

Book Reviews

Joan E. Cashin. *War Stuff: The Struggle for Human and Environmental Resources in the American Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 270 pp. \$24.99 (paperback), ISBN 9781108413183.

In *War Stuff*, Joan Cashin approaches the American Civil War from a different and unique perspective. Neither military history, nor social, nor environmental, Cashin strives for a blend of all. Broken into thematic chapter, the work begins with a foregrounding introduction of the Old South; the pre-war community and built cultural environment of planters, yeoman, and their daily lived experience within their socially constrained and constructed world. Successive chapters deal with the strands that make up the wartime environment: People, Substance, Timber, Habitat, and segueing into Breakdown, a discussion of the disintegration of wartime military policy into acknowledged total war in 1864 with Sherman's campaigns. The work finishes with a discussion of 1865 and the immediate post-war period. Cashin's main thesis is that neither governments' policies and regulations constrained the despoliation and consumption of natural, material, and human resources by their armies, and furthermore, that such mass destruction and consumption was standard practice throughout the war, not the result of small cadres of transgressors on either side. Cashin asserts this to be the first work that fully addresses prewar attitudes towards material resources and draws a line to their changing wartime nature.

The thesis proposed and argued is interesting and supported by well-chosen primary sources that provide interesting insight, context, and support to each point. Overall, it provides an excellent introductory history to the approach and perception of resources by Federal and Confederate forces during the American Civil War, and the intrinsic conflict over such resources not just by opposing armies, but between both armies and governments and civilians. For those interested in the development of the pre-war landscape, and wartime effects, there is quite a bit here. The discussion of split rail fencing, the methods of construction, timber needed, and overall lifespan is informative and interesting for those researching antebellum and postbellum landscapes, their alterations, and their evolution. Cashin's discussion of timber, its hierarchy, and the unique place pine had in the cultural worldview of soldiers and civilians is engaging and informed. This is especially true regarding the discussion of folk medicines linked to various types of timber, such as the benefits of pine tinctures.

However, this reviewer was unconvinced by claims of uniqueness made by Cashin, and unconvinced by several aspects of her argument. Firstly, in the Old South introductory chapter, Cashin makes multiple claims about the cooperative, communal nature of the Old South, describing—though careful to state it was not a utopia—essentially a utopia. This argument echoes a long tradition in Southern historiography that established an idyllic agrarian society of yeoman farmers and paternal planters, who coexisted peacefully and collegially, until it was disrupted by Yankee aggression. It is surprising such a view is echoed here, which effectively papers over large class issues in Southern society, and the resulting conflict, disagreement, and disenfranchisement of numerous constituents of the pre-war South. These deep class issues were directly echoed by the wartime policies of the Confederate government, such as draft exemptions for planters, furloughs for officers, and resistance by yeoman farmers and poor whites of the conscriptions of their sons, goods, and livestock by a government some felt were fighting a planters' war. The establishment of the Free State of Winston, the secession of West Virginia, and the Free State of Jones are all historical events that both manifestly disprove the picture painted of the Old South by Cashin and which had impacts on access to human and environmental resources by both governments and civilians.

Indeed, this is one example of a large problem with Cashin's work—sweeping generalized statements are made about foodways, material culture, landscape practices, and the nature of community but are rarely backed with citations. When a citation is given, it is from one primary source: representing one historical personage's perception, and a perception that is often (though not always) upper class and white. The end of each section does acknowledge that there were exceptions to these sweeping statements, but the structure of the argument gives the reader the impression these were exceptions to the cultural norms. Incidentally, there are no references to the massive body of archaeological literature on foodways in the South, the African American influence on them, the role African-Americans played in providing for the planter's table, or to the even larger body of literature on the material culture of elite and non-elite domestic sites in the antebellum South. The rather slim discussion on material culture in the home suffers immensely from a lack of engagement with existing historical, archaeological, and material culture scholarship.

Other areas suffer from similar deficiencies, where it seems a more thorough literature review of current secondary sources would have added depth and weight to support the thesis and argument. Areas of military doctrine, the extractive nature of industries in the antebellum South, the impact of issues like increasing production of iron ore and the impact on the surrounding countryside are all areas which seemed to overlook existing literature. Consequently, most of the work utilizes lengthy paraphrases and quotes from primary sources. In and of itself, this is not normally an issue, but there are several chapters where this style leaves the reader feeling as though there is context and interpretation missing that would have aided the argument. Finally, much of the work feels on occasion repetitive, as if the same points are being readdressed, but without adding to the discussion.

Overall, *War Stuff* is an interesting volume with a unique take on the American Civil War. The author offers several interesting insights, large amounts of primary source material, and makes the case for their central thesis, that total war was the starting point, not the end game, for both sides in their engagement with civilians, natural resources, and the built environment of the American Civil War. It suffers, however, from an apparent deep deficit of background knowledge on many aspects which it covers, including military history and material culture. While a useful resource, and an interesting volume for those focused on similar aspects, overall it feels stretched too thin, engaging superficially with the many aspects it attempts to cover. Furthermore, and curiously for the claim made that this is the first work to cover these issues, Michael Adams's (2014) *Living Hell: The Dark Side of the Civil War* covers much of the same ground and offers a significantly more in depth and supported argument. While Adams is cited as a reference, it is difficult to see any influence from his seminal work. The citation style—each endnote often contains as many as eight references making it confusing to track down which source is being utilized to support which points—further impedes identification of Adams's influence on the author's argument. In sum, *War Stuff* is an interesting thesis, but suffers from several flaws in support for its argument, an apparent lack of thorough integration of secondary sources, and technical issues with the citing of sources. It is ultimately worth the read, but fails to fully achieve the broad promise of its potential.

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Andrew S. Bledsoe and Andrew Lang, eds. *Upon the Fields of Battle: Essays on the Military History of America's Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2018. 312 pp. \$48.00 (cloth), ISBN 9780807169773.

In the foreword to *Upon the Fields of Battle*, Gary W. Gallagher notes that “the Civil War was preeminently a military event” (ix). While this interpretation is self-evident to the public, the study of Civil War military history faces an uncertain academic future. The anthology presents 17 essays in response to this trend. It demonstrates that the subfield “engages old questions and topics from new perspectives, opens fresh avenues of scholarly investigation, and . . . seems capable of almost infinite expansion” (xi). Devotees of this literature will not be surprised by the methodological conclusions, but should appreciate the range and quality of the contributions. Unfamiliar readers will enjoy a book free of technical jargon and filled with research as useful to the scholar as it is for the classroom. With such promising results, it should garner a wide audience and encourage historians to reconsider their views.

The volume is divided into three sections, with the first exploring the state of the subfield. Per Andrew S. Bledsoe and Andrew F. Lang, experts have delved into “the martial, cultural, social, political, and applied dimensions of military service and institutions” (5). They suggest that work on traditional issues as well as war and society should be in service of a shared goal. Insisting that military history exemplifies the role of contingency, they call for greater attention to “command and control” (8). Earl J. Hess highlights the merits of traditional studies, critiquing the tendency to write for popular tastes and accept historiographic wisdom. In a survey of promising directions for future endeavors, he emphasizes the growing availability of sources and the need to frame battles within a larger context, proposing that “it may well be that the oldest approach in Civil War studies . . . has the most potential for future work” (38).

The second section deals with the nature of battle, including the obstacles to victory and civilian exposure to the violence of the conflict. Kenneth W. Noe reinterprets Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan’s lackluster performance on the Peninsula. Intense rains, he points out, made the spring of 1862 the worst time in the Civil War to lead an army in that region. After the Battle of Gettysburg, Maj. Gen. George G. Meade did not stop the Army of Northern Virginia from fleeing across the Potomac River. Jennifer M. Murray contextualizes this much-criticized fact by noting the rarity of annihilative battles and effective pursuits in military history. Bledsoe describes how the Confederates fumbled coming to grips with two Union divisions at McLemore’s Cove. He highlights Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg’s confusing command hierarchy, overly flexible and numerous orders filled with problematic information, and failure to communicate his vision.

Turning to Fredericksburg in December 1862, John J. Hennessy finds that the Union artillery fire on Confederates in the town, the bombardment of the location itself, and the taking of civilian property all followed the usages of war, though subsequent Federal pillaging was “an affront to custom and discipline” (153). It did not inaugurate a conflict of relentless brutality, attesting to the fairly controlled conduct of the North. Brian D. McKnight contends that guerrilla warfare should be understood as a process of “not only military action but also civilian and societal response” (166). He stresses the agency of those targeted by irregular combatants, who frequently focused on protecting their society instead of advancing the Union cause.

The third section speaks to soldier attitudes and memory. Lang relates that Union troops in the occupied South judged emancipation as evidence of American exceptionalism. They felt that life in a slave society, however, had rendered the freedpeople and southern whites “uncivilized, indolent, and apathetic” (184). Their idyllic conviction that the United States did not force change on others ran against the fact that it would have to do so in the ex-Confederacy. Kevin M. Levin asserts that rebels lamented the execution of deserters but believed it was required to preserve the army and emerge victorious. Newspapers echoed this supportive stance. Keith Altavilla maintains that Federals voted for the Democratic McClellan in the 1864 presidential election amidst much opposition, certain he represented “the best path to winning the war and because of their long-standing loyalty to the party through traditional ideological and ethnic ties” (228). In their opinion, President Abraham Lincoln would hinder Union victory because he was ineffective and too radical.

Brian Matthew Jordan portrays the traumatic consequences of Gettysburg for the 107th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment, concluding that mental and physical pain were inseparable from how participants and their caregivers perceived the conflict. This did not make the men simply victims, he observes, but underscores the fact that the Civil War was experienced as a series of contrasting events instead of a cohesive phenomenon. Robert L. Glaze explains that Confederates lamented the death of Maj. Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston as a blow that led to their defeat. They upheld him as one of their greatest leaders and an exemplar of masculinity. This myth endured through a monument, postwar writing, and textbooks, proving “that Johnston meant more to the people of the Confederacy in death than he ever did in life” (286).

Upon the Fields of Battle offers convincing evidence that Civil War military history is neither parochial nor stagnant. The essays quickly familiarize the reader with

advances in the subfield, but there are several shortcomings. Intended to be a foray rather than definitive, the contributions are not all equally innovative. A future book, for instance, could include quantitative and digital history methods. Taking up the co-editors' recommendation, a volume could feature traditional as well as war-and-society research to help transcend assumed barriers between them. Given long-entrenched assumptions, more chapters making the case for the relevance of military history would be welcomed. The anthology does not include an essay that interweaves traditional military questions into the narratives developed by other types of historians (such as studies of politics or the home front). Such a synthesis would help challenge those who allocate the subject only limited attention in their interpretations. These are all minor issues. Civil War military historians have long urged the wider scholarly community to recognize the potential of their subfield, and this is the kind of work needed to convince the skeptics.

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John M. Thompson. *Great Power Rising: Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of U.S. Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. 280 pp. \$35.00 (cloth), ISBN 9780190859954.

Scholars still define the evolution of American foreign policy by the personality of presidents. Historians write about “Wilsonianism,” the “Nixon Doctrine,” and the “Reagan Revolution,” among other common labels. Practitioners associate these labels with substantive policy preferences for democratization, multilateralism, or regime change. The presumption behind all of these descriptions is that the president and their closest advisers make American foreign policy, and the other institutions of government follow. Public debates matter for elections, but scholars generally assume that they have limited affect on the projection of American power overseas, particularly in the decades since the Second World War. In this sense, politics seem to end at the water’s edge.

John M. Thompson’s deeply researched book begins with the proposition that this common adage is, in fact, a myth. He explains that although presidents are “widely seen as wielding a degree of power unmatched in human history,” they “face many potential constraints”—including frequent elections, congressional opposition, partisanship, and, of course, intensive critical scrutiny from the media. For all the talk of grand strategy and national interests, presidents concentrate

their attention on managing public opinion. Otherwise, the best-laid policies are doomed to failure in America's terribly messy democracy.

Thompson focuses intensely on President Theodore Roosevelt as a case study. Roosevelt promoted an expansive vision of American power and he pursued a sophisticated set of interests across the globe. In many ways, he made the United States into a major international diplomatic and military actor. Henry Kissinger and others have remembered Roosevelt as one of America's great practitioners of *Realpolitik*.

Behind this public rhetoric, however, Roosevelt was a more skilled politician than a grand strategist, according to Thompson. His account portrays Roosevelt as obsessed with newspapers, rallies, and other mechanisms for assessing and shaping public opinion. Unlike other more patronizing figures, including Woodrow Wilson, Roosevelt "believed that the public's often pivotal role was appropriate and criticized politicians and members of the eastern elite who disdained the masses or sought to diminish their influence" (184).

What frightened Roosevelt's detractors was that he appealed to the masses and drew on their energy to shape his policies. He was cerebral, but also populist; sophisticated, but rarely refined. His energies and interests reflected the street, more than the suppositions of high society. "It is difficult," Thompson aptly observes, "to imagine Rooseveltian statecraft outside the context of domestic politics" (185).

Thompson's book moves away from the large literature on Roosevelt as international strategist to reexamine this formative president as a politician. His policies, in the author's recounting, were shaped, timed, and implemented with a close eye to public opinion at home. That mattered more to Roosevelt than anything else, including the national interest.

Acquiring the land to build an isthmian canal through Central America was one of the cardinal achievements of Roosevelt's foreign policy, and it is appropriately described as an expression of his emerging global strategy for American expansion. Thompson, however, chronicles the stubborn opposition Roosevelt confronted from Democrats and advocates of alternative routes. He shows how the president's ideas shifted and adjusted to take account of those objections, and how Roosevelt worked to manipulate public opinion wherever he could. By fomenting a revolution against Columbian rule in Panama, and negotiating for American access, Roosevelt turned a divisive issue into a popular cause for liberty and trade.

Thompson is at his best when he digs into the details of domestic politics, chronicling how Roosevelt worked closely with members of Congress and appealed carefully to different voting blocs, especially German-Americans at the turn of the century. Thompson is tireless in his reading of contemporary newspapers, and he is encyclopedic in his knowledge of congressional and other political personalities. His account of Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor's influence on Roosevelt's foreign policies is particularly enlightening, showing how ethnic and labor politics came together to shape Roosevelt's worldview.

For the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, announced by the president in 1904, Thompson describes how Roosevelt maneuvered between numerous complex positions. Most Americans did not want a war around Venezuela, a country that had defaulted on its debts and faced intervention from Britain and Germany. They also did not, however, wish to see other foreign influences grow in the region. The Roosevelt Corollary was a rhetorical measure designed to show American toughness but keep the country out of war, even as it became more deeply involved in South America. A similar dynamic applied to China and Japan, where Roosevelt increased American reach, but continued to cater to isolationist and racist sentiments at home. Peeking behind the intrepid rhetoric of the president, his policies in all of these areas contained more political compromise at home than clear-eyed strategy abroad.

Great Power Rising documents beautifully how, paraphrasing former House Speaker Tip O'Neill, all strategy is local. Roosevelt was a political animal, a newspaper junkie, and a deal-maker. His rhetoric was more absolutist than his policies, and that is why he accomplished so much. He lost his bearings after leaving the presidency, when he became more militant and shrill than before, and perhaps too focused on recovering his power. Getting back to the presidency—that became a final political obsession for Roosevelt.

Thompson's book offers an insightful and compelling analysis of the domestic roots of American foreign policy. Theodore Roosevelt is a revealing case because he appears focused on international *Realpolitik*, until you look closely, as Thompson has done. The limit of *Great Power Rising* is that it overcompensates. It does not give much attention to foreign actors or the consistent strategic assumptions that motivated Roosevelt's policies. He was a politician and a strategist, and Thompson has provided a brilliant and invaluable account of the former.

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Tisa Wenger. *Religious Freedom: The Contested History of an American Ideal*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017. 312 pp. \$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 9781469634623.

In this timely and important book, Tisa Wenger focuses on the notion of religious freedom during the period of consolidation and growth of the United States as an imperial power (approximately 1870 through 1940). She gives us a case study that demonstrates that the answers to the questions “What is freedom of religion?” and “Into what realms of the public sphere may religion as a protected category legitimately extend?” are anything but easy. A complex and well-argued work, this book examines “how the discourse of religious freedom historically intersected with formations of race and empire” (16).

During the early imperial period, Wenger argues, the concept of religious freedom, with distinctive origins in the white Protestant pluralism of early nationhood, was deployed in ways that asserted dominion of that group over lesser groups distinguished by race and/or ethnicity. At the same time, however, those very groups found ways to utilize the concept to defend distinctive values and behaviors as sacred, by definition “religious,” and therefore beyond the reach of the state. Her argument takes some careful unpacking. It builds on the supposition that the normative definition of religious freedom, at least during this period, derived from an historical situation in which Protestant churches competed for adherents. Hence, “freedom of religion” meant freedom from the compulsion to support any one these. In the interstices between churches, a secular realm arose that carried over many of the assumptions of the dominant Protestant ethos without appealing to religion for its authority. Hence, in a cultural sense, departures from foundational Protestant norms and values – be they Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, or “heathen,” or explicitly and distinctively racial (as with some indigenous peoples and some African Americans) – might be read as proof of the inferiority of the group(s) in question. Failure to hold values that the “civilized” world deemed “civilized” was less a matter of religious freedom than a demonstration of stunted cultural development.

It would be fair to say that in each instance Wenger examines, the presenting issue was not initially the right of individuals to enjoy freedom of conscience to choose. Rather, each issue arose as questions of the right to respect of ethnically different cultural formations. For example, Wenger’s chapter on

Jews in America demonstrates how members of that group initially understood themselves to be a people rather than adherents of a “religion.” Numerous racist stereotypes of the time attest to the same perception among non-Jews. Over time, however, ethnic Jews began adopting the language of religious freedom to claim the privileges of whiteness in U.S. society. Judaism indeed came to seem to many more like a “religion” – a protected category – than a racial or ethnic identity. A Jew could be just as American as any Presbyterian or Methodist. The upshot was not an unalloyed victory for Judaism, however. As Jewishness came to be seen as “religion,” by definition a matter of individual choice, elements of a distinctive ethnic identity became blurred. Judaism was one “religion” among many that constituted the nation’s “Judeo-Christian” heritage.

In other words, in the world Wenger examines, there was no such thing as religious neutrality; the concept was always politicized from the outset. Either it became a reason to discount lesser cultures whose religious norms fell outside those of a ruling white Protestant consensus, or it became a way to challenge the exclusiveness of that consensus. Wenger’s conclusion sees the principal contemporary manifestation of our contested legacy of religious freedom in the continuing tendency of U.S. foreign policy to reduce “complex and multidimensional conflicts to the single question of religion” – most especially in the case of Islam. This reductionism produces a racial essentialism that is both imperialistic and dangerously naïve.

Based on research in a variety of periodicals, speeches, records of public institutions, and archives of various religious groups, Wenger crafts an engaging narrative that shows religious liberty to be far from a historically stable notion. Perhaps even more intriguing than the narrative Wenger spins out are its implications. It would be hard to miss the degree to which “religious freedom” has been used both by the Religious Right and the Secular Left as justifications for different views of public policy. These battles are being waged between a fiercely determined conservative Protestant minority and a cosmopolitan, largely secular, elite about the degree to which religious groups have the right to pursue their own moral codes. Wenger’s book gives us food for thought as these conflicts progress through the courts and legislatures. What constitutes religious freedom and what constitutes cultural difference have historically been hopelessly intermeshed. We proceed naively at our peril.

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Sam Kleiner. *The Flying Tigers: The Untold Story of the American Pilots Who Waged a Secret War Against Japan*. New York: Viking, 2018. 304 pp. \$28.00 (cloth), ISBN 9780399564130.

Sam Kleiner's *The Flying Tigers* is an eminently readable history of the famed fighter squadron. Billed as the "the untold story" of the American Volunteer Group (AVG), a fact slightly undone by the author's own reference to a multitude of contemporary newspaper and magazine articles, films, and books on the AVG (e.g., 2–3, 45, 47–48, 68, 71, 120–121, 140–141, 212–213), the work provides new insights on the famed unit through a wide historical and chronological scope. Instead of focusing on the AVG's combat record and crafting the narrative around the same, as is so often the case with military history texts, Kleiner takes up on the whole of the unit's history. Astute and accurate, Kleiner argues that the Flying Tigers tactics and successes are directly tied to AVG commander Maj. Gen. Claire Lee Chennault's formative years in Louisiana; extensive, professional flying experience; and contributions to developing early US Army aviation.

Any historical analysis which considers simultaneously the military unit's combat record and the political milieu in which it was formed and operated requires careful framing. *Flying Tigers* accomplishes this duality of military and socio-political history with aplomb. During much of its combat record the AVG and its military and political leadership were dispersed across China and Southeast Asia, a consequence of stretched numbers and matériel as well as repeated displacement due to Japanese ground advances. Kleiner uses subtle techniques, such as the ferrying of aircraft and personnel between squadron bases and combat actions undertaken by multiple flights and squadrons (e.g., 108–112, 129–132, 146–150, 161–169), to link the geographically distant but chronologically overlapping narratives of the three AVG squadrons, the AVG HQ, and the Chinese Nationalist government. The result is a seamless transition between actors and a wholly immersive story. Likewise, Kleiner animates normally dry discussions on unit formation, training, and supply—part of his effort to convey how much of a political and logistical underdog the AVG was—through effective merger of sweeping historical narratives with the individual experiences of airmen, soldiers, politicians, and civilians. Although more in-depth discussion on the political and logistical mechanics of the AVG is desirable (such as expanded analysis on the role the US Government and the War Department played in the AVG's formation, training, and supply and on Chennault's efforts to procure modern aircraft for the AVG), the generalized view provided by no means diminishes Kleiner's arguments or storytelling.

Flying Tigers is not without shortcomings. Additional discussion on the role of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Mei-ling (Madame Chiang), the later especially, in forming the AVG and its Chinese predecessors would be of value.

Kleiner does note Madame Chiang's determination to develop Chinese aviation (25) and her fondness for both the Republic of China Air Force and the AVG (35, 152-153). However, it feels as though the reader is only made aware of Generalissimo and Madame Chiang's active role when they interact directly with Chennault or the AVG. The Chiangs' growing influence in the 1920s to 1940s extended far beyond mainland China. Perhaps outside the author's remit considering the length of the text, exploration and discussion on the prominence or absence of Chennault and the AVG in the Chiangs' domestic and foreign policy—both publically and in private negotiations—would be valuable.

While the book is a thoroughly absorbing read, its value as a reference text is handicapped by referencing style. Sources are not cited in-text with the endnotes being grouped by page. Though not detracting from the author's clearly extensive research efforts, the style and formatting of citations makes connecting information to the original sources an unnecessarily complicated task. The convoluted separation of data from source citations is an unfortunate drawback for a book positioning itself as a new and significant text on the subject.

A more compact history of the AVG than other titles recounting the famed unit's combat record, *Flying Tigers* expertly weaves an engaging story of adventure, combat, loss, and memory. Kleiner's ability to root the AVG in the disparate, yet shared, personalities and cultures of its founders and members provides a thoroughly enjoyable read suitable either for classroom instruction or personal enjoyment.

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Connie Y. Chiang. *Nature Behind Barbed Wire: An Environmental History of the Japanese American Incarceration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 328 pp., 34 halftones, 1 map. \$35.00 (cloth), ISBN 9780190842062.

In her book *Nature Behind Barbed Wire*, Connie Y. Chiang provides a new perspective on the unconstitutional mass incarceration of almost 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. Motivated by racism, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership, the Japanese American "Relocation," as it was euphemistically called, had deep and far-reaching negative effects. The causes and consequences have been studied from a variety of perspectives: political, legal, and

economic history; civil rights; sociology; psychology; archaeology; and literature and art. Here Chiang focuses on the Relocation through the viewpoint of the relationship between humans and the environment.

Do not be fooled by the title: this book does not focus on oases of beautiful gardens or art made of natural materials that Japanese Americans are famously known to have created in their World War II incarceration camps. In common parlance, “nature” is often used as a contrast to that which has been developed by humans, or that which has been caused by humans. In the field of environmental history, “nature” is defined much more broadly, and includes cities and farms as well as forests and wilderness. Further, Chiang’s study is not confined to the areas behind barbed wire. Chiang’s study encompasses everything from the meticulously cared-for pre-World War II farms of Japanese Americans in California, to the dust storms created at the camps because native vegetation had been removed for construction, to the harsh climate and challenging farming conditions of the Desert West where Japanese Americans tried to settle after their release from the camps.

Chiang uses traditional written sources in her analysis, and anyone who studies the World War II mass incarceration of Japanese Americans will probably be familiar with many of the facts, statistics, stories, and sources she has compiled. Some of her conclusions have been well-documented before. For example, most will not be surprised that places where traumatic experiences occurred have the power to evoke memories and strong feelings. Archaeologists and other anthropologists have long considered the importance of environmental factors in shaping human experience, and the importance of human actions on the environment. Most of us intuitively recognize that humans and societies exist in space as well as time, and consider it obvious that a person living free in southern California will have different challenges and experiences than a person living imprisoned in rural Wyoming.

But Chiang’s environmental history provides much more than a re-mix of facts. For example, by interweaving the environmental and economic impacts of the Relocation, Chiang proves its absurdity, from a national security standpoint. She details how, before the war, Japanese Americans had adapted to their environment and become proficient at farming, fishing, and many other enterprises. By knowing their land and their crops, for example, the farmers of the West Coast were skilled in maximizing production of vegetables and fruit, which the United States desperately needed for the war effort. The Relocation created two distinct

but complementary problems. First, it lowered the production of food on the farms the Japanese American farmers were forced to abandon. Chiang's extended discussion of the Farm Security Administration's (FSA) efforts to "handle" farm land owned or leased by Japanese Americans so that important agricultural production potential would not be wasted exposes how important Japanese American farmers could have been to the war effort. Productive farm land was "abandoned" or sold, with or without the consent of the Japanese American farmer, at ridiculously low prices, to tenants or new owners who did not have the capacity to farm it. The resulting decline in productivity that Chiang documents is impressive and disheartening.

At the same time, several agencies of the federal, state, and local governments spent considerable time trying to find suitable sites for the Relocation Centers where the incarcerated Japanese Americans could grow their own food. Chiang outlines the involvement of the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Reclamation, the FSA, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, plus governors, congressional representatives, and local government officials. These efforts, too, were less than successful, from an economic and environmental perspective. Chiang calculates that the U.S. government spent \$50 million in food costs, and the incarcerated were able to raise only 14 percent of their food, significantly because of the harsh environmental settings of the Relocation Centers.

Most of the Relocation histories to date focus on the financial, social, and psychological costs of the Relocation to the Japanese American community, and on the Constitutional and civil rights travesty that threatened and controverted American ideals. Often, the loss of potential Japanese Americans' contribution to the war effort is mentioned, but in vague terms. Chiang forcibly demonstrates how just this one aspect of the Relocation hindered the war effort in practical and economic terms. Her analysis testifies to how much more the Japanese American community could have contributed to the home front if they had been allowed to remain in place.

Perhaps the most far-reaching aspect of Chiang's work is that she does not let the reader forget how intimately and inextricably humans are tied to the environment. For example, she describes the sewage problems at Gila River, Minidoka, and Manzanar, writing that "... the detainees experienced the physical environment in the most direct

ways” (39). In the closed systems of the Relocation Centers, the environment could not be avoided even with technological innovations: the Gila River incarcerated cleverly rigged up evaporative coolers, but were told not to use them before noon unless the temperature exceeded 100 degrees because there was not enough water (64).

If, in other disciplines, we separate the environmental degradation caused by humans from what we consider “nature,” we may be guilty of the sort of compartmentalization that facilitates that degradation. All too often our technocentric, capitalist society pretends that we humans are separate from the environment, and that “nature” is something to conquer, or retreat to when we need a break from “regular” life. This artificial construct may be part of the reason we seem too paralyzed and polarized to acknowledge our role in climate change. With the Japanese American World War II mass incarceration as an example, Chiang’s book is a strong argument for how short-sighted, costly, and cruel this perspective can be.

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