

The Timor problem: a geographical interpretation of an underdeveloped island

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Abstrak

The Timor problem consists of an avalanche of closely related subjects. The majority, common in all underdeveloped countries, is not new. They emanate from a combination of factors - unfavorable physical conditions, simple technologies, and a social setting, which impedes progress and modernization and result in an alarming agrarian situation, marked by malnutrition and soil erosion.

On Timor, as elsewhere in the world, the solution of these matters is exceedingly difficult and is retarded by a general lack of data, concerning both physical environment and social factors. Specialists in various fields have studied several facets of the Timor problem, and valuable suggestions have been put forward. The objection of the latter is that, made by single-minded specialists, they are rarely coordinated and do not sufficiently consider the multiple correlation in the interplay between man and nature. Co-ordination between the results of specialized enquiries, in order to show the area's real nature and critical features, is desirable.

As a geographer the author does not intend to invade the fields of other sciences, and he is not under the illusion that he can provide the answer to the Timor problem. He realizes, however, that the geographical approach has been found of value in area planning projects in many parts of the world during the last decades. Geographers' advice has been sought to in increasing degree and their practical aid welcomed. Few of them, however, have yet been employed in the gigantic project of which the present generation should form the foundation, i.e. development of newborn areas. That is just where geographers could give considerable assistance. With their training, they are often able to apply the required co-ordination and correlation. By providing the present situation's historical background, by analyzing the methods man has used to develop his environment and giving a synthetic interpretation of all phenomena found in the area, he can supply the basic overall information necessary in the formulation of plans for future development. An attempt will be made to demonstrate this in the following study regarding the Timor problem.