Special issue: “Tropical Agriculture: Past and Present”

Guest Editors: Lydie Dussol, Stéphen Rostain

In today’s global debate on food security, tropical agriculture has an increasingly important place in research and policy priorities. Several international agriculture conferences targeting tropical areas have been organized in recent years, showcasing cutting-edge biotechnologies in a context of increasingly global agribusiness. In the meantime, there has been a growing awareness of the pernicious effects conventional industrial agriculture can have on biodiversity and soil and water quality in the tropics, raising concerns about its ethical and socio-economic implications as most of these areas are located in developing countries. Alternative agro-ecological solutions based on scientific research arise worldwide in order to find a sustainable balance between productivity, biodiversity conservation and food sovereignty. These are often drawn from age-old practices that have been passed down by indigenous knowledge through centuries.

In this context, the goal of this special issue is to provide a historical-ecological perspective of agricultural systems in the tropics. Many grey zones remain regarding the role farming strategies have had in the development and decline of human societies through time, and more cross-cutting research integrating human and natural sciences is needed to fully appreciate the nature and extent of these agricultural practices as well as their long-term impact on ecosystems.

We invite submission of original research from all fields of historical ecology including archaeology, anthropology, ethnography, sociology, history, geography, ecology and biology, that focuses on the understanding of indigenous horticultural, agricultural and agroforestry systems of all time periods in tropical and sub-tropical regions. Interdisciplinary studies, cross-regional comparisons and papers highlighting new methods or specific methodological challenges in the study of tropical agriculture are particularly welcome. Relevant topics to the present issue include, but are not limited to:

- past and present conceptions about tropical agriculture
- plant and animal domestication and the development of agriculture
- farming techniques including irrigation, earthworks, soil improvement
- vulnerability and resilience of food systems
- adaptation to climate change
- long-term impact of agricultural systems on landscapes

Deadline for abstract submission is December 1, 2020, with a final publication date in Winter (March) 2022.