

# THE COMPARATIVE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEVELOPMENT

Africa and South Asia

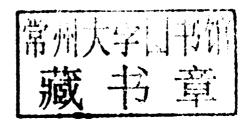
Edited by Barbara Harriss-White and Judith Heyer



# The Comparative Political Economy of Development

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## The Comparative Political Economy of Development

This book illustrates the enduring relevance and vitality of the comparative political economy of development approach promoted among others by a group of social scientists in Oxford in the 1980s and 1990s. Contributors demonstrate the viability of this approach as researchers and academics become more convinced of the inadequacies of orthodox approaches to the understanding of development.

Detailed case material obtained from comparative field research in Africa and South Asia informs analyses of exploitation in agriculture; the dynamics of rural poverty; seasonality; the non farm economy; class formation; labour and unfreedom; the gendering of the labour force; small scale production and contract farming; social networks in industrial clusters; stigma and discrimination in the rural and urban economy and its politics. Reasoned policy suggestions are made and an analysis of the comparative political economy of development approach is applied to the situation of Africa and South Asia.

Aptly presenting the relation between theory and empirical material in a dynamic and interactive way, the book offers meaningful and powerful explanations of what is happening in the continent of Africa and the sub-continent of South Asia today. It will be of interest to researchers in the fields of development studies, rural sociology, political economy, policy and practice of development and Indian and African studies.

**Barbara Harriss-White** is Director of Oxford University's new Contemporary South Asian Studies programme, and was formerly Director of the Department of International Development at Queen Elizabeth House. She has been studying India ever since driving there in 1969, focussing on the political economy of long term rural development.

**Judith Heyer** was formerly a Tutorial Fellow of Somerville College, and Lecturer in the Department of Economics, at Oxford University, before which she held posts at Nairobi University's Institute for Development Studies, and Economics Department. She is now an Emeritus Fellow of Somerville College. A specialist in rural development and in micro-economics, she has written and edited a number of books on rural and agricultural development in Kenya and Africa.

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Africa and South Asia Edited by Barbara Harriss-White and Judith Heyer From Barbara Harriss-White and all the other contributors to Judith Heyer for her decades of inspired teaching and discussion grounded in the open approach to political economy which rests on the fine-grained field research that is her trademark; for her comparativist scholarship, her own dedication and her friendship

#### **Contributors**

- Lucia da Corta: independent researcher currently working for the Chronic Poverty Research Centre in London, taking a lead intellectual role in the CPRC Comparative Life History Project. Author of numerous publications on unfreedom in Indian agricultural labour markets, focusing on both the feminisation of agricultural labour in South India and the heavy use of unfree child labour, and of a book, Peasant Household Mobility, Class Differentiation and Gender Transformations: A Study of Agrarian Change in South Indian Villages, to be published by Frank Cass.
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- Elizabeth Francis: until recently, Senior Lecturer, Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics. Author of many journal articles and book chapters, focusing first on rural development in Kenya, and subsequently on rural development in South Africa. She has published a book with Routledge, *Making a Living: Changing Livelihoods in Rural Africa* (2000).
- **Hugo Gorringe**: Lecturer in Sociology, University of Edinburgh. Author of many articles in refereed journals on untouchability and caste. Has also published a book based on his doctoral thesis, *Untouchable Citizens* (Sage 2005).
- **Barbara Harriss-White**: Professor of Development Studies, Director of Oxford University's Contemporary South Asian Studies Programme and Fellow of Wolfson College. Committed to a political economy practised through field research, she has published widely. Recent books include: *India Working*

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(2003); (with S. Janakarajan and others) Rural India Facing the 21st Century (2004); India's Market Society (2005); (edited with A. Sinha) Trade Liberalisation and India's Informal Economy (2007); (edited with Frances Stewart and Ruhi Saith) Defining Poverty in Developing Countries (2007), and Rural Commercial Capital and the Left Front (2008), which won the 2009 Edgar Graham Prize for original scholarship in development.

Judith Heyer: for three decades from 1975 Lecturer in Economics, Oxford University, before which she held posts in Nairobi University's Institute for Development Studies, and Economics Department. Now also an Emeritus Fellow of Somerville College, Oxford. A specialist in rural development and in micro-economics, she has written and/or edited the following books: (with D. Ireri and J. Moris) Rural Development in Kenya (1971); (edited with J.K. Maitha and W.M. Senga) Agricultural Development in Kenya: An Economic Assessment (1976); (edited with P. Roberts and G. Williams) Rural Development in Tropical Africa (1981); Kenya: Monitoring Living Conditions and Consumption Patterns (1991); and (with F. Stewart and R. Thorp) 2001 Groups, Institutions and Development (2001).

Karin Kapadia: independent researcher and currently an Associate of Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford. Her publications include her monograph: Siva and Her Sisters: Gender, Caste and Class in Rural South India (1995) and three edited books: The Violence of Development: The Politics of Identity, Gender and Social Inequalities in India (2002); (edited with T.J. Byres and J. Lerche) Rural Labour Relations in India (1999); and (edited with Jonathan Parry and Jan Breman) The Worlds of Indian Industrial Labour (1999). She has also published numerous articles in edited books and refereed journals.

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landscapes and livelihoods in East Africa, particularly the conflicts involving agriculture, forestry and water eco-systems.

Adam Pain: has combined a career working in the theory and practice of rural development. He is currently a Visiting Professor in Rural Development at SLU (the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences), Uppsala, and coprincipal investigator of an ESRC-funded research programme on livelihood trajectories in Afghanistan. He has been writing on Afghanistan since 2001, before which he wrote on natural resource management and rural development, in countries as diverse as Bhutan, Botswana, Nepal and India. He is currently preparing an edited book on rural change in Vietnam.

Aseem Prakash: Fellow of the Institute for Human Development, New Delhi, and a Visiting Fellow, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University in 2007–8. He is the joint editor (with Jan Breman and Isabelle Guerin) of Bonded Labour in India (2009), and the editor of State, Market, Civil Society and Dalits in India, which is currently with a publisher under review. He has published a number of articles in refereed journals.

Kaushal Vidyarthee: in 2008–9 Vice-President (International) of Oxford University Students' Union having completed his MPhil in Development Studies. A graduate of the Indian national School of Planning and Architecture and expert in GIS mapping, he has collaborated with Barbara Harriss-White on the forthcoming *Atlas of Dalit and Adivasi Discrimination* (Three Essays Press). He now reading for a D.Phil. under her supervision.

Gavin Williams: Fellow of St Peter's College, and a Lecturer in the Department of Politics, Oxford University. He has published extensively on rural development in Africa, with a particular emphasis on Nigeria and South Africa. Influential publications include Rural Development in Tropical Africa (co-edited with Judith Heyer and Pepe Roberts), The Sociology of Developing Societies: Sub-Saharan Africa (co-edited with Chris Allen) and a seminal article, 'Taking the part of the peasants: rural development in Nigeria and Tanzania'. He continues to write on sociological theory, on democracy, and on the wine industry in South Africa.

#### **Preface**

In September 2007 an international workshop, 'Rural development retrospect and prospect', was held for Judith Heyer to celebrate her formal retirement. It drew twenty participants from seven nationalities ranging from Frances Stewart, who has known and worked with Judith Heyer for nearly five decades, all the way to a group of current doctoral students.

Of her work, Judith Heyer has written as follows:

My African work focused on the importance of taking smallholders seriously, of seeing them as 'rational' economic actors similar to anyone else rather than irrational and not amenable to economic analysis as was still often argued at the time; and fighting all the biases in favour of the large-scale farming sector and agri-business interests that were still dominant in the Kenya economy. My work focused on understanding smallholders, understanding the smallholder economy, and the large-scale farming biases undermining it. This ran through my lectures, my teaching, my work on government committees, and my research and writing while I was in Kenya (1963–75). In the latter part of my time in Kenya I began to think about differentiation among smallholders too – and the fact that there was too little recognition of this.

The initial link between my work in Kenya and my work in India was the fact that the government of India appeared to recognise differentiation among smallholders, through its targeting of the poorer among them in programmes such as the SFDA (Small Farmer Development Agency) and the MFDA (Marginal Farmer Development Agency). I was also attracted by the fact that there was much more awareness of class issues in the literature on Indian agriculture than there was in the literature on African agriculture. I started my work in India by looking at the SFDA and the MFDA in 1978–80. I was struck both by the extent to which the programmes were subverted by the local elite, and by the vulnerability of the local elite as well. I felt that I was getting a very misleading view of the economy by looking at short-term cross-sectional data, so I moved into looking at long-term data instead (what my economist colleagues thought of as history, not economics). My concern was still with the poor in agrarian society. In India,

unlike in Kenya, this meant agricultural labourers as much as anything else. I started out intending to concentrate on class and not caste. I thought that the role of caste was over-rated. I gradually changed my mind. I now think that caste is an extremely important aspect of the (village) society I have been studying – an instrument of control over labour, an instrument that is used to differentiate between different categories of labour, subordinating Scheduled Caste labour to other types of labour, putting them in a position that is grossly inferior (and unfair).

I have always been interested in rural urban interactions. These were less central in the villages I was studying in South India in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but very central when I picked the study up again in the mid 1990s and thereafter. What I am now looking at is villages at the centre of an industrialisation and urbanisation process in which Scheduled Caste groups have got left behind.

I have become much more sensitive to gender issues than I was before. But I have not focused on gender. My data are particularly weak where gender is concerned. My current stance is to recognise this, and to try to factor gender into my understanding of the other issues on which I am concentrating, so far as it is possible for me to do so, but not to change my focus.

The workshop was successful in exploring rich comparative themes from Africa and South Asia – linking them with Judith's work on rural development in general and on Dalit labour in South India in particular, including gender. It was immediately clear that its proceedings could be made into a useful book. Rather than produce a Festschrift, however, we have done something unusual but entirely appropriate to the spirit of the workshop and the comparative political economy seminar that, along with Gavin Williams and Megan Vaughan, Judith and I convened.

With her long personal and intellectual engagement with all the participants and in the light of her interest and engagement with their workshop papers, Judith agreed to commission further papers and collaborate in the process of creating and editing this book.

Our book is being sent to press when the entire world is reeling from the impacts of a series of burst bubbles caused by a financial system permitted to speculate on future assets and collateralised, poor-quality debts, which collapsed when it was finally realised that the latter's value was unknowable. As yet there is little reliable information about the impact of this crisis.

While most of the developing countries in the Africa and South Asia regions we cover have current account convertability, their capital accounts remain in various stages of protection for the reason that, were this not the case, it would be possible to speculate in local currencies and to further attack the already fragile balances between the fiscal deficit, interest rates and exchange rates.

Nevertheless, the two major regions we cover are expected to suffer from the seizure in international lending, from outflows from local stock markets and from shrunken flows of remittances. There is no theory of the likely impact on

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the unprotected informal economies which are the focus of this book and where reductions in growth rates will be translated into losses of millions of livelihoods. Drops in demand for exports and lack of export credit will certainly hit the relatively labour-intensive sectors, exposed by structural adjustment and liberalisation to the instabilities of international markets. Already political and current affairs reporting, as well as the first state-commissioned reports, testify to job losses across a range of manufacturing and service sectors either linked to exports or to high income domestic demand.

Official responses in developing countries can be of two types: the first involves a coordinated counter-cyclical expansion in state investment and expenditure to sustain the effective demand of victims of the crisis in the real economy, while the second is a fiscal expansion confined to underwriting finance capital. All evidence to date suggests that states are drifting towards the latter rather than the former. Yet, large fractions of these economies consist of citizens whose enterprises or households have never been near a bank, who are 'financially excluded' and for whom such palliative measures will be irrelevant.

Changes in the economy are bound to have far-reaching effects on social and political relations outside it. Reduced returns and incomes will put stresses on household budgets and gendered relations of social reproduction. Women's work is certain to increase, as labour and production for use is substituted for purchased goods. The extent to which this substitution is possible depends on the availability of common property rights to resources to gather and glean. This may be easier in rural sites than urban.

The retreat of the state tracked in this book has also triggered the substitution of private expenditure for former public goods and services, such as education and healthcare. The state will struggle to maintain subsistence guarantees, the costs of which will rise as revenues may shrink. Households will be left with reduced incomes and greater expenditure needs; the impact greatest on the most vulnerable.

The essays in this book trace the dynamics of capital/business under duress of various kinds, and the fortunes of socially differentiated and segmented labour forces. They analyse the pauperising seasonal rhythms of the economy, rural—urban relations, the attempts by states to underwrite and regulate these processes and sustain their victims. They will be highly relevant to the development of a framework through which the impact of the crisis can be understood.

Barbara Harriss-White

### Acknowledgements

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Barbara Harriss-White and Judith Heyer

#### Abbreviations

ACCIMA Aba Chamber of Commerce ADB Asian Development Bank

Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation ADMARC

AIADMK All-India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (major Tamil nationalist

political party)

adverse incorporation and social exclusion AISE

agricultural labourer AL ANC African National Congress APM Ambedkar People's Movement

BC Backward Class Caste (lower class caste group)

BIG basic income grant BJP Bharathiya Janata Party BPO Business Process Outsourcing

BSP Bahujan Samaj Party (low-caste North Indian party)

CBO community-based organisations

Commonwealth Development Corporation CDC

Centre pour les recherches économiques et ses applications (Centre for CEPREMAP

Research in Economics and Applied Economics - in Paris)

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research CGIAR

CM chief minister

CPGTA Central Province African Grown Tea Association Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour CPIAL

CPI(M)/CPM Marxist Communist Party of India CPRC Chronic Poverty Research Centre CSED

Centre for Social and Economic Development Coffee and Tea Growers Parliamentary Association CTGPA

CTO chief technical officer

DARE Deagrarianization and Rural Employment DFID UK Department for International Development DLA

Department of Land Affairs

DMK Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (major Tamil nationalist political party)

DSF Dalit Student Federation DTC District Tea Committee

DTDC Desk to Desk Courier (India's domestic delivery network company)

DYFL Democratic Youth Federation of India

FDI foreign direct investment

**FELDA** Federal Land Development Authority FRA FRA region and people in north-west Ghana