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# State Formation in Community Spaces? Decentralization of Control over Forests in the Kumaon Himalaya, India

ARUN AGRAWAL

To reflect upon history is also, inextricably, to reflect upon power.

Guy Debord ([1967] 1994)

In the early part of this century, 1916 and 1921 were especially dry years in the Kumaon region of the Indian Himalaya. In each of these years, forest fires racked the countryside, burning beyond the power of the colonial British government to control or extinguish. It was not just the dry weather that was to blame. Villagers in Kumaon set the forest on fire; the dry weather merely helped their efforts along. The containment of this “planned incendiaryism” was one of the main planks of the scientific forestry that the colonial state<sup>1</sup> had begun to introduce in the hills in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and especially from around 1910.<sup>2</sup>

For the hill residents who relied on a mixture of livestock rearing and agriculture, and for many of whom fire encouraged the production of fresh grasses, government attempts to prevent firing were always to remain a “source of complaint” (Smythies

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<sup>1</sup>Later in the paper, I will find reason to examine briefly the notion of “the colonial state,” at least in relation to interdepartmental rivalries within the state, but for the moment I use the phrase without an indication of its fraught nature. Some recent writings have also examined issues of periodization and internal division in relation to the colonial state in the Indian Himalaya (Rangan 2000; Saberwal 2000).

<sup>2</sup>Two other elements that the Forest Department saw as crucial in its attempts to inscribe scientific forestry in Kumaon were (a) prevention of grazing, and (b) stopping villagers from lopping trees for fodder or fuelwood.

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1911, 59). In 1916 close to 200,000 acres of forest in Kumaon Circle were burnt in 441 separate fires, and 282 of these were counted as intentional.<sup>3</sup> To “voice” their social protest, villagers set fire again and again in some places. In Airadeo, for example, fires continued for three days and two nights, and “new fires were started time after time, directly a counter-firing line was successfully completed” (Champion 1919, 358). For 1921 the relevant figures are even higher. The area of forests that was fired rose to 272,000 acres. Of the 819 offences that were detected, 395 were known to be incendiary (Guha 1989, 52, 107, 116).

These were just the fire-related offences. The total number of forest-related infractions in Kumaon was far higher. The new regulations introduced under the auspices of the colonial government, and designed and implemented by its Forest Department, made illegal a range of what might be called customary uses of forests.<sup>4</sup> The protests that ensued signaled how important forests were in the hill economy. The role of forests in the economy continues even today to be significant. Despite better transport, high levels of emigration, and increasing market pressures, a significant proportion of villagers’ needs for fodder, fuelwood, subsistence timber, and some medicines is met from surrounding forests.<sup>5</sup> In the early part of the century, villagers must have depended on forests to an even greater extent. It is not surprising that when some of these everyday livelihood activities were rendered illegal as a result of new laws, rural residents articulated their unwillingness to accept the draconian laws in forms that ranged from the strikingly visible, as in fires, to the far more difficult to detect, such as continued use of fodder and firewood.

The enforcement machinery of the state, institutionalized in the shape of the Forest Department, detected a huge number of breaches of forest law. Figure 1 graphically depicts the information for some of the early years of the century. In this same period, the number of people employed by the Forest Department also rose dramatically: between 1911 and 1921, permanent employees in the Forest Department increased from thirty-five to nearly one hundred (KFGC 1921). The growth in the number of rule violations and convictions between 1911 and 1933 can thus be seen, at least in part, as a result of the higher levels of enforcement made possible by a larger workforce.

Even more striking than the relatively small rise overall in cases and convictions from 1911 to 1931, however, is the conspicuous increase in forest-related convictions between 1911 and 1921 and then the equally rapid fall by 1933. Even with missing information for some of the intervening years, this rise and fall is visible in Figure 1 as a rough inverted “v.” By 1926–27, it is evident that the number of cases and convictions had come down to more or less their pre-1912–13 levels. This paper uses the rise and fall in the level of rule infractions as indexed in the available records and the provisional explanation of this rise and fall as its point of departure. The decline

<sup>3</sup>The terms “planned” and “intentional” refer simply to the perceptions of Forest Department officials that the fire in question was a protest against the state.

<sup>4</sup>“Custom” and “customary” are fraught terms in the wake of arguments about “inventions of traditions.” I use them mainly to signal that the new laws paid little attention to how forests were connected to rural livelihoods. Their passage was motivated mainly by a concern to raise state revenues and resulted in a legal framework that restricted and restructured prevailing livelihood practices.

<sup>5</sup>Data collected from twenty-eight villages where I conducted field work in 1989–90, 1992, and 1993 show that local forests provide villagers with approximately 28 percent of their fodder requirements, 62 percent of needed fuelwood, and 39 percent of construction timber.

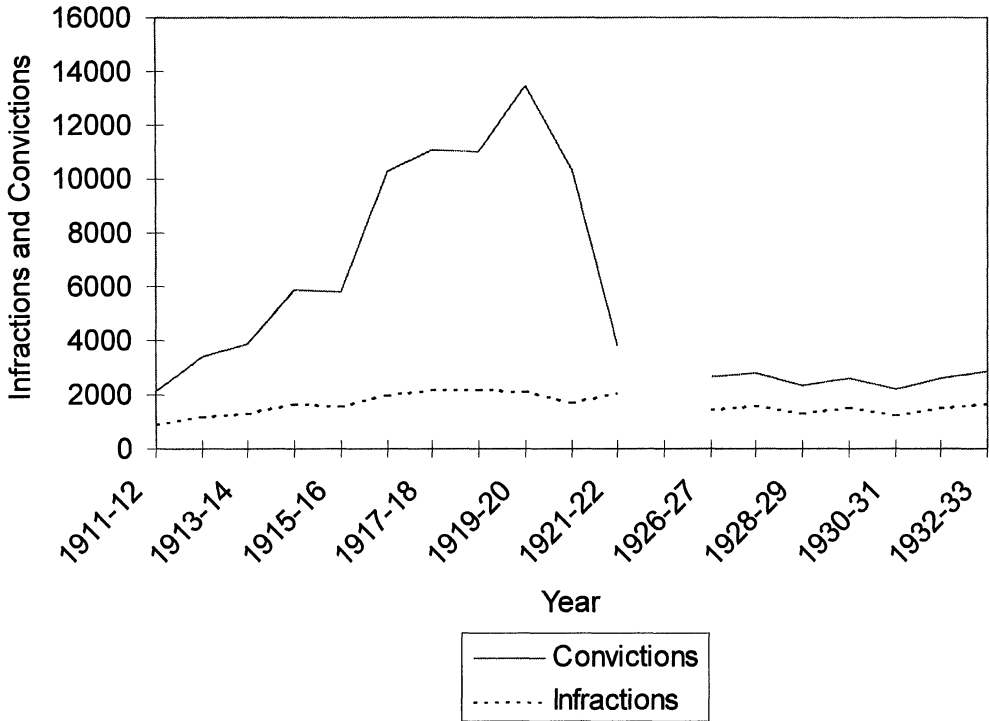


Figure 1. Infractions of Forest Laws and Convictions, Kumaon, 1911–33.

in the cases and convictions, beginning roughly in 1922, signals a profound shift in the character of control over forests in Kumaon. If the modern state can be seen as a “principle of organization” (Lloyd and Thomas 1998, 3), then the nature of this principle began to change in the 1920s in Kumaon. The change continues to mature today, fueled by the resources contained in close to 4,000 square kilometers of forests that villagers have come to control. But the transfer of control over forests to villagers has served the interests of the state as well as those of rural Kumaoni residents. Few fires in Kumaon today can be seen as “planned incendiarism.” The idiom of participatory management that animates much discourse on environment and development (and some state policy-making) has come partially to inform the use and management of forests in Kumaon.<sup>6</sup> And along the way, Kumaon villagers’ collective identities, the infusion of power into the procedures of forest use, and the nature of state authority have registered their own transformations.

For these reasons, the 1920s constitute an important decade in the history of forest use in Kumaon. The government appointed the Kumaon Forest Grievances Committee (KFGC) in 1921 to examine the continuing protests of villagers against new regulations. Some of its recommendations to change the relations of forest management in Kumaon took into account the most pressing demands posed through the protests. It is not a coincidence that 1921–22, the years that saw the appointment of the KFGC and the implementation of some of its recommendations, are also the

<sup>6</sup>For a discussion of some of the recognition by colonial states to strike a balance between conservation and other aspirations of state-formation, see Bryant and Bailey 1997, Peluso 1992.

years that mark a reduction in the levels of violence. The relaxation of state control over forests coincided with the diminution of infractions related to forest laws.

The paper traces and shows how some of the imperatives of forest management by the state in the early twentieth century have wormed their way into current efforts at management of forests by communities.<sup>7</sup> The landscape and discourse of resource management in Kumaon prefigures, admittedly in an analogical rather than a causal sense, many recent idioms of community-based conservation. The seventy-year history of decentralized forest management in Kumaon, where everyday practices around forest use bear the mark of state-facilitated local institutions, intersects unexpectedly with more recent efforts to bring community to the fore of conservation. The importance of the role of community is evident from the fact that more than fifty countries claim to be working toward greater participation of localities in resource management and control (FAO 1999). In India alone, Forest Department officials claim that the widely hailed Joint Forest Management Program has led to partnerships between the state and more than 23,000 forest protection committees, helping both manage 18 percent of India's forests more effectively (Neeraj Kumar, personal communication, July 2000). In describing and thinking historically about some of the practices of forest control in Kumaon, this article provides a means to reflect critically on the more recent efforts.

The description of how villagers manage forests in Kumaon through the constitution of forest councils would be incomplete if it were to remain occupied only with a consideration of efficiency and equity, or an enumeration of rules and infractions, or attention to compliance and resistance.<sup>8</sup> An attention to these, to the decentralization and bureaucratization of resource use, is crucial to understanding changes in the nature of control. State formation in this context can be seen to correspond to activities that contribute to the formalization and systematization of social action and, in so doing, consolidate or complicate the division between states and societies.<sup>9</sup> It would include (a) the creation of new rules to define the limits of

<sup>7</sup>Although I sprinkle terms such as "local," "community," and "state" liberally throughout the paper, without an insistent attention initially to their problematic status, it should be evident that the tone of the paper is oriented to recognizing their fraught status. In examining the multiple interconnections of the putatively local community with "states" and "markets" and "external" forces, the arguments in the paper contribute to highlighting the complex sociality and strategies of territorialization that go into the construction of the local (Appadurai 1996; Barbesino 1997; Brenner 1998; Raffles 1999). See also Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal 1998 for an effort to move away from the local / global dichotomy in relation to strategies of spatialization.

<sup>8</sup>An immense literature on community-based resource management examines each of these three themes. Considerations of efficiency have received perhaps the greatest attention in the valuable work of resource economists who have written about different institutional forms for managing common resources (Cheung 1970; Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop 1975; Dasgupta and Heal 1979; Gordon 1954). In recent years, of course, "sustainability" has emerged as a third goal with the existing ones of equity and efficiency (Redclift 1987). The literature from scholars of common property has been perhaps the most careful in examining property as rules and rights. Scholars of commons have shown how human actions are shaped by the creation of new rules of resource management. Ostrom (1990) remains the seminal text on the subject. For an introduction and insightful treatment of the nature of resistance and compliance, there is still no better text than Scott's (1985) magisterial ethnography of Sedaka.

<sup>9</sup>I do not enter into a discussion of the vast literature that engages the issue of state autonomy and state-society relations. Some representative accounts are available in Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol (1985); Jessop (1990); Migdal (1988); Migdal, Kohli, and Shue (1994).

what is permissible, (b) the institution of organizational structures to enforce such rules, and (c) the incorporation and undermining of alternative loci for the exercise of power. State officials, in consequence, increasingly become the interpreters and enforcers of what is permissible as state-making proceeds apace.<sup>10</sup>

But such a Weberian perspective on the systematization of forest-use practices must be supplemented. State formation proceeds in part by coercion but in at least equal measure by local initiative, by the willing participation of those over whom new forms of state power come to hold sway (Corrigan and Sayer 1985). In this paper, the supplement takes the form of an argument about how the changing nature of control depends on changing strategies of power and relationships between state and community actors.<sup>11</sup> In the process, the interests of the state and of community, and even what we understand as state and community, come to be redefined as well. At the same time, an understanding of the reciprocal reconstructions of state authority in new domains and the willingness of rural subjects to redefine their identities in relation to state projects can fruitfully be elaborated by looking at something that is often seen as rather mundane: how problems of local implementation and enforcement are solved.

In examining problems of local implementation and their impact on humans, who are always located in unequal relations of power, this paper follows Foucault's insight that the exercise of power is "a way in which certain actions may structure the field of other possible actions" (1982, 222). Rather than seeing institutions as separate from social networks (cf. Foucault 1982, 224), however, I treat them as part of, and closely tied to, existing networks of social relations. They are congealed relations of power, but they are also a prompt to action, a goad to new configurations of power. Thus, institutions are as much the locus and object of power struggles as they are supplementary structures above society (Foucault 1982, 222).

The theoretical arguments in the paper are based on an examination of strategies that state actors followed to extend their control over forests and the efforts of villagers to reassert their control over forests: factors that proved instrumental in the birth process of the forest councils and in shaping the relationships among different state actors, council members, ordinary villagers, and forests. The creation of the councils, discussed in the section that follows, can be taken as a landmark in the changing rationalities of rule and definitions of interests and strategies that different state and local community actors count as significant. An analysis of the operation of the councils and of the relationship of community managers with their village constituents and state actors occupies the next two sections. These sections contain the groundwork that demonstrates the emergence of new interests and alliances among state and community actors. They are also the basis for the final section of the paper, which shows how some of the earlier interests of state and local actors came together, some

<sup>10</sup>The extension of rules, or the incorporation of territories through such rules into state formations, is not necessarily a threat. But see Brow, who argues that development in Sri Lanka incorporates villages into regional and national circuits of power and exchange: "Various social practices that had served to mark the inhabitants of the same village as members of a distinct community were under threat while others had already been abandoned" (1996, 6).

<sup>11</sup>An important aspect of the changes in the forms of power and identity is related to the strategies of spatialization that have been worked out in Kumaon over the course of the eight decades following the appointment of the KFGC. Observations on place-related identities that insist upon questioning the ideas of stability and harmony often associated with community are especially valuable in this regard (Carter, Donald, and Squires 1993, xiv; Massey 1994; Rose 1997).

were redefined, and still others came into sharper relief and opposition. The dispersal of state control to communities and the internalization of rule by villagers is directly tied to the strategies of management that the councils have crafted over the past seven decades.

## The History of Changing Forest Regulations in Kumaon

The causes for the increasing number of infractions of forest laws after 1911, even if they are not specifically demonstrated, have been reasonably well established by Guha (1989). Between 1911 and 1917, the Forest Department transferred more than 3,000 square miles of forests to the Imperial Forest Department in greater Kumaon (KFGC 1921), of which nearly 1,000 square miles were located in the three present-day districts of Kumaon: Nainital, Almora, and Pithoragarh.<sup>12</sup> The colonial state had made a number of inroads between 1815 and 1910 to curtail progressively the area of forests under the control of local communities and to use forests to extract timber for revenue. But its latest incursions raised the special ire of the villagers. Their grievances were particularly acute because of the elaborate new rules that specified strict restrictions on lopping and grazing rights, restricted use of non-timber forest products, prohibited the extension of cultivation, enhanced the labor extracted from the villagers, and increased the number of forest guards. The last alteration raised the level and nature of friction between forest guards and the village women and children who harvested products from the forest.

Although government officials asserted that the new laws were never strictly enforced, the added restrictions whipped villagers into widespread protest. Villagers simply refused to accept the rules and the fundamental assumption undergirding them: that the state has a monopoly over all natural resources it deems significant. The best efforts of government officials failed to convince the villagers that the forests belonged to the government. The officers who had designed the new land settlement had hoped that the residents of the hills “would gradually become accustomed to the rules as gazetted and that control may be tightened as years go on” (KFGC 1921, 2). But hill-dwellers dashed these sanguine hopes. Many of their actions were at an individual level, oriented to extracting forest products like fodder and fuelwood and grazing livestock. But the infractions also reveal an interesting pattern overall, showing the collusive and social nature of their protests. Between 1917 and 1921, the average number of individuals convicted of each detected infraction hovered between five and six. After 1926, the average dropped to fewer than two. Collectively organized breaches of forest law thus occurred far more often in the earlier period. Although I do not have access to testimony from villagers, their dissatisfaction is clear, as is the fact that their responses occur in a far more collective fashion in the earlier period than after 1926. In light of this observation, it is hard to accept the official suggestions that Kumaon villagers broke rules initially because they “never half understood the rules that were made and often had vague ideas of the entries within their rights lists” (KFGC 1921, 2). Villagers understood the rules and their implications only too well, and they acted collectively against the rules, with all that

<sup>12</sup>Since I completed field work, the districts of Almora and Pithoragarh have had two new districts carved out of them: Bageshwar and Champawat.

such actions imply in terms of joint discussions and understandings and renegotiation of what should count as personal interest.

The incessant, often violent, protests forced the government to appoint the Kumaon Forest Grievances Committee to look into the local “disaffection.” Comprising government officials and local political leaders,<sup>13</sup> the Committee examined more than five thousand witnesses from all parts of Kumaon. It used the resulting evidence to make nearly thirty recommendations. The Committee felt that many of the protests villagers made were simply a result of unenforceable rules that interfered directly with actions of villagers aimed at securing a livelihood. It advocated the repeal of all restrictions on lopping of fodder from oak trees, the main source of food for livestock in the winter season, and on grazing of livestock in the forest. These two sets of restrictions were responsible for most of the breaches of forest laws.

The Committee also recognized the social power dynamics surrounding the enforcement of the new laws when an agent of the state, such as a forest guard, was empowered to cite villagers for actions that constituted for them no more than everyday use of the forests but were seen as infractions under the law. In such a situation, not only would a large number of guards be needed to enforce the law, but the enforcement itself would promote dissatisfaction among those being cited. As the Committee observed, “any attempt to strictly enforce these rules would lead to riot and bloodshed” (KFGC 1921, 3). The rules also created opportunities for guards to extract bribes for minor infractions. The Committee suggested that Forest Department employees would be prevented from harassing villagers, especially where women and children were involved, if they guarded only a smaller area of forest and if they were kept busy in other departmental work.<sup>14</sup>

The most significant suggestions of the Committee were twofold: (1) dereserve the larger part of the newly created Reserved Forests between 1911 and 1917, and (2) lay the foundations for creating community forests that would be managed under a broad set of rules framed by the government, but for which villagers themselves would craft the specific rules for everyday use to fit local conditions. The government took both these recommendations seriously. Initially, it reclassified Reserved Forests that had been taken over by the Forest Department between 1911 and 1917 into Class I and Class II forests. Class I Reserved Forests contained broad-leaved tree species used primarily for fodder and fuel by villagers. Class I forests often comprised smaller patches of forests (less than one or two square miles) located close to the village. All these forests were transferred to the Revenue Department and, in time, could come to be controlled by villagers by following a specific procedure as described in the 1931 Forest Panchayat Rules. Class II Reserved Forests were those stocked with commercially more valuable species. These included Chir (*Pinus roxburghii*), Sal (*Shorea robusta*), Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*), and Cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*). Class II forests were retained under the control of the Forest Department.

<sup>13</sup>Initially, the Committee had three members: the District Commissioner of Kumaon, the Member of the Legislative Council from Garhwal, and a Conservator from the Forest Service. An additional member, the chairman of the Municipal Board from Almora, was also appointed as a representative of the region (KFGC 1921).

<sup>14</sup>That rules and new programs can often be the stage at which corrupt practices are enacted behind the curtain is thoughtfully described for a plains village in India (Gupta 1995). Although Gupta is less interested in providing a causal analysis of corruption, his arguments throw significant light on the relationship between a discursively produced state, discussions of corruption as they become current in the public sphere, and the effects on the lives of villagers.



The government also passed the Forest Council Rules of 1931. These rules permitted village residents to create forest councils and bring under their own control forest lands that had been transferred to the Revenue Department as Class I Reserved Forests and Civil Forests. This step can be seen, in some cases, as the formalization of village institutions that had influenced the use of many forests in the Kumaon Hills before 1910 (Somanathan 1991). Where these informal local institutions had existed, they had been critical in influencing how villagers used forests. Institutional limits on harvesting from the forest were enforced by villagers themselves without much help from the state. The Forest Council Rules have been modified twice since their formation: once in 1971 and again in 1976. The provisions of the Rules are currently once more under consideration for revision.

The actions of the British colonial state fly against the grain of claims that assert a steady atomization of village communities under the impact of scientific forestry and capitalist development led by the colonial state (Guha 1989, 55; cf. Grove 1995). The actual process is somewhat more complex. At least in Kumaon, state officials redefined the forms of intervention and renegotiated the terms of their interactions with villagers by taking into account the context of interventions. States may, in general, be oriented to systematize and mold the world according to principles that simplify social organization and make it more predictable (Scott 1998). But where state actions run into unexpected obstacles, or where subject populations respond vociferously against cumbersome legal encroachments, state officials can also create innovative new forms of control through decentralized enforcement. Even if decentralized forms of control do not rely on coercive enforcement and systematic simplification, the effects may match state objectives of greater order and predictability.

The colonial government's efforts to establish forest councils parallel recent environment-related initiatives in a large number of countries (FAO 1999). Pressures resulting from a fiscal crunch, advocacy by national Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and international donors, and the inability of states to regulate resource use coercively have led many governments to devolve control over resources toward local communities in a manner resembling what occurred in Kumaon (Gibson and Marks 1995; Kothari *et al.* 1998; Poffenberger and McGeen 1996; Western and Wright 1994). The ostensible reasons for such incorporation are also stated to be greater participation and involvement of communities in the management of resources, as they were in Kumaon. But as localities are drawn into networks of power regulated by the state, new political relationships between state officials and local actors, and among local actors, also emerge.

In the case of forest management in Kumaon at least, the colonial state seems to have stepped back, but only to jump better. It redefined its intervention by refining the terms of control. The division of forests into two categories—Class I / Civil Forests under the control of the Revenue Department and Class II Forests under the control of the Forest Department—should be interpreted to signify the outcome of two processes. The first is the departmental rivalry that was sparked into being by the creation of the Forest Department in 1868 and by the passing of a huge swathe of territory under its control in the name of the protection of forests.<sup>15</sup> The increasing

<sup>15</sup>The history of this struggle in Kumaon can be read in Shrivastava (1996). Examinations of such conflicts in neighboring Himachal Pradesh (Saberwal 1997) and in the more distant Bengal (Sivaramakrishnan 1996) are also available. Some of the ideas that provided Forest Department personnel the founding logic of arguments against deforestation are carefully and persuasively historicized in Richard Grove's work (1994, 1995).

control of the Forest Department over vast stretches of land, and the revenues it generated by auctioning timber from the lands under its control, rivaled and outgrew the revenues from land.<sup>16</sup> The transfer of all the Class I forests to the Revenue Department was the outcome of a bureaucratic struggle that was in part resolved against the interests of the Forest Department. It was only a partial victory for the Revenue Department, however, because the Forest Department still kept the more densely wooded tracts under its own purview as Class II Reserved Forests.

The second aspect of the redefinition of land rights is that over time a significant proportion of the forested land in Kumaon has come to be managed by villagers. As Table 1 shows, villagers manage nearly 70 percent of forests in Almora and 30 percent in Pithoragarh. These are the same forests that the Forest Department sought to take over between 1910 and 1916. The control exercised by villagers unfolds, however, in ways that match the objectives of state officials. Many of the types of regulations that the colonial state had wanted to enforce are now crafted and implemented by villagers. This new way of administering forest regulations is not only more effective but has also simultaneously led to a tremendous reduction in the expenses incurred by the Forest Department on enforcement. A large number of forest-management organizations at the village level—forest councils—have come into being over the last seventy years to help state officials protect forests. But their authority over local forests is only a corollary of state claims. Indeed, the village-based forest-management processes in Kumaon may even be seen as expressions of state authority. To evaluate this claim, consider how forest councils in Kumaon manage forests.

### Institutional Landscapes of Collective Forest Management in Kumaon

Nearly three thousand forest councils today formally manage and control about a quarter of the forests in the three districts of Kumaon (Nainital, Almora, and Pithoragarh). Most of these councils are single-village councils, and thus a significant proportion of Kumaon villages, nearly 25 percent, has chosen to create forest councils. Table 1 presents information on the forest area under different forms of institutional arrangements for forests in Almora and Pithoragarh.<sup>17</sup> The broad parameters that define the formal management practices of the forest councils are laid out in the Forest Council Rules of 1931, as amended in 1976 (Ballabh and Singh 1988). These rules form the state-defined limits of local autonomy. Villagers cannot clear-fell the forest, they cannot impose fines beyond a specified amount (and only with the consent of the person being fined), they can raise revenues only through certain limited sources, they

<sup>16</sup>While doing field work in 1990–91, and then again in 1993, I stayed often in Forest Rest Houses, constructed in the earlier years of the twentieth century. In the more remote locations, these were among the only marks of state authority, located amidst some of the most striking landscapes and providing unparalleled views of the Himalayan peaks. Architecturally distinct from more recent government constructions, these earlier buildings, with their fireplaces, high ceilings, rugs, and leaky roofs, recalled a period when the Forest Department enjoyed greater relative significance than today in the administration of Kumaon's land-based resources.

<sup>17</sup>Although Nainital is one of the three districts in Kumaon, it has only a few forest councils (approximately two hundred in comparison to nearly three thousand in Almora and Pithoragarh). Only a small proportion of Nainital is hilly, and the forest councils exist only in the hilly parts of Kumaon.

Table 1. Forests in Kumaon

	Name of District			
	Almora		Pithoragarh	
	Area	Percent of Total Forest	Area	Percent of Total Forest
Institutional Arrangement				
Forest Department	550	13	1401	42
Revenue Department	423	10	534	16
Village Control	2959	70	1001	30
Private	296	7	400	12

Note: Figures for area are in square kilometers.

Source: District Collectorate Records in Almora and Pithoragarh.

must take recourse to established legal procedures to resolve conflicts, and so on. Where conflicts over interpretation and application of rules spill over into formal channels of dispute resolution underwritten by the Indian state (district and provincial revenue/judicial authorities), serious losses become unavoidable. For example, if parties to a dispute take their quarrel to district or state courts, the case may drag on for decades without being resolved.

The Forest Council Rules, like all rules, are interpreted diversely by those they are supposed to govern, the varying interpretations forming the foundation of many different actions. Consider one example. The modified Rules of 1976 sought to restrict the ability of villagers to harvest live trees for timber. Where the 1931 Rules permitted villagers to cut trees, the 1976 Rules explicitly forbade anyone from cutting more than one live tree without prior permission from three different government officials: the District Collector, the Conservator of Forests, and the Divisional Forest Officer. In 1978 the villagers in Majhkhali began to seek permission from the District Collector to cut fourteen Chir (*Pinus roxburghii*) trees for timber to repair homes. Council records indicate that for nearly three years the villagers continued to pursue the matter formally. Their repeated applications to the Revenue and Forest Department officials received no response. Ultimately, the villagers gave up. In the minutes of council meetings for 1982, two entries attract notice. The first indicates that a winter ice storm felled fourteen Chir trees. The second was a resolution by the council members to use the fourteen fallen and “dead” trees to repair dwellings in the village!

Collectively, the Rules constitute more of a framework for the management of forests rather than a straitjacket that defines local forest-management practices. Rural residents, through their elected forest councils, possess substantial powers to create concrete restrictions to prevent certain types of forest use and facilitate others. Villagers vote to elect between five and nine council members and the council leader from among village residents. The council in many of the villages meets frequently, its members discuss, craft, and modify specific rules that will govern withdrawal of forest products, and it creates monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms in an effort to enforce the rules it has crafted as well as the Forest Council Rules framed by the government. The allocative effects of rules range from being more or less equitable to extreme inequality in the distribution of forest products. The council selects guards, fines rule-breakers, manages finances, and maintains a record of its meetings, accounts, and local rule infractions. In many of the cases, the guard selected by the council is

paid by contributions from the village households. The council has other sources of income as well and usually deploys its net earnings toward public activities such as construction of school buildings, religious celebrations, or purchase of collectively used utensils.<sup>18</sup>

Councils enjoy obvious leeway in defining how to manage local forests. The limits of this range, however, are often brought into display. These limits are exposed in the normalized means of control through which the Revenue and Forest Departments articulate with the councils. But they are even more strikingly visible when recalcitrant villagers do not observe some of the more basic principles upon which the councils are founded: the authority of the councils to impose fines or the demarcation of the land on which council forests are located.

The Forest Council Rules provide for support to the councils from the Revenue and Forest Departments to facilitate rule enforcement and the maintenance of vegetation in the forests. The asymmetric authoritative exchanges within villages and between village residents and government officials are at once overlaid by informal relations of power and influence that written statements delineating the bounds of authority describe only imperfectly at best. Over the past sixty years, the relationship that has evolved between village users and the Forest and Revenue Departments has been one in which villagers and their councils have increasingly come to depend on government departments for activities related to the management of their forests.

The formation of the forest councils requires the presence of government officials from the Revenue Department and the formal transfer of land-management rights to the council. The forest over which rights and capacities to manage are to be transferred is mapped and registered with the *patwari* (the village-level Revenue Department official). Elections to the forest council are held under the supervision of the forest council inspector. The council is expected to meet regularly, keep records of meetings, and maintain accounts. The forest council inspector, who is under the control of the office of the district magistrate, is empowered to inspect all records maintained by the councils under his control.

Civil administration at the local level in the districts of Kumaon hinges upon the district magistrate—an office that melds together the tasks of collection of revenue, administration of justice, and the delivery of development. With the reorganization of the New Reserved Forests into Class I and Class II forests in 1931, and the transfer of all Class I forests to the Revenue Department, the district magistrate emerged as the most crucial official in the management of the forest councils, especially after the 1976 modifications in the Rules of 1931. The district magistrate is responsible for ensuring that the forest councils function in accordance with the provisions of the Rules. In Almora district, for example, the district magistrate is supposed to supervise the working of nearly two thousand forest councils. A number of officials assist him: the forest council officer (usually the sub-divisional magistrate, or SDM) at the *tehsil* subdivision level and two to three forest council inspectors in each subdivision. Sub-divisional magistrates supervise the activities of a number of forest council inspectors, who perform the nitty-gritty tasks of supervising elections to the forest council and the maintenance of registers, accounts, and minutes of meetings. Given the enormous burden such supervisory tasks impose on the inspector (about four hundred councils fall under the domain of each forest council inspector), and their limited resources, the inspections are perfunctory and spotty affairs. Forest council inspectors seldom

<sup>18</sup>Thus, they seem to meet many of the design principles that are characteristic of successful common property management institutions as discussed by Ostrom (1990).

manage to inspect more than fifty forest councils in a year. The ones inspected are usually the ones more accessible by road.

The forest councils do not possess the coercive authority to enforce the rules they create except by moving the judiciary. In cases of disputes with users, they must depend significantly, even exclusively, on prompt response from the officials of the Revenue Department, such as the *patwari*, or the forest council inspector. Thus, if a user refuses to pay the imposed fines, or continues to harvest benefits in infringement of existing rules, or encroaches upon the land demarcated as council forest, the councils do not possess the coercive powers necessary to bring such a recalcitrant user to book. Without quick and adequate support from the revenue officials, rule-breakers often continue using the forest in defiance of the forest councils' attempts at enforcement of rules. Officials in the Revenue Department who are supposed to help the councils must perform a host of other duties that most of them believe have priority over the tasks related to forest councils. For many forest councils then, one of the most severe problems is enforcement.

Whereas the Revenue Department officials underwrite the enforcement of rules, the Forest Department coordinates the commercial harvest of products from community forests and provides technical assistance to develop them. The Forest Council Rules stipulate that the Forest Department should prepare comprehensive working plans for all the forest councils. In practice, however, this rule has seldom been observed. As a result it has been under the impetus of the recent emphasis of the Indian government on tree plantation that the Civil & Soyam and the Soil Conservation wings of the Forest Department have undertaken some plantation on forest council land. Except for some very recent cases, in most instances the Forest Department has planted exotic species on community forestlands that have little subsistence value for villagers. Further, before the council can sell any of its timber or resin, it must seek approval from the relevant authorities in the Forest Department. Like the interactions with the Revenue Department officials, these can take a long time owing to other duties that receive greater priority. A request to cut even a few trees from the council forest can take up to two years before it is finally processed by Forest and Revenue Department officials.

This description of the institutional arrangements situates the forest councils as locally fixed partners in the management of forests, subordinate to the employees of the Forest and Revenue Departments. Their asymmetric relations with government officials cast the officials in the role of arbiters in cases of disputes between villagers and forest council officeholders. Their ability to exercise control over the use of forests, in the absence of authority to impose sanctions on rule-breakers, depends in large measure on the willingness of villagers to accord authority to councils. But forest users can also question and undermine the capacity of the councils. They can do so by showing an unwillingness to limit their harvests of forest resources. They also do so more explicitly by contesting the fines imposed by the councils. In each of these situations, the councils need to invoke the cooperation of government officials, simultaneously demonstrating their links to the state and their weaker position in this politico-managerial relationship.

### Forest Protection by Community Managers

In most of the forest councils, the basic rules for managing the forest and restricting villagers from using forest products are drafted within the first year or two

of the formation and election of the council. After that, the key activity of the council is the enforcement of rules to restrict the levels of forest products that are harvested. Many villagers agree that protection is necessary. In Dhanachuli, a village on the border of Almora and Nainital district, a villager used the heavy monsoons to make the point: "Do you see this rain? Do you see the crops in the fields? The rain can destroy the standing crop. But even if the weather were good, the crop can still get destroyed by thieves if there are no guards. It is the same with the forest. You plant a shrub, you give it water, you take care of it. But if you don't protect it, cattle can eat it. The forest is for us, but we have to take care of it, if we want it to be there for us."<sup>19</sup> Another villager, from Guniyalekh (located near Dhanachuli), pointed to the difficulties of enforcement in a meeting of the council: "Until we get the maps, legal recognition, marked boundaries [of the local forest], [the] council cannot work properly. The people from Dhar [a neighboring village] tell us that the forest is theirs. We should not enter it. So we can guard part of the forest, and we don't know which part [to guard]. Since 1984 when the *panchayat* was formed, we have been requesting the papers that show the proper limits so we can manage properly, protect our forest. But what can one do if the government does not even provide the papers?"<sup>20</sup> A second villager in the same meeting added, "Mister, this is Kaljug.<sup>21</sup> No one listens to authority. So we must get support from the government to make sure that villagers don't just chop down whatever they want."

Other villagers had different stories to tell. When asked how council rules could be enforced more effectively, one said, "Why should councils make rules to stop us from using grasses and wood from the forest? The forest is necessary for agriculture, for livestock, for home, for manure. Why should we not be able to use it?"<sup>22</sup> One of the women from Dhanachuli complained about the guards that the forest councils hire: "The wretched guard is always after us. He is worse than the forest [department] guard. At least the forest guard doesn't stop us from getting fuelwood, even from the Reserved Forest."<sup>23</sup> The members of the forest councils are more uniformly in favor of protection than the ordinary villagers. This is not surprising. Not only do the council members and leaders organize protection, but they are chiefly men and belong to the upper castes.<sup>24</sup>

The expressions of concern by some villagers and most of the officials of the forest councils are reflected in the different means councils have devised to protect their forests. In some of the villages, the duty of guarding the *panchayat* forest rotates from one household to another. Ghurkuna, a village with only lower-caste residents, followed this strategy of protection. Because it is a small village with relatively poor households, the council could not raise the necessary contributions from village households to hire a guard. But many of the villagers expressed an interest in protecting the forest from residents of other nearby villages. The duration of guard duty for each household can vary from a day to a week over the course of a year and

<sup>19</sup>Interview no. 2 with Shankar Ram, Tape 1, translated by Kiran Asher.

<sup>20</sup>Interview no. 13 with Bachi Singh, Tape 5, translated by Kiran Asher.

<sup>21</sup>In Indian mythology, Kaljug is the fourth and the final era before time resumes again to proceed through the same sequence of eras: Satjug, Treta, Dwapar, and then Kaljug. It is the time when *dharma* gives way to *adharma* and established authority fails.

<sup>22</sup>Interview no. 14 with Gauri Shankar, Tape 5, translated by Kiran Asher.

<sup>23</sup>Interview no. 3 with Gauri Devi, Tape 1, translated by Kiran Asher.

<sup>24</sup>Of the twenty-eight cases I studied, only one council had a woman as a member. In multicaste villages, *brahmins* and *rajputs* constituted the majority of the membership: 92 percent.

depends in large part on the size of the forest and the number of households in the village. Villages whose forests are large in relation to their households may allocate guard duty for only part of the year. In general, maintaining guard duty at least for the four winter months is essential. The frequency of rule infractions increases significantly in winter because the forest is often the most convenient or the only source of fodder and fuelwood in this season.

Although some councils rotate protection responsibilities among village households, this is not the most common option. Some households are chronically deficient in undertaking the patrols necessary to protect the forest, and it is easy for more infrequent free riders not to contribute their labor toward protection and not to be detected. There are two alternative options. Both involve hiring one or more guards. As the first option, the council can hire a guard, and village households then contribute a monthly or annual sum to defray the guard's salary. Direct payment from the households toward the guard's salary is customary when the council does not have independent sources of income or when its cash income is relatively low. Councils that earn income from the sale of forest products (fodder, epiphytes, grazing passes, or fuelwood bundles),<sup>25</sup> from membership fees from villagers, or through a share of the sale of commercial products that the Forest Department harvests from village forests, often hire guards directly. When a council deploys this second option, the guard's salary is paid from the general funds of the council.

The sentiments in favor of forest protection that some villagers expressed, and the means of protection that many of the councils have devised, in one sense only indicate the ubiquity of the actions that make forest protection a necessity as far as councils are concerned. The records maintained by the councils indicate that villagers break rules, often in large numbers. Conversations in the villages tell a similar story, even permitting the inference that actual levels of violations of rules prescribing forest use must be far higher than those detected by the council guards. Because councils seek to restrict the use of the same products whose use the Forest Department was trying to regulate earlier in the century, rule infractions are inevitable. Table 2 presents information on eight villages, based on the written records maintained by the village forest councils. The information in the table can be used to make several points, but I want to draw attention to two. First, there is a close relationship between a forest council's expenditure on hiring a guard and the number of rule infractions listed in council records. Second, the level of rule violations seems to be very high.

The figures in the table make it obvious that village residents routinely break rules created by the forest councils. The above information is from a subset of all the forest councils that maintained records from among the twenty-eight villages I studied. Several (about ten) councils did not maintain regular records. Nor did they hold meetings often. But where records were kept, and where councils tried to enforce their rules, rule-breaking is endemic. Minor infractions occurred almost daily. Villagers entered the forest when it was closed to them, cut grasses and leaf fodder in excess of what was permitted, gathered fuelwood, grazed animals, collected stones and slate for house construction, and sometimes felled trees.<sup>26</sup> The seeming paradox

<sup>25</sup>In almost all the cases, forest councils sell forest products only to village residents. The practice is formalized even in the term used to describe those who can buy forest products: *baqdar*, an Urdu word meaning "rightholder."

<sup>26</sup>Again, these offences are very similar to those Guha (1989) describes for the period 1917–33. The main difference is in the extent to which villagers used fire to protest against the regulations imposed by the colonial state. In present-day Kumaon, few villagers resort to this means of regulating fodder production or protesting against the regulations imposed by the forest councils.

Table 2. Detection of Rule Infractions by Forest Council Guards in Kumaon: 1977–1992<sup>1</sup>

Name of village	Number of meetings held per year	Average annual amount spent on protection (in Rs.)	Average annual number of detected rule infractions
Airadi	3	790	32
Banua	6	2835	156
Bhagartola	10	3100	192
Ladfoda	3	2840	121
Miraini	8	832	62
Lohathal	4	1850	109
Nagilagaon	5	2500	89
Tagnua	4	175	8

Source: Forest Council records at the village level; data collected during fieldwork, 1990–1993

<sup>1</sup>The figures are for seven years selected at random from the records maintained by the forest councils.

of “the higher the protection effort, the higher the rule violations” is easily explained. Villagers also break rules in the villages where there are no guards, or where guards do not report rule violations (and as a result, the council records do not contain information about rule violations). But either the forest councils in such villages make little effort to protect the forest or enforce the rules, or they have few resources at their disposal to enforce rules. Thus, it is not surprising that the councils that spend the higher amounts on protection seem also to have higher instances of villagers illegally using products from the forest.

In the eight villages for which I studied local records, the average number of rule violations is nearly ninety per year. This is almost certainly a gross underestimate. None of the village forest councils perfectly detects residents’ actions in the forests. Whether the councils attempt to deploy mutual monitoring or hire guards, most of the actions of villagers in the forest remain hidden from the view of the council (even if many are visible to villagers). In Bhagartola, the teashop owner, who himself relies on firewood from the forest to keep his stove going, said as much when he described how the world works: “To what extent can you keep watch over the forest? Nowadays even one’s own property is not safe if your eyes are not on it twenty-four hours. The forest is big, and there is just one guard. How far can he make rounds of the forest?”<sup>27</sup> Although there is no way to know for sure, conversations with the villagers left a general impression that the councils detect no more than 20 percent of all rule-violating behavior.

The eight villages in the table vary in size, in the amount of forest they manage, in proximity to markets, and in levels of out-migration. As a group, they are not visibly different from other villages in the hills. If the figures for these eight villages resemble what happens in villages in Kumaon in general, the total number of

<sup>27</sup>Such sentiments stand in sharp contrast, of course, to other expressed idioms in which villagers indicate that everyone knows what happens in a village. The point is that it is almost impossible to catch someone in the act as they are taking out fodder or firewood, even if there is a general awareness of how specific individuals act. In other studies of village life or life in small groups, it is a commonplace that members know a great deal about those with whom they interact frequently (Agrawal 1997a).



infractions in a year is striking. For the twelve thousand or so villages in the three districts of Kumaon, even the detected rule violations will add up to more than a million instances of rule breaking annually. And this may be only 10 to 20 percent of all rule violations!

Compare this figure with the performance of the Forest Department that Guha reports from the earlier part of the century. The Forest Department detected around twenty-five hundred rule violations and convicted about ten thousand persons each year at the peak of protests against its attempts to take over Kumaon forests. Even if one takes into account the fourfold population increase that has occurred in Kumaon since the early part of this century, enforcement by the Forest Department was far more imperfect. To achieve even this imperfect regulation of village life, the Forest Department had to increase its size and expenses significantly. This drastic increase in department efforts to protect and police forests resulted in widespread protests throughout the region. The policy of indirect policing, even internal policing, emerged from that failed experience of trying to extend direct control. By dividing its forest holdings into two different groups (Class I and Class II forests) and allowing villagers to take over the management of the more scattered forests that are also more critical for daily subsistence related to cooking, livestock raising, and agriculture, the Forest Department enabled the emergence of a new form of systematic regulation. The costs of controlling and managing these nearly three thousand scattered patches of vegetation were, are, and will be prohibitive for the Forest Department. The attenuation of what property rights theorists would call ownership has, however, reduced the cost of policing vegetation by displacing them onto the villagers themselves.

In conjoining policy with policing, I refer explicitly to Foucault's suggestive observations that see policy as "the set of means necessary to make the state increase from within." Political economy itself develops when it becomes clear that the "resources-population problem can no longer be fully managed through a coercive regulatory system . . ." (Foucault [1994] 1997, 69–70). It was precisely this realization that led to the appointment of the Kumaon Forest Grievances Committee in 1921 and the passing of the Forest Council Rules in 1931. In contrast to the earlier efforts of the state to exclude villagers from forests—deemed state property and monopoly—the new regulations mark a somewhat different strategy to deploy power to manage resources. They depend on the emergence and cultivation of the sense among village elite that the local forests are theirs. Archival records from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the colonial government was still attempting to take over the bulk of Kumaon forests, show that a common complaint of Forest Department officials was that it was nearly impossible to catch villagers who broke rules because they refused to inform on each other. Even village headmen, who were supposed to prevent forest-related infractions, were unreliable (Shrivastava 1996, 168–88). In contrast, village council leaders today complain that government officials do not provide them sufficient support in apprehending those who break council rules.

The handing over of local forests to villagers and their conversion into council-managed forests has wrought a remarkable transformation in the character of local rules. The new regulations penetrate deeper into existing social relations in villages and create multiple channels of engagement between state officials and village residents. But not all these engagements are conflictual. Instead, some villagers (those who are officials in the forest councils) come to redefine their interests as consonant with those of the Forest and Revenue Departments. Even while they and their families remain forest users, they become the agents of state-facilitated protection within the

village. Another group of villagers (forest users) continues to be defined as the opponents of protection. Especially prominent in this redefinition of protectors and users, official conservers and incorrigible harvesters, are women and lower-caste villagers (see next section). The locus of the conflict between management and use shifts. It is no longer between formally employed state officials and village residents. Instead, it resides within the village, even if its life depends ultimately on the sanctions available from the state. Its characteristic feature becomes consent, even if this consent is ultimately founded on the threat of coercion. Its chief instrument remains power, but it is power exercised through numerous localized points of engagement. Reshaping of individual actions is still its principal aim, but it is to be accomplished by making the villagers responsible for management and thereby aware of the need for protection. Thus, the decentralization of regulations makes villagers accomplices in their own control.

### Allocation Regimes and Their Effects

State control over forests creates typical inequalities in the allocation of forest products and asymmetries in the definitions of subjectivities. These inequalities and asymmetries hinge upon how particular peoples and groups connect with state managers. Some groups and peoples are better able to traverse the lines of state authority that permit the conversion of public resources into private profits. Asymmetric distribution of benefits under council management occurs both as a result of the type of rules some councils create and from the unequal enforcement of seemingly equal rules. If villagers are accomplices in their own control, their complicity is non-reciprocal and unequal.

Over the past seventy years, forest councils have created an enormous range of rules. These rules define who can take what from where at what time for what purpose. The “who” refers to “right holders in the forest,” who may be defined by gender, residency status, or access to monetary power. The “what” includes fodder, livestock grazing, fuelwood of different sizes, timber, medicinal plants, and stones, among other products. Similar diversity characterizes the referents of “where,” “when,” and the uses to which harvested products are put. This tremendous variation in rules notwithstanding, we must also acknowledge that the objective behind giving villagers the power to create rules was to regulate and give shape to an even greater diversity of forest-use patterns and everyday practices that had existed. The processes through which village councils are empowered to create and enforce rules go hand in hand with other processes that make rule design, rule enforcement, and rule infractions visible to powerful outsiders.

New regulations and systematization of local practices through enforceable rules are accompanied by new distributive effects. To illustrate the variations in how rules influence the benefits villagers gather from the forest, I use the contrasting examples of two forest councils in Almora district. The two councils are similar in size (both population and forest area) and distance from roads. They differ, however, in the composition of the households and the amounts they spend on guards. The first, Majethi, comprises mainly *brahman* (upper-caste) and *harijan* (scheduled castes or untouchable) households, with the *harijans* outnumbered and a long history of simmering hostility between the two groups. The five-member council in this village was formed at the initiative of the *brahman* leaders (1961), has only *brahman* members,

and spends little on a guard. The second, Bhagartola, contains households belonging to three different castes: *brahmans*, *thakurs*, and *harijans*. There are no obvious group conflicts in the village, and its council came into being in 1937. It spends thirty-one hundred rupees a year on guard salary.

The two councils have created very different rules to allocate benefits from their forests. The institutions in each reflect the salience of group conflicts within the villages. In Majethi, fodder from the forest is auctioned to the highest bidder. The forest is divided into four sections, and the grass from each section is auctioned separately. Between 1961 and 1991, *brahmans* bid successfully for the right to harvest fodder from every section of the council forest. The *harijans* in the village, if they wanted fodder, had to buy it from the individual who won the auction. Although the Majethi council reduces its enforcement problem by auctioning fodder rights to specific bidders (who then must protect their sections of the forest), the distribution of the benefits is grossly unequal. *Harijans* in the village have recently tried to form coalitions to bid in the auctions, but none has yet bid successfully.

In contrast, the Bhagartola council allocates fodder equally among its members. Its forests are divided into three sections, and these sections are opened to fodder harvests in turn. Animals are not allowed to graze in the forest, but over the course of the year the council permits the villagers to enter the forest and harvest bundles of fodder for six to twelve weeks. Council officials survey the different sections of the forest at the beginning of each harvesting season (soon after the monsoons) to assess the available fodder. They use this estimate to decide on the duration for which villagers can be permitted to cut fodder. Villagers have equal rights to fodder bundles. Each household sends one person to harvest fodder on a given day. Villagers congregate near the forest in the morning, and one of the council officials declares the forest open to harvesting. Each villager brings a uniform length of rope to tie the fodder into bundles. Each must use the same length of rope. Villagers thus harvest specified levels and equal amounts of fodder from the forest.

Majethi and Bhagartola represent empirical instances of analytically distinct rule formations. Of the twenty-eight villages I studied, four had adopted auctions as the principal mechanism to distribute fodder among the village right-holders. Typically, these villages had prominent conflicts and dominant caste groupings that prevented the adoption of more equitable rules of allocation. In the other twenty-four villages, rules were more or less equitable. But the presence of equitable rules should be seen as no more than a provisional and contested effort to shape equitably the outcomes related to the use of forests. In part, this effort is facilitated by the absence of any clearly dominant social group; but the absence of a clearly dominant social group does not mean that distributive outcomes are necessarily equal. Although the rules are equitable, their effects inevitably mirror the social and political hierarchies within the villages.

Bhagartola lies in Almora district in the Middle Himalaya. It is located at an altitude of 1,900 meters and is approximately one kilometer from a paved road. Its forest council was formed in 1937. With seventy households and a forest that is sixty-three hectares, Bhagartola residents have about one hectare of forest per household on average. The village population has not changed much over the past forty years: from 1951 to 1991 it has grown from 297 to 328 individuals. The same is true of the goat and cattle population: between 1961 and 1991, the population of goats has remained around 150 and that of cattle has gone down from 279 to 206. Table 3 provides some basic information on the village forest. The forest is densely vegetated with mixed hardwoods and broadleaved species such as Ainyar (*Andromeda ovalifolia*), Kaifal

Table 3. Basic Statistics on Bhagartola Council Forest

Indicator	
Trees per hectare	1826
Mean tree DBH (M)	0.1572
Mean tree height (M)	6.3
Total tree biomass (CuM per hectare)	205
Number of major tree species	11

Source: Field Survey, 1993

(*Myrica sapida*), Rhododendron (*Rhododendron arboreum*), Totmila (*Ficus oppositifolia*), and several species of oak (*Quercus sp.*). Villagers depend on the forest and its vegetation for close to 40 percent of their fuelwood needs and 20 percent of their fodder needs. These products are in short supply, and the Bhagartola forest council has enacted a clear set of rules to limit extraction.

The forest council meets regularly, holding ten meetings a year on average. In some years, this number goes up to fifteen when council members find more meetings necessary. The minutes of all meetings are recorded and are available to villagers. They are also available to outsiders who can get authorization from Revenue Department authorities. Meetings are devoted to discussions about the state of the forest, level of rule-following, and other details connected with the management of the village forest. Two perennial topics of interest are how to raise revenues and how to enforce rules. The council is always short of funds, and the guard continually detects villagers breaking rules.

The council has several sources of revenues. The chief sources are payments by villagers for the fodder and fuelwood they harvest, the auction of minor forest products such as fungi and moss, and the sale of pine resin to the Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation. The revenues from all sources except the last are readily available to the council to meet its everyday expenses, especially those related to monitoring and protection of the forest. To ensure that rule breaking and illegal harvesting do not reach epidemic proportions, the council tries in almost all its meetings to summon specific individuals to its meetings, to strategize about how to recover fines, and to refine the application of rules concerning extraction of benefits from the forest.

Rules differ by product. In regard to fodder harvesting, the existing rules limit grazing in the forest to no more than four weeks in the year and the cutting of fodder for storage to another two weeks. The forest council officials inspect the forest at the beginning of each season to determine when villagers can begin to graze their animals in the forest. With the help of a guard, they maintain a watch over the rate of biomass depletion and “close” the forest for grazing when they determine that the forest cannot support further grazing. The forest is opened for grazing in the monsoon months. Fodder is in especially short supply during the winter months, and at this time the council allows villagers to harvest leaf fodder from oak trees. The amounts to be extracted are limited by specified characteristics of the product and the technology to be used to obtain it. Villagers cannot use ropes greater than a certain length to tie fodder in a bundle, cannot cut with any implement other than a sickle, and cannot cut branches thicker than a certain girth, usually the thickness of an adult finger. For fuelwood, rules are less strict. Villagers are allowed to harvest fuelwood for two months in the year, but no more than a bundle a day. This provides them sufficient amounts for nearly four months of the year.

The council selects a guard to monitor the extraction of forest products during the year. The guard is paid out of the general funds raised by the council. Typically, monitoring involves the patrolling of the forest by the guard. During these monitoring rounds, the guard takes note of any villagers harvesting products from the forest during periods in which prohibitions are in place and of fresh instances of product harvesting even if no violator is in evidence. Such instances may involve the presence of an animal in the forest or the visual evidence of freshly cut trees, lopped branches, grazed grass, or abandoned cutting tools. When the guard observes an incident of illegal harvesting taking place, he has one of two options. He can either apprehend the culprit, confiscate their cutting implements, and report the infraction at the meeting of the council; or, if in doubt, he can simply report the culprit to the council. He maintains a diary in which the names and other particulars of offenders, their specific transgressions, and the details of each event are noted. This information is made available to the council in its meeting. He also informs the rule-breaker(s) of the date of the next council meeting, at which they must appear to recover their implements and pay the fine.

Upon being informed of illegal activity, the council decides upon the punishment to be imposed on the offender. Depending on the nature of the offence, punishments can vary from a mild reprimand to suspension of harvesting privileges from the forest. Unless a particular transgressor habitually violates rules and seldom pays imposed fines, the council is content to adopt a mild posture. When an individual is particularly defiant, however, the council may have to take extraordinary measures to enforce rules. The problem that confronts all forest councils is in the variety of instruments they possess to enforce their will. If a villager is unwilling to conform and insists on not heeding the authority of the council, enforcement runs into problems. The council does not have sufficiently strict punitive powers that would deter such challenges to its authority. It can impose only small cash fines, and if a villager proves unwilling to pay the fine, the only options the council has for recovery are to appeal to the local revenue official, the *patwari*, or to petition higher-level Revenue Department authorities. In extreme cases, the council can take the villager to court.

Both options are less than satisfactory. Revenue officials are loaded with other tasks from their own departments that make them unwilling to pursue additional chores. Trying to use the overburdened and cumbersome formal judicial system to recover the small sums that an offender typically owes the council is tantamount to spending a fortune to get back a nickel. In Bhagartola, fortunately, the council has not had to appeal to the courts to chastise a villager, although it has often sought the services of the village *patwari* to recover fines. In most instances, the *patwari*, after some importuning, has proved amenable to appeals for help.

There is thus an escalating series of steps through which the council travels if it is to secure compliance with its rules from obdurate rule-breakers. At each step, the stakes get higher and the number of individuals who need disciplining becomes smaller. Most individuals follow rules. Of the ones whose names are reported by the guard to the council, most pay the fines that the council imposes within a short period of time. Of those who do not pay the fines initially, many do so after the council threatens them with action for recovery of dues. There are some villagers, however, who simply do not pay the fines even after repeated reminders.

The successive stages in the enforcement of rules and the composition of the group of rule-violators at each stage is instructive. (See Tables 4 and 5 for 1951, 1971, and 1991.) Tables 4 and 5 contain information for only three years out of a forty-year time span. This renders conclusive statements about trends hazardous. Nonetheless,

Table 4. Gender Composition of Village Population and Rule Violations<sup>1</sup>

	I Number of adult individuals in the village	II Offences reported to Council	III Cases in which fines not paid initially	IV Cases in which fines not paid for at least a year
1951				
Men	33 (49)	38 (19)	20 (36)	08 (58)
Women	35 (51)	163 (81)	38 (64)	06 (42)
Total	68	201	59	14
1971				
Men	30 (48)	37 (17)	23 (47)	6 (67)
Women	33 (52)	181 (83)	25 (53)	3 (33)
Total	63	220	48	9
1991				
Men	38 (47)	50 (27)	39 (65)	18 (78)
Women	41 (53)	135 (73)	21 (35)	5 (22)
Total	79	185	60	23

Source: Bhagartola Forest Council meeting records, for 1951, 1971, and 1991

<sup>1</sup>Figures in brackets are proportions of the total (population / rule-violations).

some important inferences can be made with respect to both tables. In each of the years, monitoring leads to the detection of a certain number of rule violations. That number seems to be more or less constant. Assuming a rough proportionality over the years between the number of times villagers break rules and the number of violations the guard detects, it would be fair to suggest that there is a “normal” level of rule violations that cannot be significantly reduced with existing monitoring technologies and subsistence needs. This level of rule violations arises due to a mismatch between the significant dependence of the villagers on the forest and the desire of the council to prevent forest products from being extracted. It should be kept in mind, however, that although villagers break existing rules constantly, the forest is not in a “degraded” condition. That the forest has a reasonably dense vegetation cover was evident in personal observations during field research and also in the measurements of vegetation I report in Table 3.

In addition, the social identity of the offenders is not in proportion to their population in the village. Consider Column II in Table 4, for instance. The figures in brackets represent the proportions of total rule violations committed by men and women. The proportion of detected violations by women is far higher than their proportion in the village population. This might, in part, reflect the fact that it is women who are primarily responsible for collecting fodder and fuelwood for the household. One may expect, therefore, that they are caught breaking rules far more often than are men.

Now consider Table 5. *Brahmans* enjoy a higher ritual status than *thakurs*. The *thakurs*, or the *rajputs*, are possibly stronger politically than the other two castes, but the *harijans* are socially inferior to both *brahmans* and *thakurs*. In the absence of information on landholding and wealth, caste can be taken as a proxy for social inferiority and lack of power. In Table 5 there is a similar disproportionality for caste as exists for gender in Table 4. The number and proportion of detected offences by

Table 5. Caste Composition of Village Population and Rule Violations<sup>1</sup>

	I Number of adult individuals in the village	II Offences reported to Council	III Cases in which fines not paid initially	IV Cases in which fines not paid for at least a year
1951				
Brahmins	45 (66)	71 (35)	28 (49)	8 (57)
Thakur	5 (7)	10 (5)	11 (19)	4 (28)
Harijan	18 (27)	120 (60)	19 (32)	2 (15)
Total	68	201	58	14
1971				
Brahmins	43 (68)	88 (40)	25 (52)	5 (55)
Thakur	5 (8)	16 (7)	14 (29)	3 (33)
Harijan	15 (24)	116 (53)	09 (19)	1 (11)
Total	63	220	48	9
1991				
Brahmins	49 (60)	55 (30)	42 (71)	17 (73)
Thakur	6 (8)	16 (9)	10 (16)	5 (22)
Harijan	25 (32)	114 (62)	8 (13)	1 (5)
Total	79	185	60	23

Source: Bhagartola Forest Council meeting records for 1951, 1971, and 1991

<sup>1</sup>Figures in brackets are proportions of the total (population / rule-violations).

*harijans* are far higher than those for *brabmans* and *thakurs*. The higher proportion can be explained by the common observation that poorer villagers are often more dependent on common property resources than are those with higher levels of private assets. It may be argued that in the Indian Middle hills, social stratification is less striking than in the plains. Nonetheless, it is entirely possible that *harijans* rely more on forests for their daily needs of fodder and fuelwood than do *brabmans* or *thakurs*. Therefore, the guard detects them breaking rules more often.

Next consider Columns III and IV in Tables 4 and 5. The proportion of those who pay their fines is far higher for women and *harijans* than for men and upper-caste individuals. It seems that the council is less able to enforce its writ among upper-caste individuals and men than it is over women and *harijans*. Far more of the women pay the fines imposed on them than do men, and the proportion of *brabmans* who conform to the sanctions that are imposed on them is far smaller than that of the *harijans*. Although the rules of the forest council apply to all village residents equally, not all villagers follow them equally, and the council cannot enforce them equally. Women, who have a higher dependence on the forest because they are responsible for household chores, feel compelled to a greater degree to pay the fines. The point is not just that guards are more strict in enforcing rules against women, although that may also be true.<sup>28</sup> It is also that those who have inferior status in the village and who are not as strong politically or socially, including the *harijans*, feel forced to follow the rules crafted by the forest council.

<sup>28</sup>Women's subordination is thus not simply the result of policies imposed by the state (Schmidt [1991] 1995, 391). For excellent analyses of women's subordination through different strategies of control over property see Agarwal (1992) and Agarwal (1994).

In reporting information on rule-following and rule-avoidance by gender and caste, I do not mean to subscribe to any static or stable notion of these terms. Nor do I mean to read local politics off these categories directly. Certainly, there are many local variations within the categories *brabman*, *thakur*, and *harijan*, and the political status of those belonging to particular categories is not necessarily determined by such belonging. My use of these categories serves a rather limited purpose, somewhat different from the large question of how to understand caste. The point is simply that allocation rules, even when they are seemingly equitable, produce outcomes that are systematically biased against those who are marginal and less powerful. To understand the effects of rules on allocation, therefore, it is important not just to focus on their formal, literal meaning but also on the socio-cultural and political-economic contexts in which they are enforced, often selectively.<sup>29</sup>

The forest council in Bhagartola creates new institutional arrangements to restrict harvest of fuelwood and fodder from the forest. The formal rules that the council is empowered to create treat all village residents equally. But that does not lead to equal treatment of all villagers. Some villagers pay more as the cost of their social inequality or dependence. This social asymmetry is revealed in their everyday relations with the forest and other villagers. Women are more dependent on forests, and they feel more threatened by the rules that the council has created to protect the forest. *Harijans* are less powerful than *brabmans* or *thakurs*. They also feel they must conform to council rules to ensure continued access to forest products.

If institutions are seen as rules that are created to prompt particular patterns of behavior, then it is also important to pay attention to those unwritten norms that influence behavior implicitly and perhaps as systematically as the rules that are written and explicit. The character of enforcement is determined by prevailing social norms. If we see norms themselves also as an index to power, then it becomes clear that the unwritten rules of the game allow upper-caste villagers to get away with far higher levels of nonconformity in comparison to the lower-caste members. These unwritten rules are neither explicitly negotiated nor equitable. They are, rather, the reflection of the structured deprivation of power to which some of the villagers are subject. At least for Bhagartola, it is clear that lapses in rule enforcement reveal a particular bias against women and lower-caste members. There is little reason to believe that Bhagartola is an exceptional case in Kumaon. The community that exists treats some of its members less equitably than others, even as it formally claims to cast them as equals. Of course, this is not to suggest that it is only the current, state-facilitated communities that create unequal rules and unequal enforcement patterns. The *lattha panchayats* that predate the forest councils of today depended on more locally defined sources of power for their existence, but it can be conceded that their power was exercised unequally as well where resources were concerned.

In the context of state-formation, the more important question is not whether power is exercised unequally now and was more equitable in a distant past when the state had not intruded into local affairs. The more pressing question is *how* unequal power unfolds today in comparison to how it was exercised prior to the passage of the Forest Council Rules of 1931. The introduction of new institutions has made the exercise of unequal power more subtle. One aspect of this change is that politics can

<sup>29</sup>For a similar argument that uses gender theory to critique Habermas's emphasis on the emancipatory role of the public sphere in the emergence of liberal capitalism, see Fraser (1989, 122–29).



no longer be seen (if it ever was) to be a characteristic only of the relationships between the state and the community.

## State Formation in Community Spaces

In a very real sense, the recently discovered centrality of community in various narratives of progress constitutes the resurgence of an older metanarrative.<sup>30</sup> Fueled by the perceived failures of centralized development and resource management regimes, the advocacy of community is strengthened by appeals to local knowledge, functional integration, and fiscal conservatism (Braganza 1996; Lynch and Talbott 1995; Western and Wright 1994; cf. Moore 1996). The standard form of arguments that offer community as an alternative to state or market failures is to conceptualize it as something distinct, with a set of alternative attributes that appeal positively: homogeneity, internal equality, stability, and multiplexity of interactions among members.<sup>31</sup> There are few alternatives as appealing as the utopia of community (Williams 1976). Indeed, other utopian visions draw heavily on positive attributes of community.

The faith in community comes to be validated in its own right because of what community signifies (Li 1996; Zerner 1994). But, as importantly, community is seen as the building block of civil society, the concept most widely picked and relied upon in the last decade by those concerned with social organization at the end of one millennium and the beginning of another. Visualized as something distinct from the state, even in opposition to what states signify, civil society is acceptable both to those who suspect an enlarged role for states and those who believe strongly in free markets (Clough 1999; Rieff 1999). Whatever the general attractions of this diffuse, vague, and underspecified third option against states and markets, its specific implications for those interested in the environment or conservation remain fraught with unresolved tensions. The distinctions between states and community, or states and civil society, depend on the drawing of "shadow lines" (Ghosh 1988, cited in Sivaramakrishnan 1996). The description of how communities around forest use came into being in Kumaon adds to a growing chorus that describes how state-society distinctions become untenable in close-grained studies (Gupta 1995; Mitchell 1991). The prominent features of the Kumaoni forest councils and their attempts to shape resource use in village communities bear the strong impress of state efforts. In showing how the intersection of state authority and community management produces and

<sup>30</sup>The hope and ease with which community is today invoked alike by communitarians and free market liberals, by policy makers and policy analysts, by donors and NGOs resembles nostalgia on the behalf of community at the turn of an earlier century. The coining of such analytical categories as "status" and "contract," "mechanical" and "organic" solidarity, or "traditional" and "rational-legal" authority depended on the beliefs that a particular way of life was being destroyed, never to return, and that the future state of humanity was at least uncertain (Gusfield 1975).

<sup>31</sup>The demarcation of the conceptual boundaries around community depends, as does the construction of all "types," on showing its specific distinctive features (Hillery 1955; Taylor 1982). A number of scholars writing about the forest councils in Kumaon have relied on such attributes of community to advocate a greater measure of control over local forests for communities (Ballabh and Singh 1988; Somanathan 1991). A similar case has been made more recently for the communities engendered by Joint Forest Management legislation (Poffenberger and McGeen 1996; Sarin 1995).

reinforces differences among village groups and creates state authority in new places, however, the objective of this paper is only in part to examine the state-society distinction whose study Mitchell (1991) advocates. It is more to understand the relationship between incentives posed by policy and changes such policies introduce in relations of power and subject formation in the context of forest use.

More specifically, I have focused on how the idea and structure of community undergoes a transformation in Kumaon with an increasing level of engagement and interest of state actors in the disposition of resources. Such an engagement may have its origins in something similar to what Foucault chose to call “reason of state” (Foucault [1994] 1997, 68). The discovery of the hill forests was certainly crucial for the emergence of a different “order of reasons” (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 362–64), prompting state efforts to control larger areas of forests that contain timber useful for shipbuilding and railway sleepers. The protests of villagers against state efforts to increase revenues and appropriate a strategically important resource can be seen as leading to the birth of community-based forest management in Kumaon. But in pointing to the unwillingness of villagers in the early part of the century to accede to state demands for new territory, my aim is less to reinforce narratives that map domination to state structures and identify communities as the locus of resistance. Resistance and domination, terms describing two of the multiple aspects of power, are surely far more inclusive and subversive than suggested by efforts mapping them onto state and community. My focus is instead on how struggles and negotiations around the use of forests created an arena of forest management in which different interests represented by the “state” and “villagers” came to be played out. My depiction of how these processes unfolded in Kumaon shows clearly that state managers and community actors do not just engage in struggles with each other. At least in Kumaon, and increasingly in a large number of countries, the management of forests is becoming a phenomenon in which state and community actors take joint part, undermining their presumed division.

Categories of forest management—whether they are christened scientific forestry or participatory forestry—signify particular alignments of power and allocation regimes. In one sense, these static categories also simultaneously correspond to the dynamic of centralization and localization upon which scholars of south Asia have recently remarked (Bose and Jalal 1998, 6; Crook and Manor 1998). In the Kumaoni context, the move toward allowing villagers control over some forested areas can be seen as the move from scientific to participatory forestry, although it occurs nearly a half century before the rhetoric of participatory forest management makes a global comeback in the 1980s and the 1990s. The move shows how the changing nature of the relationship between states and communities simultaneously marks changes in the exercise of power, coalitions that social actors form, and imaginings of personhood. The allocation of new responsibilities to village-level institutional regimes is also an effort to craft how forests can be used more carefully. But state formation in community spaces is not just about the reproduction of state structures and logics through coercive acts initiated by states. It is as much about how this reproduction relies on the willingness of locally situated actors to use new laws to extend state control over themselves. Many villagers in Kumaon, and not all of them in positions of authority in the councils, argue for a stricter enforcement of rules. Lefort has argued that “institutions and laws are the outcome of struggles rooted in an *awareness of rights*” (Thompson 1986, 23), and this is certainly true of the forest councils as well. We also see, however, that the specific forms of laws and institutions in Kumaon are powerfully shaped by state interests related to systematization and regulation.

Although some state interests about systematization and regulation, and some community characteristics about reliance on forests, may appear stable, this paper shows that there are others that are clearly not so and still others that have registered remarkable change over the past seventy years. First, by highlighting the divisions between the Forest and the Revenue Departments and the multiple tasks that Revenue Department officials are empowered to undertake, I have shown the pitfalls of attributing a single rationality to the state. But there are also temporal shifts. From being authors of exclusionary forest policy regimes, contemporary Forest Department officials have emerged as actors who regulate and assist in the management of village forests. Revenue Department officials have gained an obvious upper hand in their interactions with Forest Department employees and have come to control the actual functioning of the forest councils. At the same time, the changed landscape of political relationships within the community is evident in the coinciding protectionist interests of the forest council managers, the Forest Department officials, and the Revenue Department as well. The changed interests of council office holders are best expressed in their efforts to control levels of fodder and firewood harvests and the use of fire. Not surprisingly, these activities have the greatest impact on the poorer and less powerful members of the village community.

The participatory forestry that Kumaon's councils signify relies crucially on the ability of villagers to craft themselves into communities recognizable by state authority. The constitution of forest councils depends on active collaboration between government officials from the Revenue and the Forest Departments and interested parties within the village who can summon the support of at least one third of the village. Such collaboration starts from the very initiation of the councils: the delineation and measurement of the boundaries of the council forest, the enumeration and counting of the residents who support the formation of the council, the handing over and validation of the books and registers in which council officials are supposed to record significant events related to forest use and management. Each of these steps is aimed at the instantiation of a new social space (Lefebvre 1991) whose chief characteristics can be summarized and presented by a new organization of information (Ronsbo 1997, 57).

These beginnings create institutional regimes that already potentially divide villagers into distinct groups. For example, the forest council institutions are headed by men belonging to upper castes. Typically these officials have already some contacts with government officials. Existing divisions among villagers, whether along the lines of wealth and power or caste and gender, are reinforced by the rules that the councils create, the mechanisms of enforcement, and the actions of villagers as they attempt to get around rules and enforcement. The strategies of compliance or evasion that villagers adopt depend on their already existing status, but they also consolidate such status.

The creation of the Forest Council Rules of 1931 was an implicit admission by the colonial state of its inability to control forest use by villagers, directly supervise their actions in the forests, or even collect information on the strategies of use and management they followed. Its willingness to part with nearly a quarter of the forest estate that it had wanted to use for growing timber and harvesting resin and to devolve the authority for the management of this territory to rural residents was a result of sustained struggle on the part of villagers. The 3,000 square kilometers that Kumaoni villagers control today is no mere pittance. It is the basis for their very livelihoods, and in the absence of massive protests at the beginning of the century, it would likely

have been incorporated into the centralized system of harvesting and management that the Forest Department represents.

The managerial group for this territory comprises the forest councils and their leadership together with state officials such as the Forest Panchayat Officer and the Forest Panchayat Inspector, the Forest Guard and the Divisional Forest Officer. This managing group can be seen as a mediating layer between marginal villagers who interact with state officials relatively infrequently and other, more powerful state officials who visit villages rarely, if at all. But the demands and actions of even the more marginal villagers and the more powerful state actors are registered in the interactions of the members of this mediating managerial layer. The forest councils thus form the vanguard of state formation<sup>32</sup> in those locations that previously were not accessible to state efforts.

In this sense, state formation is about creation of institutions and knowledges that systematize practices in ways that are recognizable and manipulable by existing state authority and the creation of state-sanctioned authority that is recognized as legitimate by citizens (Abrams 1988; Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Scott 1998). Forest councils actively craft new rules and enforce them. Their enforcement of rules for village residents depends on some combination of their ability to draw on idioms of environmental protection and management, the threat of recourse to coercion backed by instruments of normal state repression, such as the police and the judiciary, and the willingness of villagers to view their authority as legitimate. But the rules and directives to systematize local practice are only one aspect of state-making in Kumaon. The councils also contribute to the erasure of the lines that one may use to separate state and/or scientific knowledge from local and/or indigenous knowledge. Their voluminous records of incomes and expenses, minutes of meetings, visits of the Forest Panchayat Inspectors, means employed to protect forests and monitor use, identities of those who break rules, seasonal variations in rule-infractions, and sanctions imposed on villagers are powerful mechanisms to make local practices visible to visitors, whether government officials or political ethnographers. Once brought into existence, these means of uncovering and exposing actions to the eye, even by themselves, check forest users from harvesting items such as fodder and fuelwood.<sup>33</sup> They contribute to the transformations of subjectivities that always remain a critical part of state formation. It is this aspect of state formation that leads Coronil to remark, “as a ‘magnanimous sorcerer,’ the state seizes its subjects by inducing a condition or state of being receptive to its illusions—a magical state” (1997, 5). When bestowed with the legitimate authority to regulate forest use, councils become powerful instruments that help match state objectives of control over resources with local capacities to do so. Certainly, they do so in a way that is more roundabout, less preferred by state officials. But their very existence prepares the grounds for the political legitimacy of

<sup>32</sup>I do not insist here on the distinction between state-making and state formation. Rather, I take them both to be similar processes of extension of formalized control, but always through partial willingness and acceptance of those subject to the extension of such control. Sivaramakrishnan (1996, 3) differentiates state-making from state formation on the grounds that the former has a less teleological and more negotiated character. But other scholars who have used the concept of state formation (Corrigan [1986] 1994) also would insist on its contingent nature. See also the contributions in Joseph and Nugent (1994).

<sup>33</sup>Perhaps the most striking elaboration of the relationship between visibility and discipline is to be found in Foucault’s account of the Panopticon (1975), and the suggestive macro-politics of such mechanisms of observation that he provides later (1978). Scott’s (1998) arguments about legibility can be traced back to these accounts.

the state: not through collective visions of dazzling development projects, but by the promise of meeting local needs indefinitely into the future if only villagers restrain current consumption.

The legitimacy of council authority stems in part from its status as a village body, manned by the more prominent village residents, who also have some interest in the maintenance of the forest. It stems from its positioning as the local representative of state authority.<sup>34</sup> But it is a special kind of representative: one that is simultaneously charged with protecting forests and creating rules for use, management, and enforcement that reflect the needs of villagers. That there is always a tension between the two, and that such tensions stem from the internal divisions and varying perceptions of needs by different villager households, is part of what the council negotiates in its daily working. Perhaps the most important part of what lends the councils legitimacy, however, is their adoption of rules that are seen to be equitable by most villagers. The allocation of rights to villagers scrupulously follows a formula based on equality and fairness, one that is simultaneously inclusionary, at least in formal terms. Usually this works out as equal amounts of a particular forest product or equal contributions towards hiring a guard. But even in those councils where rights to fodder are auctioned to the highest bidder, formal equality of opportunity is still observed, since no village resident is explicitly excluded from bidding for fodder. Auctions are defended on grounds of efficiency and maximization of returns from the forest rather than on those of rights, or the limitation on rights, of some individuals. Similarly, even those villagers who are the most frequent rule-breakers admit the authority of the council to create and enforce rules. Rural residents of Kumaon have come a fair distance from the portrayal that saw them as hillmen “impatient of control.” Renan’s insight about the nation, “. . . forgetting is a crucial factor in the formation of a nation,” is equally relevant to state formation (Renan 1990, 11).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Thus it is only partially true that the regional state depends primarily on the elites in the councils for extending control into new spaces (cf. Nugent 1997, 15). The interactions between state officials and villagers, within what may be termed the mediating layer of state authority, make the relationship with villagers far more directed, even if it remains indirect.

<sup>35</sup>For a provocative discussion about the evocation of memory and its relations with history, see Skaria (1999, 10–15).

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