

Anti-Civil War movement, noting the role of Third Force parties in keeping students mostly “unaligned” until 1949.

Although it does not fit well into the editors’ typology, the chapter on the 5.19 movement at Peking University in 1957 is one of the best, clearly showing that the movement was a spontaneous outburst rather than being part of the broader Hundred Flowers movement, and that it supported a form of socialist democracy that remained within the ideological frame of Marxism. The chapter on the pre-Cultural Revolution rustication movement (1962–66) is well-documented, but it is questionable to what extent the movement can be compared to other student mobilizations. In the Cultural Revolution context, “movement” (*yundong*) refers to a state-initiated “campaign,” rather than to a form of bottom-up mobilization. A similar discussion is also lacking in the following chapter on Red Guards. Finally, the chapter on the 1989 movement provides some interesting background on student life in the 1980s but concludes by questionably designating the students’ “self-pride if not arrogance” as one of the factors of the crackdown (260).

Overall, although this is a somewhat disappointing compilation, especially in terms of conceptualization and periodization, individual chapters still offer new perspectives on certain historical episodes. Perhaps some of the contributors may yet take up the challenge of compiling a more comprehensive and diverse collection of views on student movements in twentieth-century China.

## *Profits of Nature: Colonial Development and the Quest for Resources in Nineteenth Century China*

By Peter B. Lavelle. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.  
288 pp. \$65.00 (cloth).

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In this well-crafted monograph, Peter B. Lavelle offers a persuasive analysis of Zuo Zongtang’s involvement in China’s environmental control and his relentless endeavors to strengthen the Qing Empire by tapping into nature, obtaining new resources, and acquiring wealth. Lavelle’s approach is wide-ranging, in that he covers a variety of different regions, ranging from Hunan to Jiangnan (Jiangsu and Zhejiang in particular) and then to the Northwest (Gansu and Xinjiang). Nevertheless, he has done a good job at retrieving primary sources, sharing fascinating stories, and interpreting environmental changes after the Taiping Rebellion in the south and the Muslim Rebellion in the northwest in nineteenth century China. This book should be welcome as a valuable addition to the growing literature on environmental history.

The monograph is in six chapters plus an introduction and a conclusion. Valuable photos, illustrations, and maps are included. In each chapter an in-depth analysis of a special topic is supported by prized primary sources. Following chronological order,

Lavelle appraises Zuo's encounters with China's environmental issues, his continual efforts in extracting "natural profits" for the Qing Empire, and his moves to solve tough problems. Needless to say, some of his actions succeeded, while others did not achieve the original objectives.

In chapter 1, Lavelle probes Zuo's early life, his unsuccessful participation in the imperial examinations in Beijing after he earned a *juren* degree in Hunan. After giving up further attempts, he devoted himself to agronomy, a type of "practical learning" then popular among Confucian scholars. Having adopted a number of strategies and techniques, Zuo conducted agrarian experiments on his private land. As Lavelle shows, Zuo's engagement with farming was partially driven by the need to support his wife, concubine, and (by the 1840s) six children. His experiments in food production, irrigation, and sericulture prepared him to bring his practical learning into his future political career.

In the next chapter, Lavelle narrates Zuo's early interests in Xinjiang, not unlike other Qing officials and Confucian scholars who also demonstrated their passion for this frontier region. Zuo leafed through the existing books and even consulted Lin Zexu during the latter's trip to Changsha in 1850. From Lin, who had just returned from Xinjiang, Zuo learned more about the frontier region's geography, ethnicities, and other essential issues. Zuo read the works of Gong Zizhen, Wei Yuan, Xu Song, and others from whom he realized the importance of Xinjiang not only as a vital borderland to alleviate China's overpopulation problem but also as a frontier region with rich natural resources. In other words, Zuo's early study of the Xinjiang-related literature ultimately assisted his management of it after his reconquest of the region in 1877.

In chapter 3, Lavelle examines Zuo's career as a Qing official first in Zhejiang and then in Northwest China, especially his efforts to reclaim devastated land following the decade-long rebellions. No sooner was he appointed governor of Zhejiang in 1862 than he started to implement his policy of land reclamation. Seeing that the rebellion left Jiangnan a wasteland, Zuo tried to pacify the people by encouraging them to cultivate the land. Four years later, he was appointed governor-general of the Northwest. Upon his arrival, he was in total shock by the wreckage of Gansu from the Muslim Rebellion. He assisted the local resettlement by providing tools, seeds, animals, and other necessities. The people of Gansu largely benefited from his assistance, although some Muslims were forced to resettle in certain designated areas perhaps due to their tie with the rebellion. Nevertheless, nearly 30 percent of Gansu's total prewar acreage remained out of cultivation as late as 1887 (123).

In chapter 4, Lavelle investigates Zuo's efforts to plant profitable crops in Gansu in the 1870s as a strategy of economic revival. Encountering widespread opium cultivation, Zuo implemented a ban on it. He lambasted the farmers for chasing profits by growing "evil grasses" instead of "good grains" and persuaded them to plant cotton and other crops for potential pecuniary gains. For cotton, Zuo created a regional administration to promote textile education, hire experts to assist local farmers, and publish pamphlets to disseminate relevant knowledge (103). Unfortunately this cotton project was not a success. On the contrary, the opium plantation continued and even expanded, as it "quite literally bloomed in Gansu" (110). Facing this reality, Zuo proposed to impose a higher tax on the poppy with the intention of raising its price in order to put pressure on the opium consumers.

In the next chapter, Lavelle shifts to Xinjiang which was reconquered by Zuo after suppressing the rebellion. In this frontier region, Zuo tried to tap the natural resources to aid local economic recovery and regional social stability. He stressed the importance of water as he stated that "those who control the northwest should prioritize water resources" (117). He mobilized his soldiers, utilized local manpower, and made use of

the available state funding to repair and enlarge embankments, canals, and other hydraulic structures to develop Xinjiang's water resources for its agrarian production. In particular, Zuo and his subordinate Liu Jintang expanded, rebuilt, and mended the local *karez* (kan'erjing) which was a network of underground tunnels for irrigation. On the basis of Zuo's petition, the Qing Empire finally established Xinjiang as a province in 1884.

In chapter 6, Lavelle studies Zuo and his subordinates' moves to develop sericulture in Xinjiang. Although Xinjiang had its sericulture with its own characteristics, Zuo felt that the local natives, mostly Uighurs, were not able to maximize silk's potential. Therefore, Zuo imported Huzhou's techniques, invited Huzhou's experts to train local residents, and transported Huzhou's mulberry trees and silkworm eggs from Zhejiang to Xinjiang. To reduce government outlay, Zuo endorsed a policy of privatizing sericulture. Although it seemed to be a booming business, this endeavor did not pan out well. Yet, as Lavelle argues, this case "shows how technology and the propagation of expertise for exploiting nature became a more explicit tool in their struggle to control territory and people in Central Asia" (166).

Lavelle should be commended for the scholarly achievement of his meticulous inquiry into Zuo's passion, his measures, and his legacy in China's environmental transformation. With Zuo as a case study, Lavelle has examined state intervention into natural management. However, Zuo's name should appear in the title of the book, as the monograph is mostly devoted to his life and career. Perhaps, the current vogue of chasing broader titles by publishers compels the author to select the current title. It would be better, if Zuo's name was included, because he was truly a central historical figure in nineteenth-century China. A table to show the changes of place names would also be helpful, because many places were rechristened in Northwest China. This monograph will be viewed as a new volume of "the New Qing History" by Chinese scholars who have long criticized Western scholars' colonial approach in their study of China's borderlands. In any case, Lavelle's monograph should be respected as a contribution to modern Chinese history for his offering of a rational evaluation of Zuo's enthusiasm for nature, his management of natural resources, and his impact on China's environmental change.

## *Land of Strangers: The Civilizing Project in Qing Central Asia*

By Eric Schluessel. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020. 304 pp. \$140.00, £108.00 (cloth), \$35.00, £27.00 (paper), \$34.99, £27.00 (ebook).

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Over the past ten years, the field of Xinjiang studies has experienced two different shocks to the system. Well into the first decade of the twenty-first century, it was