

(Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), even if the questions that he and Rafael ask are hardly the same.

*University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada*

ALEXANDER WOODSIDE

**DEFORESTATION IN VIETNAM.** *By Rodolphe De Koninck. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre. 1999. vii, 101 pp. (Tables, figures.) Cdn.\$25.00, paper, ISBN 0-88936-869-4.*

OVER THE twentieth century, Vietnam has had some of the highest rates of loss of forest cover in Southeast Asia. Through a baffling set of economic and social policies, the government of Vietnam still very much contributes to the degradation of the remaining forest ecosystems. Most of the relatively intact fragments that remain are cultural landscapes in the higher elevations of the country. Many of these forests have been stewarded by ethnic minorities who have often been at odds with the government and colonists from the lowlands, both largely comprised of the Kinh majority.

The prevailing wisdom of many members of the government is that swidden agriculture, involving cycles of slashing forest patches and burning, practised by the ethnic minorities, is the primary cause of deforestation. De Koninck studied several upland districts and debunked these prejudices. This book outlines a number of other factors. Kinh agricultural expansion now may well be contributing to more forest loss than is intensification of traditional swidden by minorities. With increasing rural populations swollen by recent settlers, firewood gathering is further degrading remaining treed areas. The Vietnamese government remains secretive, withholding information of dubious accuracy, making effective management and conservation planning virtually impossible. In some areas, such as Tuyen Quang Province, more contemporary forest liquidation for a pulp and paper mill, developed with assistance from Sweden, has caused as much, if not more, destruction of forest lands, as did the war of three decades back. Unfortunately, this slim book barely touches on questions beyond those directly related to demographics, agricultural clearing and the disappearance of forest canopy. In these areas of discussion, the book has made a contribution. But the intermittent discussion of the status of Vietnam's biological diversity, in this constrained discourse, is undeveloped.

*Vancouver, Canada*

GORDON BRENT INGRAM