

**Ellen, Roy** (ed.): *Modern Crises and Traditional Strategies. Local Ecological Knowledge in Island Southeast Asia*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2007. 272 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-312-1 (Studies in Environmental Anthropology and Ethnology, 6) Price: \$ 80.00

This volume is a timely and significant contribution to the study of indigenous/traditional knowledge and its modern relevance, given the rapid pace of socioeconomic change and recurring natural disasters in insular Southeast Asia. The long-term well-being of coastal populations is dependent upon coastal ecosystems and the critical economic and ecological services that they provide, including storm buffering and fisheries production. Yet the services provided by interface habitats are being degraded in the region at an alarming rate (Barbier et al., *Coastal Ecosystem-Based Management with Non-Linear Ecological Functions and Values. Science* 319.2008: 321–323). This degradation, in fact, is not only limited to coastal habitats – inland ecosystems are being destroyed at a similarly rapid pace. This ecological degradation makes coastal and inland populations in insular Southeast Asia increasingly vulnerable to rapid socioeconomic changes and massive environmental disruptions such as earthquakes and ensuing tsunamis, as well as to more protracted processes like global climate change. Yet, as described by the contributors of this volume, rural populations having traditional/syncretic knowledge ostensibly have enough adaptive management qualities to make them more resilient (i.e., the capacity to absorb shock and transformation) to rapid socioeconomic and environmental changes.

In this sense, the authors of this volume provide a diachronic and ethnographically rich account of insular Southeast Asia people's capacity to cope with rapid and long-term ecological changes brought about by modernization and environmental perturbations, while showing that rapid change does not always translate into the ominous disappearance of traditional knowledge, but rather sometimes results in a syncretism between old and new forms and the creation of novel ways of coping with social and environmental uncertainty. Successful human coping strategies, as pointed by the book's authors and an expanding scientific literature (e.g., Berkes et al., *Navigating Social-Ecological Systems. Building Resilience for Complexity and Change*. Cambridge 2003; Folke et al., *Adaptive Governance of Social-Ecological Systems. Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 30.2005: 441–473; Liu et al., *Complexity of Coupled Human and Natural Systems. Science* 317.2007: 1513–1516), are more likely under regimes of sociocultural (e.g., cultural norms, environmental knowledge, economic strategies, and governance) and ecological (e.g., high biodiversity, greater abundance of key species, and a complete community structure) diversity.

A limitation of this volume, generally speaking, and most anthropological studies in this field for that matter, however, is a lack of longitudinal data to truly test hypotheses related to social and natural vulnerability and resilience (i.e., coping strategies) when communities are faced with a rapid change precipitated by social or nat-

ural crises. For instance, large-scale disturbances like hurricanes, tsunamis, or forest fires provide researchers with an opportunity to evaluate, after the fact, if or how resilient those social and ecological communities were to these disturbances. While the authors in this book provide rich insight into cultural and socioeconomic responses, the studies, for the most part, do not have adequate longitudinal data (e.g., on household food security, wealth, health, etc.) against which to compare the condition of human cultures and local ecosystems after the socioeconomic or environmental disturbance. Such data would allow us to gauge the interlinkages between stressors, social and environmental attributes, and outcomes of traditional/rural coping strategies as these undergo social and ecological change. In fact, given that communities respond asymmetrically (some being risk-prone and others risk-adverse) to stress, this information would allow us to better elucidate the social and ecological drivers that may lead some communities to be more resilient than others when faced with massive environmental disruption. Then, we could reveal what makes a socioecological system and the actors within it more or less vulnerable to rapid change.

Overall, the book's important lesson is that centralized governments in insular Southeast Asia need to broaden their vision regarding top-down poverty relief and disaster management strategies, and to better accommodate existing indigenous ethnobiological knowledge, governance structures, and adaptive coping mechanisms. Unless this happens in earnest, and central governments stop dismissing alternative localized strategies to cope with uncertainty as ineffective or simply inferior, they will continue to deepen the divide between the rural and urban and fail to achieve the much-lauded objective of improving rural people's self-reliance and livelihoods. A first step toward achieving this aim is to devolve centralized power to provincial and local governments and, most importantly, to safeguard the remaining cultural and biological diversity. Shankar Aswani

**Eller, Jack David:** *Cultural Anthropology. Global Forces, Local Lives*. New York: Routledge, 2009. 432 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-48539-5. Price: £ 33.00

Reviewing a textbook in a fair and just way is not an easy task. I often compare the genre to the one of travel guides: both are heavily researched for comprehensiveness, but always already out-of-date when they are printed; they always contain much more information than you need and can possibly use; and not all the topics you deem important or are interested in are covered. This general argument is particularly valid for cultural anthropology, a discipline marked by a plethora of subfields. While the use of a textbook can greatly facilitate the task of those teaching anthropology by providing a ready-made solution, at the same time it is constraining because the logic and approach of the author is not always the one of the user.

Eller's textbook starts in a very traditional fashion, with explanatory chapters on anthropology (the tradi-

tional four fields and beyond), the culture concept, and the history of the discipline. This is followed by typical anthropological topics such as language, personality and gender, identity (race and ethnicity), economics (including consumption), kinship, politics, and religion. The third section of the book contains material on contemporary cultural processes that, according to the author, have forced a reconceptualization of cultural anthropology but are customarily given insufficient attention: cultural dynamics, (post-)colonialism and globalization, political identity, development, and cultural revival. Several of these themes are illustrated by Eller's personal experiences and by other ethnographic examples. Unfortunately, the cultures presented are spread very unevenly across the globe (see map on pp. xx–xxi). Eurasia is poorly covered and Latin America receives relatively little attention too. Besides, anthropologists may be disturbed by the fact that the overview map of "major societies" discussed in the book mixes ethnicities with countries (an example of methodological nationalism).

Throughout the book, Eller introduces and describes old as well as relatively new concepts, all of which are nicely bundled in the comprehensive glossary at the end. It is remarkable, though, that basic notions such as ethnology, globalization, or capitalism do not appear in the list. The author claims that his textbook "covers more topics more deeply than rival texts, and in so doing immerses the reader in the worldview, the history, the literature, and the controversies of cultural anthropology like no other" (xvii). With so much ground covered, is there anything missing? Early in the text, Eller writes that "We all live 'anthropological' lives, whether we know it or want it or not" (20). Unfortunately, his book gives the uninformed reader the impression that cultural anthropology remains the study of the Other, located far away in space or time. This neglects the fact that "anthropology at home" is on the rise, including urban anthropology, business anthropology, the anthropology of institutions, and the anthropology of science and technology. Moreover, if "Every encounter with another human being is (or has the potential to be) an anthropological encounter, one in which each participant has to determine what the others mean and how to communicate across the meaning gap" (21), why is tourism, apart from a very short mention (380f.), not properly treated? These and other lacunae are reflected in the bibliography, which contains relatively few monographs written in the last decade.

Strikingly from an epistemological point of view, is that Eller conceives cultural anthropology as "the modern science of human behavioral diversity" (xvi). Of course, the anthropological notion of culture goes far beyond what people "do" (21); it includes not only behaviour but also those ways of cognizing and valuing the world. Moreover, apart from describing cultural diversity (ethnography), the parallel mission of anthropology has always been to look for those cultural universals that make our species uniquely human (ethnology). While the author does briefly mention "world anthropologies" (70), his overall account remains remarkably Western-centric. Apart from illustrating the complexities of other world-

views, it would have been nice to sample also some of the complexities of other anthropological views of the world. Finally, it is misleading to describe a discipline that was institutionalized over a century ago as "a new science" (71).

Despite the weaknesses I pointed out earlier, Eller should certainly be commended for his clear style of writing, making the text very accessible and enjoyable to read for nonspecialist users (undergraduate students and others). The multiple illustrations and attractive layout make it an attractive study tool. Furthermore, the companion website (<http://www.culturalanthropology-eller.com/>) offers plenty of learning resources, including study guides for each chapter, testbank materials, a flashcard glossary, and links to other websites. Instructors can access PowerPoint presentations per chapter, a model course, supplementary materials, and assignments and tests. In sum, this textbook is certainly a valuable resource, but teachers planning to use it in an introductory course on cultural anthropology need to take into account its limitations.

Noel B. Salazar

**Fauve-Chamoux, Antoinette, and Emiko Ochiai** (eds.): *The Stem Family in Eurasian Perspective. Revisiting House Societies, 17th–20th Centuries*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2009. 558 pp. ISBN 978-3-03911-739-0. (Population, Family, and Society, 10) Price: € 73.80.

Der Stammfamilie (*famille souche* bei Frédéric Le Play, der diesen Begriff in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts geprägt hat; engl. *stem family*) wird eine bedeutende Rolle in der Sozialgeschichte der frühen Moderne zugesprochen. Josef Ehmer, einer der Autoren in diesem Band, geht soweit, dieses Konzept zu den "most successful ones in modern social history" zu rechnen (103). Wer allerdings davon ausgeht, dass ob dieser postulierten Bedeutung Klarheit über den Inhalt des Begriffs Stammfamilie besteht, sieht sich getäuscht. Man sieht sich vielmehr dem gegenüber, was in der Einführung als "potential for confusing discussions" bezeichnet wird, nämlich einer Vielzahl von unterschiedlichen Hypothesen zur Stellung der Stammfamilie innerhalb des Ensembles der Familienformen. Um jeder frühen und eine fruchtbare Diskussion unmöglich machenden Festlegung der Bedeutung zu entgehen, wird den hier versammelten Beiträgen lediglich eine Minimaldefinition zugrunde gelegt: Zum einen werde die Stammfamilie charakterisiert dadurch, dass lediglich ein Kind bei den Eltern wohnen bleibe, zum anderen, dass sie als "corporation" fungiere, in der Besitz und Titel über die Generationen in direkter Erbfolge weitergegeben werden (3).

Bereits hier also wird die Intention der beiden Herausgeberinnen deutlich gemacht, die Realität dieser Familienform zu erkunden sowie verschiedene Hypothesen und widersprüchliche Vorstellungen zu überprüfen anhand von empirischem Material aus verschiedenen Regionen Europas und Asiens. Gefordert wird hier vor allem die historische Demografie, die mittlerweile in der Lage ist, eine Fülle von Daten als Grundlage der Konstruktion von Modellen und theoretischen Erwägungen