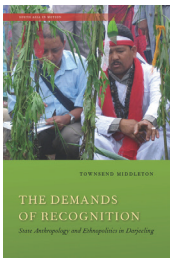

Townsend Middleton, *The Demands of Recognition: State Anthropology and Ethnopolitics in Darjeeling*

Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016. 278 pages. Cloth, $90.00; paperback, $25.95. ISBN 9780804795425 (cloth); 9780804796262 (paperback).

Since the turn of the twentieth century, issues of ethnicity and recognition have been a persistent concern in Darjeeling. Ethnic demands for regional recognition were carried out unabated in the past and are still carried out in renewed forms. In this regard, the current demands for recognition as scheduled tribes raised by a host of ethnic associations can be regarded as the latest addition to fervent ethnopolitics in the region. Drawing on such developments, this timely book by Middleton sheds a great deal of light on the contemporary ethno-politics in Darjeeling structured around the quest to become tribal subjects within the official register. Discussing these demands, Middleton highlights the complex interface between state apparatus, local political structures, and postcolonial ethnological practices. He looks at the intersection between local, regional, national, and global forces, and draws parallels between the present articulations of identity claims, and the wider politics of recognition unfolding at the global scale. He calls this discourse of cultural rights "ethno-contemporary" (9), which reflects the pertinent concern of ethnic groups to use ethnological categories to redefine their identities, and thereby secure rights and entitlements from the state.

Tracing the contours of these practices, Middleton outlines how ethnological knowledge is utilized by both the state and ethnic groups to structure the popular notions of tribes in postcolonial India. He adopts a multi-sided ethnography along with an in-depth study of state officials and state anthropologists toward understanding this prolonged struggle to attain rights and recognition in the hills. Interestingly, the book also makes ample use of archival records to outline the historical constitution of Darjeeling; document-specific interface between people and the state, the present, and the past; and the dynamic relationship between lived experience, cultural memories, and the classificatory categories of ethnology. The book charts Middleton's long ethnographic engagements and chronicles the intricate history of the region and the periodic transformation of identity politics in Darjeeling.

The first chapter foregrounds the discussion on issues of belonging and relates it to different strands of ethnic demands unfolding since the turn of the twentieth century. He characterizes the quest to belong as "anxious belonging," which is intimately tied to "politics to belong" in India (29). Charting the convoluted trajectory of ethnic demands in the hills, Middleton recounts the experiences of the people while providing a detailed account of the politics of ethnic revival epitomized by current demands for recognition as scheduled tribes. Taking into account these demands, he shifts register in order to consider the evolution of ethnological governmentality in India. Drawing from a rich array of sources, he provides gripping insights on debates surrounding tribes in colonial India, and its periodic transformation in the postcolonial phase. His astute rereading of the discourse of ethnology in India throws a great deal of light on the formation of official categories and its application in shaping ethnic subjectivities.

Following the official and academic discourse surrounding tribes in India, the book charts the convoluted journey of enumerative categories while noting the interconnected history of statist categories and regimes of power. Treating tribes as specific manifestations of colonial and postcolonial modernity, the book discusses in detail the discourse and contours of cultural recognition in India. In this regard the book narrates the interesting case of ethnic entrepreneurs, political leaders, and their quest to register themselves as scheduled tribes in Darjeeling. In particular he cites the role played by the Department of Information and Cultural Affairs (DICA) under the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in framing and augmenting demands for recognition as scheduled tribes. The book provides a fascinating and vivid account of the encounter between aspirant tribal subjects and state anthropologists, and minutely describes how communities are studied through conceptual and ethnological categories framed during the colonial period. Accounting for such practices, Middleton writes, "state ethnography involves practices that surpass the official designs of tribal recognition, as well as contingencies of a more affective register" (116). He captures the power dynamics existing between the anthropologists and the subject, and the emotive content of demands made by the ethnic leaders. He focuses on the performative aspects of identity claims amplified by the relentless quest to assert their indigenous status in the region. Noting this aspect, Middleton writes, "for people of Darjeeling, managing their histories of migration and hybridity was thus a legitimate concern in their attempt to become a scheduled tribe" (130). He characterizes these inventive ways adopted by ethnic minorities as a living example of ethno-contemporary where both ethnic subjects and the anthropologists studying them are caught in the artifice of state ethnography.

One crucial and novel aspect of the book is the way it documents the views of official anthropologists from the Culture Research Institute (CRI). While narrating the inner working of the state anthropologists, Middleton reverses the gaze upon ethnological institutions, and explores the world views of the officials, vividly documenting the ways ethnographic data is modulated and structured at CRI. Middleton characterizes this everyday ritual of state anthropologists as "bureaucratic durée," a protracted temporality that prolongs the process of securing rights and benefits (148). Tracing the undulating trajectory of ethnic demands in the hills, the book shows how people reframe official categories in their quest to reaffirm their authentic tribal identity, and also notes the internal politics operating within ethnic groups and their associations. The book lucidly documents the tensions and the sense of loss felt by the ethnic subjects who are periodically demanded to recast their ethnic habitus by reclaiming a long-lost cultural past. Most importantly, the book highlights the intersection between the tribal recognition movement and renewed demands for regional recognition in the form of the Gorkhaland movement of 2007.

Drawing from his rich ethnographic fieldwork, Middleton argues that the state apparatus fails to recognize the identities and differences of cultural groups that in turn create structures of anxiety relating to belonging in the nation. He argues that the convoluted discourse of ethnology continues to create ambivalence in the steady attainment of rights and entitlements enshrined in the constitution for ethnic minorities. The colonial taxonomies continue to haunt and structure the postcolonial imagination of ethnic groups and boundaries, and so Middleton vouches for a post ethnological future that would rework colonial categories. He states that the ethno-contemporary

asks us to reconsider the present predicaments of groups trying to categorize back the identities foisted upon them by the state. Though lacking in a detailed account of ethnic associations and the intersection between ethnicity and class, the real merit of the book lies in documenting the convergence of concerns emanating from struggles for regional autonomy, developmental demands, and the politics of belonging and recognition in the region. The book compels us to think beyond the narrow confines of recognition as defined by the state, and reconsider the possibility of recognizing culture, and thus contemplate a different kind of anthropological future.

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