

Katsuo Nawa, ed. 2017. *Taisei tenkanki nepāru ni okeru hōsetsu no shosō: gensetsu seiji shakai jissen seikatsu sekai* (Aspects of “Inclusion” in Nepal during the Transitional Period: Discursive Politics, Social Practices, and Lived Worlds). Tokyo: Sangensha.

The core of this edited collection consists of ethnographic case studies of social transition for the last ten years in Nepal, taking “inclusion” as its key concept. The period covered in the book is from 2006, the end of the armed conflict, to the summer of 2016, when even after the promulgation

of the new constitution, debates and confusion regarding the constitution continued. The period is defined overall as a transitional period from the constitutional monarchy to the federal democratic republic. The claims of rights from the various category groups and debates from various viewpoints have been active during the transitional period, which aimed to enact the federal democratic republic based on multi-ethnicities, multi-languages, multi-religions, and multi-cultures. During this period, the main discussions relating to diversity and “inclusion” (*samāveśikaraṇ*) focused on the issues of intermediary groups based on ethnicity, caste, and regionality. It is almost impossible in contemporary Nepal to not relate with the concept of inclusion. This book explores, ethnographically, aspects of relationships between people and inclusion, and diverse perspectives on this concept.

Following the introductory chapter, in which Nawa surveys the relationship between the state of modern contemporary Nepal and its residents and introduces the concept of inclusion, two chapters discuss how the Nepali government has typologized residents as belonging to certain category groups, and how these categories have changed. In Chapter One, Nawa traces the history of categorization and the shifts in its logic from the Muluki Ain of 1854 onwards. In Chapter Two, Ishii analyzes the national census, mainly focusing on those since 1991. These two chapters trace how the Nepali state has handled diversity based on caste, ethnicity, religion and language, and show the difficulties of categorizing diversity and the plasticity of each category.

In the next four chapters, contributing authors focus on the categories of caste, ethnicity, and region that have been widely discussed in studies on inclusion in Nepal’s transitional period. Nakagawa encourages a critical reconsideration of the categories by discussing the process by which Khadgi, a caste group of Newar, move between some overlapping categories, such as Dalit, Newar and *Ādivāsī/Janaajāti*. Morimoto explores how Gandarva, which is a caste treated as “untouchable” mainly in Western Nepal and Mid-western Nepal, has been categorized as both the torchbearers of culture and as Dalit. Tachibana shows the exclusion produced in the process of inclusion within development and Christianization through the case of Chepang, who are treated as a highly marginalized group. Fujikura describes the demand for a semi-autonomous state by Madhesis and Tharus in the Tarai. Through his careful descriptive analysis, he documents structural violence against Madhesis and Tharus, and highlights severe disjuncture in perception on

the issue between those in Kathmandu and Tarai. He concludes the chapter by suggesting the possibilities of considering the Madhesi and Tharu movements, not only as politics of identity, but also as demands for collective human rights.

In the next five chapters, contributing authors discuss categories other than the commonly referenced categories of caste, ethnicity, and region. Sato focuses on the women of the *Janaajāti*, and notes the pervasive image of the “typical Nepali woman” as well as the discursive structures that repeatedly and artfully exclude women who are not mainstreamed. Tanaka focuses on a self-help group of trafficking survivors. She describes the experiences of exclusion, and the possibilities of various inclusions by family and society, such as social approval without marriage and childbirth. Some women experience social inclusion through activities of the leader of the self-help group. The study by Takata reveals the problem of the objectification of street children by describing their life-worlds and its implications for reconsidering the framework of social inclusion.

Niwa discusses the trend of Protestantism, which is a religious minority in Nepal. He describes the secular and religious concept in Nepal through the cases of umbrella organizations of Protestants and the conflict among scattered umbrella organizations, which were established for uniting the Protestants in various areas in Nepal. According to him, the category of Protestant is one of choice, not one of nature. He argues that this category will be discussed further in the future because of its uniqueness and because it has created a stir in the discussion of inclusion in Nepal. Bessho explores the politics of Buddhism in Nepal through an examination of the monolithic treatment of Buddhists despite pronounced differences among them; the stark differences between Tibetan refugee Buddhists and indigenous *Janaajāti* Buddhists are explored in order to broach these issues as well as the expansion of Chinese cultural influence within Nepal.

The following two chapters discuss contrasting viewpoints on overseas migration, which has become an indispensable element of twenty-first century Nepali society. Minami describes the multilayered situation of Magar migrant workers by presenting the practices of villagers who became intermediaries involved in arranging employment in Qatar. Within a basic framing that emphasizes exploitation of Nepali workers subsumed in a capitalist world economy, the author describes how workers visited the Nepali embassy in Qatar to complain about violations of companies’ own employment rules

and how working conditions were subsequently improved. Minami clearly shows that Magar migrant workers had been exploited. However, he also argues that their interaction with the Nepali embassy can be construed as a process of their inclusion into socio-political system as bearers of rights.

Uesugi focuses on the civil rights legislation movement of the Non-resident Nepali Association and notes that while new norms of Nepali citizenship were being created through the promulgation of a new constitution, non-resident Nepalis were minimally included in the process. A paper on the democratization of Bhutan by Miyamoto presents a sharp contrast with the situation in Nepal. In Bhutan, the discussion of inclusion rarely involved issues of domestic ethnic diversity. Indeed, in Bhutan, inclusion was not treated as political issue, and when the term was used, it referred to issues concerning people with disabilities and so on. This chapter, and the book as a whole, illuminates how the Nepali debates on inclusion tend to focus on a limited number of issues, to the exclusion of others.

As described above, this edited volume examines the current situation relating to inclusion in Nepal from various perspectives. As noted by Nawa, the book retains a focus on Nepal and does not state directly how the detailed cases regarding inclusion in this context could be connected to more general discussions about inclusion as a governmental device and object of political struggle. Despite this limitation, the book has great significance for the following reasons. In regard to the situation of exclusion and inclusion in Nepal, some categories, such as ethnic groups, castes, and classes, have been focused on and treated as the main issues for debate during the period of the constitutional transition. Such fixed identity based claims provided the foundation of an inclusion framework in Nepal during the period of constitution writing. However, the current situation cannot be explained by a simple scheme, premised on the fixed identity claims of specific groups like Dalit, *Janajāti*, or women. Instead this book demonstrates the plasticity and danger of such categories and clarifies the possibility for specific categories to undergo reorganization and transformation, and for new social relations to come into view. The book is meaningful because it illuminates important social dynamics that animate experiences of inclusion and exclusion in contemporary Nepali society, dynamics that have been overlooked in previous studies on this topic.

In fact, since the second constitutional assembly elections in 2013 and the promulgation of the new constitution in 2015, the realization of inclusion by

ethnic and caste groups has stalled. At the same time critical situations that are difficult to deal with and explain using the concepts of ethnic and caste groups have occurred in various places, and are becoming more common both in practice and as a subject of public deliberation. For example, in cases of immigration and overseas migration, although there are problems and networks related to ethnic and caste groups, these social dynamics alone cannot account for the migrant experience. Another example could be problems related to the medical system such as those raised by Dr Govinda K.C. Of course, some of the issues related to medical service or medical education could be analyzed in terms of their relation to caste, ethnicity and other identity categories. However, the issues are largely understood to affect everyone, irrespective of their social identity. The movement for medical reform, thus, is an example of movement against exclusion (i.e., from proper medical education or medical service) that is not based on specific identity but rather on universal rights. Although these are just two simple examples, the forms and methods of new inclusion and the phenomena that evoke the necessity of new forms and methods can be seen everywhere in Nepali society.

Taisei tenkanki nepāru ni okeru hōsetsu no shosō focuses on various situations of exclusion and inclusion and efforts to name and remedy them. Problems of inclusion are addressed as a whole, through chapters focused on the challenges facing particular groups. Movements to advance universal rights, like access to health and medical education, are not addressed in the book, although such movements furnish another equally significant frame for understanding the politics of inclusion. The book does, however, open up the debate considerably beyond the narrow frame of caste and ethnicity, and thus it is useful for those who hope to get involved in, and critically assess, movements toward inclusion.

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