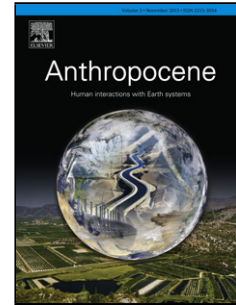


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**Finding the anthropocene in tropical forests**

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**New abstract**

"Commonly proposed definitions of the "Anthropocene" suggest that significant human alteration of the Earth system is connected to fossil fuel consumption, coinciding with the Industrial Revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, or global change resulting from the "Great Acceleration" following the Second World War. Although evidence for earlier, anthropogenically-driven environmental changes are acknowledged, they are seen as qualitatively different. This perspective is also prevalent in conservation and ecological discussions of human impacts on tropical forests. A growing body of archaeological and historical evidence demonstrates, however, that humans influenced physical, chemical, and biological systems through large regions of tropical forest starting as early as 45,000 years ago. This evidence challenges the idea, prevalent in global scenarios of anthropogenic land cover change, that human influence on tropical forests was limited until the colonial or industrial era. This paper reviews the role of tropical forests in the Earth system and, through a synthesis of archaeological data, critiques the prevailing view of anthropogenic influence on tropical forests in the pre-industrial world. We suggest that any definition of the anthropocene should account for the long history of human modifications to tropical forests. Archaeological and palaeoenvironmental research in these ecosystems is also critical to the broader debates in the social and natural sciences around the onset and utility of the anthropocene concept, and the potential for long-term, sustainable occupation of tropical forest environments."

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