

RAQIB CHOWDHURY

4. BEING AND SEEING CHAKMA

Constructing Self and Other through Images

And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.
East Coker, *Four Quartets*. (T. S. Eliot, 1940)

The increased politicisation of the question of ‘who is Indigenous’ can be seen as a result of success in the attainment of legal recognition – often through international laws – of Indigenous peoples around the world. Consequently, international organisations, host states, non-governmental organisations and researchers have each attempted to develop their own definitional standards of native peoples over the last five decades, although, as Corntassel (2003) points out, this is best answered by Indigenous communities themselves. This chapter does not aim to add to this debate; nor does it attempt to reproblematised the definitions. Rather it looks at how “invisible social realities” (Stanley, this volume, p. 4) have been exposed through images drawn by children across ethnicities.

Bangladesh has been labelled as one of the world’s most “uniquely homogeneous” (Ahsan & Chakma, 1989, p. 960) states with “no ethnic conflict” (Hussain, 2000, in Barua, p. 60) – claims predicated on statistical facts such as 99% of the population speaking Bengali and identifying as Bengali, and 85% of the people professing Islam as their religion. Over the years such convenient generalisations have legitimised the persistent cultural homogenisation that has been enacted in the country through state machineries and, with that, the suppression of ethnic minorities.

However, there are at least 45 ethnic minority communities in Bangladesh. The Chakma represent the largest of these. Commonly referred to as *pahari* (hill people), the *adivasi* (Indigenous) or the *jumma* (those who subsist on swidden cultivation), the Chakma are of Sino-Tibetan and Mongoloid descent and share linguistic, racial and ethnic ties with South East Asia and the hill peoples of Assam of North East India, Thailand and Upper Myanmar. They are conspicuously distinct from mainstream Bengalis in terms of clothing, language, food habits, religion, beliefs and rituals, mode of cultivation as well as sociocultural structures and political and economic practices. The Chakma for example primarily subsist on slash and burn

jum (swidden) cultivation as opposed to ploughed cultivation characteristic of the rest of the country.

The Chakma, who claim descent from the Shakya Buddhist line of Gautama Buddha, have lived in Bangladesh for many centuries alongside both medieval Muslim imperialists and later British colonialists retaining distinct sociocultural norms. Ethnically they represent a “continuum” placed in between the two “cultural models” (van Schendel, 1992, p. 117) of the South-Asian and the Southeast Asian or, according to Chakma (2010, p. 283) the “confluence of two regions”. Today Chakma identity is firmly established in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh where they have sought to develop an Indigenous model of state, society and culture (van Schendel, 1995, in Damodaran, 2006).

The CHT represents a distinctive identity in terms of geography, racial distribution as well as cultural and political history. It comprises of an area of 12,181 square kilometres of a geographically isolated region which topographically contrasts with the rest of the plain land of Bangladesh. For two centuries the CHT was a remote hinterland of colonial rulers and then a part of the post-colonial state of Pakistan, and is currently within the state of Bangladesh inhabited by these minorities who constitute less than one per cent of the country’s population.

However, aside from representing a region of rich ethnic diversity, CHT also marks a historical setting of significant ethnic conflict (Uddin, 2010, p. 283). Despite their cultural and linguistic diversity, there has been a “systematic reluctance” to recognise the “plural and heterogeneous nature” of the ethnic minorities within modern Bangladesh’s legal-constitutional framework (Adnan, 2008, p. 27). Uddin (2010) has documented the historical marginalisation of ethnic minorities based on the binary of upland-lowland relations in Bangladesh and the tensions which characterise the division between ethnic minorities living in hilly areas and the plain land Bengalis who regulate state institutions.

Other academic scholarship has documented significant research on the historical, political and ethnographic accounts of the CHT in general and the Chakma in particular (see for example: Ahsan & Chakma, 1989; Bhaumik, 1997; Chakma, B., 1997; Chakma, S., 2000; Guhathakurta, 1997; Mohsin, 1997a, 1997b, 2001a, 2001b, 2003; van Schendel, 1992), especially focussing on their political strife, language, history and culture. Little research to date has examined the changing mental landscape of the region through the lens of children’s eyes, and in particular their views manifested in drawings, or what we can call ‘visual narratives’ (Bach, 2007). These private and individual narratives provide rich and complex stories of identification and self-identification through the naïve, spontaneous and unstudied eyes of children who are largely uninformed of the discursive constructions of themselves and others as enacted in academic scholarship.

THE CHAKMA – A BRIEF CULTURAL-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In order to understand how the Chakma are discursively constructed, and perhaps to understand the readily available binaries the children of this study are likely to have relied upon in drawing their images of self and other, it is important first to briefly highlight two distinctive and often conflicting nationalisms enacted by the citizenry in Bangladesh, both of which have imposed invisible but almost irreconcilable boundaries between the two groups. While *Bengali* nationalism constructs unity on the basis of language and cultural commonalities, *Bangladeshi* nationalism is primarily religion-based, although it is also the term used to denote *any* citizen of Bangladesh, including her ethnic minorities. In both of these forms of nationalism, the Chakma are excluded.

Datta (2003) argues that historically Bangladesh has always adopted policies “detrimental to the minorities” (p. 245). Guhathakurta’s (2012) more recent study documents how throughout the postcolonial South and South East Asian countries, minorities have been historically marginalised and removed from centres of power on the basis of their minority ethnic status through the dual mechanisms of unitary constitutions and centralised state politics. In fact, despite the *Paharis* being the earliest inhabitants of the CHT, their status as “economically self-sufficient, culturally distinctive, and socially egalitarian” (Uddin, 2008, in Uddin 2010, p. 284) people, and their exceptionally high rate of literacy – estimated to be 70% in comparison to 28% among the Bengalis (Rashiduzzaman, 1998, in Gerharz, n.p.) – they were gradually marginalised by the successive rule of the British (1858–1947) and Pakistan (1947–1971).

The Chakma suffered several human rights violations, including ethnocide and genocide in the Liberation War of 1971. Through the ‘legitimacy’ attained through allegations against Pahari people of being collaborators of the anti-liberation movement, the state’s atrocity over the CHT people continued after independence when Bangladesh’s new constitution espoused an explicitly hegemonic form of *Bengali* nationalism, which restrained ‘other’ ethno-linguistic identities and nationalisms among the people of the country (Adnan, 2008, p. 39). Post-independence assimilationist strategies of the state over four decades saw the continued marginalisation, alienation and extermination in the name of nation-state building (Chakma, 2010) – a phenomena that continues to this day. Indeed Karim (1998) reports that a “new regime of truth” has “violently” replaced the older discourse of the Pahari as “simple” and “childlike”: the Chakma are now seen as a “terrorist, separatist and an insurgent” (p. 304) people – much like other ethnic minorities elsewhere.

Over a period of more than 150 years the colonial policy and the postcolonial state’s attempts at building a homogenous nation-state have created the dichotomised entity of the *Paharis* and the plain dwellers in the region (Uddin, 2010, p. 284)

which has trickled down into the populist discourses of the common Bengali and today largely inform their divisive and binary views. Some of these binaries were clearly reflected in the drawings made by the children of this study.

IDENTITY AND NOMENCLATURE

The politics of cultural difference, dictated almost exclusively by the state and its policy of stratifying people as belonging to different cultural ‘groups’, as well as contestations between rival nationalisms espoused by dominant groups (Adnan, 2008) have created Chakma identity as we know it today (Uddin, 2010). Sometimes, identity has been constructed in collaboration with an elite class within the central power structure, while at other times, identity has been constructed by how others (outsiders) intend to look upon them and describe them. Colonial administrators branded the CHT people as ‘hill-men’ or ‘hill-tribes’ (*Pahari*) while during the Pakistan period, the government referred to them as ‘tribal people’. In post-independence Bangladesh, the state referred to them as *upajatee* (literally ‘sub-nation’ or ‘tribe’) – often used pejoratively by Bengalis to denote the Hill people as primitive and backward farmers.

The Chakma, largely “passive spectators” (Adnan, 2008, p. 38) to such labelling, gradually adapted to the identity constructed for them by others. Today all of these labels are often used interchangeably by the Chakma. Adnan has pointed out how the “crystallisation of the collective Jumma identity of the Hill peoples” (p. 38) can be viewed as being driven by the “need to distance themselves from the Bengali assimilationist project” (p. 38) – essentially identity formulation by negation as a mechanism to distinguish the community with the dominant Bengali population.

In this continuum of naming and labelling the self and the other, this study provides new elements in the discursive construction of the Chakma identity, and it does this through the eyes of children’s images.

THE STUDY

Children often “imbue their creations with meaning” (Alland, 1983, cited in Stanley, this volume, p. 1) and therefore visual narratives can be particularly convincing sources of data. They can provide visceral and personal accounts of children experiencing unity and otherness, adding legitimate voices hitherto absent in research literature on the Chakma. More importantly, images can be seen as a window into “intercultural interfaces” and “intercultural relations” (Stanley, this volume, p. 2). The images of Indigenous and mainstream children drawing the self and the other therefore provide an illuminating lens on readings of enacting and understanding identity.

In this chapter I adopt Alerby and Bergmark’s (2012) real-world phenomenological approach of using images as a “form of language” (p. 95) to capture human experiences – such as self- and other- identification through such forms of visual art. Drawings

can be seen as “lived experiences” manifested into “transcended configurations” (van Manen, 1990, cited in Alerby & Bergmark, 2012). Such “multimodality” allows a “broadened perspective of language” where visual forms of communication allow the exploration of the “silent dimension of human experience” and become a form of language in itself in its ability to communicate (van Manen, 1997, cited in Alerby & Bergmark, 2012).

I also propose Foucault’s (1990) notion of invisibility and silence as alternative forms of text (or a ‘coded’ form of speech) in which layers of power can be embedded (or hidden). Silence or the reluctance/forbiddance of utterance can be a space that accommodates the ‘unspeakable’ or as Manen (1997) calls it, the “epistemological silence” beyond the language of words and verbal utterances. Foucault cautions against drawing “binary divisions” (p. 27) between what one says and what one does not say. The more important matter is to find alternatives to capturing and engaging with silent text through a multiplicity of forms of silences. This is to be done in view of discourses that are allowed (or “authorized” – p. 27) and the discretions required. In this study, therefore we consider children’s drawings as an “integral part of the strategies that [can] underlie and permeate discourses”, utterances not allowed or permitted in other forms of expression, such as traditional academic research based on quantitative surveys or qualitative case studies and focus groups.

A child who creates a drawing is visually depicting their lived experiences as manifest in their ‘unthinking lines’ (Stanley, 2014). To that extent the image becomes the text (van Manen, 1997), a “methodological implement when attempting to grasp people’s experiences concerning different phenomena around the world” (p. 97). Following Alerby and Bergmark’s study, it is significant in the context of this study that the participants were told that it did not matter how skilful they were in making the image, since it was merely a means to elucidate their experiences.

Rather than drawing conceptual distinctions between ethnonationalist and Indigenous groups (and their mainstream counterparts), this study has focussed on the depiction of the self and the other, in particular through drawings of attire and physical appearance, which was considered to be an age-appropriate and a more immediately implementable way of asking children to draw images.

Dress is an important characteristic as an instantly recognisable identity marker. As common in ethnic communities, traditional dresses are a female phenomenon. Wichterich (1998) has shown that in South Asian countries women typically “preserve” traditions expressed by clothing, while men’s clothes often symbolise modernity (p. 198). Kabeer (1991) explains this as a result of the predominantly male occupation of the “public space” as opposed to the primarily female domain of the more “domestic spheres of social life” (p. 129). In the context of gender seclusion, a characteristic of the dominant Muslim Bengali society, ways of dressing can be seen as embodying a symbolic value to demarcate cultural difference as well as a way of registering silent resistance. In the case of the Chakma, dress is a “distinctive mark based on horizontal structures” (Gerharz, 2000, n.p.).

Generally the Chakma are less conservative in their dressing compared to their (Muslim) Bengali counterparts. Among the CHT minorities, some of the women’s dresses are more or less similar – for example the Chakma, the Tripura and the Tanchangya dress alike. The typical Chakma female dress is composed of a homemade hand-woven cotton skirt with stripes (*pinon*), a blouse and a scarf (*khadi*). Colour and design vary, although red and black traditionally dominate. In South Asia for women the interpretation of tradition intrinsic to communal identity has restrictive implementations, especially in the way they dress (Dube 1998, in Gerharz, 2000). This study therefore looked at dress and dressing as one aspect of a very complex system of cultural boundary-marking and indeed a manifestation of the Foucauldian silence explained above.

A total of seven children participated in this study, of whom four were Bengali and three were Chakma. With the exception of one, they were all primary school (grades 5 and 6) students from Rangamati – one of the three districts in the CHT. One participant was in grade 7. All children except one were female.

Participant	Ethnicity	Age	Gender
B1	Bengali	11	M
B2	Bengali	11	F
B3	Bengali	14	F
B4	Bengali	10	F
C1	Chakma	11	F
C2	Chakma	9	F
C3	Chakma	13	F

In collecting data, care was taken so that it did not feel like an intervention or intrusion. Participants were told to participate in a game – a ‘fun activity’ which involved expressing their views through drawings. Children in Bangladesh would often engage in drawing activities which is a common hobby or pastime. In fact three of the seven participants (incidentally, all the Chakma girls) were home-tutored for drawing.

One participant asked if it was about drawing flowers or a “natural scenery”. They were told that they will draw people. They responded saying they were not good at drawing pictures of people; that their drawings “will not be good”. They were assured that this fun activity was not a competition and that their pictures would not be judged by how “artistic” or beautiful they were. Nor was there any right or wrong way of drawing. They were encouraged to draw using their imagination and assured that all images would be equally acceptable.

They were then asked to each draw two images – of a Bengali and a Chakma person. They were asked – do you think they are different? All answered in the positive, upon which they were asked - how can you tell the difference? What makes them different? When you hear ‘Chakma’ or ‘Bengali’ what does that make you think? Can you show that in your drawings?

In a study where the primary source of data is drawing, it is not possible to achieve total “understanding of a phenomenon” from interpreting participants’ lived experiences through visual art alone (Bengtsson, 2001, in Alerby & Bergmark, 2012). Therefore description and interpretation take a supplementary role in conveying as close a “personal and in-depth meaning of a phenomenon” as we can. Participants were therefore asked to take us through the images by describing their drawings, especially in terms of similarities and differences.

While drawing one participant asked if anyone else will view their drawings. They were told that a few other people would see them, but they were all elsewhere and that they will be amused seeing that the images were all drawn differently. This was done to encourage them to be ‘original’ and creative, but at the same time so that their output was natural and spontaneous.

The participants felt hesitant at first however once they started drawing the images, they did so engrossingly and took their time. With two exceptions, all other children drew pictures by themselves without the presence of other participants. Overall it was observed that the Chakma children had fewer questions for clarification than their Bengali counterparts, possibly because all three Chakma participants learnt drawing through private tutors. They were also observed to have greater confidence in handling colours and outlining their images, although critiquing this was certainly not an aim of the current study.

EXPLAINING THE BENGALI AND CHAKMA IMAGES

According to Barth (1969), rather than being a *result* of stratification, ethnic groups can also be seen as a form of social organisation. Such organisation can be most visibly manifested through the unique traditional dresses that the various ethnic groups living in the CHT wear.

Alerby and Bergmark (2012) stress that in analysing data from drawings, it is important to maintain “openness, humility, and wonder” toward the studied phenomenon and the participants. A critical interpretation can yield narratives which help us understand phenomenon and elucidate the meaning of the experiences the participants communicated through their drawings. In other words, to capture their *reflections* of their experiences can be as important as what they physically depicted.

Alerby and Bergmark suggest four steps in the analysis of such data, all of which were used in the interpretation of the images: a qualitative comparison of

both similarities and differences of meaning conveyed through the images and explanations; the exploration of patterns across the images; the creation of a ‘mind-map’ to document the findings; and generating themes emerging from these findings. In doing so the analysis passed through these phases of “reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience” (p. 100–101) of the Chakma and the Bengali children.



Figure 1. Bengali child's (B1) drawing of Bengali and Chakma.

This participant, an 11 year old Bengali boy, draws a Bengali man as one wearing the most recognisable clothes: he says – ‘Bengali means *lungi* and *genji*’ – the quintessential and most common attire for Bengali males. He is seen with ware on head, taken to market for selling, a common vocation of subsistence farmers in small communities in the CHT. The *lungi*, a local variant of the *sarong*, is common across South East and South Asian countries – a loose garment worn around the waist, appropriate in high humidity countries where trousers or ‘pants’ offer a less practical and less comfortable experience. While Bengalis often wear trousers, it is far less common for Chakma males to wear the lungi, who would rather wear the *dhoti* – a Hindu variant of the *lungi*.

The Chakma man on the other hand is wearing pants and shirt – common attire of men who normally reserve traditional clothes for special occasions only. Curiously his face is rounder and perhaps representative of facial features more characteristic of the Chakma. The lighter complexion is another marker to distinguish the two people, although it is not clear if the distinction in colour was intended or not.



Figure 2. Bengali child's (B2) drawing of Bengali and Chakma.

The second participant was another 11 year old Bengali, but female. She draws a Chakma woman wearing traditional Chakma skirt with a top and her eyes are smaller and narrower. The handwoven cotton skirt is the *pinon*, which is often colourful and made of thick and coarse fabric. The Bengali girl wears a frock and has larger eyes. It can be noted that the Chakma girl has longer hair, another feature that often characterises them - Bengali women often prefer shorter hair, although by no means this is a distinguishing feature.

Such 'less common' and incidental differentiating features provide interesting insights into how children have internalised what is normal and 'acceptable' in a society where conformity in dressing can be an expectation imposed upon by the family and centuries-old traditions. Like the previous images, the Chakma girl here seems to have a rounder face.



Figure 3. Bengali child's (B3) drawing of Bengali and Chakma.

R. CHOWDHURY

Oldest among the participants, this 14 year old Bengali girl puts a lot of visual detail into her drawings – her Bengali girl is wearing a multi-coloured traditional *saree*, with an *achol* and a colour blouse. Like her Chakma counterpart she is wearing earrings and a necklace, although it is not certain if she sees these as differently worn by the two girls in the images. While drawing she described the Chakma girl as wearing a “traditional” dress and having smaller eyes. The variety of colours in the Bengali girl’s dress is interesting and might suggest the relative simplicity of design in Chakma attire.



Figure 4. Bengali child’s (B4) drawing of Bengali and Chakma.

Our fourth participant, a 10 year old Bengali girl draws the Bengali girl wearing a long skirt and says she has a “longer nose” and “bigger eyes”. The Chakma girl on the other hand is wearing a floral top with a frock, shoes and has a purse in her hand. She mentions, and as can be seen, that the Chakma girl’s hair is longer (also seen in Figure 2), and has smaller eyes and her “nose is flat”.

It is significant that the Bengali girl’s skirt is longer than the Chakma girl’s – this denotes the relatively conservative way in which Bengali girls dress as explained earlier. Like Figures 1 and 2, the Chakma girl’s face appears to be ‘rounder’ too, unlike the Bengali girl’s more pronounced chin, although she does not mention this in her verbal description of the drawings. It is certainly possible that some of these physical characteristics are subconscious or based on incidental observations (“unthinking lines”, after Stanley, this volume) where “intrinsic facts” blend in with “observer-relative facts”. It is also to be noted that among the images of the Chakma, this is the only one that had no traditional dress, which might be indicative of what Gerharz calls “a sign for Bengalisation or foreign influence” (2010, n.p.) which is increasingly seen among the minorities in Bangladesh.



Figure 5. Chakma child's (C1) drawing of Chakma and Bengali.

The first of the Chakma participants, this 11 year old girl draws a Chakma girl walking with a *hallong* (a bamboo container) attached with a *labak* to her head. She is wearing a red and black *pinon*, and a red blouse. As noted earlier, these two are the most common colours of the Chakma *pinon* and *khadi*. Her hair is done in a *sul sudo* or bun, typical of Chakma girls, and she has bare feet. Curiously this image is drawn from the side, possibly to highlight the *hallong*.

The Bengali girl is drawn wearing a skirt and top and has a garland around her neck. Her hair is open and she is wearing shoes. Although the Chakma girl's eyes and nose have not been drawn (possibly because this is the rear view), it appears that the Bengali girl's eyes are large, proportionate to her face, possibly representing an emphasis on a differentiating feature. Her clothes are relatively 'plain' – block-coloured – as opposed to the multi-coloured *pinon* of her Chakma counterpart.



Figure 6. Chakma child's (C2) drawing of Chakma and Bengali.

R. CHOWDHURY

The youngest among the participants was a nine year old Chakma girl. Her drawing shows a Chakma girl wearing *pinon-khadi* and the Bengali girl wearing a colourful frock. While she did not say much about her drawings, it appears as though the nose and the eyes of the Bengali girl are larger than her counterpart's and she is dressed perhaps less conservatively. She has bare feet too, unlike the Bengali girl, another feature common among the Chakma, especially those living in villages and small towns.



Figure 7. Chakma child's (C3) drawing of Chakma and Bengali.

The last participant, a 13 year old Chakma girl, describes the Chakma girl in her drawing as one from a village wearing Chakma attire “in a very traditional way” – including a silver necklace and bangles around her wrist. She is on her way to the market and like the Chakma girl in [Figure 5](#), she has a bamboo *hallong* attached to her back. This participant is quite keen to point out that her nose is flat. She is also seen in *theng-haru*, or feet bangles, a traditional Chakma ornamentation common among the Chakma especially in villages, and almost never seen among Bengali girls.

The Bengali girl she describes as also being from a village. She is also barefoot but her head is covered in a *ghomta* – the end of the *saree* – again signifying the

conservative way in which Bengali girls often go out in Bangladesh. Her eyes and nose are described as ‘big’ and ‘long’ respectively.

DISCUSSION

Barth (1969) explained that among ethnic groups, the cultural features that are highlighted do not necessarily represent the sum of objective differences, rather they are ones that the actors *choose* to consider as significant in marking distinction - the “signals and emblems of differences” (p. 14). As well as being the result of a process of ascription and self-ascription (Gerharz, 2000), these cultural manifestations can be seen as an historical evolution which happens due to their occupation in a range of spaces. Given this, we can say that in the continuum of discourses constructing identities, through the act of drawing, these Bengali and Chakma children have presented what they consider to mark difference and how they relate to these differences at this point in time.

Aside from the descriptions that the participants have provided on their drawings, these also tell stories in themselves. These stories are often markers of traditional ways of life rather than anecdotal and incidental details captured physically. For example the two Chakma girls on their way to the market carrying the bamboo basket, the skipping Bengali girl and the made-up Bengali girl wearing a traditional *saree* tell us more about lifestyles than clothes and dressing. Also the tendency of Chakma girls wearing more ‘colourful’ clothes compared to Bengali people and the variety of clothing options might represent the diversity that this group is more comfortable with.

In addition to the more ‘obvious’ features of clothing, a lot of emphasis is seen to have been placed on physical features. For example, most drawings have marked difference through the relative size of eyes, nose, length of hair and the shape of the face. The words described to note these differences have been based on simple binaries such as short/long, flat/pointed, narrow/wide, small/large and round/less round. Interestingly the difference in the length has also been marked in dresses, showing that the Chakma dress less conservatively. In addition, differences have also been marked through ornamentation and make up, and through the presence or absence of footwear. Such spontaneous allocation of cultural categories and the ascription of what is perceived as ‘typical’ features are observer-relative constructions rather than deterministic, natural ‘facts’ (Stanley, this volume, p. 6).

As systems for ascription and self-ascription (Rahman, 2010), identities are perceptions in constant transition involving multiple configurations (p. 149). Social identity theory defines an individual in terms of group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, in Rahman, p. 101) and may be understood with reference to self, in-group and out-group categorisations (Rahman, 2010). While demonstrating physical markers such as clothing as a means to inclusiveness and belonging to a group through affiliation, dress is also one that excludes one from ‘others’. Such dual mechanisms of identification and differentiation is a classification system of

R. CHOWDHURY

its own, with “horizontal demarcation lines” (Gerharz, 2000, n.p.) which are quite clear in the drawings. In their explanations, the children have often used ‘us’ or ‘we’ to talk about a certain way of life, or a practice that is common to their own group.

CONCLUSION

Despite the narrow and often divisive language of nationalism and nation-state building that has characterised the discourses on the Chakma and other ethnic minorities in Bangladesh and is discussed in academic scholarship, empirical research, national and international forums or indeed among Indigenous groups themselves, the children’s images have often bypassed these and have provided alternative ways of looking into similarities and differences.

It can be seen that these children’s images are often built around readily available binaries, representations which connote self/other, familiarity/exoticness, feelings of inclusion and exclusion and perhaps, to an extent conservative and liberal lifestyles. Also has been seen is the tendency of children to explain difference through narratives, some of which have highlighted cultural nuances of lifestyles and lived experiences.

Ascribed or indeed appropriated binaries and identity labels are not deterministic of who we are and what we are like; they are indeed “intersectional” and “narrative” (Stanley, this volume, p. 15), all coloured by the “social imaginaries” available at our disposal. Stanley’s argument that we are “paradigm-bound in space, culture and time” and cannot “depict cultural Otherness except through [our] *own* ontological, epistemological and normative paradigms” (p. 8), means that these images tell us as much about the children’s view of others as they do of themselves.

However, Alerby and Bergmark (2012) warn that while spoken or written language may not be enough to fully represent knowledge and experience, there are also limits when a study exclusively depends on visual art as the sole source of empirical data. They recommend that such data are supplemented with descriptive accounts, which this study has done. Rather than drawing on generalisations, this study’s aim indeed was to break generalisations and reifications by presenting the participants’ images as openly as possible and to present the complexities and discontinuities in their representations.

Identities can never be stable systems for ascription and self-ascription as Schlee et al. (1996, in Gerharz, 2000) explains; and as Cornassel (2003) laments, ascribing identity markers to Indigenous peoples will continue to be problematic. This study therefore emphasises on these complexities and discontinuities manifest in the drawings and stresses that the most interesting representations of Selfing and Othering may be housed in the most banal of findings in this study. Together with their verbal accounts, these images provide fleeting but important insights into Foucault’s (1990, p. 27) many silences that “underlie and permeate discourses”.

The author acknowledges the contribution of Ms Sinora Chakma in the collection of data for this study.

REFERENCES

- Adnan, S. (2008). Contestations regarding identity, nationalism and citizenship during the struggles of the Indigenous peoples of the Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh. *International Review of Modern Sociology*, 34(1), 27–45.
- Ahsan, S. A.-A., & Chakma, B. (1989). Problems of national integration in Bangladesh: The Chittagong hill tracts. *Asian Survey*, 29(10), 959–970.
- Alerby, E. (2008). In school you learn to get in life: Sami children in Sweden. In E. Alerby & J. Brown (Eds.), *Voices from the margins: School experiences of refugee, migrant and indigenous children* (pp. 31–41). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Alerby, E., & Bergmark, U. (2012). What can an image tell? Challenges and benefits of using visual art as a research method to voice lived experiences of students and teachers. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 1(1), 95–103.
- Bach, H. (2008). Visual narrative inquiry. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. (pp. 939–941). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n490>
- Barth, F. (1969). *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference*. Illinois, IL: Waveland Press Inc.
- Barua, B. (2007). Colonialism, education, and rural Buddhist Communities in Bangladesh. *International Education*, 37(1), 60–76.
- Bhaumik, S. (1997). Strategic pawn: Indian policy in the Chittagong hill tracts. In S. Bhaumik, M. Guhathakurtha, & S. B. R. Chaudhury (Eds.), *Living on the Edge: Essays on the Chittagong Hill Tracts* (pp. 127–139). Kolkata, IN: Calcutta Research Group.
- Chakma, B. (2008). Assessing the 1997 Chittagong hill tracts peace accord. *Asian Profile*, 36(1), 93–106.
- Chakma, B. (2010). The post-colonial state and minorities: Ethnocide in the Chittagong hill tracts, Bangladesh. *Commonwealth & Comparative Study*, 48(3), 281–300. doi: 10.1080/14662043.2010.489746
- Chakma, B., Neale, M., Stiedl, H., Crawley, W., Gillett, S., Crawley, W., Prance, G. (2010). South Asia. *Asian Affairs*, 41(3), 482–497. doi: 10.1080/03069374.2010.510707
- Chakma, S. S. (2000). Can Chittagong hill tracts accommodate more people? In C. R. Abrar (Ed.) *On the margin: Refugees, migrants and minorities* (pp. 185–189). Dhaka, Bangladesh: Refugees and Migratory Movements Research Unit.
- Chowdhury, K. (2008). Politics of identities and resources in Chittagong hill tracts, Bangladesh: ethnonationalism and/or Indigenous identity. *Asia Journal of Social Science*, 36, 57–78. doi: 10.1163/15853108X267567
- Corntassel, J. (2003). Who is indigenous? ‘Peoplehood’ and ethnonationalist approaches to rearticulating indigenous identity. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 9(1), 75–100. doi: 10.1080/13537110412331301365
- Damodaran, V. (2006). The politics of marginality and the construction of indigeneity in Chotanagpur. *Postcolonial Studies*, 9(2), 179–196. doi: 10.1080/13688790600657843
- Datta, S. (2003). Bangladesh's political evolution: Growing uncertainties. *Strategic Analysis*, 27(2), 233–249. doi: 10.1080/09700160308450085
- Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality, Volume 1: An introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage.
- Gerharz, E. (2000). The construction of identities: *The case of the Chittagong hill tracts in Bangladesh*. Bielefeld: Transnationalisation and Development Research Centre (TDRC). Germany: Bielefeld University. Retrieved April 27, 2014 from http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/tdrc/downloads/lefo_gerharz.pdf
- Guhathakurta, M. (1997). Overcoming otherness and building trust: The Kalpana Chakma case. In S. Bhaumik, M. Guhathakurtha, & S. B. R. Chaudhury (Eds.), *Living on the edge: Essays on the Chittagong hill tracts* (pp. 109–126). Kolkata, India: Calcutta Research Group.
- Guhathakurta, M. (2012). Amidst the winds of change: The Hindu minority in Bangladesh. *South Asian History and Culture*, 3(2), 288–301.
- Gurr, T. R. (1998, December) State, nation and ethnicity in contemporary South Asia: American political science review. *The American Political Science Review*, 92(4), 951–952.

R. CHOWDHURY

- Haig-Brown, C. (2008). Working a third space: Indigenous knowledge in the post/colonial university. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 31(1), 253–320.
- Huda, M. N. (2013). Understanding indigenous people's perception on climate change and climate hazards: A case study of Chakma indigenous communities in Rangamati Sadar Upazila of Rangamati district, Bangladesh. *Nat Hazards*, 65, 2147–2159.
- Jhala, A. D. (2013). Daughters of the hills: Legacies of colonialism, nationalism and religious communalism in the Chakma Raj family, Chittagong hill tracts, Bengal c. 1990-1972. *South Asian History and Culture*, 4(1), 107–125.
- Kabeer, N. (1991). The quest for national identity: Women, Islam and the State of Bangladesh. In D. Kandiyoti (Ed.), *Women, Islam and the State* (pp. 115–143). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Karim, L. (1998). Pushed to the margins: Adivasi peoples in Bangladesh and the case of Kalpana Chakma. *Contemporary South Asia*, 7(3), 301–316.
- Khan, Z. R. (1994). Bangladesh in 1993: Values, identity, and development. *Asian Survey*, 34(2), 160–167.
- Mohaiemen, N. (Ed.). (2010). *Between ashes and hope: Chittagong hill tracts in the blind spot of Bangladesh nationalism*. Bangladesh: Dristipat Writers' Collective.
- Mohsin, A. (1997a). *The politics of nationalism: The case of the Chittagong hill tracts*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: The University Press Limited.
- Mohsin, A. (1997b, February 23–26). Militarisation and human rights violations in the Chittagong hill tracts. Paper presented at an International Peace Conference on Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangkok.
- Mohsin, A. (2000). Identity, politics and hegemony: The Chittagong hill tracts, Bangladesh. *Identity, Culture and Politics*, 1(1), 78–88.
- Mohsin, A. (2001a, March). Slash and burn. *New Internationalist*, 332, p. 27. Retrieved from <http://newint.org/features/2001/03/05/slash/>
- Mohsin, A. (2001b). *The State of 'Minority' Rights in Bangladesh*. Colombo, Srilanka: International Centre for Ethnic Studies.
- Mohsin, A. (2003). *The Chittagong hill tracts, Bangladesh: On the difficult road to peace* (p. 45). London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Rahman, A. K. M. R. (2010). Effects of gender and education on social identity in Chakma tribal population in Bangladesh. *Journal of Life Earth Sciences*, 5, 101–103.
- Stanley, P. (this volume). Theorizing the cultural borderlands: Imag(in)ing “them” and “us”. In J. Brown & N. F. Johnson (Eds.), *Children's images of identity*, (pp. 1–13). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Stollznow, K. (2006). The writing's on the wall for endangered writing systems. *Australian Science*, 27(7), 46.
- Uddin, N. (2010). Politics of cultural difference: Identity and marginality in the Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh. *South Asian Survey*, 17(2), 283–294. doi: 10.1177/097152311201700206
- van Schendel, W. (1992). The invention of the 'Jummas': State formation and ethnicity in Southeastern Bangladesh. *Modern Asian Studies*, 26(1), 95–128.