



Ecotourism Guide Book of Baima Snow-Mountain Area

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Preface

This guide book came from a project aiming to establish an active network of people living in East Asia who are seeking for a sustainable society, which we also called it “a society co-existing with nature”. The approach we chose is Ecotourism, which defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people.

The reasons to have started this project are two, one is in Japan, though the value and lifestyle of sustainability had been advocated for long time and there are also experience and wisdom accumulated, some policies and systems are built. But regretfully even today it is still not accepted by the main stream. The other one is in China, fast economy development brought many serious social problems, in which the environment is one of most hard to deal with. Civil society in China started to grow up and take the leadership to address the challenge. Both of them have to find a way to make the public to aware of a fact that a change of their life style is the key to realize a sustainable society. Therefor we started this project to connect the people working on this topic and build up a platform for them to exchange opinions and share ideas.

Just before we started the project, 311 earthquake and Fukushima accident occurred. It told that we had to accept it as the worst result of our overconsumption and over convenient lifestyle, and at the same time to know how limited is so call advanced technology. “Co-existing with nature” means to know nature, pay respect to nature, obey nature and thank nature rather than control and use up nature. That is also the mission of Ecotourism.

During 2011 to 2014, we organized quite several times of mutual visit between the practitioners of China and Japan, as well as workshop, forum and training. Based on these research and study, we wrote this ecotourism guide book for Baima Snow-Mountain Preserve and for all people who are interested in ecotourism and people who are searching for the way to sustainability.

Finally, our thanks to all those contributed to this project and this guidebook.

Introduction of Baima Snow-Mountain Reserve

LI Jingruo

Since 2004, the Baima Snow-mountain Natural Reserve started organizing scientific studies and began experimenting ecotourism project in the area.

Various kinds of activities have been carried out jointly by the reserve and local



communities during the following years, including, for example, a road been built leading to the Quzonggong Base-camp and regulations established regarding use of the road together with local villagers; agreement reached that no expansion of existing grazing land and no additional grazing land

developed; paths and wooden bridges have been built leading to spots of bird-watching and flowers in the reserve; tents have been pitched in grazing land with sleeping bags provided to facilitate tourists experiencing typical traditional Tibetan life style with the support of local residents. In 2007, trainings on alpine flowers and tourism service skills have been provided to local villagers and staff members of the reserve with the support of non-governmental organizations. Study tour to Ming-Yong village in Mt. Kawa Kharpo area were also organized for representatives of the locals from Mt. Baima Snow-mountain Area , and exchanges and discussions on impacts of tourism development to local community such as problems, changes in locals' income structure, relationship between stakeholders, etc, were carried between people from the two areas.

The Baima Snow-mountain Reserve had realized that the indigenous culture would be the foundation for developing ecotourism locally. However, it has shown that many young locals did not know and care about their traditional culture. For this, the reserve mobilized local women to work in groups on collecting and editing traditional folk stories and to make brochures. Allowance and subsidy were paid to each of the women's groups and individuals were awarded for their outstanding performance.

Nevertheless, during 2007 and 2008, as the project on building Dechen Prefectural National Park of Snub-nosed Monkey started, Mr. Xiao Lin, Director of the Baima Snow-mountain Reserve, who was in charge of ecotourism development, was transferred to the large project. And ecotourism development in Baima Snow-mountain Reserve was, therefore, suspended. By 2012, when Mr. Xiao Lin returned to his former position, he had to start everything, once again, from the very beginning. This was also the year that the reserve started collaborating with Winrock International Agricultural Development Center. In general, ecotourism development in Baima Snow-mountain Area, regardless of the short time period, failed to strike an overall balance due to unexpected disturbance.



East Asia Environmental Exchange Project (former Yakushima Island Project) began exchanges with the Baima Snow-mountain Reserve since 2011. Recalling the visit/study tour to Yakushima Island by the group of members of the Baima Snow-mountain Reserve led by Director Xiao Lin, they were, at

the time, very enthusiastic towards ecotourism related facilities and programs there. They have attentively observed the tourism explication system, the making of the display flap-board, building of the paths (plank road) and the sorting of the refuse, etc; they have, especially, shown great interests in the presentation made by Mr. Toshimichi Hirose, founder of Ecotourism Japan. This time when we visit the Baima Snow-mountain Reserve in return, Mr. Xiao Lin explained to us that the purpose for developing ecotourism in Baima Snow-mountain Area was not for creating a profit generating business. He said that it would be good if revenue could be generated, but it would, anyway, be OK without it. He insisted that they hoped to establish a natural school to provide environmental education to the public. They identify this as one of their main tasks in general.

How to Develop Ecotourism in Baima Snow-mountain Area

HIROSE Toshimichi, OHARA Hiroshi, MORI Yoshifumi



During 2011 to 2014, ecotourism experts from Japan visited Baima Snow-Mountain frequently to do field research and organized training for the staff of Baima Snow-Mountain Natural Reserve and local people. Their report and advice can be concluded into 4 points as follows:

1. Information System
2. Human Resource Development
3. Stakeholders' Roles
4. Ecotourism Guideline

1. Information System



Speaking at the level of the hardware development, the Baima Snow-mountain area has already got relatively good facilities. What is missing currently is a functional Tourist Information Center in the national park. On our way up to Mt. Baima, we have visited the Dongzhulin Monastery, which maintains a collaborative relation with the Baima Snow-mountain Reserve. By enhancing its capacity, the

educational center of the monastery can partly functions as an information center for tourists. If the reserve wants to function as a natural school, it needs not only an environment where tourists can experience local lifestyle but also an easy access to related information.

To ensure easy access to information for tourists, following approaches are applicable:



- The educational center of Dongzhulin Monastery can be turned into an inlet spot where information can be disseminated to general tourists. It is not necessary providing information on Quzonggong Base-camp in detail at this level. Information on relationship between Mt.

Baima and local area will be enough, including, for example, how important the sacred mountain is for local people, how the ecosystem in Mt. Baima area functions to support daily-life of local residents, etc (source of water, food and livelihoods).

- Information provided at the Quzonggong Base-camp are rather different, mainly covering following 4 aspects:
 - a. Information on the natural reserve, including, for example, the components and structure of the natural reserve, works done since the establishment of the Natural Reserve Administration Bureau, etc.
 - b. Information on local residents, including, for example, locations of the 4 villages, reasons for why people have chosen to live in such remote area, current interaction between local residents and the natural reserve (what do people obtain from the natural environment? If local people have made any contributions to protection of the natural environment?), etc. It is possible that outsiders might doubt that grazing livestock within the reserve area would cause damages to the environment.
 - c. Introduction on project activities. Operating a natural school requires various kinds of programs in place and these need to be introduced to visitors, including, for example, ecotourism related programs such as

bird-watching and flowers show, etc, or programs in relation to experiencing Tibetan life-style such as making yak cheese, etc. Besides the resources available from the nature, elements of local traditional life can also be developed/designed into service programs for visitors.

- d. Information on natural environment. This covers information regarding biological aspect of the natural reserve (such as plants, birds, insects, etc) and local weather forecast. All information the tourist center of the national park needs to provide to tourists are included here. A separate room can be arranged for this information dissemination and all information and data need update on a regular basis.

Above information, beside the interpretation of guide, can be provided through information board, guidebook, and brochure.

To the participants of eco-tour, different from trekker or climber who will be satisfied with a result that they finish the whole course, catching the whole picture of the area they visit is important since they are more positive and have more subject consciousness. The base camp might provide them handy local map and display a 3D map of Baima Snow-Mountain area to help them to understand easily. For sure, it could be even better if they can show more maps of local plants and animal distribution, the use of land and geologic information.

- Relevant information needs also be disseminated through media such as sign board along the tour route.



For example, during our visit there, it took about an hour walk to reach the base-camp; we started walking together in the beginning, but the group was eventually decomposed, the walkers got apart from each other due to rare air at high level of altitudes and vary in walking speed. For somebody, who has never

been to this place before, for example, finds oneself alone ahead of a group might worry for being lost in the wild. This would be very helpful at the time if there have been some route markings around. Another thing I have noticed was that there

were remainings of trees burnt along the route. In general, these burnt trees will gradually be rotten and fall down in places where the altitude is low. Anyway, the altitude in Mt. Baima Area is high relatively and the remaining of burnt trees last longer time period from falling down as a typical phenomenon. In Japan we call this "White Bone Woods". This will be helpful if some kinds of explanation boards are placed nearby the scenery, so the tourists can try understanding the background stories alone without a guide.

When arranging directory system of road signs, adequate attention needs to be paid to several issues, including, for example, materials and colors chosen for making signboards need to be suitable to natural environment, plastic material or noisy colors should be avoided; in addition to information related to the route and general background context, there should also include security related instructions. We have once, for example, passed by a place where there was stone-fall in quantity during our visit this time. In Japan, there would be warning signs erected to remind people to be cautious. Otherwise, once if accident happens, the Natural Reserve will be held responsible.

- Information needs to be shared in advance

During our visit in the Mt. Baima area, in the beginning, we were carried by car. When we got off the car and started walking, we suddenly saw animal excrement in quantity. This is, maybe, the first impression the visitors will have of local environment. Especially for those city people who have little to none knowledge of village life, this might leave them, to some extent, with some sort of a negative impression. Therefore, it is very important to provide outsiders with these sorts of information in advance. If visitors were sensitized in advance with essential information such as when grazing land was developed and how such a large area of pastureland have been survived in good shape regardless of practicing livestock grazing for many years by locals, people would, then, have better understanding of the place they are about to explore with modest expectations .



At the entrance of trail to base camp, large tunnel was under construction. A large amount of earth were poured into the valley which may give big impact to the ecosystem of that area. It will take long time to recover. In the past, same thing happened in the mountain area in Japan, in which case even today when 50 years passed, the plants are still in bad condition. On the other hand, hard rain may bring second disaster. Problems like this should be mentioned in advance or at a good timing. It is worth encouraging them to think over and even share with each other about their feeling.

Participants of eco-tour are not those only come to enjoy beautiful landscape. They would like to know more about the area they visit and have relationship with it. This kind of chance can make their experience more meaningful as a part of environment education.

2. Human Resource Development

- Who can be Ecotourism Guide?

Visitors should be required to come there with a qualified guide. A guide not only means we can make sure that no harm from visitors to the environment of Reserve, but also the local nature and culture will be interpreted and furthermore, the risk will be under control. Thus a guide of eco-tour should have not only interpreter skill, but also knowledge of risk management and rescue skill. Especially in an area of high land like Baima Snow-Mountain, a guide must know how to deal with the change of visitors' health.

When talking about human resource development, we are not talking about bringing city people into countryside and training them become tour-guide. We are, instead, talking about fostering genuine local people to become tour-guide. Real locals can speak local languages with indigenous accents and can reflect the genuine aspects of the life of the local Tibetans. This is what we exactly needed.

Staff of Baima Snow-Mountain Reserve can be best guide though it might be

difficult for them ensure there are enough man power to do that. In Japan, there are cases using trained volunteers to work in national park. The basic expenses like meal and travel are covered by the allowance from local government.



While in this case of Baima, we can take guide fee from visitors to make the fund. Besides, in Japan, rangers and volunteers edit guidebook and maps selling to visitor to earn necessary income to build up fund for further activities.

Local people can get paid by providing services like carrying luggage, making food or giving firewood for warm. At the same time, they are also good human resource for guide.

- Guide Training

● Vision and Mission

People who follow this kind of trainings have, mostly, their own perspectives and aims in advance. For some it is the fact that they love the nature or they are fond of a specific place made them to follow the trainings, while some other were driven by their religious faiths. There are even participants unwillingly follow the trainings. They are kind of forced by their communities (such as village, etc) to take part in the training; some of them, maybe, prefer leading a city life instead. The training, therefore, cannot be only about technical skills, as participants come with different understandings and goals. There are questions needed to be clarified, such as “why tour-guide for ecotourism?”, “Is it for money?”, etc. As it pays off little in the beginning, it is possible for those who have no dreams other than money to give up the job easily. Reaching a consensus is, therefore, very crucial and this has to be realized at the beginning of the training---2) a training on the concept and the vision.

● Risk Management

Risk management is always serious topic of outdoor activities, let alone guiding a tour in a high land like Baima. Besides the common risks, a guide have to know how to handle altitude sickness.

To the local people living on highland like Yunnan, eco-tour to Baima might be quite easy but to those from Shanghai or Beijing, the low altitude area, or Japan and the West, can or not be helped to get use to the thin air will be a key of developing eco-tourism in Baima.

After the technical skills, for example, the code of conducts in relation to respecting the natural and Tibetan history and local cultures, etc. are also be covered in the training.

- Message Transferring Skills

When we say interpretation in eco-tour, it means transferring message in a way that easy for participants to understand. Which means a qualified guide should know how to use difference way to interpret to difference audience. Sometime local people may not have sophisticated communication skills dealing with others. Therefore, it is necessary to train them on “Message Transferring Skills”. In Japan, there are many institutes training people to become “Guide of Experiencing the Nature”. For example, Ecotourism Japan organizes, often, this kind of training course. The skills are rather transferred through actual practice on the site than classroom lecturing. It is very important.

- Knowledge on the Nature



Training of knowledge on the nature, including, for example, knowledge regarding plants and trees, insects and mammals, etc. In this regard, those experts who are familiar with Mt. Baima Area are far better to be the teachers than us. It is in the interest of the reserve to strengthen its cooperation with NGOs and groups of citizens from urban area, for this will attract more city residents to participate in the activities and, at the same, draw experience, methodologies and other resources of NGOs. NGOs can be local from within Yunnan province as well as cross provincials. Collaborative networking can be developed through organizing

workshops/seminars.

Developing ecotourism in Baima needs experts on Baima Snow-Mountain area to give advice. If there is hard to find such expert, the way is to select one to be the leader and accumulate experience of conducting eco-tour by trial and error.

- **Conserve the Local Culture and Nature**

- a. Preserve and Use of the nature

Reserve means to proserve the nature and the culture which are considered to be valuable of the area and keep them in a good condition. But at the same time, it is also necessary to spread the information about the area to outside because if people are not allowed to enter, then no one will know the value of it. And then, when its nature is destroyed, no one will show interesting to it any more.

Thus, preserve and use are both necessary. The concept of Conserve is very important.

- b. Sustainable Livelihood



We must make sure that the local people can continue their traditional livelihood which is co-exist in a harmony with the nature, such as grazing. In order to make it possible, we should keep the formal way and size of it. And also realize that business can bring big change which do harm to the nature, and the animal husbandry.

- c. Ecotourism

Eco-tour conducted in an appropriate way brings appropriated amount of income to the local people.

But what we should know is Ecotourism is just a sideline to the local people who has other main job. If they expect too much on tour, they might work too much and over use the resource. If it happened, they will not only lose money, but also lose their main job. Many cases had showed us this.

d. Control the Amount of Visitor

Ecotourism means control the amount of visitor to the certain area. Thus we should set the maximum amount of visitor according to the factors such as principle of low impact to the nature, satisfaction of participants and etc.



It is found difficult to stick to the appropriate size of visitor when there is a big need for visiting. But in the case of Baima, the Reserve Bureau has authority to make decision on management system which make it relatively easier for them to control.

Besides, the Reserve regards the public interest important and have budget for ecotourism. They do not have to think too much about the profit which make it easy to run. So for example, 10 persons a party, the 5 parties a day. Then 50 persons per day for one valley will be appropriate. At the same

time, we should consider the burden of a certain point, then the rule of no more than 20 persons a party should be also kept. In order to make sure that everyone can see and hear the guide, the maximum of participants one guide can hold is around 10.

3. Stakeholders' Roles

Why promote Ecotourism in Baima Snow-Mountain area?

It is necessary to discuss on this topic and get basic agreement among stakeholders. Promoting ecotourism is for conserving the ecosystem of Baima? Or for helping the local people to be more economically independent? Or for protecting the ethnic culture and life style of animal husbandry? Or for raising he consciousness of public to conserve the headwaters in this area? Or for making people understand how important nature is?

The reason could be one of above or any other, or more than one. It need to be considered and discussed by stakeholders. And then to make it clear their own roles to play in it. Here we suppose there are 4 different stakeholders which are

the Reserve, NGO, local community and local government.

- Roles of the reserve

- a. The reserve is where the Mt. Baima Natural School locates and it is to provide facilities, programs and locations with illustration and ecotourism tour-guide.
- b. Develop various kinds of interactive displaying tools and experience-oriented illustrational methodologies to provide to visitors all year-round information on local natural conditions and social and cultural contexts effectively.
- c. Organizes experiencing-nature programs with taking fully the advantages of natural environment of the reserve in a sustainable way.

- Roles of NGOs

- a. Provides professional advices and training on establishing natural school in the reserve.
- b. Carries out all sorts of net-working based activities to make linkage between city residents and the reserve.



The cooperation with urban NGO is recommended since not only they can bring visitors from cities but also share their experience and resources with the local. The Reserve also can co-organize forum with NGO in Yunnan or in south-west area of China to

establish network.

- Roles of local community

Members of the 4 Tibetan villages in the reserve should understand better how precious resources their traditional ways of living and costumes are; they should make joint effort to preserve and to present them to the outside world.

- a. Assist in incorporating their traditional cultures and customs into ecotourism and environment educational projects at the designing stage.
- b. Local residents participate in service provisions themselves.

Local governments and the reserve should actively encourage and inspire participation of local community in the project works.

- Roles of the authority

The effort on promoting environmental education through operating natural school and industrializing it by the natural reserve is in the interest of maintaining a good natural environment and cultural resources in the long run. For this, there's a demand for governmental support regarding following aspects:

- a. Encourages primary and middle schools to carry out out-door learning activities through the natural school in the reserve.
- b. Encourages local residents to take part in operating the natural school in the reserve.
- c. Raises awareness of city residents further on protection of natural environment through more effective approaches.
- d. Provides funds to support natural school operation.
- e. Provides legal basis for abovementioned issues through formulating laws and regulations when possible.

4、 Ecotourism Guideline

Before talking about the guideline, we may firstly study the definition of ecotourism in Japan.

Ecotourism Definition

Eco-tour is a tour participated by appropriate amount of tourists which help tourist to understand and appreciate and enjoy the environment, nature (landscape), wild plants and animals, and their ecosystems, and then as a result, upgrade her/his relative sense of ethics without causing damage to the environment, nature (landscape), wild plants and animals, and their ecosystems.

Ecotourism means creating a social system which contribute to the conserve of the nature, culture and economy of the local community, as well as economy by repeating the conduct of eco tour. This ask for the cooperation of all kinds of stakeholders like tourists, planner, guides and hosts. (August, 1994, NACS-J)

Based on the definition of ecotourism and the field study in Mr. Baima area, Mr. Mori suggested a draft of guideline for Mt. Baima to develop ecotourism. For sure, it is only a suggestion. The final version of both guideline and guidebook should

be made by the stakeholders. The same to any other area wish to promote ecotourism.

Ecotourism Guideline for Mt. Baima Area

To tourist

- a. Minimize impact to the nature of Mt. Baima
- b. Respect the culture of Mt. Baima
- c. Try to study on the local society before visiting
- d. Think about the environmental problems through eco-tour
- e. Respect nature experience and learn to live a life co-existing with nature

To operator

- a. Fully understand the purpose of eco-tour
- b. Try to fulfill the purpose to make “a tour in nature” “a tour connected to nature conservation”
- c. Fully understand the receiving system of Mt. Baima Reserve
- d. Ask for the opinion of researchers and nature conservation NGO who are experts on Mr. Baima area when do planning
- e. Keep the amount of tourists within 20 persons per group
- f. Organize orientation for tourists in advance
- g. Provide local tour guides who are familiar with the nature and culture of Mt. Baima
- h. Think highly of the communication with local people
- i. Take feedback of both tourists and local people

To facilities

- a. Choose a location where tourists can enjoy the typical local nature and culture
- b. With a scale that bring low impact to the nature and culture of the Reserve
- c. Run and managed mainly by local people
- d. Designed and built eco-friendly
- e. Not luxury
- f. Recommend tour guide, visiting center, facilities and guidebook on Mr. Baima to guests

- g. A member of the local economy and culture network
- h. Recommend souvenir made by local and provide foods made from local products

To Baima Snow-Mountain Reserve

- a. Exchange information frequently with local research, conservation and education organization
- b. Set a limit to the amount of visitors and make everyone to keep it strictly (at the moment it could be 5 parties per day per valley)
- c. Reject tours with less nature experience and high impact to environment, promote tours with more nature experience and low impact to environment (conduct environment education)
- d. Principally reject the non-local investment

(Reference: NACF-J Ecotourism Guideline, August 1994, NACF-J)

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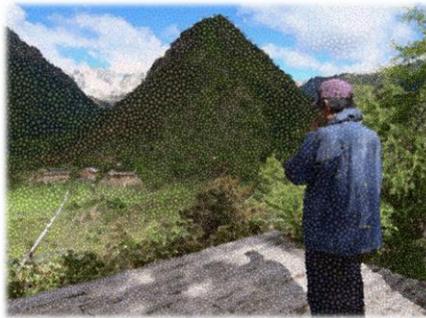
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