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**MIGRATION AND URBAN GROWTH: SOME EVIDENCE FROM  
BANGLADESH (1961—1981)**

The population of Bangladesh is characterized by a considerable mobility. Fragmentary survey on internal migrations in that country was carried on by M. Obaidullah, P. Krishnan and G. Rowe (1978), R. H. Chaudhury and G. C. Curlin (1975) and J. S. Stoeckel, A. K. M. Alauddin Chowdhury and K. M. A. Aziz (1972). Lack of statistical data, resulting from non-existent measurements of the size of migration, constitutes the principal difficulty in the analysis of migration movement. On the grounds of representative surveys and modest literature concerning the problem only a general view on migration movements in that area has been attained. To calculate the net size of migration the author has applied the national growth rate method. The results obtained, important from the point of view of the size of migration, also include information, though in an indirect way, about the economic situation of the country. The surveys on the population mobility indicate that a temporary earning migration of males is prevailing.

Migration to towns is the dominant form. This phenomenon has a considerable effect on urbanization of the country. According to the data of the population census carried on in Bangladesh in 1981, in the Central (Dhaka), East (Chittagong), South (Khulna) and North (Rajshahi) provinces the immigrants constituted respectively 64, 35, 44 and 22 per cent of the total number of urban population. Rapid inflow of the population to towns marks them in such a specific way that one may speak about their "ruralization". This applies not only to the physiognomy of towns, but mainly to their economic, social and cultural problems.

Unrestrained demographic growth of towns results from acute overpopulation of rural areas, deterioration of economic situation of peasants and the growing number of rural workers with no farmland of their own. The calculations indicate a close relationship between the growth of towns and the size of migration. Estimation of the migration figures, which is particularly important for planning, confirms that number of immigrants

in towns often reaches 80 per cent (Fig. 1, 2). Only municipal centres (*pourashavas*), have been analyzed. Out of 13.2 million of town dwellers in Bangladesh in 1981, the municipal centres numbered 9.2 million, i.e. 71.2 per cent of the total number. According to the Statistical Office data, there were 76 municipal centres in 1981. However, because of lack of data for three towns (Kalia, Mohongon, Gopalpur), 73 *pourashavas* inhabited by 70.6 per cent of the total urban population in 1981, were included in the analysis.

In the years 1961—1981, the population of Bangladesh increased by 60 per cent, while population of towns increased by 400 per cent. This considerable growth of urban population has been caused, apart from strong migration movements, also by a high birth-rate and, in case of some towns, by the change in their administrative borders.

The average annual rate of town population growth in 1961—1981 amounted to 8.39 per cent, while in 1974—1981 to 11.24 per cent. The growth of the biggest towns in the country and that of urban centres of special functions is the most significant. The rate of growth of municipal centres is bigger than that of small towns having negligible economic values because the former possess greater economic potential. The towns of the highest rate of growth include the following three types of settlements:

- traditional urban centres of administrative and cultural functions, concentrating the majority of national property,
- port towns,
- urban centres of diversified exogenic features.

The first group includes such towns as Dhaka, Khuhna, Sylhet and Jessore. They are particularly privileged towns that develop dynamically, which encourages growing migration. The second group includes Chalna and Mangla Port, the third one is represented by Jhenaidah, Kurigram and Narsingdi, characterized by a continuous growth of immigration, though they do not belong to the big centres in terms of the number of population.

The above-mentioned towns became new centres of growth, which is of particular importance for the country from the economic point of view. All the towns, excluding Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna, are characterized by significant variability of growth. This reflects the economic policy, and mainly investments, that assure economic and social development. Smaller rate of growth was recorded for such towns as Chittagong (6.92%), Rajshahi (5.67%), Dinajpur (4.80%), Pabna (4.64%) and Comilla (4.28%).

On the grounds of calculated size of immigration in municipal centres it may be stated that the directions and intensity of migration are connected with space disproportions in the level of development and urbanization of the country. One may notice the inflow of people to densely inhabited

districts, covering the areas around Dhaka and the drainage basins of the Jamuna and Ganges rivers. The share of immigrants in the period of 1961—1981 as well as in the period between population censuses of 1974—1981 amounted to 88.5%, 83.3% in Dhaka, 76.8, 81.6% in Jessore, 82.6%, 77.5% in Narsingdi, and 71.5%, 64.5% in Tangail, respectively.

A high share of immigrants in such towns as Kushtia (64.2, 81.2%), Pabna (56.0, 71.6%), Jhinaidah (85.4, 60.7%) as well as Bogra (36.3, 60.4%) and Faridpur (52.3, 60.4%), confirms the traditional direction of migration from East to West in the analyzed periods.

Small number of towns inhabited by over 50 thousand people is a characteristic feature of peripheral districts. That is why these centres became particularly attractive for immigrants. Performing administrative functions they are attractive regional centres, gaining numerous new functions. The following towns may serve as an example: Sylhet in the north-east of the country, Rangpur in the north-west, and Patuakhali in the south. One should not overlook such big and medium-sized towns as Tangail, Mymensingh, Comilla, characterized by continuous increase of immigration.

It is only Bandarban, Gopalganj, Bajitpur, Chuadanga, Ishardi, Joypurhat and Rajshahi from among the municipal centres analyzed in 1974—1981 that were characterized by lower level of immigration in relation to the natural increase.

Rapid demographic growth of towns, based mainly on immigration, concerns not only towns with proper economic base, but also those deprived of the modern type of activities, particularly industry. Migration to towns that lack those advantages takes place mainly from economically poor rural areas with considerable percentage of petty holders and landless people for whom the town becomes a sort of "refugee camp". Thus many numerous social groups arise, which do not join the life of the town, and are deprived of living resources. Municipal centres, mainly those of medium size, performing administrative functions, are at the same time important trade and cultural centres, which are likely to provide more work places in the future.

Following the administrative reform in 1983—1984 47 new districts were established. All the municipal centres perform administrative functions at present, either as the district seats or *upazila*, which will certainly contribute to their activation. According to the government's initiatives, restriction of credits and subsidies for more economically developed towns in favour of small and medium-sized towns may be expected. Gradual channelling of the industrial and infrastructural investments will ensure their development and faster rate of growth. The present activities of the authorities and non-governmental organizations aimed at increasing the number of work places in smaller towns will also increase their attracting power. A gradual change in hierarchy of towns will result

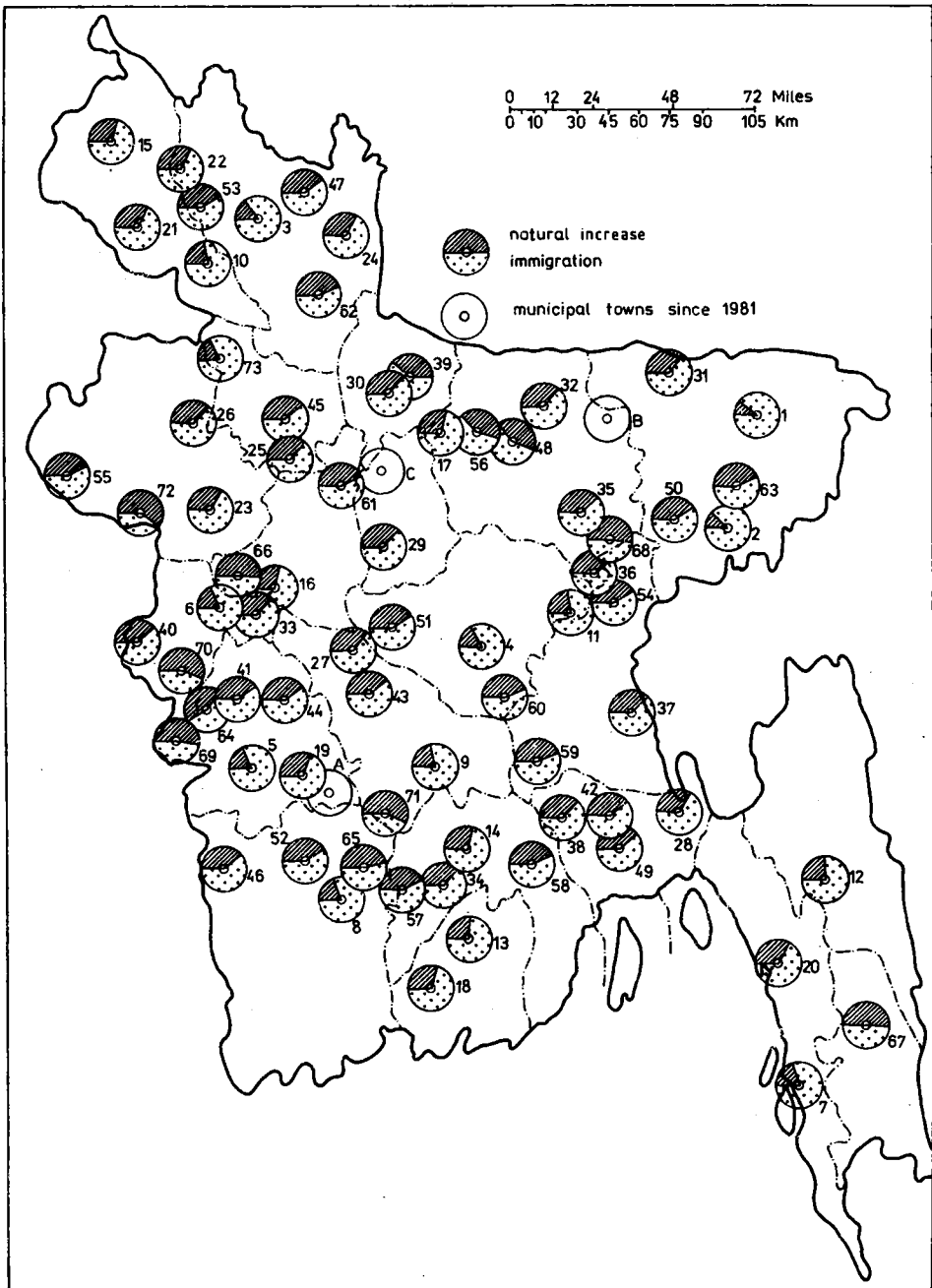


Fig. 1

Fig. 1. Share of immigration and birth rate in the growth of municipal centres in the years 1961—1981 (sequence of towns according to their share in immigration)

1 — Mangla Port, 2 — Begumgonj, 3 — Dhaka, 4 — Rangamati, 5 — Jhainadah, 6 — Kurigram, 7 — Sreemangal, 8 — Khulna, 9 — Narsingdi, 10 — Munshigonj, 11 — Sylhet, 12 — Magura, 13 — Chuadanga, 14 — Rangpur, 15 — Chittagong, 16 — Jessore, 17 — Patuakhali, 18 — Thakurgaon, 19 — Cox's Bazar, 20 — Tangail, 21 — Manikgonj, 22 — Rajshahi, 23 — Nilphamari, 24 — Jhalokati, 25 — Kumarkhali, 26 — Sathira, 27 — Meherpur, 28 — Kushtia, 29 — Moulvi Bazar, 30 — Naogaon, 31 — Dinajpur, 32 — Pabna, 33 — Natore, 34 — Kotchandpur, 35 — Jamalpur, 36 — Feni, 37 — Faridpur, 38 — Bagerhat, 39 — Noakhali (Maijdi), 40 — Comilla, 41 — Madaripur, 42 — Nekrotona, 43 — Mohespur, 44 — Sherupur (district of Bogra), 45 — Barisal, 46 — Rajbari, 47 — Muktagacha, 48 — Sirajgonj, 49 — Nowabgonj, 50 — Sunamgonj, 51 — Kishoregonj, 52 — Gaibandha, 53 — Bhola, 54 — Saidpur, 55 — Chandpur, 56 — Sherpur (district of Jamalpur), 57 — Gopalganj, 58 — Gouripur, 59 — Mymensingh, 60 — Bogra, 61 — Bhairab, 62 — Pirojpur, 63 — Brahmanbaria, 64 — Habigonj

In 1961 the number of municipal centres was 64. Source: the author's calculations based on data of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

from the policy of restricting excessive development of big towns in favour of small and medium-sized ones.

Introduction of food rationing at subsidized prices to selected social groups had a considerable influence on migration especially to such towns as Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chittagong and Khulna. The system of food rationing at lower prices was also introduced in other towns. 63% of town inhabitants were granted food rationing books in 1979. Towards the end of the 1970s the immigrants were deprived of the right to the food rationing system; however, that decision did not cause a decrease of migration to towns.

One may conclude, on the grounds of existing tendencies, contrary to the general assumptions of the authorities, that the role of Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna will be growing in a few decades to come. This results from their economic potential and the functions performed. The role of those municipal centres in development of urbanization of the country in the nearest future is undoubtful, since they are located in the areas important for planning of regional development of the country.

Evaluation of migration to towns, coupled with the analysis of their future development, constitutes the basis for planning of towns and the future urbanization of the country.

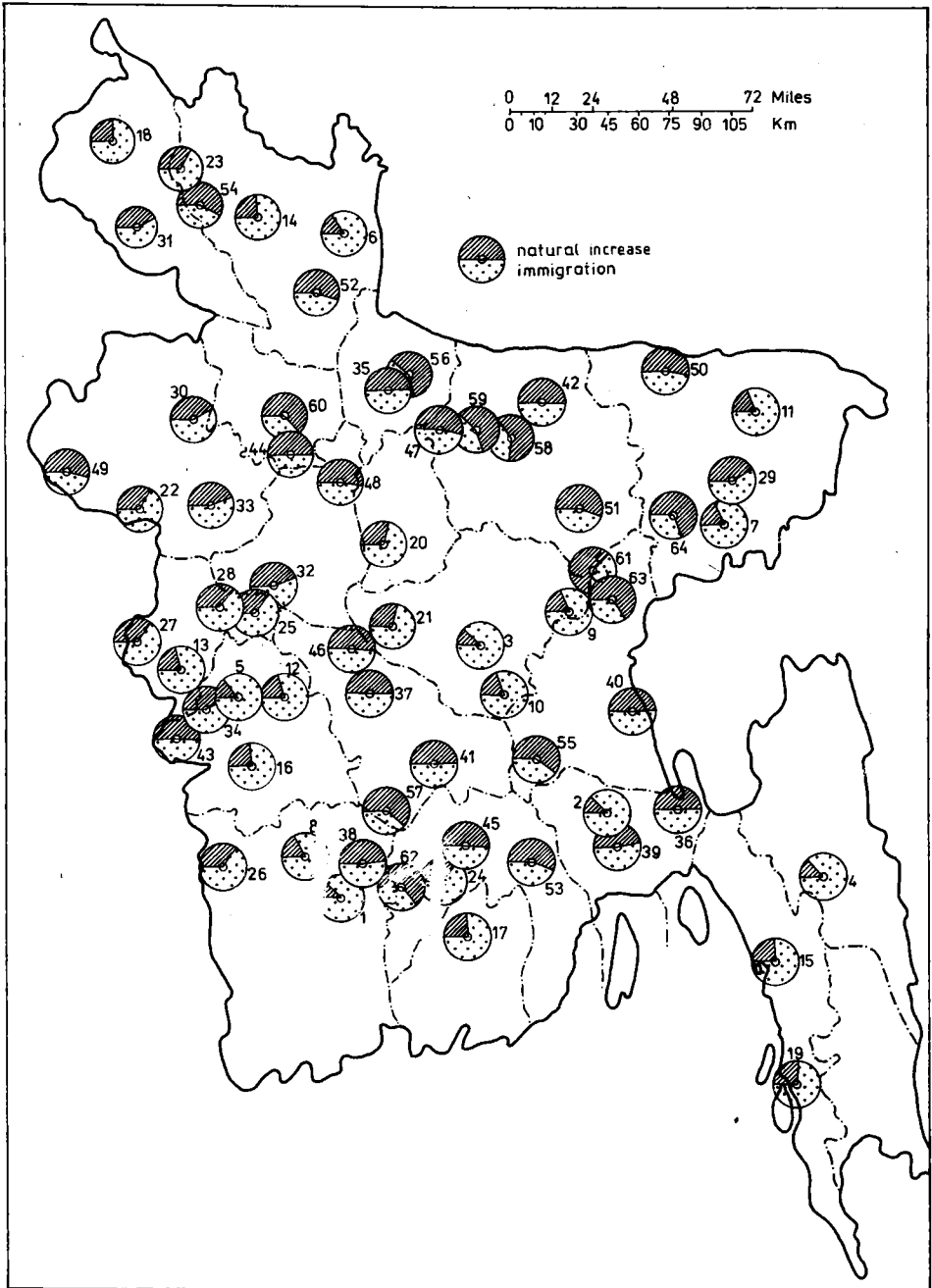


Fig. 2

Fig. 2. Share of immigration and birth rate in the growth of municipal centres in the years 1974—1981 (sequence of towns according to their share in immigration)

1 — Sylhet, 2 — Sreemangal, 3 — Rangpur, 4 — Dhaka, 5 — Jessore, 6 — Kushtia, 7 — Cox's Bazar, 8 — Mangla Port, 9 — Madaripur, 10 — Parbatipur, 11 — Narsingdi, 12 — Rangamati, 13 — Patuakhali, 14 — Barisal, 15 — Thakurgaon, 16 — Pabna, 17 — Muktagacha, 18 — Bar-guna, 19 — Narail, 20 — Chittagong, 21 — Dinajpur, 22 — Nilphamari, 23 — Natore, 24 — Kurigram, 25 — Sherpur (district of Bogra), 26 — Naogaon, 27 — Rajbari, 28 — Feni, 29 — Tangail, 30 — Jamalpur, 31 — Sunamgonj, 32 — Nekrotona, 33 — Kumarkhali, 34 — Jhalokati, 35 — Kishoregonj, 36 — Bhairab, 37 — Comilla, 38 — Lakshmipur, 39 — Sherpur (district of Jamalpur), 40 — Meherpur, 41 — Jhinaidah, 42 — Begumgonj, 43 — Faridpur, 44 — Magura, 45 — Bogra, 46 — Sathira, 47 — Lalmonirhat, 48 — Gouripur, 49 — Noakhali (Maijdi), 50 — Habigonj, 51 — Manikgonj, 52 — Khulna, 53 — Saidpur, 54 — Brahmanbaria, 55 — Nowab-gonj, 56 — Mymensingh, 57 — Pirojpur, 58 — Bhola, 59 — Chandpur, 60 — Munshigonj, 61 — Sirajgonj, 62 — Gaibandha, 63 — Moulvi Bazar, 64 — Kotchandpur, 65 — Bagerhat, 66 — Ishardi, 67 — Bandarban, 68 — Bajitpur, 69 — Mohespur, 70 — Chuadanga, 71 — Gopalgonj, 72 — Rajshahi, 73 — Joypurhat.

Municipal centres since 1981: A — Kalia, B — Mohongonj, C — Gopalpur. Source: the author's calculations based on data of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

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