

# UC Riverside

## UC Riverside Previously Published Works

### Title

Global Rivalries: Standards Wars and the Transnational Cotton Trade .  
By Amy A. Quark. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. Pp.  
xviii+282. \$66.50 (cloth); \$24.50 (paper).

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8f1473rr>

### Journal

American Journal of Sociology, 120(1)

### ISSN

0002-9602

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### Publication Date

2014-07-01

### DOI

10.1086/677068

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Peer reviewed

Overall, *Paging God* is an informative account of religion and spirituality in contemporary hospitals. The book addresses key sociological issues as they play out in the hospital context, such as problems with communication between patients and staff and between chaplains and other hospital staff or stratification in hospitals in terms of the role of chaplains, as well as the allocation of religious and spiritual issues to nurses rather than doctors, the movement to broader understandings of spirituality rather than more narrow conceptions of religion, and, relatedly, problems with diversity in contemporary secular institutions. The book extends Cadge's already influential work on religion and spirituality in secular contexts, and places the findings within the broader literature on religion and health, particularly in the concluding chapter. Readers interested in patients' views of religion and spirituality in medical institutions will be disappointed, as the book focuses on hospitals and staff. In addition, those interested in physicians in particular may find the book lacking, since Cadge gives far more attention to chaplains and nurses than to physicians. Nonetheless, *Paging God* is an important contribution to the religion and health literature. The book moves beyond the more common focus on the association between religion and health to examine the ways that medical institutions address religion, how staff in these institutions respond to religion and spirituality in the hospital context, and how their work in hospitals influence their own religion and spirituality.

*Global Rivalries: Standards Wars and the Transnational Cotton Trade.* By Amy A. Quark. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. Pp. xviii+282. \$66.50 (cloth); \$24.50 (paper).

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In *Global Rivalries*, Amy Quark uses the global cotton industry as a case with which to build a theory of institutional change capable of explaining how or why institutions change and also the direction of change. In any historical moment, the rules of the game embody the interests of the dominant actors who created them. However, these rules—along with a perhaps infinite list of exogenous forces—give rise to both rival and marginalized actors. Invariably, institutions change as rivals seek to redirect the rules in concordance with their own political-economic interests, marginalized actors seek protection from the vicissitudes of the established order, and dominant actors try to preserve the status quo in the face of these challenges. To predict the particular claims these actors make in any given moment, one must identify their position in the organizational system these rules govern. Inequalities in bargaining power underlie the particular form that new institutions take in disputes over existing institutional regimes. Because existing rules limit possibilities of change and no actor wields complete power, institutions change incrementally and reflect hybrid solutions to redirection, protection, and preservation efforts.

Quark conducts a historical analysis of global cotton standards, beginning with the dominant, rival, and marginalized actors in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Merchants in Liverpool established an informal system of cotton standards and arbitration that reflected their interests in the cotton industry as organized in the mid-19th century. This system of rules made life difficult for both rival U.S. cotton merchants and marginalized U.S. cotton producers, who brought their collective, if contradictory, weight to bear in lobbying the U.S. government. In response, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed a cotton-standards system that “rolled together” the demands of U.S. cotton merchants and producers (really just the merchants). But, to internationalize this system, the U.S. government compromised with the preservation strategies of Liverpool merchants and other European countries. The resulting standard system was not only hybrid but also incremental—it did not culminate until the 1923 signing of the Universal Cotton Standards Agreement.

The bulk of Quark’s analysis examines the period since the 1970s. She sets the stage by outlining the changing organizational structure of cotton and its upstream industries. U.S.-led neoliberal globalization was “uneven” because the interests of transnational merchants and leading firms in global commodity chains conflicted with those of domestic U.S. textile and apparel manufacturers and agriculturalists. While the former sought freer trade in cotton and apparel, the latter sought protection from increasing international competition. The U.S. government attempted to accommodate by continuing to subsidize agriculture (including cotton) and establishing a system of protectionism called the Multi-Fiber Agreement (MFA) while at the same time pushing for liberalization in other industries and globally. In the absence of global governance, the resulting organizational structure “globalized” U.S. cotton standards and a system of private contract arbitration by transnational merchants. These came to be seen as contradictions in the United States’ liberalization project and therefore set the stage for a new wave of redirection and protection initiated by the Chinese state and Southern cotton producers.

The formation of the WTO, and China’s accession to it, facilitated redirection and protection strategies by new rival and marginalized actors. Global (U.S.) cotton standards included both a particular set of cotton characteristics to evaluate (and not others) and a set of technical benchmarks by which to evaluate these characteristics. The primary rival that emerges is the Chinese state, and the new marginalized actors are cotton producers in the global South. The Chinese state desires a role in both standard setting and contract arbitration commensurate with its rising economic power. Global South cotton producers want to change global cotton standards, which discriminate against cotton produced in the global South. Constrained by rules governing standards disputes in the WTO—that standards be “international” and determined on the basis of scientific criteria—the Chinese government had first to “master” the existing framework of mechanized standards in order to challenge the universality of U.S. cotton standards. The Chinese state also attempted to supersede the private authority of

transnational merchants by creating its own bureaucracy to adjudicate contract disputes among cotton merchants and textile producers in China. Simultaneously, global South cotton producers organized collectively to include characteristics in global benchmarks that would result in higher grades to their cotton. These redirection and protection strategies were met with preservation strategies by the U.S. state and transnational merchants. In a race with the Chinese state, the USDA sought international support for the U.S. system before China developed a new one. Similarly, transnational merchants attempted to increase the number of signatories to their system of arbitration and thereby sidestep the new Chinese bureaucracy. While cotton standards remain a moving target, Quark characterizes the stops and starts as indicative of the incrementality of institutional change and sees hybrid solutions on the horizon. At minimum, future cotton standards will include “Chinese characteristics,” and the private system of arbitration will exist alongside the Chinese bureaucracy.

One consistent “finding”—that institutional change is incremental and produces hybrid solutions—is rather ho-hum because it isn’t clear how any negotiation that starts from an established order and involves actors with nonzero bargaining power can proceed in any other way. But Quark’s more ambitious theoretical agenda is her argument that conflict drives change, and the distinct interests and levels of bargaining power that particular actors bring to the table predict the strategies they employ and the extent to which new institutions embody their interests. She directs this criticism at the increasingly abstract theoretical project of institutional analysis, which seems intent on endogenizing institutional change to the point of circularity and ignoring the actual “guts” of institutional orders. The case of contemporary global cotton standards is illustrative because they are couched in the familiar rhetoric of “scientization” and “universalism” but encourage resistance because they institutionalize the economic interests of U.S. cotton producers at the expense of global Southern producers. Thus, this book invites a refreshing turn in institutional analysis and in that sense belongs on graduate reading lists in political, economic, and institutional sociology.

*Sinews of the Nation: Constructing Irish and Zionist Bonds in the United States.* By Dan Lainer-Vos. Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2013. Pp.viii+212. \$69.95 (cloth); \$24.95 (paper).

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“Monetary transaction between diaspora communities and national movements may not seem like an obvious place for examining the process of nation building” (p. 3). Dan Lainer-Vos demonstrates decisively in his excellent book on nation building that transnational fundraising (from gift giving to national bonds) for national causes is a good place to commence, since money does not constitute a neutral resource. *Sinews of the Nation*