

According to *The Gathering of all Precious Elements* ('Byung ba rin chen kun 'dus), which is the primary source enumerating the spirit lords of the soil, their most detailed enumeration comprises 1,000. However, when these are subdivided according to elements, spatial locations and their outer, inner, secret, and most secret aspects, their number is said to be infinite. In general, there are said to be 102 spirit lords who are ever-present, without reference to temporal fluctuations, and a further 474 directly associated with the years, months, days, and hours.

There are also other categories such as the "deities moving through the days of the month" (*tshes rgyu ba'i lha*) which determine the "greater black days" (*nyi ma nag chen*). One of these is the so-called "nine black omens occurring together" (*ngan pa dgu 'dzoms*) on the seventh day of the first spring month provoked by Rāhu circuiting mount Sumeru in an anti-clockwise direction. At that juncture, descending and ascending winds are reversed, horizontal winds are disturbed, the five elements are agitated, and the sunshine resembles aconite.

The movements of all these spirits is detailed in the *White Beryl*, together with a summary of the results of infringing their personal space and ritual remedies for such infringements. Fascinating stuff.

*Pastoral Politics: Shepherds, Bureaucrats, and Conservation in the Western Himalaya* by Vasant K. Saberwal. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-19-564308-9. 246 pp., maps, tables, index.

Reviewed by Ben Campbell

This fine Himalayan contribution to OUP's series on Social Ecology and Environmental History offers a well-researched investigation of conservation policy and its impact on Gaddi herders of Himachal Pradesh. Saberwal's aim is to demonstrate the interplay between scientific ecological discourse, institutional politics, and the effect of policy on communities and their livelihood practice. At the heart of his argument is the institutional rationale for the Forest Department's alarmist rhetoric of environmental degradation caused by overgrazing. Unlike studies of environmental history and politics, which project a monolithic view of the state, Saberwal manages to convey the insecurities of the Forestry Department in its historical relations of rivalry with the Revenue Department. He suggests that this rivalry accounts for the tone of alarm since the Forestry Department's establishment in 1865. He is at pains to

indicate that he is not in denial about ecological threats to the Himalayan landscape, but insists that the causes of degradation are poorly understood, that the evidence for pastoralists' blameworthiness is not convincing, and that a series of cultural stereotypes accompany the official distribution of ecological blame.

Chapter two introduces the herders and their problems of negotiating pasture over the yearly cycle of transhumance with sheep and goats from alpine grasslands down to winter forests. Saberwal spent several months of fieldwork mostly with villagers of Bara Bangahal in Kangra District, H.P. The ethnographic information on the herders is, however, scanty. Consideration is not given to the status of the category 'Gaddi', and it seems that other group terms prevail in local usage. The villagers are spoken of as belonging to a geographically restricted ethnic group called Kanet, who think of themselves as Rajputs. Nor is there any analysis of the highly gendered division of labour, for it seems that the women remain in villages while their menfolk attend to the animals. The reader is not given a view of Gaddi life in the round, and many aspects of this community's relationship to their environment are not discussed, such as knowledge of plants, domestic socialization into herding practices, extra-economic understandings of the landscape, etc, which would have been valuable to the book's questions about sustainability. The chapter concentrates instead on value-maximizing strategies of herding practice, which Saberwal argues have less to do with *de jure* rights to high and low pastures than with patterns of access dependent on a flexibility of kinship networks, labour availability, alliances with cultivator communities, and the ability to circumvent state regulation of foraging. The Gaddis are presented as successfully maintaining flocks that provide a reasonable income of around Rs 20,000 per year from an average number of one hundred animals. That they are able to do this is attributed to their mobilization of political support, and exploiting conflict between state departments.

This dimension is then explored in the remaining chapters of the book. Chapter three looks at the inception of the Forest Department, with its goal of protecting timber supply and preventing soil erosion. The Department expanded the area of forests under its control within the Punjab administration of the day in 1893 and again in 1906, competing against the Revenue Department's territories of influence. Correspondences from the time nicely illustrate the rivalries and jostlings over administrative hierarchies of command. Canal irrigation later led to a decrease of Forest Department holdings in the plains, while it maintained forests tracts in the mountainous regions of Eastern Punjab, including contemporary Himachal Pradesh, where the case for protecting soil and water sources was made.

Chapter four is entitled 'Circumvention and Negotiation', and gives an account of the methods and conditioning factors by which Himachali herders manage to avoid effectively most of the constraints on their activities entailed by forest regulation. They have according to Saberwal both under- and over-stated the numbers of their livestock to avoid taxes and to claim compensation respectively. Their facility in making local officialdom and political representatives operate in their interests leads Saberwal to suggest that Himachal's shepherds do not belong in the general characterization of pastoralists as marginal to structures of state power, though he admits his analysis has not explored the issue from an internal class perspective among the shepherds.

Saberwal takes issue with the influential thesis of Richard Grove, in his book *Green Imperialism*, that recognizably environmentalist concerns prompted the colonial Indian state's protection of forests. In chapter five records from the Forest Department are discussed to show the primarily economic justification for conservancy, fearful of reduced sources of fuel and timber. The specific case of the eroded condition of the Hoshiapur Siwaliks at the end of the nineteenth century was, Saberwal argues, strategically used by the Forest Department to extend arguments for the prevention of soil erosion elsewhere, but primarily on grounds of the commercial value of the timber rather than from conservationist concern.

A valuable contextualization of Indian forest policy within international debates on dessication is made in chapter six. The influence of American scientists on Indian foresters from the 1920s is presented, many of whom were deeply critical of theories suggesting tree cover acted as a sponge, preventing siltation of river courses. But by the 1930s, Saberwal argues, an alarmist rhetoric on the negative effects of deforestation had gained the ascendancy among foresters in India, who unlike in the USA, were not challenged by other scientists to prove the dessicationist case through adopting quantitative studies. Scientific uncertainty is further explored in an historical case study of the forestry records of the Uhl Valley in chapter seven. An explanatory model of erosion derived from conditions pertaining in the Siwaliks is shown to have been transplanted to the main Himalayan range, in order to justify exclusion of sheep and goats from the Uhl Valley in the 1940s, with the purpose of controlling water flow to the hydro-electric plant downstream.

Saberwal uses important arguments from international research on strategies of livestock management in chapter eight to expose the cultural underpinnings of forest policy attitudes to pastoralists in general. He quotes from reports on grazing issues in Himachal in the 1950s to demonstrate the persistence of nineteenth century evolutionist prejudices against all forms

of subsistence except intensive settled agriculture. He argues that in the evaluation of 'degradation', inappropriate scientific models based on maximized production within ranching conditions have been used to assess Himalayan livestock raising. When multiple users and management objectives are involved, any one-dimensional criteria for reckoning degradation or carrying capacity become problematic.

The theoretical and concluding chapters attempt to go beyond analysis of peasant resistance to state resource control in terms of simple class opposition, and offer a view of the state as composed of competing institutional agendas of resource exploitation and conservation. Within these conflicting mandates the Himachali shepherds have managed successfully to negotiate room for continuing their livelihoods, using relationships of kinship, patronage, and financial payment to ensure *de facto* access to grazing. Saberwal stresses the institutional pressure for the Forest Department to stick with a version of land-user causality in environmental degradation that has not acknowledged the uncertainty of the science it selectively uses.

*Pastoral Politics* is a consistently well-argued and valuable engagement with the increasingly sophisticated debates on Himalayan environmental history. Its primary perspective is, though, the identification of partial uses of scientific theory by strategically embattled, and culturally embedded, state institutions. The possibility that Gaddi herders may have valuable longitudinal knowledge of ecological system dynamics that could feed in to scientific research is raised at the end of the book, but unfortunately not demonstrated. Their local knowledge and perception of their role in shaping the Himalayan environment remain in the realm of uncertainty.

*Ethnizität und Nationale Integration in Nepal: Eine Untersuchung zur Politisierung der Ethnischen Gruppen im Modernen Nepal*, by Karl-Heinz Krämer. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag (Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung, Südasiens-Institut, Universität Heidelberg), 1996. ISBN 3-515-06937-2, 474 pp., 7 appendices, glossary, index, bibliography, summary in English.

Reviewed by David N. Gellner

If all books are the product of their time, this one, it is now clear, is very much the product of the early 1990s. The new constitution promulgated at the end of 1990 gave a wholly unprecedented degree of recognition to ethnic