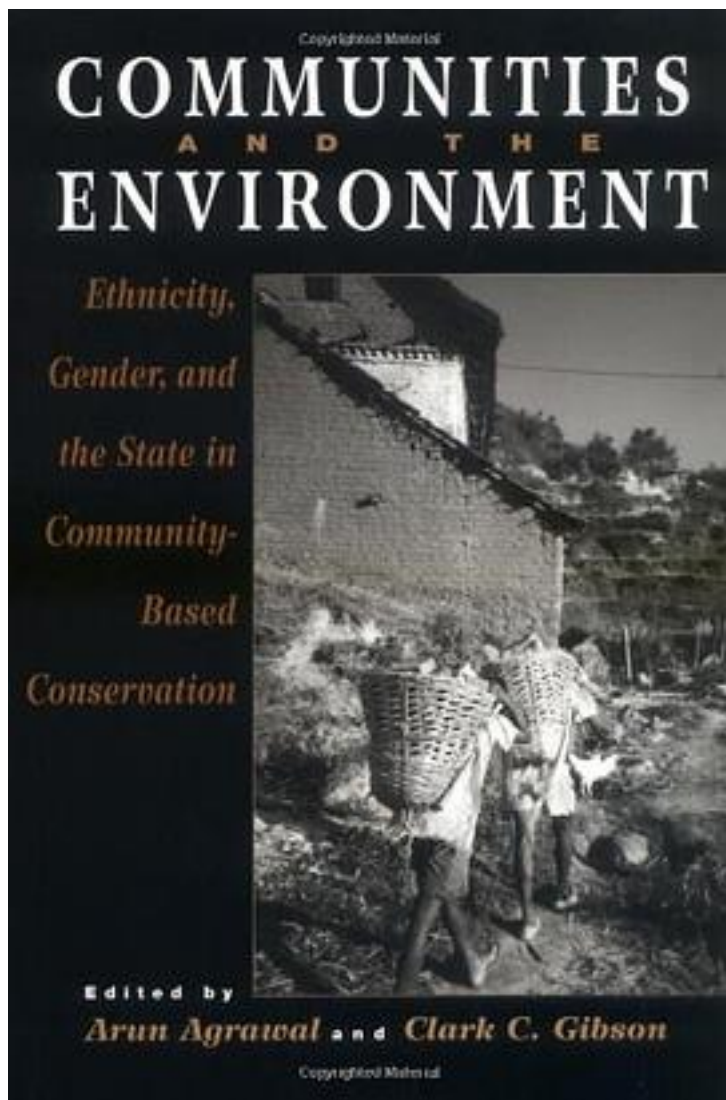


Communities and the Environment



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著者:Agrawal, Arun (EDT)/ Gibson, Clark C. (EDT)

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For years environmentalists thought natural resources could be best protected by national legislation. But due to the poor outcomes resulting from this top-down policy, professionals today look to local communities to take real strides in conservation efforts. According to a recent survey, more than fifty countries report that they pursue partnerships with local communities in an effort to protect their forests. Despite the recent popularity of this local initiative approach, the concept of community rarely receives the attention it should get from those concerned with resource management. The few studies that are available tend to idealize all actions at the local level. This balanced volume redresses the situation, demonstrating both the promise and the potential dangers of community action. Although the contributors advocate community-based conservation, they examine the record with a critical eye. They pay attention to the concrete political contexts in which communities emerge and operate. Understanding the nature of community requires understanding the internal politics of local regions and their relationship to external forces and actors. Especially critical are issues related to ethnicity, gender, and the state.

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