

FOREWORD

In August 1983, I was talking with Prof. Fusato OGAWA, Osaka City University, at a restaurant in the Hotel Indonesia in Jakarta. He was there to push on the negotiation with LIPI on his research plan in Kalimantan, and I was for participating in the International Symposium on Krakatau Research. When he flew over East Kalimantan in early 1983, he saw volumes of smoke coming up from lowland tropical rain forests, and he could not take any aerial photos by disturbing from a heavy smoke. For me it was the first contact with the information on a big forest fire in East Kalimantan.

In early 1984, Dr. Shigeru AZUMA, who had a field research on the ecology of primates in Sebulu near Samarinda a few years ago, wrote me a letter advising to set up an urgent research plan for making clear the process of ecosystem recovery after the fire. Before he wrote me he was also stimulated by a letter from Dr. Nengah WIRAWAN, who was the leader of WWF/IUCN Project 1687 at that time, asking for research in Kutai Nature Reserve (not yet designated as national park in 1984). The present study was motivated by those two letters.

In East Kalimantan there is an obscure dry season between July and October, but in 1982 dry season was extraordinarily severe and rain did not come back for 11 months until May 1983, when a heavy rain visited again. Trees in the tropical rain forest almost shed their leaves and died. Dead leaves and branches were accumulated thick on the forest floor. The desiccated litter caught fire from gardens for slash and burn around residence areas. The influenced area by the fire was estimated as 3.1 million ha, and it was the largest forest fire of the world.

The fire damage of the forests in East Kalimantan was limited to the lower layers of the forest in a large area, but trees fully entangled by lianes caught fire even on the upper part of trunks. When we visited Kutai forest in 1986, tall trees were almost decayed, and were frequently falling down with a heavy thud.

This study was carried out for 88 days from July 19 to October 15 in 1983 in the Kutai National Park along Kayu Mas Road and on the Sengata River and in Sebulu. The study was greatly aided by Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Ministry

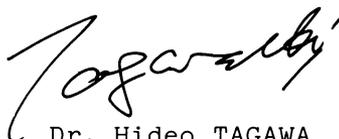
of Education, Science and Culture in 1986 and 1987.

To realize the present research we had to obtain a number of helps from various persons and organizations. We are greatly indebted to Prof. emer. Dr. Tatsuo KIRA, Osaka City University and Director of the Lake Biwa Research Institute, for giving us helpful advice on our research plan, to Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (Indonesian Institutes of Sciences) for giving us an opportunity for this research in Kutai National Park, and to Prof. Dr. Soetrisno Hadi, Rector of Mulawarman University in Samarinda, for the sponsor of the present research and for giving us every convenience and advice. JICA members of PUSREHUT (Center for Reforestation and Rehabilitation Studies of the Tropical Rain Forest), Mulawarman University, Prof. em. Iwao JINNAI, Dr. Shigeru TAKAHATA, and Dr. Atsushi KOKUBO, rendered us many facilities and gave us important information on the forest and its fire in Kutai.

Dr. Herman HAERUMAN, Assistant Minister on Natural Resources, and Mr. Syafii MANAN, Director of Nature Conservation (PHPA), Ministry of Forestry, and the staffs of PHPA (Department of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation) office for the Taman Nasional Kutai (Kutai National Park) in Bontang lent their active cooperation to the present research, especially young staffs and students from Hasanuddin University stood heavy work to transport foods, tools for the research and collections.

Mr. Soedarsono Soekardi, Chairman of Bureau for Regional Planning and Development, Samarinda helped us by participating his staff from silvicultural office, Mr. Ellia FREDRICK, in our team to help the field work. Dr. Nengah WIRAWAN and his assistant Mr. Ngakan Puku OKA were the research member of the team, but beside their scientific work they helped us in various phases of this research. Without the aid of all those people this research could not realize, and we just missed a good chance to study the earlier process of ecosystem recovery in a tropical rain forest. I express my sincere gratitude to those persons mentioned above.

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