

## **Museum and the Cultural Representation of Ethnic Communities: A Study of the Khudra-Nrigoshthi Museum in Rangamati**

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**Abstract:** The "Khudra-Nrigosthi Museum" is situated in Rangamati, one of Bangladesh's hill districts. There are numerous collections of cultural material from different ethnic communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). A significant ethnic group center is the Rangamati district, particularly for the mountainous tribes known as the "Pahari" people some of them would like to address them as "*Adibasi*" which is not recognized by the government. The study aimed at studying the collections and the display in the museum to portray cultures and ways of life the ethnic people. It was explored whether there is any consultation with the source communities at any stage of preparing and producing exhibition at this museum. At the Khudra-Nrigosthi Museum, fieldwork was done to conduct interviews and undertake questionnaires survey to the local ethnic communities and museum staff to understand the collections, display and their meanings. This field investigation opened a new door for the cultural representation of various ethnic communities. This will undoubtedly aid in the curatorial work and the development of the museum. To understand the collections and their meaning, we have documented all the collections on the display and interacted with the museum staff, visitors, and community members. This provided us with a fresh perspective on the traditions and lifestyles of individuals from many ethnic communities living in Bangladesh's mountainous regions. It made it easier to comprehend how adaptable our beloved nation is. Most Bengalis have preconceived notions about the ethnic groups that inhabit the mountainous region because they do not know about the culture, norms, and practices of the ethnic people. In addition to academic research, it is important to break down these barriers by introducing visitors to the different cultures that have been entombed in Bangladesh's hills. This will encourage diversity and social inclusion through museum activities.

**Keyword:** Museum Collections. Ethnic Culture, Ethnology, Representation.

### **1. Historical Background:**

Khudra-Nrigosthir Museum is a branch of Rangamati's Khudra-Nrigosthir Cultural Institute, which was founded in 1978. It is a self-governing institution. On May 1st, 1993, it was turned over to the district council of Rangamati. The Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum is located at Rangamati Town is one of the main tourist destinations of the hill tracks of Bangladesh. This museum depicts the art, crafts and socioeconomic conditions of the ethnic communities of the Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh, as well as their history, culture, legacy, and traditions. The museum's exhibits include life-size models of

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individuals from various ethnic groups wearing their traditional attire, textiles, jewelry, traditional musical instruments, coins, sculptures made of wood and metal, utensils, art and crafts, and paintings that are inspired by their respective cultures and ways of life.

A field investigation was undertaken at the Khudra-Nrigosthir Museum, and then a questionnaire survey was commenced among the local ethnic populations. Museum personnel were interviewed and scrutinized the museum's documentation system during a field visit to the Khudra-Nrigosthir Museum. Based on the museum's collections, we also commenced the ethnological study of the ethnic communities in the area of Rangamati. While interviewing museum staff and individuals of various ethnic communities, we also looked at the problem and prospect of representation at the museum.

Bangladesh has had evidence of human settlements for a very long time, as shown by the numerous significant archeological sites of various eras spread throughout the country. A significant ethnic group center is the Rangamati district, particularly for the mountainous tribes, they are successors to this nation's unique cultural legacy. Three hilly districts of Bangladesh comprise three museums and ethnic cultural institutions. The most notable one is located at the district office for Rangamati to symbolize and preserve the historical evidence of the region, its residents, and their culture and traditions. As widely recognized, the basis of archaeology as a discipline of study approaches the study of the history of mankind through studying of material remains of the past. On the other hand, a museum is a permanent institution that preserves, conserves, researches, and exhibits the material remains of the people for enjoyment and education (Ambrose and Paine 2006:8). Surveying is the first step in the study to fully understand the purpose and role of a museum. For an understanding of material evidence displayed at the museum, surveys, ethnoarchaeology, and ethnographic research can be used. Ethno-archaeology provides a fresh perspective on the physical remains of earlier populations. Furthermore, it opens up the possibility of communicating with new people from different societies.

A vital part of visual studies is museum study. We must develop the skills required to run museums, curate collections associated with human achievement for education and enjoyment, and organize how they are exhibited. Recognizing the place and purpose of museums in society is crucial. It becomes your responsibility to check that the museums are properly conveying historical information and artifacts from the relevant groups and cultures.

The investigation was conducted to examine the records and the collections that were on show and evaluate the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. We were able to do this extensive research by visiting the Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum in the Rangamati Hill neighborhood. Interviewing visitors, members of the community, and museum employees allowed researchers to gain insight into the goals, representations, and shortcomings of the museum.

The contribution of ethnoarchaeology to the study of intangible heritage has not received much attention up to this point. Surprisingly, there aren't many ethnoarchaeological studies that focus on the less evident remnants of past and present society. In archaeological theories and approaches for examining the significance and significance of artifacts, resources, and settlement patterns, non-material evidence is becoming more and more significant. Because of its unique characteristics, ethnoarchaeology may successfully enhance research into the intangible cultural heritage of existing civilizations and emphasize the importance of that research for the study of ancient civilizations

(Biagetti et al.2016). Therefore, such fieldwork requires a great deal of care. By connecting the Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum, which is located in Rangamati Upazila, with various ethnic communities dwelling in Rangamati, this field investigation attempted to open a new avenue for the cultural representation of communities.

### **1.1 Goals and Objectives**

The goal of this study is to investigate how the culture of different ethnic communities is represented at the Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum. The objectives are:

To document the collections of various cultural objects at the museum.

To identify and assess how effectively various ethnic groups have been portrayed in the Khudro Nri-Goshthir museum's display.

To find out how much the local communities know about the museum, its history, and how they are portrayed there.

### **1.2 Methodology**

The right methodology is essential to any research. Any study survey or investigation's methodologies are significantly affected by the goals it was intended to pursue. Through field-level surveys or investigations, it is feasible to combine both the theoretical and practical information utilized in any research. It has been recognized that the application of theoretical understanding in real-life circumstances is a crucial issue. Therefore, before accomplishing field-level investigation, we need to determine the objectives of our study by synthesizing and analyzing various types of pre-data. It is unrealistic to expect a survey to be entirely accurate on the first try or for a researcher to produce the results quickly. All they can do is gather the most accurate information that precisely matches their objectives.

For this reason, the methods used to conduct a survey must be consistent with its goals or intended purpose. Before beginning the research, it is essential to design the entire strategy and procedures based on the goals and objectives of the study. In light of this, we came up with a goal and objectives for this field investigation that had one core goal and four supporting objectives.

The Khudro Nri-goshthir Museum in Rangamati is primarily being documented through this fieldwork. Observation, recording, the gathering of relevant literature, photography, videography, and visitor interviews are all parts of the documentation.

Data mining was undertaken. The collection of data consists of demographic, geographic, and ethnographic research, as well as interviews with the local communities.

To determine whether the museum adequately represents each ethnic group and whether any of them are being overrepresented or underrepresented the evaluation of the representation was undertaken. Identifying the opportunities and challenges if there are any issues, it can be helpful to conduct interviews with staff members and tourists to learn about the difficulties they have while working in the museum. figuring out what chances the museum can provide for the community by involving them in a SWOT analysis was performed.

The methodology used in this particular study project is based on the fundamental concepts of ethnology and ethnoarchaeology. The methodology includes a variety of tasks, such as interviewing, observing, and interviewing, as well as documentation. It deals with communication in ethnoarchaeology. As a result, chats and discussions

dominated the whole fieldwork. In addition, literature was examined to learn fundamental information. The final step was properly preserving the collected data and making it legible so that it might be used for future research. To make conducting research easier, the entire project was split into three sections. Pre-survey work, Fieldwork, and Post-survey work.

The creation of a questionnaire with three different types was part of the pre-survey activity. The questionnaire was also created for the museum's regular visitors and, subsequently, for the staff members. Studying the material that was accessible was another aspect of the pre-survey preparation. Research that is conducted on the ground to collect the initial data for the study is known as fieldwork. At the time of fieldwork at the museum, the primary goals are to take pictures, locate important internal documents, gather published materials from the library, and conduct interviews with visitors and museum staff. While exploring the museum, we also paid attention to what was missing and whether any particular communities were over or underrepresented. Furthermore, we visited various villages to meet and speak with the people who lived there. We attempted to create in-depth, interactive discussions to learn about their involvement and representation in the museum. We also gained an in-depth awareness of the customs and ways of life of numerous ethnic groups. Fieldwork is quite difficult. A dilemma could cause the researcher to lose any connection to the data. As a result, we had to move quickly while obtaining data on the ground. This dispersed information must be appropriately organized by the researcher before being brought together in one paper. The study would be worthless otherwise. We have looked around the neighborhoods in and around the Khudro-Nrigosthir Museum at Rangamati, The Khangboy Wood Curving Workshop, and several ethnic groups in the Tabolchori area were the principal subjects of attention.

## **2. Theoretical Background:**

Before beginning a field inquiry, a thorough literature review was carried out to gain as much information as possible on the area and its inhabitants. After deciding on the field aim and objectives, the researcher must gather as much data as possible to enhance not just their piece of writing but also their approach and framework. Archives, online blogs, web resource pdfs, various research papers (both published and unpublished), published papers, essays, and—most importantly—maps of various sorts were all included in the library work for this study investigation. During the process of obtaining information, a few crucial issues have emerged. Along with information about the history of Rangamati, all data about ethnic communities, their customs, and cultures, viewpoints of various writers on the communities, cultural representation, the Khudro Nri-Goshthir museum, ethnoarchaeological research, methods used by earlier researchers, etc., were gathered.

The authors David and Kramer take the reader through a variety of ethnoarchaeological studies in their book *Ethnoarchaeology in Action*. The first comprehensive ethnoarchaeology study that is not an edited volume is this one (Hudson, 1993; Gould, 1978; Kent, 1987; Kramer, 1979; Longacre, 1991; Longacre & Skibo, 1994), (Arthur, 2003). John W. Arthur has introduced us to bridging ethnoarchaeology, pottery & technology. Anna Bottesi (2021) has focused her research work on "Are Museums Allowed to Keep a Secret" on demonstrating how ethnographic museums are fighting the power hierarchies implicit in the process of reflecting other people's cultures. The curator

of the South American section of the Welt Museum Wien decided how to display sacred and secret objects, or items that only certain groups of people are permitted to view. In circumstances where that storage is not an option, this article evaluates that choice and describes how artifacts should be handled. Additionally, she expressed worries about how to satisfy the needs of a population lured to the concept of the exotic and perhaps unlawful. How can we use this challenge as a chance to reflect on the privileges we do or do not have? (Bottesi, 2021).

How ancient artifacts are understood by archaeologists is the main focus of ethnoarchaeology. Its practitioners look to the physical remnants of current cultures to infer the human behaviors that generated analogous patterns in the archaeological record. In contrast to ethnography, which typically avoids topics like home waste disposal, ethnoarchaeology, also referred to as action or living archaeology, concentrates on these topics. It also asks explicitly archaeological questions regarding material culture (Sapirstein, 2022). Studies of material culture fall under the wide definition of ethnoarchaeology. There is no one way to do ethnoarchaeology on a certain object or problem; every study has its own special techniques.

Numerous studies on ethnoarchaeology have been done in the last 50 years. Researchers first attempted to build a list of every substance and each associated activity from a single civilization. (Kleindienst and Watson 1956). Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, a large number of ethnoarchaeological studies examined how ethnic communities interacted with their environment and their connections to previous foragers.

Examples include studies conducted on the Western Desert Aborigines by Gould, the Alaskan Nunamiut by Binford, the Upper Amazon Basin by DeBoer and Lathrap, and the Kung San in the Kalahari Desert by Yellen. Binford's 1978 work is the greatest example of the New Archaeology's general-comparative technique. In order to correct his unreliable statistical study of Middle Paleolithic (180,000–40,000 years ago) artifacts from sites in France, Binford accompanied the Nunamiut between 1969 and 1973. Even while the present Nunamiut are substantially different from their prehistoric predecessors, including the use of modern weaponry, several behavioral "functions" are probably shared by the majority of nomadic hunters and gatherers. Binford also offered in-depth descriptions of the slaughtering process, tool-making, camping, and seasonal journeys in addition to tables of measures and maps showing the locations and waste patterns. The "middle-range theory" is supported by these data, which also offer a far more substantial theoretical underpinning for the analysis of archaeological assemblages.

The "Middle Range Theory" is a good way to start when trying to understand ethnoarchaeology. Due to time constraints and a lack of expertise in ethnoarchaeology, our inquiry cannot follow in Binford's footsteps, although his studies might undoubtedly serve as a backdrop to ours. Perhaps in the future, Binford's and other ethnoarchaeologists' work will be utilized to undertake a larger-scale inquiry into the investigation we have done, allowing us to reach better conclusions and make better suggestions.

### **3. The Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum:**

The study being conducted in the Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum is entirely field-based. Rangamati, a region known for its natural beauty, is located between latitudes of 22.028° and 23.044° north and longitudes of 91.056° and 92.033° east. The

Indian states of Mizoram and Chinpradesh border the 6116.13 sq km Rangamati District to the north, Bandarban to the south, Chittagong to the west, and Khagrachhari to the east. The Rangamati Subdivision was designated to a district in 1983. It is split into ten upazilas, with Baghaichhari having the biggest upazila (1931.28 sq km) and Rajasthali having the smallest upazila (145.04 sq km). The sole municipality in the entire country without rickshaws is an attraction for tourists with lakes surrounding it.

The Rangamati Cultural Institute or now known as The Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Institute was established in 1978 in order to conserve, spread, exhibit, and research traditional cultures, arts, customs, beliefs, traditions, and folk-literatures of the different ethnic communities. Out of the four wings of the institute's the two most important wings are the Museum and Library. The Khudro Nri-Goshthir museum is being operated under this significant wing since the beginning of the institute. In addition to being the first ethnic museum in Bangladesh, it is also the first ethnic museum in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). On March 13, 2003, Begum Selina Rahman the then-state minister for cultural affairs officially inaugurated the current two-story museum building. Every year, the museum receives visitors, especially from different ministers, diplomats, high commissioners, and foreigners. The museum was at first known as the Rangamati Tribal Museum but due to the inaction of the *Khudro Nri-Goshthir Sangskritik Protisthan Ain 2010* made for the institutions, no cultural institutes will longer be known as Tribal Museums, under Section 4 of the aforementioned statute, but rather as "*Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museums*".



Fig-1: The Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum Building

The museum had been established with a view to collect, preserve, and exhibit historically valuable different things which are found in the areas inhabited by the ethnic minorities. These materials are worthy to be claimed as symbols of social, economic,

cultural and historical aspect of life of them in CHT. Among the different collected things preserved in the museum clothes, customs, ornaments, handicrafts, ivory crafts, documents, paintings etc. have been depicted according to their mode of life and their cultural traditions. All of them were depended on cultivation mainly known as Jum and so the influence of Jum in their life can be observed in all spheres of their tradition and culture. In CHT a number of coins and statues of Tripura and Arakan were found long ago. Now, we have in our collection, three silver coins of the king of Tripura and one coin of a King of Arakan. In one of the aforesaid coins of kings of Tripura it is written “Shree Devamanikya 1450 Sak- the conqueror of Subarnagram.” This coin is important and essential even for the national history.

Dance and music are a part of their life. Playing different types of musical instruments like flute, drum, violin etc. are common which are used in social ceremonies of the communities. Besides they have their own instruments such as Boong, Peh, Neh, Kheng-Grong, Dhuduk, Tutu-ma, Phoong, Mong or Gong etc. Many books and manuscripts written on palm leaves are found among the Chakmas and the Marmas of this region. The Marma scripts have similarity with the Myanmar scripts. On the other hand, the Chakma scripts have close similarity with the scripts of Ahom, Shan, Khamti and Myanmar scripts.



Fig-2: The Statues at the front gate of Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum

The Khudro Nri-Goshthi museum mainly shows and preserves the cultural and traditional things followed or used by the ethnic communities residing at Rangamati. There are notable twelve ethnic communities and they are the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya, Mro, Bohm, Chak, Pankhoya, Khumi, Khyang, Uchoi and Lushai.





Fig-3: The Statues beside museum gate of Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum

The Chakma people make up Bangladesh's largest ethnic group. The overall number of Chakma people living in the CHT was 239,417, according to the Census of 1991. Also in India, the states of Tripura, Mizoram, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh are home to an estimated 150,000 Chakma. The Cox's Bazar neighborhood and Myanmar (Burma) both have a tiny Chakma population. (Museum Wing, 2010). Dr. G. A. Grierson claims that the cursive form of the Chakma language's alphabets is almost identical to the Khmer characters that were once used in Cambodia, Laos, Annam, Siam, and at least the southern sections of Burma. Similarly, to the southern Indian alphabet that was in use in the sixth and seventh centuries, this Khmer script was also in use at the time. It is the source of the Burmese character, which is much more debased than the Chakma (Grierson, G. A, 1927). The Indo-European language family includes the Chakma, which is closely related to Bengali, Assamese, and Pali. The ancient religious texts written in palm leaves and maintained by the Chakma have their unique script. The writing style is akin to Mon Khmer and Burmese. The Chakma Chief, a descendant of the general who commanded the resistance, is in charge of Chakma society. The Chakma have been followers of Gautama Buddha for generations, although there are also those who practice Hinduism. They participated in a struggle against the British East India Company's armies in the 1770s.



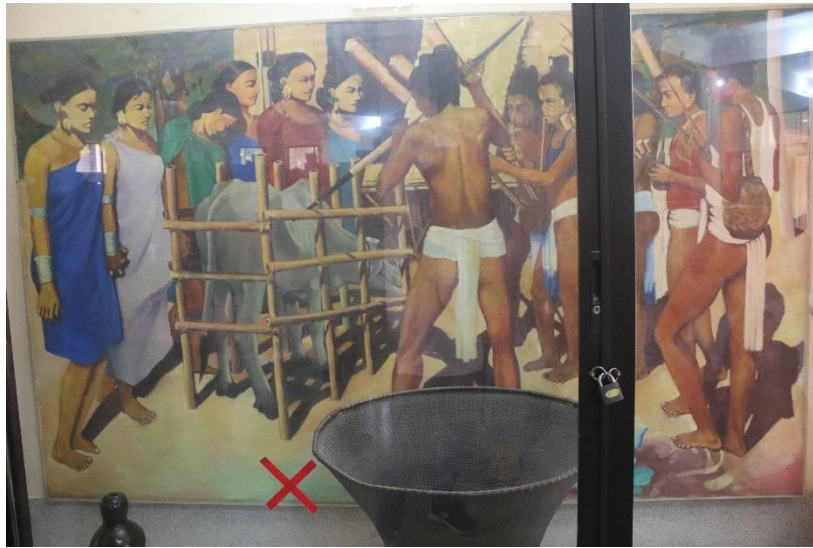


Fig- 4: "Kumlang" ceremony, The Cow killing ceremony of the Mro Community

The second-largest ethnic group in Bangladesh is the Marma community. According to the 1991 Census, there were 142,334 Marma people living in CHT. The Bohmong Chief, Bohmongri, who has Burmese generals in his family tree, is traditionally owed devotion by the Marma population in the southern CHT, which includes the entirety of Bandarban. For the Marma to advance in their education, it is thought that primary education must be offered in their native language. (চাকমা. স, ১৯৮৮) They have a beautiful language that deserves official recognition. (Museum Wing, 2010) However, several Marmas reside in Cox's Bazar and Patuakhali's coastal neighborhoods. They go by the name Rakhain. They are viewed by many as an independent ethnic group. The Marmas of this area have a link with the Arakanese people in the field of culture and sculpture. Similarities are observed in different statuses which are, made of bronze and woods and constructing Kyongor Buddhist temples which are constructed based on Myanmar architecture. Near about one hundred years ago an unknown Marma Sculptor wood curved a statue of an Arakanese prince named *Kyajoy Mongsha* (Fig-5). who fought a war against Myanmar along with ten other princes but he was the only survivor. The cannon preserved has been brought by the Marma chief called Bohmong Raja to celebrate his son's birthday by firing. The canon is nearly 100 years old. (Museum Wing, 2010).



Fig-5: Arakanese Prince named *Kyajoy Mongsha*

The entire population of the Tripura community in CHT was 61,129 as of the 1991 Census. (Museum Wing, 2010) where more than 75 percent lived just in the Khagrachari district. In the Indian state of Tripura, there are more than 500,000 Tripura. Chittagong, Comilla, and Noakhali are Bangladeshi districts where a very tiny number of Tripura people also reside. The most well-known Tripura subgroups include the Fatung, Jamatia, Naitong, Noatia, Ryang, and Usui. There are around 36 other Tripura subgroups. The Bodo branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family includes the Tripura language. Although many people in Tripura worship their own deities, they also honor Hindu deities including Lakshmi, Ganga, Saraswati, Kali, and Shiva.

Tanchangya, a tiny Mongoloid-derived ethnic group in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Tanchangya are the fifth most populous tribal group in Chittagong Hill Tracts in terms of population (19,211), according to the census report from 1991. Tanchangya habitats are established in the mountainous forest, similar to those of other hill tribes. Captain T. H. Lewing, "The Toungiynya (Tanchangya) section of the tribe, to the number of 4000 souls, is said to have come into the Chittagong Hills, as late as 1819, in the time of the

Chief Dhurmbux Khan would not recognize him as head of the Toungjynya clan, and consequently the major part of them returned to Arracan." (Lewin, T. H.: 1869). They speak an Indo-Aryan language that evolved from Bangla, Pali, and Prakrit. Aungo-gachha, Rangi-gachha, Wa-gachha, Tashi-gachha, Mo-gachha, Karwa-gachha, Dhanya-gachha, Melong-gachha, Lang-gachha, Lapuisa-gachha, Mulima-gachha, and so on are among the 12 gachha, or clans, into which Tanchangyas are split. There are seven Tanchangya clans in Bangladesh. Tanchangya women who dress traditionally always wear turbans, which Chakma ladies wore until a generation or two ago. Usually, her homespun skirt's border pattern is far more elaborate than the Chakma skirt.

In their Khumi language, where Khu means man and mi means the best race, the Khumi community primarily asserts that man is the best race. The Khumis are now primarily Buddhists, yet Pathian is their principal deity. The water deity "Bogley" and the domestic deity "Nadog" are also honored. The entire estate is given to the eldest son. Their native tongue is a member of the Kukish section's southern branch. In the seventeenth century, the Khumis migrated from the highlands of Arakan and Akyab to the hills of Chittagong. They construct their homes on top of trees and live on the slopes of hills. The walls of bamboo enclose their villages. They were a fierce race that spent most of its time fighting. They have a reputation for being devoted to their chiefs. They owed the Marma Bohmang chief their fealty, and via their village headman, they gave him an annual payment. They swear allegiance by touching the blood of a goat they've just slaughtered with a sharp object; if they betray the pledge, they promise to suffer a similar fate.

Another tribe that belongs to the Kuki-chin group of tribes is the Lushai community. The North Tripura District's Kanchanpur Sub-Division is where they are most concentrated. (চাকমা, স. ১৯৮৮) The Lushai are sometimes referred to as Mizos. They are recognized as

having Mongolian racial origins. Their culture is akin to the Mizos. ("Lushai | Tribal Research and Cultural Institute", 2022) They speak a unique language known as "Lushai" or "Dolne". Latin script may be used to write their language. Missionaries were active among them under British rule, which led to the majority of them accepting Christianity.

The Khiangs were a little population in 1869. Their social structure resembled that of the Mros and Khumis. They owed chiefs in Burma their fealty. "Hyou" is the collective name of the Khiangs. They think that 200 years ago, in the Chittagong Hills, their chief fled the conflict in Burma. The chief was joined by his pregnant younger wife. But he returned to Burma after leaving this wife and a few men behind. The Khiangs consider themselves to be the offspring of the CHT troops who were abandoned. They don't have sects or subcastes. They worship "Nada Ga" (the home deity) and "Bogley" (the water deity), although they are also Buddhists. Their language is a member of the Kuki-Chin family.

The Bom, or Bawm community, have a population of 6978 according to the 1991 census report. One of Bangladesh's smallest ethnic groups is the Bawm. However, the majority of them converted to Christianity as a result of missionary efforts during the British era. Their dialect is quite similar to Lushai. It is a member of the "Kuki-Chin" tribe. The Pankhus and Bawms may be distinguished by their haircuts. The Bawms tie their hair up in the middle of the head for both men and women. (Loncheu et al., 2013).

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Pankho or Pankhoa community is regarded as a sub-branch of the Mongoloid race. They are quite close to the Banajogi tribe in terms of social structure and language. They primarily reside in the Chittagong Hills Tracts'

Bandarban & Rangamati area, however their ancestors were most likely born in Burma (Myanmar). Pankho's have language which does not have any written form.

The Chak are said to be a branch of the Chakma. Loffler, however, asserts that the Chaks in CHT and the Saks who reside in Arakan are derived from the same people as the Chakmas. The Sak community in Arakan also refers to itself as "Asak," as do the Chaks. (1927) (Grierson, G.A. Their language is similar to Kadu, which is spoken in the Indian province of Manipur and in the Myitkhyina area of northern Myanmar. It also sounds like Andro and Sengmai. The Ando and Ngarek sects make up the Chaks. They follow Buddhism. The ancient home of the Chak was in Yunang, China, claims anthropologist and scholar Thoai Shoi Khain. They acquired the nickname "big ear race" because it was their custom to adorn ears with large-scale decorations. According to Thoai Shoi Khain and Aungsa U together, two other researchers, the Chak people migrated from Yunang to the present-day Myanmar and its Hugong region in the north. Francis Buchanan also made reference to the Chak community in his travels from 1798. (চাকমা, স. ২০০০)

One of the Tripuri clans in the Indian state of Tripura is the Uchoi community. They mostly reside in the Indian state of Tripura's Gomati and South Tripura districts. They use the Tibeto-Burmese language Kokborok, and their dialect is close to that of the Reang tribe. Folklore claims that Uchois and Reangs share a same ancestor. The Uchois share a language and culture with other Kokborok-speaking tribes. They number little more than 6000, making them the smallest of the Tripuri tribes.

Additionally, these people may be found in Bangladesh's Bandarban and Rangamati as well as Mizoram's Lawngtlai, Lunglei, and Mamit districts. Christianity is the most widely practiced religion, followed by Buddhism and a small number of people who follow Hinduism. Men now commonly wear Lungyi and shirts like Marma people, whereas Usui/Uchoi women still weave and wear their own traditional clothing. Women typically don large earrings and larger groups of handmade necklaces known as "Lwkoh" that make them easy to identify. The skirt is made of a black, white, and red linen weave and is worn open like a sarong. It is rather thick and is positioned just below the knee. Printed or plain cloth purchased from neighborhood bazaars is typically used to make or sew blouses.

The museum wing under the supervision of "Khudro Nri-Gosthir Cultural Institute, Rangamati" has taken measure to collect, preserve and exhibit traditional and rare musical instruments such as clothes, costumes, ornaments, tools, replica of different architectures, ivory, bones, handicrafts, materials serving religious purposes, documents, sculptures, pictures etc. The authority collects the materials from others after estimating its valuation and also pays an amount equals to that value.

### **3.1 The Ground Plan of the Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum:**

Through observation and interviewing we have tried to depict the whole Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum. Also, as we were provided an access to their stock register, we came to identify the collections conserved within the museum. Below the lists and ground plan (Fig-6,7) of the museum are provided to give an idea of what we have seen and collected through the investigation. It is to be mentioned that, the galleries are not numbered except for the shelves, thus the ground plan drawn has been numbered by the artist themselves for easy understanding and has been numbered from the right of the entrance accordingly.

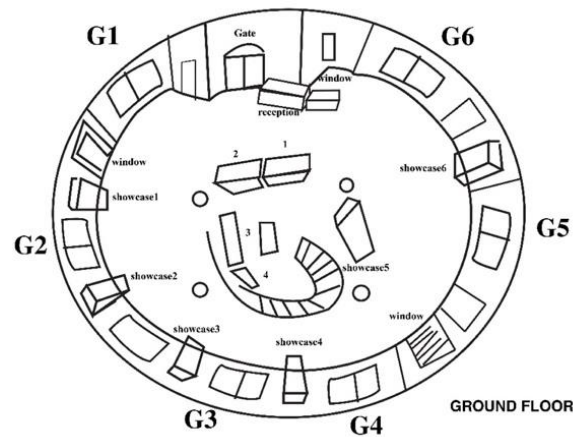


Fig- 6: Ground plan (not to the scale) of the Khudro Nri- Gosthir Museum (Drawn by Chandrika Nurani)

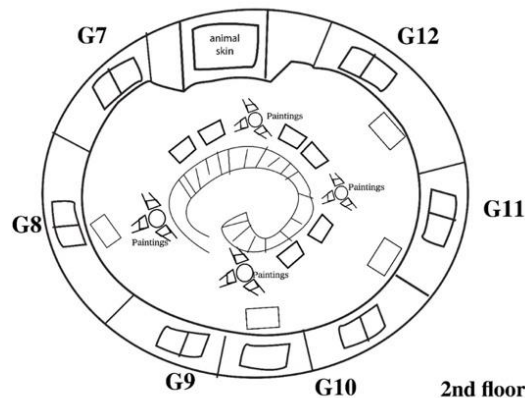


Fig-7: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Ground plan (not to the scale) of the Khudro Nri- Gosthir Museum (Drawn by Chandrika Nurani)

### 3.2 Life and Culture Depicted at Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum

The Chakma, Marma, Tanchangya, Tripura, Murang, Bom, Khumi, Kheyang, Chak, Pangkhao, Lusai, Rakhaine, and Bengalis are among the 13 communities that call the area home. Karpas Mahal was the previous name for the three hill areas of Rangamati, Khagrachhari, and Bandarban. The largest portion of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Rangamati, emerged as a hill district after Bandarban and Khagrachhari distinct districts were created from the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1981 and 1983, respectively. During the sixteenth century, the Chittagong Hill Tracts provided evidence of the existence of the Chakmas (Rahman, 2015). The Chakma Circle Chief in the Rangamati District is responsible for the collection of revenue following the traditional revenue collection system. The Chakma king is the constitutional Chakma circle Chief.

In addition to the existing special administrative structure in the Hill Tracts from the British period, a new dimension has been added to this structure since the signing of the Hill Tracts Agreement in 1996. In Rangamati, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional



Council, a task force for the resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons returning to India, and a land commission for resolving land disputes in the hilly areas have been formed. Apart from this, for the implementation of development activities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board, Hill District Council and an organization called Bazar Fund for Hat-Bazar Management have been formed. Different ethnic communities residing here have different religious beliefs. Most of the ethnic communities residing here are Buddhists and some are Hindus, Christians and Muslims. Museum also represent the religious beliefs of through display of paintings at the museum (Fig-8).



Fig- 8: Painting depicting worship in the Monasteries (Courtesy: Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum)

### 3.3 Socio-Economic Life of the Ethnic People

An important socioeconomic indicator of a community is its income. A community with a greater income level can take care of its essential needs and enjoy its way of life. Agriculture and service accounting are the main sources of revenue for households; in rural areas, a greater percentage of households depend on agriculture than in urban areas. Day labor represents a substantial portion of households' primary source of income (Mullah et al., 2007). In Rangamati district, cultivation is done in the hills by Jum method. Most of them were depended on Jum and so the influence of Jum in their life is still observed in all spheres of their tradition and culture. The main crops produced in this district are paddy, jute, potato, cotton, maize, mustard. Besides, the district has a large number of fruit and forest orchards, which are exported by the people of the district for their livelihood. Major exports include jackfruit, pineapple, forest products, timber etc. Besides, mangoes, bananas, litchis, blackberries, etc., are grown in large quantities in the district. The most impressive or one of the most important attractions of Rangamati is



their Bazar (market) where from the very early morning the farmers come with seasonal fruits and sell them which is very much cheap and fresh. Such fresh fruits are very much rare in Dhaka and the taste of those are heavenly. Farmers wake up very early and try to reach the bazar by 4:30 – 5:00 am in the morning. The locals stated that every Saturday and Wednesday are “*Hatbar*” (market day) and these two days the whole bazar remains too much busy and also closes early depending on the sale. Rangamati district has the largest paper mill in Bangladesh, Karnafuli Paper Mill and Kaptai Hydropower Station, the largest hydroelectric power plant in the country. There are also Rayon mills, Ghagra textile factories, Bain industries, bamboo and cane handicrafts, ivory industries, etc. It is also noticeable that a vast amount of wood and timber trades are running and according to the locals as abundance woods can be found through the forests that is why timbers are also one of the major businesses running here. As previously it has been mentioned that Rangamati is a rickshaw free district what we have noticed there are also negligible number of local buses. Thus, the major local transport is a CNG which mainly can be termed as a great substitute for rickshaw and local buses. According to *Omar*, a CNG driver in Rangamati, majorities residing near or in the sadar are choosing this profession as it is more convenient nowadays and demand is high.

### **Festivals:**

Among the mentionable festivals that are popular in Rangamati and are observed every year are the: Biju Sangrai Baisabi festival (Fig- 9), Hal Palani festival, Pala Gan, Pahari Lokageeti, Geeti Nritya Natak (dance drama), Garaiya dance, Jhum dance, Bamboo dance, Bottle dance etc.



Fig-9: Painting depicting Water festival (Courtesy: The Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum)



Fig-10: Painting depicting Chumulong Puja (Courtesy: The Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum)

Even different communities have different marriage customs. In the painting gallery of the Rangamati Khudro Nri- Goshthi museum we can find a painting showing the customs of a marriage ceremony of Chakma community. (Fig-10)



Fig-11: Painting depicting ethnic culture Bottle Dance (Courtesy: The Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum)





Fig-12: Painting depicting Biju festival (Courtesy: The Rangamati Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum)

Designed cloth of various tribes has been collected by the museum. The designed cloth of the Chakmas is known as Alam. "Alam" is the name of the Chakmas' design fabric (Fig-13). This fabric's surface has been woven with a variety of designs, including flowers, trees, plants, eyes, and more. Every Chakma young woman was expected to weave an Alam before being married. (চাকমা, স. ২০০০)



Fig-13: "Alam" a design fabric

In 1869 the population of the There were 1,500 people living in Mro. Since they lacked a leader of their own, they were loyal to the Bohmang chief of Bandarban. A chief was appointed in each village to collect tributes from each household head for the Bohmang chief. The post of village chief was inherited. "Turai" is their inventor. "Oreng" and "Sungtiang" are two of their other deities. They lack any books about the priesthood or religion. They hold that a bull sent by God Turai to transport their sacred book for them ate it up en route. As a result, they hold a unique ceremony called "Nasyat pa" or "Kumlang" in which a bull is slain ceremonially and a dance known as "Klubongply" is performed. They have an oral dialect that belongs to the Tibeto-Burmese linguistic family. They have still retained their traditional culture in all spheres of their life. During the dance they play Ploong Flute made of wild gourd and bamboo pipe. (Museum Wing, 2010)

### 3.4 The Paintings depicted the life of Ethnic Communities:

Many renowned artists belonging from different communities have painted to show their particular cultures. The paintings give us a depiction of different festivals, agriculture, ceremonies and especially the way the artist see their cultures. For e.g. "The Tribal Life drawn by a Chakma artist", "Nature drawn by Dibbya Alo Chakma", "Sram drawn by DhanMoni Chakma". The paintings are located mostly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the museum. Few paintings could be found within the non-numbered Gallery of the ground floor. Although many paintings are unnamed or does not bear the signature of the artist. Some photos of those paintings are given below:



Fig- 14: Painting (unnamed) showing the ethnic culture (Courtesy: Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum)



Fig-15: Jum Chash (Courtesy: Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum)



Fig-16: Traditional dance shown in a painting (Courtesy: Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum)





Fig-17: Celebration (Courtesy: Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum)

**i) Tools, Coins & other utensils:**

Tools, coins, instruments, utensils etc. have also been preserved in the museum which are also bought from different communities or are Courtesy donations. There are variety of tools in different galleries and are identified accordingly. Few of those are shown through pictures and through the display.

There are different coins, stamps, religious scripts (Chakma & Marma) and letters also preserved in the museum. Those are mostly donations from different communities and some have been collected from various sources. Abundance silver coins, few gold coins, coins dating back to the reign of Shah Alam and East India Company, Coins of Tripura Kings (Raja Deva Manikya, Vijay Manikya etc.) & Arakans etc. have been preserved there. We also get to see a model of the house plans and a small hut designed to showcase how the communities used to live a long time ago.





Fig-18: House Model of Chakma Community (Courtesy: Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum)



Fig-19: Silver Coins of Emperor Shah Alam (Courtesy: Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum)

Many books and manuscripts written on palm leaves are found among the Chakma and the Marmas of this region. Marma scripts have similarity with the Myanmar scripts. On the other hand, the Chakma scripts have close similarity with the scripts of Ahom, Shan, Khamti and Myanmar scripts as well.



Fig-20: Religious sacred scripture of Chakma & Marma community (Courtesy: Khudro Nri-Goshtir Museum)

## ii) Traditional Ornaments, Dresses and Textile

The ethnic women of CHT love to wear ornaments and dresses made by themselves with flowers and different ornaments. Museum has collected these traditional ornaments and dresses. The ornaments which are common amongst them are earring, waistband, bangles, necklace, hairpin, beads-necklace etc. There are some showcase at the museum where these ornaments were displayed. Tribal People used to make their cloth by handlooms. Each and every family has their own textile making technique and design patterns. They use *komor tat*, a kind of textile making technique which has been represented as the traditional culture of tribal people.



Fig-21: Depicting *komor tat*, a kind of traditional textile making technique

The tribal people of CHT were fond of hunting and gathering. Sometimes they were very aggressive and used to involve often in clash with internal and external enemies. They used to make different types of arms and weapons. *Khudro Nri-Goshthi Museum* has collected and displayed such kind of arms and weapon. They also collected and displayed some kinds of traf to catch birds and animals from the forest.

*Khudro Nri-Goshthi Museum* has taken measure to collect, preserve and exhibit traditional and rare musical instruments such as clothes and costumes, ornaments, various designs, replica of different architectural pattern, ivory, bones, bamboo, cane, cotton, hides, cotton, handicrafts of leaves and woods, various material used on different religious and social ceremony, weapons of tribal chiefs, seal, olds goods, different archaival documents and reports, books, letters and correspondence etc.

A number of coins and statues were collected by the museum from Tripura and Arakan region. Three silver coins of kings of Tripura and one coin of a king of Arakans were collected by the museum. In one of the aforesaid coins of the kings of Tripura it is written “Shree Devamanikya 1450 Sak- the conqueror of Subanagram”. This coin is very important for the national history.



Fig-22: Traditional musical instruments played by different communities

All tribal communities of this area are fond of dance and music. Playing different types of musical instruments like flute, drum, violin etc are commonly used by the tribal people. Beside this some indigenous musical instruments such as Boong, Peh, Neh, Kheng-Grong, Dhudhuk, Tutu-ma, ploong, Mong or Gong etc. were collected by the museum.

### **3.5 Problem of Representation of the Ethnic Culture and heritage:**

Displays of numerous artifacts and collectables from many ethnic groups, such as the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchanghya, and Mro, are available. However, after looking over the museum's whole collection, we can see that the relics representing the Chakma community are more numerous. We can learn about the diverse lifestyle choices made by the members of the ethnic communities by looking at the belongings on display. We can gain insight into how they dress, how their social structures are created and upheld, and how they go about living their daily lives. Additionally, we can learn about their farming practices and how their agricultural systems operate. We can learn a little something about the social structures of these communities by looking at the things on show at the museum. It was discovered via conversations with museum staff members and community people that there was no provision for community representative consultation at the time the display was being planned. As a result, in the museum galleries, some communities are underrepresented while others are overrepresented. Engaging the descendent ethnic communities with the museum is crucial to ensuring accurate portrayal of various communities.

We were able to interact closely with the people from the ethnic communities. A thorough questionnaire was used to conduct interviews with members of the ethnic communities. Important data was acquired via interacting with the local people, and this interaction gave us a better understanding of how they felt about the museum. We learned that they don't know anything about the museum during the course of the interviews. In several situations, the majority of the people we spoke with said they had never heard of or visited the museum. More steps should be taken to increase the level of community engagement with the ethnic people. Only by connecting the two elements, we can hope for the improvement of the museum establishment and increase the connection between the ethnic people and rest of our nation. The goal of this research is to study the display that showcase culture and tradition of ethnic communities, and their representation in museums. Additionally, it seeks to build a bridge between the communities and the museums, opening a door for them to collaborate and ensure that the communities are properly represented in the museum exhibitions. Additionally, it emphasizes bringing the public's attention to the museum and emphasizing its enormous significance.

### **4. Analysis and Recommendation:**

Utilizing various data analysis tools, the collected data has been examined. The research's core strength, the data analysis, adds value and reveals the interviewees' recommendations. Once cleaned up, transformed, and made usable for usage, data may perform miracles. The data not only contains a variety of useful information, but also displays incredibly minute patterns and features that would have previously gone undiscovered. By ensuring that nothing is left out that would impede them from drawing inferences from the data, it enables researchers to clearly assess the data. The entire approach that was employed to carry out the entire research is also shown. The entire study uses a mixed technique. As a result, samples were taken at random from the study area, and information was gathered via an open-ended survey and one-on-one interviews. Data analysis was done on the 30 interviewees (25 members of the community and 5 museum employees) who all agreed to participate. The responses were analyzed carefully and presented as recommendation.

As we can see, power relationships in ethnographic museums are evolving in the twenty-first century. Clifford claims that this signifies "a shift from a "colonial" to a "cooperative" museology. Indigenous peoples and museums are beginning to collaborate together to address the disparities in cultural representation by using collections to enhance intercultural understanding. Culture is self-perpetuating but also always changing since human actions and expressions reflect each person's unique position in the world. Everything tangible and every way of existence, both ancient and modern, are therefore a special synthesis of their forebears and the environment in which they exist. Hall's emphasis on the prefix "re-" in representation, which emphasizes a sense of repetition and revisiting, as if what is represented by the media is merely a replica of what was there before, is noteworthy. Contrarily, ethnoarchaeology may be successful in promoting the growth of research into the intangible cultural legacies of modern civilizations and emphasizing the importance of such research for the study of earlier civilizations.

We have made an effort to accomplish our goal through the study by assessing the representation and identifying the ethnic communities that are more and less represented in the museum. We really concur with this as well, keeping in mind McClusky's study, which showed that museum professionals constantly need to employ their imaginations to come up with fresh ways to sensitively portray cultures (Harris, 2003). Our observations lead us to feel that the Khudro Nri-Goshthir Museum offers sufficient opportunities and means for fostering community development and engagement through more imaginative thinking and decision-making. Without abandoning the object, one can provide sufficient context. Museums create their most potent reproduction through exhibits and objects (Tythacott, 2022).

Rangamati is a multifaceted place. People from various communities coexist here. It's not as if they are without struggle, and it is obvious to state that they have a long history of being oppressed by various organizations and certain members of the majority population who are still quite backward in their ideas. Despite these realities, the majority of people in Rangamati continue to live in peace. Travelers from all over the world and Bangladesh are still entranced by the natural beauty of Bangladesh's Rangamati area. Rangamati's verdant hills and bodies of water give visitors a brief respite from the bustle of the city and a serene mental state.

Finally, this investigation found that there are some lacks of community participation at the Khudro Nri-goshthir Museum at Rangamati. The source ethnic communities are neglected at any stage of museum function. Museum authority has not taken any initiatives to invite source communities in the museum. The ethnic culture and life were partially represented at their display. The cause behind this lacking is professional knowledge of the museum staff are not adequate. They don't have any academic training in Museology. The museum is also not member of any national or international professional network like ICOM. The opportunities of this museum are huge Museum building, Library, Guest house, Youth Centre, Large collections of ethnic culture and the location at a prime destination of national tourist. The museum authority and the government can utilized this opportunities and turn the this museum as one of the best Rthnological Research Museum in the country and a center of education and enjoyment.



### 5. Conclusion:

The Khudro Nri-goshthir Museum is a place which represents Rangamati in front of the world. For this reason, it is important that the museum is providing authentic information about the communities and overall Rangamati as a district. In this sector, there is a lot to develop. This study has already discussed what steps can be taken to develop the museum and make it more presentable in front of the local community and visitors from around the world. It is a duty of us all to be helpful in process of development. The museum authority has a lot to do, but the local and central government needs to act accordingly as well to be a part of this development process. The fieldwork that has been conducted allowed us to understand the ethnic community which is an integral part of our population on a deeper level. With the data collected and presented, we will have a better understanding of them. This understanding will allow the government to take necessary steps to ensure and protect their culture, heritage and human rights. In the end, it is the grace of this simplicity that ought to inspire us with optimism and confidence to keep tackling the problems of cultural representation. As a conscious populace and as public institutions, it is our duty to include the communities through promoting intercultural conversation. Giving society the tools to deal with an increasingly global community is one of the museums' duties in the modern world. It is also crucial for communities to take action from within.

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