

histories of the world's peoples: that is, a meshing of the local with the global. Wiesner-Hanks notes that women's and gender history has worked to broaden understanding of historical processes—for instance, by enlarging the history of politics to include movements for reform or by seeing political processes as having to do with the exercise of power not just in designated institutions such as a parliament. One hopes that this book will help enlarge and enrich definitions of world history and facilitate teaching it in the most inclusive ways.

BONNIE G. SMITH  
*Rutgers University*

*El Niño in History: Storming through the Ages.* By CÉSAR N. CAVIEDES. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001. Pp. xiv + 279. \$24.95 (cloth)

In 1588 a severe storm dismantled the Spanish Armada, eliminating it as a threat to England. This weather story is familiar to all of us educated in the Anglophone world. If we were Japanese schoolchildren, our climatic salvation story would be the Kamikaze—the Divine Wind—that destroyed the Mongol forces invading Japan. In recent times, climate's best-known role in world history is as the cruel Russian winter of 1942, the nemesis of Hitler's Russian campaign. This, of course, was a reprise of the 1812 winter's decimation of Napoleon's army.

The best-known syndrome of climate anomalies is El Niño, made infamous by the outsized event of 1997–1998. Apart from the regular march of the seasons, El Niño (more precisely, ENSO: El Niño and the Southern Oscillation) is the largest climate variation in the modern record. ENSO, which originates in the tropical Pacific, has near global reach; among its typical effects are droughts in northern China, India, Australia, the Nordeste region of Brazil, southern Africa, and the Altiplano; mild winters in Canada and the northwestern United States; and excessive rainfall in southern China, coastal Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, New Zealand, and the American southwest.

Such large climate anomalies have social and historical consequences. *El Niño in History: Storming through the Ages* by the distinguished geographer César Caviedes adds to the rapidly growing book-list in this area. The book is motivated by the desire to bring “to the surface the manifold effects of past El Niño for which there were no explicit references in conventional historical accounts” (p. 250). To

quote from the author's preface, "This book examines numerous events in political, military, social, economic, and cultural history that were influenced by El Niño. This is the first comprehensive account of the history of El Niño that shifts the research focus from the physical mechanisms of the phenomenon to its past and present impact on humans."

It is always dangerous to claim to be the first. The same "shift in focus" fits Brian Fagan's entertaining *Floods, Famines, and Emperors: El Niño and the Fate of Civilizations*. He occasionally presents matters as settled that are still hotly disputed, the impacts of ENSO on Europe being a key instance, as it bears on the attribution of the abnormally severe Russian winters in 1942 or 1812 to El Niño. There are a number of inexplicable errors, such as the incorrect definition of La Niña (p. 146).

This book from an excellent scholar is a disappointment. As a compendium of El Niño occurrences and impacts it may prove useful to those who want to see if a particular famine or historical event may be linked to ENSO, but I cannot recommend it to others.

MARK A. CANE  
Columbia University

*The Social Construction of the Ocean.* By PHILIP E. STEINBERG.  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. \$59.95 (cloth);  
\$22.00 (paper).

In a relatively short book, Philip Steinberg succeeds in explaining the social and historical nature of our past and present conceptualizations of the sea, which is after all only 71% of our planet. This is no small task. Steinberg emphasizes that even the most distant ocean space is a deliberate social construction of society, not necessarily by society. In other words, intentional or otherwise, society's idealizations of the sea are central to "the institutions and structures that govern their lives" (p. 191). Conceptions of the sea affect our society, whether we're conscious of it or not.

Steinberg the geographer focuses on the uses and conceptions of space. In categorizing the sea he shows how ocean space serves multiple functions, such as a resource area, a transportation surface, a battleground, buffer zones or "force fields," and even as a Foucaultian "heterotopia," a space for the creation of experimentation and alternate social models. The most immediate and obvious dichotomy stems from the fact that most of the world's oceans lie outside of nations and