

COLONIAL BOUNDARY POLITICS IN CHIN-LUSHAI HILLS, NORTHEAST INDIA 1870-1875

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Abstract

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Hunting ground,
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Colonial boundary,
Inner Lines,
Legitimization of Politics

This study located in the extreme most corner of Northeast India region known by Chin-Lushai Tract or Hills. The territory was bounded all around by the established valley states. It had a pre-existing boundary in which the altitudes of the hilly mountainous terrain formed the boundary with the adjoining plain territories. But, the coming of colonial state in the region had shattered those existing hills-plain boundary enterprises. Those colonial boundary politics was contested by the people as impolitic and undermining act of the existing boundary and often manifested their grievances in the form of reids and atrocities. This paper revealed the imperatives politics which overwhelmed the colonial state to displace the vernacular boundary by the material and textual manifestation of institutionalized boundary. In the same time it tends to show that how the colonial state legitimizes their politics and justified their arguments on the boundary making practices from 1870 to 1875 and argued that the colonial state justified pleas ultimately were the broad spectrum policies which serve the ulterior

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purpose of colonization of territory but in the same time disguise its actual purpose.

1. Introduction

Territorial boundaries whether international or national or even inter-states are the human construction. Thomas Holdich had rightly called it as the products of advancing civilization.^[1] The present boundaries of India in general and Northeastern inter-states in particular are in fact the product of the advancing civilization of British Colonial State. The demarcation of territorial boundary normally involves the delimitation based on the consensus of different actors. However, in Northeast India particularly a territory sandwich between Assam and Burma commonly recorded as Chin-Lushai Hills, the powerful colonial state was the sole authoritative on the delimitation of boundary. But, it is naive to think that the lack of modern concept of boundary among the actors of the region induced the Colonial state to demarcate by its own kind. The world described in this paper rather shows that there was in fact a concept of boundary but contrast to the Colonial forms.

The Chin-Lushai Hills lies in the extreme most corner of the present northeast India region. This territory prior to the annexation into British Empire was documented invariably as a country, tract or hills in the colonial official accounts.^[2] The territory all around was bounded by the established valley states, to the south by Arakan state of Burma (Myanmar), to the east by Kale-Kabaw and to the west was the British India district of Chittagong Hills tracts, in the north laid the British district of Cachar and the native state of Manipur and in the north west was the state of Tipperah. It had a distinctive geographical location with the topographical features of hilly mountainous terrains with a vast thickly forested belt and had been predominantly inhabited by the independent people identified variously as Kuki, Lushai and Chin. The mountainous terrains with its high altitudes which separated the highland and the lowland generally formed boundaries with all the adjoining territories of the established valley states. These boundaries in the words of Fredrik Bard are pre-institutionalized or pre-existing one which was soft not fixed and vaguely defines otherwise.^[3] This concept is of vernacular and the boundary is highly fluid and is very

much contrast to the colonial state boundary. But the status quo of undefined boundaries was strictly maintained and adhered by the lowland and the highland. There was no issue pop up so long the state and non-states actors in maintaining its status quo. Hence, it is pertinent to look at the vernacular notion of boundary and its functions before the coming of colonialism and is what this paper intend to do so.

On the contrary to the pre-existing boundary, the colonial state boundary was institutionalized stemmed from the idea of modern political order which requires recognition of the boundaries of territorially demarcated entities. The logic behind is to display an effort to exclusive control and sovereignty over the territory. The institutionalized boundaries are material and textual manifestation, written down in legal texts, drawn on maps and demarcated with some landmarks, or pillars, posts and fences. These ideas promoted the concept of nation building and the project was expanded in the form of colonization all the way to the Chin-Lushai Hills in the nineteenth century. The territory which lay physically and geographically outside the purview of the colonial knowledge had subsequently turned into laboratory of the project in the late nineteenth century. Therefore, the main colonial challenged objects of research in the Chin-Lushai territory in the words of Anssi Passi had been maps making and cartography in which geography was exploited in these boundary producing practices.^[4] In the process, the Chin-Lushai Hills and established valley states vernacular boundaries were kept drawing and redrawing or displaced by the hard and fixed boundary infested with rules and regulations. This concept had totally alienated to the hilly practices however were bound to recognize the legitimacy of those practices. Thus, it superseded the vernacular notion of space and territory. Those politics had been contested by the people as impolitic and undermining act of the colonial state which often caused tense in the border and invariably led to bloodsheds in the frontier. It is therefore imperative to see that the colonial state boundaries were arbitrary demarcated lines to pursuit their own interest and the counter force from the hills politics was the expression of the grievances against those lines.

However, the point of departure here is that what factors had governed the British colonial state mind behind the refusal to recognize the legitimacy of those pre-existing boundaries and what factors overwhelmed drawing and redrawing of those boundaries and replaced by

institutionalized one. Michael Baud and William Van Shendel had observed that the less restricted boundary of pre-colonial had induced to replace by the colonial hard boundary due to non-existed state formation in the region.^[5] Taking those as the discursive points, this paper investigates the colonial politics of boundary making in Chin-Lushai territory from 1870-1875. By doing so it would make understood to the larger audiences that the historical development of Chin- Lushai tract boundary with the adjoining territories had not began with the coming of the colonial power, prior to it was a ‘blank space’ waiting for the colonial to come and draw boundary line and fill up history. This article rather tends to reveals that the civilizational discourses and the lustiest politico-economic imperatives politics of the colonial state had refused to recognize the vernacular boundary by claiming legitimization on their institutional boundary over the former by giving false justification. The audience would further understand the colonial justification please was in fact the broad spectrum policy to pursuit the Empire building project through colonization of territories and its valuable resources.

Since this paper deals with the initial period of the British colonial territorial expansion, the names Chin-Lushai tract, Lushai Tract or Kuki country and Kuki-Lushai-Chin or hills men are used interchangeably to designate the territory and the people respectively as recorded in the colonial account during that period so as to depict the exact picture. The Chin-lushai Tract was annexed to British Empire after the combine expedition of 1890-91. Thereafter, for efficient administration it was divided into three units North Lushai Hills, South Lushai Hills and Chin Hills put under the Government of Assam, Bengal and Burma respectively. However, in 1898, the Government of British India amalgamated North and South Lushai Hills into single administration Unit called Lushai Hills district administered by the Government of Assam. But the Chin Hills went permanently to the Government of Burma. The Chin-Lushai tract today became a part of successive states of two nations the Chin Hills state of Myanmar and the Indian state of Mizoram after the Lushai Hills nomenclature was changed to Mizo Hills district in 1954 and subsequently attained statehood on February 20, 1987 as Mizoram.

2. Research Method

The research paper employs empirical, historical and analytical method. Empirical method based on archival works and made empirical generalization from different state archives. Historical

method is employed to analyze the construction of boundary and disclose the policy and politics behind it. Regarding the sources of data, the study is largely depending upon primary and secondary data. The important primary data sources were tour diaries and memoirs of the British administrative officers, Reports of Boundary Commissions, state and Gazetteers, proceedings of Foreign Department, Judicial Proceeding and Home Department. Secondary data consists of journals and published Books and Unpublished dissertation and thesis.

3. Discussion

Migration, Settlement and Hunting ground: formation of Boundary

The boundary of Chin-Lushai Hills with the adjoining territories is closely associated with the history of migration and settlements of the people. By taking recourse to historical process and pattern of migration the Lushai-Kuki-Chin had been scattered in the vast region. By analyzing the process of migration pattern of these people from the south-eastern part of Hunan province of China to the Chinwin valley of Upper Burma (Myanmar) and all the way from the latter to the Chin-Lushai tract, it is discovered that the inter-tribes disputes and pressure from the powerful King and tribes as well as clans were the dominant reason behind their migration in which the superior and inferior element played a decisive role in the process. In the settlement process the superior and stronger pushed the inferior one deeper and wider. The first migrated people who strikingly known by the name 'Old Kuki' were considered to be a weaker section and were conquered by the stronger one 'New Kuki' who migrated secondly and replaced their settlement. Sometime the conquered villages were recognized their settlement as long as an alliance or tribute fee was received from them. Bu the pressure of attack did not stop at this point instead increase the parameter. The last migrated people known as 'Lushai' who claimed to be superior and stronger than the two previous settlers continuously attack the latter. To escape from such kind of perpetual fear of attack and dominance the weaker sections the 'Kuki' move farther and father in a safer directions and defensible location. The higher ridges were normally sought as they easily defensible. However, the last migrated people continually occupied the settlement one after another and replaced those core and defensible areas. They eventually stop where the extension of the hills ended and settled in the adjoining areas of established valleys states. Thus, the weaker section occupied to the hostile periphery and the inhabitants of these groups were found to be dispersed in significant percentages in the vicinity of the valley states of Manipur,

Cachar, Tripura, Chittagong, Sylhet and Burma. Thus Lushai-Kuki-Chin settlements were found in all the margin areas of all the valley states.

The settlement and population pattern of the people appeared a strong sense of safety and security. The villages were perch on the top of a ridge for easily defensible as it was difficult to approach by the enemy. The villages were generally fortified by a ditches studded with pieces of sharp bamboo stuck upright in the ground, having a stockade or palisade on the inner side.^[6] The entrance of the village had a narrow gate of single profile. Thus the general setting of their villages portrayed a kind of defensive posture. The populations were distributed and scattered instead of grouping. Each villages contained houses of around 400 and 500 and 800 houses.^[7] The population spread around the landscape independent from one another. This was reinforced by the large scale dispersion of Lushai-kuki-Chin. Each village has its own chief to rule and administer over it. The chiefs had a political and judicial power and are responsible for distribution and disposal of the land. In that profession he was aided by his councilor known as village elders.

The villages were usually surrounded by *jhum* cultivation field which has been the main economic basis in which slash and burn involves in the process of cultivation. The *jhum* cultivation has to be taken every year and the same land cannot be fertile for twice cultivation in the process. So shifting of cultivation annually was practiced. The previous cultivation land was left uncultivated for some year's cycles. It was re-cultivating again when the tress had attained their full strength. Naturally the process requires a vast virgin land for annual cultivation for multiple of years. Hence, the dispute over virgin fertile land for cultivation was the frequent phenomena of the Hills which ultimately led to inter-tribe feud among the people. This peculiar method of cultivation also had been one reason behind the dispersion of the populace.

But the interesting part of the analysis lies in the thickly forested which form the outer circle of the *jhum* land. This outer circle let us comprehend the formation of the vernacular boundary. The outer circle of the *jhum* field was surrounded by a zone of vast tract of thick forest and was miles from their *jhum* land. This outer circle of thick zone of forest was regarded as their territorial hunting ground by the people. These hunting grounds were usually more visible in the adjoining

border areas between established valley states and the hills (see Fig.1). The existence of these hunting grounds were recorded in the colonial official accounts as irregular hill ranges that were 'uninhabited' and 'uncultivated' densely forest tract. For instance, in 1850, Lieutenant Colonel Lister took eleven days to cross the forest tract to reach the Mullah's village. On his way to the village he crossed a large dense of jungle uninhabited and uncultivated which he reported to have experienced a great difficulty in crossing them. He noted that the Lushai 'country' of the 'Lushye Kookis,' was 'some nine or ten marches south of Cachar'.^[8]

Similarly, Edgar illustrated in 1872 about the Manipur and Cachar frontiers on his map:

The southern limit of the Cachar village cultivation is shown by a green line drawn from west to east and extended into the Manipur hills, where it shows approximately the southern limit of the jhoom cultivation of hillmen subject to the Rajah and living between the Manipur valley and Cachar. South of this line and north of that marked 'limit of Lushai village distribution,' is a confused mass of broken and irregular hill ranges from 60 to 4000 feet in height and covered with dense jungle of swampy cane-brakes, and of streams with steep high banks and muddy beds for the greater where clearances have been made for tea cultivation, which I have marked in red crosses.^[9]

In a similar occasion Mr Power, the Political Agent, also noted about the Tiperrah hills that the large forest tract between the Lushai village and settlement hill at Tiperrah as a large unexplored jungle. The thickness of the hunting ground took him several days in crossing the dense jungle of hilly terrain to reach the Lushai village. The same situation had been reported by Colonel Phayre in Arakan and Burma frontiers in 1866:

The reason for this extraordinary state of affairs of the existence of (Shendu) tribes, virtually independent at our very doors, is partly the physical difficulty of travelling in the hilly country inhabited by these tribes, partly the unhealthiness of the country. To attempt to punish these people at the distance they are, and in the country where they live, I know from my own past experience to be futile.^[10]

In a very similar note, Hopkinson from Arakan in 1856 remarked that 'there is no point in our territory from which we could with any certainty say that we were within ten days or a fortnight's march of the nearest of their fastness.'^[11]

It is generally believed that the Lushai preserved these densely forested around their settlement for the source of their subsistence and their household materials. They procure food from the wild animals and birds also raw forest materials like timber, bamboo for their household chores. For that purpose the villages folks were engaged to hunt for the wild games which Shakespear had remarked that, ‘Large hunting parties make lengthy expeditions into the uninhabited parts in search of elephants and wild mithan.’^[12] Apart from the sources of subsistence these hunting ground also played apolitical strategy. They served a defensive purpose and meant to be a zone of protection. These zones protected the Lushai-Kuki-Chin from the valley raiding by adding the friction of distance. The importance of this preservation lies in the prevention of any potential inroads and conquerors. Thus, the preservations of these hunting grounds were duty bound to every men folk of the tract. Below thematic diagram give us more understanding on the Lushai-kuki-Chin notion of space, settlement and territorial hunting ground.

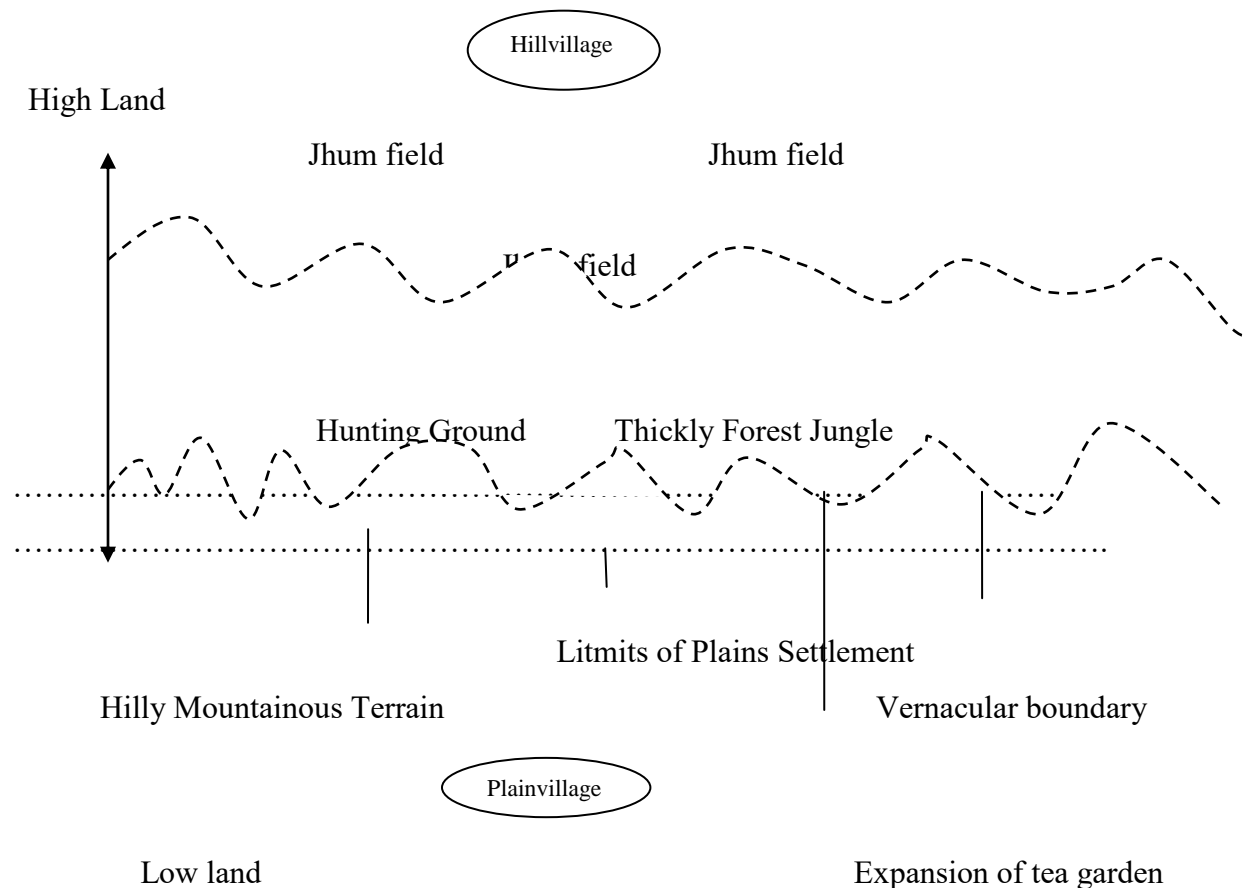


Fig.1 Schematic representation of the village settlement, hunting ground and vernacular boundary.

Vernacular Boundary: Hills-Plain Relation

The above colonial official records had broadened our understanding on the existence of a large belt of thickly forested landmass, fully covered with natural hilly mountain terrains surrounded their country. Therefore, though the tract was surrounded by valley states myriad terrain routes made much difficult for the states rulers to bring it under their control. Hence, the boundary of the native valley states ultimately fell at the edge of the plains and the states authorities were not extended beyond those boundaries. It rather seen from the above that beyond those frontiers the authorities were historically exercised by the Chiefs of the Lushais and the latter exerted substantial influenced over the areas.

The outer circle of the hunting grounds with its inaccessible altitudes of 60 to 4000 feet high of mountainous terrain, swampy canes brakes generally separates the hills and the plain. Those hilly terrains from the plains areas for instance in the Cachar were locally known as ‘Tillah’.^[12] This tillah which covered 30 percent of the Cachar land areas divides the lowland and the highland and naturally formed the boundary between them. However, the geographical land and culture had no strict and fixed boundaries. In fact unlike colonial state territory there never had a fixed boundary between the highland and the lowland. Neither the plainsmen nor the hillsmen thought of having any proper and fixed demarcation in this respect. It was so because the people of both hills and plains remained opened to limitless mobility. But in this sense it would be wrong to think that the Lushai-Kuki-Chin had no concept of boundary. They did have a concept of boundary. In fact sometime they even fought one another over disputed village settlement boundaries. For instance, J.W. Edgar on the Lushai Expedition 1871-1872 reported that.

Among the entire frontier there is a very strong feeling about boundaries. Each village has its limits which are known and respected by the tribe around as long as they are at peace with it, and any attempt made, except in the time of hostilities, by one clan to occupy lands belonging to another clan would be condemned by everyone.^[14]

It should be noted here that the Lushai-kuki-Chin boundaries could never had any permanent and fixed boundary because a it was anathema to these migratory community political choice. Thus the pre-existing boundary was contrast to modern which was highly fluid and vague in nature never had clearly defined and demarcated line like fences, post, pillars etc. As such the entire tract of Chin-Lushai country had no clear defined boundary with the neighbouring valley states. But this vague boundary did not meant to be altogether void. As David Ludden has observed that traditionally the ethnic boundaries with its terrace fields and forest formed the outer limits of the land.^[15] In this sense, the outer circle of the hunting ground covered with thickly forested mountainous terrain was considered an 'iron curtain' by the Lushais and serve boundary between the hills and the plains.^[16] This boundary was strictly adhered and fully recognized both by hills men and the plainsmen. The plains men under any circumstances could not extend their settlement beyond to iron curtain. Failing to recognize in variably led to hostile in the border.

The less impose restrictions of the vernacular boundary on the geographical mobility led to existence of a relationship between the hills and the plains. The relationship was not always in raids and atrocities but in good and open way. The plains people could procure the hills product like timber, bamboo, fruits by paying tribute to the chief of the Kuki-Lushai-Chin. The zamindars on the plains too had to often purchase peace by paying regular tribute to the Chiefs. Similarly traders from the plains carried out trade in the hills by giving a small amount of tribute to the chiefs for permission to use the passes which were under the Lushais control. Thus there was free-flow of certain goods between the hills and the plains. The Lushai also willingly came down to the lowland for bartering their product with the goods they needed. An interdependency of economy between the hills and the plains was more or less existed in the pre-colonial period. All these activities were carried out without any boundary issue pop up between the hills and the plains.

Expansion of Colonialism: Challenges of Vernacular Boundary

In the latter part of 18th century owing to the rise of Capitalism and Industrial Revolution in Britain, the highly quest of raw materials resulted in the expansion of empire in the form of colonization of new areas and land resources. With these motives, the British East Indian Company occupied Bengal In 1757. Subsequently, the Chittagong district virtually was under the

hegemony of East India Company by 1760. By playing off native ruler one after another, the company acquired the *Dewani* of Bengal and brought Sylhet under its administration in 1765 and subsequently reached the frontier of those occupied territory. However, the Company's administrations initially retain the preceded ruler's boundaries which stopped when the hills begin. From 1790 onwards the colonial authorities granted frontier tract of Sylhet to the lowlanders under the zamindari settlement. The kuki opposed the development carried out without their consent in the hunting ground. To appease the Kuki, the zamindars initially paid a tribute to their chief. However, later on in early nineteenth century the company accelerated the progress in granting large tracts of forest land to the zamindars to make farms. The zamindar gradually stopped paying tribute to the kuki Chiefs. The latter soon fought back and the situation culminated in to bloodshed in the British territorial villages in which the plainsmen became victims. Thus, the enterprise between the hills and the plains started shattering. The colonial state overlooked the frontier grievance situation and further ordered to totally stop payment to the chief. This negligence action invariably escalates the bloodshed in the frontiers territories. As such in September 1826, when party of Sylhet wood cutters were massacred by the kukis in the hills above the Simla River ten miles to the west of Dulleswari. Their anger against the colonial authority perpetrated into these kinds of raids and outrages in the British frontier territory. Now the Government decided to adopt effective measure to protect their subjects over whom the Tripura Raja had no real power. For that purpose the ill defined boundaries were to defined and outpost should set up to check the inroad of the kuki.

The real challenge of vernacular boundary was fully realized in the Cachar frontier. In 1855 the Government discovering the potential profitable tea plantation in Cachar areas made a wide publicity, inviting people to undertake the plantation and received grant from the same.^[17] The early administrators like Capt. Fisher, Let.G.Verner and R. Steward were highly enthusiastic about it and took active role in promoting the tea plantation.^[18] They encouraged the immigration of people from other parts to work and undertake plantation work in the region. As a result tea gardens were planted swiftly and in short period of time many gardens were opened in Barak valley. The tea plantation which initially took in the Silchar areas north of Barak River in course of time had expanded to the south of Barak River. The southern Cachar frontier was hilly areas with slopy in features which was suitable for tea growing. Such kind of untapped fertile soil for

the commercial crops drove the lust of investors; focused attention on forward search for definitive forested jungles of the Kuki territory increased. In this context however, it is to be noted that the native planters consciously refused to undertake the plantation, being aware that the plantation would precede the vernacular boundary which could perpetuate the bloodshed of the Sylhet frontier even in Cachar frontiers too. The venture on tea plantation altogether was undertaken alone by the European themselves.

The progress of tea plantation towards the kuki-Lushai-Chin territory was seen by the Kuki as the undermining act of the existing boundary and encroachment upon their territory. When the Lushai Chief's emissaries went to Captain Steward to register their complaint about the massive expansion of the tea garden, the latter told them that 'tea cultivation would doubtless extend as far as the streams were navigable'.^[19] In spite of the Kuki claim over the tract, the planters driven by the economic imperatives were still encouraged in expanding the plantation. In this enterprise, the investors were supported by the state supported. The imperial officials became more willing to use force to expand revenue territory. Such apprehension culminated in frequent raids on tea gardens of British emanated from different clans were seen from 1862 to 1872. In these outrages and raids the raiders attacked the tea gardens, burnt the gardens and killed several inhabitants, labourers and carried a way number of captives for slavery. The outrages from 1868-69 caused severe setback to the tea plantation and resulting to loss of money which amounting not less than 17,000 in all.^[20]

The loss of tea revenue incurred by the Lushais atrocities invited the attention of the British colonial to safeguard their commercial activity. The chambers of commerce in Calcutta were in the alert when their interest had clashed with the hills politics. Since the colonial economy was the bedrock of the British Empire in India and the security to tea industry was of paramount importance in every stage. Besides the economics perceptions of the administrators were driving towards the tea industry as it became the most attractive field of investment for them. Captain Thomas Fisher the first Superintendent of Cachar, who himself undertook plantation once wrote to R.Honston that,

any person who has made up his mind to embark in the enterprise would try planting in Cachar. I strongly recommend him. He would not be loser and he should set the people to work at once to clear a way the judge.^[21]

Now it became imperative to ensure security when the profound interest of the stakeholders and their investment were being threatened by the Lushai-Kuki raids gradually turn into fray. Mean while in 1870 Lord Mayo, the then Viceroy of British India strongly opposed any further military expedition in to the Lushai country instead suggested the adoption of negotiation policy the Lushai to solve the Frontier issue. In this regard Mr. Edgar proposed that the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar or one of his subordinates should annually visit the Lushai country, see the chiefs separately, hear grievances, made a small present to the chief who has behaved particularly well.^[22] Edgar policy was to make Lushai chiefs their ally, win their sympathy through visiting and frequent meetings in other words means to integrate the chiefs of the Lushais into the networks of colonial power. However, the policy turned out unsatisfactory despite the amount of efforts put by the officials.

It then became an argument for Colonial state that vague boundary between the hills and their territory led to failure in safeguarding their commercial plantation and administration. Thereby, it raised increasingly the need to settle the vague boundary issue at least to save guard their plantation crops. Therefore, having a clear defined boundary was the fastest solution to resolve the problems to restrict the Lushais movements and frontier tension. Their justification recorded that- the clear defined boundary secured company territories and commercial activities against any threats to the British authority posed by unregulated mobility of the hilly terrains.

The Politics of Boundary Making

The Government of British India initially insisted a policy of defined southern Cachar boundary through negotiation and mutual understanding. With regard to this policy invited some opinion for the possibility of clear demarcating southern Cachar boundary. In this case Captain Steward, Superintendent of Cachar opined that:

The Lushais have always been looked upon as an independent people, but it is not certain that they occupy independent territory. The southern boundary of Cachar is indefinite, and may be pushed as far as it is thought proper. The natural boundary is the water-pent of the hills between this and the sea.^[23]

Steward opinion was simply and clear that even if the Lushai thought themselves an independent people they could not afford to have an independent territory of their own just because there was no such natural boundary between the between Cachar and the Lushai territories. According to him the water point was supposed to be the natural boundary. So he pushed the whole Lushais Hills down to the sea as far as it thought proper which is very much impracticable and impolitic for the Lushais because it took away the whole territorial hunting ground of the latter within the colonial boundary. However, the Government desire of expansionist policy hold this opinion and as such instructed Mr. Edgar, who succeeded Steward as Deputy Commissioner of Cachar in 1869 to undertake survey beyond to the hunting ground and meet the Lushai chiefs, to established such kind of boundary. By integrating the chiefs the colonial state had the policies to push the vague boundary of the southern Cachar boundary as far as the sea. The strategy of winning over the native chief was the means to secure the projected boundary. Accordingly, J.W. Edgar the Cachar District Officer and major MacDonald toured the Lushai country from 1869-1870. In 1871 Edgar somehow reached to one of the Lushai Chief Sukpilal in his village he discussed the possibility of the above mentioned boundary demarcation.^[24] He apparently convinced the Chief and reached an agreement of Southern Cachar-Lushai Hills boundary. Accordingly, a Sunnad was signed in 1871, specifying a boundary line deep into the Lushai territory. According to the sunned the boundary started from Chatter Chura and

shall run in a south east direction to the mouth of the Bhairabi Chura at it junction with the Dhaleswari river, where it shall take a northeast direction to the top of the Bhairabee Tilla and from the top of the Bhairabee Tilla and from there to Noonvai and on to the Barakali Cherra at its junction with the Sonai River, then south east of Tipaimukh at the junction of Barak river.^[25]

(See fig.2)

This boundary had pushed the Lushai territorial land as far as to the river and intensified the territorial consciousness of the other Lushais Chiefs and refused to accept the *Sunned*. The strong reason for not willing to accept the new boundary line was because the Lushais were adhered to their existing vernacular boundary. The new dictated line had limited their territorial land by taking away the hereditary rightful hunting grounds and threatened their very existence as independence people by limiting their choice of polity-freedom of access, and freedom of movement and mobility. Thus, the colonial officials and Edgar himself were stunned to find out how the Sunnad led the intensity of the raids and atrocities increase the parameter of the frontier tension rather than solving it.^[26]

As matters of fact simultaneous raids have been emanated from different directions by the Lushai Chiefs against the newly created boundary when Edgar was still in the Hills.^[27] The Ferocious outrages particularly target the tea gardens. On the morning 23rd January, 1871 the Cachar Punjee of Ainerkhal in the Hilakandi Subdivision was burnt down; about 25 persons were killed and 37 taken prisoners.^[28] On the same day the Alexandrapore tea garden was attacked in which Mr. Winchester, a planter was killed and his daughter Mary was captured and took as captive. The adjoining tea gardens of Katlicherra, Monerkhal and Dariakhal were attacked and plundered. An attacked was also made on the tea garden of Nugdigram where eleven persons were killed and three carried off. Again on 23 February in the same year, raid was made on the coolies of Jalnacherra by huge number of Lushais.^[29] There were also simultaneous raids and plundered carried out on the Sylhet, Manipur and Chittagong frontiers. The raids clearly noted the expression of their anger against the expansion of the colonial boundary.

Western Boundary

The ulterior purpose of the colonization becomes evident when they encouraged the extension of colonial boundary from 1871 onwards. Their presence of interest on tea plantation encouraged the influx of labourers and workers to clear the jungle for civilization. The search of the above definitive boundary extensively began with order from the Governor-General-in-Council to the survey party to undertake survey deeply in to the Lushai territory.^[30] The Bengal Government suggested that the survey should be followed by the establishment of frontier line of outpost in the Cachar and Sylhet frontier. Accordingly, the survey parties topographically surveyed 6500

square miles of new and difficult terrain. The survey parties filled up the detail geographical information in the survey map. On the basis of this new survey the parties recommended a new boundary related to the eastern boundary of Hill Tripura and Lushai Hills. The government of India accepted the recommendations. The Lungai river running between the Jampai and the Hachick ranges, was taken as the eastern boundary of Tripura up to its source at Betlingsib. The boundary line then ran across the watershed to Dolujuri and thence along the recognized Hill Tripura border by Surduing to the Fenny was accepted.^[31] Captain Badgely, the leader of the Survey Party, suggested a new boundary between Cachar and Lushais but the government of India adhered to boundary already settled by Edgar and Sukpilal in 1871.

Inner Line Politics

After the Survey of the Lushai Hills in 1872, the government seriously thought upon the defense of those newly created boundaries infested with certain rules and regulations. A chain of out posts stretching from southern Cachar through Tipperah down along the Chittagong Hill Tracts and linking with those in the Arakan Hills had been established after the extensive surveys.^[32]

Colonel E.B. Elly, in his military report stated that:

After the expedition of 1871-1872 the question of frontier defense was reconsidered and in 1874 posts were established on the Cachar and Sylhet, frontier at Jirihat, Mainadhar, Monierkhal, Noarbond, Jhalnacherra, Chattachurra, Oliviacherra, Lakhimamla, Fatehkuli and Adampur. In Tipperah, at Dharmanagar, koilashut (Chiraktyi) and kamalpur. In Chittagong district at damagri, Sirthay (Sirte), Ohipum, Sialchul, Sungo Valley and Politai.^[33]

These out posts aim to secure security and consolidated the legitimacy of the newly demarcated boundary. In addition to that they deployed the enacted 'Eastern Bengal Frontier Regulation I of 1873 in the frontier of Lushai Hills from the plains of Cachar by keeping in view the frequent border clash from the hills politics. The regulation generally is an imaginary line popularly known as the 'Inner Line' to serve as a unilateral boundary with the Lushais applied to Cachar boundary in 1875. The regulations prohibited all the British subjects from going beyond the line without permission or without any Inner Line pass issue by the competent authority. This was to locate the boundary of the police out post set up during the Lushai expedition in 1871. In the

mean time the authority of Assam which was administered by the Government of Bengal was transferred from the latter to Assam in 1874. The newly created Chief commissionership was established to administer over Assam. The new Chief Commissioner, while notifying the boundaries of Cachar incidentally notified the southern boundary of the district, two months prior to the Inner Line notification.^[34] As such a portion of land measuring about 509 square miles of the Lushai country and beyond the southern boundary of Cachar District of British India was declared as Inner Line Reserve Forest. It was admitted to be Lusai Territory in Assam forest manual.^[35]

The boundary line started from a few miles north of Jalnacherra and then ran along the Dhaleshwari river in southern direction of the Jalnacherra grant across the Jalnacherra to the top of the range of Hills immediately to the east of the Khal and culminated in the northern direction to the Baruncherra grant. The boundary line then, traversed in an easterly direction till the Rengti pahar range, from the western branch of Rengti pahar, as far as the source of Jalinga and then traversed along Jalinga river to the south-east corner of the grant. The line followed the eastern boundary of Sonacherra and Noarbund grant to a road along a police outpost, then to Rukni river and then in south easterly direction to the western boundary of the monerkhal grant, the boundary line finally trend west and south to the river Sonai then to Mainadhar and then following the western grant to the river Barak.^[36] (see fig.2).

Initially, the Inner Line laid down did not necessarily indicate the territorial frontier. It neither decided the sovereignty of the territory. It only indicates the initial limit of the jurisdiction of the administered areas and was just to have effective control on the frontier. The outer limit of the colonial boundary as seen from the above analysis went far deep into the dense jungle beyond the Inner Line. It went along the Limits of the Lushai's jhum cultivation zone. In this regard the Government of British India clarify its position that: 'Neither in Cachar nor Chittagong nor yet in Arracan is there any question of the actual boundary of our empire; but between that actual boundary as shown in the maps and the narrower limit to which our real authority is felt and obeyed there is Chittagong as in Cachar and Arracan, a great belt of unexplored and unsettled country'.^[37] The Inner Line Permit in fact was purely to protect the interest of traders dealing with rubber and elephant and also protect the lives of British tea plantation in Cachar. It was the

policy to prevent adventurous planters, traders, shikaris from making excursions across the boundary lines which might lead to political complications. Thus, the core civilizational discourse of the colonial state came to be governing its spatial management of the frontier.

Legitimization of the politics

To justify their boundary demarcation the colonial recorded an argument that it is not vague boundary but with only clear natural geographical boundary alone determines the legitimacy of demarcating cultural and political boundary. The other arguments apart from the colonial state were that the vastness of the forest tract not only simply lead to confused about the territory to whom it belong but also resulted in repeated failure on the efforts to check the Lushai raids and atrocities. In their perspectives the fastness was so difficult so hostile and so unknown.^[38] It gave advantages to the Lushais to carry out such raids and atrocities by hit and run without being held red handed. So to check the raids and physical movement of the Lushai, was to demarcate clear defined boundary which was possible only by pushing the colonial boundary to the easy accessible features like rivers and sea where boundary line become easily recognized. But the colonial state intentionally refused to realize the preservation of such kind of vast forest tract was meant specifically for defensive purposes from the intruders.

In the colonial perspective a clear defined boundary demarcated with geographical features like rivers and mountains would not only ensure security to the Company territory against any threats posed by the Lushais. It would also bring peace on the frontier in which the planters and their labourer could follow their occupation in safety. Besides, the vast tract could also realize the potentiality for expansion of tea plantation. As the plain areas were victim of flood prone, it was not suited for tea plantation. Tea could grow well in hilly slope areas so the investors more focused their attention on the above plains line which ultimately fell on the Lushai Hills. Therefore, they were not ready to accept the warning of the Lushai's in the form of raids solely if the colonial boundary is pushed to the navigable river, the vast land could be brought under revenue land cultivation. The end result of both the policies could lead to pursuit the colonial interest.

In this sense, the vast tracts of forest become vital for both Colonial state and the Lushais in economic and political strategy. This economic imperative drove them towards the Lushai's territory and induced the colonial state to introduce the policy of wasteland. To legitimize these policies the colonial state further deployed certain legitimization to justify their boundary and dismiss the claim of the Lushai. Firstly, The vast tract of forested areas which were claimed by the Lushai as 'hunting grounds' were represented as 'uninhabited and uncultivated,' 'forest land' which means no one cultivated any more hence the land in their understanding was 'wasteland'. According to the colonial 'rule of property' the tract which was not cultivated and inhabited could be brought into cultivation and the disposal of the whole tract was depended on the interest of the colonial state. Secondly, in the colonial perspective hunting was an amusement. So they never considered to be economic process. However, in the perspective of the Lushais hunting never was a pastime nor amusement but very much a part of their regular economic process. Hence, in the colonial perspective the hunting ground ultimately fell within their territory and the boundary would run to the limit of Lushai's *jhum* cultivation.

4. Conclusion

The boundary making in the Chin-Lushai tract reflected the imperial design of the British building project. The project advocated an opening of the tract through the southern Cachar boundary by arguing that natural boundary alone represented one's territorial distinctness. In this case they claimed that since Lushai drank water from the Barak River that prescribed the Lushai territorial hunting ground under the British territory of Cachar. This notion upheld the concept of a natural boundary in order to facilitate British commercial interest till the sea.

The colonial certain legitimization over Lushai hunting grounds as a forest 'uncultivated and uninhabited' considered being wasteland was well design of the former to pursuit their building project. No matter how this policy seems to be very impractical and impolitic in the Lushais perspectives such apparently justified pleas of the British always serve their ultimate purpose of colonization. But the colonial state strategies were designed in such a way that they knew very well of how to disguise the actual purpose behind the veil of such justification.

The European centric notion of difference between the civilized and uncivilized in the name of Inner Line is the moot point in the academic discourse. This regulation was deployed on the pretext of safe guarding the Lushai territory from being exposed by adventurous tea planters, traders and shikaris. However, if analyzing rationally, there is fallacy in the Colonial Logic because the colonial state are more concerned about the land resources like elephant and rubber rather than the Lushai or kuki territory and after snatching away the latter hunting grounds showing their sympathy could not justified their logic.

Therefore, it is suffice to say that the making of boundary in Lushai Hills showed the Colonial absolute authority over the delimitation and demarcation. The people opinion was never accounted into the making. The colonial official insisted on defining it in a different way suiting their interests let alone the interest of the people. They insisted for the economic and administrative factors. These factors decided where the boundary to be demarcated and constructed.

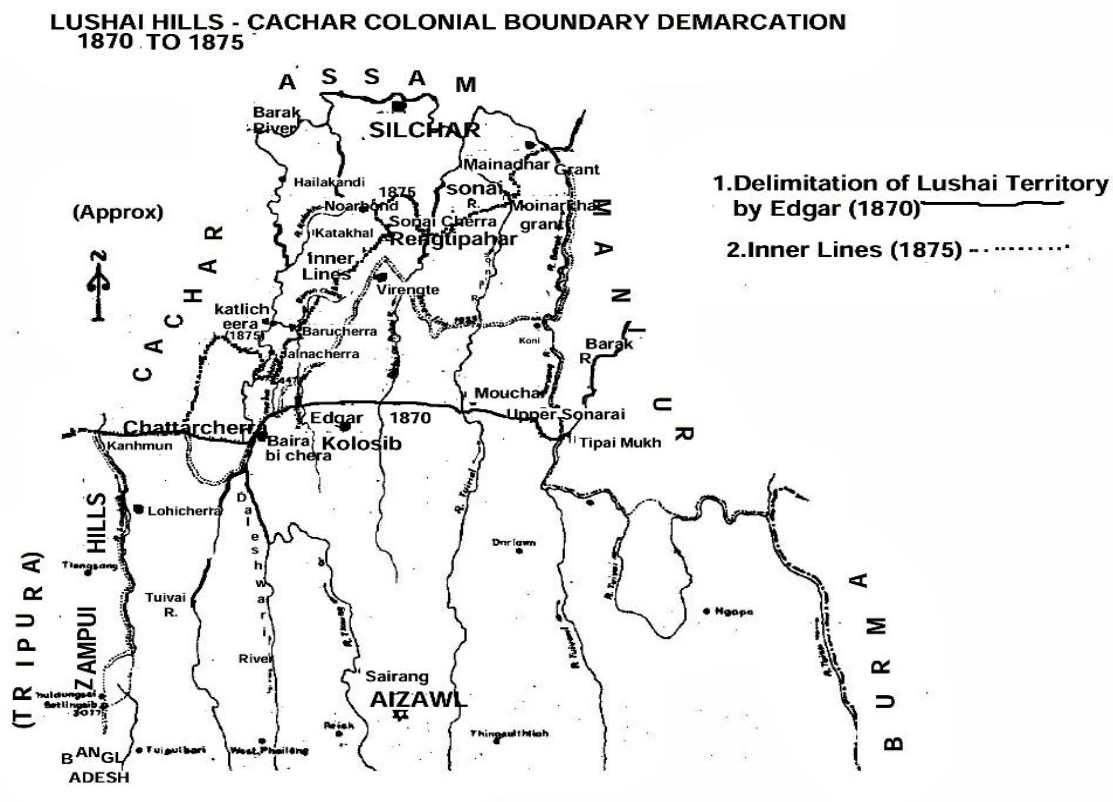


Fig.2, Thematic map of boundary between Chin-Lushai Tract and Cachar demarcated by the colonial officials in 1870-1875 not to be scaled.

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