Chapter - 2

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL ASSAM
The state of Assam is located in the North East frontier of Indian subcontinent between the latitude 28°18' and 24°N, and the Longitude 89°46' and 97°4 E. Assam is bounded on all sides by hilly off shorts of Himalayan ranges and the mighty Brahmaputra river flows through it from east to west to meet the bay of Benga¹. Before the coming of the Ahoms (1228 A.D.) the Country was known as Kamrupa and it had its capital at Pragjyotishpur (Present Guwahati). Ancient Kamrupa included many parts of the present North Bengal and Bangladesh. It included roughly

the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Rangpur Mymensingh, Sylhet and Cooch Behar of West Bengal.  

Assam is girded by mountains on its three sides, viz. the north, east and south. On its north, the country is guarded by Bhot, Aka, Dafala, Miri and Mishmi hills of the Sub-Himalayan ranges; on the east Misimi, Singpho, Patkai and Naga Hills and Burma; on the South East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) and on the West East-Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) and North Bengal. According to its physical features; Assam can be sub-divided into three divisions: i) The hilly regions of the North, ii) The Brahmaputra valley and the iii) hilly regions of central Assam and the South east side. Towards the north, the Bhot, Aka, Dafala, Miri and Mishimi hills are the offshoots of the great Himalayan ranges. The Naga, Patkai and Lushai hills separated Assam from Burma.

The Garo and Khasia-Jayantia hills are situated in the centre of Assam. In the midst of the two rows of hills on the north and the South is the luxuriant Brahmaputra valley bisected by the great river of the same name.

The Brahmaputra valley begins from the confluence of Dibang, Dihang and Lohit in the east and then gradually extending towards west suddenly becomes narrow because of the Mikir Hills in between modern Sibsagar and Nowgong District. Down stream towards the west, the valley again then near Kamakhya at Guwahati on account of Khasia-Jayantia and Garo hills situated on the Southern side of the river. The valley widens as far as Goalpara where it is again narrowed by the Goalpara hills on the South and Jogighopa and paglateg hills on the north. The valley again widens and at Dhuburi finally opens out into the great delta of Bengal. Thus the Brahmaputra valley is a compact geographical unit by nature itself.

Assam may be divided broadly into two river valleys, the Brahmaputra valley, and the Surma valley. The former again may be divided

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3 Ibid p. 28, 29
into three regions, the Uttarkula, the Dakshinkula and the Majuli to the north. Geographically, the land may conveniently be divided into two parts—the plains and the hills. The plains comprise modern Goalpara, Kamrupa, Darang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Sylhet and Munipur; the hills consist of the Garo, Khasi, Jayantiya, Cachar and Mikir hills, Naga and Losai hills and of the frontier tracts of Balipara and Sadiya.

The fertile Brahmaputra valley begins from the confluence of the rivers Lohit Dibang and Dihang in the last and the stretches through a vast tract of land about 726 Kilometers (450 miles) in length from east to west and about 80 to 161 Kilometers (50 - 100 miles) in breath between north and south. The river Brahmaputra passes through this valley and hence it is known as the Brahmaputra valley of Assam.

In ancient times, the Brahmaputra valley of Assam was known as “Kamrupa” and its capital was “Pragjyotispur” King Narakasura and his son Bhagadatta were the famous rukers in the Mahabharata period. circa 100 B.C. The Kamrupa Kingdom was founded by “Pushyavarman” in the fourth century and reached its peak of strength and glory in the region of Bashkarvarman in the seventh century. The chines traveller Hiuen Tsang visited the country around 643 A.D. at the invitation of its ruler Bashkarvarman. He left a vivid account in his monumental work Si-Yu-Ki, about the country, and its people, which recorded that after travelling to the east above 900 li from pun-na-fa-tan-na (Pundravardhana) and crossing a large river he come to ka-ma-pa. The large river which is called Ko-lo-tu in the Tangshu, is undoubtedly the Korotoya. The country was more than a eastern boundary was a series of hills that reached the confines of China, thus indicating that about this time that the extreme eastern portion of the Assam valley was included within Kamrupa.

Kamrupa, earlier a Hindu Kingdom, walled off on all sides, save the north-west by the impenetrable mountains of the South eastern Himalayan off shoots, enjoys an isolated position in relation to Tibet in the

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6 P. C. Choudhary, op. cit- 25
8 K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamrupa, p- 7
North and Burma to the South and South-east. To the North-west, however, the country gradually slopes away along the course of the Brahmaputra and finally shades off into the valley of the Karatoya in the modern North Bengal which formed the traditional western frontier of Kamrupa till at least the growth and expansion of the Muhammadan empire in India. It would appear from all these accounts that, even during the later period, the Kingdom included not only the whole of the Assam (Brahmaputra) valley, but also a part of Northern and Western Bengal, a part of Bhutan, the Khasi and Garo Hills and the Northern portion of the district of Sylhet. In any case it is clear that Pragjyotishpura or ancient Kamrupa was a much larger Kingdom that most of the other Kingdoms mentioned in the Mahabharata and most of the Sixteen Mahajanapadas existing during the time of Gautam Buddha.

The history of Kamrupa from the second half of the twelfth century to the first Muslim invasion in 1205-06 A.D. remains fragmentary and obscure. But whatever that may be, a general study of her history for the period, is an indispensable requisite to understand the political condition of the country on the eve of the first known contact with the new powers i.e. the Muslims and the Ahoms.

The history of this period clearly shows that Kamrupa become an intervening territory between the rulers of Kamrupa and that’s of Gauda. Because, if we consider P.C. Choudhary to be correct, vaidyadeva, a King of Pala dynasty, conquered the whole of Kamrupa and thus he became the undisputed Lord of the Country.

On the contrary, we assert that vaidyadeva, the successor of Tingadeva, first rules as a vassal of the Palas over that part of Kamrupa which was earlier conquered by Ramapala. But subsequently he assumed imperial titles and by a fresh conquest, extended his authority over the

9 Ibid - p. 55
11 K.L. Baruah, Early History of Kamrupa, p-7
12 K.L. Baruah, Early History of Kamrupa, p-195
14 Ibid-p- 27
whole of the western part of Kamrupa upto the river Barandi. He thus brought about a complete division of the country along with this river. This event appears to have become a prelude to the final break up of the ancient Kingdom of Kamrupa, as well as, to a long period of remarkable political social changes in the history of its people.

The invasion of Ramapala was followed by that of Vidyadeva, who extended his authority over the whole of the western part of Kamrupa upto the Barnadi in the east. After Vaidyadeva the chiefs of the Koch and Mech people might have ruled in different parts of this region as vassals of the Sena Kings and also perhaps, of the Muslim rulers of Gauda till at least the close of the first quarter of the thirteenth century. Thus from the invasion of Ramapala, the Kamrupa Kingdom divided along the Barnadi and it was in this condition that the country had to face the first shock of Muslim invasion in 1205-06 A.D.

It appears that by the close of the third decade of the thirteenth century, particularly after the invasion of Hussamuddin Iwaz in 1225-26 A.D., the Kamrupa Kingdom completely broke up into a number of Chutias in the extreme east, the Barahis and the Morans in the South-east; and the Kacharis in the South and South-east; besides the domains of Prince Badrasena in the north eastern and Nyapala in the north western regions of the Brahmaputra valley respectively.

These events synchronised with the advent of the Ahom (Shan) Prince Su-ka-phah into the country from across the Patkai range on its south-eastern frontier and within a short span of time Su-ka-phah had established himself as the Lord of the Barahi and Moran territories. He also conquered a portion of the present Nagaland while this Shan Prince was consolidating his authority in this eastern region, the new state of Kamata emerged in the western part of Kamrupa. This new state seems to have later incorporated

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16 P.C. Choudhary, *The History of Culture and civilization of the people of Assam*, P. 270
17 S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *Deodhai Baranji*, pp- 179-
18 P.C. Choudhary, *The History of culture and civilization of the people of Assam*, P. 270
the domain of Nayapala into it. But in the Sixteenth century Kamata disappeared and the Koch Kingdom has its birth and momentum there. Within the next two centuries the Ahoms had defeated the Kochs, the Kacharies and other local rulers of lower Assam including Goalpara. The Country was thus named Assam as “Asom” and then “Assam” after the Ahoms.

The Kamata kingdom or the western regions of Kamrupa, on the other hand, being contiguous to the Muslim territory of Bengal, the people there came into close contact with the Muslims and this had its results in influencing the political and social ideas in that part of the country. The result of this influence, gradually spread over the whole of the country during the period of about four hundred and seventy-five years of its wars and conflicts with the Muslims, which began in 1205/06 A.D. and ended with the expulsion of the last army of the Mugal conquerors by Gadadhar Singha (1681-1696 A.D.) beyond the river Manas in the modern Goalpara district in 1681 A.D.

Another prominent historian K-L-Barua writes that the hostilities between the Muhammadans and the Ahoms continued during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and at length the whole of western part of Kamrupa, as far as the Manas river, had to be given up to the Mughals. the Ahoms retaining only the rest of the Assam valley to the east of the Manas.

In this way the various phases of the changes, through which the country passed, can be traced not only in the local accounts but also in the Persian chronicles containing the records of the Muslims invasions into this valley of Assam. The first few Muslim chroniclers referred to this country as “Kamru” “Kamrud” or “Kanwaru”, while those of the later times preferred to call of as Kamrupa Kamata. But in the chronicles of the still later time we find that the country was mentioned as ‘Koch’ and ‘Koch Hajo’ as well as the Ahom Kingdom which again in much later times came to be

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20 S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.) Assam Buranji (S.K.M.) p-148
21 Ibid- p-35
known only as Ahom Kingdom or 'Assam'. In this regard K.L. Barua writes that the Ahoms, and the name Kamrupa has, since then, been restricted to the present district between the Manas and the Barnadi. Such use of difference names for Kamrupa in this period by different Muslim chronicles, is indicative of the various phases of Social and political changes which swayed the Country throughout this whole span of more or less five centuries, till the end of Ahom-Mughal conflicts.

It is a matter of fact that the subsequent history shows that the question of supremacy over the soil of Kamrupa became the Prime cause for tag of war between the two mighty poewers i.e. the Muslims rulers of Gauda, Bengal and Delhi and Ahom Swargadeos in the Eastern region. The Ahoms by their policy of assimilation and adoption of local traditions and culture conquered not only the heart and soul of the people but also could extend its territorial boundaries without confrontation with the local chieftains. But the Muslim rulers as a result of their differences in religion and culture had to adopt the path of confrontation other than adoption and assimilation, which made their path a rigid one. These political confrontation between the Muslim powers and the local as well as central powers of Kamrupa or Assam, has its several phases, during the whole course of history. Each of these phases has their specific changes in terms of territorial boundaries and other factors. The phases may be catagorised as:

1. Political relations of Kamrupa with Muslim conquerors of India in the early thirteenth century.
2. Political relation of Muslim powers of India with Kamrupa-Kamata Kings (1256-1389 A.D.)
3. Relations of the Ahom and Kamata Kings of Assam with the Sultans of Gauda (1430-1530 A.D.)
4. Relation of the Koch and Ahom Kings with the later Sultans of Gauda and the Mugal emperors of Delhi (1625-1682 A.D.)

23 K.L. Barua; *Early History of Kamrupa*, p-135
24 S.K. Bhuya, ed., *Swargadeva Rajeswar Singh*, p- 172
25 K.L. Barua; *Early History of Kamrupa*, p- 9
The ultimate result of these hostilities proved fatal to the geographical boundary of Kamrupa, which was reduced from both the sides, east and west as well, and it became an interfering territory between them. During the whole course of time Kamrupa had lost her ancient pride and fame and was split into many pieces, which were occupied by both the Ahom Kings and Muslim sovereigns of Bengal.

It is a matter of fact that there was no any fixed territorial boundary for Kamrupa for the whole period of time. As a result of the last war between the Ahoms and the Mughals in 1682 A.D., the later had vacated Kamrupa and retreated to rangamati.

This event certainly has its great significance in the history of Assam, because with it, the threat of Mughal invasion on the country disappeared forever and thus the long period of Assam’s tedious warfare with the Muslim power, which began in 1205/06, A.D. came to an end.

Though in 1682, Kamrupa was occupied from the Mughals, but again she had undergone to the British dominion as a result of Yandaboo Treaty in 1826 A.D. and had to pass through the hard days under British Rule. Kamrupa, finally, has tested the Juice of freedom in 1947 along with the other parts of India and at present she has formed a mere district in the Indian federal state of Assam, with its capital at Guwahati, the old Pragjyotishpura.

Goalpara came under the British control at the time when East India Company was granted the Diwai of Bengal in 1765 by the Mughal emperor Shah Alom II. It was in 1639 that Goalpara had become a part of Bengal. Thus Goalpara was included in the British Empire nearly 60 years before Assam as a whole became a part of it. It was in 1879, that with the addition of three Bengal districts namely Goalpara, Cachar and Sylhet, Assam was constituted into a chief commissioner’s Province.

26 S.K. Bhuyan, ed., Assam Buranjî (S.K.M.) p-143-ff
27 Ibid., p. 148
28 Ibid.; P. 149.
ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SUFISM

Origin and Development of Sufism:

Islam, the religion of mankind, the 'Complete Code of life', revealed for the first time on the first man and the First prophet Hazrat Adam (AWS), in time immemorial, by the Creator as a guidance for the solution of Human problems both in the perestarial world and the world to come hereafter. After the death of Hazrat Adam there were a long series of prophets who came to this world. Only to remained the mankind the same 'code of life' that is the Religion Islam. Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH) was the last prophet of this series and no other prophet will come after his death. Infact, this divine code of life was completed and finalized through the revelation of prophet Mahammad, who had practically established it in Medina as an Islamic Republic in 722 A.D. as an example for the people of subsequent generations.

After the death prophet Mahammad (PBUH) the responsibility, as no other prophet will be revealed, of the guidance of mankind has been entrusted upon the Pious followers of prophet Mahammad (SM) and ultimately the four pious caliphs, who were selected as the president of Islamic Republic in Medina, had displayed their duties for a few years upto 761 A.D., but with the ascendancy of the Umayyyad Dynasty over the throne of Islamic Republic, every thing was shattered. They had not only changed the Republican character into a Monarchical one but by adopting a huge number of Un-Islamic principles, they had weaken as well as broken the real spirit of Islam and ethos of mankind. At this situation, being disgusted with the worldliness and absolutoism of the Umayyyad sovereigns, a number of pious man started opposing their activities and followed the path of self purification. They sought to secure salvation through devotional practices, meditations and retirement from Society. They also started to sever their connections with the world and strengthened a trend by meditations on God, the soul, the mysteries of creations, and herein lies the starting point of sufism, the mystic path in Islam.
But the question of the Origin of Sufism has long been debated by western scholars, most of whom, until the last generations, held that the essential ideas of Islamic mysticism had originated from alien, non-Islamic sources\(^{29}\).

But so far mysticism is concerned, Islam does not encourage it. Even the prophet himself said that “There is no monkery in Islam”. And during the early days of Islamic practice, the conceptions were not seen. It is only during the Umayyad reign, its adherents from practicing the mortifying austerity and asceticism, which were followed by the Jewish essences, Christian Monks and Hindu Yogis\(^{30}\).

The third century A.H. (After Hijiri) appears to have been the formative period in the development of Sufism, when great Sufi masters Dhu-al-Nun-al-Misri, Al-Harith-al-Muhasibi, Sahl-al-Tastari, Abu-Yazid (Bayazid)-al-Bistani, Junaid-Al-Hallaj, Rabia-al-Basri, etc. created the modes of mystical practice and theory in Islam\(^{31}\).

Thus forwarded upon by Muslim Orthodoxy, yet quite amazingly fawned upon and romantically fondled by Muslim masses, tasawwuf that is Islamic mysticism, has proved its vital viability and over centuries extended its loving embrace by bringing into the fold of Islam, massive numbers of people in the lands, where crescent beamed forth\(^{32}\). Thus being started, Sufism has developed and flourished during the later centuries and started playing an important role in Arabia as well as the whole Islamic world.

There has been a controversy over the derivation of the word ‘Sufi’. Some Scholars has commented that the word Sufi is derived from ‘Sufi’ means ‘purity’\(^{33}\). But it is seem that the term Sufi was first applied to


\(^{30}\) Ullah Nazib : Islamic Literature, Was Hington, pp- 149-50.

\(^{31}\) Menhan Milson : Introduction in Kabah-ul-Muridis- p- 5

\(^{32}\) T.S. Rajtogi, : Islamic mysticism-Sufism, Sterling Publication, Pvt. Ltd., Delhi 1982-p-1

\(^{33}\) T.C. Rastogi : Islamic mysticism-Sufism, p- 2Delhi 1982.

There are a contradiction regarding the total number of the prophets. According to one some their number was one lakh forty thousand, while another source advocates for two
Muslim ascetics who clothed themselves in coarse germents of wool (sufi). From it comes the form 'tasawwuf' for mysticism. Again Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has expressed the view with the tasawwuf, derived from Hebru "Ensof" or the Greek 'Sophia" or both Ensof and Sophia may be regarded as the religion of humanity. Al-Gazzali held the view that "One who has not tested the Savours of tasawwuf, despite one's knowing the term prophet hood, cannot take in what prophethood is the Sufi ways and experiences have intuitively downed upon me the reality and speciality of prophet hood. In passing it may be mentioned that Sankritayan regards the word Sufi as derived from the Greek word ‘Sophist’.

At one time it was also held that the word “Sufi” was synonymous with the word mystic. But the word “Sufi” as used in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, bengali and Assamese, has a religious connotation. The origin of the name “Sufi” is explained by the Sufis themselves, the word is derived from an Arabic root ‘Safa’ (purity). This view is also held by Bashr-al Hafi (d. 841-42 A.D.) and Junaid Baghdadi (d.909-10 A.D) According to them the Sufi is one who keeps his heart pure with God.

The word “Tasawwuf” is derived from the root ‘Suf’ meaning wool. As the Sufis wear woollen dress to distinguish themselves from others. They came to be known as Sufi. Noldeka has concusively established that the word was derived from an Arabic root ‘Safa’ (purity). This view is also held by Bashr-al Hafi (d. 841-42 A.D.) and Junaid Baghdadi (d.909-10 A.D). According to them the Sufi is one who keeps his heart pure with God.

Hisorian Iba Khaldum says that coarse woollen garments were put on so that those who wore them might be distinguished from those who

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34 T.S. Trisuingham : The Sufi orders in Islam, p- 1
35 Radhakrishnan's : History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western, vol-1, p- 101
indulged in luxury. According to Qushayri, the term ‘Sufi’ got currency before the close of 200 A.H. (815-816 A.D). According to Jami Abdul Hashim of kufa (d. 778 A.D.) was the first Sufi of Islam. In 858 A.D. we find the name of Harith-Al-Muhasibi who wrote Reyait Le Haqullah in which he described the stages of Sufism. R.A. Nicholson says that “The west can still learn in respect of mystical psychology and speculation. Some thing from the East, though it had learned much during the middle ages, when Muslim philosophy and science radiated from Spain through Christain of Europe”.  

The Sufis claim to have inherited their doctrines directly from the teachings of the holy prophet who strictly speaking has given no dogmatic or mystical theology. The Quaran of course supplies raw material for both when it says; Allah is the highest of the heaven and earth “(XXIV-35)”. There is no God but He; every thing is perishable except He “(XXVIII-880). “I breathed into man My spirit “(XV-29)”, I have created man and I know what his soul suggests to him, for I am nearer to him than his Jaguar vein “(1-16),” wheresoever you turn, there is the countenance of Allah “(11-109)”. To whom Allah gives no light, he has no light at all” (XXIV-40) Dr. Sayed Nsar says that origin of Sufism is the Quran and Sunnah. The great Sufi of Baghdad, Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi said in his famous book “Awariful Ma’arif (chapter one) that though the term Sufi is not used in the Holy Quran the word “Maquarrab (nearer) connotes the same meaning which is expressed by the term Sufi”. According to Dr. Yusuf Hussain Khan, all mysticism is born of religion. Sufism is born in the bosom of Islam. It is said that knowledge can be described as book knowledge (Ilm-I-Stifina) knowledge of the heart (Ilm-I-Sina). The former is the doctrinal teaching of the Ulema and the later is the esoteric and mystical teaching of the Sufis.

The porch of the “Mosque of prophet”. Where the companions of the holy prophet used to assemble was called “Zillah” or “Suffa”, meaning

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39 M.Y. Tamizi: Sufi Movement in Eastern India, p-2, delhi 1982,
40 The Ency. of Religion and Ethic, p-373.
41 M.Y. Tamizi, op. cit. p-2
42 M.Y. Tamizi: Sufi Movement in Eastern India, p-2.3
43 Ibid - p-3
44 Yusuf Hussain, Medieval Indian Culture, p-33, Delhi, 1957
a raised place. Generally they were Suf (wool), hence they came to be known as Ahl-I-Sufia or Ashab-I-Suffa. Numerous devotees who attended the congregation of the most selected faithfuls, received special interpretation of some verses of the Quran in which the first four caliphs were included. It is said that it was due to the depth and sharp faculty of intellect that Hazrat Ali showed in grasping the Quranic contents that the holy prophet said “I am the city of learning and Ali is its door.” Thus the scholars trace the origin of Sufism from the Ahle-Suffa and particularly Ali on this very ground. The mystics of Islam of the first two centuries of the Higra were ascetics, who laid great stress on the principles of repentance (Touba) and trust in God (Tawakkul) their contemplation remained confirmed within the limits of the Quaran and the practice of the prophet 45.

Sufism is the form which mysticism has taken in Islam. It is not so much a set of doctrines as it is a mode of thinking and feeling in the religious domain 46.

According to T.C.Rastogi, ‘Sufi’ comes from the word suf. or wool because most of the early ascetics and the succeeding Sufis were undyed woolen mantles of a coarse quality 47. Again some contend that the word ‘Sufi’ is derived from Safa, meaning purity. There are writers including Thomas Arnold, Alfred Guillame, R.N. Nichoson, J.A. Arberry, who contend that Sufi is derived from the word ‘Sufi’ meaning wool. In their opinion, the pious wearing woollen garments came to be described as ‘Sufis’ 48.

Some other scholars traces its origin by the word ‘Safa’. They say that those who were pious people were called Sufis. Abu Nasr-ul-Sarraj, the auother of Arabic treatise on sufism, declares that in this opinion the word Sufi is derived from ‘Sufi’ (wool) 49.

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45 M.Y. Tamizi: Sufi Movement in Eastern India, p- 3
46 Philiph. K. Hilli, History of the Arabs, pp-432, 433
47 T.C. Rastogi, Islamic mysticism: Sufism, pp- 1,2, Delhi, 1982
48 M.P. Srivastave, Society and Cultire in medieval India, p- 19,Allahabad, 1975
49 Ibid. p- 20
Dr. Tarachand says, "Sufism was a religion of intense devotion. Love was its passion, poetry, song and dance its worship and passing away in God its ideal.

Sufism was a natural development in Islam, owing little to non-Muslim sources, though receiving radiations from the ascetical mystical life and thought of eastern Christianity. The outcome was an Islamic mysticism following distinctive Islamic lines of development\textsuperscript{50}. During the early period, Sufism was a natural expression of personal religion which asserted a person's right to pursue a life of contemplation, seeking contact with the source of being and reality, over against institutionalized religion based on authority, a one way master-slave relationship, with its emphasis upon ritual observance and a logistic morality, where the spirit of Quranic piety has flowed into the lives and modes of expression, as in the form of recollection (dhikir) of early devotees and ascetics were reflected. Thus Sufism was a natural development out of this tendencies manifest in early Islam and it continued to stress them as an essential aspect of the way\textsuperscript{51}.

Subsequently, a vast and elaborated mystical system was formed which whatever it may owe to neo-platonism, Gnosticism, Christian mysticism or other system. We may truly regard, as did the Sufis themselves, as the inner doctrine of Islam, the mystery of the Quran\textsuperscript{52}.

Sufi teaching and practices were diffused throughout the Islamic world, through the growth of particular ways which were disseminated among the people through the medium of religious orders, and as a religious movement displayed many aspects. But gradually the system of religious practices was turned into institutionalised and people started coming to the Sufi Saints for spiritual guidance. Thus the relationship between the master and disciple developed. It was natural to accept the authority and guidance of those who had traversed the stages (maqamat) of the Sufi path. Master of the way say that "every man has inherent within him the possibility for release from self and Union with God, but this is learnt and

\textsuperscript{50} T.S.Trimingham, \textit{Sufi Orders in Islam}, p.- 2
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid ; p- 2
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid ; p.- 3
dormant and cannot be released except with certain illuminates gifted by God, without guidance from a leader.\(^{53}\)

Though the beginning of the mystic trends imbibe with the zeal of self purification of human soul, gradually, it had changed its mode into institutionalized to purify other’s soul also. Thus the dominion of the missionary activities expanded worldwide. Usually the Sufi Saints have been individuals endowed with piety and religious zeal, frequently man of learning, who through their own personal interest in the spread of Islam and inspired with a “Divine Call” have been contact to wander from place to place and gather disciples\(^{54}\) to increase the follower of the Creator.

Although the system originated and flourished initially in the Islamic world, it has spread over to many parts of the world including the Indian subcontinent, by the beginning of the eleventh century A.D. There was a large influx of Sufi Saints into India who had migrated from various parts of the Islamic world. Initially they flourished mainly in the North western part of India where they were engaged in spreading Islam or, in other words, the Sufi tarika (way of life) widely spreaded among the masses\(^{55}\). One of the earliest Sufi Saints of the period about whom records are available was Sheikh Ismail, who came to Lahore about the year 1005 A.D. He belonged to the Bukhara Sayyids, and was distinguished both for his secular and religious learning. It is said that crowds blocked to listen to his sermons and that even any unbelievers come into personal contact with him could not come back without being converted to the faith of Islam.

The next Sufi Saint, on whom information is available was ‘Abdullah’ from Yemen, began his work of preaching in Gujrat about the year 1067 A.D\(^{56}\). In the twelfth century we meet with the names of Nur-Ud-Din, Nur Satagar sayyid Jalal Uddin of Bukhara etc. But with the advent of Khawajah Muin-Ud-Din chisti of Ajmeer during the thirteenth century, the very spirit of Sufism became popular in India. Perhaps he was the most famous Muslim missionary worker of India. Khawaja Muin-Uddin Chisti, a

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\(^{53}\) T.S. Trimingham, : Sufi Orders in Islam, p- 3
\(^{54}\) Titus Murray, : Indian Islam, A Religious History of Islam in India, p- 42
native of sistan, a eastern place of Persia, is said to have received his missionary call to India while on a pilgrimage to Medina. The prophet came to him in a dream and said to him. The Almighty has entrusted the country of India to thee, go there and settle in Ajmeer. By Gods help the faith of Islam shall, through thy piety and that of thy flowers, be spread in that land: according to the account, be obeyed the call and came to Ajmeer. Little by little Muin-Ud-Din attracted to himself a body of disciples, whom he had won over from infidelity by his teachings. His fame as a teacher became so well known abroad that Hindus are said to have come to him in great numbers and that many of them were induced to embrace Islam. He died in Ajmeer in 1236 A.D.\(^57\), where a tomb was erected by his disciples and still today people from all over India and world as well to visit the place every year to pay homage to the holy soul of the Saint. Muin-Ud-Din chisti left behind him a long line of spiritual successors, almost equally celebrated. Shaikh Farid Uddin Shakarganj (dt. 1269 A.D.) and Khawaja Qutub-Ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (dt. 1235) became very prominent among his spiritual successors\(^58\). Shaikh Nizamud-Din-Awliya of Delhi (1238-1325 A.D.), who was equally distinguished for his piety and learning also belong to this Silsilah (order). These Sufi saints had considerable influence on the masses as well as the nobles\(^59\).

Generally it is seen that Muslim missionaries in India have followed the footsteps of the conquering armies, while at the time of their wander for the cause of Islam. But always this was not happened because ample examples are there to prove that Sufi Saints had travelled many such places which were not conquered by the soldiers, but in regards of Bengal, Bihar and other eastern provinces including Assam the case is somewhat particular, because here in these provinces the Sufistic wave are seen only after the occupation of the area by Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khiliji at the close

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\(^{56}\) Nizam-Ul-Ghani Khan, *Madhahih-ul-Islam*, p- 272/also see Murry Titus, p- 43

\(^{57}\) Murry Titus, *Indian Islam*, p- 44


of the twelfth century A.D., when a Muslim Kingdom was founded with its headquarters at Gaur, the Sufi Saints or the missionaries found freedom for the exercise of their zeal under the protection of these Muslim sovereigns and as a result of certain social and religious causes. They were eminently successful, in establishing their dargahs here and there. In Eastern Bengal, they did not confine themselves to the cities and centre of the Govt. as it is largely seen in Northern India.

But in the eastern Bengal (and in the Western part of Assam), we find it mostly in the villages; and Judging from the manners and customs of the followers of the prophet, their physical appearances, and the caste distinction which they still retain, it seems clear that these converts were restricted from the original inhabitants of the Soil.

Infact, in this part of India, Hinduism was not merely so well organised and consolidated as in the northern, western and Southern part of the country. The inhabitants were under the influence of a crude form of Buddhism; and despised as they were by their proud Aryan rulers, who held them in disdain, they apparently welcomed the Muslim missionaries gladly.

The following statement of W.W. Hunter would seem to be quite a fair interpretation of the response made by the people of Eastern Bengal to the work of the Muslim missionaries.

"To these poor people, fishermen, hunters, pirates and low caste tillers of the soil, Islam as a revelation from on high. It was the creed of the ruling race; its missionaries were man of zeal who brought the Gospel of the Unity of men in his sight to a despised and neglected population."

Missionary efforts in Bengal and Assam as well, are attested by the graves and shrines of Sufi mystics, who are credited with having been zealous for the spread of their faith. One of the earliest of these belonged to the thirteenth century, Shaikh Jalal Uddin tabrizi, who is said to have visited Assam and Bengal and died there in 1244. A.D.

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60 Sir H. H. Resley ; The Tribes of Bengal, p- 282
61 Murry Titus ; Indian Islam, A Religious History of Islam in India, p- 45
62 T.R. Arnold ; The Preaching of Islam, p- 279
63 H. Blochman ; J.A.S.B. vol. XLII. pp- 266, 288
But Dr. Enamul Haq has given a contradictory view that the first Sufis who came to Bengal were Shah Sultan Rumi who arrived in Mymensingh in 1053 A.D. and Baba Adam arrived in Bikrampur in Decca in 1119 A.D. It is said that a certain koch king accepted Islam, at the hands of Shah Sultan Rumi and donated a village to him. Infact it would be unhistorical to study Sufism in Assam, Isolating it from the northern or north western part of India, because during the early stage, most of the Sufi Saints who were preaching the Sufi tariqa (way of life) in Bengal were either the Khalifahs (deputy) or the murids (disciples) of the north Indian Murshids (Spiritual guide). However it should not be regarded as an example of one way traffic, as it would be shown later on that many celebrated Sufi Saints of Bengal used to sent their Khalifahs to different parts of the subcontinent including Assam as well as Kamrupa, with a view to spreading the Sufi tariqa among the masses.

The Sufi missionaries imbued with the verses of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) "spread whatever you have heard from me to others" adopted their mission in life to spread the holy teachings to the mankind everywhere in the globe. The land of the medieval Assam also did not remain far behind from the pious mission of the Sufi Saints, who along with other parts of India, entered into Assam and found a very congenial atmosphere for their growth. Mohd. Yahiya in his doctorial thesis entitled. "Sufis in Northern India" remarks that this part of the country had always been a fertile soil for the Sufis and preachers of different religions and its valley have proved to be the appropriate place for their religious devotion, mystics practices and prayer.

Even Ibn Batuta who had travelled Kamrupa during the middle of thirteenth century had the privilege of meeting Shah Jalal Mujarrad, one Sufi Saint of that time in Assam.

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65 Bengal District Gazetteers, Mymensingh, 1917, p. 152.
66 Bengal District Gazetteers, Mymensingh, 1917, p. 152
67 M.Y. Tamizi; Sufi Movement in Eastern India, p-1 (Introduction)
68 Ibn-Batuta ; Rehla (Arabic Text) Beirut 1968, pp. 601, 604, Swargadeva Rajesvar Singh by S.K. Bhuyan p- 173 (See chapter Asamiya Muslim)
Thus from the beginning of the thirteenth century till date Sufism has been playing a vital role not only the Socio-cultural life of the people but also to the pages of History of Assam.

ADVENT OF ISLAM IN ASSAM

Assam became a museum of races in the ancient part as it is situated on one of the great migration routes of mankind. For geographical reasons, one of the channels of her communication with the rest of India has been through the Brahmaputra and Ganges and the land routes. Therefore, migration of the outsiders was a very common phenomena to the history of Brahmaputra valley of Assam from time immemorial. But the process of racial migration of the earlier stages was very much slow. But the beginning of the thirteenth century was a turning point in this regard, when Assam witnessed two waves of invasions, the Muslim invasion in 1205-06 A.D. from the west and the Ahom, invasion from the East in 1228 A.D. and ultimately the later had come out successful in establishing their political supremacy and ruled over Assam for a long period of Six hundred years. The Muslims, though could not establish politically over the region, continued their forceful interactions and rooted gradually throughout the whole course of time.

The entrance, growth and settlement of the Muslims in Assam was the result of gradual and continuous process of invasions conversions through peaceful penetration infiltration and migration.

It is a known fact that Muhammad Ibn-Bakhtiyar Khiliji who had entered into Assam, driving an expedition to Tibet in 1205-06, was accompanied by one Ali Mech, the first converted Muslim in the western part of Kamrupa. This shows that with the first political contact of Assam with Muhammadan powers, the Islamic faith found its way into the land.

70. Ibid. - p- 40
It is after the defeat of Muhammad Ibn-Bakhtiyar Khiliji in the hand of the ‘Rae of Kamrupa’ as well as the Kamrupa King Vallevadeva (1200-1228 A.D.) captured a good number of Muslim soldiers became war captives with whom the Kamrupa king paid due hospitality, appointed them according to their choice and experience, married them to local women and managed for their permanent settlement. Thus with the Muslim invasions, the gateway for the Muslim settlement in Kamrupa was opened which received deep momentum in course of time.

Moreover, the Business personals, spiritual Saints and their Companions had migrated and got their settlement on the Soil of Assam. It is also a known fact that even, the Ahom Kings had invited the Muslim experts of different professions and encouraged and managed for their permanent settlement. Beyond this, more vividly, during the British period, mass migration from erstwhile Bengal and other parts of British India were encouraged, of course for their colonial interest, which increased Muslim settlement in the country enormously.

- Ali Mech, a chief of the local Mech tribe, who accepted Islam from Khiliji and became his guide towards Eastern invasion. This was perhaps the earliest instance of proselytisation which synchronised with their appearance on the border of Assam.
- Some historians try to identify the king as Prithu. But the reality is still a matter of fresh research.

Thus one of the conspicuous result of approximately four hundred and seventy five years of war between the Muslim powers of India and the rulers of Assam, and around one hundred and twenty five years under the British dominion was the period of gradual growth of the Muslim population in the country, and this appears to have been effected mainly through slow infiltration and large scale migration of the Muslim into the

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73 Eliot and Dowson : The History of India as told by its own Historian, Vol. 1, pp. 305, 314.
Swargadeva Rajeswar Singha by S.K.Bhuyan, p. 173
Brahmaputra valley of Assam. It is of course true that conversions to Islam in Assam began with the adoption of the faith by a native chieftain, from Muhammad-Ibn-Bakhtiyar Khiliji, as early as 1205-06 A.D. Thus the process of conversion also contributed to the increasing number of Muslim population in Assam.

A regular and systematic process of Muslim infiltration into the country, however, seems to have commenced from the reign of Niladhawja’s successor, Chakradhwaja, who having fought a prolonged war with the invading army of Gauda Sultan Barbak Shah in Kamata, finally sued for peace and adopted the Islamic faith. During the war of Hussain Shah with Nilambar, who followed chakradhwaja and after the conquest of the great part of Kamata and the Kamrupa region by the former, the infiltration of Muslims continued, with some what growing intensity till the Ahom King Suhungmung wrested back these regions from the possession of Gauda in the third decade of Sixteenth century. It was actually during this period of Muslim occupation of the Kamrupa and Goalpara region and particularly after the creation of the colony of the Afgan Warriors in Hajo by Hussain Shah, that a considerably large number of Muslims could find an opportunity for the first time to settle in the Kamrupa and Goalpara districts permanently.

After about a century of this settlement another large horde of Muslim warriors was rehabilitated in Kamrupa by Mukarram Khan, the Mughal Governor of Koch-Hajo, immigration might have occurred when Laluk Barphukan surrendered Kamrupa to the Mughals in 1679 A.D. in expectation of their help to establish himself as the King of Assam.

Even after the Ahoms had recovered the entire territory of Western Kamrupa upto the river Karotoya, a substantial section of those Muslim settlers in these two districts appears to have stayed these in

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75 Ibid: p. 130, Medieval Assamese Society (1228-1826 A.D.) by S. Rajguru, p. 79
76 M.K. Saikia: Assam Muslim Relation and its cultural Significance, p. 132
77 S.K. Bhuyan: Swargadeva Rajeswar Singha, p. 175.
harmony with the indigenous people and thus finally composed the pith of Muslim population of the Country.\(^\text{78}\)

During the reign of Suhungmung the Muslim war prisoners brought by the forces of the Ahom King were the earliest groups of Muslim settlers in the eastern Brahmaputra valley and they subsequently came to be known as the Mariyas.\(^\text{79}\)

In fact the second phase of Muslim infiltration into the western part of Assam began with the Koch-Mughal alliance and it seemed to have reached its highest limit during the Mughal rule in the Koch-Hajo region (1613-1667 A.D)\(^\text{80}\). The frequent references of Guwahati and Hajo in the persian chronicles and Assam Buranjees, about the Ahom-Mughal relations which began from 1613 A.D. indicate that these two places became important centres of military, civil, commercial and cultural activities of the Muslim in North-Eastern India after the annexation of Koch-Hajo by the Mughals.

It therefore, seems possible that a large number of Muslims of different vocations might freely more to this region and settle there permanently from time to time. Apart from the war prisoners, the Ahom King are said to have imported many skilful Muslim artisans whenever possible, from the Mughal territory and employed them as masons, engravers, spinners and as workers in the state arsenals.\(^\text{81}\)

Thus it appears to be certain that the wars and conflicts of the Ahoms with the Mughals during the whole period helped the dispersal of the Muslim element of population from the Western part of Assam to its eastern region in a steady and regulated manner. But after the Ahom conquest of the whole of Kamrupa district and the eastern part of the Goalpara district up to the river Mana, those Muslims who had already settled in the region permanently, became Ahom subjects and therefore, their movements being

\(^{78}\) M.K. Saikia, \textit{Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance}, p-132

\(^{79}\) S.K. Bhuyan, \textit{Atan Buragohain and his times}, p-9.

\(^{80}\) Ibid : p-133.

unrestricted, they might have gradually spreaded over the entire eastern region of Brahmaputra valley\textsuperscript{82}.

Thus the history of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Muslim infiltration were increasing rapidly due to the anomalies happened in Assam as a result of the Mowamariya rebellion and the Burmese invasion. It was during this period that the largest number of Muslims came and settled in Kamrupa. This migration seems to have continued even after the country was finally annexed to British India. The census of the population of the Kamrupa district, taken some time before 1854 A.D. shows that there were 23.490\textsuperscript{83} Musalmans in the district, which increased upto 45, 823 in the census report of 1872, where as the same census of 1872 A.D\textsuperscript{84} shows the total Muslim population in the Six district of Assam valley as 1, 78, 109 settlement during the Ahom rule in Assam.

These early Muslim settlers opted for the path of total assimilation with the indigenous non Muslim population. they turn themselves into enriched the local language, dress, food habits, style of living etc. In this phase the relation between Muslim and non-Muslim in Assam was governed by the principle of mutual “Give and take” on the basis of unhindered assimilation to the best limit permitted by the prevailing objective situations. It was during this period that the most of the contributions of the Islamic civilization were made towards enriching Assamese culture, which emerged later on.\textsuperscript{85}

A study of the 120 years of British colonial rule in Assam will reveal that they opened the doors of Assam to the people of other provinces of India to suit their own colonial interest. It is a well known fact that the Mowamoriya peasant Rebellion in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the Burmese invasion in the first quarter of nineteenth century had left Assam at almost half of her natural population. Diseases like Kala Azar had

\textsuperscript{82} M.K. Saikia, Assam Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, pp- 134, 135.
\textsuperscript{83} W. Robinson, Descriptive Account of Assam, p- 282
\textsuperscript{84} H. Beverly, Report on census of Bengal, 1872 (Chapter on Assam)
\textsuperscript{85} Udayaditya Bharali, Forward in Assam Muslims fallacy and fallout by M.A. Rahman-1999, p- v, Swargadeva Rajeswar Singh by S.K. Bhuyan, p- 183.
also swept away a large number of people during the early period of colonial rule.  

In this way the natural growth of population in Assam was retarded. As a result miles after miles of the region remained uncultivated and doon became covered with deep forest jungles infested with wild beasts. As the Cultivable land was much more in proportion to the inhabitants; and as the govt. did not want to be deprived of the land revenue from these lands. The British administration seemed to have encouraged large scale migration into Assam.  

In Assam, even the process of migration during British period may be divided into two phases, i.e. from 1826 to 1905 and from 1905 to 1947. In the first phase, mainly three classes of people come to Assam. They were tea plantation labourers, Amolas or Office employees from Sylhet, Decca, Mymansingh, Rangpur and other districts of Bengal, and the Merchants and Tradesmen from Rajesthan and Bengal. They mostly, constituted a floating population in the tea plantation area and urban centres. In the second phase, beginning from 1905/06, the Muslim peasants from East Bengal (Present Bangladesh) started settling in rural areas of Assam.  

Thus during the whole course of period beginning from the thirteenth century till the period of the British dominion, the emergence, migration, mobilization, conversion and settlement of the Muslims on the soil of the region (particularly Brahmaputra valley of Assam) was a very common factor, who have been found as deeply spreaded and rooted in the country, that at present they have formed one-fourth-1/4 portion of her total population. Thus the Muslims of Assam have a very long history of more than twelve hundred years.

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86 Hari Sankar Srivastava, *History of the India Fanine (1858-1918)*, New Delhi, 1961-p. 48
87 Alaka Sarmah, *Immigration and Assam Politics*, p. 3
SUFISM IN NORTHERN INDIA

Islam quickly spread in many parts of the world and the Islamic empire included in its orbit men of various tribes and nationalities. It spread in Western Asia, Central Asia, Africa, Spain, Indian sub continent and other parts of the world. It is sometimes supposed that the spread of Islam in India was due to force employed by the conquerors. This view is not correct for there are no instances in history of wholesale persecutions of non-Muslims. As Sir, T. Arnold writes it is not in the cruelties of the persecutor or the fury of the fanatic that we shall look for the evidence of the missionary spirit of Islam any more than in the exploits of that mythical personage the Muslim warrior with sword in one hand and Quran on the others but in the quiet, unobtrusive labours of the preachers and the trader who have carried their faith into every quarter of the globe.  

The earliest Muslim who came to India were traders who reached the coast of Malabber attracted by the profit of trade. The tolerant policy pursued by the Hindu Rajas both on the eastern and western Coasts facilitated their task. The Zamorin of Calicut is said to have deliberately encouraged the lower castes to embrace Islam in order to have Sufficient Sailors to man his ships. The preacher of the faith re-enforced the traders and did much to spread his belief. After the invasion of Mahmmad of Ghazni quite a stream of Muslim missionary passed into India. Nur Uddin known as Nur Satagar came to Gujrat during the reign of Siddharja (1094-1193) and converted to Islam such castes as the koris, kunbis and karwars. In the thirteenth century, Sayyid Jalal Uddin of Bokhara (1190-1291). Settled in Uccha and sind and succeeded in gaining many converts. The most famous of all was Shaikh Moin Uddin chisti of Ajmer fame whose influence spread over a wide area in Rajputana and other parts of India. The Sufi saints of Islam lived among the people and attracted by their piety and spiritually many

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88 A.K. Das, Assam's Agony-A- Socio-Economic and political Analysis, New Delhi, 1980- p. 25
89 Iswari Prassad ; A Short History of Muslim Rule in India, pp- 13-14 Revised edition Allahabad 1965.
Hindus also became their disciples. The pantheistic doctrines of the Sufi mystics appealed much to the Indian mind and they soon gathered a large following around them. The most famous order was the chistiya which included such men as Moin Uddin Chisti, Farid Uddin Shakkar ganj of Pakpatan. Nizam Uddin Auliya of Delhi and Nazir uddin Chiragh. Delhi and Shaikh Salem chisti of Sikari. These saints exercised a profound influence on the state and society of their time and their teachings were appreciated by Hindus and Muslims alike. The other notable Orders were the Suhrawardhi, the Sattari, the Qadiri and the Nagshabandi which tried to spread the light of the faith among the people in whose midst they lived. Great success was achieved by Sufi Saints in Bengal but in Northern India Orthodox Brahmanism made the progress of Islamic missionary activities slow and difficult. To the down-trodden of Hindu Society in Bengal, Islam came as a message of hope and deliverance from the tyranny of the higher castes.

The simplicity of the Muslim creed was another cause of the success of Sufism. Islam makes no great intellectual demand upon the believer; it has no elaborate ritual the practice of which is in the hands of a recognised class of priests. The five duties enjoyed upon all Muslims by the prophet constitute a bond of unity which keeps them together and makes them feel as brethren. A person embracing Islam enters a brotherhood which knows no distinction. Daily contact with Muslims must have brought about a change in outlook and perhaps a great many found no difficulty in changing their religion. It is quite true that there causes operated to spread the faith of Islam or Sufism in India but it would be wrong to exclude altogether the influence of the political power and the love of gain and advancement so common to man. When the Muslim power was established in the Country, it was natural for people to seek its patronage and those who aspired to it were greatly influenced by Muslim ideas and beliefs. Love of position and office.

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90 Iswari Prasad: A Short History of Muslim Rule in India, pp. 13-14 Revised edition Allahabad 1965, he describes, how Nur Uddin Satagor came to Gujarat during the reign of Sidda Raja (1094-1145) and converted to Islam such caste as the Konies, Kanhis and Karwar; Elliot and Dowson History of India, vol. II, p. 154
91 Tara Chand: Influence of Islam and India Culture- p. 34
must have included some of the most talented man to embrace Islam and to shed their old beliefs and practices. The organisation of Hindu Society made it impossible for many of its members to rise in the social scale. These found a ready welcome in Islam which permits the sweeper and the prince to worship together without any distinction of rank and wealth. The most powerful attraction of Islam in India has been its brotherhood which recognises the equality of all its members. As Arnold rightly observes, it is this absence of class prejudice which constitutes the real strength of Islam in India and enables it to win so many converts from Hinduism.  

Sufis and Darvishes of Arabia, Syria, Samarqand and Bhukkrak came to India in the early period of Muslim rule (1000 A.D. to 1150 A.D.). Shaikh Ismail of Bukhara, well versed in theology at Lahor in about 1005 A.D. Next came Syed Nasir Shah (964-103 A.D.). He travelled through Arabia, Persia and parts of North India, entered the Deccan and finally settled in Trichinopoly. In 1671 A.D. Shah Sultan Rumis name appears in the Persian documents which revealed that the Saint, with his spiritual guide, Syed Shah Surkh Khul Awlia, arrived at Madanpur in Netrea Kona Sub Division of Mymensingh district in Bangladesh. The Koch King of the region tried to poison him in 1053 A.D., but the effort failed. The Raja having been influenced by the Saints’ wonderful miraculous power embraced Islam and gave out of a whole village to the revered memory of the Saint for the propagation of Islam.  

A Sufi of Yemen, Hazrat Shaikh Abdullah came to India and preached Islam in Gujrat and Comby. This Saint belonged to the Ismailia sect of Islam. Shaikh Hussain Zanjani from Azrabaiajan came to India and settled at Lahore. According to *Fawaid-ul-Fuad* Shaikh Nizamud-Din Awlia describes that Hassan Zanjani and Ali Hujwiri both are Khalifas of same pir (i.e., Shaikh Abul Hassan Ali Hadrami) Ali Hujwiri came to Lahore.

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according to his pirs' advice, but when he entered Lahore he saw only the funeral procession of Hussain Zanjani. 97

Then we come to the most celebrated Saints, Ba’ Ali Hujwiri. (d. 465 A.H.) better known as Data Ganj Bakhsh who settled at Lahore, (d. 1072 A.D.). His full name was Makhdum Sayyed Ali Al Jullabi at Hujwiri (d. 1072 A.D.). His learned work Kashful Mahjub comprising the life of the Sufi Saints, teachings, Rituails and Sufi terminologies, is the pioneer work on Sufism in Persian ever written in India. His shrine at Lahore is the centre for thousands of visitors and devotees from far and distant land. 98

During the reign of Siddh Raja (1094-1143 A.D.) there flourished another Saint Nurud-Din Ismail Nur satagarh, who came to Gujrat from Persia. It is said about him that he had striking divine power and missionary zeal and brought many to the fold of Islam. 99

We find from the year 1150 to 1400 A.D. regular activities of the Sufis in India. The most prominent and celebrated saint, Khaja Moin Uddin Chisti (d. 1236 A.D.) was for some time at Lahore, where he visited the shrine of Ali Hujawiri, Khowaja Usman Harani (d. 1220 A.D.) who lived at Haran at Nishapur. He visited Persia, Iraq, Mecca and Medina and met Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani (d. 1078-1166 A.D.) Khawaja Kutub Uddin Bakhtiyar Kaki (1142-1236 A.D ) and Sheikh Sihabuddin Shurawardi (1145-1234 A.D.). He came to India in the bigining of the year 1193 A.D. and settled at Ajmer 100. Khawaja Qutubud-Din Bakhtiar Kaki was the spiritual vicegerent (Khalifa) of Khawaja Ajmer 101. He came from Ush near Baghdad having settled at Delhi he enjoyed full sway over North India while in the west Hazrat Nurud-Din upheld the banner of Islam.

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97 Iswari Prassed; A Short History of Muslim Rule in India, pp- 14.
98 M.Y. Tamizi : Sufi Movement in Eastern India, p- 29
99 Ibid- p- 29
100 M.Y. Tamizi : Sufi Movement in Eastern India, p- 30.
101 Iswari Prassed; A Short History of Muslim Rule in India, pp- 14. (Revised edition ) states that Shaikh Moin Uddin chisti of Ajmer fame and impact not only in ajputana but also other parts of India. The Sufi Saint of Islam lived among the people and attracted by their piety and spirituality many Hindus also became their disciples. The pantheistic doctrines of the Sufi mystics appealed much to the Indian mind and they soon gathered a large following around them. 
The contact of Hinduism and Islam in this country has produced far reaching consequences. It has led to a new synthesis of culture and religions. It has influenced the manners, habits and speech of a great many people inhabiting the towns of Northern India.102

Thus from the very beginning of the 13th century to the end of the 14th century, the Sufis of Northern India ruled supreme in religious matters. The light of divine knowledge radiated from Ajodhan (pakpatan), Ajmeer, Lahore and Delhi, with the close of the 15th century A.D. a number of Sufi orders were introduced into Bengal by the Sheikhs at the central seats of Sufism in Northern India.103

SUFISM IN EASTERN INDIA

The beginning of the appearance of Islam in Eastern India dated from the time of Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khiliji (d. 1206 A.D.). Military general named Bakhtiyar Khiliji of Shihab-Ud-Din Muhammad Ghor (dt. 1206 A.D.) led the campaign into Bengal and Bihar and defeated the palas and senas respectively one after another. With the annexation of these eastern States of India, the conquest of North-East India was completed. But the first arrival of Muslims in Kamrupa (Assam) during medieval period the frontier state of the present day India is a very interesting chapter of Indian history. Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khiliji entered Kamrupa in 1198 A.D. with a view to attack China/Tibet, but his army was grounded by the King of Kamrupa, and his march towards China was foiled. Therefore, Bakhtiyar Khiliji was compelled to return to Bengal (Gour) due to unfavourable climate, the spread of peculiar diseases among his soldiers and the strong opposition of the Raja of Kamrupa. Some of his forces were captured by the Raja of Kamrupa, who later on got themselves married and settled here in Assam for ever.104

103 M.Y. Tamizi: Sufi Movement in Eastern India, p- 47
In 1200 A.D. again Gias-Uddin Bahadur Shah invaded Kamrupa but in vain. In 1256-57 A.D. Ekhtiyar-Ud-Din Yuzbek Tughrul Khan conquered it and built a beautiful mosque here in Assam. Taking advantage of the rainy season the Raja of Kamrupa attacked Yuzbek and killed him. Yuzbek's companions were imprisoned but a very few of them successfully managed to escape. The prisoners settled here.

The imprisoned soldiers settled here were entrusted by the Raja with the jobs of their own choice and experience. Sikandar Shah. Sultan of Bengal attacked Kamrupa (Sylhet). He conquered a part of the Kingdom or the whole of Kamrupa, because of the fact that he issued coins from his camp (Arsat-Kamru) in Kamrupa. The Muslim historians give the names of Kamrupa, Kamrud and Kamwaru for Kamrupa. In 1336 A.D. another invasion to Kamrupa was led by Muhammad Shah the son of Tughlaq Shah. but he also became unsuccessful. The famous moorish traveller Ibn-I-Batuta, who visited Kamrupa and had the privilege of meeting Shah Jalal Mujarrad, brought out through his pen the Socio-political and natural condition of the region. The year 1460 A.D. marked a successful invasion of Kamrupa by Shah Ismail Ghazi.

After thirty-eight years of this invasion Sultan Hussain Shah of Gaur annexed Kamrupa and having stayed here for some years, he retired. Turbak invaded Assam in 1532 A.D. Due to unfavourable natural condition and climate, he also was compelled to retreat to Bengal. The middle of the Sixteenth Century saw Kalapher, the commander of Sulaiman Karrani ravaging across the plains of Kamrupa but failed to achieve any permanent result.

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During the reign of Jahangir, the Mughal King, in 1614 A.D. Sayed Hakim the Faujder of Koch Hajo, Abu Bakr and Sattarjít tried to capture Assam, but their endeavour ended in smoke. Abu Bakr and his son Ghiyas Uddin lost their lives in this battle. Ghiyasud-Din, who was a Saint of a high order, was buried at Hajo. Later on he became famous by the name of Ghiyasud-Din Awlia. The Mughal Emperor of Delhi, the Subedar of Bengal and the Raja of Assam granted land for the shrine of this Saint.  

It is recorded that Daniyal Shah the son of Hussain Shah acted as Faujdar in Hajo. But after his death Ghiyasud-Din was appointed to this post. According to some people Ghiyasud-Din Awliya and Faujdar Ghiyasuddin of Hajo were the same person. Moreover Assam also successfully attacked by Allah Yar Khan during the reign of Shah Jahan’s (1628-1658). but according to a treaty signed by Allah Yar Khan and Momai Tamuli Barbarua, the Bar Nadi on the North and Asur Ali on the South was declared as the border between Mughal territories and Assam. 

In 1662 A.D. Mir Jumla led an expedition against, but at first Mir Jumla sent an envoy to the Ahom King demanding Gauhati which had been taken. The King replied that Guwahati was taken possession by Kockes not by the Ahoms directly and hence Koch Behar had to be conquered before Guwahati could be taken. 

Mir Jumla, after overtaking the forts at Jogighopa, Gauhati, Simuluguri and kalianbor, Mir Jumla also occupied Gargaon, and occupied the palace of the Raja. He subsequently fell seriously ill and could travel only by a palanquin, due to the unfavourable climate. Mirjumla at last agreed to make treaty with the Raja. Mirjumla was accompanied in his invasion of Assam by a traveller named Shihabud-Din talish who wrote a detail account of Assam in 1663 A.D., which is called Tarikh-I-Assam or Fathiyut-I-lhabiya.

109 S.K. Bhuyan, Assam Baranji, p- 59
110 S.K. Bhuyan, : Suargodeva Rajeswar Singh, p- 176
111 Ibid- : p- 176
113 E. Gait, : History of Assam, p- 132-134, Calcutta
114 Ibid- : p- 141-144
In 1669-70 A.D. during the reign of Aurangajeb, Raja Ram Singh was appointed General of Bengal, came to Assam with the Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur and other five prominent Sufi Saints.\(^{116}\)

Sufism in Eastern India is a continuation of Sufism in Northern India. The relation between the Sufis of Northern India and those of Bengal and Assam is so close and intimate that they can not be differentiated from one another, especially from the religious point of view. The Sufis of Bengal, Bangladesh and Assam during the period of our study worked on the same line as their counterparts in the Northern India did right up to the close of the fifteenth century A.D. After that some Sufis in Eastern India chalked out their own independent line of development to suit their local needs without altering the basic teachings of Sufism. They popularised the Islamic philosophy in the country within the span of a comparatively short period of time.\(^{117}\)

Even before the expedition led by Bhaktiyar Khiliji into Bengal, the Muslims from Arabia and Persia appear to have visited the coastal land of Bengal with a view to establishing their trade relations with this region. Dr. Enamul Haqq is of the opinion that the Muslim traders gave help to the propagation of Islam during the 8th & 9th Century A.D. He further adds that the Arab merchants had established their settlement in Chattagong during the reign at Mahato yans or Sandhya or Mahat Chandra of Rozang dynasty (788 A.D.- 810 A.D.)\(^{118}\)

The Persian were also not behind the Arabs, in respect of commercial and maritime contact for they had established important colonies of Persian merchants in the contemporary capital town of the provinces of Bengal. In ancient days, Hoogly, Chinsura, Midnapur, Tamralipti, Ganga and Sapatagram, Satgaon were the great important centres of maritime trade and commerce. In this way they attracted large number of travellers and Sufis other than merchants from outside world. The port of Bengal played an important role in strengthening the trade relations

\(^{116}\) S.K. Bhuyan,: *Atan Bhurugohain and His times*, p- 65, Guwahati, 1957.

\(^{117}\) M. Enamul Haqq,: *Indo-Iranica*, vol-II July, 1945, No. 1 p-9

\(^{118}\) M. Enamul Haqq,: *trans- Muslim Bengal sahitya*, p- 253, 1957
between the Arabia and Persia and the people of Bengal. Apart from this it was serving the purpose of a great ship building and refueling centre of the age and occasionally the Arab and Iranian merchant used to visit this area.

In Arabic books on geography and travelling are come accross frequent references to the port of Bengal Subah under different names. As for instances Shihabud-Din Ahmed Ibn Majid in his work “Maviatulikhtesarfi usul Ilmul bahar” cites the name of Bangula as a rich sea-port. In the Thahfatul fahal fi thamhidil asal in places Bengula, besides these works are find such references in Sulaiman’s silsilat-ul-Tawarikh (compiled 851 A.D.). Ibn Khurdabeh Kitab-al-Masalok wal-Mamalik (d. 912 A.D.), Marawwijus Dhanab of al Masudi (d. 956 A.D.), Ajaibul Asfar of Ibn Batuta (d. 1377 A.D.) and Arub-O-Hind Ke Ta’alheqat by Sayed Suleman Nadwi.

Even before the Muslim military invasions, the traditions confirming the arrival of Sufi Saints like Baba Adam Shahid (d- 1119 A.D.), Sultan Rurni (d. 1053 A.D.), Shah Sultan Mah Sawar (date not known) Jalal Uddin Tabrizi (d. 1225 A.D.), Shah Jalal Mujarrad (d. 1346 A.D.), Ghiyasud-Din Awliya and Azan Fakir etc. help us to establish that the Muslim Saints had been present in the region. Again Minhaj Uz Siraj mentions presence of Isfahani merchants in Lakhnawati in 1207 A.D. About the same time another Isfahani Baba Haji is mentioned in the Katwal of the same city. Among the earliest and most eminent personalities, who visited Bengal and settled in Lakhnawati was Qazi Rukunud-Din Samarkandi. Apart from these, we find some archaeological clues too to strengthen this proposition. Some coins, bearing the name of the Abbasid Caliph Harun-ul Rasid and dated 788 A.D., have been found in the excavations at Paharpur in the Rajshahi district.

On the eve of the advent of Muslim soldiers, all such evidences concerning the attachment holy men to the Muslim traders and their subsequent establishment of colonies lead us to conclude that Muslims from

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119 M. Y. Tamizi : Sufi Movement in Eastern India, pp- 45
120 Ibid- p. 45
121 Minhaj-I-Siraj, Tabaqat-I-Nasiri, B.I. Series, pp- 157, 158
the distant lands of Arabia and Persia had visited the region of Eastern India. But for a long time they could not penetrate much inside the territory because the interior was covered with mountains and forests, inhabited by wild tribes. The Muslim maneuverings for their trade and religious zeal thus remained confined to the skirt of the sea-shore in Chittagong and the Arakanese territory. In spite of all these hurdles and impediments they settled there and married local women. Therefore, Arabian descent is traced among the Muslim in some of the coastal lands of Arracan and Chittagong even today.122

After the establishment of the Sufi order or Silsilah (1150-1400 A.D.), continuous Sufi activity in Eastern India can be traced from the closing of the thirteenth century. Hence forward eminent Sufi Saints having outstanding personality began to come to India one after another almost in quick succession. These Saints worked vigorously and their work was not in vain. As a result of their work, hearty response from all quarters of India came, and the saints soon found them amidst a large number of disciples within a few centuries. The Sufi Saints, their disciples and the disciples of their disciples, were able to capture the imagination of large masses of people, who voluntarily accepted the new faith and propagated new ideas. In this way through the missionary activities both Indian and non-Indian Saints, Sufism was established in this country on a firm footing.123

During the time of Aliwardi Khan, the ancient Bengal came under the Muslim rule by the year 1197-98 and Bengal was passing through social and religious crises. Ibn Batuta who visited this part of the Country at the period regretfully mentions that a land full of riches and intellectual potentiality was in a precarious state. And this land was turned into Paradise within a very short time due to the pious efforts of the Sufis and the enlightened people of the country as well as their liberal teachings and attitudes to the Society and State.124

124 M.Y. Tamizi, Sufi Movement in Eastern India, pp- 46-47
There was a warrior, Saint named Baba Adam Sahid, in East Bengal during the reign of Ballala Sena (d. 1119 A.D.). He fought against the Raja and sacrificed his life in pursuance of his holy mission probably in about 1119 A.D., the year which coincides with the death of the Raja himself. His tomb is a fine specimen of architectural beauty at the village of “Abdullah pur”. The story of his bravery is still current in East Bengal, people from the different places of the Country flock there on the occasion of annual Urs, even today, in perfect devotion admiring his brave adventure.

Like other provinces of India, the Provinces of Bihar had been the fore runner in respect of Sufi activities and preaching of Islam. During the time of Ghouris Bihar was famous for the establishment of monasteries where Saints were the deputies for the propagation of Islam.

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