

Challenges: Resettlement of Nomads in Qinghai Province

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Background: *The Tuimu Huancao Program & San Jiang Yuan Ecosystem Protect and Rebuild Program (SJYEPRP)*

"Resettlement" or "Ecological Migration" or "Eco-immigration"

The Go West Policy (*Xibu da kaifa*) began in China in 2000. One aspect of the policy is "farmland into forest" or "grain into green" (*Tuigeng Huanlin*), which converted steep cultivated land into forest. In the grassland areas, it is known as the "pastures into grassland" program (*Tuimu Huancao*). As one of four important grassland areas,¹ the TuiMu HuanCao program was implemented in the Qinghai province in 2003.

In the Tuimu Huancao program, Nomads who lived in grassland areas were resettled beside towns or cities. This process is called Eco-immigration or Resettlement Project. As one part of the Tuimu Huancao Policy, 6,982 families and 33,500 herders will be resettled. The first eight eco-immigration pilot programs were implemented in Nov. 2004 in eight counties. These eight counties belong to the Yushu and Guoluo prefectures. In each county, one township was chosen to be the pilot.

In Jan.2005, *The San Jiang Yuan (Three Rivers Headwaters) National Nature Reserve (SNNR)* was set up, then the State Department subsequently carried out a program to restore the *San Jiang Yuan* ecosystem, which is called *San Jiang Yuan Shengtai Baohu Yu Jianshe Gongcheng* (*SanJiangyuan Ecosystem Protect and Rebuild Program,三江源生态保护与建设工程*). The program is meant to protect the ecosystem of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau – this region is home to the headwaters of three major Asian rivers: the Yellow (Machu), Yangtze (DriChu) and Mekong (Zachu).

Four prefectures, sixteen counties, and one township belong to *The San Jiang Yuan Ecosystem Protect and Rebuild Program areas in Qinghai Province*, which means more Tibetan nomadic families have to move out of grassland and be resettled.

From the building of the first resettlement in Nov. 2004 until now, the eco-immigration has been carried out for almost six years. It was reported that 86 new communities were built in the

¹ The other three big and important grassland areas are East Mongolia, West Mongolia and Sinkiang.

Sanjiangyuan region, now houses almost 50,000 eco-immigrants (Xinhua News,2009) .

The nomads who left the grassland, in some ways, have lost their traditional lifestyle. They have been resettled temporarily for a 10-year period. In the beginning, they relied on government support and then struggled to make a life. Six or seven years have passed but the eco-immigrants are still puzzled about what to do next. In three years, the eco-immigrants will have to make new decisions about whether to remain at city side or return to their home grassland.

Nowadays, some western scholars are arguing about the various reasons or goals of China's central government's eco-immigration policies, meanwhile most Chinese Scholars are paying more attention to the harsh living conditions of the eco-immigrants.

As a member of a team of researchers who have had experience with the resettled nomads from 2005 to 2009, I was one of the first observers since the first eco-immigrant pilots were set up, so I—along with my team members—have a deeper understanding of the experience of the nomads. During those five years, we spent one month each year with different eco-immigrants in the Yushu prefecture and the Ge'ernu eco-immigrant villages. Deep research was done during the five years and I experienced with them their anxiety, hopefulness, and disappointment.....so unlike most other scholars addressing this topic, I paid more attention to the experience of the eco-immigrants themselves rather than to debating the goal of the Policy. 图片 调查情景

As a member and a leader of "San Jiang Yuan Eco-immigration Research Project" group, I focused on the sustainable development of Qinghai nomads since the late 1990s. The five-year program was done in cooperation with Green-River, (a non-government organization, whose object is to protecting the environment and keeping the river unpolluted). The Qinghai nomads' resettlement project began at the summer of 2005. We organized a field work research team of 8 experts, including a photographer, a document film maker, a High Plateau Doctor and investigators.

During the five-year program, we not only focused on the resettlement communities, interviewing many eco-immigrants, but also focused on the eco-immigrants' homeland. We went to their homeland, visited the remaining Nomads (留居户), and compared them with eco-immigrants with reference to their life, religion, social structure, etc. We collected many materials which reflect on the true life and thought of nomads before they were moved and as they adapted to their resettlement.

Our field sites are all along Yangzi river headstreams: Jiajiniang (Yushu county), Zhahe

township(Zhiduo county), Zhiduo Countryside (Zhiduo County), Heyuan Cun(Qumalai county), Kunlun Minzu Wenhua Cun (Qumalai county), which belong to Yushu prefecture, and Chang Jiang Yuan Minzu Wenhua Cun and Tanggula township (now a town since 2008) which belongs to Haixi prefecture, Ge'ermu City.

Eco-immigrants can be divided into two kinds: independent resettlement and concentrated resettlement. This paper focuses on the concentrated resettlement.

The Yushu earthquake occurred on April.14 2010 and the resettlement village in Yushu was almost destroyed, so more and more scholars and outsiders have become aware of the problem of these resettlement nomads.

I divided the six resettlements into three styles, according to the location, the way to make a living, the thoughts of the individuals, their facing new challenges. My conclusion is that what is important is that whatever style it is, they could not leave their grassland completely during these years.

1、 **“Litu Bu Lixiang” resettlement model(“离土不离乡”搬迁模式).**

Zhiduo county Zhahe Township resettlement community(治多县扎河乡移民村) and Yushu county Longbao Township² resettlement community (玉树县隆宝镇移民点) are two typical sites. Almost all of the eco-immigrants are living near townships, with no chance to make a living except with the monetary subsidy from the government. Whether they go back to their home grasslands or not, their livelihoods will always come from grasslands.

Zhahe township resettlement (扎河乡移民点), as one of the first four pilots, 40 families resettled in Zhahe Township in 2004. At the same time, the other 16 families resettled nearby Zhiduo County, Bowa town. ³

It is 170km from Zhahe resettlement site to Zhiduo county Bowa town, which needs almost 7-8 hours by car, 190Km between Zhiduo County to Prefecture center_ Jiegu town and another 880Km to Province center_Xining.

Longbao resettlement site (隆宝移民点) was built in 2006, on the way from Yushu Jiegu

² Longbao town is the center of earthquake occurred on April.14,2010.

³ (in 2004, 80 families resettled totally, which include 24 families independent resettlement, 56 families concentrated resettlement, and 16 of them were resettled near county side,40 resettled near township. And there are other 245 families resettled in county side in 2007)

town (玉树结古镇) to Zhiduo (治多) County, it is 75Km from Yushu Jiegu town, which is more convenient than Zhahe resettlement site. 12 families chose to be resettled here.

In the two resettlement sites, even if they sell all their livestock and hand their grassland over to government according to policy before they resettled, their life still relies on it, which means that some of them left some of their yaks with relatives for keeps, but also means that they have no other income except a 6000 yuan or a 3000 yuan subsidy per family each year from the government⁴. Some of them picked up Caterpillar fungus (虫草), which can be exchanged for some money to complement their living expenses. Not all families are lucky enough to pick up Caterpillar fungus(虫草) as much as they need. We were told 2000 yuan was an average income for picking Caterpillar fungus (虫草) in 2008. Some of them opened small shops in the new community.

“In the small Longbao resettlement community, 12 families have two shops. One is opened near the road, the owners are middle-aged couple. They preferred to resettle near the township rather than in a county side, because they thought the shop in Longbao town is free of the duty tax. Once they resettled in the county they had to pay the duty tax, but they seemed never to know where to find a duty free site for eco-immigrants. Besides the small shop they bought a car for transportation, so it's the only family who make a living who are self supporting. As we observed, A VCD rent shop was opened in the community, but more than two hours passed before we saw even one person coming in.”⁵

In Longbao Resettlement site we found only one family who rely on their business for their livelihood. The rest of the eco-immigrants were all relying on their relatives who are remaining nomads, or went back home to their grassland as hired laborers. For convenient transportation some young men are planning to go out looking for an odd job.

Longbao town's local government and leaders said they have made some efforts to help the eco-immigrants. For instance, the eco-immigrants were permitted to pick up Caterpillar fungus(虫草) freely in the Longbao town precinct.⁶ They guided a local family to sell yoghurt

⁴ 3000 yuan for new family who form family but does not have the grassland certificate, 6000 yuan for family who have the grassland certificate. All subsidies were provided by family but don't care about how many people in a family.

⁵ Interview dairy, Jun xu, July.31, 2008.

⁶ Because Caterpillar fungus(虫草)is so valuable, some bleeding accident were happened because of scrambling for Caterpillar fungus. In order to avoid incident, all regions where have Caterpillar fungus were divided by township unit or productive team unit. All the people were forbid to pick beyond the mark. Whoever outsider were not permit to come in, or they have to hand in some Cao Shan fee to local people. The local prescript was signed by Yushu prefecture government in 2006.

to passersby on the way from Zhiduo to Yushu Jiegu in Jun.2008. They were planning to help the 12 eco-immigration families, give them some construction or repair training.

The Longbao town government has another 73 family eco-immigrants who resettled near Jiajiniang, Jiegu town. They never thought they would have so much capability to help the 73 family eco-immigrants, Fa Gai Wei(发改委) would look after them.⁷

Compared to Longbao resettlement, Zhahe eco-immigrants were not so lucky, because their location is very far away, and it's very hard to make a living.

They never used to pick up Caterpillar fungus when they lived in their home grassland. Even some of the eco-immigrants were permitted by the local government to pick up Caterpillar fungus in different townships. Picking up the Caterpillar fungus is a skillful work. Some people hand in Caoshan Fei (the money to pay for picking up Caterpillar fungus in the area) but never find a piece of Caterpillar fungus. During the five year interview, we often heard this kind of complaint.

In the two resettlement sites there are not more than five people who have found jobs in the township, whether it was an odd job during a period of five years. All their food and fuel came from the grassland. They picked yak dung for fuel from a grassland nearby the resettlement site or bought it from nomads who has not left their homeland (留居户). Meanwhile, milk for summer and meat for winter consumption were provided by their relatives who still remained in the grassland.

For this kind of resettlement, even though they are not living in their grassland, they have not exactly moved off their grassland. Even though they lost some of their livestock, they still live on the grassland. All their consumption and income are from the grassland. What is a little different from before is that each family can get 6000 yuan or 3000 yuan subsidy each year from government.

Because of this problem, in the two resettlement sites, most of the eco-immigrants have to come back to their grassland to help their relatives as hired labors. Some of them have to feed two or three Yaks for daily milk consumption, since they still live in the grasslands, not in a town or a city. The people who still stay in resettlement sites are old or young, because it's more convenient for old people to see their doctors and for young children to go to school. Zhahe resettlement sites is becoming a type of rest house,(养老院), even if it is not very comfortable.

⁷ Longbao town leader interviewed, Jun xu, July.31, 2008.

2. "From Grassland to Countryside"(从牧区到县郊) resettlement model.

Yushu county Jiajiniang community (玉树家吉娘社区), Qumalai county Heyuan Cun (曲麻莱县河源村移民区) and Zhiduo county resettlement community (治多县移民点) are three typical sites.

The three resettlement sites, which are found on the outskirts of existing towns, were programmed as a part of towns. It was hoped that some of the eco-immigrants would become urban residents in the long run. On the other hand, eco-immigrants would enlarge the population of the town, and thus improve the town's development. Seven years passed; at the first resettlement site. There was no evidence or hint to show that the Jiajiniang eco-community was becoming a part of the Jiegu town. Issues about becoming urban residents were discussed for many years, and the same problem as the Jiajiniang eco-community belonged to Jiegu town. It was talked about as resettlement continued for almost seven years. The 10-year temporarily resettlement policy is a big problem. No one knows what would happen in 10 more years. Maybe it will be solved during the rebuilding after the earthquake disaster.

But for Qumalai county Heyuan cun and Zhahe county resettlement issues still have a long way to go for becoming one part of the town. So, in some sense, the eco-immigration program to improve the town' modernization is a daydream.

Jiajiniang community includes two parts: one was built in Nov. 2004 as the first resettlement pilot, in which 229 family eco-immigrants came from Shalaxiu town ship. The other part was built in 2007, in which 73 family eco-immigrants came from Longbao town. There are another resettlement sites which were built in 2007 and 2008 near Jiajiniang, named Dongnige, similar to Jiajiniang, so I chose Jiajiniang as an example.

As the first resettlement pilot and the nearest site to the center prefecture and the center province (880Km from Xining), the Jiajiniang has an attractive to local government, state government, even central government. More attention was paid to it, which was built as a model for the first four resettlement sites. Scholars and researchers came from different institutes, even different countries to do research there. Some companies received NGO funding to help them.

Training programs were held many times. Almost all of the young people had a chance to attend training classes. Such as car or motor repairing, sewing, constructing.....even a Tibetan carpet factory was founded in July. 2006, which was sponsored by the Qinghai Tibetan wool carpet factory, and is the No.120 produce workshop.

In the summer of 2005 and 2006, I talked about the factory with eco-immigrants in the Jiajiniang eco-community. All of them were excited. It seemed that their hopes were all related to the factory. I expected the factory would be on line very soon. The feeling of eagerness is not lower among the Jiajiniang eco-immigrants. But what a pity I will not have the chance to experience the exciting outcome. The next year, when we came back in the summer of 2007, we were told the factory is opened for only two months. It had to be closed. No carpet was finished.

"For a Nomad, becoming a factory worker is very difficultly. It is a long and hard process."
The manager of the factory said disappointedly, when talking about the factory.



(The manager of Tibetan Carpet Factory looking for his testimonials, July. 2007, by Jun Xu).As a manager of the only factory in Yushu county, he had won so many honors, but could not do anything for the Tibetan Carpet Factory.

Besides the government investment in the Jiajiniang eco-community, some NGO help from a Norway Foundation gave them some literacy training. The training program was deeply researched by The Norway Foundation themselves and by our observed data. Some young people are interested in learning Chinese, which was been taught by a young local Tibetan girl. The Norway Foundation provided 20 yuan per person each day for those who attended the class. But a few days later, they came only for taking 20 yuan, then left. And then most of them did not

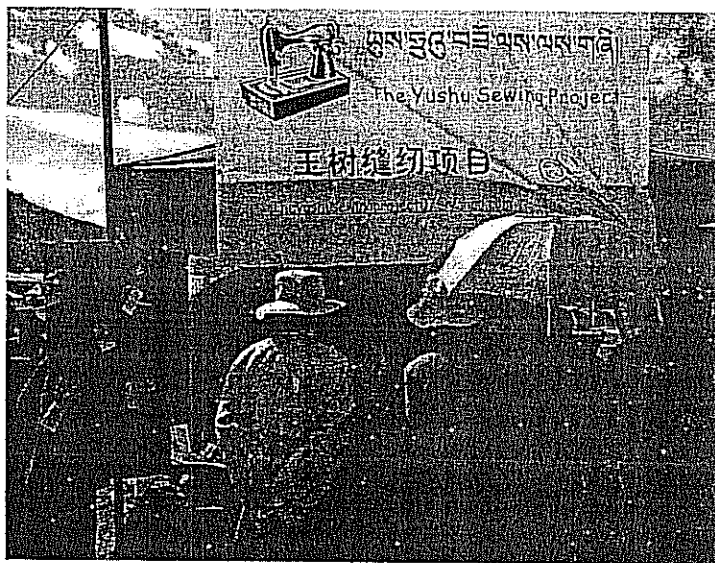


come to take the money.

(Language

training in Jiajiniang by Norway Foundation, August 2006, by Cicheng Rengqing)

Another project which was done by The Norway Foundation had the same result. Seven women were recommended to take sewing training, unlike the same training by the government. The Norway foundation provided sewing machine and materials for the students. This was to help them to make a living by sewing, but one month later, four women left, and in the end only a middle age woman insisted on working in the sewing workshop. This was because she has to feed 11 children (two of them are her grandchildren, because her elder son divorced) and her



husband fell ill.

(The Yushu Sewing Project of Norway Foundation, July.2007. by Jun Xu)

HeyuanCun set up in 2006 and 2007, 149 families resettled here. It was very near Qumalai county town, 270KM from Qumalai County to Yushu Jiegu, and more than 500KM to GE'ermu City. The eco-immigrants of Qumalai County have two choices to make, 149 families of them

chose to be resettled in Qumalai County_Heyuan cun; 240 families of them chose to be resettled in Ge'ermu City_Kunlun Minzu Wenhua Cun.

HeyuanCun was resettled two times, first in 2006, 118 families resettled and the second in 2007, 31 families resettled. Doing a much better job than Zhiduo County, the Qumalai local government had paid more attention to the resettlement arrangements. They founded a special administration committee, even though it was temporary, which is more helpful for eco-immigrants. Some training such as sewing, Mani stone carving and milk cow feeding was arranged,⁸ and some eco-immigrants were chosen to form a trash cleaning team to clean the resettlement community and hire themselves to Qumalai County town. Even a basketball team and a traditional dancing team were formed. The Local leaders were encouraged to hire eco-immigrants as housekeepers(保姆). Even though all these steps and efforts were done, there were very few people who could make a living. Going back to home grassland to make a living was the first choice of most eco-immigrants.

The following is a comparison of three resettlement sites, the Jiajiniang, the Qumalai HeyuanCun and the Zhiduo County. The Jiajiniang is the first because so many people from the government and NGO focused on its success. The Qumalai HeyuanCun is the second, because they had no chance to get more support except from Government. They had to make own decisions day by day as they went along. The Zhiduo resettlement community is the lowest achiever.

As the first resettlement was built in Zhiduo Countryside in 2004, which is one of the first four resettlement sites, only 16 families lived there. Two years later, 245 families were resettled, and some efforts were done by the local government such as guiding eco-immigrants to pick up Caterpillar fungus. As in other resettlement, some were trained as car repairmen or motor drivers, but none of the trained eco-immigrant could make a living. There were many billiards playing shops in Zhiduo County town along the street, which were owned by eco-immigrants, but very few people came to play. We interviewed half of the families in the resettlement. Most of them said that what they consumed came from their former home in the grassland, where their relatives helped them. Some of them wanted to go back home to find odd jobs and help the

⁸ 06年到08年,曲麻莱县分别组织了三江源生态移民科技培训工程项目,06年投资15万元,分别于9月15日和10月15日在县城河源村和格尔木市昆仑民族文化村举行了为期一个月的牧民转产技能培训,培训民族手工艺编织、玛尼石雕刻、蔬菜种植、奶牛养殖和农机具驾驶技术。当年有310名牧民参加了技能培训,22名干部参加了管理干部培训。07年投资44.6万,在各牧民委员会驻地、格尔木昆仑民族文化村及河源村培训444名中青年牧民好91名转产牧民为期20天的培训,08年又投资19.95万元进行技能培训。

remaining nomads to cut wool or herd cattle.

According to the project of eco-immigration, nomads who resettled outside the towns would have more chances to get a job in town, than those who were becoming urban residents. It was considered that was a best chance, not for the eco-immigrant but also for town' modernization.

Progressing is not following along the path of the original design: Jiegu Town, the center of Yushu Prefecture and center of Yushu County, whose modernization level was not high enough to absorb new labors. In Yushu Jiegu Town, the only milk company was announced to be set up in the summer of 2005. Before and after the company was announced setting up, nothing was changed: all the milk production still sold to local people. Meanwhile, the Jiegu Town's urban milk consumption is mostly from family producers, not from the company. After that, I never heard about the company again during my following year of research.

The only factory in Jiegu Town is "Yushu xian minzu wujin chang(玉树县民族五金厂)" (Yushu County Nation Hardware Factory), who was flourishing for a short time during "Si Pei Tao"(四配套), Four programs were carried out. They produced the Wang Weilan (网围栏) for the program, As Si Pei Tao program finished, they had to shift to The Third Producing(第三产业), build a hotel (Xibei Niu Binguan 西北牛宾馆⁹)and a restaurant, who opened for two or three years (2005-2008). During that period it afforded some jobs to eco-immigrants, but not many, not more than seven or eight people.¹⁰

Jiajiniang Yushu has a factory, and Jiegu Town was a cross road between Qinghai, Sichuan and TAR. It was an important business center at the cross road. Generally speaking there would be many more chances for employment than in that of Qumalai County and Zhiduo County. The fact was, the eco-immigrants who resettled in Jiajiniang, Yushu, Jiegu never felt their living was better than those who resettled in Qumalai and Zhiduo County. Very few of the Jiajiniang eco-immigrants have done Zangao(藏葵, chow dog) or Caterpillar fungus business. Most of the common eco-immigrants feel that life was hard, even though it was a better place for begging than in Quma lai or Zhiduo, because the population is much larger than in the other two County towns.¹¹ Some eco-immigrants resettled in Jiajiniang, Yushu, Jiegu Town with the same thought as those who resettled in Qumalai Heyuan Cun and Zhiduo County. Going back to their home grassland was considered to be the best way to make a living, The nomads who remained in the grassland were not struggling for food and they were used to helping those in need.

⁹ Xibei Niu Binguan was destroyed in April.14.2010 earthquake..

¹⁰ Cai ren, the manager of Xi Bei Niu hotel interviewed, Jun Xu, July.28.2007.

¹¹ Interviewed the pre-leader of Jiajiniang Sita, By Wang Qian, Aug.16, 2009.

3. "Cross District Resettlement" model (异地搬迁模式)

The following two resettlements in a different Prefecture are named Ge'ermu Kunlun Minzu Wenhua Cun (格尔木市昆仑民族文化村) and Changjiangyuan Minzu Wenhua Cun (格尔木市长江源民族文化村). The two Cross District Resettlements are famous sites which were planned to be built as Tibetan Traditional Cultural Sites, which could attract tourists who travel from inland Via Ge'ermu to Lhasa. At the same time, the resettlement in Ge'ermu City, which is the second biggest city of Qinghai province would absorb many more eco-immigrants as laborers, who would help them to make a living more easily.

Kunlun Minzu Wenhua Cun resettled 240 families in 2006 and 2007. The resettled villagers came from two townships of Qumalai County, which is much more accessible to Ge'ermu than to Qumalai County, even though their hometown is almost 500KM away from Ge'ermu. For the above reason, eco-immigrants would have more chances to make a living. In order to be more attractive, the resettlement site was named after a very famous mountain, Kun Lun Mountain, which sits nearby and is more familiar to tourists. A performing team wearing a traditional uniform was formed. They performed in Ge'ermu City in the Spring New Year of 2007, which was reported by the local newspaper and TV. Then CCTV reported it as a successful model of eco-immigration. That was the only chance to publicize their work, even though it was free and never perform again.¹² The same model of training was afforded to the eco-immigrants at Kunlun Minzu Wenhua Cun, just as in Qumalai Heyuan Cun. A Mani stone carving factory was found in the community, two or three families were working in it and making a living by selling their stone work. Compared with Heyuan Cun, it is true that Kunlun eco-immigrant had more chance to sell their Mani stone work. Some eco-immigrants bought car to use as Taxis, but a license was needed, which is so expensive for the eco-immigrant families. Furthermore, most of them could not pass the driving test. They tried to find jobs in Ge'ermu City, but traditional nomads seldom speak Mandarin, so making a living in the city is far more difficult than can be imagined.

Going back home to their grassland is extremely difficult, for it is 500KM away. It costs 300 or 400 yuan per person, one way, and would cost more if a person rented a car. To go back to the grassland for help is becoming more expensive from Ge'ermu City than from other resettlement sites. We found that Kunlun resettlement residents were struggling more for their survival. The 6000 yuan per family subsidy each year became much too limited for those who lived beside a big city. Some eco-immigrants had to sell their houses or rent them out and go back to the

¹² Interviewed the manager of Kunlun Minzu Wenhua Cun, Nan Xia, by Jun Xu, Aug.12, 2009.

grassland.¹³

We interviewed some eco-immigrants who returned home from the Kunlun resettlement site, began to help herd their relatives' yaks and feel hopeful, because the yak will grow up and bear young, and they will have their own yak some day.

Another resettlement named **Chang Jiang Yuan Cun**, with 128 families continuing 407 herders was set up in Nov. 2004.¹⁴ It was the first resettlement site of Ge'ermu City. Its members came from the headstream of the Chang Jiang (Yangzi River), a township named Tanggula which belongs to Ge'ermu City. Compared to Kunlun Minzu Wenhua Cun, a temporary resettlement, whose situation as a guest, Chang Jiang Yuan Cun, as one part of Ge'ermu City, has attracted much attention from the Ge'ermu Government. Its elementary school and its second township hospital were built in the village and various leaders often visited it and gave them some assistants. Even though many efforts have been made in Chang Jiang Yuan Cun, most of the eco-immigrants still have not been able to make a living in the modern village. Compared with all the other resettlements, The Changjiang Yun Cun is much better, but some of its immigrants have had to return to their home grassland.¹⁵

Conclusion

We visited many different resettlement sites and pasturing areas, interviewed many eco-immigrants in the above resettlement sites, many nomads who are remaining in their grassland, and some eco-immigrants who have returned to their home grassland. We followed some of them moving to city side with hopeful expectations, even selling out their livestock and their houses. We saw firsthand their struggle to make a new life as they resettled down in new place, puzzling over their future. Some were disappointed. Some were still hopeful. Some were shameful, as they talked about their lives and having to rely on their relatives who remained in grassland. Some have to return to grassland to do some odd job to earn meat for their children. This was cause for shame. The topics: why they chose to be or not to be eco-immigrants, how and what they have done to adapt their lives to living in resettlement areas were always hot issues.

According to the above description and analysis, even though both government and nomad

¹³ We interviewed some eco-immigrants who returned to home grassland, rent relatives yak to herd, but hopeful again, because the

¹⁴ Till Jun.2008, it has 128 families 445 people.

¹⁵ The other paper given more detail, I presented in SLTPA conference, Leipzig, Dec.2-3, 2009.

individuals made the decision to do their best with resettlement and to protect the grassland, San Jiang Yuan Natural Ecosystem, so far the experiment has not been successful for the nomads or for the government. Our five-year investigation showed that most eco-immigrants who resettlement in or near cities, have not be able to make a livelihood without grassland resources during five or ten years period of the San Jiang Yun Protect and Rebuild Program. On the other hand, no exact data exists to prove that eco-immigration has been helpful to the grassland ecosystem.