



Drought and the Human Story: Braving the Bull of Heaven

R.L. Heathcote

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Drought has been a long companion in the human story. Mythologised as the devastating Bull of Heaven in one of the earliest heroic legends to come out of Mesopotamia, drought has continued to wreak havoc upon societies, in many cases playing a significant role in their final demise. For societies in the 21st Century drought hovers on all horizons, the ultimate drought-proofing of society - long sought - remains elusive.

This study of the human conceptualization of drought in a global setting examines the historical record from early human society through to present day concerns to explore how and why attitudes to drought have changed and why the mitigation of its impacts has become more difficult. To offer a more lasting strategy for protection against drought, the author argues that physical scientists need to combine their skills in understanding global ecology and their technological expertise with the social scientists' awareness of the socio-economic, political and cultural contexts in which modern societies operate. Both will have to ensure that their cooperative strategies for drought management will be understood and supported by the public. If this cooperation can be achieved, the future rampages of the Bull of Heaven may be contained.

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