

Mawun-Yur: Indigenous Governance Beyond the Cartography of the Indo(naga)-Myanmar Border

Achan

Abstract

This paper examines the Indo(Naga)-Myanmar region by engaging with the concept of frontier, border, and borderland. While frontier studies are deeply rooted in colonial expansionism, border studies focus on the demarcation of the nation-state, and borderland scholarship foregrounds the cross-border perspectives. I argued that, in the context of the Indo(Naga)-Myanmar, frontier, border, and borderland are not separate analyses but interwoven concepts shaped by the complex socio-political and cultural context. Drawing on engaged ethnographic fieldwork with the transboundary Tangkhul Naga community near the Border Pillar No. 8 (Old) between India and Myanmar, this study examines how Indigenous Tangkhul Naga at the Indo (Naga)-Myanmar borderland adapt and survive amidst militarisation, refugee crisis, and state surveillance. It also explores how various groups, such as local communities, the state, and non-state actors, negotiated/function/structure for the borderland governance. To address these questions, the paper presents three ethnographic lived experiences: a borderland educator, a refugee, and a tribal chief. Based on the ethnographic data, I introduced the concept mawun-yur, which means 'governance from within' in Tangkhul Naga. A decolonial reading of mayun-yur exposed the limits of colonial and post-colonial knowledge production while recentering Indigenous socio-cultural and political relationality.