

# **TOURISM, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND ECOTOURISM IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Tourism industry contributes about 10 percent of the total GDP of the world. All Southeast Asian countries have noticed the rising potentials of tourism sector for years. But, at the present stage, all development issues are urged to consider its approaches within the framework of sustainable development. Sustainable tourism or alternative tourism has become part of sustainable development within the sector of tourism. But the mass tourism will consistently predominate in the world tourism. Pursuing ecotourism and other alternative tourism programs are necessary in upgrading the variety of tourism sector and tapping of its potentials. But the combination of ecotourism/alternative tourism – mass tourism synergy will be the main direction.

## **1. From Sustainable Development to Sustainable Tourism**

At the present stage, all development issues are urged to consider its approaches within the framework of sustainable development. Sustainable development became famous worldwide by the publication of Brundtland Report (*Our Common Future*) in 1987, in which Sustainable development is defined as to “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Though the report made no mention of tourism, the Agenda 21 of Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992 referred tourism as both a cause and potential ameliorator of environmental and social problems. The term sustainable tourism emerged in the early 1990s. And in 1993, the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* was inaugurated.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, sustainable development has been described as the “parental paradigm” of sustainable tourism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> David Weaver, 2006, *Sustainable Tourism: Theory and Practice*, p.10.

<sup>3</sup> Jim Butcher, 2007, *Ecotourism, NGOs and Development*, p.5.

The term sustainable tourism has been widely used and has been “officially recognized or ‘institutionalized’ among organizations both internal and external, of the tourism sector.” “The European Commission, for example, has identified sustainable tourism as one of the five priority areas in the Fifth Community Programme for Environment and Sustainable Development, while its environmental policy wing has developed a European Charter for sustainable tourism in protected areas. Deliberations took place through the Commission during 2003 toward the articulation of a formal sustainable tourism policy for the European Union.” A growing number of countries, at least on paper, are engaged in an effort to foster sustainable tourism development. But, at the same time, the meaning of the term became vague. Some say that sustainable tourism is “an intellectually appealing concept to be perceived by the public with little practical application.” It became “nothing more than a discredited, cynical and empty cliché.”<sup>4</sup>

By and large, the UN World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines sustainable tourism as tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunity for the future. WTO articulates that sustainable tourism is the tourism that leads to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems. Sustainable tourism, in its purest sense, is an industry that attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment, and the conservation of local ecosystems. It is a responsible tourism that is both ecologically and culturally sensitive. Thus, sustainable tourism activities have minimal impact on the environment and culture of the host community.<sup>5</sup>

Prof. Yasumura Katsumi defines sustainable tourism in two ways.<sup>6</sup> According to him, sustainable tourism is the combination of alternative tourism and sustainable development. But when we examine closely, the present reality of tourism where mass tourism predominates more in the world tourism, and government and local people do hope to pursue that direction considering the economic benefit and employment opportunities, sustainable tourism is the new type of tourism having the direction to improving the present mass tourism within the framework of sustainable tourism. The

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp.11-13, 19.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.iztsg.hr/en/odrzivi\\_razvoj/sustainable\\_tourism/](http://www.iztsg.hr/en/odrzivi_razvoj/sustainable_tourism/) visited on Feb 8, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> 前田勇編著 (2003) 『21世紀の観光学-展望と課題-』 (Maeda Isamu ed., *Tourism Studies in 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Issues and Prospects*) p.12.

essence of this definition is to change the characteristic of present main stream of tourism and not to take over it.

Alternative tourism has appeared as the term pursuing an opposite direction of mass tourism for long years. Medieval pilgrimage travel is antecedent in modern day pursuit of religious tourism, education tourism and backpacking. The contours of alternative tourism are still being defined as new forms of activity emerging, for further scrutiny, like rural tourism, green tourism, urban heritage tourism, cultural tourism, industrial tourism, health tourism, political tourism, volunteer tourism etc.<sup>7</sup> But among them, the most famous is ecotourism.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as

*"Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."* (TIES, 1990)

and also insists:<sup>8</sup>

Ecotourism is about *uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel.*

This means that those who implement and participate in ecotourism activities should follow the following ecotourism principles:

- minimize the impact;
- build an environmental and cultural awareness and respect;
- provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts;
- provide direct financial benefits for conservation;
- provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people;
- raise one's sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.

Japan Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as follows<sup>9</sup>

- a. tourism that utilizes local resources like nature, history, culture etc;
- b. ecotourism must conserve these resources by tourism by appropriate management;
- c. tourism that combines conservation of resources + tourism + promotion of the local, which target is to upgrade local economy within the framework of appropriate utilization of local resources.

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<sup>7</sup> David Weaver, 2006, *Sustainable Tourism: Theory and Practice*, Chapter 3 Alternative Tourism, pp.38-41.

<sup>8</sup> Visited on Feb. 8, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ecotourism.gr.jp/what/> visited on Feb. 8, 2011.

In addition, as the background of understanding,

- d. ecotourism is one of the types of tourism with the understanding of the above ideas;
- e. for the appropriate promotion of ecotourism, it is indispensable to keep the balance of cooperation among travelers, local people, travel agencies, academics and government;
- f. tourism planning should be prepared for utilizing attractive tourism resources and for inspiring travelers to understand local areas. For that purpose, it is desirable to have mediators (guide) who have the interpretation ability in connecting local, nature and culture with travelers.

In both cases, three elements are connected. These are the preservation of nature and culture, benefit to local people and the development opportunity by tourism. One of the Japanese specialists of ecotourism insists that as far as it is a part of tourism, ecotourism must have attractive elements in the program. It should be an entertainment.<sup>10</sup> Ecotourism is a part of movement to promote sustainable development in the field of tourism in general (mass tourism) where hundreds of million people participate every year.<sup>11</sup>

The year 2002 became the year of International Year of Ecotourism, which was organized by WTO (World Tourism Organization). Ecotourism is world famous now. But in many cases, it has kept its original style when it started in the 1980s as the nature tourism. Major TV programs entitled “ecotourism” are actually nature tourism. A representative travel agency in ecotourism (Green Discovery) in Laos advertizes all nature, agro and eco tourism in connection with mass tourism offering “far more than 100 unique tour programs all around the country, involving rafting, kayaking, trekking, rock climbing, mountain biking, cycling, caving and river trips.”<sup>12</sup>

As I wrote in my previous paper and presented in the Phnom Penh Conference of ANDA last year,<sup>13</sup> “Tourism industry contributes about 10 percent of the total GDP of

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<sup>10</sup> 藪田麻美編著 (2008) 『地域からのエコツーリズム：観光・交流による持続可能な地域づくり』 (Yabuta Asami, *Ecotourism from the Local: Sustainable Local Vitalization through Tourism and Interchange*), p. 120.

<sup>11</sup> The relation between mass tourism and ecotourism is widely discussed in 吉田春生(2004), 『エコツーリズムとマス・ツーリズム：現代観光の実像と課題』 (Yoshida Haruo, *Ecotourism and mass tourism: Reality and Issues of Contemporary Tourism*) 原書房.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.greendiscoverylaos.com/>

<sup>13</sup> Issues for Promoting Ecotourism in Laos. My paper presented at ANDA conference on January 9, 2010

the world. It is larger than automobile or IT sector. It is an integrated industry covering wide range of both private and public sectors and provides huge employment opportunities. Under the world trend for sustainable development, ecotourism is the most increasing sector in tourism.” “Though this is a bit old data, in Thailand in 1998, the distribution of tourism consumption expenditure was 29 percent in shopping, 27 percent in accommodation, 16 percent in food and beverages, 11 percent in entertainment, 13 percent in local transportation, and 5 percent for other sectors.”<sup>14</sup> Considering economic benefit, employment opportunities and the possibilities that will benefit the communities in tourist areas, all Southeast Asian countries have noticed the rising potentials of tourism sector. Even in Japan, as a part of local revitalization movement, the tourism sector has become the most vital sector after public works (construction sector) centered local development. But unfortunately, “there have been surprisingly few links established between the tourism and development literature.” But “from western experiences, tourism has been viewed as an agent of development.” Tourism should be regarded as an industry comparable to other industries. “Planning for tourism should be integrated with other planning processes” including elements like carrying capacity, visitor management and impact assessment.<sup>15</sup>

Within that framework, the neopopulism approach is gradually emerging. Neopopulism is characterized by “small-scale community-based development, environmental sustainability and empowerment of the community.” Contrary to “the formation in 1892 of the Populist Party in America, today, the term is most often used to describe any political movement seeking to mobilize people as *individuals*, rather than as members of a *particular socio-economic group*, against an overbearing authority, usually the state or foreign states.” “There is consistently an emphasis on the *local*, the *community* and their *control* over their own distinct development in the face of the market, state and supranational bodies.” “Neopopulism is characterized by an emphasis on local community level development and encapsulates the symbiosis between this development and the conservation of resources that is often characterized as sustainable development.”<sup>16</sup>

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that can be downloaded from

[http://www2.gsid.nagoya-u.ac.jp/blog/anda/international-seminars/2nd\\_international\\_seminar/paper-presented/](http://www2.gsid.nagoya-u.ac.jp/blog/anda/international-seminars/2nd_international_seminar/paper-presented/)

<sup>14</sup> Busaba Kunasirin (1998), Tourism Policy in Thailand, in Datai Tdasi ed., *Asia, Kyushu and Tourism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Asia Pacific Center, Fukuoka, p.90.

<sup>15</sup> Salah Wahab and John J. Pigram eds., 1997, *Tourism, Development and Growth: The Challenge of Sustainability*, Routledge, pp.41-42.

<sup>16</sup> Jim Butcher, 2007, *Ecotourism, NGOs and Development*, pp.31-32, 41.

As one famous economist, Sakakibara Eisuke, insists, the keywords of 21<sup>st</sup> century are environment, safety and health.<sup>17</sup> Tourism contains all the three elements. After the certain economic development and the rise of middle class, developing countries will also face the changing social value systems focusing more on the “age of human development” than the “age of regional development” as written by Prof. Matsuno and Mori.<sup>18</sup> Prof. Kimura Naozaburo, the general producer of the World Expo 2005 at Aichi, Japan, insisted the similar thing.<sup>19</sup> The need for local governments to tackle the issue of building attractive local revitalization is “to make clear what the present citizens desire.” The answer is that while enjoying urban and physical civilization in urban areas, at the same time, they would like to enjoy distinctive local culture that breathes the unique characteristics of the areas. Now is the age of a new life culture upgrading the quality of daily life while enjoying both civilization and nature/ local culture.<sup>20</sup>

Under the globalization process, neo-liberalists who promote the global economy would like to enjoy exotic Bali (or Paris, or Kyoto), exotic cuisine and exotic paintings. The World (G-8) Summit Conference at Okinawa in 2000 passed a resolution on the protection of the diversity of culture. The problem is if the mainstream (the global economy dominated by Multi-National Corporations) is kept as it is and localism is relegated as “the rest” or as supplement. As Richard Falk says “It is the main interest of globalization group to incorporate factors of localism fit for the present globalization.”<sup>21</sup> Alongside, there are streams of localism that aim to be incorporated (to sell) in the world market. Under that situation, there are streams of “globalization from below.” “Globalization from above” starts from MNCs. “Globalization from below” starts from the community and the local culture where variety is the essence. Both trends will continue and ecotourism will be continuously managed in the coexistence of both trends.

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<sup>17</sup> In many occasions, for example, 榎原英資 (2011) 『世界同時不況がすでに始まっている』 アイコム、p.182.

<sup>18</sup> 松野弘・森巖夫編集、日本青年会議所監修 (1992) 『講座まちづくり入門』 (Matsuno& Mori eds. *An Introduction to Local Revitalization*. Series)。ぎょうせい。p.47.

<sup>19</sup> 木村尚三郎 (1990) 『まちづくりの心』 (Kimura Naozaburo. *The Spirit of Local Revitalization*) ぎょうせい。

<sup>20</sup> Quoted from Kimura Hirosune (2006), Pursuing Sustainable Community and Promoting Japan's Culture towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century —Summary and Prospects of the Citizen's Forum Symposia at the World Exposition of 2005—, Discussion Paper Series No. 151, GSID, Nagoya University that can download from [www.gsid.nagoya-u.ac.jp/kimura](http://www.gsid.nagoya-u.ac.jp/kimura).

<sup>21</sup> Richard Falk, 1999, *Predatory Globalization: A Critique*, Chap.8 Resisting “Globalization-from-Above” through “Globalization-from-Below.”

The problem setting in this article stresses the age of sustainable development. Under the sustainable development, the target of tourism industry sector is to find the way of mass tourism which is the predominant system of tourism at present and the most likely trend in the future. Tourism industry contributes about 10 percent of the total GDP of the world. It is really a big industrial sector to be considered in any development strategy. In the tourism industry, both the environmental sustainability and economic benefit and employment opportunities are necessary to be realized. Then, what should be the direction of it?

## **2. Combination of Ecotourism with Nature Tourism**

As I said before, the present ecotourism is closely connected with nature tourism. Along this line, the author would like to raise several cases.

### **2-1. The Case of Laos**

Concerning the ecotourism of Laos, I already presented a paper in last year's conference (Issues for Promoting Ecotourism in Laos: footnote 13). Lao government focuses upon the promotion of ecotourism though the majority of international tourists are mass tourism participants. In 2007, the total foreign tourists increased to 1.62 million that is a dramatic increase from 14 thousand in 1990. Up to that year, Laos did not welcome foreign tourists as a communist country. Laos is very mountainous country (more than 90 percent). The arable land is only 3 percent. They would like to utilize their nature and the unexploited cultural heritages to be the targets of tourist destinations. But the majority of foreign tourists to Laos are one day tourists; all of whom visit by bus. Among foreign tourists in 2007, 59 percent came from Thailand for sight-seeing of Buddhist temples and enjoy shopping at souvenir shops; 18 percent tourists came from Vietnam after opening the horizontal road passing through Thailand - South Laos (Savannakhet) - DaNang of central Vietnam. They enjoy visiting and shopping by group of busses; 3 percent (55 thousand) tourists came from China largely from the national border areas. Among EU and US (200 thousand) tourists, only a small fraction of them participate in ecotourism (1-2 percent among total foreign tourists). Japanese who visited Laos in the same year was roughly 30 thousand and participants of ecotourism were negligible. The similar phenomena can be observed in Takayama City, Japan, where Asian tourists come as groups but Europeans come individually and a few of them would like to learn how local nature and local culture are preserved, and

practice cultural exchange with local people through guides. One of the serious problems in promoting ecotourism in Laos is the systematic lack of training of guides according to author's experience in participating ecotourism.

As Robert Travers writes, Laos urgently needs a comprehensive tourism development master plan for coping with any type of tourism, including casino and large-scale hotels, and not just on ecotourism. There is a danger of ecotourism by becoming a mere ecological window-dressing in a country where the real economic agendas are mining (bauxite and copper), timber extraction, hydro-electricity generation, and road construction. Only with a more thorough and all-encompassing approach to tourism development planning, training, marketing and product delivery (not just ecotourism product delivery) can tourism's future economic and poverty alleviation potential be realized.<sup>22</sup>

## **2-2. The Case of Cambodia**

The author experienced one of the ecotourism programs managed by an NGO in Prek Thnout, Kampot Province, Cambodia in January 2010. The following is the evaluation of it. The whole program was still in the preparatory or launching stage as the organizer said. After participating in this ecotourism program, the author noticed several points that will scale up the local ecotourism program activities. The quality of ecotourism will be determined by the program itself, the quality of guide, the attractive views and local cuisine.

- a. Concerning the program of Prek Thnout, the participatory way is insufficient. The typical example is the watching of dolphins and fireflies. The local fishermen understood that morning time is the best because the sea is quiet and passenger tourists have bigger chance to see the dolphins. Fishermen had a doubt and did not understand why the boat starts at 3:30 in the afternoon. Eventually, the wave was high and we could not go far for offing. Of course, we could not see dolphins this time. Fishermen did not think about any alternative plan to go when the wave is big and cannot go to offing. It was our taxi driver who proposed us to land on the sandbank/reef to look for the shells, hermit crab, etc. Fishermen also did not know the place where there are many fireflies. Fireflies are naturally found on the trees

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<sup>22</sup> Howard Cambridge and John Whitelegg, 2008, "The Growth and Aviation in Asia and Challenges to Sustainability," in Janet Cochrane ed., *Asian Tourism: Growth and Change*, p.115.



near the river bank. The river is actually shallow near the bank. But the boat was big enough that we could not go nearer to the bank. The day before, we took a small motor boat to see some trees with full of fireflies by going very near to the river bank organized by our hotel (with a rate of US\$2 per person). We enjoyed it very much but in our ecotourism plan, we could see only some fireflies from a far distance. Another example was the visit to shrimp processing places. In one medium sized factory, we were rejected to go in. I believe the discussion among the organizer of ecotourism, fishermen and shrimp processing factory manager was not practiced and coordination was not good.

- b. The quality of guide determines the quality of ecotourism because ecotourism is a learning process of nature and culture itself. In that sense, the lack of experienced guide this time was a factor of poor local ecotourism project. This time, it was a German lady who was 19 years old high school graduate and being sent from Germany to teach English to community people for the last several months, acted as our guide. She was a very good person and fluent in English. Because of the lack of English speaking local guide, she was temporarily employed despite her limited knowledge of local area and on ecotourism. As a new comer to Cambodia, she could not speak the Cambodian language and could not translate what local people explained in the course of interview. Eventually, without having our Cambodian driver who happened to be fluent in English, we could not understand anything about the local area.
- c. Concerning the boat trip, it is necessary to make a contract with fishermen and present a proposal on how to organize the 3 hours boat riding. Making the whole ecotourism one and a half days and experience offering to see dolphins in the morning of second day would be an alternative. Fishermen's systematic explanation of their life and their community, things about well preserved mangrove and changes of sea and fishing way, both on seasonal and historical grounds (i.e. how traditional catching has greatly changed when boats were modernized, how the sea became dirty and others), should be part of ecotourism learning process especially for tourists. Natural habitat of mangrove area was worthwhile seeing. Advanced information must be provided in suggesting an alternative activity (like going to upstream area) when sea wave is high or when it rains heavily, etc., which make offering impossible. We could not experience "watching traditional sea-fishing activities" which was part of the ecotourism explanation. The boat trip experience

needs further innovation to succeed as ecotourism activity.

- d. Walking in the forest along the river was a very good experience with nature. Stream, trees, rocks were nice for trekking, even though we did not go to a famous local waterfall because of the dry season. The beautiful scenery in Bokor National Park will be another attractive point of this ecotourism. But the organizer is better to prepare of the general explanation of Bokor National Park, mountain, stream, situation of rocks during rainy season and dry season, maintenance of road, names of trees and flowers, and other interesting sceneries.
- e. At the rest place (English school building), we had 30 minutes relaxation. In such kind of resting place, an informative program like demonstration farm for planting various fruit trees and flowers, is recommended to make participants experience higher satisfaction and enjoyment.
- f. Generally speaking, one of the major problems for tourists to experience home stay is the lack of privacy. Our home stay house had only one big room on the second floor and two beds were prepared for us. Eventually, all (or majority) family members (parents and 8 children) slept in the same room with us at night time. The program needs to prepare home stay houses by having 2 independent small rooms for tourists. Sleeping together with the local host family was a good experience for me but that kind of home stay is not recommended either. With that plan, the program cannot attract foreign tourists, with lack of privacy as a possible reason. Another problem was that we did not have a chance to communicate with home stay family. Late dinner was served in another house and when we went back to host family house, it was already too late and we were moderately drunk. It ended up solely as our place to sleep. Personally, I wanted to hear their family history, situation of their life, local livelihood and income, the future and hope of family members, among other things.
- g. Visiting two shrimp processing places was quite interesting. But the author thought it was not an ecotourism related activity but an industrial tourism. A more systematic explanation coming from the guide (or the manager) should have been prepared about their management, laborers condition, market and the way of processing. Those who accept visitors should be paid also, say 3-5 dollars or so to compensate their hospitality and preparations.

- h. We enjoyed the “rattan handicraft production and weaving center” visit, even though we could not understand the rattan community itself. The center was a small hut organized by one family but there were 7 villagers participating in rattan production. They organized the production committee. They planted the rattan in the mountains. They have demonstration farm and nursery house. For making it more interesting for visitors, all rattan varieties should be planted as demonstration farm near the center as this will add more indigenous value of the center.
- i. Local food (both lunch and dinner) was really good and cheap. We enjoyed a lot of local shrimps, crabs, various fish, shells, and squilla (shako in Japanese). Again, to make this experience more informative and enjoyable, it would be better to (a) explain about the food being prepared, (b) serve more local vegetable varieties, (c) keep certain bottles of beer in the refrigerator beforehand upon the request of guests, and (d) explain local fishermen’s life story.
- j. All Cambodian museums have two price systems. Three dollars for payment in the community entrance fee, and for the guide which depends to the local and foreign tourists. The program will be better off to charge a bit higher rate (say 5-10 dollars) to generate a better service.
- k. As for the program that invites foreign tourists, it needs to contract with various travel agencies in Phnom Penh, Bangkok and foreign countries, other than Kampot hotels. In that case, one set of travel program from and to Phnom Penh should be considered.
- l. One travel agency, with whom we rented our service car with driver in Phnom Penh did not know anything about Prek Thnout ecotourism, the road condition to go there (at that time, the national road No. 3 was under repair and very dusty). Taking a different way for going to and coming back from Prek Thnout should have been considered like going to the place with national road No.2 and coming back using the national road No.4. The planned route will make the tourists to enjoy more different roadside views. Surprisingly, the travel agency did not know, at present, that US dollar can be used throughout Cambodia and foreign tourists do not have to exchange it with local money.

Evaluation (5 point as the highest mark)

Total	Guide	Views	Food	Home stay	boat riding	shrimp	rattan	#
3	1	4	4	2	2	3	3	2

# = Learning ; Community participation 2; hospitality of people 5

With only one example of ecotourism program in Cambodia, the author cannot generalize the overall evaluation. But the systematic training system for guides and participatory way of community people in programming ecotourism schedule are decisively necessary and helpful to come up with better ecotourism programs and activities.

### 2-3. The Case of Yakushima Island, Japan

One of the Japanese specialists of ecotourism considers only 35 ecotourism sites in Japan and insists that Japan's ecotourism is still on its infant stage.<sup>23</sup> Yakushima is one of the most famous two ecotourism sites side by side with Ogasawara Islands, and is a part of world natural heritage of UNESCO (21 percent of the whole island). Yakushima is rich in rainfall (annual rainfall is 4,000mm in low land and 8-10,000mm in mountains). It has 141 rivers and some waterfalls. The most famous site in Yakushima is a very old Japanese cedar tree (the name is Jomonsugi) that is said to be more than 3,000 years old (Some say 6,000 years old but recent study tells that it is not possible). Yakushima is a small island having 505 km<sup>2</sup> and the circuit is about 100km. The tree is near the top of the mountain (1,300m above sea level), and to reach that place, tourists need to hire a guide and trek about 5 hours just for one way. There are three more forest areas (Shiratani-Unsuikyo, Yakusugi land, Seibu Rindo) and a wetland in the high land (Hananoegou). Three forest areas are easy to access. From (rental) car parking area, people can enjoy 1-3 hours trekking. Dozens of more than 1,000 years old cedar trees remain scattered in these thick forest areas even though big trees were cut continuously for the last hundreds of years. Other than old cedar trees, there are many big *Ficus superba* (Deciduous fig or *Akou* in Japanese) and Chinese Banyan (*Ficus microcarpa* or *Gajumaru* in Japanese). It is really attractive island.

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<sup>23</sup> 薮田麻美編著 (2008) 『地域からのエコツーリズム：観光・交流による持続可能な地域づくり』 (Yabuta Asami, *Ecotourism from the Local: Sustainable Local Vitalization through Tourism and Interchange*), p.58.

According to the website of Yakushima Association for Ecotourism Promotion,<sup>24</sup> there are 92 registered guides as of February 2011. The registered guides have three missions:

- (1) to conserve nature and culture of the island;
- (2) to inform the attractiveness of the island and preciousness of the nature;
- (3) and to contribute to local vitalization

All guides are for mountain and forest trekking except for nine sea guides for kayak and snorkeling. They promote nature tourism that is different from ecotourism in the sense of contributing to and an understanding of local community (Partially, tourists contribute to local community development by hiring guides).

#### **2-4. The Case of Bhutan**

The Kingdom of Bhutan is a small and land-locked country having 35 thousand km<sup>2</sup> (10 percent of Japan) and 670 thousand population (about 30 percent of them are Hindu Nepali and Indian living in the lowland of Bhutan and the Buddhist ethnic groups that dominate the kingdom live in the highland areas. Per capita GDP is relatively high (US\$2084, PPP\$5238) but people below poverty line counts for 23 percent and Human Development Indicator (2007) is 0.579 (medium and ranks 131<sup>st</sup> throughout the world). Illiteracy rate is 69 percent.<sup>25</sup> The highland areas are divided by deep valleys and rivers and very high mountains which connect with glacier of Himalayas. You need three days for traveling horizontally crossing east-west Bhutan. Because the land is mountainous, there is only one small airport at Paro in the country. Bhutan has kept the nature rich. The well protected forest area accounts 64 percent of total land area, while pasture has the share of 6 percent and agricultural-cultivated land shares 3 percent. Some 80 percent labor force is still in agriculture.

For long years, Bhutan has been a closed country. Even now, Bhutan has diplomatic ties with only 21 countries in addition to the EU. It has no diplomatic ties with the US, UK, France, China, and Russia. Only India and Bangladesh have embassy offices and Thailand has consulate in Bhutan. That means there is no Bhutanese embassy in Japan. TV and internet were allowed to exist only in 1999. Sixty percent of the government budget expenditure is financed by India's Ministry of External Affairs

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<sup>24</sup> 屋久島エコツーリズム推進協会 <http://www.yakushima-eco.com/>

<sup>25</sup> UNDP Bhutan, *Annual Report 2007-08*.

because of the national security issue for India against China after national border conflicts in 1961, at the age when Tibet was occupied by China in 1959 and Bhutan society, as a part of Tibet Buddhism, was severed its traditional ties with Tibet. Since then, roads in Bhutan have been constructed by India for national security purpose using Indian laborers. This partially explains the better income of Bhutanese in comparison with Indian people. There are scattered Indian military bases in Bhutan.

The first official tourists entered into Bhutan in 1974. Since then, up to now, all foreign tourists are allowed to enter into Bhutan under the all-inclusive system. From the arrival till departure, all tourists are attached by a guide and rental car. Hotels and three meals a day are all set with the fixed price according to the number of days to stay (US\$210 pre-payment a day), disregarding the quality of guide, car and accommodations. All additional requests need additional payments. For example (in 2009), if you rent Land Cruiser Prado, you need to pay additional \$30 a day. If you are a single traveler, you need to pay additional \$20 a day. If you prefer single room in hotels, you need to pay additional \$50 a day. Because of this expensive and non-free system, the number of foreign tourists had remained about 6,000 annually till 2003 and jumped to only 28,000 in 2008 and 25,000 in 2009.

Buddhism is at the core of all cultural identity in Bhutan. The countryside is dotted with 2,000 monasteries, 10,000 stupas, and countless Mani walls and prayer flags.<sup>26</sup> The government serves various schools of traditional arts in various regions and all accommodation and foods are free for students. But, at the same time, what government protects and promotes is the traditional culture which is highly connected with religion. It is similar with pre-Renaissance arts in Europe. Eventually, tourism in Bhutan is almost ecotourism combining nature tourism and cultural tourism (except 4.5 percent trekking tourism). Because of geographical difficulties for travelling other places within the country, tourists need to pass 3000-4,000m or so mountain roads. Eventually, tourist destinations are largely restricted to Paro – Thimphu – Punakha triangle in mid-west of Bhutan. Paro is the only airport town. Thimphu is the capital city having 80,000 populations in 2005. Punakha is the old capital which population is negligible. There are only about 30 houses near the palace, the “city” center. By setting an expensive travel cost, Bhutan government was successful to stop big penetration of foreign influence by controlling foreign tourists. But the total number of foreign tourists remains relatively

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<sup>26</sup> Megan Ritchie, *Tourism in the Kingdom of Bhutan: A Unique Approach*, in Janet Cochrane ed., *Asian Tourism: Growth and Change*, p.277.

small and tourist guides suffer by the scarcity of customers.

People in Bhutan are well known to be happy people despite the actual poverty situation. Ground-breaking words of His Majesty the Fourth King (Jigme Singye Wangchuck) declared “GNH (Gross National Happiness) is more important than GNP (Gross National Product)” in the year of his inauguration in 1972. This concept is based on the premise that the true development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development are realized. The four pillars of GNH are the promotion of sustainable development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment, and establishment of good governance. Bhutan economy is growing at 22 percent annually because of the rapid increase of the hydroelectricity power projects in recent years being exported to India. Cultural values and nature have been well preserved. Denial of good governance is implausible. It is the same with saying “our king practices no good rule.”

In a widely cited study, "A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being: A Challenge to Positive Psychology?" (2007) by Adrian G. White<sup>27</sup> of the University of Leicester in 2007, Bhutan ranked 8th out of 178 countries in *Subjective Well-Being*, a metric that has been used by many psychologists since 1997. In fact, it is the only country in the top 20 "happiest" countries that has a very low GDP. But in my direct observation during a 10-day travel in Bhutan in 2009, many people were not actually happy. The author jumped into a roadside farmer's house and made an interview for about 30 minutes. Their standard of happiness depends on children's education that connects closely with employment opportunities. The land of Bhutan is divided by mountains and almost all commodities sold in shops are Indian made which are regarded more qualified than Bhutan made. Because of the lack of national market and weak private sector, government post is the best job option for the people except teachers whose salary level is very low. But farmers have difficulty to send their children to good schools. Majority of farmers are illiterate. Until the 1960s, education was not regarded as necessary. Farmers who cannot send their children to government for work feel not happy this time. Travel guides are overflowed with 1,800 guides nationwide. Our guide did not have travelers after us for a month. During winter season, tourist guides cannot expect tourists. By saying that, he was unhappy. Hotel workers

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<sup>27</sup> White, A. (2007). A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being: A Challenge To Positive Psychology? *Psychotalk*, pp.56, 17-20. Download is possible using Internet.

were suffering by low level of wage and high level of living cost like apartment rental cost. In a mountainous area, we happened to meet with apple harvesting guys. These young guys were employed in nearby villages. They were daily workers which income is far from stable. Dr. Ueda Akiko, who lived in Bhutan, wrote that there is a sense of frustration among those who participate in manual labor. The concern of Bhutan education is the too much expectation among students to land a white color job or further urbanization.<sup>28</sup> The general secretary of the government Gross National Happiness Commission said that the major agenda of the country is to reduce subsidiary-based farmers living in scattered mountainous areas which are in far distant from roads, especially farmers living in the East of Bhutan.<sup>29</sup> One of former monks (who became a village head after being amonk) said to the author, “I was explained about GNH. But I cannot explain GNH. Bhutan is a Buddhist country. According to the teaching of Buddha, this world is filled with agony.” That means the image of Bhutan people as happy contradicts with Buddha’s teaching. The author’s understanding is that people say “we are happy” because the highly respected king says like that.

### **3. Conclusion: Combination of Mass Tourism with Ecotourism**

Tourism industry contributes about 10 percent of the total GDP of the world. It is larger than the automobile or IT sector. It is an integrated industry covering wide range of both private and public sectors and provides huge employment opportunities. Considering economic benefit, employment opportunities and the possibilities that will benefit the communities in tourist areas, all Southeast Asian countries have noticed the rising potentials of tourism sector. From the western experiences, tourism has been viewed as an agent of development. Tourism should be therefore regarded as an industry comparable to other industries.<sup>30</sup>

But at the present stage, all development issues are urged to consider its approaches within the framework of sustainable development. Under this situation, sustainable tourism has become part of sustainable development in the sector of tourism. The term sustainable tourism has been widely used and has been “officially recognized or ‘institutionalized’ among organizations both internal and external, of the tourism sector.” The UN World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines sustainable tourism as

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<sup>28</sup> 植田晶子 (2006)、『ブータンにみる開発の概念』明石書店 (*Ueda Akiko, Concept of Development in Bhutan*)、pp.164,168.

<sup>29</sup> Interview in Thimphu, September 8, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Footnote 15.



tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunity for the future. Sustainable tourism is often mixed with responsible tourism or alternative tourism. The alternative tourism is the new forms of activity emerging like rural tourism, green tourism, nature tourism, urban heritage tourism, cultural tourism, industrial tourism, health tourism, political tourism, volunteer tourism etc.

Under the present world trend of sustainable development, ecotourism is the most noticed sector in tourism. In ecotourism, three elements are well connected. These are the preservation of nature and culture, benefit to local people and the development opportunity by tourism. Within that framework, the neopopulism approach is gradually emerging. Neopopulism is characterized by “small-scale community-based development, environmental sustainability and empowerment of the community.”

Though the ideal model is like that, as it was explained in the case of tourism in Laos, the government wants to strengthen ecotourism utilizing the rich nature of Laos. But the majority of actual foreign tourists are mass tourists. Given the present reality and possible future of tourism, where the mass tourism will consistently predominate in the world tourism, as well as the hope of government and local people do hope to pursue that direction due to economic benefit and employment opportunities, sustainable tourism should be defined as the new type of tourism having the direction to improving the present mass tourism within the framework of sustainable tourism. The essence of this definition is to change the characteristic of present main stream of tourism and not to take over it, as Prof. Yasumura Katsumi insists. In reality, as it was explained in the case of Yakushima, ecotourism cannot be distinguished from nature tourism. The Laos government has pursued to include some elements of ecotourism in mass tourism. Some local governments in Japan pursue “one day ecotourism” in the massive mass tourism as well.

Mass tourism is believed to be detrimental to the environment and not suitable for sustainable tourism. But the author would like to cast doubt to such a simple understanding. For example, tens of millions of tourists visit Kyoto, Paris, and Utsukushigahara highland, a beautiful highland in Japan, every year for example. But how the environment in these places was deteriorated? The problem lies in the good maintenance system. It is true that when tourists increase rapidly, there is a probable increase of criminals, pollution, traffic congestion and environmental degradation. But

at the same time, as Salah Wahab insists, the merits should be considered also like upgrading of roads, water, sanitation, airport, etc. From the economic viewpoint, mass tourism is the desire of local people and government. There is no other way than adding the elements of sustainable tourism or ecotourism to mass tourism.<sup>31</sup>

The cases of Cambodian ecotourism managed by an NGO and Bhutan shows that ecotourism itself is difficult to connect with profitable local business. Developing countries would like to make tourism as an important business sector for profit and employment opportunities. However, this direction needs to be connected with mass tourism. Pursuing ecotourism itself and other alternative tourism programs are necessary in upgrading the variety of tourism sector and tapping its potentials. But the combination or ecotourism/alternative tourism – mass tourism synergy will be the main direction.

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<sup>31</sup> David Weaver, 2006, *Sustainable Tourism: Theory and Practice*, Chapter 1; Salah Wahab and John J. Pigram eds., 1997, *Tourism, Development and Growth: The Challenge of Sustainability*, Routledge, pp.67, 71, 75.