in 1972 was a turning point in the growth of Shillong town. Shillong continued to be the state capital (of course of the new state) and a District headquarters as well. For a considerable period administration of NEFA (Arunachal Pradesh after 1972) was run from Shillong. The regional headquarters of many Central Government offices are located in Shillong. Shillong also serves as the seat of District and Sessions Court, and the High Court Bench. The headquarters of many defence and para-military organization are also located in and around Shillong. Some are here right from the inception of the town. All these developments led to expansion and growth of various localities and the town itself. A significant fact, which needs to be highlighted, is that the town has expanded along the main traffic routes, especially the National High Way Nos. 40 and 44. Though Shillong has grown significantly in all respects, but it has not grown in a planned manner due to lack of infrastructure and non-availability of trained personnel.<sup>15</sup>

From the above lines it is clear that Shillong has grown in its own way under the influence of exogenous factors, unlike a rural settlement turning into an urban center due to endogenous reasons. In course of its development and expansion though various pre-Shillong villages have

merged in the urban set-up, but they have retained their traditional characteristics. Now Shillong is a Cosmopolis with multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic, multi-culture characteristics.

## **The Localities of Shillong**

### **Laban**

Laban is situated mainly on the northern slopes of the Shillong Range and partly in the Umshyrpi Valley. The locality is in southwest of the European Ward. According to some elders, the name Laban is kept after an incident. People say that in the past a tree or some trees fell down crushing a few persons. This accounted for the name as Laban, in which '*la*' means an event of the past and '*ban*' mean fall on. However, the nomenclature of the locality is vague.

Laban became a part of Shillong Municipal Station in 1878, like Mawkhar. The first settlers in the locality were from Sohra (Cherrapunjee). People also came from Nongkhlaw, Nongspung and Nongkrem in later period.<sup>16</sup> During the British rule the Bengalees from Bengal plains came as Government employees and settled here.

From an old village Laban has grown into a big locality of Shillong. The population has increased steadily from 5,882 in 1971 to 5903 in 1981 and to 6,989 in 1991 (Table-1 and Fig-2). The present socio-cultural fabric of the locality comprises of the Khasis, the Bengalees, the Assamese and the Nepalis.

### **Kench's Trace and Bishnupur**

Kench's Trace and Bishnupur are the two localities situated on the western side of Laban and southern part of Shillong Cantonment. Kench's Trace got its name after Mr. Kench, a British Survey Officer. There was a path (trace) from which also the locality got its name. Bishnupur is the locality, which was named after the then Chief Minister of Assam. Mr. Bishnu Ram Medhi, during the Assam Government i.e., prior to 1971. The word '*Bishnu*' was taken from the first name and '*Pur*' a Hindi word meaning place or area. In fact, there was a firing range in this area earlier. The Kench's Trace locality came up during the British rule and Bishnupur came into being during the period of the Assam government. The Kench's Trace locality was included in the Shillong Municipality in 1934.

**Table****Table 1. Population Growth in Main Localities of Shillong Urban Agglomeration (1971-1991)**

Sl.No.	Name of Localities	1971	1981	1991
1.	Laban	5,882	5,903	6,989
2.	Kench's Trace and Bishnupur	3,659	4,711	5,722
3.	Lumparing	7,334	8,150	10,402
4.	Rilbong	N.A.	1,555	1,990
5.	Mawkhar	15,830	8,869	10,208
6.	Jaiaw	8,991	10,207	12,482
7.	Police Bazaar	8,512	7,230	8,180
8.	European Ward	5,626	7,604	19,115
9.	Laitumkhrah	11,726	15,620	18,960
10.	Malki	6,956	8,804	10,225
11.	Mawprem	13,113	18,408	22,612
12.	Nehru Colony	N.A.	3,634	4,654
13.	Mawlai	14,260	20,405	30,964
14.	Nongthymmai	16,103	21,558	26,938
15.	Pynthorumkhrah	N.A.	10,711	13,682
16.	Cantonment	4,730	6,620	11,076
17.	Madan Rytng	N.A.	6,165	8,987

(Source: Population figures have been culled from various reports of the Census of India)

Till 1971, only Kench's Trace was treated as an individual locality with 3,659 persons. However, in 1981, the population of Kench's Trace and Bishnupur were taken together as 4,711 persons which increased to 5,722 in 1991. This rise in the number of the people is mainly due to the coming up of small sub-localities in and around these two localities.

The first people to settle in the Kench's Trace were the Europeans during the British rule but after Independence it was occupied by the Assamese and other officials of the Assam Government. The Assamese settled in Bishnupur during pre and post Independence period. Till today this locality has Assamese as majority population followed by the Khasi, the Nepalis and the Bengalees.



Locality-wise Population Growth in Shillong Urban Agglomeration (1971-1991)

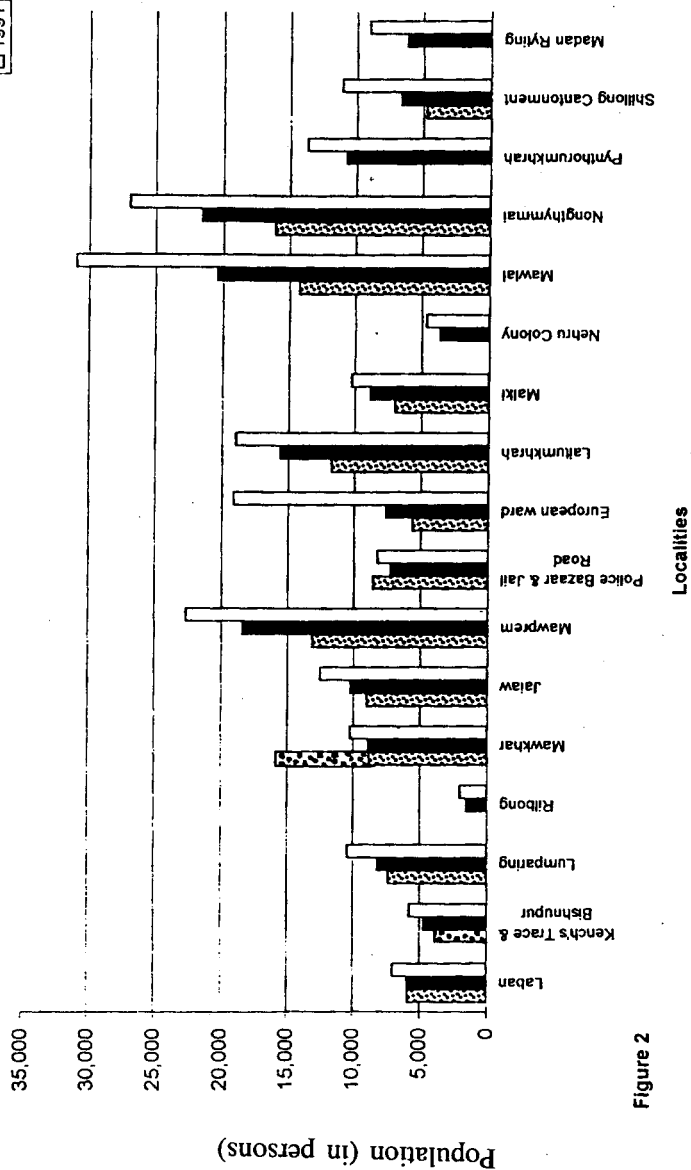


Figure 2

## **Lumparing**

The Lumparing locality is in the south of Laban. This locality is situated in the upper slopes of the Shillong Range where movement of the people is quite difficult. Hence the locality got its name from this steepness of the slope. It is because when some one climbs-up, it appears that he or she is dragging oneself. Lumparing is amalgam of two words, where '*Lum*' means hill and '*Paring*' means dragging. Together it means the steep hill slopes where up-slope movement of people look like dragging.

Lumparing was included in Shillong Municipal Area in 1913.<sup>17</sup> The first settlers in the locality were the people from the Laitkor village, which is two kilometers south of it on the Shillong Range. People from Cherrapunjee also settled here. It is also possible that with the expansion of the locality of Laban, people moved to Lumparing where space was available earlier.

The population size of the locality is increasing steadily. For example there were 7,334 persons in 1971, 8,150 in 1981 and 10,402 in 1991. Currently, the Khasis, the Bengalees, the Assamese and Nepalis are the main settlers in the locality.

## **Rilbong**

Rilbong locality is in the western part of the SUA. The northern boundary is formed by the Wah Umshyрпи which separates it from the Shillong Cantonment. The nomenclature of Rilbong is not yet known.

Earlier, Rilbong was an area for military purpose and later on it was allotted to civilian government servants for construction of residences. Though Rilbong was included in the Shillong Municipality in 1952,<sup>18</sup> but it was not treated as a separate locality. Actually, it remained part of the Raid Laban and thus a sub-locality of Laban. In 1981 the sub-locality was taken to be a separate locality. This is so because the Census of India (Meghalaya) classed it as a separate ward. The locality is not only small in area but also has small population. In 1981 the population figure was only 1,555 which increased to 1, 990 in 1991. The communities present here are the Khasis, the Assamese, the Bengalees and the Nepalis.

## **Mawkhar (Mawkhar Proper, Umsohsun, Wahingdoh and Raiatsamthiah)**

The Mawkhar locality is in the west of Police Bazaar. The Wah Umkhrah and its tributary-Wah Umsohsun flow in the eastern part of the

locality. Before describing the nomenclature of the locality it is necessary to mention that the locality comprises of four major sub-localities.

In fact, the Mawkhar locality is one of the pre-Shillong villages. A '*Kur*' (clan) of Myllem, who had a '*Myntri*' (minister) as a representative of the Myllem Syiemship, first of all inhabited the village. This *Kur* is said, to be that of the '*Kharbah*'. In course of time the '*Myntri*' of the Kharbah Kur died. Then the Syiem (King) and the 'Durbar' (Council) put up Mawbannah' (monolith) in honour of the 'Kharbah' Myntri. Thus, Mawkhar locality derived its name from the 'Kharbah' memorial stones, where '*Maw*' means stones and '*Khar*' comes from the first part of the clan name Kharbah. These memorial stones can still be seen near the office of the Syiem of Myllem.

Umsohsun is one of the important sub-localities of Mawkhar. It is situated between Mawkhar and Police Bazaar. The Wah Umsohsun flows between the locality and Police Bazaar. Hence, the sub-locality is named after it. It is interesting to note that the name of the river itself was kept after a wild fruit tree known as *Sohsun* which used to grow in plenty in the past.

To the northeast of Mawkhar have sprang-up two other important sub-locality – Wahingdoh and Riatsamthiah. Wahingdoh is located on the left side of the Wah Umkhrah. The earliest settlers in this locality saw a big tree called the '*Diengdoh*' (*populnea*) which was growing besides the Umkhrah river. Therefore, the name of the sub-locality is amalgam of two words '*Wah*' and '*Diengdoh*', i.e., Wah Diengdoh. With time, the name was corrupted and is now known as Wahingdoh.

Riatsamthiah sub-locality lies in the northwest of Wahingdoh. It is located on the steep sides of the valley of Wah Umkhrah. When houses were constructed on this steep slope they looked as if lying or sleeping on the valley side. This appearance of the houses led to the naming of this locality as 'Riatsamthiah' where '*Riat*' means escarpment and '*Samthiah*' means sleepy.

The Mawkhar and Umsohsun sub-localities were initially inhabited by the people coming from Maharam, Mawsynram and Nongkhlaw (all in the West Khasi Hills). At present 'Sawian' Kur is the owner of the major portion of land in Mawkhar. The pioneer occupants of the Wahingdoh and Riatsamthiah came from Cherrapunjee and Jaintia Hills. Few people also came from Myllem, particularly from Laitlyngkot village.

Mawkhar became part of Shillong Municipal Station in 1878. Mawkhar then included Mawkhar proper and Umsohsun sub-locality. In 1913, the sub-localities of Wahingdoh and Riatsamthiah also became part of Shillong Municipal Area. Mawkhar is one of the densely populated localities of Shillong and most of its inhabitants are now engaged in tertiary activities.

The population of Mawkhar and Umsohsun was 3800 persons in 1971. It went down to 3158 in 1981 and again increased to 3606 in 1991. The population of the sub-localities Wahingdoh and Riatsamthiah was 7030 in 1971, which declined to 5711 in 1981 but again increased to 6,602 in 1991. The decline in the population may be due to ouster of non-tribal population from these localities. Now the locality is composed mainly of the Khasi people.

### **Jaiaw**

Jaiaw is located north of Mawkhar. The Wah Umkhrach flows in the east and the north. The southern part of Jaiaw lies on the Laitumkhrach-Mawkhar Upland, while the northern part lies on the escarpment of the Umkhrach Valley. The word Jaiaw comes from the name of a flower called 'Tiew Jaiaw' in Khasi language, and '*Chrysanthemum*' is the Botanical name. Earlier this flower was growing in plenty here.

Jaiaw became a part of the Shillong Municipal Area in 1913. The locality has grown in size, especially with the coming of the Presbyterian Church during the British Period. The earliest settlers are said to have come from Maharam, Cherrapunjee and Jaintia Hills. The people living in the Mission Compound are mainly from Cherrapunjee area and a few are from the Jaintia Hills. In Jaiaw, majority is of the 'Syiemlieh' Kur the 'Lyngdoh' from the Maharam.

The size of the population has increased from 8,800 in 1971 to 10,207 in 1981 and to 12,482 in 1991. The increase in population may be due to inflow of people into the locality besides the natural growth. As regards the composition of the population, it is uni-ethnic. Literally it means that the Khasi people are the only occupant of the locality.

### **Police Bazaar and Jail Road**

Police Bazaar forms the central part of the Laitumkhrach-Mawkhar Upland. It is located in the heart of the SUA. Police Bazaar has been serving as a market place right from its inception. It begun as a small market around the first Police Station (Sadar Thana), hence also named after it. Though Jail Road came up as a separate locality on the northern

fringe of Police Bazaar but it was included as a part of Police Bazaar in 1981. Jail Road got its name because of the location of jail in the area. A road was constructed for a convenient movement to the jail. Later on settlement came up along the road. It may be noted here that Police Bazaar and Jail Road came under the Municipal jurisdiction in 1934.<sup>19</sup> Apart from the British the first Indian people to settle here were the Bengalees from East Bengal. They were mostly the traders and clerical personnel. Later on the Marwari and Punjabi merchants also settled in Police Bazaar. After the partition came the Sindhis and others.

The size of population in 1971 was 8,512 (Jail Road and Police Bazaar with 3,141 and 5,371 persons, respectively). In 1981, the population decreased to 7,230, but in 1991 it again went up to 8,180. In Police Bazaar, the Marwaris and the Sindhis form the main group followed by the Bengalees and the Nepalis. Jail Road has a Bengalee majority.

### **The European Ward**

To the southeast of Police Bazaar developed the European Ward. The Government during the British period owned the area of European Ward, which comprised of the government offices and quarters. Here, mostly on the secretariat hill, over-looking the Ward's Lake, were the bungalows for the European Officials. The Raj Bhawan and Pine Wood Hotel are some of the concrete examples of such quarters. The locality was earlier called as the 'European Quarters'. This name was given in 1866. the European Ward was the creation of the European officials and they were the first who settled in this area. This locality was under the British Area from 1866, but became part of the Shillong Municipal Area in 1874. Even after the departure of the Europeans from the country, the locality continued to grow in size.

In the southern part of the European Ward came up the Bivar Estate, which later on developed into a posh locality, known as 'La Chaumiere'. The name La Chaumiere was given by the Nawab of Dacca after a building having thatched roof. For a long time the regional office of the Anthropological Survey of India was housed in the same building. In fact, La Chaumiere is a French word where '*La*' means 'the' and '*Chaumiere*' means 'hatched roof'. The corrupted form is 'Lachumiere'. The Nawab of Dacca sold the area of La Chaumiere for three lakh rupees to the Assam Government which ultimately sold its plots to some Government officials.

The population of the European Ward was 5,628 in 1971, 7,604 in 1981 and 9,115 in 1991. It comprised mainly of the Assamese, the Bengalee and Marwari. The Khasi population in this locality is not significant as it is in the other localities of Shillong.

### **Laitumkhrach**

Laitumkhrach locality is situated in the east of the European Ward. The locality lies on the Laitumkhrach-Mawkhar upland. The Wah Umkhrach forms the northern and eastern boundaries of the locality. This river separate Laitumkhrach from Pynthorumkhrach locality, and earlier it was difficult to cross the river by the people from Mawpat and Pynthorumkhrach villages, and also from the surrounding areas. Hence a bridge was constructed near Nongmysong where the channel was narrow. Thus Pynthorumkhrach was joined with the opposite side. That's why the latter came to be known as Laitumkhrach, where '*Lait*' means free and '*Umkhrach*' the river's name. Together it means that the people are free to move across the Wah Umkhrach after the construction of a small wooden bridge.

The people coming from Sohra (Cherrapunjee), particularly the '*Nongkynrih*' *Kur*, initially inhabited the Laitumkhrach locality. Till date, there is a sub-locality called the '*Dong Nongkynrih*' in Laitumkhrach where this *Kur* is in majority. Later the people of the '*Mawrie*' *Kur* shifted to this area.<sup>20</sup> The first settlers also cleared forests from the valley area to develop agricultural fields (rice fields).

In 1913, Laitumkhrach became part of the Shillong Municipal Area. The locality from then onwards started growing in size, especially with the setting up of number of educational institutions by the Catholic Missionaries. At present there are a number of sub-localities like New Colony, Bhagyakul, Nongrimmaw, etc. The populations was 11,726 in 1971, 15,620 in 1981, and 18,960 in 1991. The increasing trend is due to natural growth of population and coming of people from other places to settle here. At present the Laitumkhrach locality is one of the most important commercial centers in Shillong, just after the CBD (Iewduh-Police Bazaar). The composition of the population includes the Khasi (who are in majority) and also the other communities like the Bengalees, the Punjabis, and the Biharis.

### **Malki**

Malki locality is mostly spread over the slopes of the Shillong Range. There are some flat lands along the Wah Umshyrpi where

Dhankheti and Madan Iewmalki sub-localities have come up. The "Kharmalki" *Kur* from Nongkrem initially inhabited the area. The locality was named after the Kharmalki *Kur*, and in doing so the first word 'Khar' was dropped. Paddy fields were present before the emergence of the sub-localities in the flat valley of the Umshyrpi river. This led to naming of a sub-loclity as 'Dhankheti, where *Dhan* means paddy and *Kheti* means cultivation. In another paddy field area Madan Iewmalki sub-locality came up along with a playground and a small market place. Thus the name is derived form the flat area (*Madan*), the market (*Iew*), and the name of the main locality (*Malki*).

The village Malki was included in the Shillong Municipal Area in 1913. The population of the locality increased with time. In 1971, it was 6,956, in 1981 it was 8,804 and then 10,225 in 1991. The main human groups of the locality are the Khasis, the Nagas, and the Assamese.

### **Mawprem**

Mawprem locality is in the western part of Shillong. The Umshyrpi river flows in the west, while the Umkhrah flows in north, the latter separates it from Mawlai. The locality got its name from the stones, which were lying there before the settlement was established. These stones were spread all over the area and with the occupation of the area and increase of population these stones were removed. The word 'Mawprem' is made up of two words '*Maw*' meaning stone and '*Prem*' the scattered distribution of stones, together meaning – a place where stones are scattered. Main sub-localities are Jhalupara and Barapathar.

Mawprem was included within the Municipal Area of Shillong in 1913. People who migrated from Cherrapunjee and also the Jaintia people from the Jaintia Hills initially inhabited the place. Gradually the population in the locality grew. It was recorded as 13,113 in 1971, 18,408 in 1981, and 22,612 in 1991. This increase is mainly due to the inflow of the people into the locality.

Since the locality is very near to the market place 'Iewduh' (CBD), many business families belonging to the Marwaris, Nepalis and the Bengalees also settled here. The Khasi population forms the major group and the Synteng of the Jaintia Hills are also found in good number.

### **Nehru Colony**

This locality lies between Mawlai and Pynthorumkhrah. Its sub-localities are Lumjingshai Colony, Industrial Estate and Forest Colony.

Nehru Colony is a new name given to these sub-localities. From the name itself, it is clear that the locality is named after the first Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The locality has sprung up because of the presence of the offices of the Food Co-operation of India, the settlers are mainly government employees. The population composes mainly the Khasis, Bengalees and Nepalis.

### **Mawlai**

Mawlai is situated in the northern most part of the SUA. It is bounded by the Wah Umiam in the west, the Wah Umkhrah in the south and Wah Umshing in the east. The first two rivers enclose the locality in the north. Mawlai is situated three miles away from the zero point (i.e., District Commissioner's Office). The locality got its name from the third mile stone, which is on the Shillong-Guuhati National Highway No.40. Mawlai is amalgam of Khasi word's -'Maw' (stone) and 'Lai' (three). Thus, Mawlai literally meaning three stones.

Mawlai was initially a village on the fringe of the old Shillong. It was included in the SUA in 1961. It may be mentioned here that the area is not under the Municipal jurisdiction. The locality was initially inhabited by the people coming from the 'Ri Bhoi' (Bhoi area). People from Nongkrem, Smit, and Maharam villages also came and settled here. As a whole, the 'Massar' *Kur* is the majority group in the locality.

Population of the locality increased from 14,206 in 1971, to 20,405 in 1981 and then to 30,964 in 1991. The increase in population is tremendously high as compared to the other localities. This may be due to coming of the various Khasi people from different parts of the Khasi Hills to settle here, as they found it to be a better place. At the same time it can be mentioned that this is the largest locality of SUA in terms of population and area. The vastness of the area offers space for fresh settlements, especially on the northern fringe. At present, it is predominantly a Khasi locality, but prior to 1987 various communities like the Biharis, Nepalis and Bengalees were also living here.

### **Nongthymmai**

Nongthymmai locality spreads over the hilly area on the eastern side of Laitumkhrah-Mawkhrah plateau surface. It is bounded by the Wah Demthring in the east and north, and by the Wah Jingkieng in the west. Towards south, it extends on the higher slopes of the Shillong Range. The name of the locality is derived from two Khasi words- 'Nong', a

short form of *shnong*, meaning a village or settlement, and 'Thymmai' meaning new. Thus, the very name of the locality suggests that it is a newly settled village in comparison to other already existing villages, which at present form various localities in SUA. The 'Kharkongngor' *Kur* from Myllem was the first to establish the village. Then came the 'Khyriem' from Mawphlang. The village became a part of the Urban Agglomeration in 1961. The main sub-localities are Rynjah, Jingkieng, Mayurbhanj and Demthring.

The number of persons in the locality was 16,103 in 1971, 21,558 in 1981, and 26,938 in 1991, which shows that this is the second largest locality, after Mawlai, in SUA. The main communities are the Khasis, the Nepalis, the Mizos, and the Biharis.

### **Pynthorumkhrah**

Pynthorumkhra is situated on the northeastern fringe of SUA. The southern part of the locality covers the flat lands of the valley of Wah Umkhrah where paddy fields have been developed from which the locality derived its name. In the Khasi language 'Pynthor' means wet fields or wet rice cultivation, and Umkhrah is the name of the river. Therefore, the name 'Pynthorumkhrah' is mainly applicable to the flat valley area of the Wah Umkhrah. Pynthorumkhrah was initially a village, which became part of the SUA in 1981. The earliest settlers included the people coming from Myllem and Maharam who were mainly cultivators. This was but natural because they came here and developed wet rice cultivation in the flat lands. Gradually, people started settling in the higher slope surrounding the flat valley.

The population of the locality increased from, 10,711 in 1981 to 13,682 in 1991. At present the main communities inhabiting the area are the Khasis, the Biharis and the Nepalis.

### **Shillong Cantonment**

The Shillong Cantonment lies in the western most part of the town. This happens to be the oldest locality of Shillong, as the first construction for the new township to come up started here. The Wah Umshyrpi flows in the western part of it.

The Cantonment area is meant for the defense purposes. Therefore, the area has a number of military and para-military establishments. The name of the locality as Shillong Cantonment is self-explanatory. Naturally, heterogeneous communities live here. Apart from the Shillong Canton-

ment, there are a few more military, para-military and air force establishments in and around Shillong. The population of the Shillong Cantonment grew from 4,730 in 1971 to 6,620 in 1981, and to 11,976 in 1991.

### **Madan Ryting**

Madan Ryting locality is on the eastern flank of the SUA. The locality is named after a flat area (*Madan*) and a tree (*Ryting*). First of all when people of the Kharkongngor clan came from Myllem to settle here this area was full of Ryting trees. These were big trees with large girth, hence mentioned as *Dieng Ryting*. The flat area is now called as Happy Valley where defence establishments are located. The locality was included in the SUA in 1981. Its main sub-localities are Alugodam (named after potato godowns) and Band Stand (named after a very sharp curve on the National Highway No.44). Interestingly in terms of expansion of the town the Maw-Blei sub-locality is counter part of Mawlai. The sub-locality is named after a big stone of the area known as stone (*maw*) of god (*Blei*). This is a fast growing locality due to expansion of Nongthymmai and the SUA itself. The population has increased from 6,165 in 1981 to 8,972 in 1991. The main occupants of the locality are the Khasis, Mizos, Nepalis, Manipuris, and Biharis.

### **Other Localities**

This paper would remain incomplete if other localities (apart from discussed above) of the SUA are not discussed, even though adequate information are not available about them. Some of these localities are Paltan Bazaar, Goalpatty or Quallapatty, and Garikhana. Paltan Bazaar got its name from the market that was set up near the Cantonment for the Eighth Gorkha Rifles (the native infantry Gorkha lines). Goalapatty is a locality lying between Mawprem and Jaiaw, which got its name from the activity of the previous settlers in the locality who were engaged in cattle rearing that means the *Gawala* in Hindi. At present the Jaintia people are in majority in the locality. Garikhana is on the western part of Mawkhar. The locality is named after the first motor garage or bus stand of Shillong, which was located along the National Highway No.40. Since the localities of Upper Shillong, Happy Valley, Umshing, etc. are not part of the SUA, no discussion appears on them in this paper.

## Conclusions

In the present paper the origin, growth, and nomenclature of the localities of Shillong Urban Agglomeration have been discussed in the brief historical background of development of Shillong town. There are a number of localities falling within the SUA. The study reveals that these localities owe their origin to various factors. Some have grown from the pre-Shillong villages, e.g., Laban, Mawkhar, Mawlai etc. Whereas the localities of Cantonment, Police Bazaar, Jail Road, and European Ward etc. came into being after setting up of the government offices and the residential quarters of the employees in the beginning itself. However, in recent time, many colonies (like Nehru Colony) have been constructed for the government employees.

The localities have recorded a steady population growth in general. However, in some localities decline was also noticed due to moving out of the people from there. On the other hand, total number of localities has grown because of – (i) inclusion of adjoining pre-Shillong villages in SUA, (ii) expansion and development of administration in the town, (iii) establishment of various central and state government offices and educational institutions, (iv) offshoots of the old localities, and (v) increase of population, both due to natural increase and in-migration of people from other areas in search of employment.

The naming pattern of the localities reveals very interesting geographical points. People have derived names of the localities from – (i) natural features like rivers, steep slopes, stones, trees, flowers, etc., (ii) cultural landscape viz., paddy fields, markets etc, (iii) name of important clans and persons, and (iv) geographical and historical events like setting up of a Jail, Police station, construction of a bridge and new settlements. Most of the localities have geographical names.

The socio-cultural fabric of the localities is also quite interesting. The Khasi people are a predominant community in almost all the localities, except the European Ward, Police Bazaar, and Jail Road. However areal distribution of some other communities shows concentration of the Bengalees in Laban, Jail Road, and Laitumkhras; the Marwaris in Police Bazaar and Garikhana; the Assamese in Bishnupur and Motinagar; the Biharis in Nongthymmai, Garikhana, Pynthorumkhras and Mawprem; the Nepalis in Mawprem, Laban, and Pynthroumkhras, and the Mizos in Madan-Ryting. Overall, Shillong has a composite cultural fabric, and

therefore can be called a cosmopolitan town where people not only from different parts of our country but of world have come and made it their second home. It can be said in the end that Shillong is a fascinating hill town having a traditional charm blended with 'modernity'.

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