BOOK REVIEW

Man in the Mangroves : The Socio-Economic Situation of Human Settlements in Mangrove Forests. Edited by Peter Kunstadter, Eric C.F. Bird and Sanga Sabhasri. Tokyo : The United Nations University, 1986. pp. 117.

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Mangrove probably is the most single dominant ecosystem in the humid tropical coastal areas, in particular along the protected muddy to sandy beaches. Ecologically, mangrove forms a rather sharp transitional gradients between the marine and the freshwater environments. In many parts of the world, especially in Southeast Asia, human populations have lived and utilized mangrove ecosystem for their traditional livelihood for centuries. However, pressures on the mangrove ecosystem in recent decades have increased steadily both from within, due to population growth, and from outside the system, due to land reclamation, brackish water fishponds or other development activities and the ever increasing exploitation of the mangrove's resources.

Since the 19th century, mangrove ecosystem has become the center of interest of many scientists. In part, this interest was due to the unique form of mangrove aerial roots, but more recently also due to their function as a protector of beach erosion and the ecological and biological features. A good number of books have been published throughout the world on the ecology and biology of mangrove ecosystem. However, only a few of them specifically deal with the socio-economic aspects of a mangrove ecosystem. Therefore, the publication of the book entitled *MAN IN THE MANGROVES : The Socio-Economic Situation of Human Settlements in Mangrove Forests*, is indeed a welcome addition to the long list of publications on mangroves.

The book on *MAN IN THE MANGROVES* is the proceedings of a United Nations University (UNU) and the National Research Council of Thailand sponsored Workshop held at Pattaya - Thailand on the 27th to 31st of May 1985. It was an activity under the United Nations University's Natural Resources Programme, in particular the Coastal Resources Management Project. It is unfortunate that this excellent project now has been terminated. During its life span the project has turned out many fine research results and has generated broad interests among the Southeast Asian coastal scientists.

The *MAN IN THE MANGROVES* is edited by Peter Kunstadter, Eric C.F. Bird and Sanga Sabhasri. It contains ten papers on socio-economic

aspects of the utilization, development and management of mangrove areas in relation to environmental and ecological factors. The book gives an excellent review of case studies on the socio-economic problems in many parts of the world, from Japan to the North and Australia to the South, from Tanzania to the West and South America to the East. However, these case studies fall short of a global review with the notable omission of countries with major mangrove ecosystems, such as the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Central America. Nevertheless, with the all shortcomings the book represents a reasonably comprehensive range of environmental, ecological and socio-economic variations of human-mangrove interactions.

Finally, a set of recommendations was presented at the end of the book. Although the recommendations were directed to the specific problems and situation in Thailand, some – if not most – of them could probably be applicable to other mangrove areas in a similar setting.

In summary, this book is a good source of reference on the socio-economic aspect of the management on mangrove ecosystem and should find its way to the personal and institutional libraries of those who are interested in this field.