



**Mark W. Driscoll.** *The Whites Are Enemies of Heaven: Climate Caucasianism and Asian Ecological Protection.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2020. Illustrations. 384 pp. \$29.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-4780-1121-7.

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### **Restoring a Harmonious Human-Nature Relationship**

Mark W. Driscoll's *The Whites Are Enemies of Heaven: Climate Caucasianism and Asian Ecological Protection* is an inspiring work that reexamines the relationship between Asians and Westerners in the nineteenth century with case studies of China and Japan. The book focuses on the Chinese and Japanese wish to protect the "harmonious relationship between the spheres of Heaven [tian 天] and Earth [di 地]" against their perceived Westerners' interruption of this status quo with their progress on industrialization (p. 2). Along with colonialism, Westerners, or "Euro-Americans" as the author calls them, brought with them the adverse impact of industrialization, such as the emission of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), to China and Japan. Hence, Driscoll particularly uses the term "CO<sub>2</sub>lonialism" to refer to the nature of Western colonialism in East Asia. He also coins the term "Climate Caucasianism" for the domination of Euro-Americans in East Asia who induced climatic changes in the region. These are all new concepts that the author introduces to the environmental history of East Asia.

Driscoll divides his monograph into six chapters with two intertexts that explain concepts

that need further exploration. The six chapters look at China and Japan alternatively. The introduction provides the background for the Chinese and Japanese defense of their environmental status quo against Western "racial capitalism" and the commencement of industrialization in the two countries (p. 43). Western capitalists in both countries appeared as "superpredators" who exploited the natives both socially and economically (p. 37). Chapter 1 details how the Westerners maintained a dominant position in Japan with the implicit consent from the declining Tokugawa shogunate and explores how their activities stirred up the hatred and activities of the rogue samurais from the southwestern Satsuma and Choshu domains against these Western invaders and the weak Tokugawa government.

Chapter 2 discusses the weakness of the Chinese Qing government in resisting Western encroachment along the Yangzi River and Chinese discontent against the negative expansion of Catholic influence in the region, particularly in the province of Sichuan and its nearby areas. The accumulated dissatisfaction against the incompetent Qing government and the Western invaders gave

rise to the Gelaohui (Elder Brothers Society), an outlaw brotherhood organization that emerged after the Second Opium War, or the “Second War for Drugs,” as Driscoll names it. Driscoll also looks at several failed Gelaohui uprisings and analyzes their significance in the Chinese resistance against Climate Caucasianism. In these two chapters, the author explains in detail the “eco-ontology” of the Chinese and Japanese people. Their eco-ontology made them commit to the protection of their homeland’s natural environment and motivated their resistance against Western imperialism.

Chapter 3 returns to Japan and looks at the southwestern samurais’ anti-government activities during the Meiji Restoration. Although the Tokugawa shogunate had been overthrown, many samurais from Kyushu were still dissatisfied with the new Meiji government and the ruling oligarchy, which advocated Westernization and continued to grant special rights to Westerners in Japan. Hence, several samurai uprisings in Satsuma, or the Satsuma Rebellion, took place between 1874 and 1877, hoping to overthrow the oligarchy, get rid of Western influence, and restore the dignity of the Japanese people and harmonious relationship between humans and the natural environment. Although the Satsuma Rebellion was suppressed by the government in 1877, its survivors fled underground and resorted to terrorist approaches, such as assassinating top officials of the Meiji oligarchy, in particular Okubo Toshimichi who was killed in 1878. At the same time, some sponsors of the Satsuma Rebellion, such as Hiraoka Kotaro, realized that violent resistance was unrealistic. They formed the Genyosha (Dark Ocean Society) in 1881 and changed their strategy against Western domination in Japan. The Genyosha claimed to respect the emperor and aimed at building a strong Japanese empire against the West. As seen from the word *yo* 洋 (ocean) in its name, the Genyosha was ultranationalistic in nature, underlying Japan’s overseas expansion in the following century.

In chapter 4, Driscoll discusses in detail the structure of the Chinese Gelaohui and its development through time. The Gelaohui rose in Sichuan as an outlaw organization in the 1860s. It was founded by poor people who were at the bottom of the social hierarchy, such as peasants, laborers, gamblers, and smugglers. These people were discriminated against by the middle class and the wealthy. Hence, they needed a brotherhood organization in which they could find self-esteem and recognition from each other. The organization had no central leadership. A lodge in each county or town was founded by the locals, but different Gelaohui lodges were not affiliated. There were strict rules in the Gelaohui for members to follow. The admission ceremony of a new member was a serious one: blood drops from the new member and an old member were added to a beverage and drunk. This was to give the new member a sense of brotherly respect. A vow for not betraying the organization had to be made. Of course, punishment to members violating the rules were particularly harsh. The death penalty could be given to betrayers. There was a hierarchy in the membership, allowing members to be promoted to a higher rank in reward of their contribution to the lodge, something that they could never achieve outside the organization. The Gelaohui expanded its influence over different entertainment places and ran protection rackets for the rich who ran these places. Witnessing the decline of the Qing government’s control over the provinces, businessmen in Sichuan gradually thought that the Gelaohui was a more trustworthy body to safeguard their commercial interests. Many wealthy merchants, literati, and respected people from the gentry even joined the Gelaohui as members, dividing the membership into “clear water” members of the rich and “muddy water” members of the poor.

Chapter 5 discusses the changes in the Japanese view toward coal extraction in Western Japan. Eco-ontologists in Japan had long regarded coal-mining activities in Japan by Westerners as an in-

terruption of the human-heaven relationship and strongly opposed it. This was also one of the reasons why samurais in Kyushu and later the Genyosha were opposed to the Meiji oligarchy for its policy to allow coal extraction by Westerners. However, after his extensive reading of translated Western-language books, Sugiyama Shigemaru, a founder of the Genyosha, began to think that coal extraction was not offensive to heaven. As Driscoll paraphrases Sugiyama, the coal resources “just lay there in the earth waiting for people to use them” (p. 141). Such a new explanation of coal extraction changed the perception of the Japanese toward the matter and inspired a number of Japanese merchants to invest in this business. Still, the Genyosha was discontented with the extraterritoriality given by the Meiji oligarchy to Westerners, and ultranationalism continued to grow in Japan

Chapter 6 returns to China and examines the growing of poppy in China and the development of the Gelaohui in the late Qing period. Although the Qing central government seemingly did not encourage opium smoking, most peasants in Sichuan engaged in poppy growing because of its huge profit. The amount of local opium production even exceeded that of imported opium from British India. Opium was smoked by people from different social classes, from Qing officials and wealthy merchants to ruffians. Christian missionaries’ attempts to cure opium addiction were seen as a maltreatment of the Chinese people. Those who made a living out of opium-related activities even protested against the Qing government’s policy to suppress poppy growing and opium consumption in the final decade of the dynasty. The Gelaohui expanded quickly at the same time. By the end of the century, there was a lodge in almost every county or town in Sichuan. The Gelaohui, not the local county-level governments, also oversaw the opium trade in the region. An important trend was also developing in the Gelaohui: the “clear water” faction, which consisted of the rich members, gradually gained control of the organization at the turn of the twentieth century. “Clear

water” members became the leaders in most lodges because of their social influence, and the “muddy water” members became the underlings. The Gelaohui lodge in each county also marginalized the local government and acted as if it were the ruler. By the beginning of the new century, the opium trade became an important source of income for the Gelaohui. It no longer cared about the harm of poppy growing to the human-nature relationship. Moreover, the Gelaohui also established connections with the revolutionaries. It played a crucial role in the 1911 railroad recovery movement in Sichuan and indirectly facilitated the outbreak of the Wuchang Uprising in October of the same year that ended the Qing dynasty. The short conclusion at the end of *The Whites Are Enemies of Heaven* suggests that by the end of the nineteenth century, both the Chinese and Japanese people had already betrayed their commitment to the eco-ontological ideal and succumbed to the attractions of modern capitalism.

Driscoll has written a brilliant work on the environmental, social, and economic history of East Asia. By introducing the concept of eco-ontology, he argues that the anti-colonial sentiment of the Chinese and Japanese people originated partly from their perception that the coming of Westerners threatened the harmonious relationship between humans and the natural environment, or “heaven” according to their view of the universe. Westerners’ predatory activities toward common people also violated the “heavenly way” (*tiandao* 天道), or rules that govern the cosmos. Hence, Westerners were seen as “enemies of heaven,” as the book title suggests. Driscoll’s approach is groundbreaking because he provides a brand-new ecological perspective on East Asian socioeconomic history during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His work also offers an excellent study of East Asian history for non-Chinese speaking specialists working on global environmental history. This encourages future collaboration between historians of the two fields of study.

The author also provides comprehensive information on the history of the Genyosha and the Gelaohui in English for researchers. He consulted Chinese primary sources and existing scholarly literature extensively to write about the origins and development of the two organizations. I am particularly impressed with his exploration of the structure and internal practice and hierarchy within the Gelaohui in chapter 4. Because of the lack of English-language research on the two organizations, the author's detailed study of them will surely provide a basis for future research on relevant topics. This book is an important contribution to the study of outlaw institutions in East Asia and should be consulted by scholars working in this field.

Toward the later part of the book, Driscoll discovers that both the Japanese and the Chinese disregarded their concerns about the relationship between humans and nature. Under the influence of economic theories from the West, the Japanese began to think that coal extraction was simply a use of resources provided by nature. The Chinese were addicted to opium smoking, and the interests of wealthy merchants were intertwined with poppy growing. They paid less attention to their relationship with nature. The author's discussion of these cases suggests that some Japanese and Chinese might have abandoned their eco-ontological belief and succumbed to modern capitalism. More in-depth research on this observation is definitely needed.

Driscoll presents two more important findings. First, the emergence of the Genyosha against Western interference in the "heaven way" and their predation on the local population contributed to the rise of ultranationalism and Japanese imperialism, helping to pave the way for World War II. Second, the expansion of the Gelaohui's influence in Sichuan and their involvement in the 1911 railroad recovery movement was indeed one of the reasons for the collapse of the Qing dynasty. These two observations were previously neglected

by historians and may provide a starting point for a revisionist study of relevant topics in modern Japanese and Chinese history.

Driscoll or other scholars can explore several directions in their future research. More in-depth comparative studies between Japanese and Chinese eco-ontological thought is one of them. The impact of eco-ontology on Japan and China in the twentieth century is another. How did this concept affect the development of the Genyosha and Japanese imperialism in the first half of the new century? After the disbandment of the Genyosha by the supreme commander of the Allied powers in 1946, to what extent was eco-ontology still an influence on Japanese society? As for China, the influence of eco-ontology and the Gelaohui in the republican era is worth exploring. How dominant were the Gelaohui and other outlaw organizations in politics? Did they still cling to eco-ontology in their activities? After the founding of the People's Republic, eco-ontology was branded as superstition, and the Gelaohui were banned. However, did people still keep eco-ontology in mind?

Scholars can also look at the responses of Japanese and Chinese intellectuals to the decline in people's attention to environmental protection during the twentieth century. When commoners gradually accepted industrialization, did intellectuals from the two countries do anything to remind their fellow countrymen of its adverse impact? If so, what did they do, and how significant were their attempts? Also, what did Japanese and Chinese intellectuals do to alleviate commoners' worries about Westerners as "enemies of heaven," and how effective were their efforts? These are all possible approaches that scholars could develop further.

Driscoll's book is highly recommended for specialists in modern East Asia and environmental and socioeconomic issues.

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