

# ASIAN HIGHLANDS PERSPECTIVES

VOLUME 6

*Edited by*

Charles Kevin Stuart

Gerald Roche

Tshe dbang rdo rje ཚེ་དབང་རྡོ་རྗེ། 才项多杰

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**Front Cover:** This photograph by G.yu lha (of her mother) was taken in Siyuewu 斯跃武 Village, Puxi 蒲西 Township, 'Dzam thang (Rangtang 壤塘) County, Rnga ba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture (Aba zangzu qiangzu zizhizhou 阿坝藏族羌族自治州), Sichuan 四川 Province. Siyuewu Villagers are officially classified as Tibetans and consider themselves as such, but speak the Rgyalrongic Lavrung language.

**Back Cover:** Workers rest while building the wall of a prayer hall using traditional building tools. Photograph by Zla ba sgrol ma, Sman shad Region, Sde dge (Dege 德格) County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Ganzi zangzu zizhizhou 甘孜藏族自治州), Sichuan Province.

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## FROM THE EDITORS

*Asian Highlands Perspectives* welcomes submissions that allow us to better hear and understand voices from the highlands of Asia relating their experiences—what they mean and how they are understood—all with a view to enriching our knowledge of this vast area. We hope to feature autobiographical accounts and studies of songs, jokes, tongue twisters, weddings, divorce, funerals, 'dirty' stories and songs, love songs, rituals of romance, illness, medicine, healing, clothing, music, rites of passages, orations, gender, herding techniques, agricultural practices, trading, flora and fauna, the annual cycle of work in rural communities, 'development', language, religion, conflict, architecture, education, apprenticeships, art, and everything else that informs us.

Prospective authors are welcome to use theory to interpret what they report, however, the editors are particularly interested in careful, detailed, contextualized descriptions revealing local meanings of what is being described, and how this connects with relevant publications. It is especially hoped that local scholars who lack access to educational systems emphasizing theory will contribute. All submissions are peer reviewed. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* is available in hardcopy as well as on-line. Published authors receive PDF versions of their published work.

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*Rin chen rdo rje*

## **Editors**

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THE BRAG 'GO WOLF BEGGING RITUAL  
(SPYANG SPRANG)

Mgon po tshe ring མགོན་པོ་ཚེ་རིང་། (Independent Scholar)

ABSTRACT

A ritual performed in 1999 in Dge rtse (Genzhi 更知) Township, Brag 'go (Luhuo 炉霍) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi 甘孜) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan (四川) Province is described. The ritual involved a man, his son, and his nephew taking a wolf skin, visiting nine villages, and asking for donations to appease the 'owner of the wolves'.

KEY WORDS

Rtse ri Village, wolf begging, ritual, Tibetan

## INTRODUCTION

A wolf begging ritual is practiced in Rtse ri dang bo (Zhiri yi 知日一), Rtse ri gnyis pa (Zhiri er 知日二), and Rtse ri gsum pa (Zhiri san 知日三) administrative villages (*xingzheng cun* 行政村), which are located in the south part of Dge rtse Township, Brag 'go (Luhuo 炉霍) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi 甘孜) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan 四川 Province. Locally, Rtse ri ma refers collectively to these three administrative villages; it is not an officially recognized term. The Rtse ri ma administrative villages were home to 182 households and a total of 634 people in 2005. All residents were Tibetan.

A century ago, there were only eight households living near the sacred mountain of Rtse, where the Rtse ri ma communities currently are located. Rtse Mountain was their tutelary deity and the vicinity of this holy mountain was their winter camp. Gradually, these eight households became the current, much larger community. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Rtse ri ma was divided into the contemporary three villages located in mountains where livestock were susceptible to wolf attack. Continuation of a livelihood based on livestock demanded that local people respond forcefully to wolf attack. The wolf begging ritual was held after killing the wolves as compensation to the *sde brgyad*,<sup>1</sup> the owners of the wolves.

It is necessary to examine more closely the particular circumstances of life in Rtse ri ma to better understand the

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<sup>1</sup> *Sde brgyad* 'the eight types' refers to a class of eight non-human beings and is a short form of *lha srin sde brgyad* 'the eight types of deities and demons' (Samuel 1993, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993). The exact composition of the eight types varies (see Samuel 1993 for a classification) but, in the Tibetan worldview, the term refers to all sentient non-human, non-animal beings, both helpful and harmful.



ritual's significance. In about 1999, Rtse ri ma residents earned their main income from yaks that provided butter, cheese, meat, and hair that was collected and used to make tents local people lived in during summer and fall. They lived in simple houses made of stone and wood in winter and spring. Houses were one-story with rammed dirt walls making three sides of the house and two big windows covering the front side. An opening covered by a thick curtain on the left side of the front wall. Inside was a large room, used as a kitchen and for sleeping. Wealthier families owned around one hundred yaks while poor families had ten yaks in 1999. No children from these three communities had attended school in 2005 because official schooling was not valued and was deemed too expensive. Furthermore, children played a key role in herding and other work for the family.

## SKINNING THE WOLF

In 1999 at the age of fifteen, I visited Uncle Her tres in Rtse ri dang bo Village, among the mountains in northwestern Dge rtse Township. He lived in a house in winter and a black yak hair tent in other seasons.

With my mother ('Tsham lha) and some other relatives, we reached Uncle Her tres' cottage on horseback. It had stone walls, and there was only one entrance and only one window in one wall. I saw smoke wafting from a pipe above the cottage as we approached.

Suddenly a child shouted, "Guests are coming!"

Uncle Her tres' wife, Aunt Sgron ma, came out and greeted us. I felt this was a bit strange because usually Uncle Her tres or his son, Rdo rje, greeted guests. I dismounted and looked around for Uncle Her tres and Rdo rje, while Mother and the other guests got off their horses and entered the house, but I saw no trace of them.

I entered the house and asked, "Aunt, where is Uncle

Her tres?"

"He is skinning a wolf behind that small hill," she said, pointing to a small hill facing the house. I rushed there without eating with Mother and the other guests. When I arrived, I saw Uncle Her tres and Rdo rje skinning a wolf.

"Uncle, what are you doing?" I asked, moving towards them.

"When did you arrive? Don't come close, just stand there," Uncle Her tres said.

"I just arrived. Uncle, why can't I come closer? I can help you skin the wolf," I said.

"If you come closer, the wolf's blood will get on you. Wolves are the livestock of *sde brgyad*, which are eight supernatural spirits. If the wolf's blood gets on you, then the *sde brgyad* will think you were involved in killing the wolf and will create obstacles and disasters for you," said Uncle, handing a knife to Rdo rje.

"What are *sde brgyad*?" I asked, sitting on a rock some distance from Uncle Her tres and his son.

"My dear nephew, to be honest, I don't exactly know what they are. But my uncle used to tell me that they are like mountain deities. If you bother them, they will cause problems for you," said Uncle Her tres.

I still did not understand very well about the *sde brgyad* but, for the moment, I was more surprised with the way Uncle Her tres began to skin the wolf. Generally, local nomads pull animals down on the ground and tie their feet firmly together when they skin them. However, Uncle Her tres had hung the wolf upside-down on a big pole and had started skinning from its feet.

"Uncle, why did you hang the wolf like that on the pole?" I said.

"To get the whole skin off the wolf," said Uncle Her tres.

"Oh," I said. I wondered, "Why does Uncle skin this wolf and why do they need to hide behind this small hill to

skin it?"

I asked, "Why do you skin this wolf? I mean, we can not eat wolf meat, right?"

Uncle Her tres put his knife near the pole, washed his hands in a wood bucket full of water, sat by me, smiled, and said, "Wolves kill our livestock so we sometimes kill them. But on the other hand, we believe that wolves are the livestock of *sde brgyad*, who can create disasters for us, so we hold the wolf-begging ritual. By holding this ritual as compensation for the *sde brgyad*, we appease the *sde brgyad*."

"Uncle, how did you kill the wolf? I heard that wolves eat people so aren't you afraid of them?" I asked.

"There are usually two ways to kill them. We find the den where the wolf lives, pile dung and other fuel in the mouth of the den, and set it on fire. The smoke wafts into the den and suffocates the wolves. The second way is to find the paths that wolves follow and scatter poisoned meat or *rtsam pa*. The wolves eat it and die. Actually, the second method accidentally kills other animals that walk on the path so we usually don't use poisoned food," said Uncle Her tres.

"Uncle, there are many dens around the mountains. How do you know which dens have wolves?" I asked.

"There are many signs that indicate where the wolves live. The dens among rocks usually belong to wolves and there is much wolf hair around the dens' mouths. And after the wolves give birth, the cubs stay at the mouth of the dens, enjoying the sunshine," said Uncle, standing up and helping Rdo rje.

I watched silently while they skinned the wolf. After finishing, Uncle spread the skin on the ground in the sunshine while Rdo rje chopped the carcass into pieces. Next, Uncle and Rdo rje put three stones near the river to support a pot to cook the meat.

"Uncle, why don't you cook the meat on the stove inside the house? The fire is better there and the meat will

cook faster," I suggested.

"No, we cannot cook the meat inside the house. The wolf is a very sinful animal. It is full of hatred and anger. If we put the meat over our stove, it will besmirch the stove deities and the vapor from boiling the meat will defile our house deities," said Uncle Her tres.

"If the meat is that dirty, then why do you cook it? We can't eat it," I said, handing Uncle the big pot near me.

"Yes, you're right. We can't eat the meat, but it is really good for our livestock, especially for the yaks. The wolf meat is very nutritious so if the yaks drink the meat soup, they will be healthier and become stronger," Uncle said.

"I see," I said. They began cooking the meat while I talked about my school life. After an hour or so, the meat was cooked. Uncle poured the soup into a big wooden bucket. Then they dug a big hole in the ground and buried the bones and the meat.

"Uncle, why do you bury them?" I asked.

"If we throw the bones and meat away, then other people will touch them unintentionally. Also, the meat has a very strong smell, so it will trouble some of the mountain deities nearby," said Uncle.

Rdo rje and I poured water on the fire while Uncle sewed the wolf skin to make a bag, put dried grass inside, and hung it up. We left the bucket of soup there to cool. We returned to the cottage with the skin, which Uncle hung near a corner of the house and commented that it would dry easily in the wind and sun.

## BEGGING

Three months passed. I went home from school one weekend to my home in Dge rtse Township Town and found Uncle Her tres and Rdo rje there. Uncle Her tres had brought the wolf skin, with pieces of multicolored cloth tied on its nose.

"Uncle, what are you going to do with the skin? Are you going to sell it?" I asked.

"No, my dear nephew, the skin is dry now so I came to complete the wolf begging ritual that I mentioned to you before. We're going to beg with this wolf skin," said Uncle.

"Why do you beg from others? Isn't begging a bad thing?" I asked.

"Generally it is, but we will beg with this wolf skin and everyone will notice that we are holding the wolf begging ritual. Begging in this case is not considered a bad thing. We must beg from people in nine villages. Only obtaining various food and items from a number of households will satisfy the owners of the wolf," said Uncle Her tres.

"I see. But why do we need to beg from nine villages?" I asked, sipping tea from Mother's bowl.

"I'm not sure why. From generation to generation we have gone to nine villages to beg. Elders say that begging from nine villages will satisfy the *sde bgryad* as compensation for their wolf and appease their anger. I'm not sure what the nine means and why we go to nine villages," said Uncle Her tres.

"Oh, by the way, Uncle, later when you go to beg, may I go with you?" I asked.

"Of course. Actually I need your help to carry the things people will give us," said Uncle.

After lunch, Uncle Her tres, Rdo rje, and I went to the village behind my home. Uncle Her tres carried the wolf skin on his back by holding the colorful cloths hanging from its nose. We slowly approached the village.

"Uncle, may I carry the skin just for fun?" I asked.

"No. I am the real killer of this wolf. Carrying the skin while we beg is like punishment from the owner of the wolf for being the killer," said Uncle Her tres.

"Why did you tie those colorful cloths on the nose?" I asked.

"The wolves' noses are like human eyes. By smelling, they find the traces of animals. Therefore, I tied these colorful cloths in the nose of the skin and hold it while I carry the skin. It's as though I am leading the way for the wolf, showing respect," said Uncle Her tres.

Rdo rje and I ran ahead while Uncle Her tres followed slowly, carrying the skin. Finally we reached the village. When we reached the gate of the nearest household, Uncle Her tres put the wolf skin in front of the gate, making sure the nose of the skin faced the gate. The Uncle Her tres loudly said:

ལྷོང་   ལྗ་   ཅུང་།   ལྷོང་   ལྗ་   ཅུང་།  
wolf   nose   hit   wolf   nose   hit

*(Satisfy) the nose of the wolf. (Satisfy) the nose of the wolf.*

After waiting a moment, a man opened the gate and gave us some food and then closed it again. Uncle Her tres chanted:

ལྷོང་                      ལྗའི་                      ལ་  
wolf                      nose.GEN                      direction

ཕྱི་རུ                      རྫོང་  
backward                      turn

*The direction of the wolf's nose (will be) turned backward.*

ཁང་                      ཕྱོག་                      མི་ལ་  
house                      upper                      people-DAT

ན་ཚ་                      འོང་མི་ཉན།  
disease                      come-NEG-FUT

*(May) disease not come to the people (living) in the upper (story) of the house.*

ཁང་	ཞབས་	ཕྱགས་ལ་
house	lower	livestock-DAT
གྱུར་གྲུབ་	ཡོང་མི་ཉན།	
disaster	come-NEG-FUT	

*(May) disaster not come to the livestock (living) in the lower (story) of the house.*

ཁ་ལས་	དགེ་དགོས།	རྒྱུང་རྟ་	དར་དགོས།
luck	good-IMP	worldly-luck	flourish-IMP

*(Have) good luck. (Your) worldly-luck (will) flourish.*

After chanting this, Uncle Her tres carried the skin as before and we went to the next household. On the way I asked, "Uncle, why did you say 'satisfy the nose of the wolf' rather than saying, 'please give us some food'?"

"This ritual has its own rules. I told you that a wolf's nose is its most important organ. If we satisfy the wolf's nose, we make peace with its owner. That's why our ancestors created this verse this way," said Uncle Her tres.

"You chanted another verse after they gave us the food, right? What does that mean?" I asked.

"That expresses appreciation to the family for giving food. That verse is full of good words and wishes," said Uncle Her tres.

"But if a family does not give us food or money, then what do we do? Does that interfere with our ritual?" I asked.

"No, it doesn't. If they don't give us food, then we chant this," said Uncle Her tres:

ལྷུང་	སྒྲིའི་	ཁ་
wolf	nose.GEN	direction

ཁྱེད་	ཚང་ལ་	སྐྱོར་
you	family	turn

*Turn the nose of the wolf (towards) your family.*

ཁང་	ཕྱོག་	མི་ལ་
house	upper	people-DAT

ན་ཚ་	འོང་དགོས།
disease	come-IMP

*(May) disease come to the people (living in the) upper (story) of the house.*

ཁང་	ཞབས་	སྐྱགས་ལ་
house	lower	livestock-DAT

ཁྱོད་གུད་	ཡོང་དགོས།
disaster	come-IMP

*(May) disaster come to the livestock (living in the) lower (story) of the house.*

ཁ་ལས་	དགའ་མི་ཉན།
luck	good-NEG-FUT

རྒྱུང་ཏྲ་	དར་མི་ཉན།
worldly-luck	flourish-NEG-FUT

*(Have) bad luck! (Your) worldly-luck will not flourish.*



"This chant is meant to curse the family. However, in the past, everyone gave food to those doing the wolf begging ritual because people were afraid of the curse and a family that refused would lose its social position and be labeled stingy," said Uncle Her tres.

"But if someone does not give us food and if we curse them, won't they get angry?" I asked, following Uncle Her tres and Rdo rje.

"No, they will not get angry, because this is part of the ritual. We only go to villages that honor this ritual, so everyone understands the rules. Moreover, no one likes to be called stingy," said Uncle Her tres.

On that day, we went to four villages to beg. Families gave us money and *rtsam pa* and other food. Uncle Her tres was right. No one refused to give food or money.

## COMPENSATION

The next day, Uncle Her tres and Rdo rje went to five more villages to beg while I stayed at home and finished my homework. In the evening, Uncle Her tres and Rdo rje returned with what they had been given.

"Uncle, what are you going to do with all the *rtsam pa* and other things?" I asked.

"I will give the money to the monastery and ask the monks to chant in order to appease the *sde brgyad*. Then I will invite a monk to chant *gsur*.<sup>2</sup> During the chanting, the monk will give all the *rtsam pa* to the *sde brgyad* by burning it," said Uncle Her tres.

"Uncle, how does a monk give *rtsam pa* to the *sde brgyad*? Does this monk know the *sde brgyad*? Why does the monk burn the *rtsam pa*?" I asked.

---

<sup>2</sup> Monks chant while burning *rtsam pa* during the *gsur* ritual to satisfy odor eaters.

"The monk gives the *rtsam pa* to the *sde brgayd* by chanting. *Sde brgyad* are *dri za* (odor eaters). The *sde brgyad* get the *rtsam pa* through the odor of the burning *rtsam pa*," said Uncle.

"What else must you do?" I asked.

"That's the end of this ritual. There is nothing more I need to do. We can keep the skin. We will soften it; cut it into a square, like a piece of felt; put cloth around the skin to make it the size of a bed; and then, old people like our grandmother can use it as a pad since it is very warm," said Uncle, sipping tea from his bowl.

## CONCLUSION

Although such villages as Ljog ri and Dgun 'brog in Dge rtse Township practiced the wolf begging ritual, I know no other places that this ritual played as prominent a role as in Rtse ri ma. Perhaps this is because most villages in Brag 'go depend on agriculture. The villages have few livestock and their concern about wolf attack is much less than herders.

In 2002, the wolf begging ritual was rarely practiced because herding had declined in importance and, with other sources of income, herdsman were less likely to kill wolves. Elders from Rtse ri dang bo Village said that many local people vowed before the local monastery to not kill or hunt any wildlife in 2003, and that hunting wolves thus stopped.

## SOURCES

Her tres (b. 1960) is an illiterate lifetime herdsman and a native of Rtse ri dang bo. He told Mgon po tshe ring about the ritual in 1999. Her tres is Mgon po tshe ring's mother's brother.

'Tsham lha (b.1952) is a graduate of Dkar mdzes Nationalities Cadre School. She told Mgon po tshe ring the history of Rtse ri communities. 'Tsham lha is Mgon po tshe ring's mother.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

B

Brag 'go བྲག་འགོ།

D

Dge rtse དགོ་རྩེ།

Dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛོེས།

G

Ganzi Nationalities Cadre School Ganzi zhou minzu ganbu  
xuexiao 甘孜州民干校

Ganzi 甘孜

Gengzhi 更知

*gsur* གསུར།

H

Her tres ཧེར་རྩེས།

L

Luhuo 炉霍

M

Mgon po tshe ring མགོན་པོ་ཚེ་རིང་།

R

Rdo rje རྫོ་རྩེ།

*rtsam pa* རྩམ་པ།

Rtse རྩེ།

Rtse ri རྩེ་རི།

Rtse ri dang po (Administrative Village) རྩེ་རི་དང་པོ།

Rtse ri gnyis pa (Administrative Village) རྩེ་རི་གཉིས་པ།

Rtse ri gsum pa (Administrative Village) རྩེ་རི་གསུམ་པ།

S

*sde brgyad* ལྗོངས་བརྒྱུད།  
Sgron ma ལྗོངས་མ།  
Sichuan 四川

T

'Tsham lha འཚམ་ལྷ།

W

wolf begging ritual ལྷུང་ལྷུང་།

X

xingzheng cun 行政村

Z

Zhiri er 知日二  
Zhiri er cun 知日二村  
Zhiri san 知日三  
Zhiri san cun 知日三村  
Zhiri yi 知日一  
Zhiri yi cun 知日一村

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LOCAL HISTORY IN A MDO: THE TSONG KHA RANGE  
(*RI RGYUD*)\*

Gray Tuttle (Columbia University)

ABSTRACT

A mdo local history is explored in this study of six little known monasteries along either side of the Tsong kha'i ri rgyud 'The Mountain Range on the Banks of the Tsong (River)'. This eastern frontier of the Tibetan culture zone has been neglected in Western language research, despite the important roles lamas and monasteries from this region played in Lhasa, Beijing 北京, and beyond. These monasteries are also critically important for their local communities, where they are vital sites for the maintenance of cultural identity, incorporating the teaching of Tibetan literacy, religion, and arts (painting, plastic arts, printing, and dance).

KEY WORDS

Tsong kha, A mdo, local history, religious history, Tibetan geography, mother and son (branch) monasteries, Tibetan Buddhism

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## INTRODUCTION

A broad history of A mdo has yet to be written in any western language, despite Tibetans having inhabited this region (roughly the size of France) since the time of the Tibetan empire in the seventh to ninth centuries. Few pre-seventeenth century Tibetan or Chinese sources specifically deal with the history of the area in other than a cursory way. Most Tibetan language sources from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries focus on the religious (often sectarian) history while the Chinese language sources focus on administrative (political and military) concerns. This article approaches A mdo history through the narrow lens of the history of six specific monasteries;<sup>1</sup> three on either side of the mountain range central to the northern A mdo region: Tsong kha'i ri rgyud. The Chinese name of the mountain range, Laji shan 拉脊山, might be interpreted as meaning 'the mountain range (that looks like a) spine pulled (out of the earth)', accurately describing its rocky ridge.

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<sup>1</sup> Dhī tsha, Dge phyug, and Ser dris monasteries in Hualong County, and Thang ring, Bā jo'i (Baijia 百家), Len hwa (the Lianhua tai 莲花台) monasteries in Minhe 民和 Hui 回 and Tu 土 Autonomous County.



Figure One. Tsong kha skyes ri/ Babao shan 八宝山.



The highest mountain in the range is the 4,400 meter Tsong kha skyes ri 'the mountain where Tsong kha pa was born' (known in Chinese as Babao shan, Eight Treasures Mountain). Tsong kha pa–Blo bzang grags pa (1357-1419)–was the founder of what became the Dge lugs pa tradition; his birthplace is in the northern foothills of this range, marked now by Sku 'bum (Ta'er 塔尔) Monastery.

Figure Two. The Tsong kha Range, visible from space as a dark ridge between the Tsong chu/ Huang shui 湟水 and the Rama chu/ Huang he 黄河/ Yellow River<sup>2</sup> in Qinghai, stretches from south of Xining 西宁<sup>2</sup> to Gansu 甘肃.



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<sup>2</sup> The color is yellow from silt that colors the water downstream, hence the name 'Yellow River' in Chinese.

Figure Three. Detail of mountains and valleys.



Although the Dge lugs pa tradition had outposts in this region from the late fourteenth century, it was only in the sixteenth century that it became pervasive in this area, thus the focus on monasteries of this tradition in this article.<sup>3</sup>

The central geographical feature around which this article is organized, the Tsong kha Range, serves as the northern and eastern border of Ba yan/ Hualong County,<sup>4</sup> and the southern border of Ru shar/ Huangzhong 湟中, Tsong kha mkhar/ Ping'an 平安, Gro tshang/ Ledu 乐都, and Bka' ma log/ Minhe counties.

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<sup>3</sup> There are strong elements of the Rnying ma tradition in A mdo south of the Rma chu.

<sup>4</sup> Officially, Hualong Hui Autonomous County.

Figure Four. Mtsho shar/ Haidong Region 海东地区.<sup>5</sup>



However, the monasteries (marked by pink dots in Figure Four, and labeled individually in Figure Six) examined below were not obstructed in their relations with one another by this mountain range because, before paved roads were constructed, steep and narrow passes were crossed on

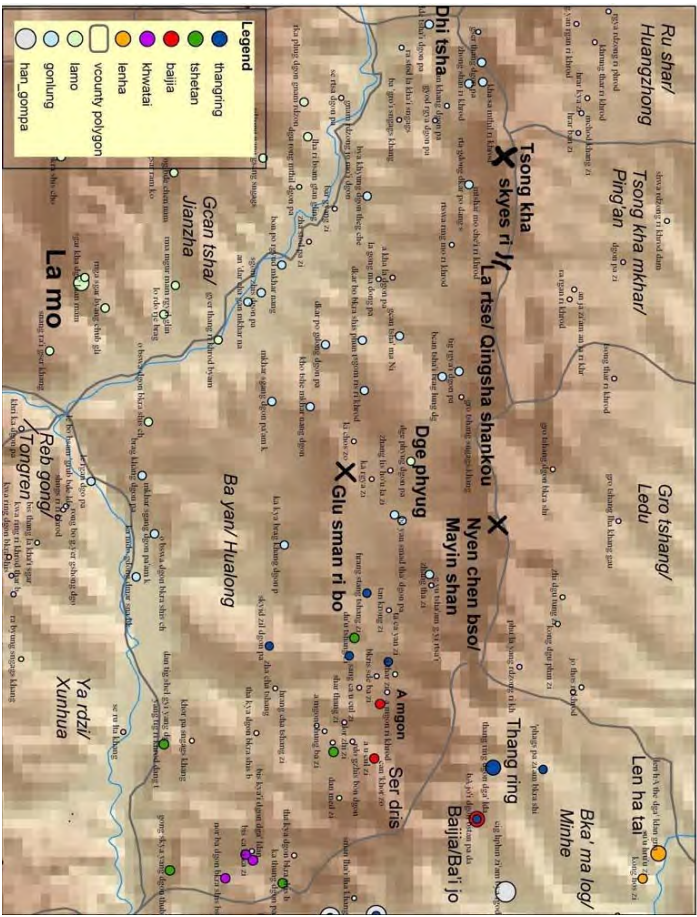
<sup>5</sup> Base map used with permission from Plateau Perspectives: <http://www.plateauperspectives.org/maps/prefecture/Haidong%20Prefecture.jpg>.

horseback and on foot. Monastery networks crossed both rivers and mountains. Moreover, this study of local history also reveals that such networks did not remain parochial but extended across the Tibetan Plateau to Central Tibet, Beijing, and Mongolia. Picking up the strands of local history thus demonstrates the web of Tibetan Buddhist connections that bound Inner Asia together.

Figure Five. *La rtse* at the summit of the north-south pass that leads from Tsong kha mkhar/ Ping'an County through the Tsong kha skye ri range; the pass name in Chinese is Qingsha shankou 青沙山口.



Figure Six. The Tsong kha Range as a county boundary; county names are in italics. Base map by Karl Ryavec.



In this map, monasteries are given the same color to indicate networks of relations of 'mother' monasteries (*ma dgon*, the larger circles: La mo, Tang ring, Baijia, Len ha tai) and 'son' monasteries (*bu dgon*, the smaller circles), which is how Tibetans describe the hierarchical relationship between the dominant monasteries and subordinate branch monasteries in a region.

This article brings together the information and images gathered from various visual and oral sources over the course of a tour in the area in the summer of 2006 and combines them with a preliminary study of the written sources available to generate place-based descriptions of a few monasteries in the A mdo region. Perhaps this initial study will inspire others to visit these sites, to write more about them and similar sites, and to appreciate the rich cultural heritage tucked away all over A mdo, virtually unknown to the outside world. This region was selected because it is so little studied, though it lies between two of the best known and largest monasteries in the Tibetan cultural world: Sku 'bum and Bla brang (to the northeast and southeast, respectively) that may be considered bookends to the region examined in this article.

The handful of monasteries described here do not fit into one or another rubric (monasteries associated with imperial Tibet or with Tsong kha pa) that will organize future articles I plan to write on this region. These monasteries collectively illustrate certain of the important local and translocal connections that have been understudied in Tibetology, especially those of mother and branch monasteries, and the relationships between Central Tibet's three largest monastic education centers ('Bras spungs, Se ra, and Dga' ldan monasteries) and these A mdo regional centers that were once tightly linked to Lhasa. Thus, several of the monasteries (Thang ring, BA jo'i/ Baijia, and Len hwa the/ Lianhua tai, and to a lesser degree Dhī tsha monasteries) examined here were historically 'important', involving

figures active in Lhasa, Beijing, and beyond. These A mdo monasteries were significant educational centers in their own right, with faculties in Buddhist philosophy and dialectics, tantra, medicine, and so on. They thus provided A mdo Tibetans, Mongols, Monguor (Tu), and Chinese (Han 汉) access to Tibetan Buddhist higher education. They used textbooks from Lhasa's central monasteries, which allowed certain students to advance to Central Tibet for higher studies, where they held such prominent positions as that of the head of the Dge lugs pa tradition, the Dga' ldan khri pa. Simultaneously, because of the multilingual status of the inhabitants of this cultural borderland, monks from this region also served at the court in Beijing and as teachers in Inner Mongolia. They were very much at the center of a nexus of Inner Asian relations that played a crucial role in linking Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian civilizations.

While small monasteries without major roles in Tibetan history have been studied outside Tibet proper, mostly by anthropologists,<sup>6</sup> they have rarely been studied in Tibet itself. Such other monasteries as Dge phyug and Ser dris south of the mountain range described in this article did not play a large role outside their immediate vicinity. However, these local monasteries are more important to Tibetan culture than the handful of truly massive and well-known monasteries because they are local repositories of cultural knowledge (education, language, arts, crafts, ritual practices, local history) that are central to what it means to be Tibetan, at least for the over seventy-five percent of Tibetans who still live in rural areas.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Excellent recent work in this vein include Ortner (1989), Mills (2003), and Childs (2004).

<sup>7</sup> Fischer (2005, xvi).



DHĪ TSHA/ LDE TSHA BKRA SHIS CHOS SDINGS  
DGON PA/ ZHIZHA SI 支扎寺

The original Dhī tsha Monastery, slightly down the valley from the monastery discussed here, was established as a branch of the nearby Bya khyung Monastery (where Tsong kha pa studied before he went to Central Tibet<sup>8</sup>) in the seventeenth century by the Dhī tsha nang so, who ruled over the ten clans (*zu* 族) of Dhī tsha.<sup>9</sup> Shortly thereafter the original monastery became the home of Ngag dbang 'phrin las (b. eighteenth century), known as the first Zhwa dmar (Red Hat) Pandita in A mdo.<sup>10</sup>

This Dge lugs pa incarnation series commenced around the same time that the Bka' brgyud incarnation series was banned by the Central Tibetan authorities from reincarnating, due to the tenth Bka' brgyud incarnation's

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<sup>8</sup> Tibetan: Dbus.

<sup>9</sup> Pu (1990, 94), Nian and Bai (1993, 53), and Bshad sgrub rgya mtsho (1995). The spelling of this monastery's name varies. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas 1982 [1865] consistently uses 'd+hI tsha' for this place name (the use of '+' conforms to extended Wylie, though I use the spelling 'Dhī' for simplicity throughout the article). The modern spelling used by the government is 'Lde tsha', which is also the name of the westernmost township in Ba yan County, at 2,500 meters above sea level. For further historical information on this monastery, see the modern abbatial lineage (*gdan rabs*) by Bshad sgrub rgya mtsho (1995), as well as the biographies of the fourth Zhwa dmar noted below. From his studies here, Dge 'dun chos 'phel was also known as 'A lags rdi tsha', yet another spelling: See his entry (P219) at the free on-line database and digital library, Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center: <http://www.tbrc.org>.

<sup>10</sup> This Zhwa dmar incarnation series should not be confused with the Bka' brgyud incarnation of the same name.

(Chos grub rgya mtsho, 1741/2-1792) involvement with the Gurkha invasion of Tibet. The La mo bde chen Monastery's fourth incarnation of the Zhabs drung Dkar po, Blo bzang thub bstan dge legs rgyal mtshan (1729-1796) awarded his own teacher (or possibly his teacher's reincarnation) the title in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The tradition of recognizing these Dge lugs pa Zhwa dmar incarnations continued, even after the Bka' bgyud pa incarnation series resumed after a one hundred year break with the birth in 1892 of the eleventh Bka' brgyud Zhwa dmar 'Jam dbyangs rin po che.

Figure Seven. The newly rebuilt Zhwa dmar bla brang.



Figure Eight. Image of the Zhwa dmar bla ma.



Not only did the Dge lugs pa lineage continue, it flourished, and the fourth Zhwa dmar incarnation, Dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho (1852-1912), founded the New/ Upper Dhī tsha Monastery with a philosophical faculty (*mtshan nyid grwa*

*tshang*) in 1903.<sup>11</sup> The fourth Zhwa dmar pa was born northeast of Kokonor (Mtsho sngon po/ Qinghai hu 青海湖), in Mda' bzhi/ Haiyan 海晏 County, a place with strong connections to La mo bde chen Monastery. After proving himself a capable student at La mo bde chen, Rong bo, and Bla brang monasteries, he was invited by Dhī tsha's local nobility, including the local leader, Bkra shis tshe ring, to found a monastery for the serious study of Buddhism.<sup>12</sup>

This monastery was originally founded as a place for retreatants (*ri khrod pa*) and for decades was a place of austere conditions and minimal exposure to bustling marketplaces and public rituals, such as had emerged around the more important pilgrimage and political centers of the famous monasteries where the Zhwa dmar pa had studied. Now that an excellent paved road and electricity have reached the monastery, some of this spartan quality has passed; I noticed young monks watching television at a teahouse in summer 2006.

Nevertheless, Dhī tsha has been known for and remains a place of intense study and impressive scholarship.

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<sup>11</sup> Hualong huizu zizhixian difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (1994, 726); the cover of this local gazetteer for Ba yan/ Hualong County features an image of Tsong kha skyes ri.

<sup>12</sup> See the entry on the fourth A mdo Zhwa dmar (P196) at the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center: <http://www.tbrc.org/>. The Zhwa dmar pa also received his vows and spent years in meditation at Rwa rgya Monastery (Lhag pa tshe ring and Ngag dbang chos grags 1990, 836). For a short Chinese biography see Hualong huizu zizhixian difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (1994, 725-726). For short Tibetan biographies see Bshad sgrub rgya mtsho (1995, 7-31) and Mun 'joms sgron me (2004, 247-278). See Thub bstan rgya mtsho (1981) 421-807 and Grags pa rgya mtsho (1990) for longer biographies.

Figure Nine. New (Upper) Dhī tsha Monastery.



Figure Ten. Debate courtyard with scripture quotations.



The monastery grew dramatically from the outset, its reputation bolstered by its strict regimen of teaching that attracted around 3,000 students before the fourth Zhwa dmar died, from what are today some nineteen different counties (Qinghai was not recognized as a province until 1928)—some from as far away as Gansu 甘肃, Sichuan 四川, and Inner

Mongolia 内蒙古—making it for a time one of the largest monasteries in the history of A mdo. With the death of the founder and the disturbances of the Republican period (民国 1912-1949) in Qinghai, the numbers declined to just under 800 monks in the 1940s. There were still nearly 600 monks when the monastery was closed in 1958.<sup>13</sup> As for intellectual training at the monastery, the students focused on religious texts and practices and philosophy/epistemology, and also studied poetry, ornamental terms, and Tibetan grammar. This explains why so many talented writers and thinkers were trained here. It also had a printing house from its early days, and remains an active publishing center.

The fourth Zhwa dmar pa had two of the best-known twentieth century Tibetans as his students: the thirteenth Dalai Lama (TA la'i bla ma, Thub bstan rgya mstho, 1876-1933) and Dge 'dun chos 'phel (1903-1951).<sup>14</sup> He was one of the official preceptors of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, who wrote his master's biography. It seems that the Dalai Lama studied with him in Sku 'bum after fleeing the British invasion of Tibet.<sup>15</sup> The Dalai Lama also passed by the monastery while visiting Bya khyung Monastery early in the fourth month of 1909 and may have visited Dhī tsha then.<sup>16</sup> The famous modern intellectual Dge 'dun chos 'phel

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<sup>13</sup> Pu (1990, 92).

<sup>14</sup> Hualong huizu zizhixian difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (1994, 685).

<sup>15</sup> See the entry on the thirteenth Dalai Lama (P197) at <http://www.tbrc.org/>. For details on their encounter in A mdo, see the chapter on this topic in Grags pa rgya mtsho 1990:655-715, which starts in 1904/5. However, Danzhu'angben (1998, 373-377) has no reference to the thirteenth Dalai Lama being at Sku 'bum in 1904/ 1905. Cf. Thub bstan rgya mtsho (1981).

<sup>16</sup> Danzhu'angben (1998, 387-388) reports his arrival at Sku 'bum in early 1909.

studied here in his childhood and was later respectfully known as 'A lags rdi tsha'.<sup>17</sup> He must have come to Dhi tsha when he was quite young, as the Zhwa dmar pa (d. 1912) is listed as one of his two main teachers. Dge 'dun chos 'phel would only have been eight or nine years old in 1912. Assuming he entered the monastery from the age of six or seven at the latest, his formative years as a youth were probably spent at this monastery where he took novice vows before leaving at the age of thirteen or fourteen to study at Bla brang Monastery in 1917. A final important intellectual who studied with the lama is well-known locally in A mdo-Sgis (sge'u) steng Blo bzang dpal ldan (1881-1944)—a principal teacher of the well-known intellectual, the sixth Tshe tan zhabs drung 'Jigs med rigs pa'i blo gros, also known as Ngag dbang dbyangs can rig pa'i 'dod 'jo (1910-1985).<sup>18</sup>

GCAN TSHA SRIB DGE PHYUG DGON/  
GEXU SI 格许寺

Dge phyug Monastery is located in eastern Ba yan County, just northwest of the county seat, in an area known as Gcan tsha srib 'the shady side of Gcan tsha', as opposed to Gcan tsha nyin 'the sunny side of Gcan tsha' to the southwest on the banks of the Rma chu. The authority of Gcan tsha's ruler, the Snang ra dpon po/ nang so, may once have extended into this region.

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<sup>17</sup> See his entry (P219) at the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center: <http://www.tbrc.org>

<sup>18</sup> Pu (1990, 93) and Nian and Bai (1993, 61). For further biographical references, see their entries (P229 and P1646) at the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center: <http://www.tbrc.org>. Nicole Willock of Indiana University is writing a doctoral dissertation on the latter figure.

Figure Eleven. Dge phyug dgon above fields of rape, with the rocky peak of Mount Gnyen chen bso behind.<sup>19</sup>



The monastery's history is poorly represented in printed materials. Although monks residing there in the summer of 2006 said that the monastery was founded in 1677 by the first Ma Ni ba incarnation,<sup>20</sup> the current spelling of the monastery's name does not appear in the nineteenth survey of Tibetan Buddhist temples in A mdo: the *Deb ther rgya mtsho*.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The Chinese name, Mayin shan 马阴, accords with the name Gcan tsha srid. Both *yin* and *srid* mean 'being in the shadow'. This peak is 4,295 meters high.

<sup>20</sup> See the descriptions of Bā jo'i dgon and Ser dris Monastery below for more on A lags Ma Ni pa bla ma.

<sup>21</sup> This oral history of the area is drawn from interviews with locals. Monks at Dge phyug Monastery cited the twentieth century autobiography of the local scholar, the sixth Tshe tan zhabs drung 'Jigs med rigs pa'i blo gros, for this information. See also Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas 1982 [1865]. Although this work, the *Deb ther rgya mtsho*, is often called the *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, this title was not found in versions of the text that I examined. The monastery is at an altitude of 3,000 meters.



A recent survey of Qinghai and Gansu monasteries noted only that the monastery was founded by 'Kula' Zhabs drung (Kula xiarong 库拉夏茸), that it later came under La mo bde chen Monastery, and that its leading lama was the Zhabs drung Dkar po, who was closely associated with the Snang ra dpon po mentioned above.<sup>22</sup> It is unclear when the relation between the 'mother' monastery and its branch (*dgon lag*, or 'son' *bu dgon*) monastery across the river was lost. This phenomenon of 'mother and son' relationships between large monasteries and their branch satellites is understudied. Often there is a relationship between the founder of branch monasteries and the mother monastery where he trained. This could also be described as a missionary relationship; a large monastery of a particular tradition influences the wider community. These networks have grown large in A mdo for such monasteries as La mo bde chen, Dgon lung, and Bla brang, indicating a relationship of power over the economy and human resources. These extended communities brought in funds, a workforce, and intellectual talent to the mother monastery. This power was also political for monasteries exercising the joint political-religious rule (*chos srid zung 'brel*, *zhengjiao heyi* 政教合一) common in Tibetan history.

In this case, there is a hint of connections to monasteries to the southwest, in an image on the altar, depicting an incarnation from Thar shul Monastery–La mo Yongs 'dzin chos rje (Taxiu si–Lamu Yongzeng fawang 塔秀寺–拉莫雍

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<sup>22</sup> Pu (1990, 101). In Xiejun · Guantai cairang (2005, 33) it is said to have been built "during the Ming dynasty." The 2<sup>nd</sup> La mo Zhabs drung Dkar po Blo gros rgya mtsho (b. 1610-?) of Mgur Monastery in Gcan tsha (whose successor later founded La mo bde chen Monastery), made peace between the two villages in Ba yan and as a gesture of appreciation Dge Phyug Monastery and the villages associated with it submitted to his administration. My thanks to Tshe dpal rgyal for this information.

增法王). I did not ask the resident monks about the image

Figure Twelve. Thar shul's La mo–Yongs 'dzin chos rje.



of this teacher on their altar, but it is notable that the fourth Thar shul rin po che Dge 'dun chos skyong rgya mtsho (1810-1884/ 1888) played a critical role in the fourth Zhwa dmar pa's religious life, including ordaining him at the age of eight. Based on the apparent age of the figure in the photograph, he might be Thar shul Monastery's Yongs 'dzin Blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho (Yongzeng–Luosangkezhujiacou 雍增–罗桑克珠嘉措, b. 1908) who, like the fourth Zhwa dmar pa, was born near Kokonor in

Haiyan County. If this identification is correct, it demonstrates a continued connection to La mo bde chen Monastery, as he was recognized as the reincarnation of the official preceptor (*yongs 'dzin*) of the seventh Zhabs drung Dkar po (1873-1927) of La mo bde chen Monastery and served in this role for the eighth Zhabs drung Dkar po. Moreover, one of the four resident incarnations at La mo Monastery is Thar shul sprul sku, whose monastery is a branch (*dgon lag*) of La mo Monastery.<sup>23</sup>

This monastery exuded a feeling of vitality, despite its rural location and small monk population. The Protector's Hall (*mgon khang*), for example, had recently been rebuilt and repainted in bright colors. The monastery had been destroyed in 1958; all these renovations had been accomplished, starting in 1983, with the leadership of a monk apparently associated with La mo bde chen—La mo grags rgan tshang, from O bswa dgon (to the south in Ba yan County)—and the support of the local village communities (*lha sde*; *cunzhuang* 村庄): Zhabs drung phyogs dra, Dro tsha, and Dge phyug. The role of such support communities begs further study.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Pu (1990, 196-197). There are at least two Thar shul monasteries. *Yongs 'dzin bla ma* is associated with the one founded in 1789 in Mang ra (Guinan 贵南) County. The other, located in Chab cha (Gonghe 共和) County, is associated with Rwa rgya Monastery. For more on La mo bde chen Monastery, see Yonten Gyatso (1994, ND).

<sup>24</sup> Excluding the last one, I am uncertain of these names' spellings. Apart from the first term, they seem to (roughly) correspond to Xiahula 下胡拉, Jiaozha 角扎, and Gexu 格许 (Pu 1990, 101). See Nietupski's forthcoming work on Bla brang Monastery for details on these religious communities (*lha sde*) support for monasteries they were associated with.

Figure Thirteen. *Mgon khang* with *sa bdag* flanking the door.



Monks from Sku 'bum Monastery created paintings on the new *mgon khang*, including two local protectors associated with nearby mountains. A low mountain in the middle of Ba yan County and one of the *sa bdag* (normally, 'lord' but in this case, 'lady of the earth') depicted on the walls of the *mgon khang* share the same name: Klu sman ri bo (Luwan shan 鲁湾山). *Sa bdag* are defined as beings who "dominate the soil and habitats connected with the earth, which is why they are easily disturbed and irritated by humans." They can also be beneficial protectors, provided they are propitiated properly. *Klu* or '*naga*' are described as:

half-human half-serpent beings who live in the ocean, semi-divine beings that dominate the underworld and water habitats such as seas, rivers and lakes; if offended they wreak vengeance by provoking infectious diseases and skin ailments.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Definitions of *sa bdag* and *nagas (klu)* are from Jim Valby's contributions to the Tibetan and Himalayan Digital

Figures Fourteen and Fifteen. Brahmanarupa Mahākāla<sup>26</sup> and *Sa bdag* Klu sman ri bo.



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Library <http://www.thlib.org/reference/translation-tool/>; see also Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1996 [1956], 290-298).

<sup>26</sup> Amy Heller has helped identify this figure as Mgon po bram ze gzugs (Brahmanarupa Mahākāla; see Heller 2003, 91-94; 2005, 220-221).

Figures Sixteen and Seventeen. *Mgon khang* door and the sacred mountain, Klu sman ri bo.





*Klu sman* are a class of these local earth deities that are produced from the union of a male *klu* and a *sman mo* (a type of goddess).<sup>27</sup> *Gnyen*, such as *Gnyen chen bso ri*, the other *sa bdag* depicted on the *mgon khang*, are an ancient class of gods in the Tibetan tradition whose position is understood to

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<sup>27</sup> Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1996 [1956], 202).

be between the earth and the sky. They are a threat to humans due to their evil nature, which explains why this local figure is depicted on the protector's hall, as this deity has been converted to a protector of Buddhism.<sup>28</sup> Thus this local monastery is a site for focusing the community's relations with their local environment, and especially the threats that the environment poses to their lives.

### THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TSONG KHA MOUNTAIN RANGE

Certain Tibetan Buddhist monasteries on the north side of the range have received attention because they were connected more directly to the Qing 清 empire, but their connections with Central Tibet are no less strong. Even so, these monasteries have been ignored by Western scholars, as noted below. The three main monasteries discussed in this section, Len hwa the (Lianhua tai), Bā jo'i (Baijia), and Thang ring are located in Bka' ma log/ Minhe County. Because the Rma chu and Tsonq chu river valleys on the north and east side of the range were more easily accessible to outside immigration over the centuries, these areas are more ethnically diverse, with Tibetans representing only a small minority dwelling at the higher altitudes. This does not mean, however, that only Tibetans practiced Tibetan Buddhism and supported the monasteries. Instead, and this is especially true of the Monguor, Mongol, and Han populations in this area, there is a long history of various ethnic groups supporting and practicing Tibetan Buddhism, even within a single monastery. The county is described administratively as an autonomous one with the dominant ethnic groups being the Muslim Hui ethnicity and the Monguor/ Mangghuer ethnicity. From the Mongol empire's incursions here in the thirteenth century,

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<sup>28</sup> Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1996 [1956], 288).



until the 1930s, this area was under the authority of the Li 李 family of Turkic (Shatuo) descent, though they were counted as Tu (natives/ aboriginal people) by the Chinese, and therefore now as Monguor.

LEN HWA THE/ LEN HĀ THE (LIANHUA TAI) DGA'  
LDAN GNAS BCU 'PHEL RGYAS GLING

This small monastery, now entirely devoid of its former grandeur, was likely named after its location (Lotus Terrace), perched above the Tsong chu where the valley narrows to form the Laoya xia 老鸦峡<sup>29</sup> 'Raven Canyon'. Lianhua tai Monastery was established in 1694 by Ngag dbang chos rgyal (Awang qujia 阿旺曲加), an incarnation known as Li kyā sku skye (Li jia hufo 李家活佛) from the ruling Li Tusi 土司 family mentioned above, which led this region under the authority of the Qing.<sup>30</sup> In fact, as Tibetan Buddhism became a locally powerful cultural and political force, there was often a close and enduring relationship between the ruling noble families and incarnations with estates at the important monasteries in A mdo. From the ten branch monasteries affiliated with Lianhua tai, it is clear that this monastery's reach corresponded to the domain of the Li

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<sup>29</sup> In Ledu and Minhe counties.

<sup>30</sup> The founder died in Chahar, Inner Mongolia, presumably while missionizing or fundraising (Pu 1990, 18 and Nian and Bai 1993, 106). Gruschke (2001, 45) devoted a paragraph to this monastery. See Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (1982 [1865]) for a line about this monastery written in 1850. The monastery is at an altitude less than 2,000 meters, which is relevant to its decline, as the river valley surrounding it has been densely settled by recent immigrants who have little interest in the remnants of the old monastery.

family, who dominated the river valley east of the monastery.<sup>31</sup>

Figure Eighteen. Lianhua tai Monastery on the shelf of land just above the Tsong chu river valley.



This monastery, like Bā jo'i Monastery described below, had four faculties (*grwa tshang*) for the study of topics important in the Tibetan Buddhist educational system: philosophy (*mtshan nyid*), tantra (*rgyud pa*), Kālacakra (*dus 'khor*), and medicine (*sman pa*).<sup>32</sup> A printing house produced texts and other important materials associated with such higher education. The influence of this monastery, like most of those north of the mountain range, declined after the destruction wrought by Muslim rebellions in the Tongzhi 同治 era (r. 1862 -1875).

In the face of a series of uprisings this monastery remarkably maintained its connections with Tibetan Buddhist higher education into the twentieth century, when the Danda Lama 丹达喇嘛 earned a *dge bshes* degree and thereby the right to reincarnate as the Li kyā zhabs drung (Li

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<sup>31</sup> This accords with what Schram writes about Li Tusi, i.e., that he guarded the Sanchuan 三川 region, "since 1930 called Ming huo" (present day Minhe) (2006 [1954-1961], 560).

<sup>32</sup> Pu (1990, 18).

jia xiarong 李家夏茸). This man, like the founder of the monastery and his later incarnations, was also from the Li Family. This was one of the last incarnation lineages to be established in modern times in China, a testament to the family's adherence to Tibetan Buddhism even in the face of modernist revolutions that had started to impact their homeland. The family's commitment to Tibetan Buddhism was also the motivating force for the rebuilding of both the philosophical college (*mtshan nyid grwa tshang*) from 1918-1920, and the estates of the four leading incarnate monk households. This was part of a trend of continued growth, as the monastery established a new branch monastery in 1916, and rebuilt another local monastery as late as 1937.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, the monastery continued to decline. By 1958 there were only twenty monks, with eighty *mu* 畝 (~ eleven acres) of cultivated fields as a tax-base.

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<sup>33</sup> Pu (1990, 2, 19).

Figures Nineteen and Twenty. Temple altar and the eighth or ninth generation Li Family Buddha (Li jia fo 李家佛).





The second generation of the Li kyā zhabs drung was a Han Chinese named Li Haishan 李海山 (1914-1989) from Gansu, one of a remarkable number of Chinese incarnate lamas from this region.<sup>34</sup> He returned to lay life in 1960, but when

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<sup>34</sup> See Tuttle (forthcoming): 'An Unknown Tradition of Chinese Conversion to Tibetan Buddhism: Chinese Incarnate

religious freedom was restored in 1982 he went back to the temple and oversaw reconstruction.<sup>35</sup> In July 2006, there were only three or four local monks, who were absent when I visited.

THANG RING DGON DGA' LDAN BSHAD  
SGRUB GLING/ LONGHE SI 隆合寺/  
SONGSHAN SI 松山寺/ TANGERTAN SI 塘尔担寺

This important monastery was established by Rgyal ba bla ma Bsam blo pa Dge 'dun rin chen (1571-1642), with the assistance of Dka' bcu Don grub rgya mtsho in 1619. Dge 'dun rin chen went to Central Tibet in 1590 and in 1599 held the position of the Rgyal ba bla ma at 'Bras spungs Monastery.<sup>36</sup> This position may have been linked to lamas whose duty and training were oriented toward bringing Dge lugs pa Tibetan Buddhist education to the northeast (to A mdo, the Kokonor Mongols, and later to the Qing court), as at least four figures were awarded the title *rgyal ba* (Sanskrit, *jina* 'conqueror', 'victorious one'; Mong. *ilaghughsan*) in the seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup>

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Lamas and Parishioners of Tibetan Buddhist Temples in A mdo' for more on this.

<sup>35</sup> Pu (1990, 18) and Nian and Bai (1993, 106).

<sup>36</sup> Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (1982 [1865]): "'bras spungs rgyal ba bla mar bzhugs". This text also uses the spelling: Thung ring dgon. See also Pu (1990, 24-25) and Nian and Bai (1993, 102).

<sup>37</sup> Dge 'dun rin chen was the first. The chaplain of Sechen Khan, the Mongol king of Kokonor, Rgyal ba chos rje Bkra shis don grub (b. sixteenth century) was the second. He served as the sixth abbot of Sku 'bum Monastery from 1638-1642, and established the teaching of abidharma (*mdzod*) and vinaya (*'dul ba*) there; see TBRC P4463

Figure Twenty-one. Rennovations at Thang ring Monastery. The Tsong kha Range is behind.



After studying in Lhasa for more than a decade, Dge 'dun rin chen returned to A mdo, and the fourth Panchen Lama sent Dka' bcu Don grub rgya mtsho to help him start this monastery and its philosophical faculty (*mtshan nyid grwa tshang*).<sup>38</sup> A little over a century later, one of the fourth Panchen Lama's disciples served as an abbot at this monastery and established a tantric faculty (*rgyud pa grwa*

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<http://www.tbrc.org>. The third figure to have the same title is discussed below, under the Bā'i jo/ Baijia Monastery entry. The final figure to hold this title was Ilaghughsan Lha btsun Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin, who served at the Qing court but later sided with the Oirat Mongol, Dga' ldan, against the Qing. He was eventually turned over to the Qing state for his betrayal of the Kangxi emperor's trust. In 1694 he was executed by the extremely painful method described as "slow slicing" (*lingchi* 凌迟 also known as "death by a thousand cuts") at the Yellow Temple in Beijing (see below), which seems to have ended the conferring of such titles. See Ahmad (1970, 276-282, 324) for details.

<sup>38</sup> For more on this Dge lugs pa education system see Dreyfus 2003, and extracts from this work, under the 'Education' tab at: <http://www.drepung.info>.

*tshang*) in 1723. The monastery was home to 900 monks at its peak in 1698 and there were over 500 monks in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup> The monastery used 'Bras spungs Sgo mang's textbooks and was a major contributor to the influx of monks that filled out the ranks of the world's largest monastery—Lhasa's 'Bras spungs Monastery—specifically through their connection to the college of Sgo mang.<sup>40</sup>

Georges Dreyfus (2006) notes in his 'Introduction to 'Bras spungs's Colleges', that most Sgo mang "monks came from A mdo and Mongolia," but to my knowledge, no one has explored the nature and details of how and from which monasteries they came. The importance of these northern A mdo monasteries is obvious through the nested hierarchy of sixteen regional houses (*khang tshan*) and twenty-two affiliated houses (*mi tshan*) in Sgo mang (a college that hosted 3,500-4,000 of the monks that made up the 10,000 monks of 'Bras spungs Monastery).<sup>41</sup> A regional house served as a regionally-based fraternity/ boarding/ educational facility and helped the monks from different regions (speaking often mutually unintelligible Tibetan dialects) navigate and assimilate to the larger institution. Of the sixteen regional houses, there were four major ones: Bsam blo, Har gdong, Gung ru, and Bra ti. All four of these were closely linked to A mdo, as well as to the Mongol communities to the north, whose monks often studied in A mdo before moving to Central Tibet.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Pu (1990, 25), citing *Deb ther rgya mtsho* (*Anduo zhengjiao shi* 安多政教史).

<sup>40</sup> For more on 'Bras spungs, see Georges Dreyfus's online essays and map: 'Introductory Essay' and 'An Introduction to 'Bras spungs's Colleges' at <http://www.drepung.info>.

<sup>41</sup> See Goldstein (1989, 30 n. 41).

<sup>42</sup> Gung ru is also closely associated with A mdo, especially through association with the Gung ru mkha' 'gro female incarnation series (see Faggen 2010).



The Bsam blo regional house had almost half (ten) of the affiliated houses (*mi tshan*) of 'Bras spungs as follows: Thang ring, Ba jo, Len hwa the, Dgon lung, Btsan po, Bis mdo, Sku' bum, Gro tshang, Lam pa, and Khal kha. Of these, all but the last two are named after monasteries in A mdo, mostly north of the Rma chu. The first three are all in Bka' ma log (Minhe) County.<sup>43</sup> These residence houses were probably once located near the Bsam blo regional house, where the 'Northern Ruins' are now marked on Georges Dreyfus' interactive map of 'Bras spungs Monastery on the Tibetan and Himalayan Library website.<sup>44</sup> I do not know the history of how these affiliations were formed, but it seems possible that the 'Bsam blo' that serves as the name of the regional house might be linked to the founder of Thang ring Monastery, Bsam blo pa Dge 'dun rin chen, or another A mdo ba, Bsam blo Sbyin pa rgya mtsho (1629-1695), who served as the forty-sixth Dga' ldan khri pa (1692-1695).<sup>45</sup> The origin

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<sup>43</sup> Mtsho kha, La mo, Wa shul, Btsan po, and Dgon lung are other affiliated houses at Sgo mang linked to monasteries in A mdo. The latter two had separate *mi tshan* in the Har dgong regional house, hosting the nomad area monks that came to these monasteries. See Dreyfus' <http://www.thlib.org/places/monasteries/drepung/essays> article. At least two of the eight mid-sized regional houses are linked to A mdo (Klu 'bum and Zung chu), and at least two of the four small regional houses are also linked to A mdo (Chu bzang and The bo).

<sup>44</sup> See 'Spaces' tab, at the Drepung website <http://www.drepung.info>.

<sup>45</sup> Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (2002, 365-366). One of these Bsam blo bla ma may have played an important role in helping incorporate the philosophical colleges, which had developed in these eastern reaches of A mdo over the century before his tenure at Dga' ldan, into the Central Tibetan Dge lugs pa educational system.

of this term may date earlier to one of the founders of Gro tshang Monastery (established 1392) named Bsam gtan blo gros ('Bsam blo' for short). He and his uncle, who also helped found Gro tshang Monastery, were both disciples of Tsong kha pa and later served as imperial preceptors at the Ming 明 court, a key sponsor of their monastery, which essentially ruled this region for centuries.<sup>46</sup>

The network of monasteries that was affiliated with Thang ring Monastery (see Figure Twenty-one above) would have made it a perfect vehicle for funneling young men to 'Bras spungs in Lhasa. Thang ring served as the 'mother' monastery to twenty-four 'son' monasteries, most of which were nearby, although some were as distant as the Silk Road corridor in Gansu, near Liangzhou 凉州 (present day Wuwei 武威). Two of these monasteries—Len hā the/ Lianhua tai and Bā jo'i/ Baijia—also each had their own set (fourteen and seven, respectively) of affiliated monasteries. Thus in total, Thang ring at its peak could draw on the collective resources of forty-three monasteries and their associated donor communities, thus dominating the intellectual and economic life of this eastern march of A mdo. With the United States as a point of comparison, it might have acted as a magnet school or something akin to boarding/ preparatory schools in the Northeast, except that the relations with the Tibetan equivalents of the Ivy League (the three great monasteries in Lhasa) were fixed and strictly regulated.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas 1982 [1865], 22. Cf. <http://www.tbrc.org> P10316.

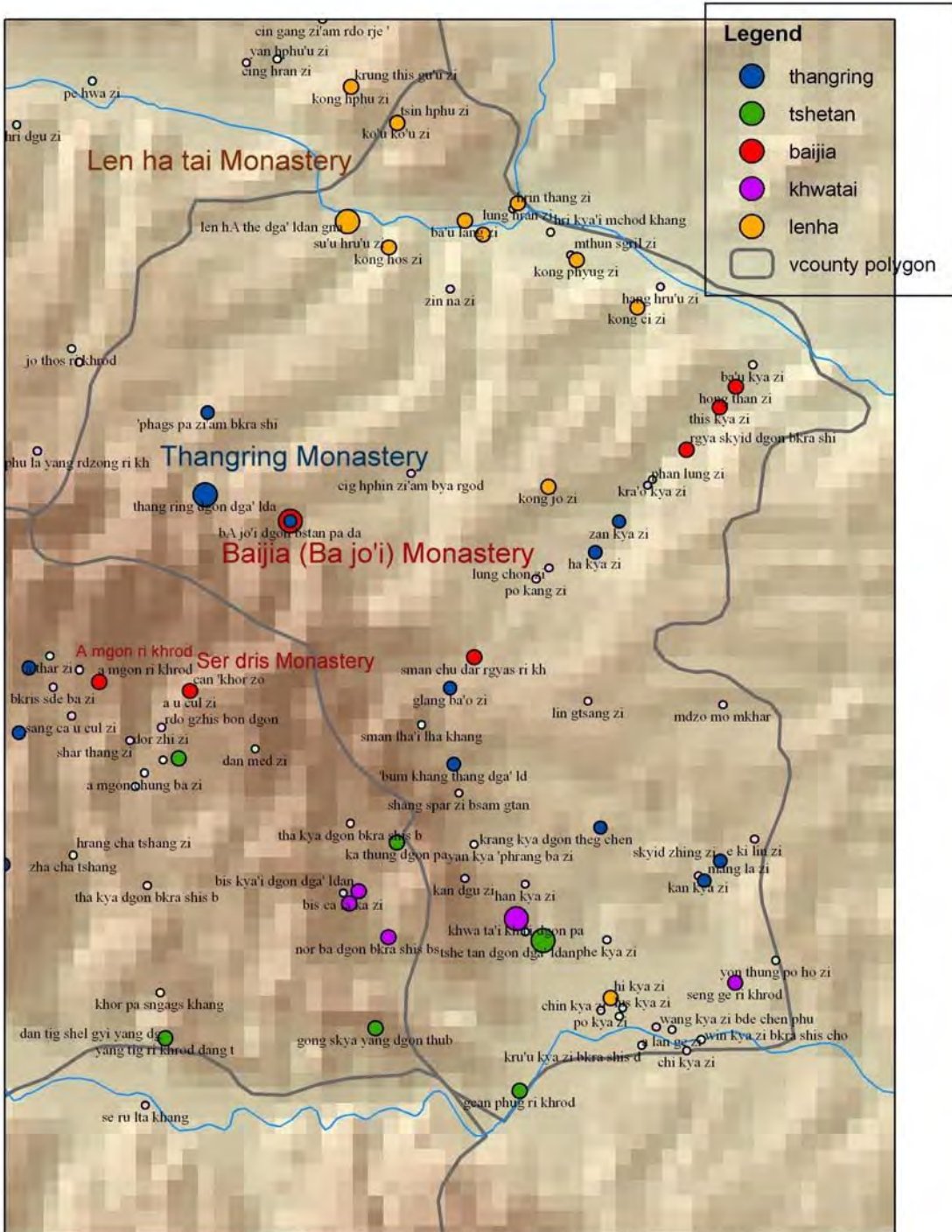
<sup>47</sup> For more information on this, see Dreyfus' article on <http://www.thlib.org/places/monasteries/drepung/essays/>:

The authorities of each college jealously kept a detailed register of all the monasteries with which they had a connection, and monks who desired to spend time at the

Figure Twenty-two (facing). Len hā the/ Lianhua tai Monastery is located just north of the Huang shui/ Tsong chu River. The other two 'mother' monasteries (Tshe tan and Khwa ta'i kha'i dgon) were smaller networks with only local affiliations and are not discussed here.

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three seats would be automatically directed to the college with which their particular local monastery was connected.



Bka' ma log/ Minhe County Map of "Mother" and "Son" Monasteries map by Karl Ryavec

BĀ JO'I/ PĀ GRU (= BAZHOU 巴州/ BAIJIA) DGON  
BSTAN PA DAR RGYAS GLING/ HONGSHAN SI 红山寺  
/宏善寺/弘善寺/洪山寺

The sources disagree over precisely when this monastery was founded. Some evidence suggests that a temple with such a name existed in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), since a place named Hongshan si was destroyed by Tibetan nomads in 1519, and later rebuilt. It possibly was established in the Ming Dynasty by a *bla ma* associated with Gro tshang (Qutan 瞿曇) Monastery.<sup>48</sup> According to one source, such imperial support continued during the Qing when the Kangxi 康熙 emperor (r. 1661-1722) enfeoffed the monastery's incarnation series in the official post of Sovereign King of the Far East (Yuandong zizaiwang 远东自在王), gave the temple an inscribed board (*bian* 匾), a sword (*jian* 剑), a seal (*yin* 印), 500 taels (annually) for 'incense and lamps' (funds for the maintenance of ritual activity), and ordered that this temple be renovated.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Schram (2006 [1957], 347) noted that a temple with this name was built by Qutan si 瞿曇寺 with the funds and resources granted it by the Ming, citing the *Annals of Xining* (ch. 15, p. 13). Having consulted the section of the Ming era *Annals of Xining* (*Xining wei zhi* 1993 [1657], 154-157), which does not mention Hongshan si, it is clear that Schram was using the *New Annals of Xining* (*Xining fu xin zhi* 1982 [1746], 377), which associates Hongshan si with Qutan si only in proximity on the page. For the destruction in 1519, see Schram (311, citing the *Annals of Xining*, ch. 31, p. 15a).

<sup>49</sup> Pu (1990, 27). A stele at one of the monastery's lama's graves recorded that early in the reign of Ming Yongle, four central Tibetan monks came to the Ming court to assist in ruling the country (*fuzuo mingting* 辅佐明廷), and due to their obvious sincerity they were rewarded, one being given the title: Gaunding puhui hongshan da guoshi 灌顶普慧弘灌

Figures Twenty-three and Twenty-four. Modern Trilingual and Kangxi (1695) Inscription Boards. The latter reads: Clouds of Kindness Hall (Ciyun si 慈雲殿) and is being refitted with a traditional style frame after being hidden (as a door or table) during the Cultural Revolution.



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顶普慧弘善大国师 (Great Dynastic Preceptor of Great Goodness, Universal Wisdom (Capable of Granting) Abhisheka). Possibly someone given this name, including the phrase meaning 'great goodness' (*hongshan* 弘善), might have lacked a connection to the temple, given the phrase's generic nature. However, this source at least suggests continuity between the person given this title and the monastery, from the Ming into the Qing era. The term 'Zizaiwang' can also mean 'independent king' and "Ishvaradeva, a title of Shiva, king of the devas . . . also a title of Vairocana" (Soothill and Hodous 1976 [1937], 218; for a digital version of the dictionary see: <http://www.acmuller.net/soothill/soothill-hodous.html>).



Whatever its earliest origins, the present Dge lugs institution traces its beginnings to the early Qing Dynasty, when the monastery came under the control of one of the most important and least well-known Tibetan Buddhists to have been involved with the Qing: a man known only for certain by his title, Gu shri Se chen chos rje (Mong. Guyshi Setsen Tsorji, combining the Chinese title 'national preceptor' (Mong. Guyshi = *guoshi* 国师) with the Mongol for 'wise' (Setsen) and the Tibetan for 'Master of the Teachings' (Mongol, Tsorji = Tib. chos rje), who seems to have been a person of Mi nyag extraction born in A mdo.<sup>50</sup> The earliest source of information for this figure is the 1662 *Erdeni-yin tobci* by Saghang Secen, which says that he was a *guoshi*, a *darqan* (Tib. *dar khan*, designating a tax-free status accorded monks and nobles by Mongol khans), and the son of a *sngags pa* (a *mantrika* or *mantrin*, a tantric lay practitioner in the Tibetan tradition).<sup>51</sup> These multiple terms for this single

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<sup>50</sup> The fifteenth incarnation of this lineage was apparently living at Sku 'bum Monastery in 2006.

<sup>51</sup> Saghang Secen = Ssanang Ssetsen (1990 [1662] v I, 178).

figure illustrate why he was to become such an important intermediary figure between the Tibetan, Mongol, and Chinese cultures and polities that intersected where he was born. He was truly a frontier figure, with a recognized status from each of the major cultures that overlapped in his native land. Given his later success at the Qing courts in Mukden and Beijing, he was surely multilingual as well, speaking Mongol and Tibetan at least, and possibly also Manchu and Chinese. He likely grew up in Mongol-dominated Amdo after the incursions of Altan Khan and other Mongols in the 1560s and '70s, which brought Dge lugs pa Buddhism to the fore in this region, with the support of the third and fourth Dalai Lamas and the various later Mongol rulers of the region. Se chen chos rje was also given the title *ilaghughsan* (Tib. *rgyal ba*) by the fifth Dalai Lama and the fourth Panchen Lama around 1640 when they dispatched him as an envoy to the Manchu king.

We first learn the founder's personal name in an early nineteenth century source, which gives Se chen chos rje Rgyal ba'i 'phrin las pa Sbyin pa rgya mtsho.<sup>52</sup> Later sources

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<sup>52</sup> This source (Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas 1982 [1865], 180) reports he was born near Nyi thang dgon, in the Kar (Mgar?) lineage. Pu (1990, 27) assumes that Nyi thang dgon is in Central Tibet, but I see no evidence of this. Ahmad (1970, 315-320) described one Zhabs drung of Nimatang (尼嘛唐 = Tibetan: Nyi [ma] thang) as being an envoy between the Kangxi emperor and the Lhasa court in 1696-1697, at precisely the same time the junior official, Sbyin pa rgya mtsho, was serving in this role. Thus, it is possible they were the same person, though he would have been quite old by this time. Ahmad's sources and local informants need to be consulted to resolve this possibility of identification. There is a monastery called Nyi [ma] thang Bkra shis dar rgyas gling in Dkar mdzes rdzong (Ganzi xian 甘孜县), Sichuan (see Krung go'i bod kyi shes



conflate Se chen chos rje Sbyin pa rgya mtsho with Bsam blo Sbyin pa rgya mtsho (1629-1695) who served as the forty-sixth Dga' ldan khri pa (1692-1695), probably based on the fact that this prominent monk was born on the north side of the Rma chu.<sup>53</sup> Dating Se chen chos rje's birth to 1629 is problematic, however, for Guoshi Se chen chos rje was reputed to have first come to Lhasa in 1625, sent his first envoy to the Qing court in 1637, and personally departed for the court in 1640, where he arrived in 1642.<sup>54</sup> This problem will remain unresolved until further information is available, but it seems likely that Se chen chos rje Rgyal ba'i 'phrin las

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rig zhib 'jug ste gnas kyi chos lugs lo rgyus zhib 'jug so'o dang krung go bod brgyud nang bstan mtho rim slob gling bo brgyud nang bstan zhib 'jug khang, zi khrod zhing chen dkar mdzes khul chus lugs cud (1995, vol. 2: 69). [I thank Françoise Robin for this reference.]

<sup>53</sup> The first source I have found that makes this association is the *Sku 'bum gdan rabs* by Gser thog Blo bzang tshul khri rgya mtsho (1982 [1881], 281). See also Pu (1990, 27); and repeated as oral history at the monastery. On the forty-sixth Dga' ldan khri pa Sbyin pa rgya mtsho and his birth north of the river, see Sde srid Sang rgyas rgya mtsho (1989 (1698), 95) and Grags pa 'byung gnas and Blo bzang mkhas grub (1992, 818), which gives Se mdo as his birthplace. Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (2002, 365-366) says he was born in Bis mdo (south of the river). None of these sources connects him to this monastery. Ahmad (1970, 311-320) describes an envoy of the Kangxi emperor, the junior official Sbyin pa rgya mtsho, as having come to Lhasa in 1696 bearing a message from the Qing, which confirms that this figure could not have been the Dga' ldan khri pa who had died a year earlier.

<sup>54</sup> For details of his travels and references to him in the fifth Dalai Lama and fourth Panchen Lama's biographies and in the *Qing shi lu*, see Ahmad (1970, 121-122, 158-162).

pa Sbyin pa rgya mtsho cannot be positively identified with the forty-sixth Dga' ldan khri pa Sbyin pa rgya mtsho based on current evidence.

In any case, someone called Se chen chos rje was sent as an envoy to the Jurchen King by the Dalai and Panchen lamas in 1640, arrived at the Manchu court in Mukden in the tenth month of 1642 and suggested to the king that he would only be worthy to rule the world if he were to fulfill his duties as the protector and donor of the lama. A Mongol history written in 1662 says that the Se chen chos rje was elevated as a high lama already in 1643:

The (Bogda Sechen) Qaghan personally went out to meet the envoy, bowed to him, and escorted him to his capital Mukden, where he raised the Ilaghughsan Khutughtu to (the status of) his supreme lama.<sup>55</sup>

When the Qing successfully captured Beijing in 1644, according to a Tibetan source, "because the kingdom was at peace, the King honored him as his royal chaplain."<sup>56</sup> The rewards of such a position were substantial—support for two temple complexes in Beijing and his family was enfeoffed with the monastery and its support communities under consideration here, in A mdo.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Schmidt (1961 [1829], 289-290; Ssanang Ssetsen (1990 [1662], 184-1855; and Ahmad (1970, 121, 159).

<sup>56</sup> Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (1982 [1865], 180). Relations with the Qing court were also noted in 1648, when "Sangphu and Rabjampa and twenty other lamas came from Bazhou (Bazhou monastery was in present day Minhe County...)" Deng (2003, 16).

<sup>57</sup> Just as these temples sat 'above' (north) of the emperor's residence, according to a monk at this monastery, the name Bai 白 was taken from the radical above the radical for king (王) in the character 皇 for emperor, thus demonstrating

The temple complexes built for him in Beijing are two of the most important Tibetan Buddhist monuments in the city today. The first was White Stupa (Mchod rten dkar po, Baitai 白塔) and the Yong'an Temple 永安寺 complex that stretches out below it, located then inside the Forbidden City, and now part of Beihai 北海 Public Park. The second is the Yellow Temple complex 黄寺 (Gser khang), which served as residence for the visits of the fifth and thirteenth Dalai lamas, as well as the final resting place for the sixth Panchen Lama.

It is located outside the old walls of the city to the north and presently houses China's Tibetan Language Division of the Higher Buddhist Studies Institute (Zhongguo zangyu xi gaoji foxueyuan 中国藏语系高级佛学院, Krung go Bod brgyud mtho rim nang bstan slob gling) founded by the tenth Panchen Lama in 1987.

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respect, in word, as the Shunzhi emperor had on the ground with his support for the monastery.

Figures Twenty-five and Twenty-six. Beihai Public Park's White Stupa with the Yong'an 永安 Monastery below (2006).





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Figure Twenty-seven. The western Yellow Temple complex with the sixth Panchen Lama Stupa (1994).

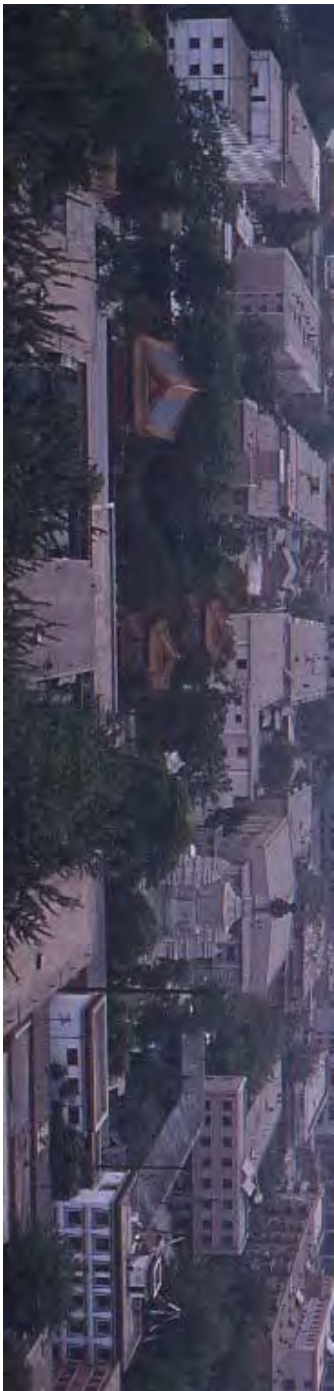


Figure Twenty-eight. The Bā jo'i dgon/ Hongshan si newly reconstructed main temple hall.



Support for the A mdo monastery was closely linked to the Shunzhi 顺治 emperor's honoring Se chen chos rje with the title *guanding guoshi* 灌顶国师 and the monastery with an inscribed horizontal board reading 'Imperially Established Hongshan Temple' (Chijian Hongshan si 敕建弘善寺), as well as some of the Shunzhi emperor's (r. 1644-1661) own clothes, prayer beads, and so on.<sup>58</sup> As noted above, the Kangxi emperor also donated an inscribed board to hang at the entrance of what was probably a newly added or renovated temple hall in 1695. The monastery was still important to the Qing court in 1715, when the Kangxi emperor indicated that he wanted the young incarnation, who would later be fully recognized as the seventh Dalai Lama, to be brought to Hongshan<sup>59</sup> 红山 Monastery to protect him from the possible threat of Lha bzang Khang who was ruling

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<sup>58</sup> Pu (1990, 27).

<sup>59</sup> The first monastery had been built near Hongshi shan 红石山 (Red-stone Mountain) (Pu 1990, 27).

in Lhasa and supporting his rival claimant to the status of the Dalai Lama. In the end, the Kokonor Mongols, who were still largely independent of the Qing Dynasty at this time, negotiated for the boy to be sent to Sku 'bum Monastery, where he could be closely watched.<sup>60</sup>

As for the community support and local influence of the monastery, aside from the 500 taels annually given by the Qing court, the monastery in the hands of the Bai family was essentially given political and religious authority (*zhengjiao daquan* 政教大权) by the Qing to rule a vast territory.<sup>61</sup> For instance, during the Qing era, the monastery had over 1,000 acres (7,200 *mu*) of 'incense grain land' (*xiang liang di* 香粮地) as a tax base, essentially dominating the upper parts of the valleys of north central Bka' ma log (Minhe) County. With these resources, the monastery was able to support four great educational faculties (*xueyuan* 学院, *zhazang* 扎仓= Tib. *grwa tshang*) with 500 monks at its peak and over 200 monks during the Daoguang reign (1821-1851).<sup>62</sup> However, the monastery suffered destruction twice in the late nineteenth century during Muslim rebellions. It was rebuilt further up the valley after 1895; by 1932 there were only forty monks. Nevertheless, research in the 1950s found that the monastery retained seven branch monasteries or retreat centers; two in Ba yan County (discussed below). This may partly explain why the new monastery was rebuilt so close to

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<sup>60</sup> Petech (1950, 18), citing both *Shengzu shilu* (ch. 263, ff. 4b-5b) and Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje's 1759 biography of the seventh Dalai Lama (f 24b).

<sup>61</sup> Baijia zang si 白家藏寺 is an old name for this monastery linking the Tibetan name for 'house/' 'family' (*tshang*) with the Chinese equivalent (*jia* 家; see Pu 1990, 27).

<sup>62</sup> Bā jo'i Monastery probably had the basic colleges of philosophy and tantra and may also have had a college to teach ritual dance (*'cham*) because the monks there said that there were Tibetan ritual dances at the monastery in the past.



*Asian Highlands Perspectives*. 6 (2010), 23-97.

the pass over the mountain range; these communities were more easily linked by horseback in the past than they are by road now.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Nian and Bai (1993, 98). The present monastery is located 2,200 meters above sea level.

Figure Twenty-nine. Seven subordinate monasteries/ retreats of Bā jo'i dgon/ Hongshan si<sup>64</sup> (underlined monasteries treated in detail below).

	Date Est.	Tibetan Name	Chinese Name	Village	County
1	1596	This kya zi	Tiejia si 铁家寺 <sup>65</sup>	Xiguo 西果	Minhe
2	1619	Li kya Hong than zi	Lijia hongtan si 李家红滩(坎滩)寺	Dala 达拉	Minhe
3	1574	Rgya skyid dgon Bkra shis chos gling	Jiaji si 甲吉寺	Longzhi 隆治	Minhe
4	?	Bā jo'i ri khrod	Huoshapao si 火烧坡寺	Donggou 东沟	Minhe
5	1496	Sman chu Dar rgyas ri khrod	Cili si 七里寺(慈利寺)	Gushan zhen 古韶镇	Minhe
6	1252	Ser dris dgon Dga' ldan chos 'phel gling	Saizhi si <sup>66</sup> 赛智寺	Jinyuan 金源	Hualong
7	1580	<u>Amgon ri khrod</u> (subordinate to the above)	Anguan si 安关寺	Chuma 初麻	Hualong

<sup>64</sup> Data collected from both Pu (1990, 27) and passim, and Nian and Bai (1993, 98) and passim.

<sup>65</sup> I thank Zhu Yongzhong 朱永忠 for the Chinese characters for the monasteries/ retreats used in this table.

<sup>66</sup> I thank Klu rgyal thar for providing the Chinese characters for Saizhi si, Anguan si, and Chuma.

SER DRIS DGON DGA' LDAN CHOS 'PHEL GLING/  
SAIZHI SI 赛支寺

Figure Thirty. Ser dris dgon, looking north toward Bka' ma log County, just a few kilometers away. Note large modern clock at entrance to the Kālacakra (Wheel of Time) master's *bla brang* (residence).



Turning to a Bā'i jo'i branch monastery south of the mountain range, we again see that geographic barriers so formidable in our modern world were less relevant in earlier times. Vehicular traffic requires a gentle grade (and thus switchbacks) and regular maintenance in the face of harsh conditions (land slides, freezing and thawing, high winds) whereas travel on foot or by horseback makes these monasteries nearer. The distance is under fifteen kilometers/ten miles over the nearly 4,000 meter mountain range, while the distance around the mountains by the modern road exceeds one hundred kilometers over roads that are very rough in places and which requires a long day's car ride. When I visited Ser dris Monastery in July 2006, an eighty-one year old incarnate lama, A lags Gser kha (Rigu 日古, Bairiguang hufo 百日光活佛), had just completed a Kālacakra ritual. A sand mandala constructed for the event, two meters across, was still on view. Pictures of the lama

dressed in full ritual attire for the event were also available.

Figure Thirty-one. A lags Gser kha, in ritual dress.



Figure Thirty-two. Kālacakra tantra mandala, summer 2006.



I was told that 30,000-40,000 people had attended the events, however, based on previous experience, such numbers are usually exaggerated by a factor of about ten. Judging from remains of encampments that had been carved into the hillsides and the amount of trash in the valley, it is likely that about 4,000 people attended the events. This monastery, like the Dge phyug Monastery discussed above, was founded by the first Ma Ni ba incarnation in 1667.<sup>67</sup> As with Dge phyug

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<sup>67</sup> See Xiejun · Guantai cairang (2005, 34). The TBRC entry P6449 gives this name and title Many+dzu shrī Blo bzang 'od zer, also known as Pa kru'u (Ba zhou/ Baijia) bla ma and 'Jam dbyangs chos rje, corresponding to the first incarnation in the series, Luosang ese 罗桑鄂色 (see Pu 1990, 108-109). Pu also lists each of the later Ma Ni ba incarnation series. The Ma Ni ba bla ma was said to have founded Qili Monastery 七里寺 south of Bā'i jo Monastery, which included all the Chinese within seven *li* as its believers (Pu 1990, 29). The lama supposedly came from Gongtong 贡东, and all the places in Tibetan regions with that name found on

Monastery, this monastery is said to have been founded in 1677, after the Ma Ni ba incarnation had been invited by Mer gen Chos rje of Bā'i jo Monastery. Because of this historic association, the monastery was subordinate to Bā'i jo Monastery as were its 'sons'. This suggests that Dge phyug Monastery was once part of Bā'i jo Monastery's network because it had also been established by the Ma Ni ba incarnation, in which case the monastery north of the range may once have dominated the eastern highlands on both sides of the Tsong kha Mountain Range. Ser dris only became independent when Bā'i jo Monastery was destroyed in the 1940s. Informal connections between the two institutions continue.

Closer to its own 'mother' monastery, Ser dris, a couple of valleys to the west, A mgon ri khrod was likewise a distant branch monastery of Bā'i jo Monastery, founded by the fourth Blo bzang dar rgyas at the end of the Qing emperor Tongzhi's reign.<sup>68</sup>

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the online map website <http://www.51ditu.com> are associated with mountains in Khams. According to a monk at Bā'i jo Monastery, Se chen chos rje was also called Mer gen chos rje (mixing another Mongol word for 'wise' and Tibetan for 'Master of the Teachings'), a title granted by the Shunzhi emperor. There seems to have been a later (?) separate incarnation series with this name.

<sup>68</sup> Xiejun · Guantai cairang (2005, 35). (Thanks to Françoise Robin for the information about the founder and the date.)

Figure Thirty-three. *A mgon ri khrod*.



Figures Thirty-four and Thirty-five. *A mgon ri khrod*; auspicious symbols on the capitals of the porch's pillars.





Little published material exists on this retreat, which was founded in the late sixteenth century. The *Deb ther rgya mtsho* mentions it, and the 1990 and 1993 surveys of A mdo monasteries note that it was demolished (*chahui* 拆毀) in 1958.<sup>69</sup> Yet the local monk who showed me the temple explained, and my own observations confirmed, that at least the main part of the structure, such as the carved pillars, survived the traumatic events of 1958, as well as the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the monasteries north of the Tsong kha Range have seen less of a return in total number of monks, and the physical development of their infrastructure lags behind that

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<sup>69</sup> See Pu (1990, 108) and Nian and Bai (1993, 72). It presently has connections to Dhī tsha and Bla brang monasteries.



of those on the south side of the mountain range. Nevertheless, with the exception of Lianhua tai Monastery, which especially suffers from being isolated from a larger Tibetan Buddhist community, the other monasteries all show signs of true revival. For Thang ring and Ba'i jo monasteries, it seems unlikely that they will ever offer advanced philosophic education again (relying instead on Sku 'bum). Nevertheless, it is likely they will remain vital cultural and religious centers for their communities, much like Dge phyug Monastery to the south. Dhī tsha Monastery, on the other hand, appears to have the promise of remaining a thriving center of Tibetan higher education in the context of a modern Buddhist educational center.

I make four final observations on the basis of this detailed study of place. First, these important institutions exist in places hardly considered 'Tibetan' today. That is, they are not recognized as Tibetan autonomous levels of PRC governance domestically and, internationally, while Tibetan scholars may recognize these areas as part of a greater cultural Tibet by including them on maps of cultural Tibet, in practice, these regions are scarcely treated as integral to Tibetan culture. Second, the pace at which these places have revived is remarkable. Third, far too little is known about these institutions and communities. Finally, these monasteries on the fringes of Tibetan civilization are not peripheral to Tibetan Buddhist culture; in fact, they are at the center of educational and political networks that unite Buddhist Inner Asia.

TIBETAN TERMS

A lags Gser kha	ཨ་ལགས་གསེར་ཁ།
A lags Ma Ni pa	ཨ་ལགས་མ་ཉི་པ།
A lags D+hI tsha	ཨ་ལགས་རྩི་ཚ།
A mdo	ཨ་མདོ།
A mdo Zhwa dmar	ཨ་མདོ་ལྷ་དམར།
A mgon ri khrod	ཨ་མགོན་རི་ཁྲོད།
Ba jo (mi tshan)	བཙོ་(མི་ཚན།)
BA jo'i dgon	བླ་ཚོའི་དགོན།
BA jo'i dgon bstan pa dar rgyas gling	བླ་ཚོའི་དགོན་བསྐྱེན་པ་དར་ རྒྱས་གླིང།
Bā jo'i ri khrod	བླ་ཚོའི་རི་ཁྲོད།
Ba yan	བ་ཡན།
Bis mdo	བིས་མདོ།
Bis mdo (mi tshan)	བིས་མདོ་(མི་ཚན།)
Bka' brgyud	བཀའ་བརྒྱུད།
Bka' brgyud Zhwa dmar 'Jam dbyangs rin po che	བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་ལྷ་དམར་འཇམ་ དབྱངས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།
Bka' ma log	བཀའ་མ་ལོག།
Bkra shis tshe ring	བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཚེ་རིང་།
bla brang	བླ་བྲང་།
Bla brang (dgon)	བླ་བྲང་དགོན།
Blo bzang mkhas grub	བློ་བཟང་མཁས་གྲུབ།
Bra ti (khang tshan)	བྲ་ཏི་(ཁང་ཚན།)
Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas	བྲག་དགོན་ཞབས་དྲུང་དཀོན་ མཚོག་བསྐྱེན་པ་རབ་རྒྱས།

'Bras spungs (dgon)	འབྲས་སྤྲངས་(དགོན།)
'Bras spungs Rgyal ba bla mar bzhugs	འབྲས་སྤྲངས་རྒྱལ་བ་བླ་མར་ བཞུགས།
Bsam blo (khang tshan)	བསམ་བློ་(ཁང་ཚམ།)
Bsam blo pa Dge 'dun rin chen	བསམ་བློ་པ་དགེ་འདུན་རིན་ ཚེ།
Bsam blo Sbyin pa rgya mtsho	བསམ་བློ་སྦྱིན་པ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
Bsam gtan blo gros	བསམ་གཏན་བློ་གྲོས།
Bshad sgrub rgya mtsho	བཤད་སྦྱབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
Btsan po (mi tshan)	བཙན་པོ་(མི་ཚམ།)
bu dgon	བུ་དགོན།
Bya khyung (dgon)	བྱ་ཁྱུང་(དགོན།)
Chab cha	ཚབ་ཇ།
'cham	འཚམ།
Chos grub rgya mtsho	ཚོས་གྲུབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
chos rje	ཚོས་རྗེ།
chos srid zung 'brel	ཚོས་སྲིད་རྒྱུང་འབྲེལ།
Chu bzang (khang tshan)	ཚུ་བཟང་(ཁང་ཚམ།)
dar khan	དར་ཁན།
Dbus	དབུས།
Deb ther rgya mtsho	དེབ་ཐེར་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
Dga' ldan (dgon)	དགའ་ལྡན་(དགོན།)
Dga' ldan khri pa	དགའ་ལྡན་ཁྲི་པ།
Dga' ldan khri pa Sbyin pa rgya mtsho	དགའ་ལྡན་ཁྲི་པ་སྦྱིན་པ་རྒྱ་ མཚོ།
Dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho	དགེ་འདུན་བསྐྱེད་འཛིན་རྒྱ་ མཚོ།

Dge 'dun chos 'phel	དགེ་འདུན་ཚོས་འཕེལ།
Dge 'dun rin chen	དགེ་འདུན་རིན་ཚེན།
Dge lugs pa	དགེ་ལུགས་པ།
Dge phyug	དགེ་ཕྱུག།
dgon lag	དགོན་ལག།
Dgon lung (dgon)	དགོན་ལུང་(དགོན)།
Dgon lung (mi tshan)	དགོན་ལུང་(མི་ཚན)།
Dhī tsha	ལྷི་ཚ།
Dhī tsha nang so	ལྷི་ཚ་ནང་སོ།
Dka' bcu Don grub rgya mtsho	དཀའ་བཅུ་དོན་གྲུབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
'dul ba	འདུལ་བ།
Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las	དུང་དཀར་བློ་བཟང་འཕྲིན་ལས།
dus 'khor	དུས་འཁོར།
Gcan tsha srib	གཅན་ཚ་སྲིབ།
gdan rabs	གདན་རབས།
gnyen	གཉེན།
Gnyen chen bso (ri)	གཉེན་ཚེན་བསོ་(རི)།
Grags pa 'byung gnas	གྲགས་པ་འབྱུང་གནས།
Grags pa rgya mtsho	གྲགས་པ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
Gro tshang	གྲོ་ཚང།
Gro tshang (mi tshan)	གྲོ་ཚང་(མི་ཚན)།
grwa tshang	གྲ་ཚང།
Gser khang	གསེར་ཁང།
Gser thog Blo bzang tshul khriims rgya mtsho	གསེར་ཐོག་བློ་བཟང་ཚུལ་སྲིམས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
Gu shri Se chen chos rje	གུ་ཤྲི་སེ་ཚེན་ཚོས་རྗེ།

Gung ru (khang tshan)	གུང་རུ་(ཁང་ཚན།)
Har gdong (khang tshan)	ཧར་གདོང་(ཁང་ཚན།)
'Jam dbyangs chos rje	འཇམ་དབྱངས་ཚོས་རྗེ།
Kar	ཀར།
Khal kha (mi tshan)	ཁལ་ཁ་(མི་ཚན།)
khang tshan	ཁང་ཚན།
Khri kha	ཁྲི་ཁ།
Khwa ta'i kha'i dgon	ཁ་ཁྲའི་ཁའི་དགོན།
Klu	ལུ།
Klu 'bum (khang tshan)	ལུ་འབུམ་(ཁང་ཚན།)
Klu rgyal thar	ལུ་རྒྱལ་ཐར།
Klu sman	ལུ་སྐན།
Klu sman ri bo	ལུ་སྐན་རི་བོ།
Krung go Bod brgyud mtho rim nang bstan slob gling	ཀུང་གོ་བོད་བརྒྱུད་མཐོ་རིམ་ ནང་བསྐྱེད་སློབ་སྦྱང་།
La mo (dgon)	ལ་མོ་(དགོན།)
La mo (mi tshan)	ལ་མོ་(མི་ཚན།)
La mo bde chen (dgon)	ལ་མོ་བདེ་ཆེན་(དགོན།)
La mo Grags rgan tshang	ལ་མོ་གྲགས་རྒྱན་ཚང་།
La mo Yongs 'dzin chos rje	ལ་མོ་ཡོངས་འཛིན་ཚོས་རྗེ།
lab rtse	ལབ་རུའུ།
Lam pa (mi tshan)	ལམ་པ་(མི་ཚན།)
Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje	ལུང་སྐུ་རོལ་པའི་རྡོ་རྗེ།
Lde tsha	ལྷེ་ཚ།
Lde tsha Bkra shis chos sdings dgon pa	ལྷེ་ཚ་བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཚོས་ལྷིངས་ དགོན་པ།

Len hwa the Dga' ldan gnas bcu 'phel rgyas gling	ལེན་དུ་ཐེ་དགའ་ལྡན་གནས་བཅུ་འཕེལ་གྱིས་སྒྲིང་།
Len hwa the (mi tshan)	ལེན་དུ་ཐེ་(མི་ཚན།)
Lha btsun Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin	ལྷ་བཙུན་དག་དབང་བསྟན་འཛིན།
Lha bzang khang	ལྷ་བཟང་ཁང་།
lha sde	ལྷ་སྡེ།
Lhag pa tshe ring	ལྷག་པ་ཚེ་རིང་།
Li kyA hong than zi	ལི་ལྷ་ཉོང་ཐན་ཟི།
Li kyA sku skye	ལི་ལྷ་སྐྱ་སྐྱེ།
Li kyA zhabs drung	ལི་ལྷ་ཞབས་དྲུང་།
ma dgon	མ་དགོན།
Ma Ni ba	མ་ཐི་བ།
Ma Ni ba bla ma	མ་ཐི་བ་བླ་མ།
Ma Ni khang	མ་ཐི་ཁང་།
Mang ra	མང་ར།
Many+dzu shrI ba Blo bzang 'od zer	མངུ་བྱེ་བ་སྟོ་བཟང་འོད་ཟེར།
Mchod rten dkar po	མཚོད་རྟེན་དཀར་པོ།
Mda' bzhi	མདའ་བཞི།
Mdo smad chos 'byung	མདོ་སྐད་ཚོས་འབྱུང་།
mdzod	མཛོད།
Mer gen Chos rje	མེར་གོན་ཚོས་རྗེ།
Mgar	མགར།
mgon khang	མགོན་ཁང་།
Mgon po bram ze gzugs	མགོན་པོ་བྲམ་ཟེ་གཟུགས།
Mi nyag	མི་ཉག།

mi tshan	མི་ཚན།
mtshan nyid	མཚན་ཉིད།
mtshan nyid grwa tshang	མཚན་ཉིད་གྲུ་ཚང་།
Mtsho kha (mi tshan)	མཚོ་ཁ་ (མི་ཚན།)
Mtsho shar	མཚོ་ཤར།
Mtsho sngon	མཚོ་སྒོན།
Mun 'joms sgron me	མུན་འཇོམས་སྒོན་མེ།
Ngag dbang byangs ldan rig pa'i 'dod 'jo	ངག་དབང་དབྱངས་ལྷན་རིག་པའི་འདོད་འཇོ།
Ngag dbang chos grags	ངག་དབང་ཚོས་གྲགས།
Ngag dbang chos rgyal	ངག་དབང་ཚོས་རྒྱལ།
Ngag dbang 'phrin las	ངག་དབང་འཕྲིན་ལས།
Nyi (ma) thang	ཉི་(མ་)ཐང་།
Nyi thang dgon	ཉི་ཐང་དགོན།
O bswa dgon	ཨོ་བསྐ་དགོན།
Pa gru dgon Bstan pa dar rgyas gling	པ་གུ་དགོན་བསྐྱེན་པ་དར་རྒྱལ་གླིང་།
Pa kru'u bla ma	པ་ཀུ་འུ་བླ་མ།
Rgya skyid dgon Bkra shis chos gling	རྒྱལ་སྐྱིད་དགོན་བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཚོས་གླིང་།
rgyal ba	རྒྱལ་པ།
Rgyal ba bla ma Bsam blo pa Dge 'dun rin chen	རྒྱལ་པ་བླ་མ་བསམ་བཞོན་པ་དགེ་འདུན་རིན་ཆེན།
Rgyal ba chos rje Bkra shis don grub	རྒྱལ་པ་ཚོས་རྗེ་བཀྲ་ཤིས་དོན་གྲུབ།
rgyud pa	རྒྱུད་པ།
rgyud pa grwa tshang	རྒྱུད་པ་གྲུ་ཚང་།

ri khrod pa	རི་ཁྲོད་པ།
Rma chu	མ་ཚུ།
Rnying ma	རྟིང་མ།
Rong bo (dgon)	རོང་བོ་(དགོན།)
Ru shar	རུ་ཤར།
Rwa rgya (dgon)	རུ་རྒྱ་(དགོན།)
sa bdag	ས་བདག།
Sa bdag Klu sman ri bo	ས་བདག་ལྷ་ཕྱོག་རི་བོ།
Sbyin pa rgya mtsho	སྤྱིན་པ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho	སྡེ་སྡིད་སངས་རྒྱས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
Se chen chos rje	སེ་ཚེན་ཚོས་རྗེ།
Se chen chos rje Rgyal ba'i 'phrin las pa Sbyin pa rgya mtsho	སེ་ཚེན་ཚོས་རྗེ་རྒྱལ་བའི་ འཕྲིན་ལས་པ་སྤྱིན་པ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
Se mdo	སེ་མདོ།
Se ra (dgon)	སེ་ར་(དགོན།)
Ser dris	སེར་དྲིས།
Ser dris (dgon)	སེར་དྲིས་(དགོན།)
Ser dris dgon Dga' ldan chos 'phel gling	སེར་དྲིས་དགོན་དགའ་ལྡན་ ཚོས་འཕེལ་སྤྱིང་།
Sgis (sge'u) steng Blo bzang dpal ldan	སྐྱིས་(སྐེའུ)སྤྱིང་སྐྱོ་བཟང་ དཔལ་ལྡན།
Sgo mang (grwa tshang)	སྐོ་མང་གྲ་ཚང་།
Sku 'bum	སྐུ་འབུམ།
Sku' bum (mi tshan)	སྐུ་འབུམ་(མི་ཚན།)
Sku 'bum gdan rabs	སྐུ་འབུམ་གདན་རབས།
Sman chu dar rgyas ri khrod	སྐུན་ཚུ་དར་རྒྱས་རི་ཁྲོད།
sman pa	སྐུན་པ།



Snang ra dpon po/ nang so	སྐང་ར་དཔོན་པོ་ནང་སོ།
sngags pa	སྐགས་པ།
TA la'i bla ma, Thub bstan rgya mtsho	དྲ་ལའི་བླ་མ་ཐུབ་བསྟན་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
Thang ring	ཐང་རིང་།
Thang ring dgon Dga' Idan bshad sgrub gling	ཐང་རིང་དགོན་དགའ་ལྗན་བཤད་རྒྱབ་གླིང་།
Thar shul (dgon)	ཐར་ཤུལ་(དགོན།)
Thar shul rin po che Dge 'dun chos skyong rgya mtsho	ཐར་ཤུལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་དགེ་འདུན་ཚོས་སྦྱོང་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
The bo (khang tshan)	ཐེ་བོ་(ཁང་ཚན།)
This kya zi	ཐེས་ཀྱི་བཟེ།
Thung ring dgon	ཐུང་རིང་དགོན།
Tshang	ཚང་།
Tshe tan (dgon)	ཚེ་ཏན་(དགོན།)
Tshe tan zhabs drung 'Jigs med rigs pa'i blo gros	ཚེ་ཏན་ཞབས་དྲུང་འཇིགས་མེད་རིགས་པའི་བློ་བློས།
Tsong chu	ཙོང་ཚུ།
Tsong kha mkhar	ཙོང་ཁ་མཁར།
Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa	ཙོང་ཁ་པ་བློ་བཟང་གྲགས་པ།
Tsong kha skyes ri	ཙོང་ཁ་སྐྱེས་རི།
Tsong kha'i ri rgyud	ཙོང་ཁའི་རི་རྒྱུད།
Wa shul (mi tshan)	ཕ་ཤུལ་(མི་ཚན།)
Yongs 'dzin bla ma	ཡོངས་འཛིན་བླ་མ།
Yongs 'dzin Blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho	ཡོངས་འཛིན་བློ་བཟང་མཁས་གྲུབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།

Zhabs drung	ཞབས་ལྷུང་།
Zhabs drung Dkar po, Blo bzang thub bstan dge legs rgyal mtshan	ཞབས་ལྷུང་དཀར་པོ་བློ་བཟང་ཐུབ་བསྟན་དགེ་ལེགས་རྒྱལ་མཚན།
Zhabs drung phyogs dra	ཞབས་ལྷུང་ཕྱོགས་དྲ།
Zhwa dmar bla brang	ཞྭ་དམར་ལྷ་བྲང་།
Zhwa dmar bla ma	ཞྭ་དམར་ལྷ་མ།
Zhwa dmar pa	ཞྭ་དམར་པ།
Zhwa dmar PaN+Dita	ཞྭ་དམར་པ་རྩྱུག།
Zung chu (khang tshan)	བྱང་ཅུ་(ཁང་ཚན།)

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A NEW INVESTIGATION OF THE GEOGRAPHIC  
POSITION OF THE BÁILÁN CAPITAL OF THE  
TŪYÙHÚN

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ABSTRACT

Báilán, of the Tŭyùhún Kingdom, is an extremely important place name in the ethnic history of ancient China. Throughout the more than 900 year medieval period of Chinese history—the Wèi, Jin, Northern and Southern dynasties, Táng, Sòng, and Yuán eras (third to thirteenth

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<sup>1</sup> This translation is based on a draft manuscript that differs in certain details from the published version of the article, which appeared as Zhū Shikuí 朱世奎 and Chéng Qǐjùn 程起骏. 2008. Tŭyùhún báilán diwàng xīn kǎo 吐谷浑白兰地望新考 (A New Investigation of the Geographic Position of the Báilán Capital of the Tŭyùhún). *Qīnghǎishèhuì kèxué* 青海社会科学 (*Qinghai Social Sciences*) 2:83-88. This article makes important contribution to the study of medieval Qīnghǎi history through its careful reading of historical documents and onsite field investigations. The final translation greatly benefited from comments and suggestions from the first author of the original manuscript, and this journal's editors and reviewers. I am also grateful to Chuluu Ujiiyediin for help with the Mongolian. Certain footnotes are my own (indicated by {}), some are from the original authors, and some contain material that was in the original text, but which reads better as footnotes. Any mistakes are the translator's responsibility.

centuries)—the name Báilán remained in historical materials, demonstrating the name's historical significance. Scholars have discussed the geographic position of Báilán since the 1920s, but no consensus has emerged. In this paper we undertake a comprehensive investigation of the issue. We carried out related field work in Dūlán County and the Qaidam (Cháidámù) area of Hǎixī Prefecture, Qīnghǎi Province and interviewed knowledgeable elders of the region. We also consulted the results of recent archeological excavations. We advance explanations for the terms 'Báilán Qiāng' and 'Báilán Mountains', and suggest a location of the ancient city of Báilán.

#### KEY WORDS

Báilán, Qiāng, Tǔyùhún, Qīnghǎi, Hǎixī

## THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH ON THE GEOGRAPHIC POSITION OF BÁILÁN

The appearance of the name 'Báilán' is intimately related to the ancient Tǔyùhún Kingdom of the Qīnghǎi-Tibet Plateau in the period of the Northern and Southern dynasties (fourth-sixth centuries AD). As the *Zizhitōngjiàn* (chapter ninety, Jin Records Twelve, first year of the Jiànwǔ reign of emperor Yuán 317AD) states, the Tǔyùhún

reside by mountains in the west. Following the turmoil of the Yǒngjià Period (ca. 317), they subsequently crossed the Lóng Region (of Gānsù Province) and went west; residing west of the Táo River and as far as Báilán; their area extends for 1,000 *lǐ*.

Báilán was the reliable, defendable base area of the Tǔyùhún people, which allowed them to achieve statehood.

In the beginning of the fourth century AD, the Tǔyùhún khan, the oldest son (by his second wife) of Shèguī, the leader of the Mùróng Tribe of the Liǎodōng Xiānbēi,<sup>2</sup> quarreled over water resources with his younger brother, the son (of Shèguī's formal wife) Mùróng Wěi. Consequently, the Khan led more than 1,700 households west to the Yīnshān Region of Inner Mongolia. In 317 AD (the last year of the Yǒngjià reign of the Western Jìn), he descended south from the Yīnshān Region, across the Lóng Mountains into southern Gānsù, gradually subjugating and incorporating the various Qiāng and Dī tribes of the present Sìchūān-Gānsù-Qīnghǎi border area, and came to control the region. After further advances he eventually controlled a large area

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<sup>2</sup> {The Xiānbēi were a nomadic people active in what is now the northeast of China. Though little about their initial history is known, they likely spoke a form of early Altaic language.}

including Qaidam, the area around Qīnghǎi Lake, and the Qiāng and Qiěmò areas of Xīnjiāng. At its largest, the Tǔyùhún territory extended 1,000 kilometers from north to south and 3,000 kilometers from east to west. The Tǔyùhún opened the Southern Silk Road which flourished from the period of the Northern-Southern dynasties up to the mid-Táng period (third to eighth centuries). They also made important contributions in the fields of metallurgy, bridge construction,<sup>3</sup> architecture,<sup>4</sup> and horse-breeding.<sup>5</sup> The famous historian, Fàn Wénlán (1949), highly praised these accomplishments in his *A Brief History of China* (*Zhōngguó tōngshǐ jiǎnbiān*) writing: "The Qiāng nationality's establishment of the Tǔyùhún Kingdom in Qīnghǎi is a shining hallmark of social development."<sup>6</sup> However, the Tǔyùhún would not have been established on the coordinates of history without Báilán.

Tǔyùhún history has at least five references to 'the protection of Báilán' (*bǎo báilán* 保白兰) in Chinese historical documents: *Cèfǔ yuánguī*, *The Compendium of the*

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<sup>3</sup> The Tǔyùhún are credited with building the Dàmǔ Bridge over the Yellow River in Xúnhuà Salar Autonomous County, Qīnghǎi Province.

<sup>4</sup> They are known for the 'Four Great Garrison Cities of the Tǔyùhún' (Tǔyùhún sì dà shù chéng), the ancient city of Xiāngrìdé (which the authors contend is the city of Báilán), and Fúsi City.

<sup>5</sup> The Tǔyùhún were known for breeding the Qīnghǎi piebald horse (*Qīnghǎi cōng*) and the famed dancing horses of the Táng Dynasty.

<sup>6</sup> With regards to the theory that the Qiāng nationality established the Tǔyùhún state, Lǐ Wénshí (2001) in *Ancient Lands in the West and Qiāng-Bodic Culture* (*Xīchuí gǔdì yǔ qiāng-zāng wénhuà*) refutes this theory. The authors support Lǐ's position that the Tǔyùhún Kingdom was established by the Tǔyùhún people.

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*Five Dynasties (Wǔdài huìyào)*, *The Sui History (Suí shū)*, *The Old and New Táng Histories (Jiù táng shū, Xīn táng shū)*, and in the *Zīzhìtōngjiàn*.

The first record of protecting Báilán occurs in the year 329, in the fourth year of the Xiánhé Reign of the Chéng Emperor of the Jin Dynasty. Tǔyán (r. 317-329), the eldest son of the Tǔyùhún Khan, was assassinated by the Qiāng leader, Jiāng Cóng. On his deathbed, he gave instructions to his subordinates for handling the state's affairs:

After I die, and the coffin has been arranged, send it far to the protected Báilán. The area around Báilán is both strategically important and the locals are weak and easily controlled (*Běi shǐ - tǔyùhún zhuàn* ch. ninety-six).

In the same year, Tǔyán's son, Yèyán (r. 329-351), formally established political authority in Báilán and, taking his grandfather's name as the name of the country, established the Tǔyùhún Kingdom.

The second record of protecting Báilán occurs in the year 398, when the sixth ruler of the Tǔyùhún, Shìpí, angered Fúqǐqiánguī, King of the Western Qín, by refusing his bestowal of the rank 'Báilán King'. Qiánguī led 20,000 cavalymen to denounce the offense, routing Shìpí's troops at Dùzhōuchuān.

Shìpí escaped to the protection of the Báilán Mountains. He sent an emissary to ask forgiveness, presenting local products in tribute, and his son, Dàngqǐ, as a hostage (*Jīnshū*, ch. twenty-five).

Only then was peace restored. Afterwards, Fúqǐqiánguī showed favor by offering one of his clan's daughters in marriage to Shìpí.

The third record of protecting Báilán occurs in 417 when the Western Qín dispatched the Āndōng General, Mùyì,

to lead an army to attack the eighth ruler of the Tǔyùhún, Shùluògān. More than 5,000 Tǔyùhún were taken as captives. In defeat, Shùluògān "escaped to the protection of the Báilán Mountains. Ashamed and angry, he developed an illness," (*Zīzhìtōngjiàn*, ch. 118) and died. Before his death he established his younger brother, Āchái, as the ninth ruler of the Tǔyùhún.

With the strategic use of forces, Āchái invaded and incorporated neighboring lands, so that his territory extended for several thousands of *lǐ*, gradually becoming a powerful empire (see, *Zīzhìtōngjiàn* ch. 118, *Records of the Jin*, 40; thirteenth year of the Yìxī Reign of the Ān Emperor, 417).

The fourth record of protecting Báilán occurs in 444 when the Northern Wèi, taking advantage of internal turmoil within the Tǔyùhún, dispatched Fú Luó, the King of Jìn, to lead a large army on a punitive expedition against the Tǔyùhún. The Tǔyùhún army was badly defeated, and "Mùlián (the Tǔyùhún ruler) fled to Báilán." The following year, the Northern Wèi dispatched the West Route Army to attack Báilán and surrounding areas, and Mùlián did not oppose him. Instead, Mùlián led his main forces west across the Qaidam deserts and invaded Yútíán in Xīnjiāng Province, where he "killed their king and occupied their land." In 446, the Northern Wèi retreated and Mùlián returned to occupy Báilán and the surrounding areas.

The fifth record of protecting Báilán occurs in 460 when the Northern Wèi attacked the Tǔyùhún along two fronts. At this time, Shíyín, the twelfth ruler of the Tǔyùhún, was in the middle of constructing his capital at Báilán, and the histories do not record such language as, "fled to the protection of Báilán." Instead, they record that "Shíyín presently protected Báilán."

Except for Mùlián's inability to defend it, in each of



these cases, the Tǔyùhún were able to safeguard Báilán. Even in the exceptional case, Mùliyán invaded and occupied Yútián by setting out from Báilán. Without the cushion of Báilán, he probably would have been unable to defeat Yútián.

The Sixteen States of the Five 'Non- Hàn' Tribes (if the Tǔyùhún are added it should be the Seventeen States) were all 'flashes in the pan', rising and falling in quick succession. The Xiānbēi State of the Southern Yān lasted the shortest time, a mere thirteen years (398-410). The Xiānbēi State of the Southern Liáng lasted eighteen years (397-414). The large and powerful Former Qín (of the Dī people) survived for forty-four years (351-395), while the Western Qín (Xiānbēi) lasted forty-seven years (385-481). The sixteen states existed for a mere 136 years in total. Only the Tǔyùhún survived for 356 years, from 317 to 663, ending only when defeated by the Tǔbō. How could the Tǔyùhún last for such an extended period? There are certainly several reasons to explain this, but the most important one is that the Tǔyùhún occupied an advantageous position in Báilán.

At the time of the Sixteen States (fourth to sixth centuries) each state fought the others, attacking and swallowing each other, leaving few days of peace. The theater of 'being a king in the morning and a prisoner at night' lasted a long time, and cases of a single battle wiping out a country were commonplace. Truly, "In such commotion does the world's theater rage, as each one leaves another takes the stage."<sup>7</sup>

Let us consider as an example the Southern Liáng who occupied eastern Qīnghǎi. In the time of the first king, Tūfā Wūgū (?-399), such policies as favoring agriculture, fostering peaceful relations with neighboring countries, valuing people of talent, instituting light taxes, and so on,

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<sup>7</sup> {The quote is from the first chapter of *The Story of the Stone*, or *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (see Cao and Hawkes (1978).)}

were adopted and the country flourished. Among the Sixteen States, the Southern Liáng was considered a civilized state. However, during the reign of the third generation ruler, Tūfā Nùtán (365-415), the army was exhausted from constant war, and the country knew no peace. Just as the Southern Liáng army was about to seize livestock of the Yífúwúdí State west of Rìyuè Pass, the Western Qín attacked their capital city in today's Lèdū County and the important town of Xīníng and the Southern Liáng, who had existed for a mere eighteen years, were extinguished. The process of extinction for the other fifteen states was much the same as that of the Southern Liáng.

However, this was not the case for the Tǔyùhún. In comparison with other contemporary states, particularly in the Tǔyùhún's early years, their composite strength was much less than that of their neighbors. And, in comparison with their later rival, the Northern Wèi, the Tǔyùhún were in another league. At one point or another, the Tǔyùhún fought wars with the Southern Liáng, Western Qín, Xià, and the Northern Wèi; they fought dozens of wars, large and small, and many times suffered large defeats. If they were defeated, the court and core military units would then, "flee to the protection of Báilán." In Báilán they rested and recuperated, built up their military strength, refined their training, and waited for an opportunity to set out again. Because the Tǔyùhún withdrew so far away after defeat, there was nothing their enemies could do about it; they simply accepted it. In the course of retreating to the safety of Báilán many times, the Tǔyùhún learned numerous lessons, developed, and grew stronger, in clear contrast with the fate of Tūfā Rútán of the Southern Liáng, who was so unceremoniously deposed.

The Tǔyùhún's defense of Báilán was therefore, the defense of their national fate. If there had been no Báilán to retreat to and defend, the Tǔyùhún would have been destroyed by the Western Qín or the Northern Wèi early on,

and their fate would have been the same as that of the other Sixteen States. In the early period, Báilán was the Tǔyùhún's reliable base, sturdy rearguard, and center for recuperating. In the middle and latter periods, it became the political and economic center of the Tǔyùhún kingdom. Owing to the special status of this location from the time of Yèyán, the Tǔyùhún were able to fully absorb the advanced culture of the Central Plains (China) and enact their policy of uniting the Qiāng tribes and ruling them jointly.

Owing to its special geographic position, the Tǔyùhún in Báilán had resources to develop political and economic relationships with the states to the north and south. Furthermore, because Báilán bordered on the Héxī Corridor (in western Gānsù) and the various states to the west, the Tǔyùhún had access to resources to open the southern Silk Route, making the Tǔyùhún the transit point of cultural flow between East and West from the period of the Northern and Southern dynasties up to the Táng Dynasty (fourth to eighth centuries). Because the Tǔyùhún had Báilán, their nation survived a long time, finally resulting in a combination of Tǔyùhún, Hàn, Qiāng, and Tǔfān cultures, creating a unique Tǔyùhún culture. In this light, Báilán is the starting point of a pluralistic multiculturalism. A single location with cultural significance of this depth is rare in ancient China's history.

#### OUR VIEW ON SEVERAL OPINIONS ON THE GEOGRAPHIC POSITION OF BÁILÁN

Where is the geographic locale of Báilán? A preliminary classification of opinions results in the following six positions:

- Lǐ Wénshí (2001) believes Báilán is somewhere in the six counties of Guōluò Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qīnghǎi Province, and that the 'Báilán Mountains' are the

Bāyánkālā<sup>8</sup> Mountains (on the border of the Tibet Autonomous Region and Qīnghǎi, and Sìchuān provinces). Zhāng Dézǔ and Wáng Ruìqín (1995) concur.

- Cóng Zhé (1982) and Huáng and Zhōu (1983) believe Bǎilán is in the area around Dūlán and Bālong in the Qaidam Basin southwest of Qīnghǎi Lake.
- Based on linguistic analysis, Cáirénbāli (1999) believes 'Bǎilán' should be 'Bālán', therefore, Bǎilán is the 'Bāyánkālā Mountains'.
- Lǚ Jiànfú (1997) believes the modern Monguor pronunciation (*bulag*) for 'fountain, spring' corresponds to the Chinese transcription 'Bǎilán', and thus the meaning of 'Bǎilán' is 'spring' or 'place of springs'. This is taken as evidence that Bǎilán is in the source region of the Yellow River, which is

the entire area of Mǎduō County, in the northwest of Guōluò Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and the northeast part of Qǔmálái in Yùshù Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

- Liú Bǐngdé (1992) believes Bǎilán is in modern Gòngghé, Xīnghǎi, and Tóngdé counties, Hǎinán Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.
- Japanese scholar Yamaguchi Mizuo believes it is in Ābà Tibetan and Qiāng Autonomous Prefecture, Sìchuān Province. Matsuda Hisao believes it is in Qaidam.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> {Mongolian Bayan Khalag: *bayan* = rich, prosperous; *khalag* = gate.}

<sup>9</sup> {The authors did not give a citation for these two scholars' arguments.}

When considering Báilán and examining historical materials related to the Tǔyùhún, we must remember three basic elements that would allow the repeatedly defeated Tǔyùhún to protect their basic livelihood and return to life. These three elements are:

First, the geographic position should have been remote and strategic, easily defended, and difficult to attack. In the words of the second generation ruler of the Tǔyùhún, Tǔyán, Báilán's, "location is remote and strategic; moreover, the locals are weak and easily controlled," pointing out that Báilán was both remote and strategic, and those who attacked it would not easily succeed. Also, the Báilán Qiāng residing at Báilán were easily controlled, or they could be thought of as willing to coexist amicably with the Tǔyùhún. Second, a large amount of living space with abundant resources would have been required to provide a subsistence base and ample land to maneuver. Third, a favorable geopolitical environment without strong neighbors would have been necessary.

These three elements were all essential; only when all were present could a location be considered the rearguard base of the Tǔyùhún. After sifting through the evidence we believe the modern Qaidam Basin and the northern and southern foothills of the Bù'érhànbùdá Mountains have these three elements and therefore, are the location of Báilán.

1. *Wèi shū*: Tǔyùhún chapter (ch. eighty-nine):

吐谷浑遂徙上陇，止于枹罕暨甘松，南界昂城、龙湫，从洮水西南极白兰数千里中，遂水草，庐帐而居：Tǔyùhún lead followers up the Lóng, stopping at Fūhàn and Gānsōng; the southern border was Āng City and Lónghé; for several thousand *lǐ* from the Táo River to the southwest extreme of the Báilán Mountains they followed the water and grass, residing in tents.

And, from the *Suí shū*: Tǔyùhún chapter (biographies #48):

吐谷浑与若洛魔不协，遂西度陇，止于甘松之南，洮水之西，南极白兰山，数千里之地：The Tǔyùhún did not get along with Ruólómó, and traveling west across the Lóng, they stopped in an area several thousand *lǐ* south of Gānsōng, west of the Táo River and south to the Báilán Mountains.

Both of these quotes refer to the time of the establishment of the Tǔyùhún kingdom and its center of activity in the border region between Qīnghǎi, Sìchuān, and Gānsù. The former quote refers to 'Báilán' and the latter quote refers to 'Báilán Mountains'; the position of both is southwest of the Táo River. The line, "*Cóng táo shuǐ xīnán jí báilán shān* 从洮水西南极白兰山" seems incongruous. We believe that Cóng Zhé (1982) correctly breaks up the line as, "*Cóng táo shuǐ xīnán, jí báilán shān* 从洮水西南, 极白兰山," meaning "southwest from the Tao River, reaching up to the Báilán Mountains." Thus, if the Báilán region is in the Qaidam Basin, it is exactly southwest of the Táo River, and the Báilán Mountains are precisely southeast of the Qaidam Basin. *Jí* 极 means 'stopping' or 'arriving', and here refers to the fact that the southern border of the Tǔyùhún territory reached the Báilán Mountains.

2. *Běi shǐ*, chapter 96 'Tǔyùhún':

白兰西南二千五百里，隔大岭，又度四十里海，有女王国。 2,500 *lǐ* southwest of Báilán, separated by a great mountain range and across a 40 *lǐ* sea there is a country with a woman king.

The 'country with a woman king' is the same as the 'Sūpí Country' referred to in the *Xīn táng shū*: Western Regions. It is in the present Tibet Autonomous Region. About 2,000 *lǐ* northeast from its political center is precisely at the southwest edge of the Qaidam Basin, and the mountain that separates them is the contemporary Tánggǔlā Mountain. This 'Báilán' is the Báilán region, not the Báilán Mountains.

3. In 445 AD, (the sixth year of Tàipíng Zhēn Jūn of the Northern Wèi) because of mutual suspicions among the family of the eleventh Tǔyùhún king, Mùlián, there was a civil war, and under the impending pressure of the Northern Wèi army, Báilán was unprotected. Mùlián led most of his forces west, invading Yútían, "killing their king and occupying their land." Mùlián's power extended deep into the southern part of modern Xīnjiāng. How could Mùlián so easily take southern Xīnjiāng? The Tǔyùhún already occupied the entire Báilán area (in Qaidam) which bordered Qiěmò, thus he was familiar with the situation in Yútían. Meanwhile, Mùlián knew that if he fought the Wèi army he would surely lose, and retreated with the entire army, thus preserving his strongest fighting force. Moreover, the Tǔyùhún and Yútían had a long-standing trade relationship; consequently, Tǔyùhún traders probably supplied information and assisted in the invasion, which made it easy for Mùlián to take their cities and hold their land.

If Báilán had been in Guōluò, Yùshù, or Sìchūān, Mùlián would have needed a huge army and would have had to cross the Bāyánkālā Mountains, the Kūnlún Mountains, the Dāngjīn Mountains, and great deserts before reaching Yútían. The Mùlián of that time was at the end of his tether; in undertaking such an expedition it would have been hard for him to succeed.

4. In 460, the first year of Hépíng of the Northern Wèi, because Shíyín, the twentieth king,

两受宋魏爵命，居止出入拟于王者，魏人忿之。定阳侯曹安表言：拾寅今保白兰，若分军左右，拾寅必走保南山，不过十日，人畜乏食，可一举而定。had received feudal titles from Sòng and Wèi, and his behavior was against the king's wishes, the Wèi people became angry with him. Cáo Ān, the Marquis of Dìngyáng, announced, 'Shíyín at present protects Báilán. If we divide our army to the right and left, Shíyín will be forced to retreat to the Nán (South) Mountains. In no more than ten days, with both people and livestock deprived of food, they can be captured in one stroke.'

The Nán Mountains referred to in this quote are the Báilán Mountains (the Bù'èrgànbùdá Mountains). In this instance, the Wèi army divided along two routes. The southern route traveled from Xīníng to Gònghé and Xīnghǎi before entering Tǔyùhún territory. The northern route set out from Liángzhōu and crossed the Qīlián Mountains into Qaidam. Shíyín entered the Báilán Mountains. The Wèi army ran into a 'contagion', probably succumbing to altitude sickness, and was not able to attain their goal of "capturing them in one stroke." This episode shows that if Báilán were in Guōluò, Yùshù, or Ābà, the northern army would have had to cross the Qīlián Mountains, a vast desert, and then cross the Kūnlún Mountains before reaching the battlefield. Sūn Zǐ's *Art of War* (*Sūnzǐ bīngfǎ*) says: "If one chases the enemy for fifty *lǐ* to seek advantage, the general will certainly be toppled." It seems the Wèi army would not attempt something as inept as this.

5. One of the four great Tǔyùhún garrisons was at Qūzhēnchuān, which contemporary scholars agree was located in modern Chákǎ. The *Sòng shū*: *xiānbēi tǔyùhún*



*zhuàn* (ch. ninety-six) records: "Quzhenchuan has a salt lake; north of the Gāngǔ range there is a 'rodent bird' hole." The salt lake referred to in this passage is Chákǎ Salt Lake. One of the present authors worked in Hǎixī for thirty years, and on more than ten occasions stayed overnight at Chákǎ Lake. In the winter of 1960, on the grass behind the original Chákǎ Hostel, he personally saw the 'rodent bird' hole. One bird, larger than a sparrow, with yellow and white markings, stood upon the head of a rodent with wings spread apart. The rodent was startled and the bird called out, and together they entered a hole.<sup>10</sup> Chákǎ is part of Báilán, and borders Xiānggrìdé and the stream Cháhànwūsū.<sup>11</sup>

After the Tǔfān defeated the Tǔyùhún, they set up a Tǔyùhún prince to unify the former Tǔyùhún lands. They gave him the name 'King of Mòhè'. Mòhè was an ancient toponym in Qaidam, west of modern Chákǎ, contiguous with Cháhànwūsū. After the 1950s, it was the pasture land of the Mòhè camel ranch.

6. The younger brother of Imperial Preceptor Phags-pa, Qià'ná Duōjiē, was enfeoffed as the 'King of Báilán' (1239-1267). He led a celebrated life, once serving as an attendant to Sakya Pandita. Upon receiving an invitation from Khotan (Kuòduān; d. 1251), he went to Liángzhōu to discuss the surrender of the Tǔfān to the Yuán. Among his descendants was Suǒnánzàngbǔ, who was enfeoffed as King of Báilán (see, *Yuán shǐ, yīng zōng jì*). The *Dūlán County Gazetteer* (*Dūlán xiàn zhì*) records: "In the first

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<sup>10</sup> {The pika (*Ochotona curzoniae*), found at high altitudes and native to Qīnghǎi Province, is the 'rodent' referred to here.} The ancients erroneously believed that female birds and male rodents could mate; this is simply a case of mutual protection.

<sup>11</sup> {Mongolian: Chagan Usu; *chagan* = white; *usu* = water.}

year of Zhìyuè of the Yuán Dynasty (1321), the Yuán court enfeoffed Suōnánzàngbǔ as the King of Báilán, granting him a gold seal." Three others were also enfeoffed after him by the Yuán as King of Báilán, namely Gǔngá, Lièbā, and Jiànzàn. The Báilán fiefdom was in modern Hǎixī Prefecture. The reasoning behind this political move was that Hǎixī bordered Tibet, and its people were Tǔyùhún and Tǔfān. Administration of Tibet necessitated administration of Hǎixī. The same principle applies in modern and ancient times. The Yuán court's enfeoffment of the King of Báilán respected the historical legacy and resident population. It was an inspired decision of great political foresight. The Báilán palace was probably in the modern Xiāngrídé area, owing to it being a strategic point of transit in and out of Tibet.

7. A comparison of the natural environment of Báilán and Qaidam: The various historical records from the period of the Northern and Southern dynasties to the Táng Dynasty (fourth to eighth centuries) record that Báilán "produces gold and metal" and "dispatches emissaries to present 'rhinoceros' and iron armor." The Qaidam Basin is full of minerals and abounds in every kind of mined resource; the Tǔyùhún had a well-developed metal smelting technology. At present, an iron mine that produces thirty tons annually has been built in Cháhànwūsū; the gold mines of Bālóng and Gé'ěrmù produce on a large scale; once, a seven kilogram piece of gold was produced near Délíngā.

The 'rhinoceros armor' is an extravagant name for the armor made of wild bovine skins. The wild bovine of the Kūnlún Range is one of the largest on the Qīnghǎi-Tibet Plateau. "Báilán produces 'Sìchuān horses' and yaks." 'Sìchuān horses' are the Qaidam horses and Qīnghǎi steeds produced in the area surrounding Qīnghǎi Lake. They are also known as products of the Tǔyùhún

ancestors. Because they were often ridden to Sìchūān, Gānsòng, and such places where they were sold to people from central China, they became known as 'Sìchūān horses'. Yaks are one of the local specialties of the Hǎixī region. "Báilán is suitable for barley and many vegetables." The modern Hǎixī area is one of Qīnghǎi's more important bases for commercial grain production. The record for spring wheat production is from Xiāngrìdé. In contrast, there is one small area on the banks of the Chúmǎkē River in Guōluò that can produce wheat, but other than that, the entire region is unsuitable for wheat cultivation.

As for Báilán, in the northwest is a several hundred *lǐ* stretch of flowing sand; in the summer, there is a hot wind, which is the bane of travelers. Only the camel is able to predict the arrival of these terrible winds. With a whistle, they gather together and protect their heads beneath the sand; those left unprotected face the prospect of death.

This is a typical scene in western Qaidam. Guōluò and Yùshù lack areas of several hundred *lǐ* of flowing sand. Camels are common in Hǎixī, and specialize in eating such plants as *Peganum harmala*, crested wheat grass (*Agropyron cristatum*), and sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) and are fond of salt licks. Guōluò and Yùshù lack the conditions for raising camels, and consequently do not produce them.

8. The regional political environment in Báilán and the Qaidam Basin: The Qaidam Basin constitutes a complete inner-continental basin with an area of 220,000 square kilometers. The Kūnlún Mountains to the south and Qīlián Mountains to the north form natural screens. That the Tǔyùhún selected this land as their rearguard is an expression of their great wisdom.

The center of Báilán is the Xiāngrìdé-

Cháhànwūsū-Bālong area. These three places are strung along a single river, and snuggled along a branch of the Kunlun Mountains, known as the Bù'érǎnbùdá Mountains. This range cuts across the landscape from west to east for more than 180 kilometers. Its highest peak, Cuòmùcèfēng, is 5,486 meters high and the average altitude is around 5,000 meters. The mountain range is steeper to the south, with a more gradual slope to the north. There has been a road connecting Xīnghǎi and Guōluò to the Bù'érǎnbùdá Mountains since ancient times but, in many places, there are strategic passes that a single individual could defend. Streams flow in every direction within the area. There are more than ten major rivers, including the Xiùgōu and Qaidam rivers, all of which have their headwaters in the springs of Bù'érǎnbùdá. The riversides are steep cliffs, and the rivers run swiftly. Without an experienced guide, a large contingent of people and horses could only cross them with great difficulty. Tuōsù and Ālā lakes to the north of the mountains constitute a natural defensive structure. The numerous natural springs and abundant pastures are sufficient to provide many people and horses ample defenses for a long time. At present, this is the summer pasture of the various townships in Dūlán County. Because of this natural environment, the contemporary Tūyùhún people could retreat to the south mountains (the Báilán Mountains) and defend themselves if they met a strong opponent. Opponents such as the Western Qín and the Northern Wèi could not defeat them there. Just the thin atmosphere of the 4,000 meter high environment caused their enemies to weaken, hampering their ability for a protracted engagement.

From the perspective of the regional political environment during the Northern and Southern dynasties (fourth to sixth centuries AD), the Qaidam Basin and Qīnghǎi Lake and north of the Qīlián Mountains, there

was only the Northern Liáng, Gāochàng,<sup>12</sup> and several small states in the western region; in the far west there was the Qiěmò,<sup>13</sup> the several states of Yútián;<sup>14</sup> in the south and southwest were such various small states as the Dǎngxiàng,<sup>15</sup> Duōmí,<sup>16</sup> and the Sūnbō.<sup>17</sup> These were all small states that posed no threat to the Tǔyùhún. Further south was the Náncháo, a state friendly to the Tǔyùhún. The Xīfān had not yet come to power. Only in the east were there strong enemies; the Western Qín and the Northern Wèi. This is precisely one reason the Tǔyùhún could make the Qaidam Basin their rearguard. This kind of favorable political and geographic environment was only enjoyed by the Tǔyùhún from the time of the Five Foreign States and Sixteen States up to the Táng Dynasty (fourth to seventh centuries). This is also the critical reason that the Tǔyùhún successfully retreated to and protected their rearguard Báilán five times. Even more, it was an excellent choice by the Tǔyùhún founder, Shíyín,

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<sup>12</sup> {Gāochàng was a city-state located southwest of modern Turfan, Xīnjiāng Uyghur Autonomous Region. During this time period, it was a major transportation hub along the north rim of the Tarim Basin.}

<sup>13</sup> {Qiěmò was a city-state located in the southeast of the Tarim Basin.}

<sup>14</sup> {This refers to polities along the south of the Tarim Basin.}

<sup>15</sup> {As used here, Dǎngxiàng refers to a state established by the Dǎngxiàng Qiāng peoples in the Sichuān-Gānsù-Qīnghǎi border region.}

<sup>16</sup> {Little is known about Duōmí, a small state centered in what is now Yùshù Autonomous Prefecture, Qīnghǎi Province.}

<sup>17</sup> {Sūnbō, about which little is known, refers to a small state located in what is now the northern part of the Tibet Autonomous Region.}

to operate in Fúluòchuān (in the Qaidam Basin).

9. The geographical position of Báilán from the perspective of the Tǔyùhún's establishment of the Southern Silk Road: Zhōu Wēizhōu, a scholar of the Tǔyùhún, thinks that the Southern Silk Road was centered in Báilán. In his major study, *History of the Tǔyùhún* (*Tǔyùhún shǐ*; Zhōu, 1985), he writes:

There were three passable routes on the Southern Silk Road: first, from Fúsi City passing through Báilán (the Dūlán-Bāilóng area), then northwest up to the modern Lesser and Greater Qaidam, up to Dūnhuáng, and from Dūnhuáng west through Yángguān into the western regions of Xīnjiāng; second, from Fúsi City through Báilán and west to modern Gé'ěrmù, then northwest through Kǎsikǒu, across the Ā'érjīn Mountains in the Shànshàn of the western regions, and then following along the same as the first route (this route is basically the same as the Qīnghǎi-Xīnjiāng Highway, a major thoroughfare on the old Qīnghǎi road); third, Fúsi City-Báilán-Gé'ěrmù-Bùlúntái-Chúlākè'àlāgān River Valley-Xīnjiāng.

If Báilán were in Yùshù, Ābà, or Guǒluò, then the Southern Silk Road would need re-surveying.

10. In 1958, with the support and encouragement of Guō Mòruò,<sup>18</sup> an assemblage of national specialists on history, geography, and archaeology published the *Historical Atlas of China* (*Zhōngguó shǐgǎo dìtújì*) after more than ten years of research and editing (Guō, 1979). On the *Northern Wèi-Southern Qí Period* (*Běi bèi-nán qí shíqī xíngshì*) map, Báilán is unmistakably located in the

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<sup>18</sup> {1892-1978, a historian, prolific author, archaeologist, university president, and government official from Sìchuān.}

southeast of Qaidam, and Hǎixī and the area surrounding Qīnghǎi Lake is marked as the Tǔyùhún area. The authoritativeness of this atlas should be respected. Also, the national atlas issued by the Southern Sòng court labels the Qaidam basin as 'Āchái' Province. 'Āchái' is the name other ethnic groups gave the Tǔyùhún in the period from the Northern and Southern States to the Táng Dynasty. These two maps provide mutually re-enforcing evidence.

11. We would like to present a slightly speculative opinion regarding the name 'Báilán Mountains'. The term 'Báilán Mountains' appeared in Chinese historical documents. 'Bù'érǎnbùdá' in Mongolian means 'Buddha's Mountains'.<sup>19</sup> In the time that Ögedei Khan (Wōkuòtái) was on the throne at the beginning of the Yuán Dynasty (1229-1241), his second son Khotan (Kuòduān) was responsible for administering all of Tibet, including Qīnghǎi. The Qaidam area was the pasturage of the Sālì Wèiwù'ér.<sup>20</sup> The eighth son of the Yuán founder, Kublai Khan, Kōkōcū (Kuòkuòchū), was enfeoffed as King Níng and dispatched to his post in the Qīnghǎi-Tibet region. At the end of the Yuán Dynasty, the noble, Buyan Temür (Bǔyān Tiēmù'ěr), was enfeoffed as King Níng and dispatched to his post in the Qaidam area. Because the Yuán Dynasty founder, Kublai Khan, designated 'Phags pa of the Sakya Sect of Tibetan Buddhism his National Preceptor and Imperial Preceptor, therefore, in the time of the former and later King Níng, they must

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<sup>19</sup> {In fact, the Mongolian name, Burkhan Bogda, can be parsed as Burkhan = Buddha, lord; Bogda = Buddha, suggesting 'Lord Buddha' as the more accurate translation.}

<sup>20</sup> {The Sālì Wèiwù'ér are generally thought to be one of the peoples of medieval Western China that are now classified as the Yùgù, specifically the western branch of that group.}

have revered and honored the Buddha and therefore named the Báilán Mountains 'Buddha's Mountains', because they were located in the Báilán area facing south toward the location of the historical Buddha (India); that is, it is natural that they are called the Bù'èrgānbùdá Mountains in Mongolian. We surmise that the name 'Bù'èrgānbùdá' first appeared around the thirteenth century, about 800-900 years after the name 'Báilán Mountains'. The nomads of Dūlán County in the Bālong region still refer to the Bù'èrgānbùdá Mountains as the Bālong Mountains or the Bālong South Mountains. Both 'Bālong' and 'Báilán' share an initial *b*-, and their finals are close to rhyming (*-long*, *-lan*), thus the difference between the two might simply be a small sound change.

Báilán, Báilán Mountains, and Báilán Qiāng are three closely related human-geographic concepts that should not be muddled together. Báilán is the large area centered on the Tǔyùhún *yázhàng* (capital city), which is in modern Xiāngridé Township, Dūlán County, Hǎixī Prefecture.

'Báilán Mountains' is the old name for the Bù'èrgānbùdá Mountains. Báilán Qiāng is a branch of the Qiāng who lived on the northern and southern foothills of the Báilán Mountains under Tǔyùhún control. The two ethnic groups lived together.

## AN INVESTIGATION OF THE TǔYÙHÚN'S BÁILÁN CAPITAL CITY AND FÚLUÒCHUĀN

### Documentary Evidence

In 452, "Shíyín first built a city in Fúluòchuān." A note to chapter 126 of the *Zīzhìtōngjiàn* reads: "Residing in Fúluòchuān, they still would not dare distance themselves from the protection of the Báilán (mountains)." The *Liáng*



*shū zhǔyì zhuàn* (ch. 54) reads: "Shíyín was established and employed documents and seals (in his rule), erecting city walls and waterworks, he built palaces and houses, and his princes also set up residences." This clearly explains that Shíyín constructed a new capital city at the base of the Báilán Mountains. The *Sòng shū*: Tǔyùhún chapter records that the Tǔyùhún, "on the whole controlled Mùhèchuān." The *Zhōnghuá shūjù* edition annotates this passage as follows: "Mùhè, Mòhè, and Fúluò are three different names for the same place; the difference is due to variation in phonetic transcription." If this is true, then Qaidam Basin contained two important Tǔyùhún garrisons: Qūzhēnchuān (modern Chákǎ) and Fúluòchuān (the location of the capital city), which is also known as Mòhèchuān. This capital city is located in the ancient ruins in modern Xiānggrídé Township. In the first year of Shéngūī of the Northern Wèi (518), Sòng Yún and the monk Huìshēng traveled to the western regions to collect Buddhist texts. *The Record of Luòyáng and Gālán* (*Luòyáng Gālán jì*) records the following incident:

Within Wényì District there was the residence of a Dūnhuáng native named Sòng Yún. Yún and Huìshēng were dispatched to the western regions. In the winter of the first year of Shéngūī (518) during the eleventh month, the empress dispatched the monk, Huìshēng of Chóngli Temple, to go to the western regions to acquire scriptures, and they obtained 170 texts, all of which were marvelous Mahayana sutras. Setting out from the capital and traveling west for forty days they reached Chílǐng (Barren Range), which was the border with the western regions where the imperial border guards were located. No grass or trees grow in Chílǐng, hence its name. In its mountains, there are birds and rodents living in the same holes. Though seemingly different, they are the same type; the male bird and female rodent, represent the feminine and masculine principles, and therefore it is referred to as 'Bird-Rodent-

Share-a-Hole'. Setting out from Chǐlíng and traveling for twenty-three days they crossed flowing sands and arrived at the Tǔyùhún [capital]. The road was extremely cold, with much wind and snow; flying sand and pebbles made it difficult to see. Only the region around Tǔyùhún was warmer than other places. Their country has a written language, which is basically like that of the Wèi, but their customs and politics mostly follow the barbarian mode. Setting out from the Tǔyùhún, they traveled west 3,500 *lǐ* and reached Shànshàn City. This city had set up its own king who was conquered by the Tǔyùhún. At present, 3,000 troops of General Níngxī, second son of the Tǔyùhún ruler [Fúliánchóu], are garrisoned in the city to guard against the western enemies.

There are many interpretations of the Tǔyùhún capital mentioned in this passage. Some say it is in the bend in the Yellow River in Hǎinán Prefecture (Hǎinán Héqǔ);<sup>21</sup> others say it is modern Fúsì City west of Qīnghǎi Lake; and others say it is modern Délíngā. From Rìyuè Mountain to Hǎinán Héqǔ or Fúsì City does not require twenty-three days of travel. These two places are certainly not warmer than other places, and they lack flowing sands to be crossed. Moreover, Fúsì City was when Kuālǚ was the Tǔyùhún khan (535-591), and was the capital during the Tǔyùhún mid-period, while Mòhèchuān (Fúluòchuān) capital, at the latest, was constructed during the time of Shíyín (452-481). The end of the Shíyín reign, 481, is fifty-four years earlier than the earliest period of the reign of Kuālǚ (535). The time that Sòng Yún and Huishēng reached the Tǔyùhún capital was the end of the first year of Shénguī, or the beginning of the following year; that is, in late 518 or early 519, which is the end of the twenty-ninth year or the beginning of the thirtieth

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<sup>21</sup> {This refers to an area in the southeast of modern Gònghé County, Hǎinán Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.}

year of Shíyín's descendant, Khan Fúliánchóu's, reign, sixty-six years after Shíyín built the city, and twenty-two years before Shíyín's great-grandson, Kuālǚ, built his city. Therefore, the capital Shíyín built could not be Fúsì City. As for Délǐnghā, there are no deserts to cross, and it is not warmer than other places. Moreover, one would have to travel to the northwest, thus the direction is incorrect.

Another account in the historical record related to Fúluòchuān is that in 444, because Emperor Jin of the Wèi, had ordered General Fúluò to recruit Mùliyán to attack Báilán, he wanted to reward Fúluò's achievement. Therefore, the Northern Wèi began referring to the area of the Tǔyùhún Báilán capital, centered in Xiāngrìdé, as Fúluòchuān. Two years later, Mùliyán returned with men and horses from Yútíán and probably cleared the area for the Báilán capital city, setting up a foundation for Shíyín to later construct the capital in modern Xiāngrìdé.

As to Xiāngrìdé capital city being warmer than the other areas Sòng Yún and Huishēng traversed, we propose a new solution. They originally set out from the Northern Wèi capital at Luòyáng in winter in the eleventh lunar month. After a forty day trek they reached Chǐlíng (modern Rìyuè Mountain in Rìyuè Township, Huángyuán County, Qīnghǎi Province, about ninety kilometers west of Xīníng). The time was mid-winter, with temperatures probably minus twenty to minus thirty degrees Celsius. At an altitude of more than 3,000 meters above sea level, one can imagine the difficulties of their travel. Each day they could probably travel around thirty *huálǐ*.<sup>22</sup> The distance from Rìyuè

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<sup>22</sup> {A *huálǐ* is a modern term for the traditional *lǐ*, a measure of distance, to distinguish it from the *gōnglǐ*, 'kilometer'. Since both the modern 'kilometer' and the traditional measure of distance can be referred to as *lǐ* in Modern Standard Chinese, the authors use the term *huálǐ* to avoid ambiguity.

Mountain to Cháhànwūsū Town, Dūlán County, Hǎixī Prefecture, Qīnghǎi Province is about 740 *huálǐ*. Consequently, they could reach Cházhèn after traveling twenty-one to twenty-two days. Again, traveling to the northwest along an ancient road and then descending south from the contemporary Zōngjiā Township, they would cross the Tiěkuí flowing sands, and reach the old Tǔyùhún capital, modern Xiāngrídé Town. The flowing sand (desert) abuts Hēdōng Village, Xiāngrídé Township, about a day's travel from the city, thus the twenty-three day journey was entirely possible, and the time recorded is credible.

From the perspective of the seasons, when they reached the Tǔyùhún capital in Xiāngrídé, Spring had begun, between the second (*yǔshuǐ* 'rain water') and third (*jīngzhé* 'insects awaken') solar periods. Moreover, the geographic position of the ancient capital is in the southeast part of Qaidam Basin. The climate here is relatively warm. Xiāngrídé is a Tibetan word meaning 'the place with dense forests'. Before the 1950s, the mountains were clearly visible and the rivers ran clear. Such grass as the needle-leaf sage (*Carex duriuscula*), Chinese cinquefoil (*Potentilla chinensis*), and Syrian rue (*Peganum harmala*) grow like a carpet, and there are forests full of such trees as the China savin (*Sabina chinensis*), *lěngshān* (*Akjes fabric*), Qingyang populus (*Populus cathayana*), Chinese tamarisk twig (*Cacumen tamaricis*), branchy tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*), little-spike willow (*Salix microstachya*), and sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*). We can see that the saying, "warmer than other places" is as true today as it was then.

At the beginning of the Táng Dynasty, Dào Xuǎn (596-667) wrote *The Local Gazetteer of Shìjiā* (*Shìjiā fāng zhì*). The fourth chapter of this work describes the journey from Shànchéng (Xīníng) to the west:

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The exact length of a *huálǐ* is disputed and is thus not translated.}

southwest about 100 *lǐ* we arrived at Chéngfèng Garrison, which was the site of a Suí era exchange market. After a further 200 *lǐ* west we arrived at Qīnghǎi Lake, which has a small mountain in the middle (Hǎixīn Mountain); the lake is more than 700 *lǐ* in circumference. Southwest of the lake we arrived at the Tǔyùhún capital (that is, the capital, Xiānggrídé), and again to the southwest we went to the national border with the Báilán Qiāng.

This place is the northern and southern foothills of the Bù'érǎnbùdá Mountains which at that time were inhabited by the Báilán Qiāng. The Tǔyùhún capital mentioned in the document is not Fúsì City, because that city is northwest of the lake, not southwest of Qīnghǎi Lake. What Dào Xuǎn has written is reliable; he was on his way to India through Tibet. The path he took is basically the same route as what was later known as the 'Great Road to Tibet' which in modern times is the Qīnghǎi-Tibet Road. Traveling in olden days was difficult; thus they would not have gone 1,000 *lǐ* out of their way, have crossed the Kūnlún Mountains to enter Guōluò, and then gone on to Tibet.

#### Archeological Evidence

The discovery of the ancient tomb complex in Rèshuǐ, Dūlán County, provided powerful evidence that Báilán is in the Qaidam Basin and the Bù'érǎnbùdá Mountains are the Báilán Mountains. There are more than 2,000 burial sites in the Rèshuǐ ancient tomb complex, of which there are four central locations: Rèshuǐ, Gōulǐ, Bālóng, and Xiàrihā. These constitute ninety percent of the tombs, distributed deep in the Bù'érǎnbùdá Mountains along the southeast side, arrayed in the shape of an open fan with the Tǔyùhún capital, Xiānggrídé, at its center. The sites are within ten to sixty kilometers from

the center. The other graves are distributed in such places as Délíngā, Wūlán, Gé'ěrmù, and Mángyá. The ancient tomb distribution is nearly identical to the Báilán area centered on Báilán City described in this essay. The tombs of the kings and nobles surround the Xiānggridé capital in accordance with the ancient practice dictating the burial of kings beside their capital cities.

The relics recovered from the ancient sites number in the tens of thousands, the great majority of which are from the ancient tomb complex of Rèshuǐ. The cultural significance of these relics is tremendous. The time period reflected in the relics spans the Northern and Southern dynasties to the Kāiyuán period (713-741) of the Táng Dynasty, which matches the time the Tǔyùhún were active in the Báilán area. In such areas as Guōluò, Yùshù, and Hāinán, no such tomb complex or relics have been unearthed.

Silks are the most typical relics, occurring in great numbers and wide variety, and demonstrating excellent craftsmanship. Certain textiles have writing on them. Eighty-six per cent of the silks originated in the Central Plains area of China, while fourteen per cent are from central and west Asia. There are also numerous gold and silver items, cornelian adornments, perfume bottles, and cosmetics cases. This evidence of the Tǔyùhún's activities along the Southern Silk Road, as well as evidence of the pivotal role played by Báilán on the Southern Silk Road, was first noted by Zhōu Wēizhōu, a scholar of Tǔyùhún history (Zhōu, 1985).

The Rèshuǐ tombs also produced an ancient bronze seal known as *jīnfēng*. The Tǔyùhún established official positions in accordance with Hàn rule (Zhōu, 1992), and this seal was the official seal for Chinese language communications among various Tǔyùhún officials. It is not an object of Tǔfān officialdom. The Tǔfān had Tibetan writing when they entered Qīnghǎi; their official equipment and decorations differed from those of the Hàn system.

Three gold coins from the Eastern Roman Empire

were unearthed in the Qaidam Region in the 1980s. One of the most precious among them is a gold coin of Theodosius II, unearthed in Mùcǎo Village, thirteen kilometers northeast of Xiāngrìdé Town. Theodosius II's reign was 408-450, corresponding to the reign of the Tǔyùhún kings Wūgēdī, Shùluògān, Ācháí, Mùguī, Mùlián, and Shíyín. This time period preceded the Tǔfān's entry into Qīnghǎi by more than a century, thus the owner of this coin could only have been a king, noble, or merchant centered in the Xiāngrìdé area from the time between Wūgēdī and Shíyín (the first half of the fifth century).

Much pottery has been found in the tombs. Archeologist Xǔ Xīngguó believes the pottery:

resembles [those of the] Chinese Jin tombs of the east, and similar pieces from the Chinese Jin tombs of the Héxī Corridor; their shared characteristics are obvious; clearly they are influenced by the Chinese areas.

The Tǔyùhún time period corresponds to that of the Western Jin, and geographically they neighbored the Héxī Corridor and it is to be expected that the utensils used in their lives were influenced by them (the Western Jin).

There is a group of carvings on the cliffs of Lùsī Valley in the middle of the Rèshuǐ ancient tomb complex, including three sitting Buddhas, three standing Buddhas, and a horse. These images of the Buddha were created to protect the tombs of the Rèshuǐ kings. According to experts, they were made during the period of the Northern dynasties, which corresponds to the fact that in Mùlián's time "in the country there was the way of the Buddha." That the Buddha and a horse were carved on the same wall demonstrates the respect the Tǔyùhún showed for horses. The *Jīn shū* (Tǔyùhún chapter) records: "Both murder and horse-thievery were capital offenses." The position of horses in the hearts of the Tǔyùhún people is clear, thus they were carved together

with the Buddha on the wall and worshiped.

The Rèshuǐ number one tomb was the grave of a king, and the Keshigtü (Kēshàngtú) sacrificial platform was the sacrificial altar for the king. The tomb gate and sacrificial altar face northeast. The tomb gates of the extant tombs also face northeast, towards the mountains, with their backs to the marsh, which is very different from the Hàn system. This is related to the Tūyùhún belief in and worship of the shamanistic Heavenly Spirit (Mongol: Tengri; Chinese: Tèngg'é'ěr) and Sun Spirit (Mongol: Naran; Chinese: nàrán), and it also symbolizes that they had not forgotten the culture of Liǎodōng, their original homeland. Furthermore, the number one tomb at Rèshuǐ has a tomb door, a tomb path, and ancillary rooms to the right and left sides, very much like the tombs of the Wèi and Jìn kings. In this way, the Tūyùhún, "built their tombs in the style of the Hàn," regarding themselves as "the Western Fān of China." Their ancestral line began as "the descendants of the Xióng family;" their ancestor Mò Hùbá, following Sīmǎ Yì, pacified Gōng Sūnyuán; earning merit for the empire, Mò Hùbá was enfeoffed as the Shuài Yì King.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, his descendants believed their kings were entitled to burials in the manner of the Hàn kings.

The sacrificial altar at Rèshuǐ has the remnants of eight sacrificed dogs and eighty-seven sacrificed horses. This is a continuation of the old practice of the Xiānbēi of the northeast. A mask was taken from the face of one corpse, and analysis has shown it to be an instrument of shamanic practice. The Xiānbēi also believed in shamanism.

Many coffin paintings were unearthed at Délǐnghā

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<sup>23</sup> {This refers to a war in 238 AD between the Wèi and a warlord, Gōng Sūnyuán, who occupied the modern Liǎodōng area. The Wèi commander, Sīmǎ Yì, (179-251) who was victorious in this campaign, became famous for his military strategy.}



and Rèshuǐ, depicting such things as the king, hunts, picnics, trading, conferences, wakes, sacrifices, parties, crying, singing, discussing the past, and decorated arrows. These paintings reflect every aspect of Tǔyùhún social life. Their clothes, utensils, customs, and cultural characteristics are in accord with the historical record of Tǔyùhún social life. Also, two painted coffins were unearthed in Mùcǎo Village (the same location where the gold coins were unearthed). Ink and mineral pigments illustrate Tǔyùhún riding horses and shooting arrows, additional evidence that the Tǔyùhún of Báilán were centered in Xiāngrìdé.

#### Field Investigation and Testimony from Residents.

From 6-15 June 2007, five of us went to investigate the Dūlán area of Hǎixī Prefecture, Qīnghǎi Province. The Xiāngrìdé area has four remnants of the ancient city; of these, the remnants of the old Xiāngrìdé City are the largest. Within the city there is a city. There were still remnants of the old city's northern wall in the 1960s. The base of the wall was eighteen meters wide, and the remnant was three meters high. The east-west length was 320 meters, and the north-south length was 300 meters. The local Mongol nomads called it 'Délùbànjīn', meaning the four-sided city.<sup>24</sup> Surrounding the city was a ditch more than eight meters wide that could be filled with water to defend against attack. The eastern city wall had the main city gate to greet the rising sun, in accordance with the practice of sun worship. The interior city, which contained the king's rooms and palaces, was built against the north city wall. The city walls of this interior city were eighty meters long from east to west, and seventy meters long from north to south. The interior city also had a gate on the east side.

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<sup>24</sup> {Classical Mongol = *dörbeljin* 'square'.}

North and south of the king's city are remnants of tall watchtowers. The north tower was built on Běishā Mountain at a strategic position on the Tibet road. About 1.8 kilometers from the north city wall, it stood 120 meters high,<sup>25</sup> allowing guards to look far into the northwest for approaching enemies. The south guard tower is situated about 300 meters from the south city wall atop a seventy to eighty meter tall hillock. The guard tower is a two-storied structure; the bottom story, the guards' residence, was about four square meters in area; the top story was the outlook and warning area of about three square meters in area from where guards watched for enemies approaching from the southeast. We ascended the hill to inspect the guards' residence and discovered that the tamped-earth construction was quite peculiar. Within the tamped earth layers there were poplar beams about ten centimeters in circumference, spaced about ten centimeters apart that served as a support framework, much like steel re-enforced concrete in modern construction. There are many ancient cities in Qīnghǎi, but an ancient city with city walls, a moat, and watchtowers is very rare, demonstrating the scope of the city's grandeur.

Later, Shíyín's great-grandson, Kuālǚ, built a city in imitation of this city eight kilometers northwest of Qīnghǎi Lake: Fúsi City. Its east-west wall was a bit longer, and its north-south wall was a bit shorter; there was a city within a city, an east-facing main gate, and there was a tamped-earth platform on the central axis of the city that also used poplar-beam reinforced, Tǔyùhún-style construction.

While in the field, we separately interviewed older people who had seen the old city walls. They are:

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<sup>25</sup> {This is probably measured from the base of the 'mountain' to the top of the tower.}

- Mr. Kǒng Xiànwén (born 1934, native of Xīníng, peasant, high school graduate, resident of Déshèng Village, Xiāngrìdé Town, resident since the 1950s);
- Mr. Zhōu Tàì (born 1923, native of Zhāmálóng Township, Huángzhōng County, Qīnghǎi Province, peasant, primary school graduate, resident of Xiátán Village, Cháwūsū Township, Dūlán County, has lived in Dūlán since 1941 and came to Xiāngrìdé many times to visit his friend, Blacksmith Zhào); and
- Mr. Niú Zīwén (born 1921, native of Xīníng, calligrapher, served as chairmen of the iron and lumber collective of Xiāngrìdé Town in the mid-twentieth century).

A compendium of their comments is presented below:

1. The Xiāngrìdé old city was about 300 meters square, basically rectangular in shape, and is called “Délùbànjīn” in Mongolian. There was a city within the city. Zhōu Tàì first saw the city walls in the 1940s and said at that time they were still quite complete, with grass growing on top of them. On the east and southern sides there were large openings that were big enough for people, horses, and carts to pass through. There was an earthen platform (four observation towers) in each of the four corners. Along the north wall was an inner city, seventy to ninety square meters, which was called the city packed in the city (*chéng tào chéng* 城套城). On the north and south mountains there were fire towers (guard towers). Mr. Zhōu's friend, Zhào Bànglún, was a blacksmith whose house was near the base of the east wall. He had dug up, one after the other, nearly thirty utensils over time, including a large copper pot, bronze plate, iron wares, and pottery. He passed away seven or eight years ago, and it is unknown what happened to those items.

2. After the 1950s, with the increasing speed of agricultural collectivization, important relics were unearthed within the inner and outer city walls. Just the ones seen by one of these writers were a large copper shard with carved decorations, arrow heads, jade implements, and iron implements. It is a pity they have not been preserved. Residents of Hédōng Village, where the ancient city had been, such as Kǒng Xiànwén, personally experienced the bounty of unearthed relics. In the 1970s, there was a campaign to increase the amount of flat land; north of the old city there was a graveyard with 100-200 gravestones of various sizes. The coffins were all cavities carved out of complete cypress timbers, with the corpses lying face up inside. On top was a flat board. The corpses were mostly of military generals, with semi-circular helmets made of leather, and bronze pieces covering the eyes. The armor formed three layers: an inner layer of felt, a middle layer of leather, and an outer layer of bronze, all held together with bronze rivets. Numerous burial objects were found with the corpses, including a large amount of silk, some of which had Chinese characters, and deer and cloud decorations. There were arrow quivers made of layered birch bark and many sets of leather armor, which had been abandoned because they were "dead people's things." There are no birch trees within a 400 kilometer radius of Xiāngrìdé. It is therefore possible that this birch bark quiver was brought by the Tǔyùhún from their homeland in the northeast.

In summary, we believe that the Báilán area is the Qaidam Basin and the Báilán Mountains are the Bù'ěrgānbùdá Mountains. The Báilán Qiāng were a branch of the Qiāng that resided below the Báilán Mountains and were under Tǔyùhún control for a long time. The old city of Xiāngrìdé was the medieval Tǔyùhún political, economic,

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and military center; it was the capital of the Tǔyùhún in the time of Shíyín and the location of the ancient capital city of Bǎilán.

CHINESE WORD LIST

A

Ā'érjīn Mountains 阿尔金山  
Ābà 阿坝  
Āchái Province 阿柴州  
Āchái 阿柴, 阿豺 (younger brother of Shùluògān)  
Āchái 阿柴 (ancient ethnonym for the Tǔyùhún)  
Ālā Lake 阿拉湖  
Āndōng 安东

B

Báilán de míngyì jí qí dìwàng 白兰的名义及其地望  
Báilán kǎo 白兰考  
Báilán 白兰  
Báilánguó dìbiàn 白兰国地辨  
Bālán 巴兰  
Bālóng 巴隆  
Bāyánkālā Mountain 巴颜喀喇山  
Běi Shǐ - tǔyùhún zhuàn 北史-吐谷浑传  
Běi Wèi - nán qí shíqí xíngshì 北魏-南齐时期形势  
Běishā 北沙  
Bù'érhànbùdá 布尔汗布达  
Bùlúntái 布伦台  
Bǔyān Tiēmù'ěr 卜烟帖木尔

C

Cáirénbāli 才仁巴力  
Cáo Ān 曹安  
Cèfǔ yuánguī 册府元龟  
Cháhànwūsū 察汗乌苏  
Chákǎ 茶卡  
Cháwūsū 察乌苏  
Cházhèn 察镇  
Chéng Qǐjùn 程起骏  
Chéngfèng Garrison 承凤戍

Chíllǐng 赤岭

Chónglǐ Temple 崇立寺

Chúlākè'ālagān River Valley 除拉克阿拉干河沟

Chúmǎkē 除玛柯

Cóng Zhé 聪喆

Cuòmùcèfēng 措木策峰

D

Dàmǔ Bridge 大母桥

Dāngjīn 当金

Dàngqǐ 宕岂

Dǎngxiàng 党项

Dào Xuǎn 道宣

Délǐnghā 德令哈

Délǔbànjīn 德律半金

Déshèng 德胜

Dī 氏

Dìngyáng 定阳

*Dūlán xiàn zhì* 都兰县志

Dūlán 都兰

Dūnhuáng 敦煌

Duōmí 多弥

Dùzhōuchuān 度周川

F

Fàn Wénlán 范文澜

Former Qín 前秦

Fú Luó 伏罗

Fúliánchóu 伏连筹

Fúluò 伏罗

Fúluòchuān 伏罗川

Fúqǐqiánguī 伏乞乾归

Fúsi City 伏俟城

G

Gānsù 甘肃

Gāochàng 高昌  
Gé'ěrmù 格尔木  
Gōng Sūnyuán 公孙渊  
Gònghé 共和  
Gōulǐ 沟里  
Gù Jiégāng 顾颉刚  
Gǔngá 滚嘎  
Guō Mòruò 郭沫若  
Guǒluò 果洛

## H

Hǎinán 海南; i.e., Hǎinán Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture  
海南藏族自治州  
Hǎinán Héqū 海南河曲  
Hǎixī 海西; i.e., Hǎixī Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous  
Prefecture 海西蒙古族藏族自治州  
Hàn 汉  
Hédōng Village 河东村  
*huálǐ* 华里  
Huáng Hào 黄颢  
Huángyuán County 湟源县  
Huángzhōng 湟中  
Huìshēng 惠生

## J

Jiànzàn 坚赞  
Jiāng Cóng 姜聪  
*jǐnfēng* 谨封  
*jīngzhé* 惊蛰  
*Jìn shū* 晋书  
*Jiù táng shū* 旧唐书



K

Kāiyuán 开元  
Kāsīkǒu 卡斯口  
Kēshàngtú 科尚图  
King Níng 宁王  
King of Mòhè 莫贺王  
Kǒng Xiànwén 孔宪文  
Kuānlǚ 夸吕  
Kūnlún 昆仑  
Kuòduān 阔端  
Kuòkuòchū 阔阔出

L

Lèdū 乐都  
*lěngshān* 冷杉  
Lǐ Wénshí 李文实  
*Liáng shū zhǔyì zhuàn* 梁书诸夷传  
Liángzhōu 凉州  
Liǎodōng 辽东  
Lièbā 列巴  
Liú Bǐngdé 刘秉德  
Lóng Mountains 陇山  
Lóng 陇  
Lǚ Jiànfú 吕建福  
Lùsī 露斯

M

Mǎduō 玛多  
Mángyá 茫崖  
Matsuda Hisao 松田寿男  
Mò Hùbá 莫护拔  
Mòhè 莫贺  
Mùguī 慕璜  
Mùhè 慕贺  
Mùhèchuān 慕贺川  
Mùlìyán 慕利延, 木利延,

Mùróng Wěi 慕容廆  
Mùróng 慕容  
Mùyì 木弈  
Nán Mountains 南山

N

Náncháo 南朝  
Nàrán 那然  
Niú Yǒngtài 牛永泰  
Niú Zǐwén 牛子文  
Northern Liáng 北凉

Q

Qaidam (Cháidámù) 柴达木  
Qaidam River 柴达木河  
Qià'ná Duōjiē 恰纳多杰  
Qiāng 羌  
Qiěmò 且末  
Qīlián Mountains 祁连山  
Qīnghǎi 青海  
Qīnghǎi cōng 青海骢  
Qūmálái 曲麻莱  
Qūzhēnchuān 屈真川

R

Rèshuǐ 热水  
Riyuè Pass 日月关  
Riyuè Township 日月乡

S

Sāli Wèiwù'ér 撒利畏兀儿  
Shànchéng 鄯城  
Shànshàn 鄯善  
Shèguī 涉归  
Shìjiā fāng zhì 释迦方志  
Shìpí 视罽

Shíyín 拾寅  
Shuài Yì King 率义王  
Shùluògān 树洛干  
Sìchuān 四川  
Sīmǎ Yì 司马懿  
*Sòng shū: xiānbēi tǔyùhún zhuàn* 宋书 鲜卑吐谷浑传  
Sòng Yún 宋云  
Southern Liáng 南凉  
Southern Yān 南燕  
*Suí shū* 隋书  
Sūnbō 孙波  
*Sūnzǐ bīngfǎ* 孙子兵法  
Suǒnánzàngbǔ 索南藏卜  
Sūpí Country 苏毗国

T

Tánggǔlā 唐古拉  
Táo River 洮水  
Tènggé'ěr 腾格尔  
Tiěkuí 铁奎  
Tóngdé 同德  
Tǔbō 吐蕃  
Tūfā Nùtán 秃发傉檀  
Tūfā Wūgū 秃发乌孤  
Tuōsù Lake 托素湖  
Tǔyán 吐延  
Tǔyùhún 吐谷浑  
*Tǔyùhún shǐ* 吐谷浑史  
*Tǔyùhún sì dà shù chéng* 吐谷浑四大戍城  
*Tǔyùhún yú bái lán* 吐谷浑与白兰

W

Wáng Ruiqín 王瑞琴  
Wèi Emperor Jin 魏晋王  
Wényì 闻义  
Western Jin 西晋  
Western Qín 西秦  
Wōkuòtái 窝阔台  
Wǔdài huìyào 五代会要  
Wūgēdī 乌纥堤  
Wūlán 乌兰

X

Xià 夏  
Xiānbēi 鲜卑  
Xiāngri dé 香日德  
Xiàrihā 夏日哈  
Xiàtán 下滩  
Xīfān 西蕃  
*Xīn táng shū* 新唐书  
Xīnghǎi 兴海  
Xīníng 西宁  
Xīnjiāng 新疆  
Xióng 熊  
Xiùgōu River 秀沟河  
Xǔ Xīnguó 许新国  
Xúnhuà 循化

Y

Yamaguchi Mizuo 山口瑞风  
Yángguān 阳关  
*yázhàng* 衙帐  
Yèyán 叶延  
Yífúwúdí State 乙弗无敌国  
Yīnshān 阴山  
Yǒngjiā 永嘉  
*Yuán shǐ, yīng zōng jì* 元史, 英宗记

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Yùgùzú 裕固族

Yùshù 玉树

yǔshuǐ 雨水

Yútían 于阗

Z

Zhāmálóng 扎麻隆

Zhāng Dézǔ 张得祖

Zhào Bànglún 赵邦伦

*Zhōngguó shǐgǎo dìtújí* 中国史稿地图集

*Zhōngguó tōngshǐ jiǎnbiān* 中国通史简编

Zhōnghuá shūjú 中华书局

Zhōu Tài 周泰

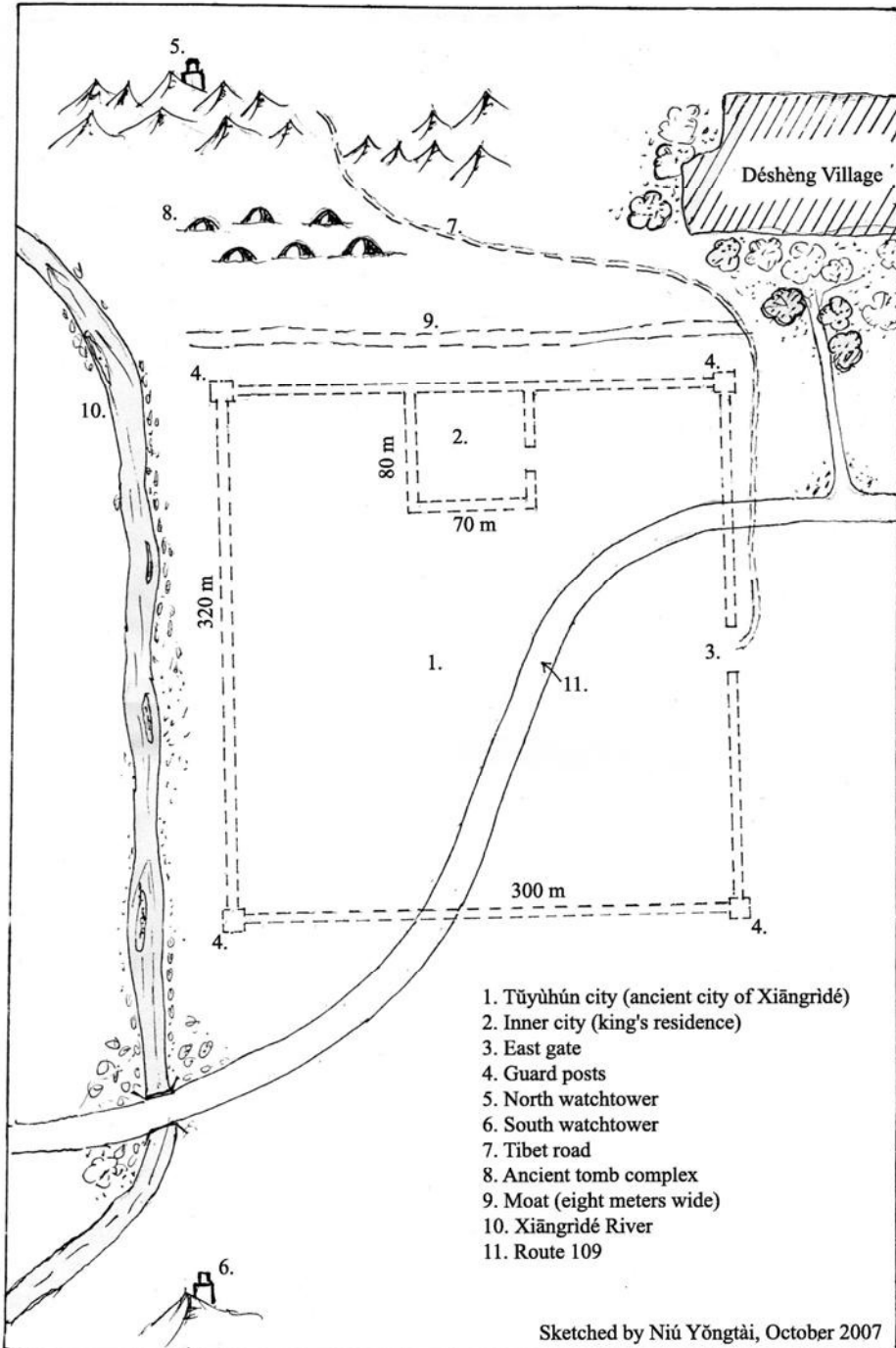
Zhōu Wéizhōu 周伟洲

Zhū Shìkuí 朱世奎

*Zīzhì Tōngjiàn* 资治通鉴

Zōngjiā 宗家

## ANCIENT XIĀNGRÌDÉ



PHOTOGRAPHS<sup>26</sup>

Figure One. The southern watchtower is on the outskirts of Xiāngridé Township.



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<sup>26</sup> All photographs were taken by Elena Mckinlay in January 2010.

Figure Two. A closer view of the watchtower.





Figure Three. The figure in this image gives a sense of scale.



Figure Four: Looking south from the watchtower toward the Xiāngniǎidé River.



Figure Five. Looking south from the watchtower toward the Xiāngrǐdé River.



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STAG RIG TIBETAN VILLAGE: HAIR CHANGING  
AND MARRIAGE

'brug mo skyid (Qinghai Normal University 青海师范大学)  
with Charles Kevin Stuart (Shaanxi Normal University 陕西  
师范大学), Alexandru Anton-Luca (Independent Scholar),  
and Steve Frediani (Independent Scholar)

ABSTRACT

Marriage in Stag rig Village, Shar lung Township, Khri ka County, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province,<sup>1</sup> China is described in the context of the hair dressing ritual, rules of exclusion and inclusion, the process of marriage (spouse selection, free choice marriage, arranged marriage), engagement, drinking contract liquor, bride wealth discussion, choosing a date for the wedding ritual, wedding preparations at the bride and groom's homes, the wedding ritual and banquet, marrying a groom into the bride's home, divorce, and the atmosphere surrounding the bride's arrival.

KEY WORDS

Marriage, Tibetan, wedding, hair-changing, Amdo, Mtsho sngon, Qinghai, China

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<sup>1</sup> Douhoulou 豆后漏/ Dourou 豆肉 Village, Donggou 东沟 Township, Guide 贵德 County, Hainan 海南 Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province.

PART ONE: ACCOUNTS

Account One ('brug mo skyid)<sup>2</sup>

I had seven days of holiday beginning 1 May 2004 so I left Mtsho sngon Normal University in Zi ling (Xining 西宁) City, where I was a student, and returned to my home in Stag rig Village, where I interviewed a family of five people—Uncle Khro rgyal and Aunt Pad ma; their son, Tshe 'bum; daughter-in-law, Bad skyid; and their five-year-old grandson, Phun mo.

When I got off the bus, I saw Uncle Khro rgyal and Phun mo sitting on the stairs in front of the village medical clinic. When they saw me, Phun mo ran over and kissed me in greeting. Uncle Khro rgyal stood, came over, and said, "'brug mo, are you home for the holiday?"

"Yes. What are you doing here?" I replied.

"Phun mo has a cold. We're waiting for the doctor to give him an injection," Uncle Khro rgyal said.

I then said goodbye and hurried home, for I had not seen my parents in more than two months.

After I had eaten something, I went to Uncle Khro rgyal's home, which is near my own home. When I got to their gate, I called, "Uncle Khro rgyal! Uncle Khro rgyal!"

Aunt Pad ma eventually came out, invited me to come inside, and offered me tea and fried bread. "I was washing chives in the kitchen, so I didn't hear you at first," she said, explaining why it had taken her some time to come to the gate.

"I saw Uncle Khro rgyal and Phun mo at the medical clinic, but where are Brother Tshe 'bum and Sister Bad 'skyid?" I asked, when I didn't see anyone else in the home.

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<sup>2</sup> B. 1983.



Aunt Pad ma put the chives outside in the afternoon sunshine and said, "Son is always busy in the millhouse, especially at this time, when every family has to mill flour for the summer." She sighed and continued, "He needs somebody to lend him a hand, but look at my husband and me—one is eighty and one is seventy-five—plus Khro rgyal caught a serious cold this spring and nearly died. Bad skyid is never at home. This morning she said she was going to help Brtan ba's family build walls."

She offered me more tea and was silent. The sun shone on her wrinkled face. I saw deep sadness in her gray eyes.

A dog barked and somebody pushed open the gate. It was Aunt Pad ma's eldest daughter, Bsod nams. "I've come to give you this meat. It is fresh. Make some soup for yourself and Father," she said and handed the meat to her mother. Aunt Pad ma put the meat in the kitchen. Bsod nams looked in the kitchen and asked, "*Mna' ma ma yong ne?* Didn't she come?"

"*Ma yong*. No," said Aunt Pad ma.

Bsod nams said, "Oh, she said she had to go help you with the sheep and dinner. She didn't even have lunch."

"You went there?" asked Aunt Pad ma.

"Yeah. That was a long time ago. The walls were finished at about two o'clock," Bsod nams said.

After a long silence, Aunt Pad ma sighed, but said nothing.

The sound of the gate being pushed open came again. Uncle Khro rgyal entered. Bsod nams stood, gave her seat to her father, and offered him a bowl of tea.

"Phun mo?" asked Aunt Pad ma.

"Playing outside with the kids," replied Uncle Khro rgyal.

"What did the doctor say?" Aunt Pad ma asked.

"No need for more injections, but he needs to take medicine for three days," he said after a sip of tea.

Bsod nams said, "I have never seen a family like yours that spends so much money on doctors, even for a cough. Look at you two—not even daring to buy a half-kilo of meat. You are too old to do heavy housework. People your age should only chant and prepare for the next life."

Then she covered her face in her hands. Her shoulders were heaving. Her mother moved next to her, and patted her, "No crying. This is our fate. At the beginning, we thought this girl was an ideal daughter-in-law... But who knows? Everyone changes as time goes by. It doesn't matter that we have to work. However, what we are really worried about is Tshe 'bum. He needs a good wife and a happy home."

Bsod nams stopped sobbing and said, "Divorce her. Tshe 'bum is still young. He has time to take another wife."

Her father looked up and said, "It is easy to say, but where is the money? These days a divorce is much more expensive than a wedding. She has been in this family for ten years. Plus there is her son. We would have to pay at least 20,000 RMB. For a wealthy family, maybe that's not a problem, but we only have a mill machine to earn a little money from our fields. It's difficult."

The sun had nearly set. The three finished talking. Bsod nams left for her home. Uncle Khro rgyal went to bring in the sheep. Aunt Pad ma chopped chives and got ready to make dinner. I stood and planned to leave, but Aunt Pad ma invited me to have dinner with them. I accepted her invitation, because I wanted to learn more.

The sun had completely set. Tshe 'bum and Bad skyid were still absent. After Uncle Khro rgyal finished feeding the sheep and putting them in the sheepfold, he sat

on the *hu tse*,<sup>3</sup> murmuring chants. I helped Aunt Pad ma make fried pancakes stuffed with chives.

Phun mo sat near the stove, humming a child's song he had learnt at school. He looked in the pan hungrily. I finished making the pancakes and asked, "Phun mo, when you are a young man, what kind of girl do you want to marry?"

He looked at me, thought for a moment, and said, "I want a very beautiful and kind wife. I don't want a strong girl for my wife. Strong girls beat weak boys."

This reminded me that his mother was stronger than his father. I had heard from my family that Bad skyid had beaten Tshe 'bum several times, but I couldn't ask the family; it would have only increased the pain in their hearts.

As we started to have dinner, Bad skyid came in. She said nothing to her parents-in-law. "Are you on holiday?" she asked me.

"Yes," I said and though I was not a member of the family, I did not want to talk to her anymore. I'm not sure why.

She turned to her son and asked, "Did you go see the doctor? What did he say?"

The little boy climbed up to his mother's lap and explained that his grandfather had taken him to the doctor who had said that it wasn't a very serious problem.

Aunt Pad ma got a cup for Bad skyid and offered her tea.

Bad skyid spoke to them for the first time, "This morning my sister told me my mother was sick so I went to see her."

"Oh, is she better now?" said Aunt Pad ma.

"Yeah, she got an injection this afternoon," said

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<sup>3</sup> Literary Tibetan: *phul tse*. A heated platform used for sitting and sleeping.

Bad skyid.

Uncle Khro rgyal looked at Aunt Pad ma, then at Bad skyid, and said, "I didn't see her in the clinic."

"Maybe she left before you arrived," suggested Bad skyid.

The sky was completely dark. At last, Tshe 'bum came in with two buckets of drinking water and greeted his parents and me. He was white with flour from head to foot. He washed quickly and sat next to his mother. Aunt Pad ma poured him a cup of tea and offered him some fried pancakes. The room was quiet, except for occasional questions to me about school. Everybody lowered their heads and ate.

After finishing, I thanked them for dinner and left for home. Aunt Pad ma saw me off. At the gate, she said, "You know my family, and you saw everything today. 'brug mo, girl, it is important to find a good spouse, for both the man and woman."

I nodded my head in reply and left. I didn't know what to say to comfort her, as I was inexperienced in such matters. I hoped they would find a good solution.

I slept until ten-thirty the following morning. After a quick breakfast, I went to visit their home again. I only saw Uncle Khro rgyal and Aunt Pad ma at home. Bad skyid had gone to help build a sheepfold at her uncle's home. Tshe 'bum had gone to the millhouse as usual. Aunt Pad ma was hitting her back with a ladle. She said, "My pain is getting worse these days. Nothing can stop it."

When I suggested acupuncture she said, "Useless. It will go with me until I die, just like my work goes with me."

Uncle Khro rgyal sat in the sun with closed eyes. I didn't want to disturb him because he looked very old and tired. Deep wrinkles creased his face and hands.

A new day had begun, repeating itself for this family. No laughter. Much sadness. I said goodbye.

Account Two ('brug mo skyid)

Tshe dbang is one of my closest childhood friends. She married when she was fourteen. Her parents and uncles arranged the marriage. She didn't love her husband, but she was pressured to marry him because she had two younger sisters living at home and her mother had to care for them. Her brother was also planning to marry a girl from the same village where they lived and Tshe dbang's bridewealth was used as the bridewealth for her brother's bride.

She worked like a dog in her husband's home for two years after the wedding. Her husband often beat her when he was drunk. Her mother-in-law treated her like a slave. In the third year of her marriage, she divorced. I was very glad to hear of the end of her marriage, because she had finally escaped from a hopeless, unhappy marriage.

After I got older, I began thinking about my own life. I have many ideas and wishes about my marriage. In the village where I live, many girls about my age are married and have children. Some are divorced. I am not married yet because I am a college student. However, my parents sometimes talk to me about my marriage and whom they think would be a good spouse for me. This makes me think about my future husband and family.

I am the youngest child in my family and the only unmarried one. According to tradition, if the youngest child in a family is a girl, then the parents let her choose her husband. If the boy's background is good, her family supports the marriage. I hope my parents won't arrange my marriage and choose a husband for me. I like the idea of a romantic marriage and hope my eventual marriage will be stronger if it is based on love. I also hope that my father, brothers, and uncles won't ask for excessive bridewealth. If it is too high, then a family with little income goes into debt

by taking a wife for their son. After marriage, the bride works as a member of the boy's family and if the family is in debt because of the bridewealth, the bride must work harder.

I want to marry an educated man. If I marry a farmer or a herdsman with no education, then villagers will think I have physical or mental problems. Besides, I think we wouldn't share the same ideas about life.

Even though I am still young to marry, in fact it is approaching. I hope my marriage will be my own to decide and free of pressure.

### Account Three<sup>4</sup>

My mother was an only child. She began living with her grandfather when she was eight years old. When she became older this responsibility prevented her from marrying out, even though many young men proposed to her.

My father is the oldest child in his family. He has two sisters and three brothers and it would have overburdened the family if he had brought a bride to his parents' home. His father died when he was thirteen. My father then had to help his mother do housework and rear his younger sisters and brothers.

My great-grandfather introduced the two and, in 1960, when Father was thirty-two, he married and moved

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<sup>4</sup> A local Tibetan woman (b. 1983) describes her parents' marriage. As this account indicates, significant age differences between spouses were common in the past, with men being older. In 2005, however, most spouses are about the same age. Men often married into their wives' homes in the past but currently, this is rare.

into Mother's home. Mother was twenty. For Mother, Father seemed like an older brother at the time they began living together with my mother's grandfather. Father earned money by making Tibetan-style leather boots for villagers, monks, and herdsmen. Mother worked in the village's communal fields.

My oldest brother was born in the fifth year of their marriage, which changed the family. Father and Mother still worked for the family. Then, one after another, five more children were born. In the year of my birth, due to land allocation in 1982, my family received thirteen *mu* 亩<sup>5</sup> of arable fields. Father also bought sheep, goats, cows, donkeys, and horses, and our house was also rebuilt.

Two of my elder brothers were enrolled in schools. My two elder sisters had married. My third elder brother herded the family livestock. Except for spring and autumn, Mother worked in the fields and did housework. Father continued making boots day and night. Sometimes, even in cold winter, he worked very late under an oil-lamp light.

I cannot recall any serious arguments between my parents. However, very minor conflicts are common. Father is the kind of man who easily becomes angry when someone does something he doesn't like, and Mother likes to joke with him. Like most Tibetan women, Mother is very respectful of Father. I never saw her oppose Father or say something bad about him. Sometimes I ask her, "Why don't you get angry when Father scolds you?"

She always answers, "That's his personality. It's hard for a man to change."

Neither of my parents attended school. Although they cannot read and write, they chant and recite prayers. In my village, my family is the only one with three educated people—my two brothers and me. My parents have

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<sup>5</sup> One *mu* equals 0.16 acres/ 0.067 hectares.

therefore become the most admired old couple in my village. Their hope is to rear us to be good people.

#### Account Four

I am a thirty-five year old man and a government officer. I am always thankful that I have the kindest parents and siblings in the world. I also have many sincere friends. However, marriage has been a big demon in my life. Marriage has changed my way of life, personality, and confidence. I now feel sick of living in this world.

I was admired by my peers when I was a teenager and received much praise from parents and other people because I always obtained high marks in school, could dance and sing very well, and my jokes would make people laugh until their bellies ached. I thought I was the luckiest person in the world. This lasted until I was twenty years old when I graduated from normal school and was employed as a Chinese-Tibetan translator.

When my uncle was close to death, my parents told me that I was to be engaged to my cousin whom my uncle had adopted. I felt like I had been hit by a lightning bolt. I then understood why my father and brother opposed the relationship I had had with a girlfriend while I was in school. I didn't like the engagement, but I said nothing. What could I say? It was my uncle's decision.

I married my cousin when I was twenty-one. She is three years older than me, and I lived in her home with her mother. They didn't treat me as I had expected, although I gave all my salary to them to show my good faith, and I did all the housework. I even washed dirty clothes. It is a big disgrace for a Tibetan man to wash his wife's clothes, especially her socks. At that time I didn't think much about it. I just thought that was the only way to be a good



husband and a good son-in-law.

However, I was wrong, completely wrong. Their maltreatment steadily worsened. Sometimes they didn't even allow me to enter the home. One night it snowed heavily. I came back from work for my son's birthday. When I reached the gate, I found the gate firmly bolted from the inside. No matter how much I knocked and shouted, nobody came to open the door. That night I slept in the shed where we stored straw. I couldn't enter my wife's home, because they wouldn't let me. I couldn't go to my parents' house, because I didn't want them to be sad over my unfortunate situation.

I led such a life until my son was three years old. Then I divorced. Before that, however, I first told my parents and siblings about my life during those four years. My wife was present and she didn't deny it. She just asked for my son. I gave him to her, not because I didn't love him, but because I know that a baby cannot live without his own mother. My parents and siblings cried for me all night long. I told them how my nightmares were now over, and that was the end of my first marriage.

Not long after that, I changed my job as an officer and moved to the Garang Township center. During the holidays, I stayed with my parents and had many happy times with them. Sometimes I would go see my son, but not in my ex-wife's home. We rarely talked to each other when we met.

When I was twenty-six, I met my second wife. Her home is in the township where I work, and she is a primary school teacher. Because she didn't attend the teacher training (normal) school, she received a very low salary at that time, even though she worked as hard as others. We fell in love as soon as we met. Our parents expressed no opinion about our marriage

I soon discovered that she could not do much

housework and she could not cook well. I accepted that, because I understood that not all women can do housework and cook well. I did all the housework. She thanked me all the time and said that she was very lucky to have a husband like me. Soon afterwards we had our baby—a lovely son. The three of us had a very happy life for seven months. Then she said that she wanted to study at Mtsho Iho Prefecture Normal School. I didn't say anything and paid her tuition. I was too busy to look after my son so I sent him to my parents' home and they cared for him until he was seven years old.

My second wife studied in the normal school for four years. When I visited her she said, "Don't let my classmates know that we are a couple because I am the only one who is married." I understood and agreed.

After graduation, she got a better teaching job and her salary increased. However, she had changed. Many nights she didn't come home. Instead, she slept at the school. People said she often walked around with a young man. I didn't believe those rumors until one day she told me that she didn't love me anymore. I was shocked a second time and my second marriage ended.

She took my second son with her, but she said I could take him to my parents during the holidays as they had raised him. After these two marriages, I completely changed. I smoked and drank everyday, and used all my money to gamble. I shouted at my parents as if they were the cause of my failed marriages. Sometimes, I even thought about ending my life to escape my horrible memories.

My parents, brothers, sisters, and friends all encouraged me and helped me to wake up from those nightmares. In time I awakened, but even now I still don't understand why my marriages failed. I feel very sad when I see my two sons, because they are the victims of

unfortunate marriages and I cannot provide them with a happy home. One thing that I am very sure is that I will never marry again, because not all women are 'gentle lambs'.<sup>6</sup>

#### Account Five<sup>7</sup>

I don't think I am lucky. Since I was born many unhappy things have happened around me and to my family—especially when I was three years old. My father died very suddenly from a heart attack one autumn day that year. A thorn pierced my mother's left eye seven days after his funeral and she soon became blind in that eye. Another unpleasant event happened a few months after those tragedies—my eldest brother caught a very bad cold that became progressively worse. Mother spent all our money trying to cure him, but the King of Demons<sup>8</sup> took away his voice and he became deaf.

There was a rumor that my father's ghost still wandered on earth and that sometimes he visited his wife and children. The villagers began to avoid every member of my family. They were even afraid to touch me—a small child. Our lives were very difficult. My second brother, who was

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<sup>6</sup> *Wenroude yanggao* 温柔的羊羔 is a Chinese saying commonly used by local Tibetans that describes gentle women.

<sup>7</sup> A twice-married, twenty-nine year old local woman (b. 1973) describes her marriages. The father-in-law in this account divorced his wife and now lives alone in a county seat town.

<sup>8</sup> Villagers believe that Gshin rje bdag po 'the King of Demons' punishes people who did evil things in their previous lives.

only nine years old, did the work of a grown man in order to earn money. My eldest brother herded livestock for other families as a servant, and my sister helped my mother do housework and look after me.

I was engaged to a young man in my village when I was fifteen. We were married three months later. It was a very good family. My father-in-law was a government officer and had a high salary. My mother-in-law and my husband were very kind to me, which almost made me forget my unhappy childhood. I was very thankful to them and I worked very hard.

However, something happened one rainy night that turned my life upside down. My husband was out with some of his friends. Only my parents-in-law and I were at home. I went to bed early after dinner because I was pregnant and not feeling well. At about midnight, somebody suddenly opened the door of my room. I thought it was my husband at first, but when the dark shadow came nearer, I realized it was my father-in-law. I was very surprised and called out, "Father, what are you..." but before I could finish, he covered my mouth with his big hand and pressed me down with his huge heavy body.

Then, the door suddenly opened. It was my husband. I was paralyzed with fear and stood up speechless. His face turned dark blue with rage. My mother-in-law appeared a minute later. They stared at us in disgust and disappointment. Slowly my father-in-law left the room. They just stared at me with cold, beast-like eyes no matter how I pleaded and explained.

As I expected, they called all our relatives the next morning. I felt guilty with my relatives present, because as my mother-in-law and husband scolded me, they also scolded my relatives for having such a disgraceful daughter and niece. At the end of the discussion it was decided that I was to leave their home immediately, and rear the baby

that was inside me by myself.

I don't remember how I spent the following days. The favorite topic of the villagers' conversations was my father-in-law and me. The scandal spread like the wind through the neighboring villages. I couldn't eat, drink, or sleep. I also didn't have the courage to meet people, even if they were young children. I stayed at home all day without speaking to anybody and I became steadily weaker. All my relatives and friends believed me and comforted me, but my baby was the only encouragement for me to live on. When I gave birth, my baby girl looked just like her father, with dark skin and thick, black eyebrows.

Although my baby's birth brought great happiness to my life, she couldn't change my life, and I couldn't stay at home. My brothers and sister hadn't married, and we were all living with my mother under one roof. Conflicts grew among us. By the time my little girl was five years old, my family members, and especially my sister, had begun expressing resentment; they shouted and sometimes even beat her. Every shout and blow was just like a stab to my heart. I know why they shouted at her and beat her, and I could do nothing to help her.

Finally, I decided to marry a man with a strong body odor.<sup>9</sup> I had no other choice, though through this marriage my own body started to smell foul. He is an alcoholic gambler and often stays out all night. However, I have no right to complain, because of the big black spot on my past.

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<sup>9</sup> Villagers believe that *gseb ri* 'strong body odor' is inherited and those with *gseb ri* have more difficulty marrying than those without it.

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage in Stag rig Village, Shar lung Township, Khri ka County, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province, China is described in the context of the hair dressing ritual, rules of exclusion and inclusion, the process of marriage (spouse selection, free choice marriage, arranged marriage), engagement, drinking contract liquor, bride wealth discussion, choosing a date for the wedding ritual, wedding preparations at the bride and groom's homes, the wedding ritual and banquet, marrying a groom into the bride's home, divorce, and the atmosphere surrounding the bride's arrival. In addition, several personal accounts contribute to the study.<sup>10</sup>

Stag rig Village, Shar lung Township, Khri ka County, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture is located in the east of Mtsho sngon Province. Sixty-five percent of Mtsho lho's population is Tibetan. The remaining population consists primarily of Han 汉 Chinese, Mongolian, Monguor (Tu 土), Hui 回, and Salar (Sala 撒拉). Tibetans and Han are the predominant ethnicities in Khri ka County, one of Mtsho lho's five counties.<sup>11</sup> Most residents of Shar lung, Phrang mar (Changmu 常牧), Ka ring (Garang 尕让), Kab ron (Xinjie 新街), and Lha khang thang (Luohantang 罗汉堂) townships

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<sup>10</sup> This article joins other, related studies written by former students of the English Training Program, Qinghai Nationalities Teacher's College, Qinghai Normal University, located in Xining City, Qinghai Province—Luo's [Blo bzang tshe ring] study (2010) of a hair changing ritual in a Tibetan village in the Bla brang area, Tshe dpal dro rje et al. (2010), Blo brtan rdo rje and Stuart (2008), Tsering Bum et al. 2008, and Tshe dbang et al. (2010).

<sup>11</sup> Chab cha [Gonghe 共和], Mang rdzong [Guinan 贵南], Dar mtsho [Xinghai 兴海], Thun te [Tongde 同德], and Khri ka).

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are Tibetan. In contrast, the population of Heyin 河阴, Hedong 河东, and Hexi 河西 townships is primarily Han.

In 2002, the population of Mtsho sngon Province was 5.3 million, of which approximately fifty-four percent was Han Chinese, twenty-two percent was Tibetan, sixteen percent was Hui, four percent was Monguor, two percent was Salar, and two percent was Mongolian (Qinghai sheng tongji ju 2003, 60). In 2001, the population of Mtsho lho was 389,274 of which 31.8 percent lived in Chab cha County, 12.4 percent lived in Thun te County, 24.2 percent lived in Khri ka County, 14.8 percent lived in Xinghai 兴海 County, and 16.8 percent lived in Mang rdzong County (Qinghai sheng tongji ju 2002, 52).

In 2005, Stag rig Village consisted of 164 households (910 residents), all of whom were Tibetan. Stag rig Village had three *dui* 'divisions'. The First and Second divisions (Yi dui 一队 and Er dui 二队) are east of the Chu bar ma 'Middle River' (a Yellow River tributary), and Third Division (San dui 三队) is west of the river. These divisions were created in 1957 during the time of collective ownership. Each section consisted of more than fifty households. The Chinese names for the divisions were used by villagers, not the Tibetan terms. When such village corvée labor as building and maintaining roads was required, each division independently completed tasks assigned by the village leader.

Traditionally, Stag rig Village is said to consist of fifteen different clans as shown in Figure One.

Figure One. Stag rig Village Clans

Clan Name	Detail
Nags tshang	Clan ancestors came from Gcan tsha (Jianzha 尖扎) County in the modern-day Rma lho (Huangnan 黄南) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province. <sup>12</sup>
Phyor tshang	<i>Phyor</i> 'to wear expensive clothes and ornaments'; historically the richest clan in Stag rig Village.
Grwa tsa tshang	
Rnye tshang	Named after the first Rnye Lama of nearby Rnye Monastery who belonged to this clan
Ge lu tshang	
Re tshang	
Dpon tshang	Literally: leader's house/ family.
Bod dar tshang	
Nag phrug tshang	It has more than thirty households.
Stag rig tshang	The village's eponymous clan is said to have been the first clan to settle in the area
Rgyal bo tshang	Literally: king's house/ family.
Rgyal mo tshang	Literally: queen's house/ family. It has a single household.
This ba tshang	
Ru sar tshang	
Sha rgya lcin tshang	It has more than thirty households.

Rituals, festivities, and ceremonies were jointly observed by clan members. Examples of this included: yearly

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<sup>12</sup> Qinghai sheng tongji ju (2003, 60).



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sacrifices to mountain deities; weddings; funerals and mourning rituals. Any man in the clan may act as the all-important *A zhang* 'maternal uncle' (the man/ men escorting the bride to the groom's home) of a bride from the clan when she gets married.

Parents sent school age children to the village primary school since its founding in 1952. In 2005, thirty percent of school-age children did not attend school because their families could not pay the school fees.<sup>13</sup> Other families wished to keep children at home to herd livestock and other activities to benefit the family. After finishing Grade Three at the village primary school, approximately fifty percent of the students enrolled at the Shar lung Township Boarding School, located eight kilometers from the village.<sup>14</sup> After graduation, only a few children continued in such middle schools as Mtsho lho Prefecture Normal School in Chab cha.

Each year, about five village boys become monks at Rnye and This ba monasteries, situated half a kilometer from the village. There were no nuns in the village and few villagers had relatives who were nuns. All Stag rig residents were Dge lugs Buddhists.

Most villagers lived in flat-roofed rooms made of adobe bricks and wood. Certain financially well-off villagers lived in red-brick houses with glass windows. A single household commonly lived in an independent compound

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<sup>13</sup> In 2005, school fees were seventy RMB per term. In addition, pupils were required to bring fuel (dung, wood, and straw) to the school. The school had three grades, seven teachers, and approximately sixty students.

<sup>14</sup> In 2005, school fees were approximately one hundred RMB per term and, additionally, students were required to give 150 kilograms of wheat and two and a half kilograms of rapeseed oil to the school. In return, students received 'free' food.

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consisting of a kitchen, a sitting room, two or three bedrooms, a shrine, a storeroom, and a stable, with a small garden in the center of the compound courtyard. Homes were decorated with pictures featuring, for example, the Potala Palace, yaks, Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893-1976),<sup>15</sup> and decorative vases, bowls, and dishes.

Most villagers were farmers and cultivated wheat, barley, beans, rape, and sesame. The village had two large apple orchards that were an important income source. Other crops included onions, garlic, potatoes, and vegetables. The most common foods were bread, noodles, and *rtsam pa*.<sup>16</sup>

Both men and women did farm work. Men left the village after planting the fields in late March to work in Ziling City, Mgo log (Guoluo 果洛) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and elsewhere in Mtsho sngon Province. Depending on the location, cash-earning activities included collecting and selling caterpillar fungus,<sup>17</sup> construction work, and building sheep enclosures for herdsman. Generally, men and older boys returned to the village in August to assist in the annual harvest of family fields. In 2004 on average, each man or older boy who had left home to work returned with 2,000 RMB. Meanwhile, women stayed at home, tended the fields and livestock, and cared for old people, children, and the home.

Villagers owned cattle, sheep, donkeys, mules, goats, and chickens. Certain families owned a large number of

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<sup>15</sup> Many villagers have a picture of Mao Zedong in their home that they believed prevents evils from harming the family. Certain villagers believed Mao was an incarnation of *Spyan ras gzigs*.

<sup>16</sup> Roasted barley flour mixed with dried cheese, butter, sugar, and hot tea.

<sup>17</sup> *Cordyceps sinensis* is a medicinal herb (Tibetan: *dbyar rtswa dgun 'bu*, Chinese: *dong chong xia cao* 冬虫夏草).

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sheep or goats; therefore, a member from each of these families was needed to herd livestock. Four or five families earned money by operating the village's four small stores, one restaurant,<sup>18</sup> five flour-milling machines, and one medical clinic staffed by two doctors.<sup>19</sup> Certain better-off villagers bought minibuses and trucks and commuted to work to such locations as the seats of Shar lung Township and Khri ka County.

Tibetan (Amdo dialect) was the everyday language of the villagers, but nearly all the young men could speak the Mtsho sngon Chinese Dialect. On the other hand, only a few women had some competence in oral Chinese.

Stag rig villagers wore clothing that closely resembled that of local Han Chinese, except for some elders who always wore Tibetan robes. For Lo sar 'the Tibetan New Year' and other festivals, village women and girls wore Tibetan robes and such decorations as coral necklaces and gold and silver earrings.

Village folk recreational activities included singing and dancing. The village leader announced male-only basketball competitions and male-female tug-of-war competitions held from the second to the eleventh days of Lo sar. A '*cham*' temple dance' was held at This ba Monastery on the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the first lunar month and a horse race was held on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month near This ba Monastery, marking Lo sar's end.

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<sup>18</sup> In 2005, this was a one-room business with three tables that served noodles and dumplings.

<sup>19</sup> In 2005, two doctors worked at the clinic. One was Han Chinese from Hedong Township who had limited competence in oral Tibetan. The other was Tibetan from Ka ring Township, Khri ka County. They treated patients with intravenous injections and other medicine, and did not use Traditional Tibetan or Chinese medicines.

Almost every family had a television set and one out of three families owned a VCD/ DVD player. A few villagers rented VCDs/ DVDs from the county seat and showed them to an audience in their home for 0.5 RMB per person. Chinese martial arts films and Tibetan dance and music videos were popular. Villagers also lent videos among themselves.

Children played hide-and-seek, wrestled, and gathered to participate in shuttlecock games.

## MARRIAGE

Stag rig villagers generally marry Tibetans from the same and neighboring villages. The bride is often two to three years younger than the man, into whose home she generally moves after marriage. The couple lives and works together. The children born to the woman are the recognized legitimate offspring of both parents. A married person has greater status than an unmarried person.

Marriage is considered vital because it continues a family's line of descent and allows the family's protective deity to continue receiving sacrifices. It is believed that when sacrifices to the family's protective deity end, the family will also end. The protective deity without a family will be angry and punish those who enter the empty home. A final reason to marry is to have children who will care for the parents when they are old.

These reasons explain why unmarried villagers in their thirties, with the exception of monks and students, are viewed as abnormal. Villagers who marry between sixteen and twenty are admired. Conversely, unmarried villagers older than thirty are considered undesirable. Examples of men in this category are thieves, persistent wanderers, the deaf, the blind, and the mentally ill. Examples of women in

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this category include sex workers, and women with mental and physical handicaps. Such people are generally excluded from village leadership positions, important village meetings, and marriage rituals.

### The Pre-Marital Hair Dressing Ritual<sup>20</sup>

There are four key rituals in the lives of female villagers. The first we describe is the hair cutting<sup>21</sup> ritual, which is held when girls are three years old and on the third day of Lo sar in the third year that the girls have lived.<sup>22</sup> Such girls are considered ready for solid food and stronger. The mothers can now attend village activities at night, freely receive guests, and are less careful about eating outside the home.

Village males have the same rituals, except for the hair dressing ritual.

The hair dressing ritual announces that the girl has become a young woman and is ready to marry. After the ritual, she may have a boyfriend and ponder her future married life. The hair dressing ritual is held when a girl is thirteen,<sup>23</sup> fifteen, or seventeen years old. Fifteen is the usual age. If a family holds this ritual when the girl is thirteen, it is probably because they wish to display their wealth or because the girl's grandparents wish to see their

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<sup>20</sup> *skra phab* = hair done.

<sup>21</sup> *bang skra* = baby hair.

<sup>22</sup> To illustrate this, imagine a child born New Year's Eve before twelve o'clock midnight. The next day, the first day of the first month, she is considered to be two years old. One year later, on the third day of the first lunar month, she has the hair cutting ritual.

<sup>23</sup> The girl might have been as young as nine years old before about 1955.

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granddaughter have this ritual before they die.

A girl might also have the hair dressing ritual when she is nineteen if a close relative has died, which has made having the ritual when she was younger impossible, because the family cannot afford the ritual,<sup>24</sup> or if the girl's health prevented holding the ritual.

During the hair ritual, the girl's hairstyle is changed to that of a young woman. Nowadays, this is only required on the ritual day but, in the past, this hairstyle change was permanent and anyone who went through the hair dressing ritual no longer dressed her hair like that of an unmarried girl. Instead, she braided her hair like that of a married woman and always wore hair ornaments.

Much of the ritual has been lost, although certain important ritual elements have been reintroduced, including choosing a hairdresser, several unique hairstyles, and the use of special ornaments. Below, 'brug mo skyid (b. 1983) describes her hair dressing ritual:

#### Account Six ('brug mo skyid)

I had my hair dressing ritual at the age of seventeen. Before the arrival of Lo sar in 1998, my family chose an appropriate hairdresser. An auspicious day for arranging my hair was determined by Father visiting an astrologer at This ba Monastery, who chose the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth lunar month. Most girls my age had the ritual on this same day. After the day was chosen, Mother went to find skilled hairdressers. She needed two assistants to dress my hair. Tradition says hairdressers must be without physical deformities, not divorcees, and must have zodiac years compatible with that of the girl. It is believed that a

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<sup>24</sup> The total cost of this ritual was approximately 3,000 RMB in 2005.

poor choice of a hairdresser may result in the girl having an unhappy future.

My hair was plaited into several dozen tiny braids by Mother and the two hairdressers in the courtyard of our home beginning at about nine in the morning. A *ral ba* 'thick flat braid' was made for the silver hair ornaments down the center of the back of my head. These hair ornaments are only worn today during such rituals as the hair dressing ritual and weddings. Some girls also decorate their hair with coral and turquoise but I didn't want to because I already felt weighed down by the heavy silver hair ornaments. It took four to five hours to braid my hair. For the first two hours I thought it was fine and I could sit still but gradually, my legs grew numb and I couldn't feel them anymore. My mother then brought a thick blanket for me to sit on. My whole body continued to become more uncomfortable. My bones started aching. I leaned this way and that way, trying to ease my discomfort, but this made it difficult for the hairdressers to continue. One of the hairdressers began to pull me by my hair as I moved about. Mother said if I didn't co-operate, then they would hit me on the head with the comb. Fortunately, that punishment did not ensue.

From beginning to end, my only wish was to finish the hairdressing as soon as possible. Finally, it was finished, and my first action was to rush to the toilet. When I returned, my mother burnt juniper needles in a ladle and blew the smoke around me to bring me luck.

My family prepared a Tibetan lambskin robe, a new fox-fur hat, and a bright blue sash. These articles have stayed with me since the day of my hairdressing ritual. This ritual continued on the third day of the first lunar month with a banquet. The day before the ritual, the family prepared dumplings, mutton, beef, pork, steamed and fried bread, and *gro ma* (cooked rice with *gro ma* 'tiny wild yams' with

added sugar and butter). Two of my nephews were sent to invite all our relatives, friends, neighbors, and clan members.

At night, all my family members stayed up very late. They ensured everything was well prepared and then gathered for a grand feast. Some nearby neighbors also came, feasted, sang, and gave good wishes, such as "*Tshe ring lo brgya yong bar smon* May you have an eternally happy life."

Father and my brothers burned a large offering of roasted barley flour and juniper branches on the roof of our home at midnight to A myes Brtan skyong<sup>25</sup> and such family protective deities as Dpal ldan lha mo.<sup>26</sup>

We only slept two or three hours that night. The ornaments made my sleep very uncomfortable. I couldn't turn from side to side, because I had to carefully keep the ornaments pressed flat. My brothers and some relatives stayed up chatting, singing, and watching television.

When the brightest star appeared in the eastern sky in the early morning, all my family members and helpers prepared for this busy, happy day. Mother and my sister-in-law made a big fire in the kitchen stove where a pot of milk tea with jujubes and sugar was heated. Father took boiled milk tea from the pot with a metal ladle and went to the house roof to make offerings with roasted barley flour, juniper branches, and *rgyal bo* 'flower-shaped

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<sup>25</sup> The mountain deity of Mountain Rgyab ri, which is situated near Stag rig Village. All villagers are his devotees.

<sup>26</sup> Dpal lden lha mo is the most common family protective deity in the village. There are two other family protective deities in the village—The'u rang and Rgyal po—though these are considered demons rather than deities by people whose families do not venerate them.



fried bread'.<sup>27</sup> He chanted scripture while offering *bsang*,<sup>28</sup> and scattered the milk tea with the ladle to the four directions. When Father completed the offerings, all my family members honored Dpal Idan lha mo by prostrating.

We then sat on the *hu tse* around a short-legged table and drank bowls of buttered milk tea. Everyone must drink this tea. This is the first part of the hair dressing ritual.

Then it was time to dress me. Mother brought out my new Tibetan robe, fox-fur hat, sash, shoes, several silver ornaments, and a coral necklace. When everything was ready, Mother and my sister began dressing me, putting on the clothes and attaching the ornaments one by one. Finally, they attached a white silk scarf to the hair ornaments.

My companion (my niece) was dressed in a beautiful Tibetan robe. If a girl has no sisters, female cousins, or nieces, then she chooses her best friend to be her companion. When the dressing came to an end, my niece and I each stood by the gate on opposite sides, and welcomed arriving guests. Nowadays, this is the only duty of the girl having the ritual but, in the past, my niece and I would have had to sing the song below while circling the center pillar of the main room three times.

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<sup>27</sup> *Rgyal bo* may be fried or baked and is only common during Lo sar.

<sup>28</sup> An offering of barley or wheat flour mixed with juniper.

1

<sup>1</sup>གནམ་འཁོར་ལོ་རྩེབས་བརྒྱད།  
<sup>2</sup>རྩེ་མོ་བརྒྱད་སྣང་།  
<sup>3</sup>དཀར་ཁུང་གོར་མོ།  
<sup>4</sup>གནམ་ལ་ལྷ་སྣང་།  
<sup>5</sup>གནམ་འཁོར་ལོ་རྩེབས་བརྒྱད།  
<sup>6</sup>བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག

<sup>1</sup> gnam 'khor lo rtsibs brygad  
<sup>2</sup> rtse mo brygad snang  
<sup>3</sup> dkar khung gor mo  
<sup>4</sup> gnam la lta snang  
<sup>5</sup> gnam 'khor lo rtsib brygad  
<sup>6</sup> bkra shis shog

<sup>1</sup> The sky is like the Eight-spoked Wheel!<sup>30</sup>  
<sup>2</sup> That has just eight spokes.  
<sup>3</sup> The round skylight,  
<sup>4</sup> Facing the sky.  
<sup>5</sup> May the Eight-spoked Wheel-like sky,  
<sup>6</sup> Brim with auspiciousness!

2

<sup>1</sup>ཀ་དོ་གོར་མོ།  
<sup>2</sup>ས་ལ་ལྷ་སྣང་།

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<sup>29</sup> This song was recorded from Khro go (b. 1926 in Stag rig Village) in his home in Stag rig Village, 11 February 2002. He learned the song from his sisters when he was a child.

<sup>30</sup> The Dharmacakra (Sanskrit), Dhammacakka (Pāli), *chos kyi 'khor lo* (Tibetan), *falun* 法輪 (Chinese), 'Wheel of Dharma', 'Wheel of Doctrine', 'Wheel of Law' symbolizes the Buddha's teaching of the path to enlightenment.

<sup>3</sup>ས་བད་མ་འདབ་བརྒྱད།  
<sup>4</sup>བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག

<sup>1</sup>ka rdo gor mo  
<sup>2</sup>sa ya lta snang  
<sup>3</sup>sa pad ma 'dob bryad  
<sup>4</sup>bkra shis shog

<sup>1</sup>The round stone-based pillar,  
<sup>2</sup>Facing the earth,  
<sup>3</sup>May the eight-petaled lotus-like earth,  
<sup>4</sup>Brim with auspiciousness.

3

<sup>1</sup>རྒྱ་སྒོ་ལྗོ་སྒོ།  
<sup>2</sup>ལྗོ་ཡ་ཉ་སྒྲང་།  
<sup>3</sup>ལྗོ་གཡུ་འབྲུག་སྒོ་མོ།  
<sup>4</sup>བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག

<sup>1</sup>rgya sgo lho sgo  
<sup>2</sup>lho ya lta snang  
<sup>3</sup>lho g.yu 'brug sngon mo  
<sup>4</sup>bkra shis shog

<sup>1</sup>The main south-gate,  
<sup>2</sup>Facing the south,  
<sup>3</sup>May the south turquoise-blue dragon,  
<sup>4</sup>Brim with auspiciousness!

4

<sup>1</sup>ཁྱིམ་འདི་བ་ཚང་གི།  
<sup>2</sup>ཁང་བ་འདི་ཚོ།  
<sup>3</sup>ཕྱི་ལོ་ལྷ་སྒྲང་།  
<sup>4</sup>ས་བད་མ་ས་སྒྲ་འབྲུག་གྱི།  
<sup>5</sup>བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག

- 1 khyim 'di ba tshang gyi
- 2 khang ba 'di tsho
- 3 phyi rim lnga snang
- 4 sa pad ma sa sna 'bum gi
- 5 bkra shis shog

- 1 In this particular home,
- 2 These rooms,
- 3 Have five circles of walls outside,
- 4 May the hundreds of thousands of armspans of wide earth,
- 5 Brim with auspiciousness.

5

- 1 ཁང་བ་འདི་ཚོ།
- 2 བར་ཁྲིམ་ལྗ་སྒྲང་།
- 3 ཁང་བ་འབུམ་གྱི།
- 4 བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག།

- 1 khang ba 'di tsho
- 2 br khrim lnga snang
- 3 khang ba 'bum gi
- 4 bkra shis shog

- 1 These rooms,
- 2 Have five circles of walls in the middle,
- 3 May these hundreds of thousands of rooms,
- 4 Brim with auspiciousness.

6

- 1 ཁང་བ་འདི་ཚོ།
- 2 ཁང་ཁྲིམ་ལྗ་སྒྲང་།
- 3 མིང་འབུམ་གྱི།
- 4 བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག།

<sup>1</sup> khang ba 'di tsho  
<sup>2</sup> nang rim lnga snang  
<sup>3</sup> mi nga 'bum gi  
<sup>4</sup> bkra shis shog

<sup>1</sup> These rooms,  
<sup>2</sup> Have five circles of rooms inside,  
<sup>3</sup> May these hundreds of thousands of people,  
<sup>4</sup> Brim with auspiciousness!

This song eulogizes various aspects of the family's home, e.g., gate, kitchen skylight, and so on and also expresses the girl's good wishes for her family's future.

Guests came to celebrate my hair dressing ritual with gifts of bolts of silk for making Tibetan robes, coats and shirts that had been bought in towns, silk scarves, tea-bricks, bottles of liquor, and *rgyal bo*. All the gifts of silk and clothes were displayed on a line strung up in the yard. People compete to give the best gift, which is determined by the silk and cloth's quality, length, and color. The tea bricks and bottles of liquor were lined up on windowsills and on the ground. Bread was collected in baskets. Guests were offered milk tea, dumplings, bread, mutton, beef, pork, liquor, and rice with butter, sugar, and baby yams. Guests gave such auspicious wishes to me as, "*Bu mo, khyod tshering bar smon* Girl, may you live a long life," and "*Khyod la bde skyid kyi ma 'ong ba zhig yod bar smon* May you have a happy future," and also gave five or ten RMB, candy, and fruits directly to me.

One or two singers sang for three to four hours that afternoon. I was a student and had not worn a Tibetan robe for a long time. I soon felt exhausted after a long while of wearing the heavy clothes and ornaments. Every part of my body ached and I felt weak. I begged Mother to take

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them off for a while, but she refused. She said that it would be impolite to the guests and our relatives. Most guests left by six p.m. Only the guests who drank liquor stayed and had dinner with my family.

The gifts were placed in boxes as the ritual neared completion, and I took off the robe and ornaments. Three days later, I was allowed to change my hairstyle back to the common way of one or two big braids.

### Rules of Inclusion

A desirable wife is healthy; filial; obedient; from a rich family; has a good personality; is skillful at cooking, sewing, cleaning, and farming; has kind and easy-going parents; has compatible family protective deities; and lacks body odor.

An ideal husband is strong, hard-working, and has a good family background.

Marriage partners should not be too closely related<sup>31</sup> or have incompatible zodiac years. A monk astrologer at This ba Monastery is consulted regarding compatibility. He determines that the proposed match is excellent, acceptable, or inappropriate. If it is the latter, nearly all families stop further wedding plans and instead, look for a new prospective spouse.

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<sup>31</sup> Maternal cousins are suitable marriage partners because villagers believe a mother's *sha* 'flesh' is inherited, which is thought to be soft. Marriage between close paternal relatives, however, is taboo because a father's *rus pa* 'bones' are inherited, which are considered strong and hard consequently, if close paternal relatives marry, handicapped children may result.

## Spouse Selection

### Free Choice

Most village marriages are based on romantic love. The boy and girl first meet in such public situations as when the villagers dig irrigation ditches together, at movie showings, dances, song festivals, and night feasts during Lo sar. They might also meet on the way to fetch water or while herding livestock. Girls generally do not show interest in boys first; they wait for boys to first show interest.

A boy chooses the right moment to approach a girl he is interested in and tell her his feelings. The boy takes her finger-ring or headscarf if she seems interested and secretly takes it to her home that night. The boy knocks on the front gate lightly three or four times and the girl opens it, provided her father and brothers are not strict. If the girl's father and brothers oppose such night visits, the boy climbs over the home compound wall or throws stones on the roof of the girl's bedroom, which is generally a small, single room. When they are together that night, they express their feelings and determine if they are right for each other. If this encounter goes well, they often associate with each other.

The boy and the girl are generally from the same village. If they are from different villages and the boys from the girl's village discover their relationship, several boys may quietly climb over the wall of the girl's home after the boy and the girl fall asleep, enter the room, and beat both of them. The couple's cries and screams for help are useless because the girl's parents and other relatives will not interfere. The boys doing the beating feel that the girl has been taken from the boys in her village. The beating is revenge and is done in the hope it will get the girl back. This also tests the boy and girl's relationship. The boy comes again and begins to prepare for marriage if he really loves her. It is the same for

the girl. She only maintains the relationship with the boy if she is serious.

## Arranged Marriage

Arranged marriage is managed by the boy and girl's parents, brothers, and uncles. If the family has no male family members, then the mother makes the decisions. First, the boy's side chooses a suitable girl for the boy. They investigate the girl's family's background, personality, work skills, zodiac year, and so on. Next, they ask the boy for his opinion. If he agrees, they choose two matchmakers who visit the girl's home. Meanwhile, a female relative who knows the girl attempts to persuade her to accept the prospective groom.

## Engagement

### Stealing the Bride

We now examine recent romantic marriage in Stag rig Village. Lha mo represents a typical girl and Don 'grub, a typical village boy. If Lha mo agrees with Don 'grub's proposal, Don 'grub asks his parents', Uncle Bkra shis and Aunt Dpa' mo's, opinion. If they think Lha mo is an acceptable daughter-in-law, Don 'grub makes a date with Lha mo to elope. This often happens during Lo sar between the third and fifteenth days of the first lunar month, because young people have more time to consider their future at this time.

Don 'grub asks one or two friends to accompany him. After midnight on the set date, Don 'grub and his friends go secretly near Lha mo's home on motorbikes. They throw a



stone on the roof of Lha mo's room. She puts on a Tibetan robe she has prepared and tiptoes out. The boys hang a white silk scarf on the gate frame of her home. When the girl's family notices the next morning that the girl is gone and sees the white silk scarf on the gate frame, they understand that she has been taken to her boyfriend's home.

Meanwhile, Don 'grub's family members—Uncle Bkra shis, Aunt Dpa' mo, Don 'grub's brothers and sisters, and other important relatives—busily prepare and wait for their future daughter-in-law's arrival. They burn much *bsang* as an offering to the deities in the yard of the home or on the roof. They place a white felt carpet at the right corner by the stove. A dragon-decorated bowl of milk tied with white sheep wool is prepared on the stove. When Lha mo arrives, she sits on the carpet and flicks milk in the prepared bowl into the air with her right ring finger three times. These are offerings to the family's protective deity. Next, Lha mo and Don 'grub's friends are offered food and milk tea. Lha mo does not eat or drink. The friends eventually leave, and Lha mo and Don 'grub sleep together that night.

The next day, Aunt Dpa' mo calls two or three skilled hair-makers to braid Lha mo's hair into several dozen tiny braids, and a big flat braid at the back center of her head for the silver hair ornaments. If Lha mo is bold or familiar with the hair-makers, she chats with them. If she is not, she covers her face with a headscarf or her sleeves. She does not let others see her face and remains quiet. When the hair braiding is finished, she wears a Tibetan robe and hair ornaments provided by Don 'grub's family.

Don 'grub's family asks two matchmakers—Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje—who are aged and respectable, to go to Lha mo's home with 300 RMB, a good quality piece of decorated silk, two bottles of liquor, and a silk scarf. Don 'grub's family also might invite one or two other aged relatives. Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje apologize for

taking Lha mo away without permission and suggest that Lha mo's parents, Uncle Bsod nams and Aunt Pad ma mstho, give their daughter to Don 'grub, highlight Don 'grub and his family's good points, and stress Lha mo's agreement.

Lha mo's family might not give an immediate answer but instead, demand the immediate return of their daughter. Finally, a date is fixed for returning Lha mo and Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje depart. Lha mo customarily returns within two days.

Lha mo returns to her home with Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje. If Uncle Bsod nams, Aunt Pad ma mtsho, and Lha mo's brothers strongly disagree with the marriage, they remove the clothes and hair ornaments she took from Don 'grub's home, lock her in a room, and ask a child to watch her. If her family is not seriously opposed, they do not lock her in a room. Lha mo might have to run to Don 'grub's home two or three times to express her sincere love for him before her family agrees. Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje may thus have to visit Lha mo's home two or three times before drinking contract liquor.

### Arranged Marriage

After Uncle Bkra shis and Aunt Dpa' mo select a suitable girl, Lha mo, for their son, Don 'grub, and he agrees, they ask two matchmakers, Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje, to visit the girl's parents, Uncle Bsod nams and Aunt Pad ma mtsho.

Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje are not close relatives of Rdo rje or Lha mo's family, otherwise they would not be impartial. Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje take gifts of cash, silk scarves, tea bricks, and bottles of liquor. When they arrive, they sit at a table near the stove in the living room or on the *hu tse*. Tea is served in dragon-decorated bowls. After general conversation, Uncle Tshe dpa'

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and Uncle Rdo rje begin talking with Uncle Bsod nams, Aunt Pad ma mtsho, and Lha mo's elder brothers about the purpose of the visit, and detail Don 'grub's family background.

Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje ask if Lha mo is engaged. If the answer is negative, they ask her parents and elder brothers to allow Lha mo to marry Don 'grub. The first request is nearly always refused. Uncle Bsod nams and Aunt Pad ma mtsho tell Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje that they must consult with Lha mo and her uncles and grandparents. Then Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje return and describe the meeting.

Afterwards, Uncle Bsod nams and Aunt Pad ma mtsho consult their important relatives. If Don 'grub lives in another village, Uncle Bsod nams and Aunt Pad ma mtsho ask a relative to visit, or they go themselves without Don 'grub's knowledge, to verify information provided by Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje. The next time Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje's visit, they directly ask about the family's answer. The matchmakers generally visit Lha mo's family three times before the family gives final consent.

Drinking Gyos sha gyos chang 'Contract Liquor'. On the appointed date, Lha mo's family invites such important relatives as paternal and maternal uncles; prepares boiled mutton, beef, pork, and dumplings; and wait for Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje's arrival.

Don 'grub's family has sent Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje with more than 1,000 RMB. When Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje arrive, they and Lha mo's relatives are offered food and milk tea. Uncle Bsod nams takes out the bottles of liquor Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje brought on the previous visit and opens them. Everyone is offered a dragon-decorated bowl of liquor. Before they drink, Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje take out the money and give it

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to Uncle Bsod nams in thanks for giving his daughter to Rdo rje. About one hundred RMB is returned. Then they flick liquor into the air with their right ring fingers three times and drink, symbolizing that Lha mo's family agrees to the proposal and formally gives her to Don 'grub. Finally, they select a date for discussing the bridewealth. From the day of drinking contract liquor, Don 'grub may visit Lha mo's family whenever he wants, and Lha mo freely visits Don 'grub's home.

Bridewealth Discussion and Choosing a Date for the Wedding Ritual. On the day chosen for the bridewealth discussion, Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje once again visit Lha mo's home. The value of bridewealth varies. If Lha mo is the only or most loved daughter of her parents, then Uncle Bsod nams, Aunt Pad ma mtsho, and their relatives do not ask for much bridewealth, e.g., one or two new Tibetan robes and other clothes for Aunt Pad ma mtsho and other important male relatives as compensation for rearing Lha mo. The bride's family understands that to ask for a large bridewealth means that the groom's family is put in difficult circumstances and later, when their daughter lives in the groom's home, she will be resented because she is the cause of the difficulty. Nevertheless, many families do ask for a large bridewealth.

The highest bridewealth for a village girl in 2000 was 3,000-4,000 RMB in cash; a lambskin Tibetan robe; a Tibetan summer robe trimmed with otter skin; three to five strings of coral; gold earrings and finger-rings; two silver ornaments that are hung in front of the robe; several shirts, coats, and pairs of pants; and clothes for the girl's parents, brothers, uncles, and male cousins. All are prepared before the wedding. The girl's parents and uncles decide if the bridewealth is adequate by listening to community members' comments.

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If Lha mo will live in Don 'grub's home, the wedding ritual is held in his home. Wedding preparations including food and seating are the responsibility of Don 'grub's side. Lha mo's side decides the number of *A zhang*.<sup>32</sup> Weddings are commonly held during Lo sar on a day suggested by the monk astrologer at This ba Monastery.

*Broken Engagements*. Engagements are sometimes broken. Lha mo may meet another boy and elope with him, in which case Lha mo's family must pay Don 'grub's family about 1,000 RMB in compensation. Don 'grub might find another girl or want to remarry his ex-wife, in which case Don 'grub's family must pay. Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje act as judges if an engagement is broken.

### Wedding Preparation

Before the wedding at the bride's home, Uncle Bsod nams' family makes one or two Tibetan robes for Lha mo, and buys new modern-style<sup>33</sup> clothes for her. Aunt Pad ma mtsho finds two hairdressers to braid Lha mo's hair for her wedding, with her hairstyle being the same as in the hairdressing ritual. A female companion for Lha mo is also identified. Bright red, yellow, blue, green, and pink sashes are bought for Don 'grub as part of the dowry.

Wedding preparations require much work and are

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<sup>32</sup> As explained earlier, this refers to a group of men who accompany the bride to the groom's side on the wedding day, including the bride's father, brothers, other close male relatives, and men from the bride's clan.

<sup>33</sup> Western-style clothing, including suits, coats, shirts, trousers, and shoes, are referred to as *rgya lwa* 'Chinese clothes'.

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expensive for the groom's family. More than five months are required to prepare for a wedding. First, much money is needed for the materials to make the bride's clothes. These include lambskins, good quality silk, cloth, otter skin, sashes, and so on. A skilled local tailor is invited to make the clothes. Silver is given to a silversmith to make ornaments.

Meat is the main banquet food, which is not a major difficulty if the family has sheep and cattle. A family lacking livestock buys five or six sheep, one or two yaks, and pork. Rapeseed oil, green vegetables, radishes, vermicelli noodles, baby wild yams, rice, butter, sugar, candy, cigarettes, and liquor are also prepared.

Finally, after all the materials are collected, relatives, neighbors, and clan members come to Don 'grub's home two days before the wedding to help. Men cut meat into pieces and boil it, chop firewood, fetch water, arrange seating, and prepare dishes of candy, bread, and meat. Women gather in the kitchen and make both steamed and boiled dumplings, fry bread, and cook rice with butter, wild baby yams, and sugar.

Don 'grub's family sends children or young men on the afternoon of the day before the wedding to inform the guests, including Uncle Bkra shis' family relatives, clan members, friends, and other villagers.

### The Wedding Ritual and Banquet

Both families rise at about five a.m. on the wedding day. There are two important tasks for the bride and the groom's sides on this day. The first is to invite the groom to the bride's home and give the dowry. The second is to escort the bride to the groom's home and hold the wedding ritual.

Inviting the groom to the bride's home (*mag 'bod*)

Don 'grub's family gets up after an alarm clock rings. The women make a fire in the stove and boil a pot of milk tea. The men build a fire on the roof and offer local deities roasted barley flour, juniper, the first ladle of milk tea from the pot, and one or two *rgyal bo*. Next, Uncle Bkra shis lights three butter lamps; puts dishes of fried bread, fruit, candy, and *rgyal bo* before the image of the family's protective deity; lights three butter lamps in the family's home shrine; and offers bowls of pure water. All the family members prostrate in front of the family protective deity and in the shrine after the offerings are prepared.

Next, everyone is given a bowl of buttered milk tea. They finish the milk tea, eat a quick breakfast, and begin to dress Don 'grub in his best lambskin Tibetan robe, a bright colored sash, a new fox-fur hat, and a pair of boots. The other men who accompany Don 'grub to the bride's home also dress in fine Tibetan robes and fox-fur hats.

When all is ready, Don 'grub, accompanied by Uncle Bkra shis, his brothers, his maternal and paternal uncles, Uncle Tshe dpa', Uncle Rdo rje, his friends, and other clan men, go to the bride's home. When they reach the gate of Lhamo's home, Uncle Bsod nam's side, including the bride's family members, relatives, and clan members, receive them. Uncle Brtan ba, a respected man from the bride's side, holds a dragon-decorated bowl of liquor tied with white sheep wool and flicks liquor with a juniper tree twig at Don 'grub three times to expel bad influences that may have come with Don 'grub. Next, they are seated on white felt and are offered milk tea, dumplings, meat, rice, and bread.

After greetings and general conversation, Uncle Tshe dpa' stands up and congratulates the new couple. Uncle Rdo rje follows. Then an eloquent man from the bride's side asks Don 'grub to stand on the white carpet and gives the sashes

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as the dowry that has been prepared by the *A zhang*. The sashes are tied across the groom's body and then Don 'grub's side leaves, signaling the end of the first part of the wedding ritual.

### Escorting the bride to the groom's home

Lha mo's family begins dressing Lha mo soon after the groom and his entourage leave. She wears her new lambskin Tibetan robe, silver ornaments, strings of coral, and fox-fur hat which have been provided by her family. Aunt Pad ma mtsho or her sister-in-law attaches a white silk scarf to the hair ornaments. Aunt Pad ma mtsho, Lha mo, and other female relatives weep because, from this day on, Lha mo is no longer a member of Uncle Bsod nams' family and must now face a new life with strangers. The bride's companion, Me tog, is also dressed in a fine lambskin Tibetan robe, silver ornaments, and a fox-fur hat.

The *A zhang* are all male and wear lambskin Tibetan robes with little decoration.

The bride leaves accompanied by Me tog and the *A zhang*. Me tog carries a basket full of *rgyal bo* and the lower part of a cooked sheep's back. The sheep's tail should protrude from the back of the basket. They go on foot if Don 'grub home is nearby, or by car if it is far away. Lha mo's group is welcomed three times by the groom's side on the way to Don 'grub's home.

The first group from the groom's side waits about one kilometer from Don 'grub's home. They offer a bowl of liquor to the main *A zhang*—Uncle Bsod nams. The *A zhang* flicks the liquor into the air three times and continues on. The second group waits fifty meters from Don 'grub's home, and again offers a bowl of liquor to the main *A zhang*. The final group receives them when they reach the home. The



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first two groups are always men, but the last group includes everyone who has come to attend the wedding. Young people are dressed in fine Tibetan robes with bright colored sashes while elders wear common Tibetan robes that are usually dark colored and lined with imitation lambskin. Some children are dressed in Tibetan robes and some wear modern clothes.

As they receive Lha mo and the *A zhang*, they say, "*A zhang tshang bde mo yin nam* How are all you *A zhang*?"

The *A zhang* reply, "*Bde mo yin, bde mo yin* Fine, fine."

An older woman from Don 'grub's side comes with a bowl decorated with dragons or the Eight Auspicious Symbols<sup>34</sup> tied with white sheep-wool string. The bowl is full of milk. She flicks the milk with a juniper twig three times towards Lha mo. Afterwards, Lha mo and the *A zhang* pass through the gateway. In the past, the moment the bride entered the gateway, the groom and bride's sides struggled for the bride's hat, competing to see which side could keep it. This was not done in 2005.

When Lha mo and Me tog reach the entrance, Aunt Dpa' mo or Don 'grub's sister-in-law takes the basket from Me tog. Then Lha mo and Me tog are welcomed into the living room or the kitchen and sit on white felt at the right of the stove. Lha mo is given a bowl of milk tied with white sheep wool. She flicks the milk into the air with her ring finger three times and then they move into the new couple's bedroom.

Don 'grub's sister helps Lha mo remove the clothes and ornaments provided by her parents and put on new clothes and ornaments prepared by Don 'grub's family.

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<sup>34</sup> The Eight Auspicious Symbols are a conch shell, a lotus, a wheel, a parasol, an endless knot, a pair of gold fish, a banner announcing victory, and a treasure vase.

The *A zhang* are welcomed into the living room or onto the *hu tse*, where they sit on white felt. All are offered milk tea; dumplings; mutton; beef; pork; fried bread; rice with butter, sugar and wild baby yams; fruit; candies; sunflower seeds; barley liquor; and cigarettes.

Don 'grub helps his family welcome the guests who bring various gifts. The relatives and close friends usually give fine pieces of silk, bottles of expensive liquor, silk scarves, and *rgyal bo*. They also give fifty to one hundred RMB. Other villagers come with sashes and *rgyal bo*. The gifts of silk and sashes are displayed in the courtyard and the guests are entertained in another big room. The male guests are seated on the *hu tse* and the female guests sit by the stove. There are dishes of fruit, fried bread, mutton, beef, pork, candies, and sunflower seeds in front of them. They are served milk tea; stuffed dumplings; and rice with butter, sugar, and wild baby yams. Bowls of liquor are also offered to the guests.

After the *A zhang* finish the meal and are engaged in general conversation, they describe what Lha mo brought with her—including the number of Tibetan robes, coats, pairs of pants, shirts, headscarves, pairs of shoes, and silver ornaments. Some girls bring livestock with them. Then Don 'grub's side gives the bridewealth. When giving the bridewealth, Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje bargain with the *A zhang* in order to lower the amount. The *A zhang* go out and discuss the matter two or three times. In the end, the final amount is lowered by several hundred RMB.

Meanwhile, the male guests are gathered in the living room and on the *hu tse* with the *A zhang*. The female guests usually stay outside and listen to the discussion about the bridewealth and how many clothes and animals the bride will bring. When this discussion ends, Uncle Tshe dpa' stands facing the *A zhang* at the end of the row of the guests with

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<sup>1</sup> དེ་རིང་གནས་ལ་དུས་སྐྱོར་བཟང་།།  
<sup>2</sup> ས་ལ་བཟ་ཤིས་འཕེལ།།  
<sup>3</sup> བདེ་ལེགས་འབྱུང་བའི་ཉིན་མོ།།  
<sup>4</sup> སྤུན་སྲུང་ཚོགས་པའི་དུས་ཚོད་འདིར།།  
<sup>5</sup> རྩོམ་འཇོམ་བྱ་སྤྲིང་གི་བྱང་ཕྱོགས།།  
<sup>6</sup> བོད་ཁ་བ་ཅན་གྱི་ཡུལ་ཁམས།།  
<sup>7</sup> སྤང་མདོ་ཁམས་ཡུལ་གྱི་ཞེ་བ།།  
<sup>8</sup> མ་ཚུའི་སྤོན་མའི་རྩོམ་ཕྱོགས།།  
<sup>9</sup> ཤིང་ཅན་དན་ལོ་འདབ་རྒྱས་ས།།  
<sup>10</sup> ལྷ་དཔའ་བོས་དཔའ་སྤང་རྒྱག་ས།།  
<sup>11</sup> མི་བཅོན་བོས་བྲིམས་ཁ་ཞིབ་ས།།  
<sup>12</sup> ཕྱོགས་སོ་སོའི་འགྲུལ་བ་འདྲ་གནས།།  
<sup>13</sup> གཡང་ལྗེ་དཔལ་གྱི་ར་བ་འདྲི།།  
<sup>14</sup> མ་བྱ་མའི་མགོ་སྐྱ་སྐྱས་ས།།  
<sup>15</sup> རྩ་འདོ་བའི་སྐོ་ལན་འཐེན་ས།།  
<sup>16</sup> སྐྱོད་པའི་སྤོ་བྲིམ་ཕྱག་མོ་འདིར།།  
<sup>17</sup> ཟས་དཀར་དམར་གྱི་ལྗེ་ལ་བཤམས་ས།།  
<sup>18</sup> སྐྱིས་ཕོ་མོ་འགོན་ལ་འདུས་ཏེ།།  
<sup>19</sup> ཞང་བཟང་ཚོ་མོ་བསུ་བའི་གཤམ་བྱས།།

ya  
<sup>1</sup> de ring gnam la dus sbyor bzang  
<sup>2</sup> sa la bkra shis 'phel  
<sup>3</sup> bde legs 'byung ba'i nyin mo  
<sup>4</sup> phun sum tshogs pa'i dus tshod 'dir  
<sup>5</sup> lho 'dzam bu gling gi byang phyogs  
<sup>6</sup> bod kha ba can gyi yul khams  
<sup>7</sup> smad mdo khams yul gyi lte ba

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<sup>35</sup> 'brug mo skyid recorded this speech from Lcags thar rgyal (b. 1963 in Stag rig Village) at his village home 20 February 2002.

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<sup>8</sup> rma chu sngon mo'i lho phyogs  
<sup>9</sup> shing tsan dan lo 'dab rgyas sa  
<sup>10</sup> bu dpa' bos dpa' skad rgyag sa  
<sup>11</sup> mi btsan pos khirms kha zhib sa  
<sup>12</sup> phyogs so so'i 'grul ba 'du gnas  
<sup>13</sup> g.yang sde dpal gyi ra ba 'di'i  
<sup>14</sup> ma bu mo'i mgo skra slas sa  
<sup>15</sup> rta mdo ba'i glo lan 'then sa  
<sup>16</sup> skyid pa'i lha khyim phyug mo 'dir  
<sup>17</sup> zas dkar dmar gyi sder kha bshams sa  
<sup>18</sup> skyes pho mo 'gron la 'dus te  
<sup>19</sup> zhing bzang tsha mo bsu ba'i grabs byas

*Ya!*

<sup>1</sup> The (alignment of stars in the) sky today marks a wonderful  
day  
<sup>2</sup> The earth flourishes with auspiciousness,  
<sup>3</sup> It is a day teeming with a promising future,  
<sup>4</sup> At this perfect time of this thriving day,  
<sup>5</sup> In North Jambudvipa, the southern continent.<sup>36</sup>  
<sup>6</sup> Situated in Tibet, the land of snows,  
<sup>7</sup> At the center of Eastern Tibet,  
<sup>8</sup> South of the blue Yellow River,  
<sup>9</sup> Richly grown with sandalwood,  
<sup>10</sup> Courageous men roar with bravery,  
<sup>11</sup> It is a place where mighty people have thorough laws.  
<sup>12</sup> Guests from all directions gather,  
<sup>13</sup> In this harmonious village,  
<sup>14</sup> Women plait their hair,  
<sup>15</sup> Fine horses are tamed,  
<sup>16</sup> At this happy, prosperous, heavenly home,  
<sup>17</sup> Various foods are displayed,

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<sup>36</sup> A continent south of Mount Meru in an enormous ocean according to Buddhist cosmogony.

<sup>18</sup> Men and women come together as guests,

<sup>19</sup> In preparation to welcome the well-lineaged girl.

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<sup>1</sup>ལོ་གཅིག་གི་གོང་རོལ་ལ།།

<sup>2</sup>གཉེན་ཚང་ལྷན་རྒྱས་མཉམ་དུ་འདུས།།

<sup>3</sup>མ་དང་ཨ་ཁུས་གྲོས་བྱས།།

<sup>4</sup>མ་དང་སྲུ་མོས་རྩད་བཅད།།

<sup>5</sup>བྱ་རྒྱུང་རང་གིས་བརྒྱ་ལས་བཅའ།།

<sup>6</sup>བརྒྱད་ལས་བདམས་ཏེ།།

<sup>7</sup>ཞང་ཚང་གིས་གསེར་གྱི་ཀ་བར་འཇུས།།

<sup>8</sup>དུལ་གྱི་ཐུ་བར་བཅངས་བ་ན།།

<sup>9</sup>ཞང་ཚང་གིས་ཀྱང་།།

<sup>10</sup>ཕོ་ལ་སློབ་དེས།།

<sup>11</sup>མོ་ལ་ཁ་བསྐྱར།།

<sup>12</sup>གཡང་གི་མདུད་བཞིག་སྟེ།།

<sup>13</sup>བྱ་མོ་གནས་ལ་བྱིན་པ་ནས།།

<sup>14</sup>བདག་ཞང་འཛིན་གཉིས་ཀ་རྩ་འཛོལ།།

<sup>15</sup>རྩ་འཛིན་ཉེ་མ་ཤར་བར་གྱུར་རོ།།

ya

<sup>1</sup> lo ngo gcig gi gong rol la

<sup>2</sup> gnyen tshang lhan rgyas mnyam du 'dus

<sup>3</sup> pha dang a khus gros byas

<sup>4</sup> ma dang sru mos rtsad bca

<sup>5</sup> bu chung rang gis brgya las btsal

<sup>6</sup> brgyad las bdams te

<sup>7</sup> zhang tshang gi gser gyi ka bar 'jus

<sup>8</sup> dngul gyi thu bar bcangs ba na

<sup>9</sup> zhang tshang gis kyang

<sup>10</sup> pho la blo dris

<sup>11</sup> mo la kha bsdur

<sup>12</sup> g.yang gi mdud bshig ste

<sup>13</sup> bu mo gnas la byin pa nas

<sup>14</sup> bdag zhang 'dzin gnyis ka lha ngo 'phrod

<sup>15</sup> lha ngor nyi ma shar bar gyur ro

Ya!

- <sup>1</sup> One year before this year,
- <sup>2</sup> The groom's members gathered,
- <sup>3</sup> Discussions were held by the father and uncles,
- <sup>4</sup> Investigations were done by the mother and sisters,
- <sup>5</sup> Choices were made by the groom himself among hundreds,
- <sup>6</sup> The making of a selection was then done among eight,
- <sup>7</sup> As he clutched the golden pillar of the *A zhang's* home,
- <sup>8</sup> And tugged the silvery hem of the girl he wished to marry,
- <sup>9</sup> The bride's side,
- <sup>10</sup> Consulted men for advice,
- <sup>11</sup> Talked to women for perceptions,
- <sup>12</sup> Having unraveled the bond of the family fortune,
- <sup>13</sup> The daughter was given as a bride.
- <sup>14</sup> The meeting of you *A zhang* and I is made possible,
- <sup>15</sup> Our faces are then warm with sunshine.

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- <sup>1</sup> ད་ནངས་ནམ་མཁའ་གསལ་པའི་དུས།།
- <sup>2</sup> མ་སྲུ་མང་པོ་ལྟན་དུ་འཛོམས་ཏེ།།
- <sup>3</sup> ས་བཟང་བུ་མོའི་གཡས་སྐྱ་གཡས་ལ་ཤད།།
- <sup>4</sup> གཡོན་སྐྱ་གཡོན་ལ་ཤད་དེ།།
- <sup>5</sup> སྐྱ་ཚོར་ལོག་ལྷུང་ལ་ཤད།།
- <sup>6</sup> དུང་གོར་མོ་རྒྱབ་ལ་བཏགས།།
- <sup>7</sup> ཨ་ཞང་འཁོར་བརྒྱས་གཞུག་ནས་བསྐྱལ།།
- <sup>8</sup> མིང་པོ་ཆེ་བས་གཡས་ནས་བསྐྱོར།།
- <sup>9</sup> མིང་པོ་ཆུང་བས་གཡོན་ནས་བསྐྱོར།།
- <sup>10</sup> གཉེན་ཚང་ལྟན་རྒྱས་མདུན་ནས་བསུས་ཏེ།།
- <sup>11</sup> གཉེན་ཚང་གི་སྒྲིའི་ཡ་ཐེམ་མགོས་ལྷུང།།
- <sup>12</sup> མར་བཞག་རྩོག་པས་མནན་ནས།།
- <sup>13</sup> སྐྱོ་ཁར་ལྷུང་ནས་གོ་ཁར་བཟང་པས།།
- <sup>14</sup> སྲིད་པའི་བསུ་ཆེན་དེ་རིང་གྲུབ་པོ།།

ya

- <sup>1</sup> da nangs nam mkha' gsal pa'i dus
- <sup>2</sup> ma sru mang po lhan du 'dzoms te
- <sup>3</sup> pha bzang bu mo'i g.yas skra g.yas la shad
- <sup>4</sup> g.yon skra g.yon la shad de
- <sup>5</sup> shra thor log thur la shad
- <sup>6</sup> dung gor mo rgyab la btags
- <sup>7</sup> A zhang 'khor brgyas gzhug nas bskyal
- <sup>8</sup> ming po che bas g.yas nas bskyor
- <sup>9</sup> ming po chung bas g.yon nas bskyor
- <sup>10</sup> gnyen tshang lhan rgyas mdun nas bsus te
- <sup>11</sup> gnyen tshang gi sgo'i ya them mgos khur
- <sup>12</sup> mar bzhag rdog pas mnan nas
- <sup>13</sup> sgo khar bud nas go khar bsdad pas
- <sup>14</sup> srid pa'i bzo chen de ring grub bo

*Ya!*

- <sup>1</sup> At daybreak this morning,
- <sup>2</sup> Many women congregated,
- <sup>3</sup> The well-lineaged girl's right-side hair was plaited  
into the right side,
- <sup>4</sup> Her left-side hair was braided into her left side,
- <sup>5</sup> Her back hair was brushed down her back,
- <sup>6</sup> Her back was embellished with round silver,
- <sup>7</sup> Hundreds of *A zhang* escorted her from behind,
- <sup>8</sup> Her elder brother supported her at the right,
- <sup>9</sup> Her younger brother held her at the left,
- <sup>10</sup> Together, the groom's side welcomed her at the front,
- <sup>11</sup> (They) passed into the groom's house with the door frame  
overhead,
- <sup>12</sup> (They) passed into the groom's house by stepping over the  
threshold,
- <sup>13</sup> Went to the sitting-quarter having passed through the outer  
gate,
- <sup>14</sup> The accomplishment of a great welcome was done today.

ཡ།

<sup>1</sup>ཨ་ཞང་ཚང་གལ་སྐྱིག་དུས།

<sup>2</sup>གཡས་གལ་ཉི་མ་ཤར་འདྲ།

<sup>3</sup>གཡོན་གལ་ལྷ་བ་ཚེས་འདྲ།

<sup>4</sup>དབུས་གལ་སྐྱེ་མོ་འབྲིང་འདྲ།

<sup>5</sup>གོན་བའི་གོས་ཡག།

<sup>6</sup>བཞུགས་བའི་སྟབས་མཛོས།

<sup>7</sup>བཤད་བའི་གཏམ་བཟང་།

<sup>8</sup>ལྗངས་བའི་ལྷ་སྟན།

<sup>9</sup>གཉེན་ཚང་གི་བསུ་སློལ་ལ་བཞུས་ན།

<sup>10</sup>བསུ་བའི་ཉམས་བཟང་།

<sup>11</sup>གུས་བའི་སློལ་ལེགས།

<sup>12</sup>ཟས་ལ་བཅུད་ཆེ།

<sup>13</sup>རྩ་ལ་རོ་ལྡན།

<sup>14</sup>རྟེན་འབྲེལ་ངང་གིས་འབྲིག།

<sup>15</sup>པན་ཚུན་འདུན་མ་འགྲུབ།

ya

<sup>1</sup> A zhang tshang gral sgrig dus

<sup>2</sup> g.yas gral nyi ma shar 'dra

<sup>3</sup> g.yon gral zla ba tshes 'dra

<sup>4</sup> dbus gral stag mo 'gying 'dra

<sup>5</sup> gon pa'i gos yag

<sup>6</sup> bzhugs pa'i stabs mdzes

<sup>7</sup> bshad pa'i gtam bzang

<sup>8</sup> blangs ba'i glu snyan

<sup>9</sup> gnyen tshang gi bsu srol la bltas na

<sup>10</sup> bsu ba'i nyams bzang

<sup>11</sup> gus ba'i srol legs

<sup>12</sup> zas la bcud che

<sup>13</sup> ja la ro ldan

<sup>14</sup> rten 'brel ngang gis 'grig

<sup>15</sup> phan tshun 'dun ma 'grub



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Ya!

- <sup>1</sup> As rows were made by the *A zhang*,
- <sup>2</sup> The right row was like the rising sun,
- <sup>3</sup> The left row was similar to the waxing moon,
- <sup>4</sup> The center row resembled a proud tigress,
- <sup>5</sup> And the clothes worn were beautiful,
- <sup>6</sup> The ways of sitting were imposing,
- <sup>7</sup> The given orations were eloquent,
- <sup>8</sup> The sung songs were melodious,
- <sup>9</sup> Now see the groom's side's welcome,
- <sup>10</sup> The receiving manners were fine,
- <sup>11</sup> The respected rules were good,
- <sup>12</sup> The food was nutritious,
- <sup>13</sup> The tea was delicious,
- <sup>14</sup> Fortune was thereafter accomplished,
- <sup>15</sup> The wishes of the two sides were granted.

This speech praises the auspicious day and congratulates both the groom and bride's sides. It summarizes the marriage process from engagement to the wedding ritual.

After this speech, the *A zhang* are offered another meal that includes the same items as the first one, with the addition of Chinese cabbage, cucumber, celery, chilli, and potato dishes. Toward the end of the meal, an eloquent *A zhang* stands at the front of the row facing Uncle Bkra shis and Don 'grub's uncles and brothers and orates:<sup>37</sup>

ཡ།  
<sup>1</sup> ད་བྱ་མོ་བཙུག་པོ་ལ་ཞུ་བ།  
<sup>2</sup> བྱ་མོ་འདི་ད་ཅུང་ལོ་ན་ཚུང་།  
<sup>3</sup> རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་ཚད་མ་རིག།  
<sup>4</sup> ལྷག་གི་ཁྲིམ་པོ་མ་ལུང།

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<sup>37</sup> 'brug mo skyid recorded this oration from Lcags thar rgyal in his home 20 February 2002 in Stag rig Village.

- 5 ལག་ན་ལས་ཀྱི་མེད།།
- 6 ལ་ལེན་བཅུ་སྒྲིལ་ཤེས།།
- 7 དེང་ཕྱིན་ཆད་ཨ་ནེ་དང་སྤྱིད་མོ་གཉིས་ཀས།།
- 8 མ་རིག་ས་ནས་སྤོན་དགོས།།
- 9 མ་གོ་ས་ནས་ཤོད་དགོས།།
- 10 མ་ཤེས་ས་ནས་སྤོབས་དགོས།།
- 11 བྱ་མོ་རང་གིས་ཀྱང་།།
- 12 མ་ཐུན་པའི་སེམས་བྱུངས།།
- 13 འཇམ་པའི་ངག་སྒྲིལ།།
- 14 གོ་མ་པ་ཡང་ལེན་དང་།།
- 15 ལག་པ་ལྷུང་མོ་བྱས།།
- 16 སྒོས་སུ་རྒྱན་ཚོན་གཉིས་ལ།།
- 17 རྒྱན་པ་ཚོས་པ།།
- 18 འབྲུག་པ་དྲོན་མོ།།
- 19 ར་ལག་ཡས་དང་།།
- 20 རྒྱན་ལག་ཡས་བྱ་རྒྱ་གལ་ཆེ།།
- 21 མག་པས་ཀྱང་དེ་རྒྱང་པན་ཆད་དུ།།
- 22 པ་མེད་ཀྱི་བྱ་མོར་ཅི་འགོ་དང་།།
- 23 ལུལ་མའི་ཟངས་ཁ་གང་འགོབས་བྱས་མེ་ཚོག།

ya

- 1 da bu mo bcol dam zhig byed
- 2 bu mo 'di da rung lo na chung
- 3 skyid kyi tshad ma rig
- 4 sdug gi khres po ma khur
- 5 lag na las ka med
- 6 kha len brtsi sgo mi shes
- 7 da phyin chad a ne dang snyid mo gnyis kas
- 8 ma rig sa nas ston dgos
- 9 ma go sa nas shod dgos
- 10 ma shes sa nas slobd dgos
- 11 bu mo rang gis kyang
- 12 mthun pa'i sems zungs
- 13 'jam pa'i ngag smos
- 14 gom pa yang len dang

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<sup>15</sup> lag pa myur mo byos  
<sup>16</sup> sgos su rgan rgon gnyis la  
<sup>17</sup> rlon pa tshos pa  
<sup>18</sup> 'khyag pa dron mo  
<sup>19</sup> ja lag yas dang  
<sup>20</sup> stan lag yas bya rgyu gal che  
<sup>21</sup> mag pas kyang de ring phan chad du  
<sup>22</sup> pha med kyi bu mor ci 'gro dang  
<sup>23</sup> rul ma'i zangs kha gang 'gebs byas mi chog go

*Ya!*

<sup>1</sup> Now let's entrust the girl to the groom's home,  
<sup>2</sup> The girl is still young,  
<sup>3</sup> She has not seen the scenery of happiness,  
<sup>4</sup> She has not carried the burden of misfortune,  
<sup>5</sup> She is not used to working with her hands,  
<sup>6</sup> She is ignorant of etiquette,  
<sup>7</sup> From now on, both the mother and sisters-in-law,  
<sup>8</sup> Show the girl when she doesn't see,  
<sup>9</sup> Tell the girl when she doesn't hear,  
<sup>10</sup> Teach the girl when she doesn't know,  
<sup>11</sup> To the girl herself,  
<sup>12</sup> Be agreeable,  
<sup>13</sup> Be soft-spoken,  
<sup>14</sup> Quicken your steps,  
<sup>15</sup> Busy your hands,  
<sup>16</sup> Especially for the parents-in-law  
<sup>17</sup> Cook whatever is raw,  
<sup>18</sup> And heat whatever is cold  
<sup>19</sup> Offer tea with one hand,  
<sup>20</sup> Prepare seats with felt unfolded with the other is important,  
<sup>21</sup> To the groom himself from today on,

<sup>22</sup> The act of doing whatever you wish to a fatherless girl,<sup>38</sup>

<sup>23</sup> And leaving a pot uncovered is not permitted.<sup>39</sup>

ཡ།

<sup>1</sup>མཐའ་མར་ལ་གཡང་ཞིག་ལོས་ན།།

<sup>2</sup>རྒྱལ་བོའི་རྒྱལ་སྲིད་བརྟན་པ་དང་།།

<sup>3</sup>བྱིམ་ལ་བདེ་སྲིད་འཛོམ་པར་ཤོག།

<sup>4</sup>གནམ་ལ་ཆར་རྒྱ་འབབ་པ་དང་།།

<sup>5</sup>ས་ལ་ལོ་ལྷུགས་འཕེལ་བར་ཤོག།

<sup>6</sup>རྒྱན་པའི་སྐྱ་ཚོ་བརྟན་པ་དང་།།

<sup>7</sup>གཞོན་པར་ན་ཚ་མེད་པར་ཤོག།

<sup>8</sup>ནོར་རུ་ནོར་གྱིས་བཀའ་བ་དང་།།

<sup>9</sup>འབྲུ་མཛོད་འབྲུ་ཡིས་གཏམས་པར་ཤོག།

<sup>10</sup>བྱ་རབས་ཚ་རྒྱད་འཕེལ་བ་དང་།།

<sup>11</sup>ཅི་བསམ་ཡིད་བཞིན་འབྲུབ་པར་ཤོག།

ya

<sup>1</sup> mtha mar kha g.yang zhig bos na

<sup>2</sup> rgyal bo'i rgyal srid brtan pa dang

<sup>3</sup> khyim la bde skyid 'dzom par shog

<sup>4</sup> gnam la char chu 'bab pa dang

<sup>5</sup> sa la lo phyugs 'phel bar shog

<sup>6</sup> rgan pa'i sku tshe brtan pa dang

<sup>7</sup> gzhon par na tsha med par shog

<sup>8</sup> nor rwa nor gyis bkang ba dang

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<sup>38</sup> This suggests that the groom may have done something improper in the past to a girl who had no male relatives to protect her, but this is not the case with the bride who has a father and brothers to protect her. It warns the groom against mistreating his bride.

<sup>39</sup> This suggests that a lazy woman does not care if the pots are covered when she cooks. However, this bride is not from a lazy family and therefore, the groom cannot mistreat his bride on the grounds that she is lazy.

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<sup>9</sup> 'bru mdzod 'bru yis gtams par shog

<sup>10</sup> bu rabs tsha rgyud 'phel ba dang

<sup>11</sup> ci bsam yid bzhin 'grub par shog

*Ya!*

<sup>1</sup> To make a final benediction:

<sup>2</sup> May the king's sovereignty be sustained!

<sup>3</sup> May this family be endowed with happiness!

<sup>4</sup> May there be much rain!

<sup>5</sup> May livestock and crops flourish!

<sup>6</sup> May the elders be endowed with longevity!

<sup>7</sup> May the young ones be free from illness!

<sup>8</sup> May the stable be completely full of yaks!

<sup>9</sup> May the barn be full of grain!

<sup>10</sup> May the line of family descent continue!

<sup>11</sup> May all wishes be fulfilled!

At about sunset, the *A zhang* and Me tog have one last meal and leave. The guests and the groom's side gather and sing. At this time, Lha mo may leave the bedroom and join the activities. After guests leave, Lha mo and Don 'grub's family have a big meal. That night, the new couple sleep together.

The next day, Uncle Bsod noms' family invites the new couple to their home and they spend a night there. When they return, several hundred RMB, is returned by Uncle Bsod noms.

### A Groom Comes to Live in the Bride's Home

At times, grooms live with their wives in their wives' homes. In 2004, however, this was increasingly rare. It might have occurred if the family had only daughters. Boys who married

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into their wives' homes were usually from families with several sons, and their parents were unable to find wives for them all. The process of marrying into the bride's home was similar to brides marrying into grooms' homes, but no grooms eloped to their wives' homes, because it was nearly always an arranged marriage. There was not much 'dowry' for the groom, but after the groom married into the bride's home, he gradually became master of the family. Men who married into their wives' homes were usually denigrated.

## DIVORCE

Historically, divorce has been rare in Stag rig Village but since about 1995, it has become increasingly common. Couples may find they have nothing in common. A spouse might also find a lover. When the couple divorces, the wife takes all her clothes back to her parents' home. Some divorces occur one or two years after marriage, and the couple might not have children. If they do, the children often go with the mother, and the father provides money and grain for the children. But if the children's father's side agrees to take the children, he only gives a small amount of money and grain to his wife as a token payment for her work at his home during the marriage. The couples do not go to court for divorce; instead they ask the matchmakers to be judges. Most divorced villagers remarry two or three years later.

APPENDIX ONE:  
WEDDING EXPENSES, STAG RIG VILLAGE  
11 FEBRUARY 2004<sup>40</sup>

THE GROOM'S EXPENSES

Engagement.

Items	Quantity	Value RMB
cash		1,000
<i>gos</i> (silk cloth)	2	80
<i>ras</i> (cotton cloth)	1	50
<i>ther ma</i> (woven cloth for making Tibetan summer robes)	1	53
<i>kha btags</i> (white, blue, or yellow silk ceremonial scarves)	1	5
liquor	4 bottles	57
Total		1,245

Given after the bride's side agrees to the marriage.

Item	Quantity	Value RMB
cash		1,500
liquor	7 bottles	49
cigarettes	10 cartons	20
beer	10 bottles	18
Total		1,587

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<sup>40</sup> Chos Idan (b. 1938 in Stag rig Village) was interviewed at his home in Stag rig Village in February 2005.

Bridewealth.

Item	Quantity	Value RMB
cash		2,000
<i>phrug</i> (thick woven cloth for making summer Tibetan robes)	1	360
<i>ha sag</i> (thin, cheap woven cloth)	1	95
<i>ther ma</i>	1	75
<i>gos</i>	3	150
<i>kha btags</i> (ceremonial silk scarves)	40	120
<i>rgya lwa</i> (Western-style clothing)	variable	280
Total		3,080

Banquet for the wedding ritual.

Item	Quantity	Value RMB
<i>lug sha</i> (mutton)	5 sheep	1,750
<i>skam sha</i> (beef)	10 kg	160
<i>phag sha</i> (pork)	10 kg	130
liquor	20 bottles	300
cigarettes	5 cartons	100
<i>sngo tshod</i> (vegetables)	variable	100
<i>ka ra</i> (candy)	5 kg	50
<i>sil tog</i> (fruit)	25 kg	75
<i>shog bu'u/sbag</i> (firecrackers)	variable	100
<i>'bras</i> (rice)	25 kg	100
<i>rgun 'brum</i> (raisins)	3 kg	30
<i>gro ma</i> (wild baby yams)	1 kg	28
<i>mar</i> (butter)	5 kg	120
Total		3,043



THE BRIDE'S EXPENSES

Dowry.

Item	Quantity	Value RMB
<i>tsha ru sram can</i> (otter-skin trimmed lambskin robe)	1	3,800
<i>phrug</i>	1	350
<i>bzos tshar</i> (artificial lambskin Tibetan robe)	1	150
<i>ha sag</i>	1	110
<i>nyal thub</i> (quilt)	1	60
<i>sngos shubs</i> (pillowcase)	2	10
<i>nyi zla</i> <sup>41</sup>	1	900
<i>wa zhwa</i> (fox-fur hat)	1	130
<i>le'u mo</i>	1	35
<i>bod kyi stod lwa</i> (Tibetan shirt)	1	50
<i>rgya lwa</i>	10	1,000
<i>lham</i> (shoes)	10 pairs	300
Total		6,895

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<sup>41</sup> A moon-shaped silver ornament the bride wears on her chest.

Banquet for inviting the groom to the bride's home.

Item	Quantity	Value RMB
<i>ske rags</i> (sash)	26	390
<i>lug sha</i>	2 carcasses	500
<i>phag sha</i>	10 kg	130
<i>skam sha</i>	10 kg	160
liquor	10 bottles	100
cigarettes	10 packets	20
candy	3 kg	30
<i>sil tog</i>	10 kg	24
' <i>bras</i>	25 kg	100
<i>sngo tshod</i>	variable	50
<i>mar</i>	5 kg	120
Total		1,624

COMPARATIVE TOTALS

Side	Value RMB
bride's family	8,519
groom's family	8,955

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

A

A myes Brtan skyong ཨ་མེས་བརྟན་སྐྱོང་།

A zhang ཨ་མང་།

A zhang tshang bde mo yin nam ཨ་མང་ཚང་བདེ་མོ་ཡིན་ནམ།

B

bang skra བང་སྐྱལ་།

bzos tshar བཟོས་ཚར།

bde mo yin བདེ་མོ་ཡིན།

bkra shis བརྟན་ཤིས།

Bla brang ལྷ་བང་།

Blo brtan rdo rje ལྷོ་བརྟན་རྡོ་རྗེ།

Blo bzang tshe ring ལྷོ་བཟང་ཚེ་རིང་།

Bod dar tshang བོད་དར་ཚང་།

bod kyi stod lwa བོད་ཀྱི་སྟོད་ལ།

'bras འབྲས།

'brug mo འབྲུག་མོ།

'brug mo skyid འབྲུག་མོ་སྐྱིད།

bsang བསང་།

Bsod nams བསོད་ནམས།

bu mo, khyod tshe ring bar smon ལུ་མོ། ལྷོད་ཚེ་རིང་བར་སྟོན།

C

Chab cha ཆབ་ཇ།

'cham འཆམ།

Changmu 常牧

Chos ldan ཚོས་ལྷན།

Chu bar ma ལུ་བར་མ།

D

Dar mtsho དར་མཚོ།

Dbyar rtswa dgun 'bu དབྱར་རྩ་དགུན་འབྲ།

Dge lugs དགོ་ལུགས།

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rgun 'brum རྒུན་འབྲུམ།  
Don 'grub དོན་འགྲུབ།  
dong chong xia cao 冬虫夏草  
Donggou 东沟  
dou rou 豆肉  
Douhoulou 豆后漏  
Dpa' mo དཔལ་མོ།  
Dpal ldan lha mo དཔལ་ལྷན་ལྷ་མོ།  
Dpon tshang དཔོན་ཚང།  
dui 队

E

er dui 二队

G

Garang 尕让  
Gcan tsha གཅན་ཚལ།  
Ge lu tshang གེ་ལུ་ཚང།  
Gonghe 共和  
gos གོས།  
gro ma གྲོ་མ།  
Grwa tsa tshang གྲཱ་ཙ་ཚང།  
gseb ri གསེབ་རི།  
Gshin rje bdag po གཤིན་རྗེ་བདག་པོ།  
Guide 贵德  
Guinan 贵南  
Guoluo 果洛  
gyos sha gyos chang གྱོས་ཤ་གྱོས་ཚང།

H

ha sag ཧ་སག  
Hainan 海南  
lham ལྷམ།  
Han 汉  
Hedong 河东

Hexi 河西

Heyin 河阴

hu tse ལུ་ཙེ།

Huangnan 黄南

Hui 回

J

Jianzha 尖扎

K

ka ra ཀ་ར།

Kab ron ཀ་བ་རོན།

kha btags ཁ་བ་ཏགས།

Khri ka ཁྲི་ཀ།

Khro go ཁྲོ་གོ།

Khro rgyal ཁྲོ་རྒྱལ།

khyod la bde skyid kyi ma 'ongs ba zhig yod bar smon

ཁྲོད་ལ་བདེ་སྦྱིད་ཀྱི་མ་འོངས་བ་ཞིག་ཡོད་པར་སྟོན།

L

Lcags thar rgyal ལྷགས་ཐར་རྒྱལ།

le'u mo ལེ་ལུ་མོ།/ལོད་སྐད་དུ་བྱིང་ལྷ།

Lha khang thang ལྷ་ཁང་ཐང།

Lha mo ལྷ་མོ།

lo sar ལོ་སར།

lug sha ལུག་ཤ།

Luohantang 罗汉堂

M

ma yong མ་ཡོང།

mag 'bod མག་འབོད།

Mang rdzong མང་རྫོང།

Mao Zedong 毛泽东

mar མར།

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me tog མེ་རོག

Mgo log མགོ་ལོག

Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 果洛藏族自治州

Guoluo zangzu zizhi zhou

Mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ

Mtsho lho Prefecture Normal School 海南州民师 Hainan

zhou minshi

Mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།

mu 苗

## N

mna' ma ma yong ngam མནལ་མ་མ་ཡོང་ངམ།

Nag phrug tshang ནག་ཕུག་ཚང་།

Nags tshang ནག་ས་ཚང་།

nyal thul ཉལ་ཐུལ།

nyi zla ཉི་ལྷ།

## P

Pad ma པད་མ།

Pad skyid པད་སྐྱིད།

phag sha ཕག་ཤ།

Phrang mar ཕར་མར།

phrug ཕུག

phul tse ཕུལ་ཚེ།

Phun mo ཕུན་མོ།

Phyor tshang ཕྱོར་ཚང་།

## Q

Qinghai Normal University 青海师范大学 Qinghai shifan

daxue

Qinghai 青海

## R

ral ba རལ་བ།

ras རས།

Rdo rje འོ་རྗེ།  
Re tshang རེ་ཚང།  
Renminbi (RMB) 人民币  
rgya lwa རྒྱ་ལྷ།  
Rgyab ri རྒྱལ་རི།  
Rgyal bo རྒྱལ་བོ།  
rgyal po རྒྱལ་པོ།  
Rgyal bo tshang རྒྱལ་བོ་ཚང།  
Rgyal mo tshang རྒྱལ་མོ་ཚང།  
Rma lho རྩ་ལྷོ།  
Rnye རྩེ།  
Rnye tshang རྩེ་ཚང།  
rtsam pa རུ་ས་པ།  
Ru sar tshang རུ་ས་ར་ཚང།  
rus pa རུ་ས་པ།

S

san dui ས་དུའི།  
Spyan ras gzhigs ལྷན་རས་གཟིགས།  
sha ཤ།  
Sha rgya lcin tshang ཤ་རྒྱ་ལའི་ཚང།  
Shar lung ཤར་ལུང།  
Shar lung Township Boarding School 东沟乡寄宿学校  
Donggou xiang jisu xuexiao  
shog bu'u/sbag ཤོག་བུ་འུ་སྐབ་སྐབ།  
sil tog ཤིལ་ཏོག།  
skam sha ལྷམ་ཤ།  
ske rags ལྷེ་རགས།  
skra 'phab ལྷ་ཕམ།  
sngo tshod ལྷོ་ཚོང།  
sngas shubs ལྷས་ཤུབས།  
Stag rig ལྷག་རིག།  
Stag rig tshang ལྷག་རིག་ཚང།

T

ther ma ཐེར་མ།

This ba ཐིས་བ།

This ba tshang ཐིས་བ་ཚང་།

Thun te ཐུན་ཏེ།

the'u rang ཐེ་འུ་རང་།

Tongde 同德

tsha ru sram can ཚ་རུ་སྐམ་ཅན།

Tshe 'bum ཚེ་འབུམ།

Tshe dbang ཚེ་དབང་།

Tshe dpa' ཚེ་དཔའ།

tshe ring lo brgya yong bar smon ཚེ་རིང་ལོ་བརྒྱ་ཡོང་བར་སྟོན།

Tu 土 (Monguor)

W

wa zhwa ས་ལྷ།

wenroude yanggao 温柔的羊羔

X

Xinghai 兴海

Xining 西宁

Xinjie 新街

Y

yi dui 一队

Z

Zi ling ཟླ་ལིང་།



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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MONASTIC  
TOURISM IN TIBETAN AREAS

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ABSTRACT

Tibetan monastic tourism is discussed including prior leasehold experience in Tsang lha Township (Zhānglà 障腊), as well as recent efforts at Sku 'bum (Tǎ'ěr Sì 塔尔寺) and Bla brang (Lābǔléngsì 拉卜楞) monasteries in the context of field work completed 2001 to 2007 in Zung chu rdzong (Sōngpān 松潘) and Gzi tsha sde dgu rdzong (Jiúzhàigōu 九寨沟) in Sichuān (四川) Province, Bla brang Monastery in Gānsù (甘肃) Province, and Sku 'bum Monastery in Qīnghǎi 青海 Province. Four points are addressed in considering the sustainability of Tibetan monastic tourism: the role of monasteries in tourism; monasteries and cultural interpretation, particularly tour guides' interpretations; protection of monasteries' historical relics; and a framework for sustainable monastic tourism.

KEY WORDS

Tibet, monastery, sustainable, tourism, Bla brang, Sku bum

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## INTRODUCTION

With the opening of the Lhasa railway in 2005, concurrent improvement of roads in Tibetan areas, and following the notion that "If western China is going to develop, tourism should take the lead (Xībùdàkāifā, lǚyóuyào dāngxiān 西部大开发，旅游要当先)" the pressure and influence of tourism on religious and monastic traditions have become serious concerns. Current government policy encourages monasteries to be self-sufficient therefore, research on how to develop monastic tourism in Tibetan areas and how to unite traditional and modern concerns in Tibetan areas is urgently needed. Based on fieldwork in A mdo,<sup>2</sup> I propose four essential factors to consider to better understand the sustainable development of monastic tourism:

- the role of monasteries in tourism;
- monasteries and cultural interpretation, particularly tour guides' interpretations;
- protection of monasteries' historical relics; and
- a framework for sustainable monastic tourism.

## BACKGROUND HISTORY

Religious practices at monasteries and temples in Tibetan areas have suffered as a result of modernization, including tourism. Conflicts in the late 1990s at monastic sites along the popular Gzi tsha sde dgu and Gser mtsho tourist route in Sìchuān Province led me to consider the possibilities for

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<sup>2</sup> A mdo includes Tibetan areas of Qīnghái, Gānsù, and Sìchuān provinces.

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harmonious coexistence of traditional Tibetan Buddhist culture and such recent phenomena as monastic tourism. In particular, problems have arisen due to tensions between the 'leasehold' form of monastic tourism and traditional monastery operations. My observation of various monasteries in the region suggests that sustainability and autonomy are essential for a successful mixing of modern and traditional concerns. The foundation of this model is the proper management of both the monastery and tourism; proper management is best done by the monastery itself.

Local people's history and traditions should be respected and protected. During the development of monastic tourism, the monasteries should be responsible for the interpretation of sites and the selection of tour guides. Additionally, when constructing and repairing monasteries for the development of tourism, attention should be given to protecting cultural relics inside and outside the monasteries to preserve the historicity of sites while meeting the demands of modern tourism. Respecting the reality of local culture ensures the sustainable development of tourism. It is essential to consider how we can accommodate both traditional and modern culture and likewise how Chinese and Tibetan culture can coexist.

My fieldwork was done in 'dzam thang (Ràngtáng 让唐) County and Tsang lha Township, Zung chu County (Sōngpān) in Rnga ba (Ābà 阿坝) Tibetan and Qiāng 羌 Autonomous Prefecture, and at Sku 'bum Monastery in Xīníng 西宁 City in Mtsho sngon beginning in 2001. What follows are recommendations for the sustainable development of monastic tourism.

## THE POSITION OF MONASTERIES IN TOURISM

It is important to determine the relationship between monasteries and tourism. A monastery is not a factory, a shop, or a hotel anyone can operate; it is primarily a place for the expression of religious feelings and performance of religious actions and is a vital part of Tibetan culture. Monasteries should not be leased to businessmen. Responsibility for management of tourism and tourist services should be taken by the monastery.

From the time monastic tourism began in 1989 in China to 2002,<sup>3</sup> there were several conflicts over the leasehold model in Zung chu County. In the context of the rapid development of the tourist economy in 1998, Dga' mas (Gǎmǐ 呷米) Monastery monks decided to develop monastic tourism, hoping to be self-sufficient by increasing monastery income, however, these efforts proved unsuccessful due to lack of experience and inability to attract many tourists to the monastery.

Businessmen from Lèshān 乐山<sup>4</sup> signed a contract with the monastery in 1999 with the purported aim of financially supporting the monastery which, in turn, allocated certain rights to the businessmen. This brought the monastery directly into the tourism industry and resulted in a new phenomenon in monastic tourism: the leasehold system. After Dga' mas was leased in 1999, Sna sten Monastery (Yuánbàsi 元坝寺), Gtso tsang Monastery (Chuānzhǔsì 川主寺), and Spyang gtsang Monastery (Shānbāsì 山巴寺) were leased to Lèshān businessmen. The leasehold contracts varied among monasteries, according to certain monks.

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<sup>3</sup> Báimǎcuò 2004.

<sup>4</sup> In southwest Sìchūān at the confluence of the Sung chu (Mínjiāng 岷江), Rgya mo rngul chu (Dàdùhé 大渡河), and Qīngyījiāng 青衣江.

The leasehold system adopted in Tsang lha Township, Zung chu County created much conflict between monasteries and society, monastic and lay communities, local tradition and modernization, tourists and local villagers, and between vendors of religious items and their potential customers. The conflict between traditional and modern attitudes fractured the traditional concept of a monastery, which has two levels of meaning.

The first layer refers to traditional concepts of the monastery as an economic unit. In the past, the monastery's basic source of financial support came from local offerings and earnings its lamas (*bla ma*) and monks generated from performing religious rites. After the institution of the leasehold system, the lessees paid lease and maintenance fees, and even salaries for some monks, causing a rupture in the traditional monastic economic system with the monastery assuming the role of a business, undermining the faith of believers. Commercialization reduced the religious value of the leased monasteries in the eyes of locals, thus motivating religious practitioners to concentrate their focus on such monasteries without the leasehold system as Sna zhig dgon pa (Duihésì 对河寺) and Rin spungs dgon pa (Línbōsì 林波寺).

A second layer of meaning refers to the relationship between the monastery and its affiliated villages, the *lha sde* 'religious community'. For example, Spyang gtsang Monastery was traditionally supported by the *lha sde* surrounding it: the natural villages of Spyang gtsang (Shānbā 山巴), A stong pa (Lādōngbà 拉冬坝), Ma yus (Má yī 麻依), Chu che ge (Qǔqígē 曲其哥), and Gser lung kha (Shělongkǎ 舍隆卡). After the initiation of the leasehold system and the beginning of monastic tourism, the monastery became a market space. This affected its religious nature, and resulted in local villagers transferring offerings and religious practice to other monasteries. Local believers, monks, and head lamas at the two Bon monasteries (Snang zhig and Rin spungs)

refused to engage in the leasehold system. Consequently, they attracted offerings and religious devotion of many local believers. Most *lha sde* members attached to Spyang gtsang, Dga' mas, and Sna sten monasteries transferred their religious affiliation and religious practices to these two monasteries. Thus, even though Snang zhig Monastery did not engage in the leasehold system during the years under consideration, it became self-sufficient because of increased local support. Believers from outside Zung chu County, including many from such herding areas as Mdzod dge (Ruòěrgài 若尔盖) also became supporters. According to a monk at Snang zhig Monastery, the monastery received offerings totaling 180,000 RMB between May 2001 and May 2002—less than in 2000—suggesting that the introduction of the leasehold system damaged locals' perception of this monastery and decreased its patronage. The traditional concept of the *lha sde* was also harmed, leading devotees to concentrate their focus on Snang zhig and Rin spungs monasteries.

The economic structure of the monasteries changed, rupturing the traditional economy and leading local villagers to redefine their relationship with the monasteries. These changing relationships did not necessarily leave the leaseholding monasteries without money, however. For example, Spyang gtsang Monastery earned 100,000 RMB in 2001 from the leasehold contract.

Conflict developed between the commodity economy and local traditional culture. Historically, Zung chu was an important point on the eastern tea and horse trade route, and the Tibetan district around Zhang la was an essential part of this route. Local villagers thus have a long tradition of commodity consciousness, and comparatively strong abilities in business; the many shops, hotels, and other enterprises that local people currently run in Gtso tsang dgon Town attest to this. However, though local people have a strong commodity consciousness, prior to the 1990s this was a



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traditional commodity consciousness based on goods barter and a small-scale cash economy; locals did not perceive culture and beliefs as commodities that could be monetized.

Without a clear sense of what a cultural commodity was, monasteries were leased and what had been a ritual space became a market space. Business talk infiltrated sacred spaces, and the ritual halls, previously entered only by believers, became places for curious observers to stroll about. When the profit orientation of the leasing businessmen was added, locals became disillusioned with the monasteries, and frequently pointed at and cursed the guides and tourists, causing conflicts. For example, a two to three meter-long stick of incense that sold for twenty RMB at the Guānyīn 观音 Temple in Xīnjīn 新津 near Chéngdū 成都 was sold for 130 RMB by leesees of the Zung chu monasteries. Local villagers criticized this, saying, "The incense at the monasteries is now more expensive than opium!"

Economic conflicts between the monasteries and the leasing agents grew. Because these monasteries were along the popular Gzi tsha sde dgu and Gser mtsho tourist route, tourists steadily increased in number. Believers and non-believers alike started entering sacred spaces, and both groups put money in the monasteries' donation boxes. As a result, along with the sale of incense and religious souvenirs, the donation boxes became a central source of revenue. In the monasteries on the tourist route in Zung chu, the monthly income from these boxes was close to 10,000 RMB during peak tourist season.

According to a Gtso tshang Monastery monk, the income from the donation boxes between May first and mid June 2002 totaled 30,000 RMB. Recipients of this income became a central concern for the leasing agents, monasteries, and public at several monasteries. Three different arrangements emerged. At Sna sten Monastery and Dga' mas monasteries, the offerings were given to the leasing agents. At Spyang gtsang Monastery, the contents of the container

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within the main temple went to the leasing agent, but the contents of the box at the door went to the monastery. At Gtso tshang Monastery, the contents of all donation boxes went to the monastery. Because of this situation, the leasing agent for these monasteries spent the whole year 'developing tourism' at Sna sten and Dga' mas Monasteries; they did not pursue business activities at Gtso tshang Monastery in 2000. According to the monks and local people, one reason Gtso tshang Monastery was allowed to reopen to tourism while the other monasteries closed is because the contents of donation boxes belonged to the monastery.

Regardless of monastic tourism in Zung chu, the issue of control over donation boxes is crucial. There were many conflicts in Zung chu before 2002, mostly because the monasteries did not seek more direct management and control of financial resources, such as the donation boxes.

I attended a meeting in Xīning in May 2007 and heard that Sku 'bum Monastery had been leased to a businessman. Further fieldwork revealed that Sku 'bum was using the same ticketing system as previously. However, the price had increased from thirty to eighty RMB. There were also other differences: some villagers did odd jobs, such as cleaning offering lamps and other tasks related to the butter lamp offerings, as well as tending the Great Stupa Temple, Sku 'bum mthong grol mchod rten chen mo (Dàjīnwádiàn 大金瓦殿) in the evening. These villagers lived in the temples where they worked. Some older monks also performed similar work. Each month, the monastery management committee paid a village leader who divided the money between the workers; this arrangement was usually laid out in an annually renewed contract. The temple manager and the village leader together collected and handed over temple donations to the monastery management committee.

With increasing numbers of tourists, the monastery had to be vigilant in guarding valuable objects within the temple therefore, some monks also worked to oversee the

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temples. For this, a yearly contract was arranged between a monk and the monastery management committee. The monk was expected to be someone who had resided at Sku 'bum for several years. In addition to the contract, the new caretaker monk, the old caretaker, and members of the monastery management committee inventoried items in the temple. These temple caretakers were also paid each month from temple donations.

## INTERPRETING MONASTIC CULTURE

To maintain the authenticity of explanations about monastic culture given to tourists, it is essential that monks determine, develop, and interpret monastic culture for tourists. These important factors present challenges, including the need for monks to master Chinese and English.

The cultural interpretation of each monastery should follow the authentic features of the monastic tradition and needs to be composed and approved by each monastery's monks. In July 2007, Jo bo Lha khang Monastery in Lhasa delivered a report entitled *The Measurement of Tourism* (*Lǚ yóu cuòshī 旅游措施*) to the Cultural Management Office (Wénguǎnjú 文管局) of Lhasa City. It reported more guides were needed for the increasing numbers of tourists, however, within the contemporary situation, many tour guides' historical explanations were incorrect and their level of cultural knowledge minimal. Tourists as well as pilgrims left dissatisfied. In light of this, it is hoped that the Cultural Management Office will rectify these problems, in part by appropriate training and support to prepare knowledgeable Tibetan guides.

Guides are among the most important stakeholders involved in implementation and development of sustainable monastic tourism. The development and implementation of

standards for professional guides must be done collaboratively.

Local participation is important in organizing and guiding tourist activities because it contributes to preservation of local culture, improves the accuracy of guides' interpretations, and contributes to the economic development of the local population. For Tibetan monastic tourism, local participation should be reflected in the tour organizers and guides, who ensure that monastic culture proceeds in an authentic, sustainable manner. Many Tibetan monks cannot speak Modern Standard Chinese and many local youths lack sufficient knowledge of Tibetan religions to act as guides. This explains to some extent why most guides within monasteries on the Tibetan tourism circuit are non-Tibetans from Inner China. After years of field work I strongly feel that the language limitations of monks and the limited knowledge of Tibetan religions among Tibetan youths who could otherwise act as guides, seriously impacts the local autonomy of Tibetan monastic tourism. The lack of these skills causes locals to remain passive in monastic tourism.

In the earliest leasehold form of monastic tourism, the lessee was responsible for organizing tour guide services at the monasteries. Tour groups were to be divided into male and female groups, and separately introduced to the situation at the monastery. However, appointed tour guides did not accurately understand local religion and traditions and often made false and misleading statements. They entered and exited religious buildings at will, ignoring appropriate rules and customs; some wore hats inside temples, pointed at religious images with their index fingers; and guides (including female guides) slept overnight in the main hall. Such behavior violates the monks' religious vows and Tibetan customs, and resulted in a backlash from locals.

Tibetans generally remove their hats in respect to religious images when they enter a temple and use an

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upturned hand to indicate images and sacred items. There are also restrictions against laypeople staying in the main hall of a monastery at night, especially laywomen. As a result, both lessor and lessee agreed that guides could not enter monastic buildings to provide introductions to tourists, and female tour guides could not be within the monastery compound after nine p.m.

When I visited Dga' mas Monastery in June 2002, there was a new building to the right of the monastery meant to house tour guides and those associated with the lessee. Nevertheless, locals' criticism continues.

Many tour guides from inner China lack basic knowledge of Tibetan religions and cannot adequately introduce the monasteries and explain Tibetan folk traditions. Ignorant, untrained tour guides mislead tourists and disseminate a distorted image of Tibetan culture. Some make disrespectful and improper comments regarding holy lakes, monasteries, and sacred mountains and distort Tibetan history and culture.

Many Hàn 汉 visitors lack knowledge of and respect for Tibetan traditions and local culture. In addition, tour guides may mislead them. In this context, it is hardly surprising that tourists misbehave: they beat drums, sit on Dharma seats (*chos khri*),<sup>5</sup> touch fragile sacred items, and swim and bathe in sacred lakes, creating conflict between visitors and villagers that impacts community stability. These conflicts are noticed by local governments and monasteries, increasing the awareness of the importance of encouraging the monasteries' own explanations and interpretations of their historical relics and, at the same time, emphasizing the need for sustainable tourism.

At present, Dga' mas and Spyang gtsang monasteries in Zung chu have begun appointing monks as tour guides

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<sup>5</sup> The seat is only for a high Lama when he teaches and oversees rituals.

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and using explanations prepared by the monasteries. These guides are required to pass an examination in Chinese, which is a challenge for most. The explanations given by monks who do know Chinese are based on explanatory pamphlets the monastery edited.

The disorder created by the number of tourist guides was the most significant tourism problem in 2007, according to the director of the Sku 'bum Monastery Management Committee (Siyuàn guǎnlǐ wěiyuánhùi 寺院管理委员会). In 2007, there were eighteen tourist companies in operation with a total of 300 guides. Management was decidedly more lax than prior to 2003. Before, guides were required to pass the professional tourist guide exam and demonstrate their knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism. Guides were generally required to wear traditional Tibetan dress and wear their official guide badges, or else they were not allowed to enter the monastery compound. However, guides did not wear Tibetan clothing in 2007, and different guides gave varying interpretations based on their individual understandings.

Since early 2006, an increasing number of monasteries and local governments in such places as Dga' mas and Spyang gtsang in A mdo and the Jo khang Temple in Lhasa have begun focusing on the importance of how Tibetan culture and religion are interpreted. Likewise, in May 2006 a seminar focusing on tourism development of Jo snang Monastery in 'dzam thang was held. The local government invited Jo snang Monastery high lamas and, remarkably, a guide to attend. This illustrates a recognition of the importance of giving certain authority to the monasteries themselves.

## THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL OBJECTS

Monasteries are an important part of Tibetan material culture, and as such their continued function is crucial to the

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sustainability of Tibetan culture as a whole. Simultaneously, given the rapid changes brought on by modernity, the museum function of monasteries has become increasingly important, stressing the need for greater awareness of the need to protect monasteries while developing tourism. I will discuss this by addressing protection of historical objects inside the monastery and the problem of protecting historical objects outside the monastery.

Many Tibetan monasteries have long histories and preserve numerous relics. In order to meet pilgrims' needs and tourists' curiosity, these objects are often displayed and are measured, certified, registered, and secured. Sku 'bum Monastery has done very well in this regard. Early each year the incumbent managers of each of the monastery's temples (*dgon gnyer*) hand over to the newly elected managers the Buddhist images, *thang ka*, and other objects. This process is overseen by the Monastery Management Committee, which certifies, measures, and photographs the objects. It is important that the Monastery Management Committee of Tibetan monasteries measure and register their old statues, *thang ka*, and other ritual instruments to protect against loss, theft, and damage that may occur in a tourist environment. For example, when I visited Jo snang Monastery in 'dzam thang County the monastery had many historical objects on display with little in the way of security.

Brag ri (Hòusì 后寺) Monastery in Zung chu County reported the loss of a statue in 2004. The monastery had not measured and registered the statue, hampering recovery on the part of villagers and public security.

Another essential component of material culture is the monasteries' exterior objects. The first aspect of this is protecting the actual buildings. In the hope that tourism will flourish, certain monasteries destroyed historical remnants and selected new sites for rebuilding. For example, when monks, nuns, lay people, or government officers rebuild a monastery they may demolish the historical remnants of the

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old monastery and build a new one; or they may abandon the old site altogether and move to a new site, literally moving away from the memory of history, cutting off the past.

Many years ago, a monastery at the foot of Mt. Sku lha (Sigūniáng 四姑娘) in Jīnchuān 金川 County was demolished and rebuilt at a new, more convenient, beautiful site. The monastery had a photograph of the old site, which I suggested be hung on the wall of the new monastery to honor their long history. Similar events have taken place at such tourist centers as Xiānggélīlā 香格里拉 County, Bde chen (Díqìng 迪庆) Prefecture, Yúnnān 云南 Province.

At present, the Jo khang Temple in Lhasa confronts the same problem. One of the oldest temples in Tibet, it has limited interior space to accommodate the 5,000 people who visit daily. The Cultural Management Office of Lhasa City and the monastery are considering various measures to protect the temple, such as controlling tourist numbers and directing visitors to other monasteries.

A second issue pertains to protecting objects outside the monastery. Thorough preservation of the entirety of Tibetan tangible heritage would necessitate the cataloguing of countless items from numerous historical sites. There are many stupas (*mchod rten*), sacred caves, groves, and lakes that should be protected for the development of monastic tourism. For example, the monastery of Bang to in 'dzam thang County has a pile of *ma Ni* stones dating from the Yuán 元 Dynasty (1271-1368) and several earthen stupa: the Byams sems mchod rten, the Sgrol ma mchod rten, and 'dul dul mchod rten, all of which are 200-500 years old and in need of protection.



ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE  
MONASTIC TOURISM

Cultural tourism began developing in China in the 1980s. Prominent cultural tourism areas include the North-Central China Plain, the Uyghur cultural area, and the Southwest ethnic minority areas. These areas' experiences provide monastic tourism in Amdo and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) with points for reflection and consideration. I examine tourism in Amdo and the TAR in an attempt to find a sustainable model for Tibetan monastic tourism and to balance tradition with contemporary developments. Based on several years of field work, I have determined that the Bla-brang model (described later) has the most potential as a model for sustainable Tibetan monastic tourism. It is well-structured, self-supporting, and sustainable compared to tourism in Zungchu County and Sku 'bum. This model should be improved and extended to other Tibetan areas.

In response to the reaction of tourists and locals, the Rngaba Prefecture Religious Affairs Commission (Ābà zhōu zōngjiàojú 阿坝州宗教局) issued a report to the Prefecture People's Government (Ābà zhōu rénmínzhèngfǔ 阿坝州人民政府) in May 2002. Based on investigations into the situation surrounding monastic tourism in Zungchu County, it was entitled *Some Opinions Regarding the Standardization of Religious Monasteries' Participation and Engagement in Business Activities* (*Guānyú zhěngdùng guīfàn zōngjiào sìmào cānyù cóngshì jīngyíng huódòng de yìjiàn* 关于整顿规范宗教寺庙参与从事经营活动的意见). These recommendations were approved by the Prefecture People's Government and were promulgated to relevant organizations at the county and prefecture levels for implementation as Document No. 64.<sup>6</sup> This document was sent to each county

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<sup>6</sup> 2002. *A Circular on Controlling and Rectifying Some Existing Problems in the Tourism Markets* (*Guānyú xiànzhì*

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government along tourist routes, instituting a process of rectifying problems related to monastic tourism in certain Zung chu monasteries. It prohibited leaseholders from participating in the administration of tourism-related commercial activities and banned leasing monastic property to outsiders. Moreover, the monasteries' management committees were ordered to immediately dissolve leaseholds. Afterwards, the Sìchuān Provincial Government carried out a comprehensive investigation of the regulation of the tourism industry in the entire province and issued a related directive<sup>7</sup> to the Rnga ba Prefecture Government in October 2002. Problems related to economic activities in certain monasteries along Zung chu's tourist routes were specifically mentioned. Rnga ba Prefecture was required to address such problems as leasing of monasteries and improper tourism-related economic activities within a month.

In November 2002, the Rnga ba Prefecture Government sent *A Circular on Controlling and Rectifying Existing Problems in the Tourism Markets* to each of the county governments along the tourist routes initiating a second wave of problem rectification related to monastic tourism in certain Zung chu monasteries. The Zung chu County Nationalities Religious Affairs Bureau (Sōngpānxiàn mínzōngjú 松潘县民宗局) ordered the monastery management committees to immediately dissolve their agreements pertaining to monastery-based economic activities in conjunction with investment networks. The Bureau declared that leaseholders would be henceforth prohibited from participating in economic activities related

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zhénggǎi lǚyóu shìchǎng wèntí dé tōngzhī 关于限制整改旅游市场问题的通知).

<sup>7</sup> *A Circular on Some Problems Related to the Control and Rectification of the Tourism Markets* (Guānyú xiànzhì zhénggǎi lǚyóu shìchǎng wèntí de tōngzhī 关于限制整改旅游市场问题的通知).

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to the development of monastery tourism. Furthermore, in accordance with the spirit of Document N<sup>o</sup>. 123,<sup>8</sup> the pricing system for entrance tickets to monasteries and prices for the sale of religious items was brought under strict regulation.

One year after the issuance of the documents above, the monasteries applied to the government for the right to conduct tourist-related activities autonomously. The government agreed on the pricing system<sup>9</sup> for entrance tickets to the monasteries in May 2004. This pricing system remained in effect at the time of publication. The County Religious Affairs Bureau strictly implements new regulations of religious routines from a national government circular issued March 2005<sup>10</sup> prohibiting businessmen and non-monks from participating in religious tourism. Tourist guides are monks who must pass a Chinese language proficiency test and are called 'narrators' (*jiǎngjiěyuán* 讲解员). There are fifteen narrators at Dga' mas Monastery and ten at Spyang gtsang Monastery. They deducted five to eight percent from the sum of tourist group revenue as personal payment in 2005. The monasteries had higher profits under the new ticket pricing system than under the leasehold model. Dga' mas Monastery received about 46,000 RMB and Spyang gtsang Monastery received 140,000 RMB from ticket sales, public offering containers, and sales of such religious items as *thang ka*, *rdo rje*, and so on in 2005. The monastic community arranged tourist work attendants and held daily rituals. Conflicts such as those discussed above are absent in this form of monastic tourism and villagers

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<sup>8</sup> 2002. *A Circular on Controlling and Rectifying Existing Problems in the Tourism Markets* (*Guānyú xiànzhi zhěnggāi lǚyóu shìchǎng wèntí de tōngzhī* 关于限制整改旅游市场问题的通知).

<sup>9</sup> Admission ticket system.

<sup>10</sup> *Religious Affairs Regulations* (*Zōngjiào shìwù tiáoliè* 宗教事务条例).

returned to the monastery to worship, circumambulate, and perform various rituals.

Monastery management committees have reinforced this self-supporting form of monastic tourism for four years, however, the following problems are still obvious:

- the narrators speak Modern Standard Chinese poorly,
- some monasteries have not been registered as tourist sites by the Sìchuān Provincial Government, consequently, tourist buses often will not stop at such monasteries unless monks in these monasteries pay the guides and drivers and give them local products to entice them to stop, and
- monastery management has been adversely affected by villagers' business activities.

In recent years, villagers have entered Dga' mas Monastery to do business with tourists without paying fees to the monastery. Disorder has followed. Raucous villagers hawked jewelry and other goods as if the monastery were a market place, negatively impacting the monks' sales of such items as *thang ka* and *rdo rje* and detracting from a solemn religious atmosphere. The monks succeeded in having the government stop monastic tourism in July 2006 in order to deal with such temporary problems.

Dga' mas Monastery and other monasteries have faced additional problems. Following the termination of the leasehold model in 2002, outside businessmen began building 'cultural'/ 'custom' villages in 2003-2004. 'The First Village (along the route to) Huánglóng and Jiūzhàigōu (Jiūháung dìyīcūn 九—黃第一村) opened next to Dga' mas Monastery in May 2005. However, after one year, the government asked the proprietors to close it because a non-

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religious place was holding religious activities and selling related items.

Many accounts about the custom village of Jiu-háung dì yī cūn circulate among locals. Some say the 'inhabitants' gave 'medicine' to tourists that impaired their judgment in order to encourage them to buy expensive *thang ka* and Buddhist images. Though I have not confirmed such accounts, unethical practices were conspicuous. According to a County Religious Affairs Bureau official, a white stupa and '*khor lo* 'pilgrimage circuit' were built when construction of First Village began. Shortly thereafter, the government ordered First Village to dismantle the stupa and '*khor lo* due to locals reactions. What remains in place of the stupa is an odd sculpture of a bird-like being with a yak's head. Unusual murals depicting Tibetans picking peaches and engaging in activities never before seen on the Tibetan Plateau have replaced the '*khor lo*.

Tibetan homes and *chos khang* 'shrine rooms' were also made in the custom village (tourist village) of Jiu-háung diyīcūn, and tour guides led tourists to meet a 'lama' who supposedly had just returned from a long retreat for divination and *byin rlabs* 'blessings'. This was short-lived. A tourist from Jiāngsū 江苏 Province wrote to the Provincial Tourist Bureau in August 2005 complaining about the fraud. In response, the provincial government dispatched a worker to secretly visit, who found that the 'lama' was an imposter (the undercover worker feigned forgetting his bag in the house of the monk, and saw the monk dressed in a Western-style suit when he later returned). The provincial government passed this information to the local government and the custom village was closed in September 2005. As of 2007, its ownership remained contested.

There was also conflict between the custom village and monastery. When the custom village was built, local businessmen hoped that the monastery would close its front gate so that tourists would pass the village and enter the

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monastery by means of the First Village, however, the monastery disagreed. There was a wall separating the monastery from the village and the two competed for tourists.

The County Religious Affairs Bureau received a letter of complaint from a tourist in May 2005 accusing Dga' mas Monastery of cheating tourists. The office replied that if the accusation was true they would compensate him five times the price he originally paid. When the office asked him to help them investigate, the tourist did not appear nor reveal his address. An officer went to the monastery to investigate but could not identify any illegal activity. The government concluded that the custom village had framed the monastery in order to benefit itself, and ignored the complaint.

The pattern exhibited by such custom villages has been pursued and run by Tibetans themselves, though in somewhat different ways. For instance, such tourist enterprises as 'New Nomad Villages' (Mùmín xīncūn 牧民新村) and 'Happy Tibetan Families' (Zàngjiālè 藏家乐) have been created based on such tourist sites as 'Happy Farmer Families' (Nóngjiālè 农家乐), common throughout China. These are established by and in pre-existing Tibetan communities. Today, along the main tourist route to Jiuzhàigōu and Huānglǒng, 'New Nomad Villages' are often organized by several families with one family's house designated to serve as the tourist house. These villages offer Tibetan cultural performances to visitors.

My initial impression is that such performances present a theatrical and idealized representation of Tibetan culture that does not approach actual Tibetan culture or representation of complex Tibetan lifestyles. During my survey of the area in May 2007, I observed that these villagers performed dances and music for tourists and that the tourists enjoyed what they saw. The entertainment lasted for about three hours for each group of tourists who entered the Tibetan house escorted by the tour guide, who then introduced customs and traditions. Afterward, tourists

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entered the living room and listened to folk music and enjoyed Tibetan food. Although the quality of this sort of 'educational entertainment' varies depending on the education and experience of the villagers, the participating community no doubt benefits economically.

## A POTENTIAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE MONASTIC TOURISM—THE BLA BRANG MODEL

In order to develop sustainable monastic tourism on the Tibetan Plateau, a sustainable model is essential. In the present context of monastic tourism, many aspects of the Bla brang Model could be emulated due to its effective, independent system.

Sku 'bum and Bla brang are arguably the two most famous monasteries in A mdo. Sku 'bum Monastery, one of the six great Dge lugs Monasteries,<sup>11</sup> is located at the site of Tsong kha pa's<sup>12</sup> birthplace in Qīnghǎi Province where tourism began growing in the mid 1980s. The Sku 'bum model differs from the Bla brang Model. The former requires the visitor to buy a single ticket from which monks take sections at each site. Local Monguor (Tǔzú 土族) and lay Tibetans serve as guides rather than monks. Each tourist group pays fifty RMB to hire a guide. According to one guide, daily income from ticket sales reaches 30,000-40,000 RMB on certain days and belongs to the monastery. Guides gave their daily earnings to the agency manager, who

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<sup>11</sup> The six great Dge lugs monasteries are Dga' ldan, 'bras spungs, Se ra, Bkra shis lhun po, Sku 'bum, and Bla brang.

<sup>12</sup> Tsong kha pa (1357-1419), an important philosopher and theoretician in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, founded the Dge lugs school of Tibetan Buddhism.

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returned thirty percent (fifteen RMB per group) to the guide. The remainder went to the agency.

Originally the only tourist agency at Sku 'bum was the state-run agency affiliated with the postal service. Later, numerous private tourist agencies became involved. In 2001, guide services were standardized, necessitating guides to pass a professional tourist guide qualification exam and demonstrate knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism. Guides were generally required to wear traditional Tibetan dress and official guide badges, otherwise they could not enter the monastery compound. However, things had changed by 2007 when I visited the monastery. As mentioned above, many guides did not wear Tibetan clothing and explained the sites in divergent ways. It was clear that the monastery improperly managed the guides and their interpretations—the monastery should tell its own history and also train guides. There were 300 guides at Sku 'bum in 2007 who had not studied Tibetan Buddhism. The director of the monastery's management team told me in 2007, "The biggest problem is confusion among the guides."

Bla brang Monastery provides a very different form of monastic tourism. It opened to tourism in 1982 and has since become an exemplary model of cultural tourism among Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. Monastic tourism at Bla brang is primarily managed by the Cultural Relics Management Committee (Wénguǎnhuì 文管会), a sub-branch of the monastery management committee. Before noon and at night each day throughout the year, monks chant scriptures while local lay people visit the monastery's temples to circumambulate, make offerings, and perform other religious activities. Tourists may enter the temples in the afternoon.

The Cultural Relics Management Committee consists of a director and two vice directors, as well as several additional committee members. The Reception Division (Jiēdàizhàn 接待站) is a sub-division of the Cultural Relics



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Management Committee and its director is a member of the Cultural Relics Management Committee.

The Reception Division had thirteen monks working as 'tour guides' in 2002, who called themselves *lo tswa ba* 'translators', a word that traditionally suggests scholar monks who translate Sanskrit texts into Tibetan. Two other guides were known as *lam khrid mkhan* 'knowers of the way', who only led tourists along the tour path. Of the thirteen translators, two were English-speaking guides. Monks in the Reception Division worked on a rotation system. In general, each guide led at least three groups per day through the monastery complex, giving explanations along the way.

During the peak tourist season, each guide might have taken as many as five groups a day. Monks in the Reception Division were admitted through a competitive examination and usually served a term of five years after which they could be admitted to higher level Buddhist study without taking the required examinations. During the peak tourist season, guides in the Reception Division were paid a salary of one hundred RMB per month. Tour groups did not pay the guides additional fees. According to monastery regulations, all tour groups were given a guided tour by a monastery-appointed monk after buying their tickets; guides from commercial agencies were not allowed to interpret monastic culture. Bla brang tourism income is managed by the monastery management committee and is typically used for monastery upkeep and repair, religious activities, and general expenses.

I recommend that monk-guides improve their interpretations by giving more detailed information, not simply announcing temple names accompanied by brief introductions. Additionally, photography and flashlights should not be completely forbidden.

It should be noted that the Bla brang Model is not perfect. The Cultural Relics Management Committee should make additional improvements to:

- improve managerial proficiency and methods,
- reinforce the quality of services,
- explicitly designate the number of tourist sites and the period they are open for tourism,
- specify the content of interpretative materials for each site, and
- set rules of conduct for monk-guides.

In addition to these improvements, the Cultural Relics Management Committee could improve the physical environment by:

- reinforcing the financial capacity and sales inventory of tourist outlets,
- accenting the monastic character of the monastery shop and setting reasonable and fair prices, and
- working to protect the monastery's historical objects and exhibit them appropriately.

Finally, monastery general management could be improved by:

- differentiating pilgrims from tours to more strictly separate the two and avoid the negative impact of monastic tourism on the religious functions of the monastery and
- setting and enforcing rules for tourists and pilgrims during rituals and chanting.

Bla brang and other monasteries can overcome these problems over time. For this to be done, however, it is crucial that the development of the monastery comes from within rather than depending on tourist agencies or leaseholders.

Two points are evident from the Bla brang model. First, for the last two decades, having developed a sustainable and autonomous style of monastic tourism, the Bla brang model has improved the local economy and simultaneously preserved the faith of devotees, clearly illustrating the model's effectiveness. Second, the Bla brang model demonstrates that it is possible for a monastery to professionally and systematically manage tourism in a way that reflects the interests of the monastery and respects Tibetan culture and history.

## CONCLUSION

Monastic tourism on the Tibetan Plateau is booming, but faces many challenges, including the Chinese and English language abilities of monk-guides, the capacity of monasteries to manage all tourism-related activities, and the preservation and care of artifacts. Bla brang Monastery provides a potential framework for sustainable monastic tourism.

The development of monastic tourism is intricately connected to the development of Tibetan society. Future research is needed to clarify answers to questions regarding the capacity of management, the harmonious coordination of monastic tourism, pilgrimages, rituals, and monks' daily practice. Founding an equitable and sustainable development of monastic tourism should play a significant role in the future development of Tibetan culture, and in the construction of a cohesive society.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

A

Ābà 阿坝

Ābà zhōu zōngjiàojú 阿坝州宗教局

Ābà zhōu rén mín zhèng fǔ 阿坝州人民政府

A mdo ཨ་མདོ།

A stong pa ཨ་སྟོང་པ།

B

Bde chen བདེ་ཆེན།

Bla brang ལྷ་བྲང་།

bla ma ལྷ་མ།

Bon བོན།

Brag ri བྲག་རི།

Byams sems mchod rten བྱམས་སེམས་མཚོད་རྟེན།

byin rlabs བྱིན་ལྷབས།

C

Chéngdū 成都

chos khang ཚོས་ཁང་།

chos khri ཚོས་ཁྲི།

Chuānzhǔsì 川主寺

Chu che ge ལྷ་ཆེ་གེ།

D

'dzam thang འཛམ་ཐང་།

Dàdùhé 大渡河

Dà jīnwǎ diàn 大金瓦殿

Déqìng 德庆

Dga' mas དགའ་མས།

dgon gnyer དགོན་གཉེས།

Duihésì 对河寺

'dul dul mchod rten འདུལ་དུལ་མཚོད་རྟེན།

G

Gǎmǐ 呷米

Gānsù 甘肃

Dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས།

Gser mtsho གསེར་མཚོ།

Gser lung kha གསེར་ལུང་ཀ།

Gtso tsang གཙུང་ཙང་།

Guānyīn 观音

Gzi tsha sde dgu rdzong གཙུང་ཙང་སྡེ་དགུ་རྫོང་།

Guānyú zhéngdùn guīfàn zōngjiào simiào cānyù cóngshì  
jīngyíng huódòng de yìjiàn 关于整顿规范宗教寺庙参  
与从事经营活动的意见

*Guānyú xiànzhì zhěnggǎi lǚyóu shìchǎng wèntí de tōngzhī* 关  
于限制整改旅游市场问题的通知

H

Hòusì 后寺

Huánglóng 黄龙

J

Jiāngsū 江苏

*jiǎngjiěyuán* 讲解员

Jiēdàizhàn 接待站

Jīnchuān 金川

Jiǔ-háung dìyīcūn 九-黄第一村

Jiǔzhàigōu 九寨沟

Jo snang ཇོ་སང་།

Jo khang ཇོ་ཁང་།

Jo bo lha khang ཇོ་བོ་ལྷ་ཁང་།

K

'khor lo འཁོར་ལོ།

L

*lam khrid mkhan* ལམ་ཁྲིད་མཁན།

Lèshān 乐山

*lha sde* ལྷ་སྡེ།

Línbōsì 林波寺

*lo tswa ba* ལོ་ཅ་བ།

M

Ma yus མ་ཡུས།

Mínjiāng 岷江

*mchod rten* མཚོད་རྟེན།

Mùmín xīncūn 牧民新村

N

Nóngjiālè 农家乐

Q

Qīnghǎi 青海

Qīngyījiāng 青衣江

R

Rin spungs dgon pa རིན་སྤངས་དགོན་པ།

Rdo rje རྩེ།

RMB (*rénmín bì*) 人民币

Rnga ba ར་བ།

Ruòèrgài 若尔盖

S

Shānbāsì 山巴寺

Shānbā 山巴

Shěnlóngkǎ 舍隆卡

Sìchuān 四川

Sìgūniáng 四姑娘

Sìyuàn guǎnlǐ wěiyuánhui 寺院管理委员会

Sku lha སྐྱ་ལྷ།

Sku 'bum སྐྱ་འབུམ།

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Sku 'bum byams pa gling སྐུ་འབུམ་བྱམས་པ་གླིང་།  
Sku 'bum mthong grol mchod rten chen mo

སྐུ་འབུམ་མཚོང་གོལ་མཚོང་རྟེན་ཚེན་མོ།  
Sgroi ma mchod rten སྐོལ་མ་མཚོང་རྟེན།

Sna sten dgon pa སྐ་སྟེན་དགོན་པ།

Sna zhig dgon pa སྐ་ཞིག་དགོན་པ།

Sōngpān 松潘

Sōngpānxiàn mínzōngjú 松潘县民宗局

Spyang gtsang dgon pa སྐུང་གཙང་དགོན་པ།

T

*thang ka* ཐང་ཀ།

Tsang lha ཙང་ལྷ།

Tsong kha pa ཙང་ཁ་པ།

Tüzú 土族

W

Wénguǎnhuì 文管会

Xiānggélīlā 香格里拉

X

Xīníng 西宁

Xīnjīn 新津

Z

Zàngjiālè 藏家乐

Zhānglà 障腊

Zung chu rdzong ཟུང་ཅུ་རྫོང་།

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MATRILINEAL MARRIAGE IN TIBETAN AREAS IN  
WESTERN SÌCHUĀN PROVINCE<sup>1</sup>

Féng Mǐn 冯敏 [translated by Mtsho mo skyid (Qīnghǎi 青海 Normal University) and Gerald Roche (Qīnghǎi Normal University and Griffith University)]

ABSTRACT

The marriage and family organization of the Zhaba 扎巴 people in Western Sìchuān 四川 Province is similar to that practiced by the Nàxi Mósūo 纳西摩梭 during the 1960s. The Zhaba 扎坝<sup>2</sup> Region is another matrilineal culture region in addition to the Lúgū 泸沽 Region in Yúnnán 云南 Province. The area has only recently begun modernizing because of its isolation. 'Visiting marriages' and matrilineal family organization continue to play an important role in Zhaba culture. This research contributes new material to the anthropological study of matrilineal societies.

KEY WORDS

Zhaba, matrilineal system, visiting marriage, Sìchuān

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<sup>1</sup> This is a translation of Féng 冯 (2006). All footnotes are by the translators.

<sup>2</sup> Different characters are used to distinguish the Zhaba region from the Zhaba people. We use Zhaba without tone marks to refer to both the Zhaba people and the Zhaba Region.

## INTRODUCTION

Matrilineality still exists in the marriage and family organization of certain minority nationalities in China. Before the discovery of the Zhaba matrilineal system, such a system was only known among the Nàxi Mósūo of the Lúgū Lake region on the border of Sìchuān and Yúnnán provinces.<sup>3</sup>

Tibetans calling themselves Zhaba live on the lower reaches of the Xiānshuǐ 鲜水 River, a tributary of the Yǎlóng 雅砻 River in Gānzi 甘孜 Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sìchuān Province. This Zhaba Region is at an average altitude of approximately 2,720 meters above sea level, and is about 1,150 square kilometers in area. The current population of about 13,624 Zhaba (according to the fifth national population census) is distributed throughout Yàzhuō 亚卓, Zhātuō 扎拖, Hóngdǐng 红顶, Zhōngní 仲尼, and Xiātuō 下拖 townships in Dào fú 道孚 County and Wǎduō 瓦多, Mùróng 木绒, and Pǔbāróng 普巴绒 townships in Yǎjiāng 雅江 County. Since these areas are isolated, Zhaba language, ornaments, and marriage system are unique; even today, a 'visiting marriage' system is still widely practiced by the Zhaba.

Published records of Zhaba marriage and family organization are scarce. Zhào Liúfāng 赵留芳 conducted fieldwork in the Zhaba Region in the 1930s, but made no significant findings regarding Zhaba marriage, stating only:

There is no marriage; marriage practices do not exist. Anyone can be anyone else's husband and anyone can be anyone else's wife. Such is their rule and their custom

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<sup>3</sup> See Huá 华 (2001) and Mathieu (2003) for background on the Mósūo.

In the 1960s, Rèn Xīnjiàn 任新建 from the Sìchuān Provincial Academy of Social Sciences (Sìchuān shěng shèhuì kēxué yuàn 四川省社会科学院) conducted research on Zhaba matrilineality and published an article in the *Gānzī Newspaper* (*Gānzī bào* 甘孜报). In 2000, he again conducted research on Zhaba society, this time from historical and anthropological perspectives. He concluded that the Zhaba are a possible remnant of the vanished Dōngnǚ Kingdom (Dōngnǚ guó 东女国). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Sìchuān Province Nationalities Research Center (Sìchuān shěng mínzú yánjiū suǒ 四川省民族研究所) created a Zhaba research group. Professor Lín Jùnhuá 林俊华 from Kāngdìng Higher Teacher's College (Kāngdìng gāoděng shīfàn zhūankē xúexiào 康定高等师范专科学校) also undertook fieldwork in the Zhaba Region in 2003, focusing on Zhaba history and culture. He concurred with Rèn Xīnjiàn, concluding that the Zhaba are likely descendants of the Dōngnǚ Kingdom mentioned in the Táng Annals (Tángshū 唐书) (Rèn 2003). Lǐ Xīngxīng 李星星 from the Sìchuān Province Nationalities Research Center introduced the concept of a 'matrilineal culture area', arguing that during the Táng Dynasty, the Dōngnǚ Kingdom covered most of the Yǎlóng River basin and that matrilineal societies currently existing along the Yǎlóng River are remnants of this kingdom. In addition to the Mósūo and Nàxi peoples to the southwest of the Yǎlóng River, matrilineality is also found among the Zhaba and Nàmùyī 纳木依 people.<sup>5</sup> However, Lǐ's article did not pay specific attention to Zhaba matrilineality. As mentioned

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<sup>4</sup> The original lacks a page number for this quotation.

<sup>5</sup> For an introduction to the Nàmùyī, see Libu Lakhi et al. (2007).

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above, there has yet to be a focused study on Zhaba matrilineality and therefore, no author has yet drawn definitive conclusions regarding this matter. In the context of our present state of knowledge, the current systematic and focused research is both valuable and meaningful.

Ethnography, a branch of sociocultural anthropology, is an important aspect of scientific research (Gupta and Ferguson 2005). The present research employed ethnographic fieldwork as its main method, and the matrilineal marriage system of Nàxi Mósūo of Lúgū Lake as a conceptual model to construct a hypothesis and research plan. I then went to the Zhaba Region in Dào fú County and conducted fieldwork on Zhaba marriage and family organization in July of 2004.

Participant-observation and survey research were carried out in eight randomly selected villages in five Townships (Hóngdǐng, Xiàngqiū 向秋, Égǔ 俄古, and Dìrù 地入 villages, Hóngdǐng Township; Gàidǐ 盖底 Village, Zhātuō Township; Wūlā 乌拉 Village, Yàzhuō Township; Zhārán 扎然 Village, Zhòngní Township; and Xiàwǎrán 下瓦然 Village, Xiàtuō Township). Data on the local marriage systems and family organization were collected from 232 households. This research examined Zhaba marriage systems and family organization across several generations, producing a basic descriptive outline of both and, for the first time, produced a statistical representation of Zhaba kinship and marriage.

The results of this study reveal that Zhaba marriage includes several different systems, among which visiting marriage (*zǒufǎng hūn* 走访婚) is the most important. Another type of marriage system is marital cohabitation (*tóngjū hūn* 同居婚) in which a person goes to live in their spouse's family home. Each marriage system has an associated mode of family organization; visiting marriages are associated with the matrilineal family (*mǔxì qīnzú jiātíng*

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母系亲族家庭); monogamous marriage (*duìǒu hūn* 对偶婚), which developed from visiting marriage, is associated with the matrilineal monogamous household (*mǔxì duìǒu jiātíng* 母系对偶家庭). Marital cohabitation marriages constitute about 102 households out of 232 households in this area or 49.04 percent of all households while visiting marriages constitute thirty-six households or 17.31 percent of the total. The sum of the two is 138 households, or 66.35 percent of the sample population. Therefore, visiting and cohabitation marriages, and the associated matrilineal family and matrilineal monogamous households are important aspects of Zhaba society. There are two types of kinship terminologies: classificatory terminology (*lèibíe shì* 类别式) and descriptive terminology (*xùshù shì* 叙述式); there is no naming system for affinal relatives in Zhaba culture. In summary, the results of this study demonstrate that the Zhaba marriage system and family organization remain completely matrilineal.

#### SEVERAL FORMS OF MATRILINEAL MARRIAGE IN THE ZHABA REGION

Marriage is the union of a man and a woman approved by social norms in a given area at a certain time. This research shows that visiting marriage, cohabitation marriage, and matrilineal monogamous marriage (*zhuānǒu hūn* 专偶婚) are currently the most important forms of Zhaba marriage and, among them, visiting marriage is the most significant.

### Visiting Marriage

In the Zhaba language<sup>6</sup> people refer to visiting marriage as *rèzuòyìcí* 热作依兹. *Rè* means 'girl', *zuò* means 'at the girl's place', and *yìcí* means 'to go to'. *Rèzuòyìcí* therefore means 'to go and live at the girl's place'. 'Visiting marriage' is a free translation and is how outsiders refer to Zhaba marriage practices. People who participate in visiting marriage call each other *gāyī* 呷依; *gā* 呷 means 'love' and *yī* 依 means 'lover'.<sup>7</sup> *Gāyī* therefore means 'beloved'. Only when two people have developed a sexual relationship do they call each other *gāyī*; males and females who have a non-kin relationship that are not sexual in nature do not use this term of address. Visiting marriage contains two elements: there must be an emotional or sexual relationship between the two people and secondly, the male (most often) must visit the female in her home. Visiting marriage is the typical type of matrilineal exogamous marriage practiced by the Zhaba.

Our research showed that in all areas except Xiàtuō Township in the Zhaba region, visiting marriage constitutes 49.04 percent of all marriages and is the dominant marriage form. The percentage of visiting marriage is even higher than in the others in certain villages, for instance Yìdǐ 益底 Village<sup>8</sup> contains twenty-seven households, of which twenty-one (77.78 percent) practice visiting marriage. Additionally,

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<sup>6</sup> Zhaba (Zhāyǔ 扎语) refers to the language that Zhaba speak. It is not Tibetan (Zàngyǔ 藏语), Muya (Mùyǎ yǔ 木雅语), or Ěrgǒng (Ěrgǒng yǔ 尔龚语).

<sup>7</sup> The Tibetan is *dga'* (love/ like) *ye* (*ye* is an oral particle with no written form; it is an agentive particle that indicates the doer of an action).

<sup>8</sup> In the list of field sites, the author mentions a Gàidǐ 盖底, but not Yìdǐ 益底. This confusion may be due to the transcription of non-Chinese words in Chinese characters.



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Égǔ 俄古 Village of Hóngdǐng Township has twenty households, of which fifteen (seventy-five percent) practice visiting marriage. Zhòngní Township's center is fifty-two kilometers from Dào fú County Town; the township is relatively isolated due to a lack of transport infrastructure and therefore, Zhaba from Zhòngní Township rarely marry outsiders. For example Mázhòng 麻仲 Village<sup>9</sup> contains sixteen households, of which fifteen (93.75 percent) practice visiting marriage.

### Cohabitation Marriage

When the majority or all of a family's children are female, the family typically needs to exogamously bring a male into the family; this is 'cohabitant marriage'. This kind of marriage is an intermediate stage in the development of marriage systems and significantly, it represents the transformation of visiting marriages to stable marriages, for it creates a common economic base for both males and females.

This marriage type primarily exists in families in which the only child is female, or in which all of several children are females. If one daughter in such a family has a 'visiting marriage' partner with whom she has a strong emotional bond, then the male may come live in the female's home as a son-in-law and a matrilineal visiting marriage family consequently becomes a matrilineal spouse marriage family. In this case, the couple lives together with the extended matrilineal family.

It is considered important to mark the creation of such a family with a marriage ceremony. Besides taking part

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<sup>9</sup> This village was not previously mentioned in the author's list of study sites.

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in a formal wedding ceremony, the concerned parties also sign a written agreement. Additionally, they change the terms of address they use with one another; they cease calling each other *gāyī* and instead use *zéróng* 泽绒 'lifelong companion'. In addition, the man is called *bùtuō* 布妥 'coming husband', and the woman *luèruò* 略若 'wife'.<sup>10</sup> Unlike *gāyī* relationships, the *zéróng* relationship is considered stable and permanent by both parties and by the community.

### Matrilineal Monogamous Marriage

If there is only one son in a Zhaba family or if all the offspring are males, a woman is usually married and brought into the home as a monogamous partner to one of the male offspring. Subsequently, other sons marry and live in the homes of their wives, or practice visiting marriage. This marriage is distinguished from true patrilocal marriage in that it only occurs once in one generation in an otherwise matrilineal family; true patrilineal descent groups exclusively follow a patrilocal marriage system. This type of Zhaba marriage is similar to what Morgan described:

Marriage systems are not strictly delineated. Features of group marriage occur in consanguineous marriage and vice versa; some features of monogamous marriage can also be found in group marriage and vice versa.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> These are Zhaba language terms that the author has attempted to render in Chinese.

<sup>11</sup> The quote in the original article may have been taken from a Chinese translation of Henry Louis Morgan's *Ancient Societies*. The Chinese translation seems to paraphrase the English original, and has been translated directly here. See Morgan (1877:393-394) for the original quote.

This describes the exact situation in Zhaba spousal marriage.

## BASIC FEATURES OF ZHABA VISITING MARRIAGE

Zhaba visiting marriage has several important features, outlined below.

### Strict Observation of Proscriptions and Limits

Though Zhaba visiting marriages may seem free, there are many proscriptions and limits.

The incest taboo is observed, which is a common rule in exogamous marriage. A strictly limited visiting marriage sphere exists; marriage is proscribed between matrilineal relatives and members of polyandrous and polygamous families. In sum, the basic principle is incest avoidance. Zhaba do not disapprove of exogamous marriage.

Zhaba families are referred to by the name of the household head; all people in one household are considered relatives and marriage within the household is taboo. Family members within seven generations cannot practice visiting marriage. Zhaba transmit their genealogies orally and marriage between relatives may be permitted when a genealogy is unclear or when matrilineal blood relatives older than three generations have not been recorded. This is probably due to the very limited marriage sphere that Zhaba share.

Many proscriptions regarding language and behavior exist between siblings. For example, it is forbidden for siblings to joke, play with, or tease each other. Females should not show their bare arms or legs, or undress in front of their brothers. People are especially sensitive about

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discussing sex in front of siblings. If sexual images appear on the screen while watching television, both sister and brother avoid looking at them. A man cannot let his sisters see him when he is visiting a girl and climbing into her home. A pregnant woman feels embarrassed to be seen by her uncles and brothers and women usually give birth in a stable. Those breaking these rules are regarded as rude and ignorant. Such rules create distance between brothers and sisters. The proscription on free communication and association indicates a highly integrated exogamous marriage system and the seriousness of maintaining the incest taboo.

There are additional proscriptions against such things, e.g., marrying people who are enemies, have infectious diseases, have congenital disorders, and have bad reputations.

### The Process of Establishing a Visiting Marriage Relationship

Zhaba have certain rules for conducting visiting marriages. To establish such a relationship either the 'item-snatching' (*qiǎng dōngxī* 抢东西) or 'house-climbing' (*pá fángzi* 爬房子) process must be followed. If a boy falls in love with a girl and wants to visit her after meeting publicly then he grabs an ornament from her to demonstrate his love. If the girl chases or ignores him, she implicitly agrees to develop a *gāyī* relationship with him and they later meet elsewhere at an appointed time. If she is not interested in the boy, she spits at him or otherwise displays disapproval and insists that he return her ornament. The boy usually returns the ornament immediately in such cases.

'House-climbing' is a component of visiting marriages. The boy must climb the wall of the girl's house on the first nocturnal visit and enter her room through a window at a prearranged time. He must return home empty-handed if he fails to climb the wall, however, after a successful attempt,

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the boy and the girl practice visiting marriage. Usually a boy only needs to climb the wall once or twice before other arrangements are made; afterward the girl opens the front door to let him in. However, if she disagrees but the boy insists on coming into the house, all the sisters in the home pour water or drop stones on him until he finally runs away. Customarily, a failed lover is never mocked.

### The Housing Situation Creating the Context for Visiting Marriages

Zhaba traditionally live in stone houses with rough walls; there are small windows on every wall. Men normally live on the top floor while women live in the second floor kitchen or the third floor storeroom. The windows are close to the floor, making it relatively convenient for men to enter the room. Newly built Zhaba houses commonly have very smooth walls that are difficult to climb, however, planks and boards are often put near the windows to make it easier for males to climb up.

According to the traditional spatial organization of Zhaba houses, women live together in one room. Women practicing visiting marriage do not have their own rooms. Only a woman with a long-term *gāyī* has a permanent place to sleep—in the kitchen directly under the window or the storeroom on the third floor. Women who accept visitors live with their sisters, however, their beds are a little farther apart than usual. *Gāyī* usually share a signal to help them recognize each other at night. There is a room beside the kitchen where the matriarch lives. Some elder women live in the same room with men who do not have visiting marriages or with their brothers; the oldest man in the family lives in a room by the shrine on the top floor.

## Traditional Standards for Choosing a Spouse

Zhaba men seek *gāyī* who are hardworking, intelligent, and virtuous. If the man is not interested in developing a long-term *gāyī* relationship, he pays particular attention to the girl's appearance. A beautiful adult woman may have many *gāyī*. Women seek men who are hardworking, healthy, honest, and kindhearted; they think only such men are reliable enough for a long-term relationship. Like men, women value appearance in short-term relationships. A handsome male may have many *gāyī*.

Long-term *gāyī* relationships contain more stable features than short-term *gāyī*: long-term *gāyī* not only have a sexual relationship but there are also possibilities for creating a monogamous household. A long-term *gāyī* relationship usually forms when a baby is born; the visiting marriage must then not only satisfy the couple's sexual needs but also the family's real needs. An intelligent and virtuous housewife is considered very important by men and a hard-working man reduces a woman's labor burden; his loyalty to the woman and family ensures the family's stability.

### Sentiment Transcends Economic Concerns in a *Gāyī* Relationship

Both men and women typically do not consider each other's family's finances when choosing a *gāyī*.<sup>12</sup> Before the establishment of a long-term relationship, men do not usually provide any financial support to the woman's family, and the woman's family seeks none. When long-term *gāyī* meet, the man is not required to give gifts to the woman. In the past,

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<sup>12</sup> Though the author does not explicitly state so, it is likely this refers to long-term *gāyī*.

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the male *gāyī* gave gifts when he wished but the woman never gave gifts to the man. A visiting relationship emphasizes sentiment rather than material wealth; this was the most significant feature of Zhaba visiting marriage spouse selection in the 1980s. Nowadays, the situation has changed somewhat. Men typically are short-term migrant laborers, earn cash income, and sometimes buy liquor, clothes, and food for the woman and her parents, however, the quantity of the gifts often depends on the man's finances and is usually insignificant. The father increases his financial support when a woman has a baby. If a male *gāyī* cannot afford to buy gifts, a woman does not end their relationship. Short-term *gāyī* never give gifts.

The man is obliged to help the woman's family with their work when they establish a *gāyī* relationship, especially when her family is short of laborers during the spring planting season. Men customarily plow, which is thought to ensure a good harvest. Additionally, men help chop wood, repair houses, and construct walls—any form of heavy manual labor. A male *gāyī* typically works in his partner's home for less than twenty days a year. The male *gāyī* is warmly welcomed by the woman's family and is treated well at this time, during which the man and woman live like a normal couple.

### The Scale of Visiting Marriage is Limited

The radius of the visiting area in the Zhaba Region is relatively small; people mostly practice visiting marriage at the township and village level, rarely going to other townships or counties. This is because the Zhaba Region is located along the Xiānshuǐ River where there are deep valleys, high mountains, hazardous roads, and poor transportation. Zhaba houses are built by fields atop

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mountains and on steep slopes. Families live separated from each other. Villages containing one, two, three, or five families are very common; the largest natural village has less than twenty households. The distance between these natural villages is typically one or two kilometers and the greatest distance is about ten kilometers. It is essentially impossible to go beyond the villages when making nocturnal visits in such an environment with undeveloped transportation infrastructure and where walking is the only means of transport. For example, people must use a yak skin boat to cross the river between Hóngdǐng and Zhòngní townships. Hiring a boat is impossible because visits are usually at night consequently, visits across the river are rare. There are no visiting marriages between the populations of Upper and Lower Zhaba because of the long distance between them. Long-term *gāyī* who live far apart usually have one or more short-term *gāyī* in nearby villages.

### Visiting Marriage Shares the Features of Group Marriage

In the past, both men and women had relatively free sexual relations and cases of having only one *gāyī* in a lifetime were very rare. People typically had more than two *gāyī* and some had several *gāyī* simultaneously. It is said that some Zhaba men had more than one hundred *gāyī* in their lifetime. There is a custom called 'throw the pants into the river' (*tuōkù rēnghé* 脱裤扔河) in the Zhaba Region. It is considered unclean and inauspicious if a man has more than one hundred *gāyī* thus, when he has had one hundred *gāyī*, his pants are removed and thrown into a river to purify him; this action also symbolically concludes the relationship with the one hundred *gāyī*. Some women may have twenty or thirty *gāyī* in their lifetime; some have as many as fifty. If the relationship is stable there are cases when people only have



one *gāyī* in their life, but this is rare. Zhaba legends say that the soul of a woman who has an excessive number of *gāyī* suffers after death; there is no purification ritual for women who have had numerous *gāyī*.

If one person has both short-term and long-term *gāyī*, the long-term *gāyī* receive preferential treatment. If a short-term *gāyī* encounters their lover's long-term *gāyī* at the lover's home, he defers to the long-term *gāyī* and leaves. In certain situations, the latecomer lets the first-comer go ahead and sometimes both generously insist that the other go first. If both the long-term *gāyī* and short-term *gāyī* insist on visiting the woman, she eventually chooses the one she loves most. Women usually prefer their long-term *gāyī*; if the woman chooses the short-term *gāyī* as a partner to live with it terminates her relationship with the long-term *gāyī*.

In the case of a *gāyī* relationship, one man may visit two sisters at the same time, or two brothers may simultaneously visit one girl. In some cases, the younger brother also visits his elder brother's *gāyī* instead of his elder brother. For example in some families, an elder brother may have practiced visiting marriage, had a baby with his long-term *gāyī*, leaves for seasonal work, and be unable to return for a long time. Because the man's family does not want to lose the *gāyī* and the baby, the man's family asks the younger brother to visit the woman and assume his elder brother's responsibilities. Therefore, although Zhaba practice matrilineal visiting marriage and the offspring belong to their mothers, they also retain the notion of patrilineal relationship with offspring. Women never openly visit their sisters' *gāyī*.

Men and women occasionally have temporary, casual *gāyī* with acquaintances and previous *gāyī*. Such couples usually find a convenient place to meet; the man does not need to climb into the house. Until the mid twentieth century some men visited a mother and daughter at the same time, a practice considered neither immoral nor taboo.

Men also exchange *gāyī* among friends, which was traditionally not a source of jealousy. Recently, however, attitudes have changed and if a person finds that a friend is visiting his *gāyī* he feels offended and verbal disagreements and fights may ensue.

Zhaba usually have many *gāyī* when they are young. Adult women have fewer *gāyī*. Most adult women choose a favored long-term *gāyī* and no longer accept short-term *gāyī*. Some women never have *gāyī* relationships and raise their offspring with the help of their parents, siblings, and other children. When most men are middle-aged, they choose a woman with whom to have a long-term relationship. Currently a couple's life is relatively stable once a *gāyī* relationship is formed, especially when they have children.

### Instability of Zhaba Visiting Marriages

Zhaba visiting marriages are unstable in many respects. When two people establish a *gāyī* relationship, its stability is due to their emotional drive. If their emotion is strong the relationship is stable; if not, they may break up. The main causes of break-ups are one or both of the couple takes a new *gāyī*; the female *gāyī* is seven or eight months pregnant but no longer wants to live with the man, in which case she often finds a new *gāyī*; the male *gāyī* no longer wants to help his *gāyī*'s family, or the man's family does not want him to help her family; the male *gāyī* believes that the female *gāyī* does not respect him; the female *gāyī* thinks that the male *gāyī* does not care about her; the female *gāyī*'s family is poor and the male's family does not want him to visit her; one of the *gāyī*'s family members has a bad reputation or an inherited disease; one of the *gāyī*'s family strongly objects to the *gāyī*'s marriage; parents from the two families disagree; or the male *gāyī* does not buy clothes or provide money for their children,

thus the female thinks he is irresponsible.

### Zhaba Notions of Possession

Before widespread Public Awareness of China's Family Planning Policy (Jìhuà shēngyù zhèngcè 计划生育政策), the idea of people as possessions did not occur among the Zhaba. Men and women were jealous of their *gāyī* having too many lovers, but it was not overtly expressed. Others laughed at a man who cared too much about this. However, when the Family Planning Policy was introduced, possessive notions grew stronger and the number of *gāyī* a person might have declined.

Exclusivity applies in casual sexual relations and in visiting marriage. When two people become long-term *gāyī*, they develop relatively possessive concerns. For example, having established a *gāyī* relationship, some people make promises to each other, saying such things as, "It is acceptable to have short-term *gāyī* and we must never abandon each other as long-term *gāyī*." Some even go to monasteries, prostrate, turn prayer wheels, and promise to be life-long companions. The author learned during fieldwork that the Xiàtuō Township leader's sister went to a monastery to pledge her love with her long-term *gāyī*. However, she died when she was only twenty-three years old. Her long-term *gāyī* was so sad that he never found another *gāyī*. He now lives with their daughter and is forty years old. He believes that by not breaking his promise he can at least let the woman's soul find peace in the afterlife.

Superficially it seems that both men and women can have several *gāyī* simultaneously but, in reality, both men and women have the notion of exclusive possession. For example, if the man abandons the woman after a *gāyī* relationship is established, she usually asks the man, e.g.,

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"Why did you abandon me?" Sometimes she goes to the new *gāyī* of her ex-lover and asks such questions as, "Why are you with my *gāyī*?" Men typically do not want their women to have new *gāyī*. The man is unhappy if a woman receives too many visitors. He may become jealous and they may argue and end their relationship. When a woman abandons a man, some men may take revenge by beating her, however, most men simply get drunk and find a short-term *gāyī* for temporary comfort. Eventually they find a new long-term *gāyī*. This shows that male *gāyī* do not simply love casually; they are also depressed when they lose lovers.

Some traditional Zhaba songs criticize the excesses of visiting marriage, thus demonstrating possessive thoughts. One song says:

There is a beautiful girl living in the village at the foot of that  
mountain; girl, please don't be proud of your  
beauty.

You used to have hundreds of *gāyī*, and I never thought  
once about visiting you.

Such attitudes are presently reinforced by policy. Since the implementation of the Family Planning Policy, two *gāyī* must obtain a government marriage certificate after having a baby. If a baby without a legal father is found, the child's biological father is sought out and heavily fined. Although a couple may keep their visiting marriage custom, their relationship becomes more formal after official marriage. They cannot have new short-term *gāyī* and feel jealous if their partner takes a lover, even resorting to legal action against them. The social environment no longer accepts such additional *gāyī*. If two *gāyī* argue or fight, the new short-term *gāyī* needs to pay medical fees resulting from the injury. A Zhaba man said,

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We did not have marriage certificates in the past, so I didn't feel angry about my *gāyī* having additional *gāyī*. But now things are different with the Family Planning Policy. The government approves our relationships, so I don't want to have other men come visit my wife. That would mean she doesn't respect me. In such a situation I must fight with the new *gāyī*.

This example shows that Zhaba men are afraid of paying fines and losing face; such feelings are actually the expression of the natural desire for possession and exclusivity.

#### The Desire for Long-Term *Gāyī* to Establish a Nuclear Family

Only a few Zhaba wanted to live apart from their extended matrilineal family and have their own nuclear families in the 1970s. Nowadays, nuclear families have become more common but nonetheless, many young people wait for further changes. A typical example is found in Gèbù 各补 Village, Yǎzhúo Township.<sup>13</sup> RZ, a thirty-year-old middle-school-educated male is a painter. His *gāyī* is from his village, and they now have three children. There are eight siblings in RZ's matrilineal family—five males and three females. One son became a monk, two went to live in their *gāyī*'s home, and two practice visiting marriage. Two of the three sisters practice visiting marriage and one is unmarried. RZ wants to have a stable nuclear family with his long-term *gāyī* but his parents disagree. He says:

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<sup>13</sup> This village was not previously mentioned in the author's list of study sites.

I want to have my own family, especially now that I've established my *gāyī* relationship. However, my father and sisters disagree. My only choice is to follow their wishes. My *gāyī* also wants to have our own family but her family also disagrees. We both really want to have our own family, so we will wait till my father agrees and then move into our own home. It will cost 10,000 to 20,000 RMB if we move out and build a new house. I can afford that. Currently my income goes partly to my father and partly to my *gāyī* to save for the future. If our extended family separated then I could use the money I give my father to build my own house.

The longing to have a nuclear family is now common among Zhaba women. They think:

Visiting marriages are not good, a formal marriage is better. In a visiting marriage, the man belongs to another family. He cannot always take care of his wife and children. However, in a formal marriage, two people become one family and they can live together happily ever after.

The Zhaba marriage system has changed as the result of modernization, changing ideas about marriage, and the limits and import of policy. Some young people have given up visiting marriage, separated from their matrilineal families, and created their own monogamous families.

In summary, Zhaba visiting marriage has the following features:

- Close blood relatives cannot marry each other; this is the most notable feature of exogamous marriage.

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- A man and woman establish a *gāyī* relationship based on mutual willingness; such relationships are primarily sexual relationships even though they contain certain qualities of stable spousal relationships. The establishment of a *gāyī* relationship is based on emotions, not finances.
- Visiting marriage usually involves 'item-snatching' and 'house-climbing'.
- Visiting marriage centers on the woman. The man is secondary, going to stay with the woman during the night and leaving in the morning.
- The two people in a visiting marriage live and work in separate families. Their *gāyī* relationship can be either long-term or short-term and is treated casually.
- Two *gāyī* do not necessarily need to have a financial connection; they only cohabit. Children belong to the mother.

## REASONS FOR THE PERSISTENCE OF ZHABA VISITING MARRIAGE

### Isolation

The Zhābà Grand Canyon (Zhābà dà xiágǔ 扎坝大峡谷) in Gānzī is situated among high mountains. Transport is hazardous and the location is inaccessible. The Zhaba Region is the most isolated area in Dàofú County; many Zhaba have never left the region, and outsiders rarely enter. The first road in Zhaba was built in 1974 by provincial government forestry officials. Zhaba experienced greater

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contact with the outside world after the completion of the road. Nonetheless, their matrilineal marriage system remained unchanged.

### Limited Land Resources Decreased the Possibility of Establishing Nuclear Families.

Zhaba live on both sides of the Xiānshuǐ River and their land resource is limited. Farmland is mostly on a few steep mountain terraces. Such areas are small, scattered, barren, and lack irrigation. Occasional natural disasters further limit the variety of crops that are grown. If an extended family wants to separate into nuclear families, division of land and property is difficult given such circumstances. Thus, matrilineal families practicing visiting marriage do not divide their lands and property rather, they live together in extended families. Through visiting marriages, people increase the number of children and avoid dividing the family into nuclear families. This also prevents family property from being divided, decreasing family conflicts. This is the subsistence basis of the Zhaba marriage system. Undeveloped agricultural technology is another contributing factor.

### Low Social Mobility

Zhaba live in a relatively isolated social and geographical environment. Infertile land, a simple division of labor, and a simple social structure resulted in low social mobility prior to the 1980s. The physical environment limited travel; only a few people left the Zhaba Region. Furthermore, in this isolated, traditional agrarian society, the division of labor was not advanced and therefore, people could not seek any



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other occupation than that followed by their ancestors. Only a few Zhaba went elsewhere for formal education; there were only a few itinerant craftsmen and blacksmiths. Few participated in specialized labor. These factors greatly affected social mobility, creating a foundation for the marriage system and matrilineal family organization. Because custom and tradition carried considerable weight, visiting marriage became the typical Zhaba marriage type.

### The Matrilineal Culture of the Yí-Tibet Corridor

Dào fú County is located in the Yí-Tibetan Corridor (Zàng yí zǒu láng 藏彝走廊). Zhaba matrilineal social organization is not an isolated example within this cultural area, however, it is comparatively well preserved. Many other matrilineal visiting marriage traditions remain within the area. For example, Jiā róng 嘉绒 Tibetans in the Dān bā 丹巴 Region have traditions of handkerchief-grabbing (*qiǎng pà zi* 抢帕子), wall-climbing (*pá qiáng qiáng* 爬墙墙), and shirt-wearing (*dǐng mú shān* 顶毡衫). The Jīn chuān 金川 Region's wall-crossing (*fān qiáng zi* 翻墙子) custom and many other marriage customs resemble Zhaba visiting marriage behavior. This suggests that the existence of matrilineal cultures resulted from a larger cultural context, the origins of which lay with the Dōng nǚ Kingdom in the Táng Dynasty, which likely extended between Jīn chuān in the north, the Yǎ River 雅江 to the south, the Dà dù River 大渡河 to the east, and the Yǎ lóng River to the west, forming a circle about 400 kilometers in circumference, with Dān bā and Dào fú in the center (Rèn 2003). Due to long history, diverse cultural influences, isolation, politics, economy, and many other factors, matrilineal visiting marriage persists among the Zhaba today.

## Marriage Custom as the Focus of Zhaba Culture

Zhaba visiting marriage is a living fossil. Throughout history, without any exterior forces to alter its surface layer, it has completely retained its form. Until the 1980s, marriage customs remained stable and unchanged. Even the few educated Zhaba could not break their primitive marriage customs. Under the influence of the Family Planning Policy, Zhaba must now have a marriage certificate with their partner after having children. However, most Zhaba do not really establish a nuclear family after receiving the certificate and continue to practice visiting marriage. Many Zhaba still practice traditional visiting marriage.

### Flexible Social Environment

Politics did not historically impact Zhaba visiting marriage but instead provided flexible external support. During the period of rule by chieftains (*tǔsī* 土司), laws were made stating that newly married couples should live separately from their matrilineal family and establish monogamous marriages, which facilitated household taxation. The government did not, however, actually interfere with visiting marriage customs. Even the tax-collecting landlords (*tǔbǎihù* 土百户) followed the local tradition and practiced visiting marriage. During the Republican Era (Zhōnghuá míngguó shíqī 中华民国时期 1912-1949) the government also treated visiting marriage practices casually because of the isolation of the Zhaba Region. After Liberation, even though monogamy was strictly practiced by people in inner China, local government permitted Zhaba to practice visiting marriage; township officials in the Zhaba Region are also allowed to follow this tradition even now. These factors all helped Zhaba visiting marriage persist.

## CONCLUSION

Anthropological fieldwork functions like experimentation in the natural sciences. Its results should be used to prove or disapprove certain theories and hypotheses; its academic significance is its ability to provide explanation and identify patterns of salience. Based on fieldwork, the author has defined the social characteristics of Zhaba matrilineal society and concluded that Zhaba visiting marriage is typically characterized by matrilineal exogamy, monogamy, and other features.

Zhaba visiting marriage belongs to the sphere of monogamy, defined as when a man and woman cohabit on a short- or long-term basis. This marriage system is practiced in primitive matriarchal societies. In the course of Zhaba visiting marriage, men and women usually develop a relatively stable visiting partner, the long-term *gāyī*. Engels (1993 [1972], 110) said:

The man had a chief wife among his many wives (one can hardly yet speak of his favorite wife), and for her he was the most important among her husbands.

This is apparent in Zhaba visiting marriages. One thing that is certain is that the Zhaba Region is a second matrilineal cultural region, in addition to the Lúgū Lake Region.

Zhaba marriage and family organization are determined primarily by the natural environment and by Zhaba culture. Its main determinant is the relationship between people and the environment—the shortage of arable land caused the sparse distribution of villages. Shortages of land and water and the reality of serious natural disasters led to a situation where family fission was impossible thus, visiting marriage was an adaptation to ensure the survival and development of lineages. Zhaba visiting marriage efficiently maintained both

consanguinity and family property.

Zhaba visiting marriage and the matrilineal kinship system refute Càì Huá's 蔡华 theory that the "Nà 纳<sup>14</sup> probably are the only ethnic group with no marriage and no family organization" (Càì Huá 2003).<sup>15</sup> This research shows that Zhaba visiting marriage and Nà visiting marriage share many cultural qualities. Firstly, both visiting marriage systems focus on sexual relationships and two people must call each other certain names based on their sexual relationship (Zhaba use *gāyī* and Mósūo uses *axia*). People outside the sexual relationship do not use such terms. Secondly, before establishing a visiting marriage, both go through such processes as item-grabbing (Nà have the exchanging gifts (*jiāohuàn dōngxī* 交换东西) custom, as well as wall-climbing and house-climbing). Thirdly, there are two visiting methods—liberal visits and secret visits. Men visit women at night and leave in the early morning in both societies. Fourthly, all visiting marriages retain features of group marriage and are unstable. Fifth, both enforce a very strict incest taboo. Sixth, in matrilineages, men usually rear their sisters' children. Seventh, Zhaba and Nà both live together in large extended families and have matrilineal spouse families.

As another example of the impact of anthropological fieldwork on matrilineal society, the discovery of Zhaba visiting marriage and matrilineal kinship systems refutes Càì Huá's concept of the Nà as a unique example, and enriches the data for anthropological research on matrilineal visiting marriage. In addition, it further compliments earlier research on Mósūo matrilineality. It thus has academic value and significance.

China has a vast landscape with many

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<sup>14</sup> More commonly referred to as Mósuō.

<sup>15</sup> The original lacks a page number for this quotation.

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anthropological resources. Additional research on matrilineal societies will occur with expansion of ethnographic fieldwork. Other examples of visiting marriage and related principles within the Yí-Tibetan Corridor still exist. Zhaba and Nà people are two matrilineal culture areas along the Yǎlóng River. Other examples similar to Zhaba and Nà societies without fathers and husbands will be found in the future.

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<sup>17</sup> Chábā is an alternative name for Zhaba.

<sup>18</sup> No page numbers are given.



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## COLLECTING WATER FROM THE YELLOW RIVER

Tshe rang mtsho (images) and Tshe ring mtsho and Tshe ring  
bsam grub (text)

### ABSTRACT

Collecting water from the Rma chu (Yellow River) near oM skor Village, Mang ra (Guínán 贵南) County, Mtsho lho (Hǎinán 海南) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sgnon (Qīnghǎi 青海) Province is shown in eleven photographs.

### KEY WORDS

oM skor, collecting water, Tibetan, pastoralist, Mang ra

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These images were taken in the summer of 2007 near oM skor (Bon skor)<sup>1</sup> Village, in Mang ra (Guínán 贵南) County, Mtsho lho (Hǎinán 海南) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Mtsho sgnon (Qīnghǎi 青海) Province.

oM skor Village is on Mu ge thang Plain, between Mang gzhung and Bya gzhung valleys, adjacent to Mang ra'i bye ma Desert, the largest desert in Mtsho lho Prefecture. Mu ge thang is arid, a problem somewhat alleviated by a water project implemented by a local company<sup>2</sup> in the upper plain area in the early 1980s.

oM skor Village is situated above the Lóngyáng 龙羊 Reservoir (built 1989) on the Rma chu (Yellow River), which is also the nearest drinking water source. During the winter, the water level drops and villagers collect drinking water from several springs. The water level rises, covering the springs in summer and locals then must fetch drinking water directly from the reservoir, which requires an entire day and at least two people to collect enough water for an average household, which consumes two truck tire inner tubes every two days.

Many rural Qīnghǎi residents suffer from problems associated with water supply. If you wish to help alleviate such problems, please see [www.friendshipcharity.org/](http://www.friendshipcharity.org/) and [www.shemgroup.org](http://www.shemgroup.org) for details.

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<sup>1</sup> 'oM skor' was created by a local writer and many disagreements ensued between locals because 'Bon skor' and 'oM skor' suggest different religious backgrounds. Local Tibetans follow both Bon and Buddhism.

<sup>2</sup> Guínán Pasture Industry Development Limited Liability Company (Guínán cǎoyè kāifā yǒuxiàn zérèn gōngsī 贵南草业开发有限责任公司). The company's focus was raising horses for the military at the time it implemented the water project. The company focused on growing oil-bearing plants and fodder in 2009.

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Figure One: Preparing to Depart. Klu mo prepares a donkey and a pair of tire inner tubes. The second-eldest daughter in her family, Klu mo, and her cousin, Bkra shis, need one full day to fetch water.

Figure Two: The Flat Plain. Klu mo leads a donkey along the flat plain where village families graze sheep for about an hour. Klu mo's donkey balks and the sheep must be driven with a slingshot. The sheep are in the distance in the right of this image.

Figure Three: Sheep Moving Down the Mountain. The sheep slowly edge downslope to the Rma chu.

Figure Four: The Rma chu. The Rma chua was dammed in 1989. Its rising waters caused serious desertification on certain riverbanks. Klu mo and Bkra shis go downslope to the river. It takes about an hour to walk from the Mu ge thang Plain to the river. They carry their lunch in a bag.

Figure Five: Donkey Drinking. The donkey drinks from the river's edge.

Figure Six: Sheep Drinking. Sheep cool in the water after reaching the river. Sheep need to drink every second day in summer and every third day in winter.

Figure Seven: Preparing to Collect Water. Bkra shis prepares inner tubes to collect water. Klu mo rests, while the sheep drink for about an hour.

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Figure Eight: Scooping Water. Bkra shis scoops water into the inner tubes for about twenty minutes.

Figure Nine: Securing the load. The two inner tubes are carried by the donkey. Two people are required to lift each tube.

Figure Ten: Setting out for home. Bkra shis and the donkey begin the journey from the riverbank back to Mu ge thang Plain.

Figure Eleven: The road home. The heavy livestock traffic erodes the soil. The donkey knows the way home and does not need to be led.

























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REVIEWS

Hartley, L and P Schiaffini-Vedani (eds). 2008. *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change*. Durham: Duke University Press. xxxviii+382. Photographs, spellings of Tibetan names, Chinese terms, list of Tibetan works in translation, bibliography, index. Soft cover. ISBN-13: 978-0-8223-4277-9.

Reviewed by Timothy Thurston (The Ohio State University)

Fiction, as understood in the West, was not a strong part of the Tibetan literary tradition (Stein 1972, 251-2). Although Newman (1996, 411) has argued that certain literary works existed as early as the eighteenth century, most fictional texts in Tibet belonged to folklore and oral tradition. Beginning in the twentieth century, however, modern fiction and poetry has gradually emerged and even thrives in spite of continuing issues of literacy and education. As relative newcomers to the study of Tibetan writing, western scholars, many of whom approach Tibet from disciplines that emphasize religion or philosophy, tend to overlook modern fiction. This work, edited by Hartley and Schiaffini-Vedani, aims to fill this void and provide scholars with an introduction to the complexities of modern Tibetan literature and how it reflects and impacts the unique transnational and cross-cultural social context it is written in.

The idea for this book was conceived after a 2001 conference panel on the same subject at an annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies. The final product is composed of fourteen essays from thirteen scholars, including a foreword by Mathew Kapstein and an introduction by the editors. Contributors were drawn from several disciplines, and provide a critical and experiential breadth that makes the collection an important resource for

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scholars in, for example, Chinese, Tibetan, and ethnic studies. Included are essays focusing on Tibetophone literature, Sinophone Tibetan literature (literature written in Chinese by Tibetans), English language works published within the Tibetan diaspora community in India, and issues of diglossia in Modern Tibetan literature.

The essays are organized in two larger sections that place the emergence of modern Tibetan literature in a generally chronological order. Part One, 'Engaging Traditions', presents works that examine how modern Tibetan literature deals with and changes traditional forms of literature. Chapters One through Six approach this issue within the realm of modern Tibetan poetry. The focus is on how many of the first Tibetans to compose modern poetry approached meter and the very stylized allusions and metaphors characteristic of traditional Tibetan poetry (*snyan ngag*). Recognizing Tibet's relationship with China, Chapter Two examines the creative ways Sinophone Tibetan poets engage the Tibetan tradition. This poetry does not emulate or draw upon the meter and register of Tibetan poetry as influenced originally by Indic poetic tradition. Instead, these poets often refer to Tibetan folk heroes such as King Ge sar, the protagonist of the world's longest epic poem, to underscore the inherently Tibetan nature of their poetic compositions. In privileging Chinese language Tibetan poetry, beginning with the first works of Yidan Cairang (Yi dam tshe ring) and continuing to recent works of female Tibetan poet Weise and others, this section recognizes the complex issues of identity creation and maintenance the authors negotiate.

Part Two, 'Negotiating Modernities', focuses on how modern Tibetan literature understands and presents itself in the unique social and political context in which Tibetan culture now exists. Chapter Eight is entitled 'One Nation, Two Discourses' and probes the social context in which contemporary Tibetan literature emerged following the

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Cultural Revolution and outlines the debate over whether Sinophone Tibetan literature may be considered Tibetan literature.

Chapters Nine and Ten examine works by two of China's most famous Sinophone Tibetan authors: Zhaxidawa and Alai, respectively. These essays deal with the use of magical realism and issues of identity in these works. Chapter Eleven continues to discuss modernity, examining the fairly small body of literature on the life of Tibetans in urban spaces. This section recognizes the vast changes a modern lifestyle has brought to the fabric of Tibetan culture, and examines how modern authors portray this. The book ends with two examinations of Tibetan literature in the diaspora community in terms of the emergence of a modern Tibetan literature outside the People's Republic of China, away from the homeland.

The book includes many supplementary materials beneficial to those hoping to continue their studies of modern Tibetan literature. With a glossary of Tibetan spellings, an appendix of Chinese Terms, and a list of English and French translations of Tibetan literary works, these materials help make the works studied accessible to a much wider audience.

While a multitude of studies exist contributing to the understanding of Tibetan art, Buddhism, and classical literature, this book is one of the first in-depth critical studies published in English concerned with the growing body of modern Tibetan literature. As the title suggests, the purpose is to situate this literature in a larger social and cultural context. The transition from classical to modern literature has occurred on a continuum mirroring how society as a whole has evolved, impacted by many of the same historical movements shaping Tibetan experience over the last century.

This work emphasizes that modern Tibetan literature is not an abrupt disconnect from Tibet's past and its literary and oral traditions; instead, it has retained its roots and evolved as a consequence of contact with other cultures and

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other forms of literature. It recognizes contributions of such authors as Gendun Chomphel (Dge 'dun chos 'phel) and Dondrup Gyal (Don grub rgyal), two of the foremost innovators of modern Tibetan literature, who attempted to adapt the traditional bound forms and verse of the Indic Ramayana to the dictates of a modern poetry and subject matter. The articles on Sinophone Tibetan literature explore the invocation of Tibetan scenery and popular culture in fiction and poetry while simultaneously experimenting with such new forms of literature as magical realism.

The collection's inclusiveness is significant. Through first explicating the sources and positions of the debate over the appropriateness of including Sinophone Tibetan literature as Tibetan literature, the evolving social context behind the development of a modern Tibetan literature is better understood. This study opts to include all literature written by Tibetan authors under the term 'Tibetan literature', regardless of the language in which it was written, while avoiding treating works written by authors who are not ethnically Tibetan (although their contributions are recognized). It thus privileges literature that may be given the Chinese-language term *Zangzu wenxue* (Tibetan ethnic literature) regardless of the language of its composition, and is less concerned with *Xizang wenxue* (Literature about Tibet) which includes literature written by Han Chinese authors.

This work most directly engages Tibetologists and those engaged in the study of post-colonial literature, other literature written by China's ethnic minorities, and studies of culture in modern-day diaspora communities. It is accessible, remains well-balanced, and combines both larger scale issues with in-depth analysis by providing essential background and context.

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Wu Yazhi 吴雅芝. 2006. *Zui hou de chuanshuo: elunchun zu wenhua yanjiu 最后的传说: 鄂伦春族文化研 (The Final Legend: Research on Oroqen Culture)*. Beijing 北京: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe 中央民族大学出版社 (Central Nationalities University Press). 246 pp.

Reviewed by Anne Henochowicz (The Ohio State University)

Wu Yazhi, Director of Preservation at the Central Nationalities University Museum in Beijing, presents an encyclopedic work on her native ethnic group that fills a wide gap in Sino-Siberian folkloric scholarship. Her book is the fruit of the '211 Project', a 1990s government initiative to consolidate and streamline governance and funding of China's top one hundred universities. Wu weaves history, folklore, and modern social trends into her descriptions of ancient customs, revealing changes to Oroqen life as a consequence of political and environmental change, calling for sustainable land use that will support not only the natural world, but the world of the Oroqen as well.

Numbering 8,196 in the 2000 Chinese census, the Tungusic Oroqen (Orochen, Orochon, Oroqin) people are among the smallest officially recognized ethnic minorities in China. They are the 'Kings of the Hinggan Mountains', traditionally inhabiting both the Greater and Lesser ranges. Wu cites numerous pre-modern sources describing the Oroqen; her book is especially rich in Manchu-era sources, such as the *Heilongjiang waiji 黑龍江外記 (Unofficial Chronicle of Heilongjiang)* and various *difangzhi 地方志* (local almanacs). Qing scholars will be particularly interested in the imposition of the banner system on the Oroqen and the balance of the people's lives between local/personal and state/imperial interests. Many Oroqen migrated southward across the Amur River (Heilong jiang) in the seventeenth century to escape encroaching Russian

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colonialists. Currently, the Russian government does not recognize the Oroqen as an ethnic group; instead, they are considered to be Ewenkis, who live predominantly in the Yakutia Republic. Indeed, despite their different lifestyles, both Oroqen legend and anthropological evidence link the hunting Oroqen, reindeer-herding Ewenki, and fishing Hezhen peoples to a common ancestor. Scholars of ethnic minority policy and Siberian/ northeastern Asian culture will delight at the care and precision of Wu's observations, while the color photographs will hint at connections to circumpolar culture. Do the skis on the feet of the smiling man on page 106 prove a link to the Fennoscandian peoples of ancient Norway, Sweden, and Russia? With its rich illustrations of roe deer leatherwork, canoes, and other artifacts of material culture, *The Final Legend* presents fascinating material for scholars of other northern peoples, be they in Asia, Europe, or North America.

*The Final Legend* works within the discourse of social evolution to chronicle aspects of Oroqen culture pre- and post-settlement. Until the 1950s, the Oroqen were nomadic hunters, raising only horses and dogs. By 1959, the Chinese government had settled the entire people on farming compounds. The Oroqen today live in the Oroqen Autonomous Banner in Inner Mongolia and nine counties in Heilongjiang Province. The book is organized by types of custom and aspects of life: individual chapters cover social organization, foodways, the life cycle, and so on. Wu looks at the Oroqen people from three layers of historical depth, comparing traditional, Manchu-Qing-era, and modern practices surrounding each facet of life. The author brings together folk, poetic, and academic writing. Rather than setting aside a section for 'folklore' or 'folktales', Wu retells stories where they offer a traditional explanation for the topic at hand.

The first portion of the book explains the origins and brief history of the Oroqen people. Wu details the various



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divisions of the Oroqen, both traditional and under the Manchu banner system, as well as their relation to the Ewenki and Hezhen peoples. Wu describes the intricate *mukun* 穆昆 (clan) and *wulilin* 烏力鄰 (units of several families), from the development of exogamous marriage arrangements to the assignment of Chinese surnames to *hala* 哈拉 (clan names). She emphasizes the importance of the 'green cradle' of Oroqen civilization: her people shape their lives around the benefits and restrictions of life in the Hinggan Mountain environment.

Chapter Three explains aspects of hunting—weapons, animals, techniques—as well as "abandoning the hunt and returning to the farm." Chapter Four describes the materials supplied by the forest for building shelters, clothing, and tools. Succeeding chapters focus on the lifecycle, ethics, and religion.

Chapter Eight returns to the discussion of material culture with an emphasis on modern Oroqen arts and the transmission of culture. Chapter Nine concludes with an evaluation of the adaptation of the Oroqen to the demands of nature and 'civilization', alerting the reader to the interdependence of a healthy natural environment and survival of the Oroqen as a people.

The Oroqen became sedentary farmers in the 1950s under government pressure. Wu sees this phase of Oroqen history as an advancement out of a 'late primitive' period. Leaving the hunting ground for the farm may be viewed as a sacrifice made for the good of the Hinggan eco-system. Wu expresses concern at government policies which, in the name of 'progress', ignore the unique structure of the local environment, citing the recent case of penning Ewenki reindeer; unable to graze on lichen in the mountains, herds died within weeks. Wu is optimistic about the strength of her native people, but issues a warning to migrant farmers and policy makers: let us not yet tell the last legend of the Oroqen.

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STORY: A BLEEDING WATERMELON

Norsang

There were three dormitory rooms for me, an Art Department freshman, to choose from on 1 September 2003. I chose the one on the eighth floor. The four-boy room looked new and comfortable. Nobody had moved in yet. I was really pleased with the choice I had made.

I went near the only window of this room, opened it, and looked out. I had a grand view of the university campus—green trees rustled in a gentle breeze, charming flowers beckoned with nodding heads, and students strolled energetically about in colorful clothing. Everything seemed peaceful. I stretched out my head and looked down from the window to concrete pavement. Acrophobia made me nervous and uncomfortable. I drew back, told myself to relax, and then set to work making up my bed, which I finished in a couple of minutes. I lay down, hoping I would have nice roommates.

Somebody knocked on the door, opened it, and in came a tall, thin, long-haired young man wearing a black leather jacket. He put down an enormous backpack and asked, "Is this a dorm room for students in the Art Department?"

"Yes," I replied.

"It's a nice dormitory room, isn't? What's your name?" he asked, offering a cigarette.

"Dorji," I answered, waving my left hand, signaling I did not smoke. "Yours?"

"Norbu," he replied.

The door opened again as Norbu and I were introducing ourselves. Two boys came in and asked the same question that Norbu had asked and, once sure they were in the right room, quickly made up their beds.

Renchin and Gongbo, the second two arrivals were both from Golok. Somehow, Norbu didn't tell us where he was from.

A month later, we had become friends. Except for the time we spent in the classroom, we spent most of our time in the dorm room, doing homework, playing the guitar, reading, and talking about women.

One night when we were chatting as usual, Gongbo said. "I had a strange dream last night."

"Tell us about it," Renchin said curiously.

"Well, it was about a watermelon. It fell from very high up, hit the ground, and then exploded into hundreds of bright red pieces," Gongbo said.

"Is that a strange dream?" I asked.

"You must have been thirsty when you were dreaming—that's why you dreamed about a watermelon," said Renchin, laughing.

"Would you please let me finish?" said Gongbo in irritation. "The watermelon hit the ground and then splattered. But I saw blood. It was bleeding and something white oozed out.

"A bleeding watermelon? What a ridiculous dream," I said, feeling disgusted.

"That was a sick dream," Renchin added.

"I shouldn't have told you guys anything about my dream," said Gongbo unpleasantly, which ended our discussion.



A screaming ambulance siren woke me. I got up, opened the window, and looked down. An ambulance was right by our dormitory building. I was going to return to bed and then I noticed Gongbo's quilt lay limply on the floor. His bed was empty. I woke up my other two roommates and asked them about Gongbo, but they said they did not know.

I went to the classroom, still wondering about Gongbo. Before the teacher began class, Norbu, Renchin, and I were called into the hallway by a policeman. Gongbo was dead. He had fallen out the dorm room window and died when his head struck the concrete pavement.

We spent a day with the police who examined everything in our dorm room. The final conclusion was that Gongbo had committed suicide.

A month later, everything had pretty much returned to normal. We avoided talking about Gongbo, especially in our dorm room.

One night when we were doing homework, Renchin asked. "Do you remember the dream that Gongbo had? I had the same dream last night."

"Please don't talk about him!" I said.

"OK, whatever," said Renchin, and returned to his homework.

Norbu said nothing as he continued to smoke and read.

I was awakened the next morning by a blaring ambulance siren. I blearily looked at Renchin's bed. It was empty.

Renchin was dead. He had died in exactly the same way as Gongbo. I was terrified. I talked to two of my teachers and they both said the same thing: "Don't worry. Don't think too much. It was just coincidence."

I was dreadfully nervous and wondered if I was to be the next victim.

That night I went back to the dorm room around nine o'clock. It was very dark. I turned on the light. Norbu was sitting on his bed.

I felt this was odd and asked, "Why didn't you turn on the light?"

"Don't worry, man! Everything's going to be fine," he said, ignoring my question

"Thanks!" I replied and then lay on my bed and tried

to sleep.

That night I dreamed of a watermelon falling to the ground. It broke when it hit the ground. Blood was everywhere. Something white oozed out from the splattered main part of the watermelon. I woke up and was terrified. "I will die," I said to myself. "That's the dream that they had before they left this world." I rushed out of the room, down the stairs, and ran to the police station near the school gate. "I don't want to die. Help! Help!" I shouted to the policemen.

They ignored me, assuming I was insane. I shouted and cried and finally fainted.

I woke up and found I was lying in my dormitory bed. The room was cloaked in a somber atmosphere. My head ached. I looked at my watch. It was 10:01 a.m. I assumed my classmates had brought me to my room. I looked around. Norbu was sitting on his bed, staring at me with eyes that gleamed and seemed strangely green. I tried to shout but I couldn't make a sound. I felt myself moving from the bed. I couldn't control it. I willed my body to stop as it neared the window. My hands opened the window and I jumped out. I was falling to the ground upside down. I could hear the wind blow past my ears. I could see the concrete pavement ever more vividly. I even saw the blood marks that Renchin and Gongbo's broken heads had left on the pavement. I suddenly realized that that oozy white stuff was human brains.

I woke up and noticed the three beds were still empty. I was panting. Someone knocked on the dormitory door and opened it. A tall, thin, long-haired young man entered. He wore a black jacket and was carrying a huge backpack.

"Is this a dorm room for Art Department freshmen?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, staring at him. I felt I had seen him somewhere before.

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*A Bleeding Water Melon* was written by Norsang (Nor bzang; b. 1988), a native of Dpa ris (Rab rgyas (Huazangsi 华藏寺 Township, Tianzhu 天祝 Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu 甘肃 Province). Norsang writes:

I heard that a university student opened an elevator door in a campus building still under construction. The elevator shaft was empty and he fell to his death. Many people had questions about his death. This inspired me to write this story.





FOLKTALE: THE KING OF SEVEN SEEDS

Sonan Jetsun

Tashi Finds a Rabbit Brother

Many years ago there was a very kind and honest child named Tashi whose parents died when he was ten years old. He was alone with no sisters and brothers and, with both parents dead, had to do everything by himself. His wheat field was on a mountaintop and the wheat was often eaten by a rabbit. He did not know how to solve this problem and then asked an old man to help him. The old man and Tashi went to his wheat field and looked for the place where the rabbit entered his wheat field through a fence of thorny bushes. Finally they found the place and placed a trap there.

Three days later Tashi returned to his field to check and found a plump rabbit in the trap. He thought, "Today I will have the best meal of my life," and got ready to kill the rabbit.

Rabbit said, "Please don't kill me, I will do anything for you."

"You eat my wheat when I don't have enough food to eat. How can you help me? You have to remember you are a rabbit, not a god, OK?" Tashi replied.

"I'm very sorry that I ate your wheat, but do not kill me, please. I promise I will repay you. Please give me a chance to change—just once chance. Please!" Rabbit pleaded.

Tashi thought, "This rabbit is very pitiful so maybe I should give him a chance to change. Also I feel very lonely when I go to work and stay at home, so why don't I try to make him my friend?"

Tashi said to Rabbit, "OK! I will spare you, but I have a demand—you must promise to be my friend. We can work together and live together. Is that OK?"

Rabbit nodded happily.

Tashi and Rabbit then lived together. Everyday they went together to work. Later, no animals came to eat his wheat but, because the weather was bad, they lacked food. Even so they had a very happy time together. They were like blood brothers in helping each other.

### Tashi Finds a Bride

Time passed quickly and Tashi was eighteen years old. One day when they went to their field to work, Rabbit discovered a cave of rich ghosts on the mountaintop. At night these ghosts killed people and brought their bodies to caves where they ate them. The ghosts also took things from those they killed and brought these things back to their cave. For this reason the ghosts were very rich.

That evening as they returned home from working in the field, Rabbit asked Tashi, "Do you want to marry?"

Tashi was very surprised and did not know how to answer for a moment. Then he nodded bashfully, and said, "You know how poor we are, right? Nobody wants to marry me."

Rabbit laughed and said, "Don't worry! I have an idea. You go borrow five horses, two bags of wheat flour, two bags of wheat, two bags of *khadak* and silk, two very good shirts, and two very good pairs of trousers and boots from the villagers. Then I'm sure we can find someone to marry you. Right now you need a new, better name."

Rabbit then opened their lunchbox and noticed seven wheat seeds. He and Tashi then decided that a good new name was King of Seven Seeds.

The following day, Tashi went to village homes and borrowed the things that Rabbit had named. Some villagers lent horses, others lent wheat and wheat flour, others lent *khadak* and silk, and one villager lent two good shirts, two

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pairs of trousers, and boots. He was able to borrow everything he asked for.

The next morning Tashi and Rabbit put on the clothes. Rabbit put *khadak* in Tashi's boots instead of insoles. They put the other items Tashi had borrowed on a horse, traveled for about a half-day, and then reached a village. Rabbit asked passersby which village family was the richest.

"That family is the richest," one man replied, pointing to a large decorated house.

"How many daughters do they have?" Rabbit asked.

"They have three daughters," he said.

Rabbit and Tashi went to the rich family's courtyard where there was a large container of water. Rabbit said, "Hey! Brother, shall we stay here tonight?"

Tashi nodded.

Rabbit unloaded the horses, made a seat of silk, and said, "Master, please sit here."

Tashi sat on the seat of silk.

The oldest daughter looked out the window and saw a rabbit taking *khadak* out of Tashi's shoes and adding new *khadak*. Rabbit said, "Master, your feet are sweating."

Oldest Daughter could not believe what she had just seen and heard and said to her parents, "Others say that we are the richest family in this village, but I just saw a truly rich man in front of our courtyard gate. He uses *khadak* for his insoles and is seated on silk."

Her parents did not believe her and told their middle daughter to look out the window. She did so and watched as the rabbit poured two bags of wheat flour into the big container of water, which their horses began drinking. The middle daughter thought, "We are rich, but we never pour flour into the pool and let our horses drink it. Unimaginable! They must be very rich." She told her parents, but they didn't believe her and told their youngest daughter to look out the window.

When she looked out the window, she saw Rabbit pour two bags of wheat on the ground, which the horses began to eat. "Oh! My Buddha!" she yelled. Tashi turned when he heard this and saw a very beautiful girl looking out the window. They looked at each other for a moment and then each smiled.

Rabbit noticed and knew what to do next.

Youngest Daughter told her parents what she had seen and her parents believed her.

Tashi said to Rabbit, "This girl is very beautiful, right?"

"Yes. She is beautiful. Master, if you want her for your wife, I will help you," Rabbit replied.

Rabbit called to the family's father, "May we stay at your home tonight, please?"

"Of course you can," the father answered kindly.

Tashi and Rabbit then entered the home. The family offered butter tea and much delicious food for Tashi and Rabbit, which Youngest Daughter served.

Rabbit said, "He is our master and his name is Tashi. His family is called 'King of Seven Seeds' and his parents died when he was ten years old. We are searching for a lady to marry our master. Are your daughters married?"

"Yes. They are married, except for the youngest," the mother answered.

"May your youngest daughter marry our master?" Rabbit asked.

"We want our daughter to marry a rich man, but we must ask her. If she agrees, her mother and I also agree," the father said. Then the mother and girl went to another room.

After a bit they returned and the mother said, "My daughter wants to marry you."

"Thanks! Which day is the best to marry? I think tomorrow is the best. Do you agree?" Rabbit asked.

"Yes, I agree. She is my youngest daughter. I want to make this wedding grand," the father said.

Rabbit said, "OK! No problem! We also want to make the wedding grand. I want your family to send one hundred men to my home with me today and send 200 men with guns with our master and his bride to our village tomorrow. Also send some people with drums."

"OK! We can do that. But can you explain why we should send men with guns?" the father asked.

"I just want to make this wedding grand. Tomorrow when you see smoke on the mountaintop then shoot the guns into the sky and beat the drums loudly, OK?" Rabbit said.

"OK! Good luck," the father replied. Then Rabbit left with one hundred men.

### Killing the Ghosts

The next day Rabbit told the one hundred men, "When you see smoke on the mountaintop, set fire to the grass near the ghosts' cave and come to the mountaintop quickly."

Rabbit went to the ghosts' cave and said to the ghost leader, "I'm your neighbor. Leader, this morning I went to the village and I heard the villagers say they will come here and kill every ghost. You must run away if you don't want to die."

"Do you think we will believe your lie? No, we are not children! We are ghosts and they are human. They cannot kill us," said the ghost leader.

"Really, my honorable neighbor? They invited a lama from another village who kills using his beads and drums. Two hundred men with guns will come here soon. If you don't want to die, you must accept my help. I have a good plan to save you," Rabbit said.

Finally the ghost's leader believed Rabbit and said, "Tell us your plan?"

"You're very smart my neighbor. OK! You must go out and hide in the grass near your caves. I will make smoke

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on the mountaintop when I see the villagers and the lama coming. You must then move down the mountain in the grass slowly. I'm sure they will kill you if they discover you," Rabbit said.

The ghosts then hid in the grass and Rabbit waited for his master and bride. He soon saw them coming, and made smoke on the mountaintop. The one hundred men saw the smoke and set the grass afire. The bride's father ordered his men to shoot and drum when he saw the smoke from the grass.

Meanwhile, the ghosts saw the smoke and heard the shooting and drumming. They were terrified, stayed in the grass, and didn't move. After half an hour the ghosts were all burned to death. Rabbit told the one hundred men to clean the ghost cave when they reached it.

Tashi and his bride soon arrived and they were amazed to find a cave full of gold, silver, and jewelry. That evening they all drank, danced, sang, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

The next day the bride's father said, "Tashi, be kind to my daughter. Daughter, your mother and I will visit you when we can. When you and Tashi have time you must visit your mother and me."

"Father, don't worry about your daughter. I will be kind to her and we will visit you and Mother," Tashi said.

Tashi's father-in-law nodded and left with his men.

### Rabbit Tests Tashi

Two years passed and Rabbit enjoyed his life with Tashi, Tashi's wife, and a three month old son; but he thought that now that they did not need him, they might kill him. One day he lay in bed and said, "Tashi, I think I'm sick. Would you and your wife visit a fortuneteller rabbit who wears a black hat and lives in a cave? Please ask him how I can get well."

"Of course we will. How do we reach this cave?" Tashi asked.

"When you go, you must climb up a rocky mountain. When you return, climb through a rocky valley," Rabbit said.

"OK!" Tashi replied and left with his wife.

Rabbit got up a short time later and hopped along a shortcut to the cave. He put on a black hat, sat, and waited for some time for Tashi and his wife to come slowly climbing along a rocky mountain. When they arrived they saw a rabbit wearing a black hat that hid most of his face.

There is a sick rabbit in my home. Please tell me how he can get well," Tashi said politely.

"OK!" the rabbit said and began chanting and divining. A short time later he said, "You have a son. If that sick rabbit eats your son's heart, he will recover. There is no other way for him to recover."

Tashi thanked the rabbit and left.

A very short time later, Rabbit hopped back to his home as Tashi and his wife climbed through a rocky valley.

Tashi's wife said, "Will you kill our son for Rabbit?"

"I don't know. I must save Rabbit. Without his help, we would not have all that we have today," Tashi said.

Tashi's wife said, "No, I don't want to lose my son."

"Wife, we are young and we can have another son but if Rabbit dies, I will regret it all my life," Rabbit said. Finally his wife agreed.

When they got home, Rabbit was lying on his bed.

"What did that fortuneteller say?" Rabbit asked.

Tashi didn't answer. He wife was crying. Tashi washed his son and then got ready to kill him.

"Stop!" Rabbit said and got up. "I'm sorry. I pretended to be sick. That rabbit wearing a black hat was me. I just wanted to know if you really cared about me! I've very sorry! Please forgive me!"

Tashi angrily demanded, "Why did you do that? Am I not good enough to you?"

"No! No! You two are very kind to me, but I thought that we are different. You are human and I'm an animal. I thought that you might kill me one day because you no longer need me. I was wrong. I'm very sorry! Please forgive me! Please!" Rabbit said sadly.

"My brother, I understand you and I forgive you. But you must promise never to do something like this again," Tashi said.

### Rabbit Leaves

"Thanks! Brother, before I promised that I would repay you and I have done that. Now I must leave and find a life that is mine. I also want to find a wife and have a family," Rabbit said.

"OK! I understand and I respect your choice, Brother. You are welcome to return at anytime. If you need help just return and tell me. The door of this home is always open to you," Tashi said tearfully.

Rabbit then left in search for a life of his own.

Sonan Jetsun (Bsod nams rgyal mtshan; b. 1988) is from Lan yid (Lianyi 联谊) Village, Gom mo (Gongbo 贡波) Township, Sde rong (Derong 得荣) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi 甘孜) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan (四川) Province. He writes:

When I was a child, there was no electricity, no TV, and no videos in my village. Every night Grandmother (Tshe ring sgrol ma; b. 1926) told me stories. *King of Seven Seeds* was my favorite because it described friendship between people and a rabbit.