a) Geographical Extent of Barak Valley:

The present Barak Valley of the state of Assam is a region created by natural boundaries and apportionment caused by the Redcliffe Award that divided the District of Sylhet of Surma Valley of the British period in 1947 following a referendum in Sylhet along with the partition of India. As a matter of fact, modern Barak Valley comprising Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts, bounded by the lofty mountains of North Cachar Hill District on the north, the Angami Naga Hills and Manipur state on the east and the hills of Mizoram and Tripura on the south, is a truncated portion of Surma valley, an administrative unit consisting of the districts of Sylhet and Cachar of the British province of Assam organised in 1874 and as such it is bordered on the west by the greater portion of Surma Valley now forming the Sylhet Division of Bangladesh. It may not be out of place to mention here that the present day Barak Valley, although a truncated portion of Surma Valley of the pre-partition days, is neither a political nor an administrative unit. It is rather a geographical entity containing linguistic and cultural attributes distinctly different from that of Brahmaputra Valley, the other plain of the state of Assam. During the British period, the region had no separate entity as it formed a part Surma Valley comprising two districts of Sylhet and Cachar of the British province of Assam.

The geographical extent of Barak valley comprising three administrative districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj does not coincide with the social boundary of the region which is wider even than that of the Surma
Valley of which the modern Barak Valley would form a part. This can be amply provided with the evidence of the traces of linguistic formation and cultural synthesis developed through ages as a result of stratification of egalitarian egalitarian early societies or the evidences discernible in the annals of history testifying emergence of autonomous political formation in distinct areas within the limit of natural geographical location.

Again, the river system of Valley shows that the main river Barak originates from the Angami Naga Hills, a lofty range forming the northern boundary of Manipur state. Descending from the high mountains to the plain of Jiribam it takes a zigzag course across the Cachar district and a small portion of Hailakandi district to reach Badarpur in Karimganj district. It flows further west and near Bhanga it divides itself into two and the main stream assumes the name of Kushiyara. The Kushiyara enters Bangladesh in downstream touching Karimganj town and flowing for some distance as the boundary between Karimganj district of India and Sylhet district of Bangladesh. At a distance from Karimganj town, Kushiyara is divided into two streams near Bahadurpur. The northern and the first branch called Bibiyana flows for a short distance and takes a new name Kalni and then joins with the Surma near Ajmiriganj on the Habiganj-Mymensing border. The other branch of the Kushiyara gets back the original name of the river, Barak, and after passing by Nabiganj and Habiganj towns meets with the Surma near Markuli. The geo-physical conditions indicate that the Surma originally takes its course from the Khasi Hills and following through Jaintia Pargana it touches Sylhet, Chhatak and Sunamganj towns in west ward stream and then enters Mymensingh near Dhirai after flowing for some distance as boundary between modern Sylhet Division and Mymensingh of Bangladesh. The other branch of Barak that originates near Bhanga flowing northwards meets the original course of Surma in Jaintia pargana by assuming
the name of Surma. The Surma taking the main streams of Barak in its downwards flow takes the name Dhaleswari and flows to the old course of the Brahmaputra near Bhairab bazar. The Brahmaputra merges into Meghna and finally flows to the Bay of Bengal. During its long course of 800 KM, the Barak of Cachar with its different names and branches in downstream receives innumerable tributaries from North Cachar Hills, Mizoram and Tripura. The Surma, on the other hand, receives a good number of tributaries from the Khasi, Jaintla and Barail Hills and ultimately receives the main stream of Barak before merging with Meghna. Thus the river system of the region created by the flows system of the region created by the flows of the Barak and its tributaries and branches connects itself with that of Meghna Valley of the Bengal plain.

Thus the geo-physical formation of Barak Valley shows that it is bounded on three Sides by mountain ridges and the western border is connected with Sylhet division of Bangladesh without any barrier and the river system of both the modern Barak valley and the Sylhet division of Bangladesh connects the whole region with the Meghna Valley of the Bengal Peninsula. Hence, the geographical formation of the Valley clearly indicates that it is the eastern most continuation of the Bengal plain.

The most fascinating feature of the Valley is that it is a small geographical unit populated by about 3 million human beings (2995769 according to 2001 census) of different social strata and economic classes. and, ethnic and cultural identities and linguistic identities who profess different religions. Muslims form about 45% of the total population but they come of Bengali, Manipuri and Hindi speaking linguistic groups. Overwhelming majority of the Muslims are linguistically Bengalees. But teaching and learning of Arabic are common to all linguistic groups of the Muslims for meeting religious obligation.

b) Process of history continued in Barak Valley:
History is a continuous process that starts with human habitation in a locality
or region, whatever the case may be. But there is a period in history of which no written records are available. This period is known as Pre-history. Again the period that follows pre-history is conveniently divided into ancient, medieval and modern. The history of India of which Barak Valley forms a small part, is divided into the above mentioned phases. So, a discussion on the process of the history that continued in Barak Valley through by gone ages cannot be independent of that of India.

It has been rightly observed that “The prehistoric stage of Indian history continued longer in the Eastern Frontier including Assam.” This is exactly the same in case of Barak Valley also as it forms a part of Assam as well as eastern Frontier. The epigraphic evidence indicating history proper of Barak Valley or some part of it are available from the 6th Century A.D. The pre-sixth century history of the Valley is surrounded almost in darkness. Scholars on the basis of references in the epics, some classical literature and in some later literary works attempt to reconstitute the history of that period. But the dates of the epics have not been fixed on certainty. Still more, the theory of later interpolation of the region as Pragjyotisha, Kamarupa in the epics cannot be over ruled. On the basis of a sporadic reference of Surmasa Janapada in the Astadhyayi of Panini V.S. Agarwal identified the janapada with the Surma Valley (Sylhet- Cachar). Panini was living during 7th-6th century B.C. when the Aryan settlement and activities did not reach even Bengal. Possibility of organisation of an Aryanised janapada in the region under review, which forms the eastern most expansion of the Bengal plain when Bengal was even not known to the Aryans, is very remote. It cannot be said on certain that any local political reformation emerged in the region or that the region formed a part of a large political organisation before the 6th century A.D. However, from the traces available among the people and places that the ethnic formation of the valley had originally been made by the Proto Austroloids in remote past They were absorbed by the Indo-Mongoloid in the succesive periods over which the Aryan culture began to spread from the 6th century A.D. if not earlier. This process continued for about 6 centuries that followed.
The ancient most epigraphic evidences about the political formation of Barak Valley are the Nidhanpur Copper plates of Kumar Bhaskar Varman, the king of Kamrupa. These inscriptions were discovered in 1912 in the village Nidhanpur of Panchakhanda Pargana in Beani bazar thana of undivided Karimganj subdivision of pre-partitioned Sylhet district. The inscriptions indicate that a vast region of modern Barak Valley was under Kamrupa during the 6th century A.D.

Hiuen Tsang’s account Si-Yu-Ki is an important document about political structure of Barak Valley of the 7th century AD. According to this account, starting from Samatata enroute to Kamrupa Hiuen Tsang reached Shi-li-Cha-ta-Ta or Srihatta. The way he referred to Shi-li cha-ta-Ta along with Samatata and Kamrupa impressed upon some scholars that Srihatta in the 7th century was an independent kingdom.

Again, the evidence of Tipperah Copper plate Inscription of Lokonatha (650AD) suggests that the Jatinga (North Cachar) and Suvanga (Cachar) areas were under Samanta rulers of Samatata. The literary and numismatic evidences, on the other hand, prove beyond doubt the existence of Harikela state in the valley from the 6th to the 9th century A.D. Again, the epigraphic and other evidences prove that the Tripura Raja performed a sacrifice at a place named Mangalpur situated within the territory of the pre-partitioned Karimganj sub division. Thus in the seventh century A.D. the boundaries of Srihatta, Kamarupa, Samatata, Tripura and Harikela states extended and co-existed in the Barak Valley. This political condition of the valley in all possibility, continued up to the close of the ninth century A.D.

However, the Paschimbhag Copper plate of Maharaja Sri Chandra issued in the 10th century A.D. indicates that the major portions of modern Karimganj and Cachar districts were under the sway of the Chandra rulers of
East Bengal forming the Srihatta Mandala of the Pundra Vardhana bhuki of Chandra rulers. It, on the other way, suggests that the southern part of the valley which now terms the area of Patherkandi and Ratabari Police Stations still remained under the state of the Tripura Kings.

The Bhatera plate inscriptions issued in the 11th century prove beyond doubt that the Srihatta Mandala of the Chandra rulers became an independent state named Srihatta rajya. The Srrhatta rajya flourished upto 12th century and its decline in the same century marked the beginning of the disintegration of Barak valley. Pretty independent or semi independent states or principalities emerged in the valley. Thus Gaur, Laur and Jayantia Kingdoms were formed respectively on the middle, north western and north eastern parts of Sylhet. The Tripura Kingdom was extended to the southern and south eastern parts of Sylhet including modern Karimganj of India and Maulavi Bazar of Bangladesh. Besides, small principalities emerged in different pockets of the region now covered by Karimganj district, on the southern portion of Karimganj which now forms the areas of Patherkandi and Ratabari Police Station a semi independent state, Sonai- Kanchanpur emerged and in course of time it assumed the name of Pratapgarh. On the eastern part of Karimganj, according to tradition, Purharaja of Deorail established his kingdom.

On the eastern region of Barak valley, i.e. in modern Cachar and Hailakandi plains the rule of Tripura rajas was revived after the decline of Srihatta rajya. This political condition continued upto the 16th century when this region was conquered by redoubtable Koch-general Chilarai. The Koch invasion took palce in 1562 A.D. and the sway of the Koch King Naranarayana was extended over the plains of Cachar, Hailakandi and the southern portion of Karimganj. However, the Koch Kingdom over Barak valley did not last long. The Mughal Empire was extended over Karimganj and the plains of
Cachar and Hailakandi went under the sway of Dimasa Kings who were ruling at that time from Maibong.

The Dimasa Kingdom flourished over modern North Cachar Hills, Cachar and some portions of Hailakandi upto 1832 when it was annexed by the British. On the annexation of the Kachari Kingdom, it was formed into a district with head quarters at Silchar and was placed in charge of a Superintendent who was subordinate to the Commissioner of Assam. In 1836 it was transferred to the Dhaka division and the title of the Officer in charge was subsequently changed into Deputy Commissioner.

With the arrival of Shah Jalal in the early fourteenth century Sylhet including the major portion of modern Karimganj went under the sway of the Delhi Sultanate forming an unit of the administration of the Bengal Sultan. It was followed by the Mughal rule when Sylhet including Karimganj formed a Sarkar of Bangla Subah of the Mughal Empire. During the last phase of the Mughal rule when Bengal was under the nominal suzerainty of Delhi, Sylhet was a Chakla, an unit of revenue administration of the Nowab of Bengal. This position of Sylhet including Karimganj continued upto 1765 when the Dewani of Bengal was assumed by the East India Company. With the assumption of the Dewani of Bengal, the British administration made Sylhet a district under the Bengal Presidency. In 1874, both the districts of Sylhet and Cachar were wrested from Bengal and included in the newly organised province of Assam under a Chief Commissioner. But these two districts constituted a separate entity named Surma Valley and placed under the Commissioner of Surma Valley and Hills of Assam. For convenience of administration Sylhet district was sub-divided into some sub-divisions and in 1878 Karimganj subdivision was created with its headquarters at Karimganj with an area of which modern Karimganj district formed a part.
The Surma Valley entity of Sylhet and Cachar districts continued up to 1947. This year India got independence but with a partition into two sovereign countries, India and Pakistan. The position of Cachar was unaltered and remained in India, but the major portion of Sylhet went to Pakistan following a referendum on the basis of the recommendation of the Boundary Commission that followed the referendum, a portion containing areas covered by three thanas and half of the then Karimganj subdivision was retained in India. This portion of the prepartitioned Karimganj sub-division was included with Cachar district as fourth sub-division retaining its original name. Needless to say that the district of Cachar had three subdivisions, viz., Silchar, Hailakandi and North Cachar at the time of independence. However in 1952, North Cachar was separated from Cachar and the district was reorganised with remaining three sub-divisions. In 1983 Karimganj Subdivision was transformed into a separate district. Again, in 1990, Hallakandl was separated from Cachar and a district of the same name was organised. The three districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj came into existence and assumed a common name ‘Barak Valley’.

From the above discussion it is clear that the historical process continued in Barak Valley witnessed three distinct phases. The early phase continued up to the thirteenth century is marked by the rises and falls of different local and regional states. From the 13th to the early 19th century the all Indian historical process and local or regional process continued simultaneously. But since the early nineteenth century a common historical process of all India character has been continuing all over the valley.

(c) Advent of Islam in Barak Valley:
As it has already been mentioned, Barak Valley is a truncated portion of Surma Valley of the British period and during medieval period, modern Karimganj
district being a part of Sylhet was under the Muslim rule, whereas modern Cachar and Hailakandi, the two other districts of the valley were under Tripura and Dimasa rules in succession. In other words, Cachar, Hailakandi never constituted a part of the Delhi Sultanate or the Mughal empire. But though Barak Valley was politically divided during the whole of medieval period, the process of cultural development continued almost in a uniform pattern over the whole valley through ages.

It is an established fact that Cachar (Cachar and Hailakandi) is the cultural expansion of Sylhet. For this reason the story of advent of Islam in the Valley goes with the story of advent of Islam in Sylhet. As a matter fact, in the process of development of Islam in the region, Sylhet proper palyed the role of epicentre and modern Karimganj, Cachar and Haliakandl its peripheries. So, the history of advent of Islam in Barak Valley cannot be reconstituted without referring to that of Sylhet.

The names of a great saint Shah Jalal and his disciples and companions are connected with the Muslim conquest of Sylhet and consequently with the advent of Islahi in the region. But the evidences of Muslims contact with the region even before the conquest are not lacking. Arab traders in course of their trading activities used to visit the coasts and ports of India and Bengal, and through trade had also contact with the hilly regions of Bengal, Kamrup and Assam. In fact, the Arab writers from Alberuni to Ibn Batuta refer Sylhet as a part of kamru, Kamrud or Kamrupa. This fact is also corroborated by the legend of Burhan-ud-din, a resident of the Kingdom of Gour Gobinda, connected with the Muslim invasion of Sylhet. S. K. Chatterji rightly observes that Sylhet “was brought under the power of the Muslim Sultan of Bengal in 1303 A. D. Prior to that there was considerable penetration of Sylhet by Musiim preachers from the West, from Eastern Uttar Pradesh, and its present day
Muslim preponderance seems to go back to the end of the 13th century. The story of the advent of Islam in Karimganj which forms the Western part of Barak Valley and had been a part of Sylhet for centuries, thus goes back to the 14th century. But the advent of Islam in modern Cachar and Hailakandi districts seems to be occurred a bit later.

It will not be out of place to mention here the popular tradition about the conquest of Sylhet by the Muslims and to examine its historicity.

When Gour Govinda was the king of Gour Kingdom (modern Sylhet) a Muslim named Burhan-ud-din used to live in his territory. He was blessed with a son and to celebrate the happy occasion or to perform *aqika* (the naming ceremony) of the new born he sacrificed a cow. Suddenly, a kite took away a piece of flesh and threw it in the house of a Brahmin or in a temple campus. The Brahmin lodged a complaint to the king who ordered the hand of Burhan-ud-din to be chopped off and the infant to be killed. His order was executed. Bereaved and mutilated Burhan-ud-din went to Gaur (Bengal) narrated his miserable plight to Sultan Shamsuddin Firuz Shah and prayed for redress against the injustice committed to him. The Sultan sent an army against Gour Govinda, but it was defeated by the latter. A second expedition was sent and this was accompanied by Shah Jalal and his 300 or 360 disciples. This time Gour Govinda fled away without offering any resistance and Sylhet was annexed to the Sultanate of Bengal. This tradition had been cherished very fondly by the people for centuries and on the basis of it *Suhl-i-yamin*, a Persian metrical biographical account of Shah Jalal was composed in 1860 by Nasir Uddin Haidar. The original Persian text was published in Calcutta in 1894 and metrical translation of it into Bengali named *Tawarikh-e-Jalali* by Ilahi Baksh was printed and published in the Bengali year 1278 (1871 A. D.).
On the basis of *Suhl-i-yamin* the old tradition about the conquest of Sylhet by the Muslims was collected in 1873⁹ which has already been narrated above.

As a matter of fact, *Suhl-i-yamin* places on records a legend that transmitted from generation to generation orally for a period of 4 centuries before the composition of the book and as such the possibility of inclusion of wild exaggeration cannot be ruled out.

However, the absolute credence can be given to those accounts which are confirmed by the testimony of other authentic sources. Such a primary source is the *Rahela*, the travelling account of Ibn Batuta, the famed Moroccan traveller who travelled Sylhet and met Shah Jalal in 1345 A.D. He later recorded that the inhabitants of these mountains had embraced Islam at his (Shah Jalal’s) hands, and for this reasons he stayed amidst them⁹. A Persian inscription now preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, may be referred to as an epigraphic source corroborating the arrival of Shah Jalal in Sylhet and consequently the advent of Islam in the region. It was issued during the reign of Sultan Ala-ud-din Hussain Shah of Bengal in 918 AH (1512 -13 A.D.) and records the Muslim conquest of Sylhet in the hands of Sikandar Khan Ghazi in 703AH (1303AD.) in the reign of Shams ud-din Firuz Shah. This epigraphic evidence though issued more than two hundred years after the conquest of Sylhet by the Muslims accompanied by Shah Jalal and his disciples corroborates the historical event of Shah Jalal’s arrival at Sylhet recorded in *Suhl-I- Yamin*. The find place of the inscription is the mausoleum of Shah Jalal at Sylhet which clearly testifies that the maebare of the saint was in extant when the inscription was issued.

Shah Jalal sent his disciples to different places of Sylhet and adjoining territories to preach Islam. His efforts did not go in vain. It is easily understood
that many a peasant of Sylhet embraced Islam. According to a tradition recorded in the *Suhl-i-Yamin* Shah Jalal sent one of his disciples named Jia-ud-din to Bundashil (Badarpur). As that time Bundashil was the eastern most boundary of the Gour Kingdom. Jia-ud-din informed Shah Jalal that the people of the locality were the victims of regular nocturnal attacks of a demon named Deorai and that the water of Barak was not drinkable as it was polluted by the demon. Shah Jalal led a campaign to Bundashil, suppressed the demon and returned to Sylhet by establishing one of his disciples Shah Badar ud-din, in spiritual charge of the locality. After Badar ud-din, the modern town of Badarpur was named subsequently. The historicity of this tradition may be interpreted in the light of Shah Jalal’s suppression of a tribal group who regularly troubled the inhabitants of Badarpur.

According to this tradition, the advent of Islam in modern Karimganj district goes back to the life time of Shah Jalal, i.e., early 14th century AD. As a matter of fact, archaeological remains found at different places of Karimganj prove beyond doubt that Islam could make its headway in the region now constitutes the territory of Karimganj district before the 15th century AD. Such archaeological evidences include both epigraphs and coins.

Of the epigraphic evidences so far discovered in the region now covered under the administrative district of Karimganj, three are in extant. The oldest inscription so far discovered in Karimganj district as well the pre-partitioned Sylhet is a stone inscription now placed on the wall of a recently built mosque at village Hatkhola near Asimganj, about 25 Km south of Karimganj town. The inscription is dated and in Arabic language and character. It was Issued in 868 AH. (1463 AD.) by the caretaker of the royal place of Sultan Rukn-ud-din Barbak Shah (1459 - 1474). The inscription refers that a mosque was built by
the caretaker on the find spot which is situated near the southern boundary of
the Sylhet district of the British period. [PALTE I. Fig-1]

Another inscription engraved on a piece of black stone in Arabic language
and character found in the remains of a mosque unearthed by a local excavation
at a village named Surjadas (locally called Furujdha) near Kaliganj Bazar
about 15 Km. south east of Kamaranganj town, now preserved in a local madrasah
named Madinatul ulum Bagbari. [PALTE I. Fig-2]

This inscription issued in 909 A.H. (1502 A.D.) clearly shows that the
extent of the Bengal Sultanate during the reign of Ala-Ud-din Hussain Shah
and consequently the extent of Islam in the region. The remains of the mosque
and its architectural style which falls under the Bengal provincial style of the
Indo-Islamic Architecture clearly indicate that Islam could make its head
way in this region even before the sixteenth century A.D.

An inscription preserved in a Kali temple at a village called Pimagar
(now pronounced as Pinnagar) about 10 Km. southward from Kamaranganj town
is also an important source for the study of advent of Islam in the western part
of modern Barak Valley. It states that one of the generals of Muhammad Shah,
son of Hussain Shah built a mosque at this place in 1539 AD. The remains of
the mosque are no longer in extent, but the inscription is indicative of presence
of Islam in the locality in early sixteenth century. [PALTE I. Fig-3]

As regards the extent of the Bengal Sultanate in the Barak Valley during
the 15th century AD numismatic sources are not lacking. "We have definite
information of a chance of a hoard of 177 silver coins of different denominations
at Aylabari tea-estate, a place about 5 km south-west of Kamaranganj town. The
coins are now preserved in the Assam State Museum, Guwahati. Here we find
an accumulation of the coins issued by Jalaluddin-Shah (1418-31), Nasiruddin
Muhammad Shah (1442-59) and Rukn-ud-din Barbak Shah (1459-74).
The archaeological evidences thus corroborate the tradition about the advent of Islam in the western part of Barak Valley during the 14th century and in all possibility, preached by Shah Jalal and his disciples. Otherwise mosques would not have built at different places of the region early in the 15th Century.

The story of advent of Islam in a region is generally attributed to the expansion of Muslim rule to the region. But it has already been referred to that the sway of the Muslim rule was never extended to the region now covered by Cachar and Hailakandi districts of Barak Valley which had successively been under Tripura, Koch and Dimasa kingdoms during the medieval period. Two Mughal invasions in the Dimasa Kingdom are recorded in primary sources, but these are only passing phases in the history of the region. According to information provided with by the *Baharistan - I - Ghayabi* of Mirza Nathan the Dimasa or Kachari kingdom was invaded by the Subadar of Bengal, Qasim Khan in 1612 AD and the king Yasa Narayan purchased peace by offering huge tributes to both the Subadar and Thanadar of Bandasal (Bundashil-Badarpur) who was in the immediate command of the Mughal invasion. The river Surma had since become the boundary between the Dimasa Kingdom and the Bangla-Subah of the Mughals and a Thanadar was posted at Bandashil (Badarpur).⑨

Another Mughal attack led by one Nowab Jamal Khan, most probably the Thanadar of Bundashil (Badarpur) who occupied Khaspur was repulsed by the Dimasa king Yasa Narayan promising to pay tribute to him in addition to the regular tribute to the Subadar of Bengal. But soon he killed Jamal Khan by a stratagem. This event took place during the reign of Shah Jahan.⑩

These historical events were passing phases in the history of the Dimasa Kingdom and could not contribute any reasonable influence of Islam to the population pattern of the region. No archaeological evidence or contemporary
source is available to prove the influence of Islam in the region before 17th century AD. In all possibilities the preponderance of Muslim population in Hailakandi and presence of a sizable number of Muslims in Cachar go back to the Dimasa kings who encouraged peasants migration from neighbouring region particularly from Sylhet for developing waste land and jungles into arable land.

Some authors while painstakingly identifying the traces of Sufi movement in the plains of Cachar and Hailakandi want to indicate that the advent of Islam in this region goes back to the 14th century when Shah Jalal and his disciples were active with their mission in Sylhet proper and adjoining territories. This line of qualification cites a place near Panchgram (Cachar paper Mill) and a dargah at Natanpur under Kathigora Police station in support of their assertion. The former is under the district of Hailakandi and latter in Cachar. The identification of a place on the top of a hillock near Panchgram as the place where Mir-ul-Arefin popularly attributed to be a direct disciple of Shah Jalal, is said to have stayed for a period of his life and the dargah of Shah Natwan, traditionally regarded as the disciple of Shah Jalal, at Natanpur in Cachar21 are generally cited as instances of advent of Islam in the region in the 14th century A.D. But these two names are not included in the list of disciples of Shah Jalal provided with by “Srihatter Itibritta” a very famous book authored by Achyut Charan Choudhury who assiduously collected the names by visiting the places connected with the legends22. However he admits that he could not collect 61 names of Shah Jalal’s disciples which would have completed the list of 360 disciples so popularly known23. But these two places do not provide us with any archaeological remains. The popular traditions are only clues which are not corroborated by the historical sources. It is not unlikely that during the lifetime of Shah Jalal some of his direct or distant disciples might have
visited the places of Cachar and Hailakandi in the close neighbourhood of Badarpur. But these occurrences cannot be taken for certainty as the evidences of advent of Islam in the districts of Cachar and Hailakandi as a whole. As a matter of fact no tradition or historical evidence is available to prove the exact time or period of advent of Islam in the whole region. It is not unlikely that when Islam attained a prominent place among the agrarian masses of Sylhet including Karimganj, groups of Muslim peasants began to enter the plains of Cachar and Hailkandi with the economic goal of transforming waste land rapidly covered with jungles immediately after the end of Tripura domination in Cachar²⁴ into arable land. The end of Tripura domination in the region, took place in the sixties of the sixteenth century when the redoubtable Chilarai, the general of the Koch king Naranarayan, extended his sway upto the border of the modern Tripura state by defeating the Tripura king²⁵. With the end of the Tripura domination the plains of Cachar (Cachar and Hailakandi) began to be depopulated due to attacks of tribal people who took the advantage of anarchy precipitated by the fall of the Tripura kingdom²⁶. The alluvial land on the plateau of Barak rapidly indulged in luxuriant vegetation and the plains were soon covered with jungle. This state of affairs attracted the land hungry Muslim peasants of Sylhet in early 17th century. But in the eighteenth century when the capital of the Dimasa Kingdom was shifted to Khaspur, the Muslim peasants were settled in the plains of the state by the king Lakshmi Chandra (1745- 1780) abundantly with a view to reclaiming the waste land into arable land. This policy of the king increased the number of Muslim population in the state and also innovated a permanent source of flourishing the royal coffer. The number of Muslim population in the Dimasa kingdom was not so reckonable at the time of establishment of capital at Khaspur. But during the reign of Lakshmi Chandra it increased to a great extent²⁷.
These facts lead us to conclude that Islam began to appear in modern Barak Valley in the 14th century, but the process of its attainment of present state continued up to the 18th century AD.

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