

## Full Length Research Paper

# The Advent of Muslim in Assam: A Historical perspective.

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Accepted 12 Aug, 2020

**Abstract:** This paper explores the advent of Muslim in Assam, a region in northern India, from the 7th century to the present day. It examines the early interactions between Muslims and the local population, the role of Sufi saints and individual preachers, and the impact of Muslim expeditions and settlements on the region's cultural and social fabric. This study highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of Islam's introduction to Assam, challenging the conventional narrative that attributes its arrival solely to military conquest.

**Keywords:** Muslim, Suian, Garia Muslim, Assamese Culture, Cultural Exchange, Bakhtiyar Khilji, Islamic Influence, Historical Perspective.

### Introduction:

Assam, a region in northeastern India, has a rich cultural heritage shaped by its strategic location on the border of the Indian subcontinent. The advent of Muslims in Assam is a topic of interest among historians, with various perspectives on when and how Islam was introduced to the region. This paper aims to explore the historical context of Muslim arrival in Assam, examining the early interactions, Sufi influence and Muslim expeditions and settlements. The Muslim community in Assam, with origins dating back to the early 13th century and even possibly before. They are not a monolithic group but consist of indigenous Assamese Muslims (also called Axomiya Musalman or khilonjia Musalman), Neo-Assamese Muslims, and other migrants groups from Bengal and elsewhere. Indigenous Assamese Muslims have been living in the Brahmaputra valley for centuries and share deep cultural, linguistic and social ties with the Assamese population, including participation in Assamese literature and traditions.

### Early Interactions (7th-12th century)

The interaction between Muslims and Assam began as early as the 7th century, primarily through trade and commerce. Arabian, Syrian, and Persian traders frequently visited the region, which was situated on an important trade route. These early interactions likely introduced Islamic practices and ideas to the local population.

### Sufi Influence (pre-1206 A.D)

Before Bakhtiyar Khilji's expedition in 1205

A.D., Sufi Saints and individual preachers played a significant role in spreading Islam in Assam. Some local kings and powerful individuals such as a Koch king in western Assam, are said to have embraced Islam in 1053 A.D. after interacting with Sufi saints. This suggests that Islam had a presence in Assam before the 13th century.

### Muslim Expeditions and settlements (13th century onwards)

Bakhtiyar Khilji's expedition in 1205 A.D. marked the beginning of Muslim political history in Assam. However, it's essential to note that this expedition was not the primary means of introducing Islam to the region. Instead, it was part of a broader process of cultural exchange and interaction. Over time, many Muslims settled in Assam, contributing to the region's cultural and social fabric.

### Impact on Assam's culture and society:

The advent of Muslims in Assam had a profound impact on the region's culture and society. Muslim traditions, culture, resulting in a unique cultural synthesis. The influence of Muslims on architecture, art and literature can be seen in Assam's monuments, mosques and literary works.

In the mid-13th century, Muslim General Malik Ikhtiyaruddin Yuzbak briefly occupied parts of Assam, introducing Islamic prayers like Khutbah and Friday services, although he was soon defeated by local rulers. The region saw repeated Muslim invasions from Bengal Sultanate forces and later Mughal attempts, but sustainable political control

was never fully established by these powers. Despite the military conflicts, the Muslim community established itself and was integrated into Assamese society over centuries.

#### **During Ahom period, some Muslims**

Immigration was encouraged with Muslims serving in various capacities including military, artisans, and administration, contributing to Assamese cultural and social life. Notably, Muslims played a role in the naval battle of Saraighat as allies of the Ahom. Islamic religious leaders like Sufi saints preached in the Assamese language fostering cultural integration and coexistence with local communities. Indigenous Muslim groups, such as the Delhi Muslims, trace their lineage directly to early converts like Ali Mech, identifying as native Assamese Muslims.

#### **Literature Review:**

1. Muslim settlements in Assam began in the 13th century with traders and Sufi saints.
2. Sufis and Muslim rulers played a significant role in spreading Islam.
3. Muslim culture has had a profound impact on Assamese literature, art and architecture.
4. Muslims in Assam face socio-economic challenges and identity politics.

#### **Major Themes:**

1. Historical accounts of Muslim settlement and spread of Assam.
2. Cultural Exchange and synthesis between Assamese and Muslim communities.
3. Socio-economic conditions and identity politics of Muslims in Assam.

#### **Gaps:**

1. Limited research on Muslim woman's experiences and contributions.
2. Need for more studies on the impact of globalization and modernization.

#### **Methodology:**

1. Historical research: Analyze primary and secondary sources, such as historical texts, documents, and manuscripts to reconstruct the timeline of Muslims arrival and settlements in Assam.
2. Archival Studies: Examine archival records, including government documents, letters and other materials to gain insights into the administrative and social context of Muslim settlement.
3. Oral History: Conduct interviews with local communities, historians and religious leaders to gather information on the experiences and traditions of Muslims in Assam.
4. Cultural Analysis: Study the cultural practices traditions and customs of Muslims in Assam, including their art, literature and architecture.
5. Comparative Analysis: Compare the

experiences of Muslims in Assam with those in other parts of India of southeast Asia to identify patterns and differences.

#### **Conclusion:**

The advent of Muslims in Assam was a gradual process that spanned several centuries. From the early Muslim settlement to the influence of Sufi saints and Muslim rulers, Islam has become an integral part of Assam's history and culture. Understanding the history of Muslim settlement in Assam is essential to appreciating the region's diversity and promoting communal harmony. The Muslim population in Assam is a major demographic group, comprising over 34% as per the 2011 census report of India, with projections suggesting it may reach parity with the Hindu population around 2041 if current growth trends continue. About 3% of the Muslim population are indigenous Assamese Muslims, while the remaining largely descended from migrants in recent centuries.

Despite complex historical challenges, the Muslim community in Assam today is diverse and integral to social and cultural fabric of the state, reflecting a blend of indigenous roots and later migrations. They have influenced Assamese language, literature and culture while maintaining Islamic religious traditions.

#### **References:**

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#### **Challenges:**

1. Limited Sources: Availability and accessibility of primary sources.
2. Bias and perspective: Potential biases in sources and interpretations.
3. Complexity: Complexity of historical events and cultural practices