

extend far beyond these four civilizations in both time and space. Although I would not assign this book as a text for a class, I would use it as a reference for designing a lecture on foods in ancient Greece, Rome, or Egypt, and I would highly recommend it to an undergraduate writing a term paper on a related topic. The volume is unique in its level of detail, organization, and compilation of data from various sources in one easy reference guide.

Political Ecology in a Yucatec Maya Community. E. N. Anderson with Aurora Dzib Xihun de Cen, Felix Medina Tzuc, and Pastor Valdez Chale. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005. 274 pp.

GARRETT COOK

Baylor University

E. N. Anderson's readable study of Maya rural economy—based on 14 months of fieldwork between 1991 and 2001, and the collaboration of indigenous experts listed ambiguously as “with” the author—explores development dilemmas in contemporary Quintana Roo. Culture is holistic and, therefore, political ecology is about religion and morality as well as environments, economics, and politics. Political ecology based on the “free market” approach is dominated by the interests of giant government-backed firms, does not support little communities and sustainable economies, and promotes the most serious unrecognized threat to humanity's future—the “worldwide rural environmental crisis” (p. 211). Anderson reveals why development using this approach fails, offers solutions to the rural crisis rooted in local culture and tradition, and calls on us to move beyond critical anthropology to identify alternatives to the neoliberal “free market” models that constituted the religion of late-20th-century planning for development.

The “wise use” view—that traditional cultures of indigenous groups manage their environments effectively—represents the best starting point for sustainable development programs. In the village of Chunhuhub, each stage of regrowth in the cyclically cleared and burned forest is utilized for different resources. The forest, when properly managed, produces more value than cattle ranching, yet the government sponsors cattle. Successful, sustainable adaptations like the diversified Sosa farm (pp. 79–86) and the Plan Forestal (pp. 100–109) demonstrate that wise use development is practical and effective. Anderson follows James Scott to argue that monocropping is the religion of government planners. Controversy over development in Yucatan is not about rational economics, then, it is a cultural—and, ultimately, political—conflict, because there are entrenched elite interests in monocropping. The key to wise use success is the development of new forest products and new markets, so that the traditional system, working with its values and knowledge base, might intensify production on its own terms, in response to population growth.

Unfortunately the most able young people are leaving Chunhuhub, and ecological knowledge is not being passed on effectively. New churches and an emerging local version

of Mexican civic culture, which lacks the moral stance on nature and balance of the traditional religion, are weakening the prospects for wise use development. Furthermore, Mexican fatalism is an obstacle to innovation. “Rural and impoverished Mexicans are so used to putting up with the inevitable that they put up with the evitable as well” (p. 180). Chapter 7 explores the dilemma in developing the most promising wise use resource, Maya ethnopharmacology; here, Anderson possibly provides too much botanical detail for nonspecialists and—in the ethically sound interest of protecting Maya intellectual property—not really enough detail for botanists or pharmacologists. Anderson finds that there is no Maya entity to hold collective intellectual property rights: “There is . . . no way of assigning a particular remedy to ‘the Yucatec’ or any one community” (p. 193), and Anderson cannot suggest a good way to create one. The intellectual property issue remains a serious impediment to both development and to ethnographic reporting.

Of failed Mexican government development plans, Anderson notes funny little goofs like rabbit production but “most extreme are the genuine tragedies of big dams and cattle deserts—the results of plans so insane that they have ruined half of rural tropical Mexico” (p. 210). The real impediments to development are unfair terms of global trade, lack of knowledge of marketing, and above all else lack of accountability on the part of the elites that design the plans. Locals view plans as election year devices: “Thus they treat the plans as milpas: things to be cropped for a year or two and then abandoned” (p. 209). On rare successful plans, Anderson writes: “These latter they treat as orchards: something to be cultivated and tended for the long run. Orchards are, in fact, the prime example of such plans” (p. 210), although the author has made it clear that sustainable tropical wood industries, forest-based Maya pharmacology, and diversified agricultural production of specialized tropical crops coupled with effective marketing would and should extend this list. In a vision reminiscent of Alvin Toffler's electronic cottages, Anderson imagines combined high- and low-tech forest-knowledge-based household industries revitalizing Chunhuhub and Quintana Roo.

This provocative book offers a compelling vision and important advice to a new generation of development experts. The writing is sometimes funny and sometimes a little bit cranky, as when Anderson writes that “money earmarked for things like clearing rain forest for cattle, or providing pesticides and herbicides to farmers, is infinitely better spent on beer than on its intended goal” (p. 208), but it is always forthright, intelligent, and original.

The Kuhls of Kangra: Community-Managed Irrigation in the Western Himalaya. J. Mark Baker. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005. 272 pp.

NEERAJ VEDWAN

Montclair State University

This book provides a comprehensive account of the persistence and transformation of *kuhls*—the centuries-old