In the previous chapters the discussion on revenue, judicial and police system of Cachar is made but only a stray reference of them is given about Karimganj. It had shifting frontier in different period of time. Changes in Cachar were not always similar to that of
Karimganj. So, it requires a separate discussion. In the present context that Karimganj has been within Barak Valley as well as had been under the British rule. Some references on land settlement and revenue, judicial and police system prevalent in Karimganj are necessary to have a complete idea about the administration in entire Barak Valley under the British.

An introductory discussion of Karimganj and Badarpur will provide better idea of the place which contributed towards the socio-economic development of the people to a large extent. South East Sylhet district contained one town, Karimganj, the headquarters and 924 villages whereas Silchar had 809 villages. The population of
the sub-division raised from 5692 to 384638 souls in 1891 whereas Silchar had 267673. An increased of 7% (410460) can be seen in 1901. The population of Hailakandi in 1891 was 99869. It increased to 112897 in 1901. It was 480265 in 1921. The Northern portion of Karimganj was a level plain, but to the South it was much broken by hills. The Saraspur-Patherkandi ranges projected into the valley from the Lushai-Tippera system. A third range of low hills, which intervened between them, separated the valleys of the Longai and Singla rivers.

Like the rest of Sylhet, Karimganj was densely populated. In spite of the large tracts of waste land in the south, the density in 1901 was 392 persons per square mile.
The cultivation of tea was an important industry. In 1904 there were 35 gardens with 21413 acres under plant. This gave employment to 51 Europeans and 24126 natives. Karimganj was almost invariably in charge of a European magistrate. For administrative purposes it was divided into two thanas of Karimganj and Jaldhub. The demand on account of the land revenue and cesses in 1903-04 was Rs. 224000/-.

Badarpur was situated on the south bank of the river Barak close to the boundary of Cachar.

Karimganj was one of the subdivision of the then district of Sylhet. Till 1886 Sylhet proper was under the operation of the old Bengal regulation and other enactments.
relating to land revenue which were prevalent in the province of Bengal. In Karimganj there were some zamindari settlements in existence though in large areas the Ryotwari settlement was in force. Since the acquisition of permanently settled estates of Karimganj the system of Ryotwari was extended there.

No attempt was made to decentralise the administration of Sylhet till 1860. In that year the question was first mooted. In 1867 the district was subdivided by a notification in the Gazette into four minor units, i.e., Sunamganj, Karimganj, Habiganj and Sadar which non corresponded to North and South Sylhet. Subdivisional establishment was opened at Karimganj in 1877 and a
Karimganj

sheristadar was appointed with Rs. 50 per mensem.5

Really speaking the Karimganj subdivision came into existence as a result of the Decennial settlement of Bengal. Settlements and measurements were undertaken by the British as they did the same work later on in Cachar. Mr Willes, Collector, reported in 1789 that the work of land measurement had been completed. He did not enter into engagements with the Chaudhuris or land revenue collectors. The settlement was made directly with the actual cultivators of the soil. The total area covered by his operations was 2100 square miles. Mr Willes did not, moreover, anticipate as a permanent engagements between
Government and its tenants. Most settlements were made at that time for comparatively short periods, and the Collector probably regarded the one carried out under his directions as a temporary makeshift. He was fully conscious of the imperfections of his work, and for fear last it should give rise to permanent and serious inconvenience, he caused most of the original documents to be destroyed. The only records in the Collector's office which bear Mr Willes's signature are the dual and talukwaris registers. The other papers bearing on the settlement were produced by the Pargana Patwari in 1802, and are either duplicates prepared at the time of settlement or unauthenticated copies of those duplicates.
or possibly, for all we know, the creations of the Patwari's fancy. The *chittas* passport to show the boundary of each estate but these boundaries are often of a vague and useless character, and some of the estates are simply said to be bounded by "hills" or "jungles".

During the Deccennial settlement, the estates which were found in existence were made permanent in 1793. The revenue of such estate was made permanent and the owners of such estate had permanent transferable and heritable rights, subject to the payment of land revenue.

Afterwards it was found that after the creation of permanent estates, a large area of land remained unsettled, which had not been included in Decennial settlement. It soon
became clear that there were extensive tracts of land which had never come within the purview of Mr Willes's perfunctory operations, and in 1802, the Collector, under the orders of the Board of Revenue, directed the patwaris to furnish statements of the unsettled lands. The lands were called *ilam* lands as for their settlement *ilam* or advertisement inviting claimants were issued. In 1807, *Halabadi pattas* were granted for *ilam* lands as well as for *Taufir* that is excess lands in permanently settled estates. *Ilam* lands were first brought under regular settlement in 1836. In 1869 *Halabadi* lands were declared as permanently settled. In 1871, Mr Hamid Bakht Majumdar was placed in charge of settling the *ilam* lands. He
practically re-settled lands previously settled and also newly settled. In November 1876 the ilam settlement rules were finally issued.

The Ryotwari tract of Pratapgarh in the south of Karimganj subdivision, comprising an area of 36 square miles, was originally composed of ilam estates, which were settled with bodies of cultivators in 1875-78. The settlement, however, broke down as the lessees were men of little subsistence, who quarrelled among themselves and a Ryotwari settlement was extended from year to year pending a fresh survey, which were not completed till 1893. Another five years settlement was then made, which expired in 1898, but was extended till the first 1902,
when the tract was settled for 20 years along with the ordinary *ilam* estate.

For settlement, cultivable *ilam* lands were in 14 classes and that of uncultivable lands in 10 classes. The first group included

(1) *Byhit*

(2) *Barondi*

(3) *Dofassal* or two cropped lands,

(4) *Ek-fassal* or single cropped lands,

(5) *Chara*

(6) *Bajor* i.e., betelnut and vine garden

(7) sugarcane,

(8) Orchard,

(9) *Aman* or *Sali* rice growing lands
Karimganj

(10) *Murali* or Paddy

(11) *Bawa* i.e., oil seeds growing lands.

The second group included

(1) Deserted homestead

(2) Cultural fallow

(3) Waste jungle

(4) Fallow

(5) *Haors* i.e., swamps

(6) *Jhil* i.e., marshy lands

(7) *Bil*

(8) River

(9) Tank

(10) Gopat.

At Karimganj there was a collecting office, where the revenue was paid in and accounts
were made up. There were also *Mufassil* collecting officers. Proceedings for the realisation of arrears (which were generally recovered by means of a sale law) were taken at the sub-division. Besides revenue measures the British Government tried to amend judicial service to punish the culprits and give reward to the worthy and honest persons.

In Karimganj subdivision there was a separate judicial service, at the head of which was the District and Session Judge, aided by an Additional District and Session Judge and two Subordinate Judges and a staff of *Munsifs* for the disposal of civil cases. The Deputy Commissioner, the Assistant Commissioner and the Extra Assistant
Commissioners have no civil power and exercised only ordinary Magisterial powers in criminal matters. Police system was also organised.

The Daroga was in charge of the thana. He had to maintain law and order in the area under the jurisdiction. The foundation of the police system was the village Chowkidar. The Chowkidar had to report to the officer in charge of the police station about the crimes of the village which was situated under the jurisdiction of respective police station. All Chowkidars are enlisted under Act VI (BC) of 1870, their number in 1921 was 6553 (including Sylhet, Cachar and Goalpara) of whom 4843 belonged to Sylhet and 580 to Cachar. The cost of the force for the year
was Rs. 357194, the whole amount of which was realised from the villages. So three areas i.e., revenue, judicial and police system witnessed changes at the hands of the British authorities. It is also to be mentioned here that after the sepoy mutiny, the British crown took the reign of administration, but that did not materially affect the character of the administration. From the very beginning of the British rule, there prevailed among the foreign rulers to exploit the Indians by any means and on all occasions and with the passing of time, this developed in a regular practice.
Notes and References


2. Ibid., and B C Allen et al., op. cit., p. 433.

3. Ibid., p. 434.


6. Ibid., pp. 328-29.

7. Ibid., p. 329.

8. Ibid., p. 334.
Theoretically the *ilam* estates were the lands which were included in the Patwari's returns in 1802, but were not settled under *halabadi pattas* prior to 1807 (*ibid.*, p. 332)


10. *ibid.*, p. 52