

# China's Environmental Challenges

By JUDITH SHAPIRO

MALDEN: POLITY PRESS, 2012

205 PAGES, ISBN 978-0745660912, PAPERBACK

Reviewed by Andrew M. McGreevy



Judith Shapiro is imminently qualified to address China's environmental problems because she has spent years in China, is well-known for previous publications, and is a specialist in global environmental politics. The most significant feature of *China's Environmental Challenges* is her multidisciplinary approach. Most of the book encompasses the time period after 1900, and the author effectively contrasts environmental policies in the People's Republic of China and the reality of environmental practices. The book is particularly good for those

who want a longer-term perspective on the topic.

I have taught Chinese history in a variety of formats to a wide range of students. From my experience, Professor Shapiro's *China's Environmental Challenges* is best-suited for students with prior knowledge of Chinese history, environmental science, and perhaps international relations. Shapiro's book is based on five concepts: globalization, governance, national identity, civil society, and environmental justice (12). She draws upon political science, international relations, environmental politics, environmental anthropology, philosophy, religion, literature, human geography, political ecology, sociology, environmental justice, social ecology, environmental history, and environmental economics to explain environmental issues in contemporary China. Shapiro's scope is impressive. For example, readers are asked to consider Daoism, tiger bones, deforestation, and accounting systems on one page (27).

Consider the following quotation, which serves to introduce students to the relationship between environmental issues and a significant Chinese belief system:

*Chinese Buddhism (one of many schools of Buddhism, which is practiced differently in Sri Lanka, India, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, Japan, and elsewhere), retains the notion of the reincarnation of souls. Chinese Buddhist monks and nuns are often vegetarian, and many devout practitioners visit temples to have a vegetarian meal. On some festival days, Buddhists will purchase and release a bird, fish, or turtle as a way of gaining merit and as an acknowledgment of the connections among living beings and the desire to practice loving kindness to animals. There is a close relationship between nature and morality, with compassion to others held as one of the most important virtues. (88)*

*China's Environmental Challenges* consists of a preface and seven chapters: "Introduction: The Big Picture," "Environmental Challenges: Drivers and Trends," "State-led Environmentalism: The View from Above," "Sustainable Development and National Identity," "Public Participation and Civil Society: The View from Below," "Environmental Justice and the

Displacement of Environmental Harm," and "Prospects for the Future." Only one map of China is provided, but there is a chronology of history and environmental events from 1894 to the present. Each chapter is followed by research questions and additional resources, which are a rich find of up-to-date online publications, websites, blogs, newspaper articles, videos, and films, etc.—all of the electronic media that are used by many of today's students. These resources will be of great value for visual materials.

There are other excellent resources on China's environment that space does not permit me to address here, but attributes of Shapiro's book include its recent publication date, intermediate length, the author's interdisciplinary focus, and her sharp eye for the often-glaring contradictions between the PRC's environmental policies and its actual practices. ■

ANDREW M. MCGREEVY teaches Modern Asian History at Ohio University-Lancaster. He is the author of "China's Environmental Challenges," *Education About Asia* 15, no. 3 (Winter 2010): 28–32.

# Tears of Blood

## *A Korean POW's Fight for Freedom, Family, and Justice*

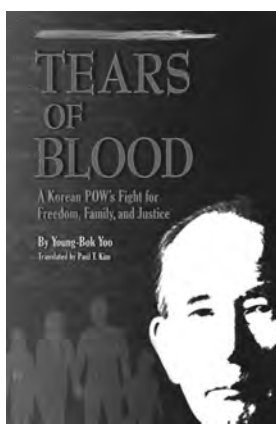
By YOUNG-BOK YOO

TRANSLATED BY PAUL T. KIM

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Reviewed by Mary Connor



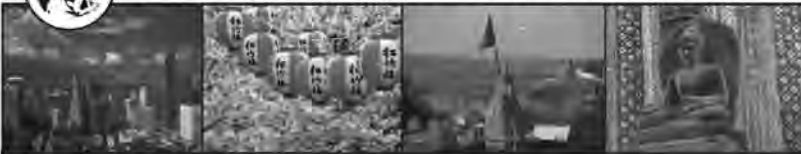
*Tears of Blood: A Korean POW's Fight for Freedom, Family, and Justice* by Young-Bok Yoo is a riveting, highly readable, and concise account of a survivor of the Korean War who suffered harsh imprisonment and forty-seven years of extreme hardship in North Korea until he escaped to freedom in South Korea at age seventy. Young-Bok Yoo's narrative brings to life not only the chaos and suffering experienced by Koreans during the Korean War but also informs the reader about an aspect of the war that is virtually unknown outside of Korea: 60,000 prisoners of the war were

held captive against their will by the North Korean government and were never repatriated. His autobiography also vividly describes the difficulties of life in North Korea and includes key historical developments over a period of fifty years, along with useful explanatory notes.

When North Korean forces invaded South Korea in 1950, Young-Bok Yoo was forced to join the North Korean army. After UN forces landed in Incheon, he was captured by the South Korean army and imprisoned for two years with 170,000 other soldiers at Koje Island on the southern coast. Upon release, he was conscripted into the South Korean army and sent to



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*While the book portrays a tragic story, it is nevertheless an inspiring one because Yoo never gave up hope for a better life for himself and his loved ones.*

the frontlines. Yoo managed to survive, but just before the armistice, he was captured by the Chinese communists and sent to a prisoner of war camp outside of P'yongyang.

In addition to providing an account of his imprisonment and other difficulties during the war, Yoo presents a vivid account of the intolerable conditions he and others experienced in North Korea. From the time he was twenty-three years old until he was seventy, he wrote that his ". . . entire life revolved around hunger and oppression. I was always put down and never able to speak my mind freely." He was, as were other South Korean prisoners, exploited as a laborer in the mines, subjected to harsh conditions, weakened by tuberculosis and famine, and nearly broken by the suffering of members of his family.

Yoo's account also provides a window into the tragedy of separated families during and after the war. When the Korean War broke out, Yoo's mother took four younger siblings north of Seoul to escape the fighting, while his father stayed in Seoul. His mother expected to be able to come home after the war, but with the division of the peninsula, Yoo's parents were never able to see each other again. After being separated from his father for almost half a century, Yoo was finally reunited with his ninety-year-old father, who had lived for nearly fifty years believing his son was dead. Sadly, his father was not able to comprehend that Young-Bok Yoo was his long-lost son.

While the book portrays a tragic story, it is nevertheless an inspiring one because Yoo never gave up hope for a better life for himself and his loved ones. *Tears of Blood* is particularly valuable not only because it portrays the impact of war on a nation and its people, but it also provides the reader with a realization that the issues of the Korean War have not been resolved and that the pain of the war persists in the minds and hearts of Korean families—both on the Korean peninsula and throughout the world.

Yoo's moving account is beautifully translated by Paul Kim, a young Korean-American whose grandmother insisted that he grow up fluent in the Korean language. Inspired by Yoo's story, Kim subsequently translated the book when he was only a junior in high school. *Tears of Blood* is particularly recommended for high school and undergraduate students. ■

MARY CONNOR taught United States History and Asian Studies for thirty-five years. She is the author of *The Koreas (Asia in Focus)* (2009) and the recipient of the Organization of American Historians Tachau Award; the Prime Minister's Award from the Republic of South Korea; and the Daekyo Enopi Award, a newly established prestigious award available to American educators. She is also Past President and Program Director of the Korea Academy for Educators (2004–2012), a nonprofit organization that informs educators about Korean history and culture and the Korean-American experience.