

President's Message Board

Dear friends, environmental historians,

Now that two women leave the board who have worked for the ESEH since its founding in 1999 and 'topped their ESEH-careers' as president and vice-president for two terms, a moment of reflection seems appropriate for them. What have been the main achievements of the last four years, how did we meet our ambitions for the ESEH? And how does this period fit into the longer period of twelve years that we were involved with the ESEH so intensely?

The main aim of the ESEH was, is and shall be to contribute to the development of the field of environmental history in Europe by promoting communication among ESEH members and between them and others in the field. Our core-business is hosting several types of meetings and promoting the realisation of publication and education tools. In addition we aim to promote the scholarly and public outreach of environmental history in Europe. This has been achieved, amongst other ways, through our Regional Representatives and a scheme of Prizes. Finally we have to take care that the ESEH continues to develop as a democratic society, open to new ideas and people, in order to be able to carry out the tasks we deem important.

In our 2007–2011 board period the ESEH participated in the preparation of three conferences and two summer schools. As tokens of success we note that the number of participants of our conferences is still growing. Also the design of the conferences is developing continuously. Each time a dynamic cross-breeding takes place due to the differing academic traditions existing in Europe. So in Amsterdam 2007 we had our first experience with a commercial conference organiser. Inspired by the rich ICE-HO conference in Copenhagen 2009 and other meetings, the organizers of the Turku meeting in June–July 2011 have staged five keynote speakers and several types of panel with varying numbers of papers, whereas before we had one keynote speaker and panels of 3 papers only. Because ESEH is an organisation run entirely by volunteers, the transfer of experience from one conference to the next is an issue that keeps demanding attention. In order to improve in this respect, from the Amsterdam 2007 conference onwards we intensified our evaluation procedure: reports evaluating the conferences are submitted by the Local Committee, the Scientific Committee and the Regional Representatives and discussed in the board meetings. Also we created a Site Selection Committee, staffed by former conference organisers, whose purpose is to advise the Local Organising Committee. This approach has already turned out to be fruitful with the first preparations for the next conference in Munich 2013.

A new initiative we can be proud of is the creation of a series of annual European summer schools: Versailles 2010 (Natural Disasters and Environmental History) and Venice 2011 (Water-Culture-Politics) have opened the series. This was really new to us and the learning curve was steep, but judging from the high numbers of submissions and enthusiastic reports we received, we can conclude safely that the initiative is very welcome. We hope that the ESEH will keep experimenting with designs and improving those already launched.

Regarding our contribution to publication tools we would like to mention the new book series we started, in cooperation with the Rachel Carson Center in Munich (RCC) and Berghahn Publishers: 'The Environment in History: International Perspectives'. The first books will soon be published. Also a challenging project, Arcadia, was launched for developing a great on-line education tool, again together with the RCC. The first tests are promising.

In order to foster the extension of scholarly and public outreach we established a new prize, sponsored by the RCC. The Turku Book Award is the prize for the best book in environmental history and is intended to identify and encourage innovative and well-written scholarship that focuses at least partly on Europe or is authored by scholars who are affiliated with European institutions.

Running the ESEH has become a big job, not least because of the ever extending number of regions that ask for ESEH representation. Australasia, Poland, Serbia, Croatia, Greece and South Africa have recently joined the group of the already represented areas, and other demands are currently being studied. Because our Board would have become too large to work efficiently with so large a number of Representatives, one of our tasks was to proceed to an internal reorganisation of the ESEH. Through the hard work on a new constitution we established a Board of ten members (among which five Regional representatives, the five others being elected by the General Assembly) and a Council of Regional Representatives (with an unlimited number of members, who elect the five RR of the board). We have also set up a new tradition to have at least one Board meeting per year, facilitated by board members at their institutes. The CRR, on the other hand, meets at the biannual conferences.

Another relationship set on a new footing was the strengthening of cooperation with the White Horse Press, which has sponsored the ESEH since its founding through offering free pages in every issue for this newsletter, the Notepad. A visible expression of the new arrangements is the more prominent place of the WHP on our website. ESEH members also enjoy reduced rate subscriptions to *Environment and History*. The ESEH has now a permanent representative on this journal's Advisory Board.

With regards to our funding, we were sorry to say good-bye to the Breuninger Foundation who sponsored us for ten years, but we are proud to say we not only survived but prospered. Yet in order to guarantee the openness and access of ESEH to new generations and scholars from low-income countries we need to find new financial means. As a token we opened a fund for modest travel

SOCIETY PAGES

reimbursements for our biannual conferences, sponsored by member subscriptions and private donations.

Ending this rather self-appreciative evaluation, we would like to comment on one thing we see as desirable for the future. The cooperation with the newly founded RCC in Munich and the partnership with White Horse Press have been inspiring and very fruitful. We hope that the ESEH will find more of such great partners in the future. Co-hosting summer schools, establishing new projects or sponsoring existing ones like the ESEH Best Article Prize, all helps to develop the field of environmental history which is very welcome.

Let us conclude with a warm thank you to all people within and without the ESEH with whom we worked together, who shared our joys and worries, who answered our emails during nightly hours and holidays, in short all who contributed to establish and develop a field for environmental history in Europe. And let us not forget the pioneers of the first hour who inspired us and convinced us to join them in this great adventure: Verena Winiwarter, Christian Pfister, Sverker Sörlin and a few others... they show that outside the ESEH board too, there is a life for an European environmental historian!

Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud President 2007–2011

Petra van Dam Vice-president 2007–2011

Notepad Editor: Phia Steyn

Items for the next Notepad should be sent by 15 September 2011 to the address shown below.

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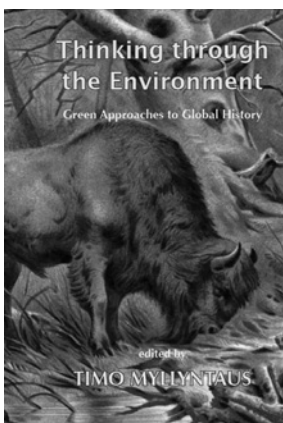


NEW BOOK FROM THE WHITE HORSE PRESS

**THINKING THROUGH THE ENVIRONMENT:
GREEN APPROACHES TO GLOBAL HISTORY**

edited by Timo Myllyntaus

Thinking through the Environment: Green Approaches to Global History is a collection offering global perspectives on the intersections of mind and environment across a variety of discourses – from history and politics to the visual arts and architecture. Its geographical coverage extends to locations in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and North America. A primary aim of the volume is, through the presentation of research cases, to gather an appropriate methodological arsenal for the study of environmental history.



Among its concerns are interdisciplinarity, eco-biography, the relationship of political and environmental history and culturally varied interpretations and appreciations of space – from Bangladesh to the Australian outback. The approaches of the indigenous peoples of Lapland, Mount Kilimanjaro and elsewhere to their environments are scrutinised in several chapters. Balancing survival – both in terms of resource exploitation and of response to natural catastrophes – and environmental protection is shown to be an issue for more and less developed societies, as illustrated by chapters on Sami reindeer herding, Sudanese cattle husbandry and flooding and water resource-use in several parts of Europe. As the title suggests, the volume exposes the lenses – tinted by culture and history – through which humans consider environments; and also foregrounds the importance of rigorous ‘thinking through’ of the lessons of environmental history and the challenges of the environmental future.

The editor, Timo Myllyntaus, is Professor of Finnish history at the University of Turku, Finland. His articles on environmental history deal with forest, water and climate history as well Finnish historiography. He co-edited *Encountering the Past in Nature, Essays in Environmental History* (2001) and the anthology *Pathbreakers, Small European Countries Responding to Globalisation and De-globalisation* (2008). He is a Board member of the European Society for Environmental History and chairs the local organising committee of ESEH’s 2011 conference in Turku.

Publication date, 20th June 2011

ISBN 978-1-874267-62-1 (HB) £65 / \$90 / €75.

320pp. Halftones, black and white illustrations, maps, figures.

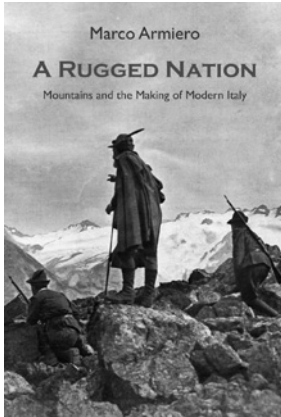
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NEW BOOK FROM THE WHITE HORSE PRESS

A RUGGED NATION: MOUNTAINS AND THE MAKING OF MODERN ITALY

Marco Armiero



A Rugged Nation uncovers how Italian identity and mountains have constituted one another. State regimes since unification in 1861 have made mountains into national symbols and resources. The nationalisation of Italian mountains has been a story of military conquest and resistance, ecological and social transformation, expropriating resources and imposing meanings.

War World I permanently transformed mountain landscapes and people, nationalising both. When the Fascists came to power, the process of politicisation of mountains reached its acme; the regime constructed and exploited mountains both rhetorically and materially, on one hand celebrating ruralism and rural people and, on the other, giving mountain natural resources to large hydro-electric corporations. The book ends with two exemplar tales about mountains and their place in the Italian recent history: the Resistance against the Nazi-Fascists, which found its sanctuary up in the mountains, and the 1963 Vajont disaster, which, with 2,000 people killed, represents the tragic epilogue of the hydroelectric modernisation of the Alps.

'This is a highly original book that changes the way we think about one of the oldest and most studied nations on earth. Through abundant details and intriguing stories, Armiero convincingly shows how central to Italy's identity its mountains have become.'

Donald Worster, author of *A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir*

'Armiero scales the summits of environmental history, deftly blending cultural and materialist approaches. His book provides a full and fascinating account of the evolving role of mountains in shaping Italian nationalist imagination and the role of nationalism in shaping the mountain landscapes.'

J.R. McNeill, Georgetown University

'Finally we have a sequel to Nicolson's *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*. Marco Armiero focuses not on the Swiss Alps as viewed by the British, but on the Italian Alps and Apennines as viewed by their own countrymen to show what became of mountain glory. Richly documented and imaginatively argued, *A Rugged Nation* brings vital understanding into the natures of nations, and will set the standard on mountain studies for years to come.'

Marcus Hall, University of Zurich

Marco Armiero (Ph.D. in Economic History) is an environmental historian, currently working as a Senior Researcher at the National Research Council, Italy.

Publication date, 15th July 2011

ISBN 978-1-874267-64-5 (HB) £57 / \$77 / €62.

250pp. Half-tones, black and white illustrations, maps, figures

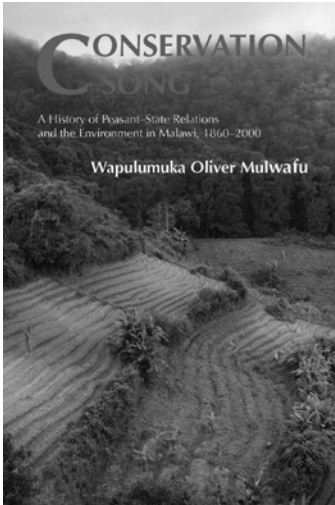
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NEW BOOK FROM THE WHITE HORSE PRESS

CONSERVATION SONG: A HISTORY OF PEASANT-STATE RELATIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN MALAWI, 1860 –1994

Wapulumuka Oliver Mulwafu



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Conservation Song explores ways in which colonial relations shaped meanings and conflicts over environmental control and management in Malawi. By focusing on soil conservation, which required an integrated approach to the use and management of such natural resources as land, water and forestry, it examines the origins and effects of policies and their legacies in the post-colonial era. That interrelationship has fundamental contemporary significance and is not simply a phenomenon created in the colonial period. For instance, like other countries in the region, post-colonial Malawi has been bedevilled by increasing rates of environmental degradation due, in part, to the expansion of human and animal populations, cash crop production, drought and consequent deforestation. These issues are as critical today as they were six or seven decades ago. In fact, they are part of a conservation song

that has a long and various history. The song of conservation was initially composed and performed in the colonial period, modified during the immediate postcolonial period and further refashioned in the post-dictatorship period to suit the evolving political climate; but the basic lyrics remain essentially the same. This book attempts to explain the evolution of the conservationist idea whilst demonstrating changes and continuities in peasant-state relations under different political systems.

The author is Associate Professor of Environmental History and SADC-WaterNet Professorial Chair of Integrated Water Resources Management at Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

Publication date, 31st July 2011

ISBN 978-1-874267-63-8 (HB) £65 / \$90 / €75

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