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ETHNICITY AND ITS POLITICAL MANAGEMENT: THE CASE OF MATAKMORAN BINARY IN ASSAM

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Abstract

Ethnicity is based on the outward socio-political expression of the members of a group who perceive themselves as a collectivity sharing similar descent, race, kinship, territory, language, history, etc. 'Ethnicity' refers to collective identity, shared beliefs and traits relating to a group or sub-group of population with a common national and cultural tradition, which has hitherto existed within a larger or dominant national or cultural group. The term 'ethnic community' is used in academics to denote different politicized cultural groups: racial, tribal, religious, linguistic and immigrant communities. The terms ethnic communities, tribes and nationalities are frequently used as inter-exchangeable expressions. In the context of India, it can be noticed that while some of the ethnic groups have been officially recognized as 'Scheduled Tribes' (ST) by the state, some others have been left out due to various reasons. Over recent decades several ethnic communities in Northeast India have tended to invoke their tribal roots by glorifying their traditional culture, beliefs and way of life, and rendering wider publicity to them via social media. The Matak and the Morans of the Upper Assam are the two communities among them. These two groups are well known in the political history of Assam as the author of the historic Moamoria Rebellion of the 18th Century. In this context, the proposed study will explore the genesis and the issues of growing political consciousness and subsequent consolidation of ethnicity among the 'Matak' community which is concentrated mainly in the districts of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh and Sibsagar in Upper Assam, and the 'Moran' community which inhabits Tinsukia district.

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Ethnic, Identity, Matak, Moran, Northeastern India, Scheduled Tribes

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