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Editorial Note

Research is a crucial component in our lives that permeates through the realms of higher education. It aids in the advancement of knowledge, improved pedagogy, the enhancement of institutional reputation, and promotes funding which are crucial to the overall growth of an institution. Within the experience of empirical studies, the researcher, be it student or teacher, finds better scope to hone a wide spectrum of skills. The immense benefits of a consistent and vibrant research environment are the impetus behind the publication of the annual multidisciplinary Dimapur Government College Journal.

Providing a wide platform for the avid scholar, this issue contains twelve papers ranging from topics as diverse as food crops, pre-colonial Naga society, issues of identity, midwives, gender, role of media, different aspects of literature, sexual health of students and the implementation of the NEP 2020 and FYUGP. They have been written by writers across academia. We are confident that readers will find these papers relevant, thought-provoking and practical.

The papers have been thoroughly assessed by qualified reviewers for whose contributions the editorial board remains grateful.

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5. The Chakhesang Nagas of Manipur: Identity Issues and Hazy Boundaries in the Post-Colonial Era

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Abstract:

This article explores the colonial and post-colonial construction of boundaries, focusing on how the end of colonial rule reshaped territorial and administrative frameworks in North-East India. It examines the ongoing debate around space and territoriality, where post-colonial states strive for governance amidst complex ethnic landscapes. The Chakhesang Naga tribe, split between Manipur and Nagaland, exemplifies the consequences of these arbitrary borders. Colonial rulers, prioritizing topographic features over demographic realities, drew boundaries along the Lanye River, fragmenting the Chakhesang community. Over time, the Chakhesang in Manipur became a minority within dominant ethnic groups, forcing them to navigate assimilation while striving to preserve their cultural identity. This article highlights their struggle to maintain their distinct heritage in a post-colonial setting, where state territoriality and classifications have disrupted indigenous concepts of space, identity, and belonging. By focusing on the Chakhesang Nagas, this study delves

into the broader themes of marginalization, conflict, and contestation arising from colonial map-making and territoriality. It underscores how colonial and post-colonial administrative practices have dislocated and dispersed indigenous communities, reshaping their historical and cultural landscapes. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, drawing on both primary data collected through qualitative interviews and secondary data from archival and published sources, to provide a in depth analysis of the topic.The article calls for a deeper understanding of these spatial histories to address the enduring scars of colonial boundary-making and its impact on ethnic identity in Northeast India.

Keywords: Chakhesang, Post-colonial, Naga Tribe, Territory, Identity.

Introduction

Boundaries whether political, social, geographical, or cultural, have played pivotal role in shaping human societies and relations. While some boundaries operate as a tool for effective governance and cooperation, boundaries can also fragment ethnic communities. The establishment of international frontiers and borders enclosed indigenous people within states and separated them from their own relatives without their consent. Indigenous people who have been trying to maintain their distinct identities into the present continue to face serious threat to their survival, which lead them to use violent means in order to assert their identity (Berman et al., 1993). This indicates a problem which is especially

painful for the Ethnic groups, national minorities and divided nations. In Northeast India colonial boundary making has left the legacy of divide, further complicating the lives of the ethnic minorities as they are reduced to minority fighting for survival and preservation of their ethnic identity in Post colonial state making project.

History of border

A border is a demarcation, whether physical, conceptual, or geographical, (Gogoi, 2019) it encompasses not only a territorial demarcation line but also a narrow surrounding zone, (Starr, 2006) that delineates a boundary which may either permit or restrict movement(Pine & Konidari, 2021), they represent intricate social constructs with a multitude of meanings and functions assigned to them (Sack, 1986). Boundaries, whether psychological or physical, serve as markers of socio-political divisions among individuals (Tripathi & Chaturvedi, 2020). Thus, the border as a boundary maker is a political construct, entailing intrinsic tension against "natural" connectivity (Murayama, 2006).

The boundaries drawn by the British in South Asia, especially in North East India, as part of their attempt to establish control over a sizable portion of the continent and rule over people who had never been governed (Scott, 2010). Upon deeper examination of the border politics of North East India, it is clear that ideas of borders and identities were transformed by the arrival of the British and their colonial determination to establish borders, map and identify populations, and exploit resources for

profit. Their mapping exercise went on to eventually snap Nagas traditional linkages, disrupting social and cultural dynamics in the process. Administrative mappings and boundary adjustments have had a long history, with the administrative boundaries being remapped to suit the political preference of the centre. The administrative manoeuvres did not merely tailor or swap territories, this resulted in temporal and spatial shift, with shifting of priorities as well (Kurian, 2013).In addition to dividing the Naga people arbitrarily at the boundary between India and Myanmar, colonial mapping also further split the Naga populations inside the India Union across the four adjacent states. States are attempting to brace and secure their borders in the post-colonial context, as well as asserting their autonomy; these efforts are interwoven with the more general issue of assimilation and identity. Physical boundaries like borders, rivers, mountains, divides communities, limiting interactions and isolation. Over time, these divisions become embedded in structures through laws, social norms, traditions, resources disparities. This social boundary are invisible thresholds dividing communities based on identity, culture, status, transforming physical boundaries into social hierarchies. Thus, the indigenous tribal communities residing at the intersection of borders are caught between the states and the harsh reality of border, trying to preserve their own unique cultural identity.

The Chakhesang Naga identity

According to common belief, the word "Naga" comes from the Burmese word "Naka" or "Naga," which means

"pierced ears." The Burmese called the people living in the area, who were well-known for piercing their ears, with this term. The word "Naga" was used by the British colonial administration in India to refer to the different tribes in the area, including the Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Konyak, Lotha, Rengma, Sema, and Zeliang tribes. Despite having separate cultures, dialects, and customs, the British referred to these tribes as the "Nagas" as a whole. The scars of Naga history are the boundaries that divided the Nagas into Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh (Sanyu & Channa, 1992) in Northeast India and also Eastern Nagaland in Somrah and Sagaing region of Myanmar (Vashum, 2000) the Nagas claims and strongly asserts that they were one homogeneous ethnic community.

The Chakhesang community, originally known as Eastern Angami, embarked on a transformative journey to reclaim their unique identity. The Chakhesang Nagas, known as the Eastern Angamis till the 1940's, were long considered a part of the Angami tribe. In course of time, they came to be regarded as a distinct entity, even though sharing a large similarity with that larger tribe. The Chakhesang tribe has woven a narrative of resilience, cultural pride, and a pursuit for identity However in the 1960s, the Chakremi and Khuzami tribe got the Sangtam to join them to create an amalgam and coined a brand-new designation CHAKHESANG for it. But the reluctance of the Sangtam to be a part of the larger entity, leaves only the Chakremi and Khuzami in its fold (Col, 2007). The Chakhesang ethnic community is one of the 18 major tribal group of Nagaland. The Chakhesang are

mainly found in Nagaland's Phek district, and Jessami and Soraphung (Kowemi) in Ukhrul district of Manipur.

The Chakhesang tribe were living together as one community prior to the coming of the colonial rulers in India. But with the advent of Britishers in North-East, two Chakhesang village Jessami and Soraphung village were demarcated as part of Manipur without the consultation of the stake holders. In the days of yore they were known as the Eastern Angami, a designation that persisted until 1946. In a momentous shift the Chakhesang tribe decided to break away from the Angamis to embrace a new identity known as the Chakhesang. Prior to the boundary demarcation they shared a same spatial history, culturally, politically and linguistically with their counterparts Chakhesang who were in Nagaland, they were one under the umbrella of Chakhesang, they asserted that they were paying one common tax as Chakhesang tax, sadly the boundary demarcation drawn by the colonial rulers greatly affected the Chakhesangs' of Manipur where social ties that were once cohesive has been strained or severed, impacting interpersonal relationships and community cohesion.It has disrupted the shared cultural bonds, leading to fragmentation among the Chakhesang Nagas'.

The History of the division of the Chakhesang Nagas

Before the coming of the colonial rulers the idea of division did not exist, the Chakhesang Nagas resided on the shared land for generations. The border lines depicted in the cartograph for records are derived from colonial historical reports, and there are no definite and

consistent historical records available to other historians. The Jessami and Soragpung (Krowemi),village ofUkhrul district of Manipur known as the Chakhesangtribe are the victim of the vague boundary demarcation. In 1842 Biggs–Gordon line and the 1872 Thomson–Butler line between Manipur and Nagaland have been hurriedly constructed without consideration for the implications of the local customs; as a result, they appear arbitrary, fictitious, and unclear. The diverse customs are thus adversely juxtaposed as a result of external state administrations and territorial mapping, which has serious implications for these ethnic groups' traditional homeland structures (Kikhi & Lanamai, 2020). The British cartographers drew the boundary between Manipur and Nagaland from Lanye river without properly studying the geographical affinities and cultural linkage of the ethnic communities. Thus dividing the Naga tribes across different state.The traditional forms of social solidarity and cultural ties that had defined communal relations during the precolonial era were completely ignored by this colonial approach (Binayak Dutt,2023).Hence, this depiction of the boundary notion not only exhibits colonial undertones, but it also serves as a contentious arena for the perpetuation of oppression, marginalisation, criminality, economic exclusion, as well as cultural and linguistic eradication (Bhebhe, 2023).

The colonial administrators later realised the blunder committed by the cartographers, in a letter addressed to the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, with the proposal of transferring Jessami village of Manipur state to the Naga Hills, in 1943. Followed by J.P Mills Secretary

Governor Assam, Shillong, to C.Gimson the then political Agent of Manipur stating that he have come to the conclusion that it is essential that Jessami village should be transferred to the Naga Hills, the boundary, "if Jessami and Soragpung(krowemi),is included in the Naga Hills, it will be straighter and better than the existing one, and it is the only Angami village in the Manipur state. They have always wanted to be in the Naga Hills" (Mills & Gimson, 1943).

The Chakhesang community in Manipur consists of two villages, Jessami and Soragpung (Krowemi), which form a small yet distinct group within the broader Naga community and the larger Manipuri population. These villages represent a minority within the majority in the region. According to the Hill House Counting Survey (2011-2012), Jessami village has 597 households with a total population of 3,308, while Krowemi (Soraphung) has 236 households and a population of 1,131. The Jessami's and the Soragpung(Krowemi's) are confronted with the problem of asserting their tribal identity as Chakhesang in Manipur as they constitute the minority tribe there in Ukhrul.The Chakhesangs of Manipur are occasionally labelled as a subgroup of the Tangkhul community as they constitute the majority. This is ironic because, their mother tongue, cultural ties, and linguistic identity are vastly distinct from those of the Tangkhuls. Both the colonial and post-colonial administrations have significantly contributed to eroding the autonomy of the Chakhesang people's cultural and ethnic identity. The Chakhesang ethnic tribe dwells along the Lanye River, which serves as the border between Nagaland

and Manipur. While they are considered a minority in Manipur, they form the majority in Nagaland.

The Marginalisation and assertion of Chakhesang identity:

The Chakhesang Nagas are minority within the minority in Manipur. For many years, the residents of Jessami and Soragpung(Krowemi) village in the Ukhrul district have been suffering from severe inconveniences due to a lack of essential amenities and the government's unwillingness to resolve their long-standing grievances (Zimik,2023).The state territorialisation, exercised by official developmental policies, had the tendency to marginalise, socially, politically, local ethnic minority people by excluding them from indigenous social and economicgeography and the use of natural resources (Anh et al., 2016). Located at the border with Nagaland, Jessami and its adjoining villages, being at the periphery of Manipur are almost completely devoid of administrators, schools with proper and requisite facilities, proper transportation facilities, medical facilities and other basic amenities.

The Jessami village council asserted that, the Manipur government has upgraded the Jessami village into a subdivision, complete with a subdivision officer, a block development officer, an additional superintendent of police, and an upgrading from a primary health centre to a community health centre. These offices are only operational in paper form. Even after the village's main health centre was upgraded to a community health

centre, there hasn't been a single doctor there for a year. To this day, there are insufficient teachers for the schools and higher secondary institutions.The inaccessibility of adequate medical facilities forces the villagers to rely on the hospitals located at Nagaland Phek district or in Meluri sub division (when they fall ill or child delivery cases). The Chairman of the Jessami Village Council praised the commendable initiative of Weri Mero, a doctor in the next village of Nagaland, who has been holding periodic health camps to address the health issues of the locals during difficult times especially in the absence of proper health care facilities. Despite their repeated requests in writing to the relevant department, the villagers feel ignored because their pleas and tears have gone unanswered. The state government's lack of commitment to address the plight of the border villages has deepened their sense of alienation. The villagers bemoaned the fact that they had no brothers who could defend their cause because their brothers were on the other side of the border.

Post-colonial era brought new challenges to the Chakhesang Nagas of Manipur. One major challenge faced by them is the language preservation. The indigenous dialect spoken by the two village is at risk of being overshadowed by the majority languages like the Meiteilon (Manipuri) and Tangkhul. It becomes necessary for the villagers to learn and use the majority language, as it dominates all forms of communication, public programmes and other events, which are usually conducted in the language of the dominant community.

Their traditions, culture, and way of life are distinct, yet

they face the pressures of assimilation from both the majority Meitei community and the larger Naga tribes. The Chakhesang Naga of Manipur see themselves as a separate ethnic group from their neighbours that is the Tangkhul Nagas even though they are lesser in number. The categorizing of the ethnic groups has left out the spatial concept of the ethnic minority group, the state making project has just clubbed those two different ethnic group into one, using the melting pot theory they have assimilated the minority ethnic group with the majority ethnic group where the former have to give up its identity to be recognised as the later ethnic group.

The idea of integrating Chakhesang culture with the Tangkhul cultural identity has promoted cultural homogeneity on one hand, conversely it has led to the marginalisation of the ethnic minority community. This has resulted in a clash of ideologies, as the Chakhesang Nagas of Manipur feel strongly justified in establishing, upholding, and asserting distinct cultural identities. A potentially decolonised space in as far as it is a community-based initiative that survives on its own, and is an active arena used to confront and challenge colonial and post-colonial marginalisation of the minority (Bhebhe, 2023; Kusasa et al., 2022). The state territorialisation, exercised by official development policies, have marginalised, socially and politically, local ethnic minority people by excluding them from indigenous social and economic geography (Anh et al., 2016), and made them the ethnic minority group with no official recognition from the side of the government.

The village councils of Jessami and Krowemi during my field visitstated that the villages are part of the Chakhesang tribe socially, historically, and culturally. The customs and traditions of the Chakhesang tribe in Manipur are strongly ingrained in their culture. Community leaders and elders plays a vital role in passing down traditions and fostering cultural praxes among the younger generation. One of the best examples of their dedication to cultural preservation is the 6-to 10-day long Tekhru-Nge festival, which means "self-sanctification/purification." Four Khels celebrate the festival with rituals, contests, communal meals, and a sense of togetherness among the villages.They claimed that 'we did not change or alter any aspect of our cultural tradition or identity', even going so far as to perform the Chakhesang traditional dance on the Manipur State Celebration Day.Instead of performing as Tangkhuls, this dance was done as Chakhesangs, and the term "Ezho," which denotes traditional identity and culture, was maintained.

Cross-border ties of the Chakhesangs

Like may indigenous ethnic groups, the two Chakhesang Naga Villages have deep connection to their land customs and traditions. The law of property inheritance "Chikekelo", which is specific to the Chakhesang Nagas, gives the blood relatives from the Nagaland side of the Chakhesang villages of Losami, Lozaphehu, Thesümi, Khomi and Tsümi the right to claim ancestral lands and property in the event that a family's lineage disappears for the Jessami village from Manipur. The ties that bind

the Chakhesang people together therefore go beyond territorial boundaries.

The Chakhesang ethnic community in the states of Manipur and Nagaland is still linked, despite their status as two distinct political entities. There is a strong Community engagement from both the side of the border, resulting in reciprocal exchange and mutual help. They also collaborate on constructing small roads to facilitate travel across paddy fields, forests, and borders. It underlined the tenacity of these historical and cultural ties by pointing out that the Chakhesang Naga tribes, who live in the borderland between Manipur and Nagaland, continue to observe marriage, funeral rituals, religious gatherings, cultural events, festivals, and family programs together. The cultural connectivity and the feeling of belonginess among the Chakhesang community allows the people to remain connected. This relation among the border Chakhesang villages reflect that trust and intimate relations between the Chakhesang of Manipur and Nagaland still exist. On 15th January 2024 a folk dance was performed by the Jessami cultural troupe at Khomi village, under Phek District Nagaland, on Sokronye festival organised by Chakhesang Public organisation in collaboration with Department of Tourism Government of Nagaland, these projects encompass efforts to encourage communication, enhance collaboration across borders, and safeguard common cultural heritage.Participating in these endeavours has offered opportunities for the Chakhesang to reassert their feeling of identity and inclusion following the division of borders.Despite the

challenges posed byborder demarcation, the Chakhesang community have been actively pursuing reconciliation and endeavours to develop bridges across the split.

The quest of formal recognition for the Chakhesang tribe in Manipur

In a letter to the Secretary of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, the Commissioner of Tribal Affairs and Hills Department, Manipur, highlighted that Jessami and Soraphung/Krowemi villages in Ukhrul district are inhabited by the Chakhesang tribe but have been wrongly identified as Angami. The state cabinet, in its meeting on 24-11-2016, approved the recognition of the Chakhesang tribe in place of Angami in Manipur (Pamei, 2016). An ethnographic report submitted to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs explained that the Chakhesang were historically referred to as Eastern Angami by British anthropologists. However, in 1946, during a public meeting in Phek, the name Chakhesang was officially adopted, replacing Eastern Angami (Ransing, 2020).

Despite this change, Jessami and Soraphung (Krowemi) in Manipur continued to be identified as Angami, leading to the inclusion of Angami as a recognized Scheduled Tribe in Manipur. Historical records, such as J.H. Hutton's 1917 tour diary, note these villages as the only Angami settlements in Manipur (Ransing, 2020). The Ministry of Tribal Affairs forwarded the ethnographic report to the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India for review in 2018, but a response is still pending. This delay has left the Chakhesang community in Manipur in

an existential dilemma, struggling for full recognition of their true tribal identity. The Chakhesang share common ancestry, culture, customs, and social institutions, higlighting their distinct identity, which remains unresolved due to administrative inaction.The story of Chakhesang'sof Manipur is a testament of enduring spirit striving diligently to preservetheir language, customs, and cultural practices in the wake of cultural assimilation and social integration.

Conclusion

This study highlights how colonial boundaries fractured and marginalized ethnic groups, prompting local communities to respond to state territorialization in the post-colonial era. Administrative borders have deeply impacted social boundaries, endangering relationships and lives. The classification of minority ethnic groups with majority ones has fuelled identity crises and conflict, underscoring the need for accurate differentiation by state administrations. Issues like identity rights, minority representation, and development have gained prominence, calling for policies to prevent further fragmentation and tension.

The Chakhesang Naga, arbitrarily divided and reduced to a minority, face uncertainty, prompting villages like Jessami and Krowemiin Manipur to seek ways to preserve cultural and natural resource flows across borders. Their efforts to safeguard their identity and traditions highlight the challenges of reconciling customary laws with state territoriality. The interplay of state boundaries, spatial history, customary practices, and identity assertion in the post-colonial context demands careful academic attention. For inclusive development, state administrators

must address minority needs, ensuring that traditional practices, such as inheritance laws, are respected alongside state regulations. This balance is crucial for fostering harmony and preserving cultural continuity.

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