CHAPTER - II

Historical Background of Muslims in Assam
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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MUSLIMS IN ASSAM

Assam has had a glorious past. At one time it was ruled by the Muslims and later was under Hindu rulers (Ahoms). The historical background has played a crucial role in giving shape to Assamese, economy, society, politics and culture. Thus, in this chapter an attempt will be made to make a detail analysis of history of the Muslims of Assam.

The advent of Muslims in Assam happened in various manners and phases. Earlier they attacked Assam at different times through different routes. Earlier in 1206, Mohammad-Bin-Bakhtiyar Khilji\(^1\) started his expedition to Tibet through the territory of Kamrup kingdom. But his expedition proved to be a misfortune to his career and life.\(^2\) It is recorded by being depicted in the North Gauhati inscription of 1127 Saka Era, before the appearance of Ahom in 1228. Various Muslim invasions had already been taken place in Assam.\(^3\)

According to the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* at the time of Bakhtiyar's invasion, the ruling king of Kamrup was Bartu or Pritu. Pritu defeated Bakhtiyar Khilji and then Hussain Uddin Iwaz (Sultan Ghiyasuddin
Iwaz in 1227 A.D. and in 1228 A.D. he was dethroned by Nasiruddin, the son of Ilutmish).  

It is mentioned in *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* that Bakhtiyar maintained friendly relations with Pritu through letter. Because Bakhtiyar knew that without their military aid, his dream of conquering Tibet wouldn’t be fulfilled. Pritu also wanted to help him on one condition if he must postpone the idea of conquering untill the next year but Bakhtiyar refused the plan and proceeded on his expedition. At this Pritu decided to attack them on their return. To prevent the soldiers of Bakhtiyar, Pritu blocked the road and cut off his supplies. On the return of Bakhtiyar, he was held up at the bridge of Barnadi and his troops were also tired enough, to resist the archers of Pritu, who attacked them in open field. Then Bakhtiyar’s army took shelter in nearby temple but they were surrounded with a bamboo stocked by their enemies. When they crossed this line of besiegers, many of them drowned in attempting to cross the river and only 100 soldiers of Bakhtiyar returned out of 10,000 cavalry soldiers and the rest were captured and slaughtered by Pritu’s army. Bakhtiyar was also arrested by the king and died shortly afterwards due to frustration.

Mohammad-Bin-Bakhtiyar was the first Muslim conqueror who came to Assam. But it is also said that he had no desire to plunder or
conquer this country. His objective was to conquer Tibet through Kamrup.8

In 1227 A.D., Malik Hussain Uddin Iwaz9 invaded Kamrup. At that time Pritu was ruling Kamrup. Iwaz lead his army from Lakhnawati towards the territory of Bang and Kamrup. Pritu strongly protected his city of Rangpur and Jalpaiguri at the western frontier of his kingdom adjacent to the territory Lakhnawati, after Bakhtiyar’s invasion. From this it was clear; Bakhtiyar and Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz’s route of invasion was same. Pritu’s army gave strong resistance to them and Iwaz was defeated by him on the very suburbs of his territory. It is presumed that his soldiers were either killed or captured.10

Visvasundaradeva was probably the original name of Pritu or Bartu who was successor of Vallabhadeva which is mentioned by Minhaj. Pritu was one of the powerful rulers of Kamrup. After two invasions by Bakhtiyar and Iwaz, Pritu was defeated by Nasir-ud-Din, son of Iltutmish, the Delhi Emperor11 and he was killed by Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud in the year 1228 A.D. Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud was the eldest son of Shamsuddin Mahmud,12 who placed the deceased king on throne on the condition of tribute.

According to the Guru Charitra by Ram Charan Thakur, Sandhya was the ruler when Tuguil Khan Malik-Yuz-Beg invaded Kamrup in the
year 1254-1255 A.D.\textsuperscript{12} because that time the Raja of Kamrup stopped payment of the tribute. Minhaj, in his \textit{Tabaqat-i-Nasiri} mentioned that:

"After Malik-Yuz-Beg returned from Awadh to Lakhnawati, he determined upon marching into Kamrud, and transported an army across the river Begmati. As the Rae of Kamrud had not the power to resist him; he retained perceptibly some whither. Malik-Yuz-Beg took the city of Kamrud and possessed himself of countless wealth and treasure, to such extent, that the amount and weight thereof cannot be contained within the area of record."\textsuperscript{14}

"The author, at the time he was sojourning at Lakhnawati, had heard from travelers whose statements are to be relied upon, that from the region of Gushtasib, shah of Ajam, who had invaded Chin and had come towards Hindustan by that route (by way of Kamrud) twelve hundred hoards of treasures, all sealed, which were (there deposited), and any portion of which wealth and treasures not one of Raes had availed himself of, the whole fell into hands of the Muslim troops. The reading of the Khutbah, and Friday religious services were instituted in kamrud, and signs of the people of Islam appeared there. But of what avail was all this, when the whole, from pherensy, he gave to the winds? For the wise have said that "the seeking to perform overmuch work that never turned out fortunate for the seeker."\textsuperscript{15}
"After Kamrud was taken (possession of), so the related, several times the Rae sent confidential persons (to Malik-Yuz-Beg), saying: "Thou hast subdued this territory and no Malik of the Muslim people ever before obtained such success. Now do thou return, and replace me upon the throne, and I will send to thee tribute every year so many bags of gold, and so many elephants, and I will continue the Khutbah unchanged, and the Muslim stamped coin unchanged."\(^{16}\)

"Malik-Yuz-Beg did not become willing to agree to this in any way: and the Rae gave command that all his train, and the peasantry should go to Malik-Yuz-Beg, and get him to pledge his right hand (for their safety), and buy up all the grain procurable in (the city and country of?) Kum rud, at whatever price he might require, so that the Muslim troops might have no provision left. They did so accordingly, and bought up from them all the produce that was obtainable at heavy rate."

"Depending on the cultivated state and flourishing condition of the country, Malik-Yuz-Beg did not lay up any sorts of grain; and when the time of the spring harvest came round, the Rae, with the whole of his subjects, rose, and opened water dykes all around, and brought Malik-Yuz-Beg and the troops of Islam to a state of helplessness, in such wise, that they were near perishing through destitution. They now took
counsel together, and came to conclusion that it was necessary to retreat, otherwise they would die of starvation.\(^1\) From the above statement, we can assume that a section of Muslim people were settled there in Kamrud (Assam) at that time which can be assessed from the introduction of Khutbah and performance of Namaz.

According to Minhaj, \"They accordingly set out from Kamrud with the intention of proceeding towards Lakhnavati. The route through the plain (country) was flooded with water, and occupied by the Hindus. The Muslims obtained a guide to bring them out of that country by conducting them towards the skirt of the mountains. After they had preceded for some stages, they got entangled among passes and defiles, and narrow roads, and both their front and rear was siezed by the Hindus. In a narrow place a fight took place in front of the leading rank between two elephants; the force fell into confusion, the Hindus came upon them from every side, and Muslim and Hindu mingled together. Suddenly an arrow struck Malik-Yuz-Beg, who was mounted on an elephant, in his chest and he fell down and was made prisoner; all his children, family and dependents, and the whole of his force, were made captive.\"

When they carried Malik-Yuz-Beg before the Rae, he made a request they would bring his son to him, he placed his face to the face of
his son, and yielded his soul to God. The Almighty's mercy is upon him." In this war, the Muslim army suffered heavy losses and mostly they were captive.

In about 1321-22, there were probably another invasion which was undertaken by Sultan Ghiyas-ud-Din. Bahadur Shah, son of Sultan Shamsuddin Firuz Shah has subjugated the northern part of Mymensigh district (present Bangladesh), east of Brahmaputra, which had from early times been included with Brahmaputra.

Early in the 12th century a number of coins dated A.H. 721 (A.D. 1321-22) were found at Mymensingh district of East Pakistan and in Koch Behar region in North Bengal and at Ropaibari area in Nowgong in the Assam Valley. During this period Sukrangka of the family of Armimatta ruled in Kamata, and in the Ahom territory Sukhangpha reigned which is situated in the eastern part of Assam Valley. According to Buranjis, the war continued between the two kings, but finally it was ended through the peace treaty in which the Kamata king gave his sister Rajni in marriage to the Ahom monarch along with dowry of five places namely Sherpur, Pltiljoha, Bahirbund, Eghara Sendur and Kamrup. which were incorporated in Mymensingh district. The Kamata king suddenly offered peace treaty with the Ahom king faced the great
danger from other side and this danger was the invasion of Sultan Ghiyasuddin.

It was probably at the time when Sukrangka was busy in prolonged war with the Ahoms, and at that time Gauda Sultan Ghiyasuddin attacked Mymensingh and this reason necessitated the Kamata king immediately sue for peace with Ahom king Sukhangpha, so that he might be able to defend the rest of his territory from Muslim invaders. Ghiyasuddin not only possessed Mymensingh district but also Koch Behar and South Western part of Brahmaputra Valley up to Nowgong form the possession of Kamata king Sukrangka.  

We learn from Kamrupar Buranji that Sultan Ghiyashuddin ruled Kamrupa region for some time and his seat of government was on Garudhachal Mountain in Hajo on the north bank of Brahmaputra.

A tradition concerning about the advent of Hazrat Ghiyasuddin Awliya of Poa Mecca Shrine of Hajo in Assam says that the saint came to Assam with the conquering army of one Sultan Ghiyasuddin who invaded the country in A.H. 721-22. So we may say that Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah of Gauda entered Assam about A.H. 721-22 and that the story actually refers to latter. Now we can assert that Sultan Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah had actually involved Kamata some time before A.H. 721-22 corresponding to 1321-22 A.D.
When Ghiyasuddin invaded the Brahmaputra Valley including of Nowgong District and the southern regions of Kamrupa and Goalpara district, it seems to have been reigned by local chiefs in Neli, Sonapur, Rani Luki, Bekeli, Barduaria and Bararaja as feudatories of the Kamata king, the son of Arimatta. Jongalbalahm, another son of Arimatta, who ruled as a vassal of brother, over the large territory comprising the southern part of Kamrup and Western part of Nowgoan district. These chiefs including Jongalbalahm simply compelled to change their allegiance to Ghiyasuddin from Kamata king and he did not annex their territory to Bengal as he had done in case of Mymensingh and Kooch Behar. After his death, Bengal came under Sultan Fakhuruddin and then Illyas Shah, the predecessor of Sultan Sikander Shah. During these three powerful reign, the tribal chief showed the allegiance to them.²³

From the above discussion, we may say that Sultan Ghiyasuddin possessed not only Mymensingh region of the Kamrup kingdom, Koch Behar, some parts of Nowgong district but also he availed allegiance of the local chiefs who were ruled in the south western parts of the Brahmaputra Valley upto Nowgong on the east. This supreme power remained till his death in 1328 and continued till the end of the reign of Sultan Fakhruddin.
A coin issued in A.H. 759 by Sultan Sikander Shah of Bengal from his camp. It is ascertained that the country (Kamrup) by that time under his possession. But the exact date of expedition is not known. But we can say that after the death of Sultan Fakhruddin, the Kacharis invaded the territories of his vassals Jongalbalahu in the Nowgong and Kamrup reign and conquered it. With the rise of Kacharis, the local chiefs who ruled over in Southern parts of Kamrup and Goalpara district, had also declared their independence from the Gauda Sultan. Probably for these reason the sultan Sikandar Shah led an invasion to Kamrup Kingdom and conquered. At that time, he issued coins in some parts of region in A.H. 759(1358).

Abul Muzaffar Azam Shah (1389 A.D.) the successor of Sultan Ghiyasuddin led expedition to Kamrup when the local chiefs in the south western part of Brahmaputra Valley showed their disloyalty to the Gauda Sultan Sikandar Shah at the end of his reign. His sway extended upto Rani area about twenty miles west of modern town Gauhati. This fact is clear from his coins dated A.H. 802 in Gauhati.

Sultan Azam Shah had invaded the main land of Kamrup after a few years of this event. But he was defeated because at that time, the Kamata king gained military assistance from Ahom king Sudangph (1397-1407 A.D.). The Kamata king Mriganka was the
contemporary of Sudangph and with this the Muslim power over Kamrupa kingdom disappeared up to the time of Hussain Shah.

According to *Risalat-us-Suhada*, the Persian chronicles Sultan Barbak Shah of Bengal (1459 A.D. - 1474 A.D.) Suffered several conflict with the king of Kamatapur Barbaks army have been repeatedly defeated by Kameswar, the Kamrupa king. This account does not mention the Kamrup king, but it was probably the Chakradhwaja because he ruled at that time (1455-1485 A.D.) the predecessor of Nilambara.

From Maldah in Bengal, Francis Buchanan collected some account in which the king Sada Lakshman, his son Mal Konwar and Harup Narayan ruled Kamrup in direct succession. Another source says that Niladwaja Chakradhuwaja and Nilambara, these kings of Khen dynasty ruled in Kamata at that time and Nilambara was subdued by Hussain Shah. Francis Buchanan says that these princes were the same person as are mentioned in the Maldah account. This indication is quite reasonable because it is not possible for two dynasties of kings to rule in Kamata simultaneously. Harup Narayan is said to have been overwhelmed by a predecessor of Hussain Shah of Gauda. From *Risalat-us-Suhadah* indicates and testifies that Sultan Barbak Shah was
only predecessor of Hussain Shah of Gauda who ruled 1459 AD to 1474 AD.

Epigraphic records show that before 1472 A.D. his invasion into Kamata occurred and Harup Narayana flourished at that time. So Harup Narayana was the same person as Prince Chakradhawaja, who was the father of Nilambara. Ismail Ghazi, a holy man was selected as a commander by Barbak Shah. The two forces met near Santosh which is situated in the modern district of Dinajpur. In this battle the Muslims were defeated. Then the Muslim commander tried to make peace treaty with the Kamata king but the latter was rejected it and the war was continued. At this time Ismail Ghazi defeated the Kamrupa king Chakradhaja by his supernatural power which compelled the Kamrup king to submit to the Muslim commander and also convert to Islam.

In 1498, Alauddin Hussain Shah, the Sultan of Gauda (1493-1519 AD) led a campaign against Nilambara, the king of Kamata and annexed his whole kingdom as far as Hazo in the East in the present district of Kamrup. With this invasion many Muslim emigrants came to Assam. After the overthrow of Nilambara the rule of Kamata Kings in Kamrup came to an end. It is very likely that when Nilambara was overthrown, he fled and was heard of no more.
Chapter 2

The success of the Muslim had been gained against Kamata after a long and hard battle. A colony of Afghans was left in Kamata, who dismissed the Hindu chiefs and took up the civil and military administration under the suzerainty of Hussain’s son Danial.34

But the victory was short lived. The Bhuiyan chiefs combined against the common foe and taking of the rains, attacked Danial’s garrison and destroyed it. Although, Hussein Shah’s invasion of Kamata ultimately proved to be a failure it appears that a colony of Mohammedans remained in country round about Hajo. A mosque was erected there by one Ghiyasuddin Aulia who subsequently died and was buried near mosque. This place is still considered as sacred by local Mohammedans who regard it as “Poa Mecca” or “one-fourth of Mecca”.35

It is mentioned in the Assam Buranjī, the Ahom king Suhummung Greeted the Bhuyans in his court who wanted the aid of Suhummung to drive the Muslim and established friendly relation with them.36 Muslim established their strong hold in Kamrup and for this reason to secure his own suzerainty the Ahom welcomed the Bhuyans in his court, but the Assam Buranjī do not mention about the Ahom participation with the Bhuiyans chief to attack against Danial.
The next Muslim invasion in Ahom kingdom occurred in 1527 AD, it was the first Mohammedan invasion mentioned in Ahom Buranji. But Muslim general is mentioned here as ‘Bara Ujir’ (chief minister or commander in chief) the war between the Ahom and Muslim had taken place near the river of Burai in which the latter was defeated.

The firearms as war weapon were introduced into the Military history of Assam which was during the time of the reign of Suhummung and Ahom learned the use of firearm from Muslim invaders during the early part of 16th century.

In April 1532, Turbak a Muslim commander invaded Assam with large number of forces including 30 elephants; 1000 horses and a large part of artillery and a great number of foot soldiers and built up their camp opposite the Ahom fort at Singiri. At this, Suhummung sent his son Suklen with strong reinforcements to Singiri, and he advanced to Sala, Suklen crossed the Brahmaputra River and attacked his enemy, but he was defeated. In this war, eight Ahom commanders were killed and he himself wounded. The Ahom then going back to Sala, Suklen after recovery, he took charge as the commander of Ahom forces at Sala. Shortly afterwards, he was attacked by the Muslims. In one or two encounters, the Muslims met with success. In March, 1533 a naval engagement near Duimunisila, the Ahom registered a great victory
against Turbak’s army. The two Muslim commander, Bengal and Taju along with large number of common soldiers were killed. They also lost twenty two ships and a number of big guns.\textsuperscript{41}

At this moment a general named Hussain Khan came from Bengal with six elephants. One hundred horses and a large number of foot soldiers to reinforce Turbak. Turbak’s troops encamped at the mouth of Dikhai river and the Ahom troop on the opposite side of the river, were garrisoned. Both waited for favourable moment for attack. The initiative was taken by the Ahom army and defeated them in number of clashes. Near Bharali, the Mohammedan were finally defeated. In the battle-field Turbak and Hussain Khan met their death with a stroke of a dragger. The Muslim soldiers began to retreat. The heads of Turbak and Hussain Khan were buried on the Charaideo Hill.\textsuperscript{42}

Many of his soldiers were taken prisoners and settled in the Ahom country, they are called Marias.\textsuperscript{43} From this we can assess that in many incident, the Muslim came to Assam for fighting purpose, and ultimately they settled here and assimilated with Assamese society.

The next group of Muslim emigrants entered western Assam when Koch Hazo comprising the present districts of Kamrup and Goalpara region captured by the Mughal dominion in 1613 and continued to be so till 1667 with an interruption between 1658-1660
after the Ahom conquest of the whole part of the Kamrup district and the eastern part of the Goalpara district up to the river Manaha. A dispersal of the Muslim population from western part to eastern Assam took place. The last immigration of Muslims of the Pre British Assam took place during the troubled days of Moamria rebellions and Burmese invasions towards the close of 18 and beginning of the 19 century. Unlike the earlier groups most of these immigrants entered Assam as raiders, mirasders and finally settled here. Some of them could become so influential and powerful, Assamese chronicles recorded the activities of one Niamat Ullah who could once occupy Gauhati.

The Ahom-Mughal struggle period is one of the most important historical periods in the history of Assam. In the 17 century Mughals were the most powerful rulers in India. One after another kingdom of India was annexed. In the frontier of Bengal, existence of any independent kingdom could not tolerated by the Mughals and with this imperialistic nature; they led expedition on Assam many time.

At the end of 15 century, the Kamata Kingdom extended from the Karatoya River to the Barnade and included the Modern districts of Rangpur, Koch Behar, Goalpara, and Kamrup was overthrown by the Muslims.
In 1632 AD, the Mughal army occupied the Koch Hazo. Balinarayam, the brother of Parikshit, the ruler of Eastern Koch kingdom, gave up his country and took shelter under Pratap Singha, the Ahom king. Pratap Singha took this matter seriously. Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan was contemporary of Pratap Singha. The Ahom king could not tolerate Muslim to lay claim to the territories of Prikshit, as the sole inheritor. When therefore the Muslims advanced towards the east and annexed the kingdom on the west of the Barnadi, the Ahom brought under their control over the Koch territory between Barnadi and the Bharali.

The first battle took place in between Mughals and Ahoms at the mouth of Bhareli River where the former gained victory, but soon afterwards the Mughals were defeated in a night attack and Pratap Singha installed Bali Narayan as successor to Parikshit and turned to his capital in triumph. Later, he advanced and took Pandu near Gauhati where he fortified. He next tried to retreat Muslim to Hazo but the Ahoms were repulsed at Hazo.

There was another attack on the country by the Mohammadans during the reign of Pratap Singha, who was also known as Susenpla or "Buddhi Swargannarayan" by his Hindu name. This invasion was successfully repulsed in the 2 battle of Kaliabar, a place in modern
Nowgong and a major part of the Koch kingdom was incorporated into the Ahom territory at the end of this victory. The conclusion of the attack launched by the Muslim general Abdur Salam was defeated and a treaty was made between the Ahoms and the Mughals in 1638.51

By this peace treaty Barnadi in the North Brahmaputra valley and west of Aswear Ali in the South bank of the Brahmaputra Valley were fixed as the boundary of Ahom and Mughal territory. This treaty lasted for 21 years, because at that time, the Mughal Emperor of Delhi, Shah Jahan fell ill and there was chaotic situation all throughout his large Empire during the war of Succession.52 Pram Narayan was then the ruler of the Koch kingdom who took opportunity of this situation. He attacked and defeated the Muslim Faujdar of Goalpara. At the same time, the Ahom victory of west took preparation for war and had bridge the Kallang River53 for entering Mughal Kamrup. Mir Lutfullah Shirazi the Faujdar of Gauhati feared about the attack from Bengal to be impossible, fled away to Dacca by Kamrup easily. The Assamese occupied the capital of Kamrup without a blow, and seized 140 horses, 40 pieces of cannon, and 200 matchlocks, besides much other property there. Pramnarayan was ejected beyond the Sankosh54 and as a result of it, the whole of Brahmaputra valley came into the hands of Ahom.55
But it happened only for short time, in June 1660 the civil war came to end through the succession of Aurangzeb, One of the sons of Shah Jahan, on the throne after killing or defeating his three brothers and imprisoning his father. After ascending the throne Aurangzeb ordered Mir Jumla, the Mughal Subedar of Bengal to reoccupy the lost territory of Assam. He first defeated Pramnarayan and then advanced against the Ahom. According to their writers, he came with an army of 12000 horses and 30000 foot soldiers and powerful fleet. The Ahom army could not give a bold resistance to the Mughal army and ultimately the Mughal army occupied fort after fort. In spite of the great difficulty of locomotion due to the numerous watercourses and the vast expanse of dense jungle, Mir Jumla marched steadily up the South bank of the Brahmaputra.  

Somadhara at the mouth of Bharali River and Simlagarh opposite it on the South bank of the Brahmaputra were now the only stronghold that lay in the path of Garhgaon, the capital of Ahom. Mir Jumla had crossed the Brahmaputra River and after reaching Simlagarh, they encamped very close to the Simlagarh fort which the Ahom army feared and fled away and occupied easily the Simlagarh fort. On the fall of the Simlagarh the garrison of Somdhara lost heart and escaped after having destroyed their stock of gunpowder. Then the Mughals reached
Garhgaon on the 17 March 1662 AD by the way of Simlagarh and Lakhau and captured it. Jayadhwaj, the Ahom king escaped and there he decided to give up his capital and took shelter in Namrup. 

According to the historian Shahabuddin Talish that “two kingdoms have been seldom conquered in the course of the same year” by one army. The Ahom faced many losses e.g. 82 elephants, 3 lakhs of rupees in cash, 675 pieces of artillery, 1343 camel-swivels, 1200 Ramchangis, 6750 match-locks, 340 mounds of gunpowder, a thousand and odd boats, and 173 storehouses of paddy, each containing from 10 to 100 mounds of grain.

Luck could not favour Mir Jumla’s troop for long time. With approaching of the rainy season the real trouble for the Mohammedan started. There was flood all over upper Assam. This situation was taken to the fullest advantage by the Ahoms. The Ahoms harassed the Mughals by repeated night attacks and demolished some outlying forts and cut off all the communications between the Mughal army and navy. As the rains progressed, the situation of Mohammedan become worst and at that moment, famine and epidemic appeared in the Mughal camp. A large number of Mughal army died by this natural calamity especially dysentery. They now only thought of returning back to their home in spite of being death in this treacherous country. Mir Jumla’s
health also deteriorated and he himself was unable to resist the clamour of his troops to led back to Bengal. At last in cold season a treaty was patched up and he hurried back to Dacca, where he died soon. Mohammedan historian mentioned on record an interesting account of their opponents. The Mohammedan captured more than 1000 war troops from the enemy, many of which could accommodate from three to four score sailors. They took nearly 700 guns, some of them of considerable size. On both sides of rivers near Tezpur extensive fortifications were built and country between Kaliabar and Gargaon was said to be well cultivated and adorned wealth goddess and orchards.

In 1663 AD, Rashid Khan, as thanadar of Gauhati, sent his envoys to the court of Chakradwaj Singha, the successor of Joydhwaj Singha for reminding Ahom king to their previous treaty which was signed in between Ahom and Mughal during the time of Joydhwaj Singha. But Chakradwaj Singha sent back him with the message to the Mughal Emperor that Mughal also did not follow the treaty by not settling the boundary and not releasing the Ahom hostages for so long. By receiving this message, Aurangzeb promised to maintain the treaty by restoring the Ahom territories occupied by the Mughals. In spite of that, Chakradwaj refused to give the rest of indemnity because his
treasury was empty and he failed to get any portion of money and elephants that were still due.⁶¹

There were severe drought and famine in Assam during the year 1665, which damaged crops and there was also scarcity of drinking water. This time Rashid Khan was replaced by Syed Firoz Khan as the Mughal Thanadar of Gauhati. He demanded Chakradwaj to pay the indemnity, but at this time the Ahom king was mentally prepared for war with Mughals.⁶²

In 1667, Gauhati was captured by a strong Ahom and navy, infantry under the command of famous Ahom General Lachit Barphukan.⁶³ Lachit Barphukan was able to capture the Mughal forts at Kajali and Pandu. A large number of Muslim soldiers were taken captive and a number of cannons, guns and other war materials were taken as booty to the Ahom camp. The Muslim were defeated in series of wars. They were driven from Agiathuthi to Manas River. Firoz Khan was taken as war prisoner to Gargaon and other captured soldiers were slaughtered to death.⁶⁴

The news of the defeat of the Mughals at Gauhati disappointed the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and he immediately appointed Ram Singh, the best of his generals sent in Assam to command the imperial army against the Ahom. Rashid Khan also joined Ram Singh. The
Mughal force comprised of 18000 cavalry, 30000 infantry and 15000 archers. In February 1669 AD Ram Singh reached Ramgamti and shortly arrived at Hazo.

The first two battles were fought near Tezpur in April 1669. The Ahom were defeated in both the wars, but they gained a naval battle and soon afterward the Mohammedans in an attack on their fort at Rangmahal. Ram Singh was bound to go back to Hazo. At that time Rashid Khan an equal rank with Ram Singh. He was also suspected to having secret link with enemy. Due to this he ordered Rashid Khan to go out of the camp.  

Ram Singh now repeated his demands for the annexation of Gauhati and challenged Chakradwaj Singha to single combat and vowed that he would return to Bengal if defeated. But the Ahom king declined to accept this challenge and expressed his willingness for peace. At this time Chakradwaj became ill and soon afterwards he died. Both parties were tired of war and hostilities were suspended for a time.

After the death of Chakradwaj his brother Maju Gohain or Sunyapha ascended the throne. He assumed the Hindu name of Udayatitya Singha who was continuing the Ahom-Mughal war. Ram Singh several times sent his envoy to Ahom court with the proposal that the old boundries should be maintained. But they refused to cede
Gauhati to Mughals at the advice of his minister Burha Gohain. Ram Singh received reinforcement and sent a detachment into Darrang. The Ahom king also prepared for war and ordered his minister to advance with 20000 men from Samdhara to Srighat. There was constant fighting from April to August 1670 but eventually the Mughals were defeated. Ram ordered his naval command to lead a naval attack on them. On hearing this, Lachit Barphukan with more ships enabled the Ahoms to return to attack. There was a famous battle that took place which was called the battle of Saraighat in the middle of March 1671. The Mughals were driven away and the Ahoms became the sole ruler of Gauhati.⁶⁷

Ram Singh returned to Rangamati. Here on the Assam border he stayed for few years. Finally, in 1676 he received permission to leave Bengal and reached to the Imperial court in June. In February 1679 the Bar Phukan submitted Gauhati into the Mughal hands fearing his rival, the Burha Gohain, and Mohammed Azam was made the Viceroy of Bengal, as a reward from Emperor.⁶⁸

In 1681, at the time of Gadadhar Singh, the incompetent ruler came to end and the Ahom force once again unitedly confronted their enemy. He became successful to oust the Mughal from Gauhati. This was the last Mohammedan war. Henceforth, the Manas was accepted by both sides as the boundary.⁶⁹
A Muslim scribe, Shahabuddin Talish came with Mir Jumla to Assam and gave very valuable documents regarding Assam in his work by the name 'Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah'. He mentioned that “in former times no foreign power ever dared to invade this country. The entry and exit of the country are very narrow. The Rajas of this land are very particular in not giving entry to any foreigners nor allowing his subjects to visit any foreign lands. The traders were given permission to come over to the frontier once a year for business and commerce........ Whenever any invading army reached the frontier of this country the people of this land bound to offer stiff resistance and indulge in night attacks upon the enemy. If this tactic failed and the enemy succeeded in entering the land than all the inhabitants left their home and hearth and took shelter on the jungle, infested hills and waited for the rains to come. When the rains pour heavily the people descend upon the enemy who is often taken by surprise and butchered them all. Hence no foreigners can stay here long.

This type of misfortune had befallen to Danial, the son of Sultan Hussain Shah of Bengal who was appointed as the Governor of this conquered territory by his father. Hence all former invasions were short lived. Moreover a large number of Muslims were captured by the Raja and settled down as inhabitants of the country”. 70
The entrance of a number of Pir and Fakir was the other reason for growth of Muslim population who accompanied the Muslim army. Some of them got married and settled here permanently. A number of local people converted into Islam under the influence of Ghiyash-uddin Auliya. He was held in such high esteem that the place of his burial is considered by the Muslims as “Poa Macca” (meaning one-forth of Macca). Hazrat Shah Milan alias Azan Fakir, who is founder of a number of Zikir, came to Assam in later part of 17 century along with four Pirs from some place in western part of the country and permanently settled here with land grants from the Ahom king Godadhar Singh (1682-1696). It is mentioned that he has 120 disciples in his Zikirs and moreover he also converted some Nagas to Islam.

Conversion of local people no doubt increased the Muslim population in Assam. The importation of Muslim artisan by the Ahom kings from the Mughal territory and their employment under Ahom government was another reason for the Muslims to come in Assam.

Muslim people were also appointed as responsible civil and military officers ranging Bora to Hazarika and also as Borua, head of department. These posts were open to the non Ahoms in the earlier period of Ahom rule. There is no evidence to show that the Muslims were appointed as Phukans (a civil and military officer commanding
6000 paiks). But there was another post known as Nawab Deka. This was different and higher than that of a Hazarika or a Barua or probably equivalent to the rank of a Phukan. The office of Uzirs seems to be open for both Hindus and Muslims. They also enjoyed revenue free land from Ahom kings. Muslims were also appointed to the Ahom court as Parsi Parihas (Persian reader) and the Royal mint was under the superintendence of a Muslim officer and several Ahom rulers struck coins with the Persian legends.

During the period Assam was involved in wars with Muslim power in India, the Muslim subjects extended their full support to the Assam King. Shahabuddin Talish commented that their hearts were inclined far more towards mingling with the Assamese than towards association with Muslims. In this connection he mentioned about Ismail Siddique alias Bagh Hazarika, who fought with the Mughals in the battle of Saraighat in 1671.

It may be said that the Muslims gradually accepted Assam as their own land. The influence of Muslim culture also falls on Assamese culture. The king Rudra Singha (1696-1714) kept Shah Newaz as a priest in his court who used to pray for the prosperity of the kingdom in Islamic form. He also brought a number of artisans from Bengal. He brought from Koch Behar an artisan named Ghansyam under his
supervision numerous brick buildings were built at Rangpur, close to Sibsagar, and also at Charaideo. The Muslim tailors were brought by this king. Mughal music also had great impact on him and sent Assamese artists to Delhi to learn the playing of Pakhuaj, Naqqarah (war drum) etc. Musical instruments and Mughal dresses like Chapkan, Futiwai were used by the Assamese dancers and stage players in the theatrical performances in the Vaisnava monasteries. Muslim painters also played an important role in the cultural life of the country. A Muslim artist Dilbar along with his Hindu friend Dasai drew the beautiful pictures in Sukumar Barkah’s Hasti Vidyarnava, an Assamese work on elephantary. By the influence of Muslim culture, the Ahom king brought them from outside and ultimately they mingled with the Assamese society. In the middle of 17 century, Momai Tamuli, Borbara reorganizing the Villages where he used to settle Muslim families beside those of Hindus.

Muslim settlement in Barak Valley started with the conquest of Bengal by Ikhtiar Uddin-Bin-Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1206 AD though the number might have been negligible. Till Sikandar Shah Ghazi conquered Sylhet with the help of Shah Jalal Mujarrad, the saint warrior. Hazrat Shah Jalal Mujarrad was responsible for the spread of Islam in Barak Valley. But it is very difficult to ascertain the time of his
advent to Sylhet due to absence of any document about his life. It is said that he came to Delhi from Yemen at the time of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia who took him as his friend and gifted him two pigeons, the ancestors of the so called Jalali pigeons. But there is nothing in the biography or writings of Hazrat Nizamuddin, about Hazrat Shah Jalal nor there is any mention of his name. In any of the contemporary or later history books like Zia-uddin Barni’s *Tarikh-e-Firoze-Sahi* or Abul Qasim Farishta’s *Tarikh-e-Farishta* or Amir Khusru’s writings on his preceptor, *the Aulia Sahab*. The first biography of Hazrat Shah Jalal Suhail-e-Yemen was written by Nasir-Uddin Hyder in the middle of 19th century and was published from Allahabad in 1860 AD.\(^8^3\)

According to Imperial Gazetteer of India, provincial series, Eastern Bengal and Assam “Gor (Gour) was conquered by the Muslims in AD 1384.\(^8^4\) Prof. Yahya Tamizi of cotton college, Guwahati expresses his view after analyzing different factors, particularly Ibn Batutah’s narration in his Rehla and has come to the conclusion that Hazrat Shah Jalal conquered Sylhet in 1303 AD and not in 1384.\(^8^5\)

According to W.W. Hunter, Sylhet was no doubt attacked by Sultan Sikandar Shah of Bengal, but Gaur Govinda made peace with him and was saved. Sylhet was actually conquered by Sikandar Shah Ghazi of Delhi who was the nephew of Sultan Alauddin Firozeshah
Tughlaq and with whom Hazrat Shah Jalal also joined in the conquest in 1384 or 1354 AD. I am personally inclined to accept this view in respect of date considering silence of the documents of the time of first two Tughlaq Sultans during whose time Hazrat Shah Jalal is claimed to have come to Delhi made friendship with Nizamuddin Aulia. An authentic biography of Hazrat Shah Jalal is yet to be written to put an end to the conjectures made by different schools on the legend about him.

Hazrat Shah Jalal’s 360 disciples spread throughout the valley up to Badarpur (presently in Karimganj district) to preach Islam. A large number of Hindus and others became attracted to the simplicity, equality and brotherhood of Islam and gradually Sylhet became a Muslim dominated area. Hazrat Shah Jalal himself did not assume power. He made Sikandar Shah Ghazi the ruler and devoted himself to prayer and penance. He did neither himself torture the Hindus or their deities nor allowed anybody to do that. As a result of this he was accepted by the Hindus as deity. He lived thirty years in Sylhet. After his death at the age of 62 or 63 a shrine was built around his grave which is revered till today by both the Muslims and Hindus.

Muslims came into Assam for the first time in the early phase of 13 century when Mohammed Bakhtiyar Khilji, a general of Qutub Uddin
led a Turkish army to this region. It may assume that some of his soldier settled here instead of going back with their defeated leader. Then in the subsequent centuries few Muslim soldiers of Mughal army consisting of Pathans and others settled in Assam. These people married the local Assamese women who converted to Islam. Generally, the Muslims in Assam called Gorias, because they came from Gour, means the name of kingdom to which the Mohammedan, the founder of the Muslim empire belonged. Other section of the Muslim, who came from East Bengal (East Pakistan and Bangladesh) and they are known as Miyas. Other sections of Muslims are called Marias, who were the defeated soldiers of Turbak and one section of Muslim are Bengali who are mainly concentrated in the Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj districts of the Barak Valley.
NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Muhammad-ibn-Bakhtiyar Khilji, son of Bakhtiyar, belonged to Khilji tribe in Ghor, a desperate Military leader under Qutub Uddin Aibak. After the death of Muhammad of Ghor in 1206 A.D. Qutub Uddin Aibak become the ruler of the conquered territory of India, which came to be known as the Sultanate of Delhi. For his details, see Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, eng. (tr.), Abul Kalam Muhammad Zakaria, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1983, pp.16-17.

The Khilji was Turkish tribe, an account of whom will be found in all the histories of the race — The Shajirah-ul-Atmak, Jami-ul-Twarikh, Introduction to the Jafarnamah. Ibid., p.17.


5. Ibid., p.138.

6. Ibid., pp.569-573.

7. Barnadi - River which raises in the Himalayas and enters the plain of Assam at 26°13’ N and 91°48’ E. From this point it once formed the boundary between the Kamrup and Darrang Districts. Provincial Gazetteer of Assam, Central Publishing House, Delhi, p.129.


9. Malik Hussain Uddin Iwaz was the leader of Khilji nobels of Gauda who formed a successful plan against Ali Mardan Khilji in 1213 A.D. and came in power in Gauda who threw of his allegiance to the Delhi Emperor Iltutmish and independently ruled till 1225 A.D. and when the Emperor himself marched against him, then he realized his situation and submitted to the Emperor. Minhaj-e-Siraj, Tabaqat-i-Nasiri by Raverty Vol. p.594, Ali Mardan Khalji was the successor of Bakhtiyar. Sarkar J. N. (ed.) History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dhaka University, 1947, p.9f. According to many Muslim historians including Minhaj Ghour was an ancient name of Lakhnawati. It was perhaps that Lakwan


15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.


25. Ibid.


30. Ibid., pp.84-85.


40. This commander’s name cannot be traced in any Muhammadan history. Nusrat Shah ruled till 1532 when he was murdered by his
eunuchs. Alauddin Firuz Shah, who succeeded him, reigned only a few months, and was followed by Mahmud Shah, the last of the dynasty of Hussain Shah. He was defeated by Sher Shah in 1538. Gait, Edward, *A history of Assam*, op. cit., p.87.


42. Ibid., pp.71-33.


44. *Manas* - River which rises in the Butan hills and enters the valley of the Brahmaputra at the point where the Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam meet. It once formed the boundary between these, but its channel is subject to frequent changes and for the greater part of its present course it flows through Goalpara, a district of Assam. *Provincial Gazetteer of Assam*, Cultural Publishing House, Delhi, reprinted 1983, p.129.


50. *The Imperial gazetteer of India*, vol.-vi, Oxford publication, 1908, p.28.


53. *Kallang* - An offshoot of the Brahmaputra which leaves the main stream about ten miles east of Silghat and after a tortuous course of about 73 miles through Nowgong district, rejoins the parent river on the confines of Kamrup. Through the greater portion of its length the banks of the Kalang are lined with villages. The
most important of which are Kaliabar, Samaguri, Puranigudam, Nowgang, the district headquarters, and Raha. *Provincial Gazetteer of Assam*, op. cit., p.127.

54. *Sankosh* - Large river which rises in Bhutan and at the point where it debouches on the plain froms the boundary between the districts of Goalpara in Assam and Jalpaiguri in Bengal.


56. *Provincial Gazetteer of Assam*, op. cit., p.130


59. Ibid.


61. Ibid.


67. Ibid.

68. Ibid., p.148.


73. Memorandum submitted by Maniram Dewan to A. J. Moffatt Mills, report on the Province of Assam 1854, Appendix K-B.

74. Baruah, S. L., "*The Muslim population in pre-British Assam*", Indian History Congress, op. cit., p.574.
75. Ibid., p.575.
76. Ibid., p.576.

78. *Pakhwaj* - which is believed to have been introduced into Assam during the time of Rudra Singha and Naqqara-war drum which Akbar is said have adept has also found its importance in the Vaishnava Namkirtana performance particularly in Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam where it came to be known as Nagaraor Naagera. Saikia, M. K., *Assam Muslim relation and its cultural significance*, op. cit., p.286.


