

Book Review

Vegetation Degradation in Central Asia under the Impact of Human Activities

Author: Nikolai Kharin, ISBN: 1-4020-0397-8, 182p.

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This book is recommended to anyone who is interested in desertification problems, especially who is interested in desertification in Central Asia around Aral Sea and near Caspian Sea or in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and neighbouring areas, or who is interested in not only physical causes but also human causes of desertification. The book is also valuable to people who are interested in desertification problems in other parts of the world because mechanism and possible countermeasure for human impact to desertification are similar in any places.

The author is a Russian scientist. He has lots of experience of observation of desertification in Central Asia because he had been working at the Desert Research Institute of Turkmenistan for about 30 years during the former Soviet period. The historical analysis for long range of period from the time of Alexander the Great to the

time after Soviet disintegration, about human induced causes to desertification and descriptions of social causes to desertification with real examples made this book interesting not only for researchers but also general readers. For example the book describes "Due to prevailing bad custom of 'Pripiska' (intentional falsification of accounts and reports aimed at obtaining illegal income) in Central Asia, there is a difficulty to observe true social causes of desertification." At the same time, this book includes various types of scientific data and statistics based on the observation which cover plant species and the data by remote sensing techniques.

"This book is about desertification. The author describes vegetation degradation as a part of the integral process of desert ecosystem degradation in Central Asia under the impact of human activities. A connection between is made between political and social factors and the degradation of desert environments in historical perspective. Fragile desert ecosystems suffer first of all from loss of vegetation. ----- Several measures are also discussed in the book for the conservation of desert vegetation and rehabilitation of desert lands." (from back cover of the book)

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