



SIGNS OF WATER: COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON WATER, RESPONSIBILITY, AND HOPE

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III. HISTORIES: On Four Continents



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Introduction

As in the rest of the Legal Amazon, the Upper Xingu region faces severe problems related to deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and changes in rainfall patterns (among other ecological issues), closely interlinked with social, cultural, and economic diversity.

—Fernanda Viegas Reichardt, Andrea Garcia,
and Maria Elisa de Paula Eduardo Garavello, Chapter 6

Clearly defining the roles of all interest-driven stakeholders is a necessary condition to realise sustainable water supply and management in Northwest Cameroon.

—Henry Bikiwibili Tantoh, Chapter 7

The colonial [Indian] government's intention was not only to expand agriculture to generate revenue, but also to use the river system as a tool to take control of the forests from Indigenous peoples.

—Arivalagan Murugeshapandian, Chapter 8

When comparing northern British Columbia to the Yukon in terms of land-use planning and watershed management, some notable differences in planning practice emerge.

—Reg Whiten, Chapter 9

Just as water connects language and culture, as we have just seen, the movements of water across time and place leave connections that can be examined as histories. Formations and signs of life, exquisitely given cultural examination in the preceding chapters, can also be traced in geological histories—such as the Burgess Shale fossil beds in the Canadian

Rockies. Sea floor animals, likely killed by changes in their environment and fossilized over 500 million years ago, moved in the power of water and land to get deposited in an area that is just a few hours away from where we live in the eastern foothills of the Canadian Rockies. Histories of human management of water over time and place offer similarly graphic accounts of power.

Our first disciplines and professions in the health sciences (the editors were both practising nurses) rest on histories of water, health, and hygiene traced to the continental land masses, extending to the pursuits of empire and to simply sustain life. Ancient Greek and Roman philosophers and physicians alike knew that health was linked to water hygiene; indeed, politics of water technologies, management, and infrastructure originated in the Antiquities.

In the four chapters that follow here, historical examinations from Brazil, Cameroon, India, and Canada highlight the powerful connection of colonizing practices across time and place. Working in South America, Reichardt, Garcia, and de Paula Eduardo Garavello point to the power of resistance and disruption in knowing social and legal water connections, while Tantoh invites readers to reflect on the role of water in community and collective governance in Cameroon, Africa. Continents apart, the power of colonial practices severing Indigenous people from their water histories, uses, and hydroscaapes are common connections in both Arivalagan Murugeshapandian's South India case study and Whiten's Mackenzie River Basin account.

—Robert Boschman and Sonya Jakubec, editors