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 natural 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-