

Ontological time is conceptually the most dense section of the book and describes how one moves daily through different times, such as the capital time in a coffee shop or Indigenous time in the sea. All these simultaneous times intersect with *ontological space* into spatiotemporal constructions that determine notions of identity, while those of the sea disrupt such power structures.

Chapter 4 introduces the oceanic literacy of ho'okele through accounts of Nainoa Thompson, Kanaka navigator of the *Hōkūle'a*. Ingersoll describes, among others through illustrative graphics both Micronesian and Thompson's navigation, which, despite their differences, contend that the Pacific voyager is always at the centre, whereas islands and reefs are mobile. Ingersoll then theorises the ideology of travel as "a set of ethical ideas that create a 'map' of the way in which the world moves according to that particular ideology" (144). She traces early European colonialists' voyaging ideology – among others, James Cook's – that reflect an enlightenment geographical discourse of systematising foreign landscapes and the sea. In contrast, seascape epistemology requires a conception of the centre (that is, the canoe) as moving, just as the map, along Kānaka Maoli ancestors in rain clouds or lightning.

Finally, Chapter 5 offers a poetic call for action to found ka hālau, an education centre and research site for oceanic literacy, picking up on the original vision of many Hawaiian-focused charter schools. Education here combines place- and practice-based approaches, where routine interaction with place provides an inherent education through smelling, hearing, tasting and touching the ocean, as well as through oral and written words. Ingersoll's vision includes tools and knowledges from Kanaka epistemology, ontology and western experiences. This is relevant because contemporary Kanaka youth experience Kanaka or "western" cultural spaces in intersectional ways – just as the ontological times and spaces the author describes. Instead of a conclusion, the book ends with a short epilogue on humanity, recognising that to articulate one's relationships with the ocean, and nature more generally, is deeply human.

This book is suitable for anyone familiar with Kānaka Maoli concepts, the language and Hawaiian Studies literature. One is reminded of Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua's (2013) land-centred literacies or Katrina-Ann Oliveira's (2014) ancestral sense abilities and performative cartographies, and it would have been interesting to learn how seascape epistemology and oceanic literacy relate to (or diverge from) these concepts. Those less familiar with the Hawaiian language will find the book more difficult to read, as it lacks a glossary for the most common Hawaiian words. Yet the reader may find it refreshing that terms like *surfing* turn into *he'e nalu*, conveying in a practical (reading) sense of what a (Hawaiian) seascape epistemology is about. Occasional redundancies (for example, providing definitions of seascape epistemology) in each chapter offer parts of the larger thesis of the book, which may – or may not – make it an easy task for teachers to assign certain chapters for class. The book primarily speaks to philosophers and literarians, while anthropologists will find the open, poetic-ethnographic writing inspiring. The transdisciplinary interest in the book is also reflected in its premise: just as seascape epistemology has a core while open to change, the book has a core in Hawaiian Studies while permeating other disciplines – and epistemologies.

References

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Drew, Georgina. *River Dialogues: Hindu Faith and the Political Ecology of Dams on the Sacred Ganga*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017, 264 pages.

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When King Bhagirath had done penance in the Himalayas for countless years, the goddess Ganga descended to earth, following the king from the mountains all the way to the Bay of Bengal, where her water blessed the ashes of the king's sixty thousand great uncles, who were finally freed from their curse. Since then, the goddess has continued to bless the people along the banks of the River Ganga, her physical form on earth.

Most people in Georgina Drew's book *River Dialogues* agree on this story. However, the story's implications for current affairs are more ambiguous. Set in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand, in the Indian Himalayas, this nuanced ethnography discusses the shifting activist stances regarding hydro-power developments on the "main" tributary of the River Ganga, named after King Bhagirath. Working mostly with female activists, Drew describes a shift in their positions vis-à-vis hydro-power dams – from unconditional rejection at the time the hydro-power companies began construction on the dams to a more compromising stance once the construction had been stopped and the area had been declared an "ecozone." Drew's material suggests that Garhwali women are not so much defending a river as they are struggling to maintain meaningful lives, which include viable and dignified livelihoods and a stake in the decisions affecting the economic development of their region. Ganga – as river, mother and goddess – serves as an important idiom for embodying and voicing these concerns.

Drew makes clear that there is no single Garhwali movement for or against dam building in the area. Instead, her ethnography portrays various groups at different scales, which occasionally seem to bond strategically to further their projects. Scale is a key topic in her analysis, with recurrent tension between the region and the nation, the tributary and the catchment, and local traditions and generalised religion. In their discussions on the region's infrastructural development and environmental conservation, Garhwali women find themselves systematically marginalised by male experts from the Indian plains. It is certainly useful for activists that the Ganga is considered a "national river" that represents the "culture of India," as this translates their concerns into an idiom that is plausible to a wider constituency. Simultaneously, however, this larger frame of reference erases the specificity of their particular motivations and worries. Is the conflict about the Ganga as an entire river, or is it about specific sites of worship and other everyday uses along a Bhagirathi tributary? And are the

conservation measures for the region a victory for local anti-dam campaigners or another patronising gesture from the Indians of the plains who are said to regard the mountains as a “religious playground and endless source of resources” (135)? Many Garhwali activists are left with the lingering conclusion that, for them, there is little difference between dams and an ecozone. Both are decided on and managed from elsewhere; the benefits of both always flow to the plains.

People’s relations with and discussions about the Ganga take centre stage in the book. The enigma of what this goddess-river is for different people in different situations stays with the reader. Etymologically related to the verb *to go*, the divine Ganga manifests only in flowing – as opposed to dammed – water, which suggests that the term may relate to a more general association of movement and life (Krause 2013). Some female activists invoke Ganga as mother, emphasising the love and care she extends to the people along her banks but also justifying their special relation to the goddess-river. The Ganga also figures as the gracious goddess who extends her blessings and provides economic prosperity in the form of hydro-power projects, but equally as the furious avenger if she feels violated by infrastructure development. At times, it seems that when activists speak of Ganga, they refer to more than the motherly goddess-river and invoke the entire landscape with its life-giving wetness (see da Cunha 2019).

Drew focuses on the Hindu religion-inspired discourse around the river – a brave choice, not only because Hindu religion is such a multi-dimensional and variegated assemblage but also because “religion” is often difficult to separate out as a distinctive category from the rest of life (Asad 1993). On one hand, the reader learns about the everyday gatherings of Garhwali women singing devotional songs to Mother Ganga and worshipping the goddess at particular sites along the river. On the other hand, they get to know a retired engineer whose highly publicised fasts unto death successfully pressure the government to abandon the hydro-power projects, but who openly admits that he only uses his religious references strategically to influence decision-makers who would be deaf to more technical arguments. The reader also learns about the concerns of local hotel owners and others who fear a decline in pilgrim numbers to the region, which for them are proxies of tourism income.

All sides of the conflict, even the dam proponents, argue their case in terms of Hindu religion and the goddess Ganga, simply because of the significance of this river in the religious community, which the large majority of contestants feel part of. The danger of analytically framing the argument in religious terms becomes obvious when Drew briefly mentions the Hindu nationalists’ attempts to draw support from environmentalist movements in an unholy alliance between “green and saffron” (Sharma 2012). Framing the struggles in terms of religion may provide material that can be hijacked for this alliance. Other framings – like *place* (Garhwali versus outsiders) or *ancestry* (King Bhagirath’s heritage) – might have worked as well, without incurring this risk.

Special attention to female activists and the discussion of the gendered dynamics of activism and knowledge put this study into the context of other influential social movements in the region where women had pivotal roles, including the Chipko movement and the struggle for Uttarakhand independence. Drew reviews the popular trope of pure, simple, upright, dignified and hard-working Garhwali women, who constitute the region’s “backbone” and have a natural connection with Ganga – or the forest – because of their motherhood and care. She suggests

that everyday practices like singing are key in motivating women’s river-related activism. Garhwali women are systematically excluded from more authoritative registers like priesthood or expert status, and many struggle with the stigma of illiteracy in a context full of better-educated men. But activism, rooted in specific relations to place and sustained by a conviction that women would have much to lose and little to gain, especially compared to men, from environmental transformations that are labelled *development*, seems to be a field open to women.

In accessible prose, this book offers detailed descriptions of meetings, conversations, public events and political rallies that the author combines into an assemblage that she calls *River Dialogues*. These dialogues unfold over many years in relation to a range of other developments, including the policy shift from hydro-power development to environmental conservation and the ethnographer’s own conversion from ardent dam critic to more flexible observer. The main argument about the benefits of including religious studies in political ecology analysis proves useful when considering the difficulties the author faces in trying to separate cultural politics and political ecology in the book’s structure. The material makes obvious that both the religious and the ecological are already political and inherently linked. This becomes obvious in the politics of exceptionalism that surrounds discussions of the Ganga as a “national river,” which may provide some leverage to campaign for more sustainable and participatory development on the Bhagirathi but simultaneously implies that other rivers, like the Narmada, can be sacrificed for hydro-power and irrigation development.

After the book’s detailed and multi-dimensional introduction to the shifting positions of Garhwali activists, the epilogue’s resorting to standard, green and participatory development discourse comes as a surprise and leaves the reader wondering who – in a Garhwal characterised by gender, caste and rural-urban differences – would be in a position to formulate “regional perspectives on development” (196). The plural of *perspectives* nevertheless points to the book’s principal strength: detailed descriptions of diverse and often ambiguous encounters that reflect the multiplicity of smaller and larger gestures, which only from far away may look like an environmental movement. From the perspective of the female activists, this is part of their quotidian endeavours to live decent lives, which include singing songs to the praise of Mother Ganga and King Bhagirath.

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