Foreword

This book puts paid to any suggestion that Asia is a barren field for the development of international environmental law. Asia is a dynamic and geopolitically pivotal region with rapidly expanding and changing economies and a rich variety of peoples, cultures and unique natural environments. Accompanying (though often lagging) the region’s economic, social, cultural and political dynamism has been the emergence of a network of soft and hard law regimes for protecting the fragile and diverse ecosystems of the Asian subregions.

In this book Simon Marsden offers a deep and interdisciplinary analysis of the growing body of terrestrial and marine environmental regimes that span the tapestry of Asian political boundaries. The work is structured according to a systematic selection and analysis of environmental regimes in identified Asian subregions. Southwest Asia is the subject of Chapter 2, where the practical operation of the conventions and protocols in force for the protection of the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, and Red Sea and Gulf of Aden are examined. Chapter 3 shifts the focus to central Asia, concentrating on the arrangements in place for the inland seas of this subregion, particularly the Caspian and the Aral Seas (the latter of which has almost entirely disappeared). In Chapter 4 the attention moves eastwards to southeast Asia, which has been a laboratory for transboundary environmental governance, especially as a result of initiatives within ASEAN. Chapter 5 is devoted to an assessment of China’s central role in transboundary environmental governance in the region as a whole, and in the ‘Third Pole’ in particular. Marsden explains the ecological and political significance of the Third Pole – the Tibetan Plateau that makes up a key component of the Earth’s cryosphere and which spans south-western China (including the Tibet Autonomous Region), Nepal and parts of north-east India. This original discussion is a signal strength of this work, providing for the first time a comprehensive assessment of the legal and policy framework for the protection of an under-examined subregion. Marsden argues for the elaboration of a dedicated regime for the Third Pole that can address the many serious environmental impacts that are being felt here, particularly from massive dam-building programmes.
Environmental Regimes in Asian Subregions: China and the Third Pole provides a comprehensive and penetrating account of subregional international environmental law in Asia. It will undoubtedly become the standard reference for all those interested in the practical operation of transboundary environmental law in one of the world’s most fascinating, complex and important regions.

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