



Geographical and Physiographic Characteristics of Thingsai Village

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2583-8261

Volume: 03

Issue: 06

November-December 2024

Received: 07-10-2024

Accepted: 09-11-2024

Page No: 142-146

Abstract

The present study focuses on the border regions of Mizoram adjoining Myanmar, particularly Thingsai village. Owing to their strategic location along the India–Myanmar border, this area provides an important setting for examining the relationship between geographical conditions, border dynamics, and regional development. Understanding the physical landscape and geographical characteristics of this frontier area is essential for analysing their physiographic and geopolitical significance. There is a wide variety of relief characteristics throughout India's Physiographic Divisions. Understanding the nation's geography, ecology, agriculture, and socioeconomic development is made easier by these physiographic categories.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54660/IJSSER.2024.3.6.142-146>

Keywords: Geographical, Physiographic, Mizoram, Myanmar, Thingsai, village

Introduction

Mizoram, one of the northeastern states of India, is situated between 22°19'N and 24°19'N latitudes and 92°16'E and 93°26'E longitudes, covering a geographical area of 21,087 square kilometres. According to the 2011 Census, the state has a population of 1,091,014 and an average population density of 52 persons per square kilometre. The state is bounded by Myanmar to the east and south, Bangladesh to the west, and the states of Assam, Manipur, and Tripura to the north and northwest. Its strategic location at the international frontier makes Mizoram an important region for geographical and geopolitical studies.

The state shares an international boundary of approximately 404 kilometres with Myanmar and 306 kilometres with Bangladesh. These international borders have historically connected and, at the same time, divided several Mizo ethnic groups and their associated clans across national boundaries. The border regions have therefore become significant zones of cultural interaction, economic exchange, and geopolitical importance.

Physiographically, Mizoram is characterized by a rugged mountainous landscape consisting of north–south trending hill ranges separated by narrow valleys and deep gorges. The average elevation of the state is about 900 metres above sea level, while the eastern border ranges adjoining Myanmar rise to nearly 2,000 metres. The terrain is dominated by structural hills formed through folding processes, resulting in alternating anticlinal ridges and synclinal valleys. Continuous processes of weathering, erosion, and denudation have further shaped the present landscape.

The present study focuses on the border regions of Mizoram adjoining Myanmar, particularly Thingsai village. Owing to their strategic location along the India–Myanmar border, this area provides an important setting for examining the relationship between geographical conditions, border dynamics, and regional development. Understanding the physical landscape and geographical characteristics of this frontier area is essential for analysing their socio-economic and geopolitical significance.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the geographical location of Thingsai Village in Mizoram.
2. To study the physiographic characteristics of Thingsai Village in Mizoram.

Methodology

For collecting household data, simple random sampling technique was used. The data collected includes family member's name, age, sex, education, family size, monthly income, migration, means of livelihood, livestock, service sector, assets, types of house, social structure, culture and custom and trans- border trade between Mizoram and Myanmar.

Sample: Out of the total 461 households of Thingsai village, 152 household survey was done for the present study.

Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data were used for the present study. In cases where they are relevant to the research's objectives, secondary sources such as books, periodicals, articles, journals, census reports, government papers, and others have been studied.

Data Analysis

The primary goal of data analysis is to make judgements about certain data. These findings help researchers formulate conclusions about their research. For the present study, descriptive and qualitative method was employed using percentage.

Review of related literature

Skocpol (1977) in the context of his investigation of Wallerstein's "World's Capitalist System," contends that Wallerstein's concept of European capitalism specifically ignores the relevance of "geopolitical situations" and "geopolitical circumstances." Skocpol goes on to say that as focus has shifted from simply economic to the function of the state and the political superstructure, geopolitics has found a place in radical geographical analysis. The question of how really separate the political is from the economic foundation has been the focus of debate. However, Lacoste and his colleagues on the publication Herodote have acquired the most persistent geopolitical interest in France.

Jay (1979) managing international competition is the art and practise of geopolitics, but it also has a relationship to local politics. Good regionalism is good geopolitics, and bad regionalism is bad geopolitics, he argues.

Gaddis (1982) develops the concept of "strategic interests" of the state as a geopolitical code to define the map of allies and enemies. This typology undoubtedly

helps in understanding the variety of geopolitical representations that discursive analysis addresses, despite the fact that it has not (yet?) gained much traction and is unlikely to do so because it ignores the common meaning of two terms that are already well-established (geopolitical codes and geopolitical visions).

Deudnay's (1983) and Freedman's (1985) atlas of global strategy. The majority of the contributions made by geographers to geopolitics focus on the geopolitics of global strategy, as in O'Sullivan's (1985) extremely critical examination of the geopolitics of deterrence.

Classical geopolitics are evaluated by Zoppo and Zorgbibe (1985) to see if they are still applicable in the nuclear era. According to Leslie Happle, this literature tends to have a relatively constrained understanding of both conventional geopolitics and "geographical factors," often limiting them to spatial configurations and physical features while excluding human distributions. Traditional geopolitics restricts itself to global challenges and ignores the Germanic tradition. Furthermore, it frequently conflates geopolitics with "power politics," emphasizes technology, and claims that geopolitical interactions arise "naturalistically" without the influence of social and political institutions and ideologies.

Morgenthau et.al (1985), in their study on politics among nations: *The Struggle for Power and Peace* discussed conflicts in the Mediterranean, Middle East, Central Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Balkans, involving demography, energy, water, and food, and highlighted the major geopolitical issues confronted by the American "hyper power" as well as those of Europe, Russia, China, India, Japan, and Brazil

Findings and analysis

Objective 1: Geographical location study of Thingsai Village in Mizoram.

Thingsai village is located in Hnahthial district in the eastern part of Mizoram along the India–Myanmar border. The area is characterized by mountainous terrain with prominent relief features. The hill ranges run in a north–south direction and are separated by narrow valleys and deep gorges. Compared to the southern part of Mizoram, the eastern region has higher elevations and steeper slopes, with the ranges along the India–Myanmar border averaging about 2,000 metres above sea level. Physiographically, the area consists of structural hills formed by parallel and sub-parallel anticlinal ridges and synclinal valleys. The landforms have been shaped by continuous processes of weathering and denudation under the influence of natural forces, particularly running water. Based on lithology, relief, drainage, and structural pattern, the terrain of Thingsai can be broadly classified into denuded structural hills and valleys.

a)



(a) Tiau River at Thingsai – Myanmar Border

b)



(b) Bridge connecting Thingsai & Myanmar

Fig 1: (a) & (b)

Thingsai village enjoys a moderate and pleasant climate throughout the year, with neither extreme summer heat nor severe winter cold. The climate is characterized by warm and humid conditions during the summer months and cool, dry conditions during winter. Based on seasonal variations, the village experiences three distinct seasons: the warm season, the rainy season, and the cold season. The warm season extends from March to May, with April and May being the hottest months. During this period, the maximum temperature often rises above 23°C. The rainy season lasts from June to September and is marked by heavy rainfall. Although precipitation lowers the overall temperature, days without rainfall can remain relatively warm. The cold season begins in October and continues until February. January is typically

the coldest month, with minimum temperatures occasionally falling below 5°C. Winter is characterized by cold and dry weather, and frost is commonly observed during the night.

Natural vegetation

The forest cover in and around Thingsai village is predominantly composed of sub-tropical vegetation. The area supports a diverse range of plant species, contributing to its rich biodiversity. The natural vegetation includes species such as *Lithocarpus*, *Schima wallichii*, *Rhododendron*, canes, various species of orchids, and lichens. Common herbaceous plants found in the area include *Ageratum adenophorum* and *Maesa indica*. The diversity of flora reflects the favourable climatic and ecological conditions prevailing in the region.

**Fig 2:** Community Reserve Forest at Thingsai

Agriculture

Agriculture is the mainstay of the people of Thingsai village. Jhum cultivation is practiced by 320 families. The household survey who involved in the cultivation of Rice and Vegetables consist of 31.6%. The household comprising 17.8% were engaged in only vegetables cultivation Thingsai has an agricultural land of 252.80 hectares for cultivation.

Introduction of permanent jhuming in Thingsai for which land development activities like Bench Terracing, wet rice cultivation, contour trench and half moon terrace and othermoisture conservation are carried out. Harvesting of rain water during monsoon for optimum utilization during dry season. The major cash crop in Thingsai is chilli and ginger. Planting of Horticulture cash crops like

orange, nimbu, hatkora, banana, avocado, pineapple and broom grass cultivation in areas with slope % of 10-45.

There is and introduction of climbers like Passion fruit and grapes in areas above 4000 feet from mean sea level.



Fig 3: (a) & (b)

Trade

Prior to India's independence, Mizoram maintained active trade relations with Myanmar through traditional trade routes. Rice and other essential commodities were imported from Myanmar to meet local demands, while products from Mizoram were exported in exchange. This cross-border trade played a significant role in supporting the Mizo economy and ensuring the availability of essential goods.

During the period of chieftainship, the economy of Mizoram was predominantly based on jhum (shifting) cultivation. Households contributed a portion of their agricultural produce to the chief as *Fathang*, and agricultural activities largely met the subsistence needs of the population. Economic aspirations remained limited, and the traditional economy functioned primarily on self-sufficiency.

The British administration brought significant changes to the socio-economic structure of Mizoram. The enforcement of settled habitation and restrictions on the traditional nomadic lifestyle reduced the availability of new sites for jhum cultivation, leading to a decline in agricultural productivity. Furthermore, the spread of education encouraged many people to seek alternative occupations outside agriculture, resulting in a gradual transformation of the traditional economic system. Following the independence and partition of India, trade relations between Mizoram and Myanmar were disrupted due to the establishment of international boundaries and new political arrangements. The cessation of cross-border trade adversely affected the Mizo economy, which had previously depended on commercial exchanges with Myanmar. Consequently, many people relied on employment in government services and small-scale trading activities for their livelihood.

Recognizing the historical importance and economic potential of cross-border trade, the Governments of India and Myanmar signed the Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Agreement on 21 January 1994. The agreement aimed to promote economic cooperation and facilitate trade between communities residing along the border. Its major objectives included:

1. Facilitating the exchange of locally produced commodities among people living on both sides of the

Indo-Myanmar border.

2. Promoting foreign trade transactions through freely convertible currencies, mutually agreed currencies, local currencies, or counter-trade arrangements.
3. Reducing transportation costs and making commodities more affordable through land-based trade routes.
4. Generating employment opportunities by encouraging manufacturing activities, free trade zones, and joint venture enterprises in border regions.

The agreement marked an important step toward reviving traditional trade linkages and strengthening economic integration between India and Myanmar. For Mizoram, enhanced border trade offers opportunities for employment generation, market expansion, infrastructure development, and overall socio-economic growth.

Status of Myanmar Refugees in Mizoram

The military coup in Myanmar on 1 February 2021 resulted in widespread political instability, violence, internal displacement, and a severe humanitarian crisis. As the military intensified its crackdown on pro-democracy protesters and ethnic groups, thousands of Myanmar citizens were forced to flee their homes in search of safety. The resulting refugee movement has had significant implications for neighbouring countries, particularly India, which shares a 1,643-kilometre international border with Myanmar.

Mizoram, owing to its geographical proximity and cultural affinity with the people of Myanmar's Chin State, became one of the primary destinations for those seeking refuge. Since the outbreak of the crisis, thousands of Myanmar nationals, predominantly from the Chin State, have crossed into Mizoram and settled in various border districts. The influx of refugees has created both humanitarian and administrative challenges for the state government and local communities. In March 2021, the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India issued an advisory to the states bordering Myanmar—Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh—directing them to identify and prevent the illegal entry of Myanmar nationals. The advisory was

based on India's position that it is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. Despite this directive, the Government of Mizoram adopted a humanitarian approach and provided shelter and assistance to many of the displaced persons.

The majority of refugees entering Mizoram belong to the Lai, Tedim-Zomi, Lusei, Hualngo, and Matu ethnic groups, which share close ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and historical ties with the Mizo people. These cross-border ethnic connections have played a crucial role in facilitating the acceptance and support of refugees by local communities. Geographically, the Chin State of Myanmar shares a border with several districts of Mizoram, including Champhai, Lawngtlai, Siaha, Hnahthial, Saitual, and Serchhip, making movement across the border relatively accessible.

The refugee influx has had important socio-economic and geopolitical implications for Mizoram. While it has strengthened humanitarian cooperation and ethnic solidarity across the border, it has also increased pressure on local resources, public services, employment opportunities, and border management systems. Consequently, the Myanmar crisis highlights the interconnected nature of geopolitics, geography, and socio-economic development in the India–Myanmar border region.

Conclusion

The present study highlights the geographical significance and strategic importance of Thingsai Village, located in the eastern part of Mizoram along the India–Myanmar border. The village is characterized by rugged mountainous terrain, structural hills, deep valleys, and a moderate subtropical climate, all of which influence the settlement pattern, agricultural practices, and livelihood of the local population. The rich natural vegetation and diverse ecological resources further contribute to the environmental significance of the area.

Agriculture remains the primary source of livelihood in Thingsai, with jhum cultivation continuing to play a dominant role despite ongoing efforts to promote sustainable and permanent farming practices. The cultivation of rice, vegetables, chilli, ginger, and various horticultural crops demonstrates the agricultural potential of the region. Recent initiatives aimed at land development soil conservation, and horticultural expansion have contributed to improving agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods.

The study also reveals the historical and contemporary importance of cross-border relations between Mizoram and Myanmar. For centuries, traditional trade routes facilitated the exchange of goods, services, and cultural practices between communities on both sides of the border. Although political changes following Indian independence disrupted these economic linkages, the Indo–Myanmar Border Trade Agreement of 1994 created opportunities for renewed economic cooperation, employment generation, and regional development.

Furthermore, the geopolitical developments following the 2021 military coup in Myanmar have reinforced the importance of border regions such as Thingsai. The influx of refugees from Myanmar has highlighted the strong ethnic, cultural, and historical ties that exist across the international boundary. While the refugee crisis has created challenges related to resource allocation, public services, and border management, it has also demonstrated the humanitarian values and social solidarity of the people of Mizoram.

In conclusion, the geographical location of Thingsai Village, combined with its environmental resources, agricultural potential, cross-border interactions, and strategic position along the India–Myanmar frontier, makes it an important area for geographical and socio-economic study. Sustainable development of the village and the surrounding border region will require improved infrastructure, enhanced trade connectivity, effective border management, and policies that balance economic growth with environmental conservation and social well-being.

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How to Cite This Article

Ralte L. Geographical and Physiographic Characteristics of Thingsai Village. *Int J Soc Sci Except Res.* 2024 Nov-Dec;3(6):142-146. doi:10.54660/IJSSER.2024.3.6.142-146.

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