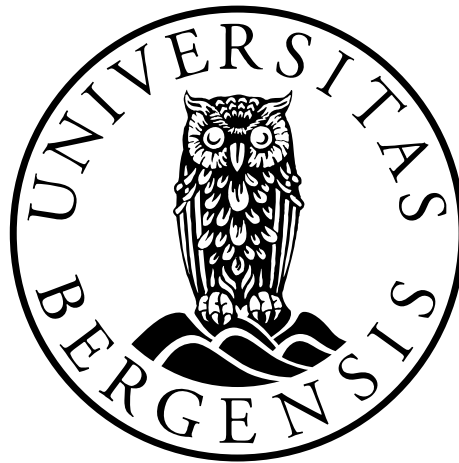


**Dispossession and Ethnic Identity in Expanding State Space of
Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh**

By

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADAB	Australian Development Assistance Bureau
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BFD	Bangladesh Forest Department
CFUG	Community Forest User Group
CHC	Christian Hospital Chandraghona
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CHTDB	Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board
CHTR	Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation
DC	District Commissioner
FD	Forest Department
HDC	Hill District Council
JSS	Jana Samhati Samiti
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IWGIA	International Work Group for Indigenous affairs
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSD	Norwegian Social Science Data Services
RF	Reserved Forests
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USD	United States Dollar
USF	Unclassed State Forest
VCF	Village Common Forest
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
VGF	Vulnerable Group Feeding
WB	World Bank

ABSTRACT

In the milieu of the global development and ‘state’ formation of Bangladesh, the *Khyang* people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are in a situation of economic transition and marginalization. Bangladesh state’s persistence to build *Bangalee* and Bangladeshi nation and its commitment to develop the country socio-economically (formulated and funded by the international development agencies) has led the state’s encroachment of the CHT which were beyond direct state control for most of its history. During my ethnographic fieldwork in *Rangamati* and *Bandarban* of CHT, I found that with the expansion of the state space there has been a mutation of citizenship for the *Khyang*, where their rights and access to land and forests are being limited (and sometimes denied) through government actions and policies. Based on my ethnographic information I argue that as the state built infrastructure and as planned migration of *Bangalee* people took place the livelihood options for the *Khyang* changed from subsistence to market economy and today the *Khyang* are involved in diverse non-agricultural occupations. Consequently, class distinctions emerged in the social structure and, the gendered division of labor is altered (as men are taking more responsibility in household tasks and women are doing income-generating activities). Further, I have observed changes in indigenous practices of food consumption and dressing. With the changed economic frontiers forced by governmental seizure of access to land and forest the *Khyang* were required to change from *Jhum* (shifting cultivation) to plough cultivation, and became integrated in the market economy. New rights, entitlements and opportunities have opened avenues for establishing social networks with people of other ethnic groups; yet, it has also marginalized the *Khyang* economically and socially. While some *Khyangs* benefitted from these processes, the *Khyang* remains as a ‘minority of the minorities’ in CHT as they are denied of minority quotas in jobs and education, which are mostly availed by the larger ethnic groups like the *Bangalees* and *Chakmas*. During fieldwork, it became evident that within a shifting socio-political context *Khyang* identity has diversified. Engagement of the *Khyang* with diverse social networks has created internal differences regarding the subjective belief in their common descent as a group. I found that the idea of *Khyang* identity has become fluid, as for many hill populations of Southeast Asia, being subjected to state expansion and people from the valleys. Based on my ethnographic findings I argue that *Khyang* of different economic, political and educational backgrounds have different thoughts regarding the common history and historical consciousness of *Khyang* as a group is not reproduced by the younger generations. Thus, the *Khyang* now act as ‘ethnic amphibians’ in the CHT.

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CHAPTER ONE

**CONTEXTUALIZATION OF CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS (CHT) AND THE
RESEARCH PROBLEM**

INTRODUCTION

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), the area of my fieldwork is situated in the southeast corner of Bangladesh and constitutes about 10 percent of the total land area. In this region people from different ethnic groups such as *Bawm*, *Chak*, *Chakma*, *Khyang*, *Khumi*, *Lushai*, *Marma*, *Mro*, *Pangkhuia*, *Tanchangya*, and *Tripura*, live including the majority ethnic group of the country the *Bangalee* people. I did my fieldwork among the *Khyang* 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: 61). 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: 103).

The main objective of this thesis is to analyze and discuss the different dimensions of interconnectedness and contestation of ethnic minority groups with the dominant *Bangalee* group who constitute the majority of the country in terms of number of people and economic and political power (Mohsin 1997; Schendel, Mey and Dewan 2001). Through a discussion of state policy, development projects of NGOs and social networks I aim to show how expanding state space and economic transition in the CHT has dispossessed and marginalized the ethnic minority groups and altered their livelihood options, social structure and also limited their rights and access to resources, such as land and forests. Moreover, I will analyze their social networks and identity formation in the changed socio-economic contexts. In this regard, I have will analyze the interrelations of the *Khyang* with other ethnic groups.

The *Khyang* are one of the ethnic minority communities living in the CHT. The geography of the region, in contrast to the rest of the country’s plains, is comprised of hills, valleys, and a dense semi tropical monsoon forest. The three districts in the CHT are known as *Rangamati*, *Bandarban*, and *Khagrachhari* (see Annex 1). My field sites were located in *Rangamati* and *Bandarban* district.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objectives and research questions of the thesis are:

- I) Make a profile of *Khyang* people who are living in CHT in order to understand their livelihood strategies
 - a. What kind of economic activities are the *Khyang* involved with?
 - b. How is the seasonality of their economic activities?
 - c. How are gender roles and responsibilities of the *Khyang* distributed in resource management and livelihood-strategies (production, distribution, consumption and exchange)?
 - d. How do the *Khyang* respond to the changing economic scenario and interacting with others?
- II) Analyzing rights and access to resources such as land and natural resources in order to understand the effect of government and non-government policies on *Khyang* livelihood
 - a. What factors (especially government policies) affect *Khyang* economic opportunities and livelihood strategies?
 - b. How do policies of land and forests affect inter and intra dynamics of *Khyang* community and their relation with other groups?
 - c. How do the *Khyang* perceive government and non-government policies and other factors, which affect their access to land and other resources?
- III) Exploring *Khyang* identity and social networks of *Khyang* life in order to understand the interconnectedness and contestation of the *Khyang* with other ethnic groups (*Bangalees* and others) and the outside world
 - a. What constitute *Khyang* identity?
 - b. How do they interact and connect with different social, religious, ethnic or political networks?
 - c. How do the *Khyang* perceive and counteract factors (if any) that prevent them to connect with the wider social networks?
 - d. What role does *Khyang* identity play in economic relationships within and outside the group?
 - e. Whether involvement with diverse livelihood activities has created diversification in identity internally and public image for the outside ethnic groups?

THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS (CHT) OF BANGLADESH

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 southeast and by the Bay of Bengal to its south. Siliguri Corridor of India separates the CHT from the Democratic Republic of Nepal and the Kingdom of Bhutan. 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 *Bangla* 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. Bangladesh got independence from Pakistan in 1971 and founded on *Bangalee* nationalism (Mohsin 1997: 50). The *Bangalee* form the country’s predominant ethnic group, whereas there are 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%).

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 British colonial empire carved out the present boundaries of the CHT in 1860 (Roy 1995; Mohsin 1997). CHT covers an area of approximately 13,189 square kilometers. Formerly, the Chittagong Hill Tracts was a single unified district, but administrative reorganization has led to its division into the three districts of *Rangamati*, *Khagrachhari* and *Bandarban*. The CHT was under the British Rule from 1860-1947, followed by Pakistani rule until 1971 and then became a part of Bangladesh (when Bangladesh got independence from Pakistan).

The landscape of CHT differs from the rest of Bangladesh, which is flat and faces regular monsoon flooding. The hills of CHT stretch 1,800 kilometers from western Myanmar to the eastern Himalayas in Tibet. Along this mountain range are a variety of ethnic minority groups live in a scattered manner. The hills are rich in natural resources, for example timber and bamboo. In recent years, Bangladeshi companies and investors through government allocation of forests have developed parts of the CHT for pulpwood and rubber plantation (Ray and Salam 2009).

There are 11 different indigenous ethnic minority groups (recognized by the government) in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Customary laws and practices within these communities vary, but there are 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. There are also significant differences in terms of language, 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 subsistence cultivation in CHT called *Jhum*¹ (Roy 1995).

The CHT became formally a part of the then province of Bengal in 1860. Historically, the CHT had largely been an independent and self-governed territory until 1860 when the British took it over (Ishaq 1975). In the year 1900, the British passed and enforced the ‘Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900’, which declared the CHT as an ‘Excluded Area’ and put an embargo on ‘outsiders’ (people other than members of the indigenous groups) to settle or purchase land in the territory of CHT. This regulation provided substantive autonomy to the indigenous people. The autonomy was in force until 1962 when the government of Pakistan replaced the ‘excluded area’ status of the CHT with that of ‘tribal area’ in a constitutional amendment. This constitutional change paved 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: 17).

The percentage of *Bangalee* people in the CHT increased rapidly in mid-1950s when the Pakistan Government initiated construction of the Kaptai Hydro-electric project to meet the demand for energy for industrialization and domestic consumption with financial assistance from Canada and the World Bank (WB). The project was completed in early 1960s. This project, along with development of other industrial units in CHT (for example the *Chandraghona* Paper Mill in Kaptai area) has provided the government with an opportunity for allowing non-indigenous population’s influx in the name of economic development (Ray and Salam 2009).

¹ Slash and burn cultivation

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* is responsible for *Rangamati* district, the *Mong* for *Khagrachhari* and the *Bomang* is for the *Bandarban* district. Each circle is divided into numerous of ‘*mauza*’² (territorial zones). There are about 380 *mauza* in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. A ‘Headman’ leads each *mauza*. *Mauzas* are further divided into several villages and each led by a village ‘*Karbari*’³. 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* and homesteads (Amnesty International 2013).

KHYANG OF THE CHT

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

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).

Among the *Khyang* the father of a family is the head of the household. Men are the decision makers in the home and society. Male dominance among the *Khyang* is evident by the fact

² *Mauza* is the grass-root revenue unit. *Mauza* is placed under a Headman (or Dewan) appointed by the concerned Circle Chief, in concurrence with Deputy Commissioner.

³ Each *mauza* is sub-divided into smaller units called *Para*, which actually contains individual village settlement. Such villages are placed under a *Karbari*, who is appointed by the *mauza* Headman with the concurrence of the concerned ‘Chief’.

that sons get share of paternal land however, the daughters do not have any share in inheritance (Khyang 2007: 96). The logic is as girls get married to other families and goes to her husband's house after marriage. So they are organised after a patrilineal kinship system and inheritance follow the patri-lineage and at marriage they practice parti-local settlement. However, if the parents want they can give the daughters a share in inheritance.

In conversations with the *Khyang*, they said that they are very peaceful and always love to live at a safe distance from other groups of people. That is why they always choose to settle on remote hilltops far from the villages in valleys. They call a house 'em' and a village 'nam'. Most of them depend on *Jhum* cultivation and it is their only source for livelihood/subsistence. The *Khyangs* through generations has practiced *Jhum*/ slash and burn cultivation.

There is no other population in the entire region who has been as badly affected by the expansion of governmental Reserved Forests (RF⁴) and plantations as the *Khyang* (Chapola 2009: 5). Life became extremely difficult for them after the British Government had imposed a ban on *Jhum* cultivation in 1900. However, at the local level people continue to practice *Jhum*. Though the ban on *Jhum* has continued it is enforced strictly in different areas at different times periodically to restore soil fertility which degrade because of continuous *Jhum* cultivation, one such strict ban was imposed during the *Jhum* season of 2009 (World Food Programme 2011: 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: 5).

The *Khyang* require vast land for *Jhum* but they have been losing accessible land for cultivation because of expansion of the reserved forest (see chapter three) and construction of government driven hydroelectric project in the Kaptai Lake (Uddin 2008: 18). 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 *Bangalee* settlement (Adnan 2004; Schendel, Mey and Dewan 2001; Mohsin 1997; 2003). These forces

⁴ Reserved Forests (RF): These are lands under the direct control of the FD. The Forest Act is applicable for their protection. Forest Department (FD) is responsible for the management of the forest reserves. However, the collective rights of ethnic groups to use and extract forests resources are not recognized.

allegedly invoked armed resistance by different ethnic groups to which the Bangladesh government responded by means of military operations. However, in 1997 Bangladesh government and the *Pahari* groups demanding autonomy signed a peace accord after decades of violence in CHT (Barkat et al. 2009).

On this backdrop, different ethnic groups of CHT including the *Khyang* are in competition with *Bangalee* people and complying with the government and non-government policies to make use of the available resources to sustain their livelihood. Thus, I will describe the diversified interrelations between different ethnic communities living in the CHT (specially the *Khyangs*) and discuss how the *Khyang* negotiate and sustain their ethnic identity in this changing context where they cultivate limited *Jhum*, depend on the market for selling their products and buying daily needed groceries. That is how they are responding in their transition from subsistence to market economy.

FIELD LOCATIONS

The locality in *Bandarban (Dolbonia)* is about 15 kilometers away from the *Bandarban* town center, and three kilometers away from the nearest road that goes to the town center. The area has no electricity and from the nearest road junction to the cluster of households one generally has to walk but occasionally one may reserve mini-taxi or motorbike. People of the *Khyang* community here are Buddhist. Among the 65 *Khyang* household (360 people) most are plough cultivators, thus, they are the *Laitu Khyang*. However, there are people with other occupations also, such as small business (shop owner), school teacher, non-government officials, and daily laborers who work in the agricultural fields nearby, in the brickfield or at the *Bandarban* town. These forms of wage labor however, are generally a supplement to people's income from agriculture. They cultivate rice, different kinds of vegetables, some spices like ginger and many of them cultivate tobacco. Another distinctive feature of this area is that the surrounding areas of the *Khyang* cluster of houses are settled by *Bangalee* Muslims.

The area of *Rangamati* where the *Khyangs* live is within a kilometer of a major road junction to *Rangamati* Town, *Bandarban* Town, Chittagong City and *Karnafully* Paper Mills. There is a bus terminal, taxi stand, commercial bank, big market place, ferry to cross *Karnafully* river, commercial banks, hospital, industries, abundance of shops and stalls where a great

variety of commodities are sold. People of the *Khyang* community here are follower of the Baptist Church. In the ‘Mission Para’ (neighborhood) of *Rangamati*, there are 54 households (297 people). Traditionally they were *Jhum* cultivators (shifting cultivation) and they regard themselves as *Kongtu Khyang*. Since they settled in this area around 1900 they have gradually stopped cultivation, and as of now none of the *Khyang* living here are engaged with any sort of agricultural production but a few cultivate fruits in homestead garden for consumption. People here have diverse forms of wage labor including medical doctor, accountant, medical technician, nurses, cook, cleaner, security guard, beautician, garments worker, daily labor, shop owner, non-government officials, etc. People of this area are more politically active compared to the *Khyang* of *Bandarban* and there is an elected *Khyang* member in the local government body called ‘Union Parishad’⁵. *Khyang* of the *Rangamati* live in close contact with different ethnic groups such as the *Bangalee*, *Marma*, *Chakma*, *Tanchangya*, However, *Bangalee* people living in adjacent areas are either Christian (followers of the Baptist Church) or Hindu.

None of my field sites is in any respect a bounded system. The personal networks of inhabitants have so many dispersed interrelations. However, *Khyang* of the *Rangamati* have more non-local linkages than the *Khyang* of the *Bandarban*. In addition, their social identities are partly defined through their engagement with other ethnic groups, political organizations and institutions of national scale, which contribute to the creation of shared understanding and situational identities.

The context of my position as a researcher in relation to my field sites can be analyzed in line with Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 13) where they discuss the distinction between ‘field’ and ‘home’ and the hierarchy regarding purity of field sites. They claim that if the ‘field’ is a place that is ‘not home’ then some places be more ‘not home’ than others, and hence more appropriate, more ‘fieldlike’. According to them, largely because the idea of ‘the field’ remains un-interrogated such hierarchies of field sites remain in anthropology.

Further, Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 12) argue the function of narratives of entry and exit into field is to authenticate and authorize the material that follows, most of which used to be written from the standpoint of an objective, distant observer. Fieldwork at ‘home’ or distant

⁵ Union Parishad is the smallest rural administrative and local government units in Bangladesh.

‘field sites’ and anthropological writing implies presumption that ‘otherness’ means difference from an unmarked self (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 14f). Doing fieldwork in a situation where I as a person and my ethnic identity as a *Bangalee* are a part of the social context has blurred the subject/ object distinction on which an ethnography is conventionally founded (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 33). Though I am part of the *Khyangs*’ everyday life being a *Bangalee*, in my interaction with them I tried to be impartial in my opinion during discussions.

As I have combined two field sites, I also had to integrate observation and interview methods as many of my enquiries were to be discovered from the memories of the *Khyang* as Malkki (1997) did among the Hutu refugees in Tanzania. In line with Malkki (1997: 87), I was investigating the transitory phenomena among the *Khyang*, which is not produced by any particular cultural milieu. I will continue my discussion on method in the methodology section later in this chapter.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ethnicity and identity

In anthropology, the term ‘ethnicity’ is contested and there are many different understandings of what ethnicity is about. According to Weber (1978 [1922]), the term ‘ethnic group’ can be defined as human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration. Ethnic identity is further marked by a group’s distinctiveness and the recognition of common cultural, linguistic, religious, behavioral or biological traits, real or presumed, as indicators of contrast to other groups and it can make differences in interaction and social relationship (Eriksen 2001; 1993).

My field sites and the CHT are comparable to Eriksen’s (1992 b) field situation in Trinidad, which, he termed as ‘creole cultures’ suggesting presence of an incongruous admixture of cultural traditions classified as ‘plural societies’. In line with Eriksen, I will treat ethnicity as the systematic and enduring social reproduction of basic classificatory difference between categories of people who perceive each other as culturally distinct.

In this thesis, I will discuss how *Khyang* ethnic identity is formed and through what means it may change. I will analyze how the *Khyang* talk and think about their own and other groups, explain ethnic identity of the *Khyangs* in line with Eriksen's concept of 'situational ethnicity'. In Trinidad and Mauritius, as in the CHT virtually any situation involving people from different ethnic membership has a varying ethnic character (Eriksen 1992 b: 18). For example, Eriksen claims personal economic failures in Trinidad are frequently explained by the notorious dishonesty/ partiality of an ethnic category and where informal economic networks are ethnically bounded (Eriksen 1992 b). Similarly, in case of CHT and my field sites interactions between the *Khyangs* and other ethnic groups especially the *Bangalee* people are characterized by distrust (see chapter two).

Fredrick Barth pointed out that ethnic group boundaries are a matter of membership and only socially relevant (Barth 1969). Barth (1969: 15) argues the boundaries to which attention must be given are of course social boundaries, even if they have territorial counterparts. If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion.

Barth (1969) understood ethnicity as ideas perpetually negotiated and renegotiated by both external ascription and internal self-identification. He argues that a Southern Pathan from the homogeneous, lineage organized mountain areas, can sometimes find the behavior of Pathans in Swat so different from their own values that they declare their northern brothers 'no longer Pathan' as their overt pattern of organization seems much closer to that of Panjabis (1969: 13). Thus, the cultural diversity which is observed between different Pathan communities and which is comparable to communities and neighboring non-Pathan groups does not provide criteria for differentiating persons in terms ethnic identity. Comparatively, in CHT since the massive migration of *Bangalee* people, the day-to-day interactions between different groups might create a situation where the *Khyang* and the *Bangalee* people are having similar customs and practices. In such a situation I will analyze how the *Khyangs*' ethnic boundaries are maintained in line with Barth's (1969: 19) argument that members of this society select only certain cultural traits (for instance patrilineal descent for the Pathans), and make these the unambiguous criteria for ascription to the ethnic group.

Further, I will analyze how, when, and why different markers of ethnic identity become salient during *Khyangs*' interaction with other group members, involvement in diverse social

networks in changing socio-economic settings (see chapter four). In addition, I will analyze the transformation of identity of the *Khyang*. There are always internal tensions and inconsistencies among the various identities and group memberships of individuals (Calhoun 1994). Individuals negotiate their identities within the ‘interaction order’⁶ and present an image of themselves (of self) for acceptance by others (Jenkins 2008: 93). The more people have to do with each other in everyday life, the more likely they will be to identify each other as fellow individuals, rather than primarily by reference to their collective identifications (Jenkins 2008: 147). In CHT, the *Khyang* has been involved in different activities for livelihoods and I therefore discuss whether these activities have created diversification in identity among the *Khyang* internally and in their public image for the outside ethnic groups.

Further, from the point of view of national politics, the national constitution of Bangladesh in 1972 did not have any provision for ‘autonomous status’ to the CHT or cultural distinctiveness to the hill people (ignoring their claim). This has generated a deep-seated fear among the hill people that more lands will be taken away by the government as previously during 1957 and 1963 the ‘Kaptai dam’ had submerged 40% of the CHT cultivable lands. Further, ethnic identities were and are being used as a means to mobilize and politicize people along ethnic lines towards a separatist movement (Kabir and Ahmed 2012). I will therefore, discuss the ways different ethnic groups maintain their interrelationships and connect with the outside world and how ethnic identity is involved in ‘politics of identity’ (c.f. Scott 2009: 243).

Resources and livelihoods: production, consumption, distribution and exchange

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: 143). How the *Khyangs* maintain their livelihoods and the ways they are involved in *production, distribution, consumption* and *exchange* (of resources) are in particular discussed in chapter two.

⁶ The *interaction order* is the human world as constituted in relationships between individuals, in what-goes-on-between-people (Jenkins 2008: 39). In other words, it is the face-to-face domain of dealings between individuals.

Turner (1986: 114) argues that forms and processes of *production* is the manner in which a society pragmatically defines itself and the boundary between itself and another society. Therefore, it is essential to focus on the situations of interaction between different ‘modes’, sectors or levels of production. I hold that such an approach will open up for understanding the possible interrelationships of *Khyang* with other ethnic groups as they had to change their cultivation practice from *Jhum* to plough and also integrated with the market economy (Mohsin 1997; Schendel, Mey and Dewan 2001). The consequences of this change in mode of production might alter the way in which the society (in this case the *Khyang*) organizes access to land, labor, energy, technology, information and economic, political and social relations (c.f. Narotzky 2001: 4070). To explore the transformations associated with the change in mode of production among the *Khyang* is important for my thesis because in line with Gudeman (2005) I analyze how the *Khyang* responses to adapt with the transition from economic transactions at the community level to the market realm where people engage in short term exchanges.

More frequently, ‘division of labor’ is used to address particular production processes and the assigning of individuals or groups to positions within the process. The concept of ‘division of labor’ was designed originally to explain the ‘integration of the social body’ through the necessary dependence between specialized domains of work (Durkheim 1933). Therefore, I discuss on the division of labor among the *Khyang* in order to illuminate the new frontiers of interaction of the *Khyang* and impacts of the changing economic pattern. In this regard, I will analyze my data and discuss in chapter three in line with Kasmir and Carbonella (2008: 7) who argue that the process of economic assimilation creates its own ‘other’.

Changes in production systems influence the kind of produce and goods are exchanged. On the other hand, production for exchange is a principal catalyst for the transformation of social life (Bloch and Parry 1989: 7). Through new economic activities and being involved in a larger market networks older solidarities erodes and it might also promote a wider and more diffuse sort of social integration (Simmel 2004 [1978]: 410f). Thus, it is also pertinent to investigate the new forms of networks of the *Khyang* in economic and social life. I discuss the forms of social networks of the *Khyang* in chapter four and analyze how ethnic identity place the *Khyang* in a hierarchical order during interaction with *Bangalee* people and people of other ethnic groups (see chapter four).

Social networks

The connectivity of social networks and dynamic exchange among its members and with members of other social groups might allow a multiplication of resources that one owns (Rosas 2001: 42) and access to entitlements is contingent on having a well-connected patron who can channel claims and applications (Hansen and Stepputat 2006: 306). In North-western Bangladesh, Shafie and Kilby (2003: 3) show that the clustering and hierarchical arrangement of ethnic identities constructs social barriers, such as discrimination in the labor market that prevent wider social networks of ethnic minorities. Thus, in chapter four I discuss how the *Khyang* identify, connect and maintain social relations with the different social, religious, ethnic or political networks including the dominant ethnic groups. This is deemed important because each person's network – the particular set of other persons with whom he or she recurrently interacts – is based on that persons own selection among the opportunities of persons that occur.

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) (2012) reports that in CHT the military are directly involved and on many occasion provide covert support to the numerous ethnic/ communal attacks on minority villages. These communal conflicts between the ethnic minority communities and the *Bangalee* people are often motivated by the quest for control of lands. I assume incidences of violence over the years may have created disruption in the life and networks of the *Khyang* and they might have developed indigenous strategies of intercommunity connections like the *Iroquois* discussed by Jordan (2013). The Iroquois remained largely self-governing until after the American Revolution. Thereafter, they were confined to reservations and became engulfed by thousands of Euro-American settlers moving into lands secured by a series of controversial treaties between the Iroquois, the new United States, and its constituent states (Jordan 2013: 31).

The Iroquois responded establishing 'satellite villages'- smaller communities placed nearby the principal towns, usually labeled 'satellite villages' (Jordan 2013: 31). Satellite communities appeared within the Iroquois' homeland during the 1500s. These satellites local, regional, and extra-regional served numerous functions for both Haudenosaunee communities and newcomers (Jordan 2013: 38). Incorporation of outsiders provided the Iroquois with allies. Such allies were useful for military expeditions and marriage possibilities, and they could provide valuable information about their former home regions and social ties to those

groups that still resided there. For allied populations, close ties with the Iroquois provided military protection coupled with ongoing semi-autonomous status (Jordan 2013: 38). Because of the settlement of *Bangalee* population, presence of the military and new market opportunities I discuss how the *Khyangs*' relations with the people of other ethnic groups is shaped and take forms.

The diverse social networks of the *Khyang* and the transformation of identity and historical consciousness is will be analyzed in line with Malkki's (1995) discussion on how historical consciousness is embedded and emerges from particular, local and lived circumstances. She argues, based on information collected from two groups of Hutu refugees from 1972 conflict in Burundi. Among that, one group was living in refugee camps and other in town neighborhood. This is comparable to my field sites as the village in *Bandarban* is distant from urban localities whereas the area of *Rangamati* is at the vicinity of Chittagong city and I found variations in identity formation in the two sites.

State policy and development: dispossession, marginalization and graduated sovereignty

During 1980s, the practitioners of *Jhum* were subjected to the development program of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB), which encouraged people to practice a settled mode of cultivation in cooperative farms. The objective of the program was to settle the landless swidden cultivators into a settled form of land usage. The people who had communal properties were allotted 5.25 acres of land on individual basis for the cultivation of various vegetables. However, the land allotted had slopes of 20% to 40%, which were only suitable for fruit and tree crop cultivation, and not suitable for rice cultivation, the staple food for the hill people (Mohsin 1997: 124). As they did not had the opportunity to cultivate rice they became dependent on the market for selling their produce and for buying the necessary staple foods. The development project did not plan for marketing, preservation or storage and consequently made the hill people dependent on the *Bangalee* people who controlled all the local markets. *Bangalee* traders can manipulate prices as the produce of the *Pahari* people are of perishable nature that needs to be sold fast before getting decomposed (Mohsin 1997: 124ff; see chapter three).

The resentment of the minority ethnic groups against the initiatives of allotting lands for plough cultivation by the government of Bangladesh was backed by their idea regarding

lands. The concept of landlessness was alien to the *Khyang* and other ethnic minorities practicing *Jhum* as they regard land to be communal property. It was therefore, a case of imposing *Bangalee* notion of settled agriculture and land ownership upon the *Pahari* people. The land acquired by the state was subsequently settled with *Bangalee* people (Mohsin 1997). The program of allotting lands to the ethnic minority families to be settled was financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), who also recommended and financed the formation of CHTDB in 1976 to prepare projects and programs for the development of CHT (Mohsin 1997: 120).

Further, the absence of adequate transport infrastructure was identified by the government as a primary restraint in the economic development of CHT. Eventually the Australian Development Assistance Bureau (ADAB) then undertook the construction of 66-kilometer long road from *Rangamati* to *Khagrachhari*, besides other roads were upgraded (Mohsin 1997: 131). However, the local population resented this road construction and regarded it as a way of controlling the hill people through swift military movement and for the benefit of *Bangalee* traders (Mohsin 1997: 131). The initiatives of the Bangladesh government, such as allotting private lands to individual families and construction of road networks can be analyzed in line with Scott's (2009: 330) argument of expansion of state space for making the hill people taxable.

Scott (2009) writes about how hill-people deal with a predatory state. Scott's analysis focuses on the various groups residing in the hills of Zomia in South East Asia, which is an area 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. Scott analyzes how the hill people negotiate with the coming of the state and argues that Zomia can be understood as a 'state effect'. In line with Scott I discuss in chapter three (see also chapter four) how the *Khyangs* negotiate their rights, maintain their livelihood and ethnic identity in an area comparable to that of Zomia.

The situation of the CHT and the ethnic minority groups in relation to Bangladesh states' endeavor to modernize and introduce private ownership and subsequent land loss or dispossession of the *Khyang* and other ethnic groups can be analyzed in line with Murray Li's (2010: 394) argument that in much of Asia peasants (plough agriculturists) were sent into the

highland as the ‘territorial spearhead’ of the state in order to tame unruly tribes. They were also expected to supply the labor, taxes, and surplus produce that would boost industrialization. As the settler/ migrated people take center stage, the populations that distinctly marked as ‘tribal’ in the colonial period are been treated as a national embarrassment to be brought up to modern standards as quickly as possible.

In this way the use of land is reserved from some actors and denied to others, consequently the *Khyang* are excluded from access to land (c.f. Hall, Hirsch and Murray Li 2011: 4). In this regard, different kinds of regulations, fear of possible violence and market demands have been critical for *Khyangs*’ dispossession from land (c.f. Hall, Hirsch and Murray Li 2011: 16ff; see also chapter three). Here I would also like to mention that the marginality of the *Khyang* is to be understood as a social construction and an ongoing relationship with power, be it the power of the state, market forces or power of the majority people of the country (Murray Li 1999: 2).

The differential treatment of populations through bio-political measures may insert different groups of people differently into the process of global capitalism something which may overlap with pre-formed racial, religious, gender hierarchies, and fragment citizenship for people who are all nominally speaking, citizens of the same country— this is what Ong termed graduated sovereignty (Ong 2000: 62). I hold that this is a similar tendency in Bangladeshi policy as the *Bangla* language and prioritization of Islam have been the main tools in shaping *Bangalee* and Bangladeshi nationalism. This was done by the governments to gain political power, which in turn have alienated the ethnic minority groups (Mohsin 1997: 75). I will discuss the process of marginalization of *Khyang* in relation to state formation and citizenship in chapter three.

Moreover, as the state’s interventions also are influenced by the international development organizations as powerful actors impose their interests, values and beliefs onto people of the developing world, I also discuss the relation between state policy and foreign aid, investments, Non-governmental Organization (NGO) projects as part of commitment to international development (c.f. Crewe and Axelby 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Initially, I made contacts with some of people who live in my research areas so that I could hire research assistants from the *Khyang* community and find a place to live in the community. However, I could not find a place to live among the *Khyang* in *Rangamati*, so I stayed as a paying guest with a *Marma* minority family five minutes' walk from a *Khyang* cluster of households. The household head of my host family works for the Christian Hospital and lives in a house in the 'Mission Para' with his wife, son and daughter. They also provided me with food during my stay at *Rangamati*. In *Bandarban*, I lived with a *Khyang* family with four children and where both the head of the household and his wife worked as farmers in their self-owned farm. In both neighborhoods, there were a few shops where different snacks and tea were sold. These were the localities where I could get in touch with men of the community and discuss different issues. There were also open spaces where young people used to play football and cricket. To talk with the women I used to visit *Khyang* houses in the afternoon.

Though most of the *Khyang* speak *Bangla*, I hired assistants because the *Khyang* also use their own spoken language in conversations. The research assistants helped to get acceptance in the community and in gaining the trust of the people I wanted to engage in conversation. However, hiring research assistant had its drawbacks too; they proposed to go to the people they thought would know much about my research topic. To avoid being directed towards their own friends and family and to get access to different groups and collect broad data, I had to tell my research assistants that I would go to every households of the community. I hired three research assistants, one in *Rangamati* and two in *Bandarban*. All of my research assistants were young men; two of them were studying in *Rangamati* town. While one of the research assistants of *Bandarban* left school before completing secondary level. At the time of my fieldwork, he was working as a teacher.

In the field, I tried to come into contact with different ethnic communities and talk to people randomly on the streets, markets, tea stalls, bus stops, etc. I participated in informal gatherings of different groups of people, in particular the *Khyang*, with an intention to get information about their local networks and their interaction with others and amongst themselves (c.f. Barth 1983).

During my stay in the villages, I was a participant observer among the *Khyang*. In fact, sitting, asking, listening and participating in their daily activities- is to conduct participant observation, which entails the systematic, detailed, nonjudgmental, concrete descriptions of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study (Marshall and Rossman 2006). Being a participant observer I gathered information about the economic activities of the households and how values and norms are employed and produced through everyday life. For example, I have participated in prayer meetings of the *Khyang* in *Rangamati* and seen how they interact with the *Bangalee* people who they identify themselves with in terms of religious belief. Further, in those meetings different individuals raised and talked about different issues which they would like to seek blessings of the God. This revealed the priority issues for the *Khyangs* and gave me cues for further exploration.

I was a keen observer of the *Khyangs'* daily lives and activities. The importance of observation is supported by Jenkins's (1994: 435ff) argument that what goes on at the French cattle market is to be discovered by observation rather than by listening and the knowledge involved is largely 'non-verbal'. Jenkins show how knowledge and values are transmitted from father to son, but not only by words of mouth but through experience. Without using verbal discourse, it is possible for them to examine the animals and to different series of economic transactions. In the CHT as the *Khyang* are generally perceived as someone from the lower status compared to the *Bangalee* people, I tried to observe the interaction in the market places or in daily activities to bring out the underlying and unuttered knowledge and meanings. However, during observation and data analysis I was aware of the issue that there is no such thing as objective, uninvolved knowledge. Jenkins's (1994: 443) argues that the anthropologist gets caught up in the series of events that constitute social life, where there is no objective truth, but different versions of truth that constitute the event. However, through participant observation with the *Khyang* I could investigate everyday activities and find patterns of interaction and activities (Whyte 1997: 19ff).

I had chosen to be a participant observer, as ethnographic material collected using this method can yield understanding which cannot be obtained through other methods (Jenkins 1994: 436; Keesing 1987: 163). However, since not all aspects of an event are observed simultaneously, the bringing into awareness of the components of the event, as well as the field within which it took place, becomes a retrospective process. To avoid personal biases during data collection I wrote down whatever I had observed and subjective interpretations or

my understanding of the same event (c.f. Mack et al. 2005: 15). I tried to write notes when the events were taking place; however, sometimes I did it afterwards based on my memory.

As a *Bangalee* male participant observer among the *Khyang* I had certain limitations for example I had to inform the families before I went and to talk with the women. So I think I did not have enough information from *Khyang* women compared to the information I have got from *Khyang* men. My situation in the field was similar to what DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 83ff) noted on male and female researchers access to information. They argued that as the sex of the researchers sometimes determine their access to different people, settings, and bodies of knowledge ‘participant observation’ is conducted from a biased or partial position from which stance data is collected.

I have also conducted informal interviews to elicit individual experiences, opinions, feelings, the connections and relationships a person sees between particular, events, phenomena and beliefs. Whenever I met someone who was willing to talk I used to talk and discuss about the day to day problems they face to sustain life, how is the education of the *Khyang* child in the area, what programs they arrange in the locality where people from other communities take part, how do the farmer sell their products in the market places, how arrangement for cultivation are made, or even what do the young people do for recreation. I used to go and sit at the small tea stalls on the afternoons where I could meet almost all the men and took part on whatever issues were being discussed, for example, the political turmoil over general election or reality shows on TV.

Through interviews I also tried to explore how the *Khyang* perceive government policies regarding forest reservations and how those are interlinked with the other ethnic groups and what are the barriers (if any) to engage in their livelihood pursuits and how do they counteract those barriers. I also conducted interviews regarding how the *Khyang* understand past events of their village establishment, what did they do in the past to live and what economic activities they are involved with at present. I have also asked them and tried to understand how they use knowledge of the past for making livelihood and interacting with *Bangalee* people living in the areas (c.f. Giles-Vernick 2006: 90). For example, how the *Khyang* are being dispossessed from the land access to cultivate *Jhum*, what are the problems the *Khyang* face during marketing and selling agricultural products or accessing loans or credits. The interviews were informal initially and as I identified informants that might have

extended knowledge on the areas of my research interest or proposed to talk in detail later, I also conducted formal interviews (c.f. Crane and Angrosino 1992: 57). However, during interviews it was difficult to make people talk about issues regarding government policies and community dynamics. Rather they were interested to talk about my background and how I am feeling living in the village or even how my fieldwork and data collection is going on. During an interview, *Ongsha Khyang* was telling me about parental land holdings and how some of the land was sold to *Bangalee* people at nominal price. In addition, when I asked about his current landholding situation he did not want to talk more and said, “*if I start to talk about this then a lot have to be said.*” However, after a pause he shared his experience regarding how powerfully linked *Khyangs* of his village are talking land controls exercising political and administrative linkages. On other instances, they talked very general which I took as an indication that they did not want to talk on the issue.

Interviews supplemented my data gathered from observation, as during interviews informants own experience and understanding can be captured (Giles-Vernick 2006: 87). I also did group discussions, which helped and aided interpretation of my observations (c.f. Short 2006: 104). However, I was also aware that sometimes the informants may overstate the reality as I was dealing with sensitive issues like the interrelationships between the *Bangalee* and the *Khyang* I did not rely on only one method of data collection rather I have combined observation and interviews. During interviews, I have not put my perspective on the research issues so that participants do not modify responses and describe their own perspectives (c.f. Mack et al. 2005: 39).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a researcher, I followed several ethical considerations such as assurance of confidentiality and anonymity (Bernard 2006). I had taken verbal informed consent through informing the purpose of the research and a description of the researcher (an introduction of myself). The participants were informed about the expected duration of the research, the expected role from them, how the information provided by the informants are stored, how privacy will be ensured and what will be final products of my research (c.f. Scheyvens, Nowak and Scheyvens 2003: 143). Moreover, they were be given the opportunity to withdraw at any time in the process (Mack et al. 2005: 10). Participants were ensured that they will be asked only to express their opinion regarding their life, government policies, their relationship with the

others, how do they make a living. I also assured them that no information they provide would be stored and preserved in a way that nobody except the researcher (me) has access to it. Moreover, to ensure anonymity of the informants' pseudonyms are used. I have also used pseudonyms during writing my field notes.

Further, I was aware that minority groups may remain wary about outside researchers because of their historical experiences (c.f. Scheyvens, Scheyvens, and Murray 2003: 177); however, I did not face any unwelcoming attitude from the community. I have been respectful to the culture and to individual personalities (c.f. Mack et al. 2005: 4).

Moreover, I tried to interview people in their free time not to harm them economically by interviewing during their work hours. However, in many cases whenever I visited homes or talked with them at tea stalls it become very difficult to pay for the food they provided.

As a student in Norway, I have filled in and send in the notification form to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), and complied with the required ethical issues.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In chapter two, I describe and discuss the various *Khyang* economic activities in relation to the changes, which occurred in the *Khyang* communities in terms of livelihood opportunities. The chapter also explores the 'new frontiers' the *Khyang* encounter because of the changing socio-economic scenarios, that is, the coming of the state, administration and commerce. I analyze the changes in *Khyang* production, consumption, distribution and exchange and consequent changes in *Khyang* society, customs and cultural practices concerning ethnic and gender relations and seasonality of economic and agricultural activities. I also analyze the changes in inter and intra community relations of *Khyang*. Based on the findings of my research I argue that the integration with the market economy is responsible for changes in social structure and practices in the *Khyang* community (c.f. Bloch and Parry 1989) and these changes blur the ethnic boundaries of *Khyang* (c.f. Turner 1986). The state-space making process has arguably been constantly reformulating the livelihood and identity of the *Khyang* and in the process they are being marginalized (c.f. Scott 2009).

Chapter three is about *Khyangs'* rights and access, to resources such as land and forests. I discuss how state and government(s) policies have affected the livelihoods of the *Khyang* and how the *Khyang* perceive the policies and development projects undertaken by the government. In line with Ong's (2006) argument for Southeast Asia, I hold that rights and entitlements of the *Khyang* have shifted with the changes of administration of the CHT and influx of the *Bangalee* people in the region. Further, based on my ethnographic findings I argue that in Bangladesh the relations of state officials and the minority groups of the CHT is determined by the differences of power and perception by each groups of the other a tendency observed by Rosaldo (2003) in Southeast Asia, where state officials and also powerful individuals treat the minority groups differently than others, as it is assumed that the powerless people will not be able to resist them. By comparing CHT with Scott's (2009) concept of 'Zomia' for Southeast Asia I find that the government through acquiring *Jhum* land and forcing the *Khyang* to settled cultivation has expanded state space. Development in terms of developing better infrastructure has helped the government to relocate some of its population into CHT, easy transportation of resources from CHT, and facilitated a better administration of the CHT and its people who were partly outside of the state space previously.

In chapter four I describe and analyze different forms of social networks of the *Khyang*, how *Khyang* ethnic identity is produced, transformed and reproduced through engagement with, and establishment of, different networks. As the *Khyangs* increasingly are being involved with different economic activities different forms of social networks are created. I argue that social networks of the *Khyang* define their perception of ethnic identity, that is, a *Khyang's* educational, political and occupational background create situational identities (c.f. Eriksen 1992 b). Further, in line with Barth (1969), I hold that though the *Khyang* put emphasis on their own language, agricultural practices of *Jhum* and historical consciousness as marker of their ethnic identity, with the changing socio-economic circumstances the emphasis on these issues are not necessarily identity markers in all situations. Similar to what Malkki (1995) argues about the collective identity of the Hutu refugees of camps and the assimilating shifting identities of refugees in the town, I hold that the *Khyang* interacts beyond their ethnic boundaries and present themselves differently in different contexts. This tendency is more prominent if perception of the younger vs older *Khyang* or urban vs village dwellers are taken into consideration. Thus, the idea of *Khyang* identity is becoming fluid.

In chapter five, I will summarize the central findings and arguments regarding economic activities of the *Khyang*, relationships between state formation, government policies and marginalization of the *Khyang*. I will also discuss formation of social networks and production and reproduction of the *Khyang* identity. Further, I will situate the CHT and the condition of the *Khyang*, CHT and Bangladesh in the international development discourse. Describing the global processes and ‘development’, I will argue in line with Crewe and Axelby (2013) that the *Khyang*, CHT and Bangladesh have been subject to interest, values and beliefs of powerful international actors and development organizations. The global discourse of ‘development’ understood as economic growth has been influential in changing the life and livelihood of the *Khyang* through promoting and forcing settled agriculture, infrastructural development and market integration. However, these changes in CHT and Bangladesh state have altered customary practices, created an economically vulnerable situation by reformed rights and entitlement on resources, and placed them at the lower tier of hierarchy in their interaction with the state officials and the *Bangalee* people in market places and social contexts.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHANGING ECONOMIC FRONTIERS OF THE *KHYANG*

INTRODUCTION

As the frontiers of Bangladesh government, administration and commerce have pushed into CHT and progressively out to the villages expanding state space (c.f. Scott 2009), people of other ethnic groups especially the *Bangalee* people has encroached further into areas surrounding the *Khyang* villages. Forest conservation and land acquisition are the main effects of these processes, which has caused major changes in *Khyang* livelihood.

In this chapter, I discuss 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. I will argue that among the *Khyang* the changes of economic frontiers have been taking place with the coming of the administration and security forces, massive migration of *Bangalee* people, encroaching market and urbanization, which in the end I see as ‘the coming of the state’. In the process, the *Khyang* have been experienced changes in gender and ethnic division of labor, agricultural production, seasonality of economic activities, intra community and inter community dynamics. The growing market economy and increasing commercialization of agriculture, more interaction with wider community, dependence on the market and credit facilities are initiating changes in *Khyang* community in regard to social structure, customs and practices, and gendered division of labor (c.f. Bloch and Parry 1989: 7). Bloch and Parry (1989: 8) also argue the integration with market economy does not dissolve the relations of dominance that arise from interplay of norms and structure of the society, and I will illuminate how integration with the market has affected the *Khyang* and its position in the social structure of CHT. Based on my ethnographic information I will argue that the changes in the *Khyang* customs and practices, which were part of their unique cultural identity, have blurred the boundary of the *Khyang* ethnic group (c.f. Turner 1986: 114). In the end, the shifting social landscape, social and structural categories and relationships are constantly reformulating economy and identity of *Khyang* (c.f. Scott 2009: 244).

ECONOMY OF THE *KHYANG*: ACTIVITIES AND SEASONALITY

While not all societies have specifically subsistence economies, they all have specific ways of producing food, shelter, clothing and income. Different societies also have different ways of

sharing, distribution and exchange. As Herkovits (1974: 143) argues, there is no society without methods of production, distribution, consumption and some form of exchange, in this section I discuss the *Khyangs'* economic activities in the CHT.

During my fieldwork, the *Khyang* talked about their livelihood in the old days. Traditionally, most of the *Khyang* villages were founded on hills and most of the *Khyangs* depended on *Jhum* (slash and burn) cultivation. Throughout history, it has been their only means for sustaining their livelihood and 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 such as rice/ paddy, sweet potato, watermelon, bean, oil-seed, melon, ginger, etc. When it rains, they dig holes and sow a variety of vegetables and paddy. It only takes a few weeks for the seeds to sprout. The farmers remain very busy attending the crops in the months of September and October and eventually start harvesting crops during November and December. They commonly live in a temporary makeshift house ('peng' or 'pengem') on the *Jhum* lands until the crops are harvested.

However, this practice of *Jhum* is today no longer carried out on a large scale by the *Khyangs* of my field sites. 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., while younger people are 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 are involved in different activities, most of them are plain land agriculturist (plough cultivation) followed by daily labor. *Khyangs* of *Bandarban* are involved in non-agricultural occupations as a supplement to their income from cultivation as now-a-days they do not get enough production to meet their need. This is inflated by increase in consumption needs and decreasing land ownership of the *Khyang*. Influx of *Bangalee* population in the adjacent area has influenced the *Khyang* people to sell much of their land (see chapter three).

Agricultural work and cash crops

There are two major ways by which a people can earn an income from agriculture other than by owning land. These are sharecropping, and casual labor. A man commonly rent out his land to a sharecropper because he is unable to work it himself. Very occasionally, a rich man will allow a poorer man as a favor to sharecrop 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 in half between the landowner and the sharecropper.

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 carry the products to the local market and sell. However, when they produce enough crop to supply to different markets they sell to the middlemen/ agent (*Paikar*) who come to the fields to buy the harvests. The farmer only picks the products and piles it near the field from where the middlemen take/ buy the products.

There is an increase in the production of cash crops and marketable resources in the indigenous community, which raises many concerns for people. The growing market economy and increasing commercialization of agriculture, more interaction with wider community, dependence on the market and credit facilities and also kind of creating 'others' in the market sphere. Stephen Gudeman (2005: 95) 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: 95f). 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 when they go to sell their products.

In case of selling their produce, they have a double disadvantage as they do not have access to the bigger markets in Chittagong as these are controlled by the *Bangalee* businessmen. In the large markets, they could get better prices for their produce but they have to depend on

the *Bangalee* middleman for trading there. Middlemen buy their produce and transport those to the large markets as the *Khyang* themselves cannot afford to transport their produce to Chittagong. *Ongsha*, 48 years in *Bandarban* said 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, even if they go to the large market of Chittagong or at Dhaka the syndicate of the whole sellers offers 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). *Mongchin*, 40 years, who works as a school teacher in *Bandarban*, had shared his experience at wholesale market in Chittagong. He said:

“Last year I had cultivated ginger in my fields and the yield was good so I wanted to sell those directly at Chittagong. I had hired a pick up van to transport the ginger but when I reached there, I was offered BDT 50,000 (USD 625). However, I had to pay this amount just to transport the ginger from Bandarban to Chittagong. The storehouse owners suggested me to leave the products there and go after a week and they will let me know if they find any buyers. I went there a week later but no luck and they suggested me to go again after a week. Eventually I had to sell the products at BDT 40000 (USD 500).”

Therefore, the *Khyang* face economic loss and thus, become marginalized through indebtedness and land loss (see page 72-73). Different NGO officials I spoke to in *Bandarban* 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.

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 company like 'Akij' and British American Tobacco) local agents contract the farmers and almost all the households in *Bandarban* cultivate tobacco in the winter.

When I asked both men and women about effects of 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 and they have to be depended on the market for daily necessary goods.

Daily labor

Khyangs are also involved with daily wage labor. They look for work in the local area and work on the mutual understanding with the person who requires some labor to fix his house or to cultivate land. The wage rate for daily labor varies between 160-200 Bangladeshi Taka (BDT)/ 2- 3 USD per day. Both men and women work as daily laborers but women normally get lesser payment than men do. This is in line with the overall situation of Bangladesh where women get almost 20% less wage than men, when the education of the people considered is below the primary level (Kapsos 2008: 21). This is because women are perceived to have lesser endowments than men do. Women also do domestic work for rich people, as housemaids or domestic servants but in return of rice or other products usually and not cash/wage.

Skilled labor

Some of the *Khyangs* who have technical skills like installing tube wells, masonry usually works with the contractors. The contractors make contract with the client to do the job and hires technician to do the technical tasks. However, the *Khyang* have some reluctance to work for the *Bangalee* contractors and prefer to work with other ethnic minority groups. The reasons for their reluctance was that *Bangalee* people do not really pay as agreed before starting the work and they commonly try to find some faults in the work to pay less. “*Bangalee contractors want more work with lesser price*” *Namishi*, 26 years said to express his view on working for the *Bangalee*.

Shop keeping/ small trading

Khyangs are also involved in small business in the locality where they sell daily needed groceries such as salt, spices, snacks, rice, etc. Sometimes they run the shops themselves but they also hire someone to run the shop. I have seen one of the shops owned by a *Khyang*,

(*Shimul*, 36 years) was maintained and run by a *Bangalee* in *Rangamati*. Shop keeping is not an exclusive task for men or women, I have seen shops run by *Khyangs* of both sex. These shops become 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 backgrounds meet and interact with one another in a light pleasant mode. In these shops, they bring goods from the nearby market places and the income from the shop range from 2000-15000 BDT (USD 25- 200) per day.

Private service sector: the new opportunities

Khyangs are involved in different kinds of private services like teaching at schools, administrative work at different NGOs, nursing, work at the beauty parlors or at the garment factories, etc. Among these, work in garments and work as beautician are mostly done by *Khyang* women. These opportunities has presented themselves as the communication system, that is, infrastructure such as roads, trains, and busses, have become better and connected the *Khyang* with the cities. Once a *Khyang* get a job in the garment factory, beauty parlor or in any NGO, they usually help their relatives to find jobs. In this way many *Khyang* are being connected socio-economically with the *Bangalee* and outside of their immediate village.

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

Thoi Khyang, 52 years, of *Rangamati* said that he had been applying for a job at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) project operating at the CHT. He said that he had applied four times but was 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.” He further said, *“When a Chakma gets a job he always tries to support other Chakmas in getting a job. As they are well off people, they and Bangalees never let us get into the job sector easily.”*

Multiple occupations

The occupational pattern has changed as the *Khyang* increasingly are taking up multiple occupations to maintain their livelihood. *Khyangs* who have permanent jobs at NGOs or other non-agricultural jobs are also involved in small farming. Sometime members of the same household are involved in different job sectors. For example, a *Khyang* man, *Jibon*, 29 years, who works as school teacher also has a small shop, a nurse in Government Hospital *Camelia*, 40 years, also runs at private medical center. These multiple forms of occupation provide for 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 in the local community.

CHANGING OCCUPATIONAL PATTERNS

Development of CHT and marginalization of the hill people

When the British penetrated CHT in 1760, the initial contacts between the hill people and the British were limited to the collection of taxes (Mohsin 1997: 79f). The tax was collected in the form of cotton locally known as 'kapas' and the amount of revenue varied. The British company had made arrangement for collection of taxes through *Bangalee* middleman. Thus, the hill people were vulnerable to exploitation by the *Bangalees* who usually collected more cotton than the amount to be paid to the company (Mohsin 1997: 79). Eventually the CHT became a supplier for raw material for British textile industries. In 1789, the form of tax was changed from kind to cash of three to four rupees for each adult. This further caused the introduction of money-economy in the CHT and made them dependent on the *Bangalee* traders to be able to pay the taxes (Mohsin 1997: 80).

Subsequently the British colonial state planned to change the hill peoples' mode of production. They attempted to replace *Jhum* cultivation by plough cultivation, which required no fallow period for land, thus perceived economically more profitable and was considered technologically more superior. After 1860, taxes were demanded on a territorial basis rather than on the basis of personal following to tie the hill people to a piece of land. Mohsin (1997: 83) argues the introduction of plough cultivation was motivated by the British's interest in increasing revenues from the CHT.

Hill people were also suffered from the government initiated hydroelectric project in the *Kaptai* Lake of *Rangamati* in the late 1950s (see page 5 and 12). After the independence Bangladesh the government also tried to settle the perceived landless *Jhum* cultivators into a settled form of land usage (see page 15-17 and section below). Mohsin (1997: 136) argues development in CHT has stripped the local people from their land consequently made the hill people wary about the government's economic development plans and projects. The hill people started to believe that the government led development projects will not change their life for betterment rather would facilitate the influx of *Bangalees*.

Development projects at the village level had also impact the community dynamics. There have been many development projects in CHT and different organizations organize development committee in areas and provide funding for initiating income-generating activities for example through buying and rearing 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. *Ongsha*, 48 years, in *Rangamati* said:

“With 0.5 to 0.8 million BDT (USD 6250- 10000) in the hand of few people for deciding how to spend the money create difference of opinion and distrust.” He further mentioned, *“when this huge amount of money comes, people do not even spend it properly rather use it for their own purposes and during evaluation meetings they report that the cattle was dead to illness or sometimes say that predators from the forest came and killed the cattle.”*

Reserved forest and land loss: expanding state space

From the British and Pakistan period, the forest department has defined one quarter of the CHT as Reserve Forests (RF) (Adnan and Dastidar 2011). After the independence of Bangladesh, the Forest Department has since the late 1980s been attempting to expand such forests. However, new Reserve Forests can only be created by acquiring the Unclassed State

Forest (USF)⁷ lands on which the ethnic minority of the CHT had common or private land rights (Adnan 2004: 51). Thus, expansion of state forests necessarily entails the loss of lands of the inhabitants of the CHT.

According to my informants forest dependent communities have been involved in such projects of creating new RF merely as providers of cheap wage labor. Even though formally designated a ‘beneficiaries’ or ‘participants’, they have never been allowed to have any meaningful decision-making roles in these forestry projects (Roy 2004: 7). 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. These are in the USF areas in which most of the lands used by the ethnic minority groups are located (Adnan and Dastidar 2011). From 2009, the government attempts have been renewed to acquire customary lands (and, in some instances, the private property) of the local ethnic groups for afforestation⁸ 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 tree, which often are initiated and funded by international banks and donor agencies (Halim and Roy 2006: 3). 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); that is, the support (loan) was allocated with implementation of rules and regulations for formulating development strategies for the hill people. The forestry policies and program activities of the World Bank and the ADB in the CHT have had unfavorable impacts on the traditional land rights (Roy 2004: 6) and were guided by concepts of progress and economic development that are often insensitive to local customs and values (Mohsin 1997: 121) of the *Khyang* and other ethnic groups. The policies and projects of the government have systematically promoted industrial forestry by expanding rubber and timber plantations (none of my research participants were involved in such projects) and strengthening the policing function of the Forest Department. The ADB’s Forestry Master Plan and other policies and projects have impacted negatively upon the forest commons,

⁷Un-classed State Forest Land: These are the lands that are under the control of the Ministry of Land, Government of Bangladesh. They are designated as Un-classed State Forests (USF) and/or *Khas* lands.

⁸ Afforestation is the establishment of a forest or stand of trees in an area where there was no forest.

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 (such as ‘Notified Forests’) have been in circulation in the CHT since 2010. Supported by international donor agencies, when making the case for acquiring lands for afforestation, the Forest Department (FD) 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, FD 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 who has been using the land are willing to move away if paid with due compensation. However, such certification by the Forest Department can be deceptive and the reported findings of the field inspections may turn out to be fictitious (Adnan and Dastidar 2011: 49). My informants in the *Bandarban* mentioned that many hills and *Pahari* lands have been covertly acquired by the Forest Department based on false claims that these are not populated. *Uchachi*, 47 years, mentioned, “*much of my ancestral lands in the hills are acquired by forest department.*” 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.

Transmigration of Bangalee people and land loss

The pattern of migration of *Bangalee* people in the CHT became a political project in 1979 when the government decided to settle 30,000 landless *Bangalee* families on government owned ‘Khas’⁹ land (Mohsin 1997: 112). By the end of 1984, about 400,000 families were settled in the CHT (Mohsin 1997: 112). Mohsin (1997:115) argues that the settlement policy evicted around 100,000 hill people from their land, about half of those took refuge in Tripura and Mizoram states in India and the rest were scattered around CHT. Besides evicting the hill people, this migration of *Bangalee* population also had consequences for *Jhum* cultivation. The population pressure and land scarcity lead to the reduction of fallow period of *Jhum* lands to two-three years from two-five years. We can get a sense of impact of the transmigration project on CHT from the ratio of *Bangalee* population in CHT. The non-indigenous population (mostly *Bangalee*) in 1872 was 1.74%, which rose to the level of around 9.09%

⁹ Government owned fallow land, where nobody has property rights.

(1951) over eight decades. However, the ratio was doubled by the next two decades (19.41%) in 1974. Further, Barkat et al. (2009: 17) state that as of today *Bangalee* population in CHT stands at almost 50 percent.

The people of the CHT are today producing more for the market and the private ownership of land has become important in order to secure peoples' livelihoods. Consequently, more and more forest-commons of the communities 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 no notion of private property in the recent past. *Thoi Khyang* (52 years) mentioned that during the establishment of the Christian Hospital in *Rangamati*, in the early 1907 his father was working as a 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. However, he did not think of doing something like that and said, "*as for me swidden cultivation was the way of life and notion of registering land on personal name was not a need.*"

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 (see page 16). 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 (Roy 2000: 96). These developments produced positive and negative results for the minority groups. 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 of the CHT. The negative impacts included a drastic increase in the rate of deforestation, as well as an increase in the population

settlements coming from outside, which added to the pressure on the already stretched resources of the region (Roy 2000: 96).

Some *Khyangs* mentioned that their new interest in farming cash crops has been influenced by the improved communication system. They commonly said that as new roads have been created wholesale marketers do come and buy the products from their fields so they now tend to cultivate vegetables and spices that they can sell for cash.

Educational advancement

Some of the *Khyangs* have been accessing different job opportunities with advancement in education. Many *Khyang* are now being educated in the mainstream curriculum of the country. The *Khyang* who have passed secondary level of education are mostly involved in non-agricultural works. I met four school teachers and three NGO workers in *Bandarban*. In *Rangamati*, on the other hand, *Khyang* women mostly find employment as nurses, beauty parlors and in garment factories. For nursing and work at beauty parlors they get training before starting the job and for work at the garment factories, they join as apprentices with salary and after three or six months they are offered a permanent job.

However, I have also found during my fieldwork 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 (*Ongsha*, 48 years) in *Rangamati* said that, “*I cannot continue paying for my four children’s education. I have to support all the children I cannot spend all the money to send one child to the university.*”

In case of education, and especially 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. *Angela*, 22 years, in

Rangamati 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. She 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.*”

This tendency of minority groups being discriminated is also seen in India, where among the Rabhas (indigenous forest dwellers) positive discrimination in the field of education and a system of reserved employment quotas in government institutions has produced a category of well-off tribals and thus created tribal elites (Karlsson, 2000: 18). In case of CHT, the ethnic minority groups who have larger population size, such as for example the *Chakma* compared to the other minority groups like the *Khyang* take such opportunities.

The ethnographic information of my fieldworks suggests that as the *Khyang* are being educated they are getting themselves engaged with non-agricultural jobs, however, they are being discriminated in higher education and also in different larger organizations of the country, such as civil administration, United Nations’ (UN) local office and local NGOs.

THE NEW FRONTIERS OF INTERACTION

With the changing trend of land and forest access, no compensation was paid to the indigenous people for the loss of their traditional resources such as lands and ceasing the use of natural resources from the forests required to meet subsistence strategies. A forest when notified as a ‘reserved forests’ it restrict the use of resources for the inhabitants of that area. During discussions with the *Khyang* at several occasions, such as social gatherings and personal interviews, people told me that with the social, economic and political changes in the CHT, the *Khyang* have been subjected to engagement with different contexts which include: dealing with government and administration, interacting with the security forces/ state army forces, living with the *Bangalee* people, engaging to new form of economic activities, non-governmental development programs, adapting to encroaching market and urbanization.

Within the Reserve Forests, any use or extraction of forest produce is prohibited. Nevertheless, Forest Department, sell the produce or market it after processing. The majority

of the indigenous people are subsistence farmers, they have to engage in subsidiary hunting and gathering of forest products, their principal source of livelihood is the use of natural resources. With no measures taken to facilitate a transition to a market oriented economy, the indigenous farmers are experiencing difficulties in seeking alternative opportunities for income generation. Yet, as we see from the above, the *Khyang* do sometimes find alternative modes of sustaining their livelihood.

If the present policy of converting the communally owned forests of the Chittagong Hill Tracts into extraction areas for the government's sole use and enrichment continues, the decline of the indigenous people's subsistence opportunities is inevitable. As they are being marginalized in both finding daily wage labor and in the market places to sell their products, if they are denied access to land to cultivate their daily needs they might fall into economic hardship (will be discussed in the later sections, see also chapter three). Although the use of, and extraction from, the forest and its resources is prohibited in the Reserve Forests, and is in fact penalized by physical assault and legal cases, the indigenous people often have no alternative but to enter these forests for use and extraction to meet their domestic requirements, and in some cases for commercial purposes too. However, I found that only in a few cases people did speak of using reserve forests for resources (this may be because most of the villages I was visiting were not near reserve forests). The interviewees who said that they were sometimes compelled to use the reserve forests added that this was because they felt they had no other choice; they were in desperate need of resources to meet household requirements. From interviews, it seemed that women were more inclined to use reserved forests, as their first priority was to meet household needs, while men replied that they did not use reserve forests. The interviewees stress that when people become desperate they have no other choices than to take the risk that comes with entering the reserve forests and cutting down trees. The process inevitably forced the *Khyang* to negotiate and sometimes override the forest officers from the government.

When armed conflict was in rise during 1980s and 1990s, the *Khyang* faced double pressure from the insurgent groups and the military. Both the parties forced the *Khyang* and other ethnic minority groups of the CHT to keep supporting the armed conflict by giving food, shelter, and information. *Khyang* people told me that they were assaulted by both military and the insurgents who would visit the villages and took shelter in their houses also demanding food and money. On the other hand, the military always kept them under surveillance - for

instance, they would ask questions if they bought grocery more than they would require for a normal week. *Ongsha*, 48 years, in *Bandarban* said:

“Those were terrifying days for us. Members of the ‘shanti bahini’ would sometimes come to the village and ask for food and money. When they are gone the military would have come and beat us for giving shelter to the ‘shanti bahini’. Therefore, when military forces are gone from the village ‘shanti bahini’ would come again and ask ‘why the military forces were here? Who have informed them that we were here?’ We were beaten by the ‘shanti bahini’ and by the military. We had no place to live peacefully at that time.”

Apart from administration and the military, many *Bangalee* people were relocated in the CHT by the government through transmigration projects (Mohsin 1997: 112). This brought different kinds of job opportunities because the *Bangalee* started businesses and the ethnic minority groups started to compete with the *Bangalee* people for wage labor and land. With many people living in the locality resulted in a bigger consumer-group for the different businesses, thus the *Khyang* faced encroaching markets and urbanization. The situation of the nearby market places testifies the claim of *Agni Khyang*, a grocery store owner, who said that when he started his store there was only one store (except his shop) in the small market place where he runs his store. However, in the last seven/ eight years the population increase has been so high that now-a-days there are around 50 more stores (run by both *Khyangs* and *Bangalees*).

Landlessness caused by forest policies, the dam and the mass settlement program have created changes in the pattern of resource use and land-access by the ethnic minority groups but the *Khyang* (in *Bandarban*) are still reliant on agriculture to some extent. They sometimes work on other people’s plot of land. When asked about the methods of management of sharecropped lands, there were many different responses. Some said they are paid in cash for the work they do on other’s land. Some said that they use the land to plant seeds they have selected and then give a portion of the harvest to the landowner, there is no fixed amount, and this is negotiated between the landowner and the sharecropper.

Another change is that the landless and displaced people of *Rangamati* now are engaged in the production of rice wine for sale (which is sold secretly from their homes). ‘Rice wine’

production and consumption is an element of their daily life, however, in the past rice wine was prepared at home for community and family members and not for sale. In the villages of *Bandarban* and in *Rangamati* people were very reluctant to talk about wine production. However, through a series of interviews it became apparent that wine was being produced in homes. I was also offered rice wine during having meals at their homes. The rice needed for wine production was purchased at the market. It has also been noted by Tebtebba Foundation (2000) that there is a marked increase in the use of alcohol and drugs within the indigenous community of CHT. Further, this has made them reliant on easy cash earned from the sale of rice wine and during the interviews, it became apparent that many people do not tend to work because they can earn quick cash selling rice wine. A liter of rice wine is sold at the price of BDT 200 (USD 2.2). On the other hand, as it is illegal to sell rice wine sometime the police raid the area and sometimes arrest the *Khyang* wine sellers. Selling rice wine or any sorts of alcohol is prohibited by law in Bangladesh and ethnic minority groups are only allowed to produce rice wine for self-consumption but not for sale.

The consequences of the new forms of economic activities and increased interaction with the *Bangalees*, administration and market places on inter and intra community practices of the *Khyang* will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

IMPACT OF CHANGING ECONOMIC PATTERNS

Social structure

The effects of the changing occupational patterns on the economy of the indigenous people of the CHT have been complex and manifold. One of the major consequences has been the widening gap between the rich and the poor. This is what *Thoi Khyang*, 52 years said during an interview:

“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 were met by a community platform on a collective basis.”

Social changes have taken place in the way indigenous family law and other customary laws (*Dung*) are being practiced. Here again, the changes vary from people to people (sometime smaller groups and sometimes individuals). However, perhaps the most distinctive difference can be seen between *Rangamati* and *Bandarban*. In *Bandarban*, it is the traditional village elder (*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 on the basis of customary laws (*Dung*). In urban areas the prevalence of customary practices are far less pronounced compared to rural areas. Overall, the community responses to dealing with problems and challenges based upon traditional values are fast giving way to responses by families and individuals. I argue this based on my discussion with *Thoi Khyang* and my observation in *Rangamati*.

As during the foundation of their village they did not appoint any village head (*Karbari*), it continued without any formal village head. Thus, for any problems within the community they usually go the police or chairman of the Union Parishad. Not having any village head leads to a situation where *Khyang* rules and regulations are not being followed. *Thoi Khyang* further said that there is an open area beside his house, which is captured by his maternal cousin to build a house if there were any village leader he could have retained that place. The changing pattern of *Khyang* customs and practices will become more evident from the discussion in the following sections.

Sanskritization of customs and ritual

Occupational changes have also induced significant changes in cultural practices. 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 (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 modes of dressing, food habits, and ceremonies, which I exemplify on the basis of my fieldwork below.

Srinivas (1956) 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 (Srinivas 1956: 483).

The changes among the *Khyang* in the Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh are comparable to the ‘*Sanskritization*’ process in India. I find that, the *Bangalee* and the economically powerful people set the standard for cultural custom and practices. For example, the *Khyang* who are rich and powerful smoke cigarettes while people who smoke ‘bidi’ (without filter) is of lower class. Many *Khyang* who have the financial means now build houses with bricks and cement instead of the traditional houses made of wood. Some of the *Khyangs* also changed their cooking pattern, during my fieldwork, of the respondents asked me, where do I stay and where do I eat?, as I replied that I live with a family nearby and also eat with them the *Thoi Khyang* (52 years) said, “*can you eat the food they cook? Do not they eat only boiled food? Whenever you want to eat some good food you are welcome to visit our home.*” He was making sure that I understand about him and that he is no longer practicing the food habits that the other *Khyangs* have. In this way, he could also reflect his higher position in the area. He is regarded a rich person in the area and others tend to ask for his opinion if they wanted to buy new electronic products. I came to know this when one evening he was called by *Rimi Khyang* who wanted his opinion regarding which laptop she should buy. From this, I argue that food habits of the *Khyang* are changing. Another reason, which is responsible for this change, is their dependence on the local market for buying and trading rice, spices and meat in recent times. Whereas, previously the *Khyangs* used to meet most of their food needs from the produce of the swidden cultivation and from hunting, trapping, gathering and fishing.

Another incidence of the *Khyang* custom being treated as something uncivilized was mentioned by the head of the village (*Karbari*) in *Bandarban*. He said that during his childhood his father was ‘*Karbari*’ of their village and 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 a way he normally does in order to show respect to a religious leader. At this event, everyone laughed

at him so later he never wanted to join such meetings 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 experiences of the *Khyang* are in line with the Scott's (2009: 120) argument that people from the valleys regard the people of the hill as uncivilized, that is, those on the mountain tops are the most backward; those living midslope are slightly more elevated culturally; those living in upland plateaus and growing irrigated rice are, again, more advanced, though certainly inferior to those at the core of the valley state. It also reflects the power dimension of people residing in the valley and in the hills.

Further, in line with Scott (2009) 'Hilliness' in the CHT is disqualifying per se. Scott cites example that many of the Palaung in Burma are Theravada Buddhists, dress like Burmans, and speak fluent Burmese. They are not however, considered civilized so long as they live in the hills. In the CHT too, though many *Khyangs* have taken many practices of the higher-class people in the locality, they are considered of lower class by the people who came from the valley, that is, the *Bangalees*.

I have also seen changes in dressing. The *Khyangs* and other ethnic minority groups are not wearing their traditional dress and are adopting dresses of the *Bangalee*. Traditionally they used to wear dresses, which are not like the clothes of *Bangalee* people. So when they go outside the community they are easily recognized as people from an ethnic minority, thus, treated differently. I could understand this from my observation at the *Khyang* villages and from my discussion with *Roma Khyang* (28 years). One evening I was invited to her home as she came home on holidays. She works at the Chittagong town at garment industry. She was amazed by the fact that I was there doing research about the *Khyangs*. As I replied I want to investigate the problems of people in CHT, she promptly replied, "*there is no end to our problems. How many do you want to listen? We have problems here and it does not end even if we go to the town. Whenever Bangalee men see us (recognize that they are from an ethnic minority group) they never miss a chance to tease us.*" From her comment I argue in line with Malkki (1995: 156) that the *Khyangs* are wearing dresses like the *Bangalees* as a strategy where they are not recognized as a minority people which gives them opportunity to avoid everyday hassles (see chapter four). However, I have observed that women tend to wear their traditional dresses more than men do. I will discuss the changes in marriage customs and practices in chapter four (see page 94-96).

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 I find that the division of labor between men and women has become far less 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 division of labor and household responsibilities is 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, decision-making is a task for the household head, that is, men. During my fieldwork in *Bandarban*, I have been in touch with a family who has been cultivating rice and other vegetables and they 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 understands the economic benefit that could have been achieved if a mixed cropping orchard was there.

On the contrary, the household preparation of food is exclusively done by the women for the extended family and caring of children is expected to be done by women. 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. During a visit to *Thoi Khyang* (52 years) and *Camelia Biswas's* (40 years) home, I saw that *Thoi Khyang* was preparing food he said that he has been cooking for lunch as his wife will be coming back from the hospital where she works as a nurse after 15.00 hour and they will go to the medical center, which they both run together after 16.00 hour. Therefore, he usually cooks for lunch and sometimes his wife tries to wake up early cook before going to her work place.

However, food-preparing tasks are considered a task for women and commonly women prepare food for her family. In *Bandarban*, contrary to *Rangamati* I have hardly seen men performing cooking. I have never seen women joining meals when I was present. *Ongsha* (48 years) said, “usually a man’s responsibility is to bring food to the house and women perform all the activities regarding cooking.”

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. Within the agricultural field, 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, threshing and marketing (Parveen 2009). However, as I have observed during my fieldwork 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. Thus, I hold in line with Narotzky (2001: 4070) that changes in mode of production have altered the ways the *Khyang* organizes access to land and labor.

DISCUSSION

The situation in the CHT and the changes in the employment pattern and economy of the *Khyang* can be explained in line with 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. Zomia 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 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 focuses 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. I have discussed, and will provide more detail in the following chapter; how the Bangladesh government is no exception and has undertaken many development programs 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 move into the hills as an act of state avoidance. Thus, settlement in the hills is a state-effect (Scott 2009: 24).

According to Scott (2009: 324) mankind has historically 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 shrunken and beleaguered by the expansion of state power, and (IV) an era in which virtually the entire globe is ‘administered space’ and the periphery is not much more than a folkloric remnant. The Chittagong Hill Tracts is somewhere between the era of III and IV as since 1980s there has been a truly massive transfer of *Bangalee* population in the CHT. The valley population in the CHT as in the case of Zomia (Scott 2009) has served the dual purpose of peopling the frontiers with a presumably loyal population and producing cash crop for export to all over the country and relieving population pressure from the valleys.

The government initiatives in CHT 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 *Khyangs* and ethnic minority groups the *Bangalee* started to ‘ethnicize’ and marginalize the others (c.f. Bloch and Parry 1989: 8; see also chapter three).

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*), and their culture is evolving due to constant influxes of new social and economic determinants (c.f. Bloch and Parry 1989: 7). As I have shown and argued, the changes in their social structure, gendered division of labor, and ‘*Sanskritization*’ of their customs and practices are all related to the changes in the economic sphere and the *Khyangs* interaction with the state and *Bangalee* people. Therefore, in line with Turner (1986: 114) I hold that the changing production system and *Khyangs*’ engagement with diverse occupations have blurred the boundary between the *Khyangs* the *Bangalees*. Besides, the changes in the marriage system in terms of more intermarriages and use of language in relation to the *Khyang* identity will be discussed in chapter four.

This process has created a ‘shatter zone’ or ‘zones of refuge’ and a constantly reformulating economy and identity of the *Khyang*. Scott (2009: 7) argues that a pattern of state-making and state-unmaking produced a periphery that is composed as much of refugees as of peoples who had never been state subjects. Much of the periphery of states became a zone of refuge or ‘shatter zone’, where the human remains of state formation and rivalry accumulated, creating regions of bewildering ethnic and linguistic complexity. State expansion and collapse often had a ratchet effect as well, with fleeing subjects driving other peoples ahead of them seeking safety and new territory (Scott 2009: 7). Thus, Scott (2009: 7) argues much of the Southeast Asian massif is, in effect, a shatter zone. On the basis of my ethnographic information, I argue in line with Scott (2009) that as the state has consolidated and created new frontiers the *Khyangs* and other communities of the hills face new and altered opportunities and limitations in terms of livelihood. There has been economic specialization, trade and administrative and political links flourishing as the community is taking advantage of the opportunities that the state has brought them. Selling cash crop at the market, engaging themselves with non-agricultural occupations are two kinds of new opportunities. However, ethnographic information that I collected suggest that in availing this opportunities the *Khyang* are in a marginalized position in their interaction with the *Bangalees* and other ethnic groups (see chapter three). 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.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The Bangladesh state's aim of building a 'Nation' and better control its population in the CHT has led to its focus on initiating development activities. This has been supported by transmigration programs transferring *Bangalee* populations from the valley to the hills. Through the government's civilizing projects the *Khyang* have changed their livelihood practices based on subsistence shifting cultivation to a diverse range of professions. This change in the economic frontiers has, as I have shown had many impacts on the way of life of the *Khyang*, which include class distinctions among the *Khyang*, that is, economic and political power difference has emerged. This change has also led to 'Sanskritization' among the *Khyang* and they have now adopted new housing pattern, dressing style and food preparation, which are compatible with the valley people, that is, the *Bangalees*. I have also noticed changes in gendered division of labor as in urban areas now-a-days both men and women share the household tasks, which was exclusively a task for women previously. The civilizing project of the Bangladesh state has also created a diversification among the *Khyang* and new social spaces (for instance, the market places) where the relations between the *Khyang* and *Bangalee* is a relation between the powerless and the power full (people from the hill: people from valley :: uncivilized: civilized). I will discuss this marginalizing process of the *Khyang* in the following chapter focusing on the process through which the *Khyang* are being dispossessed of their livelihood means (for example: land).

CHAPTER THREE

**BANGLADESH STATE AND THE GENESIS OF DISPOSSESSION AND
MARGINALIZATION IN CHT**

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I explore the changes of the administrative system of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and how government policies regarding natural resources especially land and forests, have created a situation of ‘dispossession’ for the ethnic minority groups of Bangladesh. By dispossession, I point to the situation of stripping the *Khyang* of CHT of the means of their social reproduction and commodifying resources and forms of labor that had hitherto been outside of capital’s realm (Kasim and Carbonella 2008: 8). Focusing on the period after independence of Bangladesh in 1971, on the basis of my ethnographical findings I will argue that government initiatives to improve the situation of the CHT have created mutations in citizenships in the multi-ethnic region of CHT (c.f. Ong 2006). The government interventions have taken place through processes of land and forest governance, improvement of the transport and communication systems, the offering of quotas for admission in schools and education and the development of markets and job opportunities. The encroaching borders of the nation has over-ridden some aspects of ethnic boundaries, that is, some of the *Khyangs* are not being able to sustain a life which were part of their ethnic identity.

Small ethnic groups are in a disadvantageous position in terms of receiving and making use of the different opportunities presented by the government, because the government policies has inserted different groups of people differently in the process of development which sometimes overlap with pre-formed racial, ethnic and gender hierarchies and thus, fragments citizenship for the people of the same country (Ong 2000: 62). In line with Rosaldo’s (2003) argument for Southeast Asia, I hold that in Bangladesh the relations between state officials and hinterland minority groups involve differences of power and perception by each group of the other something, which shapes the production of marginalization.

In this chapter, I will illuminate and argue that as part of the ‘Nation State’ CHT is exposed to a process of continuous recreation of inequality and marginalization. The chapter explains how the *Khyang* are being dispossessed from land access and from other rights and entitlements, in other words, how the process of assimilation has an effect in the production of difference (Kasim and Carbonella 2008). Based on my ethnographic findings I will discuss and illustrate the ways in which the policies and development interventions of the state has created certain assemblages where particular groups of people are facing dispossession and also finding it hard to sustain their livelihoods (c.f. Murray Li 2009).

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RELATION BETWEEN THE CHT AND GOVERNMENT(S)

Pre-Bangladesh period (before 1971)

Historically the Chittagong Hill Tracts existed as an independent territory and did not belong within any formal authority (colonization) until the 18th century (Ishaq 1975). The different groups living in the CHT functioned as independent communities until the time of British entry into the administration of Chittagong Hill Tracts (Roy 2000: 38).

Previously, the hill region comprised an area greater than what is now the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It included parts of present day Chittagong (Rangunia, Ramu and Sitakunda areas), Cox's Bazaar districts as well as Mizoram (Lushai Hills). Roy (1995) mentions that there are traditional *Chakma* songs describing how the *Chakma* people living in the plains around Chittagong were forced by migrating valley people to move further into the hill region. This is in line with Scott's (2009) claim that hill people were further moved into the hill because of the encroaching state and the valley people.

Although the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chittagong District (a plain district) are contiguous, their historical development has differed. Most of Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar districts were part of the Tripura or Arakan kingdoms and later became integrated into the Mughal Empire (1666), whereas the CHT always retained its independent status and remained with a separate administrative structure where the customary laws (*Dung*) of the *Pahari* people were paramount. Thus, despite their geographical proximity, the plain districts and the CHT have for a long time experienced different political and legal regimes. Thus, in the hills, the different groups of people were self-governing small entities without any formalized political systems, whereas the people in the plain were always subject to external powers (Mey 1984; c.f. Scott 2009). However, there were economic factors involved in the relationship between the neighboring areas as raw products from the CHT such as timber, cotton, sun grass and bamboo found a ready market in the plains, while the *Pahari* people needed utensils, salt and kerosene, which were not available in their area.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts became a part of the modern nation state system in the late 19th century and the major factor responsible for the penetration of outside influences has been

economic. Thus, the CHT could not continue its relative isolation from the market economy of the rest of the Indian sub-continent. Economic relationships in the form of trade and tax collection were the first step in the process of gradual encroachment into the area by external powers. The external administrators (colonizers) were initially motivated by purely commercial interests, but subsequently guided by expansionist policies (Roy 2000: 39).

When in 1760, the British East India Company had succeeded in annexing Bengal the CHT drew their attention as a strategic area, which could facilitate their access to and control of the neighboring countries. Moreover, CHT were rich in natural resources, in particular forest produce, which increased the interest of the colonizers (Hutchinson 1906: 2). When the colonizers took control, initially, the jurisdiction extended to the collection of the cotton tax only, but gradually this tax collection exercise was instrumental for the British in establishing their authority over the entire Hill Tracts. The tax collection process has been instrumental for any expansion of state space in South and Southeast Asia throughout history (Scott 2009). However, the colonial powers did not interfere in the internal administration of the area, which remained in the hands of the chiefs and their headmen (Ishaq 1975).

The British started a military campaign in 1776 to include the Hill Tracts within their control. However, during the process they met with strong resistance from the local ethnic groups and tribes. Subsequently, a treaty was made between the people of the CHT and the British company on 1787 (Anti- Slavery Society 1984).

In 1860, 'Act No. XXII of 1860' declared the CHT as a district within Bengal and a superintendent were appointed to the Chittagong Hill Tracts under the supervision of the commissioner in Chittagong. When the annexation process of incorporating the Hill Tracts to the British Empire was formalized, and finalized, there were three *Rajas*. The *Chakma Raja* whose territory covered about half the Hill Tracts, the *Bomang* to the south up to the border with Burma and the *Mong Raja* in the north-west (Hutchinson 1906: 24). As part of the British colony the traditional *Rajas* continued to exercise their authority within their jurisdiction affecting all matters directly related to the people of CHT, given that they paid the annual revenue to the British administration in India (Anti-Slavery Society 1984: 45).

Although the number of valley people in the Hill Tracts were nominal (less than 2% of the total population) during the colonial period as protective measures to preserve the cultural

and territorial integrity of the hill people, the British administrators formulated a number of administrative regulations of which the 1900 Regulations are of prime significance (Hutchinson 1906: 44). This regulation was expected to restrict the entry of non-indigenous people to the area. Until de-colonization following the Second World War the people of CHT enjoyed a wide degree of independence and protection from the intrusion of *Bangalee* settlers of the more populated plain lands (Burger 1987: 130).

In 1920, the CHT was declared a 'Backward Tract', which was to be administered as an 'Excluded Area' (Mohsin 1997; Roy 1997). Further, the Government of India Act of 1935 designated the region as a 'Totally Excluded Area'. Subsequently, during the partition of British India in 1947, the CHT was annexed to the Muslim-majority state of Pakistan, despite the unwillingness of the leaders of the minority ethnic groups (Mohsin 1997). The constitution of Pakistan, formulated in 1956, retained the status of the CHT as an 'Excluded Area' (Shelley 1992). However, as the Pakistani government was interested in exploiting the rich natural resources of the CHT, they showed little concern about the possible adverse impacts on the ethnic groups of CHT and their habitat (Mohsin 1997). In this new post-colonial context, the colonial policy of keeping the CHT isolated from the rest of the country became an impediment for majority groups' concern to lift the restrictions on their entry, residence and rights to hold landed property in the area. As a result, the status of the CHT was altered from an 'Excluded Area' to a 'Tribal Area' in the new constitution adopted by Pakistan in 1962. The limited protection provided by even this modified status was stripped away by a constitutional amendment in 1964 (Mohsin 1997; Adnan 2004).

In 1964, the list of tribal areas¹⁰ was amended by a constitutional amendment in the National Assembly and the CHT was removed from this list. The CHT no longer had the official recognition of being designated as a separate homeland for the indigenous people as it had under its previous designations as 'Excluded Area' and 'Tribal Area'. More significantly, this had the effect of facilitating the access of non-indigenous people to the CHT; that is, opening it up for the settlement valley people. In practical terms, this enabled non-indigenous people to enter, acquire and own land in the CHT.

¹⁰ The government of Bangladesh also recognizes different groups living in the CHT as ethnic sects or tribes.

From the above discussion, we can see that the people of the CHT had been suffered from the government policies and from development interventions of the British administration and Pakistan governments. This historical trajectory is important because I find that many of the Bangladesh governments' strategies are similar to the ways the previous governments had dealt with the CHT issues.

Bangladesh period (after 1971)

With Bangladesh's independence in 1971, ethnic minority political leaders of the CHT lobbied the new government for specific recognition of their identities and autonomy in the nation's first constitution. In this regard, ethnic minority leaders met with the Prime Minister and called for regional autonomy, while remaining within the new state of Bangladesh. They also requested for the recognition of traditional governance system, and a ban on the migration and settlement of *Bangalee* people into CHT.

These demands were rejected and the prime minister advised the hill people to adopt the new nationalist *Bangalee* identity and also threatened to effectively marginalize ethnic minority communities by sending *Bangalees* into the region (Mohsin 2003: 22). Strong sense of nationalism of *Bangalee* identity based on *Bangla* language had driven the call for independence from West Pakistan in 1971 and it formed the central idea of the constitution of Bangladesh. This was reflected in the constitution, as it had no appreciation for the status of other minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh. Consequently, the constitution of 1972, focused on a distinctive *Bangalee* identity, language and culture; Article 9 of the constitution states:

“The unity and solidarity of the Bengali nation, which deriving its identity from its language and culture, attained sovereign and independent Bangladesh through a united and determined struggle in the war of independence, shall be the basis of Bengali nationalism.”

One of the leaders of ethnic minority groups Manabendra Narayan Larma expressed the frustration of *Pahari* / hill people in a speech to the Bangladesh Parliament:

“You cannot impose your national identity on others. I am a Chakma not a Bengali. I am a citizen of Bangladesh, Bangladeshi. You are also Bangladeshi

but your national identity is Bengali ... They [the Pahari people] can never become Bengali” (Mohsin 2003: 23).

In response to formulated constitution of 1972 of Bangladesh, Manabendra Narayan Lama established the Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS) political party in 1972. The JSS had the core demands of regional autonomy, and constitutional recognition of *Pahari* identities. After year the JSS’s armed wing ‘Shanti Bahini’ (peace force) was established, however, it was not militarily active until the mid-1970s. With the widespread violence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, between 1980 and the early 1990s, thousands of *Pahari* people sought refuge in India. Many thousands more were displaced within the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Amnesty International 2000).

In such a circumstances Bangladeshi government tried to control the situation and a key part of the counter-insurgency strategies was to resettle hundreds of thousands of *Bangalees* from the Bangladesh’s plain districts into the three districts of the Chittagong Hill tracts. Between 1980 and 1985, transmigration program was undertaken facilitated by the military forces. The policy was not made public and no *Pahari* were informed of or consulted about this program. Shapan Adnan (2004: 29) noted that the whole process of *Bangalee* settlement in CHT was planned and executed with the precision and secrecy of a covert military operation. He also stated that the aim was of this transmigration program was to accelerate the settlement of a sizeable *Bangalee* population in the Chittagong Hill Tracts that would be loyal to the Bangladesh state. Many *Bangalees* were settled in ‘cluster villages’ next to army camps and they became ‘human shields’ and also potential army recruits for paramilitary operations against the ‘Shanti Bahini’ and the wider *Pahari* population (Adnan and Dastidar 2011). The *Bangalee* settlers were mostly landless families from the plains districts; some of whom had were homeless due to river erosion. They were assured by the government that they would get land, food rations, cash allowances and the protection of the security forces as incentives if they settle in the CHT. The land allotted to them included lands vacated by the *Pahari* people during the armed conflict.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, which was signed in December 1997 between the government and JSS formally stopping the armed conflict. As per the accord, the authorities agreed to establish a new system of formal governance to provide the *Pahari* people with a measure of regional autonomy in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Greater autonomy was one of

the key demands of the *Pahari* people during negotiations. After the accord was signed, the authorities amended legislation governing local bodies in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, establishing a system of local governance that is distinct from other districts in Bangladesh.

LAND LAWS IN CHT

Land administration

Under the indigenous system of administration, the land is divided into separate categories depending on the modality of use and management, and revenue is paid to the indigenous administrations accordingly (Roy 2000: 59).

In 1860, when the British took control of the Hill Tracts, they recognized it as an indigenous area distinct from the rest of the country. Administrations of the CHT, including that related to lands, were distinct from the plains districts. However, the indigenous system of land tenure in the CHT differed considerably from British concepts of land holding and administration, thus, the colonial administrators wanted to restructure the land revenue system and to bring it into greater conformity with their own systems of land tenure. Thus, a series of administrative and legislative measures were passed culminating in Regulation 1 of 1900. This regulation remains as the principal instrument for regulating the transmission of land rights in the Hill Tracts today (Roy 2000: 59).

Regulation 1 of 1900 (or the CHT Manual as it is also called) partially acknowledges some of the collective and customary land rights of indigenous people. One of the principal changes enforced by these regulations were the formal demarcation of the CHT into three separate 'Circles', and the designation of the three traditional leaders as 'Chiefs'. Consequently, these leaders, who had enjoyed the status of 'heads' within their territories for centuries, required the required recognition of the colonial authorities to rule CHT (Roy 2000: 60).

The British formally divided the CHT into territorially defined administrative units known as *mauzas* to replace the earlier system of *taluks*. A headman was appointed as the responsible authority for each *mauza*; his responsibilities included the collection of revenue. Each *mauza* comprised a number of villages, each of which was generally headed by a *Karbari*.

The land use pattern of the indigenous people provided the basis for the revenue administration, with specific taxes levied on each category of land (see sections below). In line with Roy (2000), I hold that the promulgation of the 1900 Regulations was the first step of the erosion of land rights of the indigenous people in Bangladesh. It is the principal legal instrument applicable in the Hill Tracts and it remains valid today (Roy 2000).

Collectively owned land

These lands are those which belong to the community as a whole with a shared and common right of access. The people have a right to these lands and its resources, by virtue of their collective ownership of the areas. Traditional economic activities such as fishing, hunting and gathering are carried out in these areas. Further, *Jhum* lands fall within this category, as do the lands used for grazing and for growing sun grass, which is used to make thatched roofs. The forests are also included within this category of *mauza* common. Traditionally no taxes were levied for the use of this category of land.

The government does not formally recognize the rights of the indigenous people to the collectively owned/ common lands as a collective legal right (Roy 2000: 61). It rather regards this kind of land as state-owned. This kind of land is also known as *khas* land, that is, state land. Besides, forest department categorizes this land as Unclassed State Forests (USFs). This kind of land is not demarcated as Reserved or Protected Forests, and also are not settled or leased out in the name of any private individual or corporate body. In actual practice, these are the common *Jhum*, forest, hunting and fishing grounds, and homestead lands of ethnic groups living in CHT.

Jhum land

The hills and adjacent slopes of the CHT are suitable mainly for *Jhum* cultivation. The ethnic groups have communal rights to these lands, as well as the individual right to its use. In earlier times and even in 1918 when the population of the CHT was about 200000, so *Jhum* was a viable system and provided the hill people with their basic necessities, in addition to surplus produce which could be exchange at markets for other supplies (Roy 2000: 62). As outlined in chapter two, it was the principal occupation for the majority of people, and nearly all farmers practiced slash and burn agriculture.

Every family of the ethnic groups has the right to cultivate *Jhum* where they choose, subject to the land not belonging to another person or family. Various factors are taken into consideration by the *Khyangs* and other ethnic communities in allowing cultivation a particular piece of *Jhum* land including whether the specified period to allow the soil to regain its fertility has been completed. A person retains the right over his *ranya* (old *Jhum*), and in case of disputes the *talukdar* or *mauza* headman resolve the disputes.

Initially, the British discouraged *Jhum* as they regarded it to be conducive for nomadism, and unsustainable as an agricultural system. Thus, they made efforts to stop *Jhum* and force the people to settle and cultivate with the plough (Hutchinson 1906: 51). The policy decision of the British administration to discourage *Jhum* remained unchanged. Thus, by the middle of the 19th century, most of the ethnic groups who lived along the riverbanks such as the *Chakma* and the *Marma* had adopted the plough. Thus, much of the land suitable for plough cultivation was being converted to plough cultivation using this method. However, as the amount of plough land in the CHT was limited, many of the indigenous people remained *Jhum* farmers.

Homestead land

As per customary law (*Dung*), every family of the ethnic groups living in CHT has the right to sufficient land for residential purposes (Roy 2000: 70). Most ethnic groups of CHT and the *Khyang* own and build their houses with the help of the entire community.

The allocation of adequate land to build a house is the responsibility of the village authorities; the *Karbari* or headman, and the decision is taken based on certain criteria including land availability, the existence of prior claims to the claimed area, as well as family and kinship links. No formal lease or deed is required for land holding and revenue is paid to the *mauza* headman.

At present, as I have seen the customary right to lands for house building has been restricted mostly to rural areas. The high population density in urban areas makes it impossible to find any unoccupied land. Further, in the market areas, commercial plots are formally registered in the names of their owners - generally traders and merchants.

Forests

As I discussed in chapter two, the people of the CHT (specially the ethnic groups) depend on the land and its natural resources, including the forests, for making a livelihood. Traditionally the right to use and extract forest produce existed without any restrictions except those prescribed under customary law (*Dung*). However, between 1875-1882 the British administration initiated a policy of curtailing the rights of the indigenous people to the forests (Roy 2000: 71).

Initially, the forests were divided into two categories:

- 1) Reserve Forests; and
- 2) Unclassed State Forests.

However, in the mid-60s a third category was introduced:

- 3) Protected Forests.

Reserved forests

The practice of creating Reserved Forests was institutionalized by Section 3 of the Forest Act of 1927. Roy (2000: 72) argues that according to the annotated comments to the Forest Act, it is clear that if the land is a part of permanently settled land, it is a private property, and it would therefore, not be legal to declare it as part of a Reserved Forest. However, measures are not taken to ensure that lands which are to be included in a proposed Reserved Forest are not subject to conflicting claims. Furthermore, the ethnic groups of CHT are often ignorant of national legislations and do not take the necessary steps to secure their rights. Besides, the procedural regulations are cumbersome and complicated for the ethnic minority groups and do not facilitate an immediate process of adjudicating conflicting claims. I will discuss the *Khyangs*' experience in this regard later.

The Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD) is responsible for the management of the forest reserves, including the protection of forests, afforestation, research, extension, and collection of royalty charges on forest produce and the protection of game. However, there are no provisions to recognize the collective rights of ethnic groups to the use and extraction of the forests and their resources (Roy 2000: 72).

Protected forests

In 1960, the concept of protected forests was introduced in Bangladesh (then it was the Pakistan State). Specific areas of what the British administration had earlier classified as Unclassed State Forest, that is, common lands were re-categorized as Protected Forests. Although Protected Forests were not initially regarded something to be like an interim phase prior to their upgrading to Reserved Forests, sometimes this has been the case, for example the Gazette Notification of 21 May 1992 (Roy 2000: 73).

As with the Reserved Forests, the Protected Forests are also created by Government notifications in accordance with the Forest Acts, and are under the control and management of the Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD). Within the Protected Forest, the BFD has sole control to maintain the biodiversity of the forests. The *mauza* residents have some access to forest produce and can cultivate a *Jhum* in designated areas. In some cases, the *Jhum* practicing people work as waged laborers of the BFD and plant teak and garjan trees in their *Jhums*. The forest department pays some wages (far below the market rate) for taking care of the trees. Once the area is covered with trees, the indigenous people are ordered to move from the area, and the trees remain the property of the Government Roy (2000: 73).

Village Common Forests (VCF)

Village Common Forest (VCF) is a natural forest, other than the government forest around the households. It is cultivated to fulfil ethnic groups' need of forest resources. Baten et al. (2010: 7) argues the community-managed VCF in the CHT is a direct result of resource constraints caused by deforestation and the prevention of entry into and use of the resources in reserved forests (which were restricted from local people's use through government declaration). These constraints have led local communities to devise newer and more sustainable modes of the natural resources management in the form of VCF during the first quarter of the 20th century (Baten et al. 2010: 7).

Between 1871 and 1885, three-fourths of CHT's land was declared as state owned forest lands by the British colonial government. Besides, except some privately owned land those are obtained through leasehold or freehold, the remaining lands were declared as 'khas land' (Rasul 2007: 155f). One fourth of the government forest lands (approximately 3484 square kilometers) were declared as Reserved Forests (Rasul 2007: 156). Since 1900, the Chittagong

Hill Tracts Regulation (CHTR) gave 'Headman' of each *mauza* has given power to manage the forest within a *mauza*. Thus, from 1939, the ethnic minority groups started to manage the forests around their homesteads in CHT. Currently, it is estimated that VCF covers around 202 hectares of the total land in CHT (Baten et al. 2010: 7).

Similar forest management has been seen in Nepal and Anderson (2011) reports in the 1950s and 1960s a concern for the protection of natural resources led many Asian countries to nationalize all land, forests and water resources that were not private property. In Nepal, the government nationalized all forests under the Private Forest Nationalization Act of 1957. Traditionally, customary accesses were regulated among villages. They had rights in different resource units such as fuel wood, timber, fruits, fibers, fodder, and leaf litter from forest floor for composting with manure. These rights were not uniform for every village, but were widely respected. Following nationalization of natural resources, heavy deforestation occurred; one reason advanced for this deforestation is the disruption of community management systems and that state managed forests, in fact, became open access areas. The state realized its inability to protect the forests something, which led to several legislative changes, aimed at the handing over of forest management to local communities, which resulted in the Forest Act of 1993. It provides authority to the village users for management of forest resources through a community institution called a Community Forest User Group (CFUG), which represented the community of forest users in a village, who were legally authorized to take management decisions. The area of forest and size of a CFUG vary according to circumstances; the areas range from a just a few to over 4,000 hectares, the average being around 80 hectares (Anderson 2011: 26).

There has been a change in how the *Khyang* and other ethnic groups in the CHT had access to land and forest resources. The government policies have shrunken their rights to resources. The people of the CHT have been denied access to forests in the name of biodiversity conservation and land conservation, however, there is evidence that the minority ethnic communities, for example, in Bangladesh and Nepal have a sustainable forest management practices. In the following section, I will discuss the process through which the *Khyang* are dispossessed from their land and how the dislocation has been creating a difference at inter and intra community level.

RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES: DISPOSSESSION AND PRODUCTION OF DIFFERENCE

Based on the above and following discussion, I hold that the ethnic minority¹¹ communities of the CHT have been going through a process of dispossession from natural resources in the area. Ethnic minority communities are also losing land to *Bangalee* people who have been migrating to the CHT in a massive number after 1980s. The trend of land loss of the ethnic minority communities has been acknowledged by the government as special measures such as were taken in the Peace Accord of 1997 (Adnan and Dastidar 2011). However, the mechanisms for land grabbing are many and on different levels like state acquisition, transmigration programs, forcible seizure, etc.

The prevalent system of landholding in the CHT is characterized by legal pluralism in terms of the co-existence and parallel operation of three major categories of land laws (Adnan and Dastidar 2011: 44).

- (a) Formal laws which apply to Bangladesh as a whole
- (b) Formal laws applying specifically to the CHT and ethnic minority communities.
- (c) Customary laws and practices of the ethnic minority communities.

Land rights based on each of these systems overlap to varying degrees giving rise to instances of conflicting legal rights/ claims on the same plot of land. Within this complex framework of property rights, the acquisition or grabbing of land in the CHT has been taking place through many different processes, which can be grouped under four broad categories.

Acquisition of land by the State

Unlike the rest of Bangladesh, land acquisition in the CHT is conducted under a law specific to the region, entitled the CHT (Land Acquisition) Regulation, 1958. This law empowers the District Commissioner¹² (DC) to use force to acquire the designated lands without having to

¹¹ The constitution of states on the article for the culture of tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities (23A) states that the State shall take steps to protect and develop the unique local culture and tradition of the tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities. Article 23A was inserted by the Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment) Act, 2011 (Act XIV of 2011), section 14.

¹² It is office of administrative head for the respective districts in Bangladesh.

give prior notice to the concerned landowner. There is also no provision for appeal against land acquisition under this law (Adnan and Dastidar 2011: 46).

However, after the peace accord of 1997 the common article 64(1) of all three Hill District Council (HDC) Acts, endorsed by the Accord, explicitly specifies that without the prior approval of the concerned council, no lands of the district can be settled, leased, sold, or transferred in any other way, by any agency, including the government itself. Even though the framing of the HDC Acts clearly empower ethnic minority groups to override the power given by the CHT Regulation to the DC, in practice, the DC allegedly has continued to process land settlements and leases for *Bangalee* interest groups from outside without obtaining the legal/ prior approval of the concerned HDC (Adnan and Dastidar 2011: 46; see next section).

On the other hand, even though existing ('old') Reserve Forests already cover nearly one quarter of the area of the CHT, the Forest Department has been attempting to expand such state forests from the late 1980s acquiring more lands. However, this establishment of new Reserve Forests (or other state-managed forests) necessarily entails the acquisition of the common or private lands of the ethnic minority communities living in the so-called Unclassed State Forest (USF) areas of the CHT. Approximately one quarter of the CHT is reserved forest in which collection of fuel wood and other forest products is prohibited. In addition to the forest that had been declared as reserved from colonial times, there has been a further expansion of reserves forests by use of the Forest Act of 1927. Between 1990 and 1998, 217790 acres of land from 83 *mauzas* in three hill districts – have been embarked as reserved forest. Of these, 140,342 acres have been formally declared as reserved forest (Gain 2000: 3).

The government's strategy to seize land from the forest dwellers are also seen in India. Karlsson (2000: 3f) writes about the Rabhas who live in forest villages inside or on the fringe of the reserved forest ruled and 'owned' by the Forest Department, and ultimately by the Indian Government. Before the colonial times the Rabhas were shifting cultivator, who were denied rights to the forest that was declared 'reserved' by the British. The independent Indian state has by large continued the colonial system of forest management, and today people like the Rabhas still lack any formal or legal rights to the forest. The increasing interests in forest and wildlife conservations have led to seizure of livelihood options for the Rabhas.

Mohsin (1997: 81) argues, for CHT, in line with Scott's (2009: 10) argument for Southeast Asia, that the colonial state sought to change the mode of production in the CHT from *Jhum* to Plough as *Jhum* was economically less profitable for the state. In doing so, little consideration was given to the values and rights of the hill people. Contrarily they were stigmatized as primitive and semi-barbarians, who practiced a 'primitive' mode of cultivation through 'primitive technology' and the hill people carried their stigma of 'primitiveness' in the state of Pakistan and as well as in Bangladesh.

Another argument for promoting land seizure by the government is (alleged) gradual degradation of land. Government perceives that degradation of land and forest owing to unsustainable land-use practices, locally known as *Jhum* (slash and burn), an extensive land-use characterized by frequent shifting of plot, has become a serious concern in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh. Governments also regard that the practice of *Jhum* has been responsible for losing tree covers of the hills. Thus, policies and programs aimed at promoting alternative settled land use practices in cooperative farms (Mohsin 1997: 124).

People living at the CHT are also blamed for being conservative and not adopting alternative land use systems such as: plough cultivation and cultivating cash crops. However, the constraints in adopting alternative land use practices have been overlooked by the governing authorities. This became evident to me while one morning I was sitting at a small tea stall at *Rangamati* and I saw *Thoi Khyang* (52 years) going towards his home. As he saw me sitting there, he approached me and asked what I was doing. Afterwards he offered me to go with him to his house and I happily agreed. When we were climbing the small hill towards his home I asked where was he coming from and he replied that he went to buy some vegetables and showed me the vegetables he bought and said:

"This small amount of vegetables cost me 20 BDT (0.15 USD)." He further said, "beside my home there is some free land but I cannot cultivate any vegetable as there is no provision of water supply for irrigation here." He also said, "Khyangs of this area are really in economic hardship. Palash has been trying to establish small shop to survive but it is not proving beneficial for him. I guess he is also not that committed to run the shop. He opens the shop in the morning and closing by mid-day. He is also facing the same problem as me. Now he runs his family from the income of selling rice wine."

There is also a problem of marketing and selling of local cash-crop products (discussed later, see also chapter two). However, it has been the state policies on land use in CHT over two centuries has contributed to the process of land degradation starting during the British colonial period with the nationalization of land and forest and large scale commercial logging (Adnan and Dastidar 2011).

Designation of previously cultivated land as reserved forest has shrunken the ethnic minority groups' opportunities of making a living. Although the *Khyang* may also benefit from the forestry projects people hardly go to avail these opportunities as the procedure remain unknown for most people. *Lelung*, 55 years in *Bandarban*, said:

“In 1990 one day we heard that the government have declared some reserved forests (which is around seven kilometer from here). Then we did not know what is a ‘reserved forest’ and why it is a reserved forest? Eventually we found that we have no access to the forest from where we have collected fire woods and other fruits for years. Some years ago, we have also come to know that Bangalees are also working in forestry projects. We never knew what those were and are not interested in those.”

Further, the forests officers behave rudely with the minority people so they do not want to face them again thus lose all the opportunities.

Probat, 58 years from *Bandarban* said:

“The acquiring process of Pahari lands started in 1960s and many forests of the hills were acquired for the purpose of forestry projects. This have evicted many Khyang families and isolated them from the livelihood option. Now-a-days we are even deprived of minimal basic rights of living. The Khyangs and other ethnic minority people are also suffering from false cases as timber merchants sometimes cut trees and sell in the towns when get caught false cases are filed against the minority people as they know Khyangs or other minority people will not be able to do anything against the powerful people.”

My respondents also told me that the establishment of reserve forest abolished their customary rights and forced them to reduce the time between cultivating on the same plot of land. Thus, fertility and yield from the land has been decreasing. On the other hand, the construction of a hydroelectric dam and the state's encouragement of migration of lowland people into the CHT has created further pressure on land and forced farmers to bring more lands that are marginal under cultivation for growing food or annual cash crops and increase the cultivation frequency. Therefore, I find that the persistence of extensive land use practices is not caused by people's adherence to indigenous land use practices but by failures of policies to create conducive environment.

Seizure of private and common lands by powerful individuals

Seizure of private and common lands of the ethnic minority groups by powerful *Bangalees* and *Khyangs* result in dispossession of the *Khyang* and the conversion of common lands into private property. Once located in the CHT, many *Bangalee* settlers use a range of different techniques for grabbing *Pahari* lands. In some cases, they forged land settlement documents to justify their (illegal) occupation. Otherwise, they simply occupied lands by force, given the backing of the security forces and the civil administration. Such incremental land grabbing by *Bangalee* settlers has continued during the post-Accord period (Adnan and Dastidar 2011: 97).

The trend of decreasing ownership of land among the *Khyang* is seen in both *Bandarban* and *Rangamati*. *Ong Thui Khyang* (age 55 years) of *Rangamati* said that:

“The place we are living is called ‘Khyang Para’ however, at present there is lot more Bangalee people living inside the area and also adjacent areas. Those who have private lands are selling their lands and new comers in the area often build multi-storied buildings.”

The marginal position of the *Khyang* can be exemplified by his response when I asked if he did anything to stop this process. In addition, he said:

“Now a big building is being built just in front of my house and there is just a small passage left from where I can enter my house but these are small matters

and nothing can be done. Those who have money can do this and I have nothing to say on this. If I had money may be I would have done the same.”

I found that many types of forgery, involving illegal modification of titles, tenure contracts and other land records, have been used for fraudulent transfers of *Pahari* lands to others. *Bangalee* settlers have often made forged land settlement documents and used these to justify fraudulent claims on *Pahari* lands. *Ongsha*, 48 years in *Bandarban* said:

“Bangalee people at first take shelter in Pahari lands and afterwards capture the land. We are naive in believing the tricks of the Bangalee people. People previously were less educated and could not understand the price of the lands so sold lands at a nominal price. Sometime they had written 20 acres of land in the deed in place of 2 acres taking advantage of our illiteracy.”

Here, I will refer to the case of *Thoi Khyang* of *Rangamati*, which reflects that when individual interest rises there is rupture in community interests, and leads to land grabbing by one *Khyang* from another (see page 41-42).

Land grabbing by commercial agencies

In the early 1990s, the government began issuing private leases for commercial rubber and horticulture plantations on a large-scale during the counter insurgency. This process has also dispossessed the *Khyang* from the land where they have practiced *Jhum* for years.

One afternoon I was walking in the hilly areas I saw some small hills enclosed with fences and I asked one of the persons (*Thoi Khyang*) with whom I was with what this was. He said that the enclosed areas are privately leased land. When I asked why the lands were not being used for any purposes my informant replied that people have taken lease and they will do something may be in the future. He further said these are land where the *Khyangs* were doing *Jhum* when they first arrived in the area.

The areas leased out were mostly taken from the common lands of the indigenous peoples in the USF (Unclassed State Forest) areas that they had traditionally used for *Jhum* cultivation, grazing, hunting and gathering, and other purposes. However, their customary rights over

these lands were not recognized by the DC office, which treated these as state property (*khas*) and leased the lands to plantation leaseholders.

The beneficiaries of the leases were mostly members of the influential *Bangalee* elite who did not reside in the CHT (Adnan 2004: 127). The whole process amounted to a colossal exercise in privatization of land in which vast tracts of *Pahari* common lands were ‘enclosed’ through the use of state power and redistributed to absentee members of privileged classes of the majority community. It is important for business people to hold land titles in the CHT as it can grow as a business enterprise or else they can further sub lease the land and profit. The lands, which are leased out mostly remain unused, as most of the leaseholders are outsiders mainly influential *Bangalee* people, who do not have knowledge of or interest in rubber plantations. They have taken lease just to grab the public land with a speculation that in future it will be very valuable/ profitable and it was instrumental to borrow money from bank with low interest rate in the name of rubber plantation (Rasul and Thapa 2005: 10).

Even though the CHT Accord specified that the leases of plots that had remained unutilized for more than ten years were to be cancelled, I have observed that this clause was not implemented (as I have mentioned above). Instead, DC offices in the CHT continued to issue new plantation leases during the post-Accord period. This process enabled many *Bangalee* civil and military officials, as well as political leaders and professionals, to obtain plantation leases for themselves and their relatives and clients (Adnan and Dastidar 2011: 77).

Like the *Bangalee* settlers, many of the *Bangalee* plantation leaseholders attempted to take over adjoining *Pahari* lands to expand the area under their control, something which is indicative of a process of incremental land grabbing (Adnan and Dastidar 2011: 81). During my fieldwork in *Bandarban*, I also observed the incremental land grabbing by brickfield owners. The brickfield was built near the village and agricultural fields. Because of the fumes and heat nearby fields were affected in terms of fertility and yield. Thus, the owners of the adjoining lands were gradually forced to sell the lands to the brickfield owners. *Probhat*, 58 years, was once showing me the brickfield and said:

“A brickfield should not get permission to operate so near to the forests and human settlement. However, look, it is just 250 yards from my home. It affects the agricultural fields and us. And the brick field is getting bigger each year.”

When I asked how is the brickfield becoming bigger? He replied, “*as the agricultural fields loosing fertility there is no point holding the land, so people tend to sell and move away. I would have also moved away. I do not have any other place to live so I am bound to live here.*”

Distress sell of land

‘Distress’ or constrained sale of land by ethnic minority communities and the *Khyang* constitutes another factor in the various trajectories leading to sale of land and minority groups’ situation of dispossession. I found that a critical factor pressurizing the ethnic groups to sell their lands has been the gradual encirclement of their homesteads and cultivable plots by *Bangalee* settlers moving in and getting hold of the lands in the surrounding area. One of my informants (*Ongsha*, 48 years from *Bandarban*) said that:

“*My father had sold land for very negligible prices to the Bangalee people. He could not realize that the price of land will increase this much. Bangalee people are more intelligent than us and could anticipate that land prices will continue increase.*”

This continues to be a significant factor resulting in their land loss in current times. This trend has been seen in both *Rangamati* and *Bandarban*. Indebtedness is another reason for distress sell of land by the *Khyangs* (see page 72-73 and 86).

Litigation and land loss

Litigation is an instrument widely used for harassing and pressurizing *Paharis* until they let go of their lands. *Bangalee* settlers and commercial agencies have typically lodged false cases against *Paharis* in order to compel them to sell their lands (Adnan and Dastidar 2011: 99). Correspondingly, litigation has been widely used by the Forest Department to put pressure on *Paharis*, with the aim of compelling them to surrender their lands for afforestation projects. Furthermore, litigation has also been used by land grabbers to legitimize illegal land gains (Adnan and Dastidar 2011: 99). During my fieldwork, I also found that the threat of litigation has been used by the *Karbaris* to gather more land that is owned individually. *Ongsha* (48 years) of *Bandarban* said that he has some lands, which are not distributed among the heirs (parental land), and the lands are sometimes given/ leased to share croppers and sometimes

cultivated by their cousins. As there are many cousins and heirs who have not yet distributed the lands among themselves, I asked him how they all get their share. He responded that it is mostly taken by the people who cultivates and sometime he gets a share of 1 or 2 acre of lands. One of his paternal cousins is also the *Karbari* of the cluster of households and controls all the land. My informant also said one could not do anything against a person who is economically powerful and more connected with the administration.

“The Karbari (my paternal cousin) of the village did not give me the share of our common land which was inherited from my grandfather. However, I cannot do anything about it. If I try to get my share, the powerful Karbari can make a false case against me.” He said, *“even if the Karbari do not file a case himself he might use his influence on others to file a case claiming my lands. To run a case in the court cost a lot of money and I do not want to get into trouble.”* (Ongsha, 48 years, from Bandarban).

He further expressed his frustration, as *“I cannot do anything because he can get me arrested by police in one hour and if I am to file a case against him it could take me one week at least only to meet the concerned officials.”*

Corruption of Headman land loss

Growing instances of self-interest and corruption among Headmen and *Karbaris* is also a factor contributing to the dispossession of *Pahari* lands. Some Headmen and *Karbaris* have used their traditional roles as custodians of the land rights of the ethnic minority groups and made private settlements (or leases) on common lands that they had previously shared with the rest of their communities. In other instances, Headmen are reported to have taken bribes for giving their recommendations for transfer of the common lands of their communities to *Bangalees* from outside. During my fieldwork I saw newly built houses by the *Bangalees* and in a discussion with such an owner it became clear that they got the lease with permission from the Headman of the area. I was also told that if I want to build a leisure house in the hills I could also get some lands on lease if I am willing to spend some money. My experience in *Bandarban* indicates that some Headmen and *Karbaris* are operating as land dealers/ traders who buy cheap from ordinary *Paharis* and resell at a profit to outsiders (Roy 2004: 14; Adnan 2004: 89).

On the basis of my ethnographic fieldwork in the CHT, it became evident that the economic and socio-political power of the *Bangalee* people and also the *Pahari* leaders work against the *Khyang* people and create dispossession from land. It seems like there are two broad processes going on simultaneously here; the first process involves the loss of land rights by the ethnic groups to outside agencies and interest groups, while the other involves transfer of land rights among members of the ethnic groups (in this case the *Khyang*).

On the basis of the above discussion, I argue that both *inter-ethnic* and *intra-ethnic* land grabbing is going on among the *Khyang*. I found unfavorable government policies for the ethnic groups and growing capitalist interests and privatization as the major factors initiating land loss of the *Khyangs*.

EXPANDING STATE AND MARGINALIZATION OF THE *KHYANG*

Marginalization through indebtedness

In relation to my discussion in chapter two that the *Khyang* often face economic loss due to monopolization of the distribution of agricultural products by the *Bangalees*, here I will discuss how this process is leading to marginalization of the *Khyang* through indebtedness and land loss.

Once they face economic loss (as I have discussed in chapter two) the *Khyang* fall in a spiral downward, either they are forced to sell land or to take loan at high interest rates, sometimes they loan in condition of advance selling of their produce (the price of advance sell is much lower than the actual price). This is also linked with the gradual dispossession of land of the *Khyang*. *Mongchin* in *Bandarban* said once they face economic loss, to recover the cost of the production of cash crops sometimes they are forced to mortgage or sell lands (see also page 85-86).

Murray Li (2009: 72) states that in rural India, among small-scale farmers, dispossession by debt has intensified. Farmers who had been encouraged to buy productivity-increasing inputs on credit faced ruin when state subsidies were abruptly removed. However, in CHT, the people are encouraged by the government and NGOs to produce cash crops, but, due to lack of proper marketing plan, the *Khyang* and other ethnic minorities are facing economic loss.

Therefore, the *Khyang* remain depended on middlemen for trade and moneylenders for economic needs during production (sometimes middlemen also act as a moneylenders). I have observed that the need of cash has also introduced some NGO driven micro credit programs. However, at individual level also few people act as micro credit operators. To minimize the dependency of the farmers on the money lenders, the government has adopted many initiatives including establishing a 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 other minority groups members from taking such loans and builds hatred towards such officials.

Probhat, 58 years in *Bandarban* said:

“If you do not have connections to powerful people, there is no way one can get a loan of 2000-5000 BDT (25-60 USD) without giving bribe. You either pay cash or give vegetables, poultry or some fruits. Even after that we face bad behavior and also we have wait hours to meet them.”

On the same issue of credit facilities *Ridima*, 50 years in *Rangamati* said:

“We do not want any credit from anywhere even if we have to eat one meal a day. I do not want credit and consequently lose my house. Moneylenders give a small amount of money and eventually take everything that one has. I have less and I am happy with that. I do not want to lose everything I have.”

She said this because she has seen that due to not being able to pay loans on time the private moneylenders and NGOs even take away utensils of the households.

Political representation and citizenship

For the development of ethnic minority group the establishment of Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (Act of 1998) by the government has created a systemic 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.

As we see from the above, the *Khyang* and other smaller groups are in a disadvantages position of representation in order to voice their rights and opinion about development. The situation is comparative to Ong's (2000: 58) analysis in Malaysia and Indonesia of what she terms 'graduated sovereignty' which refers to the differential treatment of populations by the government inserting 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 political representation at the council cannot even express their worries and wishes. *Thoi*, 52 years of *Rangamati* 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 *Probhat*, 58 years from *Bandarban* said, "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: 58) explains that 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, through awarding rights and benefits largely denied to the Chinese and Indian minorities. This has been done through awarding the Malays shares in government owned trusts, government contracts, business credits, scholarships, business licenses, university admissions, civil employments, and jobs in large firms. Ong (2000: 59) states that this was the world's first affirmative action system tied exclusively to ethnicity, which is a system of ethnic-based

governmentality that has come to racialize class formation and naturalize racial differences in Malaysia.

I find that after the independence of Bangladesh nationalism has been established based on the majority *Bangla* language, Islam – religion of the majority, followed by a mass transfer of *Bangalee* people in the CHT along with development initiatives based on settled agriculture and private ownership of land. Thus, I see Bangladesh as a comparative case to Malaysia in terms of government policies creating graduated sovereignty (c.f. Ong 2000). The favoritism towards the ethnic majority groups has marginalized the *Khyang* and other ethnic minorities of the CHT disregarding their problems regarding land dispossession as I have described in this chapter. After the government took initiatives to empower the ethnic minorities through HDC it has proven again marginalizing for the smaller communities like the *Khyang*.

DISCUSSION

Rosaldo (2003: 1) mentions that the nation building project try to build metropolitan centers and include minority groups in the process driven by ideas of development, modernity, assimilation and nationalism. Such notions marginalize hinterland ethnic groups and demand that they transform themselves into citizen (Rosaldo 2003: 1). In other words, the process demands that such ethnic groups stop being who they are and assimilate with the national community. If the situation of the *Khyang* and CHT is looked upon with a similar analytical perspective it becomes clear that the initiatives of the governing authority to include CHT in the state, or making it into state space, has forced the *Khyang* into a situation where they cannot practice the way of life that they had before. As I have discussed in this chapter that with the changes in administration of land and forests in the CHT the *Khyang* are subjected to land loss. The government, powerful *Bangalees* and *Khyangs* and also business agencies did this land seizure.

Southeast Asia enjoys a high degree of linguistic and ethnic diversity, regional and religious heterogeneity, and distinct colonial history (Rosaldo 2003: 2). The new nations have undergone a daunting process of transforming colonial subjects into citizens of the nation-states and they have struggled to define citizenship and elicit nationalist sentiments from hinterland populations (Rosaldo 2003: 2). Struggles over electoral politics, national language,

religious inclusion, educational access, and codification of national law are the topics of negotiation over citizenship (Rosaldo 2003: 2). Rosaldo cites examples of the indigenous Penan in Malaysia where the government officials hope to convert the Penan from what they see as their present state of savagery into citizens of the national community like themselves in the name of modernization and national development. In the case of forested Penan lands, development is presented as necessary national good; the government profits from its taxation of logging and other such enterprises. They find the Penan system of land tenure indecipherable and view Penan existence as hand to mouth, abject poverty and a generally miserable way of life. However, Rosaldo (2003: 9) claims the official language of inclusiveness, citizenship and equality, which is precisely what is oppressive for the Penan, who is thereby diminished as rational beings and as a moral community. Thus, official citizenship is at odds with ‘cultural citizenships’¹³, or with Penan perceptions of how they should be treated were they to become full members of the national community. The *Khyang* in the CHT has been experiencing a similar nation building process. They are losing their means of production, their way of life is being marginalized (as discussed above) and they are forced into becoming citizens of Bangladesh at the cost of their cultural citizenship. The changes in economic frontiers (see chapter two) have led the *Khyang* into a situation of direct competition with the *Bangalees* and the state policies also marginalized the *Khyang* even though those were supposed to develop the CHT and its people.

In line with Rosaldo’s (2003) argument, I hold that in Bangladesh the relations between state officials and marginalized hinterland minority groups involve differences of power and differences of perception by each group of the other. The *Khyangs* have accepted being minority and believe that those who have power and money can do the things according to their wish. The *Khyangs* further believe that the kind of behavior they get from government officials and powerful people is because the powerful people is certain about the fact that powerless people will not be able to resist it.

¹³ Rosaldo (2003: 3) defines cultural citizenship as, in Latino contexts the term calls attention to the range of claims that’s citizens (especially groups subordinated by race, gender and class) make against the state. Such claims must be understood from the point of view of the subordinated subjects. Socially and historically constructed in relation to local definitions of legitimate entitlements and aspirations, they range from jobs, wages, houses, and schooling to respects, wellbeing, and dignity as defined and understood by the subjects in question.

The process of acquiring *Jhum* land and forcing people to do settled cultivation has occurred because of Bangladeshi government, as the British colony and Pakistani government has an interest in expanding the state space and create a larger fiscal/ taxable population and in this way exercise better control over the population. As Scott (2009: 40f) argues, modern states aim to devise an ideal ‘state space’, that is to say a space of appropriation, therefore, wet rice, along with other major grains, has been the foundation of early state – making. Wet rice cultivation was the choice for the state makers because it has reliable and maximum yield compared to other mode of cultivations. In a similar way, construction of transportation network/ infrastructure facilitated the Governments’ relocation of its population from the plains to the CHT. As I have shown in this chapter, transmigration programs and mass moving of *Bangalee* people have made it hard for the minority groups to maintain their access to lands on which they practice *Jhum* and lived for years (see also chapter two).

Ong (2006: 499) states that the ever-shifting landscape of rights and entitlements associated with citizenship (on a global level) has been shaped by the flows of markets, technologies and populations. This changes challenge the notion of citizenship tied to the terrain and imagination of a nation state. She claims the difference between having and not having citizenship is becoming blurred as the territorialization of entitlements is increasingly challenged by deterritorialized claims beyond the state. Ong argues (2006: 500) that on a global level universal market interests, technologies and NGOs become articulated with citizenship and make new claims for resources from state and non-state institutions. In the case of Bangladesh and CHT, I have, in this chapter illustrated that rights and entitlements of the *Khyang* have shifted as the administrative system changes and as the influx of *Bangalee* people increased. The *Khyang* are dispossessed from land access through government seizure, powerful individuals among the *Khyang* and *Bangalees*, and commercial agencies. The *Khyang* are being marginalized in the market places and through debt and distress sell of lands. Thus, an unique social, economic and political scenario is created in relation to the ethnic minority communities and CHT; resulting in dispossession and creating a condition where certain people (the *Khyang*) can no longer sustain their livelihoods through direct access to the means of production, or access to a living wage (c.f. Murray Li 2009: 77; Hall, Hirsch and Murray Li 2011: 4). Murray Li (2009: 67) claims, in large parts of rural Asia, these conditions of dispossession from means of production or access to living wage have become widespread as a result of two sets of forces: what she terms as a ‘new round of enclosures’ that have dispossessed large numbers of rural people from the land; and the low

absorption of their labor in alternative occupations. I hold that a similar situation is seen in CHT today where the state has been seizing land, closing the forest frontier for conservation and, *Bangalee* population has been migrating to the CHT. Further, the ethnic minority farmers find it hard to make profit when exposed to competition from the *Bangalee* merchants. Further, as the *Khyang* are not informed about the possibilities of work in forestry projects and are also negligent about this opportunities because of losing their means of production as I have discussed in this chapter (see page 65-66), they are not also incorporated in the alternative occupations either (see page 31). This situation in CHT indicates a process where the government and their policies have selected *Bangalee* sub set of the population for life enhancement while others ethnic groups as the *Khyang* experience to be encroached upon, coerced or excluded from the Bangladesh nation, and their access to resources and livelihood options. Consequently, through these new relationships with state and other associated factors the *Khyangs* are being marginalized (c.f. Murray Li 1999: 2; c.f. Ong 2000: 58).

I argue that Bangladesh state's prioritization of *Bangalee* nationalism based on *Bangla* language, declaration of Islam as the state religion and standards imposed for developments have marginalized the *Khyang* and other ethnic minorities in CHT. The process of 'majoritising' the *Bangalee* population simultaneously 'minoritises' and marginalizes other ethnic groups of CHT, which can be termed as 'politics of identity' (c.f. 2009: 243). Scott (2009: 244) argues ethnic identities in the hills of Zomia are crafted and designed politically to position a group vis-à-vis others in competition for power and resources. The marginalization of the 'hill people' in the CHT is continued following the colonial rule in CHT and it is an ongoing process between the 'powerful' and 'powerless'. Murray Li (1999: 2ff) terms this as social construction of marginality through which particular spaces become subject to simplified, stereotyped and contrastive descriptions according to defined criteria at the center. She argues based on her ethnography in uplands of Indonesia where with the locus of power shifting towards Islam, many of the cultural standards of the uplands (such as production system and forest dependence) were judged distinct and deficient (Murray Li 1999: 4ff).

In CHT, there is another dimension of marginalization where few members of the groups become more integrated with the state and state power and dominate other *Khyangs* economically and politically which marginalized the *Khyang* as an ethnic group (see page 70-71). The process of assimilation through socio-economic changes have created its own

‘others’ as Kasmir and Carbonella (2008: 14) also point out how dispossession and ‘production of difference’ works. They cite examples of regularization of London dockworkers’ wage payments at the turn of the 19th century where instead of regular monetary wages, dockworkers received their chief remuneration in ‘chips’ along with the ‘takings’ from other workplaces and trades along the Thames river – coal, silk, sugar, coffee, tea, pins, cloth and tools. Efforts in the 1970s to regularize the money wage followed with dual strategy of criminalizing dockworkers customary takings and eliminating the non-monetary community. Individuals found guilty of illegal appropriation were subject to public whipping, imprisonment, deportation and even hanging. I hold that a similar process can be observed among the *Khyang* as the forest regulation has deprived them of the forest resources that they would have been using otherwise. They are beaten when they use forest resources from the RF and bear legal cases. They are also facing false cases filed by the timber traders and corrupt forest officers. The government’s intention of establishing such projects, that is, the new opportunity of benefitting from the social forestry skim is unknown to them.

On the basis of my ethnographic findings, I have shown that the Government, powerful *Bangalees* and *Khyangs* (who are politically and economically connected with the state apparatus), and commercial agencies are seizing land access from the *Khyangs*. As a group the *Khyangs* are deprived of minority quotas in jobs and education (see also chapter two). Even the formation of the CHT regional council proves the *Khyang*’s marginalization where they have no representation. Due to these changes social hierarchy developed among the *Khyang* as the society has been centering itself to money and political power. Thus, most of the *Khyangs* are dispossessed from means of livelihoods and marginalized.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I described the historical trajectory of CHT and how the *Khyang* are being dispossessed from their land. The state acquisition and conversion of land and forest coupled with government policies of leasing out lands to commercial agencies has deprived the *Khyang* from their customary rights of the forest resources. These processes together with the emerging notion of private property among the *Khyang* have created a pathway for land grabbing by one *Khyang* from the other and by the state as against its people (powerful versus the powerless). The Bangladesh state’s strategy to give equal opportunities in terms of

representation in the national forum, economic opportunities, opportunities in education to all the ethnic groups has not benefited the *Khyang* (see also chapter two). Such benefits of opportunities and quotas in jobs, in education and in market places that are established have been monopolized by the larger ethnic communities living in the CHT. In the present situation, as I have described on the basis of my ethnographic information, the *Khyang* are marginalized and deprived in the Bangladesh nation state. Yet, some of them are finding their own space in the nation state as a citizen of Bangladesh where economic and political power helps them. The following chapter will analyze the ways transition of economic activities and being part of the Bangladesh nation state has affected *Khyang* identity and social networks.

CHAPTER FOUR

**SOCIAL NETWORKS AND ETHNIC IDENTITY AMONG THE *KHYANG*:
FORMATION AND DIVERSIFICATION**

INTRODUCTION

The connectivity of social networks and the dynamic exchange among members of other groups might allow members of the ethnic/ minority groups a multiplication of resources that one owns through reciprocating favor, help, support received in difficult times or any moment in daily life (Rosas 2001: 42). In this chapter, I discuss the social networks of the *Khyang* and the ways *Khyang* identity is a restriction on engagement in networks. I will also address how *Khyang* identity is formed in the present socio-economic situation of the CHT and the differences between older and younger generation and between various occupational groups. Based on the previous chapters, I hold that the *Khyang* as subjected to the state expansion and development projects are being marginalized because of their identity as *Khyang*. In this chapter, I will analyze the ways changing economic frontiers, state expansion and marginalization has affected the *Khyang* identity and social networks.

I have found that the use of *Bangla* language in most social arenas and the position of the *Khyang* as people of ‘low status’ restrict their access to, and incorporation in, different social networks. The social networks of the *Khyang* arguably define their perception of identity and a persons’ position in the wider context of CHT (occupationally, politically or educational background) creates situational identities (c.f. Eriksen 1992 b). For the *Khyang* the idea of having own language and a common history of establishing villages collectively produce a historical consciousness of *Khyang* identity. The existence of a collective identity among the *Khyang* is comparable to what Malkki (1995: 241) has found among the Hutu refugees in the refugee camps and in Kigoma town of Tanzania. The camp refugees perceived their identity as collective, whereas the town refugees perceived their identity as shifting. I have found that there are variations in collective consciousness and collective identity between different groups of *Khyang* people, especially between younger and older generation and between urban and rural dwellers. Therefore, I hold that the *Khyang* interact beyond ethnic boundaries and present themselves differently in different contexts in a multi-ethnic stratified society.

Based on my ethnographic information I will illustrate that there are no fixed identity markers, which the *Khyang* are maintaining to preserve their identity, rather, there are a set of factors in action. Social position based on education, political power, economic position and ethnic identity as *Khyang* initiate situational identities (c.f. Eriksen 1992 b). Thus, I will argue that

the idea of *Khyang* identity is fluid (Scott 2009) and their ethnic boundary maintenance is a dynamic process (c.f. Barth 1969).

FORMS OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

If social network is understood as the particular set of other persons with whom a person recurrently interacts – it is based on that person's own selection among the opportunities that occur. Barth (1983: 133) states in a social context person with different characteristics, such as sex, wealth, religious affiliations produce different opportunities for the persons. Therefore, through this the processes that reproduce the forms of social life for the *Khyang* will be identified.

Neighborhoods

A person's neighborhood provides the first and most accessible set of potential parties to relationships. There are distinct differences of neighborhood characteristics between my two field sites, that is, *Rangamati* (more connected to the urban center) and *Bandarban* (isolated and far away from the town). The difference may be because *Rangamati* is more urbanized than *Bandarban*. The neighborhood in *Rangamati* is formed with people from different ethnic, economic/ professional and educational backgrounds, while the neighborhoods of *Bandarban* are more ethnically homogenous. Thus, the forms of interaction between people of *Rangamati* differ from interactional forms in *Bandarban*.

In *Bandarban*, I observed that almost all people visit the small tea-stalls during the evening and talk while in *Rangamati* such gatherings are formed based on the economic position of the participants. Women also participate at such gathering but the number of women is far less than the men and women participate mostly when there are fewer numbers of people (men) are involved. However, women establish a small set of reciprocal or unilateral visiting relationships; they visit each other at a daily basis and even go together to fetch drinking water. The number of partners in groups varies from a pair up to eight (sometimes they have their young children with them). Women's relationships are based on close proximity of home, so they are less diverse than that of the men. This is comparable to what Barth (1983: 142) finds characterize networks of women in Sohar town.

Religious and community networks

Among the *Khyang* of *Rangamati*, the church based religious network is stronger than the *Khyang* community network itself, while in *Bandarban* the community network with fellow *Khyang* is strong. This became evident through the *Khyang* association for supporting fellow members in times of economic hardship, for example: if someone wants to sell land, the association buys it so that none from the outside could get their community lands. It is important for the *Khyang* community to keep their lands something, which is related to their production of *Khyang* identity. There are many *Bangalee* people living in the surrounding areas who have bought many lands from the *Khyang* so now they want to keep their lands within the *Khyangs* (see chapter three). In *Rangamati*, the *Khyang* take part in the regular prayer meetings where they take part as a Christian and not as a *Khyang*. *Bir Khyang*, 45 years, in *Rangamati* said, “*I feel more Christian more than I feel myself a Khyang.*” He further said, “*when I was in Sylhet (district) for my studies I saw my Hindu and Muslim classmates to take part in their religious activities regularly, so gradually I also started to go to Church.*”

Occupational networks

The *Khyang* are also involved in occupational and professional networks, which are mostly hierarchical in arrangement, that is, in those networks *Khyang* act along the hierarchical position they hold in the relationships. Further, among the youth who are studying and engaged in pursuits beyond the immediate locality I found a more diverse association with networks. These processes affect how the *Khyang* think of their community (individuality vs collectivity). These networks will be discussed in detail in the later parts of the chapter.

Political networks

The *Khyang* of the *Rangamati* are more infused with the people of other communities (see chapter one) and are more politically active than the *Khyang* of *Bandarban*. One of the elected members of the local government is from the *Khyang* community of *Rangamati*. It is important and beneficial for the *Khyang* because whenever there are some government help (there are some regular allowance and some occasional) to be distributed such as old age allowance, destitute women allowance, Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), etc., it is on discretion of the members of the respective wards to prepare a list who will get the benefit from the development program. *Ushoichin* (35 years) of

Rangamati told me that “for the last two and half years, since we have got an elected member from their community in the Union Parishad, most of the insolvent *Khyang* get benefit from the program who did not get this before.” This is important because the population of the area who need help and are also eligible for receiving such allowance is too large than to be covered by the allocation that comes. I was present during one such distribution and I observed that many people were asking for a receipt from the members of the Union Parishad and one of the members (who is also a *Khyang*) said, “I have got an allocation for 100 households but there are 500 households who are in need of this support.” In my view, this situation shows that the connectivity of social networks (and dynamic exchange among its members and with members of other social groups might) allow a multiplication of resources people can/may access (c.f. Rosas 2001). This is in line with Hansen and Stepputat (2006: 306) who argue that fragmented systems of authority are found all over the postcolonial world where local strongmen occupy strategic positions between state institutions and the population, where proper land titling never has been undertaken and where access to entitlements is contingent on having a well-connected patron who can channel claims and applications.

In the next section, I will explain the factors that put barriers for the *Khyangs*’ connectedness in networks of people from different ethnic groups.

INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND CONTESTATION OF DIFFERENT NETWORKS

There are some things that the *Khyang* perceive as hindrances for building their social networks: the hegemony of the *Bangla* language and the general position of the *Khyang* as a minority ethnic group in the CHT and Bangladesh.

Language as a mode of domination

Language occupies a central position in the construction of nationhood of the *Bangalees* (see page 55). *Bangla* is used in the official correspondence within the state (Mohsin 1997: 61). There is no state policy for the protection or promotion of other languages within the state as 45 ethnic groups in Bangladesh form linguistic minorities in the country, speaking more than 30 different languages (Rahman 2010: 341). On the other hand, the *Khyang* and other ethnic minority people I met during fieldwork alleged that as the official language being *Bangla*

they face tremendous problems in the courts for example where they often have to attend land settlement disputes. These difficulties discourage them from taking resort to legal measures as well.

Language is also responsible in two major ways for the economic marginalization of the *Khyang* and other minority groups of the CHT. These are the inability to understand or communicate in *Bangla* language and the refusal of the state to understand or accommodate the economic modes associated with the traditional ways of the *Khyang* (discussed in chapter three). In many cases, they have lost their land to *Bangalee* moneylenders. *Ongmui*, 57 years, in *Bandarban* mentioned that:

“During the lean seasons many people (Khyangs) borrow money from the Bangalees. Their inability to communicate in Bangla make them put their thumb stamps on documents that in many instances charge exorbitant interest rates. Which have led to losing land of the Khyangs.”

This is in line with what Murray Li (2009: 73) writes about land dispossession of small holders in India and China where people are dispossessed through large-scale enclosures for agricultural expansion and conservation and the piecemeal dispossession of farmers through indebtedness.

The *Khyang* experience that their own language is neglected, and that this constrains them from making wider connections. The state has set up some tribal institutes at the district levels but these are catered towards the promotion of the CHT as a tourist area. All their publications are in the *Bangla* language. No serious attempts have been made by these institutes to promote the local languages and cultures; rather the presentation of the culture of the *Khyang* and other ethnic minority groups as a static entity is a distortion of the local culture(s). Moreover, the electronic media, radio and television, all have their programs in *Bangla* language. At times programs on the different ‘ethnic minority groups’ of Bangladesh are telecasted on the television. However, the programs are presented in the *Bangla* language, only the songs are performed in the local language. *Ongsha*, 48 years, from *Bandarban* shared his concern regarding this issue and told me that the *Khyangs* and people of other ethnic groups living in the surrounding areas view the programs as telecasted for the *Bangalees* and those do not reflect their culture. Further, I have also observed that the road

markers, nameplates, signboards, car plate numbers are all written in *Bangla*. The moment a foreigner enters Bangladesh, she/he would take it as a land of *Bangla* speaking people only, whereas officially 12 ethnic groups including the *Bangalee* people live in the CHT with their own languages and cultures.

The more the *Khyang* interact with speakers of other languages, especially *Bangla*, the more their own spoken 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 *Khyangs* I met identified two main reasons for their loss of language; first, in the primary school level there is no provision for learning *Khyang* language. However, for the education of the ethnic minority groups 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. Even there have been no official government attempts to give instructions to the ethnic minorities in their own languages even at the primary levels (Mohsin 2010: 161). 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. In this regard, *Thoi Khyang*, 52 years, of *Rangamati* said that *Khyang* children find it difficult to compete with the students whose mother tongue is *Bangla* and the dropout rate among students of *Khyang* is very high. One of the reasons of drop out is financial hardship and another is that *Khyang* children do not find it worthy to go to schools or colleges. Sometimes they also feel inferior in schools, and so they become motivated not to go to schools. During in-depth personal interviews of young students, I found that they had suffered from inferiority complex during their childhood because of their different pronunciation and accent of *Bangla*. They were teased by their fellow students so they were shy to speak out in class. They all felt that they could have done much better if they had their primary education in their mother tongue.

The second reason often mentioned as a cause for the loss of *Khyang* language is inter-marriages, especially in cases when women are from other communities children get used to language, which is usually *Bangla*, or their mother's language. Dr. *Bir Khyang* is a medical doctor who has passed MBBS from Sylhet Medical College and works as a medical practitioner at a Christian Hospital. He has married a *Marma* woman who herself is a medical doctor and works at a Health Complex of sub-district level in *Rangamati* district. They have two sons, five and three years old respectively. *Bir Khyang* said that his children do not

speak *Khyang* language and as from childhood, he himself could not practice the *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 with *Bangla* speaking people.

Starks et al. (2005) discuss the issue of language and ethnic identity in the Pasifika communities in Auckland, New Zealand's largest urban center. This region has the highest percentage of Pasifika peoples in New Zealand. The Pasifika label covers a wide range of disparate Polynesian communities in the Pacific. The four largest communities in Auckland are the Samoan, Cook Islands, Tongan and Niuean groups. All are relatively recent migrants with the majority of migration between 1960-1970. They examine the relationship between their self-evaluation of their household identity and their language maintenance. The quantitative and qualitative findings show that all four Pasifika communities are undergoing shift in identity perhaps due to their new and changing environment in New Zealand. They claim though in the context of New Zealand these communities are not using their own language extensively, it is one of the most important factors to these communities in regard to their identities (Starks et al. 2005: 2195). On the basis of my fieldwork I argue that though the *Khyang* language is not used in the daily activities (work places) and though many do not even speak the language, the notion of the language is central to the their *Khyang* identity. Most of *Khyang* have responded that their language is one of the most significant identity markers.

In a similar situation Scott (2009: 240) argues that in the area of 'Zomia', not all the Miao people speak a unique language. They speak three major languages, and within each of those languages there are dialects that are mutually unintelligible. Though at the micro level of an individual village, the same language could be found, there is difference among the same ethnic groups living at different places. A major reason of differences among the same ethnic group as identified by Scott (2009: 241) is that hill groups absorbed whomever they could. The absorptive capacity (for example through marriages as in the case of *Khyang*) led to great cultural diversity within hill societies. This intermingling has led to the lesser use of *Khyang* language. Further, the *Khyang* have also adopted irrigated padi cultivation, the other non-agricultural jobs (see chapter two) and the language of the padi core, that is, *Bangla*.

In the face of decaying *Khyang* language, 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 areas met several times to compile *Khyang* words. However, this has created another problem regarding the alphabet of the language, as some of the *Khyang* proposed to use Roman alphabets while others demand to use Alphabets, which previously were 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 thus widened the divide between Christian and Buddhists *Khyang*.

Ethnic identity as mode of domination

In the CHT the *Khyang* as an ethnic group are treated as having lower social status than the *Bangalee* people have. The *Bangalee* people living in the surrounding areas make it visible through some spectral violence (c.f. Hansen and Stepputat 2005) which can be described as miniature exercise of sovereign power of the Bangladesh state.

Ongtha, 52 years, in *Bandarban* told me that in 2004 he was beaten by some neighboring *Bangalee* people during their celebration of New Year at an event where young boys and girls spill water on each other. However, as the program is arranged in the village people from the neighboring areas also go to see the events. In such an event, one *Bangalee* boy got wet which initiated a fight between the *Bangalee* and *Khyang* boys. Eventually, *Ongtha* as the head of the event organizer was beaten by the *Bangalees* and sent to hospital. A police case was filed on this issue but he said that but the police did not do anything more than a mere investigation.

Ongtha said:

“If I mix with the Khyang during 80 percent of my activities I have to mix with the Bangalees in 85 percent of my daily activities. I even invite them in all the social programs we arrange. However, I do not know why I was beaten like this. As I was born a Khyang, I have to face such incidences.”

This event indicates that in the CHT where *Bangalee* are the majority it is believed *Bangalees* as the majority has the right over lands and control over social situations of the localities. This event was a spectral exhibition and enforcement of the power they assume and the event can in line with Hansen and Stepputat (2005: 3) be seen as sovereign power always seeking to project itself as given, stable and natural. Sovereign power is established through performances within nations, and through construction and maintenance of localized sovereign power through exercise of actual and or 'spectral' violence. Hansen and Stepputat (2005) further states that the sovereignty of the state is an inspiration that seeks to create itself in the face of internally fragmented, unevenly distributed and unpredictable configurations of political authority that exercise more or less legitimate violence in a territory. Thus, rather than the Indians becoming citizens of the new nation-states in Latin America, they were often reduced to subjects of indirect government by local strongmen, landowners and other who took up local government offices (Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 22).

However, some of the *Khyangs* have overcome the marginalized position of the *Khyang* as a group and hold position of higher status in their interaction with other people, which is basically contingent upon political, economic/ professional or educational background of the persons involved. *Thoi Khyang* (52 years), for example, who runs a medical center in *Rangamati* and provide maternal and general health services, said that his customers are mostly Muslim *Bangalee* as the medical center is located in an area populated mostly by Muslims. He further said he does not face any sort of rude behavior or discrimination during his interaction with people from other ethnic backgrounds in providing health services to his customers. The reason for which, he believes, they get so many customers is the lack of enough medical facilities at the locality. Because of the demand and providing good and quality care has provided them the status of dependable persons in times of medical/ health needs. Here, I have observed that in case of other *Khyang*, the identity being a *Khyang* remain prominent however, in this case it is evident that *Thoi Khyang* has presented an image of himself as a medical practitioner, which the local people have accepted. Thus, he acts accordingly and in line with Jenkins's (2008: 93) argument of that individuals negotiate their identities within the interaction order and presents an image of themselves (of self) for acceptance by others, which sometimes could override collective identifications. Here the position of medical doctor (which is a position of high status in Bangladesh) of *Thoi Khyang* get the prominence and though the *Khyang* group as a whole is somewhat of low status in the locality he gets the superior position because of his profession.

IDENTITY FORMATION: DIVERSIFICATION IN SELF AND PUBLIC IMAGE

To explore how the *Khyang* interact and how their identity is produced I have started by mapping out what Adrian Mayer (1966) has called action-sets¹⁴, that is the ego-centered first-order linkages, to use the terminology of network theory (Eriksen 1992 a). The purpose was finding out who does what with whom and for which purposes. However, this was not an exhaustive exploration considering the sheer hugeness of the entire network. Therefore, purposive selection was made in locating persons, or key informants covering a wide range regarding profession and age (there is an apparent male bias because of the *Khyang* being a patriarchal society). I will present four cases below to explain how identity and social networks work among the *Khyang*.

Thoi Khyang is a middle-aged Christian man living at *Rangamati*. He lives in a house built on a land leased by the Christian Hospital with his wife and two daughters. He works as an administrative officer at CHC. His oldest daughter is a dental medical student and lives in another district while his youngest daughter studies at higher secondary level in a nearby college. His wife (ethnically *Bangalee*) is a staff nurse in government hospital and they both run a medical center. His action-set has five main components, excluding his nuclear family: kin, affine, neighbors, colleagues and patients/ customers. His kin, notably his siblings, live in the other areas of *Rangamati*; his affine live in different parts of the country and in the capital city. *Thoi Khyang* and his family visit both categories at special occasions. His closest neighbors are mostly *Khyang* and *Bangalee* Christian and Hindu. He participates in the Baptist prayer meetings on a regular basis. He and his wife's colleagues include Muslims, Christian, Hindu, other ethnic minority groups and also the *Khyang*. He frequently engages in lively discussions at work concerning the state of the country, public events, or the situation at work. In the medical center where they provide maternal and general health services, their customers are mostly Muslim *Bangalee* as the medical center is located in an area populated mostly by Muslims.

¹⁴ Action set is a series of links within a personal network which describes ego's communication for a specific purposes (for example, political influence) for a short period of time. In Mayer's (1966) view a certain number of linkages which exist in a total network in a community may be mobilized for a specific and limited purpose. The mobilization must involve some transaction between the persons (who are involved) of the action set. The transactional element distinguishes action set linkage from network linkage (Mayer 1966: 122; c.f. Mitchell 1969).

A very different type of action-set is that of *Shipon* (32 years), who lives very close to *Thoi Khyang*, and works as an elected member of the local government (Union Parishad). He also owns a small shop, which becomes a meeting place for the young people in the evening. He is married but still childless, and has a different range of linkages than *Thoi*. Apart from his kin and affine, to whom he has certain strong obligations, his action-set includes friends scattered all over the area, as well as colleagues and political associates. He is politically active, and his action-set activates a social field of larger scale than *Thoi*. Because of being a member of local government, he is on cordial terms with his non-Christian and non-*Khyang* colleagues and general people of his area. Sometimes, he experiences role-dilemmas. During fieldwork, I observed a clash between young people of the area where he lives and the shop owners of the nearest market where he tried to appease both sections of the population as he has stakes at both end being a *Khyang* and also being a member of local government. He could not decide who to support (shop owners or people from his neighborhood) as at one side was people from the *Khyang* community and the others were his friends and political allies. Therefore, he could not make a decision and wanted to remain uninvolved. However, he had to talk with both groups so that the fight does not go further.

Ongtha Khyang is a middle-aged man with two wives and six children. He is a plain land cultivator in *Bandarban*. He has land to produce crops to sustain his big family. Compared to others his action set/ network is limited to the agricultural laborers (who work for him), the middleman who buys his produce (vegetables and spices) for trade in bigger markets, and his neighbors who are mostly Buddhist *Khyang* and Muslim *Bangalee*. During almost all his interaction his *Khyang* identity is the imperative, specially while selling his produce he must depend on the middle man because in the bigger whole sale markets his identity as an ethnic minority constrain him to pursue business with the *Bangalee* business men as the syndicate of the whole sale buyers do not want to buy at a fair price and sometimes ethnic minority people have to sell on loss, therefore, they cannot go to the bigger market rather sale their produce to middlemen who are also *Bangalee*. Though in this interaction with middlemen they hold a common understanding, it also reinforces his identity of being an ethnic minority, *Khyang*.

Usha Ching Khyang is a young male (20 years) from a village of *Bandarban*. He is a student of agricultural diploma and mostly lives in *Rangamati* town. When he comes home for vacation or in peak agriculture season to help his father, he generally feels isolated and out of

place in the village where he was born. He states that he cannot mix with anyone in the village, he do not share any understanding with his fellows in the village. He cannot talk or pass time as people at his village are not familiar with his interests and does not sometime support his view, the way of talking which he adopted during his stay at *Rangamati* town. Rather he enjoys his life in *Rangamati* town. However, he regards himself as a *Khyang*, wants to practice *Khyang* traditions, and speaks the language. What I assume from *Usha Ching Khyang's* position is that as his understanding and worldview modified because of his studies and living in a cosmopolitan city, he feels alienated in the place he was born and raised. He identifies himself as part of a much larger society than the immediacy of his village as probably is common amongst young people who engaged in higher education or jobs in the bigger cities.

The four persons from two different locations of CHT represent very different positions in terms of education and class, but share an identity linked to an imagined shared past, customs, norms and practices. They also have a wide range of shared representations and practices with non-*Khyang* such as the Christian *Khyang* marriage ceremony, which is different from the *Khyang* customs and practices, the use of *Bangla* language in their daily activities and at work. In many regards, *Thoi*, *Shipon* and *Usha Ching* seem to have more in common with a townsman or other people of the occupational network than with *Ongtha*. Therefore, situational character of social identities should be kept in mind.

The multi-ethnic character of *Thoi's* workplace and the lack of ethnic segregation at work at a Christian Hospital or at his medical center indicate the existence of shared understanding across ethnic boundaries. When he discusses conditions at work and when he is providing services to his patients their status as colleagues or service provider are more important than their ethnic ones.

Both *Thoi* and *Shipon* identify themselves as *Khyang*, and they stress that they also are Christians. Their shared *Khyang* identity includes components such as religion, and a shared common history of being *Khyang* (c.f. Malkki 1995). The context for any encounter between them is largely defined by their shared historical consciousness, including references to the establishment of the locality. Other dimension of *Shipon's* and *Thoi's* shared identity is conditional on their integration into greater society as politician at the local level or at the medical center and hospital.

What I find from the above cases is that identity is produced from the set of social relations a *Khyang* engages in at a regular basis. Thus, identity is produced in social relations and is an ongoing process (c.f. Jenkins 2008: 93; Eriksen 1992 a). It is also evident that educational, political and economic position of the individual *Khyang* places them in a higher or a similar level in their interaction vis-à-vis the *Bangalee*. Otherwise, the *Khyang* as an ethnic group are treated as of lower category by their *Bangalees* (the hill people versus the valley people, c.f. Scott 2009).

TRANSFORMATION OF IDENTITY ACROSS GENERATIONS

Marriage customs and intermarriages

The *Khyangs* have customary laws (*Dung*) for marriage and for their wedding ceremonies. As I was discussing with *Biren Khyang* about how marriages are fixed among the *Khyangs*, I got the following information. Generally, marriages do not take place within the same patri-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. As per the customary laws, in the past the bridegroom's family had to pay some BDT 50-55 (less than One USD) as a dowry to the bride's family if the marriage was arranged by the parents. The *Khyangs* call the amount /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 (USD 6.25). 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 were 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 sunrises. The village headmen or the elders ask the villagers to gather, then they formalize and celebrate the marriage of the runaway bride and groom in front of all. The

parents of the bride do not attend such a 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 carry a suitcase with garments for their own use, a tool 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 change in the marriage custom that became clear through various conversations with my respondents is that in recent days more inter marriages occur. One of my respondents, *Ongthui*, 35 years, 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, *“I have a daughter. If she marries a Marma or Bangalee what can I do?”* In addition, as *Khyang* are patriarchal, *“if a woman marries in another community she is generally perceived not belonging to the Khyang community anymore.”*

This statement of a *Khyang* reflects the *Khyang* increased interaction with others and their worries about preserving and or practice their own customs and traditions. His reference to the bigger ethnic communities like *Marma* and *Bangalee* refer to the helplessness he feels in this regard.

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

One more reason that is promoting the marriage of *Khyang* girls with boys of other communities is that when a *Khyang* girl is educated until higher secondary level or higher it becomes harder for her family to find a boy who is more qualified than her in terms of education. For example, *Biren Khyang* has a daughter who is studying medical and he said, *“I will not find any Khyang to marry her I will have to look among the Christian community.”*

This change in the marriage practices, specifically in terms of intermarriages with other groups, has an effect on the patriarchal nature (c.f. Mohsin 1997: 17ff) of the *Khyang*, for

example, I knew from the fieldwork that the decision making process in the household is exclusively on the men of family. However, the household where the wife was from another community, for instance, from *Marma* and *Bangalee*, I was told that both the husband and wife takes responsibility in deciding matters related to their family. Even women were the sole decision maker in the household matters, that is, maintaining the homestead and also education of the children. The practice of intermarriages affects the *Khyang* identity as I have shown (see page 87-88) that when mothers are not from the *Khyang* community and do not speak *Khyang* language children often cannot learn the language, which is an important identity marker for the *Khyang*.

Being ‘not as a Khyang’

Parents play a formative role in their child’s ethnic identity development. The way parents influence their children may be determined by a number of factors as Marks et al. (2007) showed evidence that immigrant parents’ levels of acculturation¹⁵ can influence the development of their child’s ethnic group identity. For instance, if parents are deeply rooted in the culture and behaviors of their country of birth, they may find it difficult to educate their children in a way that does not acknowledge these views and beliefs. On the other hand, if a strong identity with the home country creates future difficulties for their children – for instance, by creating externalities that alienate majority individuals and prevent them from provision of equal economic opportunity – then parents may consider this, and direct their influence on their children in a way that acknowledges this. Similar adaptation to circumstances regarding identity was referred to by Malkki (1995: 156) among the Hutu refugees in Kigoma town. Malkki states the town refugees did not define themselves primarily as member of the marked collectivity ‘Hutu refugees’. For example, some claimed to be Burundian immigrants from the colonial era, and thereby, Tanzanian citizens, the adoptive labels converged to negate any uniform, collective self-definition, and those were individualistically pursued and deployed. This strategy of not appearing as refugee could facilitate numerous routine activities of daily life: avoiding harassment by immigration officers, securing jobs, travelling, obtaining license for petty trade, market spots, spending leisure time in bars and night spots, and during conversing with strangers (c.f. Malkki 1995, see discussion below).

¹⁵ Acculturation explains the process of cultural change and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures (Sam and Berry 2010).

The way the *Khyang* are trying not to be distinctive when they encounter a *Bangalee* person can be analyzed from their pattern of dressing (see page 44) and the way they name their children. During my fieldwork as I was meeting many people, I got surprised listening to the names of the young people. The name sounded to me more like *Bangla* names or even English names like ‘Max’. Out of curiosity one day I asked *Thoi Khyang*, why people are having names like this? Thus, he said:

“Khyang names are difficult to write in Bangla alphabets and also difficult to pronounce. Therefore, in schools sometimes the teachers asked to change name when they are admitted. Sometimes the names are written in a wrong spelling. Because of all these now a days we tend to take names which are easier to write or spell.”

In reply I asked him, is it the only reason people are taking names like this? Why do not the teachers or parents try to write the name in the correct form? To my queries, he further said:

“Previously most of the Khyang parents were illiterate. They could not write or read Bangla so the teachers had written how they thought it was correct. Moreover, the Khyang children are bullied by the fellow Bangalee students because of their names. So now people are giving names to their children which are familiar to others.”

The issue with the name was also present during my first interaction with one of my research assistant who is student of agricultural diploma and studies in *Rangamati*. When he was introduced to me, he said his name was ‘Emon’, which is a very common name among the *Bangalees*. After a few days as I was moving around the *Khyang* households with him, whenever we met someone, they would refer him as ‘Lupea’. Afterwards, when I asked for his mobile number, as I was to travel to *Bandarban* he saw me writing his name as ‘Lupea’ and said, *“write ‘Emon’ too. Out of this area, I am known as ‘Emon’ ”*.

Based on these evidences I argue that as the *Khyang* identity sometimes lead to be treated differently by the *Bangalees*. Sometimes they try to present themselves not as a person from the *Khyang* community or a minority group.

In the CHT parents who have not gained higher education (at least until secondary level), now want their children to be educated in the national curriculum so that they can get a better job and earn money. Some of my respondents mentioned that they are now economically poor and have lost their lands because they could not read or write and thus could not understand land laws and other official procedures to legalize their land holdings thus, with time they have lost much of their lands. Now they want their children to be educated so that they do not have to face such situations. However, I think this connection has created a situation that has been changing the *Khyang* group identity. Those who are studying outside the villages and are involved in a social arena that requires them to think a member of bigger cultural scenario affect their sense of belonging and identity.

Further, the situation of *Khyang* identity between old and new generation, such as the difference in thinking between *Usha Ching* and *Ongtha* could be explained by Halbwachs's idea of collective memory (Halbwachs 1980; Malkki 1995). For Halbwachs (1980) collective memory is a continuous thought, which is capable of living in the consciousness of groups keeping the memory alive. However, young and old, regardless of age are encompassed within the same perspective as long as certain national, political or religious situations are not altered. However, as soon as a new situation is proposed or imposed, ensuing generations start having different streams of thought. In case of the CHT a new socio-economic situation has been imposed with the changes in the CHT administration and coming of the *Bangalee* people to the region (discussed in chapter two and three). As I have seen, in both *Rangamati* and *Bandarban* the young generations do not trace back their identity to the past; rather they see themselves as part the complex web of personal networks beyond their villages, whereas among the older generation the memory of their past still remains as a part of their identity. Similar pattern of divergence in historical consciousness is seen among the Hutu refugees who live in refugee camps and towns (Malkki 1995).

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I have illustrated how the *Khyang*'s social networks take shape and what produces the *Khyang* identity. The case of the *Khyang* reflects that the notion of identity is never completed; it is rather an ongoing process of identification and differentiation. Stuart Hall argues the process of establishing an identity implies the construction of the 'other', a

splitting between that which one is and that which is the other (Hall 1997: 47f; c.f. Barth 1969, see chapter one). In establishing a new way of thinking about identity, Hall brings his own experiences of racism and of becoming ‘black’ or learning an identity as black in Britain. Hall writes that he ‘became’ a ‘black person’ as a reaction to the racist practices to which he was exposed. English identification was blocked to him and other ex-colonial immigrants; hence, they had to find another place to stand. What Hall reveals is that all identities, both personal and collective, are constructed in and through relations of dominance and resistance.

The difference in experience of the *Khyang* living at *Rangamati* and *Bandarban* can be explained in terms of their different social context (rural and urban) following and during the economic transition that has been going in CHT. I find this situation to resemble what Malkki (1995) writes about the mass violence in Burundi of 1972 between the Hutu and Tutsi in her investigation of identity formation of two groups of Hutu refugees who had fled the mass killings. One group was settled in a carefully planned, physically isolated refugee camp, while the other lived in the less regimented setting of Kigoma Township. Thus, the ‘town refugees’ who live outside of any camp context tended to be dispersed in non-refugee neighborhoods. Malkki writes that the most unusual and prominent social fact about the camp was that its inhabitants were continually engaged in an impassioned construction and reconstruction of their history as ‘a people’. The narrative production of their history was based on collective idea of the ‘autochthonous’ origins of Burundi as a ‘nation’. In contrast, the town refugees had not reconstructed such a categorically distinct collective identity. Rather than defining themselves collectively as ‘the Hutu refugees’ (or even just as ‘the Hutu’), they tended to seek ways of assimilating and of inhabiting multiple, shifting identities—identities derived or ‘borrowed’ from the social context of the township. Identities, Malkki claims (1995: 3) were like ‘porous sieves’ to move in and out of, and assimilation was always intricately situational. Malkki (1995: 3) argues that the opposition between the historical-national thought of the camp refugees and the cosmopolitan ways of the town refugees reflect the ways social, imaginative processes of constructing nationness and identity are influenced by the local, everyday circumstances of life.

I think Malkki’s analysis provides a good comparative case for what I have found regarding identity formation among the *Khyang* in *Rangamati* and *Bandarban*. In *Bandarban*, those who live in a more isolated social context than the *Khyang* of *Rangamati*, people display a collective thinking about their socio-economic situation and themselves. Like in the refugee

camps though there was no mass killing of the *Khyang* at CHT there was violence in the form of exercising sovereign power and loss of livelihoods and land, and in some cases what I above have described as spectral violence (see also chapter three). But people inhabiting and creating different social contexts (*Rangamati* and *Bandarban*) have responded differently to the given situation and though situational identities are prevalent in both the field sites the cases presented above reflects that the collective identity of the *Khyang* are more prominent in *Bandarban*. Here I think the occupational, political and educational background of individual person plays important role. As the people of *Bandarban* are not so engaged with such individual networks, there is a thought of collective identity.

Malkki (1995: 241) also compares the historical consciousness of the refugees in the camps that have helped to give form to a historical national consciousness and which is challenging the cosmopolitanism among the Hutu living in town. She argues that the historical consciousness is embedded in, and emerges from, particular, local, lived circumstances. Instead of looking at historical consciousness as a thing already formed, she finds it more fruitful to focus on the processes of its formation and transformation. In line with this perspective, if we see how the younger and older generation of the *Khyang* at *Bandarban* think about themselves, it becomes clear that as *Khyang* people are becoming actors in different social milieus they find themselves in different social arenas where the historical consciousness of the *Khyang* as a group living in an area is losing its appeal to the younger generations and perhaps a new kind of consciousness is being formed among the young *Khyang*. On the other hand, the marginalized position of the *Khyang* also reinforces the thought of a common historical time of affluence among those who have lived that time and are now in a vulnerable position. Thus, among the *Khyang* there is a transformation of the historical consciousness and associated ideas of identity among one group, whereas, the marginal situation of the *Khyang* is also reinforcing the consciousness of the past among the others. This tension and difference has been produced by economic diversification of the *Khyang* which has loosened the older solidarities to new form of social and political networks and also promoted a wider and more diffused pattern of social integration (c.f. Simmel 2004 [1978]: 410f).

From the cases I have presented, I argue that the interaction between people from different ethnic backgrounds creates 'situational identities' (Eriksen 1992 b: 18). In the case of Trinidad and Mauritius, virtually any situation, which involves people of different ethnic

membership, has an ethnic character (Eriksen 1992 b: 18). Eriksen writes about a multi ethnic region in Mauritius where the main ethnic categories are blacks, Indians, Chinese, Europeans and culturally ambiguous categories of phenotypically ‘mixed’ people. The people of different ethnic backgrounds routinely express mutual suspicion in economic transactions. Personal economic failures in Mauritius are frequently explained by the notorious dishonesty/partiality of an ethnic category and where informal economic networks are ethnically bounded (Eriksen 1992 b). Similarly, the *Khyang* have also complained about the *Bangalees* as being dishonest with them in economic transactions and blame them as economic exploiters. The cases presented above also reflect the similar situation of the ethnic minority groups. Apart from economic transactions, ethnicity serves to organize the social world cognitively and normatively. For example, In Mauritius, it is considered good for an Indian to conduct business with a Chinese, but it is bad to do it with a Black. Similar tendencies were found among the *Khyang* (chapter two) where the *Khyang* prefer to work with someone from ethnic minority groups rather than with the *Bangalees*.

Historically the village of *Bandarban* has constituted something more than merely a physical aggregation of households. Ritually, it has been set apart by local religious beliefs and shrines; economically, it has represented a self-sufficient community; socially, it has formed the unit of status, of reciprocity, and of social insurance for the *Khyangs*; politically, it has generally been a unit of dispute settlement as well as of administration and taxation, until the massive economic changes since 1980s which undermined much of the economic basis of village autonomy.

On the contrary, in *Rangamati* the village was established as the *Khyang* stopped cultivation and engaged with non-agricultural activities; the village had no traditional political structures, further, as most of the *Khyang* converted to Christianity, their religious beliefs and ritual were also transformed so it was apparent negotiation between two traditions. However, few of the bases of *Khyang* identity, most importantly language persisted and which they are still practicing, however, in competition with the *Bangla* language, which they must use in everyday activities, *Khyang* language is losing its importance with time. The loss of language varies and it is more prominent in *Rangamati* than *Bandarban*, and I assume as the area is more connected with other *Bangla* speaking people through being part of a multi-ethnic social milieu. The occupation based differentiation between *Kongtu* and *Laitu Khyang* is no longer functioning; intermarriages between different groups of people with different

backgrounds are more common. These changes indicate that their culture, if not their tradition, has adapted to the demands of interconnection between different groups of people and economic activities. The pattern of multiple occupations, intermarriages and use of *Bangla* language by the *Khyang* can be analyzed in line with Jordan (2013) as a strategy to overcome the marginalized situation with connections and social networks. Jordan (2013: 38) describes the Iroquoian ‘satellite villages’ which were useful for military expeditions, marriage possibilities, and gathering information about their former home regions and social ties (Jordan 2013; see chapter one). On the contrary, the *Khyang* have taken up individual strategies where the *Khyangs* through intermarriages and personal networks with the members of other ethnic groups have sometimes created a social position beyond their *Khyang* community. So what I find is that there are no fixed identity markers which the *Khyang* maintain to preserve their identity, rather, there are a set of factors in play initiating situational identities, thus, their boundary maintenance is a dynamic process (c.f. Barth 1969, see chapter one).

I find the whole scenario of the *Khyang* at CHT comparable to Scott’s (2009: 260) reconsideration of ‘ethnogenesis’ and his argument that standard attempts by the administrators and governments to identify certain traits (e.g., language) as defining characteristics of groups or identities are not manageable in the context of Zomia. This is because in the CHT, as in the hills of Southeast Asia, I argue that social relations and ethnic identities are better understood as continually evolving. It is not that groups and identities are absent in the hills; instead, there are no clear demarcations or boundaries that are readily observable by outsiders over long periods. Because of this, characteristics and traits are fluid and ever changing. The various processes of development, which turn the world into a single space through creating sameness among people, also create new differences and new aspirations in the CHT. In such a moment, the construction of identity is not a once and for all act but an ongoing practice of identification. All ethnic identities are relational because each asserts a boundary. However, in the CHT as in the case of Southeast Asia (c.f. Scott 2009: 253) ethnic identity and language differences have become fluid because of being in close contact with other groups and thus a certain plasticity of identity is built and many *Khyangs* located in two or more social context act differently and identify themselves differently on the basis of social relationships. The diversity among the *Khyang* is increasing and there is no single trait such as religion, clothing, or even language which applies to all. Similar condition of the Karen people was mentioned by Scott (2009: 241ff) in the Zomia

after the coming of the 'Padi State' (low land state/ rice state). Despite having such diversities all of them are *Khyang*; they are *Khyang* at the locality and neighborhood, Christian at the Church, fellow worker at the workplace, etc. They are like 'ethnic amphibians' (c.f. Scott 2009: 241) being able to pass between such identities without a sense of conflict.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have addressed the factors, which play a pivotal role in forming the social identity and networks of the *Khyang*. Social networks allow *Khyang* to get access to the government benefits, which they sometime are denied from as being a minority community in the CHT (see chapter two and three). Further, the *Khyang* who have better connections with the government officials sometimes use power against other *Khyangs* who are not that connected (see page 63-72). This is also evident in the case of benefitting from the minority quotas in education and job sectors (see page 31 and 37-38) and in agricultural production, marketing and selling of agricultural products (see page 28-29). Their status as *Khyang* is also responsible for them being treated as someone who cannot resist the activities of higher governmental officials (see page 66). Moreover, the state making process and government's initiatives to develop the CHT is a result of seeing and identifying the hill people as uncivilized and backwards who are in need of modernization (c.f. Scott 2009). To overcome their hindrances to connect to wider social networks the *Khyangs* have adopted *Bangla* language and try to behave or adopt certain occupations and cultural practices that will present them as bearer of a cosmopolitan and national culture.

From the various social networks they engage in and their ideas about '*Khyang* identity' I argue that though there is a subjective belief in their common descent as a group, there are also internal differences in the group about how much importance they give to these ideas and the degree to which a *Khyang* historical consciousness is reproduced and transformed. They have assumed a fluid idea of *Khyang* identity, something which is a social trait among the hill people in Southeast Asia (Scott 2009), when they get themselves involved in different social arenas and social relations. In such instances of ethnic intermingling, the '*Khyang* identity' is not the most important aspect and they do not always put the same emphasis on the ethnic identity markers, such as language, occupation, historical consciousness (c. f. Barth 1969). However, this trend is not found among all the *Khyang*. Political and economic status

of the person also influences how they are treated in social interactions. It also determines how much a person's social relationships are influenced by the ethnic identity (of the persons involved) in the social interaction. Thus political and economic status of a *Khyang*, in turn, shape the 'identity of the *Khyang*'.

Though the *Khyang* believe in their common history, their specific form of livelihood strategies and language as the pillars of their *Khyang* identity, all the three aspects get different preferences in different groups of people in terms of economic, political and educational background. Based on my ethnographic findings I argue that the *Khyang* social networks and identity formation process can shed light on how government initiated development programs can affect a multi-ethnic region. In the next chapter, I will situate the *Khyang* and the CHT within the international development discourse and sum up the main findings and arguments of my thesis.

CHAPTER FIVE

**CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS (CHT) AND BANGLADESH STATE IN GLOBAL
DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE: CONCLUDING REMARKS**

INTRODUCTION

In this concluding chapter, I will sum up my findings and central arguments through situating the condition of the *Khyang* and the CHT in Bangladesh within a global process, namely, ‘Development’. The origins of development are disputed, however, Hopper (2012: 3) states that ‘Development’ in its contemporary guise emerged after the Second World War, with the creation of the United Nations and in particular, institutions like the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Funds (IMF). In the 1960s, modernization theory continued to define development globally. Whereas in the 1970s the appeal of dependency theories was strengthened by the persistence and deepening of global inequalities, with some countries showing little sign of breaking free from ‘under-development’ (Hopper 2012: 5). International agencies like the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank responded by turning the attention to ‘redistribution with growth’ and ‘basic needs’. These ideas continued to stress the necessity of economic growth, but placed greater emphasis upon gearing development towards meeting the needs of the poor (Hopper 2012: 5). During 1980s, the concept of sustainable development gained increasing acceptance, whereas the 1990s saw an inclusion of a new vocabulary of local engagement, participation and poverty reduction strategies, which places the onus upon the developing countries themselves formulating their own development approaches base on local consultation.

In this chapter I will analyze the effects of development programs at the local level in different countries and argue that the global development discourse more often do not take into consideration the local context and further marginalize the people who are poor and marginalized in the society. I will analyze and discuss how CHT and Bangladesh are tied into the global discourse of development and argue the *Khyangs*’ situation also is tied not only the state expansion project of Bangladesh but also to the global development discourse.

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AND MARGINALIZED LOCAL LIVES

The evaluation reports and portrayals of development achievements serve to attract attention, galvanize support and direct practices towards development initiatives (Crewe and Axelby 2013: 2). But in making these dramatic claims, the realities of life are distorted – not just the everyday experiences of poverty and marginality but other aspects of life are lost: work, play,

fun friends, as well as deals, gossip and quarrels (Crewe and Axelby 2013: 2). Through ‘development’ powerful international actors were able to impose their interests, values and beliefs onto people of the developing world. This can be seen as a continuation of colonialism by other means (Crewe and Axelby 2013: 9). Crewe and Axelby (2013: 91ff) exemplify this point by the efforts of introducing the concept of sustainable livelihood in India. The Institute of the Development Studies (United Kingdom) assumes that a livelihood is sustainable if it can recover from setbacks, maintain its assets and capabilities, and avoid undermining the natural resource base, this approach also give poor people stronger voice in designing development projects. However, the state government in India had their own frameworks, priorities and institutional pressures, which constrained the impacts. One of the Orissa design team compared the sustainable livelihood approach to a wish list that raises expectations but it is politically and institutionally impossible to full fill (Crewe and Axelby 2013: 93).

Ferguson and Lohmann (1994: 176) make the same point with regard to the history of ‘development’ projects in Lesotho. They argued that the development agencies portray developing countries in terms that make them suitable for standardized development packages and thus the country profiles that the agencies base their interventions frequently bear little or no relation to economic and social realities. For example, in 1975, the World Bank issued a report on Lesotho that was subsequently used to justify a series of major Bank loans to the country, the report identified Lesotho as dependent on subsistence agriculture and promoted agricultural reforms (Ferguson and Lohmann 1994: 176).

However, Lesotho has not been a ‘subsistence’ society since at least the mid-1980s, having entered the twentieth century as a producer of wheat, wool, mohair, horses and cattle, for the South African market. Ferguson and Lohmann (1994: 177) also argue that Lesotho is a labor reserve for South African mining and industry rather than an autonomous ‘national economy’, so portraying the dynamics of Lesotho in relation to South Africa would be to stress the importance of something which is inaccessible to a ‘development planner’ in Lesotho. Though the WB has no disposition to involve itself in political challenges to the South African system of labor control, it is in an excellent position, however, to devise agricultural improvement projects, extension, credit, technical inputs for the agriculture of Lesotho. For this reason, agriculture concerns tend to move center stage and Lesotho is portrayed as a nation of ‘farmers’, not wage laborers. Similarly in case of CHT as I have seen and discussed in the preceding chapters that the development initiatives of governments and NGOs

stereotyped the *Khyang* and other ethnic minority groups as ‘primitive’ and ‘uncivilized’. Thus, they have tried to shift the ethnic minority groups’ livelihoods from subsistence to market oriented. However, in the context of Bangladesh the ethnic minority groups have a lower status in the social hierarchy compared to the *Bangalee* population and are in a marginal position who were further marginalized in the market places and as well as in job sectors and education.

This process of ‘development’ reflects how the global development discourse defines ‘poverty’ and ‘development’ at a global level but transforms life of the people at local level. It also creates friction with the existing values. In another context Broch-Due (2000: 53ff) describes the colonial relocation of Turkana from Isiolo town in central Kenya and forced them to return to Turkana District in the northwest corner of the country in 1958 as they were still herding. Thus in the colonizers’ views they were primitive and problematic. She states that the pastoralists Turkana were previously forced to settle in a sedentary life during 1920s and 1930s to live on agriculture, service and fishing. The dual relocation of the Turkana in an attempt of civilizing them forced Turkana people alien in their own homeland.

Broch-Due also describes the situation of a border area between Nairobi and Lodwar in Kenya (Broch-Due 2005: 5). The mid-eighties were the heyday of development spending in Kenya the town life corresponding with ‘development’ had busted livestock holdings and loss of a pastoralist control of the pasture land of the Turkana. However, in the mid-1990s the situation had completely turned away as the development agencies moved away because of diplomatic relations with Kenya and with civil wars in Sudan and neighboring areas ‘the pastoralist’ was replaced by ‘the refugee’ figure as prime recipient of aid and concern. Thus, she argues the life of the Turkana were devastated by the development, which came, and gone in 15 years.

From above discussions, I argue that development as perceived by the development organizations, often do not consider the local context, thus, produce more unintended and sometimes negatives effects instead of improving the life of the marginalized. In the following section, I will discuss the situation of the CHT in the context of global development discourse.

CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS (CHT) AND BANGLADESH STATE IN DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

If I look at the history of development, projects in the CHT on the backdrop of discussion above I find some similarities in the process that development initiatives suggested by development organizations sometimes marginalize certain segments of the population. Since the independence of Bangladesh (this discussion about the state and development is focused on the Bangladesh period), the government has undertaken a number of development projects in CHT the where stated objective has been the development of the ‘hill people’. However, as I discussed (see chapter two and three) the governmental development projects have been benefiting the *Bangalees* (sometime other larger ethnic groups compared to minority groups) and consolidated hegemony of the state and majority ethnic groups over the ethnic minority groups living in the hills. Such marginalizing impacts of development projects can be explained in terms of exclusion of the people from planning and also in terms of the dominant and favorable position the *Bangalees* are given through state policy, which I have argued creates graduated sovereignty in the CHT.

As I have shown, early in the 1973 the government made a separate board for the development of CHT, which were formalized in January 1976 when the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) was duly constituted. Bangladesh government sought assistance from development agencies in order to modernize the CHT (Mohsin 1997: 120; see also page 15-17). However, in the formulation of the development board and development strategies for the hill people no consultative body of the local people was formed, instead opinion was sought from international development agencies. The agencies are guided by concepts of progress and development that are often insensitive to local customs and values. The Forestal Report stated:

“The tribal people had attained a reasonably satisfactory was of life adequately adjusted to the limitation imposed by the physical environment before the dam was built. After the dislocation a disastrous cycle of over cultivation had led to depletion of soil fertility, loss of forest crop, serious erosion and further pressure on remaining land ... the age old practice of shifting cultivation attuned as it may have been in the past to the environment, can no longer be tolerated... A change to a system of permanent intensive agriculture must be

made... more of the hill tribesmen will have to become wage earner in the forests or other developing industries, and purchase their food from farmers practicing permanent agriculture.” (Webb 1966: 3232; see also Mohsin 1997: 120f).

Many of the desired changes, what the government and development agencies wanted, had as specified in the Forestal report been achieved (see chapter two). However, the development of the ethnic minority groups such as the *Khyang* is at long distance. Though some of the *Khyangs* at the individual level might have become economically and politically powerful and also achieved higher status in the society, I argued in chapter three that the *Khyangs* as a group are now more marginalized, economically vulnerable and the social dynamics of the group has been altered. This leads to my fourth chapter, which discusses the social networks and identity of the *Khyang* as fluid in the present day socio-economic context.

With such a background of development having marginalizing effects on the poor, it is pertinent to discuss ‘participatory development’. In relation to development works being eurocentric, western dominated and top-down the concept of participatory development took off in 1970s (Hopper 2012: 159). Participatory development put emphasis upon localism, self-determinism, grassroots activity, empowerment and entails involving local people at all stages in the development process, including identifying what needs to be done and policies that need to be formulated. In this way, it could be ensured that people have a greater say in the development planning and decisions that affect their lives (Hopper 2012: 160). In this endeavor of participatory development NGOs were at the forefront, and in response to dispossession of indigenous communities and rights of these groups of people are hinged on collective identity for claim to a territory (Murray Li 2010: 295). Murray Li (2001: 645) writes about the Alliance of Indigenous People of the Archipelago in Indonesia who advocates ‘cultural distinctiveness’ as the grounds for securing rights to territories and resources threatened by forestry, plantation and mining interests backed by police and military intimidation.

However, insistence on indigenous collective landholdings cannot be a solution for the *Khyang*. As Murray Li (2010: 399) argues there are two sets of advocates; some consider that indigenous people reject individualized tenure, while others insist on their right to buy, sell and mortgage their land. She also indicates to the flaws of UN indigenous rights regime,

consultation mechanism of development banks who emphasize collective identity and landholding. However, if a group is fractured and start favoring individualized property or an individual acts alone there remain no existences of collectivity. Based on my ethnographic information as I have shown throughout this thesis that with the economic transition and marginalization new and differentiated notions about identity (individual vis-à-vis group identity) have emerged among the *Khyang*. Among the *Khyang* there is now different streams of thought regarding identity based on the individual persons' age, education, experiences, political or economic networks. Therefore, I argue the *Khyang* are exposed to diverse and changing forms of dispossessions and development challenges, where the state, international development agencies, *Khyang* leaders (Headman), *Khyang* from different age, sex, occupation and political affiliations, traders, businessmen, *Bangalee* people all are assembled through diverse elements and processes.

SUMMARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Among the *Khyang* the changes of economic frontiers came into being through interventions of the government (the state) and international agencies. The transformations occurred through change in administration of the CHT and deployment of security forces, transmigration of *Bangalee* people, development of market places and urbanization. Most of the development projects were introduced by the international development organizations like the ADB, ADAB, WB and SIDA. I have argued that this process has created diverse changes among the *Khyang*. The changes were in regard to gender and ethnic division of labor, agricultural production, economic activities, and also community dynamics at the intra and inter community levels. Consequently, these changes have altered their unique cultural identity (see chapter two). On the basis of these findings from the ethnographic fieldwork, I argue that the governments' endeavor to develop the CHT and its people has created a state of dispossession among the *Khyang*.

The constant reformulation of economy and coming of the state has marginalized the *Khyang* (c.f. Scott 2009). Since 1980s, there has been a massive transfer of *Bangalee* population in the CHT who served, as in the case of Zomia (c.f. 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 relieving population pressure from the valleys. I have argued in line

with Scott (2009) that his process reflects how the state and its valley population marginalize the hill people through the expansion of state space and using state administrative and military power (see chapter three).

The changes of the administrative system of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and policies regarding natural resources especially land and forests have created a situation that has stripped the *Khyang* of CHT from the means of their social reproduction and also commoditized resources and forms of labor that had hitherto been outside of capital's realm (c.f. Kasmir and Carbonella 2008: 8). Further, small ethnic groups as the *Khyang* are in a disadvantageous position in terms of receiving and making use of the different opportunities presented by the Government. In line with Rosaldo's (2003) argument for Southeast Asia, I have argued that in Bangladesh the relations between state officials and hinterland minority groups involve differences of power and perception by each group of the other. This perception of 'the other' (as backward and in need of development and modernization and also as 'marginal' people who does not have means of resistance) shapes the production of marginalization (see chapter three).

From the various social networks the *Khyang* are involved with and their ideas about *Khyang* identity it can be argued that though there is a subjective belief in their common descent as a group, there are also internal differences in the group about how much importance they give to these ideas. The idea of *Khyang* identity is fluid, as for the hill populations in Southeast Asia (Scott 2009). Thus, the identity is situational and 'shapeable' and the imperative of the *Khyang* identity vary in different social arenas and social relations. In such instances of interaction with different groups of people, the *Khyang* identity- is not imperative rather other aspects such as their political affiliations, occupational superiority, etc. are of importance (c.f. Barth 1969). Though the *Khyang* believe in their common history, their specific form of livelihood strategies and language as the pillars of their *Khyang* identity, these aspects get different preferences in terms of generation, economic and educational background (see chapter four). The identity and involvement in diverse social networks also led to access to resources. Thus, I have argued that the *Khyang* social networks can shed light on how shared meaning and identity are produced and the ways in which government initiated development programs affect a multi-ethnic region.

In a broader context of global development and ‘state’ formation of Bangladesh the *Khyang* are in a situation of economic transition and marginalization. Bangladesh state’s nation building process and its commitment to develop the country socio-economically (encouraged by the international development agencies) has led the state’s encroachment to the CHT which were beyond direct state control for most of its history (c.f. Scott 2009). As the state built infrastructures and planned migration of *Bangalee* people took place the livelihood options for the *Khyang* changed and their traditional way of slash and burn became banned by law. There has been a mutation of citizenship (c.f. Ong 2006) for the *Khyang*, where their rights and access to land and forests are denied through government actions and policies. While some of the ethnic minority groups and *Bangalee* benefitted from these processes, the *Khyang* remains as ‘minority of the minorities’ in CHT. Within this shifting socio-political context, there has been a diversification of *Khyang* identity. Thus, the *Khyang* now act as ‘ethnic amphibians’ (c.f. Scott 2009: 241) in the CHT.

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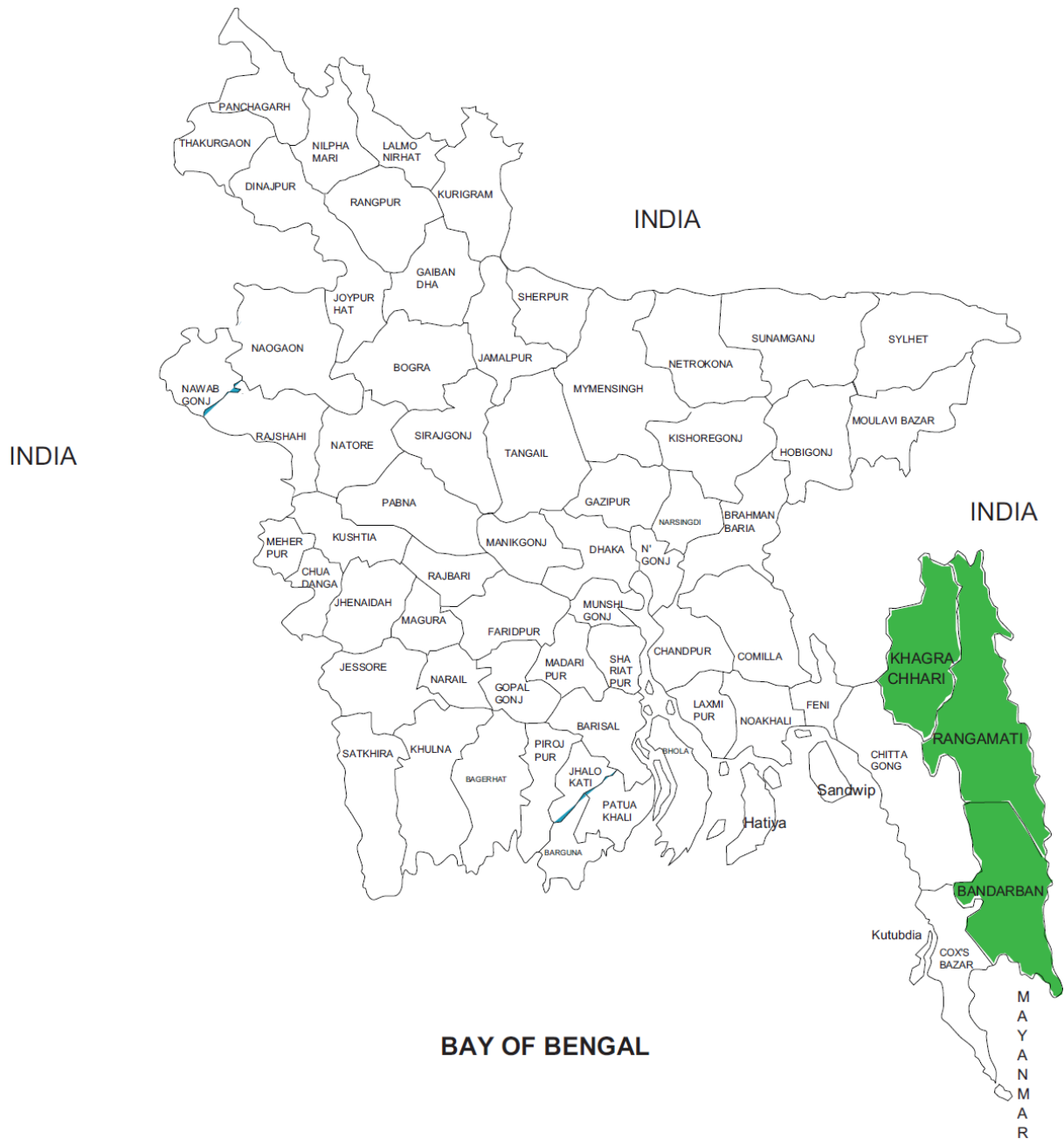
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ANNEXURE

ANNEX 1: MAP OF BANGLADESH AND FIELD LOCATIONS



Source: Barkat et al. 2009.

ANNEX 2: PHOTO OF *KHYANG* HOUSE

Photo: House in *Bandarban*



Photo: House in *Bandarban*



Photo: House in *Rangamati*



Photo: House in *Rangamati*



ANNEX 3: PHOTO OF AGRI-FIELD OF *KHYANGS*

Photo: Agri-field in *Bandarban*



Photo: Agri-field in *Bandarban*

