Editorial issue 1 2013

Heather J. Hoag · Maurits W. Ertsen

Published online: 19 March 2013
© Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

In our first issue of 2013, two important fields within water history are highlighted: military history and archaeology. The historian David A. Biggs, author of *Quagmire: Nation-Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta* (University of Washington, 2010), introduces the first set of papers which focus on the role of wetlands in military-environmental history. Wetlands have posed challenges to societies and their institutions. We are most familiar with the struggles between humans and their riverine environments. Just think of the monumental efforts to control the Mississippi floods or the efforts to drain the wetlands of Mesopotamia to reclaim agricultural lands. The technical, financial, and labor costs associated with such efforts meant such Herculean feats were often military affairs. But as Biggs reminds us wetlands also have been key sites of actual war (as well as hideouts for recalcitrant outlaws). The first paper by Jack Hayes analyzes classic Chinese military literature and several Chinese wetlands to contextualize regional warfare prior to the 1960s. He presents these wetlands as “literary and tactical characters” in Chinese military history. The second paper takes us to the South Pacific during World War II and the Battle for the Guadalcanal. Through a detailed case study of the U.S. 1st Marine Division, Dylan Cyr illustrates how water shaped both the daily experiences of the division members and U.S. military strategy. Together with Biggs’s introduction, these papers show the important role of wetlands in military life, strategy, and literary traditions. We hope they are just the beginning of what will be an on-going discussion of military-water history in the pages of *Water History*.

The next set of papers continues our discussion of the contribution of archaeology to water history. Firstly, Kirk French, Christopher Duffy and Gopal Bhatt examine the hydraulics of water management in the ancient Maya site of Palenque in Chiapas, Mexico. How successful were the Maya in coping with droughts, floods and water supply problems that evolved from their own hydraulic designs and urban hydrologic manipulations? Using a hydroarchaeological method to project watershed models, they show how alternating landscape and meteorological conditions can affect a local watershed. The next paper by Kevin Edwards and Edward Schofield builds upon previous discussions in *Water History*

H. J. Hoag · M. W. Ertsen (✉)
Delft University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands
e-mail: M.W.Ertsen@tudelft.nl

on water systems in Greenland. Focusing on the Greenlandic settlement of Garðar, they describe a medieval irrigation system, which are associated with Norse colonization and agriculture. This includes a detailed discussion of the system's interconnected channels and cascading dams. Based on excavations across three supposed irrigation channels, they show how the system included both man-made and natural features.