

Conservation and Development in Irian Jaya: A Strategy for Rational Resource Utilization

Ronald G. Petocz

Brill, Leiden, 1989, 218 pp., SB \$75

After 6 years of living in Irian Jaya (Indonesian New Guinea) as the Project Leader for the WWF Irian Jaya programme, few if any know more than Ron Petocz (pronounced 'Peters') about the natural resources and the development pressures facing them in this, the most exceptional of Indonesia's 27 provinces. We therefore stand in his debt for having produced such an authoritative and complete text with attractive illustrations and maps by George Raspado. The book has a chequered history, having appeared in its first edition as a publication of WWF/IUCN in Indonesia in 1984. An Indonesian version was published in 1987. The first edition has been much-photocopied in country, but this new book is updated and revised.

Irian Jaya is one of the last wild places on earth and has a famed physical and biological diversity with the tropics' only glacier, vast torrid swamps, unspoilt coral reefs, traditional tribal people, an unforgettable expanse of forest—as well as one of the world's most profitable (and highest) mines, pockets of Javanese transmigrant settlers, logging operations and industrial tree plantations.

It used to be difficult, or at least expensive, to reach, but now that the airport on Biak Island just north of the 'mainland' is open to the largest Pacific-crossing jets, a small but growing and regular influx of visitors has begun.

The book is divided into two parts; the first quarter describes

the geological, biological, and historical background to the province as well as the principles governing the design of the protected area system. The bulk of the book is termed the 'Action Plan' comprising the needs for establishing and coordinating responsibilities for the protected area system, the special needs of certain species (such as crocodiles, birds of paradise and parrots, giant clam, and butterflies), the development factors of immediate concern to conservation (such as logging, mining, transmigration and resettlement), the development of conservation support systems (such as public awareness, tourism and legal aspects, and training), and the role of international donor agencies.

Maybe other broad and informed books on conservation and development in specific areas like this do exist, but I have not come across them. I join Ron Petocz in hoping that the book (in both its language versions) will influence the paths of conservation and development in Irian Jaya and act as a model for other priceless regions. As ever, the price put on it by Brill is ridiculous and cannot but hamper its effective dissemination.

Tony Whitten.

Rainforest Politics: Ecological Destruction in South-east Asia

Philip Hurst

Zed Books, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9BU, 1990, 303 pp., HB £32.95, SB £10.95

This is an original and very readable book in which the environmental, human and economic consequences of forest loss are explored in detail for six South East Asian countries—Indonesia, East and West

Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and Burma. These countries hold between them just over one-fifth of the world's tropical rain forest and each of them is experiencing apparently uncontrollable loss of valuable and potentially renewable forest resources. The roles of governments, donors and the private sector are examined, and no conclusion is drawn without an ostensibly thorough review of the available information.

The major failing of the book is its innumerable factual mistakes, some important, some less so, and the degree to which much of the information is out of date. The author returned from 18 months' of fieldwork and data collection 3 years before this book was published. He would have served himself, the countries, and the reader well had he asked some of those active in the forestry issues of the country to review the manuscript. Had this been done, however, a great deal of revision would have been required. It would be churlish to pick on any of the mistakes in particular but they cover scientific fact, 'half-truths' and the spelling of local names and individuals. In his foreword Jonathan Porritt writes that the book 'will be of benefit to all those seeking the actual facts (sic) behind the myths'; the facts' should be checked before they are repeated.

Despite these shortcomings, the final chapter, 'Common Factors: A Regional View' is sound if, again, somewhat dated. By teasing out the factors such as the presence of absence of a colonial past, style of religion, political system, and stage of industrialization the conclusion is reached that economic straitjackets have been the cause of forest loss, and ways are suggested, based