



Border Dispute In Northern Mizoram: Land, Revenues And Resources

N. William Singh

Associate Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Pachhunga University College

Pc. Vanlalpeka

Research Scholar, Dept. of Sociology, Mizoram University

Abstract

This article investigates the prolonged territorial contention between Mizoram and Assam, with an emphasis on the northern frontier of Mizoram, where the delineation remains both undetermined and disputed. By tracing the historical trajectory of this contention, the manuscript identifies its origins in colonial boundary-delineation practices, notably the enforcement and subsequent alterations of the Inner Line as dictated by the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, along with later notifications issued in 1904, 1912, 1930, and 1933. These colonial interventions, motivated by administrative expedience and resource extraction, disrupted ethnic homelands, restricted traditional land-utilization practices, and established the groundwork for post-colonial discord.

Utilizing a diverse array of archival documents, official reports, minutes from inter-state meetings, media sources, and comprehensive fieldwork accounts, the article scrutinizes how clashing assertions rooted in the 1875 and 1933 Inner Line notifications persist in influencing state positions and invigorating annual cycles of claims and counterclaims, particularly during the periods of cultivation and harvest. This investigation underscores the socio-economic ramifications of the intractable dispute on borderland communities, encompassing land dispossession, livelihood instability, administrative overlaps, and the militarization of quotidian existence. It posits that the inability of successive negotiations and the lack of a neutral Boundary Commission have sustained an atmosphere of uncertainty and distrust. The article concludes by asserting that, in the absence of a historically informed, negotiated, and community-sensitive demarcation process facilitated by central authorities, the Assam–Mizoram border dispute will persist as a chronic source of discord and marginalization within the region.

Keywords: Assam–Mizoram border dispute, Inner Line Regulation, Colonial boundary-making, Land and resource conflict, Borderland communities, post-colonial state formation

Introduction

Mizoram shares a 123-kilometer-long border with Assam. A demarcated border is the prime character of state. Yet, the northern border of Mizoram is non-demarcated and the border is fuzzy at the ground reality. One of the issues that occur in this non-demarcated border is the border dispute, on an annual basis. Claims and refutations between the borderland communities between the Mizo and non-Mizo communities occur especially during cultivation and harvesting seasons. Border skirmishes, claims, counter claims and refutations characterized the inter-community relationship between the borderland communities of Assam and Mizoram.

The map of Post-colonial Assam has been changing, since, the event of Indian Independence. For instance, Mizoram, earlier known as Lushai Hill district, was a district of Assam. Mizoram was newly created as the Union Territory of India in 1972. The border as detailed in the Political Map of Mizoram and southern Assam is not yet officially delimited and non-demarcated between the two states. Claims and counter claims between the two states has been the ongoing issue since Mizoram became a union territory in 1972 and statehood on 1987. The existing dots and lines on the map as the official border are based on the line drawn on the Map by the colonial administrators. Border disputes arose especially in this borderland due to the extension and adoption of erstwhile colonial administration practices without any changes in post-colonial Assam. Border between administrative divisions during colonial era was based on administration convenience. Such colonial policy of border based on administrative convenience did not consider the geographical entity. Rather, it divided ethnic homelands and habitats. The ongoing annual border dispute in the borderlands between Assam and Mizoram is the case in point due to the adoption of principle of colonial administrative convenience. It is a byproduct of the historical tragedy triggered by the colonial authorities towards the tribal societies at the margins of its administration. Further, the irony is that despite various interventions, in the post-colonial era, state official meetings on several occasions in the last three decades between the states had failed to solve the ongoing border dispute at all counts.

The Annual Border Dispute between Assam and Mizoram

Border dispute between Assam and Mizoram begins with the onset of jhum (slash and burn cultivation) season, and continues till the harvesting season. Border dispute in this area undermines the territorial and political sovereignty of Mizoram and Assam. The dispute affects the livelihood of the borderland communities, their belongings like land and forest resources in incomprehensible and inexplicable terms. In a drastic and dreaded sense, annually there occurs cycle of claims and counter-claims. On an annual basis, the communities often felt the sense of belonging and un-belonging of their land and resource due to the ongoing claims, refutations and accusation in this northern part of the borderland of Mizoram. Unfortunately, in this zone of dispute, the communities have submitted to live and accustomed to such borderland disputes, and carry on with their everyday existence.

One of the problematic aspects of non-demarcated border is the overlapping of administrative divisions, which resulted to non-conclusive border disputes and counter claims. For instance, in this borderland, whenever border disputes occurred, the district officials rushed to the borderland with the map to sort out issues. They usually look the spots for border pillars arguing this bank of the river to Mizoram and that bank of the river to Assam.

Amidst the widespread sense of helplessness, there is also an overwhelming desire to be free from such borderland dispute due to the stationing of armed police – 1st Indian Reserve (IR) battalion by the Mizoram authority in the disputed borderland. The motive for incepting the IR battalion was to curve down the skirmishes, tensions and scuffles, which has been part of the annual ritual in this borderland. The very existence of the security force provides security and reduces the climate of dispute during the times of harvesting, sowing of seeds and in collecting timbers. The absence of security forces in this zone, literally, cripples the people from both sides of the borderland during sowing of seeds, harvesting and collection of timbers.

The root cause of the border dispute between Assam and Mizoram is due to the lack of negotiation between the authorities of the two states. The dispute is further deepened due to lack of data and information of the region. Yet the available data are not sufficiently analyzed and communicated between the two states and the Centre, contributing to further misinformation, mismanagement and alienation.

This article will focus on border dispute in this northern part of Mizoram bordering Assam. It focuses on issues of land, consequences of non-demarcated border, review border commission reports and the ongoing demand for demarcating border between Assam and Mizoram. Narratives and opinions gathered during

fieldwork are also revealed in this chapter, so as to make sense of the ongoing border disputes in the northern part of Mizoram.

The Nature of Border Dispute

On 26 June 2007, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) – an influential students organization in Mizoram - torched the official map of Mizoram in front of the Vanapa Hall, Aizawl, which is the main historical landmark of Mizoram (www.thefinancialexpress.com, 2007). The student body cannot accept the boundary of Mizoram of 1971, as marked in the map. Subsequently, they took out a rally at the main streets of Aizawl. They roared, shouted, raised their arms, displayed posters of denial, and demanded that the inter-state boundary between Mizoram and Assam be demarcated in accordance with the notification issued in 1875 under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act, 1873. The protest by the students' body was in response to the 2007 border incident in the cultivable borderlands of Mizoram and Assam.

During fieldwork, Officials from the revenue department of the Government of Mizoram supported the students body claim that the government does not accept the present boundary with Assam and the inner line of the Inner Line Reserved Forest as described in the 1875 notification under the East Bengal Frontier Regulation of 1873 should be the basis for demarcating the border. Officials from the Mizoram census also, mentioned that prior to 1981 census, the area of Mizoram measures 20,187 square kilometers. Since 1981 census, it has been recorded as 20,181 square kilometers and so far from 1981 Mizoram area has been narrowed to six square kilometers (Personal interview, 16th November 2016).

The Mizoram officials narrated that border limits were hurriedly carved out of Assam without paying much attention to the realities on the ground. And therefore, these freshly created state boundaries did not strictly conform to the ethnic boundaries of the region. For example, there are sizeable populations of Mizo and Naga in the Cachar hill, making it possible for both Mizoram and Nagaland to claim territories in Assam. Also, the Central government transferred areas that legitimately belonged to Mizoram, thus creating sources for potential tensions.

Later, the influential students' body undertook a resolution. They demanded that the Inner Line Forest Reserve (509) square miles between Assam and Mizoram area should be handed over to the Mizoram Environment and Forests Department from the Cachar Forest Division of Assam. The student body urged the state for more police personnel to be deployed in Mizoram-Assam border so as to effectively guard the border areas. They urged the state government to expedite a solution to the border dispute by through tripartite negotiation between the two states and the Centre as the interlocutor. They also demanded: a) a separate ministry of border for the Government of Mizoram b) to constitute a State Boundary Commission expeditiously.

Claims And Refutations at Assam-Mizoram Borderlands

According to Pu Bawliana (Retired Forest Officer) Border dispute has been an annual event for all wrong reasons! (Personal Interview, 22nd October 2016). During September 2012, the pillar rake case in the borderland, once gain flared up at the Mizoram and Cachar region. The pitch of the protest, demands, tripartite talks, negotiations, inception of Border Commission and the magnitude of demands once again engulfed the peaceful climate of Aizawl. It affected the functioning of the government offices and educational institutions in Mizoram. It caught the attention of lawmakers, civil society organizations, opposition of the Mizoram legislative assembly and the ruling Congress party (The Telegraph, 2016). It flared up once again, after the Assam authority allegedly planted a boundary pillar in a paddy field of the neighboring state near Vairengte, on the inter-state border. Supporters of Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) – a political party of Mizoram, and was in the opposition during that moment - subsequently destroyed the pillar on 3rd September. According to the local media reports, ZNP legislator K. Liantlinga warned that any further inaction on part of the Mizoram government over the dispute would only aggravate the issue. During fieldwork, the ex-legislator mentioned,

“There is nothing more important than protecting our land. Mizoram authority should speed up the issue with the Assam government immediately. Most of the encroachers were illegal migrants, who were being encouraged to grab lands that belong to Mizo. We will do anything to stop such encroachment on our ancestral lands.”

According to a complaint filed by C Zoparlana, president of Aitlang Sihpui (a village in Northern Mizoram) Young Mizo Association (YMA) Branch, a boundary pillar appeared suddenly in the paddy field of Lalmangaiha, which the farmers reported the matter to the sub-divisional officer (civil) of Vairengte sub-division (Northern Mizoram) on 4th September 2012. The letter mentioned that farmers in the area were surprised, as the land has been cultivating by generations of Mizo families living there. The letter urged the concern authorities to remove the pillar. However, since there was no action taken by the government for more than a week, ZNP members decided to remove the pillar on their own, undermining the rules and law of higher authority. Criticizing the various state governments of the past, which had failed to settle the boundary issue with Assam, ZNP leaders claimed - about one hundred hectares of paddy fields at Singkili, adjoining the Aitlang Sihpui in Mizoram borderlands were allegedly grabbed by non-Mizo families, some years back.

The party, which collected documents from various offices in Silchar, found that twenty-four people had filed a complaint on 22nd September 2012, accusing the Mizoram counterparts for smashing a boundary pillar on the 3rd September. The complaint stated they were “living in the village Dholaikhai for the past 40 years” (The Telegraph, 2012). However, enquiries conducted by the correspondents of The Telegraph newspaper from the authorities in Silchar revealed that only thirteen people out of the twenty-four complainants could be traced.

The ZNP leaders mentioned during fieldwork that Mizoram’s present boundary was drawn unilaterally by Assam under the North East Re-organization Act, 1971. It is also true that during the making of the boundary in 1971, no Mizo leaders were consulted. The point is that the present northern boundary of Mizoram was imposed to the Mizoram without any consent of the Mizo District Council leaders. Also it is vital to note that during 1971, Mizoram was a schedule district of Assam. Hence, according to the ZNP party, the present boundary is not acceptable to the people of Mizoram and the historicity of the northern borderland is a fraught history in every sense. According to the party, the northern border was created on a copy-paste manner, by just reproducing the exact lines and dots of the 1933 border notification. It signifies an undemocratic bloat in the democratic annals of India. The party leaders further opined that it was a bitter day, when the Mizo National Front (MNF) under Pu Laldenga overlooked the issue of border disputes and demarcation of Mizoram borders with its neighboring states during the Mizo Peace Accord signed on 30th June 1986. The party claimed that the actual boundary between Assam and Mizoram should be the one agreed between the British and Mizo chiefs in 1875.

In today’s Mizoram, all political party and civil society organizations have a unanimous view on the northern border, that the northern border should be based on the 1875 Inner Line Regulations. The northern border should not be based on other regulations and notifications.

Subsequently after the pillar rack event, Barak Valley Peace Delegation approached towards the higher authority of Mizoram. The delegation met Mizoram Chief Minister LalThanhawla at his residence and held a discussion on the boundary issue and other inter-State matters. The Chief Minister commented that as it will take a long time in settling the problem, it is best to negotiate and solve all the problems through discussions around the table. The Chief Minister said erection of boundary pillar at Mizo paddy fields and demolishing the same is a cowardice act, and mentioned his plan to discuss the boundary issue with the higher authority ([www.timesofindia](http://www.timesofindia.com), 2016). He agreed to consider the proposal to set up a Grievance Cell in order to bring immediate solution to any border disputes between the two States.

Similar rhetoric of protest occurred as retaliation on border disputes by civil society organizations at Cachar. The only difference is the geography of protest; which is - Mizo's domain of protest remained at the hill and Cachar's domain of protest at the plains. On 19 September 2012, a protest march was organized by several organizations in the main streets of Silchar, demanding the immediate solution of the long-standing boundary dispute between Assam and Mizoram. Many organizations - All Barak Youth and Students Association (ABYSA), Dalit Sena (DS), several local clubs among others - alleged that a few days back the boundary pillar between Assam and Mizoram was destroyed by members of the Mizoram based political party Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) – in the area and tension has been prevailing since.

The Cachar based organization urged both Assam and Mizoram Governments to resolve the issue at the earliest or else it may lead to law and order situation, spokesperson of ABYSSA Baharul Islam Barbhuiya alleged that two prominent organizations of Mizoram, Young Man Association (YMA) and Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZO) were primarily responsible for occupying Assam's land in Cachar district since 2007 (www.pti.com, 2017). The organizations also submitted a memorandum to the Assam Chief Minister through the Office of Cachar Deputy Commissioner.

Steps Taken Up by the State Authorities to Resolve Border Disputes

During 1972, Mizoram became a union territory of India. One of the first thing, which the Mizoram authority demanded at that time was the demarcation of clear-cut border between Assam and Mizoram. Within a year, the newly formed territory formed a border committee on the northern boundary of Mizoram, headed by Reverend Zairema. The priest along with B Poonte prepared and submitted the report on June 1973, later published by Government of Mizoram on December 1973. In a nutshell, the border committee report mentioned that Mizo are dissatisfied with the Inner Line of 1875, which was imposed by the colonial authorities as a frontier line that separated the Lushai hill and the plains of Assam. The 1973 report also mentioned the unacceptable manner in which the northern boundary with Cachar was fixed arbitrarily by the British dividing the Mizo homelands and stripping their rights to hunt and gather firewood from the Inner Line Reserve forest. One of the main issues, which the report mentioned was to re-fix the territorial blunder of colonial map making. It urged to demarcate and re-fixed the border between Assam and Mizoram on certain reasonable grounds like historical, traditional and cultural backgrounds.

Till date, six inter-state level meetings were held between the higher officials of Mizoram and Assam on 1978, March 1988, April 1988, 14th February 1994 at Silchar and 15th February at Guwahati. Another National level meeting took place at New Delhi on 6th February 1994, which was convened by the Home Minister, Government of India (GOI), which was attended by both the Chief Ministers of Assam and Mizoram.

After a total of six meetings, the two states, till today, have not held any inter—state level meetings to end the border disputes. One thing is clear from fieldwork that the outcomes of such inter-state level meetings have not ended or brought any good results to end border disputes, till date.

The first inter-state meeting on border dispute between Mizoram and Assam was held on 12th August 1978 at Silchar. The matter for discussion during meeting between the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Silchar and DFO Aizawl was entirely on the number of families from both sides - Assam and Mizoram – who had encroached upon the edges of the Inner Line Reserve Forest (ILRF). The intrusion by both Mizo families and Assamese families was to destroy the valuable ILRF and its resources. In order to stop the intrusion towards the forest, the officials took measures to save the forest, as well as to evict the encroachers by setting 1959 land settlement certificate (patta) issued by the respective states, as the main criteria. The meeting's resolution mentioned that household who has been doing cultivation prior to 1959, will not be evicted. The rest, which obtained their pattas after 1959 will be stripped off their cultivating rights and subsequently be evicted (Chawngkunga, 2014, p.7).

The second round of inter-state official meeting was held on 3rd March 1988 at Aizawl. The matter of discussion was on the Inner Line Notification of 1875 and the later notification of 1933 (on expansion of Inner Line, 1875), which is usually known as the ground demarcation of the inter-state boundary. In the meeting, Mizo officials demanded that 1875 Inner line should be the exact boundary between Assam and Mizoram. Whereas, the Assam officials urged that 1933 notification should be considered as the basis for demarcation.¹

The third inter-state level meeting between the officials of government of Mizoram and government of Assam on border dispute, held at Aizawl on 27th April 1988. During the meeting, the Mizoram officials suggested that the notification of 1875 along with that of 1933 should be referred for the ground demarcation of the inter-state boundary between Assam and Mizoram. Whereas, the Assam officials urged that 1875 notification should not be considered for ground demarcation. Only the 1933 notification should be taken as a basis for ground demarcation. After detail discussion, the following decisions were taken –²

1. Both the notifications of 1875 and 1933 along with other relevant Notifications/Acts including those relating to the creation of Mizoram Union Territory and State of Mizoram shall be examined by the respective state governments.
2. Thereafter, the basis for ground demarcation should be decided mutually by the two states governments, latest by 30th September 1988.
3. Thereafter, the details of the modalities for ground demarcation shall be decided by the Survey and Forest Officials of both the state governments and finalize the modalities latest by 15th November 1988.
4. On the basis of the mutual decision of the two state governments and the modalities as discussed above, the actual work of ground demarcation of the inter-state boundary should starts by the 1st December 1988.

Unfortunately, the basis for ground demarcation work did not follow up due to disagreement on the 1933 notification mainly by the Mizoram authority. The Assam government urged upon 1933 notification only, and did not want to concede an inch of land, and simply rejected the 1875 notification. Whereas, the Mizoram government urged to consider both the 1933 and 1875 notification. The border dispute and non-demarcation are mainly due to the disagreement on the colonial Inner Line regulations, the expansion of the inner line further towards the northern Mizoram forest areas. Assam authority supports expansion of Inner Line notifications, whereas the Mizoram authority rejects the colonial policies of Inner Line expansions. According to the Mizoram officials, the 1933 notification on Inner Line notification was for expansion of tea gardens in the foothills of Mizoram and resource extraction.

Five years later, after the meeting of 1988 April, the Revenue Minister, Government of Mizoram, wrote to the Chief Minister of Assam proposing to convene an inter-state level meeting, so as to bring a consensus on the 1875 and 1933 notifications. In reply to the proposal, the Chief Minister of Assam on 23rd June 1993, mentioned that the government of Mizoram should first implement the decision taken on 27 April 1988 meeting.³ The Chief Minister of Mizoram subsequently reply back to the Chief Minister of Assam on 8 September 1993 proposing a meeting, to resolve and demarcate the border between Assam and Mizoram on the basis of their discussion. The main objective of the proposed meeting was to come to an agreement, so

¹ Chief Minister of Mizoram (2007), "Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India: Constitution of Boundary Commission for settlement, delimitation and demarcation of the boundary between Mizoram and Assam with other neighboring states", Aizawl: Government of Mizoram, p.12.

² Annexure J, Chief Minister of Mizoram (2007), "Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India: Constitution of Boundary Commission for settlement, delimitation and demarcation of the boundary between Mizoram and Assam with other neighboring states", Aizawl: Government of Mizoram.

³ Chief Minister of Mizoram (2007), "Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India: Constitution of Boundary Commission for settlement, delimitation and demarcation of the boundary between Mizoram and Assam with other neighboring states", Aizawl: Government of Mizoram, Pp.13-14.

that the state authorities could instruct officials of both the states to undertake demarcation of the boundary on ground to the satisfaction of both states.

Before the fourth inter-state meeting could take place, during November (harvesting season) 1993, undesirable border skirmishes took place at Vairengte, necessitating intervention of the Government of India. The fourth meeting took place at New Delhi on 6 February 1994, convened by the Home Minister, GOI, which was attended by both the Chief Ministers of both the states, Land Revenue Commissioners and Chief Secretaries to resolve the border dispute and consider the 1933 Inner Line regulation as the main criteria for demarcating the disputed border. There occurred protest by civil society organizations and students body in the streets of Aizawl as a protest against the GOI direction, which favored and gave an edge of advantage to Assam. Subsequently within the same year - during 1994 - the fifth and sixth inter-state border dispute meeting took place on 9th February at Silchar and 15 February 1994 at Guwahati, respectively, without any measurements to end the border disputes and the main issue of border demarcation.

In the Sixth meeting on Assam-Mizoram border dispute, Chief Secretaries of both the states met on 15 February 1994, it was decided that ground demarcation of the boundary should start immediately. But the meeting in its minutes mentioned that the directions for demarcations should first come from the two Chief Ministers.⁴ Till date, no directions came from the Chief Ministers, neither border demarcations occurred after these six meetings held at different venues since 1978-1994. No further meetings were held till date. In fact, there is no point for further meetings, since the standpoint for demarcation based on historical documents differs for both the states. Mizoram wants the 1875 notification and Assam wants the 1933 notification as the basis for ground demarcation in this disputed borderland.

Mizoram realized the necessity of boundary delimitation between Mizoram and its neighboring states – Assam, Tripura and Manipur. Yet, the inter-state boundary cannot be tackled independently by the Mizoram state alone. In order to observe the sanctity of the inter-state boundary issues and borderland skirmishes, borderland land revenues and land certification issues, the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in its 7th session held on 9 March, 2006 passed a resolution. The resolution mentioned, “Government of India should constitute immediately the Boundary Commission to settle the disputes on the inter-state boundaries between Mizoram and its neighboring states”.⁵

Memorandums and Border Study Committees initiated by Mizoram

During 2007, a memorandum was submitted by the then Chief Minister of Mizoram Zoramthanga to the Prime Minister of India. The memorandum was a compilation of historical documents, facts, orders, notifications since 1875 and meeting minutes on border issue meetings between Assam and Mizoram. Till date, the Prime Minister’s office has not taken any positive steps to end this annual cycle of border disputes in this northern borderland of Mizoram.

The Mizoram state Congress party formed a Border Study Committee under the chairmanship of C. Chawnkunga on 2013. The border study committee was financed and instituted by the ruling Congress party of Mizoram. The committee submitted its report to the Congress headquarter, Mizoram on 1st July 2014. The report contains historical documents, orders and letters of communication between the colonial authorities, minutes of meeting held between the state authorities, memorandums submitted to the government of India

⁴ Annexure K, Chief Minister of Mizoram (2007), “Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India: Constitution of Boundary Commission for settlement, delimitation and demarcation of the boundary between Mizoram and Assam with other neighboring states”, Aizawl: Government of Mizoram.

⁵ Quoted from Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the Chief Minister of Mizoram (2007), “Boundary Commission for Settlement, Delimitation and Demarcation of the Boundary between Mizoram and Assam with Other Neighboring States”, Aizawl: Government of Mizoram, p.22.

and government of Assam for demarcation and delimitation of the disputed boundaries and Inner Line Reserve Forests (ILRF).

Further, on 18th July 2014, Chief Minister Lalthanhawla told the Mizoram state assembly that he had asked the Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh to constitute a Boundary Commission to settle the boundary disputes with Assam. The Chief Minister demand, "Constitution of boundary commission is the need of the hour to prevent bloodshed and violence in the region by finding amicable solution to the border disputes with Assam" (www.pti.com. 2016).

The Evolution of Mizoram – Assam Border During the Colonial Era

When the British annexed Assam, there were no fixed boundaries and fixed frontiers. During 1835, Captain Pemberton in his dairy mentioned that on the south of Cachar, the limits of the frontiers adjoining the Lushai hill has never been defined or surveyed (Chawngkunga, 2014, p.10).

On 6th November 1849, Lushais attacked a Kookie (kuki) village, over a family quarrel. The village was 10 miles south of Silchar town. The Kookie chief appealed to the British authority to punish the Lushias. Captain Lister, the political agent undertook the Lushai expedition in January 1850. He met the Lushai chief and told that the Lushai should respect their border and in turn the British would respect their border and in turn not to interfere with their affairs. Further, Captain Lister informed the Lushai chief not to commit any raid or carry out their internal quarries beyond the proposed line by Colonial Lister. The proposed line as mentioned in ER Ellis' book 'Military Report on the Chin- Lushai Country', first published on 1893 was – "The boundary line extended from a few miles above Lakhipur on the Barak River to the northern limits of Hill Tipperah (Tripura hill), passing through the southern extremity of the Chattachura range" (Ellis,1993, p. 27).

As tea plantations expanded beyond the Lister line of 1850, the plantations penetrated deep into the Lushai forest areas. As a response, the Lushais committed series of raids on the tea gardens. To prevent the Lushai raids, British authorities made defensive lines, which were continually surveyed and patrolled by them.

On 3rd April 1867, Surveyor General Colonel Thullier in his letter No.325 wrote, "I find no absolute defined limits laid down for Cachar district or jurisdiction and I believe, no authoritative boundary has ever been fixed or approved by the government" (Mizoram State Archive, Sl. No 874, CB-27).

By 1867, some line was fixed by the British officials beyond which, no British officials were allowed to go in and few police outpost were built. These outposts were connected by footpath, which were known as patrol paths. Alexander Mackenzie described this line as, "Leaving for further consideration the question of the policy to be followed in future with the Lushai chiefs, the Bengal government contended itself on the close of the 1871-1872 Lushai expedition, with placing a line of strongly manned posts along the whole southern frontier of Cachar and Sylhet" (Mackenzie, 1995, p.317).

By 1870, the British authority felt the necessity of fixing proper boundary on the frontier areas of Assam. On the Cachar front, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar was instructed to survey the region with the survey department and submit a draft notification for approval by the British authority. In a letter by the Government of Bengal (No.215, 3rd May 1870), mentioned, "Care must be taken to draw the boundary so that it will include only areas, where we have control" (Mizoram State Archive, Sl. No 1074, CB-42). Accordingly, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, Mc Williams drew the line, which was conveyed in his letter No. 364, 27th May 1870 (Mizoram State Archive, Sl. No 1098, CB-46).

During 1870, another proposal to demarcate the southern Cachar boundary was proposed by JW Edgar, the tribal expert, who was positioned as Special Deputy Commissioner of Cachar. Edgar's proposal was to extend the southern boundary of Cachar and penetrated deep into the Lushai forest areas. These forest areas were the

hunting grounds for the Lushai and had rich mineral resources. The proposal was accepted by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and was notified on 21st September 1870 (Chawngkunga, 2014, p. 10).

During 1870, the boundary was changed twice, all at the disposal of the British authority, without any consultations or consent of the Lushai. Edgar visited the Lushai hill and met a Lushai Chief, by the name of Suakpuilal. A line known as 'Sunnud line' was drawn and handed to the Lushai chief on 16th January 1871. The line was different from the 1870 line drawn by Mac Williams. The level of penetration was deeper into the Lushai forest areas.

Fixation of most of the boundaries of Assam, particularly the borders of the tribal area took place during 1870-1876. The fixation of boundaries by British authorities was executed without any consideration of social, cultural and tribal homeland ties. The boundary was drawn without any traditional significance on tribal way of life and it halted the historical belonging of Lushai like hunting rights with the imposition of ILRF. The main possible grounds behind the whole project of boundary making and border making in Assam was the possibility of maximum economic exploitation, administrative convenience of the Imperial government and for maintenance of law and order in British India.

The Bengal Frontier Regulation Act (Inner Line Act 1875)

Under the provisions of section two of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation I of 1873, the Governor-general in council notified a regulation for the peace and government of certain districts on the Eastern frontier of Bengal (The Gazette of India, 1875). The regulation was the imposition of a line on the map of Bengal Eastern frontier, which was later described as 'Inner Line' on the southern frontier of the district of Cachar. The line detailed the legitimacy and the boundary of British administration. The line also follows the principle of mountain crest, streams and rivers as the markers of limits of British administration.

Under the provision of the section mentioned in this notification of 20th August 1875, the Governor-general in council further prohibited all British subjects from going beyond the 'Inner Line' without a pass under the hand and seal of the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar.

The main purpose of the Inner Line was to demarcate the active jurisdiction of the Cachar administration and to highlight its administrative frontiers. Other purposes of the Inner line were also to mark the limits up to which British subjects may move freely or settle.

Alexander Mackenzie writes, "Under the orders of the government of India, the Inner line is defined merely for jurisdiction. It does not divide the sovereignty of the territory beyond the active control of the district officer need not necessarily extend up to the boundary earlier known as Sunnud line of 1871. But, it must under no circumstances be carried further. Beyond the line, the tribes are left to manage their own affairs with only such interference on the part of the frontier officers in their political capacity as may be considered advisable with the view of establishing a personal influence for good among the chiefs and tribes" (p. 225).

Two months before the Inner Line of southern Cachar was notified, the Chief Commissioner of Assam had defined the district and sub-district boundaries in his notification on 24th June 1875, in which the southern boundary of Cachar was declared. The declared line in that notification was more or less the same as the Sunnud line of 1871 (Chawngkunga, 2014, p.12). The Inner Line was drawn arbitrarily in the map prepared by the colonial official; as a result, the line did not remain as a fix line. It was redrawn and changed, penetrating deeper and deeper inwards to the Lushai hill. In other words, the colonial expansion at the Lushai frontier occurred with the drawing and redrawing with further penetrations of the newer Inner lines notified subsequently in the later years. The penetration of Inner line further deeper into the Lushai-Cachar frontier occurred simultaneously with the aim of inception of colonial administration in the Lushai hill.

For instance, The Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 led to the occupation and annexation of the Lushai hill. This in turn resulted in the creation of two districts—The North Lushai hill and the South Lushai hill, with headquarters at Aizawl and Lunglei respectively. The North Lushai hill came under the jurisdiction of the Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1895,⁶ while the South district became a part of Bengal until 18982 when it was transferred to Assam.⁷ Captain H.R. Browne was placed in May, 1890 as the first Political Officer for the North Lushai hill District. In the South Lushai hill District, Captain J Shakespeare took the charge of office as the first Superintendent on the 16th April 1891 (Sir Robert Reid (1997, p.13). On 1st April 1898, the two districts were amalgamated into one and came to be known as the Lushai hill District, administered by a Superintendent with its headquarter at Aizawl. Major J. Shakespear occupied the post of officer as the first Superintendent of the Lushai hill.⁸ The whole district, since then came under the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

Expansion of the Inner Line - 1904, 1912, 1930 and 1933 towards the Lushai hill

In the 2007 memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the Chief Minister of Mizoram on the subject of constitution of boundary commission for the settlement, delimitation and demarcation of the boundary between Mizoram and Assam with other neighboring states. The memorandum highlighted “the level of injustice done to the Mizoram in boundary delimitation”.⁹ The reason why the 2007 memorandum also mentioned the term ‘injustice’ in many of the pages, was due to the erroneous and one-sided fixation of Lushai-Assam boundary, which was executed solely by the colonial authorities without any consideration and consent of the Lushai chiefs, during the colonial era.

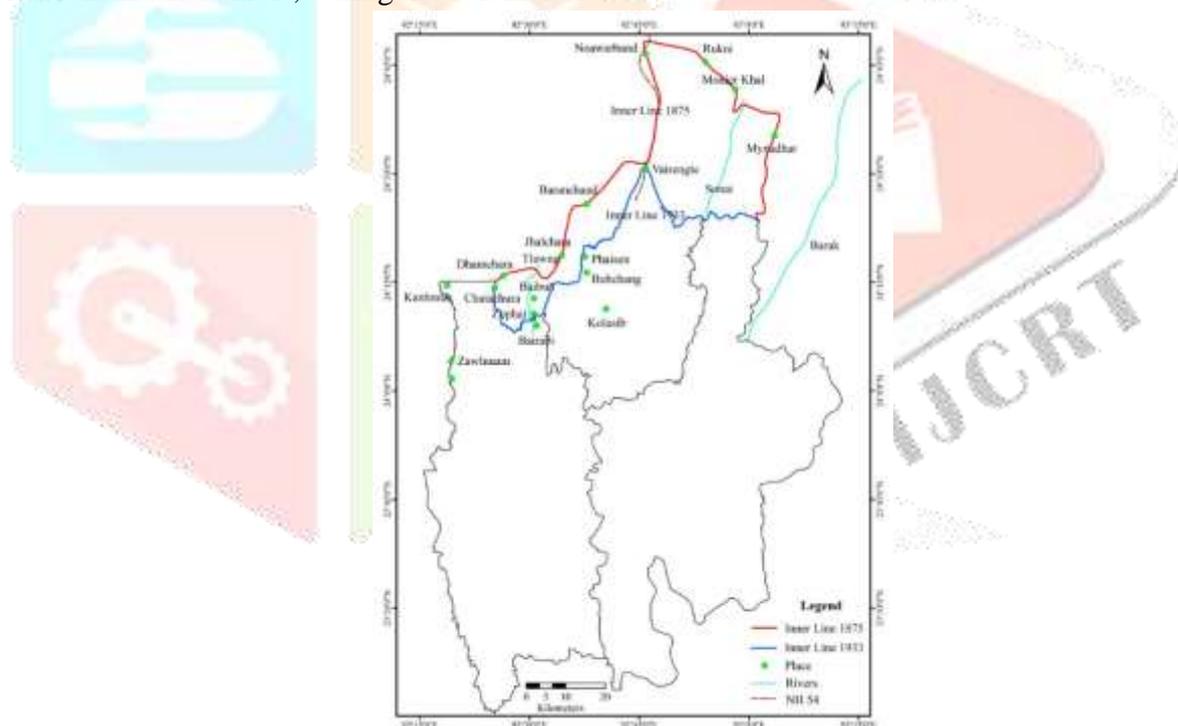


Figure 1.0 Map showing the expansion of Inner Line from 1875 -1933. (Source- Prepared by the Author)
The colonial authority - fixed, re-fixed, drawn, redrawn and expanded the Inner Line subsequently on 1904, 1912, 1930 and 1933. The 2007 memorandum mentioned that the main motive behind the drawing, redrawing, fixation of the line, re-survey of the Inner Line on the actual ground resulted to expansion of Inner Line further

⁶ Foreign Department Proclamation No. 1698 E, dated the 6th September 1895. (Manual of local Rules and Others, 1915, Volume 1, p. 2).

⁷ Proclamation No. 591 E. B, dated the 1st April 1898 (Manual of local Rules and Others, 1915, Volume 1, p. 4).

⁸ Foreign Dept., External, April, 1897, No. 221; in Robert Reid- History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941, Spectrum Pubs., Guwahati, Reprint, 1997, p. 13.

⁹ Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the Chief Minister of Mizoram (2007), “Boundary Commission for Settlement, Delimitation and Demarcation of the Boundary between Mizoram and Assam with Other Neighboring States”, Aizawl: Government of Mizoram, p.13.

penetrating into the Lushai territory. This process of resurveying as done by the British officials, according to the Mizo officials from the Land Revenue and Settlement, Government of Mizoram, was a process of land grabbing to exploit minerals and resources. It was a policy adopted by the colonial authorities for maximum economic exploitation. In the gazette letter of 1875, usually known as the Bengal Frontier Regulation Act, terms like maximum economic exploitation were not mentioned. Rather, terms like - “administrative convenience and effective maintenance of law and order in British India”¹⁰ are mentioned in the colonial gazette notification.

The modifications and re-fixation of Inner Line created confusions among the indigenous settlers and conscripted their right to hunt in those vast forest areas. It altered the earlier idea of controlling of lands and cultivating practices among the tribal villages in the Lushai hill. Until the line was imposed, there was no hard boundary for cultivating and hunting practices. Each village had consensual boundaries and limits up to which they can practice cultivating practices. Because, each village had distinct areas under their respective control; until, the British policies altered the whole picture with administrative control, map making and impositions of Inner Lines.

The Inner line of 1875 was redrawn and re-notified in 12th September 1904. The main reason for the redrawing was that it was found impossible to give a more accurate description of the southern boundary of Cachar, as many of the small streams in the 1875 notification have no names (Zairema and Poonte, 1973, p37). In this notification, the small tributaries, which were raised in the Bairabi area, till it crosses the present southern boundary of the Cachar district, earlier notified in the 1875 were further re-notified in 1904.

The 1904 Inner Line was proposed to redefine the southern boundary of Cachar more clearly as the Government of Bengal and Assam proposed to redefine the southern boundary of Cachar during the meeting of 14th February 1912 at Calcutta (ibid, pp.36-39). The proposal and the agenda to further re-define the southern Cachar boundary (not border) was subsequently agreed by the colonial officers of the Government of India. So the line was again notified and changed through the Gazette Notification No.419 P, dated 23rd February 1912 (See Annexure) (Zairema and Poonte, 1973, p.39). It mentioned that Survey of India found it impossible to lay down the boundary defined in the 1875 notification, especially – 1) In the Sonai River and the Bongkong Range b) The Bongkong Range and the Rukni (Nobucherra) River.

Eighteen years later, by 1930, the Government of Assam with the letter No. 1552/7312, dated 4th June 1930 wrote to the Government of India to enforce harder border laws and punishments, so as to protect the Cachar tea gardens from the notorious raids by tribal groups from the Lushai hill (Zairema and Poonte, 1973, pp.37-43). The letter addressed two crucial issues, which will directly affect the tribal communities. Because, further fixation on the ground topography would lead to more land grabbing by the colonial authorities for inception of more tea gardens in the foothills and the sloppy hill of the Lushais. First, the letter demands a clear-cut demarcation and description of the 1875 line drawn on the map to be made and marked in the best possible manner in the ground topography. Second, the letter proposed to lease lands to any tea planters around the Cachar areas, and the colonial authorities must ensure to provide security and protection to the planters, traders. The letter also proposed to criminalized Lushai from hunting and practice (jhum) shifting cultivation in areas near to the tea gardens. The Lushai hunters must be prevented in making excursions across the redrawn boundary line of 1912, which might lead to political complications.

The argument is clear that tea economy had inspired the colonial authorities used the Line of 1875, just like a cosmetic, where one can press/modify and re-fixed in any possible manner which serves the interest for the

¹⁰ Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the Chief Minister of Mizoram (2007), “Boundary Commission for Settlement, Delimitation and Demarcation of the Boundary between Mizoram and Assam with Other Neighboring States”, Aizawl: Government of Mizoram, p.14.

colonial authorities and tea planters by overlooking and sidelining the tribal communities forest rights, hunting rights and jhum cultivating practice for hill settlers.

Letter POL-1551/7312, dated 4th June 1930 by the Government of Assam to the Government of India also proposed proposals for the favorable consideration of the Government of India, which were –

1. The extension of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (V of 1873) to the Lushai hill District.
2. The prescription of the Northern boundary of the Lushai hill as the Inner Line if the district under the regulation.
3. The abolition of the Inner Line of Cachar district.

Subsequently, the proposals were accepted and the notification No.9102 of 28th August 1930 further redefined the mountain crests, river and streams further inwards into the Lushai territory.

Three significant outcomes of the 1930 notification No.9102 (See Annexure) were – first, the formal acceptance and amendment of the 1904 southern Cachar boundary, which was later amended in 1912 and redefined again in the 1930 Inner Line Notification. Second, the 1875 Inner line for Lushai Hill district drawn on the Map was further and redrawn with further penetration into the Lushai territory. Third, the line which was officially termed, earlier as Cachar district Inner Line was abolished and replaced officially as Lushai hill Inner Line.

The main principles adopted in fixing and re-fixing of the line subsequently in 1904, 1912 and 1930 were based on geographical focal point and administrative convenience. For instance, due to geographical focal point on the map cut the Lushai jhum lands in an arbitrary manner especially in the Bhojan, Bongkong, Rangte and Chattechora jhum lands. Also for administrative convenience, the colonial authorities and surveyors rely only the higher authority points of view. During the course of land survey, there were no natives and local tribal chiefs in the surveying procedure.

During fieldwork, Mizo elders commented that the Inner Line and series of regulations was ‘tortuous’ and ‘zig zag’ in manner. The line is not honest at all. It carved out cultivable land of the Lushai and the best forest areas with rich resources. The line awarded many lands to the Cachar administrative division during the colonial time. This unjust history has not been able to resolve by the present Mizoram authorities. During the colonial era, two of the most fertile pockets of land were taken away by the Cachar administration due to the imposition, drawing and redrawing of Inner Line of 1875 and later in 1904, 1912 and 1930.

Without consulting the Mizo chiefs and the Lushai hill Superintendent, the Government of Assam again revised the Inner Line of 1933 and issued the Notificataion No.2106, dated 9th March 1933. The notification of 1933 modified the boundary between Lushai hill and Cachar district and unreasonably excluded some of the Lushai inhabited areas such as Cachar Zion, Tlangnuam, Lala Bazar and Baga Bazar etc (Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the Chief Minister of Mizoram, 2007, pp. 7-8).

Inner Line Reserve Forest Area and Absence of Divisional Forest Office at Aizawl till 1955

The Government of Assam Report on Lushai (1872-1889) mentioned that the reserved forest area of 509 square miles between Cachar - Lushai boundary in the Inner Line of 1875 belongs to Lushai territory (Chawngkunga (2014, p. 12). The Assam Forest Manual mentioned that the Inner Line Reserved forest belongs to the Lushai territory and the Inner Line of 1875 was said to be contiguous with the Assam provincial boundary as defined by the Boundary commissioners.

One of the administrative lacunas during 1875-1960 was at Lushai Hill, there were no Forest Divisional Offices. Hence, the Inner Line Reserve forest was administered and was put under the management of Divisional Forest Office, Cachar. The absence of forest office is also one of the reasons, which aggravates the annual borderland disputes in the northern borderlands of Mizoram.

The Divisional Forest Office of Lushai hill was incepted on 1955, with the enactment of The Mizoram Forest Act, 1955 (<https://lad.mizoram.gov.in/page/forest-act-1955.html>). Before 1955, and since 1873, Lushai hill forest was under the authority of the Cachar Forest Division. The Inner Line Reserved Forest under Assam Forest Department and the Cachar Forest Division Office, until 1955. However, forest area excluding the Inner Line Reserve forest within Lushai hill were administered by the Mizoram Autonomous District Council since 1952 headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner as Divisional Forest Officer and other staff with a creation of Forest Department.

When Mizoram attained Union Territory, the Forest Department became a full-fledged Department headed by Director of the rank of Conservator of Forests. This post was upgraded to the post of Chief Conservator of Forests on 29.12.1983. Northern Circle and Southern Circle were created on 13.1.1984. Another Circle, Research & Development was created on 5.8.1987. The Department was renamed as Environment and Forest Department with the creation of one Principal Chief Conservator of Forest on 10.12.1987.

During fieldwork, forest authorities of Cachar - Assam – clarified that there are no official document or agreement between Mizoram and Assam of the administrative transfer of the Inner Line Forest from Cachar authority go Mizoram Forest division, till today. The absence of such official administrative transfer and encroachment of land at the edges of the reserved forest areas by both the Assamese and Mizo household has not been resolved, till today, at the official level. Further, failed meetings between the two states to demarcate and to delimit the disputed Assam-Mizoram border remains as an annual event during the harvesting and spring season.

The Present Northern Mizoram – Assam Border

The present so called boundary and defined mainly through Inner Line was made in 1930 and 1933 without consultations with and approval of the competent authorities (i.e. Superintendent of Lushai hill, Mizo chiefs and without the consent of the Mizo people of Mizoram. The non-demarcated border according to Mizo elders at the borderland was an imaginary line. The line had penetrated further south of the erstwhile Inner line of 1875. The penetration of the Inner line towards the Lushai hill has deprived the Mizo habitats, losing their traditional habitats and lost the right to farm in the disputed cultivable lands.

Also, the penetration of the Inner line further south of Cachar made it convenient for outsiders to settle and claim lands. It also helps the migrant labors brought by the colonial authorities to settle within the Lushai hill, which was actually against the ethos of the Inner Line Regulations.

For the people of Mizoram, the only known and established northern boundary with Assam is the Inner Line of 1875, on the southern frontier of Cachar district, which was drawn by colonial authorities even before the colonizer established an administrative division in Aizawl. This is also the boundary recognized by usage and in actual practice by the borderland communities and the Government of Mizoram. Yet, the Government of Assam sticks to the 1933 re-modification of 1875 Inner Line. The re-modified line of 1933, penetrated further into the cultivable lands, forest and hunting domains of the Lushai. These contrasting views, where Mizo claim the 1875 Inner Line as the border of Assam and Mizoram; and Assam authorities refused to recognize the 1875 Line, instead accepting the 1933 is the root cause for the spiraling border conflict and border skirmishes that occurs on annual basis in this part of the Mizoram borderland.

Mizo community has never accepted their boundary fixed by the British post 1875 Inner Line, which were the re-modified lines of 1904, 1912, 1930 and 1933. The Mizoram remained in state of refusal as proposed by Government of Assam to demarcate and delimit Assam-Mizoram border based on the 1933 re-modified Inner Line. The Mizo district council also took a strong objection of the then district boundary between Mizo district and Cachar district which was revealed in the Mizo district council's Resolution No.217 of 10th July

1965 and subsequent representation submitted to the Government of Assam on 24th August 1965 (See Annexure A and B).¹¹

Ongoing Claims and Counterclaims

During 2013, Mizo civil society organizations and families affected due to the ongoing border disputes accused, staged protest at the Kolasib district headquarter and at Aizawl, Directorate of Revenue of the Mizoram government. Two reasons for the protest were – a) the lack of concern by the Mizoram authority in the interstate boundary issue and b) Mizoram farmers who had lost their land has not yet given any proper/just compensation and land reallocation due to the ongoing land issues in the northern borderland of Mizoram. A Mizo elderly from Bairabi mentioned,

“The Mizoram Revenue department ordered to submit our periodic patta. My family lost lands for the construction of railway line. Earlier, I had 14 bighas of land. The government gave me rupees 11,000 only as compensation for the half of the land that was lost due to the railway line construction. It was not a proper compensation. Later, I submitted a memorandum to the state government to give us job in railway, for those who had lost their lands for the construction of railway. Till date no job or nor proper compensation comes from government.

One of our ancestors, Mr. Lala used to stay in the other side of Tlawng River. Vais named the area as Lalaghat. Similarly, Darighat was named after a Mizo lady named Dari. At present, there are no Mizo familiae at Darighat and Lalaghat.” (Fieldwork interview, Pu Tawnphunga, Bairabi, 22nd March 2017):

The All-Mizoram Farmers Union (AMFU) spearheaded the accusation against the Mizoram authority. The organization compares the level of work taken up by authorities of Assam and Mizoram. According to their assessment, Mizoram state failed on all accounts and the union, authorities of Assam took measures to protect and provided security measures to the families affected due to the ongoing border skirmishes. They mentioned that Assam government taking fast steps regarding its boundary shared with Mizoram, if the Mizoram government also do not take stronger steps immediately, it will go on losing its land, said AMFU General Secretary Zion Lalremruata, who led a survey over the inter-state boundary on June 18, 2013 (www.Mizonews.Net. 2016).

AMFU General Secretary found that the Assam side is taking strong steps in the disputed boundary areas, as they go on constructing roads using PMGSY schemes and constructing link roads within the erstwhile borderlands of ILRF areas.

The survey party said that the Assam side is constructing roads even reaching up to the area around the paddy fields near Mautui River, which belongs to K Hlimlawma, of Vairengte. The road construction indicates the aggressive steps taken up by Assam authorities to claim lands, which were legitimate lands belonging to Mizoram. The AMFU survey party also further mentioned that such steps of making roads encroaching the edges of Mizoram borderland indicates that the Assam government keeps boundary issue in its priority list, which is still minimal in the priority list of Government of Mizoram.

AMFU Secretary informed that they also inspected the problems faced by the cultivators who depend their livelihood on paddy fields along the interstate boundary. Expressing its impression that the steps taken by the Mizoram government on security concern and boundary issue is comparatively poor. The organization also claimed that, they not only conducted survey at Vairengte, but also in 2008 conducted survey at Tlabung

¹¹ Annexure A & B, Chief Minister of Mizoram (2007), “Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India: Constitution of Boundary Commission for settlement, delimitation and demarcation of the boundary between Mizoram and Assam with other neighboring states”, Aizawl: Government of Mizoram.

where the international border is shared with Bangladesh, and subsequently submitted its findings to the then MNF Ministry.

According to the organization's leader, during fieldwork, he mentioned that submission of memorandums and findings to the state authority have become meaningless, because, no further actions in the interest of saving the land has not been seen, since Mizoram became a state of the Indian union.

During fieldwork, the village council leader of Bairabi mentioned,

“They allow us to plant anything, but they harvest it. We do not have much trouble in rice and other crops, but teak. Around four years back, Pu C. Chawngkunga and his fellowmen came to Bairabi and the local YMA discussed boundary issues with the Mizo visitors from Aizawl. A heated discussion was on the lost lands at Baibun. We looked for clues and evidences, where our ancestors had left. Baibun cultivable land was ours’, the British government also gave us land pass, but now the lands are being claimed by Assam. Something has to be done; else, we will be losing all the cultivable lands at Baibun. The other woe is that some of the Mizos have already sold their land to Vais. The Vai demography also shoots up, at this borderland, since the National Highway was constructed, fifteen years back” (Interview with VCP, Bairabi, 2017).

During fieldwork, it was also found that many Mizos do not take the land and boundary issue lightly. It has something to do with identity issues like ethnic homelands, and issues about claims-counter claims like my land-your land being divided by the colonial mapmakers. To every Mizo in the northern Mizoram, Bairabi River is considered as the boundary between Mizoram and Assam, since there is no demarcated boundary settlement. It was also found that yet many of the Mizo households questioning the relevance of constitutional provisions and entitlements, like outsider-insider/ legal-illegal to buy immovable assets under the Sixth schedule of the Indian constitution being compromised in many instances, when Vai buys the Mizo villager's land.

A member at the Village Council, Bairabi mentioned,

“Any tensions on land – building, planting, harvesting, putting up fences etc - glares up into a non-demarcated boundary issue in this northern borderland. For instance, during 2015, the Mizoram agriculture department set up a shed on the Mizoram side of the Bairabi River. The Assam government destroyed it within a week. It turned up into a border dispute during 2015. In another incident, Mr. Rintea of Kawnpui village constructed a farmhouse at his paddy field in 2005. A month's later the farmhouse was demolished by the Assam government officials. Due to the demolition, border dispute flared up during 2005. During 1990, the Mizo villagers cut down teaks from their plantations with LSC's. The villagers stocked them together on the banks of Bairabi River. Later, what happened was, Assam authorities turned up and took away the teaks.

The ill response from the Mizoram authority left us beleaguered. After 1990, things began to change. Since then, many of the villagers did not want to cultivate their paddy fields. So they sold it to Vai people. For generations, the Mizos used to have paddy fields around Labhaichhora, but during the last two decades, they had sold it all to the Vai people.

We have given up cultivation at our paddy fields, which used to be our own lands in the past few decades. Non-demarcated border, border disputes and ill response by Mizoram authority have conceded our lands, and we lost most of our lands, which were our inherited lands from our ancestors.

The steps taken up by the Government of Mizoram is not helping us in getting back our land, and hence unacceptable. When we face trouble, the district Superintendent of Police and the District Commissioner used to turn up. The dispute will be silent for some time, and after a short period of time, the same trouble arises again.

At the moment, Mizos who have paddy fields in these areas are cultivated and taken care by Vai. During the time of harvest, the landowner claimed certain amount of the harvested rice on the basis of the land, and the rest goes to the cultivator or the caretaker of the field” (Interview with Village Council Member, Bairabi, 2017).

A former member of Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) (MZP is a powerful Mizo student organization with sub-headquarters in various parts of Mizoram) mentioned,

“For generations, cultivable lands at Baibun were cultivated by our forefathers’. Since the last three decades, the outsiders are also claiming that the cultivable lands belong to them. As a result, no one is daring to cultivate these areas, these days. The Assam police added fuel to the woes by threatening the cultivators. It is very problematic that the Mizoram government remained silent to protect the border area lands.”

Land Settlement Certificate (LSC) is issued under the Revenue Department, Government of Mizoram. The nature of LSC for lands near the borderland carries different character and meaning, because the LSC is itself in dispute, on an annual basis. The legal rights of the LSC, is challenged by Assamese authority, annually, during cultivation and harvesting season. The Mizoram government issued it, but the very government is neglecting us in ending this dispute. As the LSC at the northern Mizoram borderland has different character from the LSC of other parts of Mizoram, these days, we decided collectively refuse to pay tax.

The Assam government has been carrying out many activities at the Inner Line Reserved Forest Area. Such activities are not acceptable by Mizo families at the northern borderland of Mizoram. For instance, during 2004, there was an open dispute with few casualties. During that time, the Assam government constructed a new school inside the Inner Line Reserved Forest area. The Mizo community objected it and demolished the school building, and the Assam government responded by sending a troop of Assam police.

Reference

- Annexure J, Chief Minister of Mizoram (2007), “Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India: Constitution of Boundary Commission for settlement, delimitation and demarcation of the boundary between Mizoram and Assam with other neighboring states”, Aizawl: Government of Mizoram.
- Assam – Mizoram Border Disputes (2012), Guwahati: Times of India, 21 October, www.timesofindia.com, (Accessed on 22 September 2016).
- Chawngkunga, C (2014), “Minutes of meeting held in the office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Cachar Division at Silchar, 12th August, 1978”, in Border Study Report, Aizawl: Mizoram State Congress Party.
- Chief Minister of Mizoram (2007), “Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India: Constitution of Boundary Commission for settlement, delimitation and demarcation of the boundary between Mizoram and Assam with other neighboring states”, Aizawl: Government of Mizoram.
- Ellis, E R (1993 Reprint), Military Reports on Chin-Lushai Country, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute.
- Foreign Department External (1897) No. 221; in Robert Reid, History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941, Spectrum Pubs. Guwahati, Reprint, 1997.
- Foreign Department Proclamation (1895), No. 1698 E, dated the 6th September 1895.
- Foreign Department Proclamation No. 1698 E (1895), Dated the 6th September 1895, (Manual of local Rules and Others, 1915, Volume 1, p. 2).

- Foreign Dept., External, April, 1897, No. 221; in Robert Reid- History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941, Spectrum Pubs, Guwahati, Reprint, 1997, p. 13.
- <https://lad.mizoram.gov.in/page/forest-act-1955.html>, (Accessed on 30 September 2017).
- Interstate Border Disputes in the Northeast (2014), New Delhi: PTI, 8 July, www.pti.com, (Accessed on 25 August 2016).
- Land issues in Assam-Mizoram Boundary, www.Mizonews.Net, Accessed on June 16, 2016.
- Mackenzie, Alexander (1995, Reprint), The Northeast Frontier of India, 1995, New Delhi: Mittal Publication.
- Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the Chief Minister of Mizoram (2007), “Boundary Commission for Settlement, Delimitation and Demarcation of the Boundary between Mizoram and Assam with Other Neighboring States”, Aizawl: Government of Mizoram.
- Mizo Students Rally on Border Issue, New Delhi: The Financial Express, 27 June 2007, www.thefinancialexpress.com, (Accessed on 26 December 2016).
- Mizoram State Archive, Sl. No 1074, CB-42.
- Mizoram State Archive, Sl. No 1098, CB-46.
- Mizoram State Archive, Sl. No 874, CB-27.
- Organizations Rally for Border Disputes (2012), Silchar: PTI, 20 September, www.pti.com, (Accessed on 13 January 2017).
- Pillar Rakes Up Boundary Row (2012), Guwahati: The Telegraph, 23 September, https://www.telegraphindia.com/.../story_15967981.js, (Accessed on 14 November 2016).
- Proclamation No. 591 E. B, (1898), Dated the 1st April 1898, (Manual of local Rules and Others, 1915, Volume 1, p. 4).
- Reid, Robert (1997 Reprint), History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941, Guwahati: Spectrum Publication., Guwahati, Reprint.
- The Gazette of India (1875), Shimla: Notifications - Political, 20th August 1875.
- Zairema, Reverend and B Poonte (1973), Report of the Fact Finding Committee on the Northern Boundary of Mizoram, Aizawl: Government of Mizoram, p.37.