

BOOK REVIEW

Indigenous Peoples and Tropical Forests: Models of Land Use and Management from Latin America. Jason W. Clay. Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival, Inc., 1988. \$8.00 (paperback). ISBN 0-939521-32-6.

Jason Clay, director of research and editor of the quarterly magazine at Cultural Survival, provides us with an overview of management of natural resources by indigenous peoples in Latin America. He organizes this evaluation into five topics—gathering, hunting, fishing, swidden agriculture, and permanent agriculture—drawing examples from various regions of the Neotropics. Towards the end of the book, he integrates these elements in an examination of how indigenous people classify and manage distinct ecological zones, a topic essential to understanding peasant production. He gives a detailed account of three large-scale and putatively sustainable systems of resource management: CRIC Environmental Restoration in Colombia, the Awa Ethnic and Forest Reserve on the Colombia-Ecuador border, and the Kuna Indian forest park in Panama. Clay prefaces these descriptions by stating that “. . . hundreds of similar projects deserve description and analysis.”

This statement captures the essence of the book. Rather than a comprehensive review, it is a plan of action for further applied and basic work in the tropics. At the end of each chapter, Clay lists several research priorities; these are reiterated in his conclusion to the book. The ample, 37-page bibliography is by no means exhaustive, an indication of the quickening pace of publications on this critical aspect of the world environmental and ethnic crisis.

Given the brevity of the presentation, some chapters are more satisfying than others. The admirable 20-page chapter on slash-and-burn cultivation combines an excellent overview with examples and case studies from Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, and other countries. In contrast, the five-page chapter on permanent agriculture focuses on the difficulty of extending the technology of *chinampa* floating gardens to the lowland tropics, while neglecting to elaborate on more promising systems such as terracing, home gardens, and managed forests.

Throughout the book, Clay correctly places the emphasis on our relative ignorance of folk systems of environmental management, and the urgency of continued study in this field. *Indigenous Peoples and Tropical Forests* provides a good introduction, an ambitious program of future research, and a stimulating “call-to-arms” for anyone interested in environmental conservation and the survival of ethnic minorities.

Inquiries on this and other books on indigenous peoples may be directed to: Cultural Survival, Inc., 11 Divinity Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138.

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