



Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt is a senior fellow in resource management in the Asia-Pacific Program at the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. *Gopa Samanta* is an associate professor in geography at the University of Burdwan in India.

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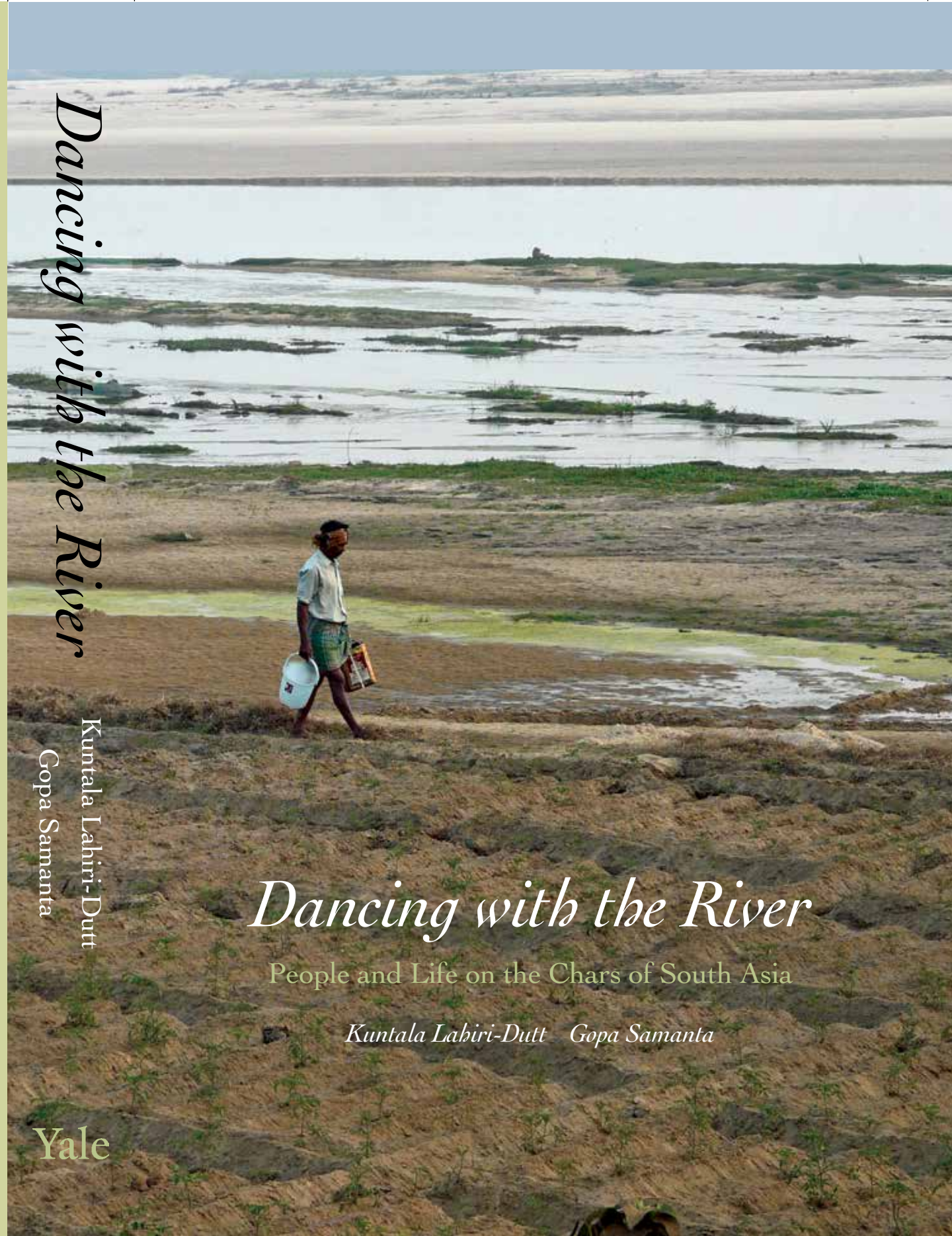
“Dancing with the River provides a sensitive and evocative portrayal of the struggle for livelihood in the fluid landscape of deltaic Bengal where nothing truly endures, yet nothing wholly disappears. It is a deeply researched and elegantly told story of subaltern ingenuity in negotiating the transience of their physical environment between water and land.” *Sugata Bose*, Gardiner Professor of History, Harvard University, author of *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*

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Dancing with the River

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Dancing with the River

People and Life on the Chars of South Asia

Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt Gopa Samanta

Yale

An intimate glimpse into the microcosmic world of “hybrid environments” and their inhabitants

In this ground-breaking book Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt and Gopa Samanta explore the world of chars—the part land, part water, low-lying sandy masses that exist within the riverbeds in the floodplains of lower Bengal. They show how chars, both as real-life examples and as metaphors, straddle the conventional categories of land and water, and how people who live on them fluctuate between legitimacy and illegitimacy. The result is a study of human habitation in the nebulous space between land and water and a new way of thinking about land, people, and ways of life.

Dancing with the River will prompt readers to reconsider the view that land and water form two different elements of the physical environment; it will encourage the rethinking of ideas of security and vulnerability as absolute, measurable, and equally applicable to everyone; and it will offer a revision of the concept of adaptation to a changing environment as a long-term project by showing it to be a day-to-day and contingent affair that is continually in flux.