

# 'Voices in the Shadows': Indigenous Narratives from Karbi Anglong, Assam on Land, Autonomy and Development

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## **Abstract**

Over the years, tribal identity and vicissitudes of tribal development in India have been widely contested among academicians and in the Indian legislature. However, institutional narratives on these issues are laden with prejudice and remain incongruous to indigenous aspirations for recognition, development, and autonomy resulting in continued marginalisation suffered by indigenous or Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities well into the post-colonial era. Experience of marginalisation has influenced emerging identity discourses from within the communities as manifested in claims to indigeneity, 'distinct' cultural identity, and demands for political autonomy over distinct physical territory. These complexities and their dynamics remain largely incomprehensible in the imagination of modern Indian nation-state as well as to Western literature. The narratives documented in this study aim to supplement literature on indigenous Karbi livelihoods collected through a humanistic empirical inquiry involving qualitative approaches to data collection as opposed to logical positivist, determinist or quantitative approaches.

*Keywords:* India; Indigenous; Cultural Geography; Karbi Anglong; Tribe; Development; Narrative; Autonomous