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GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA

**A STUDY OF OFFICE TEA STALLS IN SHILLONG  
IN CONTEXT OF THE SHIFTING OF ASSAM'S CAPITAL  
FROM THE TOWN**

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SHILLONG

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INTRODUCTION

The growth of Shillong, its economic prosperity and its cosmopolitan character, owed largely, if not solely, to its being chosen as the capital of Assam. As soon as it became known that Meghalaya would emerge as a separate State, the shifting of the capital of Assam from Shillong also became a certainty and was only a matter of time. The shifting of some of the Assam Government offices from Shillong had taken place earlier also either for administrative convenience or other factors. This process, however, did not get accelerated until towards the close of 1973 when the dead line for complete shifting became known.

2. The impact that the shifting would have on the economy of the town and its hinterland had engaged the attention of the Meghalaya Government as soon as the State came into being. The extent of the social costs and benefit as a result of the shifting would, of course, remain a matter of opinion, there being no one accepted formula to quantify them. Apart from the steps taken to absorb and offer alternative employment to the tribal employees of the Assam Government and other measures, an adhoc study was undertaken during November-December, 1973 to gauge the likely reduction in the number of Government Employees in the town and other related sections of the population.

3. The shifting of Assam's Capital from Shillong has impinged in a number of ways and in varying degrees on different sectors and sections of the population. This could be a fascinating subject of study which, unfortunately, is beyond our present resources to undertake it at one stroke. In the first instance, therefore, it has been decided to find the magnitude of the impact on the tea stalls and their employees (tea girls) supplying tea to the Government offices of Assam since these were the sections immediately affected by the shifting.

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Planning and design of the study :

4. The State Planning Department was asked to organise and co-ordinate the study of the tea stalls. A list of tea stalls for Government offices of Assam and Meghalaya was quickly compiled by the State Directorate of Economics and Statistics. This formed the frame on which further study was planned. A questionnaire for collecting the information was devised by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics in collaboration with the State Labour Department whose staff were also associated in the field work. In view of the urgency, the questionnaire was made as simple as possible, seeking only the barest basic information necessary such as the name and address of the tea stall owners, number of tea-girls employed before and after shifting, number of offices served, average monthly turn-over and expenditure and average monthly wages paid.

5. The primary information were collected in the first week of March, 1974. Four investigators (including Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors) of the Directorate of Economics and Statistics were engaged to interview the tea stall owners. Some of the stalls were also covered by the staff of the Labour Department.

6. The response was very good and we wish to place on record the ready co-operation of the tea stall owners in this regard. Thus encouraged, the Directorate of Economics and Statistics further selected 10 tea stalls by random sampling method for the purpose of collecting ancilliary information in respect.

(1) Establishment cost on

(a) Utensils (kettle, Degchi, Frying Pan, etc.)

(b) Crockerics (cup, plates, etc.)

(2) Raw materials cost on

(a) Tea leaves

(b) Sugar

(c) Milk

(d) Ghee and Oil

(e) Atta, flour, etc.

(f) Fuel, (charcoal, coke, firewood, etc.)

(3) Rent of stall

(4) construction cost of stall

(5) Wage rate

(6) Other business apart from tea such as pan, biri, Cigarettes, etc.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Summary Findings :-

- |   |   |             |  |
|---|---|-------------|--|
| (1) The total no. of tea stall  | - | 54          |  |
| (2) No. of tea stalls closed down after shifting of the offices of Assam Govt. to Gauhati (included above).           | - | 4           |  |
| (3) Shops not affected  | - | 14          |  |
| (4) No. of tea stall shifted to Gauhati with the shifting of offices of Assam Government (not included in (1) above). | - | 1           | (name of the tea-stall owner not known.).  |
| (5) No. of tea stalls whose whereabouts were not known (not included in (1) above).                                   | - | 2           |  |
| (6) No. of tea girls engaged :  |   |             |  |
| (i) Before shifting   | - | 175         | } decrease - 38.2%   |
| (ii) After shifting   | - | 108         |  |
| (7) No. of offices served by the tea stalls :   |   |             |  |
| (i) Before shifting   | - | 135         | } decrease - 30.37%  |
| (ii) After shifting   | - | 94          |  |
| (8) No. of persons served by the tea stalls.  |   |             |  |
| (i) Before shifting   | - | 8722        | } decrease - 57.69%  |
| (ii) After shifting   | - | 3690        |  |
| (9) Average monthly Gross Income of each shop:  |   |             |  |
| (i) Before shifting   | - | Rs. 1305.65 | } decrease - 55.96%  |
| (ii) After shifting   | - | Rs. 575.06  |  |
| (10) Average monthly expenditure of each shop :   |   |             |  |
| (i) Before shifting   | - | Rs. 1048.17 | } decrease - 54.59%  |
| (ii) After Shifting   | - | Rs. 476.02  |  |
| (11) No. of tea girls thrown out of employment (list enclosed)  | - | 83          | This includes 16 new persons who were employed as tea girls during time of shifting. The total tea girls thus affected are $(175 - 108) + 16 = 67 + 16 = 83$ |
| (12) Total Turn-over by tea stalls  |   |             |  |
| Before shifting   | - | Rs. 67894   | per month  |
| After shifting  | - | Rs. 29903   | per month  |
| (13) Estimated Wage bill per month on tea girls:  |   |             |  |
| Before shifting   | - | Rs. 10123   | per month  |
| After shifting  | - | Rs. 4320    |  |
| Average Wage per tea girls per month :  |   |             |  |
| Before shifting   | - | Rs. 53.00   |  |
| After shifting  | - | Rs. 40.00   |  |

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NUMBER OF SHOPS BY EXTENT OF EFFECT

Sl No	Extent of effect	By No. of girls employed	By turn-over	By No. of customers served
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Not affected	20	14	13
2.	Reduction upto 25%	2	2	5
3.	Reduction 25 - 50%	17	8	8
4.	Reduction over 50%	8	23	21
5.	Total	47	47	47

The number of tea stalls found functioning at the time of investigation was 47. The number before the shifting of the Assam Government offices was reported to be 54. As a result of the shifting, 4 stalls have closed down, 1 has shifted to Gauhati and for 2 other stalls, the where-about is not known. (When this report was about to be finalised, another tea stall was referred by the Secretary, Cabinet Affairs Department. This tea stall served the staff of tea Meghalaya Revenue Department in the Apex Bank Building. It employed three girls including the owner. Its case is a peculiar case. It has been affected not directly by the shifting of any Assam Government office but by the shifting of the Revenue Department from the Apex Bank Building to the Additional Secretariat Building in course of the past few days. This has not, therefore, been included in the analysis in the following pages. It has simply been added to the list of the affected).

8. The number of tea-girls engaged by the 54 tea stalls before the shifting was 175 by the 47 stalls after the shifting was 108. Thus there was a decrease of 67 tea-girls. 16 new employees were also employed temporarily as tea-girls during the time of shifting. The total number of tea-girls trown out of employment is thus 83. A list of these 83 tea-girls has been prepared and placed at appendix A and the list of the tea stalls at Appendix B.

9. Total number of offices served by the tea stalls before shifting was 135 and after shifting it came down to 94.

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10. The total number of persons served by the tea stalls before shifting was 8722 and after shifting it declined to 3690. This could be ascribed mainly to the reduction in Assam Government offices. The offices of the Government of Assam were concentrated in and around the Secretariat hills. After the shifting of the Assam Government offices, some of the buildings were occupied by Meghalaya Government offices. But the number of employees in such building is much less now than when occupied by Assam Government offices.

11. The average monthly turn-over per tea stall works out at Rs. 1305.65 before shifting and Rs. 575.06 after shifting.

12. Some of the tea stalls concentrating around Deputy Commissioners' offices and Government Press, are not much affected because they also serve the A.G. and other Government of India offices. The number of such tea stalls is 14. The clientele of these stalls remained more or less stable.

13. The average running cost per month also declined as a result of the shifting. Prior to the shifting, the average expenditure of each shop per month works out at Rs.1048.17 but after shifting this is reduced to Rs. 476.02. This reduction was mainly on operating cost and retrenchment of the girls by the tea stalls.

14. The average wage per tea girl is estimated at Rs.53.00 per month before shifting and Rs.40.00 after shifting.

15. Of the 47 existing tea stalls, 2 tea stalls sold Rs.3001 or more per month before shifting while at the other extreme 2 tea stalls could get only below Rs.100 per month. 19 tea stalls deriving an average income between Rs.101 to Rs.500 per month form the highest concentration <sup>before</sup> shifting of Assam Government offices.

16. After the shifting of Assam Government offices, only 1 tea stall reported a turn-over of between 2501 and 3000/- per month, 3 tea stalls were found to earn below Rs.100. The number of those in the group Rs.101 to Rs.500 has increased to 24.

17. Table 1 below shows the distribution of tea stalls before and after shifting according to Income group.

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TABLE - I:

Average Monthly Income Group.	No. of tea stalls	
	Before shifting	After Shifting.
(1)	(2)	(3)
Below Rs.100	2	3
Rs. 101 - Rs. 500	19	24
Rs.501 - Rs.1000	8	12
Rs.1001 - Rs.1500	8	5
Rs.1501 - Rs.2000	7	2
Rs.2001 - Rs.2500	3	-
Rs.2501 - Rs.3000	2	1
Rs.3001 - and above.	2	-
Information not available.	3	-
	<u>Total-54</u>	<u>47</u>

18. Table II below shows the monthly expenditure of the tea stalls before and after shifting of Assam Government offices.

TABLE - II

Average monthly Expenditure Group	No. of tea stalls	
	Before shifting	After shifting.
(1)	(2)	(3)
Below Rs.100	-	6
Rs. 101 - Rs.500	16	22
Rs.501 - Rs.1000	11	14
Rs.1001 - Rs.1500	5	2
Rs.1501 - Rs.2000	8	2
Rs.2001 - Rs.2500	3	1
Rs.2501 - Rs.3000	4	-
Rs.3000 - and above.	4	-
Information not available.	3	-
	<u>Total - 54</u>	<u>47</u>

19. The above table reveals that before shifting of offices of Government of Assam there were 4 tea stalls having average monthly expenditure of Rs.3000 and above, and 16 tea stalls had on average expenditure between Rs.101 to Rs.500 per month.

20. After shifting of Assam Government offices, the highest average expenditure reported was in the expenditure group between Rs.2001 - Rs.2500 and the number of tea stall was only 1. The number of tea stalls in the group Rs.101 to Rs.500 has increased to 22 and that in the group Rs.501 to Rs.1000/- to 11. This was mainly at the expense of the higher expenditure groups reflecting the recession at work.

21. The following table (Table III) shows the concentration of office-tea stall ratio before and after shifting of Assam Government offices.

TABLE-III

Office - Tea stall ratio (1)	Number of tea stalls	
	Before shifting	After shifting
	(2)	(3)
1 offices : 1 teastall	13	21
2 offices : 1 teastall	12	14
3 offices : 1 teastall	9	7
4 offices : 1 teastall	11	2
5 offices : 1 teastall	6	2
6 offices : 1 teastall	-	1
Information not available	3	-
	Total - 54	47

22. The above table reveals that 6 tea stalls served the highest number of 5 offices per stall before the shifting while 13 stalls were single office stalls.

23. After shifting of Assam Government offices there was only one tea stall serving 6 offices and 21 stalls were single office stalls.

TABLE - IV

Number of Persons served per tea stall. (1)	Number of tea stalls	
	Before shifting	After shifting
	(2)	(3)
Below - 100	24	38
101-200	8	8
201 - 300	11	-
301 - 400	5	1
401 - 500	2	-
501 - 600	1	-
600 and above	-	-
Information not available	3	-
	Total 54	47

24. The above table shows that before shifting, only one tea stall served 501 to 600 persons, where as 24 stalls had less than 100 customers per stall.



25. After shifting the maximum number of persons served by a stall was reduced to 301 to 400 and only one tea stall was found in this category. 38 tea stalls served less than 100 persons each after shifting of Assam Government offices.

26. The following table V shows the distribution of tea stalls before and after shifting of Assam Government offices by the number of tea girls employed.

TABLE - V

Number of Tea Girls per stall. (1)	Number of tea stalls	
	Before shifting (2)	After shifting (3)
1	7	13
2	12	17
3	12	10
4	8	6
5	3	-
6	5	1
7	1	-
8	2	-
9	-	-
10	-	-
11	-	-
12	4	-
Information not available	3	-
	<u>Total - 54</u>	<u>47</u>

27. The above table shows that before the shifting, one tea stall engaged as many as 12 tea girls but after shifting the maximum number of tea girls engaged by single tea-stall was reduced to 6. Before shifting of Assam Government offices 7 tea stalls engaged one tea girl each whereas after shifting the number of one-girl tea stalls has increased to 13.

28. The average wages paid to each tea girls employed by the tea stall owners worked out Rs.53.00 and Rs.40.00 before and after the shifting of Assam Government offices respectively. The wage rate of tea girls varies according to the age of the employees. Generally, higher wages are paid to a grown up employees and less to a minor girl. In some of the tea stalls family members who are not paid are engaged in serving the tea.

29. The tea stalls were mostly built by the owners themselves, The cost of construction of such stalls varies from Rs.300/- to Rs.2000/- according to the size of the stall. A few tea stalls are accommodated in spaces provided by the office when they supply tea. Instances of hiring houses on rent for tea stall were not found during the course of study.

30. The average cost on capital expenditure i.e. Kettle, Dagchi, Frying Pan, Crockerics etc. have been estimated at Rs.288 (without depreciation). Regarding other raw materials before shifting, the information were also collected and the following results have been obtained.

1. Average Expenditure on capital goods :-

Kettle, Dagchi, Frying Pan, - Rs.288 per year (without depreciation)  
Crockerics, spoon, etc.

2. Average Expenditure on raw materials per tea stall per months-

	<u>Before shifting</u>	<u>After shifting</u>
(1) Tea Leaves	Rs. 137	Rs. 37
(2) Sugar (open market)	Rs. 395	Rs.76
(3) Ghee & Oil, milk, etc.	Rs. 118	Rs.185
(4) Atta, Maida, etc.	Rs.123	Rs. 11
(5) Fuel (Charcoal and firewood)	Rs. 51	Rs. 60
Total -	Rs. 824	Total-Rs.369

31. The above figures reveals that expenditure on raw materials have significantly decreased after shifting of the offices of Assam Government. This is because of reduction of offices and number of customers. The rising trend observed in Ghee and Oil, milk and fuel after shifting was mainly due to general rise in prices of essential commodities.

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