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CONTENTS

Dynamics of Survival Strategies: Perspectives from the Indigenous People of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

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Abstract

The indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) have routinely faced various intruders such as the Mughals, British, Pakistanis and Bengalis. The situation has worsened with a state-sponsored and military-assisted transmigration program that began in 1979. With the apparent connivance of the security forces of Bangladesh, Bengali settlers have forcibly displaced many indigenous peoples from their homes and lands. Two decades earlier, these indigenous peoples had been displaced by the construction of Kaptai hydroelectric dam. Already in duress because of land scarcity, they faced survival problems because of the presence of Bengali settlers. Under the circumstances, they employ diverse strategies to manage survival in their own land. The present paper is an effort to offer insights into the dynamics of the survival strategies of the indigenous people of CHT.

1 Introduction

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) (Figure 1) is located in the southeastern part of *Bangladesh* bordering India and Myanmar. It hosts eleven distinct indigenous groups[1] (in order of estimated size): *Chakma*, *Marma*, *Tripura*, *Mro*, *Tanchangya*, *Bawm*, *Pangkhoa*, *Chak*, *Kheyang*, *Khumi*, and *Lushai*, each with its own history, culture, language and customs. These marginalized indigenous groups have never shared a sense of unity and do not see themselves as a single entity (Lewin 1869, Uddin 2011, van Schendel 1992). Each group identifies itself as unique and separate from other groups; however, collectively these groups are known as *Pahari* (hill people). They differ significantly from the mainstream *Bangali* (Bengali) in terms of physical appearance, culture, language, religion, dress, and other socio-political aspects. Physiologically and socio-culturally "There is a great affinity and kinship with the people of northern India, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Burma and Thailand" (Roy 2003*a*, p. 16).[2]

Since the mid-1970s, the CHT has been beset with conflict and violence between the Pahari, Bangali, and government military forces. The situation worsened when, beginning in 1979, the state sponsored a population transfer program — in-migration of landless plainsmen Bangali into the hills. With the apparent connivance of security forces, the Bangali settlers displaced many Paharis from their ancestral land. Less than two decades earlier, in the 1960s, many Paharis had already been displaced when their valley was flooded by the Kaptai dam. Consequently, the Pahari who were already in duress because of land scarcity caused by the dam and transmigration faced further survival problems because they were now in competition with the incoming Bangali settlers.

The influx of settlers created such a pressure on the existing land that, organized by the *Jana Samhati Samiti* (JSS),[3] the Pahari provided military resistance to this influx. This resistance was spearheaded by the *shanti bahini* (peace force).[4] Calling this resistance an insurgency, the Government of Bangladesh deployed a huge number of military and other armed forces in this region. As a consequence, many incidents of massacre, attack and reprisal attack, indiscriminate arrest, torture, judicial and extrajudicial torture, killing, rape, sexual violence, forced religious conversion, forced marriage and abduction took place in the river-valleys, often committed by the armed/security forces and settlers against the Pahari. The shanti bahini also carried out insurrectionary activities against the state authorities that include hit and run attacks, ambush and extortion. They attacked the army, BDR[5] and police patrols and encampments that had been mounted (Ali 2010, p. 135). Under the circumstances, many Pahari, Bangali and security forces (military, police, BDR, VDP[6], etc.) were killed in the armed conflict between the shanti bahini, and security forces and settlers. Following many failed initiatives, the government and the JSS finally signed an Accord, popularly known as *shanti chukti* or Peace Accord, on December 02, 1997 and ended

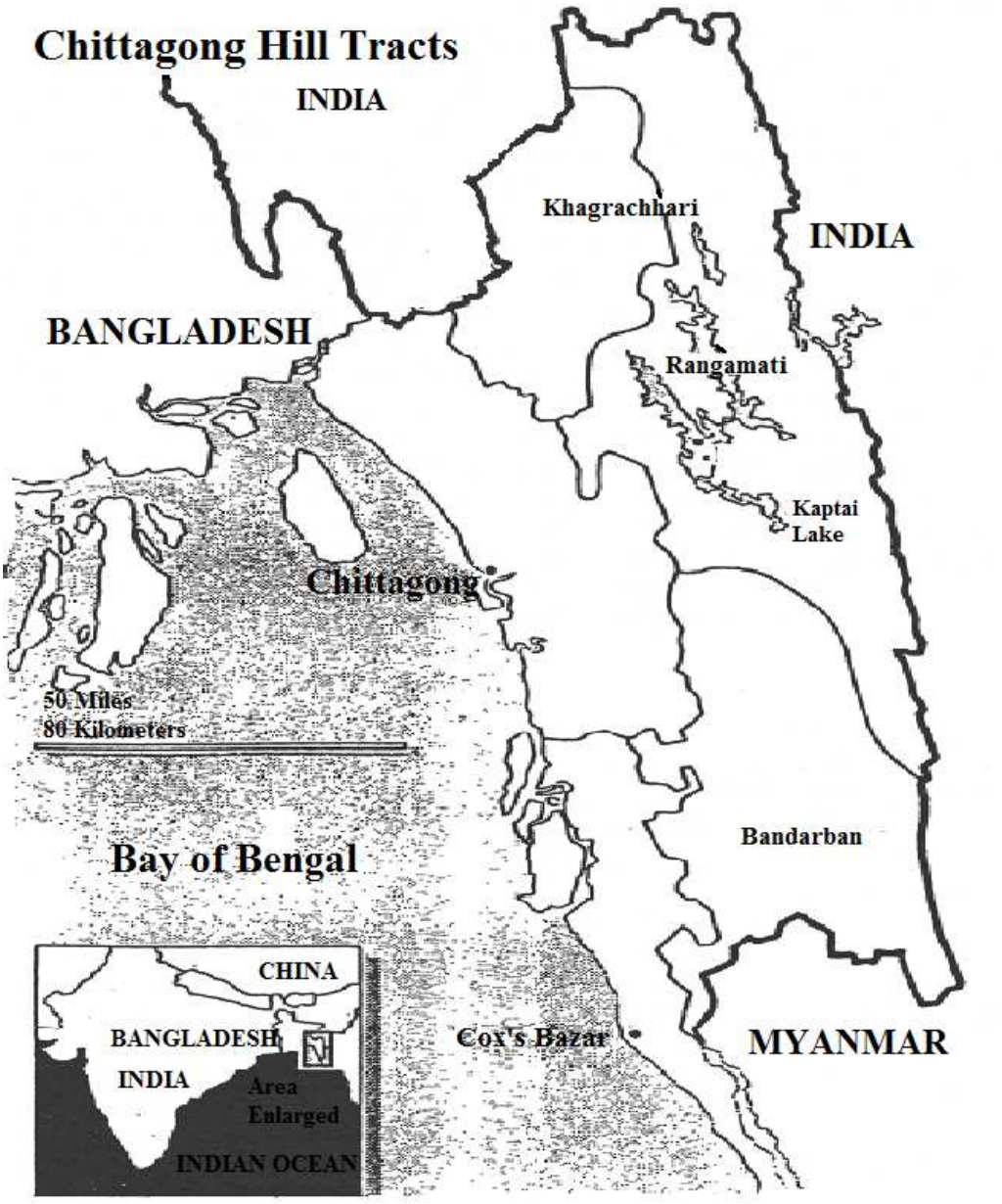

Figure 1: The Map of Chittagong Hill Tracts (Adapted from Ali, 1993, p. 164)

the two-decade long bloody conflict. Although 15 years have elapsed since the signing of the Accord, the CHT is still neither a peaceful nor a secure region for its people; locals fear for their safety at all times, both day and night, at home and outside.

Under the circumstances, the Pahari employ diverse strategies in order to manage their survival in their own land. Based on the Pahari life-experience and perceptions, strategies that have evolved from indigeneity can be seen at two levels: salient or dominant and silent or reluctant. Here indigeneity refers to local consciousness that underlines "indigenous" rights, "traditional" life-ways, associated with ancestral lands and location. They also incorporate some transethnic measures due to their relations to and interaction with the dominant Bangali in the private as well as social sphere, a situation resulting in different ways of thinking, feeling and acting from their traditional one (Anduji 1988). These transethnic measures refer to local adjustments in matter such as language and dress that must be adapted with regard to the dominant culture. There are many local versions and accounts of the history of the area, thus refuting the prevalent view that the region is homogenous. This paper attempts to provide insight into the management of survival — the ways the Pahari try to manage their survival problems, and the logic behind the strategies they employ. It frames the reality that the Pahari are not homogenous, illustrating that different indigenous groups have evolved survival strategies over time in relation to the depredations of the Bangladeshi state and society.

Drawing upon current theoretical considerations in cultural anthropology, ethnicity, and social movements, this paper addresses the survival strategies of the Pahari — how they try to manage their survival problems in the changed circumstances they face, and their shifting interethnic relationships as well as their interactions with the state. The paper is based on primary data collected through an anthropological investigation intermittently conducted in Rangamati district of the CHT between 2008 and 2012 using purposive sampling. In line with the above-mentioned objective, research tools such as observation, in-depth interview, key-informant interview, life history, case study, and focus group discussion (FGD) were applied to appropriately gauge the native point of view. Secondary sources were also used to supplement the primary information. Data analysis was supplemented by the local interpretations. To comprehend the dynamics of the hill region, the paper assesses the Accord 1997 in light of the roots of the conflict as discussed above, how the agreement was arrived at, the situation it created in, and finally, its implementation process.

2 The Construction of Pahari Identity

The indigenous people of the CHT speak a number of different languages, and there are wide differences in lifeways between one part of the area and another; each group refers to itself by its own/distinct identity (e.g. Chakma, Pangkhoa, or Marma). They never developed a particular sense of unity, "... none of them appear to have any general term for all hill dwellers" (Lewin 1869, p. 28). Comprehending the dynamics of different ethnic groups, Lewin (1869, p. 28) classified them into two heads: (i) *Khyoungtha* or children of the river (Arakanese origin) — Paharis that reside in the river-valleys, and (ii) *Toungtha* or children of the hills (mixed origin) — Paharis that reside on the mountain-ridges.[7]

Among the indigenous groups, the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya, Kheyang and Chak who reside in the river-valleys are referred to as *Khyoungsa* (valley Pahari; *Khyoung* means river, *sa* means children).[8] On the other hand, the Pangkhoa, Mro, Bawm, Lushai, and Khumi who reside on the mountain-ridges are referred to as *Toungsa* (mountain Pahari, *Toung* means mountain). Here the Khyoungsa-Toungsa dichotomy is not a meaningless classification based on their residence; it is the basis for the main arguments of this article. This category also shows the distinct socio-cultural and politico-economic life-worlds of the Pahari. In consequence, their perception toward displacement, fear, relation with insiders and outsiders, and strategies for survival are distinct. However, in this paper, the term Pahari refers to both Khyoungsa and Toungsa.

Until the 16th century, this hilly *terra incognita* was identified as *Kapas Mahal* (Cotton Territory).[9] It had been part of a number of political reigns: the Mughal Empire, British Empire, and Pakistan state before it became a part of independent Bangladesh in 1971. As a result, transformations in this region interspersed by external interventions did not go smoothly that eventually hindered the traditional life-ways of its indigenous peoples. The Table 1 shows the distinct worlds of the people of the CHT:

Following the Mughal period, the British East India Company took control over the area in 1757. The region then served as a buffer zone between the British Bengal and Lushai/Mizo confederacies to the east. By the 1780s, the British East India Company had converted the major chiefdoms and "tribal" confederacies of the region into British tributaries (Chakroborty 1977, Hutchinson 1906, Lewin 1869, Roy 2003*a*). Following the Sepoy Mutiny (*Sipahi Biplab*) in 1857, the English took over power from the East India Company in 1860, and began direct rule, renaming the region as *Chittagong Hill Tracts*, and annexed it to the colonial empire (van Schendel, Mey and Dewan

Table 1: An ethnic potpouri

People	Population	Percentage	Residence	Religion	Language
Chakma	2, 39, 417	24.00	River-valley	Buddhism	Chakma
Marma	1, 42, 334	15.00	River-valley	Buddhism	Marma
Tripura	61, 121	6.50	River-valley	Hinduism	Kok-borok
Mro	22, 167	2.30	Mountain-ridge	Animism	Mro
Tanchangya	19, 211	2.00	River-valley	Buddhism	Tanchangya
Bawm	6, 978	0.72	Mountain-ridge	Christian	Bawm
Pangkhoa	3, 227	0.33	Mountain-ridge	Christian	Pangkhoa
Chak	2, 000	0.21	Mountain-ridge	Christian	Chak
Kheyang	1, 950	0.20	River-valley	Buddhism	Kheyang
Khumi	1, 241	0.13	Mountain-ridge	Buddhism	Khumi
Lushai	662	0.06	Mountain-ridge	Christian	Lushai
Gurkha	900	0.08	River-valley	Hinduism	Napalese
Ahom	500	0.05	River-valley	Hinduism	Assamese
Bangali	4, 66, 276	49.00	River-valley	Islam	Bangla

Source: Population Census 1991 and local information

2000).

Strategically, the colonial administrators introduced a slow and cautious process of modernization into the region. The first and most important step that the English took was the elimination of "tribal warfare" (Ahmed 1993, p. 34). They carefully planned efforts to evolve a market economy and induced the people to give up *jum* cultivation[10] (farming with fire) and their unsettled life and adopt plough cultivation (farming with water) that eventually simplified the settling of Bangalis in this area. This also justified the presence of Bangali intermediaries between the English and Pahari, leading to an economic dominance of the Bangalis in the hills.

Even though the English did not consider the impact of colonization on India, paradoxically, in order to 'protect' the distinct life-ways of the Pahari, and to protect them from the Bangali domination and exploitation, they promulgated Regulation 1900. Although some Paharis opposed Regulation 1900 at the time, it has been regarded as an appropriate safeguard by many in the postcolonial period (Mohsin 1997). This is because the English formulated a number of administrative regulations aiming to preserve the "cultural and territorial integrity" of the Pahari, and restrict outsiders' entry into the CHT (Roy 2000, p. 44). Likewise, the administrative system, land rights and closure to outside settlers all set it apart from the rest of the country. This status was reconfirmed in the 1930s, when the region was declared as an "excluded area".[11] Thus Regulation 1900 formalized its *divide et impera* policy that in due course isolated the Pahari from the mainstream society.[12] Regulation 1900 recognized several groups of people who were led by the dominant Chakma who later consolidated themselves under a common platform called "*Jumma*"[13] in the aftermath of the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. The government of Bangladesh did not consider the indigenous groups as *adibashi* or indigenous, as there was no special provision to do so in that constitution. In fact, 11 ethnic groups are recognized as *upajati* or tribes through the Hill District Councils (HDCs) Act 1989 and Regional Council (RC) Act 1998.

When the British colonial rule came to an end in 1947, contrary to Regulation 1900, the outgoing colonial ruler annexed the predominantly non-Muslim CHT to Pakistan in August 1947 while the British India was partitioned into two states.[14] Notwithstanding practically being devoid of Muslims and being largely a non-Muslim population, and though Paharis (mostly Chakmas) wanted to be a part of India, the CHT was awarded to (East) Pakistan.

There was no prior consultation with the Pahari about the partition or annexation, nor did the Paharis get enough time to form a consensus about this matter (Mohsin 1997). However, the Chakma and Marma expressed their indignation as *sons of the soil* against their annexation to Pakistan. Protesting the Radcliffe award, some Chakmas hoisted the *tricolor* Indian flag in Rangamati while some Marmas hoisted the Burmese flag in Bandarban. The Baluch Regiment of Pakistan Army overcame this resistance, and took control of the CHT, raising the Pakistani flag there on 21 August 1947 (Ahmed 1993, p. 37). The incorporation of CHT to Pakistan by the English was thus an example of disregard and indifference toward the diversified socio-cultural system of the CHT.

In the following years, the Pahari were given the message that their life would change under the new Pakistani state. The Pakistan government undertook several programs in the hills ironically in the name of "national development" and "national integration" (Bertocci 1996,

Mohsin 1997, Tripura 1991, van Schendel 2002). One such devastating project was the construction of a hydro-electric dam in the 1960s on the Karnaphuli River, occupying about 256 square miles of Rangamati district. It immediately displaced about 100,000 Paharis (mostly Chakma) and submerged 40 percent of their best cultivable lands (54,000 acres).[15] In effect, tens of thousands Paharis became internally displaced while many other took shelter in the Tripura state of India.

Notwithstanding the Pahari were not incorporated into East Pakistan by the Bangali, since it was relatively a "secular" state, the Pahari had great expectations from the newly independent Bangladesh. In the aftermath of independent Bangladesh (1971), some leading Paharis (both individually and collectively/group-wise) had been trying to convince the newly formed government to meet their demands including that of autonomy of CHT; however, they were refused. Their rights remained unrecognized in the newly constituted (1972) National Constitution. Moreover, the government employed huge security measures in this borderland sandwiched between Myanmar and India, from where the Pahari are supposed to have immigrated into the current areas more than three centuries ago.[16]

The most threatening survival problems engendered by the state-sponsored and military-assisted population transfer program began in 1979. Within only five years of this process, about 400,000 landless Bangali plainlanders, (mostly Bangali Muslims) were settled in the hills from various plains districts (e.g. Noakhali, Chandpur, Barisal, Chittagong).[17] As a result, many Paharis (mainly Khyoungsas) were displaced by the Bangali settlers with the apparent connivance of security forces. The Toungsas have also been affected when the internally displaced Khyoungsas had moved to settle the steep hills.[18] As a consequence of increased pressure on limited arable lands fallow period for juming (shifting cultivation) decreased in the hills.

In this situation, the Paharis resisted to the influx (Bangali in-migration) for two decades (until 1997). As a result, many incidents of massacre, attack and reprisal attack, indiscriminate arrest, torture, judicial and extrajudicial torture, killing, rape, sexual violence, forced religious conversion, forced marriage and abduction took place in the river-valleys, often committed by the security forces and settlers against the Khyoungsa Pahari. The government security forces as well as Bangali settlers also faced many attacks and counter-attacks carried out by shanti bahinis. In the following sections we will comprehend how the Pahari try to manage their survival problems in their own lands affected by the outsiders.

3 Comprehending Survival Strategies

This paper frames the dynamics of strategies for survival — how the Pahari have been trying to manage their survival problems in their own land distressed by the outsiders. In order to comprehend the strategies, a brief discussion on survival strategies elucidated by notable scholars is pertinent here. Anthony Smith's observation on "ethnic revival" is relevant to this study. To him, "ethnic strategies" are a modern response to economic and political change (Smith 1981, p. 15) and there are a range of strategies employed by ethnic groups to survive in a given circumstance. He, however, observes six main strategies incorporated by ethnic communities in polytechnic states (Smith 1981, pp. 15–17):

Isolation is the most common strategy for smaller ethnic communities who choose to stay aloof from the mainstream society as a whole. *Accommodation* is when the ethnic community aims to adjust to its host society by participating in the social and political life of mainstream society and its state. *Communalism* is a more dynamic and active form of accommodation — the aim is communal control over communal affairs in those geographical areas where the ethnic community forms a demographic majority. *Autonomism* aims to secure benefits from maintaining its links with the overall state structure, while asserting the political identity of the ethnic group, which it represents. *Separatism* is the classic political goal of ethnonational self-determination, as sought by most of the East European communities in the last century, and also by the Bangali in Bangladesh (1971). In each case, the aim is to secede and form one's own sovereign state, with little or no connection with former rulers (Smith 1981, p. 16). *Irredentism* of an ethnic community is where members are divided and fragmented in separate states and seeks reunification and recovery of the "lost" or "unredeemed" territories occupied by its members (Smith 1981, p. 17).[19]

There are many other forms of survival strategies such as acculturation, insurrection, negotiation, adjustment and involution. Consider, for example, Li (2010) shows indigenous identity as a "defensive" response in the context of Indonesian uplands (Li 2010, p. 385). People may even use violence as a means of their survival; it can be an instrumentally rational strategy of bargaining for power (Schimdt & Schrïngder 2001, p. 8). Apart from manifested strategies, powerless peoples may employ alternative measures for survival. Power of the powerless peoples derives from their collective knowledge, experience and other qualities broadly shared by the population as well as their rulers (Skalnìk 1989). In this manner, among the Russian Old Believers (*raskol'niki*), Scheffel (1989) shows how *avoidance* can be a tool to *outwitthe*

state. Likewise, Scott (1985) observes *weapons of the weak* among the Sedaka peasants, who "accept their place in society more-or-less uncritically."

In the context of CHT, as examined by van Schendel,[20] the dominant strategy of the Pahari is "autonomous", while "separatism" is a second option (van Schendel 1992, p. 127). However, this paper attempts to explore the dynamics of survival strategies employed by the Pahari in the hills, where, by now, circumstanced by various intrinsic and extrinsic factors, they have become marginalized while the existence of many is at risk.

Given the distinct life-world, and life-experiences of the Pahari, it is conceivable that they employ different strategies for survival though this version has been ignored in the prevalent literatures. In the following section we will explore the dynamics of survival strategies — while the 'dominant' groups (Khyoungsa) such as Chakma employ dominant (salient) strategies, the 'weak' groups (Toungsa) employ silent (reluctant) strategies. Both the salient and silent strategies evolved from indigeneity. Besides this, both the Khyoungsa and Toungsa incorporate some transethnic measures in an attempt to ease their communication with the dominant cultures. Here it has been observed that indigeneity is connected with private possession, capitalism, and resource allocation; while trans-ethnicity is connected with marketization, NGOization, developmentalization and internationalization. However, both strategies intend the management of survival.

4 Survival Strategies of the Pahari

Historically speaking, the Pahari have been protesting against the 'harmful' policies of different rulers/governments since the pre-British periods. Although many Paharis expected their problem would be solved in independent Bangladesh, it pushed them to form a regional political party, i.e. JSS, to protest against the state policies of Bangladesh. Devastatingly, the population transfer process (1979—) pushed the shanti bahini to fight against the government security forces to save their ancestral lands and their people from the displacement and destruction often caused by the Bangali settlers and security forces. Besides the insurrectionary activities or resistance, the Pahari also incorporate peaceful negotiation i.e. Accord 1997 with the government. These activities evolved from the indigenous consciousness which is associated with ancestral land and cultures.

As a mobile term indigeneity has been articulated in relation to a range of positions and struggles (Barnes, Gray and Kingsbury 1995, de la Cadena and Starn 2007, Li 2000; 2010). However, distinct socio-cultural traits, land use and struggle for rights are its basic markers. In this way or another, indigeneity is connected with capitalism in the context of dispossession as an external force against indigenous rights. As a result, indigeneity, capitalism, displacement, and militarization — are frequently brought together over the survival and conflicting issues. As mentioned by Li (2010), there has been a devastating threat to the lives and livelihoods of the indigenous people posed by large-scale enclosures of land for dams, logging, or plantations in the context of Indonesian highlands. This view is what exactly happened in the postcolonial CHT. In the making and unmaking of the colonial and postcolonial CHT, we observe indigeneity co-emerged with capitalism as it is connected with private possession and resource allocation. The Pahari movement however does not comprehend macro- and micro-scales of capitalism as mutually exclusive. Below we will explore how different ethnic groups incorporate indigeneity differently.

4.1 Salient Strategies of the Khyoungsa

Because of distinct locations (river-valley and mountain) and life-experiences (more or less adversely affected), different groups' responses toward invasions from outsiders are distinctive. As a result, the 'salient' or 'dominant' strategies employed mainly by the Chakma were not used by all ethnic groups. This led to some tensions within the inter-ethnic relations in the hills, primarily due to the 'inbuilt inequality' and Chakma dominancy over other indigenous groups. In this situation, even the non-Chakma Khyoungsa (e.g. Marma, Tripura) kept them away from CHT politics since the mid-1980s, while the strategies employed by the Toungsa have been reluctant and 'silent' from the very beginning.

In this section, I discuss two major strategies — one is the insurrection activities spearheaded by the shanti bahini that has been in action for about two decades (till 1997); and the second is the negotiation or the signing of the Peace Accord of 1997). I also explore the dynamics or local versions within these strategies that eventually encounter the dominant strategies.

In the immediate aftermath of independent Bangladesh (1971), some Paharis (both individually and collectively/group-wise) had been trying to convince the newly formed government to meet their demands that include recognition of their identity and autonomy of the CHT; however, they were refused. Their rights remained unrecognized in the newly constituted (1972) National Constitution. Thereafter, failing to establish their rights in constitutional and democratic ways, their movement soon drifted to insurrection to press their demands; they had resisted the influx of settlers for long two decades till 1997.

Although the insurrection activities or 'military strategy' of the Pahari have been perceived as an armed-

struggle or militant resistance, closer observation reveals that activities of the shanti bahini were more like what Scott (1985) terms *weapons of the weak*, since the main strategy and tactics (*everyday forms of resistance*) of the Pahari insurgents were hit and run, ambush, extortion and assault on security forces that also engaged in sabotage activities. Throughout the strategy, the Pahari on the one hand wanted to draw the government's attention to their strong position, while on the other they wanted to get support of international organizations to press the government to meet their demands. Here we find different thoughts and different paths of different groups in this strategy. Besides the internal faction within the JSS, the dominance of the Chakma kept most non-Chakma Khyoungsa away from the JSS politics since the 1980s.

Apart from the military strategy, JSS also responded to the initiatives initiated by successive governments beginning in the early 1980s. After several attempts, the government and JSS reached an accord in 1997.This 'bargaining strategy' formally ended insurrectionary activities of the shanti bahini; nevertheless, the displacement and oppression against the Pahari committed by the settlers and security forces did not stop.

Although the JSS has been saying that the "*Jumma nationalism*" or insurrection activities of the shanti bahini had been operative for the greater interest of the Pahari, the groups who reside on the mountain-ridges had almost no involvement in these actions. Only the affected Khyoungsa such as Chakma, Marma, Tripura and Tanchangya — who reside in the river-valleys and came into direct contact with Bangalis on a regular basis, were involved in these actions. Further, in the Accord of 1997, a few JSS leaders (mostly Chakma) were the key persons who took part in the negotiation with the government whereas the non-Chakma and non-JSS Paharis were not well incorporated.[21]

Eventually, terming the Accord of 1997 as "compromise" and "sell-out" a youth group hitherto allied to the JSS explicitly condemned the JSS for the Accord of1997, and began armed resistance against the JSS. As a result, many Paharis have been killed in the course of armed-violence between the JSS and UPDF. Consequently, the JSS become weak, the Pahari become demoralized. That led to the government not to heed the JSS demands seriously and therefore neglect the implementation of the Accord of 1997.[22]

Thus, it can be said that neither the military nor the bargaining strategy of the Pahari has been effective to meet major demands such as regional autonomy, constitutional recognition; rather, instead of restoring peace, conflict over the strategies complicated the circumstances. Since both the 'hard' (insurrection activities) and 'soft' (Accord of 1997) strategies were not inclusive practically, and dominated by the majority Chakma, other groups remained absent from these strategies as well as counter strategies. Since all the Pahari necessarily do not need the same compromises and collaboration from the state, they have evolved diverse strategies for survival.

4.2 Silent Strategies of the Toungsa

Unlike the 'salient' strategies employed mainly by the dominant groups (Khyoungsa), the weak groups[23] (Toungsa) incorporated alternative measures ('silent' strategies) in order to survive in the 'hard' environment circumscribed by the Chakma as well as the Marma and Tripura[24] and in-migrant Bangalis. Although outsider encroachment eventually made the region 'hard' for their living, the mountain-dwelling Toungsa did not take any 'hard' action against the settlers or security forces, neither their involvement/participation in the "Chakma resistance" was remarkable. They rather prefer to employ 'reluctance' and 'cultural resistance' as defensive strategies in order to resist the Bangali hegemony and "national integration".

Although at the beginning some Toungsas had supported the JSS, they also maintained a submissive relation with the security forces that were stationed on the hilltop camps to oversee security matters and Pahari insurgents. Most of the Toungsa were reluctant because they have had no active confrontation (e.g. displacement, attack, killing, or sexual harassment) with the settlers. Some Toungsas were forcibly relocated by security forces so that the forces could attack the shanti bahini using appropriate locations from the hilltops. The establishments of new villages which have been officially claimed as an act of benevolence, such as rehabilitation, have actually been the result of strategic military decisions (Ahmed 2012, p. 189).[25] The military forces also wanted to dislocate the Toungsa from the Khyoungsa in order to keep them away from the insurrection activities led by the shanti bahini. Moreover, development of interventions led to the emergence of new ways of life among various groups such as the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Pangkhoa, and Mro and distanced the Toungsa from the Khyoungsa.

The Pahari have been able to maintain a distinct way of life by locating in steep high hills (average 300 feet msl), and relocating as needed. Unlike the dominant groups (such as Chakma), the less dominant groups (such as Pangkhoa) do not employ 'hard' strategies. The Toungsa have juxtaposed this type of 'cultural resistance' with their reluctant disposition, and chose the preservation of their customs and traditions as a strategy for survival (Löffler 1994, p. 10). Here the cultural resistance is against the Bangali hegemony and "national integration" policy of the state. The Toungsa immerse themselves in their traditions and seek the help of their God

(*Zing Pathian*) for survival. They perceive this as "spirit of survival". They believe that because of their vulnerable position the way out for them is to preserve their own distinctiveness, and survive in the hills.

The above discussed dynamics have been routinely overlooked by the prevalent views that envision the hill problems through Chakma and ignore those who did not take up arms against the state authorities. Moreover, the prevalent views tend to look into a nationalistic, ethnic-oriented discourse which idealizes homogeneity and authenticity of nations which are coherent with international minority laws and human rights (Shelley 1992).

Despite the Pahari project to establish an autonomous region, the Toungsa involvement in the salient/dominant strategies has almost been insignificant and not taken into account in the post-Accord developments. There are various local narratives that counter the dominant viewpoints such as Mro war against the shanti bahini, and the identity crisis of the Gurkha. Uniquely, despite the fact that initially the Mro had fought against the security forces by joining the shanti bahini, the Mro later fought against the shanti bahini. They were assisted by the government security forces following a "misunderstanding" between the Mro and shanti bahini. The Mro maintained this strategy as a means of survival as they got shelter, facilities and other forms of support from the government security forces. This case shows how the security forces utilized the Mro against the JSS, and that the JSS considered themselves different from their "primitive" neighbor. In the Gurkha case, the state has not recognized them as one of the tribal groups residing in CHT. In addition, The Khyoungsa (mainly the Chakma and Marma) do not recognize the "Gurkha" as a tribe because they have fought with the government security forces against other groups in the hills.

In addition to the salient and silent strategies discussed above, the Khyoungsa and Toungsa employ what may be called 'trans-ethnic' strategies through cultural attributes such as dress, food, residence, or language. They employ these strategies in an attempt to ease their communication in the dominant setting to manage their survival problems maintaining also significant distinction. Among the trans-ethnic attributes, the most significant one is dress, particularly that of the Pahari women's.[26] The easiest way to separate a Pahari woman from a Bangali woman has always been her dress. However this is no more unique in the CHT headquarters where the Bangali are majority; nowadays, both the Pahari and Bangali women wear *salwar-kamez* or *sari*, which are Bangali women's clothes.

In the plains, the Bangali are used to seeing women in covered dresses which is prescribed and admitted by the laws of Islam, but in the hills they see "bare-clothed" or "bare-breasted" Pahari women.[27] For this reason, since the British period, the "tribal" (Pahari) customs and costumes have been considered "sexual behavior" and Pahari women have been attributed with an "unrestrained sexuality" (van Schendel 2002). As a consequence of these attitudes, the Bangali settlers and security forces have raped or sexually assaulted many helpless Pahari girls or women either in their home or in isolated jungles or farms.[28] When girls or women work alone around their locality, collecting woods from the jungle, bathing in the river, or going/returning from the school/bazaar she is unlikely to escape if a security personnel or settler attempts to sexually assault her.

This has led to Pahari girls and women feeling unsafe in public places because of the preponderance of Bangalis. They have responded by adopting the salwar-kamez or sari to make their presence in the public sphere safer.[29] We also observe the opposite scenario in the mountain, where the Toungsa women either wear their traditional clothes ("bare-breasted") or western dress (jeans, skirt, etc.). The Toungsa women incorporate western dress because many of them (e.g. Pangkhoa, Lushai, Bawm) embraced Christianity as their religion; moreover, they live in the mountain, away from the Bangali settlement. While the Khyoungsa women prefer to wear Bangali dress as a coping strategy in the public sphere where Bangalis are the majority, the Toungsa women who embraced Christianity have already given up their traditional dress in favor of Western outfits.

This strategy has resulted from the sexual harassment of the state security forces and majority settlers against the minority Pahari. The Pahari do not feel comfort wearing their traditional clothes even in their own lands, where, over the years, the Bangali settlers have been dominating them. Consequently, in office, schools and colleges, and even at the local bazaars, many Khyoungsa women prefer to wear Bangali clothes.

Significantly, the Pahari (both Khyoungsa and Toungsa) incorporate alternative measures in order to interact with the dominant world, which increasingly encroaches on their land. Although they would prefer to face the outside worlds without changing their habits, they must do so to cope with the threats with regard to mobility and harassment that they find themselves in. We find that the disintegration of the indigenous realms force the Pahari to integrate with the outside world, particularly as a consequence of the discordant relationships they face. The trans-ethnic strategies that they use in turn hasten the disintegration of their realms as well. These strategies are neither accepted in their own communities nor valued by outsiders (Elsass 1992, Jochim 1981, Porter III 1986). The Pahari are compelled to incorporate these strategies, along with the salient and silent strategies described above, so that they can manage their survival in

an environment where the dominant Bangali culture has an immense and adverse effect on the local cultures.

5 Conclusion

The CHT region is recognized as a multiethnic setting and its indigenous groups employ different strategies for their survival. Some strategies, such as military and political ones, are taken primarily by the Khyoungsa for the recognition of their identity, to establish their rights and autonomy, and from fear of uncertainties. Other strategies are adopted, mainly by the Toungsa, from fear of survival and the ability to maintain their traditional living and livelihood. Due to the diverse locations, size, and power of different groups, each must choose different strategies to manage its own survival.

Although the Pahari had demanded an autonomous region due to the dominance of the Chakmas, Toungsa involvement in the salient strategies have almost been insignificant, as have been their presence in post-Accord politics and other developments. Instead, they have retracted within their own communities and cultures, believing that cultural resistance is the only means for their survival in the hills. They perceive reluctance and cultural resistance as defensive strategies, and "primitivity" and "nakedness" as tools of resistance against Bangali hegemony and "national integration". Therefore, juxtaposed with their reluctant disposition they immerse themselves within their traditional social arrangement in an attempt to preserve their distinct identity through cultural resistance.

Although the dominant accounts of the region focus on the Chakma insurgency and JSS politics, ignoring the groups that have been reluctant to take on these salient strategies, there are many local accounts that acknowledge these differences. The dominant accounts have not come about because the Chakma have been suffered most of the adverse consequences, but because of the existing symbiotic relationship of the Chakma with the nearby Bangali and their gradual integration into the wider nationalistic political system.

A closer look allows us to observe diverse strategies of different groups during the pre- and post-Accord periods where, for example, the Pangkhoa strategies are different from the Chakma, the Mro strategies are not similar to the Pangkhoa, and even within the Chakma there are several versions of why the salient strategies such as the insurrection and Accord of 1997 were adopted. At a level of generalization the Pahari live in a distinct socio-cultural and politico-economic systems compared to their counterpart Bangali settlers, and have a common core of historical experience, but they also show considerable group and individual variation in their response to historical and contemporary forces. In addition to the insurgent, the reluctant should also be taken into consideration for building peace in the green hills of Chittagong. Therefore, this paper argues that a holistic-critical approach is needed to unveil the dynamics of CHT, not only challenging the prevalent stagnant viewpoints, but also admitting various versions of local dynamics in the region.

Endnotes

1. "Indigenous" has a number of different meanings. Even within anthropology the concept of "indigenous" people is complex (Barnard and Spencer 2010, p. 377). In this paper it is applied to the people who have been inhabited in the CHT for a long time, earlier than the outsiders as 'first people'. Saugestad (2001, p. 43) maintains, autochthony is one of several characteristics of the definition of indigenous peoples (Barnard and Spencer 2010, p. 77). Here, in the relation of dominance of one group over another, and especially the relation of different groups to the state, the hill peoples are indigenous, local or natives in this sense that they are not only the first people of the region, but have been engaged in the struggle for political rights, for land, for a place and space against the state authorities. Regulation 1900, which is the principal legal instrument for the region, refers to the CHT people as "indigenous hillmen" and "indigenous tribesmen" interchangeably (Roy 2000, p. 22). The state is perceived as protecting the values of non-indigenous over indigenous peoples, and it is the non-indigenous group, which, by definition, is dominant over the indigenous one (Barnard and Spencer 2010, p. 377). Notwithstanding, the *Pahari* define their needs and identities as *adibashi* or "indigenous people" (Mey 2006, Roy 2000; 2003*a*, van Schendel 1992), but the Bangladesh state does not accept this term and instead address them as *upajati* (tribes) or ethnic minority.
2. There is a debate about how many ethnic groups reside in the CHT. Some scholars mention the number of ethnic groups is 11, to some 13, to some others it is 12. See Ahamed (2004), Ahmed (1993), Ali (1993), Dalton (1973), Hunter (1876), Hutchinson (1906), Lewin (1869), Mey (2006), Mohsin (1997), Roy (2000; 2003*a*;*b*), Sopher (1963; 1964), Uddin (2011; 2008), van Schendel (1992), van Schendel et al. (2000) and others. Besides these 11 groups, there are two other groups, namely, the *Gurkha* (Nepalese origin) and the *Ahom* or *Assami* (Assamese origin). They have been living in this region since the British colonial period without "recognized" identity neither as "indigenous" nor as "tribe". The CHT comprises an elongated 5,089

square miles of land strip, primarily hilly, wooded subtropical territory covering about 9 percent of the total area of Bangladesh (Ahmed 1993, p. 32); comprises three hill districts: Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari.

3. *Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti*(PCJSS) (The Chittagong Hill Tracts United Peoples' Party), locally known as *Jana Samhati Samiti* (JSS) — the *champion* of the Pahari — the sole political party in the CHT until the emergence of UPDF (United People's Democratic Front) in 1998.
4. An armed wing of JSS formed by the Pahari youths (mostly by the Chakma).
5. Bangladesh Riffles (BDR, a border force) was renamed as Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in December 2010.
6. State assisted Village Defence Party.
7. Sopher refers to the Khyoungtha as "River men", and Toungtha as "Mountain men" (Sopher 1964, p. 109).
8. The Gurkha and Ahom have also been residing the river-valleys since their arrival in the hills.
9. The Chittagong Hill Tracts was called *Kapas Mahal* (Cotton Territory) and later *JumBanga* during Mughal period (Roy 2003*b*, p. 23).
10. Since the pre-colonial period, *jum* has been the principle livelihood means of the Pahari ties with their everyday life, livelihood and rituals.
11. To some others, however, the Regulation 1900 was the legal expression of the final destruction of "tribal" self-government (Ali 1993, p. 174).
12. The *divide et impera* (divide-and-rule) approach characterized British policy all along the empire's frontiers (Ali 1993, p. 174). Regulation 1900 gave recognition to the chiefs of the Chakma and Marma, and made chiefs of the other groups subservient to them (Mohsin 1997, p. 85).
13. The term *jum* came from the local Chakma word for swidden or shifting cultivation; Tanchangya also use the same word (jum) to refer to their traditional shifting (slash & burn) cultivation. The rest of the groups call this cultivation in their distinct languages, for instance, in Pangkhoa language it is called lo, in Marma it is *yah*, the Tripura call it *hug*, and in the Mro language it is *ua*. Notwithstanding, the JSS leaders (mainly Chakmas) formed the common platform of the Pahari as "Jumma nationalism". Jumma or *Jumia* which means the people who cultivate jum (swidden or slash & burn). Later it was appropriated by the JSS in an attempt to unify all Pahari people under one socio-political umbrella as a counter to the Bangali/Bangladeshi nationalism and Bangali hegemony and establish it as a collective movement for the expected autonomy and self-determination of the region. The JSS invented the Jumma nationalism to strengthen the solidarity of the Pahari. It highlights Pahari's cultural separateness from Bangali, their shared possession of a Jumma homeland and shared history of oppression and marginalization. In the 1970s, the JSS leadership dreamt of an autonomous *Jummaland* (in place of Chittagong Hill Tracts)-the land of the Jumma.
14. The Two-Nation Theory was a negation of this philosophy that the Indian sub-continent has only one nation, consuming all the inhabitants of the subcontinent into one Nation. It explicates that Indian sub-continent has two large communities as Hindus and the Muslims. The Two-Nation Theory (also known as the ideology of Pakistan) was the basis for the Partition of India in 1947. It stated that Muslims and Hindus were two separate nations by every definition, and therefore Muslims should have an autonomous homeland in the Muslim majority areas of British India for the safeguard of their political, cultural, and social rights, within or without a United India.
15. The Pahari were not consulted prior the construction of the dam. The Pahari were not organized then to resist the construction. The Koel-Karo movement, however, is one of the rare examples of the successful prevention of the construction of massive dams on indigenous lands (a hydroelectric project planned on the South Koel and Karo rivers) in India in a long and rich history of determined struggles by tribal peoples against forces of displacement (Ghosh 2006, p. 502).
16. According to German anthropologist, Löffler, this multiplicity of political borders is a postcolonial artifact (Löffler 1994, p. 1).
17. This transmigration project proved popular among the plainlanders. Because, Bangladesh is an overpopulated land; out of its total population of eleven million people (in mid-1970s), 6.18 million rural land-poor households belong to the category of functionally landless (0.05–0.49 acres) and marginal (0.50–0.99 acres) farmers (Sobhan 1991, p. 31). The population density in the plains in 1980 was 1400 persons per square mile; on the other hand vast tracts of land in the CHT were lying empty (Mohsin 1997, p. 113); not more than 100 per square mile. However the inhabitable and arable lands in the hills were not in plenty; cropland per capita in CHT is 0.23 acres (0.09 ha), while the national average is 0.13 acres (0.05 ha) (Adnan 2004).
18. Here it is pertinent to note that the Bangali settlers coveted the relatively level land in the hill valleys

and forcibly displaced hundreds of valley-dwelling peoples-e.g. the Chakma, Marma, Tripura and Tanchangya. The Bangali are used to cultivation in the plains and fishing, they do not know how to make a 'hard' living on the steep high hills, where livelihood totally depends on shifting cultivation in the hills.

19. In this context, it is pragmatically pertinent to note the distinction between *latent* and *manifest* (visible) levels of social movements delineated by Melucci (1988).
20. A renowned scholar; he has been involved in doing research and writing on the CHT issues since the early 1990s.
21. Here it is pertinent to mention that, the Chakma are the largest and most educated among the indigenous groups; they have also been severely affected, first by the Kaptai dam, and later by transmigration and militarization (van Schendel 1992).
22. An exceptional case is found in the Indian state of Mizoram. In the first few years after the Mizoram Accord of 1986, there was some dissatisfaction but those issues were soon resolved amicably (Roy 2003*a*, p. 2).
23. In the changed circumstances, the mountain-dwelling Pahari (Toungsa) use some terms to denote their existing situation such as powerless, weak, small, poor, and vulnerable.
24. Because of their preponderance and political preeminence in the hills.
25. At present, the largest Pangkhoa settlement is the Pangkhoa Para in Bilaichhari upazila. The Pangkhoa call this as *dinthar* (new village) as it is a relocated settlement. The Pangkhoa were relocated here from different villages.
26. Although the clothes of both male and female signifies the same denotation for identity, to understand the cultural aspects of dress here we focus women's dress as a survival strategy against the Bangali hegemony, against the ethnic status quo. We focus on women's clothes since it is more visible than men's one. Most male persons have already given up their traditional clothes for modern shirts, t-shirt and trousers while the Pahari women still maintain their traditional dress at home and remote areas. They still try to preserve their traditional designs to help future generations pick up designs from it.
27. Each group has their own traditional clothes.
28. Before the Bangali settlement, rape, sexual assault, or ragging was almost unknown in the hills, what is frequent in the plain districts of Bangladesh. Local word for rape or sexual assault is lack in their languages.
29. When several Bangali women were asked whether they would wear skirts or jeans, they said they wear whatever they like: "We are the mainstream population of Bangladesh, nobody can dominate us, and we decide our clothes".

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