

origins. He convincingly argues that legal regimes, bounded by clear jurisdictional limits, shape human actions in ways that are “verifiable, common, explainable, and concrete.” The “intractable puzzle of national political differences is thus reduced to the highly tractable trajectories of comparative sociolegal development” (6).

His historical account of how America developed a highly litigious society, in which private corporations loom as large or larger than the state, draws on a wealth of detail from a relatively rich American literature. His task is not to bring forth new facts, but to synthesize and reinterpret earlier authors. This reader found his reinterpretation of American sources fascinating and, on the whole, convincing.

Canadians may find his sections on Canada marginally less persuasive. Partly, this is due to a thinner existing interpretive literature for Kaufman to draw upon. But there is another problem: like many liberally minded Americans, Kaufman is perhaps a trifle too inclined to see the liberal, progressive side of Canada (that is, after all, what stands out as different from contemporary America). Canadian–American differences are differences of degree, and are as easy to exaggerate as to deny.

Even given some imbalance in the two sides in this comparative study, Kaufman has produced a readable and thought-provoking work that definitely moves the standard forward in this small but intriguing academic industry.

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Monica Chiu (ed.), *Asian Americans in New England: Culture and Community* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2009, \$50.00). Pp. xv + 252. ISBN 978 158465 7941.

Significant scholarship has recently emerged that moves the interdisciplinary field of Asian American studies away from its earlier emphasis on the West Coast. *Asian Americans in New England* can be envisioned as such an effort, enlarging the historical, social, and cultural scope of Asian America to include New England. Importantly, the book also affirms that this inclusion entails a more radical realignment of the field, rather than the simple addition of new spaces and subjects for analysis.

For instance, histories of Asian Americans often begin with the large-scale migrations, labor practices, and exclusion laws of the later nineteenth century. But as K. Scott Wong’s introduction reminds us, Asia played a major role in American society and culture at a much earlier point in time. Instances of Chinese and other Asian immigration to New England long preceded exclusion, as documented by Karen Sánchez-Eppler in her analysis of the aesthetic, linguistic, and political contexts of an 1824 “friendship book” by a Chinese student at the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut. Similarly, Amy Bangerter’s essay on Yung Wing, author of *My Life in China and America*, concentrates on Yung’s education in New England and formative college experience at Yale in the 1840s and 1850s.

The essays here also move away from defining Asian American studies as strictly devoted to accounts of immigrant individuals and communities, and posit a more flexible sense of how the field might imagine connections between the spaces of “Asia” and “America.” Thus Constance Chen’s discussion of the creation of the

Department of Chinese and Japanese Art at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts depicts late nineteenth-century white American fascination with Japanese arts and crafts. Krystyn Moon considers the reception of Japanese acrobatic troupes in various New England cities during the late 1860s. Moon's original research on these performing artists reinforces the close relationship between various discourses of Orientalism and the racialization of Asians visiting or inhabiting the United States. Bandana Purkayastha and Anjana Narayan also scrutinize this connection; their essay on 1890s lectures by the Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda suggests how Vivekananda's teachings countered the prevalent typecasting of "hindoos" and how in the present South Asian Americans both employ and oversimplify versions of his doctrine to challenge Orientalism's continuing legacy.

Later essays provide distinctive sites of scholarly study and question the terms by which such research is framed and conducted. Shirley Suet-Ling Tang and James Diên Bui look at Vietnamese American grassroots community-building efforts in Boston's Field's Corner neighborhood, and Monica Chiu examines the expressive possibilities of hip hop for Lao American youth in New Hampshire. Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns uses the example of the University of Massachusetts–Amherst's New World Theatre and Roberta Uno collections to unpack the ideological underpinnings of Asian American studies and performance studies archives, and Leakhena Nou considers the possibilities of an indigenous perspective in research on Cambodian Americans. While individually none of the essays makes a sweeping claim about Asian Americans in New England, collectively they invite a larger reconsideration of the history and the contemporary presence of Asian Americans, not just in this understudied location, but overall.

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James Silas Rogers and Matthew J. O'Brien (eds.), *After the Flood: Irish America, 1945–1960* (Dublin: Irish Academic, 2009, £19.95). Pp. 223. ISBN 0 7165 2988 2.

In their short introduction to *After the Flood*, the editors note that Irish American historiography has traditionally focussed on the nineteenth century, particularly the years of the Great Famine (1). In line with more recent studies, which challenge this narrow chronological scope, Rogers and O'Brien make a claim for the years 1945 to 1960 as "a distinct historical and cultural moment" in Irish America, arguing that Irish American ethnicity is of "pivotal significance" in these years (4). Indeed, 1945 to 1960 might be "the most important single period for twentieth-century Irish-American ethnicity" (5). They and other contributors (notably Margaret Lee) are keen to discredit the thesis of "ethnic fade" which proposes a "straight-line course of assimilation that would reduce ethnicity to a romanticized affectation" (2). Rogers and O'Brien need not be so emphatic in their claims, which are, in any case, very difficult to prove. This is a thoroughly original project, spanning history, politics and cultural studies (literature, film, sport, music), that justifies its existence in its very title. While the historical ground has been covered quite comprehensively by Linda Dowling Almeida in *Irish Immigrants in New York City, 1945–1995* (2001), it is true that