

Hopkins, Brian. *Forest and Savanna*. London, Heinemann, 1965, 100 pages.

David Watts

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Volume 11, Number 22, 1967

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/020710ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/020710ar>

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Publisher(s)

Département de géographie de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0007-9766 (print)

1708-8968 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

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Cite this review

Watts, D. (1967). Review of [Hopkins, Brian. *Forest and Savanna*. London, Heinemann, 1965, 100 pages.] *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 11(22), 155–155. <https://doi.org/10.7202/020710ar>

## NOTICES SIGNALÉTIQUES

### BIOGÉOGRAPHIE

HOPKINS, Brian. **Forest and Savanna.** London, Heinemann, 1965, 100 pages.

One of the inherent difficulties of introducing university students to problems of tropical ecology and biogeography is the general lack of relevant text books. Brian Hopkins' short book on *Forest and Savanna*, directed at first-year university students, is one attempt to alleviate this situation.

The book briefly describes the major physiognomic types of forest and savanna which occur in West Africa, and evaluates the physical and human factors which have affected their evolution and distribution. In pointing out early the fact that untouched, primary forest is rare in West Africa, the author quickly establishes the main theme of the book, which is that man, with his agricultural and grazing techniques, and the use of fire, has left his mark on all the major vegetation associations of West Africa, as they are now constituted. But he does not neglect the climatic, edaphic and topographic factors, which give rise to variations within vegetation associations in certain areas.

After a brief introduction, Dr. Hopkins arranges his material under four main chapter headings. *The West African Environment* is discussed in terms of its human and physical components. The major sub-types of vegetation are presented under the general chapter headings of *The Forest* and *The Savanna*, and are analysed according to their structure and physiognomy, floristic composition, species morphology, related climates, and the effects of man's activities. Finally, a chapter entitled *The Relationship between Forest and Savanna* is concerned with the nature of the forest/savanna boundary, and its successional development. Two short appendices describe several field methods of vegetation analysis which are particularly useful in West Africa, and certain related projects which students could develop in similar environments. The book has an ample number of well-chosen diagrams, but more photographs of selected vegetation sub-types would have increased the pertinence of some comments to those students unfamiliar with this area.

Dr. Hopkins admits that any discussion of ecological features in West Africa is severely restricted by the current lack of relevant research ; in particular, it is doubtful whether some of his more general statements concerning the physical environment will still hold true when more detailed knowledge is available. Moreover, his conclusions concerning the role of man in savanna formation may not be entirely applicable in other parts of the world e.g. in South America. But, given these minor drawbacks, his book can be recommended as an admirable introductory survey of the problems associated with forest and savanna environments in the tropics, particularly in West Africa.

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DAVIS, P. H., CULLEN, J. **The Identification of Flowering Plant Families.** Edinburgh and London, Oliver & Boyd, 1965, 122 pages.

This is an excellent small book, which students in biogeography and ecology, as well as those interested in identifying plants for other reasons, will find most useful. It is the only small, compact book, currently in print, concerned with the genus identification of angiosperms in the northern hemisphere, and includes descriptions in key form of all related plant groups, excluding those of Mexico, Florida, India, and parts of subtropical China ; in short, it deals with flowering