



AGRI MAGAZINE

(International E-Magazine for Agricultural Articles)

Volume: 03, Issue: 03 (March, 2026)

Available online at <http://www.agrimagazine.in>

© Agri Magazine, ISSN: 3048-8656

Achik Borang-An Indigenous Traditional Tree House Practiced for Agricultural Crops by Garo Tribe of Meghalaya

*Tarun Kumar Das, Sanjay Chetry, Sagarika Borah and Monica Singh
ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, West Garo Hills, ICAR Research Complex for
NEH Region, Umiam, Meghalaya, India

*Corresponding Author's email: tarunkd2011@gmail.com

The Garo tribe, an indigenous community from the Northeastern Indian state of Meghalaya, as well as parts of Assam and Bangladesh, traditionally builds treehouses or elevated houses as part of their unique architectural style. The indigenous Garo tribe has a rich tradition of crop cultivation, deeply rooted in their culture and customs. A tree house, constructed around, next to or among the trunk or branches of one or more mature trees while above ground level, used for recreation, workspace, habitation, and observation. The Treehouse, locally called as '*Borang*' by the *Garos* is constructed mainly using bamboo, bamboo leaves, thatch, and timber etc. '*Borangs*' are elevated on tree canopies, serving as both a lookout post and a defence tower against wild animals. While tree house has vanished from many regions due to shifts in agricultural practices towards plantation crops, they can still be found in areas where the *Songsarek* or *Non Christain Garos* tradition endures. In numerous locations, these tree houses have become a point of interest for tourists. Despite the recent decline, the *Borang* has always been an integral part of the culture of the Garo people.

Key words: Garo, treehouse, traditional, agriculture

Introduction

The Garo tribe, indigenous to the eastern Indian subcontinent, particularly in Meghalaya, has a rich tradition of agriculture. The Garo community from the Northeastern India state of Meghalaya, as well as parts of Assam and Bangladesh, traditionally builds treehouses or elevated houses as part of their unique architectural style. The Garo tribe's traditional agriculture practices are closely tied to their cultural identity and the natural environment. The Garo tribe, indigenous to Meghalaya, India, has a rich tradition of crop cultivation, deeply rooted in their culture and customs. The Garos cultivate a variety of crops, including rice, maize, millets, and vegetables, based on the suitability of the land and the season. The Treehouse, locally called as '*Borang*' by the Garos, is constructed mainly using bamboo, bamboo leaves, thatch, and timber etc. '*Borang*' is elevated on tree canopies, serving as both a lookout post and a defence tower against wild animals.

Treehouse or *Borang*

A tree house, tree fort or tree shed is a platform or building constructed around, next to or among the trunk or branches of one or more mature trees while above ground level and tree houses can be used for recreation, workspace, habitation, and observation. The Treehouse is locally called as '*Borang*' by the Garos. The custom of making treehouse or '*Borang*' are dates back centuries to when the Garos were still hunter-gatherers. Culturally, *Borang* does not hold significant religious importance, but a smaller version known as *Dellang* in A'tong language was utilized during the *Chugan* festival. Constructed mainly from bamboo, thatch, and timber, '*Borangs*' are elevated on tree canopies, serving as both a lookout post and a

defense tower against wild animals. Access to the treehouse is typically through a ladder, although at times, tree branches are used for entry. While 'Borang' have vanished from many regions due to shifts in agricultural practices towards plantation crops, they can still be found in areas where the *Songsarek* (Non-Christian Garos) tradition endures. In numerous locations, these tree houses have become a point of interest for tourists. Despite the recent decline, the *Borang* Tree House has always been an integral part of the culture of the Garo people. These tree houses are used to protect people during hunting and serve as a vantage point to prevent wild animals from grazing on the vegetation.



Features of Garo Tribe Tree houses

1. *Bamboo and Wood Construction* – They use bamboo, wood, and thatch as primary materials for building houses.
2. *Thatched Roof* – Roofs are made from dried palm leaves, bamboo leaves or thatch to withstand heavy monsoon rains.
3. *Room Structure* – Traditional Garo homes have a single large room, but as per the requirement, they sometimes divided with bamboo partitions.
4. *Raised Platforms* – Some houses, especially granaries or storage spaces, are built on tree branches or elevated platforms to protect food from rodents and insects.

Purpose of Garo Tree houses

- Safety from wild animals: Tree house or Borang were built as a means of protection against wild animals and enemies, as well to safeguard their agricultural harvest from wildlife like elephants, tigers etc.
- Protection from floods in hilly and riverine regions.
- Cultural and social significance (some treehouses serve as meeting places).

The treehouses of the Garo tribe are deeply connected to their culture, environment, and way of life. Their construction techniques reflect their deep knowledge of sustainable architecture, adapted to the hilly and forested terrain of Meghalaya, Assam, and parts of Bangladesh. Below are the key details about their construction techniques and cultural significance.

Construction Techniques of Garo Tree houses & Stilt Houses

a. Choice of Location

- Built on hillsides, near forests, or in elevated areas to avoid floods and wild animal attacks.
- Some treehouses are constructed on strong branches of large trees, while others are built on wooden stilts over flat land.

b. Materials Used

- **Bamboo:** The primary material used for walls and flooring.
- **Wood** (Sal, Teak, Gamari, etc.): Used for pillars and beams.
- **Thatch** (Dried Grass, Palm Leaves): Used for roofing, offering natural insulation.
- **Cane & Ropes:** Used for tying beams and walls together instead of nails.

c. Architectural Style

• Treehouses (Built on Large Trees):

- ✓ Usually, small structures are used for food storage or as lookout points for hunting.
- ✓ Constructed by tying wooden planks and bamboo to strong tree branches.
- ✓ A ladder (Kari/ jangki) is used for entry, which can be removed at night for safety.
- **Roofing:**
- ✓ Steeply sloped to allow rainwater to run off quickly, preventing water lodging.

- ✓ Sometimes reinforced with additional leaves to make it waterproof.
- **Veranda (Chimagre):** Many houses have an open porch used for resting and social gatherings.

Cultural Significance of Garo Tree houses

a. Protection & Survival

- Traditional houses are designed for safety against natural disasters, floods, and wild animals (elephants, tigers, etc.).
- The elevation also prevents insect infestations like termites.

b. Spiritual & Religious Connection

- The Garo people follow animistic beliefs (worship of nature, spirits, and ancestors).
- Some treehouses or elevated platforms are used for rituals and sacrifices.
- A treehouse built in a sacred tree may be used for spiritual purposes.
- In rural areas, traditional houses remain popular due to their eco-friendly and cost-effective nature.
- Some villages have preserved treehouses as cultural heritage sites.

Conclusion

The treehouses or *Borang* of the Garo tribe are not just shelters, they are deeply tied to cultural identity, survival strategies, and traditional wisdom. Their sustainable, elevated structures provide protection, comfort, and a connection to nature, making them an essential part of Garo heritage.