

Karin Animoto Ingersoll, *Waves of Knowing: A Seascape Epistemology* (Duke University Press, 2016)

Waves of Knowing, begins with an the author, Karin Animoto Ingersoll, attempting to think with (and through) the ocean in order to explore the meaning of her own (recently discovered) Native Hawai'ian identity. However, the book rapidly expands its scope as the author uses her relationship with the sea to think through the historic role of the ocean in forming the lifeworlds of Pacific islanders and the role of the ocean in the historic (and ongoing) imperial and military conquest of the Pacific islands and its peoples, insights that, in turn, reflect on her own identity as a Pacific islander. These stories are told through the lens of, and build the foundations for, a 'seascape epistemology', a way of thinking inspired by historic and contemporary interactions between mobile Pacific peoples and an equally mobile sea that "organizes events and thoughts according to how [the ocean's elements] move and interact, while emphasizing the importance of knowing one's roots, one's center, and where one is located inside this constant movement" (p. 6).

Surfing, in particular, plays a prominent role throughout the book, as an activity where embodied encounter meets material flow, where self awareness meets environmental absorption, where cognition meets performativity, and where colonization and appropriation of indigenous practices meet the subaltern resistance that occurs when these practices and perspectives insinuate their way into hegemonic order. Thus, on the one hand, Ingersoll describes the book as exploring "how the surf tourism industry perpetuates the dominance of a totalizing ideology that places indigenous identities, knowledges, imaginations, and memories in the periphery [and where] geographic and economic colonization is perpetuated, as is the specific Western epistemology regarding Hawai'i's role in a capitalist endeavour" (p. 13). But on the other hand she also notes that the story is more complicated than this because the seascape epistemology that she adopts when surfing "provides a decolonizing methodology for Kanaka [Native Hawai'ians] by revealing hidden linkages between water and land that speak to indigenous ways of knowing and being, to historical means of political, social, and cultural survival" (p. 20).

In the sentence quoted above, Ingersoll writes that the "hidden linkages between water and land...*speak to* indigenous ways of knowing" (emphasis added). This term – to *speak to* – illustrates both the book's strengths and its weaknesses. In *Waves of Knowing*, everything speaks to everything else, as the dynamics of colonialism, fluidity, indigeneity, and interchange move seamlessly from historical epic to the affective moment of catching a wave and back again. Ingersoll's elaboration of the seascape epistemology thus provides a powerful tool for the author seeking to make links between her own identity, her practices, the historic and ongoing place of her people in the world, and her material environment. However, it frustrates the reader who wishes to take her insights further.

For instance, one might conclude from the book that the political power of a seascape epistemology emerges from the orderings and disorderings that occur

when one tries to make sense of a marine environment that is steeped in archipelagic rhythms of difference and repetition, depth and volume, fluidity and flow. For Ingersoll, however, the connection between the human-ocean encounter and a plural politics of continual re-creation is not simply located in human navigation of the material. As Ingersoll notes, “oceanic literacy is not political or ethical on its own” (p. 10). As she elaborates, the seascape epistemology’s politics emerges from the context of the encounter, not from the abstractions that emerge when one creates a knowledge system. That said, the materiality of the ocean, and the cognitive and non-cognitive thought processes that are enacted as one situates oneself in its environment, do make a seascape epistemology *possible*. However, full actuation of the epistemology occurs for Ingersoll only when one uses the ocean encounter to reposition indigenous histories of trans-oceanic migrations and colonial encounters and, complementarily, when one situates one’s own indigenous history and identity within the material histories of a moving field. Thus, she writes, “Although the insight here may be open to anyone who has ocean-based knowledge, such as, for instance, a lifelong surfer of Scottish American descent residing in Santa Cruz, California, seascape epistemology is a specific concern of indigenous politics because of what it offers native peoples with colonial legacies” (p. 23). In other words, being attuned to the sea and its dynamic rhythms can shape one’s cultural and political perspectives by upending ideas of boundaries and solidity, but that is not enough to constitute the seascape epistemology embraced by Ingersoll. Rather, Ingersoll is exploring a more focused seascape epistemology that lies in a very specific interaction of indigenous navigations of the sea, colonial histories of domination and appropriation, postcolonial dynamics of reappropriation, and everyday embodied encounters and the ‘knowing’ of the sea that comes from such encounters.

This framework is effective for positioning an individual in the sea and its history, but it leaves some analytical questions unanswered. For instance, what can be learned from her study for indigenous peoples who engage with different environments that contain different histories of indigenous and colonial encounters? Could there be an equivalent landed indigenous epistemology, in particular among travelling peoples, or is there something specific about the material properties of the ocean and the way it is encountered that fosters this indigenous sense of identity and place? Conversely, while it is explained that the Scottish-American California surfer cannot fully embrace the seascape epistemology because of his different historical association with the sea, what about non-indigenous peoples whose livelihoods and identities are built around movements across moving spaces, from in-shore wave interactions to long-distance migrations?

In large part, Ingersoll’s inability to provide tools for answering these questions stems from the relatively narrow body of literature used to build her argument. While well grounded in Pacific studies, surfing studies, and core texts in socio-cultural theory, there is a surprising lack of engagement with a number of literatures that would seem highly relevant. These include anthropological work on the cultural meanings of water and sea (beyond the Pacific context), work in critical island studies (again, beyond the Pacific context), work on the sociology

of science (and its complicated intersections with both indigenous and embodied perspectives as well as with militarisation, all of which have historically played a key role in the colonisation of both the ocean and Hawai'i), as well as the extensive literature from anthropology and cultural theory on the role of the ocean in constructing identities of difference and connection among people as diverse as the African diaspora and the peoples of the Arctic. As a geographer, I was struck not only by the lack of engagement with the burgeoning literature in geography and allied fields on the ocean's potential for spurring social thought, but also the fact that the very idea of a *seascape* is never really considered, despite its troubling resonance with the concept of the *landscape*, which has been critiqued as being embedded in a distanced, Western, masculinist ocularcentrism.

Of course, a single book cannot do everything. Furthermore, it is likely that many of these alternate literatures suggest pathways that diverge from Ingersoll's, and Ingersoll may well be justified in rejecting them. However, the reader would have benefited from a more direct engagement, because in the very process of considering and rejecting these alternate perspectives Ingersoll might well have provided a better foundation for exploring just how far the perspective articulated in the seascape epistemology can be stretched to other contexts, as well as probing its limits.

In short, as a methodological exploration into the ways in which personal history, cultural connectivity, imperial history, and commercialisation of recreation can be woven through a story of encounters with (and in) a specific space, *Waves of Knowing* is a fascinating book. As a contribution to the burgeoning literature on the ways in which ways of knowing, encountering, and projecting power, connection, and resistance in and across the oceans, however, it is limited by its relatively narrow scope of enquiry.