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**THE ECONOMIC FRONTIERS AND MINORITY CONSTRUCTION: THE
CASE OF THE KHYANG OF CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS IN
BANGLADESH****Abstract:**

The Khyang is one of the smaller ethnic communities within the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) where people from different ethnic groups such as Bawm, Chak, Chakma, Khyang, Khumi, Lushai, Marma, Mro, Pangkhua, Tanchangya, and Tripura live including the majority group of the country the Bangalee people. The research focuses on the historical perspective of changing economic frontiers at the CHT and the socio-economic condition of the Khyang. Historically, the CHT has been regarded as one of the economically backward place of the country and many economic development programmers have taken place to develop the area and improve the life of the ethnic minority groups living there. The development initiatives have often proven to marginalize the ethnic minority groups. The Field material for the paper is collected from Bandarban and Rangamati of Chittagong Hill Tracts through participant observation. The findings indicate that among the Khyang the changes of economic frontiers have been taking place with coming of the administration and security forces, massive migration of Bangalee people, encroaching market and urbanization. In the process, the Khyang were subjected to change of available livelihood options, seasonality of economic activities and into a position of economic marginalization. The case of the Khyang provides evidence for the fact that attempts of development and modernization by government and non-government organizations sometimes lead to extreme levels of uncertainty about the legitimacy of established identity, rights and claims.

Keywords:

Economic frontier, Minority, Khyang, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

JEL Classification: Z10, Z18, P48

1 Introduction

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is situated in the southeast corner of Bangladesh. It is about 10 percent of the land area of Bangladesh. In this region people from different ethnic groups such as *Bawm*, *Chak*, *Chakma*, *Khyang*, *Khumi*, *Lushai*, *Marma*, *Mro*, *Pangkhu*, *Tanchangya*, and *Tripura* live including the majority ethnic group of the country the *Bangalee* people. Throughout history minority people have been treated as *Pahari* (people living in hills/ hill-people) by the neighboring *Bangalee* population, while these communities claim to be the indigenous people of that area having their own individual cultural history (Chowdhury, 2008). The identification of these different groups by the common term *Pahari* involves a variety of pejorative conditions and *Pahari* populations are seen as different from, and inferior to the majority *Bangalee* population in respect of race, language, religion, social organizations etc. Though the word *Pahari* is a local term of the Bangla language to label ethnic minorities it does not express the identity of a particular ethnic group. During the colonial era (1760-1947) the term 'Hill men' was used to refer to the 'tribal' people living in the Hill Tracts (Nasreen and Togawa, 2002). As the frontiers of Bangladesh government, administration and commerce have pushed into CHT and progressively out to the villages, so the people of other ethnic groups specially the *Bangalee* people has encroached further into areas surrounding the *Khyang* villages. Forest conservation and land acquisition are the main aspects of these changes.

In this paper I focus on the various ways the *Khyang* people make a livelihood, what shapes their efforts and their interaction and interconnectedness with other groups of people in their daily activities in the CHT. Moreover, I will argue that among the *Khyang* the changes of economic frontiers have been taking place with coming of the administration and security forces, massive migration of *Bangalee* people, encroaching market and urbanization, that is the coming of the state. In the process, the *Khyang* have been subjected to change of gender and ethnic division of labor, agricultural production, seasonality of economic activities, intra community and inter community dynamics. The processes have also initiated some changes in the customs and practices (which were part of their unique cultural identity) marginalizing the *Khyang*.

2 Chittagong Hill Tracts and the *Khyang*

Bangladesh is a country in South Asia. It is bordered by the Republic of India to its north, west and east, by the Union of Myanmar (Burma) to its south-east and by the Bay of Bengal to its south. It is separated from the Democratic Republic of Nepal and the Kingdom of Bhutan by the narrow Indian Siliguri Corridor. Together with the neighboring Indian states of West Bengal and Tripura, it makes up the ethno-linguistic region of Bengal. The name Bangladesh means "Country of Bengal" in the official Bengali language.

With a population of more than 160 million people in a territory of 56,977 square miles, Bangladesh is the world's eighth most populous country, as well as one of the world's most densely populated countries. The *Bangalee* form the country's predominant ethnic group, whereas there is different groups of people in northern and southeastern districts who form a significant and diverse ethnic minority. The four largest religions in the country are Islam (89%), Hinduism (9%), Buddhism (1%) and Christianity (0.5%). Bangladesh got independence in 1971 and was established on the basis of *Bangalee* nationalism.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh lies on the country's international borders with Myanmar (Burma) and India (the 'states' of Tripura and Mizoram). The present boundaries of the CHT were carved out of the British colonial empire in 1860 (Roy, 1995; Mohsin, 1997). CHT covers an area of approximately 13,189 square kilo meters. Formerly, the Chittagong Hill Tracts was a single unified

district, but administrative reorganization in recent decades has led to its division into the three districts of *Rangamati*, *Khagrachari* and *Bandarban*.

The CHT differs from the rest of Bangladesh, which is flat and subject to regular monsoon flooding. These hills form part of a mountain range that stretches 1,800 kilometers from western Myanmar to the eastern Himalayas in Tibet. Scattered along this mountain range are a variety of ethnic minority groups. The hills are relatively rich in natural resources, particularly timber and bamboo. In recent years, parts of the region have been developed for pulpwood and rubber plantation by Bangladeshi companies and investors (Ray and Salam, 2010).

There are 11 different indigenous ethnic minority groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Customary laws and practices within these communities vary, but they share commonalities in terms of their social and political organization. They differ significantly from the majority *Bangalee* population in relation to religion (as most ethnic minorities are Buddhist whereas most *Bangalee* are Muslim), language, their social and political organization, marriage customs, birth and death rites, food, and agriculture techniques. The hilly and forested terrain is suitable for the indigenous form of cultivation, known as *Jhum* (Roy, 1995).

The CHT became formally annexed to the then province of Bengal in 1860. Historically, the CHT had largely been a self-governed independent territory until 1860 when the British took it over as their vassal (Ishaq, 1975). In the year 1900, the British had passed and enforced the 'Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900', declared the CHT as an 'Excluded Area' and put an embargo on 'outsiders' (people other than the indigenous ones) to settle or purchase land in the territory. The Regulation provided substantive autonomy to the indigenous people. The autonomy had been in force till 1962 when the Government of Pakistan replaced the 'excluded area' status of the CHT with that of the 'tribal area' in a constitutional amendment in 1962 aiming at paving the way for an influx of people other than those of the indigenous origin into the region in a large number. The non-indigenous population (mostly *Bangalee*) in 1872 was 1.74%, which rose to the level of around 9.09% (1951) over eight decades, and doubled by the next two decades (19.41% in 1974). At present the *Bangalee* population stands at almost 50 percent in the CHT (Barkat et al., 2009).

The rate of *Bangalee* people increased rapidly because in mid-1950s, the Pakistan Government initiated construction of the Kaptai Hydro-electric Project to meet the need for energy for industrialization and domestic consumption with financial assistance from Canada and the World Bank; the project was completed by early 1960s. This project, along with development of other industrial units in CHT (mostly the *Chandraghona* Paper Mill in Kaptai area) has provided the government opportunity for allowing non-indigenous population's influx under the coverage of economic development (Ray and Salam, 2010).

In present days, the Chittagong Hill Tracts are divided into three "circles" each led by a "Circle Chief" or "Raja" – the *Chakma* circle, the *Bomang* Circle and the *Mong* Circle. Each circle is roughly equivalent to each district in the Chittagong Hill Tracts – the *Chakma* with *Rangamati* district, the *Mong* with *Khagrachari* and the *Bomang* with *Bandarban* district. Each circle is divided into numerous of "mouza" (territorial zones). There are about 380 *mouza* in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Each *mouza* is led by a "Headman". *Mouzas* are divided into several villages each led by a village "Karbari." These traditional leaders exercise jurisdiction in relation to matters of family law, lower level crimes, and allocation of customary interests in collective lands, such as the allocation of land for *Jhum* (Amnesty International, 2013).

The *Khyang* is one of the smaller ethnic communities within the CHT. *Khyang* have the same origin as the Chin of Burma; *Khyang* language is similar to that of the southern Chin with a partial influence of the Burmese language (Shafie, 2000). According to Adnan (2004) the total *Khyang* population in Bangladesh is 1900.

There are two kinds of *Khyang* communities, the *Kongtu Khyang* and the *Laitu Khyang* (Chapola, 2009). The *Kongtu Khyang* lives on top of the mountains and have mostly converted to Christianity (Seventh-Day Adventists) from Buddhism while the *Laitu Khyang* lives in the plain land of the valleys in CHT and they are mostly Buddhist. *Laitu Khyang* people are involved in plough cultivation, while *Kongtu Khyang* people are more dependent upon shifting cultivation (*Jhum*) because of living at high altitude (Chapola, 2009).

There is no other population in the entire region who has been as badly affected by the expansion of reserved forests and plantations as the *Khyang* (Chapola, 2009). Life became extremely difficult for them after the British Government had imposed a ban on *Jhum* cultivation in 1900. The ban has been continued but being enforced strictly since 2009 (World Food Programme, 2011, p.4). Some *Khyang* families have developed fruit garden, some earn their income by selling labor in plantations while many families rely on a very small income from collecting and selling fuel wood, bamboo, etc. (Chapola, 2009).

The *Khyang* require vast land for *Jhum* but they have been losing their land because of expansion of the reserved forest and construction of government driven hydroelectric project in the Kaptai Lake (Uddin, 2008). In some instances, entire *Khyang* villages have disappeared (Adnan, 2004; Schendel, Mey and Dewan, 2001). The precarious conditions of the *Khyang* are no exception from other indigenous communities in the CHT due to insurgency, counter-insurgency, militarization, and Bengali settlement (Adnan, 2004; Schendel, Mey and Dewan, 2001; Mohsin, 1997; 2003). These forces allegedly invoked armed resistance by different ethnic groups and the Bangladesh government responded to the resistance by means of military operation. However, after decades of violence in CHT a peace accord was signed in 1997 (Barkat et. al., 2009).

In this backdrop, different ethnic groups of CHT including the *Khyang* are going through an economic transition and are in competition with Bengali people and complying with the government and non-government policies to make use of the available resources to sustain livelihood. Therefore, my research focuses on the diversified interrelations between different ethnic communities living in the CHT. Further, in relation to the socio-economic endeavors, how the *Khyang* are being marginalized has been explored.

3 Economy of the *Khyang*: activities and seasonality

Even though not all societies have specifically subsistence economies; they all have specific ways of producing food, shelter, clothing and income. There is no society without methods of production, distribution, consumption and some form of exchange (Herkovits, 1974, p.143).

During my fieldwork the *Khyang* talked about their livelihood in the old days. My informants said that traditionally, most of the *Khyang* villages were founded at on hills. They call a house ‘em’ and a village ‘nam.’ Most *Khyangs* depended on *Jhum* (Slash and burn) cultivation. Throughout history, it has been their only means for sustaining life and livelihood. They have continued this subsistence agricultural production from generation to generation. *Jhum* crops are grown on the slopes of the hills. The *Khyang* farmers usually uproot bushes and weeds that grow on the slopes during January-March, and dry them in the sun. They burn them during April - May, clean the ground and finally make beds for sowing seeds (rice/ paddy, sweet potato, water melon, bean, oil-seed, melon, ginger, etc.). When it rains, they dig holes and sow a variety of vegetables and paddy in them. It only takes a few weeks for seeds to sprout. The farmers remain very busy treating the crops in the months of September and October. And eventually start picking up crops during November – December. They even live in a temporary makeshift house (‘peng’ or ‘pengem’) inside the *Jhum* lands until the crops are harvested.

But, this practice of *Jhum* is today no longer continued on a large scale. I have observed that *Khyang* at the *Rangamati* engage in a range of diverse professions such as: medical doctor, accountant, medical

technician, nurse, cook, cleaner, security guard, etc., but younger people have been involved in daily/day to day wage labor such as: coolie, agricultural labor, house repairing work, etc. There are also a few non-government officials among the *Khyang*. *Khyang* in *Rangamati* seemed to be more diverse regarding wage work and employment compared to the *Khyang* of *Bandarban*. Though the *Khyang* of *Bandarban* also is involved in different activities, most of them are plain land agriculturist (plough cultivation) followed by daily labor. *Khyang* of *Bandarban* are involved in non-agricultural occupation as a supplement to their income from cultivation as they nowadays need more return because of population increase (daily consumption needs) and decreasing land ownership. Influx of *Bangalee* population in the adjacent area has influenced the *Khyang* people to sell much of their land.

3.1 Agricultural work

There are two ways by which a people can earn an income from agriculture other than by owning land. These are share cropping, and casual labor. A man gives his land to a share cropper because he is unable to work it himself. Very occasionally a rich man will allow a poorer man as a favor to share-crop a field, but usually it is necessity which drives the owner to let someone else to the work. A well to do man commonly allows to be share cropped only those fields which lie in villages too distant for cultivation by himself and his servants. The produced crop is usually divided at half between the landowner and share cropper.

3.2 Daily labor

Khyangs are involved with daily wage labor who works on the basis of finding job in the local area and work on the mutual understanding. The wage rate for daily labor varies between 160-200 BDT per day. Both male and female work as daily labor females normally gets lesser payment than males. Females also help in domestic works of rich people, as housemaids or domestic servants but in return of rice or other products usually and not cash/ wage.

3.3 Skilled labor

Some of the *Khyangs* who have technical skills like installing tube wells, masonry works with the contracts they made with the contractor. However, they have some reluctance to work for the *Bangalee* contractors. They want to work with mostly other ethnic minority groups. The reasons mentioned were *Bangalee* people do not really pay as decided before starting the work and try to find some faults in the work to pay less. *Bangalee contractors want more work with lesser price; Namishi, 26 years*, reported to express his view on working for the *Bangalee*. *Khyangs* have connections with the contractors who are ethnic minority and tend to work with them only.

3.4 Shop keeping/ small trading

Khyangs are involved with small business in the locality where they sell daily needed groceries. I have seen some times that they run the shops themselves or also hire someone to run the shop. One of the shops in *Rangamati* owned by a *Khyang* was run by a *Bangalee*. This shop becomes the place for passing time of the youth and they come and sit there and talk and gossip about different issues which are going on in the locality. These are the places where people of different ethnic background meet and interact with one another in a light pleasant mode. In these shops they bring goods from the nearby market places and they make money from 2000-15000 BDT per day.

3.5 Private service/ sector: the new opportunities

Khyangs are involved with different kinds of private services like teaching at schools, administrative work at different Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), nursing, work at the beauty parlor, worker at the garment factories, etc. among these garment work and the job of beautician is mostly done by the *Khyang* women. These opportunities has presented themselves as the communication system connected the *Khyang* with the cities and once a *Khyang* get a job in the garment factory, beauty parlor or in any NGO they usually take their relatives to find them jobs also. In this way many *Khyang* are getting connected socio-economically with the *Bangalee* and the outside of their immediate village.

4 Changing occupational patterns

4.1 Reserved forest and land loss: expanding state space

From the British and Pakistan period the forest department has defined one quarter of the area of the CHT as Reserve Forests (RF) (these are lands under the direct control of the Forest Department). The Forest Act is applicable for their protection) (Adnan and Dastidar, 2011). After the independence of Bangladesh, the Forest Department has since 1980s been attempting to expand such areas. However, new Reserve Forests can only be created by acquiring the Unclassed State Forest lands (the lands that are under the control of the Ministry of Land, Government of Bangladesh are designated as Un-classed State Forests (USF) and/or *Khash* lands) on which the ethnic minority of the CHT had common or private rights (Adnan, 2004, p.51). Thus, expansion of state forests necessarily entails the loss of lands of the inhabitants of the CHT.

Forest dependent communities have been involved in such projects of creating RF merely as providers of cheap labor. Even though formally designated as ‘beneficiaries’ or ‘participants’, they have never been allowed to have any meaningful decision-making roles in these forestry projects (Roy, 2004). Since 1989, the cumulative total of lands in the CHT targeted for acquisition by the Forest Department has amounted to a staggering 218,000 acres (Adnan and Dastidar, 2011). From 2009, attempts have been renewed to acquire customary lands (and, in some instances, the private property) of the local ethnic groups for afforestation projects to set up new RF (Chakma and Tripura, 2010).

The afforestation projects of the Forest Department typically involve expansion of monoculture plantations, such as: rubber, which often are initiated and funded by international banks and donor agencies. For example, major forestry initiatives in the CHT, including the National Forestry Policy of 1979 and the Forestry Master Plan of 1994, have been undertaken with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). These forestry policies and programme activities inspired by the World Bank and the ADB in the CHT have had unfavorable impacts on the traditional land rights of the *Khyang* and other ethnic groups (Roy, 2004). The policies and projects have systematically promoted industrial forestry by expanding rubber and timber plantations and strengthening the policing function and authority of the Forest Department. The Forestry Master Plan and other policies and projects have affected negatively upon the forest commons, traditional land rights and community participation of the local minority people (Roy and Halim, 2001; Roy, 2002; 2004; Adnan 2004).

Furthermore, plans for creating completely *new categories* of state forests (e.g. so-called ‘Notified Forests’) have been in circulation during 2010. Supported by international donor agencies, when making the case for acquiring lands for afforestation, the Forest Department is required to undertake field inspections on the ground to assess the actual conditions and nature of habitation in the concerned areas. In order to get approval, it has to certify that during field inspection the land to be acquired was found to be either uninhabited or fallow. Alternatively, if the land is inhabited, the department has to certify that the people present are willing to move away if paid due compensation. However, such certification by the Forest Department can be deceptive and the reported findings of the purported field

inspections may turn out to be quite fictitious (Adnan and Dastidar, 2011). My informants in the *Bandarban* mentioned that many hills and *Pahari* lands have been covertly acquired by the Forest Department on the basis of false claims that these are not populated. This ploy has enabled the department to circumvent the requirement for making public announcements and enquiries and consult with the affected people, as required by law and official procedures.

4.2 Improved communication system: roads and markets

The government in its way to develop the socio-economic condition of the CHT has been involved in infrastructural development and continuing creating roads and markets. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the pace of marketization accelerated with the expansion of the road network in the region. The two main factors were: defense strategies of the government and the government's intention to exploit the region's forest resources for its industrial needs (Webb and Roberts, 1976; Roy 2000). These developments produced positive and negative results. The positive impacts were easier transportation of farm produce to the markets and the increase of government extension services with regard to health, education and credit in remote areas. The negative impacts included a drastic increase in the rate of deforestation, as well as an increase in the population settling coming from outside, which added to the pressure on the already stretched resources of the region (Roy, 2000). Some *Khyangs* have mentioned that their new interest in farming cash crops has been influenced by the improved communication system. They said that as new road has been created whole sale marketers do come and buy the products from the fields so they now tend to cultivate vegetables and spices that they can sell for cash.

4.3 Educational advancement and adoption of non-agricultural forms of livelihood

Some of the *Khyangs* have been accessing different job opportunities with advancement in education in the mainstream curriculum. The *Khyang* who have passed secondary level of education are generally involved in the non-agricultural works. I met four school teachers and three NGO workers in *Bandarban*. In *Rangamati*, on the other hand, *Khyang* women are mostly employed as nursing, beauty parlors and in garment factories. For nursing and beauty parlor they get training before joining the job and for working at the garment factories they join as apprentices (with nominal salary) and afterwards they get the job.

4.4 Multiple occupations

The occupational pattern has thus changed as the *Khyang* are increasingly taking up multiple occupations to maintain their livelihood. *Khyangs* those who have permanent jobs at NGOs or any other non-agricultural jobs also involve in small farming. Sometimes member of the same household are involved in different job sectors. For example: a *Khyang* who works as school teacher also has a small shop, a nurse also work at private medical center. These multiple forms of occupation provide for give those extra cash at hand to meet the need of 'luxury' consumer goods like mobile phone, Television and laptops which is a sign of high status at the local community.

5 Impacts of changing economic pattern and interaction

5.1 Social structure

The effects of the changing occupation patterns on the economy of the indigenous people of the CHT have been complex and manifold. On the most important consequences of has been widening the gap between the rich and the poor. 30 years ago there was little economic disparity and social distance

between and among the indigenous people. This is no longer the case. Class distinctions have increased. Along with this, there have been significant changes in the way that the families and household deal with their everyday challenges. Traditionally, such challenges and were met by from a community platform on a collective basis. Social changes have been in the way indigenous family law and other customary laws are being administered. Here again, the changes vary from people to people. But perhaps the most distinctive difference can be seen between *Rangamati* and *Bandarban*. In *Bandarban*, it is the traditional village elder or *Karbari*, who still presides over arbitration and judicial proceedings, but he tends to act in concert with other leaders including the elected government leader and decisions are usually taken by consensus and by invoking custom. However, in urban areas (*Rangamati*), the prevalence of customary practices is far less pronounced. Many of these practices relating to social customs and religious traditions are now-a-days observed less and less frequently, if at all. On the whole the community responses to dealing with problems and challenges based upon traditional values are fast giving way to responses by families and individuals.

5.2 Sanskritization of customs and ritual

Occupation changes have induced significant changes in cultural practices as well. This is especially noticeable among the people of *Rangamati* who have connections with urban areas. In other words, among the *Khyang* who are not dependent on land for their livelihood (those who are not farmers), that is to say, *Khyangs* who have to interact more frequently with *Bangalee people*. Sanskritization of customs and practices are visible in such areas as modes of dressing, food habits, ceremonies and preferences in music.

Srinivas (1956) has introduced the concept of ‘Sanskritization’ to explain the changing custom and practices of lower caste groups in India. He mentions that the structural basis of Hindu society is caste, and it is not possible to understand Sanskritization without reference to the structural framework in which it occurs. Speaking generally, the castes occupying the top positions in the hierarchy are more Sanskritized than castes in the lower and middle regions of the hierarchy, and this has been responsible for the Sanskritization of the lower castes as well as the outlying tribes. The lower castes always seem to have tried to take over the customs and way of life of the higher castes. The idea of hierarchy is omnipresent in the caste system; not only do the various castes form a hierarchy, but the occupations practiced by them, the various items of their diet, and the customs they observe, all form separate hierarchies.

To the changes that the *Khyang* indicate with the changing economic activities are similar to the ‘Sanskritization’ process in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. The *Bangalee* and the economically powerful people set the standard for custom and practices. For example: the *Khyang* who are rich and powerful smoke cigarettes while people who smoke ‘bidi’ (without filter) is recognized to be of lower class.

Another incidence of the *Khyang* custom being treated as something uncivilized was mentioned by the head of the village (*Karbari*) in *Bandarban*. He mentioned during his childhood his father was ‘*Karbari*’ of their village and also an influential person in their locality so he was invited to a meeting with a minister and higher civil administration officers in the *Bandarban* city. When his father reached there to greet the minister he bowed in order to show respect to a religious leader. At this event everyone laughed at him so later he never wanted to join such meeting again and wanted his children to be educated more and be like the higher officials so that they never have to face such embarrassing incidents.

The many changes have come about both due to changes in occupational patterns, urbanization, the spread of education, social intercourse with others and influences of the national and international media. I have noticed changes in dress and food production and consumption patterns. However, I

have observed that women tend to wear their traditional dresses more than men. Food habits have also changed. Previously, *Khyangs* used to meet most of their food needs from the produce of the swidden cultivation and from hunting, trapping, gathering and fishing. However, in recent times they buy rice, spices and also meat from the local market.

5.3 Marriage custom and intermarriages

The *Khyangs* have some customary laws for marriage and their wedding ceremonies. Generally, marriages do not take place within the same lineage and marriage is strictly prohibited between cousins. If it happened by any chance, the persons involved were ostracized. If a boy and a girl were found to be attracted to each other in any village, their parents and guardians would negotiate and fix a date for their marriage. In line with the customs, in the past the bridegroom's family had to pay some BDT 50-55 as a dowry to the bride's family if the marriage was arranged socially. The *Khyangs* call payment 'dafa.' If a boy and a girl fled first and then got married, the bride's parents were allowed to increase the amount of the 'dafa' as per their will. Sometimes this amount would rise to BDT 500. If the father of the groom failed to meet the demand, the bride's parents could take their daughter back. The parents were allowed to keep their daughter with them as long as the payment was not made. If a time frame was set in this regard, the groom's relatives would go to the bride's house on a given date to pay the amount.

Marriage never occurs if any side disagrees. In such cases, the boy and the girl often run away and get married. First the groom and the bride flee and seek refuge to a relative's house located in another village. That relative informs the parents and the guardians of the village about it before the sun rises. The village headmen or the elders ask the villagers to gather, then they formalize the marriage of the runaway bride and groom in front of all. The parents of the bride do not attend such wedding party. The groom's side, together with the villagers, arranges the wedding ceremony. Within a week after the marriage takes place, the bride and the groom have to return to the bride's parental home. They bear a suitcase with them carrying garments for their own use, a sickle for reaping *Jhum* crops, a bottle full of wine and a living chicken. Then both of them ask for forgiveness to the bride's parents.

The changes in the marriage custom that became clear through different discussion with *Khyang* people is that as the *Khyang* have started to live surrounded by other communities and with *Bangalee* there is more inter marriages. One of my respondents in *Bandarban* reported that now-a-days one can meet a *Bangalee* at only few minutes walking distance however, *in my grandparents time there was only a handful of Bangalee household in the locality*. He also said that *I have a daughter is she goes to a Marma or Bangalee what can I do?* And as *Khyang* are patriarchal, if a woman marries a man of another community she is generally perceived to not belong to the *Khyang* community anymore.

This statement of a *Khyang* testifies that the *Khyang* have accepted the fact that with the kind of interaction with others there is no way to preserve or practice their own custom and tradition and his reference to the bigger ethnic communities like *Marma* and *Bangalee* refer to the helplessness that they feel in this regard.

On the other hand, in *Rangamati Khyangs* do not follow any of such customs which were unique to the *Khyang*. As they have converted to Christianity they follow the Baptist Church in regard to marriage custom. In *Rangamati* there is more intermarriage with the *Bangalees* and are mostly co-workers at the Christian Hospital, *Chandraghona*, or in other areas.

5.4 Language and education

The more the *Khyang* interacts with speakers of other languages, especially Bangla, the more their own language is eroding. They believe speaking Bangla on a daily basis has been a threat to their language as it has no written scripture. The *Khyang* have identified two main reasons for their loss of language,

first, in the primary school level there is no provision for learning *Khyang* language. Though for the education of the ethnic minority group the government has taken initiatives to build and run schools and colleges in the area, however, the medium of instruction is in Bangla so the minority groups are in not an equal level to continue with the *Bangalee* students. On the other hand, studying in Bangla and the everyday use because of interaction with the *Bangalee* people is regarded by the *Khyang* as a reason for the loss of their language which do not have any written script. Second, inter marriages with others, especially when the women are from other communities children get used to language which is usually Bangla or their mothers language. Dr. *Bir Khyang* is a medical doctor who had passed MBBS from Sylhet Medical College and works as a medical practitioner at the Christian Hospital Chandraghona. He had married a *Marma* women who herself is a medical doctor and works at the Upazila Health Complex. They have two sons, five and three years old respectively. *Bir Khyang* mentioned that his children do not speak *Khyang* language and as from childhood he himself could not practice *Khyang* language. Though he regards himself as a *Khyang* and opined that *Khyang* language is a unique trait of them, he could not practice the language during the time of studies (when he was away from home) and in his daily activities he cannot use *Khyang* as he interacts more with the Bangla speaking people.

5.5 Development, interaction and change in internal dynamics

There have been many development projects CHT and different organizations organize development committee in areas and provide funding for initiating income generating activities for example buying cattle. However, a problem is that with the inflow of money/ cash an increasing tendency of distrust between committee members regarding the proper use of money has emerged. Typically, the development organizations tend to give the total organizing-power to the local committee as part of their commitment of participation of the local people and empowerment in decision making but this in turn has created distrust among the people involved. For example: one person mentions with 0.5 to 0.8 million BDT in the hand of few people for deciding how to spend the money create difference of opinion and distrust.

For such interest of the development organizations few of the *Khyang* have taken initiatives to compile and create a *Khyang* dictionary with the funding of United Nations Development Programme. For this task *Khyang* of different people met several times to compile *Khyang* words. However, this has created another problem for regarding the alphabet of the language, as some of the *Khyang* proposed to use Roman alphabets while others demand to use Alphabets which were previously used by the traditional healers (mostly Alphabets of Burmese language). Those who want to use the Burmese alphabets regard Roman alphabets as the language of Christians. The opportunity of compiling '*Khyang* words' has widened the divide between Christian and Buddhist *Khyang*.

5.6 Household responsibilities and division of labor

The changes in occupational practices among the indigenous people have, of course, affected both men and women, but these changes have not been uniform. In agriculture women and men shared the work more or less equally. However, with the growth of non-farm activities the division of labor between men and women has become far more pronounced.

In *Rangamati*, though the *Khyang* are engaged in more diverse occupations, there is little difference between responsibilities of men and women (except child rearing related activities). On the other hand in *Bandarban* the divisions of labor and household responsibilities are more prominent. During my stay in the village I observed that in terms of cultivation men are generally expected to plough and prepare isle of the agricultural lands while women are expected to involve in other activities. Other than these two tasks men and women perform all the other tasks together in agriculture. However, the household

preparation of food is exclusively done by the women for the extended family and caring of children is also expected to be done by the females. Whereas in *Rangamati* I have seen men contribute in food preparing tasks as many of the women here are engaged in office work which require a specific amount of time outside the household. However, food preparing tasks are considered a task for women and commonly women prepare food for her family.

The scenario is similar to the Bangladesh scene in general, women in farm household are relatively more involved in reproductive roles like household chores, but less involved in productive activities than their husbands. However, they are more involved with home gardening and livestock rearing (Parveen, 2009).

In *Bandarban*, agriculture is still considered the mainstay of the *Khyang* economy. The role of men and women within the agricultural field one where men would clear the area and women would tend to the weeding and harvesting. In agriculture related activities in Bangladesh women are more involved with process of harvest like: winnowing, parboiling, drying and storing and preservation of grains and straw. They are less likely to be involved in land preparation to transplanting, harvesting and threshing and also marketing (Parveen, 2009). However, now it seems that women are becoming increasingly involved in all aspects of agricultural cultivation and are often taking the lead role as men move towards daily labor in neighboring places. This may not be the case in remotest areas; this finding is based on villages close to town (accessible in approximately two to three hours) and villages that are slowly moving towards urbanization.

5.7 Cash crop

Agriculture is often combined with cultivation of cash crops such as ginger, turmeric, banana and other vegetables. The production of cash crop is decided by the head of the household (usually a male) but the whole family participates in the production process. In terms of marketing and selling the produce both men and women take part if they are going to sell it in the local market. I have also seen women to carry the products in the local market and sell. However, when they produce enough crop to supply to different markets they sell to the middleman/ agent who come to the fields to buy the harvests. The farmers only pick the products and pile it near the field.

The increase in the production of cash crops and marketable resources in the indigenous community raises many concerns. The growing market economy and increasing commercialization of agriculture more interaction with wider community, depend on the market and credit facilities and also kind of creating 'others' in the market sphere. Stephen Gudeman (2001) argues that the economy consists of two realms, the community and the market. The community refers to "real on-the-ground associations and to imagined solidarities that people experience" while the market realm "designates anonymous, short-term exchanges" (Gudeman, 2005). Market and community complement one another, as no market system exists without the support of communal agreements. In case of the *Khyang* the broader social structure influence the market and the *Khyang* remain marginalized also in the market.

Decisions about agriculture (how to plan and perform) are taken by the men, and women are generally not involved in these formal decision making processes. For example: I have been in touch with a family who has been cultivating rice and other vegetables and they also had banana orchard in the hills. The household head had three sons and one daughter. The second son was studying diploma on agriculture and wanted to cultivate mixed cropping mango with banana. However his father decided not to do so and kept half the hill unproductive. The son who was studying agriculture was frustrated and told me that none here understand the economic benefit that could have been achieved if a mixed cropping orchard was there.

Another crop not traditionally planted which seems to have become quite popular in the recent years is tobacco. There is a large element of environmental degradation (deforestation) involved in tobacco

cultivation, as wood from forests is used for drying and curing tobacco. The tobacco companies provide money in advance to the farmers for tobacco cultivation. Tobacco Company's local agents contract the farmers and almost all the households cultivate tobacco in the winter.

There are many implications of cash crops on cultural practices around agriculture and social dynamics within and outside the community. When I asked both men and women about growing cash crops they said that the positive side of introducing cash crops outweighed the negatives. The positives are that it is now possible to get easy access and consume different luxury goods because of the advent of the market. They buy different things with the money they earn by selling the crops they produce in the fields. However, this has negative sides as they are no more subsistence agriculturists they have to be depended on the market for daily necessary goods.

5.8 Commons and private ownership of land

The people of the CHT are toady showing more interest in producing for the market and private ownership of land has become important in order to secure their livelihoods. Consequently, more and more hitherto widen and forest-commons are being converted into homesteads and family-owned orchards and plantations. However those who, for whatever reason, cannot obtain a private plot are now deprived of access to former commons. Similarly, some areas of *Rangamati* have been leased out to non-resident entrepreneurs, causing conflict with local people who used the area for agriculture. Furthermore, indigenous communities do not share the same motivation as the *Bangalee* people for becoming registered owners of their land. As they understand land as a common property of all the *Khyang* and they had not have notion of private property in the recent past. One of my respondent mentioned that during the establishing of Christian Hospital, Chandraghona in 1907, his father was working as a as cook and support staff for the missionary people and the British governor of the area. If he had asked them for land in the area, he could have got the whole *Rangamati* on his name. But he did not think of doing something like that and said that *as for me swidden cultivation was the way of life and notion of registering land on personal name was not a need.*

6 Forms and processes of inequality and marginalization: factors affecting economic opportunities and livelihood strategies

6.1 Production, marketing and selling

I will argue in this subsection that the massive influx of *Bangalee* people into the area is one of the main reasons for the disadvantages or marginalized situation of the ethnic minority groups in CHT. Population growth mean lesser land available for cultivation thus with time the *Khyang* and other groups had to become depended on the market places for purchasing daily needs and to sell their produce.

In case of selling their produce they have a double disadvantage as they do not have access to the bigger markets (controlled by the bigger business men) where they could get more benefit rather they have to be depended on the *Bangalee* middle man. They must depend on the middle man as they do not have the money to arrange transport to take their products to the bigger markets. One of my respondents mentioned that to hire a pick up van to carry goods to Chittagong city required BDT 80,000 to 100,000 (USD 1000-1300) which he does not have, thus, even after knowing all the information and exposed to all the procedure he can not avail the opportunity.

However, in the bigger markets the syndicates of the whole sellers offer lesser money for their produce and they are forced to sell at a low price because they do not have the capacity to preserve (as most of the good are perishable vegetables and fruits).

And once they face economic loss they fall in a spiral downward either they are forced to sell land or to take loan at high interest rates or in condition of advance selling of their produce (the price of advance sell is much lower than the actual price). Different NGO officials I spoke to also mentioned this problem of the *Khyang*, that there is a syndicate for marketing of agricultural products to the cities and town and that the NGOs are working to create a better marketing strategy for the marginalized.

Therefore, they have to remain depended on middle men for trading and its mostly done by the males on the contrary women play the central role in transporting/ carrying and selling products to the local retail market.

To minimize the dependency of the farmers on the money lenders, the government has adopted many initiatives including establishing bank for the agriculturists which offer loans at a nominal rate of interest. Nevertheless, respondents have mentioned that some officials of the loan granting agencies indulge in corrupt practices, which further discourage the *Khyang* and also other minority groups members from taking such loans and builds hatred towards such officials.

These situations gradually culminated in self exclusion and 'acceptance of their fate'. As some the *Khyang* has said that they know how they can get higher price by selling to the retail seller but they do not have the capacity to do so.

6.2 Non-agricultural jobs and education

In general I found that the *Khyang* do not put much emphasis in *education* as they regard that education will not ensure any job for them. They say that they do not have the capacity to compete with the *Bangalee* people and thus they will not get any job after completing education. As they lack the money sometimes they have to make choices between education and working for earning. They cannot continue education because of money also. As one of my informants mentioned that "*I cannot continue paying for my four children's education. I have to support all the children I cannot spent all the money to send one child to the university.*"

Another important factor is that the *Khyang* are a minority among the minority. There are many quotas in education and job sectors for ethnic minority groups however, those were generally for the broad categories and the majority groups among the minority generally get those opportunities and with time the *Khyang* are systematically excluded.

One of my respondents mentioned that he had been applying for a job at the UNDP project operating at the CHT. He said he had applied four times but got rejected every time. He further said "*I did not get the job because I did not have any connections. People with lesser qualifications have been appointed. I never got the opportunity because I am Khyang and do not know any higher officials*".

In case of education also specially in cases of admission at the public university and medical college the *Khyang* believe they do not have equal opportunities compared to other minority groups (contrary to the fact of being minority at the national context some groups are majority and powerful groups among the minorities). I have heard another incidence of a *Khyang* girl wanting to pursue medical studies after passing her secondary and tried to get admission to a public medical college but she did not get admission. She said she has tried to contact the ministers and other officials along with her father so that she gets admission however they were not successful. They (the *Khyang* girl and her father) said *it was the first time a Khyang girl was in a position to get herself admitted in medical studies but could not because of being minority among the minorities.*

6.3 Political representation

For the development of ethnic minority group the establishment of Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (Act of 1998) by the government has created a systematic bias against the *Khyang* and other smaller groups. The council has to have 12 tribal members elected but the formation is proposed as:

- a) Five shall be elected from *Chakma* tribe.
- b) Three shall be elected from *Marma* tribe.
- c) Two shall be elected from *Tripura* tribe.
- d) One shall be elected from the *Mro* and *Tanchangya* tribe.
- e) One shall be elected from *Lushai, Bawm, Pangkhua, Khumi, Chak* and *Khyang* tribe.

So the *Khyang* and other smaller groups are in a disadvantageous position to voice their rights and opinion about development of the ethnic minority. The situation is like Ong's (2000) analysis of what she terms graduated sovereignty as the differential treatment of populations insert different groups of people (*Khyang* and other minority groups) differently into the process of development. The Hill District Council is responsible for overall supervision and coordination of all development activities CHT; therefore, the smaller groups such as the *Khyang* without any representation at the council cannot even express their condition. One of my respondents said "*as we have none of our people at the council nobody thinks about the problem we are facing to make a living*". Another respondent told me that, "*the government would have done things to help us but how would they do. They do not know about the problems. It is problem of us that we cannot inform them what we need*".

Ong (2000) explains that's since Malaysia's independence from Great Britain in 1957, the country has favored the political rights of the Malays on grounds of their status as an 'indigenous' majority population and on their general economic backwardness when compared with the ethnic Chinese and Indians who were descended from immigrant populations. From the 1970s onward, a system of graduated sovereignty has come into effect as the government has put more investment in the bio-political improvement of the Malays, awarding them rights and benefits largely denied to the Chinese and Indian minorities. The system of ethnic-based governmentality has come to racialize class formation and naturalize racial differences in the country.

Similar to the Malaysian case I find that after the Independence of Bangladesh nationalism has been established on the basis of Bangla language, Islam religion, followed by a mass transfer of people in the CHT along with development initiatives based on settled agriculture and private ownership of land. Which in turn has been excluded the *Khyang* and other ethnic minorities of the CHT disregarding their own understanding of self and how to make a living. After the government took initiatives to empower the ethnic minorities through HDC it has proven again marginalizing for the smaller communities like the *Khyang*.

7 Discussion and conclusion

The situation in the CHT and the changes in the economy of the *Khyang* can be explained in line Scott's (2009) argument of how ordinary hill-people deal with a predatory state. Scott's analysis focuses on the various groups residing in the hills of Zomia - a mountainous region in South East Asia comprised of parts of Burma, Cambodia, China, India, Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand. His focus on Zomia is driven by the fact that the region is the largest remaining area that has not been (until quite recently) integrated into a nation state. Indeed, for over two thousand years, the people living in the highlands of Zomia have lived outside the reach of the powerful lowland government (padi-states). The common view of these "hill people" is that they are remnants of the pre-state period and represent an uncivilized and primitive form of living with slash and burn cultivation and animist beliefs. In contrast, those that have moved into the lowlands and become part of the state system have progressed and become civilized. Although Scott is focused on Zomia, it should be noted that governments and those involved in international development efforts tend to hold a similar view towards those living outside 'the reach of the state' in other settings as well. Indeed, this view underpins the efforts to 'fix' the various institutions (economic, legal, political, and social) in societies around the world in the hope of bringing modernity and development to people who are viewed as primitive. Bangladesh

government is no exception and has undertaken many development programmes with such a motivation. In contrast to the view that the people of Zomia are primitive leftovers of the pre-state period, Scott argues that those living in the highlands consciously choose to live outside the reach of the state. Given the possibility of being subject to predatory behaviors by states - including conscription, slavery, excessive taxes, forced labor, and war - people make the deliberate choice to move in to the hills as an act of state avoidance. Thus, settlement in the hills is according to Scott a state-effect.

Scott (2009) mentions that, on a historical view the mankind has inhabited four eras: I) a stateless era, (II) an era of small-scale states encircled by vast and easily reached stateless peripheries, (III) a period of in which such peripheries are shrunk and beleaguered by the expansion of state power, and (IV) an era in which virtually all the entire globe is “administered space” and the periphery is not much more than a folkloric remnant. I believe, the Chittagong Hill Tracts is somewhere between era III and IV. As since 1980s there has been a truly massive transfer of *Bangalee* population in the CHT who served, as in the case of Zomia (Scott 2009) the dual purpose of peopling the frontiers with a presumably loyal population and producing cash crop for export to all over the country and also relieving population pressure from the valleys.

The government initiatives have seized much of their land, established military camps and resettled a huge number of populations in the region. The *Khyang* and other ethnic minority groups who had been practicing swidden cultivation could not avoid the state and have been in competition with the settlers for livelihood. Thus, to have benefits in the trade relations with the *Khyang* and ethnic minority groups the *Bangalee* started to ‘ethnicize’ and marginalize the others.

Scott (2009) further argues that pattern of state-making and state-unmaking produced, over time, a periphery that is composed as much of refugees as of peoples who had never been state subjects. In the process, much of the periphery of states became a zone of refuge or “shatter zone”, where the human shards of state formation create regions of bewildering ethnic and linguistic complexity.

In line with Scott's argument, the situation of the *Khyang* indicates that with the changing economic scenario of the area they are bound to do something to keep up with the daily needs. However, they can no longer themselves produce all the daily necessary items which they consume. This has created a transition from subsistence to market/ cash oriented agriculture (as with the pressure on land and encroaching market there is few options left for the *Khyang*). This process has created a ‘shatter zone’ or ‘zones of refuge’ and a constantly reformulating economy and identity of the *Khyang*. As the state has consolidated the *Khyangs* and other communities of the hills has been adapting to new and altered opportunities and limitations. There has been economic specialization, trade and administrative and political links flourishing as the community is taking advantage of the state opportunities. Though the processes have marginalized the *Khyang*, in response to state supported economic expansion, and state encouragement of settlement, the *Khyangs* have taken up sedentary cultivation; some of them moved closer to state center and establishing trade relations and incorporating traits linguistically and assume identity compatible with the *Bangalee* people.

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