
Preface

This is the first of several companion volumes to be published in this series that reinforce the message that ethnobiology is not about the preservation of archaic and quaint knowledge and practices of 'indigenous people' but is relevant to contemporary development issues in their widest sense. The volume arises from a Wenner Gren-sponsored symposium that took place at the Ninth International Congress of Ethnobiology (ICE), held at the University of Kent at Canterbury in June 2004, and hosted by the Department of Anthropology and the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE). The meeting was a joint event organized by the International Society of Ethnobiology, the International Society of Ethnopharmacology and the Society for Economic Botany.

The studies presented here all address the theme of how traditional or local ecological knowledge that has evolved over the long term to cope with production and population survival crises still has a vital role to play in coping with modern crises, whether environmental or socio-economic in origin, or some combination of the two. These studies are not statistically representative in any geographical sense, and are drawn from mainly upland and peripheral parts of island southeast Asia, rather than from core areas of high population density, or from where development and globalization are at their most evident. They are, nevertheless, what Malinowski would have called 'apt illustrations' of scenarios and processes that are very widespread throughout the region. The chapters by Iskandar, Meitzner Yoder, Platten, Puri, Soemarwoto and Soselisa were all presented at the symposium. Novellino and Dove were unable to attend, but have since written chapters specifically for this volume. The co-written chapter by Iskandar and Ellen was first presented at a White Oak Symposium (Florida), and subsequently at the Seventh ICE held at the University of Georgia in Athens, both in 2002. We would like to thank Gary Martin and the Global Diversity Foundation for supporting

participation in these events and for permission to include the original paper as a chapter in this volume. I would also like to thank Rini Soemarwoto for an enormous amount of editorial work on the manuscript, work supported by ESRC grant RES-000-22-1106 awarded to Roy Ellen, and H333-25-0053 awarded to Michael Fischer, Roy Ellen, David Zeitlyn, Gary Martin, Glenn Bowman, Raj Puri and Janet Bagg, on 'Interactive Data Collection and Reproduction: the Transmission of Environmental Knowledge', and with the resources of the Centre for Social Anthropology and Computing at the University of Kent, under the direction of Professor Michael Fischer. Other acknowledgements will be found appended to individual chapters.

Finally, although the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami will inevitably be firmly in the minds of many readers as the pre-eminent example of a contemporary natural disaster in the region, and it has certainly helped draw attention to the issues which we raise, it must be remembered that this tragic episode occurred well into the revising stage of the present book, and its implications for understanding the role that local ecological knowledge played in the coping strategies of victims, and in the overall coordination of relief, has yet to be properly addressed, let alone analysed.

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