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Re-Evaluating Traditional Environmental Knowledge
Edited by Serena Heckler, Durham University

The field of study variously called local, indigenous or traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) has experienced a crisis brought about by the questioning of some of its basic assumptions, for instance that scientific methods can accurately elicit and describe TEK or that incorporating it into development projects will improve the physical, social or economic well-being of marginalized peoples. The contributors argue that to accurately describe TEK, the historical and political forces that have shaped it, as well as people’s day-to-day engagement with the landscape around them must be taken into account. TEK thus emerges, not as an easily translatable tool for development experts, but as a rich and complex element of contemporary lives that should be defined and managed by indigenous and local peoples themselves.

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Edited by James G. Carrier, Oxford Brookes University and University of Indiana, and Paule West, Barnard College, Columbia University

“[T]he true contribution of Virtualism, governance and practice is found in the second section, which explores the relationship between conservation design and conservation execution... Even if [it does] not answer all of the important questions, [it] succeeds marvelously in posing them in a clear, provocative manner. [It] would be an excellent addition to courses on environmental discourses and community-based conservation. Even more, [it] would be useful reading for anyone individual who hopes to contribute to the policy and practice of conservation in the twenty-first century.”

Focal

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Edited by Manuel Pardo-de-Santayana, Universidad Autonoma of Madrid, Andrea Pieroni, University of Bradford, and Rajinder K. Puri, University of Kent

“Rather than simply cataloguing plant use, each researcher analyzes the historical, societal, economic, or political aspects relevant to changes in human plant usage. Thus, the authors provide a true ethnobotanical resource that can be instructive to academic audiences.”

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The study of European wild food plants and herbal medicines is an old discipline that has been invigorated by a new generation of researchers pursuing ethnobotanical studies in fresh contexts. Now in the 21st century, in the age of the European Union and Globalization, European folk botany is once again dynamically responding to changing cultural, economic, and political contexts. The authors and studies presented in this book reflect work being conducted across Europe’s many regions. They tell the story of the on-going evolution of human-plant relations in one of the most bioculturally dynamic places on the planet, and explore new approaches that link the re-evaluation of plant-based cultural heritage with the conservation and use of biocultural diversity.

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Cultural Meanings, Social Practices
Edited by Eveline Dürr, Ludwig-Maximilians-University and Rivke Jaff, Leiden University

Re-examining Mary Douglas’ work on pollution and concepts of purity, this volume explores modern expressions of these themes in urban areas, examining the intersections of material and cultural pollution. It presents ethnographic case studies from a range of cities affected by globalization processes such as neoliberal urban policies, privatization of urban space, continued migration and spatialized ethnic tension. What has changed since the appearance of Purity and Danger? How have anthropological views on pollution changed accordingly? This volume focuses on cultural meanings and values that are attached to conceptions of ‘clean’ and ‘dirty’, purity and impurity, healthy and unhealthy environments, and addresses the implications of pollution with regard to discrimination, class, urban poverty, social hierarchies and ethnic segregation in cities.

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WEATHERING THE WORLD
Recovery in the Wake of the Tsunami in a Tamil Fishing Village
Frida Hastrup, University of Copenhagen

“This book is a pleasure to read with its combination of intensive ethnography, its austere and almost minimal style of writing and its conceptual innovations. There is no doubt in my mind that this book constitutes an important contribution to the manner in which we think of disaster and its relation to the everyday not only in the social sciences but also in policy sciences.”

Veena Das, Johns Hopkins University

The Asian tsunami in December 2004 severely affected people in coastal regions all around the Indian Ocean. This book provides the first in-depth ethnography of the disaster and its effects on a fishing village in Tamil Nadu, India. The author explores how the villagers have lived with the tsunami in the years succeeding it and actively worked to gradually regain a sense of certainty and confidence in their environment in the face of disempowering disaster. What appears is a remarkable local recovery process in which the survivors have interwoven the tsunami and the everyday in a series of subtle practices and theorisations, resulting in a complex and continuous recreation of village life. By showing the composite nature of the tsunami as an event, the book adds new theoretical insight into the anthropology of natural disaster and recovery.

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