

## Residents' Attitude Towards Cultural Landscape at Alxa Beisi in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in China

Guorong Han<sup>1\*</sup>, Katsunori Furuya<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Graduate School of Horticulture, Chiba University

### Introduction

Cultural landscape has been utilized to promote tourism at Alxa Beisi in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in China. The objective of this study has been set to clarify the evaluation of cultural landscape by residents in the area. Beisi was established in 1804 and currently consists of 15 temples and over 100 buildings. The number of monks once counted 993 in 1869, but has come down to six as of 2007. Due to the decreasing number of monks, it became difficult to maintain Beisi as a temple; therefore, it is now utilized for tourism.

### Study Methods

A field research has been conducted in August 2007 and August 2012. An attitude research was run among the Mongolian residents in the surrounding area of Beisi. Interviews were organized and answers were collected from 271 respondents. The content of the research included demographics of the respondents, images of Beisi, opinions about tourism development, and expectations for ecotourism. A Chi-square test was applied for the analysis.

### Results and Considerations

The surrounding area of Beisi was designated as National Forest Park in 2002. This designation included Beisi as a part of the park, and ecotourism started. For the purpose of regulations for nature conservation and tourism usage, charges have been imposed to visitors to enter Beisi since 2002. It is open free of charge only once a year on a festival day. Occupations of the residents in the surrounding area of Beisi also changed from nomadism to hotel businesses and souvenir shops.

The gender among the respondents split with 135 males and 136 females. Regarding the number of visits to Beisi, 63% visited one to three times a year, while 18% never made a visit. The purpose of visits was prayer (72%) and events (52%). With the evaluation of images of Beisi, the following images exceeded 50% with the response of *very much agree*: *Beisi is a sacred site of Buddhism* (76%), *Beisi is attractive* (66%), and *a place to interact with monks* (51%). It is inferred that Beisi is still considered among the Mongolian as an attractive and sacred site for Buddhism.

With a statement of *suitable for a tourism spot*, the total of *very much agree*, *agree*, and *somewhat agree* counted 94%. Similarly, statements about tourism development resulted in; *destruction of serenity of a sacred site of Buddhism* (85%), *destruction of environment* (84%), and *promotional activities of environmental preservation* (80%). Residents in the area think that Beisi is suitable for a tourism spot but are simultaneously concerned about destruction of the environment and serenity as a sacred site of Buddhism. Furthermore, it was uncovered that tourism development of Beisi was considered as promotional activities of environmental preservation. The results of opinions about tourism development with multiple answer questions are as follows: *communicate Mongolian ethnic culture* (55%), *communicate Buddhism culture* (54%), *communicate importance of environment preservation as a nature experience site* (36%), and *increase regional economic revenues* (26%). These regional residents thought tourism development as a mean to communicate Buddhism culture and the Mongolian ethnic culture. Expectations to Beisi with multiple answer questions resulted in; *a place for prayers* (69%) and *a place for nature experience and green activity volunteers* (61%). These results imply that the regional residents considered Beisi not only as a place for prayers but also as a place for nature experience and green volunteer activities. As a result of a Chi-square test, statistically significant differences were detected. Statistically significant differences were also detected according to ages with a statement: *Beisi is attractive*. The younger the respondent is, the higher the evaluation is with attractiveness of current Beisi. The older respondents thought that the traditional identity has been lost due to the deterioration of natural environment around Beisi and new buildings.

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