

Urban Morphology in Transition: A 100-Year Analysis of Tilagor, Sylhet (SPZ 4, 10, 11; Wards 4, 5, 18–24)

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Abstract

Urban morphology offers critical insight into the ways cities evolve over time, reflecting socio-economic, cultural, and environmental forces. This study investigates the morphological transformation of Tilagor, a strategic sector of Sylhet, Bangladesh, spanning 90 years (1934–2023). The research focuses on Strategic Planning Zones (SPZ) 4, 10, and 11, covering Wards 4, 5, and 18–24, representing a microcosm of Sylhet's broader urban dynamics. Using historical maps, satellite imagery, and spatial analysis, the study traces the city's growth from a colonial-era settlement to a contemporary urban landscape characterized by densification, altered street networks, and evolving plot patterns. The findings reveal distinct phases of expansion influenced by socio-economic pressures, population growth, and urban planning initiatives. By mapping these transformations, the research highlights how morphological patterns shape urban livability, infrastructure development, and community interactions. The study also emphasizes the importance of understanding long-term urban form evolution in guiding future planning strategies that are both sustainable and context-sensitive. Overall, this paper demonstrates the value of detailed morphological analysis as a tool for informing urban policy and design in rapidly changing cities, offering lessons relevant not only to Sylhet but to secondary cities experiencing similar growth pressures in the Global South.

Keywords: *Urban morphology, Tilagor, Sylhet, spatial growth, urban transformation, sustainable urbanism*

1. Introduction

Urban morphology, the study of the form and structure of human settlements, provides a framework for understanding how cities evolve over time in response to political, social, economic, and religious influences [1]. Cities in South Asia, such as Sylhet, Bangladesh, have experienced complex layers of transformation shaped by both natural landscapes and cultural heritage [2]. This research investigates the morphological transformation of Tilagor, a historically significant sector of Sylhet, over a 90-year period (1934–2023). The study area, covering Strategic Planning Zones (SPZ) 4, 10, and 11 and Wards 4, 5, and 18–24, represents a dynamic segment of the city's expansion. Once part of forests and hilly terrain, Tilagor has gradually been absorbed into Sylhet's urban fabric as the city expanded due to population growth, infrastructure development, and administrative reforms [3]. The history of Sylhet demonstrates distinct phases of transformation, from its roots in the Harikela Kingdom to the colonial period under Bengal Province, followed by transitions through East Pakistan and post-independence Bangladesh [4]. Government interventions, including the construction of highways, drainage improvements, and public facilities, have further accelerated the city's growth, alongside demographic and economic changes [5]. Religious and cultural streams have also shaped Sylhet's urban identity. Hinduism and Islam, the two dominant religious traditions in the region, influenced the development of sacred sites, architectural monuments, and neighborhood centers [6]. These elements continue to provide Sylhet with a unique cultural landscape that intertwines faith, community, and urban growth.

At present, Sylhet City Corporation governs an expanded municipal boundary comprising 42 wards and 207 mahallahs, with additional expansions under review as of 2022 [7]. The city plays a critical role in Bangladesh's economy, being known for its remittance flows, tea estates, natural gas, and cross-border trade. However, rapid growth has also created challenges related to infrastructure, drainage, and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage [8]. This study aims to provide a critical overview of the past, present, and potential future development of Tilagor, tracing its transformation through cartographic surveys, archival studies, and field investigations. By documenting landmarks, road networks, drainage systems, and community growth centers—including MC College, Shahporan Mazar, and Burhanuddin Mazar—the research highlights the relationship between historical context and contemporary urban form. The findings are intended to contribute to a deeper understanding of Sylhet's urban morphology, offering insights that may inform future planning and sustainable growth strategies in similar secondary cities of South Asia [9].

2. The Research Process & Flow Diagram

To achieve all the objectives of our morphological analysis a systematic study is followed that is summarized into the following flow diagram.

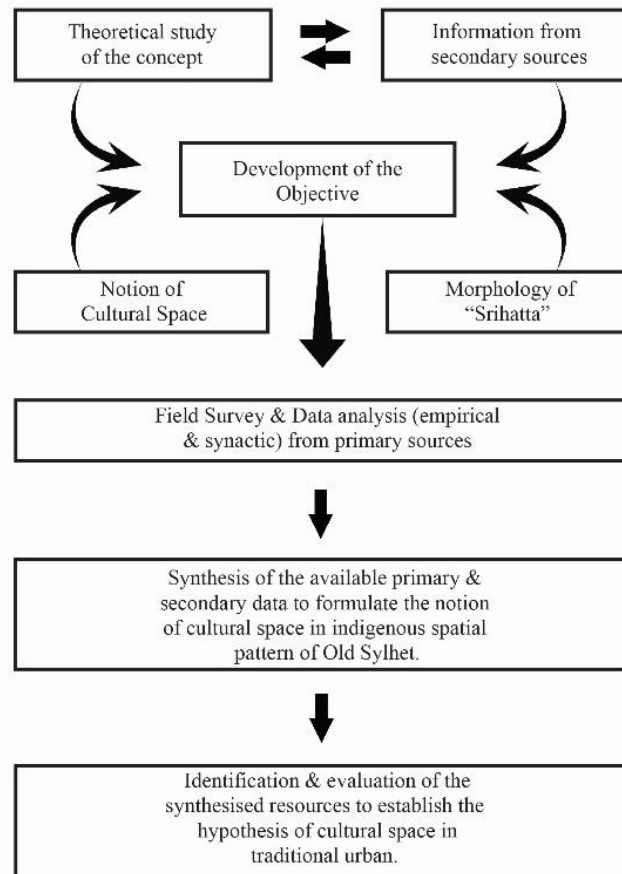


Figure 01: Flow Diagram of Resarch Process (Modified By Author)

3. Context

Sylhet city is located in the northeastern region of Bangladesh, at approximately 24.8917°N latitude and 91.8833°E longitude [10]. The city lies on the banks of the Surma River and forms part of a larger district encompassing 12 Upazilas, 5 Pourashavas, and 105 unions [11]. Covering a diverse landscape, Sylhet is bordered by the Jaintia, Khasi, and Tripura hills and is characterized by a combination of low-lying floodplains, locally known as Haors, and hilly terrain [12]. The climate of Sylhet is humid subtropical, with hot and humid summers and relatively cool winters, and falls within the monsoon climatic zone [13]. Geologically, the region exhibits complex formations with evidence of ancient marine deposits, including limestone and stone quarries, reflecting its Oligo-Miocene past [14]. Sylhet has historically experienced seismic activity, with three major earthquakes occurring over the past 150 years, the most recent in 1918 [15]. Sylhet is also recognized as a significant religious and cultural center. It hosts the mausoleums of Hazrat Shah Jalal (R) and Hazrat Shaparan (R), among over 360 other sacred sites, earning it the title "City of Saints" [16]. The population is predominantly Muslim (approximately 90%), with Hindu (7%), Buddhist (0.07%), and other communities comprising the remainder [17]. The city is also home to several historical landmarks, including Kean Bridge, Ali Amzad Watch, Zitu Miar Bari, Jointa Raj Bari, Jainta Ranir Gate, Monipuri Museum, Osmani Museum, and the House of Chaitanya Dev [18].

Economically, Sylhet is resource-rich, with oil, natural gas, and stone quarries contributing to regional development. Its tea gardens and tropical forests are renowned, and the city has strong connections nationally and internationally, facilitated by Shahjalal International Airport and the Tamabil inland port [19]. Despite a relatively modest industrial base, Sylhet ranks third in the country in terms of industrialization and hosts a diverse range of commercial markets and infrastructure facilities [20]. Administratively, Sylhet City is divided into wards under the Sylhet City Corporation (SCC), which governs urban planning, infrastructure, and public services. As of 2022, SCC comprises 42 wards and 207 mahallahs, with ongoing adjustments to boundaries to accommodate urban growth [21]. The study area for this research focuses on Tilagor, encompassing SPZs 4, 10, and 11, and Wards 4, 5, and 18–24, representing a key segment of Sylhet's morphological development over time [22].

This context provides the foundation for analyzing historical and contemporary urban form, including spatial patterns, cultural influences, and infrastructural developments, which are central to understanding Tilagor's evolving morphology.



Figure 02: Denote Sylhet in the Map of Bangladesh (Source: UN Geospatial)

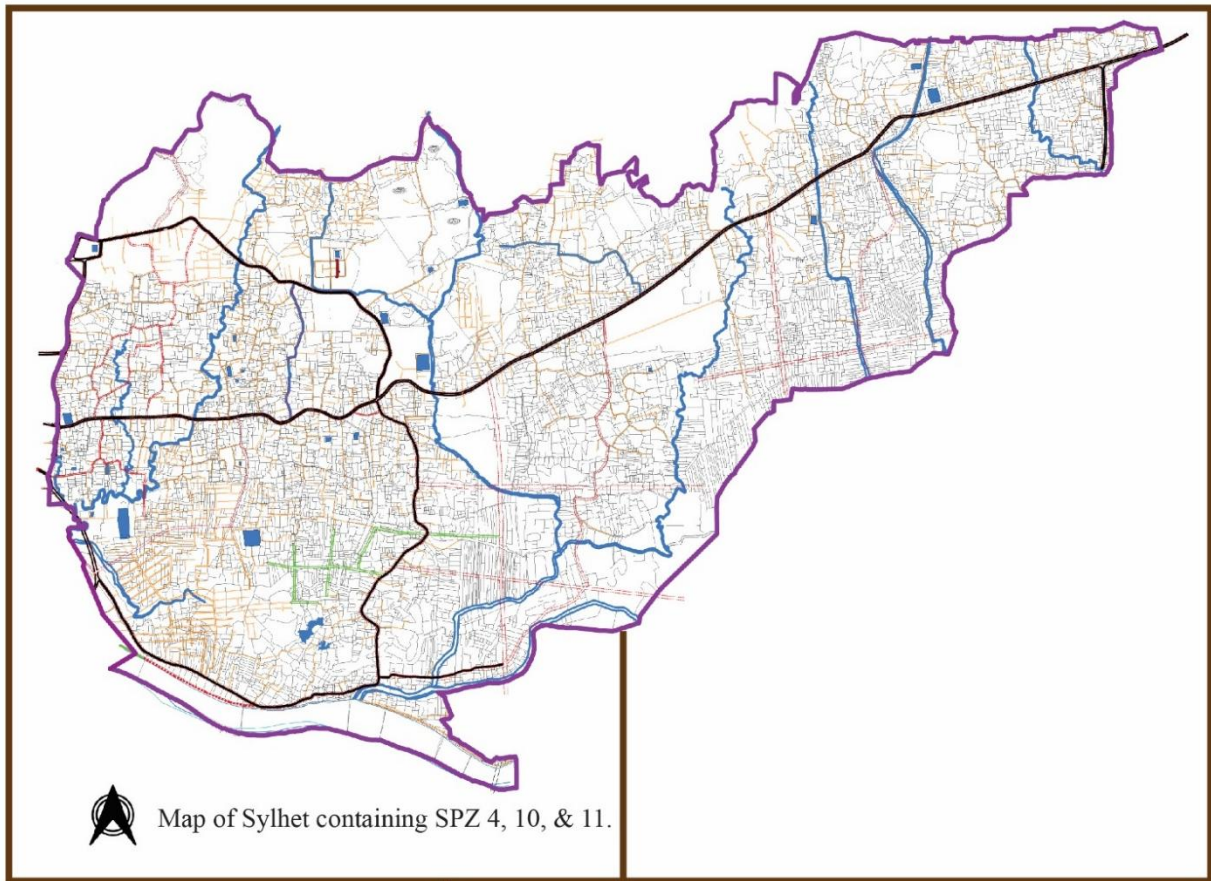


Figure 03: Map of Sylhet containing SPZ 4, 10, & 11 (Source: Mouja Map, Modified by Author)

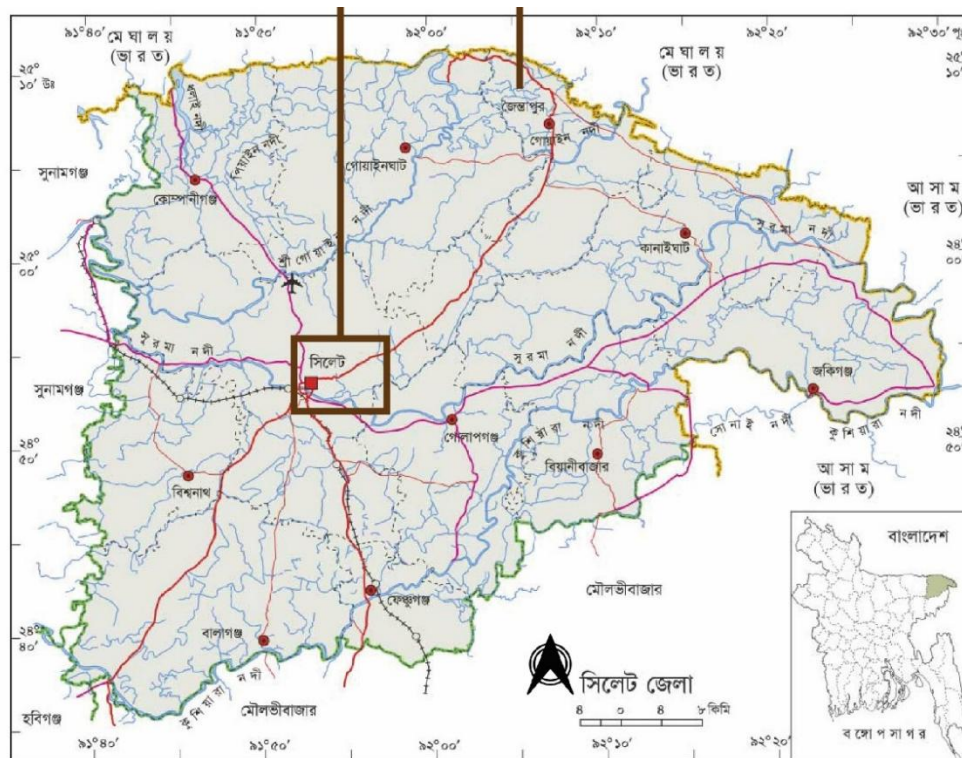
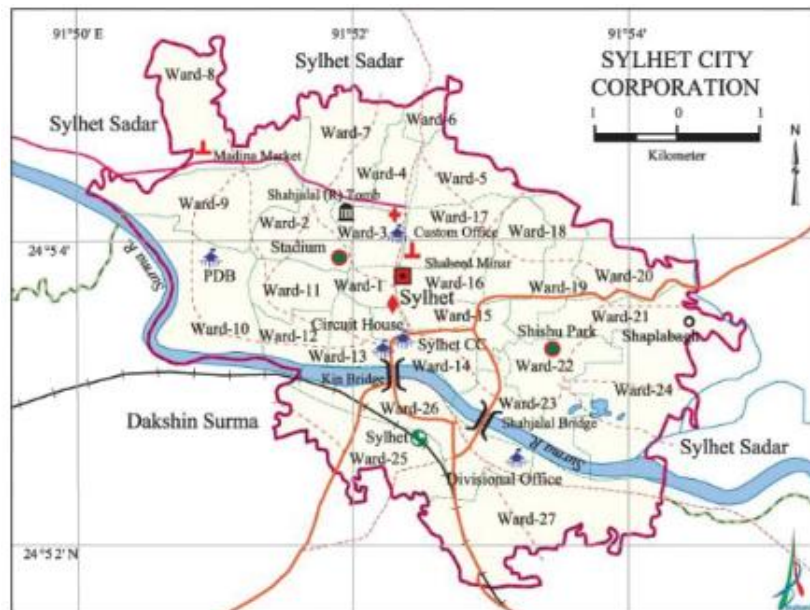


Figure 04: Map of Sylhet (Source: aboutbangladesh71.blogspot.com, Modified by Author)

Administration Sylhet Municipality was formed in 1867, and it was turned into City Corporation on April 9, 2001.

City Corporation	Thana	Ward	Mohollas
1	4	42	218

Thana						
City Corporation	Area (Sqkm)	Ward	Mahallahs	Population	Density (Per Sqkm)	Literacy Rate (%)
Kotwali model	17.22	18	144	168271	9772	71.75
Jalalabad	0.96	1	8	7409	6160	67.98
Dakshin Surma	2.7	2	10	19912	7375	64.13
Bimanbondar	1.84	2	22	22654	12312	71.38
Shahporan	4.64	4	42	52360	11284	66.70



IJSDRTH01015	International Journal of Scientific Development and Research (IJS DR) www.ijedr.org	b164
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Table 2 Sylhet City Corporation at a Glance

First Chairman	Ray Bahadur Dulal Chandra Deb
Municipality was formed	1867
Upgraded to City Corporation	9 April 2001
First Mayor	Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran
Number of holding	29381
Ward	27
Wards Commissioners	27
Reserved Seats for woman Commissioners	9
Police Station	2
Roads	21998 km
Park	3
Community Center	30
Gymnasium	3
Graveyard & Cemetery	4
Bus Terminals	2
Traffic Signal	7

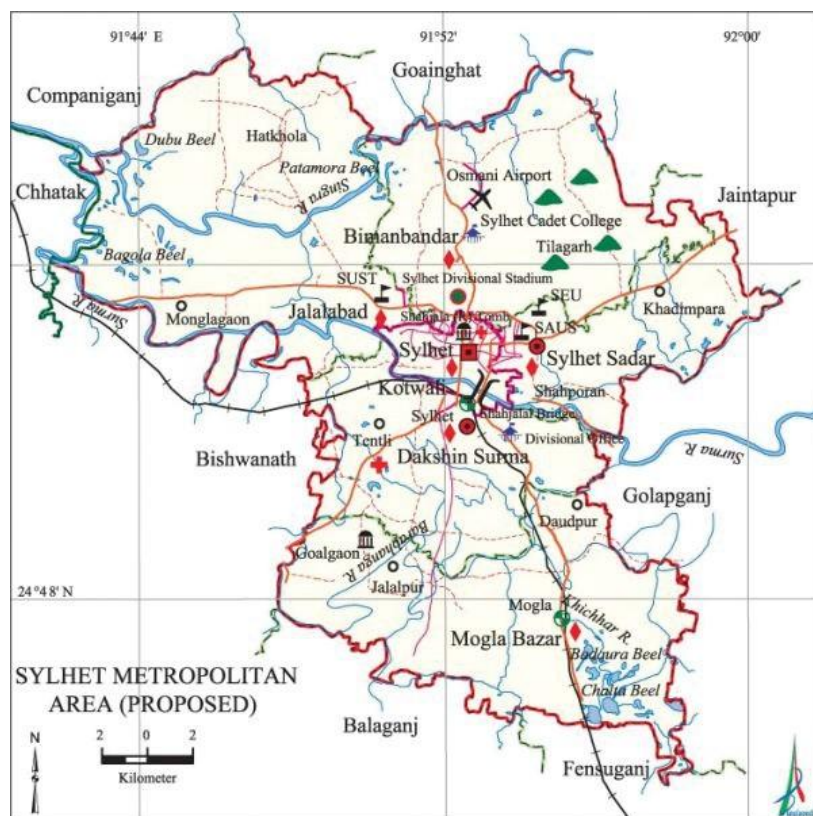
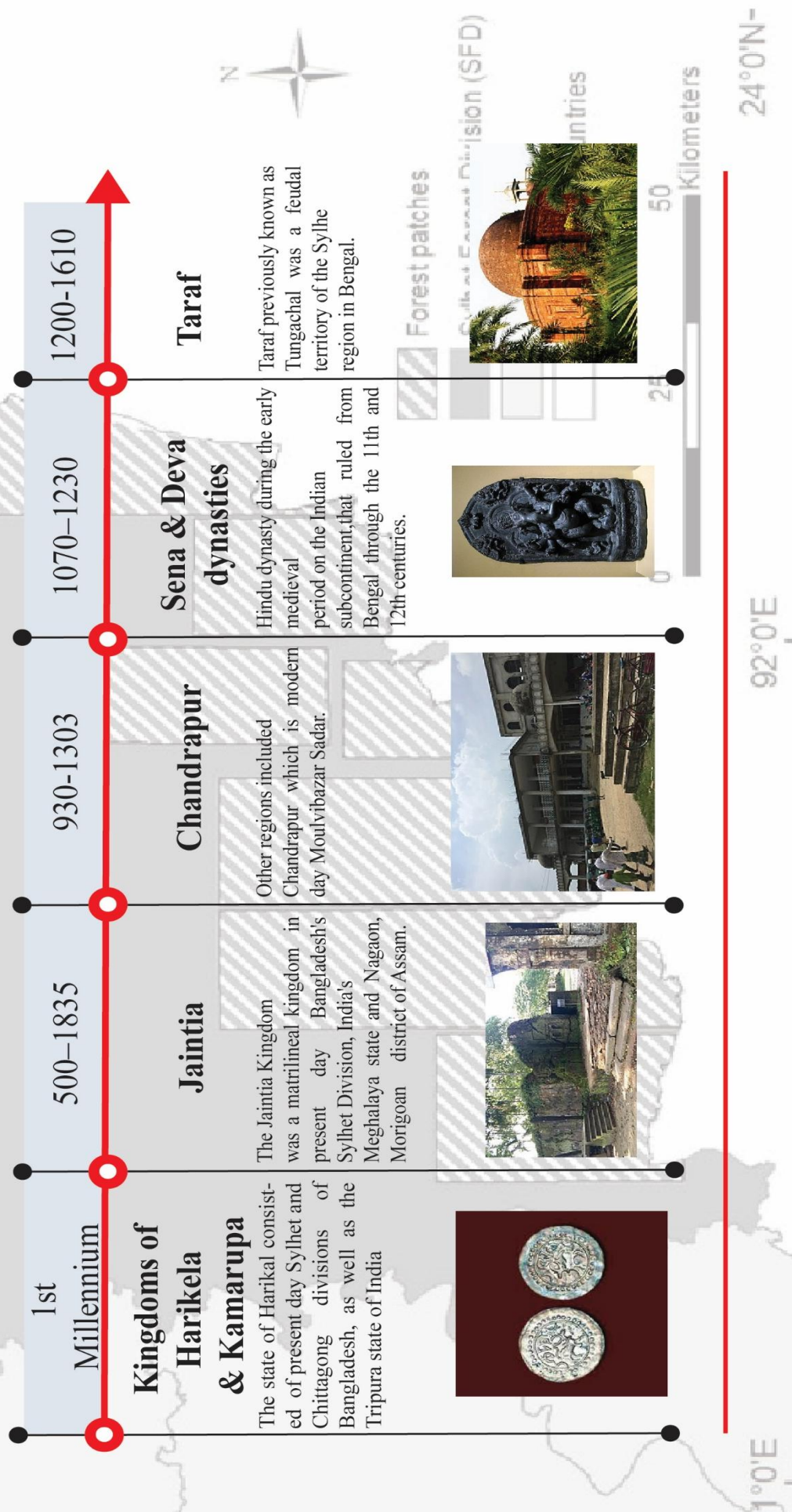
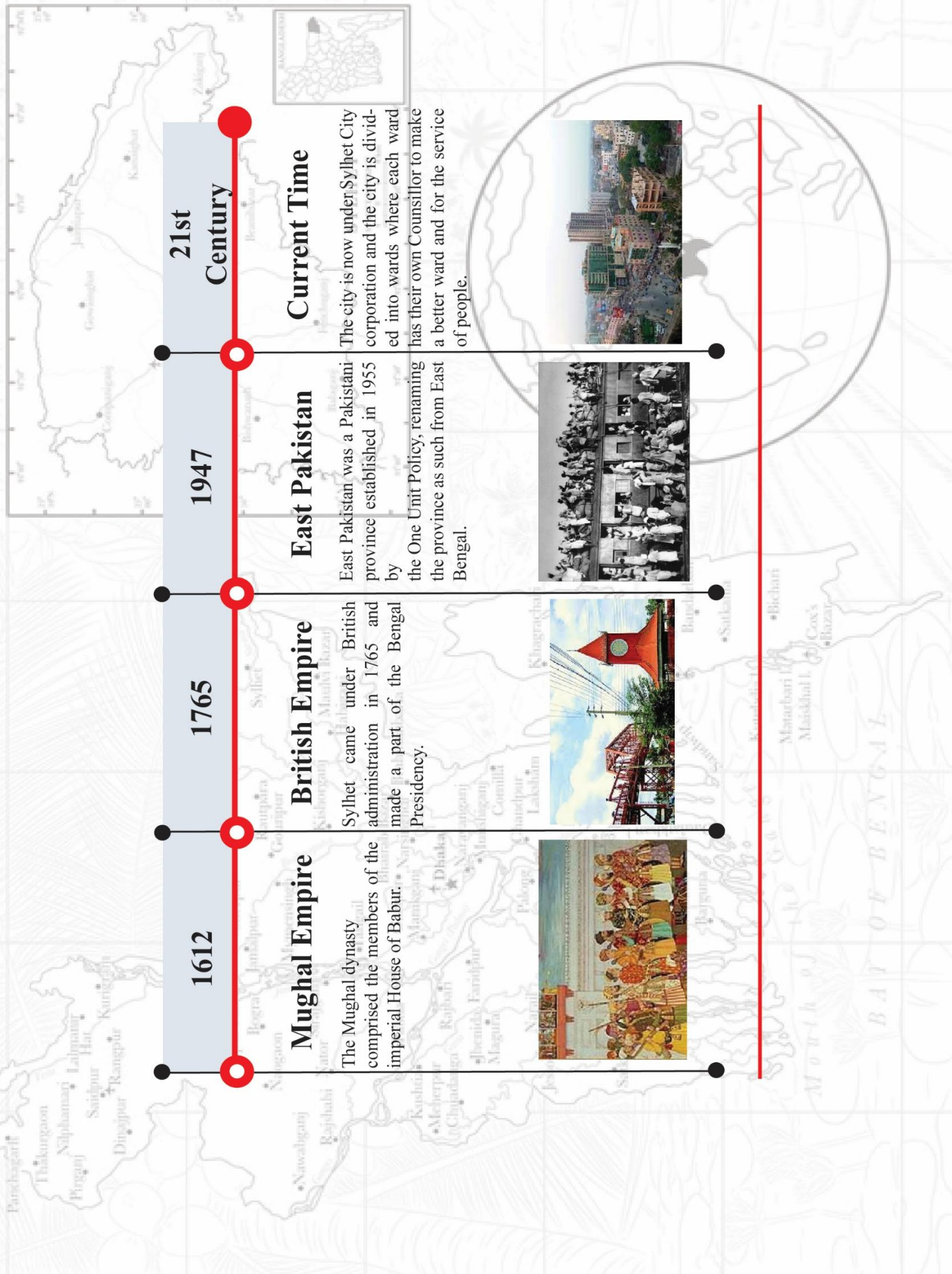


Figure 06: Map of Sylhet Proposed Metropolitan Area (Source: Banglapedia)

HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF SYLHET







5. Research Methodology

The methodological framework for this study was designed to examine the morphological transformation of Tilagor, Sylhet, over a ninety-year period (1934–2023). A mixed-method approach combining historical analysis, spatial mapping, and field surveys was employed to ensure both diachronic (over time) and synchronic (contemporary) perspectives were addressed.

Historical and Archival Analysis

Primary and secondary historical sources, including colonial-era maps (1934 cadastral survey), aerial photographs, government records, and archival documents from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and Sylhet City Corporation, were reviewed to reconstruct the early urban fabric of Sylhet. Particular attention was given to administrative shifts, demographic records, and infrastructural interventions during British, Pakistani, and post-independence Bangladesh periods [23, 24].

Spatial and Morphological Mapping

A comparative cartographic method was applied to analyze changes in land use, road networks, settlement patterns, and religious/cultural landmarks across different timelines. Strategic Planning Zone (SPZ) maps and ward-level demarcations provided by Sylhet City Corporation (SPZ 4, 10, and 11; Wards 4, 5, and 18–24) were digitized and overlaid using GIS-based techniques. This allowed for identification of growth centers, edge expansion, and transformation of public spaces [25, 26].

Field Survey and Ground Verification

To complement the archival analysis, structured field surveys were conducted in the study area. Local residents, community leaders, and senior inhabitants were interviewed to validate historical narratives and provide insights into urban transformation. Key landmarks such as MC College, Shahporan Mazar, Burhanuddin Mazar, and surrounding neighborhoods were selected as growth nodes for observation. Discussions with ward councillors and officials of Sylhet City Corporation were also incorporated to understand recent infrastructural developments [27].

Data Collection from Government and Institutional Sources

Official records, including infrastructure plans, drainage and utility layouts, and expansion notifications (e.g., SRO No. 288-Act/2021), were collected from institutions such as the Ministry of Land, Zila Parishad, Sylhet City Corporation, and related urban planning offices. These datasets provided updated information on roads, gas, water, and electricity networks within the study area [28].

Analytical Framework

The data was analyzed through a morphological lens, focusing on street patterns, plot structures, and building typologies. Both quantitative measures (e.g., density, land-use ratios) and qualitative aspects (e.g., religious influence on urban form, cultural identity of neighborhoods) were examined. The study employed Conzenian urban morphology principles, alongside contemporary urban design theories, to interpret changes across historical periods [29, 30].

6. Objectives and Limitations

The present research intended to explore the origin and development of indigenous city form with particular emphasis on Sylhet through an orderly comparison of its historical, social and morphological growth pattern. Moreover, spatial structure of historically and culturally eminent local areas is meticulously observed. The main objective of this present research sets out to investigate firstly the historical and morphological evolution of Sylhet over the period of hundreds of years (1934-2023) to find spontaneous spaces, which had been historically and culturally important and remain lively in the form of cultural spaces over time. Then finally analyze the socio-physical qualities and internal spatial structure of these spaces that makes the Sylhet vibrant and impulsive even at present.

The methodological limitation is empirical research where in addition to primary surveys, social dimension and perceptual component of cultural space needs elaborate Environment Behavior Study. However, due to time limitations this research helps from secondary resources about environment behavior study along with cognitive approach for perceptual component and social dimension of cultural space.

Another limitation is due to inadequacy of the research material. As the research problem is constructed as a set of interdisciplinary questions, the research needs explanation and support from different related grounds.

7. Literature Review

Regions of Sylhet

From Shilahat (King Guhak's Haat).

King Guhak of the ancient Gaur state is believed to have founded a market (haat) named Shilahat after his daughter Shiladevi. Over time, the name is thought to have transformed into Silat or Sylhet [31].

From Hindu Mythology.

According to Hindu belief, when the bones of Goddess Sati fell across the subcontinent, two of them fell in Sylhet. Since another name of Sati is Sri, some scholars argue that Srihatta originated from "Sri+Hatta" (market), later evolving into Sylhet [31].

From Hazrat Shahjalal (RA).

A local tradition holds that upon his arrival, Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) proclaimed “Sil Hot Jah” (“move the stones”), which eventually gave rise to the term Silhat or Sylhet [32].

Early Foreign Accounts.

The Chinese Buddhist scholar and traveler Hiuen Tsang (640 AD) mentioned the region as Shi-Li-Cha-T-L, which some associate with Srihatta [31].

Similarly, the Muslim scholar Al-Beruni in the 11th century referenced Silahet in his work Kitabul Hind [31].

Colonial Period Standardization.

During British colonial rule, the name was recorded as Silhet. To avoid confusion with Silchar, the district headquarters, the spelling was later standardized as Sylhet in the early 19th century [32].

Sylhet District and Sylhet Division

Sylhet District was officially established on March 17, 1772, during British colonial rule. Initially, it was part of the Bengal Province under the jurisdiction of the Dhaka Division. In 1878, the district was transferred to the newly created Assam Province, remaining under its administration until 1947 [33]. Following the partition of British India, a referendum held in July 1947 resulted in the majority of Sylhet District joining East Pakistan, which later became Bangladesh. The referendum excluded the Karimganj subdivision, which remained part of India [34].

Subsequently, Sylhet District was incorporated into the Chittagong Division of East Pakistan. In 1983–84, the Greater Sylhet region was divided into four new districts: Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, and Habiganj [1]. In 1995, the Sylhet Division was established, comprising these four districts, with Mr. Mohammad Habibur Rahman serving as its first commissioner [33].

The History of Sylhet Timeline

Harikela: Ancient Empire of Eastern Bengal

Overview

Harikela was an ancient empire located in the eastern region of the Indian subcontinent. It was originally an independent township of ancient East Bengal, with a continuous existence of approximately 500 years. The state of Harikela encompassed present-day Sylhet and Chittagong divisions of Bangladesh, as well as the Tripura state of India.

History

The Chinese traveler Yijing (7th century CE) mentioned a kingdom called Ali-ki-lo, identified with Harikela. During the 10th century CE, the region was ruled by the Chandra dynasty. The Chandras were later overthrown by the Varman dynasty of Southeast Bengal, who were in turn succeeded by the Deva dynasty. By the 17th century, the Mughal

Empire absorbed Harikela, incorporating it into the Bengal province.

Geography

Initially, the capital of Harikela was near Chittagong before being moved to Munshiganj by the Chandras. Arab traders recognized Harikela as the coastal regions of Bengal (near Chittagong) during the early period, and Sylhet was included in the later period, with influence extending as far as the ancient Sundarbans [35].

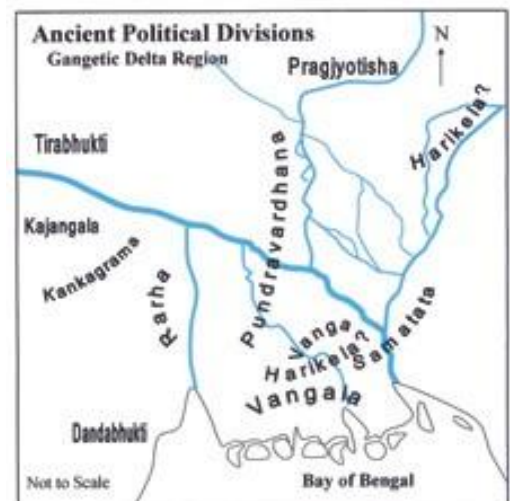


Figure 07: Ancient Political Divisions
(Source: Wikipedia)

Kamarupa: Early State of Assam

Origins and Political Dynasties

Kamarupa (also known as Pragjyotisha or Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa) was one of the earliest documented kingdoms in the northeastern Indian subcontinent, lasting approximately from 350 to 1140 CE. The kingdom absorbed Davaka in the 5th century CE. It was ruled by several dynasties in succession: the Varman dynasty, the Mlechchha dynasty, and then the Pala dynasty.

Capitals

The capitals of Kamarupa shifted with dynasties; some of the known capitals include Pragjyotishpura (in present-day Guwahati), Haruppeswara, Durjaya,

and Tezpur.

Territorial Extent

At its zenith, Kamarupa encompassed the Brahmaputra Valley, large parts of



Figure 08: Map of the Sena Empire
(Source: Wikipedia)

North Bengal, Bhutan, and the northern portion of present-day Bangladesh. At various periods it also included adjacent parts of West Bengal, Bihar, and Sylhet.

Etymology and Literary Sources

The earliest recorded use of the name Kamarupa is from the 4th century CE, when Samudragupta's Allahabad Pillar inscription refers to it as a frontier kingdom. The name Pragjyotisha is mentioned in older epic literature, but its identification with the historical kingdom became clearer later, especially under Bhaskaravarman in the 7th century CE. The 10th-century Kalika Purana explains the name Kamarupa as "the form (rupa) regained by Kama", related to Kamadeva mythology.

Historical References and Sources

Among important sources are the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta (4th century), Chinese traveler Xuanzang's accounts from the 7th century, and several epigraphic records and Sanskrit inscriptions. This helps trace the political history and extent of Kamarupa.

Boundaries & Internal Divisions

Traditional boundaries described in texts such as Kalika Purana and Yogini Tantra place Kamarupa between the Karatoya River in the west, Sadiya in the east, southern limits near Dhaka/Mymensingh (Bangladesh), and Kanchenjunga in the north. Internally, the region was divided into pithas (territorial-religious units) like Ratnapitha, Bhadrupitha, Saumarupitha, and Kamapitha. [36].

The Varman dynasty (c. 350–c. 650 CE)

It was founded by *Pushyavarman* (350–374 CE), who consolidated his rule despite multiple conflicts. His successor *Samudravarman* (374–398 CE), named after Samudragupta, was recognized as overlord by many local rulers. Later monarchs expanded the kingdom, with *Kalyanavarman* (422–446 CE) annexing *Davaka* and *Mahendravarman* (470–494 CE) extending authority further eastward. *Narayanavarman* (494–518 CE) and *Bhutivarman* (518–542 CE) performed the *ashvamedha* (horse sacrifice). The Nidhanpur inscription of *Bhaskaravarman* (600–650 CE) records that these territorial expansions included *Chandrapuri visaya*, corresponding to modern Sylhet [37].

The dynasty faced significant challenges, including invasions by *Yasodharman* of Malwa (525–535 CE). Despite this, *Sthitavarman* (566–590 CE) defeated the Gauda Kingdom and conducted two horse sacrifices, suggesting recovery of Kamarupa's power [38]. His successor *Susthitavarman* (590–600 CE) struggled against *Mahasenagupta* of East Malwa. Susthitavarman's sons, *Suprathisthitavarman* (595–600 CE) and *Bhaskaravarman* (600–650 CE), were briefly captured by the Gauda kingdom but later restored their authority through a political settlement [37].

Among all rulers, *Bhaskaravarman* was the most illustrious. He allied with *Harshavardhana* of Kanauj after 606 CE against *Shashanka* of Gauda, significantly weakening Gauda's influence. His military success is evident in the Nidhanpur copper-plate inscription, issued from his victory camp in *Karnasuvarna* (modern Murshidabad, West Bengal), reaffirming land grants in Sylhet first made by *Bhutivarman* [37].

Mlechchha dynasty (c. 655–c. 900 CE)

The Mlechchha dynasty emerged following the death of *Bhaskaravarman* (600–650 CE), the last ruler of the Varman dynasty, who left no heir [39]. After a period of civil unrest and political instability, authority was assumed by *Salasthambha* (c. 655–670 CE), possibly a former local governor belonging to the indigenous *Mlechchha* (or *Mech*) community [40]. Although the dynasty traced its lineage symbolically to the Naraka tradition, it had no direct dynastic connection with its predecessor, the Varmans [39].

The capital of this dynasty was *Haruppesvara*, identified with modern *Dah Parbatiya* near Tezpur [40]. Governance under the Mlechchhas displayed feudal features, with power distributed among the king and subordinate rulers. These included *mahasamantas* (great feudatories) and *samantas* (vassals), who exercised significant regional autonomy [39]. The dynasty continued until the reign of its last known ruler, *Tyāga Singha* (c. 890–900 CE) [40].

Pala dynasty of Kamarupa (c. 900–c. 1100 CE)

After the death of *Tyāgasimha* without an heir, *Brahmapala* (c. 900–920 CE), a member of the Bhauma family, was elected king by the ruling chieftains, following a process similar to the election of *Gopala* of the Bengal Pala Empire [41]. The dynasty's original capital was *Hadapeshvara*, later shifted to *Durjaya*, founded by *Ratnapala* (c. 920–960 CE) near modern Guwahati [42]. The most prominent Pala ruler, *Dharmapala* (c. 1035–1060 CE), established his capital at *Kamarupanagara*, now identified with North Guwahati [41].

Western Kamarupa and External Invasions

During this period, Kamarupa faced external challenges. The Pala king *Ramapala* of Bengal temporarily conquered western Kamarupa [42]. Ramapala could not maintain long-term control, and *Timgyadeva* (c. 1110–1126 CE) ruled western Kamarupa independently. His son, *Vaidyadeva*, was sent against Timgyadeva by *Kumarapala* but eventually styled himself after the earlier Kamarupa kings. He issued grants under the traditional elephant seal and assumed the title of *Maharajadhiraja*, although he did not adopt the title *Pragjyotisadhipati* [43]. Vaidyadeva controlled portions of Kamrup, Goalpara, and North Bengal, but not Kamarupanagara, the former seat of Kamarupa kings.

Central Kamarupa

As Kamarupa's authority declined, parts of Kamrup, Darrang, and Sonitpur districts on the north bank of the Brahmaputra came under local rulers. An inscription dated 1185 CE records a "Lunar dynasty" of four rulers—*Bhaskara*, *Rayarideva*, *Udayakarna*, and *Vallabhadeva*—whose reign spanned 1120–1200 CE [42].

Southern Kamarupa

In the Sylhet region, local rulers emerged, including *Kharabana*, *Gokuladeva*, *Narayana*, and *Kesavadeva*, governing smaller political units independent of central authority [43].

Kamarupa Proper and Turko-Afghan Invasions

Kamarupa proper, located south of the Brahmaputra with its center at *Kamarupanagara*, continued under rulers *Prithu*, *Samudrapala*, and *Sandhya* [41]. In 1206, the Turko-Afghan general *Bakhtiyar Khalji* passed through Kamarupa on an expedition toward Tibet, which ended in failure [42].

At this time, the reigning monarch was *Raja Prithu* (d. 1228 CE), identified in some records as *Visvasundara*, son of *Vallabhadeva* of the Lunar dynasty. *Prithu* successfully resisted invasions by *Ghiyasuddin Iwaj Shah of Gauda* (1226–1227 CE) but was eventually defeated, captured, and executed by *Nasiruddin Mahmud* in 1228 CE [42]. *Nasiruddin* briefly installed a tributary ruler, but control returned to local rulers following his death in 1229 CE.

Capital: 1. Pragjyotishpura.

2. Haruppeswara.

3. Durjaya.

Common languages: Kamarupi Prakrit, Sanskrit, Austroasiatic, Tibeto-Burman.

Religion: Hinduism, Tribal religion.

Government: Absolute monarchy

Historical era: Classical India.

Established: 350.

Disestablished: 1140.

Succeeded by 1. Ahom kingdom.

2. Kamata kingdom.

3. Chutia Kingdom.

4. Baro Bhuyans

Today part of: India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal

The Jaintia Kingdom: History, Culture, and Governance

Geographic Extent and Political Structure

The Jaintia Kingdom was a matrilineal state located in present-day Sylhet Division of Bangladesh, Meghalaya state of India, and parts of Nagaon and Morigaon districts in Assam, India [44]. In 630 CE, *Raja Guhak* partitioned the kingdom among his three sons, resulting in the creation of the Jaintia Kingdom, the Gour Kingdom, and the Laur Kingdom. The Jaintia Kingdom was annexed by the British East India Company in 1835 [45]. The Khasi (Pnar) Rajahs of Jaintiapur belonged to the Syiem Sutnga clan, claiming descent from *Ka Li Dohkha*, a divine nymph [46].

Etymology

The name "Jaintia" is believed to derive from the shrine of *Jayanti Devi* or *Jainteswari*, an incarnation of the Hindu goddess *Durga*. Another theory suggests it originates from the Pnar settlement *Sutnga* in modern-day Jaintia Hills [45]. The Pnar and War communities, speakers of Mon-Khmer languages related to Khasi, were integral to the kingdom's cultural identity [46].

Capitals and Administrative Center

The kingdom extended from the eastern Shillong Plateau to the Barak River valley in Assam. Its winter capital was located at *Jaintia Rajbari*, Jaintiapur, while a potential summer capital existed at *Nartiang*, marked by the Nartiang Durga Temple and megalithic sites [44]. During British rule, the hill near the winter capital also hosted the Civil Surgeon's bungalow.

Early History and Foundation

Austroasiatic tribal migrations during the Holocene contributed to the settlement of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The Khasi were primarily the religious class, while the Pnar served as the ruling class [46]. Legend describes *Arjuna* visiting



Figure 09: Bengal Map of The Imperial Gazetteer of India (Source: Wikipedia)

Jaintia in pursuit of a horse, as recorded in Hindu epics [45]. The earliest recorded ruler, *Ka Urmi Rani*, married *Sindhu Rai*, an ambassador to Kamarupa, and their descendants—*Ka Urvara* and *Krishak*—were instrumental in establishing dynastic continuity and reforming inheritance laws [44].

Reign of Raja Guhak

Raja *Guhak* ascended the Jaintia throne around 600 CE, following in his father *Hatak's* footsteps by marrying a Kamarupi princess. Guhak promoted Hinduism, facilitating Brahmin migration from Kamrup. He also introduced religious icons such as *Kangsa-Nisudhana* (Krishna and Balaram killing Kamsa), *Grivakali*, and *Janghakali* for worship on a hill near the modern Civil Surgeon's bungalow [45].

Guhak had three sons—*Jayantak*, *Gurak*, and *Ladduk*—and two daughters—*Sheela* and *Chatala*. Following a series of personal and political events, including *Sheela's* secluded life and *Chatala's* exile, Guhak abdicated in favor of ascetic pursuits [44].

Partitioned Kingdoms and Successive Rulers

Jayantak inherited the northern hills, forming the Jaintia Kingdom; *Gurak* received the southern plains (Gour Kingdom), and *Ladduk* obtained the western plains (Laur Kingdom) [44]. *Jayantak* established

religious sites, including the *Kamakhya Bama Jangha Pitha* temple, and dedicated regions such as *Phaljur* to his son, Yang. Legendary accounts persist in local folklore, including the tale of Yang transforming his queen into a cursed bird [45].

Jayantak's heir, *Joymalla*, was remembered for his strength and martial prowess. His successors—*Mahabal* and *Bancharu*—focused on agriculture, trade, and Buddhism, with *Bancharu* introducing human sacrifices at *Jangha Kali*, a practice that persisted into British times [44].

Later Pnar Rule and Brahmin Administration

King *Kamadeva*, son of *Bancharu*, was a Sanskrit scholar and close ally of *Bhoja Varma Deva*. He was succeeded by *Bhimbal*, who faced insurgencies and was either killed or exiled. Subsequently, his minister *Kedareswar Rai* established the Brahmin ruling dynasty, marking the final phase of Jaintia administration before British annexation [45].

The Jaintia Kingdom

Emergence of a New Dynasty

In 1618, *Dhan Manik* conquered Dimarua, initiating a conflict with *Maibong Raja Yasho Narayan Satrudaman* of the Kachari Kingdom. To secure assistance, *Dhan Manik* offered his daughter in marriage to *Raja Susengphaa* of the Ahom Kingdom. The Ahoms subsequently intervened against the Kacharis, facilitating *Dhan Manik* and the Jaintians' escape [44].

Around 1676, the Jaintia Raja attempted to rebel against the Mughal Empire. According to contemporary *Akhbarats*, the Raja assembled 1,500 infantry, plundered neighboring regions, and laid siege to Sylhet fort. Mughal forces, including General *Shaista Khan*, nobleman *Iradat Khan*, and *Raja Tahawar Singh* of Kharagpur Raj in Bihar, defeated the Jaintia forces, bringing the kingdom back under imperial control [46].

Subjugation under the Ahom Kingdom

In 1707, *Jaintia King Ram Singh* kidnapped the Kachari Raja, prompting Ahom intervention under *Raja Rudra Singh Sukhrungphaa*. The Ahoms attacked via

North Cachar and the Jaintia Hills, annexing Jaintiapur. Thousands of civilians suffered brutal punishments, including execution or mutilation, and *Sukhrungphaa* asserted trade control over the Jaintia territory [44].

Ahom authority in the region proved short-lived; the Jaintias successfully rebelled, and *Ram Singh* died in Ahom captivity. His son, *Jayo Narayan*, regained the throne. In 1757, the Nongkhrem-Khairam Khasi chief closed the Sonapur Duar, disrupting trade with the Ahoms. Jaintia envoys petitioned *Raja Suremphaa Swargadeo Rajeswar Singh*, who reopened the trade route [46].

British Contact and Annexation

The British first came into contact with the Jaintia Kingdom following the Diwani of Bengal in 1765. The capital, Jaintiapur, controlled hills and plains north of the Barak River. Major Henniker led the first British expedition in 1774, targeting the kingdom's lime quarries. Initial encounters were hostile, and the Jaintias resisted British influence, subsequently becoming increasingly isolated through forts and regulated trade [44].



Figure 10: Front Wall of Jaintiaswari (Source: Wikipedia)

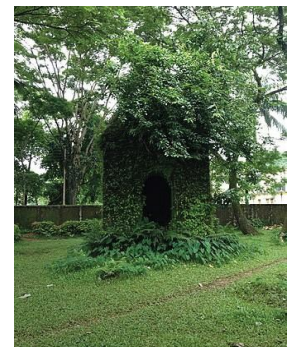


Figure 11: Peculiar Building in Jaintiaswari Estate

In 1821, the Jaintias kidnapped British subjects for human sacrifices, a ritual believed to bless royal offspring. The British threatened military action, leading to a 1824 agreement with Raja Jaintia to cease such sacrifices. Despite this, in 1825, the Jaintias attempted to resume the practice [46].

Following the First Anglo-Burmese War, the British allowed the Jaintia king to rule north of the Surma River. In 1832, four British men were kidnapped, three of whom were sacrificed at the Great Hindu temple in Faljur. The British responded by annexing the Jaintia Kingdom on 15 March 1835. The king retained personal property in Sylhet and received a monthly salary of Rs. 500. The British administered plains directly, while the hills were governed indirectly via fifteen *dolois* and four *sardars*, with limited judicial authority [45].

Administrative Divisions under British Rule

Under British administration, Jaintia was divided into parganas (fiscal units) within Greater Sylhet:

- **Puriraj (Jaintiapuri Raj) Pargana:** 59.15 sq. miles, land revenue £325 (1875)
- **Phaljur Pargana:** 51.84 sq. miles, land revenue £301
- **Chairkata Pargana:** 37.88 sq. miles, 749 estates, land revenue £276
- **Japhlang Pargana:** 40.07 sq. miles, 342 estates, land revenue £279 [44]

These divisions marked the final administrative configuration of the Jaintia Kingdom prior to full colonial integration.

Capital: Nartiang.

Religion: Niamtre (Niam Khasi), Hinduism.

Established: 500.

Disestablished: 1835.

Succeeded by: Gour Kingdom, Laur Kingdom.

Today part of: Bangladesh.

The Gour Kingdom of Sylhet

Origin and Founding

The Gour Kingdom, one of the major medieval kingdoms in the Sylhet region, was founded according to legend by *Gurak*, the son of Raja *Guhak* of the Jaintia Kingdom, around 630 CE [44]. The kingdom emerged as an offshoot of the Jaintia Kingdom, with Gurak receiving the southern plains, while his brothers inherited the hilly Jaintia Kingdom and the western Laur Kingdom. Early historical accounts of Gour were largely mythological until the reign of *Navagirvana*, who is mentioned in the Bhatara copper-plate inscriptions. The rulers of Gour were patrons of Hindu revivalism, transitioning the region from its earlier Buddhist and animist practices [46].

The capital was initially established at *Borchola*, five miles northwest of modern Sylhet, and later moved to the bank of the *Malini Stream*, with administration assisted by the minister *Marbel*, stationed at *Mona Rai's Tila* near the port [44].

Early Administration and Partition

During the reign of *Raja Kshetra Pal* (1140 CE), familial disputes led to the kingdom's partition. Kshetra Pal's sons, Brahmajit and Dharmadhvaj, inherited Gour and its southern territory, Brahmachal, respectively. While both claimed authority over the entire kingdom, they gradually administered their domains separately, officially dividing Gour and Brahmachal in 1170 CE. During this period, Brahmin priests such as *Nidhipati Shastri* facilitated Vedic rituals, reinforcing the kingdom's Hindu character [45].

Civil War and Conflict with Neighboring States

In 1250, *Raja Govardhan* ascended the throne of Gour following the death of his father, Gouradhwaj. Civil unrest persisted between Gour and Brahmachal. Govardhan, with the assistance of his chief minister *Madan Rai* and general *Virabhadra*, orchestrated the assassination of Upananda, the ruler of Brahmachal, and appointed his general Amar Singh as governor. Conflicts extended to Tungachal, where the feudal ruler Epivishnu resisted Gour's authority. Govardhan's forces assassinated Epivishnu and installed Shandul as governor [46].

The neighboring Twipra Kingdom, led by *Ratan Manikya*, intervened in response to these territorial aggressions. Simultaneously, the Jaintia Kingdom, in alliance with indigenous tribes, attacked northern Sylhet, capitalizing on the instability in Gour. These pressures culminated in the temporary dethronement of Govardhan [44].

Restoration under Gour Govinda

Gour Govinda, nephew of Upananda, restored the kingdom with military and administrative reforms. He constructed forts, training camps, and the seven-storey *Gorduar* in Penchagor as the new capital. Govinda introduced archery as a formal warfare strategy, strengthened the kingdom's navy, and subdued neighboring states including Laur and Jaintia [46]. Strategic diplomacy, such as gifting an elephant to Ratan Manikya of Tripura, facilitated the reintegration of Brahmachal and Tungachal under Gour authority.



Figure 13: The hill of Raja Gour Govinda in Chowhatta, Sylhet. (Source: Wikimedia)

During his reign, Govinda actively resettled Brahmins from Muslim-ruled regions of India and Bengal, reinforcing the Hindu character of the kingdom and marginalizing followers of Tantric Buddhism and local tribal groups [45].

Decline and Muslim Conquest

Despite military and administrative success, Gour faced eventual conquest by Muslim forces in 1303. Following disputes over Hindu ritual offenses with local Muslim settlers, Sultan *Shamsuddin Firoz Shah* of Bengal appointed his nephew, *Sikandar Khan Ghazi*, to lead an expedition. Initially, Gour Govinda successfully repelled Muslim forces, but the arrival of the saint *Shah Jalal* and his companions led to Govinda's defeat. The royal family fled, and Sylhet was incorporated into Muslim Bengal under Firoz Shah [45]

Capitals: Borchola (first),

Malini stream bank (royal),

Mona Rai hill (ministerial)

Languages: Sanskrit, Prakrit

Religion: Hinduism (official)

Government: Monarchy (Raja)

Historical Era: Classical period

Established: c. 600 CE

Disestablished: 1303 CE

Preceded by: Jaintia Kingdom

Succeeded by: Taraf Kingdom, Lakhnauti Sultanate

Modern Location: Bangladesh

Notable Rulers and Officials: Gurak (first, c. 630–660 CE)

Govardhan (1250–1260 CE)

Gour Govinda (last, 1260–1303 CE)

Marbel (first minister)

Vanamali Kar (1060–1100 CE)

Madan Rai (1250–1260 CE)

Mona Rai (last minister, 1260–1303 CE)

Sikandar Khan Ghazi was appointed the first Wazir of Sylhet, and Tungachal would subsequently be captured off Achak Narayan in the following year by Syed Nasiruddin and his 12 lascars ghataram.

The Laur Kingdom of Sylhet

Geographic Location

The Laur Kingdom was one of the several petty kingdoms in the medieval Sylhet region, alongside Gour, Jaintia, Ita, Taraf, and Pratapgarh kingdoms. Its territory was bounded by the Brahmaputra River to the west, the Jaintia Kingdom to the east, Kamarupa to the north, and Brahmanbaria to the south. By the 7th century, Laur encompassed the modern-day Sunamganj District as well as portions of Habiganj and Mymensingh in present-day Bangladesh [44].

Early History and Establishment

Prior to its independence, the Laur region formed part of the greater Jaintia Kingdom under the Kamarupa polity. When Raja *Guhak* ascended the Jaintia throne, he married a princess from Kamarupa and promoted the migration of Brahmins from the Kamrup region. Guhak divided the Jaintia Kingdom among his three sons: Jayantak received the northern hills (Jaintia Kingdom), Gurak the southern plains (Gour Kingdom), and Ladduk the western plains (Laur Kingdom) [45].

In 640 CE, Raja Dharma Fa of Tripura invited five Brahmins from Etawah, Mithila, and Kannauj. Among them, Keshab Misra settled in Laur and established a Hindu kingdom, marking the beginning of Laur's early political history [44].

Conflicts and Dynastic Changes

During the late 13th century, Laur faced repeated incursions from the neighboring Gour Kingdom under Raja *Gour Govinda*. These attacks destabilized Laur, forcing local rulers to navigate both internal and external threats [45].

A notable dynastic change occurred under Raja *Ramnath*, a descendant of Keshab Misra. Ramnath had three sons, with the second, *Durbar Singh*, converting to Islam and assuming the name *Durbar Khan*. He established a palace in Jagannathpur and later seized his youngest brother Gobind Singh's territory in Baniachong. Following Durbar Khan's death, Gobind Singh assumed control, converted to Islam under imperial authority, and adopted the name *Habib Khan*. In 1566, Laur was formally incorporated as a feudal territory under the Mughal Empire, losing its independence while retaining local administrative authority [46].

Subsequently, Laur's governance passed through prominent zamindar families, notably Abid Reza, who relocated to establish Baniachong, which became one of the largest villages in the world. Reza's family maintained feudal ties under the Amils or Faujdars of Sylhet and contributed to local infrastructure, including forts and settlements in Laur [46].

British Period and Administrative Changes

Under British rule, Laur continued as a *pargana* (fiscal division) and later as a *thana* within greater Sylhet. By 1875, the pargana covered 105.64 square miles, consisting of 305 estates, with a land revenue of £308 [45].

The region also experienced sporadic tribal insurgencies. In 1787, Khasi tribes attacked Laur, plundering several parganas—including Atgram, Bangsikunda, Ramdiga, Betal, and Selharas—and killing up to 800 people. British administrative forces, led by the Collector of Sylhet, Robert Lindsay, were unable to prevent the retreat of the Khasi attackers back to the hills [45].

Capital: Nabagram (now in Badaghat Union, Tahirpur).

Common languages: Sanskrit, Prakrit

Religion: Hinduism.

Demonym(s): Lauri.

Government: Monarchy.

Historical era: Classical period.

Established: 600

Disestablished: 1565

Preceded by: Jaintia Kingdom.

Succeeded by: Mughal Empire.

Today part of: Bangladesh, India.

The Brahmachal Kingdom

Geographic Location

The Brahmachal Kingdom, also known as Badapanchala, was a petty kingdom in the medieval Sylhet region. It encompassed primarily the northern parts of present-day Moulvibazar District, with its capital at Brahmachal (modern Baramchal in Kulaura). The kingdom exercised feudal authority over the neighboring Tungachal territory, part of present-day Habiganj District [44].

Establishment

Brahmachal emerged as a separate kingdom in 1170 CE as an offshoot of the Gour Kingdom due to familial tensions among the royal heirs. Following the death of Raja Kshetra Pal of Gour in 1140, succession disputes arose between his sons Brahmajit (born to his second wife, Surama) and Dharmadhvaj (born to his first wife, Ratnavati). Fearing for his safety, Brahmajit relocated northward and established his capital at Brahmachal, leaving Dharmadhvaj to govern the old capital, Gour. Over time, the two territories gradually became distinct kingdoms [45].

During Brahmajit's reign, a Vedic *yajna* was hosted at Bhatera Homer Tila in Brahmachal, organized by Priest Nidhipati Shastri, a Brahmin descendant from Mithila. Another *yajna* was hosted by Raja Sengkwchak Dharmadhar of the Twipra Kingdom, consolidating regional religious and political ties [45].

Dynastic Succession

Brahmajit was succeeded by his son, Indrajit, followed by Jayananda, who had two sons: Srinanda and Upananda. Srinanda, afflicted with chronic rheumatism, migrated to Kamrup after Upananda, described in the *Hattanath Tales* as ambitious and malevolent, usurped power with the support of military general Amar Singh. Srinanda attained prominence as a sannyasi at the Kamakhya Temple, while Upananda assumed rulership of Brahmachal with Singh as his commander-in-chief [45].

Loss of Independence

In 1250, Govardhan ascended the Gour throne following his father's death. The longstanding conflict between Gour and Brahmachal intensified during this period. Govardhan, through strategic marriages and alliances, orchestrated a covert operation to infiltrate Brahmachal. Amar Singh, in coordination with Kuki chiefs, attacked Upananda's palace, resulting in a massacre and the effective annexation of Brahmachal under Gour authority. Upananda was killed, and Amar Singh was appointed feudal governor [46].

The Tripura Kingdom, under Ratan Manikya, responded to these actions, particularly the assassination of Tungachal's Raja Epivishnu, and intervened militarily. Amar Singh's forces were defeated, and Tripura annexed Brahmachal temporarily, appointing Jaidev Rai, son of Upananda's minister, as a feudal ruler [46].

Restoration under Gour Govinda

In 1260, Gour Govinda rose to power and sought to recover territories lost under his predecessor. Through diplomacy with Ratan Manikya, including the gifting of an elephant, Govinda successfully restored Brahmachal (including Tungachal) under Gour administration. The kingdom remained part of Gour until the Conquest of Sylhet in 1303, when it was incorporated into Sultan Shamsuddin Firuz Shah's domain [46].

Capital: Brahmachal.

Languages: Brahmachal.

Religion: Hinduism.

Government: Monarchy.

Raja-

1170-1200	Brahmajit (first).
1200-1210	Indrajit.
1210-1240	Jayananda.
1240-1250	Upananda (last Raja).
1250-1253	Amar Singh.
1253-1260	Jaidev Rai.
1260-1303	Gour Govinda.
1240-1252	Amar Singh (last).

Historical era: Classical period.

Established: 1170

Disestablished: 1252

Preceded by: Gour Kingdom.

Succeeded by: Gour Kingdom.

Today part of: Bangladesh.

Chandrapur

Chandrapur (earlier known as Chanda until 1964) is a city and municipal corporation in the Chandrapur district of Maharashtra, India. It serves as the district headquarters and was originally founded as a fort city by Khandkya Ballal Sah, a Gond king of the 13th century. The city is located at the confluence of the Erai and Zarpot rivers. Due to its richness in coal seams, Chandrapur is also referred to as the "Black Gold City" (Chandrapur District Gazetteer, 2020) [47].

Prehistoric and Ancient History

Archaeological evidence suggests human inhabitation of the Chandrapur area since the Stone Age. Tools discovered by researcher Suresh Chopane, now displayed in his Rock Museum, confirm this. Pottery findings further indicate Neolithic settlements. Historically, the region was ruled by major Indian dynasties: the Maurya Empire (322–187 BCE), Shunga Empire (187–78 BCE), Satavahana dynasty (1st century BCE–2nd century CE), Vakataka dynasty (3rd–6th century CE), Kalachuri dynasty (6th–7th century CE), Rashtrakuta dynasty (7th–10th century CE), Chalukya dynasty (up to the 12th century CE), and the Seuna (Yadava) dynasty (850–1334 CE) (Deshpande, 2019) [48].

Gond Rule and the Founding of Chandrapur

The Gond people, an Adivasi community of central India, played a pivotal role in the history of Chandrapur. King Khandkya Ballal (1470–1495) is credited with founding the city. According to local legends, he suffered from tumours, which were miraculously healed after drinking water from a sacred spring at the Jharpat river. The site became a pilgrimage spot, leading to the construction of a temple. Later, inspired by an omen involving a hare and a dog chase, Queen of Khandkya suggested building a fortified city. This city became known as Chandrapur (Kamble, 2018) [49].



Figure 14: Anchareshwar Temple in Chandrapur (Collected by Author)

Maratha and British Rule

Chandrapur came under the control of the Nagpur Bhonsles in 1751 during the Maratha Empire. After the death of Raghuji Bhonsle III in 1853 without an heir, the British annexed Chandrapur into their territories. During colonial times, it was officially referred to as "Chanda." In 1871, Anglican and Scottish Episcopal missionaries arrived, and by 1874, new administrative divisions were established. Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the district underwent several reorganizations, including the transfer of Sironcha and Gadchiroli into separate administrative units (Gupta, 2007) [50].

Post-Independence Developments

Following India's independence, Chandrapur underwent significant territorial changes. In 1956, the district was moved from Madhya Pradesh to Bombay State. Later, in 1960, it became part of Maharashtra. In 1964, the city was officially renamed Chandrapur. Following the 1981 Census, the district was bifurcated into Chandrapur and Gadchiroli districts (Government of Maharashtra, 2015) [51].

Sena Dynasty

The Sena dynasty was a Hindu dynasty that ruled Bengal during the early medieval period (11th–12th centuries). At its height, the empire covered large parts of northeastern India. The dynasty traced its origins to the Karnataka region in South India [52].

Founding and Expansion



The dynasty was founded by Samanta Sena, followed by Hemanta Sena, who declared himself king in 1095 CE. His successor, Vijaya Sena (1096–1159 CE), had an unusually long reign of over 60 years and laid the political foundations of the dynasty. Ballala Sena later conquered Gaur from the Palas, shifted the capital to Nadia, and strengthened ties with South India through his marriage to Ramadevi, a Chalukya princess. Lakshmana Sena succeeded him in 1179 and ruled for about 20 years, expanding the empire into Odisha, Bihar, and possibly Varanasi. However, in 1203–1204 CE, Bakhtiyar Khalji of the Ghurid Empire invaded and captured Nadia, marking the beginning of Sena decline [53].

Figure 15: Map of Senas of Bengal
(Source: Wikipedia)

Origins and Identity

According to Deopara *Prashasti*, Samanta Sena, the dynasty's founder, was a migrant Brahma-Kshatriya from Karnataka. This title suggests that the Senas were originally Brahmins who adopted the profession of arms and became Kshatriyas. Some historians also suggest they were Baidyas. Initially, the Senas served as *sāmantas* (feudatories) under the Palas in Radha. As the Pala dynasty weakened, the Senas gradually expanded their territory, eventually annexing all of Bengal by the late reign of Vijaya Sena [54].

Decline

The decline of the dynasty began under Lakshmana Sena, considered the last significant ruler. Although Sena kings continued to rule parts of eastern Bengal for some decades, the main political power in Bengal shifted to the Muslim Ghurid Empire following Bakhtiyar Khalji's invasion [55].

Legacy

After their downfall, the Sena rulers and their descendants were absorbed into the Kayastha caste group, being recognized as neo-Kshatriyas of Bengal. Abul Fazl, in his writings, noted that Bengal had always been ruled by Kayasthas. However, the caste identity of the Senas remains contested: some Baidya genealogies claim them, some Brahmin traditions accept them, while Kayastha genealogies reject such claims [56].

Capital: Gauda, Bikrampur, Nabadwip, Lakhnauti, Chandrabhoga Gadhi, Balirajgarh.

Languages: Sanskrit.

Religion: Hinduism.

Government: Monarchy.

Historical era: Middle Kingdoms of India.

Established: 1070 CE

Disestablished: 230CE

Preceded by: Pala Empire Varman, Dynasty (Bengal)Samatata.

Succeeded by: Deva dynasty, Khalji dynasty of Bengal.



Figure 16: A sculpture of the Hindu deity Vishnu (Source: Wikipedia)

Deva Dynasty

The Deva Dynasty was a Hindu dynasty that emerged in Bengal following the decline of the Sena dynasty. The dynasty established its capital at Bikrampur, in present-day Munshiganj District, Bangladesh. This period is often described as a time of peace, prosperity, and cultural creativity, sometimes referred to as a "Golden Age" [57].

Sources and Early Rulers

The primary sources for the history of the Deva dynasty are copperplate inscriptions of Damodaradeva, issued in 1156, 1158, and 1165 of the Saka era (corresponding to his 4th, 6th, and 13th regnal years). These inscriptions provide key evidence of dynastic succession and territorial control [58].

The dynasty was founded by Purushottamadeva, who reportedly rose from the position of a *gramani* (village chief). His son, Madhumathana or Madhusudanadeva, became the first independent ruler, assuming the title of *nripati*. He succeeded by Vasudeva, followed by Damodaradeva [59].

Damodaradeva and Territorial Expansion

Damodaradeva (reigned 1231–1243 CE) is considered the most powerful ruler of the dynasty. He adopted the elaborate title *Ariraja-Chanura-Madhava-Sakala-Bhupati-Chakravarti*, signifying imperial authority. Inscriptions suggest that his kingdom extended into present-day Comilla, Noakhali, and Chittagong, consolidating the dynasty's dominance in eastern Bengal [60].



Figure 17: Map of Deva Empire (Source: Wikipedia)

Later Rulers and Decline

A subsequent ruler, Ariraja-Danuja-Madhava Dasharathadeva, expanded the kingdom further and made Bikrampur his capital. According to Yahya bin Ahmad in *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi*, Dasharathadeva (referred to as “Danuj Rai of Sonargaon”) formed an alliance with Ghiyas-ud-Din Balban in 1281 [61]. His brother, Bikramaditya Deva, later shifted the capital to the eastern side of the kingdom in 1294. This marks the last known historical record of the dynasty [62].

Capital: Bikrampur.

Common languages: Sanskrit Bengali.

Religion: Hinduism.

Government: Monarchy Maharaja.

Historical era: Medieval India.

Established: 12th century.

Disestablished: 13th century.

Succeeded by: Delhi Sultanate.

Taraf in Bengal (Tungachal)

Taraf, previously known as Tungachal, was a feudal territory of the Sylhet region in Bengal. It came under the authority of multiple petty kingdoms at different points in time [62]. The territory largely corresponded to what is now Habiganj District in Bangladesh, with its headquarters located in present-day Chunarughat Upazila. The majority of Tungachal extended over Habiganj and the eastern borders of Moulvibazar District [63].

Establishment and Closure

Taraf (meaning “Side” in Turkish) was a liberal newspaper in Turkey that openly criticized the involvement of the Turkish military in political and social affairs. First published on November 15, 2007, it gained nationwide distribution [64]. However, on July 27, 2016, the newspaper was closed under a statutory decree during the state of emergency following the failed Turkish coup attempt. Authorities claimed it had ties to the Gülen movement [65].

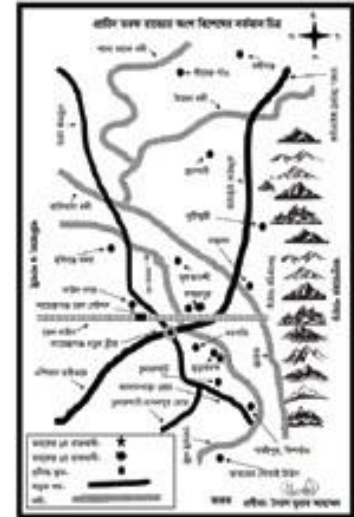


Figure 18: Map of Taraf
(Source: Wikipedia)

Investigative Reports and Controversies

The paper became known for publishing high-profile investigative reports exposing military conspiracies. Among them were the “Sledgehammer” coup plan, involving mosque bombings, and Operation Cage Action Plan, which included plots to bomb cultural sites. These revelations significantly harmed the military’s reputation in Turkish society [66].

Institutional Reactions

The Turkish military retaliated by revoking Taraf’s press accreditation. Other publications, such as Nokta also faced closure in 2007 after releasing leaked military information (operations Sarıkız, Ayışığı, Yakamoz, and Eldiven) [67].

Ownership and Political Affiliations

Founder Başar Arslan denied accusations of foreign influence, insisting that he incurred financial losses to maintain Taraf’s independence [64]. Nevertheless, some of its prominent figures—such as Mehmet Baransu, Emre (Emrullah) Uslu, and Önder Aytaç—were linked to the Gülen movement, though their status as official representatives was contested [68].

WikiLeaks Partnership and Editorial Changes

In 2011, Taraf became the first Turkish partner of WikiLeaks, publishing classified documents provided by the platform. WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange described it as “the bravest newspaper in Turkey” [69]. By December 2012, several leading editors and columnists, including Ahmet Altan and Yasemin Çongar, resigned due to internal differences. Despite these departures, Arslan confirmed that the newspaper would continue its publication [70].

Capital: Rajpur (1200-1304), Laskarpur (1304-1610).

Languages: Bengali, Persian.

Religion: Hinduism (1200-1304), Islam (1304-1610).

Historical era: Classical period.

Established: 1200.

Disestablished: 1610.

Preceded by: Gour Kingdom.

Succeeded by: Twipra Kingdom, Mughal Empire.

Today part of: Bangladesh.

Jagannathpur is an upazila of Sunamganj District in Sylhet Division, Bangladesh. It is bordered by Chhatak and Dakshin Sunamganj to the north, Bishwanath and Osmani Nagar to the east, Derai to the west, and Nabiganj to the south [71].

Historically, the area was known as Pandura, later renamed Perua State, a sub-capital under Laur. It was later renamed Jagannathpur after King Jagannath Misru Singh; following his death, his son Romanath Singh succeeded him. During this period, eight companions of Hazrat Shah Jalal arrived in the area to preach Islam [72].

Notable figures from Jagannathpur include Bojendra Narayan Chowdhury, a politician, journalist, and author, and P.C. Goswami, pioneer and first principal of Modon Mohon College [73].

Administratively, a Thana was established on 1 October 1920 by gazette notification of Anamul Haque of Parargaon. It was upgraded to an Upazila in 1983 and declared a municipality in 1999. The upazila consists of Jagannathpur Municipality (9 wards, 43 mahallas) and eight union parishads: Asharkandi, Chilaura Holdipur, Kolkolia, Mirpur, Pailgaon, Patli, Raniganj, and Syedpur Shaharpara, subdivided into 225 mauzas and 310 villages [74].

Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526)

The Delhi Sultanate was an Islamic empire that ruled large parts of the Indian subcontinent for over 320 years (1206–1526) [75]. It was founded after the defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan by Muhammad Ghori in the Second Battle of Tarain (1192). After Ghori's death in 1206, his slave and general Qutb-ud-din Aibak declared himself Sultan, establishing the Mamluk (Slave) Dynasty [76].

Administration

The Sultanate was governed by Islamic law (Quran & Sharia), and its administration was divided into departments:

1. Sultan – head of state with supreme authority.
2. Naib – deputy of the Sultan.
3. Wazir – prime minister, head of finance.
4. Diwan-i-Ariz – military affairs.
5. Diwan-i-Risalat – foreign relations.
6. Diwan-i-Insha – state correspondence.
7. Sadr-ur-Sadar – religious affairs.
8. Amir-i-Mazlis Shahi – public works & festivals [77].

Dynasties of the Delhi Sultanate

1. Mamluk (Slave) Dynasty (1206–1290) – founded by Qutb-ud-din Aibak, known for the Qutub Minar (completed by Iltutmish).
2. Khalji Dynasty (1290–1320) – founded by Jalaluddin Khalji; expanded territory.
3. Tughlaq Dynasty (1320–1414) – founded by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq; rulers included Muhammad bin Tughlaq & Firoz Shah Tughlaq.
4. Sayyid Dynasty (1414–1451) – founded by Khizr Khan, a former governor under Timur.
5. Lodi Dynasty (1451–1526) – last dynasty, ended when Ibrahim Lodi was defeated by Babur in the First Battle of Panipat (1526), leading to the rise of the Mughal Empire [78].

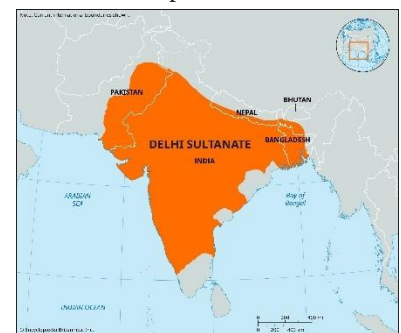


Figure 19: Map of Delhi Sultanate (Source: Wikipedia)

Extent

At its height, the Sultanate ruled over much of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and parts of Nepal [79].

Bengal Sultanate (1352–1576)

The Bengal Sultanate was a powerful Sunni Muslim monarchy that ruled Bengal from the mid-14th to the late-16th century [80]. It emerged after the decline of the Delhi Sultanate and became the dominant power of the Ganges–Brahmaputra Delta.

Dynasties

Five main dynasties ruled: Ilyas Shahi, House of Ganesha, Hussain Shahi, Suri interregnum, and Karrani [81].

Extent

At its height, Bengal's influence reached Odisha, Arakan, Tripura, Assam, Nepal, Jaunpur, and Varanasi [82].

Administration

Persian was the official language, but Bengali gained court recognition in the

16th century under the Hussain Shahi dynasty [83].

Trade & Economy

The Sultanate was a major trading hub in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Its mint towns produced the taka currency. Sonargaon, Pandua, Gaur, Bagerhat, and Chittagong were key urban centers [84].



Figure 20: Extent of the Sultanate of Bengal under the Hussain Shahi dynasty. (Source: Wikipedia)

Culture & Religion

Known for religious pluralism, it allowed peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others. The Sultanate also fostered a distinctive Bengali Islamic architecture [85].

Prosperity

In 1500, Gaur was the fifth-largest city in the world. Foreign travelers described Bengal as the “richest country to trade with” [86].

Decline

The Sultanate weakened after the Suri Empire’s intervention and eventually fell to the Mughal Empire in 1576 following the Battle of Rajmahal [87].

Status: Sultanate.

Capital: Pandua (1352–1450).

Sonargaon (1390–1411).

Gaur (1450–1565).

Tanda (1565–1576).

Common Languages: Persian, Bengali, Arabic.

Religion: State religion: Sunni, Islam (Hanafi).

Minority religions- Hinduism, Buddhism.

Government: Absolute monarchy

Currency: Taka

Preceded by: Delhi Sultanate, Sonargaon Sultanate, Satgaon Sultanate, Kingdom of Mrauk U, Kingdom of Twipra, Pratapgarh Kingdom, Chandradwip, Karrani rule in Orissa.

Succeeded by: Mughal Empire, Bengal Subah, Suri Empire, Kingdom of Twipra, Pratapgarh Kingdom, Baro-Bhuyan, Kingdom of Mrauk.

Today part of: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Myanmar.



Figure 21: Adina Mosque. (Source: Wikipedia)

Vassal States of the Bengal Sultanate

The Bengal Sultanate maintained several tributary and protectorate states on its periphery. These vassal states acknowledged the suzerainty of the Sultan of Bengal but retained local rulers due to geographical, political, or strategic reasons [88].

Vassal states were ruled by Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist monarchs. They enjoyed partial autonomy but paid regular tribute to the Bengal Sultan.

Pratapgarh Case –

- In the Barak Valley, Bazid of Pratapgarh declared himself a Sultan equal to Bengal.
- Alauddin Husain Shah sent Sarwar Khan to suppress him.
- Bazid was defeated, forced to pay tribute, and renounce claims over Sylhet, which was under direct Sultanate control [89].



Figure 22: The 4th Tomb of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah in Sonargaon. (Source: Wikipedia)

Pratapgarh Kingdom (15th–18th century)

The Pratapgarh Kingdom was a medieval monarchy in the northeastern Indian subcontinent, covering present-day Karimganj (India), parts of Tripura, and Sylhet (Bangladesh) [90].

Founded in the late 15th century by Malik Pratap, a landowner of mixed native and Persian ancestry. The kingdom was named after him, with Patharkandi as its capital [91]. Inhabited by Hindus, Muslims, and tribal communities; Islam, Hinduism, and indigenous faiths coexisted.

- Rise under Sultan Bazid –
 1. Reached peak power during Bazid’s rule.
 2. Became a cultural centre and military power.
 3. Defeated Kachar Kingdom and briefly captured Sylhet from the Bengal Sultanate [89].

Decline



Figure 23: Karimganj District and surrounding areas (Source: Wikipedia)

In the early 18th century, Kachar annexed Pratapgarh. The ruling family survived only as zamindars under the British Raj.

Legacy

The kingdom's memory persisted in regional names, oral traditions, and cultural identity. The Barak Valley's people, largely Sylheti-speaking Bengalis, preserved its history [92].

Ita Kingdom (Etarajya)

The Ita Kingdom, also known as *Etarajya*, covered parts of present-day Moulvibazar, Rajnagar, Kamalganj, and Kulaura. Its history is detailed in works like *Etar Dynasty* by Golam Mostafa Chowdhury (Pakistan period) and *Etar Itihasa* by Mujibur Rahman Mujib (Bangladesh period). Historical mentions also appear in *Shrihatter Itivart* (1910) by Achyutcharan Chowdhury and earlier works such as *Shrihatt Darpan* (1886) and *Towarikhe* (1893). Several dighis (Sagardighi, Balidighi, Jamalkha Dighi, Kamalkha Dighi, Baldha Sagar Dighi) remain as traces of its past [93].

According to *Rajmala* (Tripura history), the state was originally called Manukul Pradesh, consisting of parganas like Chauvalish, Balishira, Satgaon, Chaichchiri, Indanagar, Bhanugach, Indeswar, and Baramchal. A Brahmin named Nidhipati Sharma established control, and his descendant Bhanu Narayan assumed the title of Raja, later succeeded by his son Raja Subid Narayan in the early 16th century [94].

In 1598, Raja Subid Narayan was killed by Khwaja Osman Lohani of Pathanbir. Four of his sons—Jamal Khan, Kamal Khan, Haji Khan, and Isa Khan—accepted Islam. After Osman's death in 1612 at Lambodharpur, Mughal rule was established in the region [95].

Descendants of these converted rulers, especially the Haji Khan clan, contributed to local politics, literature, and Muslim socio-political movements during British and Pakistan periods. Figures like Dewan Abdul Hamid Chowdhury, Dewan Abdul Basit, and Dewan Bachit Sahib played vital roles in Assam-Bengal Muslim awakening and later political developments [96]. In this context, some parts of a letter written in his own hand from Saudi Arabia to the author in 1986 are quoted precisely: -

C/o. Sk. Rafiuddin
My Dear Joynal Abedin.
P.O. Box No-532 Makkah S. Arabia
6-7-86

I am happy to receive your letter. I have changed that address, so the letter is late. I am happy to know that you have written the biography of late Maulana Abdur Rahman Singkapani. Accept my congratulations.

I wrote a little bit below. I have lost my reading and memory power in these ten years. I give you the right to modify and enhance my writing.

Your Sincerely
A. Basit

"I had a close relationship with late Maulana Abdur Rahman Singkapani from childhood. He is one of my father's peers and favorite people. My political life started in 1935. I was a student at Dhaka University Law College then. With the special encouragement of Maulana Marhum, I became a candidate for our Local Board election and with the special encouragement of the late, I returned uncontested to work like the Plan Program of the Late. Since that time, I am colleague and companion of late Maulana. At the next level, the seat of the only Muslims in the state of Assam is in the Indian Legislative Assembly I contest in the election and I am blessed by God. According to the late Abdul Matin Chowdhury's Plan Programmed, the late Maulana traveled all over the province and worked for me"..... Dewan Abdul Bachit.

The genealogy of Raja Subhidhanarayan's son Isha Khar in Jalalabad Katha was published by Bangla Academy in 1983 citing Ita's family.

Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire (1526–1857) was a major early-modern empire in South Asia, founded by *Babur* after defeating *Ibrahim Lodi* at the First Battle of Panipat in 1526 [97]. At its height under *Akbar* and later *Aurangzeb*, it stretched from Afghanistan and Kashmir to Bengal, Assam, and the Deccan Plateau. Though built on conquest, the empire integrated diverse cultures through administrative reforms and revenue systems, most notably Akbar's agricultural tax (*zabt*), which expanded trade and markets [98]. The Mughals brought relative peace in the 17th century, enabling economic growth and attracting European traders. They also left a rich cultural and architectural legacy, with monuments such as the *Taj Mahal*, *Red Fort*, *Fatehpur Sikri*, *Humayun's Tomb*, *Lahore Fort*, and *Shalamar Gardens* [99].

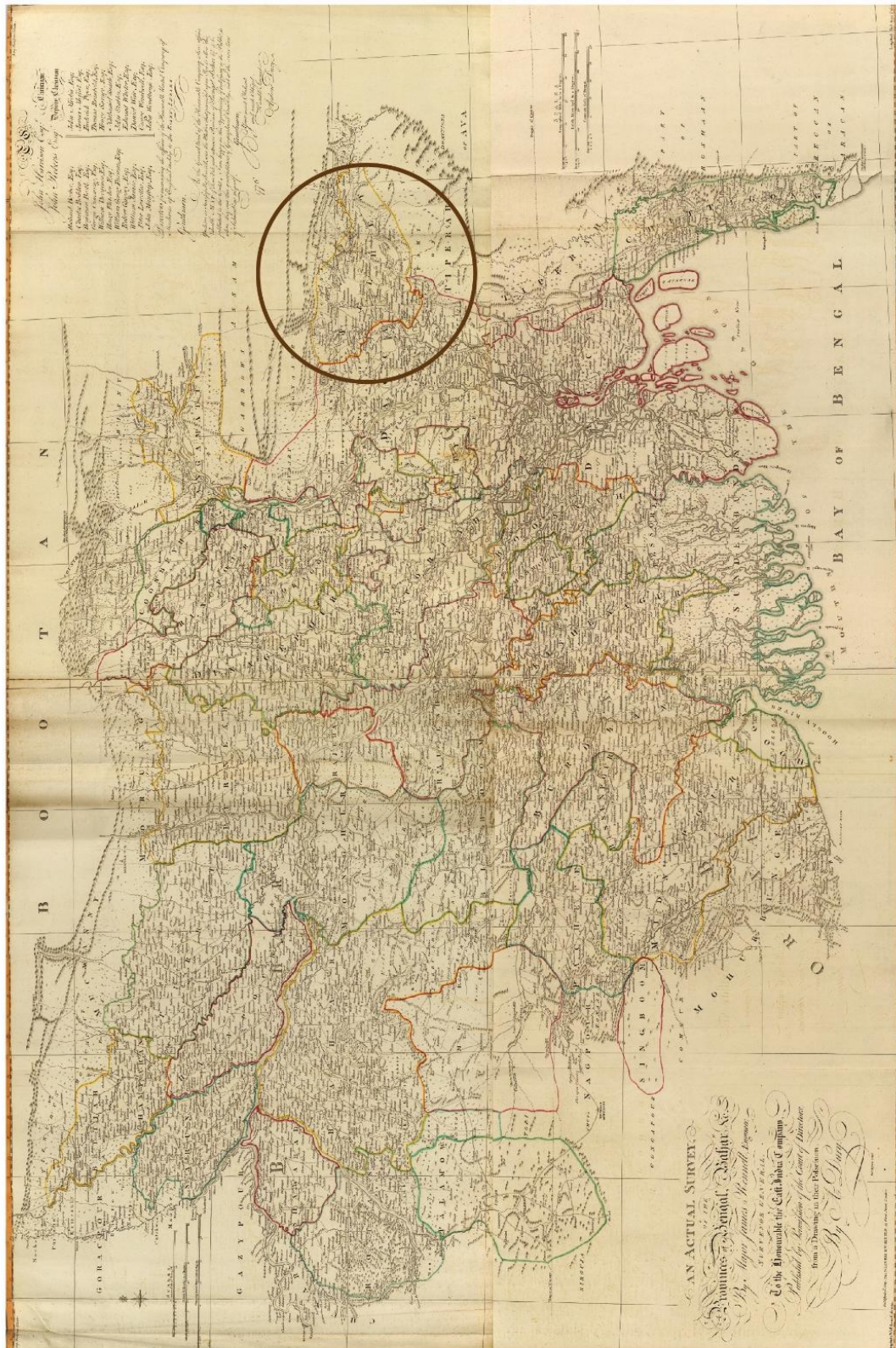
The dynasty saw itself as *Timurid* or *Gurkani*, descended from both *Timur* and *Genghis Khan*, though heavily Persianised in culture. The term *Mughal* (from Persian/Arabic "Mongol") became common only in later centuries, especially during British rule [100]. By 1760 the empire shrank to Delhi, and after the *1857 Rebellion*, the British dissolved it, marking the end of one of South Asia's greatest empires.

East Pakistan

East Pakistan was a province of Pakistan established in 1955 under the One Unit Policy, when East Bengal was renamed. It shared borders with India and Myanmar and had a coastline along the Bay of Bengal. Its residents, known as Pakistani Bengalis, were distinguished from India's West Bengal. Politically, the province experienced military coups, martial law, and growing demands for autonomy led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, culminating in the 1970 election, the Bangladesh Liberation War, and the secession of East Pakistan as Bangladesh in 1971 [104].

Administratively, East Pakistan inherited 17 districts from British Bengal, with some renamings and new districts created in the 1960s. Geographically, it featured the world's largest delta, approximately 700 rivers, tropical forests, and hilly regions, contrasting with West Pakistan's deserts and mountains. Economically, it contributed a major share of exports but received less federal investment, though projects like the Kaptai Dam, Eastern Refinery, and development of Dacca as the second capital were undertaken. The name Bangladesh reflects the cultural and historical identity of the region [105].

9. Historical Map analysis



Author: Dury, Andrew, Rennell, James, Robert Laurie &

James Whittle, Kitchin, Thomas

Type: Composite Map

Country: Bangladesh, India.

Publisher Location: London

Pub Date: 1804

Scale 1: 750,000

 Map of 1794

 Independent States

 British Possession

Figure 28

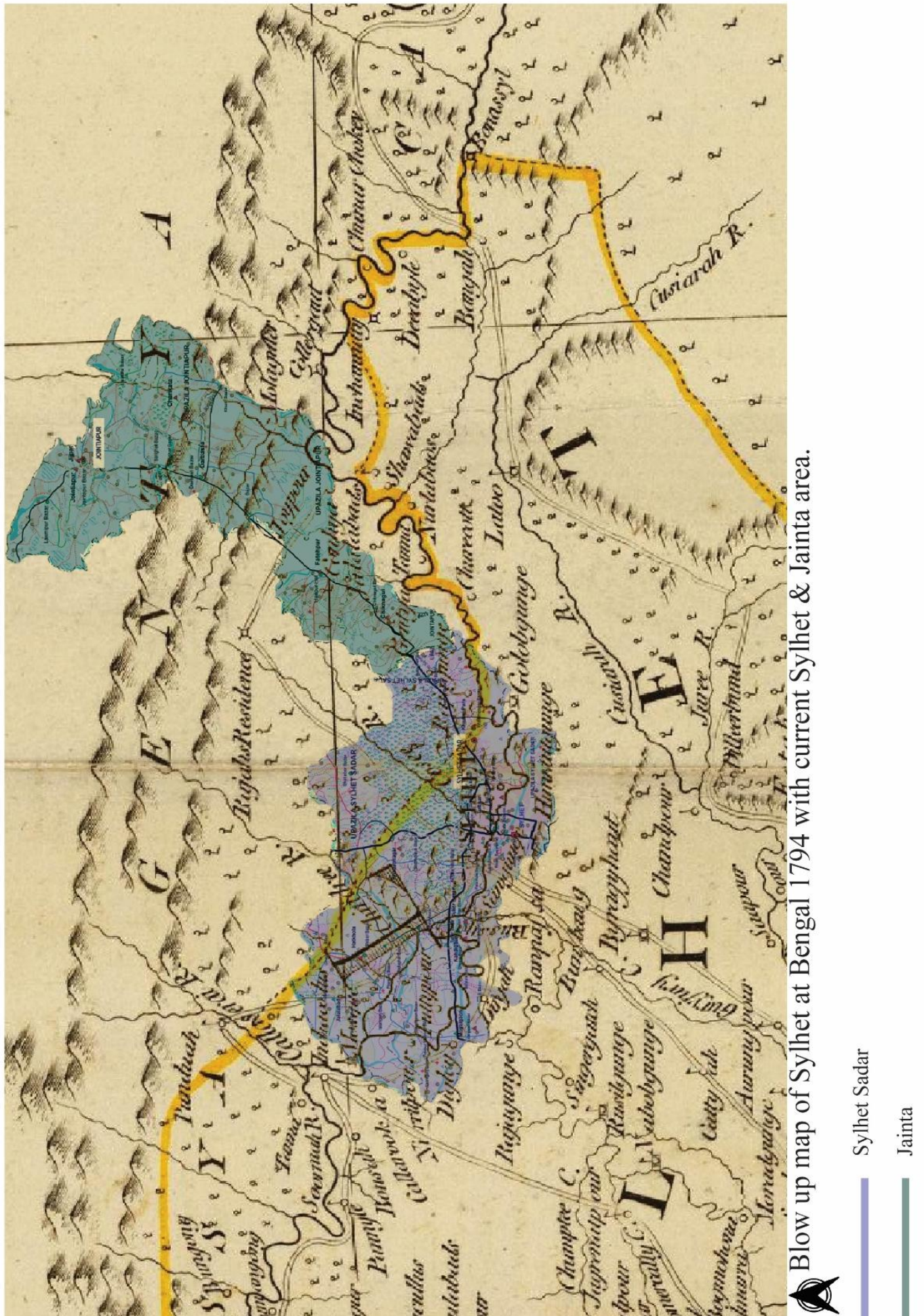


Figure 29

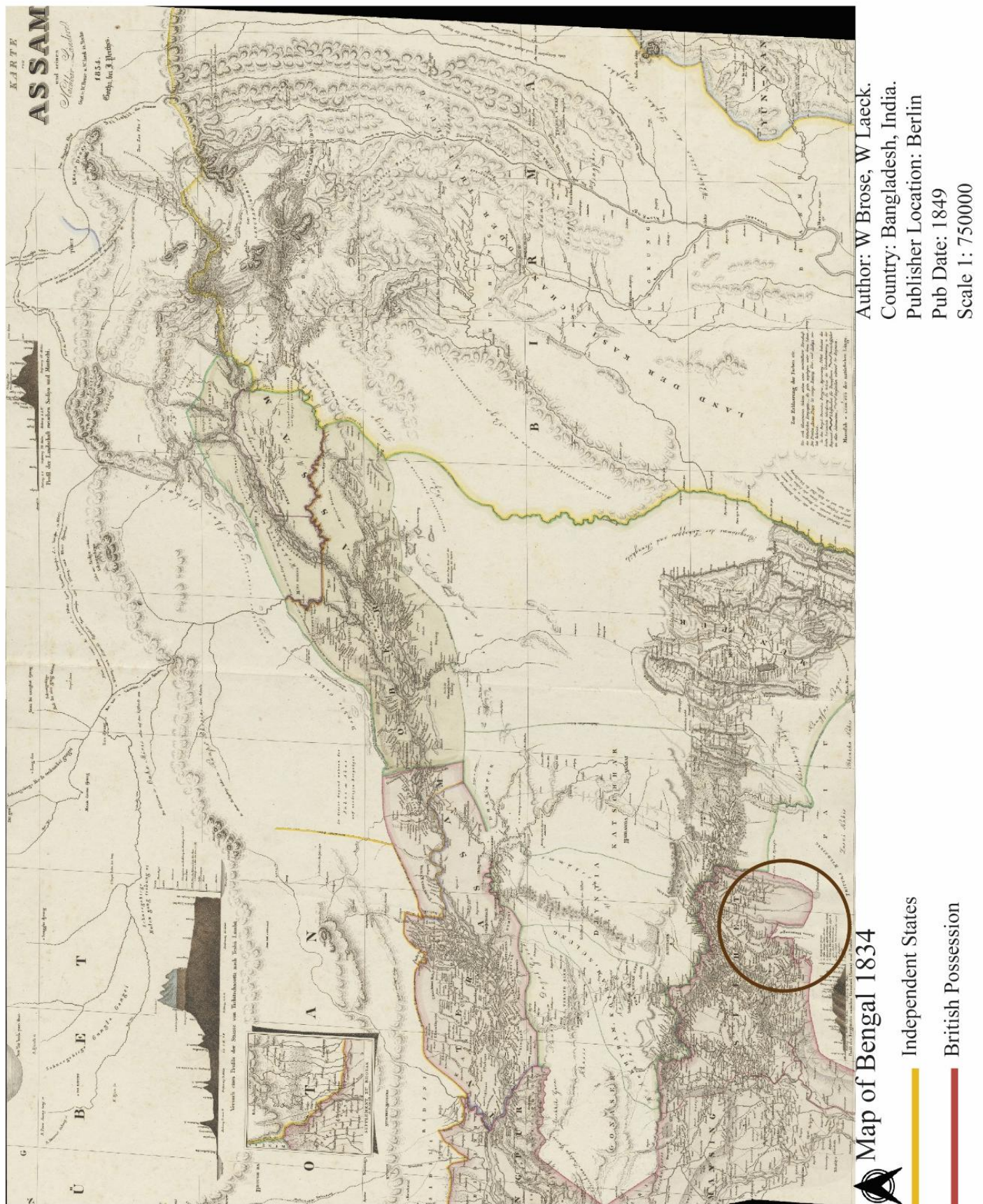


Figure 30

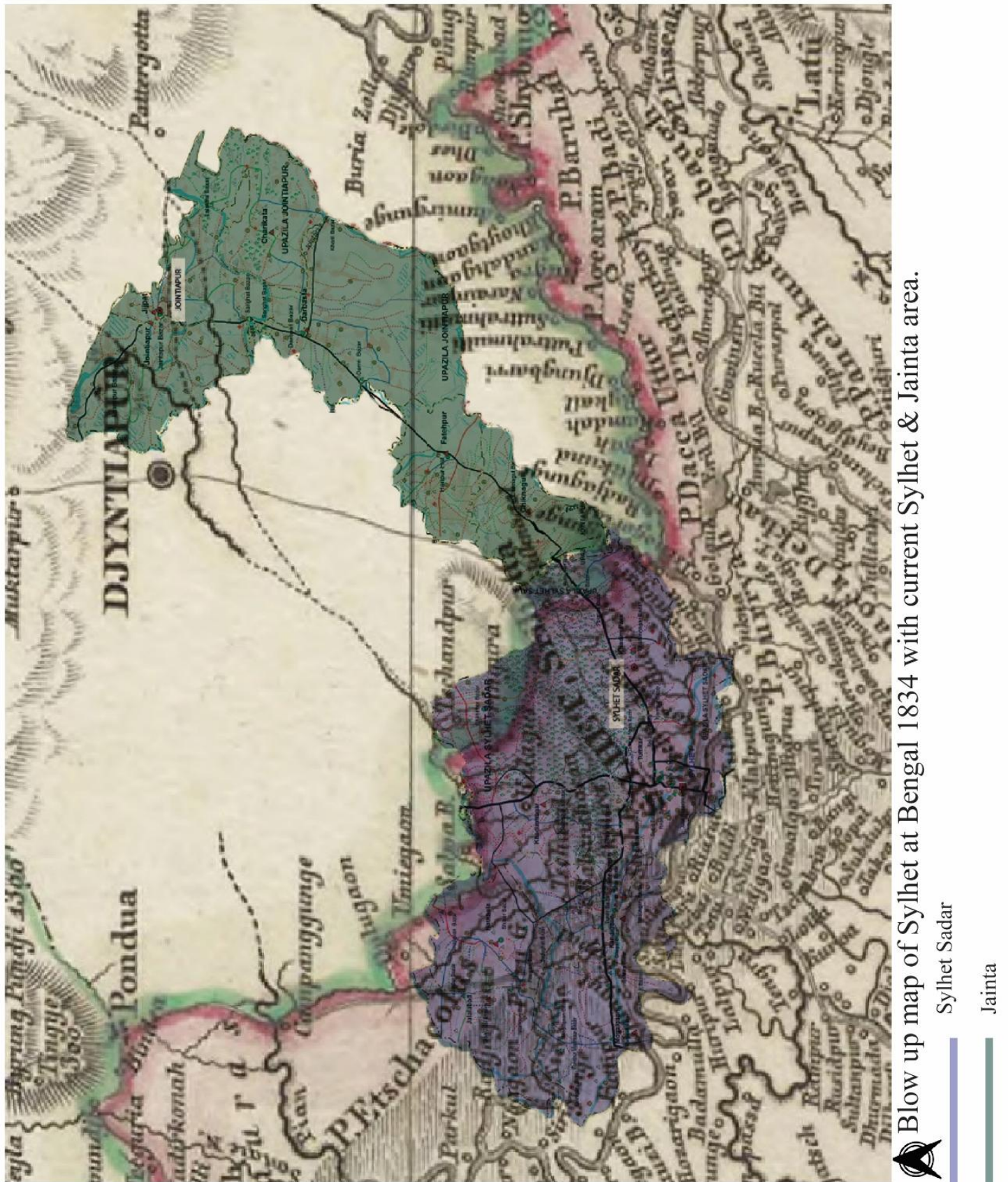


Figure 31

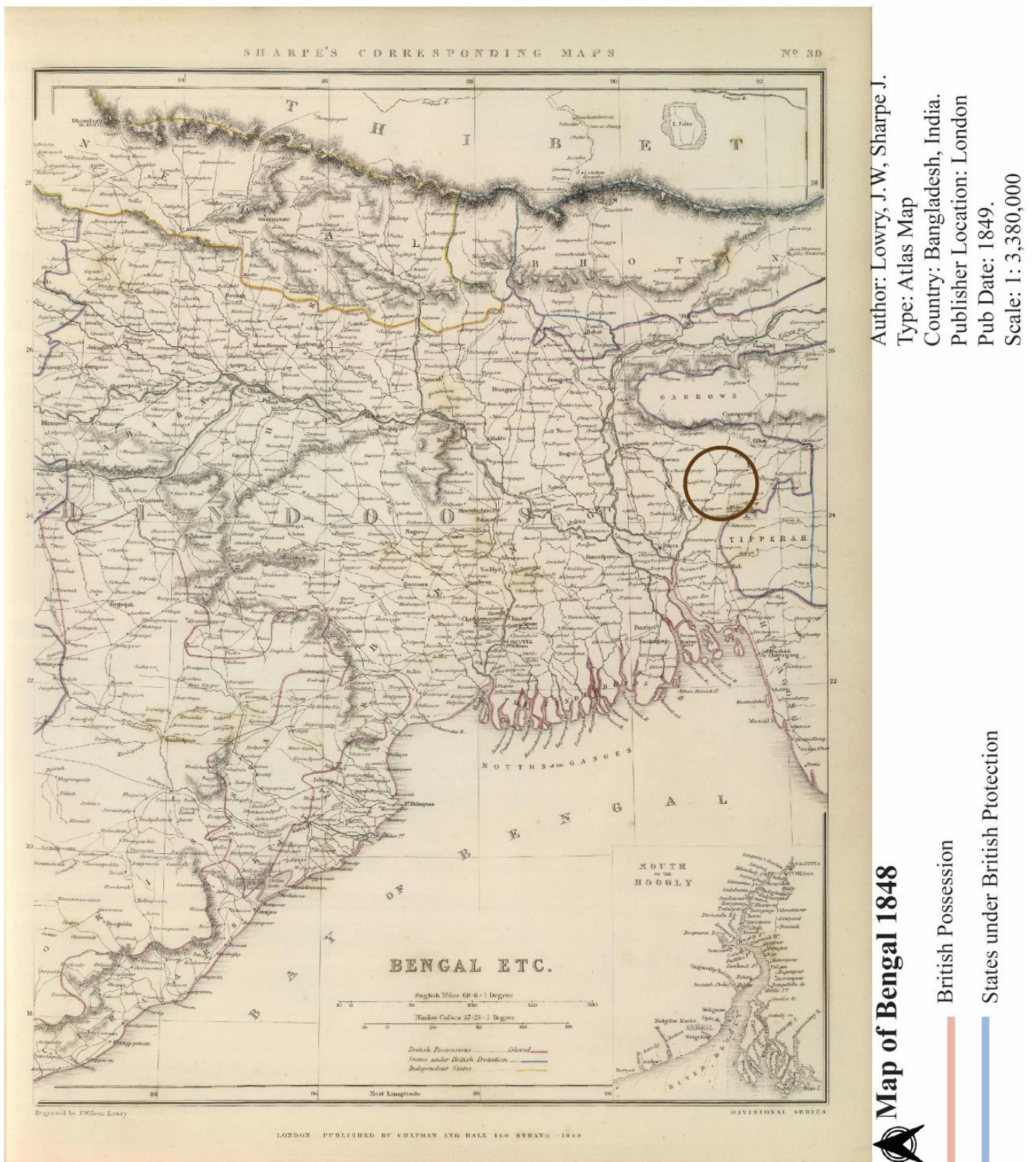


Figure 32:



Figure 33:

Rivers in Sylhet

Sylhet is crisscrossed by rivers, canals, and haors, which make it one of the most water-rich areas of Bangladesh. The waterways are mainly fed by rain from the surrounding Meghalaya and Manipur Hills as well as Himalayan sources.

1. Surma River

- Upper course is called the Barak, originating in the Manipur Hills, India.
- Splits near Silchar into two branches: Surma (north) and Kushiara (south).
- Flows through Sylhet city and tea valleys, eventually merging with the Meghna system. [106]

2. Kushiara River

- Southern branch of the Barak.
- Splits into distributaries in Sylhet (e.g., Kushiara, Juri, etc.) and rejoins Surma downstream.
- Important for agriculture and irrigation. [106]

3. Manu River

- Originates in the Tripura Hills (India).
- Flows through Moulvibazar district of Sylhet Division.
- Known for frequent flooding in monsoon. [107]

4. Khowai River

- Originates in the Meghalaya Hills (India).
- Flows through Habiganj district before joining the Meghna basin. [107]

5. Jadukata River

- Flows from the Khasi Hills (India) into Sunamganj.
- Noted for its scenic beauty and stone collection sites.[107]

6. Sari (Sari-Goyain) River

- Comes from the Meghalaya Hills, entering Sylhet near Jaflong.
- Famous for its clear waters and stone quarrying. [107]

7. Piyain River

- Another transboundary river from Meghalaya.
- Joins the Surma after flowing through Jaintiapur. [107]

Importance

- These rivers form extensive haors (floodplains), such as Hakaluki Haor and Tanguar Haor, which are biodiversity hotspots.
- The rivers provide water for irrigation, fisheries, transport, and contribute to the fertile alluvial plains of Sylhet.

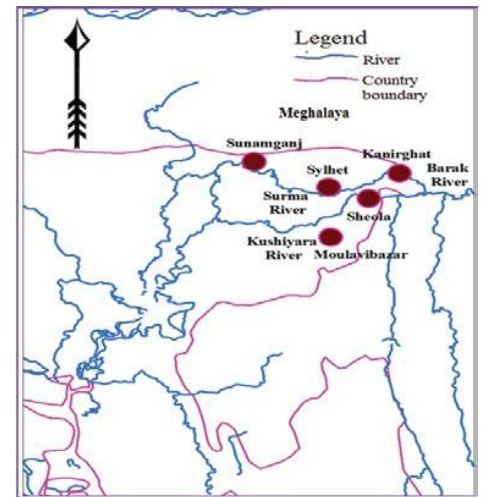


Figure 34: Surma and Kushiara River with water level measuring stations.
(Source: 3rd International Conference on Water & Flood Management)

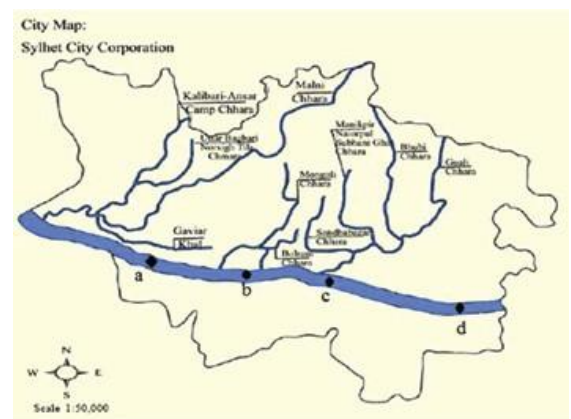


Figure 35: Sampling locations of water samples of the Surma River. (Source: Sylhet City Corporation)

10. Strategic Planning Zones (SPZ)

Under the Structure Plan, Strategic Planning Zones (SPZs) have been created to facilitate detailed area planning. Of these, six zones fall within the Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) area, and six zones lie outside it.

The logic behind establishing SPZs is to divide the Structure Plan area into smaller, manageable units to identify their problems and opportunities, and to propose development strategies that both address challenges and promote growth. By grouping together areas with common characteristics, SPZs help ensure a uniform land-use framework for the future. Within the SCC area, more than one ward has been combined to form an SPZ, while outside the SCC area, mouzas have mostly been taken as the basic unit for delineation.

SPZs provide the basis for preparing detailed area development plans, allowing for more thorough investigation of local issues and opportunities. This approach ensures better management of planning and development processes.

The advantages of SPZs include:

- Enabling more specific and accurate stakeholder perceptions.
- Supporting better diagnosis of local problems.
- Serving as a solid foundation for analysis and micro-level recommendations.
- Facilitating short-term investment decisions and forming the basis for local-level capital investment programs.
- Providing more opportunities for dialogue with local communities to achieve consensus on detailed local-level planning.
- Allowing infrastructure, social amenities, and community expectations to be clearly illustrated and articulated.

In this study, the focus areas were SPZ-4, SPZ-10, and SPZ-11.

Table 3: SPZ with respective local area coverage

SPZ	Local area coverage
SPZs outside SCC Area	
SPZ-01	Kumargao and Koshva Akhalia
SPZ-02	Mangalichara, Malnichara, Hamidpur, Brammonchara, Tarapurand Lakktura Tea Garden.
SPZ-03	Barsala
SPZ-04	Shadipur 1st Part and Devpur
SPZ-05	Sultanpur chok, Khidirpur, Bohor, Pesh neyoaj and Hajibai.
SPZ-06	Kuchai, Palpur Purba, Pashchimbhag.
SPZs inside SCC Area	
SPZ-07	Ward No- 25, 26, 27.
SPZ-08	Ward No- 8, 9, 10.
SPZ-09	Ward No- 2, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.
SPZ-10	Ward No- 5, 17, 18, 19, 20.
SPZ-11	Ward No- 21, 22, 23, 24.
SPZ-12	Ward No- 1, 3, 4, 6 ,7.

Table 4: SPZ with area under each ward

SPZ	Ward No.	Name of areas under each Ward
SPZ-07	Ward No.	
	25	25- Barokhola, Godrail, Khojarkhola, Mominkhola, Musargoan, Lawai.
	26	26-Bharthokhola, Chandnighat, Jalopara, Kadamtali.
	27	27- Alampur, Ganganagar, Mejortila.
SPZ-08	Ward No.	
	8	8- Brahman Shashan, Hauldar Para, Kucharpara, Korarpara, Noapara, Ponitula, Pathantula.
	9	9- Akhalia, Baghbhari, Dhanuhata, Kuliapara, Madina Market, Nehari Para, Pathantula, Sagardigir Par.
	10	10- Lamapara, Shamimabad, Kanishail, Kalapara, Majumder Para, Molla Para, Nabab Road, Wapda.
SPZ-09	Ward No.	
	2	2- Dariapara, Jallar Par, Kethripara, Kazi Elias, Lama Bazar (Saraspur), Mirza Jangal, Zindabazar.
	11	11- Rohon Das Ratul, Bhatalia, Bil Par, Kajalshah, Kuarpar, Lala Dighirpar, Madhu Shahid, Noapara, Rekabi Baza.
	12	12- Bhangatikar, Itakhola, Kuarpar, Saudagartala, Sheikhghat.
	13	13- Taltola south, Itakhola, Saudagartala, Tufkhana, Masudhighirpar, Mirja jungle, Jitu Miar point, Ramer Dighir Par, Sheikh para, Lamabazar, Monipuri Rajbari.
	14	14- Bandar Bazar, Brahmandi Bazar, Chali Bandar Poschim, Chararpar, Hasan Market, Dak Bangla Road, Dhupra Dighirpar, Jallar Par, Jamtala, Houkers Market, Kastagarh, Kamal Garh, Kalighat, Lal Dighirpar, Paura Biponi, Paura Mirzajangal, Shah Chatt Road, Uttar Taltola, Zinda Bazar.
	15	15- Bandar Bazar, Baruth Khana, Chali Bandar, Churi Patti, Hasan Market, Jail Road, Joynagar, Jatarpur, Nayarpool, Noapara, Suphani Ghat, Puran Lane, Uttar Dhopa Dighirpar, Zinda Bazar.
	16	16- Charadigirpar, Dhooper Digirpar, Hauapara, Kahan Daura, Kumarpara, Purba Zinda Bazar, Naya Sarak, Saodagor Tola, Tantipara.
SPZ-10	Ward No.	
	5	5- Borobazar, Electric Supply, Goypara (Chachnipara), khasdobir, Eidgah, Hazaribag, T.B colony.
	17	17-Kazitula, Loharpara, Moktobgoli, Electric Supply, Ambarkhana, Mirboxtula, Chondontula, Chowhatta, Uchashorok, Kumarpara, Uttor Kazitula, Shahi Eidgah, Noyashorok.
	18	18- Brajahat Tila, Evergreen, Jhonnar Par, Jherbn jheri Para, Kumar Para, Mira Bazar, Mousumi, Sabuj Bagh, Serak, Shahi Eidgah, Shakhari Para.
SPZ-11	Ward No.	
	21	21-Bhatatikr, Brahman Para, Gopal Tila, Hatimbagh, Lakri Para, Sadipur, Shaplabagh, Tilaghar, Rajpara, Sonar Para.
	22	22- Shahjalal Uposhor.
	23	23-Machimpur, Mehendibagh.
SPZ-12	Ward No.	
	1	1- Ambarkhana, Dargah Mahalla, Darshan Deury, Dargah Gate, Jhonnar Par, Mirer Maydan, Mian Fazil Chist, Purba Subidbazar, Rajargali.
	3	3- Kajal Shah, Keyapara, Munshipara, Subid Bazar, M.A.G Osmani Medical, Police Line.
	4	4- Ambarkhana, Dattapara, Housing Estate, Lichu Bagan, Mazumdari.
	6	6- Badam Bagicha, Choukidighi, Eliaskandi, Syedmogni.
	7	7- Jalalabad, West Pir Moholla, Soyef Khan Road, Subid Bazar, Uttar Pir Moholla (Paharika), Haji Para, Bon kolapara, Fazil Chisht Residential Area, Kolapara, Mitali, Londoni Road.

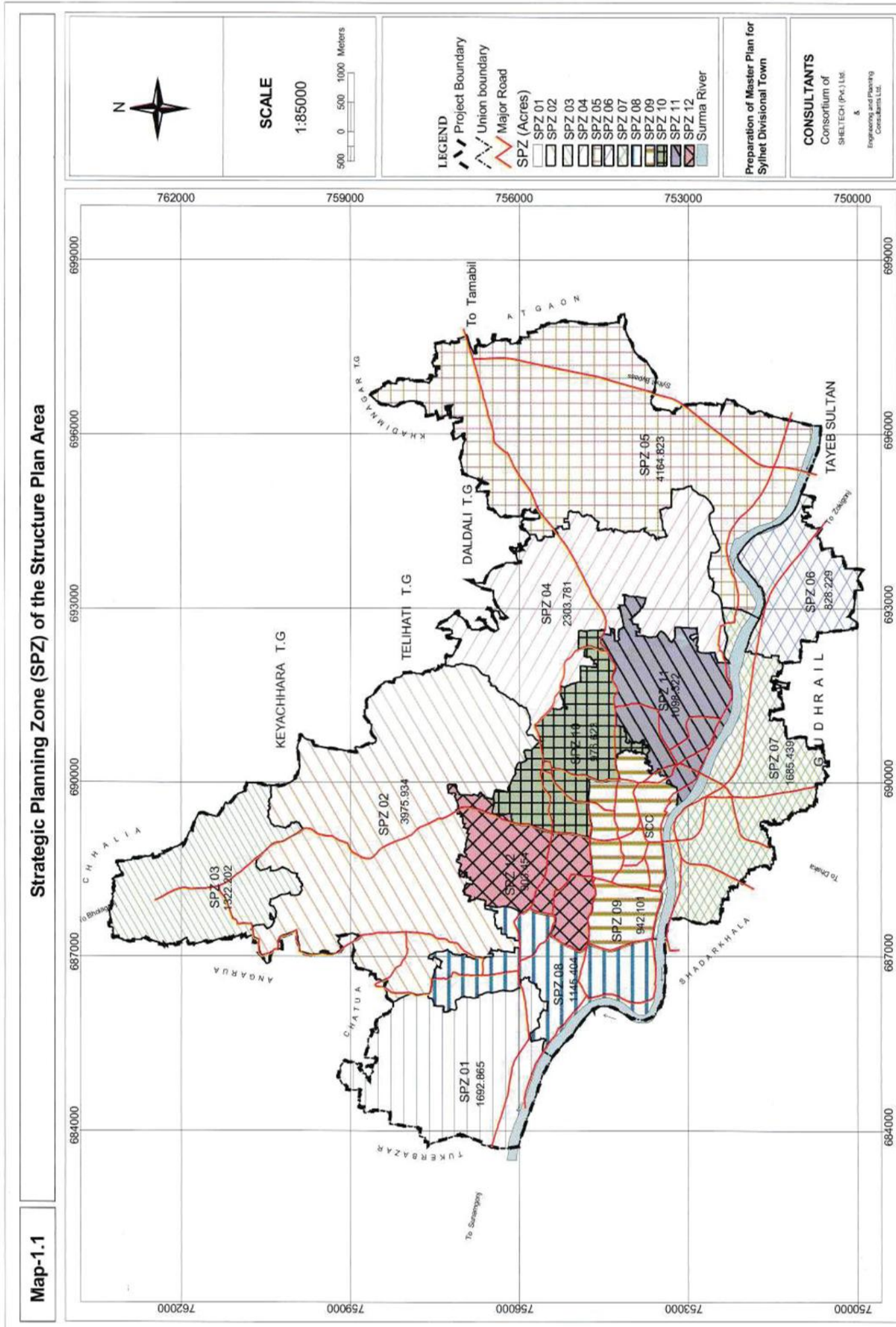


Figure 36: Strategic Planning Zone (Collected by Author)

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SPZ-04: Sadipur (1st Part) and Debpur (Part)

Area and Administrative Boundary

SPZ-04 covers a total area of 2,303.78 acres and consists of two mouzas within Tultikar Union. The Lakkatura Tea Garden lies at the westernmost edge of this zone. The northern boundary is formed by Wards 19, 20, 21, 22, and 24 of the Sylhet City Corporation (SCC). The southern part of this zone lies outside SCC, where the mouzas of Sultanpur Chak and Pesh Newaz are located. Bahar mouza is situated on the eastern side. Notable landmarks within this zone include the BADC Sylhet Sadar Seed Farm, RAB Headquarters (former Sylhet Textile Mill), Bangladesh Radio Tower (Betar), Jalalabad Eye Hospital, and the Eastern Housing Project. Prominent educational and health institutions such as MC College, Sylhet Government College, Sylhet Agricultural University, and the Heart Foundation are also located here.

Population

The current estimated population of SPZ-04 is about 23,833, with a gross density of only 10 persons per acre, which is considered very low compared to the overall SCC area. By 2030, the population is projected to rise to 55,851, resulting in a density of 24 persons per acre.

Topography and Drainage

The area is largely flat with several scattered hillocks. Numerous ponds are distributed across the zone. Several khals and chhoras serve as natural drainage channels, including Khana Chhora, Voni Chhora, Borchha Chhora, and Kuchai Chhora. Kuchai Chhora is the main drainage artery, directly connected to the Surma River.

Land Ownership

Most of the land in SPZ-04 is privately owned. Publicly owned land includes areas under BADC, MC College, Betar, and the Agricultural University.

Road Network

The road network in SPZ-04 extends for 49.07 km, with over 80% being paved (pucca). Only 7.49 km (15.26%) are unpaved, and 2.12 km are semi-pucca. Major roads include the Sylhet–Tamabil Road, which passes through the zone, and the Sylhet–Kanaighat Road to the south. Minor roads include Poultry Farm Road, Mirapara Road, and Baluchar Road.

Community

Facilities

The zone contains 7 primary schools, 2 high schools, 6 madrasas, and 3 colleges. In addition, there are 8 hospitals/clinics, 4 community centers, and 3 kitchen markets. SPZ-04 also has 7 graveyards and 2 playgrounds.

Utilities

- **Water Supply:** As SPZ-04 lies outside the SCC boundary, there is no piped water supply. Residents primarily rely on hand tube wells for drinking and household use.
- **Gas and Electricity:** Electricity supply is available, but gas connections do not exist. Most households depend on traditional fuels for cooking.
- **Drainage and Sewerage:** The drainage system is inadequate, poorly maintained, and inconsistent in width and continuity. Many drains are broken. While some houses have septic tanks, most sewage is discharged directly into khals or left in open latrines.
- **Solid Waste Management:** There is no organized waste management system. Residents often dispose of waste indiscriminately in drains, ponds, and canals, polluting water bodies and posing health risks.

Existing

Land

Use

Residential land use dominates, covering 27.41% of the area. Agriculture is the second major use, occupying 557.72 acres or 24.21%. Other land uses include 12% tilla/hilly area, 9.58% institutional land, 4.10% water bodies, 2.60% transport and communication, and 10.94% vacant land. Commercial, industrial, recreational, and religious land uses, as well as graveyards/cemeteries, occupy relatively insignificant portions of the zone.

Major Issues and Problems

- Narrow road network
- Waterlogging during monsoon
- Lack of adequate water supply
- Insufficient recreational facilities
- Unplanned and ineffective drainage system
- Inadequate link roads
- The abandoned Sylhet Textile Mill, currently used as the RAB Headquarters, has the potential to be redeveloped into a modern central auditorium with community facilities

SPZ-10: Wards 05, 17, 18, 19, and 20

Area

and

Administrative

Boundary

SPZ-10 covers a total area of 977 acres and consists of five wards of the Sylhet City Corporation: Wards 05, 17, 18, 19, and 20. The western boundary is formed by Wards 01, 04, and 06, while the Lakkatura Tea Garden and Sadipur (1st Part) lie to the north. Ward 21 marks the southern boundary. This zone contains several significant landmarks, including Shahi Eidgah, Roads and Highways offices, Hazrat Manikpir Mazar and Graveyard, Ram Krishna Mission, the British Council, the Television Tower, Roynagar Rajbari, Shishu Paribar, the Meteorological Department, and the Water Development Board.

Population

The current estimated population of SPZ-10 is 82,666, with a gross density of 85 persons per acre. By 2030, the population is projected to rise sharply to 378,051, resulting in a density of 387 persons per acre.

Topography**and****Drainage**

The zone is predominantly flat and suitable for development, with numerous ponds scattered throughout. The southwestern portion is low-lying, crossed by several khals and chhoras. Most drainage channels originate in the northern hills and are discharged into the Surma River. Major natural drainage systems include Goali Chhora and Voni Chhora, with the latter serving as the primary drainage artery.

Land**Ownership**

Most of the land in SPZ-10 is privately owned. However, some portions are controlled by public agencies, such as the Water Development Board (WDB) and Ram Krishna Mission. Additionally, approximately 37.87 acres of khas land are located within the zone.

Road**Network**

The road network extends for 42.84 km, of which over 97% is paved. Only 943.58 meters (2.21%) remain unpaved. The Sylhet–Tamabil Road runs along the northern boundary, while Airport Road defines the western edge of the zone. Other important but narrow roads include Ambarkhana–Borobazar Road, Kazitola Road, Shahi Eidgah Road, Jerzaripara Road, Doripara Road, Dadapir Road, Monipur Road, and Kalbakini Road. These require widening to support smooth traffic movement.

Community**Facilities**

The zone hosts 10 primary schools, 6 high schools, 4 colleges, and 4 madrasas. It also includes 3 hospitals/clinics, 6 community centers, 4 kitchen markets, 16 graveyards, and 2 playgrounds, serving the local population.

Utilities

- **Water Supply:** Being inside the SCC area, SPZ-10 has access to piped water supply. In addition, some residents use deep tube wells, while river and pond water are occasionally used for domestic purposes.
- **Gas and Electricity:** Electricity is widely available. Gas supply is managed by Jalalabad Gas Transmission and Distribution Company (JGTC). However, many households still rely on traditional fuels such as firewood and kerosene for cooking.
- **Drainage and Sanitation:** While roadside drains exist, they are insufficient and poorly maintained. Although some dwellings are equipped with septic tanks, most households discharge sewage directly into khals or open latrines.
- **Solid Waste:** The area lacks a formal solid waste management system. Waste is often disposed of along roadsides and drains, causing environmental pollution.

Existing Land Use

Residential land use dominates, covering 72.46% of the zone. Other key uses include transport and communication (6.15%), vacant land (3.80%), commerce (2.59%), and education and research (3.36%). Land allocated for health services, graveyards, recreational areas, religious facilities, industrial activities, and mixed uses remains minimal.

Major Issues and Problems

- Insufficient supply of safe drinking water
- Narrow roads and lack of pedestrian facilities
- Poor connectivity, e.g., absence of link roads such as Moktab Goli Road and the road from the Christian Graveyard to Kumarpara
- Severe traffic congestion at Zindabazar and Bondarbazar
- Inadequate parking facilities
- Poor maintenance of the drainage network

SPZ-11: Wards 21, 22, 23, and 24**Area and Boundaries**

SPZ-11 covers 1,098 acres and includes Wards 21, 22, 23, and 24 of Sylhet City Corporation. The Surma River forms the southern boundary, Debpur Part lies to the east, and Wards 19 and 20 are to the north. Shah Jalal Upashahar (NHA) is in this zone, and the third phase of its residential area extension project is ongoing. Important landmarks include the Jalalabad Gas Transmission Office, Department of Environment, Borhanuddin Mazar, Garden Tower, Hotel Star, Rose View City, private bus counters, and a wholesale vegetable market.

Population

The current estimated population is 60,102, with a gross density of 55 persons per acre. By 2030, the population is projected to reach 301,629, with a density of 275 persons per acre.

Topography and Drainage

The area is flat and suitable for urban expansion, containing many ponds. The southwestern part is low-lying. Natural drainage is provided by khals and chhoras, which also act as stormwater reservoirs during the monsoon. Major khals include Voni Chhora and its branch, which flow into the Surma River. However, encroachment and filling of these channels are common.

Land Ownership

Most land is privately owned, with 36.48 acres designated as khas land.

Road Network

SPZ-11 has 48.86 km of roads, over 95% of which are paved. Only 1.36 km is unpaved, and 831 meters are semi-paved. Major roads include Sylhet-Tamabil Road (north) and Dhaka-Sylhet Road (west). Minor roads, such as Chhali Bandor Road, Bishwa Road, Upashahar Main Road, Burhanuddin Road, Sadatikor Road, Sonapara Road, Upashahar Block Road, and Tultikar Road, are narrow and need widening for better traffic flow.

Community Facilities

The zone has 10 primary schools, 4 high schools, 5 colleges, and 10 madrasas. Health facilities include 4 hospitals/clinics. There are also 4 kitchen markets, 4 community centers, 1 post office, 12 graveyards, and 3 playgrounds.

Utilities

- **Water Supply:** Piped water is available. Residents also use deep tube wells, Surma River, and ponds.
- **Gas and Electricity:** Electricity is available throughout the area. Gas is supplied by Jalalabad Gas Transmission Company, though traditional fuels like firewood and kerosene are still used.
- **Drainage and Sanitation:** Roadside drains are insufficient and often broken. There is no proper sewerage system; most sewage flows into khals or open latrines, causing pollution and health hazards.

Existing Land Use

Residential is the dominant land use occupying about 51.74% of the SPZ. Vacant land is also ample, covering about 23% of total area of this SP. Other important land uses are, transport le covenunication (6.94%), defense & security (2.43%), commerce (2-63%) and water body (8.92%%. Commune under health care services and graveyard/crematorium/cemetery, recreational area, land us industrial activity, mixed use etc are insignificant in the SPZ-11.

Major Issues

- Narrow roads
- Lack of bylanes and connections
- Encroachment and excavation of Holdi, Goali, and Jugni Chhoras
- Shortage of primary schools, playgrounds, and local markets
- Lack of street lighting at Tikripara (Shaplabag to Tilagar Mosque) in Ward 21
- Insufficient dustbins
- Misuse or improper use of khas lands

11. Landmarks of Study Area SPZ

Sylhet Shahi Eidgah

Sylhet Shahi Eidgah is a large open-air prayer ground built during the rule of Mughal Sultan Sarfaraz Khan. It can hold over 100,000 worshippers at the same time and is one of the most popular tourist spots in Sylhet. Recently, the gates were rebuilt to improve safety and security. [108]

During the reign of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, Farhad Khan, the faujdar (military governor) of Sylhet, supervised the construction of the Eidgah on a hill in the 17th century. The Eidgah is designed like a Mughal fort but is meant for prayers. It has three gates, fifteen domes, and a large central mihrab with smaller mihrabs around the ground. Near the main gate is a large pond called “Fukoir” or “Fukri” for ablution (wudu). The borders of the Eidgah are lined with half-domed minars, adding to its grandeur. [109]

On 16 December 1782 (10 Muharram 1197), two religious leaders, Syed Muhammad Hadi and Syed Muhammad Mahdi (locally known as Hada Miah and Mada Miah), along with the Pirzada of Sylhet, led a rebellion against the British at this site. They planned to attack during a tazia procession, but the British officer Robert Lindsay was prepared and confronted them. A short battle took place, and the leaders were killed. This event is known as the 1782 Sylhet uprising. [110]



Figure 38: Eidgah (Collected by Author)

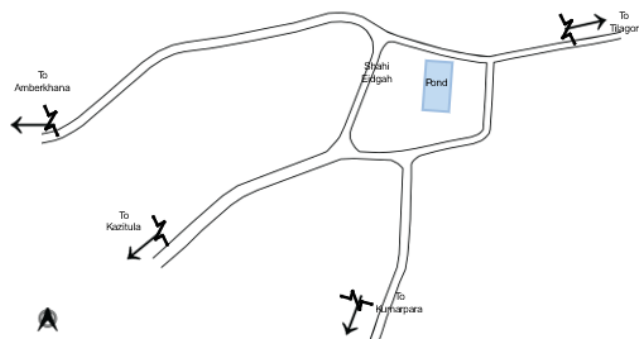


Figure 39: Denote Shahi Eidgah (Source: Modified by Author)



Figure 40: Shahi Eidgah Ground



Figure 41: Prayer Space



Figure 42: Eid Prayers in Eidgah



Figure 43: Sahi Eidgah Ground

Burhanuddin Mazar

Syed Gazi Burhanuddin was a 14th-century Sufi Muslim and is known as the first Muslim to settle in the Sylhet region. He lived in Tultikar, where around 13 Muslim families had settled under his leadership. Their ancestors had come to the Indian subcontinent after Muhammad bin Qasim's conquest of Sindh in the 8th century, later traveling through Chittagong before arriving in Sylhet for dawah (spreading Islam) and trade. The village where they lived is still known today as Tero Ratan in Tultikar.[111]

A famous incident in his life led to a major turning point in Sylhet's history. During the aqiqah (celebration) of his newborn son, Burhanuddin sacrificed a cow. The Hindu king of Sylhet, Gour Govinda, saw this as sacrilege and ordered the killing of Burhanuddin's infant son, Gulzar Alam, and had Burhanuddin's right hand cut off. Around the same time, Qazi Nuruddin of Taraf also faced punishment for a similar reason under the local ruler Achak Narayan. [112]

Seeking justice, Burhanuddin and Helimuddin (Nuruddin's brother) went to Sultan Shamsuddin Firoz Shah of Bengal. The Sultan then launched an expedition to Sylhet, with Burhanuddin serving as a guide.

In 1303, Sylhet was conquered with the help of Hazrat Shah Jalal and his companions, an event remembered as the Conquest of Sylhet. [111]

Today, Burhanuddin is honored in Sylhet. A road is named Syed Burhanuddin Road in Burhanabad, Tultikar, where his mazar (shrine) still stands. [113]



Figure 44: Gate of Burhanuddin Mazar. (Source: Captured by Author)



Figure 45: Inside Burhanuddin Mazar. (Source: Capture by Author)

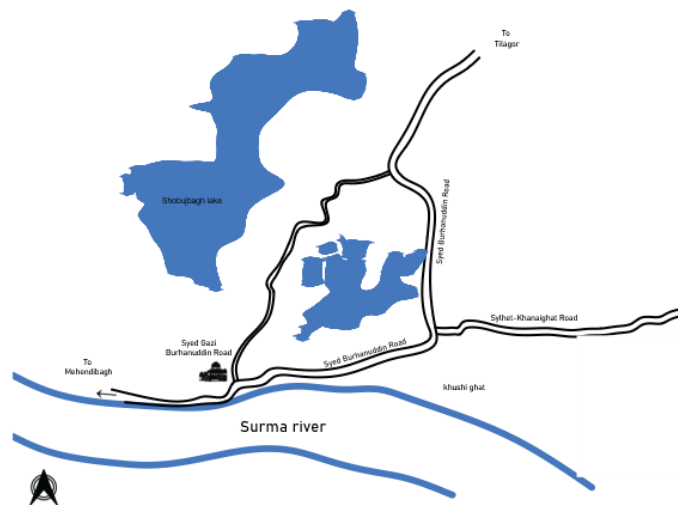


Figure 46: Denote Burhanuddin Mazar (Source: Modified by Author)

Murarichand College (MC), Sylhet

Murarichand College was founded in 1892 by Raja Girish Chandra Roy of Rainagar in Sylhet Sadar, making it the first college in the then State of Assam (Cotton College in Guwahati was established later in 1901). [114] It remains one of the most prominent institutions in Sylhet's history of modern education.

Raja Girish Chandra Roy (1845–1908) was born in Charvita village, Boaljur Pargana, Sylhet. Adopted in childhood by Brajsundari Devi, daughter of Murarichand, he grew up in Rainagar. Despite initial struggles in his social and personal life, he later devoted himself to education. With the encouragement of Nabakishore Sen, Deputy School Inspector of Sylhet, he purchased Banga School in 1876 and renamed it Girish Banga Vidyalaya. [115] The school later became Girish Chandra ME School (now Aided High School).

In 1886, he established Murarichand High School in Bandar Bazar. By 1891, it was offering FA classes under the University of Calcutta, and on 27 June 1892, it was formally upgraded to Murarichand College. [116] The college began with four professors and eighteen students, with Satish Chandra Roy as its founding principal.

In recognition of his contribution, the British government awarded him the title of Rai Bahadur in 1895, and Raja in 1899—the first and only such titleholder from Sylhet. After the 1897 earthquake destroyed much of Sylhet and his institutions, he rebuilt them and continued philanthropy, including endowing a hospital ward in his mother's name. Girish Chandra Roy died in 1908, remembered as a pioneer of education in Sylhet. [114]

Early Development of Murarichand College (MC College)

Sylhet Murarichand College was founded on June 27, 1892, with four teachers and eighteen students. The first Muslim student was Abdul Khaliq Chowdhury, and the first graduate was Bina Dutta in 1919. After the 1905 partition of Bengal, the government prioritized Cotton College. MC College followed a “wait and observe” policy. In 1906, renovation of the building and facilities was required, but due to financial crisis, Raja Girish Chandra Roy requested government aid. A grant of Tk 500 per month was approved in 1908, increased to Tk 800 in 1909. Plans to upgrade the college included constructing a new building for 100 students and a hostel for 75 students at Peterson Street (now Shaheed Shamsuddin Ahmed Hospital). MC College officially came under government control on April 1, 1912, under the University of Calcutta.

College Expansion and First-Class Degree Status

Initial relocation plans to Thakar in Tilagarh were postponed due to World War I. Temporary ‘Chong Bungalow’ structures were built at Gobindacharan Park (now Hasan Market). Under Kaptan Miah, the college aimed to become a first-class degree college. The government required Rs 18,000 from local contributions, which Kaptan Miah provided. MC College began first-class degree courses in July 1916. In 1918, 110 acres were acquired at Tilagarh for the college campus, leaving previous land for the Sadar Hospital. Foundation stones were laid in 1921 by Governor Sir William Marys. Construction was completed in 1925 and the campus included hostels and a hospital.

Sylhet Referendum and Teacher Crisis

In July 1947, a referendum decided whether Sylhet would join Pakistan or remain in India. Muslim League (axe symbol) supported joining Pakistan; Congress (hut symbol) supported India. Sylhet voted to join Pakistan. Following the referendum, many Hindu professors left, causing a teacher shortage. Initially, honors courses were not permitted by Dhaka University; the Calcutta University syllabus continued for two years. Honors courses resumed in 1961.

Name Changes and Recent History

Based on recommendations from the Sharif Education Commission, the college was renamed Sylhet Government College as it was fully government-funded. An intermediate college (MC Intermediate College) was later established on the east side of the campus. In 1988, the original name, Murarichand College, was restored by government notification, and the intermediate college was upgraded to degree level. [117]



Figure 47: Entry Gate of MC Field.
(Source:

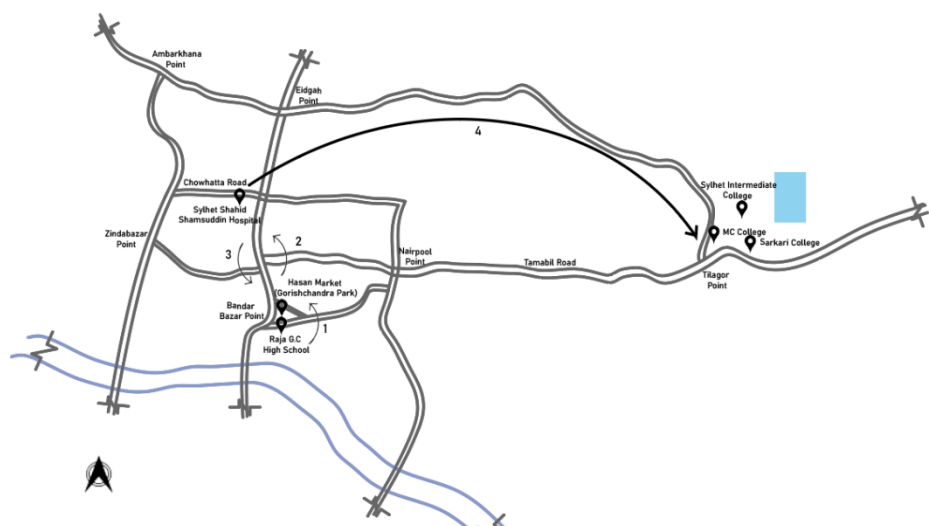


Figure 49: Denote MC Collage (Source: Modified by Author)



Figure 50: One of the Campus of MC



Figure 51: Chemistry Department



Figure 52: Central Library of MC Collage



Figure 53: View from Outside OF MC

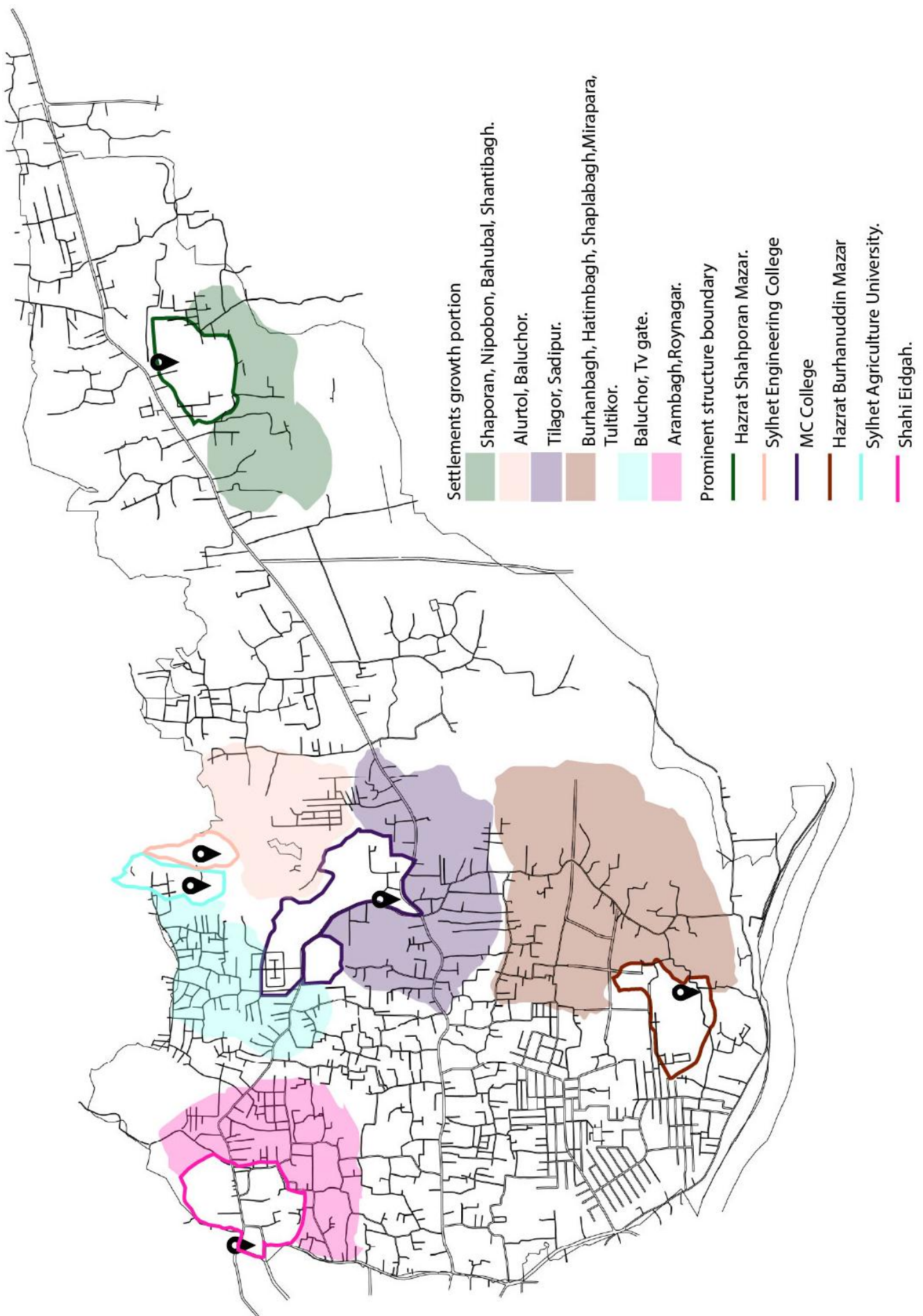


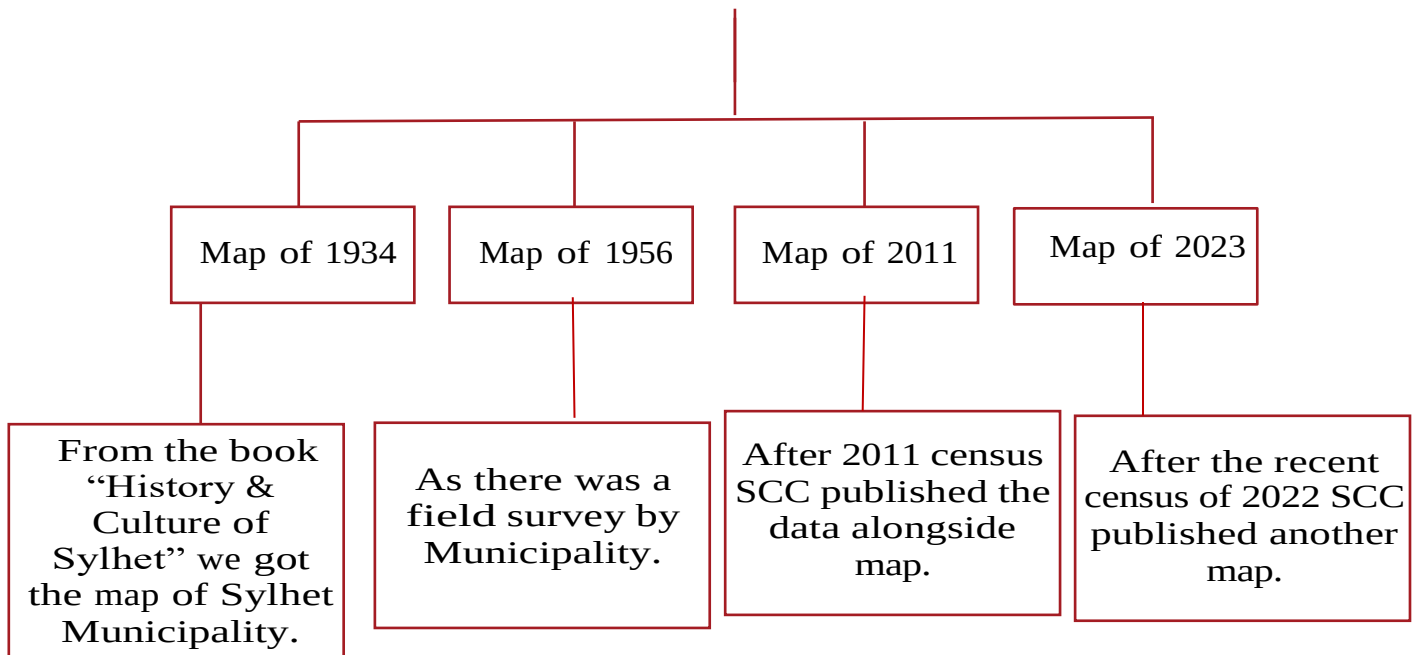
Figure 54: Map of Settlement Area of prominent Structure (Source: Modified by Author)

12. Changes of Plan of Attributed SPZ's in Different Timelines

It was not possible to analyze the morphological change around 100 years. Therefore, four maps are selected for analyze the morphological change of Sylhet. Analyzing the morphological transformations of these selected four years will provide an overall idea of the change of settlement patterns in Sylhet.

The four selected Maps are-

Map of Sylhet in different timelines



All the maps we've collected so far will be in the following order:

- Landmark Map.
- Connectivity Map.
- Land-use Map.
- Geographical Map
- . - Elevation Map.

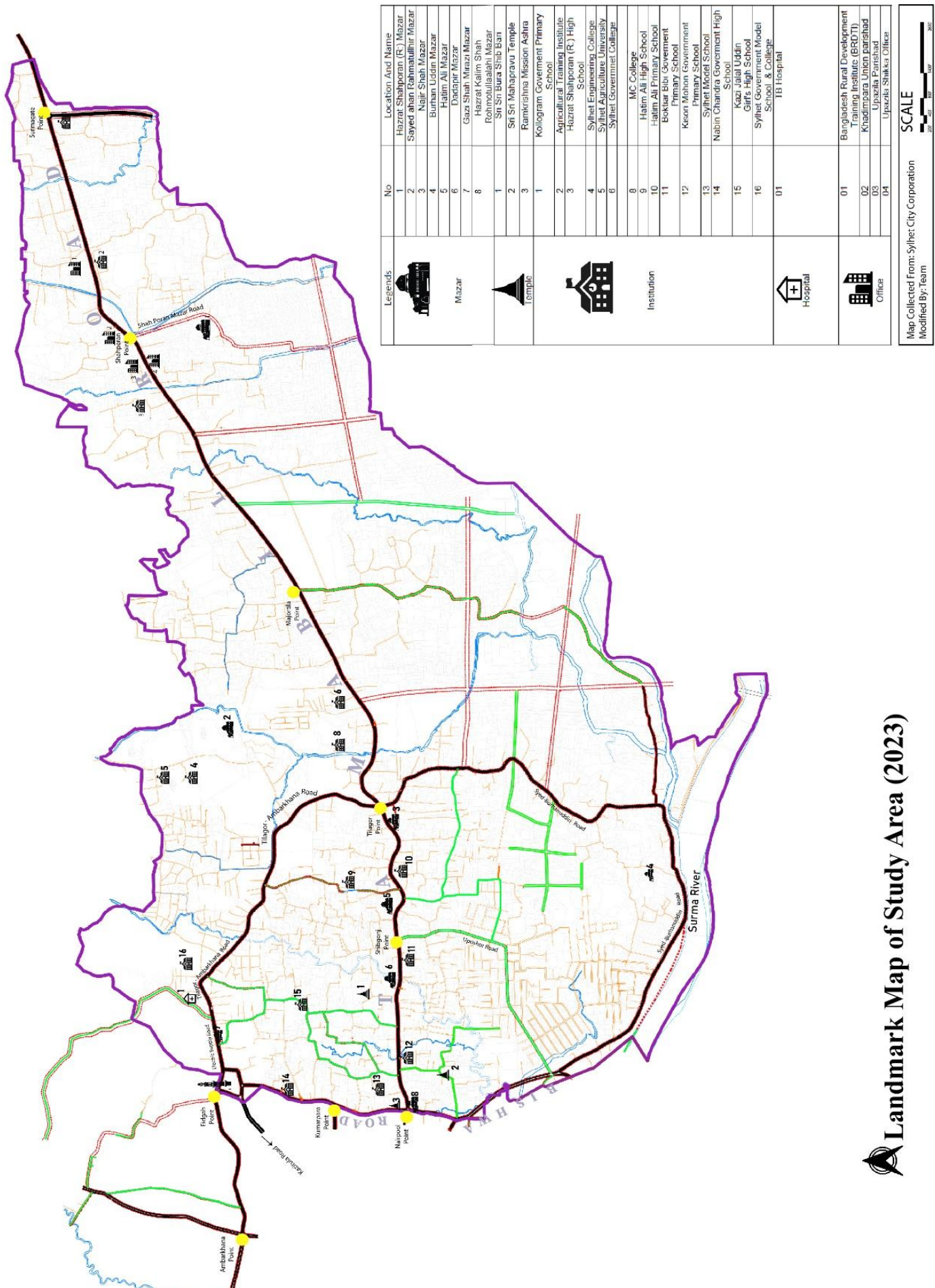


Figure 55

Landmark Map of Study Area (2023)

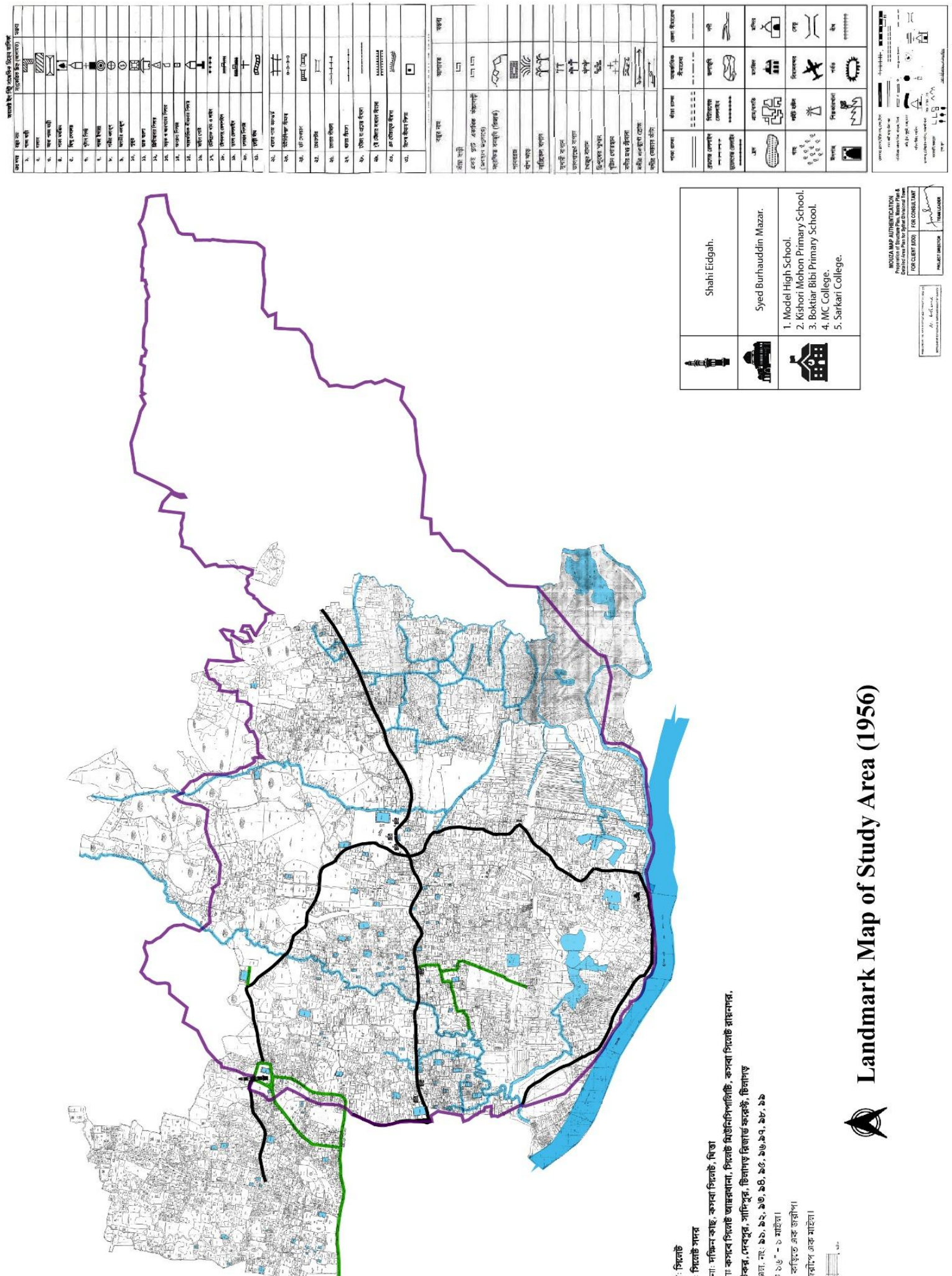


Figure 56

Road Network of Bangladesh

The road network of Bangladesh Consists of

1. National highways (designated by a number preceded by "N"),
2. Regional highways (R numbers) and
3. Zilla or district roads (Z numbers)

which are maintained by Roads and Highways Department, as well as Upazila Roads, Union Roads, and Village Roads which are maintained by Local Government Engineering Department.

Facts		
Classification	No. of roads	Total length
National Highway	110	3,990.75
Regional Highway	147	4,897.71
Zilla Road	735	13,587.82
Total	992	22,476.28

Longest roads (top 5)	
Road No	Length (Km)
N5	526
N1	462
N2	287
N7	250
N6	232

1. National Highway: National Highways connect the national capital with different divisional and old district headquarters, port cities and international highways. These roads have been categorized as National Highways considering the national importance and geographical positions.
2. Regional Highway: The term regional road (or route) is used in several places to designate roads of more than purely local but less than national strategic importance in a country's highway network.
3. Zilla or District Roads: Zilla roads are paved or have hard packed surface roads. Zilla roads are narrower in width than Regional Highways, can be hard to trace due to the tree canopy adjacent to the road. During seasonal flooding events Zilla roads can flood and become very muddy or impassable.

Vehicle Type	PCU factor
Car	1.0
Bus	3.0
Truck	3.0
Authorickshaw	0.5
Bicycle	0.3
Rickshaw	1.0
Motor Cycle	0.3
Tempo	1.0
Bullock Cart	4.0

Source : Transport Research Laboratory (UK) Overseas Road Note 13

Table 5: Passenger Car Unit (PCU) conversion factor for non-urban roads.

Design Type	Carriageway (m) / (ft)	Hard shoulder (m) / (ft)	Verge (m) / (ft)	Crest Width (m) / (ft)
8	3.0 / 10	0.0 / 0	1.25 / 4	5.5 / 18
7	3.7 / 12	0.0 / 0	0.90 / 3	5.5 / 18
6	3.7 / 12	0.0 / 0	1.8 / 6	7.3 / 24
5	3.7 / 12	0.9 / 3	0.9 / 3	7.3 / 24
4*	5.5 / 18	0.0 / 0	2.15 / 7	9.8 / 32
3	5.5 / 18	1.2 / 4	0.95 / 3	9.8 / 32

Table 7: Recommended Geometric Design Standard.

Design Type	Peak Hour maximum passenger car units (pcu)	Daily Commercial vehicles max. (trucks and buses)
8	(90)	50
7	(130)	100
6	(210)	200
5	(290)	300
4	530	600
3	800	

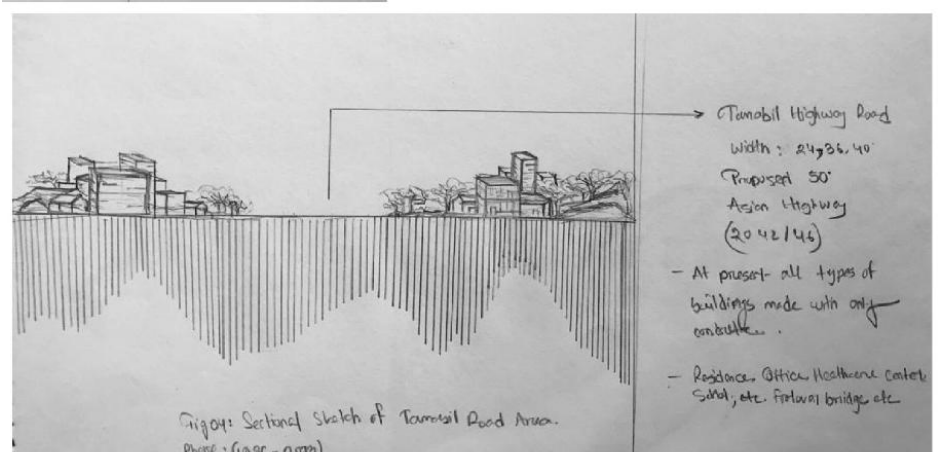
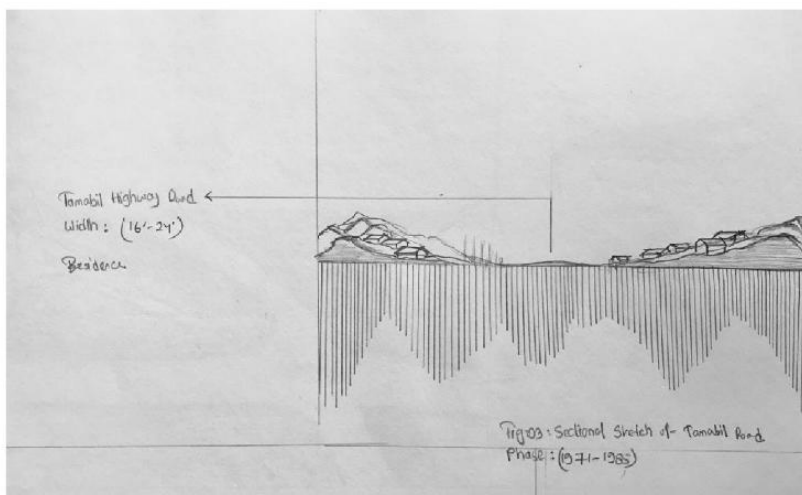
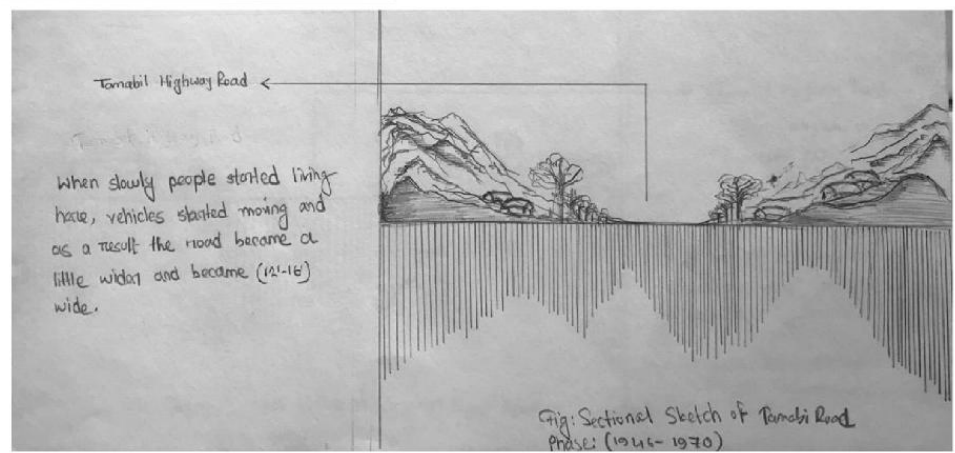
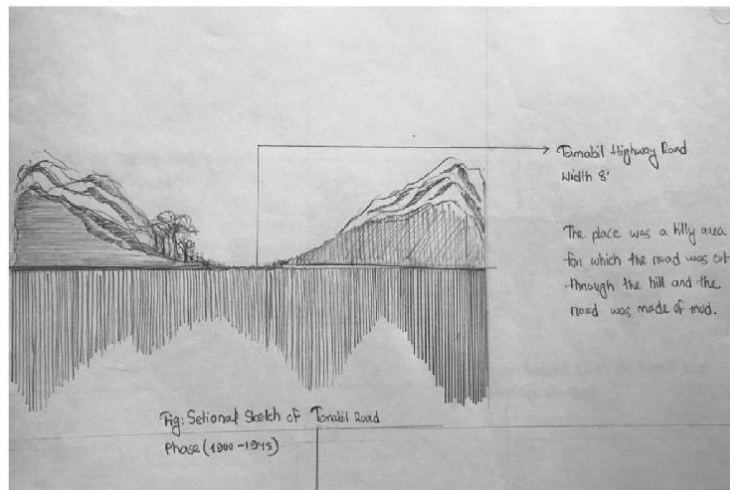
Table 6: Traffic Criteria for Design Purpose.

Road Class	Existing Design		New Class	Recommended Design		
	Cumulative Million ESA's	Typical Expected Design Life (years)		Design Type	Design Life (Million ESA's)	Expected Design Life** (years)
Rural Road / Union Road	0.5	10	Union	8	1.0	10
Feeder Road B / Upazila Road	1.0	10	Upazila	7	1.0	10
				6	1.0	10
				5	1.6	10
Feeder Road A / Zila Road	1.0	10	Zila	4*	2.0	10
				5	1.6	10
				4	5.0	20
				3	6.5	20

** Overlaying of 25-40mm BC will be required after every 7-8 yrs. * Special type to be used under special circumstances

Table 8: Existing and Recommended Design lives.

Road Section Over Past 100 Years



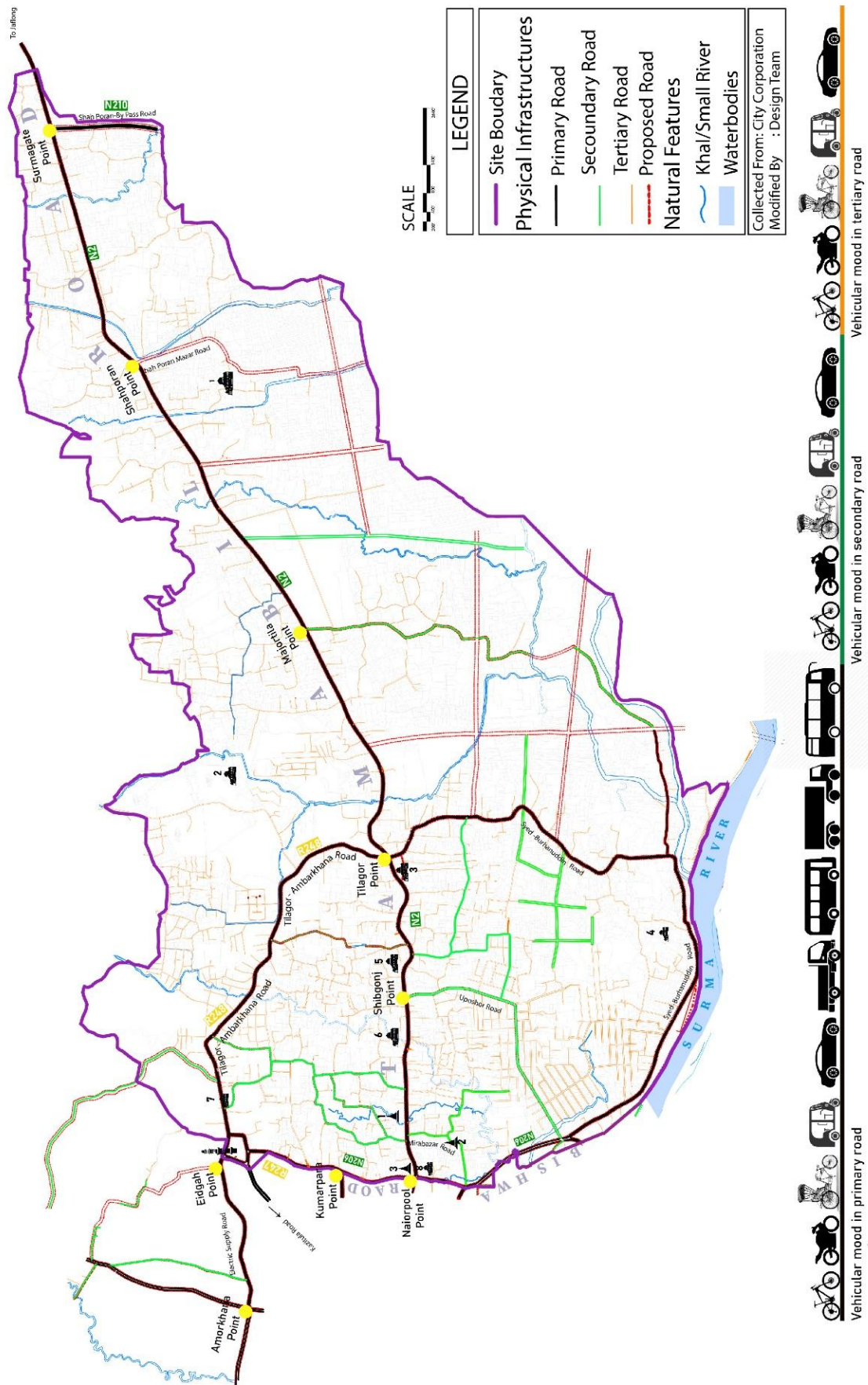


Figure 60

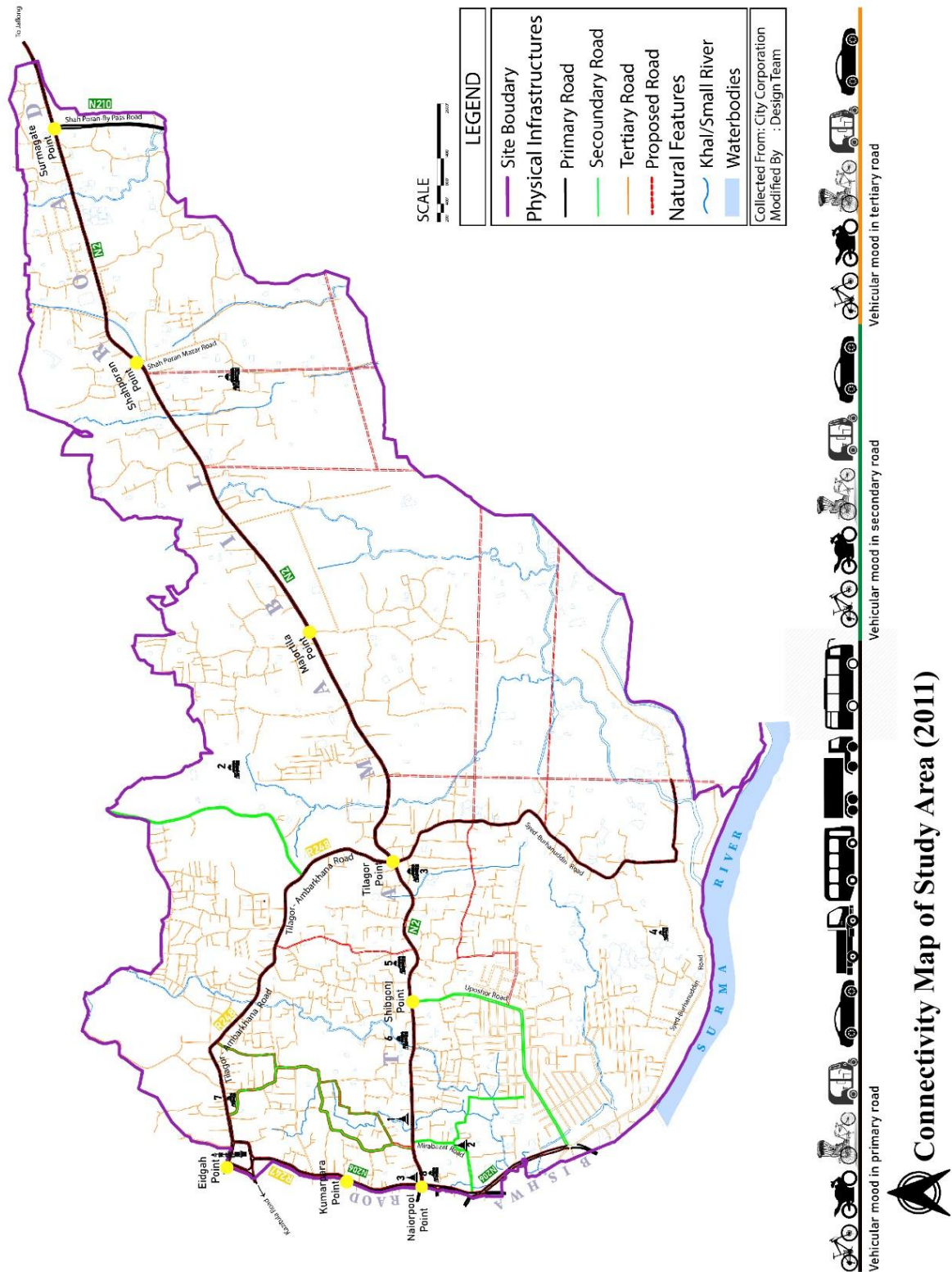


Figure 61

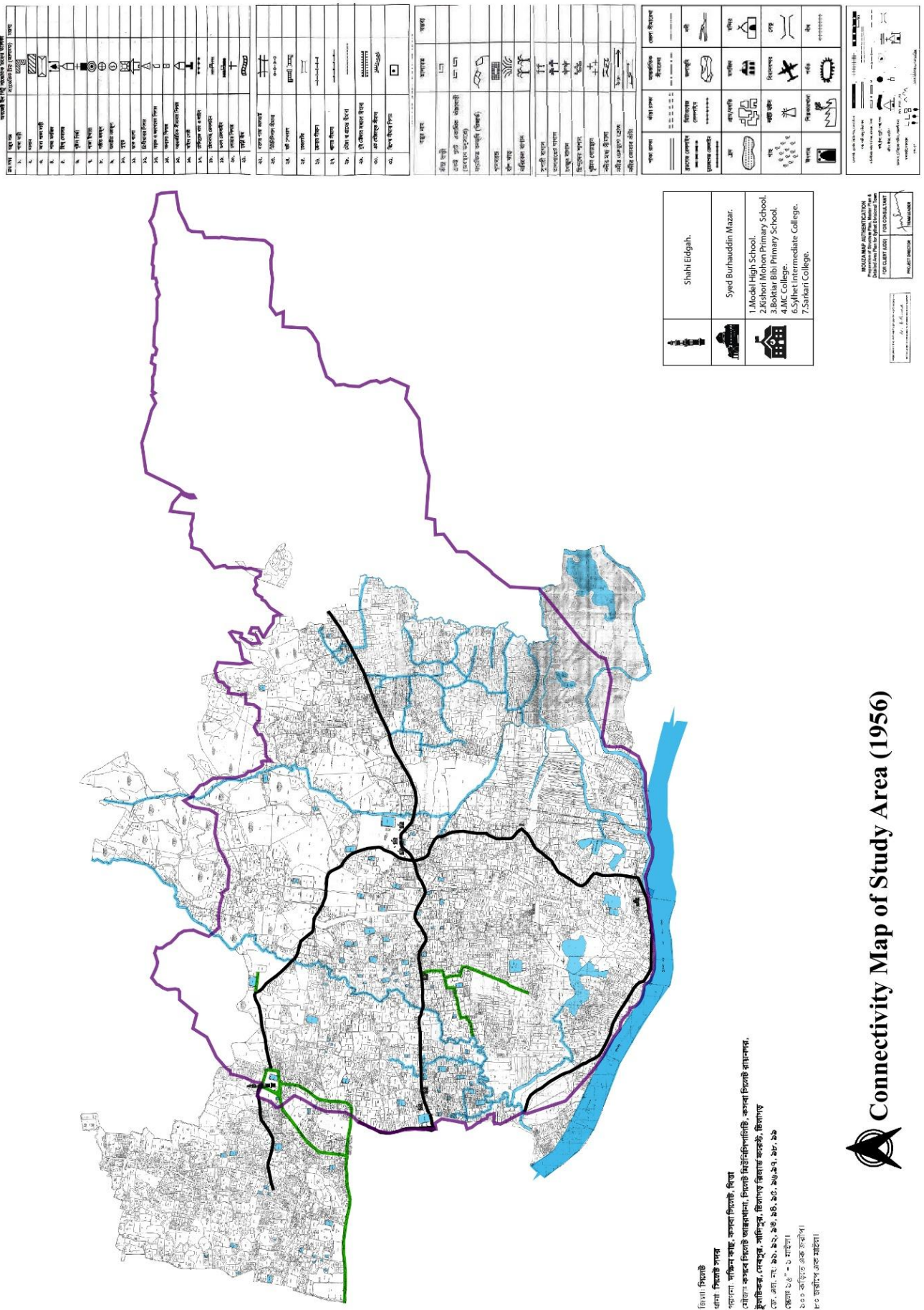


Figure 62

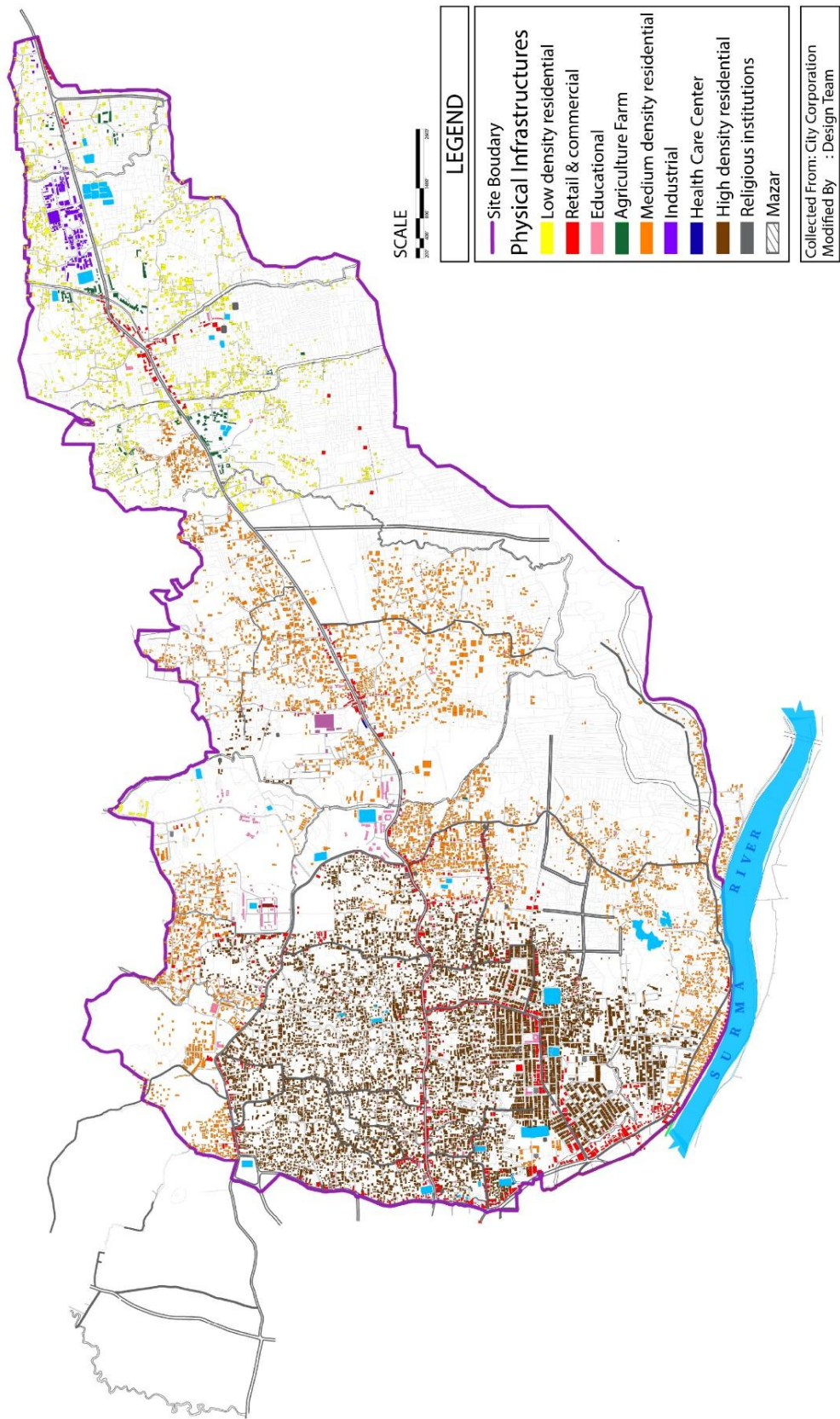


Figure 63

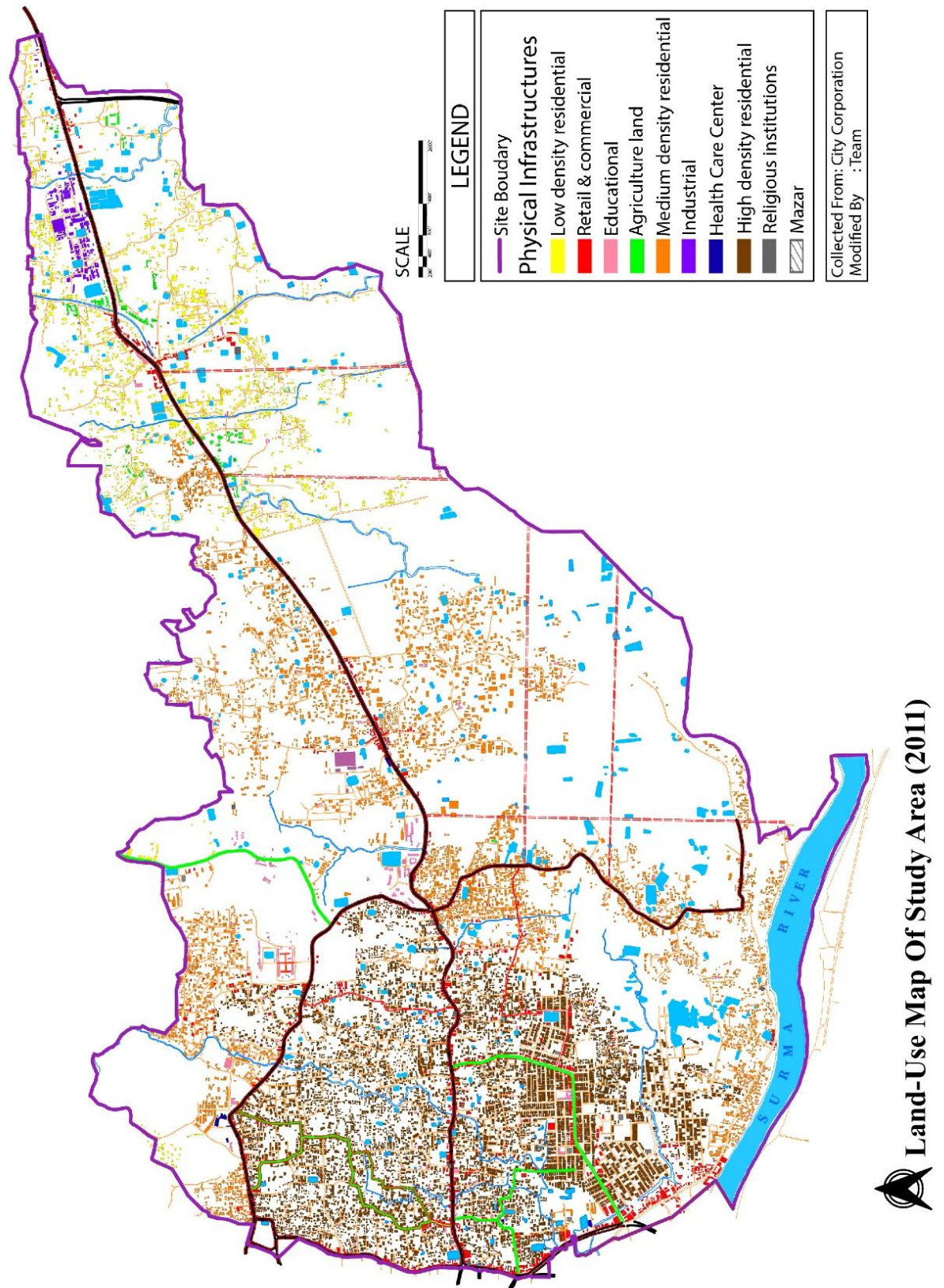


Figure 64

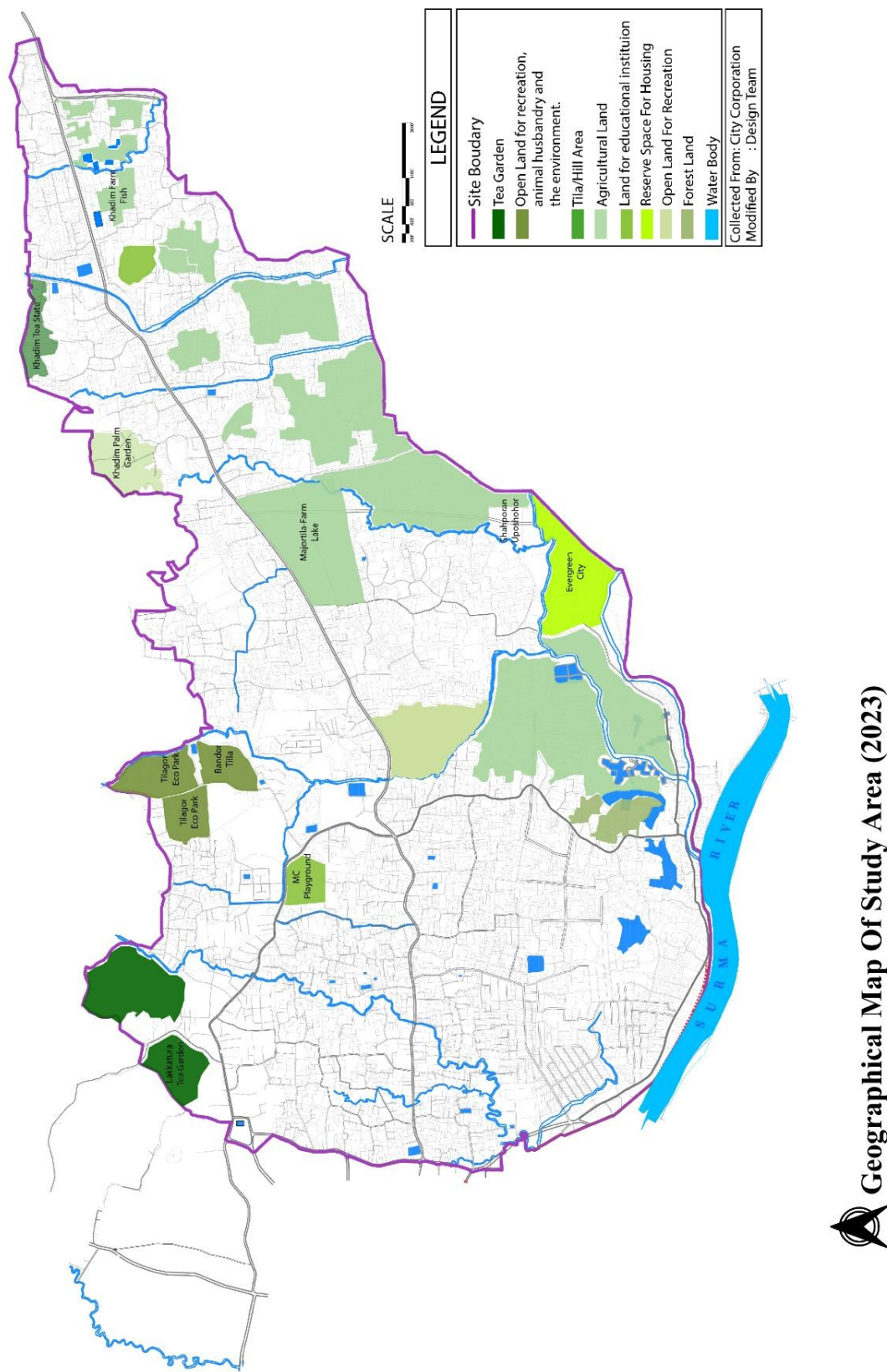


Figure 65

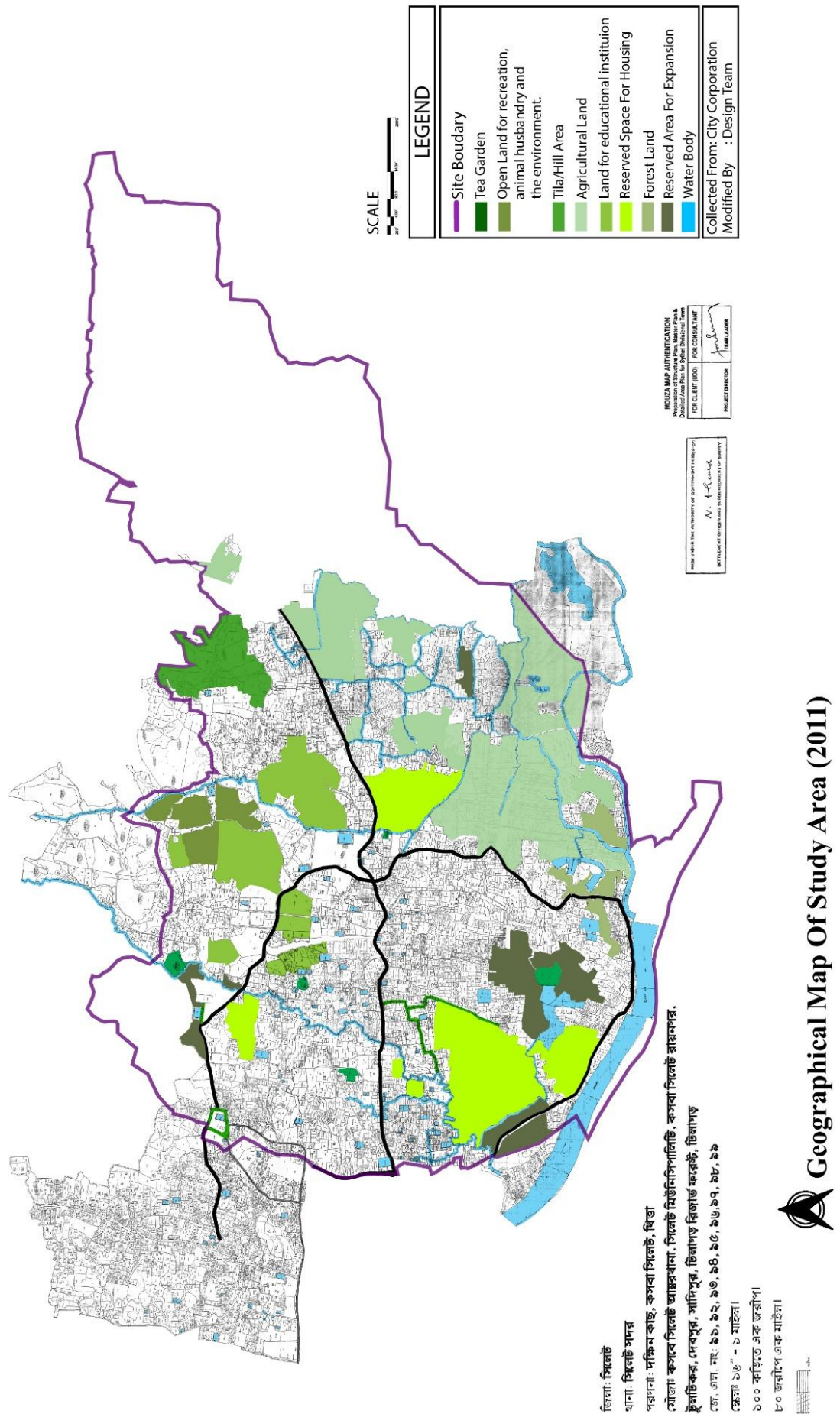


Figure 66

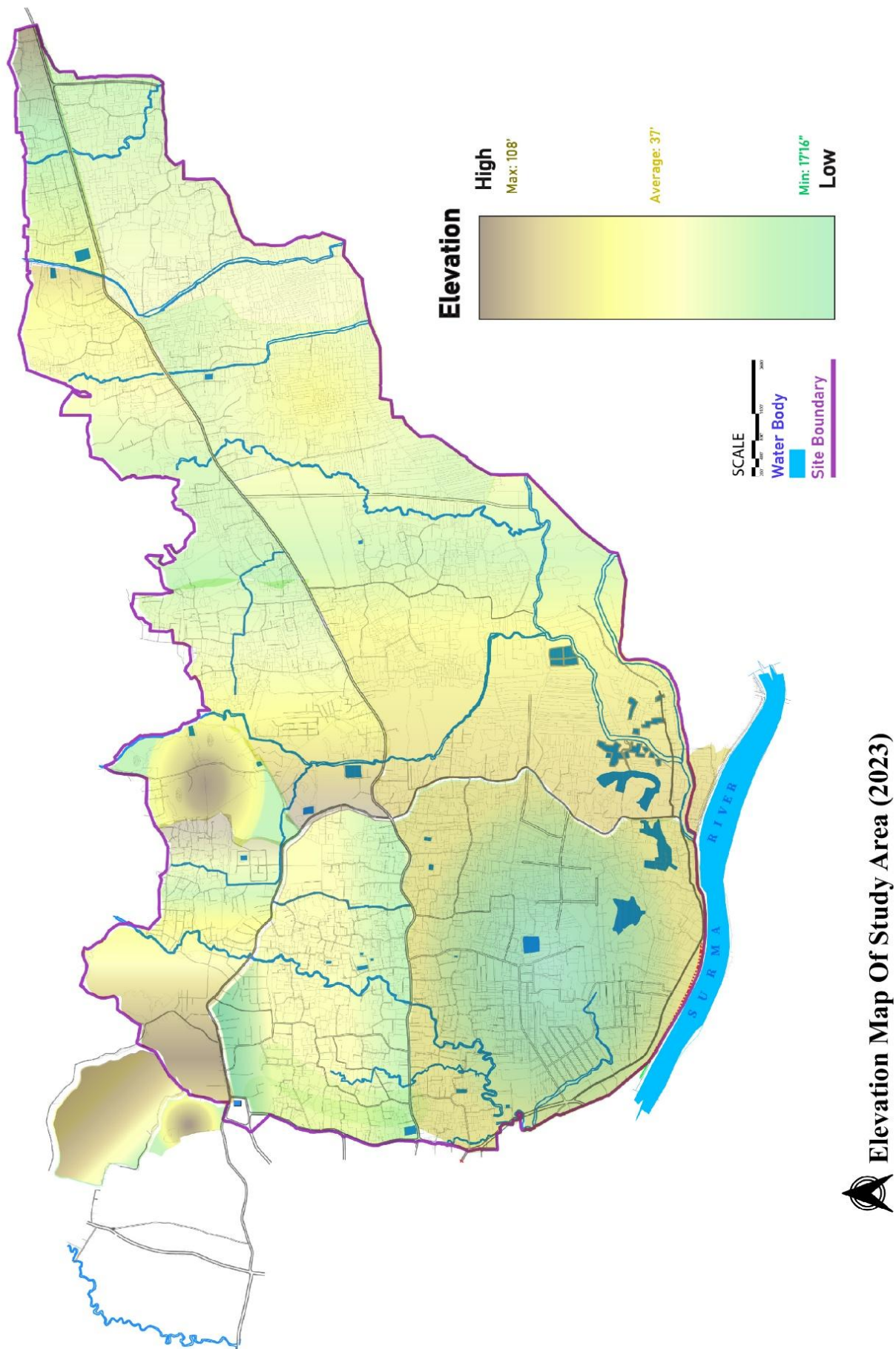


Figure 67

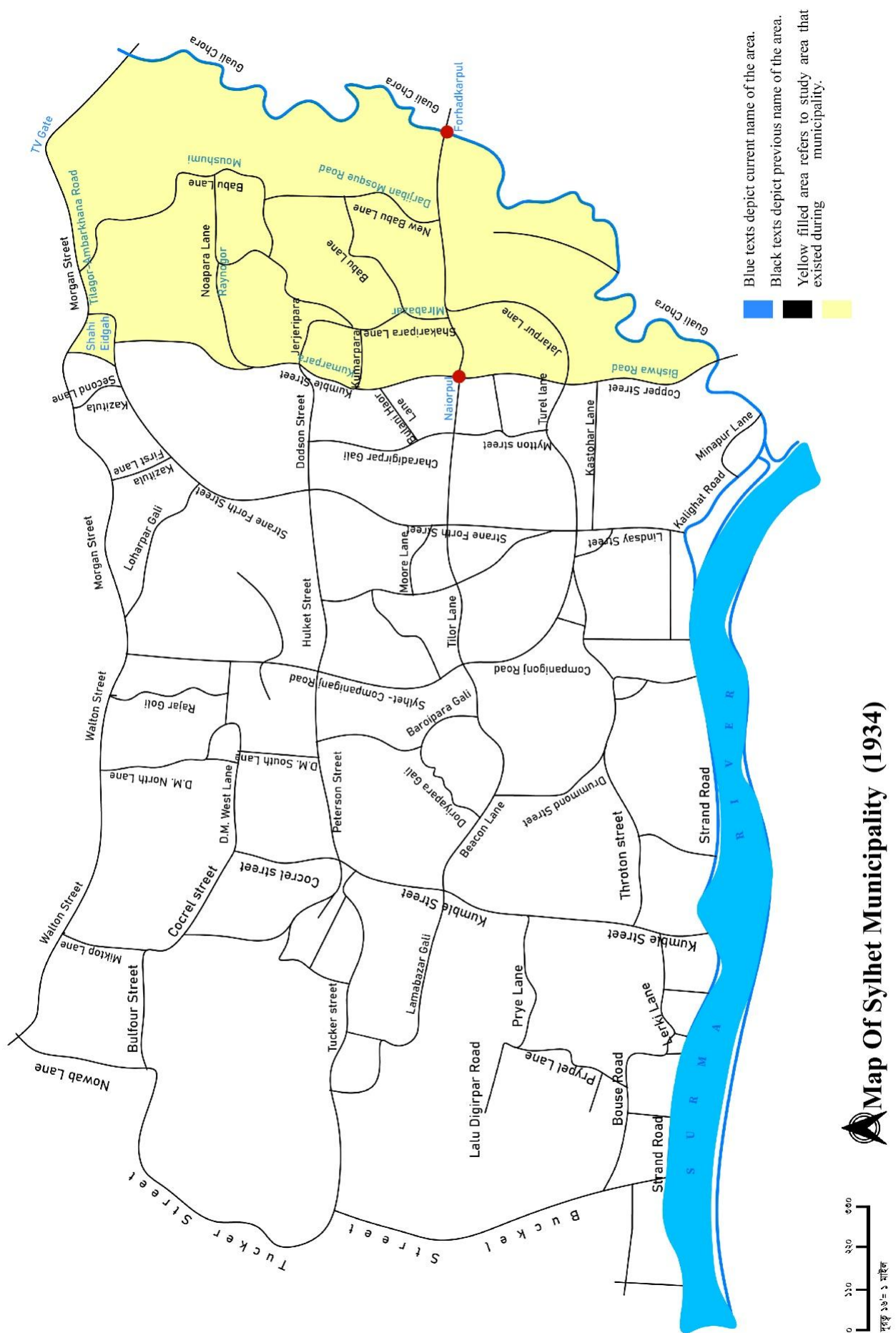
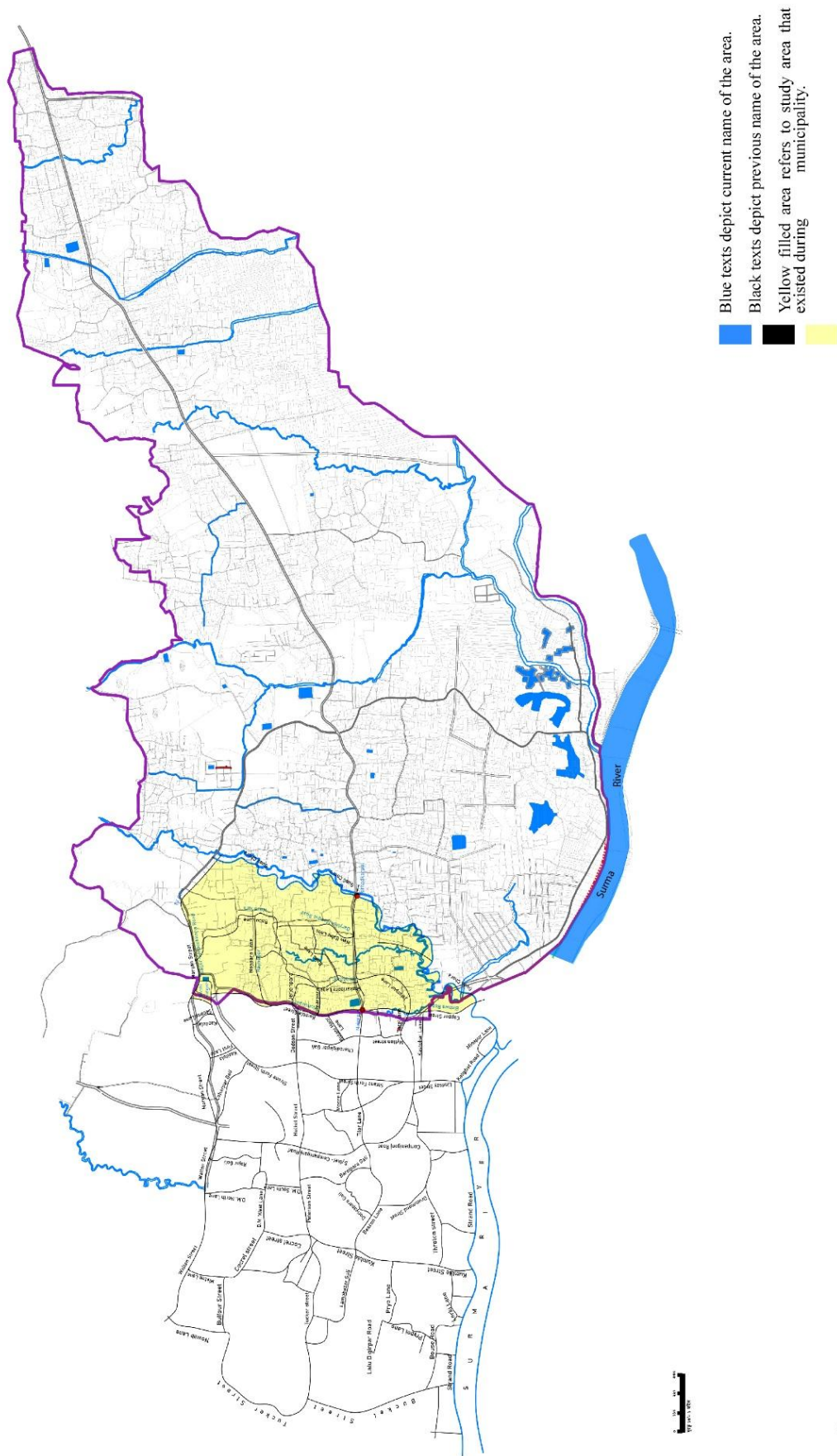


Figure 68



Map Of Sylhet Municipality Compared to current Study Area

Figure 69

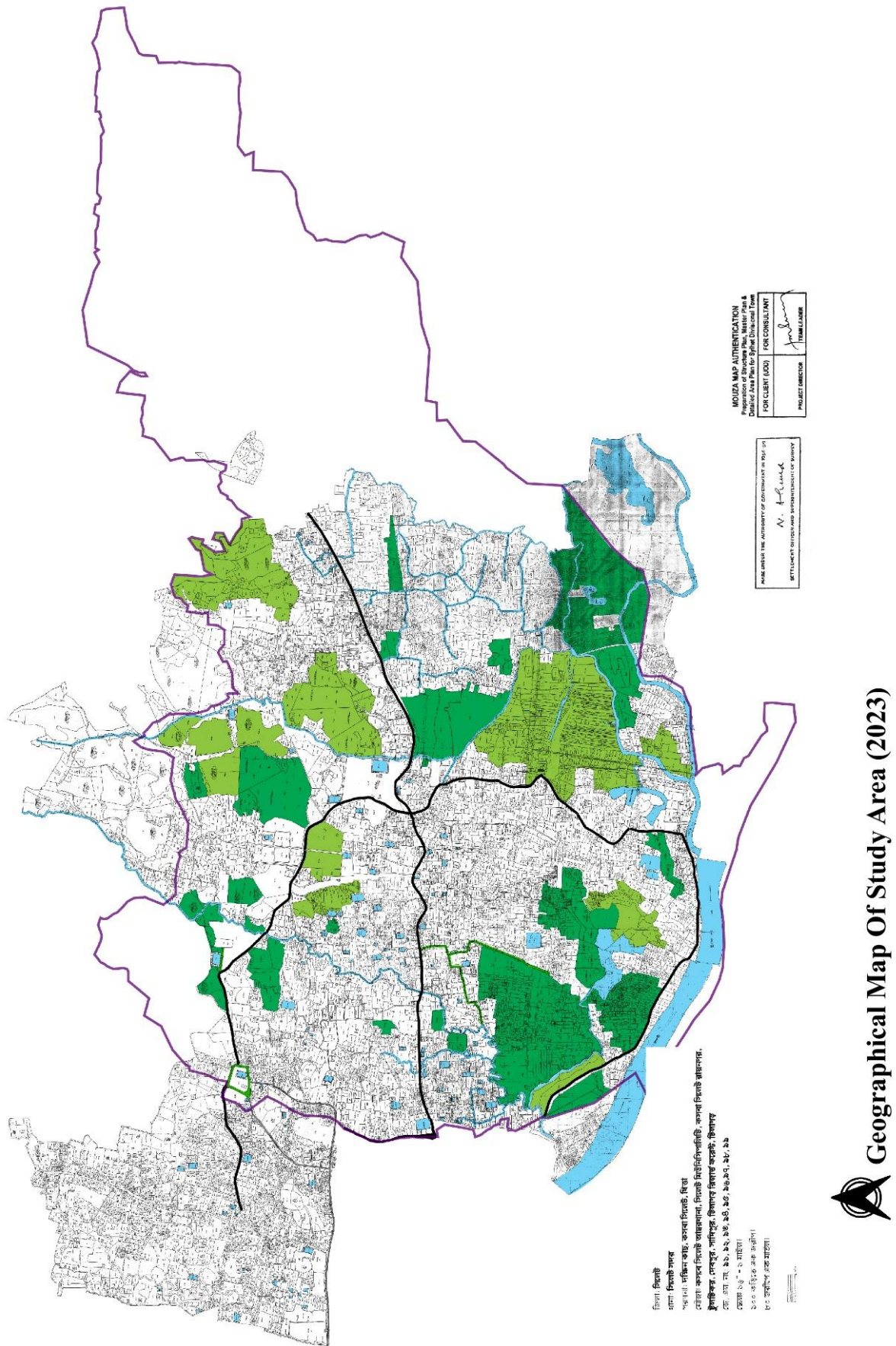


Figure 70

Several Initiatives Undertaken by Sylhet City Corporation (SCC)**Municipal Services**

For sustainable urban development, adequate access to basic urban services—water, power, sanitation, gas, drainage, and solid waste management—is essential. However, the rapid and largely uncontrolled growth of population in Sylhet has placed these facilities under severe pressure, leading to significant deficiencies. Even a cursory analysis of the current situation suggests that infrastructure bottlenecks could trigger a broader urban crisis. Proactive action and comprehensive arrangements are therefore critical to ensure sufficient provision of basic infrastructure. For each service component, a broad augmentation plan is required to meet future demand.

Water Supply

To meet the projected demand up to the year 2030, inter-regional river water allocation must be considered. Reducing unaccounted-for water losses and production inefficiencies at existing plants is also vital. The drainage basins should be designed to become self-sustainable by integrating water, sewage, and drainage systems. Alongside new projects and upgrades to current infrastructure, community-driven water conservation initiatives must be encouraged through both short-term and long-term measures.

Gas Network

Sylhet holds an estimated 242 thousand million m³ of recoverable natural gas reserves, which accounts for 81% of the total reserves of Bangladesh. At the current consumption rate, these reserves are projected to last about 20 years, highlighting the need for careful resource management and exploration of alternatives.

Power Supply

The power shortage in Sylhet has become increasingly acute in recent years. The region, with a population exceeding 10 million, faces an average daily demand of 100 MW, while actual supply remains between 40–50 MW. This shortfall results in an average deficit of 50 MW per day. Consequently, the Power Development Board (PDB) enforces daily cyclic load shedding, severely disrupting the functioning of public offices, private institutions, and commercial activities.

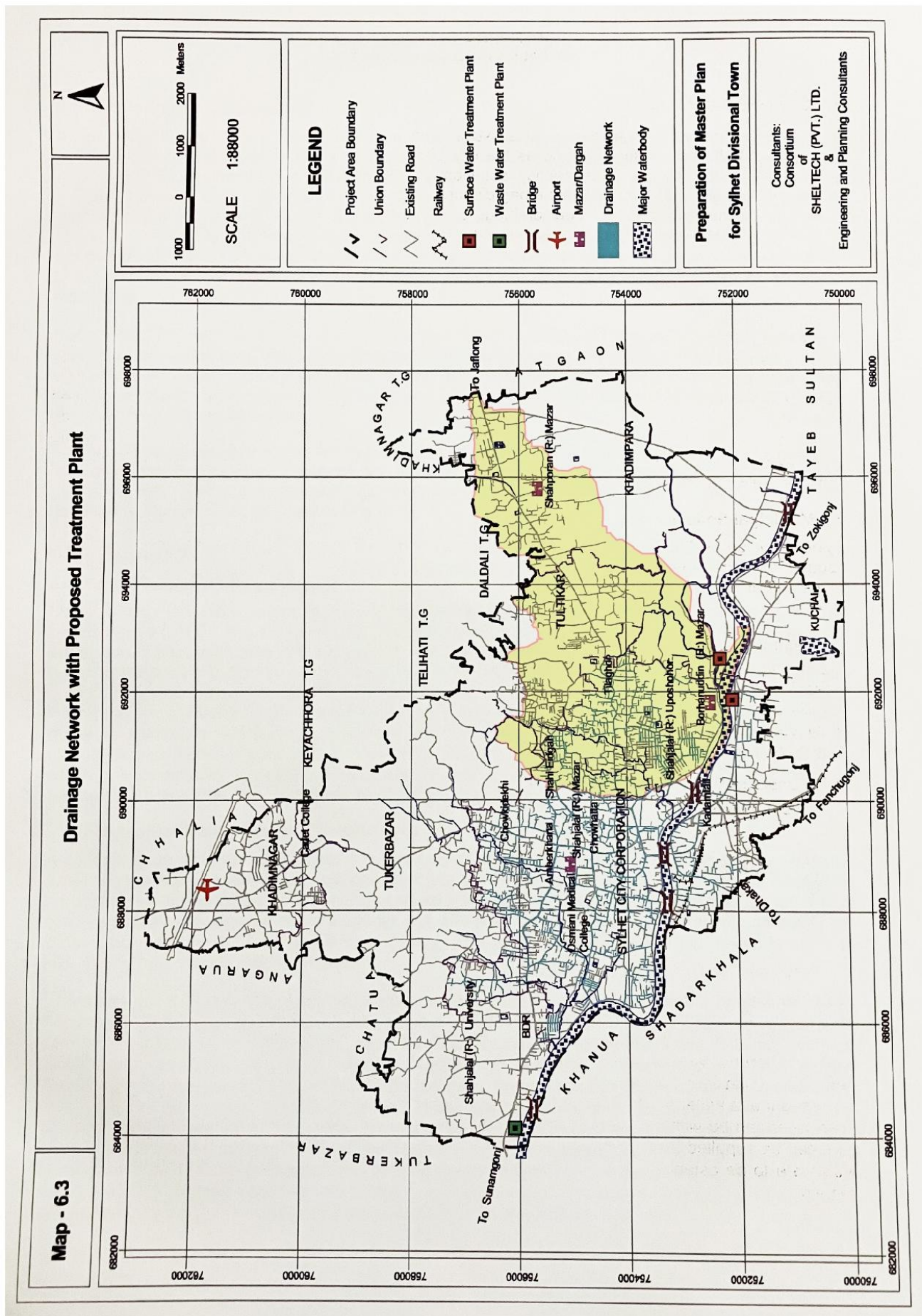


Figure 71. (Source: Sylhet Divisional Town Master Plan (2011-2050))

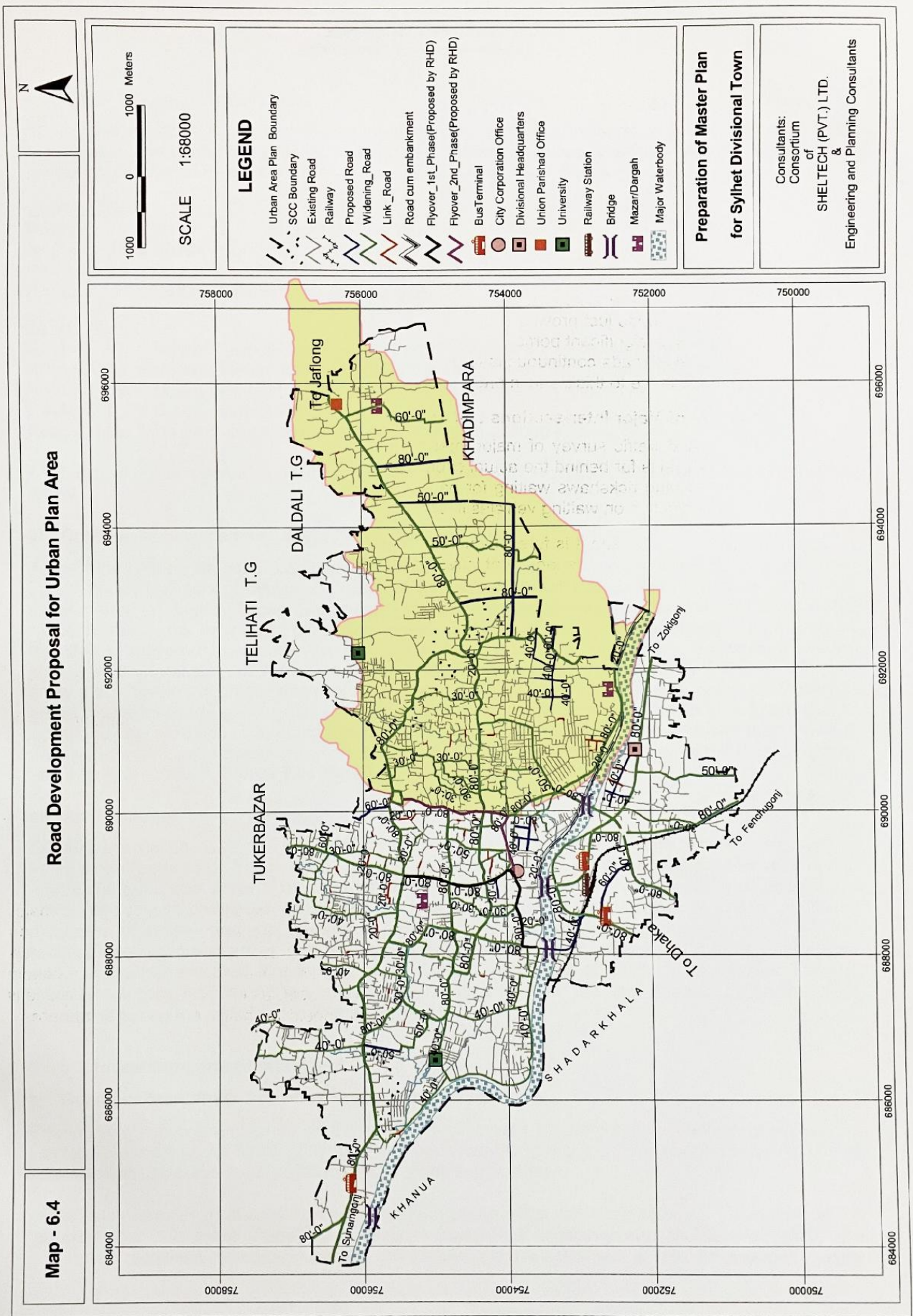


Figure 72 (Source: Sylhet Divisional Town Master Plan (2011-2050))

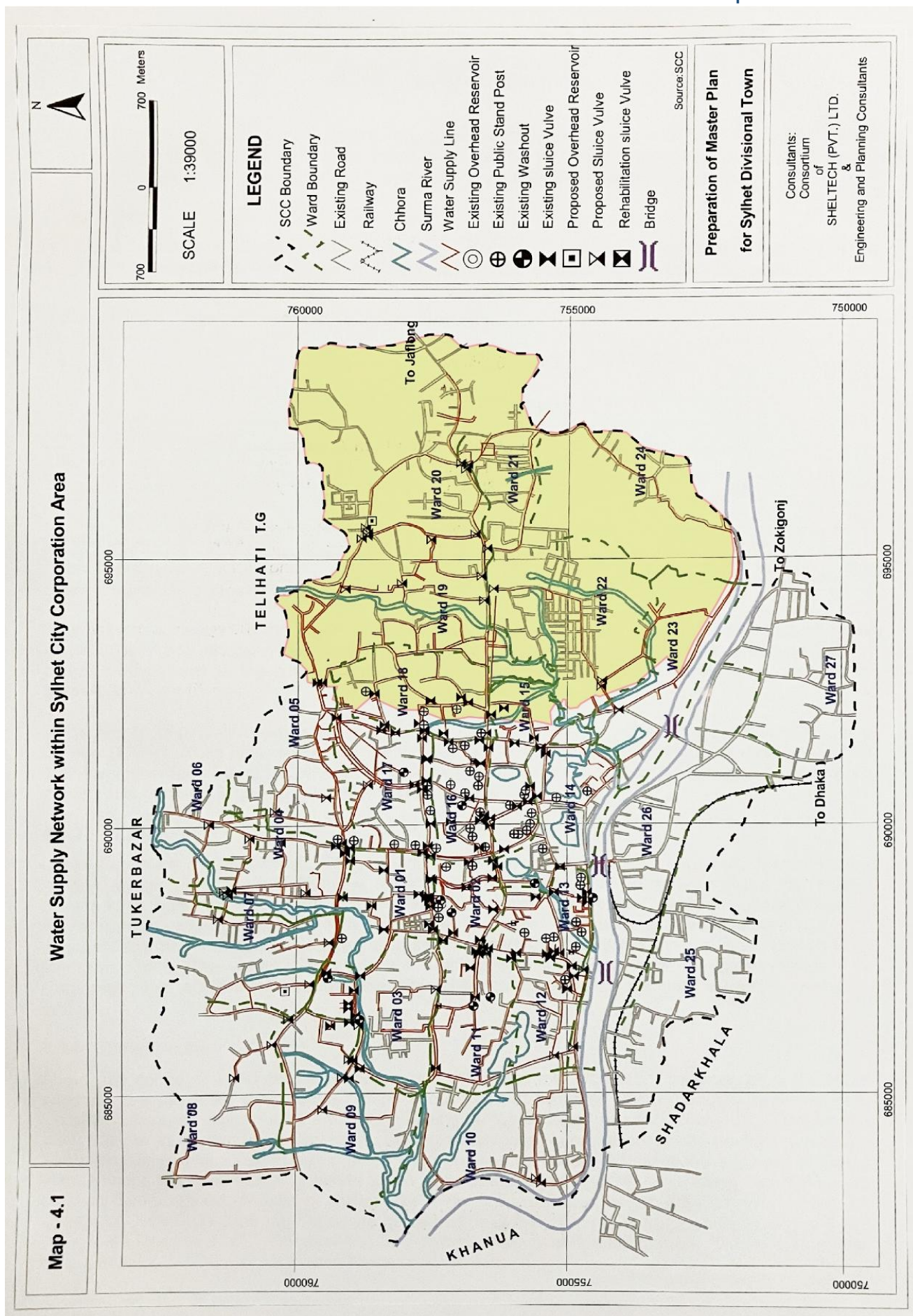


Figure 73 (Source: Sylhet Divisional Town Master Plan (2011-2050))

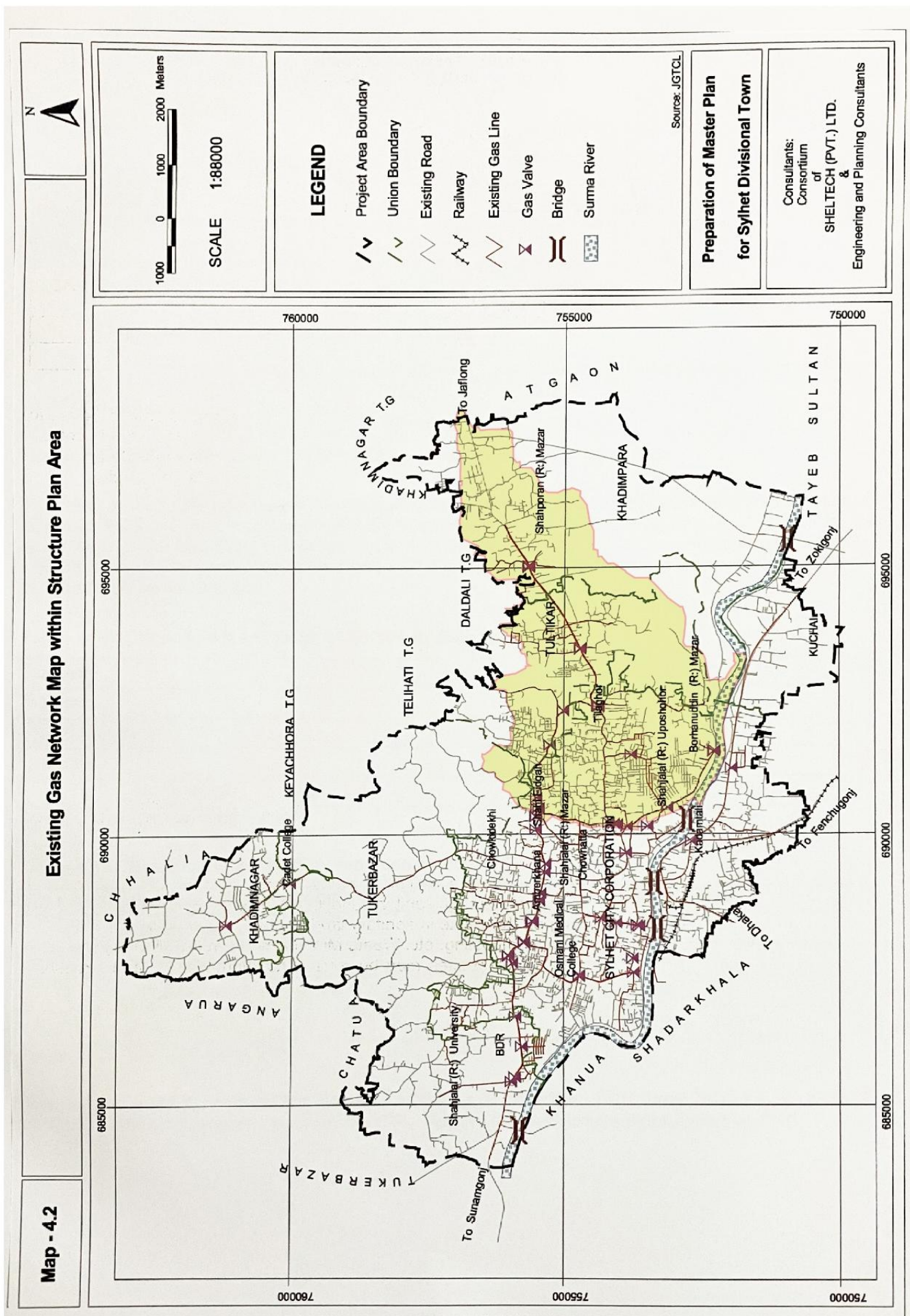


Figure 74 (Source: Sylhet Divisional Town Master Plan (2011-2050))

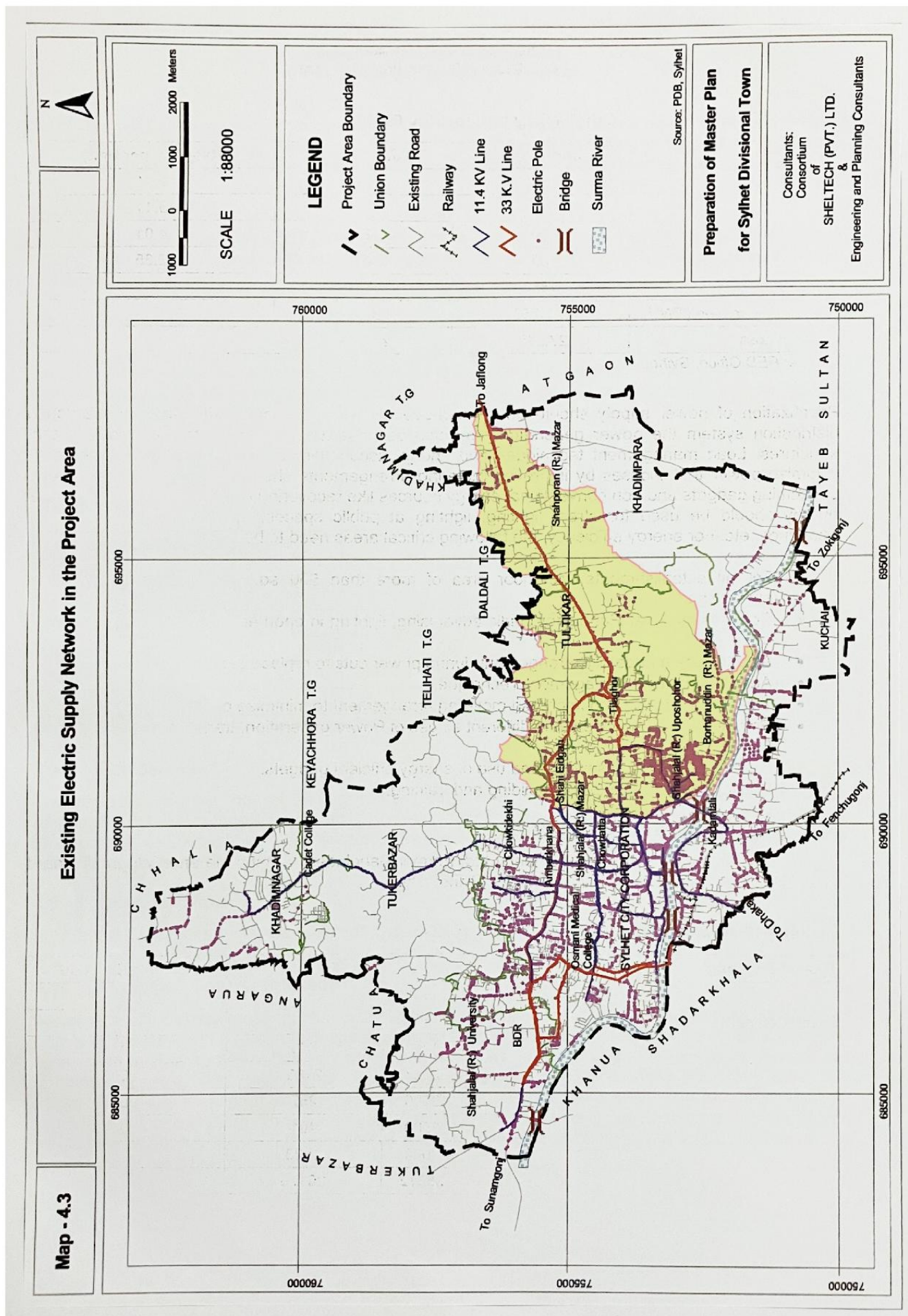


Figure 75 (Source: Sylhet Divisional Town Master Plan (2011-2050))

13. Data Collection

Two types of data were collected for research:

- Primary data were gathered through site surveys, questionnaire surveys, and discussions. The site survey and documentation of structures were carried out by a research team consisting of the group members. The field survey was conducted with the intention of historic interpretation, aiming to identify the determinants that shaped the form and space as symbols of cultural ethnicity.
- Secondary data were obtained mainly through a literature survey. Books and written documents on the history of Sylhet city served as key sources for building the theoretical framework. In the second phase, field survey data were compiled and analyzed in relation to the theoretical background.

Physical Features of Tilagor

Background, Area, and Location: Tilagor, once a part of the Kingdom of Jaintia, is now traversed by the Tamabil Highway, which forms part of the Asian Highway. According to local belief, the name originated from a narrow road passing through the hilly terrain that connected to the Shillong Road, later referred to as Tilagor.

- **Boundaries:** The area is bounded south by the Surma River, north by hills and tea gardens, on the east by the expanding city area, and on the west by the existing urban settlement.
- **Size and Coordinates:** The study area covers approximately 940 sq. km and lies between 24.917118°N and 91.906730°E.

Temperature, Rainfall, and Soil: The maximum recorded temperature is 33.2°C, while the minimum is 13.6°C. The area receives an annual average rainfall of 3334 mm.

Main Rivers: The Surma River and the Kushi River are the principal rivers of the study area. The region is notable for its distinct topographical features, comprising vast forested land, a renowned academic institution, a local playground, and a prominent mazar (spiritual site).

Urban Growth: Tilagor has experienced rapid growth and expansion over the past two decades. Sylhet Municipality was originally established in 1878, but a devastating earthquake on 12 June 1897 destroyed much of the settlement. In the reconstruction phase, a modern town was developed following European planning models, with new roads constructed in the late 1890s. The establishment of the Assam–Bengal Railway extension (1912–1915) further connected Sylhet with other regions. Later, the development of the Tamabil Highway accelerated vehicular mobility and urban growth.

Archaeological Heritage and Relics

The region is rich in historical and cultural monuments, including:

- The stone monuments of Jaintapur
- MC College
- Eco Park
- Shahi Eidgah
- The tombs of Hazrat Shah Paran (R.) and Syed Ghazi Burhan Uddin (R.)

Historical Events

Sylhet is one of the oldest settlement regions in Bengal. Known as Jalalabad during the Sultani period, it has witnessed several key historical milestones:

- From the Pashchimbagh brass plate (10th century) engraved by Maharaja Shreechandra, it is assumed that Sylhet was conquered during his reign.
- Historically referred to as Sreehatta (enriched market place), it flourished as a commercial hub since ancient times.
- In the 14th century, Hazrat Shah Jalal (R.), a saint from Yemen, conquered Sylhet and initiated widespread preaching of Islam.
- Pathan warrior Khawja Osman resisted Mughal expansion with the aid of local rulers.
- During the Sepoy Mutiny (1857), British traders defeated the mutineers in Sylhet.
- The Nankar Revolt, a major peasant uprising against the feudal zamindari system, eventually led to the abolition of the Nankar system in 1950.

Famous Personalities

Sylhet has produced many national and internationally acclaimed figures. A few notable personalities include:

- Humayun Rashid Chowdhury: Distinguished civil servant, diplomat, Foreign Secretary, and later Speaker of the Bangladesh National Assembly.
- Shah Paran (Shah Farhan): Renowned Sufi saint, nephew of Hazrat Shah Jalal (R.), who established a khanqah (spiritual retreat) at Kadim Nagar, 7 km from Sylhet town.
- Syed Ghazi Burhan Uddin: A 14th-century Sufi saint, celebrated in folklore as the first Muslim to settle in the Sylhet region.



Table 9 Census Results at a Glance

Key Indicators	Zila		Upazila	
	2011	2001	2011	2001
Population (Enumerated)				
Both Sex	34,34,188	25,55,568	8,29,103	6,82,459
Male	17,26,965	13,14,317	4,36,679	3,63,813
Female	17,07,223	12,41,249	3,92,424	3,18,646
Urban	6,03,088	2,73,959	4,85,138	2,63,197
Other Urban	1,50,461	1,59,639	41,274	53,114
Rural	26,80,639	21,21,968	3,02,691	3,66,148
Annual growth rate (%)	2.95	1.73	1.93	2.10
Sex Ratio				
Total	101	106	111	114
Urban	113	124	116	125
Other Urban	105	115	102	126
Rural	98	103	105	105
Number of Household (HH)				
Total	5,96,081	4,23,675	1,58,233	1,15,649
Urban	1,18,834	49,156	97,991	47,270
Other Urban	27,375	26,577	7,633	8,284
Rural	4,49,872	3,47,942	52,609	60,095
Average HH Size				
Total	5.74	6.02	5.16	5.8
Urban	5.00	5.39	4.86	5.37
Other Urban	5.49	5.92	5.37	6.03
Rural	5.94	6.11	5.68	6.09
Area sq. km	3452.07	3490.39	301.80	517.41
Area sq. mile	1332.85	1347.64	116.52	199.77
Density per sq. km	995	732	2747	1319
Density per sq. mile	2577	1896	7115	3416
Urbanization (%)	21.94	16.97	63.49	46.35
Literacy (7 years and above) (%)				
Both Sex	51.2	45.6	61.3	59.1
Male	53.5	49.4	64.6	63.1
Female	48.9	41.6	57.6	54.6
School Attendance (5 to 24 years) (%)				
Both Sex	50.6	37.9	51.6	38.8
Male	50.9	39.1	52.6	40.2
Female	50.4	36.5	50.5	37.3
Population (Adjusted)				
Both Sex	35,67,138	26,73,774	8,61,069	7,16,355
Male	17,93,858	13,75,225	4,53,538	3,81,948
Female	17,73,280	12,98,549	4,07,531	3,34,407
Administrative Units (Number)				
Upazila/Thana	12	11	-	-
Union	101	98	9	17
Mauza	1,598	1,693	88	186
Village	3,206	3,225	353	634
Paurashava	4	2	1	1
Ward	36	36	27	27
Mahalla	111	78	207	207

Note: 1. Mauza refers to populated mauzas only in 2011.

2. School attendance pertains to age group 3-29 years in 2011.

3. Area of the upazila decreased due to creation of a new upazila.

Union-Ward, Mauza-Mahalla and Village Characteristics

The upazila consists of 1 city corporation 27 wards, 207 mahallas, 9 unions, 88populated mauzas and 353 villages. The average population of each ward and mahalla are 17968 and 2344 respectively. On the other hand, the average size of each union, mauza and village are 33632, 3440 and 857 respectively.

Housing and Household Characteristics

In the upazila, there are 158233 households. Distribution of households by type shows that there are 97.0% general units, 0.26% institutional and 2.74% other units.

Household Size

The average household size (General) for the upazila is 5.2 persons, for rural areas the size is slightly higher i.e. 5.7, for city area the size is slightly lower i.e. 4.9 and for other urban area the size is 5.4.

Type of Housing Structure

In the upazila 37.2% general households live in pucca houses, 36.4 % in semi-pucca houses, 24.1% in kancha houses and the remaining 2.3% live in jhupri which is shown in a pie-chart below:

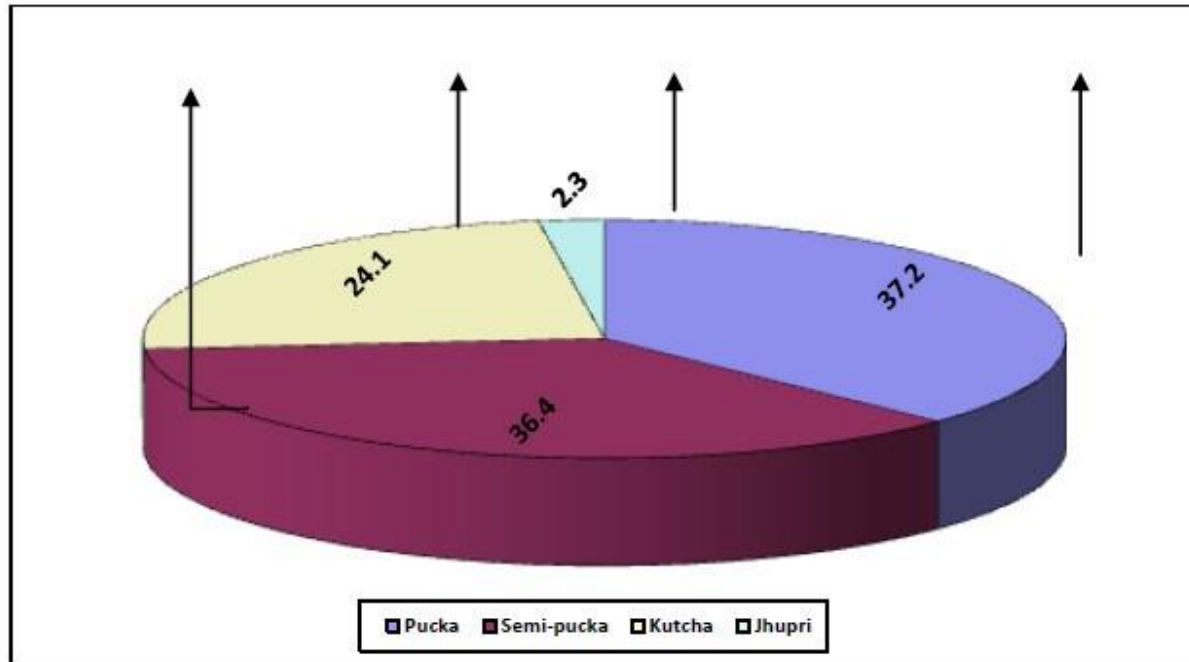


Figure 27 Housing structure by type in 2011 (Source: Census 2011)

Source of Drinking Water

In this upazila 46.0% of general households get the facility of drinking water from tube-well, 1.7% from tap water and the remaining 52.3% households get water from other sources.

Sanitation

In the upazila, 49.2% of general households have sanitary latrines, 48.7% nonsanitary latrines and 2.1% have no toilet facility.

Access to Electricity

All the 9 unions of the upazila have brought under the Rural Electrification Program. However, a total of 99.8% of the general households reported to have electricity connection in the entire upazila.

Population Characteristics

According to Population and Housing Census 2011, the total population of the upazila is 829103, of which 436679 are males and 392424 are females. The sex ratio of the upazila is 111 males per 100 females in 2011 as against 114 males per 100 females in 2001.

Growth Rate

The decadal population growth rate for the upazila is 214.9 and annual compound growth rate is 1.93. The decadal growth rates over the last half-century are shown below:

Table 10 Decadal growth rate of population, 1951-2011

Decades	Growth Rate
1951-1961	17.5
1961-1974	47.6
1974-1981	26.2
1981-1991	25.2
1991-2001	23.1
2001-2011	21.5

Literacy and Education

Information on Literacy and Education is furnished below: **Literacy:** In Sylhet Sadar upazila it is found that 61.3% of the population aged 7 years and over are literate.

Table 11 Literacy rate by sex, 1991-2011

Item	1991	2001	2011
Both Sex	44.1	59.1	61.3
Male	50.0	63.1	64.6
Female	37.0	54.6	57.6

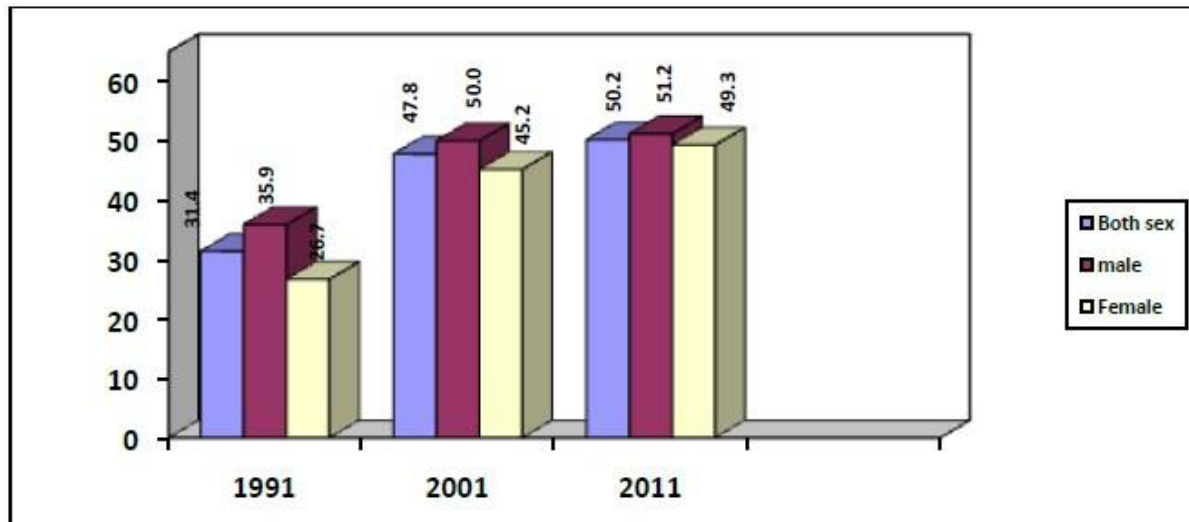


Figure 78 Literacy rate in 2011 (Source: Census 2011)

The above table shows that, the literacy rate of Sylhet Sadar upazila in 2011 is 61.3% for both sexes, 64.6% for males and 57.6% for females. The table shows 2.2, 1.5 and 3.0 percent point increase in 2011 over 2001 for both sex, males and females respectively. In the upazila the literacy is the highest i.e. 82.3.0% inward no 22 of Sylhet City Corporation and the lowest i.e. 35.6% in Jalalabad union.

A survey was carried out in selected wards to understand the existing conditions and community needs. It included site visits, mapping, photographic documentation, and structured questionnaires, along with informal discussions and interviews with residents. These findings not only validated secondary data but also revealed important social, cultural, and spatial challenges and opportunities.

Ward 20

(Data Collected by Survey on 14.02.23)

(Balichhara South, Kharadi Para, Lama Para, Majumder Para, Roynagar, Senpara, Sonarpara, Shibganj, Shadipur, Tilaghor, Gopaltila, Vatatikor)

Councillor: Azadur Rahman Azad

Population- 20,000

Houses- 1500 houses

- At first it was open drain system but now RCC box system is made for drain.
- The transition of road went from 8' to 15'.
- Main road consists of 5' pedestrian on both sides.



- Secondary road consists of pedestrians on one side which is 3' and other side the footpath is same level to the road.
- Future initiative is to fit parking tiles in the pedestrian, mini gardens beside pedestrian or nodes points, making pockets for public seating, LED lighting poles.
- Solar panels for street lighting are used at three roads- Mojumder Para, Balichhara South & Tilagor to Baluchor.
- A swimming Pool & Shahid MInar was made inside the Hatim Ali Secondary Primary School.
- In future College will be introduced in this Secondary School.
- About 10 years ago the field at the tilagor point was at first used to dump debris but now the Councillor has cleaned it up and leveled it with soil. Now it is a field used for playing or gardening.

Figure79: Councilor Office of Ward 20
(Source: Captured by Author)

Ex- Chairman of Ward No: 20

Azizur Rahman Manik (Age- 70)

- Tamabil road was called Shillong Road.
- Three minibuses used to travel for Shillong Road.
- Tilagor name was given 50 years ago. Tilagor name was given as Tila means □□□□ and Gor means □□□□ (the road between two hills).
- Majortilla was called Hindubari.
- Tilagor area was filled with hills, jungles and farming land.
- Uposhor was called Dubri Haor.
- Moniouri para was called Adittopara.
- MC college boundary wall was raised by Ayub Khan.
- Water canal was the only drainage system at that time.
- The filled at the Tilagor point was called Keyabon where debris used to be dumped.
- The water system was not good.

Ward 24

(Data Collection by Survey on 14.02.2023)

(Hatimbagh, Kushighat, Lamapara, Mirapara, Sadatikar, Saderpara, Shapla Bagh, Sadipur-2, Tero Ratan, Tultikar, Purbo Sadatikar, Sobujbag)

Councillor: Suhayl Ahmed Ripon

Population: Approx 15000.

House: Earlier around 320. Now 57 more houses are newly constructed.

- During the years 1955-1960 there were only 79 houses. Day by day after the liberation war people started migrating & it started developing.
- It was a village, or you can say rural area at first under Tultikar Union. Later it was converted into a Ward.
- Earlier there were no specific road network to enter the region. All the roads were broken and only 10'/12' in width.
- The primary road which serves the users of this region is the renowned Burhanuddin Road. One wing of this road ends up linking to the Kanaighat Road, the other one ends up on the Kushighat. The same Kushighat road also serves the users to visit the Major of Burhanuddin.
- During the year 2009 first time Bangladesh government took initiatives to develop the road. Though the central government provided enough funds, because of political influence allocated funds were distributed midway to other works.
- Later again in 2011 a total amount of 88 cr. was given by the central government. But because of some unknown reason the donation did not reach its destination and Sylhet City Corporation took the initiative then.
- The first initiative of developing the road network was taken by the then Mayor Bodor Uddin Kamran & then it was successfully finished by the current Mayor Ariful Haque Choudhury.
- The Panjayet graveyard was shifted backyard to enlarge the road.
- Currently another project of developing the Kushighat walkway and road development projects are going on.
- Other various proposals are also undertaken by the current ward councillor Suhayl Ahmed Ripon.



Figure 80: Office of Ward No 24

(Captured by Author)



Figure 81: Riverbank of Surma

(Captured by Author)

Khadem Of Hazrat Shah Gazi Burhan Uddin Mazar Shorif**M Altaf Hussain Babor.****(Data collected by survey on 14.02.23)**

M Altaf gave us some interesting news regarding the development or transformation of the region. Firstly, he started briefing the mythological incident regarding Burhan Uddin.

He gave us interesting data about the area "Tero Ratan". (Actually, along with Burhan Uddin 12 more muslim Phir came to the land of Sri Hatta & they first put their step on a riverside area of Kushiara river which is now widely known as Tero Ratan).

Because of the outrage of the King Gour Govinda 12 Phir left the region and only Burhan Uddin stayed as he was aged enough and was unable to travel long paths.

Several incidents happened and Burhanuddin stayed there till his death and after his death a Mazar was made after his name.

There were several areas named Gulapbag, Hatimbag, Sobujbag, Sadipur, Tero Ratan, Tultikor started developing day by day.

In earlier days the mazar was negligent. Several times many political leaders came and gave hope, but no one fulfilled them.

Though visitors came from all over the Bangladesh to visit the area but still because of the lackings of well transportation and road channel the area was like totally detached from the main city.

Lately the development started in 2011, and people started migrating there. The area is much more developed and well-furnished now.

There're several madrashah's set up beside the BorhanUddin Road and one right in front of the Burhanuddin Mazar.



Figure 82: Way to Burhanuddin Mazar. (Captured by Author)



Figure 83: Entry of Burhanuddin Mazar. (Captured by Author)

14. Findings and Comments

Mazars: Spiritual spaces influence urban morphology

The study of urban morphology signifies the understanding of forms of urban fabric (levy 1999). As discussed, the sacred image of Sylhet city is typically generated by different sufis or pirs coming to Sylhet as well as the Mazar forms. These practices as urban forms have vast influences in both private and public scale, community space to important public intersections. Apart from religious differences, these spiritual spaces have a common appeal of 'Formlessness' which may be shaped by the philosophy of Sufism. Investigating the characters of Sufi Mazars may reveal a spiritual impact on urban fabric of Sylhet. First census report (1872) on Sylhet region showed that majority of Hindu locals were followers of Vaishnava cult and among the various ethnic groups Manipuriviii communities who are in urban Sylhet became followers of Vaishnava philosophy in 18th century (Ahmed 1999). Also, their traditional practices intermingled with Hindu-Vaishnava practices, consequently, Manipuri-temple reflects strong similarity.

Mazar is more of a holy abode than a sacred structure, the tomb of Hazrat Shahjalal and some of his prominent companies extend through the central part of the city. These Mazars gained a formal organization and sited on comparatively high ground or Tilas (mound) which are physically and administratively key places of Sylhet city like Police line, Stadium, Darga gate, Zindabazar, Manikpir Tila, Eidgah etc.

Darga complexes of Saint Hazrat Shahjalal and saint Hazarat Shah Paran are institutions comprise of a mosque, prayer space, accommodation, public dining, pond, public ablution space and schools. Besides, Mazars are most importantly a space dominating organization, a vibrant urban stage that invites people from every social and religious group. Due to terrain topography of Sylhet city, most of these Mazars are placed on elevated earth mound. This makes an elevated connection with existing road networks. The elevated approach by steps is also a dominant character that disconnects the tomb from the crowd. However, unlike elevated Mazars, many small-scale Sufi shrines scattered across the city are more undemanding forms, open to sky tombs mostly shaded by trees, resemble the traditional gathering place of Bengal. Visual and physical separation is being intentionally avoided here from any bazars, busy pedestrians, or private houses. These forms may be structurally insignificant but create the image of those areas as commercial and social activities grow around them.



Figure 84

Shahporan Mazar Eidgah beside Shahporan mazar Burhanuddin Mazar Way to Syed Jahan Rahmatullah Mazar (Respectively) (Captured by Author)

Upraised approaches to Hazrat Shahporan Mazar, Burhan Uddin Mazar, Syed Jahan Rahmatullah Mazar resemble the topographical context of the city.



Figure 85

Hatim Ali Majar

Najai Shah Majar.

Dada Pir Majar.

Roadside Mazars (DadaPir majar, Hatim Ali Majar, Najai Shah Majar) giving a unique visual integrity of the city as a sacred landscape.

Ethnicity in continuous transition: The city of Sylhet

Cities concentrate on a multitude of cultural, social, political, economic, and artistic activities and permit these to cross-fertilize each other in dynamic and creative ways. Housing, the layout of streets, the use of open spaces and monuments, building typologies, the relationship of the public to private space, and other elements of city form are studied for what they reveal of the cultures and societies which have created them and which infuse them with meaning and this is also true for an organically grown city like Sylhet. Even cities that are planned at the start undergo a continuous transformation. According to Bell and Rose (2011), “Clearly, some cities do express and prioritize different social and political values: what we can call an “ethos” or “spirit” of a city”.

Being a part of the modern world, this may be a contrast to the pluralistic image of today’s city but a historic city like Sylhet represents a singular image i.e. spirituality. Many historians think that Sylhet was an expanded commercial center from the ancient period which explains its original name’s sake as ‘Sree Hotto’ (Chowdhury 1910) means an enriched marketplace. But since the medieval period to date, Sylhet is eminent for its locative landscape, diverse cultural ethnicity and religious heritage value. It is known as the spiritual capital of Bangladesh, the Holy City.

The story of mysticism is well-known to us. Its most common themes include the intellectual speculations of theosophists, the spiritual intoxication of poets and the diffusion of various institutionalized mystic orders. This all influenced the growth pattern of the historic Sylhet city. Here the concept of Sufism has emerged as alternative manifestations of Muslim belief and practice that are more widespread.

So, Muslim holy men (or Pirs) are celebrated as bearers of spiritual power. The relationship between Sufis and cities is an ambiguous one. Though there is a difference among the indigenous people and tribal people concerning ethnology and language, they however inherit a common religious, cultural and social heritage (Mohanto 1999). This cultural diversity has given the scope of spiritual ethnicity to have multiplied.

The colonial and post-independence period tried to give a customary urbanized image of Sylhet city by penetrating urban infrastructure, occupying available land, voriginating textual morphologies and new typological order, but inhabitants develop innovating processes on their relationships within the urban space, by living in it and appropriating it with innovative forms. Juxtaposition- contamination of residential space and artisan’s space, hybridization, or interpretation of distinct syntaxes express diversify experiences. Imply changes in the way how urban space is useful and in urban quality types, making them more consentaneous with their customs of space and maintain the spirit of the historic city as a cultural extinction.

Superintending Engineer at City Corporation**Engr. Md Ali Akbar****(Data Collection by Author on 14.02.23)**

- Transferring 16-acre artificial slum to Bangabandhu multipurpose centre (25 storied building).
- Surma tunnel connection will be made.
- Ambarkhana to tilagor flyovers will be made.
- On the way from Shaporan to Badaghat walkway and prak will be designed.
- Pocket land for recreation.
- Wholesale market will be transferred to truck terminal near Keane bridge.
- 10-acre space will be designed for display centre.
- At Uposhor water will be pumped out during flooding.
- Uposhor ground floor should be vacant.
- Metro will be introduced.
- Sylhet will be a green city/ holy city by adding plants and making it like garden.
- The city will be neat and clean.
- 1.5 corer tender is given just to plant trees in the city.
- During dry season the canal will be used for fishing by adding temporary dam.
- The canal will be used as lake.
- Parking will be parked in multi-stored.

Nikunjo Bihar Guun**Ex-Senior Teacher at Shahporan School (Age 75)****(Data collected by survey on 15/02/23)**

- Around 65 years ago, the Tilagor area was known as Sheulibon and Kheyabon, with roads made of sand.
- The road was later made pucca during the war to bring the Indian Army from Shillong via Tamabil Road (then called Shillong Road).
- The area was covered in jungle with very few inhabitants; farming was the main livelihood.
- AIT was the first public university established after the war.
- Shops were available only at Bandar, with just one or two rickshaws in operation.
- Very few tourists visited Shahjalal Mazar at that time.
- Electricity was a luxury affordable only to the wealthy.
- In 1977, the upazila was built.
- The Tamabil road near Shahporan was only 8 feet wide and unpaved (kacha).
- About 18–20 houses made of bamboo and leaves existed in the area.
- Uposhor was then called Dubrihaor and was used for farming.
- Gas lines arrived after 2002, though only a few could afford the connection.
- During Ershad's regime, electricity was available only at MC College Hall.
- At present, there is still no proper water supply or garbage collection system.

Iqramul Kabir (Reporter, Somoy TV)**(Data collected by survey on 14/02/23)**

- Digging of the Surma River has started to increase its capacity during floods.
- Many canals remain unclean, and some end without proper outlets.
- Recreational spaces are lacking; open areas should be developed for public gatherings.
- The Eco Park Zoo has collapsed due to the absence of experienced zookeepers.
- The Keane Bridge, a historical landmark, needs preservation. A new bridge will be constructed beside it for vehicle movement, while Keane Bridge will be reserved for pedestrians.
- Sylhet–Bulaganj Road has been upgraded to improve traffic flow and reduce accidents.
- Electrical wiring has been placed underground for safety purposes.

Electrical Engineer at City Corporation – Ruhul Alam**(Data collected by survey on 14/02/23)**

- From the main electric pole, one wire from the three-phase four-wire system is stretched for streetlights only.
- Sunamgonj Road contains solar-powered streetlights.

- The main road of each ward will have separate electric poles for easier maintenance.
- Electrical wires are placed underground for safety and maintenance purposes.
- Secondary roads are recommended to be widened to 60 feet, but financial limitations make this difficult to achieve.

Additional Observations:

- Many roads are too narrow, creating difficulties for emergency services such as fire trucks and ambulances.
- The increasing number of unauthorized vehicles contributes to traffic congestion, chaos, and illegal activities.

15. Conclusion

A significant proportion of the world's historic cities and sacred sites—over 100 historic cities and nearly 200 sacred sites on the World Heritage List—are located in the developing world, where rapid urbanization poses serious threats. Sylhet, as a city rich in spiritual heritage, exemplifies how historical and sacred values can contribute to sustainable urban development. This study highlights Sylhet's unique identity as a spiritual city, shaped by both tangible and intangible heritage.

Sylhet's sacred landscape exhibits a distinctive urban morphology, encompassing religious architecture, natural sites, road networks, and topography, which collectively define its shared heritage identity. Beyond physical elements, Akhadas and Mazars embody intangible cultural values, including faith, belief, and a sense of place, deeply intertwined with community life. Residential neighborhoods have grown organically around these holy sites, reflecting a close relationship between sacred landmarks and adjacent communities. Traditionally, local communities have managed these sites, suggesting that future conservation efforts can benefit from active community participation.

Key heritage sites—including Mazars, old academic institutions, and historic city areas—demonstrate how urban forms adapt to Sylhet's topography. Many sites are located atop earth mounds (Tilasix), preserving topographic authenticity while ensuring visibility and protection from flash floods. Long ascending stairways connecting streets and structures create a unique path-space experience, offering pilgrims a metaphorical journey toward serenity.

The increasing socioeconomic value of pilgrimage sites has transformed land use patterns, with traditional residential areas gradually giving way to commercial functions such as hotels, restaurants, and souvenir shops. These changes have accelerated the demolition of historic urban fabric and triggered conflicts between urban development and the preservation of religious sites. City authorities have initiated infrastructure improvements, including road widening, pedestrian pathways, and drainage construction, but these often compromise site accessibility and community connections.

To balance heritage conservation and urban development, Sylhet requires a comprehensive heritage planning framework that integrates tangible and intangible, cultural and natural values. A landscape-based, holistic conservation approach would ensure sustainable preservation. This study provides a baseline for urban policymakers, conservators, environmentalists, and planners to conduct further research and develop strategies that respect both community identity and the city's sacred values.

In essence, Sylhet's sacred sites are not only historical landmarks but also living elements of community identity, social interaction, and urban morphology. Preserving these sites alongside natural assets is essential for maintaining the city's unique image, meaning, and spiritual character.

16. Landmarks in Our Study Area Which Can Be Transformed into Urban Space

Significant Spaces Can Be:

- Heritage Buildings: Public spots or tourist spaces.
- Places Facing Cultural Extinction
- Commercial Areas
- Government Land: Potential for adaptive reuse.
- Existing Urban Spaces: Opportunity for rethinking or redesign.

List of Proposed Sites:

1. Hazrat Shah Paran R. Mazar
2. Tilagor Eco Park
3. Khadim Palm Garden
4. Shabujbhag Lake
5. Open Field Behind Bangladesh Radio Station

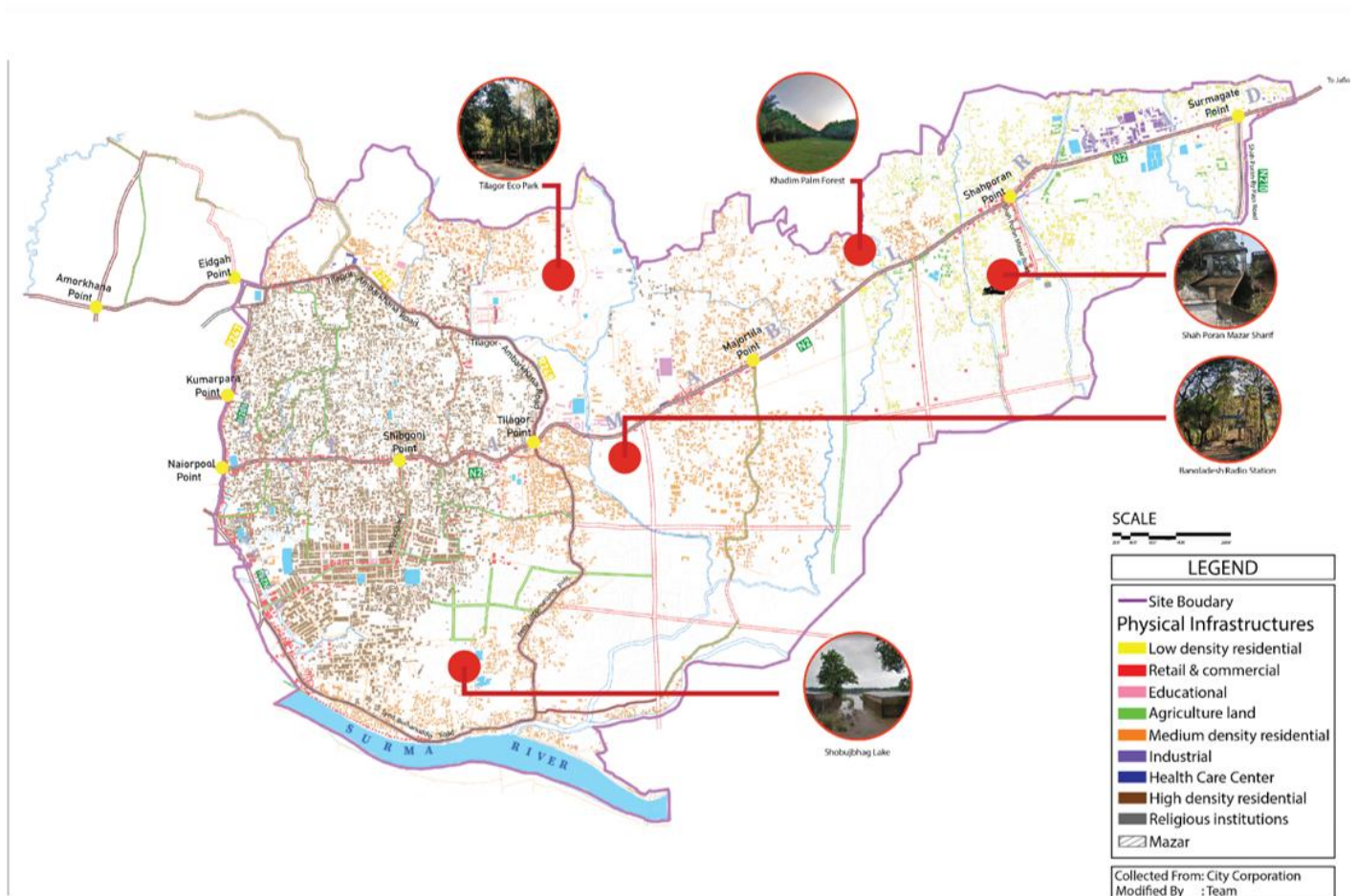


Figure 86: Landmarks denoted in Sylhet Map

(Illustration by Author)

Hazrat Shah Paran R. Mazar

- Location: Approximately 4 km east of Tilagor Point, surrounded by residential areas developed around the mazar.
- Significance: Hazrat Shah Paran R.A. Mazar is a spiritually significant site in Sylhet, steeped in history and tradition. The serene environment and devotional atmosphere make it a focal point for both locals and visitors. Observations during the visit highlighted the strong emotional and cultural connection the local community has with this sacred site.
- Opportunities for Development: The commercial areas around the mazar present potential for thoughtfully designed business initiatives. Opportunities include:
 1. Hotels and resorts catering to pilgrims and tourists.
 2. Restaurants offer local cuisine to enhance cultural experience.
 3. Tourism-oriented services that respect the spiritual essence of the site while creating economic activity.



Figure 87

Tilagor Eco Park

- **Location & Significance:** Tilagor Eco Park is characterized by lush green spaces and gentle variations in terrain, creating a visually captivating and serene environment. The park currently serves as a conservation site for animals and is often used for educational purposes by nearby schools and institutions.
- **Opportunities for Development:**
 1. **Public Realm & Recreation:** Open spaces can be designed for jogging, walking, seating, and various recreational activities to engage visitors of all ages.
 2. **Conservation & Surveillance:** Proper measures should be taken to ensure the safety and conservation of the animals within the park. Improved surveillance and management can prevent the failure of past initiatives.
 3. **Family & Community Spaces:** Play zones for children, picnic areas, and food courts can be introduced to make the park more inviting for families and tourists.
 4. **Revival of Neglected Areas:** Abandoned or uninviting areas, such as neglected mausoleums or corners of the park, can be revitalized to enhance the overall appeal.



Location



Path between forest



Way to Mazar



Zoo



Play zone

Figure 88

Khadim Palm Garden

- **Location & Context:** Surrounded by open spaces, tall buildings, and nearby hilly areas, Khadim Palm Garden (also known as Khadimnagar National Park) is a protected forest located in the Sylhet division of Bangladesh. The forest spans approximately 678 hectares and hosts diverse plant and animal species.
- **Significance:** The garden offers scenic views of the city from the hilltops, and its tall palm trees create a striking natural landscape. It is an important site for both ecological preservation and aesthetic enjoyment.
- **Opportunities for Development:**
 1. **Accessibility & Connectivity:** Enhance pathways and entry points to make the area more accessible for visitors.
 2. **Recreational Spaces:** Design areas for leisure and relaxation, including picnic zones and seating arrangements.
 3. **Adventure & Engagement:** Introduce hiking trails, nature walks, and various outdoor rides or activities that complement the natural environment while attracting visitors.
 4. **Scenic Viewing Points:** Create designated viewpoints to maximize the visual experience of the cityscape and surrounding hills.



Location



Hilly area with palm trees

Figure 89

Shabujbhag Lake

- **Location & Context:** Shabujbhag Lake is situated near Kushighat, surrounded by residential areas including Uposhor, Mirapara, and the Burhanuddin Mazar.
- **Current Condition:** The lake is currently abandoned and lacks a defined purpose, despite its central location within a residential neighborhood.
- **Opportunities for Development:**
 1. **Community & Recreational Spaces:** Transform the lake surroundings into areas for leisure and social activities for local residents.
 2. **Tourism & Pilgrimage Integration:** Develop spaces that cater to visitors of Burhanuddin Mazar, enhancing the cultural and spiritual experience.
 3. **Activity Zones:** Introduce walking paths, seating areas, small parks, and water-based activities to engage different age groups.
 4. **Aesthetic & Environmental Improvements:** Landscape the area to improve visual appeal while promoting ecological sustainability.



The marshy land



Location



View of lake

Figure 90

Open Field Behind Bangladesh Radio Station

- **Location & Context:** This open field is one of the oldest government-owned spaces in Sylhet, located near Tilagor Point alongside the Tamabil Highway. It is adjacent to the Bangladesh Betar (Radio) office, which conducts broadcasting activities in the area.
- **Current Condition:** The field is largely unused and consists of marshy land. Access is restricted due to the proximity to the government facility, and the area currently has no defined purpose.
- **Opportunities for Development:**
 1. **Community & Green Space:** Portions of the field could be revitalized as public green space or recreational zones, where security restrictions allow.
 2. **Urban Integration:** Sensitive planning could integrate the field's open areas with surrounding neighborhoods, creating walking paths, seating, or community gardens without interfering with radio operations.
 3. **Ecological Improvements:** Marshy areas could be preserved or rehabilitated as wetlands to promote biodiversity and provide educational or eco-tourism opportunity



Location



Way to office

Figure 91

17. Conflict of Interest

This research originated as an academic project during the authors' fourth-year first semester. The current work for publication is conducted independently by the three authors. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest and that the results of the research were not influenced or sponsored by any individual, organization, or institution.

18. Acknowledgement

We are sincerely grateful to Prof. Syeda Zarina Hossain, Ar. Md. Shawkat Jahan Chowdhury, and Ar. Arpan Shil for their valuable guidance, encouragement, and thoughtful advice, which greatly contributed to the development of this research. Their insights and support helped us refine our ideas and strengthen our approach. Our heartfelt thanks also go to Ar. Rajon Das for his constructive suggestions and continuous encouragement. His mentorship and professional advice have been a significant source of inspiration throughout the process. Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to our peers and colleagues who offered their support and encouragement during different stages of this work. This research is an outcome of our independent efforts, and we are deeply thankful to all who contributed directly or indirectly to its completion.

19. Authors' Biography

Rezwan Ahmed Sami is currently working as a Junior Architect in the Department of Architecture at Kshiti Sthapati and is an associate member of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB). He is also preparing for master's level studies abroad. Mariam Choudhury is a recent graduate of the Department of Architecture at Leading University and an associate member of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB). Rabeya Bochory Rifat is a recent graduate of the Department of Architecture at Leading University and an associate member of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB).

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