ABSTRACT

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Indigenous peasants and other subordinate groups use different strategies to undermine domination, subjugation and marginalization. Such strategies of resistance may range from ‘everyday forms of resistance’, which are often backstage, silent and covert in nature, to open confrontations against power holders in the forms such as rebellion. The existing body of literature has documented and analysed the ideas, actions and triumphs of open forms of resistance of indigenous peoples with a tendency to highlight the political actors, events or ideas within indigenous movements that dominate and shape the socio-political-cultural spaces of indigenous peoples. At the same time, there remains an apparent negligence on participation, resistance and contributions of the ordinary, non-dominant members of indigenous peoples, such as peasants. This ethnographic work aims at re-imagining marginalization and social movement in the context of indigenous peasantry in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh, and intends to survey to what extent they have the potential in contributing in the social movements and understandings of social change. The case of the CHT has been carefully chosen because indigenous resistance movement in the CHT, began in the second half of the last century, has been labelled as a movement of educated middle class indigenous peoples for autonomy, while ignoring the overarching role of the peasants and other subordinate classes in the movement, whose aspirations to join the movement was not necessarily for autonomy. Taking the case of the CHT, this PhD project intends to explore following questions. What are the forms of everyday resistance that indigenous peasants use for their survival as well as to undermine power and domination? In what circumstances they depart from everyday forms of resistance and get involved with open forms of resistance? What are the aspirations and social visions of indigenous peasantry and to what extent their aspirations are reflected in the popular movements led by the elites? What role do class, gender and ethnicity play in this regard?