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This book constitutes a pivotal introduction of environmental humanities to the Himalayan region. Edited by Dan Smyer Yü and Erik de Maaker, it is a product of the working group "Trans-Himalayan Environmental Humanities" (established in 2017) of the Himalayan University Consortium (HUC).

The volume treats the integral entanglement of the Earth's natural-environmental qualities and the cultures and cosmovisions of contemporary Himalayan people. It features case studies from Bhutan, Assam, Sikkim, Tibet, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sino-Indian borderlands, many of which are presented by authors from indigenous Himalayan communities. Three environmental dimensions of the modern Himalayas are explored—the anthropogenic, the indigenous, and the animist. Focusing on the perceptive relationships of humans, animals, and spirits with the Earth in different parts of the Himalayas, the expert contributions from the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanist disciplines discuss the contexts of indigeneity, land use, and sustainability. Ultimately, the book highlights the decisive role that indigenous stories and perspectives play in building new regional and global environmental ethics for a sustainable future. The book aims to address scholars of environmental humanities, religion, and ecology, indigenous knowledge holders, as well as sustainable development stakeholders.

In the Introduction, Smyer Yü puts forward the "experiment of undisciplining," meaning the further detachment of the environment as a research object from the constraints of specific sciences and disciplines, which seemingly enjoy the exclusive privilege of producing environmental knowledge and significantly contribute to the often problematic distinction therein between "scientific" and "unscientific." Rather, he convincingly argues for the inclusive and democratic qualities of environmental humanities, providing a more humanistic foundation for a sustainable future. Smyer Yü argues for the uniqueness of each researcher's discipline in the sense of an intellectual niche that joins that of colleagues through ecotones or transitional terrains—which should be connected. In this sense, "environmental humanities" absolves environmental knowledge from the exclusivity of the natural sciences and creates interfaces between diverse concepts.

The book's first part, entitled "Kindred of the earth, deities, humans and animals," is dedicated to environmental relationships, taking into account that the Earth is animated and inhabited by spirits, supernatural beings, and deities, which in turn are embodied in various topographical entities. Thus, the physical Earth is tightly interwoven with a spiritual one. This inherent life of the Earth and the relationship of its inhabitants to it expresses itself through a variety of different perceptions, actions, and practices toward the Earth (including animals and plants). Two case studies from Bhutan (J. J. P. Wouters; T. Dema) and 1 from North Sikkim (C. K. Lepcha) shed light on these human–Earth relations as human–deity relations, specifically between herders, yaks, and highlands. The critical connection between the animate environment and environmental protection is made clear at the point where the invasive and destructive impact of land development and exploitation (deforestation, mining, and cash crops) comes into play.

Part II, "Aqueous earth," brings together 3 case studies, 2 from the Himalayas (B. Das; R. Lepcha and M. Lepcha) and 1 from the Tibetan Plateau (R. Gamble), that focus on water as a substantial component of the land and an integral part of the Earth system. The exploration of the mutual, closely intertwined importance of land and water involves the cosmological context of the landscape and how the inhabitants interact with the animated Earth. Elements of collective cultural memory and hence mythology are deeply anchored in the waters and the Earth and everything in between. Thus, the tangible aspects of the land merge with the intangible mythical worldview and spiritual cosmos. As in part I of the book, the multilayered consequences of natural resource management and exploitation are discussed. These are not only physical effects on the lifeworld but they also affect the spiritual world. Notably, the tendency to structurally separate water and land causes decisive tensions in the holistically inclined cosmogeography. It is concluded that the land's conservation and restoration require the involvement of local people, whose knowledge and interactive experience complements the "static approach" of technical expertise.

In Part III, "Evolving cosmovisions, climate change and community resilience," human–land relations are discussed between the realities of inhabitation, cultivation, and economic developments as well as climate change. Three case studies located in the Indian Garo Hills (E. de Maaker), the Bhutan highlands (K. Choki), and Nepal (R. Deshar et al) reveal the complex relationship between indigenous cosmologies, local environmental knowledge, and modern livelihood against the background of the stark tension between tradition and modernity. In the transition to

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modernity at the expense of indigenous knowledge, much is at stake. Economic interests, Christianity, and globalization are named as the prime drivers of this shift. Choki identifies a "cosmological imbalance" in Bhutan's highlands, triggered by the increasing neglect of ritual practice toward the cosmological landscape on the one hand, and reactions—such as for instance the anger of the mountain gods for mistreating the land—on the other. Using the example of the Mahakali River, Deshar and coauthors showcase how indigenous knowledge plays a valuable role in sustainable living by successfully integrating indigenous knowledge with modern technology in dealing with flood events.

Part IV, "Transboundary environmentality and indigenous communing," covers the environmental connectivity between the many landscapes that constitute the Himalayas. The underlying issue for the 4 contributions (A. Dutta and S. Yashawant; Z. Khalid; A. E. Davis; D. Smyer Yü) is the anthropocentric, geopolitical definition of the Himalayas, whereas the environmental and topographic qualities are barely taken into account. This discrepancy results in ecosystems being artificially disrupted by state boundaries. Another issue arising from this disruption is that landscape interventions and measures in one country can have significant effects on another (eg Bhutan's dam installation). Here again, local indigenous environmental knowledge comes into play, potentially leading to cross-border community agencies. Davis argues in favor of a dialogue between international relations and environmental humanities to create possible solutions for a sustainable future of the Himalayas. Part IV concludes by stressing the planetary quality of the Tibetan-Himalayan water commons, which deserves multidisciplinary discussion. Eventually, a "nonhuman environmental commoning" and "environmental freedom" is proposed (D. Smyer Yü).

John Grim's concluding chapter is a homage to the sacred natural heritage in the sense of religious ecologies (in the plural, nota bene). He claims the holistic and organic approach to the land to be particularly strong with Himalayan indigenous people, where the environment is entangled with the full range of life. The threat of damage and loss of this land-based cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible at the same time, calls for "multiple understandings" of indigenous people's spiritual and affective relations with the Earth and nonhuman species to successfully achieve environmental restoration and future engagement with environment. Against this background, the book not least constitutes an indispensable foundation for a set of global environmental ethics.

While animated landscapes and cosmogeographies are familiar research topics, particularly in the fields of ritual anthropology and religious studies, their striking significance to current environmental issues conditioned by economics, politics, society, and climate has rarely been put into focus to a similar extent. This book addresses this shortcoming and comprehensively reveals the powerful and sustainable potential that indigenous knowledge and heritage can have for the protection and restoration of the Earth.

The diverse authorship and wide-ranging topics, case studies, and approaches reflect the integrative and multilayered idea of the book's subject matter. The Introduction and Conclusion are intelligent syntheses of the 13 chapters that summarize the underlying concerns and suggest axes for future action. This is not only theoretical or folkloric, but pragmatic in its implementation and impact. The concrete, solution-oriented aspect of the book is appreciated, especially regarding the protection of sacred landscapes, as well as the recognition of landscape cultural heritage and the potential that indigenous knowledge has for environmental protection. The fact that the ethical frameworks presented are conceptually transferable to other areas of the world makes the book indispensable. In this respect, the project must also be seen as a landmark for the consideration, recognition, and acceptance of indigenous lifeways and subsistence practices, which tend to fall behind in the global efforts to diversify land use approaches.

Due to the publication format and in particular the circumstances of production, the presentation of the figures, that is, photos, is regrettable. The image quality prevents the reader from getting an appropriate visual impression of the land. The book and its message would definitely benefit from a larger format and color photos in adequate print quality.

On a personal note, as an archaeologist who has worked on the prehistoric ritual topography of the Alpine space, I am always impressed and overwhelmed by the deep history of indigenous knowledge tied to the terrain. Beyond the relevance of the topic per se, the temporal dimension and a certain universality of cosmogeography are underlining the inherent power of the human–landscape connection and the "more-than-human" dimension of the land. This book has made me even more aware of the sensitivity and transience of this cultural asset and heritage.

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