

Louise Morauta, John Pernetta, and William Heaney, eds., *Traditional Conservation in Papua New Guinea: Implications for Today*. Boroko, Papua New Guinea: Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research, Monograph 16, .1982. Pp. 392. K 4.50.

The fourth national goal of the constitution of Papua New Guinea asserts the need to conserve the country's natural resources, and to use them

wisely for the present benefit and for that of future generations. This volume of papers is based on a conference held in Port Moresby in October 1980, which brought together a vast range of specialists interested in conservation of all kinds. It includes over forty papers, some by technical experts, some by planners, and some by Papua New Guineans themselves, whose expertise lies in their unique view of conservation and knowledge of their home areas. The information presented is too diverse for individual comment, yet many common themes emerge from the papers.

The most crucial theme in my view is how to balance development and conservation. A number of papers relate to this issue. Papua New Guinea as a nation is both in a unique position and at a critical juncture of its history. It can benefit from the developmental follies of other countries by acting to safeguard its resources from overexploitation at too rapid a pace and cost. But as in other developing countries, both the government and local individuals need revenue. How to weigh these inherently contradictory desires is only part of the problem dealt with in many of the conference papers; the issue runs deeper still, to individual rights and freedom versus national goals and needs.

A second major theme concerns traditional knowledge of the environment and how traditional practices affected resource conservation. There are certain differences of opinion here. Some papers argue that cultural practices and values had a conservational element to them, that taboos and access to resources were partially "about" conservation after all, and left to their own devices "traditional societies" were sensitive to resource limitations and practiced restraint in the use of valued resources. Conservation in many papers is seen as a latent function of cultural fact. Other papers suggest that, while local knowledge of resources was great and detailed, traditional practices had serious nonreversible environmental impact. Some faunal species were extinct in pre-colonial times through human overexploitation; erosion, burning, and other practices threatened livelihood in pre-European days. While these two positions conflict, surely the real issue is how to bring together both internal and external expertise and knowledge to confront such problems and solve them in the future.

A third major theme that is manifest throughout partially relates to the first: the relationship between "external" pressures and "internal" ones. How are the development projects of multinational corporations, courted by the national government, to be reconciled with local sentiment, values, and resource use? Can logging operations and the sanctity of land be made compatible? This seems to be the most complex issue ad-

dressed at the conference, and although there are no solutions offered, Papua New Guineans themselves are the most vociferous and clearminded of the contributors.

This volume is a sourcebook of great importance. If it is short on specific recommendations for solving problems, it is nonetheless an ambitious attempt to bring people, viewpoints, and issues together. The clear message of the conference is that essential to any conservation solutions is the active participation of Papua New Guineans in their own destiny. External experts with all their scientific knowledge will never be sufficient, for the solutions must be sought and phrased in the values held by Papua New Guineans. Without that most crucial component in any solution, attempts to solve environmental and conservational problems will certainly fail.

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