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Editorial

The idea for this journal began as a result of a conversation between the editor and Professor Ranajit Guha in 1988. 'What we need now', Professor Guha claimed, 'is a history of sticks and stones'. Ranajit Guha has since become famous as the originator of a whole school of Indian history, now known as 'Subaltern Studies', after the series of books of that name. The essence of Subaltern Studies lies in seeking to document the history and experiences of ordinary people and to move away from élitist history. This has led, quite naturally, to a focus on the history of the relationship between people and their everyday environment in South Asia, a part of the world where environmental history has become as vibrant as anywhere in the world. Similarly, the increasing emphasis on 'history from below' pioneered by Peter Burke and his colleagues, and on the history of material culture as pursued by Fernand Braudel, has led to a similar shift of emphasis in European historical studies, particularly in France and Britain. In both countries the critical growth of 'climatic history' had already been spurred on by the work of Le Roy Ladurie, Gordon Manley and Hubert Lamb.

In North America environmental history has had radically different roots, growing up in the wake of Rooseveltian conservationism, 'New Deal' and 'Dust Bowl' anxieties, and finally coming to busy life in the period between the publication in 1956 of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and the anti-Vietnam war protests of the 1960s. If one were to choose a single publication that really set the agenda and the standard for environmental history it would surely be the late and much-missed Clarence Glacken's *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*. Glacken's book aptly symbolised the coalescence of a venerable and cosmopolitan cultural geographical tradition pioneered by Carl Sauer at the Geography department in Berkeley, with the dynamic growth of the 'New Environmentalism' that has lasted to this day and which also had many of its roots in California. Conservationism had, of course, long been an essential component of the 'American Dream' and it was not surprising that environmental history should flower so strongly in the United States. It has been nourished since Glacken with great enthusiasm by Samuel Hays, Donald Worster, William Cronon, Donald Hughes and Carolyn Merchant among many others, to create a splendid and innovative historiography.

North American environmental history has also produced at least two excellent journals: *Environmental History Review* and *Forest and Conservation History*. These two journals have quite rightly been preoccupied with documenting the North American experience and have only occasionally ventured into the environmental history of other regions. This journal, then, sets out to complement the activity of the existing journals in the field. We aim, essentially, to move the environmental history of the rest of the world closer to centre stage and to

deliberately encourage the writing of environmental history in Africa, Asia, Australia, South America, the Pacific and, not least, in Europe. In these regions, too, North Americans made a substantial pioneering contribution, particularly in the work of Richard Tucker, John Richards and Edward Hayes in India and Nancy Lee Peluso in Java, while Alfred Crosby has performed a seminal role in globalising environmental history.

But there were, much earlier, always the lone pioneers. Henry Clifford Darby, Oliver Rackham, Victor Skipp and John Sheail developed environmental history in England. Andrée Corvol has been a formidable presence in France, while her countryman, Jean Filliozat, began studies of South Indian ecological history in Tamil Nadu as early as 1956; setting the agenda for the remarkable studies still being carried out by the French Institute in Pondicherry. In West Africa E.O. Egbah and Olufemi Omosini, in the 1960s, began the solitary and potentially massive task of documenting the forest history of Nigeria and its neighbours, while Helge Kjekshus stirred up a very fruitful ants' nest in East African history with his heretical 1977 plunge into the ecological history of Tanzania. Just a little earlier, from Melbourne, Joseph Powell provided us with a model for writing books on environmental history with his 1976 book on the history of environmental management in Australia. We owe a great deal to those pioneers, whose work was often regarded as eccentric when they first wrote. However, the evidence of global environmental change has now turned the tables on their critics.

In particular, the discovery of the ozone hole in the mid 1980s and the gathering evidence of greenhouse warming during the last decade have served to sharpen still further the pens of environmental historians, and have forced other historians to listen. In our global time of crisis, the agendas of environmental history have emerged as being increasingly relevant. We are called upon to explain and to narrate how it is that humanity has come to tread such a potentially dangerous path. Perhaps, by making a sober, scholarly and committed contribution to history, we can help to suggest some useful paths away from danger and towards a more just and stable future. This journal will seek to encourage all those who set about this task.

On a note of acknowledgement, I should like to thank all my colleagues at the Global Environmental History Unit in the History of Science Department at Cambridge University, at the Institute of Advanced Studies at the ANU in Canberra, and at the National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies in New Delhi. *Environment and History* is very much a product of the emerging and enthusiastic activity in the field at all three centres.

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