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Ceylon Room (Theses)

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Phd.

... the political system in Ceylon is an  
analysis of the political system of Ceylon within an  
... It examines the political system of Ceylon  
... University of Ceylon  
Peradeniya

FAMILY AND CASTE IN THE POLITICS  
OF THE SINHALESE

1947 - 1971

by

Janice Jiggins

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Chapter 3 attempts a general ABSTRACT description of the occupational elites. Chapter 4 examines the relationship of family

The study begins in Chapter 1 and 2 by examining the nature and of the formal political structure in relation to the widerly social environment and noting unique features in the constitutional and electoral provisions which seem to take certain social factors into account. It is suggested that areas of elite power other than the legislature are involved in the political decision-making process. In particular, caste and family identities are seen as linking the occupational elites in neo-political groupings which do not necessarily coincide with political parties, and which are capable of influencing policy decisions. and their political implications, the effects of the re-shaping of the constituency boundaries in 1945 and Government and administration are seen to relate to the politics of faction as well as the politics of party and policy. The power structure is posited as one in which the occupational elites (including the legislative) supply the membership of the political elite any one time. Caste and family groups are situated among the occupational elites; caste and family identities and loyalties provide alternative means of recruitment to positions of political power and the exercise of political pressure (other than political parties and ideologies).

Chapter 3 attempts a qualitative description of the occupational elites. Chapter 4 examines the relationship of family groups and kinship patterns to the major political parties and the occupational elites. Given the existence of such family ties, it is asked to what degree they form a stronger bond than, or alternative to, party loyalty. The question whether the family caucus can or does operate politically is examined. In addition, the coincidence of certain family groups with a particular caste (Goigama) is discussed. Chapter 5 attempts an analysis of the role of caste, both at the constituency and national level, in Ceylon's politics. Beginning with a survey of certain geographic and demographic features in the distribution of castes and their political implications, the effects of the re-shaping of the constituency boundaries in 1945 and 1959 on caste-community voting at General Elections, is examined.

An attempt is made to discover the proportional distribution and relationship of each caste group. The results are given of extensive field research undertaken in Sabaragamuwa Province (after island-wide testing of the validity of the attempt and a pilot study of research methods in Matale DRO's division), to establish the proportional relationship of the major caste groups. The political implications are discussed in detail.

Finally, the link between caste political behaviour electorally, and the formation and operation of caste lobbies under successive governments, is described; their membership and effectiveness as shapers of policy (rather than merely as political pressure groups) are discussed.

The last chapter draws together the threads of the analysis and describes the shifting politics of the last twenty-five years in terms of the manipulation of caste allegiances. It shows how the perspectives adopted in this thesis elucidate the persistence of certain family groups (and the continued dominance of the Goigama community) in an era of supposedly popular politics and mass participation.

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