

SOURCES

by crimson streaks of unrelenting fire” (26). This work is a valuable contribution to the study of the Korean War because it gives readers an intimate look at combat.

Hannings succeeds in showing a detailed portrayal of combat in Korea, but the work does tend to have an American bias. For example, many of the sources he consulted are military histories published by the U.S. government. He indicates in the preface that North Korean, Soviet, and Chinese records “were unavailable” and he had to rely on information from the U.S. military for the Communist countries’ military movements and casualty figures (5). Readers will therefore need to keep in mind that the events presented may not be completely balanced.

Other works that investigate the Korean war include James I. Matray’s *Historical Dictionary of the Korean War* (Greenwood, 1991) and Spencer C. Tucker’s *Encyclopedia of the Korean War: A Political, Social and Military History* (ABC-CLIO, 2000). Hannings’s work differs significantly from the other two titles. While Hannings’s work looks specifically at combat, Matray’s work focuses primarily on the political and diplomatic aspects of the war. Tucker also examines these aspects as well as social and military dimensions. Furthermore, the Tucker and Matray books present a broader perspective of the war. Both Tucker and Matray indicate that their books are from American and South Korean perspectives. Additionally, Tucker notes that articles in his encyclopedia were constructed with information available from Russian and Chinese archives. Finally, the Tucker and Matray works may also be considered more scholarly. For instance, both individuals are academics as are many of the contributors to their respective volumes. But Hannings presents a unique perspective on the Korean War and his work is recommended for academic libraries supporting American military history or foreign relations programs.—Michelle Hendley, *Reference Librarian, State University of New York, College at Oneonta*

Material Culture in America: Understanding Everyday Life. Ed. by Helen Sheumaker and Shirley T. Wajda. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2008. 420p. alkaline \$95 (ISBN 978-1-57607-647-7).

From “attics” to “yard sales” and from “adolescence” to “shopping centers and shopping malls,” the 193 entries in *Material Culture in America: Understanding Everyday Life* offer a glimpse into material culture in the United States over the past four hundred years. An introductory overview defines material culture studies in the United States. As the editors state in the introduction, “it is not yet possible within the confines of one volume to account for, describe, and discuss the full wealth of material culture created, used, and altered by various groups in the American experience” (xvii). This volume instead sets out to cover three aspects of the field of material culture. First, it describes the scholarly disciplines that incorporate material culture into their study of American history and society. Covering theoretical issues, methodologies, and professional practice, entries in this category include “anthropology and archaeology,” “disability and disability studies,” and “social

history.” Second, there are entries that relate to the “stuff” and aspirations of material culture: “funerary (sepulchral) monuments,” “mobile homes and trailer parks,” and “religious dress.” Third are entries that address aspects of the human experience with respect to material culture, for example, “adulthood,” “poverty,” and “rite, ritual, and ceremony.”

The alphabetically arranged entries range from one to six pages in length, with the majority about two pages. Entries are signed and include cross references and a brief list of references and further readings. Contributors include faculty, graduate students, and museum professionals; however, a substantial number of entries were authored by one of the co-editors. Stock photos illustrate the text. The fifty-two page bibliography is arranged by topic and/or type of material, including categories such as “theory and methodology,” “journals,” and “social, cultural, and ethnographic approaches.” The work ends with a detailed index.

Entries are interesting to read and one can learn snippets of information about the freegan movement, the history of sex toys, the invention of the carpet sweeper, or the appearance of the mass-produced toilet paper roll. While the scholarship is fine, the selection criteria are unclear, and many entries emphasize material culture of the past hundred years, not the full spectrum of American history. There is no comparable encyclopedia of American *material* culture, but the brevity of many entries, and the selection of topics and the exclusion of others (why “plainness, Quaker” and not “Shakers”), leaves one holding a rather Spartan and eclectic “map of American material culture and its study” (xvii).

Reference works with more substantive essays on many of these topics include *Encyclopedia of American Social History* (Scribner, 1993), *Encyclopedia of the United States in the Nineteenth Century*, (Scribner, 2001), *Encyclopedia of American Studies* (Grolier, 2001), and the *Greenwood Guide to American Popular Culture* (Greenwood, 2002), as well as specialized encyclopedias such as the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America* (Oxford Univ. Pr., 2004). For example, the *Greenwood Guide to American Popular Culture* covers only fifty-eight topics, but the chapter-length essays on “games and toys” and “foodways” go into far greater historical detail than the two-page entries in *Material Culture in America*. An encyclopedia covering four hundred years of American “stuff” ought to have more volumes and include a much wider range of topics in greater historical depth. A *raison d’être* for this reference work never seems to materialize, making *Material Culture in America: Understanding Everyday Life* an optional purchase for academic libraries supporting programs in material culture or American Studies.—J. Christina Smith, *Anthropology/Sociology Bibliographer, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts*

New Encyclopedia of Africa. Ed. by John Middleton. New York: Thomson-Gale, 2008. 5 vols. alkaline \$575 (ISBN 978-0-684-31454-9).

New Encyclopedia of Africa is the successor to *The Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara* (Scribner, 1997) also edited