

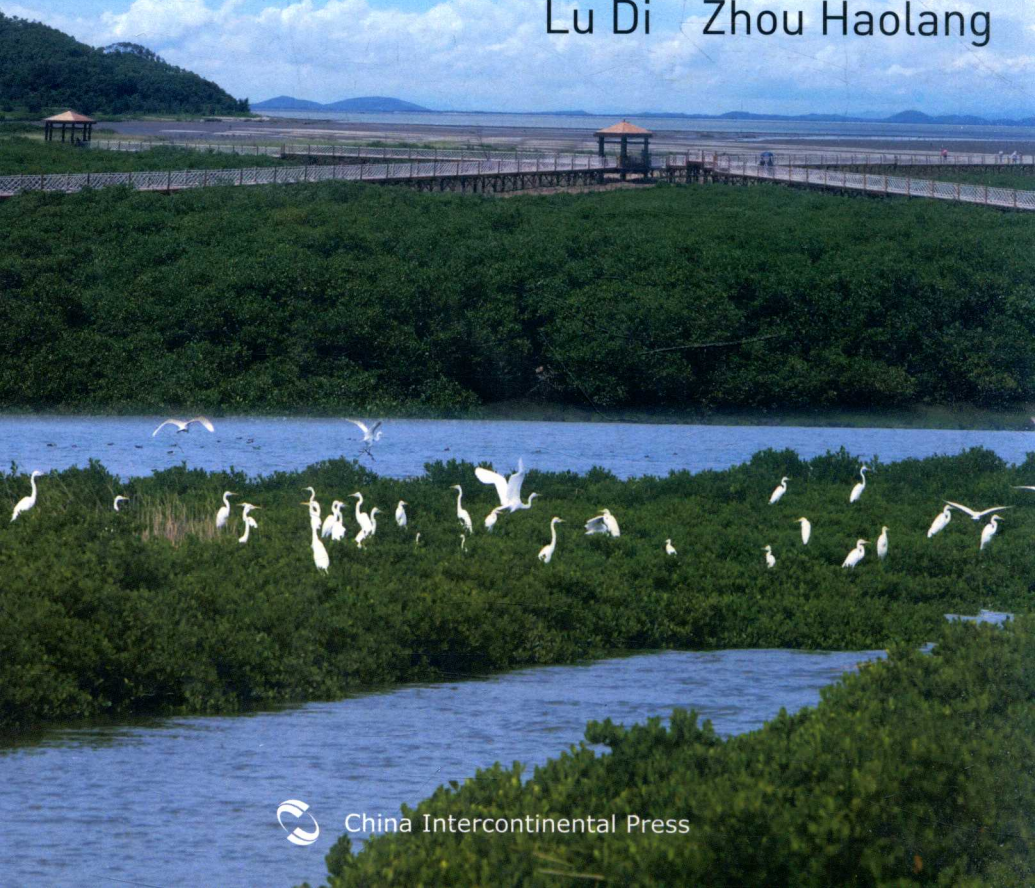


Green
China Dream



EXPECTING FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE OF THE MANGROVES

Lu Di Zhou Haolang



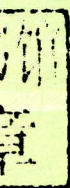
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*Humankind is only a part of the nature,
and never will nature submit itself to humankind.*

Preface

“All these little kids are playing some game in this big field of rye. Thousands of little kids and nobody’s around – nobody big, I mean – except me. And I’m standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff – What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff That’s all I’d do all day. I’d just be the catcher in the rye and all,” wrote by American writer J.D. Salinger in *The Catcher in the Rye*.

The mangroves in Beihai city, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region are located in one of the most beautiful and promising gulfs in China – Beibu Gulf. Mangroves have brought remarkable ecological and environmental benefits, going far beyond the direct economic benefits rendered. However, the damages brought to mangroves may be more severe than the dreadful waves surged by the disastrous typhoon, which explains the saying that the coastal development “fever” for mangroves aroused these years is by no means good news worth celebrating. Even if our policymakers are fully qualified to make right decisions, they can hardly resist the great appealing of the rapid increase in GDP; even if the people living at the seaside are humble and grateful enough to be satisfied with their current lives, they will find it really difficult to refuse the lure of those easy money.

Mangroves are now confronted with unprecedented threats coming from people's thirst for money. They are like cheetahs, their ferocious eyes glaring in the dark.

The last thing people who truly love and care about mangroves can do is to "watch and hope" – hoping they can stop those people from chasing profits at the cost of the collapse of the ecosystem and present to them, through the shelter of profits, this beautiful land. They may finally realize that our fate is closely linked with it.

Maybe, that's the only thing they can do for it.

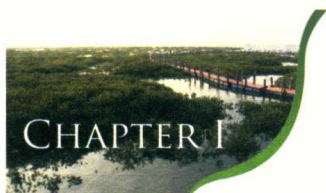
If the integrity and the peace of mangroves can finally be ensured, they would bear no regrets towards this land and its people.

What's more, if they can guarantee the recovery and a promising future for mangroves, they will be able to face their offspring with a clear conscience.

While overlooking the sea and staring at the night sky, we can't help looking back on the past and into the future.

The truth is that mangroves have been living here for such a long time, longer than any living people among us. Thus, we sincerely wish it a peaceful and everlasting future.





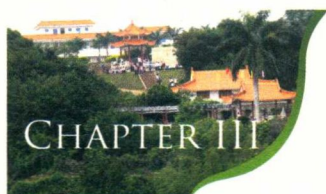
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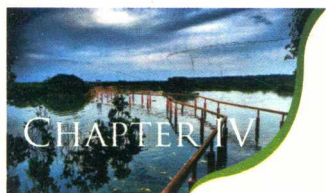


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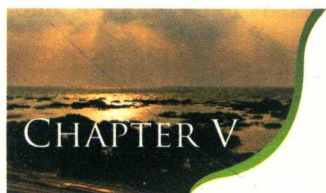
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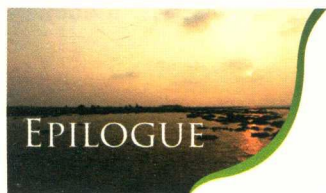
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CHAPTER I

GAZING ON MANGROVES





I. A Stranger's "Mangroves Complex"

April 1991, it was mid-spring in Beihai city, in southern Guangxi. The whole city was surrounded by luxurious plants and filled with the scent of flowers in full blossom. Guangxi Institute of Oceanology is located at No. 92 Changqing Road, on the banks of a dried up city canal. By the river, the red flower clumps of Hehuan (which is *Albizia julibrissin* Durazz) were blossoming, trembling on the branches, while the Chinese redbud and crape myrtle flowers were sprawling freely by the road, not manicured but animated.

This young man, Dr. Fan Hangqing watched at these luxuriant plants and soon decided that this city was definitely suitable for planting.

However, was a place suitable for plants suitable for such a young man? Was this place worth him devoting his career and whole life? People were walking in a slow pace, with a tranquil and content look on their faces. He was not sure about it.

In his luggage, there was a large wooden box made of Chinese fir, a kind of wood growing in the hilly areas of northern Fujian. His parents made it by themselves and gave it to him when he went off to college. Besides, there was an outworn quilt which had been used for nine year and a stack of printed precious materials. When he finished his Ph.D., with the great enthusiasm of putting his knowledge into practical use, he left his tutor – Professor Linpeng (A famous Chinese plant ecologist who was later elected to the Chinese Academy of Engineering) and came here – Guangxi Institute of Oceanology.

Professor Lin cherished his talent and tried to persuade him to teach at Xiameng University after graduated. Teaching and conducting research at Xiamen University, which is often called the most beautiful campus in China, could be the best end-result for people who want a comfortable and simple life. What's more, Sun Yat-Sen University also welcomed him to further his study there as a postdoctoral student.

Meanwhile, Guangxi Academy of Sciences and Guangxi Institute of Oceanology also invited this young man sincerely. Fan Hangqing felt attracted this time. This was the first time for him, a student who had long been studying in the “ivory tower”, to make a hardest choice concerning his career and future. During the nights of the past three months, he kept thinking of his seniors, other disciples with him as well as his friends and family back home who strove to persuade him to stay here, he became confused and bewildered.

“Two roads diverged in the wood,
among which I chose the one less traveled by,



A rainbow hanging over the mangroves



and that has made all the difference.”

After thinking over and over again, Fan decided to decline his tutor's kindness. The reason he made such a decision was quite simple: I just want to do something. I am the first Ph.D. who studies mangroves. I should go there, out of the library and breathe, take root in and grow with the mangroves... Finally, he made up his mind and chose Beihai city, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

In 1984, Beihai city, as one of the 14 coastal cities first approved by the State Council, planned to further open up. However, comparing with other 13 coastal cities by then from the perspective of municipal strength, it was the one that started the lowest base and developed at the slowest pace with a weak economic foundation. In the early 1990s, Beihai city, as a prefecture-level city, had only two people with Ph.D., Fan Hangqing included. The unsatisfactory level of technology and education, thus, can be assumed.

However, what truly attracted Dr. Fan was the 150,000 mu (approximately 10,000 hectares) of mangroves located on the coastline of Beibu Gulf in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, cheap and abundant seafood as well as the pure and simple folkway there. Besides, he also found there great potentials to apply his specialized knowledge.

According to the *State Report on China's Mangroves*, the total area of mangroves in China is 22,639 hectares, and 8375 hectares of which is distributed in Beibu Gulf – one of the key distribution areas, accounting for 37% of the total.

Mangroves are mostly small tree community up to medium height and evergreen shrubs that only grow in saline coastal sediment habitats in tropical and subtropical areas. Mangrove is ligneous and viviparous at the meantime, which is very rare. There are about 55 species of mangroves all around the world, with 27 species of them can be found in China. Mangroves mainly distribute in Hainan, Guangxi, Guangdong, Zhejiang, Fujian and Taiwan in China. Among them, the mangroves of Guangxi are famous for its abundance, accounting for one third of the



Mangroves growing in Caotou Village in Beihai

total. Furthermore, compared with other natural distribution areas along the coast, the one in Guangxi is in better condition. It is larger, typical in structure and well-preserved. In the case of mangrove distribution area in Hepu county alone (in the town of Shankou, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), the mangroves growing there can best represent the mangroves along China's coast. There are 96 species of phytoplankton and 15 species of mangroves including 10 species of true mangrove plants



(*Bruguiera gymnorhiza*, *Kandelia candel*, *Rhizophora stylosa* which is also collected by China National Gene Bank, *Aegiceras corniculata*, *Avicennia marina*, *Sonneratia caseolaris*, *Lumnitzera racemosa*, *Acanthus ilicifolius* Linn, *Heritiera littoralis* and *Excoecaria agallocha*) and 5 species of semi-mangrove plants (*Acrostichum aureum* Linn, Jiejin, *Thespsia Populnea*, *Pongamia pinnata* Linn, *Cerbera manghas* Linn)...

The mangroves in Beibu Gulf feature a rich bio-diversity. You can even find the black-faced spoonbill, saunder's cull and other rare species of animals here. If we compare the lab in Xiamen University to an inn, introducing the landscape of mangroves to some artistic young travelers who have curiosity, then the natural distribution area in Beibu Gulf can be regarded as a paradise or home for mangrove family. Mangroves grow rapidly, like a green carpet unrolling forward slowly. Its green color is shallow and deep, direct and showy. Sometimes it drowns itself in the clear, blue ocean and sometimes it melts in the bright sky without a track.

Dr. Fan rolled up his trousers and immersed himself in the research of this forest. Within half a month, he became tanned and skinny, seeming like a migrant worker at first sight.

He might be the only one who clearly knew what he had gained from Beihai, what he had done for Beihai city and how he felt about his life here.

Years later, Dr. Fan's daughter was born. When she was still a teething toddler, she would yell out "papa's mangrove" every time she saw the images of mangroves on TV. In her memory, father was either working in the mangroves or on his way to the mangroves. He not only studies there, eats there, but even sleeps there and lives there.

Now, Dr. Fan has had a long string of titles behind his name – Director of Guangxi Mangrove Research Center (Guangxi Marine Environment & Coastal Wetland Research Center) and Key Laboratory of Mangrove Ecology, Guangxi, Distinguished Professor and PHD/Master instructor at Guangxi University, member of National Committee on Wetland Science and Technology, the vice-chairman of Group of Mangrove subordinated to Ecological Society of China, the chief expert for UNEP/

GEF Project Entitled “Reversing Environment Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand” on China’s Mangroves study, member of CPPCC(Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference) of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, senior expert directly contacted by Central Organization Department of China.

As one of the most distinguished experts in this particular field, Dr. Fan has long been conducting researches on mangroves, seaweed and salt marsh, mainly focusing on the ecological study of seaside plants in sea-land transitional zone. At the same time, he also went to other Asian and European countries to carry on collaborative researches, including cooperating with the UN.

Now, 23 years later, we would naturally associate the name of Fan Hangqing with the mangrove study.

Mangroves might still be strange to most of the Chinese people; however, it shows great appeal to this stranger – Dr. Fan and the residents of Beihai city. Thus, we can’t help wondering where on earth its true magic lies.

II. The Gift from Mangroves

Due to his work, Dr. Fan has little time to stay at home. He either works in mangroves or heads for mangroves. After becoming an expert of this field, he is obliged to engage in the work related to the study and protection of mangroves carried on in China and in other countries of Southeast Asia.

Mangroves of different countries are of different appearances. For example, the mangrove growing at the seashore of Andaman Sea in Thailand looks more slender with longer branches and straight prop roots, while the mangrove growing on the Beibu Gulf in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region seems short and sturdy but unbending by nature.

By and large, regardless of how it looks, there is no doubt that mangroves are one of the most tolerant, tenacious and selfless natural