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主 論 文 の 要 旨

論文題目

An assessment of the impact of ecotourism on forest rules and on the livelihood of various ethnic groups: A case study of Chitwan National Park in Nepal

(エコツーリズムが森林規則および多様な民族の生計に及ぼす影響の評価: ネパールのチトワン国立公園の事例)

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論 文 内 容 の 要 旨

The modern history of protected area management in Nepal dates back to 1973 with the establishment of Chitwan National Park (CNP) and an enactment of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1973. Initially, the government used a top-down management approach prioritizing biodiversity conservation over the needs of the local community. This resulted in conflict between the park authorities and the local communities. However, to gain the support of local communities and to minimize their dependency on forest resources, the government of Nepal amended the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1973 in 1993 and introduced the concept of the buffer zone policy in the protected areas of Nepal. Further, to maximize the local participation in resource management and utilization, Buffer Zone Community Forest (BZCF) was designated and handed to the local community. As an alternative source of livelihood, Buffer Zone Community Forest User Committee (BZCFUC) introduced ecotourism in that BZCF. Further to foster ecotourism, Protected Area management centered its focus on wildlife and vegetation improvement with stringent rules and regulations. However, this amendment in rules has failed to address the need of local people and caused a burden. Thus, this study aims at understanding the dependency of locals on forest resources, their compliance on forest rule evolved after the introduction of ecotourism and analyzed the impact of

ecotourism on the local residents living in buffer zone villages of CNP.

The study was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative analysis through field surveys. Preliminary surveys and meetings with the focal persons were done to identify the settlement which was more dependent on forest resources and the ethnic communities who were remarkably reliant on their usage. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data from the two buffer zone communities nearby CNP. The first and second study was concentrated on local people's dependency on the BZCF, the development of forest rules, and their perception. To analyze the data, the respondents were selected from close and far settlement users based on the distance of their living space to the forests. A total of 64 respondents from the two villages were interviewed. Subsequently, the third study examined the economic benefits reaped by the communities based on their ethnicity and landholding status. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, surveying 145 Kumroj, and Amaltari village households using a stratified random sampling technique.

From the findings of the first study, it was found that the forest users from both study villages comprised various ethnic groups, although the Tharu group was the majority in both places. It was also revealed that landless respondents were living in the settlement closer to the forest and were highly dependent on forest products like fodder, fuelwood, etc. To tackle the issue of the overuse of forest products, the government of Nepal developed biogas plants to provide them an alternative source of energy. However, dung was too scarce to run biogas plants, because locals had minimized the cattle count due to the strict grazing measures. They had no choice other than breaking the rules in order to get an energy source to ensure their livelihood. Taking into account the above, in order to achieve sustainable conservation and successfully reduce the local people's dependency on forest resources, residents have to be provided with better options to support their livelihood.

The second study examines the Nepalese community's perceptions of the BZCF rules and investigates the interplay of rules, ecotourism, and human-wildlife conflict (HWC). It was found that the access to forest resources has become more restricted since ecotourism was introduced in the BZCF. The implementation of this rigorous forest rules contributed to improving the forest habitat and wildlife conservation, but also led to a decrease in accessibility to forest products which affected forest users' daily lives. The results indicate that respondents who benefited from ecotourism had a positive perception of the policies implemented for the BZCF. Households living close to the forest

experienced strict rules, as well as damage caused by wildlife, and thus, had a negative perception of forest conservation. Respondents believed that more stringent rules implemented to improve ecotourism resulted in increased HWC. This study recommends better livelihood opportunities for disadvantaged groups in and around the BZCF, along with the development of forest policies based in reality to improve compliance with forest rules and to gain local support for conservation efforts.

The findings of the third study indicated that similar ecotourism activities were taking place on both sites. It was found that the majority of the community expressed the need for ecotourism in their community and showed their supportive reaction. The result showed that BZCUC was generating a significant amount of revenue. However, the respondents are deprived of not having significant benefits as a source of income and complained about a lack of opportunity to participate in ecotourism activities. Based on landholding size and ethnic status in the community, the result found that ethnic people who were very well-off, i.e., those who owned land and were engaged in agriculture, benefitted the most from ecotourism. But those who had no land and were solely dependent on ecotourism had no opportunity to generate an income out of it and had to suffer because of the strict forest rules. Thus, from this study, it can be recommended that the rules should be reformed so that marginalized people could also receive benefits. The intent of ecotourism is not just to promote conservation or increase the revenue from tourism, but also to make the lives of those who are living closer to the protected areas easier and to provide them with an alternative source of livelihood.