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Genocide in Bangla Desh
The Chittagong Hill Tracts Case

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From the 28-30 March, 1980, a seminar was held in Rajshahi/ Bangla Desh which was devoted to the problems of preservation of "Tribal Cultures" in Bangla Desh.

Three days before the beginning of this seminar, Bangla Desh military forces massacred 300 persons in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, an area in Bangla Desh where most of its ethnic minorities are concentrated.

This coincidence may illustrate the hopelessness of writing about the fate of tribal societies. I shall, nevertheless, try to present a number of facts which may serve to understand the current situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts are situated in Bangla Desh, bordering Assam and Upper Burma to the east, Arakan to the south and the Chittagong District to the west. This hilly area is inhabited by 12 different ethnic groups who have mostly immigrated into this area during the last four hundred years. Most of these groups belong to the tibeto-burman language family and display mongoloid features. Their economies, cultures, social and political organisations bear much resemblance to groups of Upper Burma and Assam.

There is a rough division between valley-living groups and ridge-top living groups. The former used to practise plough cultivation, the latter shifting cultivation.

1. An inquiry into the history of the relationships of the CHT-groups to the Bengali population of the plains reveals the historical and recent patterns that determine these relationships: They are marked by a strange ambiguity towards the plains civilisations: Simultaneously they both try a) to imitate the culture of the the plains in two respects: adaption of technical informations and patters of rule and b) to oppose the pressures originating from the plains, viz. eviction, exploitation, fraud and domination.

1.1. Eviction and Raid

The control of the coastal plains of Bengal and the hinterland of Chittagong was highly desired by the dynasties of Tripura, Arakan, and Bengal from the 14th century onwards, until finally the Moghul annexed this area in the middle of the 17th century.

The ethnic groups which lived in this area were slowly pushed eastwards into the hills in the train of the consolidation of Moghul rule. These evictions led to raids of the hill tribes on Bengali villages in the newly cultivated areas. From this time onwards, the relationships between the hill tribes and the Bengali peasants were marked by continuous confrontations ¹⁾, attempts to bar Bengali expansion into the hills and to react to fraud and exploitation by Bengali zamindars ²⁾.

1787 the Chakma Chiefs acknowledged British hegemony over the Chittagong District and the hinterland, but the raids of the Chakma came to an end only during the early 19th century.

1.2. The adaption of technical informations and patters of rule The Chakma Case

In spite of these fights, the ethnic groups of the CHT were independent of the political developments in the plains. In 1713, however, Moghul authorities and representatives of some ethnic groups came to an agreement to open up trade with the hills on delivery of a trade tax in kind ³⁾.

The ethnic group of the Chakma was formed by a number of kinship groups which were all independent of each other. During the continuous fights in the hinterland of Chittagong during the 17th century, the Chakma groups acknowledged or were made to acknowledge a military leader (the first one was probably a Bengali) who had no position in the kinship system. This office holder succeeded in dominating a large number of kinship groups by acting as intermediary to the Moghul authorities. He was acknowledged as tax-collector in the contact zone between the plains and the hills and repeatedly received grants of land by the Moghul administration. He was partly integrated into the administration and fiscal system of the Moghul and partly into the "tribal" system. Since 1830, these Chakma Chiefs succeeded in applying the Bengali tax-system (taluk-system), based on private ownership of land to the collectively owned lands of the Chakma swidden farmers. They also induced a number of plainsmen to introduce plough cultivation in the hills. These Bengalis worked as tenants on the estates of the Chakma Chiefs in Rangunia, the former residence of the Chakma Chiefs in the plains and later in Rangamati⁴). This partial economic and political integration of the Chakma Chiefs and the use of Bengali systems of rule and administration brought in its train cultural and religious influences from Bengal. During Moghul times, the Chakma Chiefs adopted Muslim names and titles. Islam, however, could not penetrate into the Buddhist systems of the Chakma, but Hinduism was used in British times as legitimation of the newly acquired positions of political rule.

2. Colonial Rule

The policy of the British administration towards the CHT was contradictory: on one side the aim was to link the economy and the tenancy rights with the systems prevailing in the Bengali plains and to establish "tribal" hierarchies, on the other side they made provisions to safeguard the hill tribes from economic exploitation through plains people and to isolate the ethnic groups from the political development in the plains.

2.1. Policies of integration

During British times (1860-1947), the position of the Chiefs of the CHT-groups as tax-collectors did not change significantly. The first attempt to substitute swidden cultivation in the hills by plough cultivation during the 1860s failed; only towards the end of the last century mainly Chakma, Marma and Tippera (the valley-living tribes) adopted plough cultivation as a result of increasing shortage of swidden land and decreasing yields.

Though administrated separately from the Chittagong District, plough land leases in the hills were given indiscriminately to hillmen and Bengali. This led to substantial settlements of Bengali farmers in the hills.

At the same time, markets and bazars were opened, a result of the pacification of the "wild tribes", the improvement of the infrastructure and the intensification of market-oriented production of the CHT-farmers.

With the application of the new tenancy rights for the plough-cultivators, new types of property evolved:

Swidden cultivators were/are the possessors of the land they cultivate, the ultimate owner was the the village/clan/tribe or the spirits. Returns from swidden fields are private property. Plough-cultivators became tenants under a tax-collector. They rent the land they cultivate from the state (who is the ultimate owner) for a number of years and have no property rights. Taxes from swidden cultivators were collected by traditional representatives and handed over to the chiefs who kept a fixed percentage to themselves and forwarded the rest to the British administration.

Except a few higher posts in the district's administration, all administrative (etc.) tasks were fulfilled by an indigenous body of representatives and functionaries of the resp. ethnic groups.

2.2. Policies of isolation

The aim to keep the administration of the hills separately from the administration of the plains led to the appointment of a Superintendent and later a Deputy Commissioner (DC) (Act XII of 1860/Regulation of 1900); 1921, the CHT were declared a "Backward Tract" ⁵⁾, and only the Governor-in-Council was authorized to interfere with the administrative and judicial proceedings in the hills. Following the provisions of the "Government of India Act, 1935", the CHT were declared a "totally excluded area". When after World War II the partition of the subcontinent was planned, the three Chiefs of the CHT demanded a status of a "Native State" for their resp. circles ⁶⁾. In a later application, they suggested the formation of a confederation with the neighbouring states of Tripura, Cooch Behar and the Khasi-States; this confederation should be placed under the direct administration of the Central Government which should be responsible for the safeguarding of the rights of the tribal peoples ⁷⁾.

3. The CHT in the State of Pakistan

3.1. The administrative status

After the final vote for Pakistan, the CHT continued to be administered according to the provisions of the Regulation of 1900, which guaranteed some sort of autonomy to the CHT-population. The CHT were placed under the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions, which was responsible for the administration of the former "partially and totally excluded areas" ⁸⁾. In 1955, the provincial Government decided to abolish the special safeguards for the CHT and to place them under the Rule of the Regulations ⁹⁾. The 3 Chiefs of the CHT and the then British DC however succeeded in warding off this "integration" by stiff resistance and several appeals to the address to the central Government in Karachi. The CHT were then defined as "Special Area" and, being placed under the Ministry of Home and Kashmir Affairs, were administered by the Central Government directly, represented by a DC in the hills. Nevertheless, shortly after the independence of Pakistan, a slow but steady demontage of tribal-led institutions of self-government began, and first of all

the indigenous police-force was disbanded, its officers were sent to different districts and Bengali police and officers were appointed in the CHT.

"As a result, the tribals have been denied all police protection"¹⁰⁾.

In 1959, with the application of the Basic Democracies Order the indigenous political systems were substituted by the new political order of the Military Government under Ayub Khan, and with

"the new constitution of Pakistan, in 1962, a systematic but clandestine colonialization of the hills by the Bengali began"¹¹⁾.

Finally, in 1964, as a result of the amendement of the constitution in 1963, the special status of the CHT, granted under the Regulation of 1900 was totally abolished and

"all branches of the district administration earlier run by tribals themselves were brought under the control of the Central Pakistan administration"^{12) 13)}

3.2. Underdevelopment and minority policies in East Pakistan

Until the late 1950s, the policy of the Bengal Provincial Government towards the ethnic minorities in the CHT may be called a "laissez-faire, laissez-aller" policy. The authorities cared for the upkeeping of law and order and the tax-collection and did not interfere significantly with the "self-government" of the ethnic groups¹⁴⁾.

During the mid-sixties, this policy changed dramatically. During these years, the population explosion in East Pakistan

"became so severe that...population densities reached an overall average of 1,215 people per square mile and the soil resources of the country were being pushed to its limits"¹⁵⁾

By applying development models of the industrialized countries for the development of the 3rd World countries, which emphasized large, capital intensive projects, preferably industrial ones to facilitate economic growth, the Pakistan Government directed special interest and attention to the CHT and its only partly tapped resources. On this background the plan to construct a hydroelectric plant at Kaptai materialized, financed largely by American capital. The catchment area now covers 50 000 acres of the best plough land in the hills, 40% of the district's total cultivable area; the lake displaced 100 000 persons, few of them were rehabilitated, none adequately. 40 000 members of ethnic groups migrated to India.

The construction of this dam marks the first step in the chain of large scale interventions in the CHT.

A survey conducted among the Chakma¹⁶⁾ showed that between 58% and 93% of the Chakma have been affected in various ways by this project. The lake with its different effects (a) disruption and desintegration of the settlement patterns, the economic and social structure of the Chakma, b) the development of new economic potentials as fish farming and fish industries for Bengalis) gave incentives for further "reorganization" of the use of the CHT's resources: In 1964,

"the Pakistani Government enlisted an eleven-man international team of geologists, soil scientists, biologists, foresters, economists, and agricultural engineers to devise a master plan for the integrated development of the area based on what they considered to be optimum land use possibilities. The team worked for two years with helicopters, areal photographs and electronic computers" 17).

The team came to the conclusion that regardless of how well the traditional economic system of land use in the CHT may have been in the past, it

"can no longer be tolerated"¹⁸⁾ "The research team decided that the hill tribes should allow their land to be used primarily for the production of forest products for the benefit of the national economy" 19).

The FORESTAL-Report was quite clear concerning the future development and Webb concluded that

"a whole system of culture and an age-old way of life cannot be changed overnight, but change it must, and quickly. The time is opportune" 20).

Correct, time was opportune. 100 000 persons had already been on the move, why not 350 000 more....

In the bare perspective of population density in Bengal, the CHT of those days were extremely fortunate: only 91 persons per square mile and this (not considering the different ecological and geological set up as well as the different carrying capacity of swidden land under conditions of shortening recultivation cycles) promised anew what had already been envisaged 15 years ago:

"the Hill Tracts may be said to be East Pakistan's land of promise. If the crude, primitive, and shifting cultivation called 'jhum' is replaced by settled cultivation...some of the plain's growing population can possibly be absorbed in the thinly populated areas" 21)

because "Cultivation is negligible and is found in a few places in the valleys" 22).

Strangely enough, though the land policy has been implemented following the recommendations of the FORESTAL-survey and the Master Plan, it left its land-man ratio analysis completely out of consideration: The CHT were not "thinly populated" in the mid-sixties, the Master Plan is quite clear in this respect:

"As far as its developed resources are concerned, the Hill Tracts is as constrained as the most thickly populated District...The emptiness of the Hill Tracts therefore, is a myth" 23).

Thus the legal and administrative conditions for extending the Bengali grip to the natural and human resources of the CHT were implemented following the change of the national economic plannings in East Pakistan in the mid-sixties. The exploitation of the resources of the CHT has started under the guise of a "development plan" which really aimed at accomplishing two tasks:

1. to start a process of massive de-tribalization of the CHT-groups (it was Mujibur Rahman's policy "to force the tribal people to loose their identity(24) : "Let them become Bengalis") and
2. to plan and prepare military actions in advance should there be any resistance to this sort of development planning. Road construction schemes were implemented to facilitate the military build up and actions in the hills.

During the constitutional assembly debates, MP Manobendra Narayan, representing the Hill Tracts, tried to safeguard the interests of the hill peoples; he

"moved amendements for the preservation of 'special rights' of the minority and backward nationalities'" 25).

His proposal the CHT should become an

"autonomous tribal region" to protect the interests of its inhabitants was interpreted as

"'a conspiracy against Bangla Desh sovereignty'" 26) and accordingly rejected.

In 1972, a delegation led by Manobendra Narayan Larma met Mujibur Rahman to discuss four demands of the CHT-groups, viz.:

1. autonomy of the CHT with its own legislature,
2. retention of the 1900 Regulation in the Bangla Desh constitution,
3. continuation of the tribal chiefs' offices,
4. constitutional provisions restricting the amendement of the Regulation and imposition of a ban to the influx on non-tribal people" 27)

Mujibur Rahman answered that this would encourage ethnic feelings. He advised the delegation to go home and "do away with their ethnic identities" 28).

This demand of regional autonomy, e.g. the restitution of the former status quo was interpreted as a secessionist movement, and immediately after the deputation had left, massive military operations by the Bangla Desh army, police, and air-force were carried out in the CHT.

"Thousands of men, women and children were murdered and hundreds of villages were burned. To escape torture and persecution, hundreds of tribal people fled to the forests" 29).

In 1975, a second delegation consisting of 67 representatives of the CHT population met the President of Bangla Desh, Justice A.S. Sayem to renew their demands 30). The result of this mission, however, was similar. The Bangla Desh army carried out raids in the hills, burnt villages and put the inhabitants into jail. Again, in 1976, similar proposals were presented to Ziaur Rahman, then President of Bangla Desh 31). Even the Government-supported Tribal Convention forwarded a plan to Ziaur Rahman in January 1980, proposing similar demands though being more compromising as to the Bengali settlements in the hills and less decisive on the issue of regional autonomy 32). In reply, the Government promised to stop new Bengali settlements in the hills...

Another aspect of governmental policy is the corruption of influential representatives from among the Chakma. Few of them have been made to support the centre by official patronage. A segment of the Marma has been neutralized by the integration of the brother of one Marma Chief as 'tribal minister' into governmental agencies. 33)

4. Bengali immigration and the natural resources of the Hill Tracts

4.1. The large scale Bengali immigration into the hills already started during the Bangla Desh liberation war. During this time, 30-50 000 Bengalis entered the Ramgarh subdivision with the help of the army and occupied the lands of the settlers who had fled to India; they hold the land in their occupation still today though the owners returned to their homes after the war 34). Since this war, repatriated Bengalis have been "rehabilitated" in the Hill Tracts after the forcible eviction of the owners from their homesteads:

"agricultural lands were taken by force and distributed among the Bengali settlers" 35).

Bengali settlements have been continuously encouraged by governmental agencies, and in the past few years,

"over 25 000 Bengali settlers are said to have moved into the district" 36).

Though officially denied, the Hill Tracts are being systematically depopulated by eviction of ethnic groups and later populated with non-tribal settlers 37). Each settler family has been given 5 acres of land for cultivation, free rations for a month and taka 3600 (5000, personal communication) to cover initial expenses 38).

"In August 1979, the government issued a secret circular advising the District Commissioners of all other districts of Bangla Desh to prepare lists of landless people under their jurisdiction. Now these landless people from all over Bangla Desh are being taken to the Chittagong Hill Tracts in government-hired busses, trucks, and trains" 39).

The ultimate aim is to convert the CHT into a Bengali-Muslim majority area 40). Wherever a Bengali settlement comes up in the hills, madrasahs and bazars are constructed 41).

Official sources are contradictory to this settlement policy.

Amnesty International reported that Bengali authorities will speed up the development of the CHT and refused to bar Bengali settlers from entering the hills, 42) because it would be unconstitutional to stop any citizen from settling in the hills and buying land there. On the other hand, officials communicated that the government has stopped all such settlements 43).

It is, at the moment, impossible to obtain correct figures of the speed of the Bengali immigration. A few numbers may, however, indicate the speed of the immigration.

In 1951, the district had 287 274 inhabitants including 26 150 Bengalis (= 9,1%) 44). In 1970, 30-50 000 Bengalis had moved into the hills 45). In 1980, the district was said to have 603 000 inhabitants 46) including 225 000 Bengalis 47) (=37%). In the year 1980 alone, 100 000 Bengalis have been settled in the hills through government initiative 48) 49). To back this development, the Bangla Desh Army has launched massive road building programmes in the hills. The CHT have been divided into 11 development circles to facilitate this build-up, and all-weather roads are being constructed under army guidance and plannings from:

Bandarban to Ruma,
Charinga (on the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road) to Alikadam
Ramgarh to Dighinala via Khagrachari
Chittagong to Khagrachari via Fatickchari.
Australian aid ⁵¹⁾ and also funds from the Federal Republic of
Germany are being used for these projects ⁵²⁾.

Repeatedly, tribal delegates have asked to stop development aid
of this sort.

"Sweden, in response to their fears, is winding down a program
to develop the areas timber resources, after failing to win
sufficient reassurances from the government that the tribal people
will be the ones to benefit" ⁵³⁾.

At the same time enormous military equipment has been transported
into the hills.

In 1978, the tribal guerilla force, the Shanti Bahini, in an
appeal stated:

"The entire district of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is now simply
a military camp. Almost the whole one Division Army stationed at
Chittagong has been deployed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts" ⁵⁴⁾.

3 brigade command offices have been set up at Rangamati, Kaptai, and
Bandarban, 3 cantonments at Dighinala, Ruma and Alikadam, 1 naval
base at Dhulyachari with 3 gun boats (near Kaptai), two special
police posts at Barkaj and Mahalchari. The sector headquarter of
the Bangla Desh Rifles has been set up at Rangamati and two of its
wing headquarters at Kaptai and Rangarh. 2 Ansar (Islamic guards)
battalion are stationed at Khagrachari and Ghagra, and

"in every bazaar of the district, one police camp has been
established" ⁵⁵⁾.

The district consisted formerly of 3 subdivisions with 12 police-
stations. Now there are 6 subdivisions and 28 police stations and
a large number of outposts. To house the armed forces, schools,
office buildings and Buddhist temples have been requisitioned.
Concerning the number of armed forces in the hills, there is no
reliable information Amnesty International states that between
20 000 and 100 000 armed personnel are active in the Hill Tracts ⁵⁶⁾⁵⁷⁾.

4.2. The natural resources in the hills

The settlement of landless Bengali families is only one aspect of the economic interest in the CHT. More important are the forest reserves and the mineral resources.

The exploitation of the CHT-forests is sped up for export purpose (at the beginning of 1971, Bangla Desh which is in a chronic demand of wood, has started to export timber.) The ruthless extraction of forest produce will destroy the natural environment in the CHT within a few years. Those who practise shifting cultivation will lose the very basis of their existence.

Western enterprises have been searching for mineral resources in the hills since years, and it will not be far fetched to link West-German and Australian interest in 'development aid' in the Hill Tracts with the newly discovered uranium in the hills 58)

5. Policies of resistance

This 'development' of the Hill Tracts did not meet the favour of the ethnic groups concerned, and since the beginning of the 70ies, a slow but steady increase of resistance to governmental policies and the pending threat of economic and ethno-cultural alienation and oppression has grown.

The first mass killings by Bengalis in the hills started right after their independence. These massacres were connected with the efforts of the Pakistani Army to recruit

"Rajakars and Muhajids from among the hillmen at the late stage of the independence war" 59)

Later, Mukti Bahini entered the Ramgarh area and killed 400-500 Marma and Tippera, then the paramilitia force of the Awami League, the Rakhi Bahini, terrorised tribal villages under the pretext of searching them for collaborators 60).

5.1. The beginning of resistance

The emergence of an ethnic resistance movement is the result of developments of various causes outside and within the hills.

"The reaction to governmental policy of integrating the district came from the students who began to organise themselves...in the form of the Hill Students' Association (in 1957, W.M.). Confronted with a martial law administration, they decided that the front rank leaders should go to the countryside, open schools and develop tribal consciousness" (61).

The reasons are known which led to the Bengali immigration. This sped up a development the tribal economies had been able to ward off until recently. Though land scarcity caused a slowly increasing division into a few well-to-do hillmen and a large number of poorer tribesmen (especially among the Chakma and Marma in the north of the hills), mutual aid and cooperation along kinship lines had prevented the worst. This changed fundamentally after the dam. Traditional settlement patterns of Chakma and Marma plough cultivators were destroyed and the affected people were scattered all over the district. Thus the territorial condition for the working of kinship solidarity was weakened or destroyed to a large degree. I have no figures concerning the rate of landless plough cultivators in the hills prior to the dam. Though a part of the peasants was poor, real misery was unknown. Today, 100 000 persons, mostly Chakma, Marma and Tippera are said to be landless, this corresponds to 26,5% of the total tribal population. The real rate for the plough cultivators must be much higher and might even reach 40-50%. This widespread social desintegration and economic deterioration led to attempts to check further developments of this kind. In 1966, after the alarming effects of the Kaptai dam, the CHT Welfare Association was founded. This underground party soon split into two groups on the issue of the realization of the fundamental rights of the CHT population. One group supported peaceful means, the other armed struggle. After the unsuccessful return of the hillmen's delegation in 1972,

"leadership went into the hands of the militant wing, votaries of the peaceful movement deserted the organization" (62),

which was dissolved the same year. This led to the formation of the Parbottya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (CHT Welfare Society),

headed by the then MP Manobendra Narayan Larma and his brother Bodhi Priyo Larma, a school teacher⁶³⁾ with the Shanti Bahini (Peace Force) as its armed wing⁶⁴⁾.

"Underlying these changes were an increasing sense of alienation and frustration of the tribal leaders" 65)

5.2. The guerilla

No informations as to the early years of the Shanti Bahini activities have been available to me. It is known, however, that a number of military operations were launched.

According to their statements, they fight against the

"(1) continuation of feudal, colonial and undemocratic contents of the 1900 Regulation; (2) threat to the cultures and languages of the different tribes; (3) continuous influx of Bengali settlers; (4) non-settlement of tribals used to shifting cultivation; (5) obsolete anti-hillman tenurial system; (6) poor communication; (7) inadequate facilities for education, medical care, accomodation, trade and commerce; (8) non-rehabilitation of the major portion of those who were displaced by the Karnafuli project; (9) unemployment; and (10) lack of incentives on the development of cottage industry" 66)

The political activities of the PCJSS, therefore were aimed at establishing an alternative administrative suited for the changed tribal reality.; hardly any information is available as to the actual working of this self-administration.

But before dealing with this development, I think it necessary to present the few facts known about the Shanti Bahini; repeatedly, in newspapers and magazine articles, facts about the military wing of the PCJSS have been published, but as these informations are widely scattered and difficult to obtain, I shall give a kind of resumé.

The Shanti Bahini have been operating since 1972. They consist mostly of Chakma and Marma, the two largest ethnic groups in the CHT; these groups have been most directly affected by the events in the hills. It is not possible to give an exact number of guerilla fighters; according to Shanti Bahini statements, 15 000 fighters have joined the guerilla force, Government sources admit about 2000⁶⁶⁾.

Amnesty International sources mention 5000 fighters, who are headed by the former MP Manobendra Narayan Larma⁶⁷⁾. They are said to have no foreign backing today⁶⁸⁾. In the past, they received a short and

tentative support by the Indira Gandhi Government since it was hostile to the Bangla Desh Government after Mujib's death in 1975. Since 1976 it was clear that the Indian Government used its support of Mujib-supporters and tribal people to bring pressure on the new Dacca Government, and tribal guerilla fighters used to operate from basis positions in Indian territory in Tripura State. Manobendra Narayan Larma, the top man in the Shanti Bahini went over to Tripura to organise actions. Since then, nothing has been heard of a continuation of this short-lived Indian support after 1975/76⁶⁹⁾. Though Indian support has been stopped, there is a pro-Indian group in the Shanti Bahini organisation which is said to be stronger than the pro-leftist group.

The relationships of the rebels to the neighbouring guerilla group of the Mizo National Front is said to be bad. The relationship to Burmese rebel groups is obviously very good,⁷⁰⁾ though it is not evident which groups have been referred to in the existing reports, to the rebels in the Chin Hills or to those in the Hill Tracts of Northern Arakan or to both. A section of the Chakma, the Taungchengya, have a guerilla organisation of their own, the Mukhti Parishad, led by Sudharta Tangchainga. This group is smaller in size and hostile to the Shanti Bahini. They have been fighting each other in the past, at the moment, however, they have stopped in order to concentrate on attacking Government forces⁷²⁾. The reason for this hostility may well have an ethnic background. The Chakma Chiefs never acknowledged the independence of the Taungchengya kinship groups but tried to dominate them throughout the last century. This led to the breakaway of Taungchengya gozas (kinship groups).

Besides some support from other ethnic groups, the Shanti Bahini have another ally: the non-tribal Marxist-Leninist Sarbohara Party, which was very active in Mujib's times. The chief revolutionary leader, a certain Siraj Sirdar, was captured in 1974 and killed in captivity. This led to a party split, one faction, headed by the fugitive army officer Lt. Col. Ziauddin is active in the CHT⁷³⁾.

The Shanti Bahini have extensive organisational networks in the Rangamati-, Ramgarh-, and Bandarban-subdivision, their main base is located in the forests ⁷⁴⁾. The main target of Shanti Bahini operations during last year have been the new settlers. The guerillas first

"serve a 'quit notice' on the settlers in a particular locality. This is followed by an attack in which the new settlements are often razed to the ground" ⁷⁵⁾.

Except for the military camps, the guerilla force is in control of the CHT. They have successfully integrated into the traditional social systems without antagonizing them. They are not operating against customary hierarchies; their positions regarding the 3 Chiefs have, however, drastically changed, because their administration is considered as feudal.

Without the consent of the Shanti Bahini no important political decisions are taken on local levels. They have a cadre-organisation with military-like hierarchies. The members are volunteers from the local population, very often they come from the emergent middle-class.

The Shanti Bahini are responsible for publicity and propaganda of the rebel organisation. The PCJSS has, in the meantime, established its own administrative and judiciary systems in the countryside with the help of the local panchayats, the administrative units of their organisation.

"In fact, the district seems to be run by two parallel administrations - the civil-military apparatus of the state and the Shanti Bahini...With a fairly effective intelligence network and a disciplined cadre" ⁷⁶⁾.

It is difficult to judge the range of the Shanti Bahini organisational structure. Though originally a Chakma organisation, they have integrated Marma fighters as well and extended their influence on other ethnic groups as well. Under their supervision, land reforms have been carried out in some places. The production brigades of the PCJSS/Shanti Bahini are said to participate in agricultural production. They also collect taxes, mainly from Bengali bazar traders and contractors who purchase the right to cut wood in the forests for the saw- and paper-mills in the CHT from the hillmen.

Concerning the political demands of the Shanti Bahini, there have been a few changes over the time.

First of all, they are not demanding secession from Bangla Desh. In 1975, they stood for an autonomy similar to that of the Indian States under the Central Government. Facing the hard-liners in the Bengali Government, the Shanti Bahini now stand for

1. self -determination within Bangla Desh with a separate legislature,
2. restitution of all lands taken by Bengali immigrants since 1970; total ban of influx of Bengali settlers;
3. constitutional arrangements for the preservation of the indigenous cultures and their identity,
4. free movement and commerce within the district and
5. freedom from officials' harrassment 77).

They also demand an own para-militia recruited from among the ethnic groups.

A very significant change has occurred: the Shanti Bahini demands clearly show the absence of their support for the maintenance of the tribal chiefs' offices.

The last Chakma Chief of political weight was Tridiv Roy who had to leave Bangla Desh shortly after independence because he favoured the presence of the Pakistani Army as a means of checking Bengali domination over the hills. All his successors have been more puppets the present Chief, Raja Devashis Roy, 21,

"is more interested in athletics and folk music - he has his own guitar band - than in politics, but he has to listen to endless petitions against harrassment by General Zia's soldiers. To all he advises legal remedies" 78).

5.3 The Army in the hills

I don not intend to give a detailed account of the guerilla fights in the CHT. The rough outline will show that military activities of the Bangla Desh Army and other military personnel are integrated processes to open up the whole of the CHT to Bengali immigrants resp. businessmen.

In the early sixties, a few raids on police stations in the southern CHT were carried out. These events had connections with

the guerilla fights in Mizoram, but obviously, no direct links exist to the Mizo-guerilla today.

Since the mid-sixties, a steady increasing number of crimes of Bengali settlers, Government officials and Bengali police (rape, arson, abduction, theft) were reported to the D.C.⁷⁹⁾

These inroads on the CHT-groups were at first individual or partly collective crimes on the part of the Bengali; they were, at that date, not yet part of an integrated scheme of overall eviction. Only since the beginning of 1977, reports of massacres became publicly known.

"It was alleged that in early 1977 the Bangla Desh Government sent troops to 'massacre' the tribals living in Matiranga, Guimara, Manikchari and Lakshmichari...and 5000 tribals were forced to go to Tripura" 80)

During the last week of December 1977, the army carried out "operations"⁸¹⁾ in Kukichari, Panchari, Bhaibonchara and Pushgang (ca. 60-70 miles north of Rangamati) possibly a response to skirmishes with the Shanti Bahini units in the area of Guichara in early December of 1977⁸²⁾. Army massacres have also been reported from Matirana, Guimara, Manikchari, Lakshmichari during the last three years⁸³⁾. Since late 1978, conflicts have been increasing. Severe fights were reported in May, October and December⁸⁴⁾ in the area of Eidghar, Manikchari and Fakirachara apart from everyday clashes and fights. In December 1978,

"troops 'invaded' Dumdumya, Maidong and Panchari Moujas (the smallest administrative unit, containing one or several villages, W.M.), a large area with a population of more than 75 000 covering over 50 villages. On January 9 and December 22 last year (1980/1979, W.M.) 35 villages were set on fire" 85).

As a result of the jungle fights in early March 1980 and heavy losses of Bengali troops, the army launched counter attacks on villages and civilians.⁸⁶⁾

An integrated attack took place on March 25, 1980 in Kalampati Union. The commander of a local army unit

"arranged for an assembly of the leading tribal people of the Kalampati Union in the market to hold a religious congregation and the ordinary hillmen were made to gather for the repairing of the Poapara Buddhist temple. While they were at their repairing work,

they were asked to line up; and as soon as they stood in line, the army men began to shower them with bullets" 86);

300 persons (most sources) were killed on the spot.

30 women were abducted and taken into the military camps and raped. After this, thousands of Bengali rioters entered the scene immediately after the army attack. They had been given a deadline by 25/3/80 to abandon illegally occupied lands which they refused. Instead, they began to burn and to loot homes of tribal villagers.

"They were on the rampage in the village of Kaukhali, Mukhpara, and Headmanpara, burnt the houses of hillmen, butchered those who came across their path" 87); temples in 9 more villages were destroyed and immediately after this, under the protection of the Bangla Desh Army, thousands of Bengali settlers entered this 'pacified' area 88)89).

A large number of similar incidents have occurred since then 90), and it is quite obvious that the armed forces have stepped up their annihilation policy:

"About 800 people were massacred by Bangla Desh Army in the Chittagong Hill Tracts between 10 and 22 December (1980, W.M.), villagers claim" 91).

On December 10th, 1980 army forces attacked, looted and burned 7 villages in the Harina valley, an unknown number of men were killed, and women raped. 500 families who tried to flee to the neighbouring Mizoram were driven back by Indian border security forces.

"It is feared that all of them died either in torture or simply due to starvation" 92).

Similar operations in this area on the 10th, 19th, 21st and 22nd of December 1980 led to the death of 5000 tribal people 93).

The Bangla Desh High Commission in London admitted that the CHT are the scene of

"considerable lawlessness, and that murder, arson and looting are prevalent. But they deny any undue violence or policy of repression on the part of the government forces" 93).

Genocide is but one aspect of this situation. An unknown number of persons have been put in jail during the last years without any charge or trial. It is estimated that between 5000 and 10 000 men and women are imprisoned nowadays in jails, many outside the district, but usually in military camps⁹⁴⁾. Imprisonment for women means: rape. Young men are often crippled to prevent them from handling weapons⁹⁵⁾.

In order to obtain informations and/or confessions, torture is widely used. This includes

"severe beatings, electric shocks, uninterrupted interrogation, withholding of food and water, inadequate medical care (if any), standing in the sun until collapse, living and sleeping in open trenches exposed to the elements and half-drownings"⁹⁶⁾.

Especially parents of Shanti Bahini guerilla fighters are put under pressure to make them give up their sons.

To curtail local support for the Shanti Bahini, forced settlement camps (or more appropriate: concentration camps) have been opened up in recent years⁹⁷⁾. Camps of this sort have been established in Belaichari Union, Moghban Union, Balukhali Union, and some in the Bandarban- and Ramgarh-subdivision. The village of Ghagra on the Chittagong-Rangamati-road has been deserted by the Chakma villagers because another camp was to be built there⁹⁸⁾.

Government sources say they are trying to resettle "uprooted" tribals in

"Government sponsored cooperative farming estates"⁹⁹⁾.

These projects are assisted by the Asian Development Bank.

To control guerilla movements and transportation of foodstuffs, the army has established checkpoints on roads and waterways. Salt, medicine, food, and kerosene are not allowed to be carried beyond Rangamati, the district's capital¹⁰⁰⁾. These measures have widely affected communications and whoever is met on the road is liable to be abducted into army camps. Food shortages are affecting many parts of the CHT today. Army inroads do not even stop at temples. A large

number of Buddhist temples have been desecrated, looted and burnt down ¹⁰¹). A number of monks have been killed, imprisoned or tortured, and

"it is not unusual for tribal people to be pressured to convert to Islam; a number of forcible conversions have reportedly taken place" ¹⁰²).

During the early phase of confrontation, the government strictly refused to negotiate with the Shanti Bahini. Things began to change slowly with the exchange of letters in May 1979. Until May 1980, four letters were exchanged, and the MP of the opposition parties, Upendra Lal Chakma, acted as go-between ¹⁰³). He had three rounds of talks with the PJCSS ¹⁰⁴). In February 1980, two top leaders of the Shanti Bahini, Bodhi Priya Larma (alias Shantu Larma) and Sabai who had been imprisoned in 1976, were released ¹⁰⁵) to persuade their "colleagues" to give up the demand of self-determination ¹⁰⁶). The Home Minister announced the release of 100 more tribal prisoners during March/April 1980 ¹⁰⁷).

In February/March, the CHT issue was discussed in Parliament and a 5-member Parliament committee headed by the Home Minister was established to inquire into the cause of the "crisis". It is significant that this "committee" did neither include members of the opposition parties nor the CHT-representatives ¹⁰⁸). Needless to mention: the committee has never reported ¹⁰⁹).

The commander of the 24 Infantry Division deployed in the CHT, a certain Major-General Manzoor was nominated to negotiate with the Shanti Bahini and Upendra Lal Chakma received green light for talks on the 27/3/1980 ¹¹⁰), two days after the Kalampati massacre...

Since Government strictly refused to discuss the Kalampati killings and the other massacres in the CHT ¹¹¹), three opposition MPs (Upendra Lal Chakma, Shahjahan Siraj, and Rashed Khan Menon) investigated these incidents four weeks after the killing; they visited the concerned area, and they observed in their report that

"the Government had let loose a reign of terror in Hill Tracts with a definite aim of uprooting the tribals from their ancestral homes...The report states that the Government plan included forcible distortion and destruction of the religion, culture language and tradition of the tribal people" ¹¹²).

They presented a 6-point suggestion on behalf of the CHT-groups as a first step into the direction of a possible solution:

1. Inquiry into the Kalampati massacre and punishment of the killers,
2. Rehabilitation of the distressed persons with adequate security arrangements,
3. Reconstruction of the damaged Buddhist institutions, compensation for the losses of the temples and an apology for hurting the religions sentiments,
4. Check on Bengali immigration,
5. Immediate withdrawal of plainsmen who have settled in the CHT,
6. Withdrawal of the restrictions on the movements of goods in the markets ¹¹³).

It is not likely that there have been substantial talks on these issues. On the contrary. On one side, the military leaders in the Bangla Desh Army are pressing hard for a military solution, on the other side, the legal provisions are being made for a "legal genocide":

"As Bangla Desh prepares to celebrate ten years of independence, the situation of the ethnic minorities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts has gotten worse" ¹¹⁴).

To have a legal basis for genocide in the hills, the Government introduced a new bill in Parliament in December 1980, the "Disturbed Areas Act of 1980". According to this Act, uniformed personnel and local administrative officials would be authorized to make arbitrary arrests and open fire on anybody

"engaged in any unlawful activity" "Unlawful activities are broadly defined as including any action 'prejudicial to the sovereignty or territorial integrity...(or) security of Bangla Desh or the maintenance of public order'. Police and defence forces would be authorized to enter any premises to conduct a search, destroy any house believed to be hiding explosives or ammunition and confiscate property. Applications of these sweeping powers could not be challenged in court." ¹¹⁵)

The Bangla Desh Government has admitted that this bill 116)
"is tailored to curb the insurgency in the...Chittagong Hill Tracts" .

This bill has met strong opposition from various parties. It has not been passed so far. Its aim is clear to the people concerned: "The government is looking for a genocidal solution of the problems of the ethnic minorities up there" 117).

Notes

- 1) Hunter 1876:115
- 2) Lewin 1869:21; Hunter 1876:115; Hutchinson 1909:24
- 3) Hutchinson 1909:24
- 4) Similar developments took place among the Marma groups. They had left Arakan following the annexation of their lands by the Burmese. Representatives of these groups were also acknowledged by the British administration in Chittagong as tax-collectors.
- 5) Ahmad 1937:1
- 6) Prue et al. 1945:2
- 7) Roy et al. 1947: 5 f.
- 8) Hindustan Standard, 9.7.48
- 9) Haq 1955; Niblett 1955; Roy 1955 : 9 ff.
- 10) Joshi, B.K. 1980
- 11) Moorehead, C. 1980
- 12) A I 1980: 2
- 13) Still, evidently not all laws of the Pakistan State were applied in the CHT. Purchase and sale of land to outsiders has been made possible only in the course of the Mujibur Rahman Government.

The abolition of the special status was affirmed later under the Bangla Desh Constitution in 1972 which came into effect in 1972" Montu, K. 1980: 1510.
- 14) Zaman 1980: 2 f.
- 15) Bodley 1975: 7 f.
- 16) Chowdhury, R.I. et al. 1979:127, tab. 7.1., in:Zaman 1980: 2 f.
- 17) Bodley, J.H., 1975:8
- 18) Webb, W.E. 1966, in: Bodley 1975
- 19) Bodley 1975: 8
- 20) Webb 1966: 3232, in: Bodley 1975
- 21) Ahmad/Rizvi 1951:20
- 22) Johnson/Ahmad 1957:160
- 23) Master Plan 1967, B:19; For the general economic development of the CHT see Mey, A., 1979
- 24) EPW 1978: 23
- 25) Phadnis 1981 (b)
- 26) Phadnis 1981 (b)
- 27) AI 1980 : 2
- 28) Montu, K. 1980:1511
- 29) EPW 1978:723; The Statesman Weekly, 10/5/1980; Henes 1980:5

- 30) Montu, K. 1980 : 1511; AI 1980: 1; Joshi, B.K. 1980.
- 31) AI 1980 : 2
- 32) AI 1980 : 5
- 33) Phadnis 1980 (b)
- 34) EPW 1978 : 723
- 35) EPW 1978 : 723
- 36) AI 1980 : 3
- 37) Joshi, B.K. 1980
- 38) Montu, K. 1980 : 1510
- 39) Henes 1980 : 6; in the meantime, more detailed information has been available to me. On the 16/10/ 1980, "The Ganakanta", a Dacca paper reported:
"Despite protest and strong opposition of the tribals, the Government have taken up a programme of rehabilitating about new 100 000 families from the other districts of the country in the Chittagong Hill Tracts...Each family will be given 2.5 acres of plain land or 4 acres of bumpy land or 5 acres of hilly land free of cost." The settlers will receive taka 3200, in addition each family will be given 12 seers of wheat per week for the first 6 months, if necessary for another 6 months. This programme has been drawn up with the financial help of the Saudi Government.
- 40) Joshi, B.K., 1980
- 41) EPW 1978 : 723; Appeal 1978 : iii
- 42) AI 1980 : 5
- 43) Kamaluddin, S., 1980 (a) : 6
- 44) Montu, K, 1980 : 1510
- 45) EPW 1978 : 723
- 46) Keatley, P. 1980
- 47) Montu, K, 1980 : 1510
- 48) Montu, K, 1980 : 1510
- 49) Different figures are given in the Times of India: "Official statistics reveal that the tribal-Bengali ratio in the district was 90.9 and 9.1 in 1951; 88.4 and 11.6 in 1974; 67.1 and 33.9 in 1980. (But) Against this, the figures in Bangla Desh's Statistical pocket book of 1979...put the ratio at 69.79 and 30.21" (for 1979) (Phadnis 1981 (a)). Other sources say that the Bengali number nowadays 40% of the district's population (Datta-Ray 1980).
- 50) Kamaluddin, S., 1980(a) :31
- 51) Kamaluddin, S., 1980(a) :31
- 52) Appeal 1978: iii
- 53) Henes 1980 : 5
- 54) Appeal 1978 : iv

- 55) EPW 1978 : 726
- 56) AI 1980 : 3
- 57) To characterize the change: in 1872 (in the wild, colonial times) 656 policemen were stationed in the hills to ward off Lushai raids. The ratio: 1 policeman to 106 members of ethnic groups (Hunter 1876:98; AR 1972/73, III, Appx.). 1975/80: 20,000 - 100,000 military personnel are stationed in the hills; the ratio: 1 armed man to 8 hillmen (EPW 1978 : 726; Henes 1980:5)
- 58) Pogrom 1979 : 33
- 59) Montu, K. 1980 : 1510
- 60) Montu, K. 1980 : 1510
- 61) Phadnis 1981 (a)
- 62) Montu, K., 1980 : 1510
- 63) Montu, K., 1980 : 1511
- 64) AI 1980 : 2
- 65) Phadnis 1981 (a)
- 66) Montu, K., 1980 : 1511
- 67) AI 1980 : 2
- 68) AI 1980 : 3
- 69) AI 1980 : 3; Kamaluddin, S. 1980 : 30
- 70) AI 1980 : 3
- 71) AI 1980 : 1
- 72) Kamaluddin, S. 1980 : 30
- 73) Kamaluddin, S. 1980 : 30
- 74) Kamaluddin, S. 1980 : 30
- 75) Phadnis 1981 (b)
- 76) Phadnis 1981 (b)
- 77) Montu, K., 1980 : 1511; AI 1980 : 2
- 78) Datta-Ray, S. 1980
- 79) Mey 1980 : 222 ff.
- 80) For details see Appeal 1978 : v ff; The Statesman Weekly, 10.5.80
- 81) For details see: Appeal 1978: xi, xv f.
- 82) EPW 1978: 727, 726
- 83) AI 1980 : 3
- 84) AI 1980 : 3; Montu, K. 1980 : 1511
- 85) The Statesman Weekly, 10.5. 1980

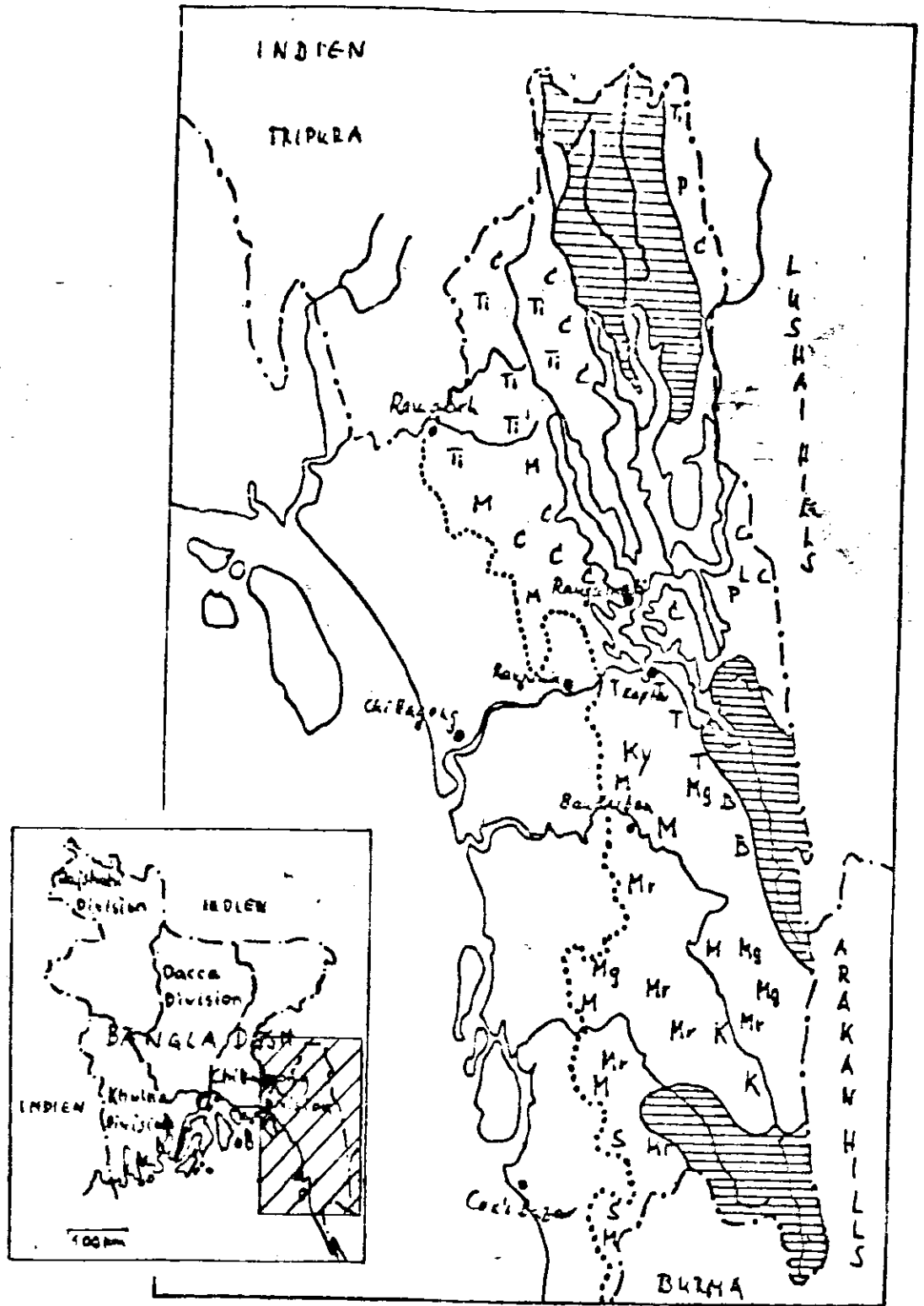
- 86) Kamaluddin, S. 1980 :30; AI 1980 : 3 f.; Montu, K. 1980 :1511; Observer 14/12/1980
- 87) Kamaluddin, S., 1980 (a); Montu, K., 1980 : 1512
- 88) AI 1980 : 3 f.
- 89) "In the days which followed, bands of Bengalis, aided by Bangladesh soldiers, attacked several villages in the surrounding area, burning houses, looting, raping, forcing the inhabitants of the villages to flee further into the wooded hills. Buddhist temples were looted and either partially or totally destroyed. Several priests suffered torture at the hands of army personnel. The Kalampati Massacre and the follow-up raids, in which more tribal people were killed, frightened people so badly that, despite of Government assurances of safety, many of the survivors have not returned to their villages to this day" (Henes 1980:4).
- 90) For details for the time between 19/11/80 and 20/3/81 see the Press Conference Statement of Chakma 1981; Joshi, B.K. 1980; Keatley, P., 1980.
- 91) Eads, B. 1981
- 92) Eads, B. 1981
- 93) Moorehead, C., 1981
- 94) Appeal 1978 : viii; EPW 1978 : 726; Henes 1980 :5; Joshi, B.K. 1980; Observer, 14/12/1980
- 95) Appeal 1978 : vii ff.
- 96) Henes 1980 : 3
- 97) Appeal 1978 : vii; AI 1980 : 6
- 98) EPW 1978 : 726
- 99) Kamaluddin, S., 1980 (a): 30
- 100) Appeal 1978 : vi
- 101) Appeal 1978: xii; EPW 1978 : 726; Chakma 1981; AI 1980 : 4
- 102) Henes 1980 : 6
- 103) Montu, K., 1980 : 1511
- 104) Kamaluddin, S., 1980 (a) : 30
- 105) AI 1980 : 5
- 106) Montu, K., 1980 : 1511
- 107) AI 1980 : 5; Kamaluddin, S., 1980 (a) :30
- 108) Montu, K., 1980 : 1512
- 109) Moorehead, C., 1980
- 110) Kamaluddin, S., 1980 (a):30
- 111) AI 1980 : 3 f.; Datta-Ray, S., 1980
- 112) Montu, K., 1980 : 1512; AI 1980 : 4
- 113) Montu, K., 1980 : 1512
- 114) IFOR-Report 1981 : 26

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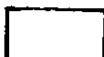
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100 km

- - - - - internat. Grenze
- Grenze CHT-CD
-  reserved forest
-  Stausee

C	Chakma	P	Pankhua
M	Marma	Mr	Mru
Ti	Tippera	K	Khumi
Mg	Mrong	L	Lushai
T	Taungchengya	Sak	Sak
B	Bawm	Ky	Khyang