

restrict women's cash incomes in relative terms; and 4) confine the seasonal distribution of income drawn from the plots to the period of the mango harvest. Each of these factors has serious negative implications for family food security and the livelihoods of women gardeners in this region.

Schroeder demonstrates that in The Gambia's North Bank Division, drought-related ecological changes since the 1970s have led to competition between male and female crop production systems over low-lying land and groundwater resources. Dozens of lucrative communal market gardens controlled by women have been threatened by largely male-dominated fruit orchards established in the same locations as a means to "stabilize" land resources. In an attempt to promote environmental stabilization through tree planting, international donors had encouraged male landholders to take advantage of the female labor power invested in the irrigation of garden plots by planting orchards on the same locations. Shade canopy eventually undermines gardeners' objectives as plants no longer get sufficient sun, and destroys the gardeners' usufruct rights by restoring the plots to male control assured by the presence of male-owned trees. In many villages, funding for orchard projects now effectively replaces the food security and equity-oriented women in development (WID) emphasis of the previous decade.

By planting orchards (and woodlots) directly on top of gardens that function as women's income-generating projects, male landholders reap a double benefit: first, from the subsidy paid by development agencies to install infrastructure, such as wells and fences, and, second, from unpaid female labor, which the men "capture" to water their trees. It is clear that the political ecology of this flourishing horticultural district has become gendered! Schroeder's return to this region in 1995 revealed a continuing and complex struggle involving resistance, negotiation, compromise, victories and losses in a dynamic and unresolved land use conflict between women's garden groups and male land owners.

This comparison of the garden/orchards confirmed that trees can be used as a means for claiming both material and symbolic control over garden lands. Tree planting on garden beds, moreover, is a mechanism for landholders to alienate surplus female labor as well as subsidies embodied in concrete-lined wells and permanent wire fences. At the same time, shade effects from tree planting threaten to undermine the productivity of gardeners, who now play key roles in providing for the subsistence needs of their families. This situation has brought about considerable resistance on the part of vegetable growers, who have demonstrated both individually and collectively their willingness to contest anything that they perceive as a threat to their newfound livelihoods. Donor agencies and the state have used landholders' leverage over vegetable growers to meet their own objectives of environmental stabilization via tree planting. This implies, Schroeder reminds the reader, that in some cases developers at all levels have staked their very legitimacy on the continued mobilization of unpaid female labor. They have also failed to recognize the critical factor motivating women to undertake land improvements in the first place, namely the preservation of livelihoods.

In sum, the dramatic emergence of a female cash crop system in rural Gambia resulted from the convergence of several ecological, social and economic forces simultaneously requiring women to assume unprecedented financial responsibilities within their families and communities. Gender is thus a key factor in understanding The Gambia's recent ecological politics. Schroeder has a keen grasp of the ways in which local dynamics intersect with wider national and international processes. He offers the reader a carefully documented micro-history and ethnographic research of the region, drawing on his extensive field experience and in-depth knowledge of the area. He embeds his analysis in a conceptual framework drawn from the disciplines of geography, environment, gender and development studies. This intriguing work is relevant to those focusing on African development, environmental change, agroforestry, gender politics the intersection of local power relations and international processes, and aid donor policies. For both scholar and practitioner in these arenas, this case study is "a must."

Disputes and Arguments Amongst Nomads: A Caste Council in India,
by Robert M. Hayden. New Delhi: Oxford University Press (1999), xiv, 177 pp.

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Hayden's *Disputes and Arguments Amongst Nomads* is a revised version of his 1981 anthropology dissertation. The book focuses on disputes and dispute settlement in the context of the social structure and culture of

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the Tirumal Nandiwallas, a nomadic caste in Maharashtra State in India. Disputes are processed by a community council of elders known as the panchayat. This is a traditional institution, not to be confused with the legislated and government initiated nyaya panchayats at the local community levels, which often do not function well (Baxi and Galanter 1979; Moore 1985).

Hayden's fieldwork was carried out in 1975 and 1979. When he revisited the area in 1992, he found that the Tirumal Nandiwallas had given up nomadic life and were settled, and their panchayat no longer met. The book, however, is written in the ethnographic present and I follow suit. This brief book is a valuable contribution to the body of ethnographies on informal dispute processing.

Nandiwallas, meaning those who work with bulls, are non-pastoral nomads serving the settled people in neighboring villages. They are engaged in such activities as doing tricks with bulls, fortune telling, providing entertainment and music, and begging. The women often sell sewing needles, and provide folk medicine, and sometimes engage in prostitution. Some men have become involved in bull trading and money-lending, as the entertainment needs of the villagers are increasingly served by modern forms of entertainment.

The Nandiwallas, considered to be a middle-level caste, have their own intra-caste hierarchy. The Patil putta (subcaste), at the top, are the panchayat elders, headmen, and priests. The others in rank order are: the Chougale, assistants to the Patils; the Komti tradesmen and money lenders; and the Daundiwallas, servants of the panchayat and executors of punishment. Higher sub-caste ranking corresponds with higher economic standing. It is believed that these divisions arose as a consequence of violation of caste rules and other wrong-doings by the process of excommunication and suspension from regular everyday roles. The higher sub-castes follow stricter purity rules, consider those below them as polluting, and expect deference from them. Each sub-caste is an endogamous group. Some of the settled Nandiwalla groups do not follow the sub-caste rules. Unlike many Nandiwalla groups that have a Patil as village priest, the Tirumal Nandiwallas in this study have had a Brahmin as their guru, or spiritual advisor. The Tirumal Nandiwallas, split into small groups, move around specified territories and carry out their occupational roles. They return during the monsoon season (June through August) to Wadapuri in Poona District, which they consider their home village. At that time they conduct religious celebrations and marriages, and hold panchayat sessions to settle disputes.

Panchayat specifically means a council of five, but may include more than five elders, who authoritatively direct the villagers and help to resolve their disputes. Adult men congregate in front of the elders and participate in the deliberation of cases. Women are not included, unless they are connected with a case; this is also the practice among the Tirumal Nandiwallas. Panchayats decide administrative matters of collective concern, such as collecting money for festivals and other projects. Most also settle disputes. In multi-caste villages the village panchayat used to settle inter-caste disputes and problems involving the whole village. However, these are not as common as caste panchayats, especially in modern times, as egalitarian notions and politics run counter to traditional caste hierarchy (Cohn 1965; Vincentnathan 1996).

Most problems and disputes are settled within the caste by caste elders, or by elders constituting the caste panchayat. The Tirumal Nandiwallas have a caste panchayat, which receives disputes, deliberates on them in public, and settles them, using public opinions. As elsewhere, their panchayat usually meets near a temple. The meaning behind this practice, which is missed in the book, is that truth and justice (nyayam) should prevail in the presence of god. The Tirumal Nandiwallas panchayat meets in Wadapuri when the Patil headman through the Daundiwallas announces it to the community and convenes it. The headman sits away from others surrounded by "speakers," many of whom are Patils. The position of the headman is highly respected, as he is the head of the caste, the community, and the panchayat. Cases are presented by the headman and the "speakers" argue the case. Those assembled also join in. The Brahmin guru, if present, can provide interpretations and make decisions, which are respected and often become binding. He helps to resolve very difficult cases.

A review of the cases would reveal that most of them are minor and trivial, as in many communities, including the communities I investigated. When I presented my findings to an American audience, they could not believe that such trivial private matters could be given such public attention. Among the Tirumal Nandiwallas, the cases referred to the panchayat are for violation of caste rules of association, transaction, marriage, funerals, and religious practices. Cases of cursing, illicit sexual conduct, false accusations, wife battering, violations of panchayat rules, stealing, and fighting with a knife are also brought before the panchayat. A generalization that could have been made by Hayden from the bulk of his cases is that they were probably taken seriously for two reasons. First, the Nandiwallas feared that they might offend the deities if they violated caste rules. Without the deities' benevolence their health, wealth, and happiness could be jeopardized. Monsoons may fail, diseases may erupt, and people would be in serious economic distress. Second, they feared that if these issues were not settled quickly, they could deteriorate the community, leading to eruption of major disputes and conflicts. A desire for collective well-being makes caste rule violations public issues, which are dealt with collectively for the purification of the community.

Similar to the villages I studied, the panchayat discussions in Hayden's community become loud, tense, factional, political, and driven by status and power contests. Complex and confusing decisions are made that are oriented toward creating a balance within the context of the community beliefs and the community's hierarchical social order. It should be added, however, in caste panchayats there is greater equality and open discussion, and intra-caste hierarchy often blurs in heated and tense discussions. Such openness cannot be found in the traditional village panchayats, such as the ones I studied in Tamilnadu. As Hayden (pp. 101-107) notes, panchayat discussions are not purely case-based and case-based linear processing, as in modern courts. Instead cases are viewed from multi-sided perspectives. The nature of historical relationships of the disputants, their statuses, the requirements of religion, the need for reestablishment of relationships, and implications for peace in the community are all considered (see Nader 1969). Opinions, views, evidence, and hearsay information are admitted, without strict rules of order. Sanctions are often fines and excommunication. In the latter case, most are not totally out-casted, which happens for only rare, serious cases. Most are excommunicated temporarily with fines, and are later restored to normal relationships by the panchayat's readmission of them. The excommunicated may be isolated and others required to avoid normal relationships with them. When they are readmitted, the guru does a pollution removal ceremony.

Studies on panchayats show that in general during panchayat sessions, established norms are articulated, used, and reinforced, and sometimes contested. Exceptions are made and rules are modified in relation to new situations posed by the changing social order and changing times. For the Tirumal Nandiwallas the Brahmin guru helped direct these changes.

Disputes with outsiders are not handled in the panchayat, but are privately settled. In general, as the Tirumal Nandiwallas are not well-regarded or trusted by the settled people in the villages, who have a greater power-base, they often settle disputes with villagers in a resigning, accommodating manner, giving greater concessions. They have learned to "lump it" and live with it.

The Tirumal Nandiwallas are more religious, caste-bound, and ritualistic than nomads in general, and other Nandiwalla groups in particular. Hayden (p. 161) observes that this is because of having a Brahmin guru as their advisor, while other Nandiwallas have ones appointed from among themselves. It seems to me that having a Brahmin guru may be their attempt at sanskritization to raising their caste status (Srinivas 1989). There is perhaps also an economic motivation on the part of the guru behind this religiosity. In addition to the guru's fee collected from everyone, two-thirds of the fines collected for ritual and normative infractions are given to the guru. This is a sizable, decent income, which the guru wanted, and for which he continued to provide service. The guru's economic interest, combined with his religious and ritual services, may have contributed to the greater religious focus, the strengthening of the sub-caste hierarchy, and community integration. It is commonly said that such economic interests of the Brahmins are responsible for the development of new deities, temples, and forms of worship, and this in turn helps integrate the community. As Durkheim (1915) might say, by having the deity represent the community and its concerns, and worshipping it, the community solidifies itself. The rest of the panchayat fines collected are shared among all the Nandiwallas, which is at least a small incentive for many to participate in the panchayat sessions and become involved in collective life. However, fines imposed on the Daundiwallas (the lowest sub-caste) are not collectively shared because they are the "impure" caste, one of many measures taken to separate pollution from purity and maintain hierarchical holism. But with the decline of support for religion-based, hierarchical divisions, and declining involvement of the guru, their community and the panchayat disintegrated.

Hayden notes that the democratic values surging up are disturbing to the functioning of the panchayat. He (p. 5) also notes, "It seems that the nomadic adaptation, which prevented recourse to state institutions, was the key feature in the preservation of these panchayats, for when these groups ceased being nomads their panchayats died." I wonder whether giving up nomadic life and becoming settled would necessarily involve the dissolution of the panchayat, considering the fact that settled people usually have well-developed panchayats. They also prefer to settle disputes peacefully among themselves, rather than taking them to the official system, which could cost money and time, and could cause shame. Furthermore, official outcomes are often unpredictable. Hayden, however, gives no other explanations for the disintegration of the group and the demise of the panchayat, except their becoming settled and the decline of the caste hierarchy and development of democratic ideals. In my view, an important reason for the disappearance of their panchayat might be their absorption into new and respectable (at least not demeaning) occupations that economic development has provided, especially in cities and towns. When the author revisited the research area in 1992, it is unclear whether he was able to locate the people, as they had apparently given up nomadic life, and had become settled elsewhere, but we are not told where. A good, brief explanation could have been given for the changes that have occurred. There is a lot of information available from other studies that could have suggested reasons for these changes, including findings my own recent publications (Vincentnathan 1992,

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1996; Vincentnathan and Vincentnathan 1994). Changes and improvements in the economy have especially diminished dependence on caste hierarchy; increased involvement of people in new occupations; reduced interaction with caste members; and dispersed people away from their home villages. I would suggest that as the frequent interactive relationships that the traditional occupations provided declined, and the new occupations promoted separation, individualism, and alienation from each other, the community withered away and so did its panchayat.

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Questioning Geopolitics: Political Projects in a Changing World System, Edited by Georgi M. Deruglian and Scott L. Greer. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers (2000), 264 pp.

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This collection of essays aims to find regularity and predictability in a changing world geopolitical system and, frankly, falls far short of its mark. There are at least three features of this particular book that “put me off”: its too liberal reliance on jargon; its apparent preoccupation with a “contemporary global crisis” that I was not aware existed; and its underdeveloped editorial organization. The problem of having to try to deal with a jargon with which, as an economist, I was totally unfamiliar – and the overuse of arcane words (the more arcane the better, apparently) – is a minor quibble. My other two concerns are not, for they affect the question of whether this is in fact a book, as opposed to a printing between covers of thirteen essentially unrelated essays.

There is a sense running through the book – which was written well before 11 September 2001 – that we were somehow in the throes of a “contemporary global crisis.” This would, I think have been news of a rather surprising sort to the majority of the world’s population who, at the time didn’t even know if we were in or moving into a first recession in over a decade. To be sure, a motley group of protesters had been doing their level best to disrupt meetings having to do with the international economy for the past couple of years, most people were vaguely aware of potentially escalating threats from terrorists, and we confronted the familiar set of problems; but a global crisis? What were the authors and/or editors thinking about? And how broad a coterie of political scientists and other social scientists concerned with geopolitics and world-systems shared their opinion(s)?