



Journal of North East India Studies

ISSN: 2278-1455 (Print) 2277-6869 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.jneis.com>

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To cite this article: Seikhogin Haokip (2016): Autonomy Demands in the Hill Areas of Manipur: Issues and Challenges, *Journal of North East India Studies*, 6(2): 28-50.

Published online: 1 December 2016.

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Autonomy Demands in the Hill Areas of Manipur: Issues and Challenges

Seikhogin Haokip

In contemporary multi-ethnic nation-states of the world, autonomy has been often seen as a panacea for solving ethnic conflicts. However, when ethnic groups do not settle compactly in a particular geographical area, granting of autonomy to minority ethnic groups becomes problematic. It is often faced with overlapping land and territorial claims between groups and the tensions and conflicts thereafter. In India's Northeast, ethnic groups are seldom found settled compactly in defined geographical areas. As such, autonomy demands in the region often involve contesting identity, land and territorial claims between groups, thereby, becoming the source of ethnic tensions and conflicts in the region. This paper examines the various issues and challenges in ethnic-based autonomy demands in the hill areas of Manipur.

Keywords: Autonomy demands, Northeast India, Overlapping territorial claims, Conflicts

Introduction

The term 'autonomy' is derived from the Greek words '*auto*' meaning 'self' and '*nomos*' meaning 'law' or 'rule' (Benedikter, 2009: 18). Thus, autonomy basically means 'to make one's own laws' or 'self-rule or self-government'. In its political and legal context, autonomy refers to "the power of social institutions to regulate their own affairs by enacting legal rules" (Cornell, 2002: 249). In international law, autonomy denotes "parts of the state's territory are authorised to govern themselves in certain matters by enacting certain laws and statutes, but without constituting a state of their own" (Heintze, 1998: 7). In the field of minority rights, autonomy denotes 'limited self-rule' in a given area to 'complete self-rule just short of independence' (Benedikter, 2009: 18). In contemporary multi-ethnic and multi-religious states, autonomy is seen as an "instrument to allow distinct section of the population to exercise direct control over certain affairs which are of special concern to them, while allowing the larger entity or state to exercise control in matters which are of

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common concern to all groups and entities” (Ghai, 2009: 7). In its broadest sense, autonomy can be defined as “the granting of internal self-government to a region or group of persons, thus recognising a partial independence from the influence of the national or central government” which can be determined by “the degree of actual as well as formal independence enjoyed by the autonomous entity in its policy decision making process” (Heintze, 1998: 7).

Autonomy refers to certain types of power-sharing arrangements in a state and may be granted in various forms. According to Benedikter (2009: 38-40), three major forms of autonomy can be distinguished: (a) territorial autonomy (b) cultural or personal autonomy (c) and local or administrative autonomy. Territorial autonomy refers to an ethnic group’s self-rule- political authority over a certain territory- in order to govern its own internal affairs to a determined extent (Cornell, 2002: 249). Cultural autonomy is a scheme whereby members of a particular ethnic community are endowed with specific rights and duties in relation to the government. Members of particular groups may be endowed with special rights to preserve their culture and language (ibid. 249). Cultural autonomy is sometimes referred to as ‘non-territorial autonomy’ or ‘corporate autonomy’ when an ethnic group is given forms of collective rights. Rights and entitlements under such autonomy can be personal and political (Ghai, 2000: 486). Local or Administrative autonomy refers to a special form of territorial autonomy that is limited to smaller administrative units and administrative powers. Through local autonomy, people within an administrative unit are given the power to manage their own minority affairs themselves, beyond the responsibilities that are normally legally assigned to the administrative units, and in specific, in matters which are exclusively or predominantly in the interest of the local community (Benedikter, 2009: 40). In this paper, autonomy demands in the hill areas of Manipur basically refer to those which come under the purview of territorial autonomy.

In India, beyond the federal relationship between the Union and the States, the Indian Constitution provides territorial autonomy to its minority ethnic groups in the form of ‘asymmetrical federalism’ and through the Sixth Schedule. Asymmetrical federalism refers to “those federal systems in which one or more regions are vested with special powers not granted to other provinces or regions” (Ghai, 2000: 9). The Indian Constitution provides special status to the Northeast Indian States like Nagaland, Sikkim, Mizoram, Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh under Articles 370 and 371 (Benedikter, 2009: 181-82). On the other hand, the Sixth Schedule provides for the formation of ‘Autonomous District Councils’(ADCs) as self-governing institutions in districts dominated by the tribal communities, providing territorial autonomy to the areas under its jurisdictions. It has been designed to suit the autonomy aspirations of the smaller tribal groups in the Northeastern States of India. It provides for the establishment of District Councils and Regional Councils with limited legislative and executive powers in various important areas which concern with the tribal communities (Benedikter, 2009: 182). Under this provision, several autonomous councils have been created for various minority ethnic groups in the Northeastern States of India.

Autonomy Demands in the Hill Areas of Manipur

Manipur, which constitutes one of the Northeast Indian States, is inhabited by numerous ethnic groups mainly classified into hill tribes and non-tribals. The hill tribes are divided into the Naga and Kuki-Chin groups. Presently, the State has 33 officially recognised Scheduled Tribes (Singh, 2007-08). The non-tribal communities are the Meiteis, the Manipuri-Muslims and other immigrant communities who are concentrated in the valley areas. Geographically, the State is divided into two distinct regions-i.e., the hills and valleys. While the valley areas at present have four districts namely Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal and Bishnupur, the hill areas comprised of five districts - Churachandpur, Ukhrul, Chandel, Tamenglong and Senapati.

Historically, the hill tribes were governed by their own traditional institution of chiefship and enjoyed autonomy in their own affairs. With the dawn of British colonialism too, the British rulers recognised chiefship as a local governing institution of the hill tribes. Therefore, they excluded hill administration from the general administrative scheme of Manipur and placed it under the Political Agent who was also the Vice-President of the Manipur State Durbar (Dena, 2008: 69-80). However, with the outbreak of the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919,¹ the British colonial government began to feel the need for bringing in a closer hill administration in the hill areas of Manipur. Accordingly, hill administration was transferred from the Political Agent to the President of the Manipur State Durbar. Three Sub-divisions namely Tamenglong, Ukhrul and Churachandpur were established and placed under the charge of European officers who were directly responsible only to the President of the Durbar, a European officer himself. Besides, separate budgets for the hill tribes were set aside for the first time (Kshetri, 2006: 6). However, this system was done away during the 1930s and the old system of hill administration continued. The Government of India Act' 1935 did not make any significant changes in hill administration. Following controversy between A.C. Lothian, the special representative of the Viceroy and the Maharaja of Manipur over the issue of hill administration, the hill areas were ultimately brought under 'Excluded Areas' (Dena, 2003: 76). With the promulgation of the Manipur State Constitution Act' 1947, the hill areas were brought under a common unit of administration with the valley areas. Since then, the hill areas came to be administered through a series of Acts and legislations.²

Since the time of independence, the hill tribes of Manipur- the Nagas and Kukis have been demanding various forms of territorial autonomy from time to time. Today, autonomy demands in the hill areas of Manipur manifest in three major streams (a) the demand for 'Greater Nagalim'³ of the Nagas (b) the demand for separate Kuki State of the Kukis (c) and the demand for extension of provisions of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur. Earlier, the Naga National League (NNL) in Manipur under the leadership of Daiho Mao had mooted the idea of a separate hill administration by way of secession or merger with the adjoining hill areas of Assam (Ray, 1990: 123). However, the Nagas of Manipur soon came to identify themselves with the larger Naga ethnic-nationalist movement for an independent 'Naga State' under the Naga National Council (NNC) formed by A.Z. Phizo in 1946. On the eve of Indian independence, the NNC rejected the Sixth Schedule recommended by the 'Bordoloi

Committee' and declared Naga independence on 14th August 1946. In 1956, the NNC formed the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) and carried out an armed struggle for an independent 'Naga State'. Within few years, the Naga movement which was initially strong only in the Naga Hills District spread to the Tuensang Frontier Division of the then North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) and to the Naga inhabited areas of Manipur (Srikanth and Thomas, 2005:62). In October 1957, the Manipur Naga Convention (MNC) held at Ukhrul proclaimed its solidarity and support to the movement for Naga independence under the NNC (Gopalakrishnan, 1995: 87). In July 1960, the Government of India signed the 'Sixteen Point Agreement' with the Naga Peoples Convention (NPC) which consequently led to the formation of the State of Nagaland on 1st December 1963. But the hardliners of NNC continued its armed struggle for independence again. This led to the signing of the 'Shillong Accord' between the Government of India and the NNC on 11th November 1975.⁴ However, the Accord created much controversy amongst the Naga armed rebels. This consequently led to the formation of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) under Th. Muivah, Isaac Chisi Swu and S.S. Khaplang on 3rd January 1980. Challenging the Accord as a sold out of Naga political aspiration, the NSCN formed the Government of Peoples' Republic of Nagaland (GPRN) and initiated several radical and populist programmes in the fields of economy, culture and politics, and soon emerged as one of the most powerful Naga armed revolutionary groups (Srikanth and Thomas, 2005: 64). However, in 1988, the NSCN split into two factions- NSCN(IM) led by Th.Muivah and Isaac Chisi Swu and NSCN(K) led by S.S. Khaplang, a Naga from Myanmar (Rammohan, 2002: 2). With the birth of the NSCN(IM), the question of integration of Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur with Nagaland under a single administrative unit called 'Greater Nagalim' becomes a popular agenda amongst the Nagas. On 1st August 1997, the NSCN(IM) entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India and has been holding peace talks with the Government of India from time to time. In 2001, as an outcome of the peace talks, the 'Bangkok Declaration' was signed between the Government of India and the NSCN(IM) which agreed to extend the ceasefire beyond Nagaland including parts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. This evoked violent protests in Manipur which led to the killing of 18 civilians due to police firing at Imphal and later came to be known as the 'June 18 Uprising' (Singh, 2010:2). Recently, the Government of India and the NSCN (IM) signed the Framework Agreement on 'Indo-Naga Peace Accord' on 3rd August 2015. Though the issue of integration of Naga-inhabited areas was kept aside for the time being,⁵ the Nagas under the NSCN(IM) remain persistent on their demands for integration of Naga inhabited areas under the proposed 'Greater Nagalim'.⁶

Parallel to the demand for 'Greater Nagalim', the Kukis have been demanding various forms of autonomy from time to time. On 24th October 1946 the Kukis formed the Kuki National Assembly (KNA). Its primary objective was to bring all the Kuki tribes under a single political unit (Ray, 1992: 187). Apprehensive of being dominated by the majority valley community, KNA also favoured merger of the hill areas of Manipur with those of Assam and had given threats of secession time and again.

For this, KNA started mobilising the support of neighbouring tribes like the Lushais and Chins of Burma (Ray, 1990: 124-25). In 1960, it demanded the creation of a separate 'Kuki state' within the Indian Union (Kuki State, 1960). However, neither her threats of secession nor its demand for separate Kuki State receive any positive response from the Government of India. Therefore, the Kukis under the KNA agreed to strive for 'Greater Mizoram' as per the 'Kawnpui Convention' held in Churachandpur under the aegis of the Manipur Mizo Integration Council (MMIC) in 1965 (Haokip, 2010: 26). Accordingly, the Kukis became a part of the movement for independent 'Mizoram' under the Mizo National Front (MNF) led by Laldenga (Haokip, 2010: 26). However, with failure of the 'Mizo Accord' between the Government of India and Mizo National Front (MNF) to address the issue of 'Greater Mizoram', the demand for separate 'Kuki State' resurfaced in the form of an armed struggle with the formation of the Kuki National Front (KNF) and Kuki National Organisation and its armed wing the Kuki National Army (KNO/KNA) in latter half of the 1980s.⁷ While KNF strives for creation of a separate 'Kukiland' to be comprised of Sadar Hills area of Senapati, Chandel, Churachandpur and parts of Ukhrul and Tamenglong districts of Manipur within the framework of the Indian Constitution (Kipgen, 1993), KNO/KNA claim to strive for restoration of '*Zale'n-gam*'.⁸ Towards this, KNO advocates self-determination of the Kuki people in the form of a defined territory i.e. separate 'Kuki State', one in India and another in Burma/Myanmar (Haokip 2008: 402). Over the years, new Kuki armed groups have been formed with similar demands. At present, there are about 25 Kuki armed groups primarily grouped under two umbrella organisations namely, the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and the United Peoples' Front (UPF).⁹ In August 2008, KNO and UPF signed a "Tripartite Agreement on Suspension of Operations (SoOs)" with the Government of India and the State Government of Manipur.¹⁰ Since then, KNO has been persistent on its demand for separate Kuki State within the framework of the Indian Constitution. In support of this demand, the Kuki State Demand Committee (KSDC) was also formed on 2nd November 2010 to democratically spearhead the movement for separate Kuki State (KSDC, 2011). On the other hand, the UPF demands a separate 'Autonomous Hill State' to be carved out of the hill areas of Manipur.¹¹

Apart from the demand for 'Greater Nagalim' and separate 'Kuki State', the hill tribes –Nagas and Kukis have also been demanding for extension of provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India in the hill districts of Manipur. Based on the recommendations of the 'Bordoloi Committee', the Sixth Schedule was enshrined in the Constitution of India under Articles 244 (2) and 275 (1) to facilitate self-governance amongst the hill tribes of the then Assam and to safeguard their ethnic identity, custom, culture and traditions. Apart from the Sixth Schedule, the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution under Article 244(1) provides for the formation of 'Tribal Advisory Councils' to safeguard the culture, traditions, and to promote the welfare of tribals not included under the Sixth Schedule. However despite such constitutional provisions for the tribals in other areas, the hill areas of Manipur were not included in either of the two categories (Bhatia, 2010: 40). Subsequently, to meet the autonomy aspirations of the hill tribes, the Government of India as a Statehood grant to Manipur proposed for the creation of six ADCs under the Manipur

(Hill Areas) Autonomous District Councils Act' 1971 (Kshetri, 2006: 16-17). Accordingly, the Manipur (Adaptation of Laws) Order' 1972 and in exercise of the power vested in him under Section 3 of the Act, the Governor of Manipur vide Notification Order, Dated, 14/02/1972 constituted six ADCs in the hill areas of Manipur.¹² However, the District Councils under the said Act suffers from genuine legislative, executive and financial powers. In this regard, *Institute for Human Development 2006* noted:

The district administration exercises supreme control over the District Council in executive, legislative and judicial matters. The proposals for framing rules, regulations and bye-laws, developmental works and executive and judicial matters are submitted to the district administration after these are passed in the district council. The district administration has to approve the proposals. Generally, the important executive, legislative and judicial activities are carried out by the district administration...the district council does not possess the financial, administrative and functional powers of an effective local self-government. Thus autonomy granted under the district councils' act remains elusive (cited in Bhatia, 2010: 42).

Due to such inherent defects in the said Act, the hill tribes have been opposing the District Councils in Manipur right from the time of its inception. Despite such opposition, the Act came into effect and the six ADCs functioned from 1973 to March 1989 when the District Councils were dissolved owing to widespread protest from the hill tribes. For the next two decades, the District Councils were successfully boycotted. Several high-level government committees have recommended the extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur. The Hill Area Committee (HAC), which comprised of the elected members of the hill areas in Manipur, had recommended extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur in 1974. The National Commission for Reviewing of the Indian Constitution in its report submitted on March 2002 also recommended for extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur. Notwithstanding these recommendations, the State Government of Manipur continues to delay the extension of the provisions of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas on grounds of 'local adjustments' and 'amendments' (Bhatia, 2010: 41-3). On 10th October 2008, the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils' (Third Amendment) Act' was passed in the State Legislative Assembly. The District Councils became functional albeit opposition from the hill tribes on grounds of 'procedural lapses' and 'irregularities' (Bhatia, 2010: 41-3).

Issues and Challenges

Though diverse forms of autonomy demands came up in the hill areas of Manipur, there are various issues and challenges associated with these demands. The issue of competing 'ethnic homelands' with contesting identity, land and territorial claims between the hill tribes; lack of unity and consensus within demanding groups; the issue of territorial integrity of Manipur; the question of an independent or 'Free Manipur' advocated by valley-based insurgent groups; and policies and responses of

the Government of India and the State Government of Manipur are some of the major issues and challenges towards autonomy demands in the hill areas of Manipur.

The issue of competing 'ethnic homelands'

One of the major challenges to autonomy demands in the hill areas of Manipur is the question of contesting identity, land and territorial claims between the Nagas and Kukis. The two ethnic communities co-inhabited the hill areas of Manipur. However, the Nagas claim that the hill areas of Manipur as their 'ancestral homeland' and considered the Kukis as foreigners and as "merely colonial implants of the British" of the 19th Century (Vashum, 2005: 180). Similarly, the NSCN (IM) also claimed:

There was no such thing as Kuki homeland in the history. It was in the 1840s when McCulloch the British political agent who initiated a systematic policy by bringing in a large number of Kukis in the Naga Hills loaded with British firearms and ration to subdue the Nagas resistance against the mighty British Empire. Within a short period of time, thousands of more Kukis were planted in the Naga Hills. The demand to establish a Kuki homeland is a recent phenomenon and that is also within the Naga territory.¹³

Based on such claims of land ownership of the hill areas of Manipur, the Nagas today demanded integration of all the hill districts of Manipur except Churachandpur under their proposed 'Greater Nagalim'.

In contradiction to the above Naga claims, scholars dated back Kuki settlement in the region to much earlier period. The historians Majumdar and Bhattasali refer to the Kukis as the earliest people to have lived in prehistoric India, preceding the 'Dravidians' who now live in South India (Majumdar and Bhattasali, 1930: 6-7). Gangumei Kamei, a noted historian from Manipur also contends that some of the Kuki tribes might have migrated to Manipur Hills in the pre-historic times along with the Meitei advent in the Manipur valley (Haokip 2010: 20). In support of the indigeneity of the Kuki people in Manipur, Seilen Haokip (2010: 20) argued,

The *Pooyas*, the traditional records of the Meitei people refers to two Kuki chiefs named Kuki Ahongba and Kuki Achouba helped Lairen Pakhangba, the first historically recorded king of the Meiteis, in the latter's mobilization to the throne in 33 A.D. Also, according to the *Cheitharol Khumbaba (Royal Chronicles of the Meitei Kings)*, in the year 186 Sakabda (AD 264) Meidungu Taothingmang, a Kuki became king.

Tracing the historical accounts of 'Kuki' 'Chin' in the Hindu mythology, a native scholar Lunminthang also argued that the Kukis have settled in most parts of their present settlement in Northeast India to much earlier period (Lunminthang, 2016: 1-20). He contends that the Kukis enjoyed suzerainty and control over their land before the advent of British imperialism in the region (Lunminthang, 2016: 18). Haokip also argued that the Kuki chiefs reigned supreme in the hill areas of Manipur while the Meitei kings ruled the valley areas of Manipur and contends that the Kukis and Meiteis were allies. The Kuki chiefs help the Meitei kings on numerous occasions

(Haokip, 2008: 131-38). Further, he also argued that the Nagas were subjects of the Kukis who paid loyalty taxes to the Kuki chiefs of Aisan, Chahsad, Joujang Laijang, Jampi, etc., before the Anglo-Kuki Wars (Haokip, 2008: 87-91). Based on such arguments, the Kukis also claim Churachandpur, Chandel, Sadar Hills Sub-division of Senapati, parts of Tamenglong and Ukhrul Districts as their ancestral homeland and included in their demands for separate Kuki State or 'Zale'n-gam' (Kipgen, 1993; Haokip, 2008: 402).

Apart from such contesting claims over land and territory, there are conflicting claims between the Nagas and Kukis over the ethnicity of the 'Old Kuki tribes' like *Aimols, Anals, Chothe, Chiru, Kharam, Lamkang, Maring, Moyon, Monsang* etc. These Old Kuki tribes mostly settle in Chandel district of Manipur along with other Kuki tribes. Ethnically, the Old Kukis tribes exhibited more historical, cultural and linguistic affinities to the Kukis than the Nagas.¹⁴ However, due to the impact of Naga ethnic-nationalist movement and inter-tribal and clan rivalries amongst the Kuki tribes over issues of identity and nomenclature, some of the Old Kuki tribes came to identify themselves with Naga identity (Arora and Kipgen, 2012: 439-44; Dena, 1999: 186; Kipgen, 2013: 28). As a consequence, the Nagas today claim the whole of Chandel district as part of their ancestral land and included it in their demand for 'Greater Nagalim'. However, the Kukis continue to claim the Old Kuki tribes as a part of Kuki ethnicity and claim Chandel district as exclusively a Kuki inhabited area and included it as an integral part of their demands for separate 'Kuki State' (Haokip 1998: 19-70).

Due to such contesting identity, land and territorial claims between the two communities, the NSCN(IM) started a violent ethnic campaign against the Kukis in the hill areas of Manipur which eventually led to the Naga-Kuki conflicts of the 1990s (Singh, 2008: 10-11; Kipgen, 2013: 21-38). Today, claims and counter-claims continue to persist between the two communities. Since the Indo-Naga ceasefire agreement in 1997, the Nagas have become more persistent in their demand for integration of Naga inhabited areas under a single administrative unit 'Greater Nagalim'. Likewise, the Kukis are equally empathetic in their demand for separate 'Kuki State'. In 2012, KSDC brought out its proposed map of 'Kuki State' which includes the whole of Sadar Hills Sub-division of Senapati, Chandel and Churachandpur, parts of Ukhrul and Tamenglong districts.¹⁵ In opposition to this, the NSCN (IM) asserted that "the physical and political boundary of the Nagas is inalienable and that the Nagas will not tolerate any means used by the Kukis to distort the historical foundation of the Nagas."¹⁶ Likewise, Naga frontal organisations like Naga Peoples Organisation (NPO) argued that the KSDC's claim as "unacceptable and fabricated" and asserted that "the Nagas will not part with an inch of their territories".¹⁷ On the other hand, KNO in one of its press statement claimed that,

KSDC's stand is based on the land of the Kukis for which our chieftains possess Pattas, legal land ownership rights... KNO will not tolerate any attempt by the NSCN (IM) to forcibly include Kuki inhabited traditional areas into any form of Naga administrative entity (KNO, 2012).

Recently, on the signing of the Framework Agreement on 'Indo-Naga Peace Accord' between the NSCN(IM) and the Government of India in August 2015, the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex social organisation of the Kuki community in Manipur, also reminded that the Kukis will not accept any peace agreement between the two parties until the issue of the NSCN(IM) ethnic cleansing campaign against the Kukis is settled.¹⁸ Thus, competing 'ethnic homelands' between the Nagas and Kukis continue to be major challenges towards any solution to the demands for 'Greater Nagalim' and separate 'Kuki State'.

The question of 'unity' and 'consensus' within groups

Though the Nagas and Kukis demanded their own exclusive 'ethnic homelands' in the form of 'Greater Nagalim' and separate Kuki State, inter-tribal rivalries and issues of factionalism within the Naga and Kuki communities eluded any form of 'unity' and 'consensus' in their respective demands. Within decades of the Naga armed struggle for independence, inter-tribal and clan rivalries amongst the Nagas have resulted in factionalism and internecine warfare amongst the Naga tribes and armed groups. As Horam wrote: 'This [tribalism] has been one of the main source(s) of tension and instability and in fact, has led to inter-tribal rivalry and killing in Nagaland for the past 30 years...' (Shimray, 2005: 152).

Such traditional rivalries amongst the Nagas often manifest in rival factional armed clashes between the Naga armed groups. While Naga tribes like *Sema*, *Tangkhul* and *Zeliang* are known to be aligned with the NSCN(IM); the *Konyak* and *Ao* groups are known to be aligned with the NSCN(K); and *Angami* and *Chakhesang* groups are known to be loyalists of the NNC (Sashinungla, Undated). The matter becomes more complex when each armed groups claim themselves as legitimate representatives of the Naga people and their political aspirations. Though the NSCN (IM) claims itself as the only legitimate revolutionary organisation representing the aspirations of the Naga people, other rival Naga armed groups like the NSCN(K) have questioned the credibility of the NSCN(IM). For instance, NSCN(K) asserted that "any kind of agreement entered between the Government of India and Muivah would be termed as a contradiction".¹⁹ Thus, inter-tribal and factional rivalries amongst the Nagas have seriously impeded the Nagas demand for 'Greater Nagalim'.

Further, the question of 'sovereignty' continues to be another major challenge towards any meaningful solution to the Naga problem. This has been behind the failure of earlier peace accords and resurgence of Naga armed movement time and again (Thomas and Srikanth, 2005: 73). The NSCN(IM) as part of the ongoing 'peace talks' with the Government of India has agreed in principle to solve the Naga issue within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Further, the acceptance of Indian passport by Th. Muivah on his visit to New Delhi on 23rd January 2011 shows signs of the NSCN(IM) compromising its stand on sovereignty (Goswami, 2011). This apparent shift in NSCN(IM)'s stand has been often questioned by other Naga armed groups. In this regard, the NSCN (K) states: 'The so-called dream episode of the Isak group on 'Nagalim' is anti-Naga programme because it is outside of the charter of the Nagas struggle for sovereignty be it the NSCN (GPRN) or the NNC'.²⁰

On 16th May 2013, the NNC also reaffirm its commitment to Naga freedom and sovereignty.²¹ In one of his recent interview in connection with the Framework Agreement on Indo-Naga Peace Accord, Th.Muivah said that the NSCN(IM) has not given up its demand of sovereignty (Sharma, 2016). However, the question of sovereignty remains a contentious issue towards any successful conclusion of the Indo-Naga Peace Deal. Apart from the issue of sovereignty, the demand for 'Greater Nagalim' has been contested by the demands for separate 'Zeliangrong State' and 'Frontier Nagaland'. On 25th February 2011, a new Naga armed group - Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) was floated with the aim of creating a separate 'Zeliangrong State' to be comprised of Zeliangrong inhabited areas of Manipur, Nagaland, and Assam.²² Amongst the Tangkhuls, an armed group – Manipur Naga Revolutionary Front (MNRF) was also formed with the aim of preserving the 'territorial integrity' of Manipur.²³ In Eastern Nagaland too, the Eastern Naga Peoples' Organisation (ENPO) also demanded the formation of a separate State - 'Frontier Nagaland' to be comprised of the backward districts of Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphrie and Mon (ENPO, 2010). Thus, lack of unity and consensus amongst the Nagas continues to be a major challenge to the demand for 'Greater Nagalim'.

Likewise, in the case of the Kukis, inter-tribal and clan rivalries eluded any sense of unity and consensus in their demand for separate 'Kuki State'. Though KNA was initially formed as a pan-political organisation of the Kukis, it could not emerge as a common political platform of the Kuki tribes due to differences over issues of identity and nomenclature. This can be traced back to Shaw's remarks in his book, *Notes on the Thadou-Kukis* (1929) published by the Asiatic Society of India. In the said book, Shaw remarked that Kuki tribes such as *Gangte, Vaiphei, Hmar, Kom, Chiru, Changsan, Lunkim, Lhnahlam* and *Lenthang etc.*, are subject to the 'Thadous' (Shaw, 1929). This created widespread dissension amongst the non-Thadou Kuki tribes. The matter was exacerbated by the dominance of the Thadou chiefs in the KNA. As such, KNA came to be identified with the interests of the Thadou chiefs (Ray, 1990: 112). As a consequence, the non-Thadou tribes began to disown Kuki identity and formed the Khulmi National Union (KNU) as an alternative platform to the KNA (Vaiphei, 1995: 128). Due to such inter-tribal and clan rivalries amongst the Kuki tribes on issues of identity and nomenclature, many splinter groups emerged from KNA and began to assert their own separate tribal and clan identities (Chaube, 1973: 195). Also, many of non-Thadou Kuki tribes began to identify themselves with 'Mizos', 'Chins', and more recently as 'Zomis' (Haokip, 2009). Furthermore, within the Thadou speaking groups, divisions persist on the issue of Thadou's recognition in the Government of India Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes Lists Order' 1956 (SC/ST Order) and naming of the language spoken by Thadou and its cognate clans as '*Thadou language*'. According to Kuki customs and laws of inheritance, the younger cannot usurp the position of his elders (Haokip, 2010: 28). Therefore, cognate clans of Thadou like *Doungel, Lhangum, Lunkim, Changsan, Thangeo* etc., who claims seniority to Thadou in lineage are opposed to the recognition of 'Thadou' in the said SC/ST Order and insisted that it should be done in the name of 'Kuki'. Implicit in the recognition of Thadou in the SC/ST Order was naming of the lan-

guage spoken by Thadou and its cognate clans as '*Thadou language*'. Therefore, the same group of clans who were opposed to recognition of Thadou in the said Order insisted that it should be named as '*Kuki language*'. The matter reached the Guwahati High Court. Ultimately, in compliance with the decision of the Guwahati High Court based on the recommendation of the Expert Committee (Dated 3/2/1995), the Government of Manipur, Education Department, issued an Order No. 17/1/72-SE (Dated 12/05/1987) wherein it said that hereafter language shall be recognised as '*Thadou-Kuki language*' in supersession of its earlier orders (Gangte, 2008: 5). However, the controversy continues till today impeding any sense of unity amongst the 'Thadou-Kuki' speaking groups (Haokip 2011).

Further, competition and conflicts between the various Kuki armed groups and the absence of a common political agenda between them are major obstacles to the path of finding any meaningful solution to the Kukis demand for separate State. As mentioned before, there are about 25 Kuki-Chin militant groups primarily grouped under the KNO and UPF. As such, competition and conflicts on issues of identity and nomenclature, ideology, leadership, territorial control, support base, financial and other resources have become a common feature. Such competition and conflicts often resulted in internecine armed clashes between the various Kuki armed groups.²⁴ Besides, the absence of a common political agenda between Kuki armed groups has also been and continues to pose serious challenge to the demand for separate Kuki State. With failure of the 'Mizo Accord' to address the issue of 'Greater Mizoram', Hmars took up an armed struggle under the Hmar Peoples Council (HPC) for creation of a separate Hmar Autonomous Region (HAR) to be comprised of Hmar inhabited areas of Mizoram, Manipur and Assam (Singh, 1994: 182). On 27th July 1994, HPC and the Government of Mizoram reached a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the creation of Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC).²⁵ However, the hardliner sections of the HPC did not approve the Accord and formed the HPC (Democratic) and continued the armed struggle for separate Hmar Autonomous Region.²⁶ Likewise, in the wake of the 'Naga-Kuki Conflicts of the 1990s the Paites and other allied tribes formed the Zomi Reunification Organisation and its armed wing Zomi Reunification Army (ZRO/ZRA) to promote Zomi identity and interests and began to demand for the reunification of all the Kuki-Chins tribes under a single administrative unit called 'Zo-gam'.²⁷ Till today, Kuki armed groups belonging to KNO and UPF are not able to come up with a common political agenda. While KNO is persistent on its demand for a separate 'Kuki State' within the Indian Union,²⁸ UPF demand a separate 'Autonomous Hill State' within Manipur.²⁹ In August 2016, with the start of political dialogue between the Government of India and Kuki militant groups for the first time in New Delhi, KNO and UPF submitted a joint representation to the Government of India on the outline of the political demand for separate Statehood.³⁰ However, it is yet too early to surmise on the contents and outcomes of the joint representation.

On the question of the demand for Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur, differences persist between the Nagas and Kukis. While the Kukis are in favour of continuing with the already existing six ADCs namely, Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Chandel,

Senapati, Sadar Hills and Churachandpur; the Nagas proposed a single ADC consisting of all the hill districts; or alternatively, two ADCs, one consisting of the four Naga-dominated hill districts and the other constituted by the Kuki-dominated Churachandpur district; or five ADCs corresponding to the existing five hill districts, excluding the putative Sadar Hills (Phanjoubam, 2001). Here, it might be mentioned that Sadar Hills Sub-division was one of the six proposed ADCs under the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act' 1971. However, it continues to remain as a Sub-division of Senapati district primarily due to Naga opposition as a part of their ancestral land and vision for 'Greater Nagalim' (Singh et.al., 2008: 42; Haokip 2012: 104). Apart from such differences on the number of ADCs to be created, competing demands for exclusive 'ethnic homelands' of the Nagas and Kukis has also impeded any sense of unity and consensus amongst the hill tribes in their demand for implementation of the provisions of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur. For instance, the UNC has made it clear that it will not accept extension of the provisions of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur but will rather stick to its demand for 'alternative arrangement'.³¹ Thus, unity and consensus amongst the Nagas and Kukis have also been a major factor which seriously impeded the demand for extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur.

The question of 'Territorial Integrity' of Manipur

Another major challenge to autonomy demands in the hill areas of Manipur is the question of 'territorial integrity' of Manipur. Though the 'territorial integrity' of Manipur has been challenged from time to time in the form of the demands for independent 'Naga State' and separate 'Kuki State', this exacerbated with the emergence of the NSCN (IM) in 1980 and its demand for integration of all Naga inhabited areas under its proposed 'Greater Nagalim' and the rise of Kuki armed groups and their demands for separate 'Kuki State' or 'Zale'n-gam' in the latter half of the 1980s. With this, the 'territorial integrity' of Manipur came to be seriously threatened. More recently, as a part of the ongoing peace talks with the NSCN (IM), the Government of India agreed to extend the ceasefire with the NSCN (IM) 'without territorial limits' i.e., to all Naga-inhabited areas as a result of the 'Bangkok Agreement' on 14th June 2001.³² This evoked strong protest from the dominant valley based Meitei community resulting in the killing of 18 civilian protestors at Imphal on 18th June 2001 which came to be popularly known as 'June 18 Uprising'. Since then, several valley organisations like All Manipur United Clubs Organisation (AMUCO) and United Committee Manipur (UCM) etc. came up with the objective of protecting the 'territorial integrity' of Manipur. For instance, on 24th December 2003, UCM submitted a memorandum to the President of India on the question of the territorial integrity of Manipur and raise the following demands: (1) by recognising the unique historical position of the State of Manipur and respecting the democratic aspirations of the people (a) grant greater autonomy to Manipur (b) guarantee its territorial integrity and (c) and provide sufficient means for faster economic development of the State of Manipur (2) reaffirm the earlier assurance of not disturbing the territorial integrity of Manipur under any circumstances (3) pass parliamentary resolution effecting the

existing territorial integrity of the State of Manipur as in the 1(b) above in the current session of parliament (UCM, 2002). Recently, in opposition to KSDC's proposed map of 'Kuki State', the International Meitei Forum (IMF) went to the extent of asserting that, "before the British came, there were no such terms as 'Kuki' in Manipur" and threatened of "deporting the Kukis to Myanmar setting 1951 as cut-off year".³³ Such standpoints of the dominant valley based Meitei community and frontal organisations on the question of 'territorial integrity' of Manipur remains a major challenge to the question of 'Greater Nagalim' and separate 'Kuki State'.

Further, due to such apprehensions on the 'territorial integrity' of Manipur, the dominant valley based Meitei community continues to oppose the demand for extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur. They see it as a precursor to the formation of 'Greater Nagalim' or separate 'Kuki State'. Besides, this opposition also revolves around the issue of land ownership in Manipur. Under the existing land laws, the valley people could not buy, own land nor settle in the hill areas but the hill tribes can buy, own land and settle in the valley areas. But several attempts have been made by the State Government of Manipur at the behest of the dominant valley based Meitei community to remove the content of the Act 'except hill areas thereof' in the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act (MLR and LR) 1960 through several amendments [of which] is the MLR & LR (Amendment) Bill 2005 (Shimray, 2006). Therefore, in the case of extension of the Sixth schedule in the hill areas of Manipur; such attempts to implement uniform land laws in the State may become more difficult if not impossible. Thus, the standpoint of the dominant valley based Meitei community on the 'territorial integrity' of Manipur remains a major challenge to the demands for 'Greater Nagalim', separate 'Kuki State', and extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur.

The question of 'Free Manipur'

Another major challenge to autonomy demands in the hill areas of Manipur is the question of an independent or 'Free Manipur' raised by valley-based insurgent groups. This can be traced back to the formation of the Red Guards in 1948 under the leadership of Thiyam Irabot Singh. It advocated the Maoist line of struggle for the liberation of Manipur from Indian colonial rule (Sanajaoba, 1988: 250). Since the 1960s, valley based armed revolutionary groups like the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), Revolutionary Peoples Front (RPF), and People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) etc., were formed with the objective of restoring Manipur's independence status. Though these revolutionary groups pursue the national liberation movement of Manipur through different perspectives, they are mostly based on the 'ethnonational identity of the Meiteis'.³⁴ This project of 'Free Manipur' advocated by Meitei insurgent groups contradicts the project of 'Greater Nagalim' and separate 'Kuki State'. For instance, in an exclusive interview with V.K. Shashikumar, Special Investigations, CNN-IBN, Sanayaima, the UNLF Chief has reiterated his opposition to any form of political demands i.e. 'Greater Nagalim' or 'Kukiland' based on ethnic lines.³⁵ Earlier, the Manipur Peoples Liberation Front (MPLF) - a conglomeration of three Meitei insurgent groups - PLA, UNLF

and PREPAK also resolved to protect the ‘territorial integrity’ of Manipur (Oinam, 2008: 2). Thus, the project of ‘Free Manipur’ counters the demands for ‘Greater Nagalim’ and separate ‘Kuki State’.

State Policies and Responses

The Indian Constitution to protect the ethnic identity of the tribals of Northeast India had provided autonomy through the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India and through the creation of several States in the region. Under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, various autonomous councils have been created from time to time. Besides, several States such as Nagaland, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram have been created assigning them with some ‘special status and powers’ in Indian federalism. However, after Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh attained statehood in 1986, only councils have been created, and the path available to minority groups only goes as far as the establishment of a regional council as provided in the Sixth Schedule. In other words, no matter what the demand of an ethnic community in recent years, the arrangement arrived at is the creation of Autonomous Councils (Rajagopalan, 2008:43-4).³⁶ Thus, the creation of new States on ethnic lines by territorial reorganisation of the existing States in Northeast India seems to be losing ground to the Government of India. Recently, in connection with the issue of integration of Naga-inhabited areas, the then Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh on his visit to Imphal stated that the Central Government is committed to protecting the territorial integrity of Manipur while addressing a public gathering in Imphal on 3rd December 2011.³⁷ In the recently signed Framework Agreement on ‘Indo-Naga Peace Accord’ between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM), the issue of integration of Naga-inhabited areas was again kept aside. The Centre’s commitment to the ‘territorial integrity’ of Manipur is also evident in the inclusion of the clause “not to disturb the territorial integrity” of Manipur in the ‘Tripartite Agreement on SoOs’ with Kuki militant groups.

Further, various anti-tribal policies, Acts and legislations of the State Government of Manipur and its commitment to the ‘territorial integrity’ of Manipur posed serious challenges to the demand for ‘Greater Nagalim’, separate ‘Kuki State’ and extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur. Of late, the State Government of Manipur has become an instrument of structural dominance of the dominant valley based Meitei community on the minority hill tribes. Politics, development, education, and employment etc., in the State, has been monopolised by the dominant Meitei community (Haokip, 2013: 161-72). Apparently, to perpetuate this structural dominance on the hill tribes, the State Government of Manipur has been following various policies, Acts and legislations which are detrimental to the hill tribes.³⁸ The recently passed controversial Three Bills, namely the Protection of Manipur People Bill, 2015, the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (7th Amendment Bill), 2015, and the Manipur Shops and Establishments (Second Amendment) Bill, 2015 which created much turmoil in the State is a case in point. Protest against the Three Bills by the hill tribes led to the killing of 9 protestors due to police firing in Churachandpur. The three bills have become a contentious issue in the State with

the hill tribes demanding for separate hill administration.³⁹

Apart from such anti-tribal policies, Acts and legislations, the State Government has also been opposing demand for 'Greater Nagalim', separate 'Kuki State', and the demand for extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur. For instance, in June 2011, just ahead of the scheduled tripartite talks between the State Government of Manipur, the Central Government and the United Naga Council (UNC) on the question of 'Alternative Arrangement' for the Nagas of Manipur, Chief Minister of Manipur, O. Ibobi categorically stated that, "there would be no question of alternative arrangement, and even if the agenda comes up in the meeting, such agenda will be opposed by the State Government of Manipur."⁴⁰ Further, the standpoint of the State Government of Manipur on the issue of 'territorial integrity' of Manipur is also evident in its insistence to include the clause 'not to disturb the territorial integrity of Manipur' in the 'Agreed Ground Rules' of the SoOs signed between the Central Government of India, the State Government of Manipur and Kuki armed groups - KNO and UPF. In connection with the demand for extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur, the State Government of Manipur also continues to delay it on the grounds of certain 'local adjustments' and 'amendments' (Bhatia, 2010: 41-3). In the light of such anti-tribal policies of the State Government of Manipur and its commitment to the 'territorial integrity' of Manipur, any meaningful solution to the demand for 'Greater Nagalim', separate 'Kuki State' and the demand for extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur has become more complicated.

Concluding Remarks

From the foregoing discussions, it is observed that autonomy demands in the hill areas of Manipur have various issues and challenges. First, autonomy demands in the hill areas of Manipur involve contesting identity, land and territorial claims. The demand for 'Greater Nagalim' and separate 'Kuki State' has an overlapping identity, land and territorial claims. Such contesting claims of the Nagas and Kukis also seriously impeded the demand for extension of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas of Manipur. Two, inter-tribal and clan rivalries amongst the Nagas and Kukis, internal competition and conflicts amongst the Naga and Kuki armed groups on issues of ideology, territorial control and supremacy posed serious challenges to their respective demands for 'Greater Nagalim' and separate 'Kuki State'. Three, the question of 'territorial integrity' and 'Free Manipur' envisaged by the dominant valley based majority Meitei community and valley based organisations are major obstacles to autonomy demands in the hill areas of Manipur. Lastly, the tendency of the Government of India and the State Government of Manipur to view autonomy demands as a 'destabilising force' and their commitment to the 'territorial integrity' of Manipur is another major obstacle to any meaningful solution to the demands for autonomy in the hill areas of Manipur.

In the light of the above issues and challenges, the hill tribes Nagas and Kukis need to address the inherent internal contradictions in their respective demands for 'Greater Nagalim' and separate 'Kuki State'. Unity and consensus within the Nagas and Kukis are indispensable for any meaningful solution to their respective demands

for autonomy in the hill areas of Manipur. Further, since autonomy demands of the Nagas and Kukis involve contesting identity, land and territorial claims, there is a need for the two communities to come to the negotiating table and find a mutually acceptable solution in the spirit of ‘mutual respect’ and ‘peaceful coexistence’. Recognition to the right of each ethnic group to have a say in their own affairs- identity, land, and territory taking into consideration the present socio-political and demographic realities is likely to pay dividends to both the communities. At the same time, avenues for finding solution to their respective autonomy demands within the existing parameters of the Sixth Schedule can also be explored. The need for the two communities to mutually resolve their contesting identity, land and territorial claims become more significant keeping in view the increasing assertion of the dominant valley based Meitei community on the hill tribes through the apparatus of the State Government of Manipur. At the same time, the Government of India and the State Government of Manipur can act as a facilitator for finding a durable political solution to the Nagas and Kukis demands for autonomy in the hill areas of Manipur. An amicable political solution to their respective demands will not only ensure durable peace in the ethnically conflict-ridden State but will ensure development and progress.

Endnotes

¹ Though colonial writers termed it merely as a rebellion, native scholars termed it as ‘the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919’, ‘the Kuki War of Independence of 1917-1919’, or as ‘the Kuki Rising of 1917-19’; see (Haokip, 2010: 23).

² Some of the important legislations and Acts which laid down the rules and regulations for the purpose of administration in the hill areas of Manipur included *The Manipur (Hill Areas) Administration Regulation Act’ 1947*, *The Manipur (Hill Areas) Village Authority Act’ 1950*, *The Acquisition of Chiefs (Hill Areas) Act’ 1957*, *The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act (MLR and LR), 1960 and its Amendment Act’ 1975*, *The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils’ Act’ 1917* etc.

³ The term ‘Greater Nagalim’ basically refers to ‘Nagaland’. The term has been seldom used by the Nagas or the NSCN (IM). However, the term has been used in the context of public discourses in Manipur and the demand for integration of all Naga inhabited areas of Northeast India –Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland under a single administrative unit.

⁴ See, The Shillong Accord signed between the Government of India and the Underground Nagas, Dated, Shillong, 11th November 1975.

⁵ See, “Modi govt signs historic peace accord with Nagaland’s NSCN (I-M)”, *The Times of India*, 4th August 2015, available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Modi-govt-signs-historic-peace-accord-with-Nagalands-NSCNI-M/articleshow/48331844.cms>, accessed on 20/08/2015.

⁶ “NSCN (I-M) adamant on integration of Naga areas”, *The Nagaland Post*, 19th August 2016, available at <http://m.dailyhunt.in/news/india/english/nagaland-post-epaper-nagalandpost/nscn-i-m-adamant-on-integration-of-naga-areas-newsid-56881879>, accessed on 13/08/2016.

⁷ According to Nehkholun Kipgen, its founder President, the KNF was formed in 8th

May, 1988 at Molnoi Village in the Indo-Burma borders; see (Kipgen, 2012:107-13). However later versions of the KNF claim that it was formed in 8th May 1987, see, Kukiland: Land of the Kukis (2012): 112-13. KNO/KNA was formed in 24th February, 1988 at Molnoi Village in the Indo-Burma borders, see, (Haokip, 2008: 68)

⁸ The term '*Zale'n*' refers to 'freedom' or 'independence' and '*gam*' means 'land'. Therefore, '*Zale'n-gam*' colloquially refers to 'land of freedom'. It refers to the ancestral land of the Kuki people presently divided under Northeast India, Northwest Myanmar and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh.

⁹ KNO at present includes 17 Kuki armed groups viz; Kuki National Army(KNA), Kuki National Front(Military Council), Kuki National Front (Zougam), Kuki National Front (Samuel), United Socialist Republican Army (USRA), Zou Defence Volunteers (ZDV), United Komrem Revolutionary Army(UKRA), Hmar National Army(HNA), United Minorities Liberation Army(UMLA), Pakan Revolutionary Army(PRA), Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), Kuki Liberation Army (Khaikam Touthang), Kuki Liberation Army (Timothy Khongsai), Zou Defence Volunteer (Dino Zou), United Tribal Liberation Army(UTLA) and Kuki National Liberation Front (KNLF). The UPF includes eight Kuki armed groups viz; Kuki National Front (KNF), Zomi Revolutionary Organisation (ZRO), Zomi Revolutionary Front(ZRF), United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF), Zou Defence Volunteer (Kamkhanpao), Hmar Peoples' Convention-Democratic (HPC -D), and Kuki Revolutionary Front (KRF) and Kuki Revolutionary Army (Unification).

¹⁰ See, *The North-East Sun*, 1-15th September 2008, Vol.14, No.3, p.12.

¹¹ The UPF in its consultative meeting held at Haipi, Sadar Hills on 13th July 2013 have agreed to put the demand for a separate 'Autonomous Hill State'; see, See, "Autonomous Hill State" Demand hi huoplen ahi:UPF", Eimi Times, A Bilingual Thadou-Kuki daily, Imphal, 14th July 2013. pp.1-2.

¹² The proposed six ADCs under the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils' Act' 1971 were: (a) Manipur North ADC now Senapati ADC (b) Sadar Hills ADC (c) Manipur East ADC now Ukhru ADC (d) Tengnoupal ADC now Chandel ADC (e) Manipur South ADC now Churachandpur ADC (f) Manipur West ADC now Tamenglong ADC.

¹³ See, "NSCN (IM) Reacts to Kuki Inpi and Kuki Human Rights Memo to PM", The Hornbill Express, 13th September 2013 available at <https://asanjohn.wordpress.com/2015/11/20/nscn-im-reacts-to-kuki-inpi-kuki-human-rights-memo-to-pm/>, accessed on 16/06/2016.

¹⁴ For a distinction of the *Old Kukis* and *New Kuki tribes*, see, (Arora and Kipgen, 2012: 435; Kabui, 1995: 25-9).

¹⁵ See, "KSDC releases proposed 'Kuki State' map..." The Sangai Express, 15th November 2012, available at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/21073-ksdc-releases-proposed-kuki-state-map-defers-blockade-stir-to-november-17-map-covers-huge-chunk-of-areas-in-ukl-tml-cdl-spt/>, accessed on 16/06/2016.

¹⁶ See, "NSCN (IM) ridicules Kuki map, asserts territory", The Sangai Express, 23rd November 2012, available at <http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=1..231112.nov12>, accessed on 17/06/2016

¹⁷ See, “Kuki Map unacceptable asserts NPO” The Sangai Express, 30th November 2012, available at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/21514-kuki-map-unacceptable-asserts-npo/>, accessed on 18/06/2016.

¹⁸ “Kukis Unhappy with Naga Peace Pact”, *The Times of India*, 12th August 2015, available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/Kukis-unhappy-with-Naga-peace-pact/articleshow/48442438.cms>, accessed on 12/09/2016.

¹⁹ “NSCN-K to oppose ‘intruders’ in Naga Issue”, *Imphal Free Press*, Imphal, 12th July 2002.

²⁰ “NSCN (K) Cautions Isak Swu”, *Nagaland Post*, 27th August 2002.

²¹ See, “NNC leaders reaffirm Naga sovereignty”, *Nagaland Post*, 8th December 2015 available at <http://www.nagalandpost.com/ChannelNews/State/StateNews.aspx?news=TKVXUzEwMDA5MDc1NA%3D%3D>, accessed on 16/06/2016.

²² See, “New Outfit Floated”, The Sangai Express, Imphal, 4th March 2011 available at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/4140-new-outfit-floated/>, accessed on 19/06/2016

²³ The MNRF was formed in 2005 as Naga National Liberation Army (NNLA). In 2008, it was renamed as United Naga Peoples’ Council (UNPC), see, “The Question behind the Tangkhul Naga Long Demand for Ukhrul as the Summer Capital of Manipur” by K.S. Solomon Naamai, Member, Core-Committee, Naga National Workers Peoples’ Support Group (NNWPSG) published in the *Morung Express*, 9th September 2009.

²⁴ See, *Intercine Clashes among Kuki Outfits in Manipur: 2005-2016*, available at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/manipur/data_sheets/intercineclashkukioutfits.htm, accessed on 20/02/2016.

²⁵ See, *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the Government of Mizoram and the Hmar Peoples Council (HPC)*, Dated, 27th July 1994, Aizawl.

²⁶ For a brief profile and account of the HPC-D, see, http://www.satp.org/satporg/countries/india/states/mizoram/terrorist_outfits/HPC_D.htm accessed on 21/07/2008.

²⁷ ‘Zo’ is believed to be the common ancestor of all the Kuki-Chin tribes and ‘mi’ means people. Therefore, ‘Zomi’ colloquially refers to ‘Zo people’, see, (Thangkhingin, 2008: 201-210). The term ‘Gam’ refers to land. Therefore, ‘Zo-gam’ literally refers to ‘land of the Zo people’. It refers to the ancestral land of the Kuki-Chin (Zomi) tribes spread out in the contiguous territories of Northeast India, Chin Hills and parts of Northwest Burma (Myanmar) and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh.

²⁸ Presidential Speech of the KNO, at YPA Hall, Hengtam Lamka, Churachandpur, 14th March 2013.

²⁹ See, “KSDC slammed, Kuki State demand debunked, UPF makes its stand clear”, The Sangai Express, 26th January 2013, available at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/23162-ksdc-slammed-kuki-state-demand-debunked-upf-makes-its-stand-clear/>, accessed on 21/06/2016

³⁰ See, “Finally GOI, KNO, UPF Open Dialogue”, The Sangai Express, 16th June 2016, available at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/finally-goi-gom-kno-upf->

open-dialogue/, accessed on 20/07/2016.

³¹ “UNC Says No to Sixth Schedule”, *The Sangai Express*, Imphal, 16th December 2012.

³² See, “Centre Agrees to Extend Truce to All Naga Areas”, *The Sangai Express*, 15th December 2001, available at <http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=1..150601.jun0>, accessed on 25/07/2013.

³³ See, “Now, Meitei body comes out against proposed Kuki map”, *The Sangai Express*, 9th September 2012, available at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/21792-now-meitei-body-comes-out-against-proposed-kuki-map/> “Kuki Students Organisation hits out at IMF...”, For a reply of KSO to this IMF statement, see, “Kuki Students Organisation hits out at IMF”, *The Sangai Express*, 19th December 2012, available at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/22086-kuki-students-organisation-hits-out-at-imf-gives-point-by-point-rebuttal-foreigner-tag-irks-kso-ghq-backs-kuki-state-demand/>, accessed on 26/06/2016.

³⁴ For a detail discussion of the rise of valley armed revolutionary groups, profile, ideology, and objectives, see (Singh, 2005).

³⁵ See, “We will fight Indian forces: UNLF Chief”, UNLF Leader, Sanayaima, Exclusive interview with V.K Shashikumar, Special Investigations, CNN-IBN, available at <http://www.news18.com/news/india/we-will-fight-indian-forces-unlf-chief-248440.html>, accessed on 10/05/2016

³⁶ For more details of Peace Accords signed in connection with demands for autonomy in the Northeast region, see (Rajagopalan, 2008).

³⁷ See, “PM Negates Supra State body report, remains mum on AFSPA Promise”, *The Sangai Express*, 5th December 2011, available at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/11229-pm-negates-supra-state-body-report/>, accessed on 20/06/2016.

³⁸ Some of the important legislations, Acts, and policies of the State Government of Manipur detrimental to interests of the hill tribes are: *The Manipur (Hill Areas) Village Authority Act’ 1957; The Acquisition of Chief Rights Act’ 1967; The Manipur (Hill Area) District Councils Act’ 1971; The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Amendment) Act’ 1975 (MLR and LR); and The Manipuri Linguistic Policy, The Manipur (Hill Areas) Village Development Council Act, 2011, the Right to Fair Compensation & Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation & Resettlement Act, 2013, the Manipur New Land Use Policy’ 2014* etc.

³⁹ For a detail discussion of the implications of the Three Bills and the killing of 9 tribal protestors in Churachanpur, see, (Kipgen 2016).

⁴⁰ See, “CM rules out Alternative Arrangement”, *The Sangai Express*, 26th June 2011, available at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/6792-cm-rules-out-alternative-arrangement/>, accessed on 18/06/2016

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