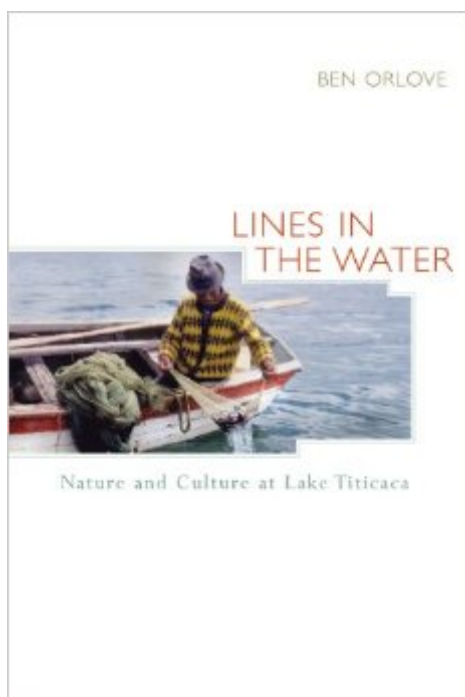


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Lines In The Water: Nature And Culture At Lake Titicaca



Synopsis

This beautifully written book weaves reflections on anthropological fieldwork together with evocative meditations on a spectacular landscape as it takes us to the remote indigenous villages on the shore of Lake Titicaca, high in the Peruvian Andes. Ben Orlove brings alive the fishermen, reed cutters, boat builders, and families of this isolated region, and describes the role that Lake Titicaca has played in their culture. He describes the landscapes and rhythms of life in the Andean highlands as he considers the intrusions of modern technology and economic demands in the region. Lines in the Water tells a local version of events that are taking place around the world, but with an unusual outcome: people here have found ways to maintain their cultural autonomy and to protect their fragile mountain environment. The Peruvian highlanders have confronted the pressures of modern culture with remarkable vitality. They use improved boats and gear and sell fish to new markets but have fiercely opposed efforts to strip them of their indigenous traditions. They have retained their customary practice of limiting the amount of fishing and have continued to pass cultural knowledge from one generation to the next--practices that have prevented the ecological crises that have followed commercialization of small-scale fisheries around the world. This book--at once a memoir and an ethnography--is a personal and compelling account of a research experience as well as an elegantly written treatise on themes of global importance. Above all, Orlove reminds us that human relations with the environment, though constantly changing, can be sustainable.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

(Planeta.com Journal) -- Lines in the Water (University of California Press, 2002), a beautifully written ethnography of rural fishermen and their families. The book's subtitle "Nature and Culture at Lake Titicaca" specifies the center of action, but the scope is much broader and deeper. It's actually hard to find the words to say how delightful this book is. Author Ben Orlove is an environmental science professor at the University of California, Davis, and his book is based on three decades of trips to Peru and Bolivia. The book is a showcase of fresh writing and a major contribution to the literature about South America. Orlove provides a frank account of the role academics themselves play. He includes himself in this story and shares candid observations -- from his reactions to office politics to daydreaming about museums. This book is highly recommended. Eco travelers visiting Lake Titicaca would do well to read this book in advance.

This is a gem, written with great respect for the indigenous people who live around Lake Titicaca, well-annotated and with wonderful photographs by the author. Orlove has broad interests - anthropology, economics, natural history, environmental issues, to name a few, and a talent for accessing interesting memories. He conveys his astute observations in clear and vivid prose. The book is organized nicely - I especially liked the material in the final chapter, entitled "Paths", which offers an antidote to the sad fact that roads and highways are so often destructive to local people and to biodiversity. Paths, literal or metaphorical, also provide valuable linkages and essential connections among the various components of this remote but very interesting and community with ancient roots. Orlove provides the reader with a sense of having traveled those paths for a short while with him.

This ethnography is quite literary with lots of anecdotes and popular song narratives. However, it also deals quite seriously with contemporary environmental issues like invasive species, biological diversity and the rights of subsistence communities. I recommend taking it to the beach or assigning it in an undergraduate seminar.

Bloody boring book unless you are specifically into the anthropology of the indigenous people of the Andes and their fishing habits.

do yourself a favor and read this book! it will help you look at sustainability and culture in a new light!

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