

Book Review

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Caplan, Lionel (1970), Land and Social Change in East Nepal: A study of Hindu-tribal relations. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, (PP 235 with postscript 2000), ISBN 99933 13 07 6

Lionel Caplan is Emeritus Professor of South Asian Anthropology and Professorial Research Associate in the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies. He has maintained an ongoing research interest in Nepal since he first did field-work in the country in 1964-65. His other publication includes *Administration and Politics in a Nepalese Town: the Study of a District Capital and its Environs* and *Warrior Gentlemen: 'Gurkhas' in the Western imagination* (also published by Himal Books). He has also done field work in south India.

This book has written a lucid monograph in the based on the anthropological traditions with the utilizing both Functionalist and Marxist ethnographical perspectives. It is concern with the nature of political and economic interdependence between the Hindu (mostly Brahman) and tribal group (Limbu) in the region of eastern Nepal (Indrani cluster, Ilam). The book is based on data collected in what Caplan called Indranai Cluster a group of four contiguous (Angbung, Bharapa, Chitok, & Dorumba), started settlements which from part of the Sewa Village Panchayat a few mile north of Ilam bazaar. Book looks at how the Limbu retain their sense of identity in the face of long-continued domination by their neighbors. The author has added a

postscript to this edition of his classic anthropological study at 2000.

Author focus is on Brahman –Limbu social relation focused on mainly two issues of much current interest of social science. In the first, it studies on ethnic group and the processes by which it maintains a sense of identity, and, in adaption, considers what happens to the group in the face of long continued and exploitative domination by so called high caste. Because the Limbu were far from Kathmandu and posed a threat of revolt, the rulers of Nepal permitted them to retain their ancient corporate form of tenure. In the second, over the past century and half this form of tenure became a relying point, a source of ethnic identity and morale. Identity is crises the two way exchange of cultural traits: in other words, in manner in which the tribe is increasingly, 'Hinduised' (Hindu culture, language) while the Hindu group is correspondingly 'tribalised' (dietary pattern and offering local/ tribal god). It implies relationship between members of two groups with is single society. Mainly as a result of the communal strength this gave them, the Limbu, despite political and economic frustrations, didn't select a messianic option.

The author analyses the decline a tribal land authority system (*Kipat*) and concomitant monogamous for the land-grabbing by the emigrant Hindus with the support of government because in the ruling position also enjoy by high caste. The processes are mitigated by author, the acquisition of commercial earning by limbus in the forms of service, pensions from the Gorkha Armies.

Dr. Caplan book in the form of tightly packed ethnographic report divided in eight chapters and describe on geographical information of research area macro to micro level, land and kin group formation with focused on clan, lineage and

inheritance pattern. Like wise Caplan describe on family, marriage, kinship, land relation, gender role and importance of patriarchy, relation between inter and intra caste economic life and political circumstances, & land and cultural relationship of the Limbu. The development of its particular angle would have gained in perspectives had the author also unfolded it as a commentary on the process of change at selected at macro level in the highly stratified society of Nepal. But from another angle, this study focuses our appetite for comparable studies of Nepalese micro politic and generally, of the tribal economic in the Himalayan area, which is a measure of Dr. Caplan commendable success in this venture.

Caplon discribe political contraducton between highcaste Hindu and tribal group at nineteenth century and up until the 1950s, the eastern hills witnessed a number of Limbu rebellions; these had their roots in the loss of land (*Kipot*) to upper caste migrants and state efforts to revoke provisions for local autonomy. Following fierce resistance and given the strategic location of Limbuwan at a sensitive border, the early Nepali state had granted far-reaching autonomy to Limbu headmen (*Subba*) in a 1774 royal decree; under the *thekka thiti* system (1820-1951), they controlled the communally held and legally inalienable *kipat* land, collected taxes from clansmen and tenants living on it, and were allowed to maintain militias and dispense justice.

The state set out to erode this autonomy almost as soon as it was established; a central strategy of the government was to encourage Hindu caste groups to migrate into the eastern hills and to transform *kipat* land into *raikar* because government wants to collect revinue from Limbuwan. The latter category could not only be bought and sold freely, but was also administered directly by the central state. Economically more powerful and better connected in the administration, the

migrants expanded their landholdings at the expense of the Limbus. Largely tied to *kipat* land, the authority of the Limbu headmen diminished as land tenure was changed. This prompted considerable and often violent resistance. With Hindu migrants widely perceived as responsible for the loss of land and autonomy, most Limbu resistance was explicitly anti-Hindu and often directed against Brahmins and the Chhetris living in the eastern hills. During 1950, for example, when Limbus and Rais played an important role in the anti-Rana movement, the eastern hills also witnessed widespread riots against Brahmins and Chhetris, killing and displacing many.

This book examines not only analysis relations between the Limbus, an indigenous tribal people in East Nepal, and the Hindus who have entered their region during the past two hundred years. Describing the divisions which have arisen between the two groups as a result of confrontation over land, the book nonetheless stresses how they are linked by ties of economic and political interdependence and in so doing, explores the link between culture and politics. But also describe historical aspect of revolutionary ideology developed causes of exploitation by rulings class also.