CONTRADICTION OF POPULATION COUNTING OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE: A CASE STUDY IN RAUTE COMMUNITY, NEPAL

[1]BANU YASIN, [2]KENICHI MATSUI

[1]Doctoral Student, University of Tsukuba,Japan
[2]Associate Professor, University of Tsukuba, Japan

Abstract - Comparing to the rest of the nation's population, Indigenous people have higher rates of infant mortality, unemployment, alcoholism, diseases and incarceration (Bureau of Statistic, 2007). In Nepal, 59 distinctive indigenous peoples reside in different areas with the total population of about 8.4 million, which is about 37% of the Nepal's total population (IWGIA, 2008). About 86% of the country (CBS, 2003) is covered by mountains, in which many of these Indigenous peoples live (ICIMOD, 1994).
The Raute people are the only nomadic foragers in the country living. Many studies have been published about the Raute, but no studyexamines thepopulation of the Raute.According to the Census Bureau, from 1991 to 2011, the population of the Raute rapidly decreased from 2,878 to 140 (Census 2011). Even though many researches have studied about the Raute, no one has given clear explanation about this rapid decline of the Raute. Nor have they suggested any political actions that might restore the population. In light of these concerns, this chapter investigates the main causes of the rapid "decline" of the Raute population. My investigation shows that the Bureau actually made a wrong estimation.

Keywords - Census Bureau, Population, Indigenous people

I. INTRODUCTION

All indigenous peoples are concentrated in their own ancestral lands in Nepal. In the mountain regions, such as Mustang, Manag and Rasuwa, indigenous peoples comprise 75 to 95 per cent of the population, but in the Hills and the Terai, indigenous peoples are less than 50 per cent of the population because they are outnumbered by the migrant non-indigenous populations. The indigenous peoples in mountain areas still control their indigenous way of life. On the contrary, many indigenous peoples of the Hills and the Terai have been losing control over their indigenous way of life because of the influence of the dominant groups through the processes modernization(Bhattachan, 2012).

There are two Raute communities in Mid-Western part of Nepal. Both of their livelihoods are based on forest resources. But one of them has already settled in 1981 by the government as discussed in previous chapters (Singh, 1998). They are no longer identified as the Raute. Currently, they are called Raji and live in Aampani (Jogbudha), the Rajyouda (Sirsha) Village Development Committee (VDC) in Dadeldhura District, western Nepal. The total population of the Raji is 618, of which 320 are males and 298 are females. They have engaged unsuccessfully in agriculture because of insufficient knowledge about cultivation and irrigation(Gurung et.al, 2014).

Table 1. Classification of indigenous peoples by population size, (Source: Census 2001)

Population in percent	Indigenous peoples	No
5 to 8 per cent	Magar, Tharu, Tamang, Newar	(4)
1 to 3 per cent	Rai, Gurung, Limbu	(3)
0.4 to 1 per cent	Dhanuk, Sherpa, Bhujel, Kumal, Rajbansi, Sunusuwar	(6)
0.1 to 0.4 per cent	Majhi, Dnuwar, Chepang, Satar, Jhangad, Gangain, Thami	(7)
Less than 0.1 per cent	Dhimal, Bhote, Yakkha, Darai, Tajpuria, Thakali, Pahari, Chhantyal, Bote, Baramu, Jirel, Dura, Meche, Lepcha, Kisan, Raji, Byansi, Hayu, Walung, Raute,Hyolmo, Kushbadiya, Kusunda	(23)

The most recent population of the nomadic Rauteis 162 or 45 families, of which 92 are males and 70 are females(Fieldwork, 2015). However, it was very difficult for the author to count their current population during fieldwork due to prohibition of counting member in the Raute community. But with

the help of Mr. PradeepShrestha, previous Chief District Officer (CDO) of KalikotDistrict in 2015, the author got the name list of the nomadic Raute from the DailekhDistrict office. Recently, the Raute gave permission only to the government staff to count the number of their family after they got money per person Rs1000 (Nearly, US$10).About counting members in their community, HariBahadurRastakoti says:

Why you need to count our member? We do not allow anyone to count our member. It's not our culture. If you need you can contact Dailekh District Office. We already allow them to count our member and suffer different problems. We do not want any more problems.

His answer made me more sware of their strict culture and their strong belief against counting the population.

In previous researches conducted institutionally or personally, therefore, only could guessed the Raute population, but the author for the first time managed successfully to present the accurate current population of the Raute for this study.

II. DELUSION ABOUT THE NOMADIC RAUTE POPULATION

Most studies that mention the Raute population do not distinguish the nomadic Raute from the Raji.The Census Bureau of Statistics (CBS) andthe National Population Census (NPC), Community and Economic Development Association (CEDA)do not distinguish the Raji from the nomadic Raute. This has created the misconception about the population decline of the nomadic Raute community.

Table 2. Vaired population estimates of the Raute (Singh 1998;CBS, 2002;Paudel, 2012;Gurung, 2014; Thakur 2014;CBS, 2011; Fieldwork, 2015)

Scholars/Institutions	Number of Families/groups	Counted Population	Status (Nomadic or sedentary)
Reinhard(1974)	35-36 huts	140	Nomadic
Nepal Yatri(1983)	4groups	352	-
Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (1984)	-	135	Settle+Nomadic
Bista(1985)	-	200	Nomadic
National Population Census (1991)	-	2875	Settled+ Nomadic
CEDA (1991)	-	375	-
CERID (1991)	-	2878	-
CBS (March1993)	-	268	-
Karki (August 1993)	60 families	350	Nomadic
Mishra (January, 1993)	Many groups	250	-
Majhi (July, 1993)	1 group	300	-
Singh (1997)	6groups	980(130Nomadic+850sedentary)	-
CBS(2002)	-	658	Settled+ Nomadic
Paudel (2014)	-	148	Nomadic
Thakuri(2014)	-	143	-
Gurung(2014)	45 families	167	-
CBS(2011)	-	140	-
Fieldwork (2015)	2groups	162	-

Table 2,shows that in 1975 Reinhard's count of the nomadic Raute population was 140 but in 1983 Yatri enumerated both Rajiand nomadic Raute as 352. The National Population Census of 1991 showed2,878, but theCEDA in the same year (1991)claimed 375.The CBS in 1993said the Raute population to be 268.These counts alone show considerable differences.Singh in 1997, however, separated the settled population from the nomadic one, and said the nomadic population was 130.Despite Singh's study, in 2002, the CBSdeclared that the Raute population was 658, combining both the nomadic Raute and the Raji. Recent studies of the scholars touched on the estimated population of the Raute, but they didnot conduct their own surveys. Hence, it is clear that the past estimates do not provide reliable sources of information to trace the changes in the Raute population. Discounting the overestimation by the National Population Census in 1991, and setting aside the Raji population, it is quite likely that the Raute

population has not declined rapidly. Myinvestigations during field work in 2015shows that the exact population of the Raute was 162.This count is based on the data provided by the Dailekh District Office in 2015.

III. IMPACT OF DISEASES ON THE RAUTE POPULATION

Although the population of the Raute has not declined,it is clear that the Raute are suffering from the economic and ecological challenges, which have severely threatened their traditional livelihoods and culture. Moreover, recently they have suffered from diseases, such as dysentery, cholera, typhoid. Since the water resources are being polluted, waterborne diseases have increased as the Raute drink water directly from ponds and spring. In July 2012, cholera broke out in the community and killed three small children within two days.They were advisedto take allopath, but they rejected in the beginning. When the epidemic took the lives of two more children and two elderly people in the same month, severely suffering patients accepted the medicine with hesitation for the first time in the history (Paudel, 2012). But they are not happy to accept the modern medicine.HaribahadurRastakoti(age 52)explained:

Yes, we do [take medicine] sometimes because we do not have option now due to the depletion of medicines in the forest like Ciraito (Sweet flag calamus) for treating stomachache,AkasbeliSwertiaangustifolia for treating fever,Amala(Phyllanthusemblica), PaniAmala (Nephrolepisaueiculata) for treating cholera. Harro(Terminaliachebula)Barroo(Teminaliabelerica) to prevent catching cold, Pipla Piper longum, Halhale (Elephantopusscaber) to treat injuries most of it we find very hardly which are not enough for us. But still we believe our own treatments rather than this so called modern medicines.

I asked another question regarding on the population decline due to differentdiseases, and Surya Narayan Shahi said:

We don't know if our population is declining or not. We are human being like you and die normally as you people die in your society. In our community, males died usually while hunting because we need to run blindly competing with the monkey and at that moment our members fall down from the cliffs of the forest. And females died during pregnancy and giving birth. Except this we also got sick and have disease like cholera, typhoid sometimes. Most of the times we got injured while climbing cliffs of the forest.Two years ago some doctors came to our community and said that few of our children are suffering from polio, which we did not believe, but they forced us to give our children polio drops and vitamin 'A'. These days we suffer from different modern diseases, which we never heard before because we do have eating our own food properly sometimes we also suffer from hungriness. Will you convince the government to provide food for us frequently in the future?

It seems that the Raute people do not want to disclose about their population decline of their community. Dying during climbing cliffs in the forest and during pregnancy and delivery are the normal things for them. In dealing with water-borne diseases, they started taking allopathic medicines. But they do not want to take it continuously in the future.

CONCLUSION

This study identified the current population of the Raute, which contrary to the previous government notion of "endangered" status, has not changed. However, the nomadic Raute face the urgent problems of deforestation, various new diseases, population encroachment by majority societies, language domination, and the political hegemony of the surrounding Nepalese society. While they suffer from diseases like cholera and polio, their future population growth seems to depend on the extent to which the Raute control their own affairs in terms of forest resources use and acceptance of modern medicine.

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