

Tsum Sacred Conservation Area in Gorkha, Nepal

Nima Lama

President (Tsum Welfare
Committee)

Email: info@tsumvalley.org

W: www.tsumvalley.org



Jailab Kumar Rai

Lecturer (Tribhuvan University
Nepal)

Researcher (ForestAction Nepal)

jailabrai@gmail.com

jailab@forestaction.org



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Tsum valley Within Manaslu Conservation Area

- Located inside Manaslu Conservation area (declared in 1989)
- Two Village Development Committees:
 - Chhekampar (upper Tsum)
 - Chumchet (Lower Tsum)
- Surrounded by beautiful mountain sites:
 - [Ngula Dhachhen (5093m high) in eastern direction, Thapla Pass (5,104m high) in the western direction, Humlung Pass in the northern and Nyak in the southern direction]



Protected Areas of Nepal



50 25 0 50 100 150 200 250

Rich in Biodiversity

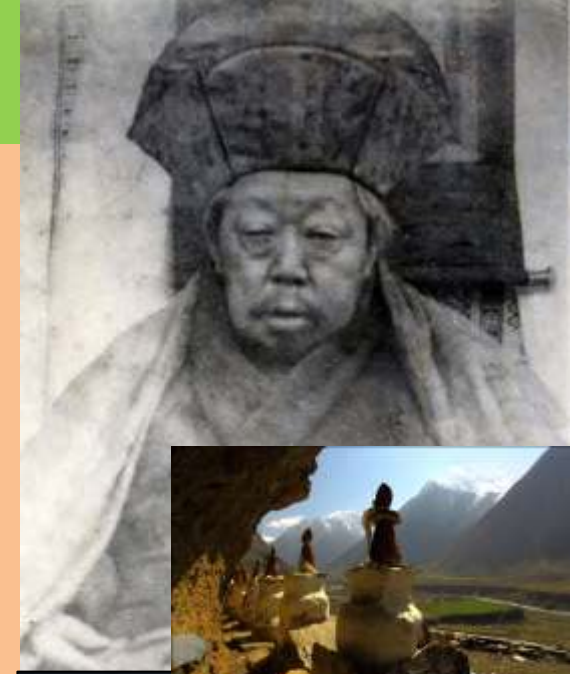


- Surrounded by scenic beauty (mountains, waterfalls, high passes, river and lakes)
- Shelter of more than 33 species of mammal (like snow leopard, musk deer, blue sheep etc).
- 2000 species of plants, 11 types of forests, 3 species of reptiles.
- 60 types of medicinal plants, 110 species of birds & 11 species of butterflies
- All mammals are treated as friends and member of a family
- The territory is like “open museum”



What is Tsum Valley for Local People?

- It is sacred place; “Bheul kimolong” which means hidden valley;
- Have common belief that this territory is hidden by “Guru or lord Padmasambhab”;
- Tsumba people are settler of this territory (about 500 HHs with around 3700);
- Culturally rich area;
- They are followers of Buddhist religion;
- Lama “Serap Dorje Drukpa Rinpoche” proposed to declare upper Tsum (Chhekampar) as “Shyakya” “himsarahit chhetra” or “Non-Sacrificing area” in 1920;



Six Principles Agreed in the Declaration

1. Not to kill any animals
2. Not to hunting
3. Not to harvest honey
4. Not to fire in the forest
5. Not entry for flesh traders
6. Not to trade (sell) domestic animals to the traders



Local Efforts for Expansions of Agreed Principle

- Local people, leaders, Labrang Lamas agreed this proposal and declared this area as Non-Sacrificing territory in 1920;
- Later, local people and leaders are following and preaching the concept continuously to new generations;
- Series of religious preaching, celebrate festivals, generate local commitments by collecting signatures to follow agreed principle;
- Series of public lecture by religious



Local Efforts for Expansions of Agreed Principle

- Repeated commitment in 1972
- The declaration note was translated in Nepali language;
- In 2009, Tsum Festival was organized and the local people repeated their commitment;
- In 2012 priminister Dr Baburam Bhattarai also participated and singed on the agreement;
- As result lower Tsum (Chumchet) also declared as Non-Sacrificing area in 2012



Conservation Practices

- Informal Practices:
 - Monasteries and associated local beliefs and practices (e.g. Rachhen Monastery, Piren Phu, Mu Monastery, Dephyudonma Gumba, Gumba Lungdang);
 - Gumba Ban (Gumba Forest) and concept and practices of no cutting of forest in the Gumba forest area;
 - Cultural festivals and occasional events like “Shyakya” festival
 - Private forest
- Formal Practices:
 - Establishment of Buffer Zone Community Forestry (BZCF) and practices;
 - Implement different programs through PA authority
 - Establishment of local organization (e.g. Tsum Welfare Committee in 2006)



Conclusion and Lessons Learned

Conclusion

- The culture, cultural beliefs and associated practices of local people is contributing to the conservation of biodiversity;
- Religion, religious beliefs and associated practices of local people are playing significant roles in the biodiversity conservation;
- Despite these, community leaders and people are initiating other forms of activities (organize events, occasional festivals, establish formal organizations etc);
- Tsum people have historically rooted religious and spiritual relations with land and territory;

Lessons Learned

- Customary laws, beliefs and practices are more effective for biodiversity conservation;
- People living with cultural and spiritual association with lands and territories possess their own forms of beliefs, practices and institutions;
- Identification, recognitions and support to the customary laws, beliefs and practices is most essential for sustainable conservation of biodiversity;
- Formal PA institution such as BZCF are creating dilemmas and contradiction for support to the informal or customary institutions and practices;

Acknowledgement

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 - ForestAction Nepal

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