

Doctoral Thesis

Deforestation and Local Livelihood Strategy: A Case of Encroachment into the Wunbaik Reserved Mangrove Forest, Myanmar

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Abstract

Deforestation in the Wunbaik Reserved Mangrove Forest (WRMF) (22,919 ha), Myanmar, has been accelerating since the 1990s. This study focuses on the causes of deforestation and local people's livelihood strategy. Results show that 34.9% of the dense mangrove forest area was lost during 1990–2014. Degraded mangrove forest covered approximately 23.6% of the WRMF in 2014 due to logging for charcoal production and bark peeling for collecting dyes. Most of dense mangrove forest were converted into paddy fields and shrimp ponds by forming earthen dyke to block tidal flows, known as '*kari*' in local language. According to interviews with the members of 104 households of *kari* farmers, most of these farmers had earned their livelihood by fishing or ordinary farm before they started to *kari* farming, then had changed over to *kari* farming in the WRMF because of a higher cash income and daily food needs. Even though *kari* farming could earn a higher cash income, the maintenance of dykes is the most important for getting good production and the stable cash income. Based on the interview with 65 households of founder *kari* farmers, 60% of these farmers stopped *kari* farming because of dyke break. When they could not rebuild the dyke again, mostly because of financial problem, they sold their *kari* to other people. As the result, the ownership of *kari* has frequently been changed and *kari*s are continuously utilized. Alternatives to *kari* farming and land use policy must be prepared for the effective protection of WRMF.