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V. DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

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Title: Nepali and Kirāti: Political Economy in the Eastern Hills

The Kirāti are a Tibeto-Burman language speaking population which has inhabited the contiguous hill districts of eastern Nepal and West Bengal for at least 2,000 years. Prior to the military conquest of this area in the late 18th century by Hindu rulers from central Nepal, the Kirāti were divided into numerous endogamous sub-tribes, each possessing a dialect and, in some cases, a body of custom quite distinct from that of neighboring groups. Following the period of conquest, the region became subject to a centralized political authority ruling from Kathmandu which encouraged the settlement of Hindu populations within the area. Since that time, the two major divisions of the Kirati have come to be known as Rai and Limbu. Based on eighteen months of field work among a Rai group in eastern Nepal, this study examines the historical developments which have implicated the Rai in the consolidation of the Nepalese polity during the last 200 years. Central to this concern is the attempt to locate the Rai historically, economically and politically in the multi-ethnic peasant society characteristic of the regions which they inhabit today.

The historical analysis of this study proceeds from the ethnographic concern for oral historical sources such as myths of origin and the genealogical histories of Rai clans as well as elements of ceremonial life which serve as distinctive cultural features through which the Rai regenerate and express their knowledge of themselves. These sources are elaborated through an exploration of the Hindu epic literature wherein the Kirāti are acknowledged as bow wielding "savages" living on the northern frontier of the Gangetic plain; 19th century ethnographic reports prepared by agents of the British East India Company who visited Kathmandu; and, more recent linguistic studies which have attempted to trace the origins of the various hill dialects.

The economic analysis of this study develops from a description of the local social and productive relations which govern agricultural production and which serve to integrate the ethnically diverse populations inhabiting continuous ecological zones within the region. Patterns of labor recruitment, tenantry arrangements and contracts with service castes within the village are examples of such relations. These relations are then examined vis-a-vis regional market networks and labor migration, including the enlistment of Rai men into the British army during the last century, in order to explore the character of local economic

dependencies upon and the expansion of local economies into regional and national markets. An important consideration in this analysis is the historical development of specific economic institutions imposed by the central government for the purpose of consolidating administrative control of the region and the consequences of these institutions for social and productive relations at the local level. Among those considered are policies governing land tenure and taxation, production of cash crops for the national market and patterns of religious patronage.

The imposition of administrative and economic policies is then examined in terms of a political analysis in order to further pursue the effects of these policies on local populations which have been incorporated into the centralized polity. What, for instance, are the consequences of the imposition of a Hindu legal code which legitimizes a hierarchically ranked social order and enforces social relations bounded by commensal restrictions on a non-Hindu, classless population? How has the imposition of this code and methods of its enforcement via a bureaucratic administrative system affected traditional patterns of authority and social control among the Rai? The study explores this dialectic of locality and national polity further by analyzing the development of local political consciousness, that is, the means by which and the extent to which national political issues are transmitted to the local level. Two events of national significance -- the Congress revolution of 1951-61 and the recent national referendum -- are compared to describe the nature of local perceptions of political ideology and subsequent response. This comparison serves to highlight the function of political networks in communicating and promoting political issues among a population which is relatively remote from national political concerns.

Finally, the study turns to a broader analysis of the anthropological data gathered among the Limbu and other Rai groups in an effort, through the comparison of data, to describe a regional political economy of the eastern hills. Historical documents from the period of conquest are examined to explore the character of relations between the two groups and the inchoate Nepali state and to evaluate the relevance of these relations to contemporary economic and political realities. The Limbu, for instance, were granted a form of cultural autonomy by the Nepali conquerors who conceded to acknowledge their traditional form of land tenure. This concession led to struggles between the Limbu and successive Nepali governments over land ownership which gave rise to a "cultural movement" among the Limbu to protest government claims on their land. No such concessions were made to the Rai. In addition, economic interdependencies among different ethnic groups are examined in relation to the market and trade networks which link the hills with the economy of the country's fertile and highly productive plains, the Tarai, with the nation's capital, Kathmandu, and with India. Some consequences of recent land reform measures which have encouraged the agricultural development of the Tarai are discussed as they relate to the settlement of growing numbers of migrants from the hills in the area. This migration has had profound effects on the social and economic relations in the hills with the establishment of communities on the plains which maintain vital kinship and economic ties with the hill communities from which the members migrated.

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--Ph.D.

--Cornell University, 1982

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Title: Planned and Spontaneous Land Settlement in Nepal: A Study of Two Tarai Settlements in the Kanchanpur District

The Tarai (plains) region of Nepal has been subject to a heavy influx of population from the densely settled Hill region in recent decades. The government has implemented planned projects under the assumption that uncontrolled, spontaneous settlements are inferior socially, less efficient economically, and more destructive ecologically. This study evaluates the relative ability of the two types of settlement to provide subsistence to the landless and poor (the official target groups). Contrary to the usual understanding, spontaneous settlements are more efficient economically.

Two representative settlements in the Kanchanpur district were studied -- the Parashan Resettlement Project (PRP) and the spontaneous area contiguous to it. Primary data were collected through household surveys in 1978-79. Four broad evaluation criteria were identified -- technical and environmental, demographic, economic, and institutional. Simple statistical methods were used for quantitative analysis.

The PRP site was selected by political considerations, resulting in settlement in a relatively dry and erosion prone area compared to the agriculturally better and environmentally stable spontaneous settlement site. A higher proportion of target groups was found in the PRP but free food made government costs very high. Timber destruction by settlers was comparable in both settlements.

Spontaneous settlers established themselves more easily with fewer hardships and their agricultural practice was more efficient. With substantially lower land holdings, they had agricultural income similar to the planned settlers. Effective self-help institutions are absent in both settlements.

The study implies that smaller holdings (1.35 hectares) are sufficient for subsistence. Nonetheless, Tarai settlements cannot contribute much to relieve population pressure in the Hills. The government must control spontaneous settlements and change its planned settlement program by undertaking adequate surveys, selecting settlers from the poorest in Hill localities having critical environmental problems, discontinuing free food rations, and involving settlers in land clearance activities. Limited government capability and likely opposition may make such policies ineffective, even if accepted in principle.

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Title: The Contribution of Education to Agricultural Productivity, Efficiency, and Development in Nepal

The literature concerning the contribution of education to agricultural productivity, efficiency, and development suggests that education has a higher payoff in the areas characterized by changing technology and that its contribution to productivity emanates from the worker, allocative, and input-selection effects.

In light of the above findings, this research was initiated with the major objective of testing the hypotheses that (1) education and extension have a positive contribution to productivity (marginal) in the technologically dynamic region as well as the relatively static hilly region, (2) its contribution to productivity revealed through the worker, allocative, and input-selection effects is much stronger in the dynamic terai than in the static hilly region, (3) education and extension are substitutes in the farm decision-making process, and (4) the educated farmers in both regions are more efficient relative to the illiterates. Additional objectives such as studying relationships between education, income, modern input use, and estimating output supply and input demand were also stipulated.

Bara District, situated in the central terai, was chosen to represent the terai region, and Gorkha District, located in the western hills, was selected to represent the hilly region. A sample of 205 farm households from Bara and 149 households from Gorkha were randomly selected and interviewed to gather data necessary for this study. (The terms Bara District and terai region and Gorkha District and hilly region are used interchangeably in this study.)

Three types of production functions -- engineering, gross sales, and value added -- were estimated to determine the contribution of education to productivity and the extent of the different effects. The issue of economic efficiency differences between educated and illiterates was accomplished by the joint estimation of the restricted normalized profit function and input demand functions.

The contribution of education to productivity revealed through the worker, allocative, and input-selection effects was positive in both districts (regions). The allocative effect was more dominant than the worker effect in both Bara and Gorkha. As hypothesized, all the three effects of education were much stronger in technologically dynamic Bara relative to static Gorkha. Extension had no significant impact on productivity in either district. Education and extension were weak substitutes in the farm decision-making process of both districts.

Educated farmers of both districts were able to attain higher economic efficiency relative to illiterates. The higher economic efficiency of the educated in Gorkha resulted from having higher technical and price efficiency than the illiterates,

while the higher economic efficiency of the educated in Bara emanated from their being more technically efficient than the illiterates.

The level of modern input use was also directly and positively related to the level of operator's education in both districts. Operators with higher education earned higher income, and child mortality declined with the increased level of operator's education in both areas.

Output supply, and input demand were more responsive to price changes in Bara relative to Gorkha. Elasticities of output supply and input demand with respect to fixed inputs were also larger in Bara than in Gorkha.

Unavailability of suitable modern innovations, lack of knowledge about modern inputs, high transportation cost, low capital formation and limited credit availability, and less political influence of hill farmers appeared to be main factors responsible for technological and educational stagnation of the hilly region relative to the terai.