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Andrea E. Duffy, *Nomad's Land: Pastoralism and French Environmental Policy in the Nineteenth-Century Mediterranean World*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. xxiii + 313 pp. Maps, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$55.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-8032-9097-6.

Review by Donna Landry, University of Kent, Canterbury.

This book exemplifies the virtues of what Sanjay Subrahmanyam calls “connected histories,” histories that are both comparative and so attuned to possible connections between themselves that the governing narratives of each may be transformed. Such a “connected” approach begins from the premise that “openness to other histories and other societal trajectories [is] essential to make sense even of one’s own backyard.”^[1] The international reach of nineteenth-century French forestry documented here testifies to the success of French imperial ambitions, not only to exploit colonial Algeria, but to exert soft power in the Ottoman Empire by applying policies developed in and for Provence well beyond French shores. If the scientific management and conservation of forests had its origins in eighteenth-century Germany, especially Prussia, France adopted and adapted German learning, but took the lead in Mediterranean climate zones. Thus, battles over forest laws and practices rooted in metropolitan France came to have repercussions in both North Africa and southwestern Anatolia during the nineteenth century. At the heart of new strategies for promoting afforestation and conservation of trees lurked growing hostility to livestock grazing, especially that practiced by “nomads,” according to customary patterns of transhumance. During the course of the nineteenth century, mobile pastoralists with their flocks of sheep and goats were increasingly cast as the rhetorical enemy of fragile Mediterranean ecologies.

Duffy’s study makes an intervention in Mediterranean environmental history that is alert to questions of animal agency. From the long view presented in this book, it would seem that the antagonism towards shepherds and their flocks stemmed from a multiplicity of sources that differed according to the particular context but was, in the light of subsequent developments and according to current environmentalist thinking, largely misplaced. In all three regimes of forest management—Provence, colonial Algeria, and Ottoman Anatolia—“mobile pastoralists suffered doubly in the wake of natural disasters” (p. 137), of which there were many in the nineteenth century: drought, wildfires, earthquakes, pests such as locusts, and epizootics, all leading to famine, poverty, and social unrest. “Even as shepherds reeled from environmental challenges, narratives associating their practices with such occurrences informed environmental policy and sedentarization efforts” to such a degree that “Mediterranean pastoralists became veritable scapegoats for nature” (p. 137).

Such attitudes on the part of both metropolitan society and the state colluded with imperial ambitions and what Duffy calls, after Michel Foucault, the “governmentality” (p. 56) of the modernizing state to push nomads, where they still existed, to the periphery, and enforce whenever possible the sedentarization of transhumant populations. Capitalist privatization of land continued apace, alongside the extinguishing of commoners’ grazing rights and other forms of forest subsistence. Indeed this attack on both “nomads’ land” and “no-man’s-land,” as Duffy puts it (p. 108), constitutes another chapter in the debates surrounding “the tragedy of the commons,” the unregulated overexploitation of land held in common, in Garrett Hardin’s coinage of 1968 (p. 121). In Duffy’s account, however, Hardin’s understanding is replaced by what we might call an alternative “tragedy of the commons,” the loss of commoners’ rights, of sustainable practices in managing common lands, and of stewardship of the environment based upon local knowledge, as opposed to privatized commercial overexploitation. The political stakes of this privatizing, modernizing, “improving” shift emerge most clearly in the case of colonial Algeria, in which arguments about deforestation, environmental degradation, and the lack of private property led inexorably to the dispossession of indigenous people (p. 121). Throughout this process, whether in Provence, Algeria, or Anatolia, it was usually the poorest pastoralists who were hardest hit. The French example, grounded in conflicts specific to Provence but applied wholesale elsewhere, saw shepherds’ sheep demonized, and even more vehemently, their goats—the poor shepherd’s mainstay, especially in the decades immediately following the French Revolution.

Duffy does not quite grant sheep and goats centre stage in terms of eco-historical, co-evolutionary agency, as has become thinkable in recent environmental history attentive to animals and informed by the new animal humanities research. The possibility of nonhuman animal agency has been envisaged, for example, by the Ottoman historian Sam White. White argues, concerning the vicissitudes of nomadic versus settled ways of life during drastic climate events, social unrest, and rebellion in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Anatolia, that from the cinematic viewpoint of historical hindsight he calls “an Olympian perspective,” “the conflict between desert and sown would appear not as a clash between settled villagers and nomads, but between humans and sheep.”^[2] The co-evolutionary nature of human-animal relations is similarly revealed when Alan Mikhail recognizes the collective agency of animals alongside that of human laborers for the long-lived effective functioning of what he calls the “ecosystem” of the Ottoman empire in Egypt and elsewhere.^[3] Duffy’s centring of mobile pastoralists and their dwindling fortunes does not go quite so far as do these precedents in displacing anthropocentric historical paradigms. But Duffy does show convincingly, across the otherwise politically very different Mediterranean zones of Provence, Algeria, and southwestern Anatolia, the crucial importance of animal-based economies, especially for poor, indigenous, and tribal peoples—the “subalterns” (p. 191) of this story of sedentarization-as-modernization, and of governmentality manifested in ever-intensifying surveillance and bureaucratic control.

The book moves smoothly from one political and ecological scene to the next, with chapters organized both chronologically and thematically, each one considering France, Algeria, and Ottoman Anatolia in a comparative frame, beginning with the traditional importance of sheep, wool, and mobile pastoralism for all three Mediterranean societies. By the late eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the emergence of new approaches to both forests and trees, and new beliefs about deforestation and environmental degradation were casting “shepherds and their flocks as the black sheep of the Mediterranean world” (p. 33). The French Forest Code of 1827 and the founding of the royal forestry school at Nancy in 1824 (p.

73) marked the institutionalization of French forestry theory and practice which would soon be applied in Algeria and the Ottoman Empire and beyond. French forest agents would travel to “such far-flung places as Greece, Switzerland, Denmark, Romania, Madagascar, Yemen, Arabia, Vietnam, Turkestan, and Indonesia in order to research and refine their forestry techniques”; they also studied forestry and forest legislation “in diverse contexts, from Norway to Hungary to Japan” (p. 77). These foresters often concentrated on sites in which mobile pastoralism figured importantly—in Mediterranean states such as Spain and Italy, and in colonial contexts such as India, generating “considerable international prestige” (p. 77). “British forest agents destined for India completed their forestry education in France,” and the “father” of United States forestry, Gifford Pinchot, studied at Nancy (p. 78). The Ottoman forest institute established in 1857 would be forever after referred to, even in twentieth-century Turkish scholarship, as “the Tassy school,” after French forester Louis François Victorin Tassy, who helped pioneer Ottoman forest administration following the Tanzimat reforms (beginning in 1839) and the Franco-Ottoman alliance of the Crimean War years (1854–1856) (pp. 96–102, 180). The career of Tassy, who worked in Algeria and Provence as well as Ottoman Anatolia, represents “a direct link among these three Mediterranean contexts and one way in which they influenced the core of French forest administration” (p. 102).

Promoting “the forest for the trees,” rather than for local pastoralist populations, was the most formative legacy of the application of French scientific forestry around the Mediterranean (p. 81). For Tassy, significantly, “the mission of the forest service was ultimately to save forests, not people” (p. 144). As might be expected, targeting nomadic pastoralist practices generated the most violent consequences in colonial Algeria. Applying the 1827 French forest code to a different environment and society often meant insult as well as injury. The code not only permitted pigs to be pastured in forests, a “direct affront” as well as being “of little value to Algeria’s predominantly Muslim and Jewish population,” but it prohibited the sheep and goats upon which they relied (p. 93). Unsurprisingly, the code’s environmental reasoning “resonated poorly with indigenous Algerians, who understandably tended to view it as a tool of imperial domination” (p. 93). The revolt of 1871, prompted by “growing desperation and hostility” toward the colonial regime but also by three years of “drought, famine, and locust invasions” (p. 124), produced a backlash—the “regime of repression” led by the settler-rights champion Auguste-Hubert Warnier (p. 125). Warnier helped “to codify the ‘Kabyle myth’ by contrasting Berbers and Arabs”—applying characteristically colonial tactics of divide and rule—distinguishing Berber from Arab society as “relatively orderly and civilized,” while “the Arab” was “lazy, corrupt, and degraded, a ‘devastating torrent,’ and a brutal unwelcome invader” (p. 125). Criminalizing traditional practices, including burning to prevent wildfires, and accusations of collective responsibility against indigenous people, made “fire control” a “tool of empire” with a distinctly “racial dimension” in Algeria (pp. 149–156, 161).

Ottoman application of French forestry thinking was more lenient towards nomads’ customary rights and practices than in the Algerian case but became increasingly intent on enforcing sedentarization, especially under pressure from the influx of refugees as the empire’s frontiers shrank. Ottoman forests tantalized French foresters with their commercial possibilities. The seventeenth-century Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi had described “the region just south and east of Istanbul (Kocaeli Province) as a ‘sea of trees’ (*ağaç denizi*), an epithet used through the late nineteenth century,” and the Ottoman state was still harvesting these and other forests for export to France and other international destinations at mid-century (p. 97). Yet French forestry experts could not reconcile this wealth of woodlands with what they took to be totally inadequate

management strategies either for commercial exploitation or tree-protecting precautions on the part of the Ottoman administration. Following the promulgation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858, official Ottoman attitudes “toward mobile pastoralists began to echo Western biases, explicitly categorizing nomads as savage, primitive, and less advanced than their settled peers” (p. 130), while at the same time the state gained better technologies and tools to settle its mobile populations, and two new sources of “ethical justification” for its sedentarization initiatives: “the narratives of civilization and environmental conservation” (pp. 130-131). It was a cruel irony that by the beginning of the twentieth century, “approximately twenty thousand nomads had died in Ottoman settlement campaigns” (p. 174), while the mid- to late-nineteenth century’s toll on Anatolian forests, the ostensible excuse for these violent campaigns, must be attributed not to “goats or nomads but agriculture, industry, and the railroad” (p. 180).

It would be a long time before the tide turned again in favour of mixed agro-sylvo-pastoral forms of land use, and then these mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth-century champions of mobile pastoralism could be seen as “romanticizing” the “noble savage” shepherds who had once been such a recognizable part of Mediterranean societies and landscapes, but had now so retreated to the periphery as to have largely disappeared from view (p. 166). Attempts by Frédéric Le Play and Lucien-Albert Fabre to resuscitate the reputation of nomadic graziers as stewards of fragile environments, after they had been condemned to the margins for decades (p. 165), coupled with the literary works of such figures as Alphonse Daudet, Marie Mauron, Émile Zola, and Jean Giono “indirectly confirmed the triumph of governmentality and empire” (p. 166). By the turn of the twentieth century, “France’s internal colonization of Provence was complete” (pp. 166, 188). Violent colonization strategies in Algeria meant that foresters, though increasingly at odds both with colonial settlers and the French state, “ultimately succeeded in driving indigenous pastoralists from more fertile regions, only to watch the country’s forests disappear at the hands of cork farmers and other colonial entrepreneurs” (p. 185)—another tragic irony.

Yet always there was resistance and negotiation (p. 182). Nomads have never entirely disappeared. Now in Provence “the practice of transhumance by foot has actually regained appeal,” with new urbanite-shepherds taking up residence and locals enjoying the sight of passing flocks and valuing “the meat of transhumant over stabled sheep” (p. 182). Ecologists have begun to argue convincingly for “the essential role of grazing in the life cycle of Mediterranean vegetation, which has adapted to the presence of sheep and goats” (p. 186) (and in Anatolia, the camels of the nomadic *yörük* who powered the caravan trade). Understanding ecosystems as not static but rather as “continually reshaped” by human and natural forces means that “the relative adaptability of mobile pastoralism makes it a more appropriate and practical use of certain dynamic environments than unirrigated agriculture or other economic systems” (p. 187). At the same time, “common property regimes have proven more effective than private landownership in regions of limited annual precipitation or of high annual rainfall variability, where the risk burden of environmental disturbances is too great for a single individual to bear” (p. 187). In short, contemporary scientific understandings are resurrecting and redeeming “many of the very practices that nineteenth-century French forest science fought so bitterly to destroy” (p. 187).

Duffy concludes her study by reminding us rightly of the need to maintain “critical distinctions” between contexts when embarking upon comparative work, a practice she herself has persuasively demonstrated in the cases of Provence, Algeria, and Anatolia (p. 184). The soft power of educational or policy influence is not the same kind of instrument of imperial domination as settler-colonialism. Yet Duffy is equally clear that throughout its Mediterranean “application,”

French scientific forestry “embodied the interests of empire” (p. 187). In this respect, the case of French forestry, as it was disseminated transnationally across the Mediterranean, can represent and potentially illuminate other instances of how “power relationships have been determined and contested on environmental terms” (p. 191). Duffy’s well-crafted study, grounded in French and Ottoman archives, and informed by a wide range of French, Provençal, Algerian, Ottoman, modern Turkish, environmental, and ecological sources deserves to be widely read. Nineteenth-century French history, Mediterranean environmental history, Algerian-French imperial and colonial history, and Ottoman history can all benefit from the book’s connected-historical enterprise.

NOTES

[1] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005, 2nd imp., 2012), p. 2.

[2] Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 248.

[3] Alan Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) and *Under Osman’s Tree: The Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Environmental History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Donna Landry
University of Kent, Canterbury
D.E.Landry@kent.ac.uk

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