

Current Status of Tourism and Roles of a Proposed Local Guide Association in Pasu, Northern Areas of Pakistan

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Abstract

Most local guides believe that they understand ecotourism and that they have experiences in conducting ecotours (9.7 times on average). Ecotourism development in Pasu, however, was found not to be even at an early stage. The local guides are not ready to translate the interpretation into action in the field although they tend to overrate their understanding and knowledge of ecotourism. This great gap is attributed to lack of their actual interpretive skills and knowledge. This study proposes the creation of a local guide association in Pasu, which would have the four functions: (1) ecotourism-programme development; (2) environmental conservation; (3) fund raising; and (4) negotiation and communication functions.

Key words : ecotourism development, environmental conservation, local guide association, guide training programme, Northern Areas of Pakistan, Pasu

I . Introduction

Tourism has grown to become an industry, which regional planners and advisers have been suggesting as a valuable resource to improve income-generation conditions in deficient areas. Thus it is not surprising that mountain tourism in attractive locations is a prime target region for tourism activities. Since the 1980s a special form of tourism has been promoted as ecotourism. Ecotourism attempts to be in line with sustainable development. Nature protection, intervention with consideration and local participation in the value chain are key concepts of ecotourism. With the establishment of Khunjerab National Park in 1975 the Hunza Valley has experienced quite some interventions in the tourism sector, which has grown

to become a valuable resource for income generation in a combined mountain agriculture system (cf. Ehlers and Kreutzmann, 2000). The question is whether the tourism structure is eco-friendly and whether an adaptive strategy has to be qualified in a way that shows how natural assets are incorporated into the tourism enterprises, how local entrepreneurs participate in income-generating opportunities, and how the dependency on these external resources develops.

In the Hunza Valley of the Northern Areas tourism was brought in only after the opening of the Karakoram (Karakorum) Highway (KKH) in 1978, the upper valley up to Pasu (Passu) was incorporated by 1982 and trans-boundary tourism through Khunjerab

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National Park to PR of China was permitted for international travelers after 1986 (Kreutzmann, 2003a). After a boom of tourism in the 1980s and 1990s the events connected to the '9.11' incidence had severe and detrimental effects on tourism in Northern Pakistan. With the widening of the KKH as a bilateral Pak-Chinese project increased interest of Chinese tourists can be expected and a number of international tourist groups already approach the Hunza Valley from China only. In addition improved infrastructure will facilitate a further increase of domestic tourism.

The Government of Pakistan and IUCN published in 2003 a strategy for sustainable development in which 'sustainable tourism' pays an important role. They state: "...tourism activities in the region have been heavily based upon the NAs outstanding landscape and dramatic mountain scenery; ... Tourism in the Northern Areas is also associated with a number of environmental impacts. Tourism development is largely unplanned, and there are no land-use or zoning schemes in place to guide or control activities" (GoP and IUCN, 2003: 45). Among their recommendations we find: "Diversify the tourism product by promoting activities such as wildlife viewing, low altitude trekking and cultural tourism; ... establish a Tourism Training Institute within the Northern Areas, in order to enhance human resource development" (GoP and IUCN, 2003: 47). It is surprising that no mention of ecotourism is made here and that the local entrepreneurs such as hotel and guesthouse owners, guides and porters are not mentioned. These developments could enhance the prospects for ecotourism and it seems high time to consider an improved and sound structure of providing local tourism services.

Most previous studies on tourism development in the Northern Areas have been conducted in the lower Hunza area, ie, Gilgit and Karimabad (e.g., Kreutzmann, 1995, 1996, 2003a). The upper Hunza area, also known as Gojal,

bordering China, is famous for glaciers (Batura, Pasu, and Ghulkin) and prominent mountain peaks (e.g., Batura, Shishpare, and Distaghil Sar). Kreutzmann (1996) examined tourism in the upper Hunza area until the first half of the 1980s, and found that the Pasu village is one of the villages that can be directly affected by tourism development. Tourism in the upper Hunza area including Pasu with a high tourism-development potential (Butz, 1995; Mock and O'Neil, 1996), however, has been less studied so far.

The important components for ecotourism development include infrastructure (hotels and restaurants), natural as well as historical/cultural attractions (tourism resources), porters, guides, and tour companies. Among these, infrastructure is slowly but steady increasing, attractions are very rich, porters have an association system (will be described later), and tour companies are linked with local guides in many cases in Pasu. The local guides, therefore, are key to ecotourism development in Pasu. Many guides in actual contribute to (eco)tours in mountainous developing countries such as Nepal (e.g., Gurung et al., 1996; Nepal, 2001) and Kenya (Christ, 1994). There are, however, the roles of the guides in Pasu have not been studied at all.

This study, focusing on the village of Pasu and local guides, first examines the current status of tourism and guide system. A guide is expected to play a large number of roles in ecotourism (Weiler and Ham, 2001). A local guide is defined in this study as a guide of Pasu origin regardless of residence, who is employed on a paid basis. This study then examines local guides' views to ecotourism and discusses shortcomings in the capabilities of local guides; and finally proposes a creation of a local guide association to develop ecotourism in the area. The Pasu villagers have shown interests in wildlife conservation, on 15 August 2004 they established Pasu Community Conservation Area (PCCA). Pasu has an advantage in ecotourism

development not only because of the newly created PCCA, but also because of the 'Batura National Park Proposal', which was suggested in the presidential speech to the Alpine Club of Pakistan in December 1995 (Snow Leopard Trust, 1997). Nevertheless, Pasu fails to meet even the rudimentary status of ecotourism as will be described later.

Field observations and interviews with the community representatives and local guides were conducted between 2001 and 2008. Questionnaire to local guides, which consists of 14 questions, was prepared in English to determine: (1) local guides' definition and expectations of ecotourism; (2) their perception of ecotourism and relationship between ecotourism and local resources; and (3) their perception of necessity in non-personal (non-verbal) interpretation sources for ecotourism in Pasu. The questionnaire was distributed to all accessible 22 local guides out of 37 in Pasu, Gilgit, and Islamabad by hand, as well as in foreign countries by e-mail in 2007. Twenty-one guides responded to the questionnaire. In addition, questionnaire survey was conducted with 61 Pasu residents other than the local guides to learn their views on tourism in September and October 2008. The questionnaire sheet (10 questions) was distributed to the residents under the guidance of a local leader.

II . Study area

Pasu village (2,500 m) is located close to the three glaciers of Batura, Pasu, and Ghulkin (Fig. 1), which terminate approximately at 2500 m asl and are easy to access from KKH (Fig. 2A). These three glaciers have different characteristics (Owen and Derbyshire 1993), so that the glacial-landscape diversity is a great potential in glacier tourism to be developed (Iwata and Watanabe, 2007). Geological structure as well as depositional landforms as 'geotour' resources can be clearly visible because of

sparse vegetation cover.

The inhabitants of the village belong to the Wakhi speakers. The population consists 872 persons with 112 households (as of 2006). The local economy is characterized by combined mountain agriculture. Crop cultivation focuses on grain crops and potatoes as a cash crop. In addition, orchards contribute fruit harvest of apples and apricots, which only partially are marketed while the main contributes to the staple diet (Ochiai and Mizushima, 2004). In addition animal husbandry is combined with crop cultivation, natural pastures along the Batura glacier provide ample fodder grounds while the animals need to be stall-fed during nine months of the year. Eighty-seven households sent a herd of 282 yaks, 356 cattle/cows, 1,547 goats, and 468 sheep to the pastures along the Batura Glacier in 1998 (Kreutzmann, 2006). Income diversification is augmented by the remittances of migrants who substantially contribute to the household incomes. Tourism is therefore mainly another, nevertheless for some households significant resource of income diversification. Up to 2007 investments have been made into seven small hotels/lodges (hereafter collectively referred to as 'hotels'), five shops, and two independent restaurants. In addition domestic handicraft production, provision of food items to restaurants and hotels and other services are indirectly linked to tourism. In fact tourism could act as one of the few job opportunities locally.

III . Current status of tourism and guide system in Pasu

1. Current status of tourism

Table 1 shows the number of the overnight tourists at five out of seven hotels in Pasu, from which data were provided. These hotels include top-end, moderate, and inexpensive hotels. This area attracts tourists from all over the world, among which Japanese contribute the highest number followed by Germany and the

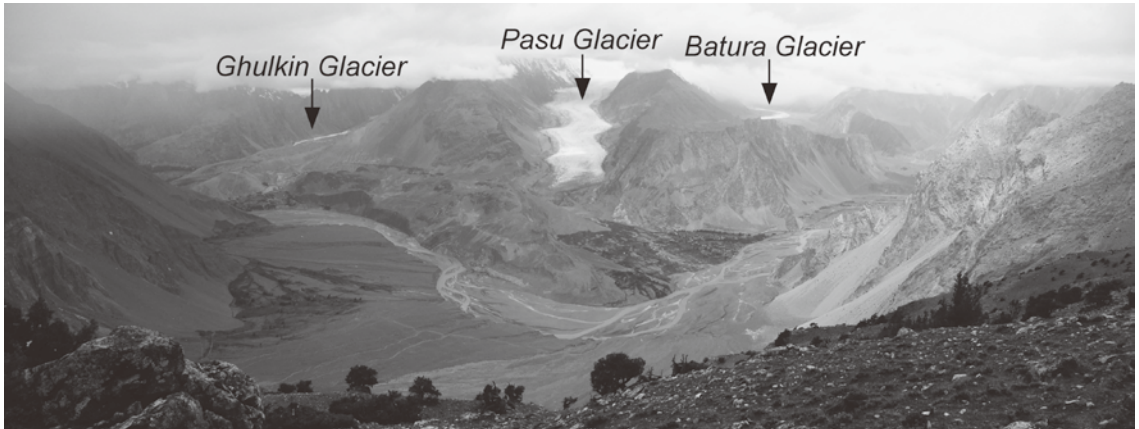


Fig. 1. The village of Pasu (centre) and the three glaciers of Batura (right), Pasu (centre), and Ghulkin (left), viewed from Abdegar. (Photo by Teiji Watanabe, 2007)

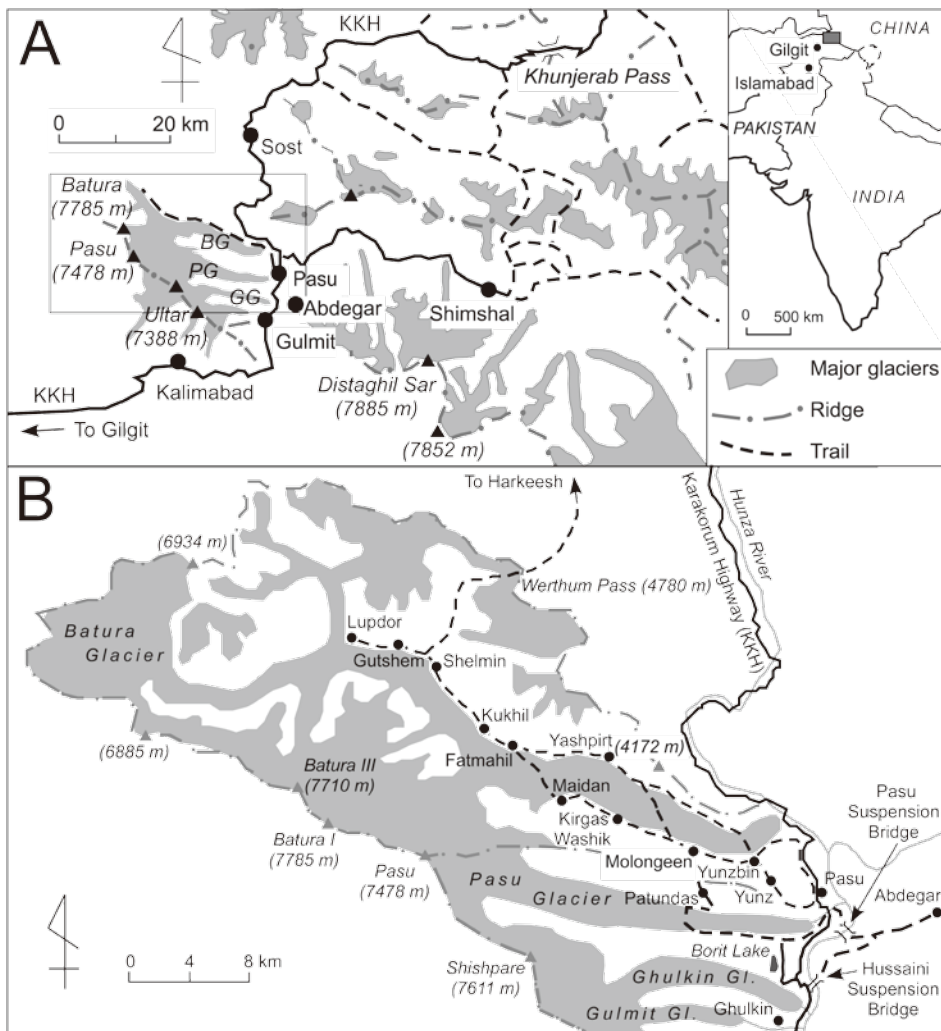


Fig. 2. Study area (A) and the major existing trekking routes in the Pasu area (B). BG: Batura Glacier; PG: Pasu Glacier; GG: Ghulkin Glacier.

Table 1. Overnight tourist number at five hotels in Pasu.

Country of origin	B Inn (2000)	S Hotel (2003)	P Inn		R Hotel (2005 & 2006)	A Hotel (2006)	Total
			(2005)	(2006)			
Pakistan	7	8	4	14	19	21	73
Japan	118	61	55	46	30	15	325
Other Asian countries	24	7	36	52	3	5	127
UK	57	37	23	38	10	17	182
Germany	36	36	25	43	10	54	204
France	25	39	24	35	6	52	181
Switzerland	8	26	13	28	3	15	93
Italy	3	21	8	12	4	19	67
Other European countries	92	41	84	81	11	44	353
USA	17	38	4	31	2	7	99
Australia	18	15	21	27	1	8	90
Other countries	24	26	24	33	0	13	120
Total	429	355	321	440	99	270	1914

(Source: Hotel guest books surveyed in 2001, 2004, 2006, and 2007)

UK. In recent the number of domestic visitors seems to be increasing and cannot be ignored.

Figure 3A shows the total number of tourists staying overnight at the two selected hotels in Pasu. One of the hotels examined was a top-end hotel, and the other was an inexpensive hotel. The changing trends of the tourists staying at each hotel were similar (not shown in the figure): these can be representative of Pasu as a whole although the data were collected only at the two hotels. The number of tourists staying at the hotels had increased at a high rate until 2001. The number, however, suddenly decreased after the incidence of '9.11' in 2001. This decrease since October 2001 is attributed not only to the '9.11' incidence, but also to a growing social unrest in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area, the Kargil conflict, and an outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in China in 2003 although the upper Hunza area has been safe and has not been affected by SARS.

Since the '9.11' incidence, the number has gradually increased but the absolute number still remains small (Fig. 3A). This demonstrates that great reliance to tourism has a great risk to the local economy. Kreutzmann (2003b) warns that complete dependency on tourism

enlarges risks in local economies. Village communities in the Hunza Valley are well aware of the fact that they mainly have to depend on themselves. Consequently we find in all villages of Gojal quite a number of institutions, which reflect self-governance. In fact, Pasu was one of the pioneering villages in accessing formal education as a means to diversify incomes. When the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) started its activities in Hunza, by the mid-1980s Pasu developed to be a leading village organization (VO) (AKRSP, 1988) which proactively developed the newly irrigated area of Janabad Das. Therefore it is not surprising that Pasu villagers have acted in the tourism sector similarly. From an early stage villagers were concerned to approach an equitable distribution to enable several persons to share the proceeds from accompanying trekkers and climbers along glacier walks and on the approach paths to high peaks.

The Batura Glacier trekking has been managed by a village organization of the Pasu Reform Panel (PRP) since 2001. It is the most popular among the trekking activities around Pasu: the PRP president said that 12-15 groups went to the Batura Glacier trekking out of 18

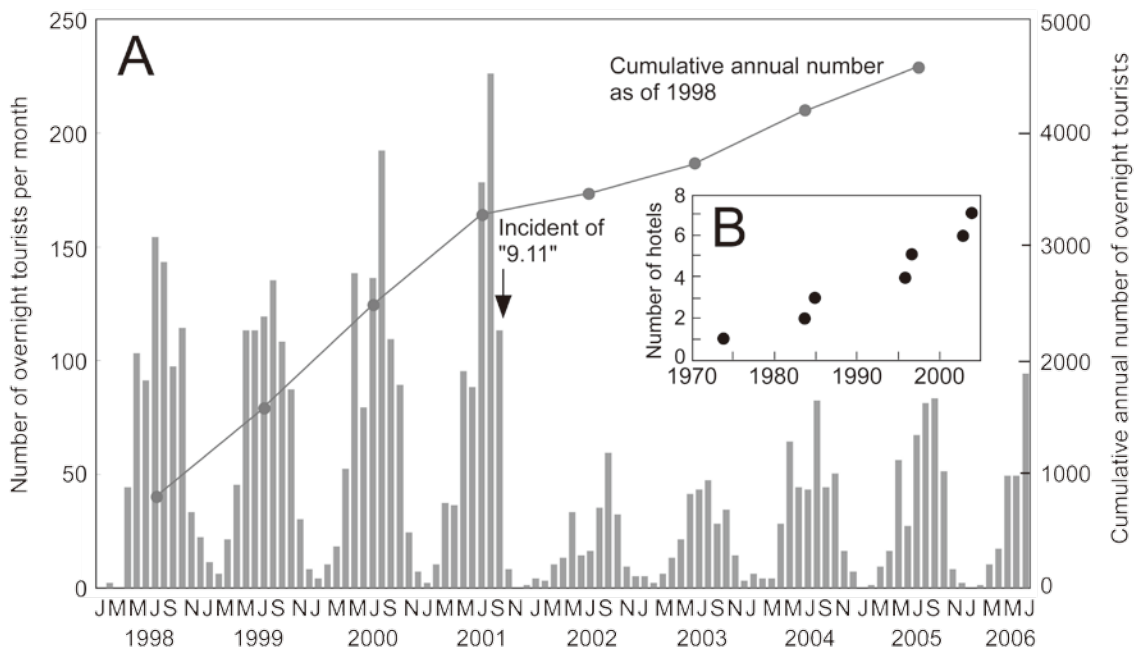


Fig. 3. Change of the total number of persons with overnight stay at the selected two hotels among seven in Pasu from 1998 (A), and the increase in the number of hotels in Pasu (B). (Source: visitors' books at the hotels for A, and interview for B)

Table 2. Availability of non-personal interpretation sources, and the ranking of their necessity perceived by the local guides in Pasu.

Source	Field assessment	Number of answers				Rank by local guides*
		Most necessary (1)	Necessary (2)	Not necessary (3)	Total (4)	
Website	Some	18	3	0	21	1.9
Visitor centrer	None	13	7	1	21	1.6
Printed materials (pamphlet, guidebook, etc)	Limited**	8	10	3	21	1.2
Signs	None	4	6	11	21	0.7
Self-guided walks	None	3	7	11	21	0.6

* Scale of 0 to 2, where 2 = 'Most necessary', 1 = 'Necessary', and 0 = 'Not necessary'.

Therefore, Rank = $(2 * (1) + 1 * (1) + 0 * (3)) / (4)$.

** Pamphlet: Paley (2005); Trekking guidebook: Shaw and Shaw (1999); Mock and O'Neil (2002); and Winter (2004).

groups that stayed in Pasu in 2005. Other major trekking routes are: Werthum Pass and Lupdor (long treks); Abdegar, Yashpirt, and Patundas (medium treks); and Yunz (day treks). Many tourists visit the Borit Lake and the suspension bridges of Pasu and Hussaini.

Availability in the non-personal (non-verbal) interpretation sources (Table 2) was assessed by interviewing with tour companies and representatives of the local community, as well as by observing in the field. Table 2 suggests that most tourists have to rely on guidebooks and website as information sources before visiting the area, and that they learn no more kinds of non-personal interpretation sources are available when they arrive in the area. This means that roles of the local guides are essential for ecotourists visiting Pasu: the local guides are stakeholders to satisfy visitors to Pasu as well as to develop ecotourism in Pasu.

2. Current guide system

Pasu has a local porter association system but no local guide association system to date. A guide association would be more complex than a porter association. Nevertheless, the local porter association system is briefly described first for discussion of possibilities in a creation of a local guide association in the future.

The local porter association of Pasu was established by PRP in 1994-1995, with which local residents can be registered as a porter to be hired on a rotational basis (Ochiai, 2001). Each participating household can be given an equal share in the porter business (Kreutzmann, 1996). This means that no outside porters are allowed to work when trekking is practiced in the territory of Pasu. Such a porter system exists in the adjacent community of Shimshal, where Butz (2006) examined portering labour relations. The questionnaire survey in 2008 with 61 residents (52 males and 9 females) shows that 77.0% (all were males) have experiences in portering (mean

number of employment: 32.6 times in their life). As a result, most interviewed residents (86.9%) provided a positive answer to the question, "is the current tourism in Pasu economically beneficial to the Pasu community?".

The number of registered porters attained 45 in the summer of 2000 (Ochiai, 2001), and increased to approximately 60 in the summer of 2004. They are mountain farmers and herders when they are not engaged as porters. A salary, which is fixed according to 'stage' (padow in Urdu) or a standardized section, was Rs 310 (Rs 60 = US\$ 1) per stage in 2003 (Paley 2005) and Rs 350 in 2006. One way from Pasu to Lupdor along the Batura Glacier (Fig. 1B) is assigned six stages, and one way to Gucheshm (Gutshem, Gutches, Guchem) is five stages. One percent of their salary goes to the PTP.

Guides, on the other hand, have no local association: the local community organization of PRP has no effectiveness in managing the guides. They are always paid per day, including rest days. The salary to be paid to guides varies, with the general earning of Rs 600 per day for 1-3 clients, Rs 900 per day for 4-6 clients, and Rs 1,200 per day for 7 or more. The questionnaire survey shows that 62.5% of the answered local guides (N=21) have other jobs, and that the percentage of income from other jobs is 21.4% (range = 0-50%). One local guide said that a guide association is not necessary at this moment but will be necessary in the future. He admitted that the attitude of most local guides is just to earn money by guiding, which differs from the common responses from the guides in an area at the minimal stage of ecotourism development such as in Madagascar, eg, 'to help with the protection of the environment' (Ormsby and Mannle, 2006).

A professional guide (tour guide, trekking guide, and climbing guide) in Pakistan is required to obtain a governmental license. A list prepared by the local guides had 37

names in 2007 although an interview with the PRP representatives suggested that the number of licensed guides of Pasu origin was 16-18. A trekking company based in Islamabad also provided the same number. Among 21 interviewed guides, 16 guides have the governmental license, and 5 have no license. The license does not require specialized trainings of ecotourism.

Ten out of 31 local guides live in Pasu throughout year, 22 seasonally live either in Pasu (October to April) or in a large city such as Islamabad (May to September), and five live abroad (two reside in UK, one in Chile, one in Australia, and one in Japan). Ten guides always living in Pasu (they have no governmental license) are trekking/climbing guides and mainly guide to the Gojal area (Batura, Pasu, and Khunjerab National Park). Among 22 guides seasonally living in Pasu and the large city, 17 guides are mostly practicing trekking/

climbing guides (including one hunting guide in winter); and five guides are mostly practicing tour/culture guides. Their guiding destinations are not limited to the Gojal area. The average experience period as a professional guide of 21 interviewed guides is 10.3 years (range = 3-20 years).

3. Local guides' views to ecotourism

All interviewed local guides have heard the term, ecotourism, and they answered that they know the definition of ecotourism (Table 3A). About 85% of them (18 guides out of 21) have conducted 'cotours' (Table 4A), taking their clients to the surrounding areas (Table 4B). Eighteen local guides (about 85%) also believe that ecotourism is important in Pasu, and 15-18 local guides (about 83-100%) answered that interpretation of natural and social resources is important for ecotourism (Table 3B).

Further questionnaire survey, however,

Table 3. Summary of the local guides' answers to the questions related to ecotourism in Pasu.

Questions	Total number of answers	Percentage of the answers					Total
		Strong yes	Yes	Do not know	No	Strong no	
<i>A) Understanding of ecotourism</i>							
Q1: Have you heard the term, ecotourism?	21	-	100.0	-	0.0	-	100.0
Q2: Do you know the definition of ecotourism?	21	-	100.0	-	0.0	-	100.0
<i>B) Importance and effectiveness of ecotourism</i>							
Q3: Do you think ecotourism is important for Pasu community?	21	76.2	9.5	14.3	0.0	0.0	100.0
Q4: Do you think the followings are important for ecotourism?*							
2-1: Interpretation on natural environments such as wildlife, plants, glaciers, landforms, and geology	18	44.4	55.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
2-2: Cultural interpretation	18	33.3	50.0	5.6	11.1	0.0	100.0
2-3: Historical interpretation	18	33.3	50.0	5.6	11.1	0.0	100.0

The questionnaire was distributed to the local guides in May 2007.

* Guides answered 'strong yes' and 'yes' in Q3 provided the answer to Q4.

Table 4. Characteristics of 'ecotours' conducted by the local guides (N = 21).

	Number of answer
<i>A) Number of ecotour experiences</i>	
20 times or more	5
6 - 19 times	7
1 - 5 times	6
None	3
Average	9.7
<i>B) Ecotour destinations</i>	
Pasu village	16
Batura Glacier	5
Shimshal village and pass	5
Khunjerab National Park	3
<i>C) Tourism resources interpreted</i>	
Environment	2
Nature	2
Vegetation	2
Wildlife	1
Glacier	1
Geography	1
Agriculture	2
Culture	1
History	1

Responses to B and C were gathered through open-ended questions during conducted interviews.

suggests that the local guides are likely to overrate their understanding and knowledge of ecotourism. Table 4A shows that five local guides have more than 20 times of 'ecotour' experiences (average = 9.7 times) in the past. The number, however, is too large if the annual number of group trekkers was 18 in 2005 and if the average experience period as a professional guide is 10.3 years as stated before. The local guides are most likely to misinterpret definition of 'ecotourism'.

One of the most important roles of tour guides for ecotourism is interpretation (e.g., Weiler and Ham, 2001). Local guides understand the importance of interpretation (Table 3B); however, the tourism resources actually 'interpreted' (explained) by the 21 local guides to their clients in and around Pasu are very limited (Table 4C).

IV . A creation of a local guide association for ecotourism development

It would take long years to change the existing governmental policies or the attitudes of already-developed tour companies based in large cities such as Islamabad. A creation of a local guide association in a small community such as Pasu would be easier and faster to develop ecotourism. As described earlier Pasu created the VO with the assistance of AKRSP. It also has the Pasu Development Organization (PDO) created by the community residents themselves for institutional and economic development. The PRP was created under the umbrella of the PDO. None of the existing organizations, however, functions exclusively for ecotourism/tourism development. A new social structure of the local guide association to exclusively handle ecotourism/tourism is preferable in Pasu. The local guide association can take a responsibility in ecotourism development, whereas the PRP or the POD, overseeing the guide association, may find its major roles in supervising the guide association.

This study proposes the creation of a local guide association because the association has the potential to serve the following four functions (e.g., Black et al., 2001; Weiler and Ham, 2002; Stone and Wall, 2003; Ormsby and Mannle, 2006): (1) ecotourism-programme development function (guide training and ecotours); (2) environmental conservation function; (3) fund raising function; and (4) negotiation and communication function.

1. Ecotourism-programme development function

Tables 2 and 4C show that development of ecotourism programmes is preferable. Table 3B shows that most local guides suggest the importance in the development in Pasu. The ecotourism programmes to be developed should include guide training programmes and ecotour programmes.

The local guides are well qualified to conduct ordinary tour guiding, such as arrangement of accommodations and local transportation. Although the local guides understand the importance in interpretation (Table 3B) they are not ready to translate the interpretation into action in the field (Table 4C) due to lack of interpretive skills and knowledge. Guide training programmes can fill this gap being provided equally to all local guides by the local guide association. The association needs to identify necessary contents of the training programmes including the interpretation skills and site knowledge of fauna, flora, ecology, glacier, landform, geology, agriculture, culture, and history.

The local guides also lack ecotour programmes, which result in less practices of actual resources interpretation (Table 4C). Ecotour programmes should be developed as a part of commercial package. Ecotour programmes to be developed are concrete, standardized personal (verbal) interpretation programmes in the individual ecotour (trekking) routes. The Pasu area has a great advantage in developing programmes of glacier tours (Iwata and Watanabe, 2007) and 'geotours'. It is important that glacier-tour and geotour programmes are included as a part of ecotour programmes. The local guide association will develop concrete interpretation programmes in the individual routes with the help from outsiders. This will provide better quality of experiences and satisfaction to tourists.

Once created the association needs to find potential trainers first from outsiders and then from the local guides: there will be a need for train-the-trainer programmes (Black et al., 2001) to be developed soon. Such identification is difficult if individual guides or governmental organizations have to take responsibilities.

2. Environmental conservation function

The Pasu village shows interests in wildlife conservation by establishing PCCA. The conservation area, however, seems to rely on trophy hunting as observed in the surrounding areas such as the Khunjerab Community Conservation Area in the north of Pasu. PCCA should not be placed as an income generating structure from foreign hunters through trophy hunting.

Instead of leaning towards trophy hunting, wildlife safari may be a key consideration as a conservation-oriented programme to be developed. Wildlife such as ibex and snow leopard is observed mainly in winter seasons, so developing wildlife-related programmes creates job opportunities for the local guides as well as other Pasu residents including local porters in winters when they usually have no/less works and when tourists are rare (Fig. 3A).

The current tourism activities have not contributed revenues towards conservation in Pasu to date. The similar status is observed in the Northern Areas of Pakistan (Haroon, 2002) as well as in other parts of the world such as Hainan, China (Stone and Wall, 2003). The local guides should understand the connections between environmental conservation and ecotourism. Ormsby and Mannle (2006) emphasize that a guide association has the ability to bring conservation and development together and to act not only as guides to a protected area but also as guides to a local community and culture.

3. Fund raising function

The local guide association would serve as a structure to collect funding to develop and implement the ecotourism programmes. The current tourism does not raise funds for programme development or resource conservation in Pasu. Successful ecotourism development requires both trained staff and

sufficient funds (Stone and Wall, 2003). The local guide association is a structure that could easily collect a portion of tourism revenues to raise such funds.

4. Negotiation and communication function

The guide training programmes may be developed with the help from international universities and organizations working in the area even on a voluntary basis. Many studies emphasize that international universities and organizations can provide assistance to ecotourism development (e.g., Weiler and Ham, 2002; McGahey, 2006). Negotiation and communication with international universities and organizations, however, may be difficult for individual guides. The association is an effective structure to negotiate and communicate with foreign bodies to organize the ecotour programmes and training programmes.

Guides working for tour companies may be able to use website to obtain international clients. Table 2 shows that website is most importantly ranked. A guide is not a principal occupation for most guides in Pasu, for whom it is very difficult to develop an international market.

The association would be expected to develop international market to increase the number of tourists as well: the number of tourists to Pasu is still small (Fig. 3). The continuation of the small number of tourists is to some extent due to underdevelopment of international marketing.

It is advantageous for the local guides to stay seasonally in Islamabad and take clients to any destinations in Pakistan to maximize their income, so it may not be easy for them to reside in Pasu throughout the year. There seems to be a tendency that potential key guides in the local guide association seasonally reside in Islamabad. It is, however, advantageous for the

Pasu community if the local guides residing in Pasu throughout the year take coordinative roles in the community. With the creation of the local guide association in Pasu, exchange of information and manpower between Islamabad and Pasu will become much easier and more effective.

V. Conclusions

The KKH is now under improvement as stated in the beginning (Fig. 4). Once the improvement of the present KKH is completed, it could provide a great boost to the tourism industry although the expected tourism boost needs to be validated in the future because the political conditions have greatly changed. Even if the number of tourists would increase as the lower Hunza area and Gilgit area had experienced before (Kreutzmann, 1995, 1996). Pasu could lose tourism revenue because it has less developed (eco)tourism. Otherwise, not only monetary leakage but also environmental deterioration may occur if foreign capitalists turn their attention to the possible tourism market in Pasu. This study, focusing on the local guides, provided limited discussion on the views of local residents other than the local guides. Further studies are needed in this regard.

This study identified a local guide as a stakeholder. A guide acts as a mediator between tourists and a host (local community) especially in the context of ecotourism (Black et al., 2001; Weiler and Ham, 2001). The creation of a local guide association can be a vital key to increase ecotourists to Pasu, which results in enhancing sustainability in Pasu.

Natural and cultural resources as the targets of ecotourism are diverse and sufficient in Pasu, but their interpretation is not well practiced. This study showed that the local guides of Pasu origin do not necessarily provide interpretation of nature as well as culture/history despite the fact that they have a number

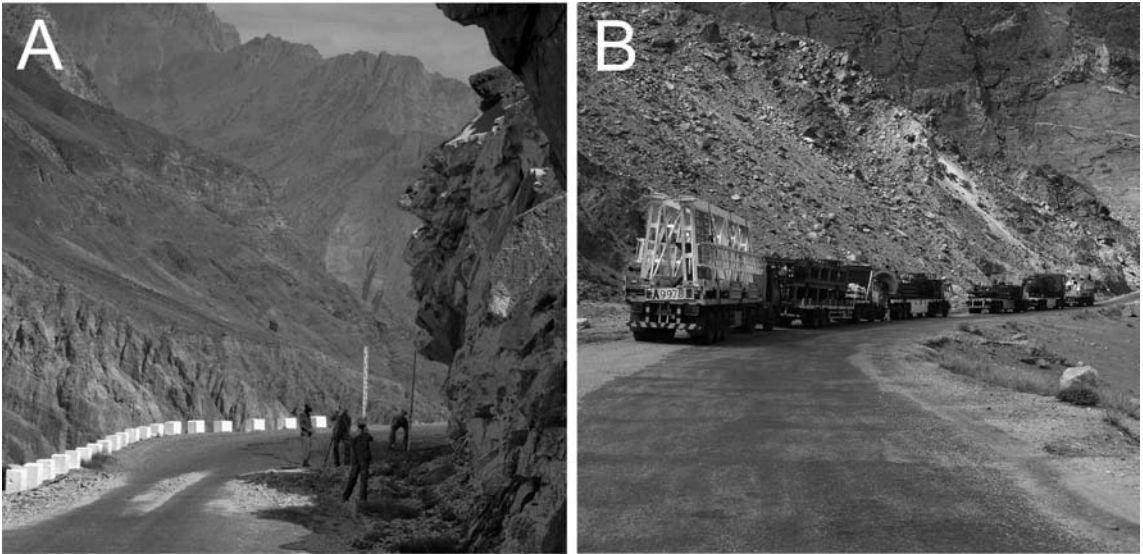


Fig. 4. Measurement of Karakoram Highway (KKH) for widening by a Chinese team in the Hunza valley (A) and a row of Chinese trucks transporting construction materials for the KKH upgrading in Pasu (B). The Chinese government supports Pakistan to improve KKH, through which not only the Pakistan-China trade but also tourism would become much more active. (Photos by Teiji Watanabe, A: August 2006, B: May 2007)

of 'ecotour' experiences (9.7 times on average). The questionnaire survey demonstrates that there is a great gap between their talks about ecotourism and their actual interpretation practice, suggesting that most local guides lack interpretive skills and knowledge.

Outside assistance, if descended into 'ad hocism', may result in minimal communication and coordination in community-based development as observed in Nepal (Gurung and DeCoursey, 2000). Creating a permanent structure, therefore, is important, and creating a local guide association is the first priority step to take, which can develop guide training programmes and ecotour programmes. International universities and organizations can assist the training programmes. The local community itself should develop ecotourism, but community involvement in ecotourism in Pasu is minimal. Training local people to be interpretive guides helps achieve not only ecological sustainability but also economic sustainability (Weiler and Ham, 2002).

Haroon (2002) states that tour operators in large cities decide the fate of areas without involving the locals, when they send tourist groups to the Northern Areas of Pakistan. Pasu composed of the residents of Wakhi with the strong identity, however, seems to be different. They can make decision of the tourism direction without outside interference. Future studies, therefore, are needed to focus on the perception of the Pasu residents regarding the relationship between the existing PCCA and (eco)tourism development. Environmental conservation will become more important issue in Pasu after the KKH Improvement Project is completed.

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