

*Prophets of Agroforestry: Guarani Communities and Commercial Gathering*, by Richard K Reed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. ISBN 0-292-77067-7, xiii + 251 pages, maps, tables, photographs, bibliography, notes, index. US\$37.50.

In recent years many writers have generalized about the social and ecological impacts of commercial exploitation of plant resources, particularly tropical forest products. Very few works, however, have adequately documented the complexity of the histories of market exploitation of forests and of forest-dwelling populations. This book is an exception. In *Prophets of Agroforestry* Richard K Reed explores in deep detail the impact of the commercial extraction and trade of yerba mate (*Ilex paraguayensis*) on the history and culture of the Chiripa, a Guarani people of Paraguay. Although many indigenous groups were destroyed by the commercial extraction and trade of yerba, a few such as the Chiripa have survived the intense pressure and conflicts brought by the trade. The author examines and explains how and why the cultural complexity, diversity, and dynamics of the Chiripa situation helped the group survive centuries of commercial extraction and trade of this valuable tropical resource.

Detailed historical, ethnographic, and ethnobotanical information is marshalled to show why the Chiripa people have remained a very distinctive cultural group in broader Paraguayan society. Reed develops several arguments, but perhaps the most convincing and interesting is his discussion of cultural flexibility. Because of such

flexibility, he argues, this particular indigenous group avoided cultural domination by the mestizo groups that controlled the commercial extraction and trade of yerba mate.

The book includes much important ethnographic information, and much of the richness of the story comes from the historical and ethnobotanical contexts in which that ethnography is discussed. The historical evolution of the yerba trade and the Chiripa's participation in it are recounted in the book and these analyses clarify how this particular Guarani group maintained its cultural identity. The author shows, for instance, how throughout a long and complicated history, the Chiripa people resisted domination by practicing a very complex settlement pattern. By living in isolated households and moving constantly, this indigenous people resisted resettlement by the Jesuits, landlords, and the government. The Chiripa's intimate knowledge of the landscape and forests also helped them escape repeated threats of persecution and resettlement.

The Chiripa's cultural flexibility, distinctive settlement patterns, and profound knowledge of the environment are cited by Reed as important to their survival, not only in the past but also in understanding their ways of making a living in the present. The book includes one of the most interesting and well-documented case studies of how present-day indigenous people use the forest as a source of subsistence as well as a source of cash income. The only persistently confusing aspect of that discussion is the author's choice to classify and call the Chiripa people "agroforesters" rather than the very

skilled “forest managers” that his own description shows them to be.

Although Reed describes the production of fruits and other products in house gardens and orchards, most of the information included in the book deals with the Chiripa’s forest activities, including the collection of yerba. The author clearly reports that most yerba sold by this indigenous people comes from their forests; their agroforestry activities are only superficially described. While it is of little value to quibble about where “agroforestry” and “forest management” actually begin and end, I find that the Chiripa people would be far better described as “prophets of forest management” rather than prophets of agroforestry. The complex and sophisticated cleaning, thinning, and other management techniques that the Chiripa apparently practice are recognizable as excellent forestry. Acknowledging them as such should help to strengthen the argument recently made by other researchers that indigenous people have often been excellent—and usually overlooked—manipulators and managers of forests. Reed presents considerable evidence that most yerba sold by Chiripa families is not planted by them but is collected from their managed forests.

Apart from his somewhat confusing categorization of the Chiripa, the author clearly understands that the patterns of agriculture, agroforestry, and forest management activities carried out by the Chiripa are strongly interconnected. In this, the Paraguayan evidence clearly supports and reinforces the results of recent ethnographical and ethnobotanical studies conducted in other tropical regions.

This finding should be of considerable interest to those planning and pursuing programs of reforestation, agroforestry, and forest management in indigenous communities of Amazonian South America and elsewhere in the tropics.

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*In Place of the Forest: Environmental and Socio-Economic Transformation in Borneo and the Eastern Malay Peninsula*, by Harold Brookfield, Lesley Potter, and Yvonne Byron. UNU Studies on Critical Environmental Regions. Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1995. ISBN 92-808-0893-1, xiv + 310 pages, figures, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$30.

Virtually all current writing on Borneo highlights the very rapid recent pace of environmental, social, and economic change on the island and in neighboring regions. This new volume, written by a team of geographers who are both highly experienced field researchers and innovative scholars, is no exception. *In Place of the Forest*, however, stands out strikingly from the rest. The volume not only discusses the recent trends and transformations of a highly dynamic area of Southeast Asia, but it presents and explicates their complex historical and geographical contexts and precedents, and then even reinterprets and updates what we always thought we knew about the past of the region in light of new multidisciplinary data and understandings.

This volume is one of a series of