

use of these resources are available only for purchase, highlighting, in the process several Southern initiatives which attempt to counter this position in practical terms.

Chapters four and five bring the reader up-to-date with the state of negotiations in the areas of POPs and forests, respectively, which have still remained inconclusive. While in the case of POPs – toxic chemicals which persist in the environment without breaking down – the North's unwillingness to make appropriate financial commitments is proving to be the stumbling block, lack of consensus towards a forest convention seems to stem from the very definition of sustainability. As in previous chapters, the authors critique the mainstream criterion for 'green' wood, arguing that direct control of local people needs to be made central to the issue of sustainability.

The next two chapters – six and seven – wade through the murky linkages between the world's economic system and the whole gamut of environmental concerns, ranging from multilateral investment agreements to intellectual property rights regimes related to biological resources. Indeed, the authors once again go beyond the analytical mode to lay down a proactive agenda for the South for protecting the rights and innovations of local communities in the face of Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which are in contradiction to the CBD agreement regarding use of biological resources.

The remainder of the book – chapters eight and nine – explores the evolving institutional framework meant to support the agreements covered earlier. The emergence of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the international financial mechanism for enabling developing countries to take action for protecting the global environment has resulted in a new funding 'climate' where cost incrementality is set to become a guiding principle. This basically means that the GEF funds only that part of a project cost which results in global benefits – something which is almost impossible to determine in the case of most projects, especially in the biodiversity area. The authors question this idea as well as several more concrete issues like the GEF's push for protected

areas at the expense of sustainable use of biodiversity, as emphasized by the CBD. Finally, the book ponders over the idea of a World Environment Organization as an umbrella organization, bringing the environmental conventions together and acting as a countervailing influence on the World Trade Organization.

If the purpose of the volume is to bridge the gap between the often information-starved civil society of the South and the world's negotiating platforms, it serves the purpose adequately. If the aim is to provide the serious specialist researcher a pithy capsule on the science and politics of the environmental negotiations, it does an admirable job. The layout of the volume is extremely attractive with rich graphic material supporting the text throughout. It is a pity though that such a well-researched volume is without an index and a glossary. One hopes that CSE would keep its promise of continuing the series, and in the process, its efforts at opening eyes wide shut.

ANIRBAN GANGULY

*Centre for Ecological Sciences,
Indian Institute of Science,
Bangalore 560 012, India
e-mail: aganguly@ces.iisc.ernet.in*

The Environment History of South and South-east Asia: Nature and the Orient. Richard H. Grove, Vinita Damodaran and Satpal Sangwan (eds). Oxford University Press, YMCA Library Building, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi 110 001. 1998. 1036 pp. Price: Rs 1250.00.

This book meets the aspirations of nature lovers as well as persons dealing with natural history. It is one of the very few books depicting the environmental history of south and south-east Asia. The editors, Richard H. Grove of the Australian National University, Vinita Damodaran of the University of Sussex, UK and Satpal Sangwan of the National Institute for Science, Technology and Development Studies, New Delhi, have done a commendable job in editing papers written by eminent scholars in their

respective fields. The book, which is the outcome of a conference held in 1992 at New Delhi under the auspices of National Institute for Science, Technology and Development Studies, contains 31 papers under six units and two parts. The first part deals with 'Constructing nature and changing the landscape', while the second part deals with 'Colonial forest management and its impact on indigenous societies'. The first part has four units, viz. (i) The pre-colonial period; (ii) The colonial state and construction of nature; (iii) The colonial scientific community and its environmental agendas; (iv) The ecological demands and transforming impact of colonialism. The second part has two units, viz. (i) Forest management, 1840–1940; (ii) The damaging impact: Colonial forest management and indigenous societies.

Bridget Allchin deals vividly on the early men and environment in south-east Asia from 10,000 BC to 500 AD, while the aspect of deforestation in pre and protohistoric south Asia has been discussed lucidly by George Erdosy.

India has been known for her contribution to the world in the field of ecological knowledge and early ecological knowledge in India has been dealt with by J. Donald Hughes.

Water is a valuable resource which has been put to use by people of ancient India through different kinds of devices. Ranabir Chakravarti has dealt with creation and expansion of settlements and management of hydraulic resources in ancient India.

It is quite logical to think that the forests were quite intact in south and south-east Asia during pre-colonial India and its adjoining tropical countries. Anthony Reid has lucidly described the relation between humans and forests in pre-colonial south-east Asia.

The climate in India is similar to neighbouring countries like Thailand, Myanmar, etc. The editors are quite correct in incorporating articles written on Thailand by Janice Stargardt.

The second unit includes papers dealing with the colonial State and the construction of nature. Richard Grove deals with indigenous knowledge and the significance of south-west India for Portuguese and Dutch construction of tropical nature. Satpal Sangwan deals with the aspect entitled 'From gentle-

men, amateurs to professionals: Re-assessing the natural science tradition in colonial India: 1780–1840'. Paul Greenough has written on 'Hunter's drowned land: An environmental fantasy of the Victorian Sunderbans'. M. S. S. Pandian has written vividly on the hunting and colonialism in the nineteenth century Nilgiri Hills of South India.

The third unit of the book deals with the colonial scientific community and its environmental agenda. Richard Grove deals with the article where he has lucidly described about the East India Company, the Raj and the El Nino – the critical role played by colonial scientists in establishing the mechanisms of global climate telecommunications 1770–1930. Ravi Rajan has dealt with the aspect of imperial environmentalism/environmental imperialism, European forestry, colonial foresters and the agendas of forest management in British India: 1800–1900.

The fourth unit deals with the ecological demands and transforming impact of colonialism. In this unit, E. P. Flint discusses the aspects of deforestation and land use in Northern India with a focus on sal (*Shorea robusta*) forests – 1880–1980. Michael Mann discusses the Ecological change in North India: Deforestation and agrarian distress in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab – 1800–1850. Richard Tucker deals with the non-timber forest products policy in the Western Himalayas under British rule. Marika Vicziany discusses the men, molluscs and the marine environment in the Maluku Islands: Imaging customary law and institutions in Eastern Indonesia – 1872–1992. Peter Boomgaard

deals with the ecological demands and transforming impact of colonialism.

Part two of the publication deals with the theme 'Colonial forest management and its impact on indigenous societies'. Here unit five deals with the forest management: 1840–1940. Mahesh Rangarajan deals with the production, desiccation and forest management in the Central Provinces: 1850–1930. Ajoy Skaria discusses the timber conservancy, desiccationism and scientific forestry – the Dangs 1840s–1920s. Marilene Buchy deals with the British colonial forest policy in South India – an unscientific or unadapted policy. The practice of shifting cultivation is quite common today. M. D. Subash Chandran discusses the details of shifting cultivation, sacred groves and conflicts in colonial forest policy in the Western Ghats. Indra Munshi Saldhana deals with the colonial forest regulations and collective resistance – nineteenth century Thana district, in a vivid manner. Edward Haynes discusses the natural and the Raj – customary state systems and environmental management in pre-integration Rajasthan and Gujarat. The forests, Chena cultivation, plantation and the colonial state in Ceylon 1840–1940 have been discussed by Eric Meyer. Raymond L. Bryant lucidly summarizes the rationalizing forest use in British Burma: 1856–1942.

The book ends with the unit six which deals with the broad theme 'The Damaging Impact: Colonial Forest Management and Indigenous Societies'. This unit has a beautiful set of five papers beginning with Vinita Damodaran who excellently deals with 'Famine in forest tract: Ecological change and the causes

of the 1897 famine in Chota Nagpur, Northern India'. Felix Padel does an excellent discourse on 'Forest knowledge: Tribal people, their environment and the structure of power'. J. Kathirithamby-Wells dealt with a little different aspect but in a very lucid way on the 'Attitudes to natural resources and environment among the upland forest and Swidden communities of south-east Asia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'. T. N. Harper exclusively deals with the Orang Asli and the politics of the 'forest in colonial Malaya. The book concludes with the article entitled 'A farewell to ancestors? Deforestation and the changing spiritual environment of the sora' written in a very interesting way by Piers Vitebsky.

The bibliography has enriched the publication while the detailed index helps in the quick reference of the relevant aspects. Notes appended almost in each chapter are an added advantage in this publication.

The present publication is a book in the series *Studies in Social Ecology and Environmental History* and the General Editors of the series, Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha have done a wonderful job by publishing such books in the series depicting the environmental set-up in the sub-continent. The publishers, Oxford University Press deserve appreciation in selecting such a publication in the series.

DEVASHISH KAR

*Department of Life Science,
Assam (Central) University,
Silchar 788 005, India*