



Through Amazonian Eyes: The Human Ecology of Amazonian Populations

By Emilio F. Moran

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In the final years of the twentieth century we live with omnipresent worries. Will the Amazonian forests survive current deforestation trends? Will Amazonia's native populations survive the spread of diseases and the expropriation of traditional territories? Will the promise of biotechnology ever be fulfilled, given the genetic losses we are experiencing? Will scientists find new chemical substances in the forests of Amazonia to cure diseases heretofore incurable or yet unknown? Will we learn to use, rather than thoughtlessly destroy, the thousands of tropical species that we now consider without value? Will we invest in agronomic research to find ways to achieve sustainable cultivation in the humid tropics? In June 1992, at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the world was finally ready to ask these questions. In this well-written, comprehensive, reasonable yet passionate volume, Emilio Moran introduces us to the range of human and ecological diversity in the Amazon Basin. Beginning with a description of its Indian and peasant populations and their knowledge of their environment, he describes the Amazon's widely contrasting ecosystems, their ecological variations, and the human strategies of resource use workable within each environment. Every ecosystem - from upland forests to floodplains, savannas to blackwater rivers - offers opportunities as well as limitations; each has unique characteristics that can be used advantageously or resisted at great cost. By describing the complex heterogeneity of the Amazon's ecological mosaic and its indigenous populations' conscious adaptations to this diversity, Moran leads us to realize that there are strategies of resource use which do not destroy the structure and function of ecosystems. Finally, and most important, he examines ways in which we might benefit from the study of human ecology to design and implement a balance between conservation and use. Through Amazonian Eyes shows that the traditional inhabitants of Ama

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About the Author

Emilio F. Moran is Rudy Professor of Anthropology, Professor of Environmental Sciences, Director of the Anthropological Center for Training and Research on Global Environmental Change and Adjunct Professor of Geography at Indiana University. He is Codirector of the Center for the Study of Institutions, Population, and Environmental Change.

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