Book Review

Nkemdirim, Lawrence C. (Editor) : El Niño-Southern Oscillation and Its Global Impacts. A Publication of the Commission on Climatology of the International Geographical Union, Bonn, Germany. 256 pages, 2000. (Contact : L. C. Nkemdirim, Department of Geography, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive N. W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N 4)

As written in the preface of this book, the public interest shown in the most recent El Niño and La Niña events (El Niño-Southern Oscillation, ENSO events), their socio-economic significance, and the people issues they highlighted confirm that the decision to write this book was correct and timely.

This book contains nine chapters. Starting by an overview on ENSO, the features and their impacts of ENSO in Europe, South America, the United States, China, India, Africa and Southwest Pacific. Even though some climatologically important and interesting regions of the continental and oceanic regions of the world are not found on the titles of chapters, almost all parts of the world have been dealt with thoroughly. For this reason, this book contributes to "climatography" of ENSO of the world. Since the most authors are or were members of the Committee, this book can be understood as a product of activity of the Commission during the last several years.

Chapter 1 discusses three major aspects of the ENSO systems: Physical, environmental and human. The author of Chapter 1 is a chairman of the Commission and the editor of this book. It is therefore a good overview with about 70 references at the present stage of the studies summarizing the results made clear and the questions unresolved.

After reading through the chapters, the following points are thought to be mentioned: (1) There are tables or lists of ENSO years defined by the Equatorial East Pacific sea surface temperature. But, the years are slightly different region to region. Readers may like to know, how and why are the impacts on weather systems/climatic variability region to region in the world different and how interaction mechanisms and phases of lag effects between the regions different. This may be one of the good subjects to be studied as an international cooperation among the Committee. (2) Impacts of ENSO on agricultural production through droughts or floods have been well discussed, but there found few description on forestry, fishery and human health except the chapters of overview and Africa. Also, snow fall and accumulation, permafrost, water resources, river runoff and forest fires and their effects on societies are not mentioned. (3) Regionality of the ENSO impacts on agricultural production should have been discussed, because the impacts are positive in some regions, but negative in some other regions in the world. Also lag effects are different region to region. This is an important view point of short period food security of the world.

It is recommended that this book should be read by the research workers, who are interested to ENSO events and their effects on the socio-economic conditions, because of rich sources of information from many parts of the world.

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