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Article in *Environmental History* · January 2008

DOI: 10.1093/envhis/13.1.185

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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Landscapes of Power and Identity: Comparative Histories in the Sonoran Desert and the Forest of Amazonia from Colony to Republic* by Cynthia Radding

Review by: John Soluri

Source: *Environmental History*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Jan., 2008), pp. 185-187

Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of Forest History Society and American Society for Environmental History

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25473218>

Accessed: 28-11-2016 01:47 UTC

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While environmental historians have long recognized connections between environmental thought and American political culture, and while a few environmental philosophers have recently begun to formulate a pragmatist environmental ethics, Minter is the first to argue that American environmental thought is deeply rooted in the civic pragmatist tradition. Environmental civic pragmatists argue that the principles underlying environmental ethics are best understood not as *a priori* truths, but rather as provisional assertions worked out and continually modified within democratic communities of inquiry. This flexibility has allowed civic pragmatists to articulate a “third way” approach to environmental ethics in which the human use of nature is guided by the notion that nature’s intrinsic and instrumental values are mutually reinforcing rather than antagonistic. Minter makes a compelling case that even Leopold, who is usually regarded as the fountainhead of biocentric ethics, took precisely this sort of “multifoundational” stance.

In piecing together the evolution of environmental civic pragmatism, Minter is at his best when his evidence allows him to reconstruct a genuine historical “conversation” based on actual influences and communications among the figures he writes about. But when such evidence is unavailable, Minter frequently resorts to speculation, which weakens his argument that environmental civic pragmatism is a coherent intellectual tradition. Minter also inflates the importance of his argument somewhat by occasionally suggesting that American environmentalism in general—as opposed to the much narrower world of academic environmental philosophy—is dominated by biocentrism. While biocentrism may reign supreme among environmental ethicists, mainstream environmentalists tend to prefer anthropocentrism.

But these are fairly minor weaknesses. *The Landscape of Reform* is clearly an important and well-written contribution to the history of environmental thought and politics. Those who take seriously William Cronon’s sage admonition to focus our attention on issues of sustainable use will find Minter’s careful interdisciplinary scholarship particularly valuable.

Jordan Kleiman is assistant professor of history at SUNY-Geneseo. He is currently writing a history of the American branch of the appropriate technology movement.

Landscapes of Power and Identity: Comparative Histories in the Sonoran Desert and the Forest of Amazonia from Colony to Republic.

By Cynthia Radding. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. xx + 431. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. Paper \$24.95.

This book is a brilliantly conceived, exhaustively researched, and skillfully crafted comparative study of cultural landscapes in Sonora, Mexico, and Chiquitos, Bolivia, two frontier regions in Spain’s American empire. Drawing on multi-archival research, ethnography, artifacts, and published accounts of travelers and missionaries, Cynthia Radding integrates broad historical frameworks and ethnography in a study that spans both the colonial and post-

colonial eras. The book is organized chronologically and thematically, with separate chapters devoted to comparative analyses of ecological and cultural frontiers; colonial political economies; community and territorial claims; ethnic and gender identity formation; political power, governance, and contestation; and spiritual landscapes and rituals. The final two chapters examine changes and continuities during the tumultuous period of independence and early nation-state formation.

At first glance, the arid deserts and mountains of Sonora appear to have little in common with the humid lowland forests and savannas of subtropical Chiquitos. However, Radding argues that both regions were pre-Columbian frontiers: Sonora represented the northwestern edge of Mesoamerican culture based on maize-squash-bean agroecologies; Chiquitos lay at the crossroads of Andean empires and Amazonian/Río de la Plata riverine cultures. Indigenous livelihoods in both regions combined agriculture with foraging, fishing, and hunting. Both areas came under the influence of Spanish crown institutions and missionary societies in a process that was far more protracted and tentative than in Mesoamerica and highland Peru in part because Sonora and Chiquitos lay on the peripheries of major silver mining centers. Missionaries and *encomenderos* (Spaniards holding Crown grants to the labor tribute of Indians) played important roles in changing both the spiritual and physical landscapes of the region, introducing cultigens, architectures, technologies, symbols, and rituals that would be selectively incorporated by indigenous people. Radding concludes that warfare (including violent disputes among indigenous groups) and political negotiations were more important than diseases in accounting for the formation of colonial institutions.

Landscapes of Identity and Power also identifies several important differences in the two region's historical trajectories. For example, land concentration and the formation of smallholders took place in parts of Sonora in the eighteenth century; in Chiquitos, corporate structures governed resource use until the 1850s when a fledgling national government targeted both church and indigenous resources (including land and cattle) for privatization. Significantly, Radding argues that similar colonial institutions gave rise to distinct ethnic identities: in Sonora a process of *mestizaje* ("hybridization") took place while in Chiquitos ethnic identities remained fragmented, a difference that Radding attributes in part to the practice of swidden agriculture widely practiced in Chiquitos. Divergent patterns of resource control and identity formation contributed to the emergence of distinct sites of political contestation.

The insights offered by Radding's comparative perspective cannot be done justice in this brief review. Some *Environmental History* readers will share my desire to know more about the causes, outcomes, and meanings of ecological changes to which the author frequently alludes (see pp. 88, 100, 181, 194, 207, and 302) but does not analyze in depth; others may struggle to stay oriented in two regions filled with unfamiliar people, places, and concepts. However, the author's refusal to reduce the complexity of cultural encounters to familiar tropes of domination and resistance, her subtle yet critical

challenges to Carl Sauer and Alfred Crosby's sweeping interpretations of the conquest period, and her attempts to get at indigenous ideas about the non-human world, make this a work that deserves a wide readership.

John Soluri is associate professor of history at Carnegie Mellon University, and the author of *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (Texas, 2005).

Ecological Nationalisms: Nature, Livelihoods, and Identities in South Asia. Edited by Gunnel Cederlof and Kalayanakrishnan Sivaramakrishnan. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006. xiii + 399 pp. Bibliography, photographs, maps, charts, index. Cloth \$50.00.

Ecological Nationalism, an edited volume of essays selected by the anthropologists Gunnel Cederlof and Kalayanakrishnan Sivaramakrishnan—of Finland's Uppsala University, and the University of Washington, respectively—is an ambitious and successful addition to the steadily growing literature on South Asian environmental history. Authors representing several academic disciplines contribute case studies concerning topics as diverse as fishery management, the spice trade, and wildlife landscapes in regions selected from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Through unusually cohesive editing, Cederlof and Sivaramakrishnan guide the conversation and extend the nationalist project recently revisited by the subaltern studies scholarly collective, and suggest that juxtaposing nationalism with the concept of ecology affords insight into South Asian environmental discourse. This book echoes and extends familiar themes for readers of Sanjay Subrahmanyam, James Scott, Benedict Anderson, and other subaltern studies scholars—such as the relationship between people and the state—and epitomizes the interdisciplinary nature of environmental history. A substantial bibliography and the inclusion of photographs, maps, charts, and ecological data are highlights of the collaboration between researchers from varied academic backgrounds and enhance the book's usefulness.

Ecological nationalism—as Cederlof and Sivaramakrishnan construct and define it—incorporates two possible interpretations of nature, the cosmopolitan and the nativist, which emerge from the dramatically disparate urban and rural usage patterns. State-sponsored guidance involves manipulating and uniting the two strains, and appropriating the environment and environmental policies as forms of national pride, thereby consolidating and legitimating the nation (p. 10). This analytical framework provides the launching point for the subsequent essays, which explore the potential and varied dimensions of environment and ecology this theory makes accessible.

Two of the book's chapters are exemplary models that employ the new paradigm. Cederlof's contribution, "The Toda Tiger," illustrates how life changed for an indigenous herding-based society, the Toda. Contestation within the British East India Company, and the competing visions of "local custom and aboriginal right" met with "those of a national or public good and of sovereign rule" (p. 67). Another superlative study is Claude Garcia and J.-P.