



Changing pattern of occupational structure among the Karbis of Karbi Anglong district in Assam.

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Abstract

The Karbi tribe is a hilly tribe located in the Karbi Anglong District in Assam. Agriculture is the prime economic source of income of the Karbis. Jhum cultivation was the main agricultural system practiced by their forefathers. Now a day, a considerable portion of the present generation of the Karbi people are engaged in different non-agricultural activities. It is seen that the percentage of the people engaged in the primary sector is decreasing. As a result, the percentage of workers in the secondary and tertiary sector is gradually increasing among the Karbis. The researcher through this research work has tried to find out the occupational changes of the Karbis living in Karbi Anglong District of Assam. The case study has been conducted in four villages, namely Umpanai, Rongchek, Lanklam and Beylangso located in Hamren Sub division (Hamren is now recognized as a district as West Karbi Anglong). This study is based on the primary data source, which has been collected randomly from the field with the help of questionnaire. The study has revealed that with the passage of time, many Karbis of the new generation have changed their parental occupations to other new occupation. Therefore, a shift in the occupational structure along with the resultant socio-economic changes is being observed among the Karbis residing in Karbi Anglong District.

Keywords: Occupational Structure, Occupational Changes, Parental Occupation, Present generation.

1. Introduction

Various ethnic groups namely Karbi, Dimasa, Garo, Khasi and Jayantia, Chakma, Hajong, Hmar, Kuki, Lakher, Man, Mizo, Paudi, Synteng etc, inhabit Karbi Anglong District. The Karbi tribe is the largest among the tribes in the district. According to the 2011 Census report the total Karbi Population in the district is about 4,30,452 persons out of which 2,17,758 persons are male and 2,12,694 persons are female respectively. The Karbi tribe is a hilly tribe located in the Karbi Anglong District in Assam. Agriculture is the prime economic source of income of the Karbis. Jhum cultivation was the main agricultural system practiced by their forefathers. Now a days, a considerable portion of the present generation of the Karbi people are engaged in different non-agricultural activities. It has been seen that the percentage of the people engaged in the primary sector has been decreasing. As a result, the percentage of workers in the secondary and tertiary sectors is gradually increasing among the Karbi tribes.

The researcher through this research work has

tried to find out the occupational changes of the Karbis living in Karbi Anglong District of Assam. The case study has been conducted in four villages, namely Umpanai, Rongchek, Lanklam and Beylangso located in Hamren Sub division (Hamren is now recognized as a district as West Karbi Anglong). This study is based on the primary data source, which has been collected randomly from the field with the help of questionnaire. The study has revealed that with the passage of time, many Karbis of the new generation have changed their parental occupations to other new occupation. Therefore, a shift in the occupational structure along with the resultant socio-economic changes is being observed among the Karbis residing in Karbi Anglong District.

2. Objectives

The main objectives of the study area:

- a) to focus about the male and female work participation in different economic activities in the study areas,
- b) to find out the inter-generational wise

- occupational changes among the Karbi people living in the study areas, and,
- c) to find out the causes leading to occupational changes among the Karbis belonging to different generations.

3. Methodology

Both empirical and descriptive methods are followed in collecting facts and analyzing the problem. Purposively designed questionnaires were used for collecting requisite data from the field. Secondary data has been collected from different journals, books, administrative reports and records, census reports and handbooks, etc.

Occupational structure of the Karbi people in the study areas

Occupational structure of a country refers to the division of its work force engaged in different economic activities. 'Occupation' means an economically productive pursuit where as 'structure' refers to the distribution of labour work force in different economic sectors. Therefore, occupation provides income and personal satisfaction as well as social status to the people (Singh, 1986). In the interior villages of the study areas, agriculture remains almost the sole means of livelihood, yet the people are slowly changing their occupation from the primary to secondary and tertiary sectors

From the Table-1 it has been found that occupational structure of the Karbis living in Umpanai village area shows that the total male work participation is 55.19 per cent and female work participation is 44.80 per cent. Among them 49.41 per cent, male workers are engaged in primary occupation, 9.41 per cent are engaged in secondary sector and 41.17 per cent workers are engaged in tertiary or non –agricultural sector of occupation. Out of the females, as high as

57.97 per cent workers are engaged in primary sectors, 14.49 per cent in secondary and 27.53 per cent is engaged in the tertiary sector.

About 59.50 per cent males and 40.49 per cent females are engaged in different economic sectors in Lanklam village. Among them 50 per cent male workers are engaged in agricultural work, 9.72 per cent are engaged in secondary economic activities and 40.27 per cent are associated with tertiary economic activities. While as high as 71.42 per cent female workers are engaged in the primary sector, only 8.16 per cent are engaged in secondary sector and 20.40 per cent females are engaged in tertiary sector, which is half of the male work participation of the village.

In Rongchek village, about 58.69 per cent male workers are engaged in primary activities, 10.86 per cent are engaged in the secondary sector and 30.43 per cent are engaged in the tertiary sector. On the other hand, 67.92 per cent females are engaged in the primary sector, 18.86 per cent in secondary sector and only 13.20 per cent are engaged in tertiary sector. From the analysis, it has been focused that the proportion of the female workers are more associated with the primary sector than the secondary and tertiary sector. As a whole the total female work participation is also high than the male workers.

About 50.45 per cent male and 49.54 per cent females are engaged in different economic sectors in Baylangso village. Among them 41.07 per cent male workers are engaged in the primary sector, 16.07 per cent are engaged in the secondary and 42.85 per cent are associated with tertiary economic activities. While as high as 58.18 per cent female workers are engaged in the primary sector, only 10.90 per cent are engaged in secondary sector and 30.90 per cent females are engaged in tertiary sector, which is half of the male work participation of the village.

Table-1: Occupational Structure of the Karbi People in the study areas

Areas	Gender	Primary		Secondary		Tertiary		Total No of persons	Per cent
		No.of Persons	Per cent	No.of Persons	Per cent	No. of Persons	Per cent		
Umpanai	Male	42	49.41	8	9.41	35	41.17	85	55.19
	Female	40	57.97	10	14.49	19	27.53	69	44.80
Lanklam	Male	36	50	7	9.72	29	40.27	72	59.50
	Female	35	71.42	4	8.16	10	20.40	49	40.49
Rongchek	Male	27	58.69	5	10.86	14	30.43	46	46.46
	Female	36	67.92	10	18.86	7	13.20	53	53.53
Baylangso	Male	23	41.07	9	16.07	24	42.85	56	50.45
	Female	32	58.18	6	10.90	17	30.90	55	49.54

Source: Primary Survey-2012-2015

Generation wise Occupational mobility

Occupational mobility refers to the movement of individuals, families or groups from one occupation to another (Blau, 1967). Generally, it changes from primary to secondary or tertiary activities. The field

survey in these four regions has distinguished the changes of occupations of the people from their grand father's generation to the respondent's generation. The rate of change in different occupational categories among these three generations is depicted in Table 2.

Table-2: Generational wise occupation Changes among the Karbis living in Study Areas

Areas	Generation	Cultivation	Agricultural labourer	Service	Business	Wage Earner	Miscellaneous	Total No of Households
Umpanai	G ¹	30(96.77%)	01(3.25%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	31
	G ²	27(87.09%)	3(9.67%)	01(3.25%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	
	G ³	13(41.93%)	3(9.67%)	7(22.58%)	4(12.90%)	3(9.67%)	01(3.25%)	
Rongchek	G ¹	28(82.35%)	6(17.64%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	34
	G ²	26(76.47%)	8(23.52%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	
	G ³	20(58.82%)	4(11.76%)	2(5.88%)	3(8.82%)	2(5.88%)	3(8.82%)	
Lanklam	G ¹	23(95.83%)	01(4.16%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	24
	G ²	20(83.33%)	03(12.5%)	01(4.16%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	
	G ³	12(50%)	03(12.5%)	04(16.66%)	02(8.33%)	2(8.33%)	01(4.16%)	
Beylangso	G ¹	32(100%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	
	G ²	28(87.50%)	4(12.5%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	
	G ³	16(50%)	3(9.37%)	6(18.75%)	4(12.5%)	2(6.25%)	1(3.12%)	

Source: Primary Survey 2012-15

Among the 31 households of Umpanai village, although 41.93 per cent of the households are still engaged in cultivation, yet a number of families have changed to other economic sectors like in service (22.58 per cent), business (12.90 per cent), as wage earner (9.67 per cent), and while in miscellaneous job (3.25 per cent). Such activities were not found in their grand father's and father's generation respectively. In Lanklam village, though the percentage of cultivators is still high with 50 per cent, yet the diversification of occupations is being observed when compared to the earlier generations as depicted in Table 2.

In Rongchek village about 58.82 per cent of the new generation households are engaged in cultivation, 5.88 per cent are engaged in service sector where as 8.82 per cent are associated with business, 5.88 per cent are as wage earning system and 8.82 per cent are relating to different miscellaneous jobs. Such activities were not seen in their parent's generation.

In Baylangso area, also the occupations are becoming diversified with each passing generation, which is shown in Table 2. About 50 per cent households of the present generation are engaged in cultivation. 9.37 per cent of the households are becoming as an agricultural labourer, 18.75 per cent of households are engaged in service sector that was not found of their parental generation. Again 12.50 per cent of the households are associated with newly adopted business sector. 6.25 per cent are engaged in wage earning activity, which was not in their parental occupation and 3.12 per cent are relating to miscellaneous jobs.

4. Findings

1. From the study it is found that most of the Karbis in rural areas practice cultivation as their prime occupation although they are engaged in other subsidiary occupations.
2. Upward occupational mobility is also observed in

rural areas 22.58 per cent of the respondent's families of Umpanai village area, 16.66 per cent of the respondent's families of Lanklam area, 5.88 per cent of Rongchek area and 18.75 per cent of Baylangso area are engaged in service when compared with their father's generation.

3. The recent developments in the means of transportation and communication have resulted in great mobility of people in the study areas leading to inter-generational occupational changes.
4. Influx of non tribal traders and businessmen has changed the indigenous Karbi people's attitude concerning their traditional activities. Therefore, hunting, fishing, handicraft making, weaving, subsistence agriculture practices have changed

and new methods and practices are being adopted by the Karbis.

5. More Karbis are engaged in sedentary agriculture than in jhuming in the study areas.

5. Conclusion

The study has revealed that the present generation of the Karbi people is witnessing changes in the types of occupation. This generation of Karbis residing in Karbi Anglong District of Assam is engaged in a variety of secondary and tertiary occupations in addition to their main primary occupation as cultivators. The agricultural workers are also now-days more engaged in sedentary agriculture than in jhuming, as revealed by the study. In future, it is expected that more and more Karbi people will be engaged in non-agricultural activities.

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