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EMPIRE FORESTRY AND THE ORIGINS OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

What we now know as environmentalism began with a series of land reservations in 1855 in British India, spreading during the second half of the nineteenth century until over 10 percent of the land surface of the earth became protected as a public trust. Sprawling forest reservations, many of them larger than modern nations, became revenue-producing forests that protected the whole “household of nature,” and Rudyard Kipling and Theodore Roosevelt were among those who celebrated a new class of government foresters as public heroes. These foresters warned of impending catastrophe, desertification, and global climate change if the reverse process of deforestation continued. The empire forestry movement spread through India, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and then the United States to other parts of the globe, and Gregory Barton’s pioneering study is amongst the first to look at this movement, and thus the origins of environmentalism, in global perspective.

Born under imperialism, environmentalism today is as profound a global movement as that for democracy itself. Ironically it is in those former colonies where environmentalism took shape that its future, and the future of nature, seems least assured. *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* is a major contribution to the understanding of what is perhaps one of the most powerful political and social forces of modern times.

Raised in Oregon, Gregory Barton is Professor of British, Colonial and Environmental History at the University of Redlands, California. He is the editor of *American Environmentalism*. This is his first book.

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*For my mother,
Ina Mae Russell Barton*

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