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Kieko Matteson, *Forests in Revolutionary France: Conservation, Community, and Conflict, 1669-1848*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. xviii + 307 pp. Maps, figures, bibliography, and index. \$99.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-107-04334-3.

Review by Hamish Graham, University of New South Wales.

Kieko Matteson's book examines the efforts by successive French governments to regulate forest management and exploitation, and the reactions of rural communities over a 200-year period. Her regional focus for this study is the frontier province of Franche-Comté, divided since 1790 among the departments of the Doubs, Jura and Haute-Saône.[1] The author argues that official notions of woodland conservation in France at this time were driven less by concerns about ecological sustainability and biodiversity than by a desire to extend state power over a previously autonomous area, while promoting the exclusive rights of private ownership at the expense of communal forest property and collective use rights. The Introduction explicitly links these past conflicts over forest resources in Franche-Comté with subsequent policies in France's colonial empire, as well as more recent struggles in Southeast Asia, Africa and other parts of the developing world.

Matteson's initial chapter provides a clear and concise overview of her chosen region, surveying the landscape and history of Franche-Comté and pointing out significant features of its economic and political past. The author does well here to highlight the changing nature and uses of forest resources, while also managing to background issues about the prominent forms of woodland property and access rights that loom large in subsequent chapters. Louis XIV's annexation of the strategic Habsburg province in 1678 delivered his kingdom more taxpaying subjects and established a useful buffer zone on the eastern border. Yet, Louis and his eighteenth-century successors were also motivated by the wealth of material resources that Franche-Comté had to offer, especially construction timber that was so essential for naval shipbuilding and public works, and the output from a range of manufacturing processes that relied on charcoal fuel (particularly metals, glass, and salt). This provides Matteson with an opportunity to sketch the French crown's development of legislation for the regulation of forests, which gave rise to the *réformation* of royal woodlands undertaken in the 1660s and culminated in promulgation of the 1669 *Ordonnance des Eaux et Forêts*. [2] Not all the inhabitants of Franche-Comté reacted positively to enforcement of these policies. Besides various efforts to stymie the monitoring and regulation of their woodlands by officials of the royal forestry service (Eaux et Forêts), some Comtois took more direct action. In 1765 the Forêt de Chaux—today one of the most extensive state-controlled forests in France at over 20,000 hectares—became a scene of open revolt that was suppressed only by military intervention.

The second chapter explores the “intellectual underpinnings” of woodland management and conservation as they emerged and were debated during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Starting from John Evelyn's *Sylva* (1664) and Louis XIV's 1669 Ordinance, this discussion summarizes the views of figures like Vauban and Réaumur, whose reactions to timber shortage will be familiar to some readers of eighteenth-century French history. [3] The author contrasts the assurance of what she calls “rational, top-down regulation and scholarly erudition” (p. 55) in matters of long-term woodland management with the local knowledge and practical flexibility of forestry officials on the ground in

Franche-Comté. A brief introduction to physiocratic principles and policies (Quesnay and Bertin) allows Matteson to proceed with a survey of the late eighteenth-century impetus for land-clearing, and the period's competing discourses of forest productivity (Duhamel du Monceau) and the romantic appeal of wooded landscapes.

The third and fourth chapters start to probe more deeply by concentrating on the revolutionary decade, 1789–99. Here we get additional background about some of Franche-Comté's distinctive features in the eighteenth century, including the prominence of mortmain (“serfdom”) tenures and the province's attachment to Catholicism (pp. 75–76). Rural *cahiers de doléances* drawn up in 1789 offer Matteson a wealth of grassroots evidence about the issues that pervaded the Comtois countryside on the eve of the French Revolution. Clearly, the “forest crisis” of the preceding decades had multiple dimensions: seigneurial usurpations, the competing demands for fuel from forges, furnaces and urban dwellers, and the various “failings” of the royal forestry officials. These pressures were crystallized in wrangles over the timber needs of privileged industries such as the royal salt works at Arc-et-Senans (pp. 99–105), now a UNESCO world heritage site. The increased competition for wood and access to forest resources served equally to accentuate internal divisions in Comtois communities, as evidenced by disputes over *affouage*, the tradition of collective fuel wood allocations.

It was in this context that the Revolution's legislators lobbied for various “reforms” in the administration of France's forests, and debated proposed legislation in a rapidly shifting atmosphere of political instability, civil strife, economic turbulence, and foreign invasions. Drawing extensively on the period's huge pamphlet literature, Matteson charts the twists and turns by which successive legislatures of the 1790s sought to impose their priorities on various forms of rural property, including woodlands. In 1791 the posts of forestry officials in the Eaux et Forêts were abolished, and all private woodland property was freed from state control. The nationalization of church lands and the later seizure of émigré estates brought woodlands amounting to hundreds of thousands of hectares into the hands of the state. In the belief that private ownership should take priority, small woodlots (less than fifty hectares) were allowed to be auctioned off. A new forestry bureaucracy was legislated, but technical details of how its employees would actually manage woodland resources were left vague. Moreover, pre-revolutionary issues such as reforming fuel wood allocation (*affouage*) and dividing up common lands again prompted regional resistance to the prescriptions of the central state, while simultaneously sharpening social tensions within Franche-Comté.

In the fifth and sixth chapters, Matteson highlights the development of the Forest Code of 1827, which finally replaced Louis XIV's Ordinance. The opening decades of the nineteenth century did not bring any resolution to the problems faced during the 1790s. If anything the combination of Napoleonic centralization and authoritarianism, together with the material and fiscal demands of almost constant warfare, brought a return to some forest policies of the ancien regime monarchy: mature trees in private woodlands could again be subjected to naval priorities. Efforts to document and verify all the rights of access in state and communal forests gave rise to a host of competing claims and a good deal of civil litigation and criminal prosecutions. Particularly under the Restoration, royal nostalgia for the fine principles of the 1669 Ordinance was revived, with two major consequences for the future direction of French forest policies: the creation in 1825 of a national training school at Nancy, based on the latest ideas from German silviculture; and the completion of a new Forest Code in 1827. The government's motive to eliminate collective use rights—for collecting fuel wood, grazing animals, or gathering forest products like mushrooms, berries, or undergrowth to use as barn litter—was clearly enunciated. According to the minister Martignac, such customary practices represented “dévorantes servitudes.”<sup>[4]</sup> Matteson uses the debates and drafts published in the *Archives parlementaires* to show how deputies from Franche-Comté sought to neutralize proposals that they felt might threaten the interests of large landowners, and their willingness to do so by invoking regional “traditions.”

Implementation of the 1827 Forest Code in Franche-Comté generated a flood of grassroots opposition, for which the author finds ample evidence in a host of prefectorial reports, newspapers, and criminal justice records. In the Jura resistance reached a peak during the 1840s, often taking the form of arson, threats, assaults, and even homicide. Like similar outbreaks in the Pyrenees during the 1830s, as we know from the work of Peter Sahlins and others, the initial phases of this unrest often involved local community leaders such as mayors.[5] In Matteson's view it was the activism and tenacity of Franche-Comté's population that enabled them to preserve their access to the extensive woodland resources that still exist today.

This book thus stands as something of a prequel to Tamara Whited's well-received study, *Forests and Peasant Politics in Modern France*. [6] Both works use regional examples from upland areas of France's periphery to examine the dictates of the central state and the reactions from local communities who depended on access to forest resources. Whited deals more with the Third Republic (1870-1940), while Matteson focuses primarily on the period from 1789 to the 1848 revolution and the beginnings of the Second Empire. The concluding section of Matteson's book provides a neat segue into issues that get more comprehensive treatment in Whited's work, especially the wrangles over official efforts to control the headwaters of rivers in mountainous regions, RTM or *Restauration des terrains en montagne* (pp. 245-49). In these lop-sided contests the rural communities of Franche-Comté, Savoie, and the Ariège had few direct means to counteract the pressures and dictates of the central state, yet as both Matteson and Whited ably demonstrate, rural inhabitants were not entirely defeated.

Like Whited, Matteson has been blessed by the availability of copious sources of documentation generated since the outbreak of the French Revolution. By comparison, however, the treatment of Franche-Comté in the period before 1789 seems to offer much less first-hand evidence, and far fewer of the rich and engaging insights that enliven subsequent chapters. The author's reasons for this choice are by no means clear. It is true that many records of the ancien régime's Eaux et Forêts in Franche-Comté were destroyed at the time of the Revolution. According to the website of the Archives départementales du Jura, their holdings of surviving files from the forestry officials at Dole occupy only 0.15 shelf meters. Yet, other forestry documentation exists for centers such as Poligny (Jura) and Pontarlier (Doubs), as we know from the regional work of French scholars like François Vion-Delphin, Pierre Gresser, Georges Plaisance and others, all of whom appear in Matteson's bibliography. [7]

The book also has a couple of production problems. The titles of chapters and their subsections, especially those in the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters, are frustrating: they take the form of brief quotations that are clearly evocative, but not always very informative. And a glossary of specialist forestry terms would have been advantageous.

Overall, however, Kieko Matteson has done a good job of demonstrating how regional struggles from the past relate to present-day concerns. She argues that the priority accorded to private property and exclusive rights of forest access was a pervasive feature of every political system in France, from the ancien régime monarchy to the Second Empire. These principles were also damaging to the long-term conservation of France's woodlands. By contrast, she insists, communal property and collective use rights over forests can produce beneficial outcomes, not merely for the state, but also for inhabitants of the countryside.

Like Whited, Matteson has chosen to concentrate on the history of interactions between state forestry authorities and the rural population in upland, frontier areas that were characterised by these forms of woodland property. Within France, though, regions like Franche-Comté and their forests were by no means typical. Not every rural parish in 1789 was antagonistic to the presence of forges, furnaces and other charcoal-fueled industries. [8] Environmental scholars studying more recent examples of conflicts over forests in the colonial and post-colonial world will nonetheless find many points of similarity.

## NOTES

[1] Matteson acknowledges (p. 4, n. 8 and p. 17, n. 5) that she omitted consideration of the Territoire de Belfort because of its geographical and historical distinctiveness.

[2] On the process of *réformation* see Chandra Mukerji, "The Great Forestry Survey of 1669-1671: The Use of Archives for Political Reform," *Social Studies of Science* 37 (2007): 227-53.

[3] Michel Devèze, "La crise forestière en France dans la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle et les suggestions de Vauban, Réaumur, Buffon," [*Actes du*] *88e Congrès national des Sociétés savantes: Section d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, Clermont-Ferrand, 1963* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1964), pp. 595-616.

[4] Quoted in Arlette Brosselin, "Pour une histoire de la forêt française au XIXe siècle," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 55 (1977), p. 94.

[5] Peter Sahlin, *Forest Rites: The War of the Demoiselles in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[6] Tamara White, *Forests and Peasant Politics in Modern France* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000). Jones's

[7] Pierre Gresser, André Robert, Claude Rayer and François Vion-Delphin, eds., *Les hommes et la forêt en Franche-Comté* (Paris: Éditions C. Bonneton, 1990); Georges Plaisance, "Tensions, oppositions, hésitations et contradictions dans les forêts feuillues comtoises au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue forestière française* 15 (1963):485-511; Georges Plaisance, "Les droits d'usage en forêt de Chauv et leur cantonnement," [*Actes du*] *Symposium international d'histoire forestière, Nancy, 24-28 septembre 1979* (Nancy: ENGREF, 1982), 2 vols., vol. 1, pp. 82-95; François Vion-Delphin, "Politique forestière et rattachement de la Franche-Comté à la France (1678-1750)," [*Actes du*] *Symposium international d'histoire forestière, Nancy, 24-28 septembre 1979* (Nancy: ENGREF, 1982), 2 vols., vol. 2, pp. 11-35; François Vion-Delphin, "L'homme et la forêt dans le Haut-Doubs au XVIIIe siècle: l'exemple de la gruerie de Pontarlier," in Andrée Corvol, ed., *La forêt. [Actes du] 113e Congrès national des Sociétés savantes: Section d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, Strasbourg, 1988* (Paris: Éditions CTHS, 1991), pp. 259-82. See also Louis Mazoyer, "Exploitation forestière et conflits sociaux en Franche-Comté à la fin de l'Ancien Régime," *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* 4 (1932):339-54.

[8] One survey of thirty parish *cahiers* from the northern Périgord, a significant center of iron and steel production, found no mention of metalworks and their demands for fuel: Richard Beaudry, Dominique Beaudry, Serge La Barbera, Michel Mange, and Daniel Marcadet, eds., *Cahiers de doléances du Nontronnais* (Nontron: Lycée Alcide Dusolier, 1989), p. 77.

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