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"'Hungry Dragons': Expanding the Horizons of Chinese Environmental History—Cantonese Gold-miners in Colonial New Zealand, 1860s–1920s "

Beattie, James

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Tens of thousands of Chinese seized on the opportunities presented by British imperialism to take advantage of resource frontiers opening up in places like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Utilising British legal apparatuses and financial systems, Chinese migrants grafted them, in varying ways, onto their own networks of expertise and environmental knowledge drawn from China and elsewhere. This article brings to light neglected aspects of global, British imperial, and Chinese environmental histories. Just as Chinese environmental historians have overlooked the environmental history of overseas Chinese, so environmental historians of British settler colonies have likewise ignored Chinese. The article fills these historiographical gaps by examining the environmental impacts of Cantonese gold-miners in New Zealand, who adapted water technology from their homeland of Guangdong Province and from elsewhere, such as in California and Victoria, Australia. In New Zealand, Cantonese mining caused soil erosion, reduced timber supplies, displaced vegetation, and used up scant water resources, in addition to establishing environmental exchanges between parts of New Zealand and southern China. The article also argues that studying the environmental impacts of overseas Chinese can present new research on both Chinese environmental history and comparative global environmental history. (Text from author's abstract)

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Further readings:

- Beattie, James. "Dragons Abroad: Chinese Migration and Environmental Change in Australasia." In Christof Mauch, Ruth Morgan, and Emily O'Gorman, eds. "Visions of Australia Environments in History." *RCC Perspectives: Transformations in Environment and Society* 2017, no. 2. doi: 10.5282/rcc/7902.

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