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RGYAL RONG TIBETAN LIFE, LANGUAGE, AND FOLKLORE
IN RGYAS BZANG VILLAGE



G.yu 'brug and CK Stuart

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Front Cover: Rgyas bzang (Jizong) Village, Kha mdo (Shuizi) Township, Rong brag (Danba) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, PR China (photo by G.yu 'brug, 2010).

Back Cover: Bon practitioners chant for a family in Rgyas bzang Village (photo by G.yu 'brug, 2012).

Abstract: This study of Rgyas bzang (Jizong) Village includes a brief summary of G.yu 'brug's life, local languages and location, agriculture, sleeping, eating, childbirth and child raising, stone houses, stone towers, taboos and customs, and folktales, a short story, annual religious rituals, death rituals, pilgrimage to Mount Dmu rdo, marriage, education, a glossary of non-English terms, a Rgyas bzang Tibetan Dialect-English word list, and an English-Rgyas bzang Tibetan Dialect word list.

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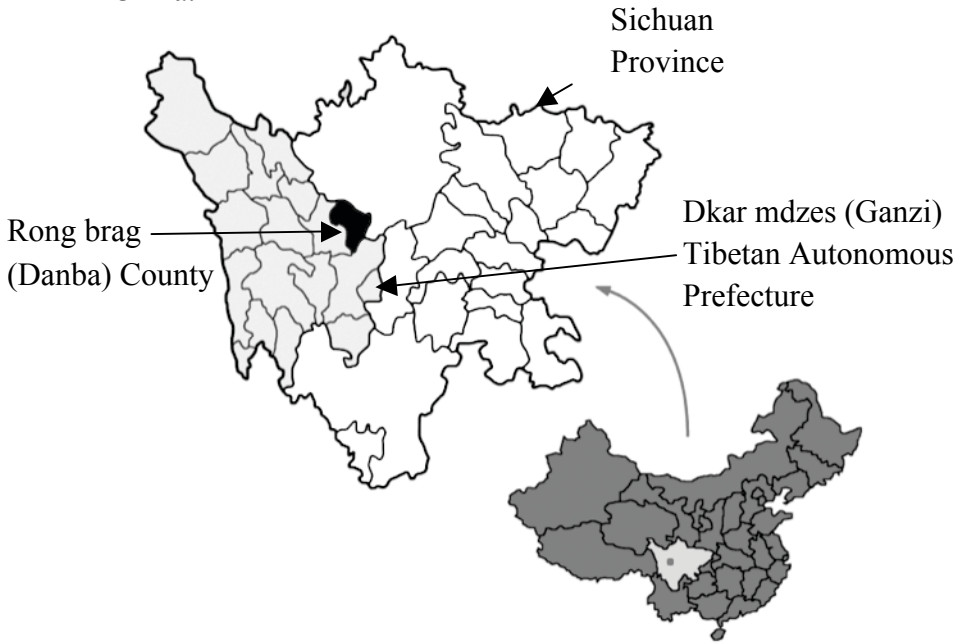
Skal bzang dbang 'dul སྐལ་བཟང་དབང་འདུལ། (Gerongwendeng 格
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泽翁拥忠)

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

Map One. Rong brag (Danba) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, PR China.¹



¹ This is a modified version of the map by Croquant (2007) at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Location_of_Danba_within_Sichuan_\(China\).png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Location_of_Danba_within_Sichuan_(China).png), accessed 2 July 2011.

PART ONE: THE LOCAL CONTEXT

CONSULTANTS

Skal bzang dbang 'dul (b. ~1955), G.yu 'brug's father, was born in a *sgom pa*² lineage family in Khriims ra (Changna) Village, Kha mdo (Shuizi) Township, Rong brag (Danba) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, PR China. Skal bzang dbang 'dul's father never returned home after being arrested and taken away when Skal bzang dbang 'dul was three months old. Though he attended school for only a year, Skal bzang dbang 'dul learned Chinese well enough by himself to have acquired excellent oral and written Chinese skills. He married 'Bum mtsho and moved to her home in Rgyas bzang (Jizong) Village. He understands about forty percent of what he hears from Tibetan television announcers. He clarified the meaning of rituals and explained how the village is rapidly changing.

'Bum mtsho (b. ~1965), G.yu 'brug's mother, was born and lives in Rgyas bzang Village. She never attended school. She is illiterate, speaks very little Chinese, and prefers her family members to speak Tibetan at home. She sometimes attends religious teachings in the village. She explained traditional childbirth and child raising practices, and described her religious fasting experiences.

Ngag dbang phun tshogs (b. ~1967) was born in a *sgom pa* lineage family in Khriims ra Village. He is currently a lecturer at the Academy of Culture, Yunnan Nationalities University, and an officer of the Tibetan Research Institute at the same university. He checked Tibetan place names and certain other Tibetan entries.

²This term refers locally to yogins, meditators, ascetics, and practitioners of Tibetan religion who may marry and who chant for local villagers. These were historically often lineage positions. There were six *sgom pa* in Rgyas bzang Village in 2010. Three were Bon and three were Rnying ma practitioners. By 'lineage family', we refer to the hereditary transmission of this position (*sgom pa*).

G.YU 'BRUG

I was born in my mother's natal home in 1985 at about eleven a.m. on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, according to the Chinese lunar calendar. A *sgom pa* gave me the name ShAkya tshe ring and told my family members not to let me kill sentient beings. After *sgom pa* finish certain rituals, they may ask attendants to prostrate to them, however, Mother told me that *sgom pa* never asked me to prostrate when I was small. Furthermore, I was not ordered to prostrate to *bla ma* when they visited my home. This is because of what happened one day when I was sitting on a wool carpet on the third floor of my home.

My paternal grandmother stopped chanting as she held a prayer wheel and a string of prayer beads, gazed at the village gate, and saw a *bla ma* and a monk entering the village. Grandmother embraced me and went down to the courtyard. After a while, the *bla ma* and monk arrived at my family's courtyard gate and were welcomed by my maternal grandfather. The *bla ma* held a string of prayer beads in his right hand and touched each of our heads as we bowed, blessing us. When it was my turn, he slowly bent his noble body, held my cheeks in his hands, and touched his forehead to my forehead, murmuring all the while.

The *bla ma* was from Nyag rong County. Grandfather, who can communicate in a variety of Tibetan dialects, learned from this *bla ma* that I was the reincarnation of a *bla ma* belonging to a Bon monastery in the Rong brag area. The *bla ma* did not mention the precise monastery nor the *bla ma* whose reincarnation I was.

My family members were shocked, for we are Rnying ma followers, not Bon. However, they were pleased because having a reincarnation lama in the family is an honor, and considered to be the result of accumulation of merit from previous generations. He then gave me the name that I use today - G.yu 'brug. He told my family to send me to a local Bon practitioner to study Tibetan and added that he would

return to see me soon. I kept the *kha btags*³ that the *bla ma* gave me, but I never saw him again.

Grandfather sent me to a local *sgom pa* to study in Sgang bzang (Gezong) Village when I was six. I stayed there two days and then returned home because I was homesick. My parents then enrolled me in the village school.

Because I was often ill, a *sgom pa* suggested that I adopt surrogate parents as a cure. They gave me the name Tshe ring rdo rje.

I did not formally study written Tibetan until 2007 when I enrolled in the English Training Program (ETP) at Qinghai Normal University. While in ETP, I gained an appreciation for the value of recording folk songs, folktales, religious activities, dances, and wedding speeches. I have put such materials on these websites:

- <http://www.oralliterature.org/collections/map.html>
- <http://www.youtube.com/user/Danbaculture>
- <http://www.archive.org/details/DanbaTibetanCulture>
- [http://tibetanplateau.wikischolars.columbia.edu/Rong+brug+\(Danba\)+Tibetan+Culture](http://tibetanplateau.wikischolars.columbia.edu/Rong+brug+(Danba)+Tibetan+Culture)
- <http://tibetanplateau.wikischolars.columbia.edu/Photographs+in+Winter+2010>
- <http://tibetanplateau.wikischolars.columbia.edu/A+Mushroom-Gathering+Song>
- <http://www.flickr.com/photos/koknor/sets/72157623544109725/>

³ Ceremonial scarf offered to show respect.

PHOTOGRAPHS⁴

Photograph Three. *Bya khyung khyung*.⁵

Photograph Four. Tsa ri spun gsum⁶ Mountain Deities.

Photograph Nine. The wall of the *ma Ni* pile and a prayer wheel at the gate of Rgyas bzang Village.

Photograph Twelve. A conch and a container of wheat flour in the wall under the *bsang khang*. Every morning a stick is used to place a little wheat flour in the *bsang khang* three times while offering *bsang*.⁷ A conch is blown on special occasions.

Photograph Fourteen. Bon *sgom pa* chant during a wedding.

Photograph Fifteen. Bon *sgom pa* light butter lamps in front of images made by *bla ma* and *sgom pa*.

Photograph Sixteen. G.yu 'brug's family members observe G.yang skor.⁸ Bon *sgom pa* chant at this time to bring wealth to the family.

Photograph Seventeen. A stone tower in Rgyas bzang Village.

Photograph Eighteen. G.yu 'brug's family members observe G.yang 'bod, a ritual in which both *sgom pa* and a *bla ma* chant to bring wealth to a family.

⁴ All photos by G.yu 'brug unless otherwise noted. Photograph captions not listed here appear on the same page as the photograph.

⁵ Locally understood to mean a deity bird, it is believed to eat snakes. An image of *bya khyung khyung* may be placed above the courtyard gate to repel evil. *Bya rgyal khyung* (*khyung*, the king of all birds), *khyung chen* (great *khyung*), and *khyung* are written forms of the local term.

⁶ Tsa ri spun gsum = Three Brother Mountain Deities.

⁷ Incense with juniper and wheat flour are the main ingredients in *bsang*, which is burned every morning and also at other times, e.g., when *sgom pa* are invited to a home to chant. *Bsang* also suggests a fumigation/ purification ritual.

⁸ A ritual during which Bon *sgom pa* chant to bring wealth to a family, whose members circle smoldering *bsang* and call "O *g.yang shog!*" to bring wealth.

Photograph Nineteen. Mgo gsum has the heads of an ox, pig, and dog, hence the name, which means 'Three Heads'. Locals believe it to be the most powerful evil deity. Its image is made by *sgom pa* when families have unexpected troubles, such as sudden human and livestock death and illness.

Photograph Twenty. A *bla ma* gives auspicious wishes to a new couple during their wedding.

Photograph Twenty-one. A new couple receives auspicious wishes from *sgom pa* and aged village men.

Photograph Twenty-two. Village women perform a song at a wedding.

Photograph Twenty-three. Aged village women chant in front of the village prayer wheel in the center of Rgyas bzang Village.

Photograph Twenty-four. A couple in wedding dress.

Photograph Twenty-five. Village girls in clothing worn during New Year.

Photograph Twenty-six. A Rgyas bzang Primary School classroom in 2010.

Photograph Twenty-seven. Horses and mules are important beasts of burden in Rgyas bzang Village.

Photograph Twenty-eight. A black-haired sheep gave birth to two lambs, suggesting future prosperity for the sheep's owner.

Photograph Twenty-nine. Turnips are cooked and fed to pigs.

Photograph Thirty. The *bang ma* is a room where such items as meat, butter, and lard are stored.

Photograph Thirty-one. An '*o zom* 'milk bucket'.

Photograph Thirty-Two. Village women carry firewood home.

Photograph Thirty-three. A *spal par* 'pottery vessel' that is old enough that no one knows when the family acquired it. It holds about 0.75 kilograms of liquor. The *spal par* is used to offer liquor to guests, especially during the New Year period, marriage rituals, and dancing parties.

Photograph Thirty-four. Tibetans purchase televisions in Brag mgo⁹ in 2010.

⁹ Brag mgo (Zhanggu) Town (*zhen*), the county seat.

Photograph Thirty-five. A crowd during the pre-New Year period in Brag mgo in 2009.

Photograph Thirty-six. Tibetan shop in Brag mgo.

Photograph Thirty-seven. Tibetan traditional clothing shop in Brag mgo.

Photograph Thirty-nine. Dmu rdo Mountain Deity.

Photograph One. Sacrifices are regularly made in the home's shrine room to such deities as ShAkya thub pa and Pad+ma 'byung gnas.





Photographs Two (a) and Two (b). Dmu rdo image.







Photograph Five. Mchod rten rang byon, a self-arisen stupa in Dpa' bo Township, Rong brag County.



Photograph Six. Rgyas bzang mchod rten, a stupa that was built in 2006 in the center of Rgyas bzang Village.



Photograph Seven. Village women light butter lamps and chant *oM ma Ni pad+me hU~M* in the Rgyas bzang Village prayer wheel room in the village center.



Photograph Eight. A stone tower in Po rtsa Hamlet, Rgyas bzang Village, known as *lha khang* - a Bon practitioner's shrine room.





Photograph Ten. Bon prayer wheel in Po rtsa Hamlet.





Photograph Eleven. A family *bsang khang* 'incense burner' on the roof of a home.



Photograph Thirteen. Family *la btsas* with prayer flags on the roof of G.yu 'brug's home.





























15-9 = 12-4 = 13-5 = 5+9 =
14-7 = 13-7 = 14-5 = 7+4 =
19-7 = 12-6 = 17-8 = 3+12 =
18-9 = 15-4 = 11-9 = 2+17 =
12-6 = 16-3 = 10-7 = 18+2 =
17-9 = 17-8 = 14-6 =
18-7 = 12-4 = 6+3 = 12-8 =





























VILLAGE INTRODUCTION

Rgyas bzang Village is a Tibetan farming community and home to fifty-five households (280 residents). It is located in Kha mdo Township, which is composed of Brag tse (Shuizi yi cun), Kha mdo (Shuizi er cun), Rtswa Khang (Shuizi san cun),¹⁰ Khrims ra (Changna), La rgyab (Najiao), Sgang bzang (Gezong), Rgyas bzang, Kho lo (Keli), and Stag mo (Dama) villages. The population of these villages is given below:

Table One. Village population and names in Kha mdo Township.

Village Names			Population 2010
Rgyas bzang Tibetan Dialect	Tibetan	<i>pinyin</i>	
goŋ zoŋ	Sgang bzang	Gezong	300
ʃe zoŋ	Rgyas bzang	Jizong	260
k ^h a ntɔ	Kha mdo	Shuizi er cun	420
k ^h ə ləŋɪ	Kho lo	Keli	200
la ndzy	La rgyab	Najiao	700
tɛ ma/ maŋ	Stag mo	Dama	700
tsa k ^h aŋ	Rtswa khang	Shuizi san cun	300
tʃɛ tsi	Brag tse	Shuizi yi cun	270
tʃ ^h ɔ ræ	Khrims ra	Changna	300

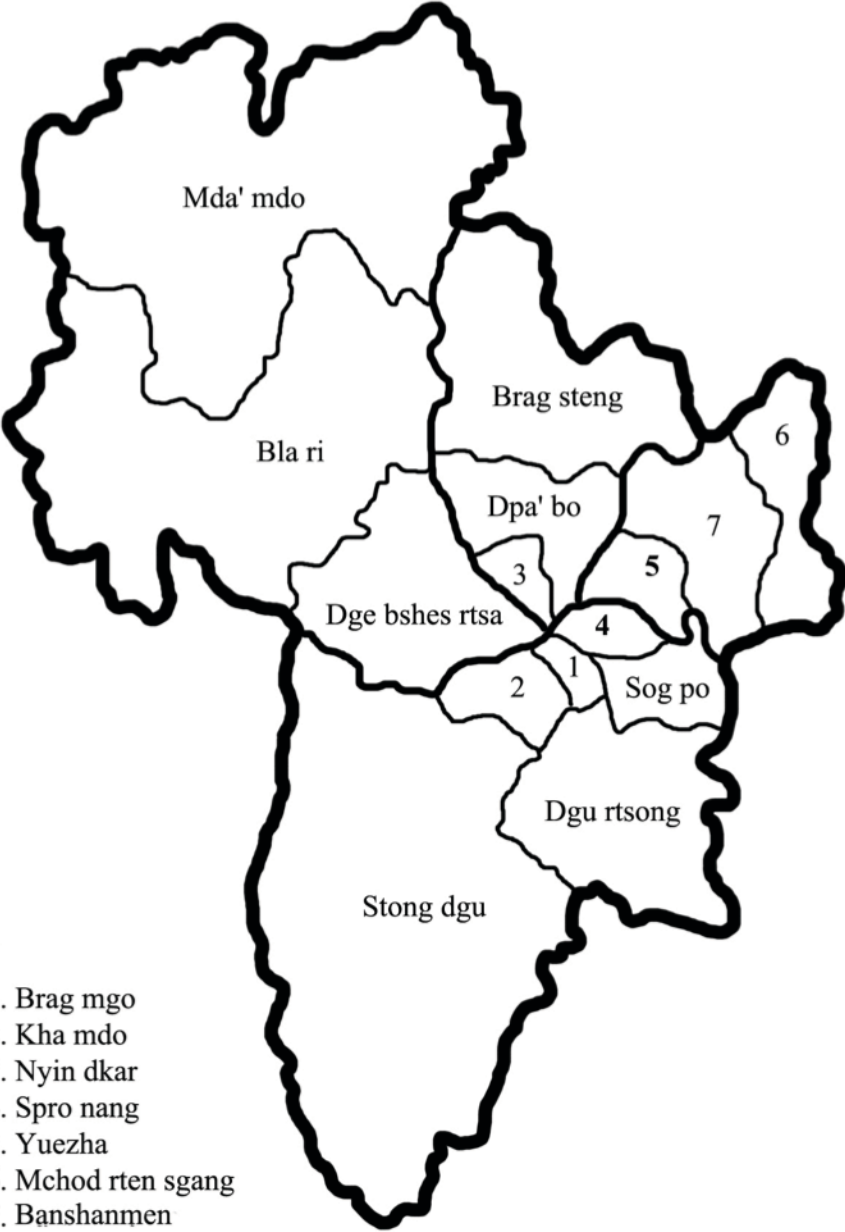
Rong brag County consists of Dgu rtsong (Gezong), Kha mdo (Shuizi), Spro snang (Zhonglu), Stong dgu (Donggu), Sog po (Suopo), Dge bshes rtsa (Geshizha), Bla ri (Bian'er), Mda' mdo (Dandong), Dpa' bo (Bawang), Nyin dkar (Niega), Brag steng (Badi), Mchod rten sgang (Taipingqiao), Banshanmen, and Yuezha townships, and the county seat, Brag mgo Town (Zhanggu zhen).

¹⁰ Yi = one, er = two, san = three, and cun = village.

Map Two. Townships and Brag mgo Town in Rong brag County (Chinese names).



Map Three. Townships and Brag mgo Town in Rong brag County (Tibetan and Chinese names).



- 1. Brag mgo
- 2. Kha mdo
- 3. Nyin dkar
- 4. Spro nang
- 5. Yuezha
- 6. Mchod rten sgang
- 7. Banshanmen

Rong brag County is located in Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, which has seventeen other counties - Sde dge (Dege), Nyag rong (Xinlong), Dar rtse mdo (Kangding), Gser shul (Shiqu), Dpal yul (Baiyu), Dkar mdzes (Ganzi), Brag 'go (Luhuo), Gser thar (Seda), Rta'u (Daofu), Rong brag (Danba), Nyag chu kha (Yajiang), Li thang (Litang), 'Ba' thang (Batang), 'Dab pa (Daocheng), Phyang phreng (Xiangcheng), Sde rong (Derong), Brgyad zur (Jiulong), and Lcags zam kha (Luding) in Sichuan Province.

The total population of Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in 2006 was 930,500 of which Tibetans accounted for about seventy-nine percent and Han Chinese eighteen percent.¹¹

Villagers cultivate barley, potatoes, wheat, peas, prickly ash (Sichuan pepper, numbing spice), apples, walnuts, pears, turnips, and corn. They also own cows, sheep, goats, swine, and horses. Prickly ash is an important source of income, with village households earning on average 600 RMB annually from its sale to Han and Tibetan buyers who come to the village, the township town, and Brag mgo. Village men doing road and construction work outside the village earn twenty-five to thirty RMB per day. Annual cash income is about 3,000 RMB per household. Villagers sell pigs when they need money quickly to pay for medical and educational expenses.

Villagers trek six kilometers (roundtrip) along a steep, winding path to a forest to gather firewood. The path is slippery when wet. Women and girls, whose cultural duty it is to collect fuel, risk their lives navigating this narrow, steep track. No families haul wood with livestock. Local government policy designates only one month a year in winter to cut firewood. Women and girls carry fifty to sixty kilograms of firewood per load on their backs, which become swollen and blistered. Painful feet cause some women to require a walking stick while hauling wood. Children frequently stop attending class to help cut wood.

¹¹ <http://www.gzz.gov.cn>, accessed 13 September 2010.

The local government implemented a policy of converting arable land to forest in 1999. Villagers were given about 125 kilograms of rice per *mu*¹² per year as compensation. If villagers tell government workers they have plenty of rice, they receive about 1,500 RMB a year in lieu of the rice. Villagers are very pleased with this policy. Even old people who do not know the Chinese language recall Zhu Rongji¹³ and say that he implemented this policy. After the policy was implemented, villagers focused on planting wheat in *chu zhing* 'irrigated fields'. Fields were irrigated from two springs. One spring is now completely dry, which villagers attribute to deforestation in the village vicinity and the Wenchuan earthquake of 2008. The surviving spring no longer adequately meets village irrigation needs, resulting in village quarrels when fields are irrigated.

LANGUAGE AND LOCATION

According to the Rong brag County Annals (1996; hereafter, RCA),¹⁴ Tibetan spoken in the county includes Khams, A mdo, Rgyal rong, and Ergong¹⁵ dialects and also reports that these dialects are spoken in Btsan lha (Xiaojin), 'Bar khams

¹² One *mu* = 0.0667 hectares.

¹³ Zhu Rongji (b. 1928) was the mayor and Communist Party chief of Shanghai from 1987-1991, and Vice-Premier and Premier of the People's Republic of China from 1998-2003.

¹⁴ RCA, published in 1996, includes sections on geography, ethnicities, economy, political and military affairs, culture, and historic characters.

¹⁵ Lewis (2009) gives Bawang, Bopa, Danba, Daofu, Daofuhua, Dawu, Ergong, Gangli, Hor, Hórsók, Huo'er, Pawang, Rgu, Stau, Western Gyarong, and Western Jiarong as alternative names for Ergong, and also mentions such mutually unintelligible dialects as Western (Daofu, Taofu, Western Horpa, Western Ergong, Dawu), Eastern (Zhongzhai, Gangli, Jinchuan, Lawurong), Northern (Shangzhai, Rangtang), and Central (Danba, Geshiza, Geshitsa).

(Ma'erkang), Li rdzong (Lixian), and Khro chu (Heishui) counties in Rnga ba Tibetan and Qiang¹⁶ Autonomous Prefecture. Other languages, according to the same source, include Chinese and Qiang.

Map Four. Languages spoken in Rong brag County (according to RCA, which does not specify languages spoken in Brag mgo Town and Niega Township).



¹⁶ One of China's officially recognized fifty-six ethnic groups. Certain locals consider Qiang to be Tibetan.

Skad cha signifies 'language' in the Rgyas bzang dialect. People are referred to by adding *ba*, *red*, and *vənə*¹⁷ after the location of the Tibetan area, e.g., A mdo *ba*, A mdo *vənə*, and so on.

G.yu 'brug had a short conversation, summarized below, in Chinese with a retiree from the Rong brag County Religious Bureau at the Rong brag County Town bus station in 2009:

G.yu 'brug: Uncle,¹⁸ which township are you from?

Rdo rje: I'm from Brag steng.

G.yu 'brug: Are you Tibetan?

Rdo rje: Of course. Ninety percent of the Brag steng population is Tibetan.

G.yu 'brug: What do you call your language?

Rdo rje: Bod skad. Why are you asking such questions?

G.yu 'brug: Bod skad? What does that mean?

Rdo rje: Of course it means 'Tibetan language'. You didn't answer my question.

G.yu 'brug: Sorry. Some people say people from your place speak Rgyal rong language. What do you think about that?

Rdo rje: Come on! Even we don't know what Rgyal rong language is! That is what some people say - don't take it seriously. Just ignore it.

According to the RCA, Tibetans in Stong dgu, Dge bshes rtsa, Bla ri, and Mda' mdo townships speak Ergong, except for herdsman, who speak A mdo. However, local county farmers say they speak Bod skad 'Tibetan language', while certain people from other townships say that people in Stong dgu, Dge bshes rtsa, Bla ri, and Mda' mdo townships speak Mi nyag.¹⁹

¹⁷ '*vənə*' and '*ba*' are nominalizers used after a location to signify a person from that place.

¹⁸ A polite term of address.

¹⁹ Lewis (2009) gives Boba, Manyak, Menya, Minyag, Minyak, Miyao, and Munya as alternative names for Mi nyag

RCA reports that pastoralists speak the A mdo dialect of Tibetan. However, when G.yu 'brug spoke in Tibetan to a painter from a pastoral area of Mda' mdo Township about his dialect when he was painting furniture in Rgyas bzang Village in 2010, he said:

We speak Bod skad. We pastoralists have herded on the grasslands in many places since time immemorial. We never had problems communicating with other herders in Tibetan areas; we only have problems communicating with Tibetan farmers.

Local Tibetan farmers say herders speak 'Brog skad 'nomad language' and do not claim that they speak A mdo. People from Stong dgu and Dge bshes rtsa townships sing the same songs and dance the same dances as do Rgyas bzang villagers, even though oral communication in Tibetan is often challenging between different communities. Communication within each of these community clusters (Stong dgu, Dge bshes rtsa, Bla ri, and Mda' mdo townships) is easy to moderately challenging; communication between clusters is challenging.

RCA reports that in Dgu rtsong, Kha mdo, Spro snang, Sog po, and Yuezha townships, and Brag mgo Town, Twenty-four Villages (RCA did not give these villages' names) Khams Dialect²⁰ is spoken. Local Tibetans cannot completely understand each other in these townships. Those who know written Tibetan and those who have had experiences with Tibetans outside Rong brag County find it easier to communicate. A Dgu rtsong Township resident said:

and writes that the Eastern Muya and Western Muya dialects are mutually unintelligible.

²⁰ In this context, it refers to a Tibetan dialect spoken in Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture with smaller groups of speakers within Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces, and Tibet in China. For more on the 'Twenty-Four Villages' Dialect, see Suzuki (2011).

I once went to Sde dge with some relatives from my village to do construction work. We thought they could not understand our dialect so we spoke Sichuan Chinese to them. They understood Chinese, though not as well as I had expected. They called us Rgya ngan 'Bad Han Chinese'. I was very depressed when I heard them say I was Chinese and wanted to fight them if it would stop them calling me that; but how could I win by fighting local residents? I said in my dialect, "You are a dead person!" to a man wearing a big sheepskin robe and who was holding a string of prayer beads when he called me Rgya ngan.

To my surprise, he laughed, stared at me, and said, "Hey, friend, you are originally Tibetan. Come to my home tonight and I'll offer you butter tea and beef. You are far from your home and lack good food after working hard!" and pointed to a house nearby.

Gradually, local Tibetans there realized I was speaking a Tibetan dialect that was different from theirs. If we spoke slowly, we could understand about forty percent of each other's speech.

RCA reports that Tibetans in Brag steng, Mchod rten sgang, and Banshanmen townships speak Rgyal rong Tibetan and that some Tibetans in Btsan lha, 'Bar khams (Ma'erkang), Li rdzong (Lixian), and Khro chu (Heishui) counties also speak Rgyal rong Tibetan.

G.yu 'brug talked to some local Tibetans from Brag steng Township who said, "We speak Bod skad." G.yu 'brug asked, "What do you think when people say you speak Rgyal rong?" Their answer was always the same:

We live in the Rgyal mo tsha ba rong²¹ Region, so outsiders say we speak Rgyal rong Language, which is not considered

²¹ 'Rgyal rong' is a contraction of 'Rgyal mo tsha ba rong'. For an overview of related historical, linguistic, and geographical features see <http://places.thlib.org/features/23680/descriptions/1288> and <http://places.thlib.org/features/15376/descriptions/1220>, accessed 12 October 2011.

a Tibetan dialect. We are sure we speak Bod skad, but it is a Tibetan dialect that is different from yours.

Some Brag steng Township Tibetans once asked G.yu 'brug, "What do people in your village think about our language?"

G.yu 'brug replied, "We say that people in Brag steng, Mchod rten sgang, and Banshanmen townships speak Dwags po."²²

They said, "Our ancestors were Dwags po people. They were strong soldiers, and defeated Tang Dynasty²³ soldiers."

Rgyas bzang Village is divided into Rgyas bzang and Po rtsa hamlets located on Sgang bzang Mountain. At the foot of these mountains is Yak River, which flows along Provincial Road 303 running from Rta'u County to Brag mgo. Kha mdo Township Town is located at the foot of Sgang bzang Mountain. A steep path starts from Provincial Road 303 in the township town and winds its way to Rgyas bzang and Sgang bzang villages. It takes about two and a half hours to walk from the township town to Rgyas bzang Village and about two hours to walk to Sgang bzang Village.

Local Tibetans describe Rgyas bzang as the right wing of a *bya rgod* 'vulture'. Sgang bzang Village is the left wing, Po rtsa Hamlet is the body, Gnyan zhing Forest²⁴ is the tail, and Spang sgang²⁵ is the head. Therefore, Sgang bzang rgyas bzang suggests a place where cheerful birds perch and where birds of wealth dwell.

²² See Upton (2000) for a discussion of Dwags po.

²³ 618-907 AD.

²⁴ Cutting trees and other plants is forbidden in this sacred forest.

²⁵ Mountaintop meadow. The shape of the mountain resembles a bird's head.

Table Two. Names for residents and locations near Rgyas bzang Village.

Location Name				Name for Residents	
Wylie	<i>pinyin</i>	Autonym	Rgyas bzang	Autonym	Rgyas bzang
Bon dga' yul	Beixiayi	pəh' ga	pə gəh'	pəh' ga reh'	pə gə wə
Dge bshes rtsa	Geshizha	gə ʂəh' tsa	gə səh' tsa	gə ʂəh' tsa və nə	gə səh' tsa wə
Khrims ra	Chang na	tʂʰaŋ ru	tʂʰə ræ	tʂʰaŋ ru rɛ	tʂʰə ræ wə
La rgyab	Najiao	nʰa zə	la ndzɣ	nʰa zə rɛ	la ndzɣ wə
Sgang bzang	Gezong	gəŋ zəŋ	gəŋ zəŋ	gəŋ zəŋ wə	gəŋ zəŋ wə
Stag mo	Dama	te h' maŋ	te ma	te h' maŋ rɛ	te ma wə
Stong dgu	Donggu	təŋ ŋə	təŋ ɣgə	təŋ ŋə	təŋ ɣgə wə

Sgang bzang and Rgyas bzang villages are situated about seven kilometers east of Brag mgo. From east to west along Provincial Road 303 to Rta'u County are Bon dga' yul Village,²⁶ Stag mo Village,²⁷ Khrims ra Village,²⁸ Dge bshes rtsa Township,²⁹ La rgyab Village,³⁰ and Stong dgu Township.³¹ All local Tibetans practice agriculture except Stong dgu pastoralists. Tibetans speak at least three different dialects in the places just mentioned, as discussed earlier.

²⁶ Located east of Rgyas bzang Village and south of Danba City, and a two hour walk from Kha mdo Township Town.

²⁷ Located in the mountains at an elevation comparable to Rgyas bzang Village, southeast of Provincial Road 303. Kha mdo Township Town is about a two hour walk from Stag mo Village.

²⁸ This village is south of 303 Provincial Road. It takes one hour to walk from this village to Rgyas bzang Village.

²⁹ North of 303 Provincial Road and north of Rgyas bzang Village. The township town is a ninety minute walk from Rgyas bzang Village.

³⁰ Located south of 303 Provincial Road between Kha mdo and Donggu township towns. It is an hour walk from Rgyas bzang Village.

³¹ This township is divided by 303 Provincial Road and Yak River, and is located west of Rgyas bzang Village. A two-hour walk from Rgyas bzang Village is needed to reach the township town.

Dge bshes rtsa and Stong dgu township residents speak dialects that are mutually comprehensible, despite some differences, as indicated in Table Three.

Table Three. Comparison of selected Tibetan lexical items in Stong dgu and Dge bshes rtsa townships.

Location	Lexical Item			
	Tibetan	people	Tibetan language	deity
Stong dgu	bəh'	zj	bə.ɹɜ kah'	ɕəh' da
Dge bshes rtsa	bɛ	zj	bə.ɹɜ ka	ʃə da

Residents of Rgyas bzang, La rgyab, Khrimis ra, Stag mo, Bon dga' yul, and Sgang bzang villages speak dialects with near complete mutual comprehension. There is, however, variation, as evident in Table Four.

Table Four. Tibetan dialectical variants for selected lexical items in Bon dga' yul, Stag mo, Sgang bzang, Rgyas bzang, Khrimis ra, and La rgyab villages.

Village	Lexical Item									
	elder brother	elder sister	to sit	people	eye	cloth	we	hole	to breathe	one
Bon dga' yul	ʔa ʔə	ʔa pau	nje	muh'	mey	kəh' ʔi	wə cɛ	təŋ	puy p'ə	nju
Khrimis ra	ʔa ʔə	ʔa puh'	ntauh'	mə	mi	kə	wə cɛ	təŋ	pau p'ə	ce
La rgyab	ʔa ʔu	ʔa ce	ntau	mə	me	gəh' ʔi	ŋə cɛ	bauh' boh'	pau p'ə	dze
Rgyas bzang	kuku	ʔa njae	ntu	məh'	məŋ	gə ʔi	ŋə cɛ	bu bə	pu p'ə	cu
Sgang bzang	kuku	ʔa njae	ntu	məh'	məŋ	gə ʔi	ŋə cɛ	bu bə	pu p'ə	cu
Stag mo	ʔa ku	ʔa pu	ntau	mə	miy	gi	ŋəŋjɛ	bau bah'	puy p'əh'	dzey

Marriage between residents of these villages is common, except for Bon dga' yul Village, whose residents experience the same difficulties gathering firewood as described earlier for Rgyas bzang Village, making Bon dga' yul Village unattractive to prospective brides.

Han Chinese³² families operate three shops in the town, and customers must speak Chinese when shopping there. No

³² Ninety percent of local Han Chinese are from Sichuan and are descendants of migrants who first came to the area in the 1930s. They asked local Tibetans for food and land when they

Tibetan families live in the town who can speak Chinese to help them when they make purchases. This makes older people, especially women, reluctant to go to the township town or to Brag mgo to make purchases. In 2009, there were twenty women and seven men who had not been to the township town since 1989; some had never been to Brag mgo. They said, "We don't speak Chinese, so why should we go to the city and town and be ridiculed?" A consultant confided:

I made a pilgrimage to Dmu rdo.³³ On the way, I bought candies for my family members as *skor sbrang*³⁴ in Brag mgo. I cannot speak Chinese and I pointed at the candies. The shopkeeper smiled, gave me a bag of candies weighing about one kilogram, and charged me twenty RMB. I also bought a package of cigarettes for ten RMB. My remaining money was enough to buy a bowl of noodles in a Chinese restaurant with my friend, who also was on pilgrimage to Dmu rdo. When I returned home, my grandson told me that I was charged three times the real price of the candies and twice the regular price for the cigarettes.

There were several monks sitting by Dmu rdo Temple asking for donations for a monastery. My friend and I made a contribution. When the monks asked us to sign our names, we were unable to do so. The monks had to write our names for us. I felt so outraged and defeated by being unable to write my name in my own language! Then I beseeched Dmu rdo Mountain Deity to give me power so

first arrived, and learned and spoke Tibetan in order to survive. Their living conditions improved as their Tibetan language skills improved. Certain Han practice Tibetan religious activities and have married impoverished local Tibetans. These are the people referred to as 'local Chinese'. 'Local Chinese' who live in Rgyas bzang Village speak perfect Tibetan whereas more than ninety percent of Han who lived in the township town in 2010 were unable to speak Tibetan.

³³ Dmu rdo is an important deity for local people, the name of the mountain where the deity resides, and a cultural hero.

³⁴ Candies pilgrims bring home to give family members.

that I could learn the Tibetan written language. Through this experience, I was motivated to send my grandson to study Tibetan at the Provincial Tibetan School in Dar rtse mdo. In 2008, my grandson was a Tibetan-Chinese translator working at the Judicial Department in Gser thar County. Meanwhile, I studied written Tibetan with a local *sgom pa* and now I can write and chant for villagers.

About ten percent of Kha mdo Township men born in the 1950s have learned enough written Tibetan to write and chant for villagers. Some have become *sgom pa* and chant scripture when villagers ask. No village women read or write Tibetan. There is no Tibetan language school in the village. When villagers receive teachings from a *bla ma*, they require a translator who knows both literary Tibetan and the local dialect.

G.yu 'brug chatted with an older lady (Lha mo) in his village about language obstacles:

G.yu 'brug: Aunt, have you been to Brag mgo?

Lha mo: Yes, I've been there twice.

G.yu 'brug: I know some of your friends have never been to Brag mgo because they don't know Chinese and are afraid they'll be cheated by Chinese businessmen. How do you feel about that?

Lha mo: I'm OK with the situation. My grandson studies in Rong brag Middle School and lives with his uncle there, and one of my sons has a job in Brag mgo. They take me around, and I can see many new things that I cannot see in the village. It is also very easy to see doctors when my rheumatism flares up, unlike in the village where there is no medical care. I can also buy whatever I want with my son and grandson's help and won't get cheated by shopkeepers. They both have perfect Chinese language skills. It's no problem for me to stay there and I want to visit Brag mgo again this summer. I'm also very happy to stay in the village with family

members and my old friends, with whom I enjoy chanting at the village prayer wheel.

G.yu 'brug: How many Tibetan dialects do you speak?

Lha mo: I speak two different Tibetan dialects - Rong skad and Mi nyag, which is why I'm not bored when I am in Brag mgo. Many elders there speak Mi nyag. Some are retirees from government offices and some are from remote places and live with their children who work in Brag mgo. I can talk to these old people. We share our experiences.

G.yu 'brug: How did you learn Mi nyag?

Lha mo: Boy, that is a long story, but I'll make it short: I learned Mi nyag from my mother who was from Dge bshes rtsa Township. She married my father and moved to his home in Rgyas bzang Village. He speaks fluent Mi nyag because Mother taught him. She also taught me Mi nyag and I could speak fluent Mi nyag by the time I was nine.

G.yu 'brug: What was it like to speak two different dialects?

Lha mo: There were several advantages for me and the villagers. I could communicate with my maternal relatives and other Mi nyag speakers. It was also important for the community. I helped settle conflicts between our village with Stag gsum Village (in Dge bshes rtsa Township) over water and forest issues. I also translated orations at several weddings between Dge bshes rtsa people and my villagers. As you know, people treated me very respectfully and kindly because of my efforts and my status in the village was the same as a village leader when I was in my thirties, even though I'm a woman.

Village children have been interested in other languages since about 2004. Certain children cannot express themselves in their mother tongue alone; they must use some Chinese in order to express themselves.

Televisions, VCDs, and DVDs are increasingly popular in the villages. Many children and adults born after 1975 are

television addicts. Their daily conversation includes discussion of Chinese television sitcoms, series, and movies; which characters are bad and good, and what the characters did. Some dedicated viewers imitate the way characters speak and act. Village children like to watch cartoons and argue with family members who prefer to view other programs. When children are together, they often play games drawn from movies or TV, and speak in Chinese, imitating the actors, acting out stories related to what they see on TV and do not play traditional games nor reenact stories related to how King Ge sar³⁵ and local hero, Dmu rdo, defeated demons and invaders as children did before.

Villagers can receive Tibetan language programs broadcast from Qinghai and Lha sa but have great difficulty in understanding the broadcast dialects. Consequently, villagers generally watch Chinese-language programs, except during the New Year. At this time, villagers avidly watch the New Year programs that feature Tibetan music, dances, orations, auspicious speeches, songs, and so on. Though it is very hard for villagers to understand what performers say and sing, they feel satisfied with what they identify as Tibetan content.

Villagers attach status to fluency in Chinese, which is a direct threat to the local dialect and culture. In response, *sgom pa*, *bla ma*, and elders encourage younger people to speak Tibetan. Some elders even use their walking sticks to beat their grandchildren when they speak too much Chinese as in the case of Bkra shis's grandmother, Lha mo, who beat him after Bkra shis spoke Chinese to one of his friends in their home:

Bkra shis: Grandmother, do you think a walking stick has the same power as putting scriptures on the head?³⁶

³⁵ A Tibetan hero who ruled the legendary Kingdom of Gling.

³⁶ She had knocked his head with her walking stick. Touching the head with sacred scriptures is believed to bring good fortune, drive away illness, and protect against evil. This conversation was created by G.yu 'brug based on various

Lha mo: Scriptures drive away evil and hopefully, my walking stick will stop you speaking Chinese in my home.

Bkra shis: Is there anything wrong with speaking Chinese?

Lha mo: Are you going to become Han Chinese? Remember that you are a Tibetan!

Bkra shis: I know I'm Tibetan but I don't want to be like you, isolated and afraid of going to Brag mgo because you can't speak Chinese! I want to empower myself.

Lha mo: Don't you feel ashamed when you speak Chinese to your friends at home in front of your family members?

Bkra shis: I'm sorry Grandmother, but I don't feel ashamed. Instead, I think I'm doing the right thing. I have two brothers. Our family's limited land cannot support three families. This is one reason that pushes me to learn fluent Chinese. I don't want to be cheated by Chinese. Therefore, Grandmother, please don't try to stop me from speaking Chinese.

Lha mo: Boy! How pitiful not to know who you are when you grow up! Yes, I know you can have a better life if you have good Chinese language skills. But when you have children, will you make them speak Chinese and make them use Chinese to pray to our mountain deities and Buddha? If your children speak Tibetan, it will depend on your oral Tibetan ability. Look at the Han Chinese families who moved to our village several generations ago. They practice Tibetan religion and speak fluent Tibetan. Some of them cannot speak Chinese. Some Tibetans say they are not Tibetan and Han people say they aren't Chinese. They are treated as though they have no nationality. They sadly scold their ancestors for not staying where they belonged. I don't want you and your ensuing generations to condemn your family members and me. Remember, if you lose your mother tongue, you will lose yourself!

Bkra shis: I speak Tibetan. My oral Tibetan isn't an issue.

stories he heard in the village to illustrate differences in attitudes toward language use between generations.

Lha mo: What you know is the simplest oral Tibetan. You cannot speak perfect Tibetan. You are so arrogant. Don't say you have no issues with oral Tibetan. Even some people in their thirties and forties who tell folktales cannot use excellent language. Use of Tibetan language is decreasing at an incredible rate because of the incursion of Chinese culture and villagers' interest in new things.

Bkra shis: Sorry Grandmother, I'll speak Tibetan at home from now on.

Previously, villagers tried to learn Chinese, especially children. Certain families used Chinese at home but, after 2008, villagers agreed not to speak Chinese in the village except when necessary. When G.yu 'brug recorded traditional dances and folk songs in the village, made DVDs, and returned them to villagers, people were very encouraged and some restarted telling folktales, singing folk songs, and performing traditional dances.

SUBSISTENCE

Rgyas bzang villagers cultivate barley, potatoes, wheat, peas, prickly ash (Sichuan pepper), apples, walnuts, pears, turnips, and corn. Three men from three families go to mountains to herd cows, *mdzo*,³⁷ and pigs about three to four kilometers away from the village from April to October. They live in a *tsha gdan*³⁸ tent near big caves. They milk cows and make butter, cheese, and yogurt. They make a small pool by some trees, creating a cool, humid environment to store butter. They also dry cheese and feed pigs. One of these men brings a bull loaded with butter back to the village every week and takes it to the three families. Some of the butter is sold in Brag mgo. When he returns to the herding area, he takes *rtsam pa*,³⁹

³⁷ A *mdzo* is a yak-cow hybrid. The father is a yak and the mother is a cow. Villagers only use it to plow fields.

³⁸ Fabric woven from goat hair.

³⁹ Roasted barley or wheat flour.

potatoes, brick tea, and *skyur skam*.⁴⁰ The men never kill domesticated pigs in the mountains, but do hunt wild pigs.

Villagers raise cows, sheep, goats, and horses, and take them to the mountains about one kilometer from the village every morning and herd them back to the village every night. Villagers never sell or kill bulls and steers used to plow fields because they are considered helpers. Villagers sell goats and sheep when lacking the labor required to herd them. They sometimes also sell pigs, as mentioned earlier, when they need money for medical and educational expenses.

Villagers dig manure from the livestock quarters and put it in the pigsty for about ten days to ferment before plowing fields in the first lunar month. About 250 kilograms of manure is put on each *mu* of field. Women form two groups - one group from the upper part of the village and one group from the lower part of the village - and each group helps their members for one day to carry the manure to the fields. Women scatter manure over the fields before plowing.

Chu zhing and *skam zhing*⁴¹ 'dry fields' refer to different types of fields. Holes about twelve centimeters deep with a diameter of about ten centimeters are made about four centimeters apart in *skam zhing* after breaking clods, which is done after plowing. A small whole potato, or a potato cut in pieces, is placed in each hole and covered with soil.

After breaking clods, certain families sow barley seed before the plowman arrives because they consider it bad luck if barley seed touch a man's body. Soil is also put around the *rdo dkar* (a white stone as big as ten fists placed in the middle of fields)⁴² to show respect to the Sa bdag 'Land Deity'. Villagers harvest barley for about ten days in the eighth lunar month and do not plow until the next year. Villagers plant

⁴⁰ Pickled turnip leaves are put in hot water. The water is then removed and the leaves are formed into round cakes. This is done in winter, as freezing is believed to improve the taste. Villagers cut the cake into pieces, boil for about three minutes, and then add noodles and condiments.

⁴¹ Rain-fed fields where barley and potatoes are grown.

⁴² This stone is more respectfully called *zhing dkyil rtsa dkar*.

corn, potatoes, wheat, buckwheat, beans, carrots, radishes, and turnips in *chu zhing*. They also have a small plot where cabbages, green onions, chilies, tomatoes, and lettuce are cultivated.

Villagers used chemical fertilizer on *chu zhing* in the 1990s. While it is easy to fertilize in this way, locals concluded that chemical fertilizer made the soil hard, changed the taste of food, made plowing more difficult, and increased the number of insects. Chemical pesticides were also used to control insects at that time, rather than ash, the traditional pesticide. However, villagers felt eating such vegetables made them sick with frequent abdominal complaints. Villagers stopped using chemical fertilizer and commercial pesticides in 2001.

As mentioned earlier, irrigation engenders disagreements due to the limited supply of water at the small pool where it accumulates from the spring. Each household has two days to irrigate their fields from the pool in turn. Before irrigating, water is allowed to accumulate in the pool at night. The designated family waters their seedlings during the day. Two or three families may water their fields secretly without permission from the family whose turn it is to irrigate the next day. The next morning, the designated family discovers water was stolen from the pool and easily determines the culprit by tracing the water flow. Quarreling ensues.

Villagers begin harvesting wheat in the middle of the sixth lunar month. Corn and turnips are planted in the middle of the seventh lunar month and are primarily fed to livestock and swine. Turnip leaves are eaten by villagers.

SLEEPING

Each family home has a '*grul khang*,⁴³ *gor khang*,⁴⁴ and *rogs nyal khang*.⁴⁵ There are also designated places for family

⁴³ The first floor of this small, attached two-floor building is used as a stable for sheep and goats. The second floor has a

members to sleep together around the *thab rdo* 'hearth stone', which consists of three stones. All the stones are shaped like an upside-down capital J with the hook facing the fire. A pot is placed at the convergence of the three *ʔdza bɕ*⁴⁶ and above the fire. The *thab kha* is a small shelf on the upward side. The *thab kha* is about two and a half centimeters long and about three centimeters wide. Food is offered here for the deities. Grandparents sleep behind the head *ʔdza bɕ*, perhaps with grandchildren. Women sleep on the left side of the *thab rdo* and men sleep on the right side. When relatives visit and spend the night in a home, they sleep with family members around the *thab rdo* while visiting non-relatives sleep in the *'grul khang*. The *gor khang*, with the *thab rdo* in the center, is the main room and is where the family cooks, eats, sits, and sleeps.

Twelve people slept around the *thab rdo* in winter in G.yu 'brug's home when he was a child. Every night after dinner, the young people helped G.yu 'brug's grandfather make a bed behind the head *ʔdza bɕ*. They put *tsha gdan* on the floor, made clothes into pillows, and prepared *tsha gdan* to use as quilts. When elders finished summing up a day's work or telling stories, the mother of the home or her daughter made beds for other members.

A consultant said:

I never removed my pants when I slept with my family until we built a new house. My wife and I moved to our new house

guestroom. There are three enclosures in the first floor of the main house. Goats and sheep are kept together, piglets are put in another enclosure, and larger swine are kept in a third enclosure.

⁴⁴ The main room for villagers. The *thab rdo* 'hearth stone' is in the center. Families cook, eat, sit, and sleep in this room.

⁴⁵ A room for the newlyweds. When their youngest child is three years old, they leave this room for their children, and then sleep in the *gor khang*.

⁴⁶ The *thab rdo* is comprised of three *ʔdza bɕ*.

with my mother, and we slept separately. I then removed my clothes when I went to bed.

Winter was very hard for the families who lacked enough *tsha gdan* to share. They huddled together when sleeping. In summer, older boys and young men sleep on the third floor where dry grass is kept, because they feel hot in the *gor khang* and want to remove their clothes.

When a new couple sleeps in the *rogs nyal khang* during the first year of marriage, no family member visits the room until the bride gives birth because villagers consider it bad luck to accidentally see a new couple in an intimate encounter. A consultant said:

By the time I was twenty-three, I had two sons and a daughter. I moved from the *rogs nyal khang* to the *gor khang* to sleep around the *thab rdo* when my oldest son was ten. I really wanted to embrace my wife after one month of sleeping away from her. One night after I found my family members deeply asleep, I put on my robe, quietly went to my wife, pulled her leg, and woke her. Instead of getting up, she turned to my daughter to hold her. I tried to lie by her but, following a cough, Father turned to face my young son. I shyly tried again. My wife turned and was about to ask me something. My gesture stopped her. I gave a signal and she followed me to the third floor. We had a nice sleep that night wrapped in my robe on the dry grass. After that, we slept together on the third floor several times a month.

The *'grul khang* is offered to guests. Family members never sleep in this room without a guest - this is a rule.

It has become increasingly common for family members to have their own rooms. Children were no longer afraid to stay in rooms alone in the dark after electricity came to the village. Additionally, most villagers moved the *thab rdo* from the *gor khang* to a kitchen, and made the *gor khang* into a guest room with a TV and VCD/ DVD player. Only a few families kept the *thab rdo* in the *gor khang* and slept in this room in 2010.

EATING

Women get up at around six-thirty, make a fire to boil tea and, after finishing milking about thirty minutes later, they make tea. Other family members wake up to have tea at about seven. Elders sit in bed and chant for about thirty minutes until *rtsam pa*, butter, cheese, and tea are ready. Elders offer three drops of tea (to the ancestors, the Three Jewels,⁴⁷ and the Hearth Deity) and then family members begin eating and drinking for about twenty minutes. During this time, elders make a plan for the day, including a schedule for the morning work, e.g., who will take cows, sheep, and goats to the mountains; who will clean the rooms; and so on. Women have no time to eat *rtsam pa* after putting *rtsam pa* in family members' bowls, for they are busy cooking for the family and feeding pigs, cattle, and lambs.

Women often cook bread, pork, and *nyog nyog*⁴⁸ for breakfast. The family has breakfast around the *thab rdo* at about eight a.m. They put pork or *nyog nyog* in bowls for family members. Women pass bread around. Elders sit behind the head *?dza b#* and put a breadcrumb on the *thab kha* as an offering to the *Zas lha* 'Food Deity'. Women offer tea at least three times during the meal. Family members start work after breakfast and generally work together.

At about twelve, women make tea for family members who spend about twenty to thirty minutes having tea and *rtsam pa* or bread in the fields when they are weeding, harvesting, and so on. Women begin cooking lunch at about one p.m. Bread is commonly prepared and, much less often, rice. Dishes such as pork with cabbage and potato, and green chili with turnip leaves are frequently prepared. At about two-thirty, lunch is eaten around the *thab rdo* or in the fields. Food

⁴⁷ The Three Jewels are the Buddha, the teachings of the Buddha, and the community of practicing Buddhists. 'The Three Jewels' is often said as an affirmation of truth.

⁴⁸ Villagers melt a piece of pork fat; add pickled turnip leaf liquid, salt, and Sichuan pepper; wait until it boils; and then serve in bowls. Bread is dipped in this and eaten.

from each dish is put by the white stone in the field center. Tea is sometimes drunk at about five p.m. when working in the fields.

Noodles are a common supper item and are generally made by women, although men may help pull the noodles if long noodles are made. Bits of dough are also chopped off blocks of dough to make noodles. In contrast to many Amdo farming communities, short pieces of dough are not pulled off longer pieces of dough with the thumb and forefinger and then squeezed to produce short, flat noodles. Chopped turnip leaves are boiled with water and lard and then homemade noodles are added. Family members sit around the *thab rdo* and are served by the women.

CHILDBIRTH AND CHILD RAISING

Pregnant women work right up until they give birth. Some women give birth prematurely and some infants die. A consultant said:

My husband was outside the village doing seasonal labor when I was pregnant. I had to cut firewood and left my three year old son with a relative during the short firewood cutting season. In the course of doing strenuous woodcutting, I gave birth to a stillborn child and nearly died. People visited me but, according to village custom, there were no gifts. Villagers consider giving gifts an insult if a woman gives birth to a dead infant.

After giving birth at home, the woman's mother or her mother-in-law takes the placenta to the pig sty, digs a deep hole, and buries it. The placenta is not a concern if the mother gives birth in a hospital.

Women stay at home for about a month after giving birth. Only the woman's mother or her mother-in-law stays in the *rogs nyal khang* to assist during birth. The husband cannot enter this room during the birth and for three days after the birth. Only the woman's mother may sleep with the new

mother and infant to help when the woman gives birth the first time. For subsequent births, the mother may have less need for a helper. On the third day after birth, *sgom pa* perform *bsang skor*⁴⁹ around the *rogs nyal khang* to protect the infant from attacks by evil spirits. The husband may now sleep with the baby and his wife in the *rogs nyal khang*. New mothers eat in bed. When they need to go to the toilet, they go from the *mdzod sgo*⁵⁰ down to the first floor where pigs are kept. They do not leave the family *gor khang* for nine days following the birth.

On the sixth day after birth, *sgom pa* perform a second *bsang skor* in the *rogs nyal khang* and family members may see the baby. If the baby often cries and sleeps fretfully, the family asks *sgom pa* to chant. *Sgom pa* give the third *bsang skor* for the baby on the ninth day, and relatives then visit the baby in the *rogs nyal khang*. After fifteen days, the new mother's friends visit without bringing gifts. On the thirtieth day, about a hundred relatives, friends, and villagers come with pork, pig legs, eggs, mutton, butter, chicken, beef, and noodles. The mother brings her baby to show visitors in the *gor khang*, and resumes working.

Mothers sing this lullaby when babies cry and at bedtime:⁵¹

ʔa kə ʔa kə məŋ tɕiɛ ɲtɕɛ ɲtɕɛ j̃ la məŋ tɕɹ
 ʔmŋ gi boŋ loŋ ɕɛ tɕʰə tɕɛ mə gi
 tɕaŋ ləŋ ʔdza saŋ ʔja gə dzəu tɛ tɕʰə ʔja
 ʔa kə ʔa kə məŋ tɕiɛ ɲtɕɛ ɲtɕɛ j̃ la məŋ tɕɹ
 ʔmŋ gi ɦæ ləŋ ɕɛ tɕʰə tɕɛ mə gi

⁴⁹ A *bla ma*, monk, or *sgom pa* chants *bsang* scriptures and burns juniper needles to purify rooms, clothing, prayer wheels, and prayer wheel flags.

⁵⁰ *Mdzod sgo* refers to a wood cover that is one and a half meters long, one meter wide, and three centimeters thick over a hole in the floor by the wall in the *gor khang* near the *rogs nyal khang* entrance.

⁵¹ Texts here and elsewhere in IPA are so given because we are unsure of the meaning of certain lexical items.

wε dzε ηæ la sε nafi ηɔ kah⁷ma ji mε tɔ^ha
ʔa kə ʔa kə mən tʃiε ʔa kə ʔa kə mən tʃiε

Mothers do not give babies milk made from milk powder. If a new mother lacks breastmilk, the family asks a woman who recently gave birth to nurse the infant. The wet nurse comes to the new mother's home to nurse the baby at least four times daily for three to four months. The infant's mother also gives the infant a little cow milk boiled with water and melted butter. Mothers usually stop breastfeeding after seven months. From the fourth month after a birth, the mother begins giving the infant melted butter, with a little corn meal in warm water.

When the baby is one year old, the father takes it to a *sgom pa* and asks him to give it a name, which is based on the baby's father's religion, the time the baby was born, and the day the family asks for the name. If a baby is frequently ill, the mother asks a high *bla ma* or a *sgom pa* to give a different name. Villagers believe a baby will no longer suffer from illness if it changes its name.

Grandparents might give a male name if they dream about *Tsa ri spun gsum*, regardless of the baby's gender, and the baby cannot have other names in the future for the baby is considered to be a gift from *Tsa ri spun gsum*, who are male deities. The baby's name is thus a male name that shows respect to them.

A family may also ask a couple with the same '*byung ba* 'element'⁵² to allow the baby to formally acknowledge them as surrogate parents, and give a name to the baby as mentioned earlier. This name is only used by elders. The baby is taken to visit the surrogate parents with gifts of pork and a bottle of liquor at some point between the first and twelfth days of the New Year. Such visits continue until the child is twelve years old, at which point they stop.

⁵² Earth, metal, water, fire, and wood.

STONE HOUSES

In the early 1980s, ninety percent of village families lived in five-floored *ma khyim* 'mother houses' made of stone. A few families had six-story houses. Several families had *g.yung drung*.⁵³ Bon followers put Ston pa gshen rab's⁵⁴ image in the *g.yung drung* shrine room to prevent evil spirits from entering. According to local accounts, Ston pa gshen rab's efforts to propagate Bon were obstructed by the demon, Khyab pa lag ring, who had come from far away and was the worst demon on earth. Ston pa gshen rab asked Khyab pa lag ring to leave and become a good creature. Khyab pa lag ring only wished to destroy Ston pa gshen rab's religious work and defeat him but, eventually, the demon was converted and became Ston pa gshen rab's disciple. Locals carefully decorate the *g.yung drung* shrine room by drawing Bon deity images and symbols on the walls.

Several families have a '*grul khang* - the small, two-floored building mentioned above - attached to the *ma khyim*. The first floor of the *ma khyim* is for sheep and goats, and has two rooms, the *phyi ra* 'outer sty', and the *nang ra* 'inner sty'. The inside room is a pigsty and the outside room is for both swine and calves.

The second floor is a guest-room that has the *gor khang*, *rogs nyal khang*, *mkhar bang*,⁵⁵ and *skas rtsa*.⁵⁶ The

⁵³ Some Bon families added a three-floor extension (another building but joined to the main house) to their home. The first of these floors was used for storage, the second was a shrine, and the third floor was for the family *la btsas*. After the addition of the extensions, the houses were thought to resemble a Bon swastika, hence the name. The Bon swastika 卍 turns counterclockwise, in contrast to the Buddhist swastika 卐 that turns clockwise. The Bon swastika is used similarly to a vajra in Buddhism.

⁵⁴ Ston pa gshen rab, the founder of Bon.

⁵⁵ Directly across from the *skas rtsa* is the *mkhar bang*, a room where potatoes and turnips are stored.

gor khang has four same-sized square windows. A large stone reservoir in the wall is just by the entrance to the *gor khang*. Two wood poles - the *ltag shing* - support firewood just above the entrance door. A column by the stone reservoir is the *tshogs shing ka ba*. After making butter, the mother puts some on this column. The *thab rdo* is located in the middle of the *gor khang*. The *rogs nyal khang* has a bed for the new couple and a window.

Ladders or stairs lead to the third floor. To the right side is the east-facing *mar 'khor*.⁵⁷ It has no door. It is about three meters wide, four meters long, and two meters high. Grain and other items are stored here.

On the left side of the entry to the third floor is the *byang 'khor*, an open north-facing room about the size of the *mar 'khor*. A door to the left leads to the *bang ma*, a storeroom for meat, butter, and jewelry. A *nor lha*⁵⁸ image is also kept here.

The *khang che* is between the *mar 'khor* and *byang 'khor* on the third floor. To make this floor, about fifty poles (each about six meters long with a five centimeter diameter) are placed across twenty to twenty-five *'dung phra* (wood poles about ten centimeters in diameter), which in turn, rest across three or four *nts^hə kã* 'crossbeams' (about six meters long with a diameter of twenty centimeters).

Each floor is made up of thousands of *glang ma shing* 'willow sticks', each of which is about three meters long and has a diameter of about two centimeters. Dried grass is used to fill the spaces between the sticks. Black mud is put atop this and then covered with red mud to create the surface. The *khang che* slopes to the east side of the *khang 'dabs* (the edges

⁵⁶ The *skas rtsa* is a room where tools are kept. To the right of the *skas rtsa* is the *gor khang*.

⁵⁷ A storage room for corn, dry grass, barley, wheat, and tools.

⁵⁸ A syncretic figure combining elements of the Indian deity of wealth, Dzam bha la, and native wealth-bestowing zoomorphic spirits; a wealth deity dwelling on a lotus who accumulates jewels (www.tibetarchaeology.com/newsletter_nov09.htm, accessed 16 September 2010).

of the *khang che*) to allow rainwater to flow through the 'do thos 'drain' (a piece of slotted wood one meter long leading rainwater *khang phyi* 'outside the house'). The 'do thos is placed under 'tsham lhig 'shingle stones' that are around the *khang phyi* to protect the 'dung phra and the *ntṣʰə kã* from rainwater that induces rot.

A ladder leads to the fourth floor where there are two open areas (without walls or roofs) and the *lha mkhar*, a small room where grain that has been dried in the open is stored. A *la btsas* is atop the house in the location where *bsang* is offered every morning.

STONE TOWERS

Despite chaotic social events in the mid to late twentieth century, three stone towers still stand in the village, testimony to an ancient past. A *sgom pa* said:

There were ten towers in the village before the 1970s. Except for the eight-sided tower⁵⁹ in the center of our village fields, the others were all four-sided towers. The eight-faced tower was rounded, and used to launch bombs.⁶⁰ Only *mthu sgrub mi*⁶¹ could send bombs to the places where the tribal chief directed. Actually, many people have asked me and other elders how we know the eight-faced tower was used to launch bombs. My answer is that this is what people told me. Our ancestors used it to attack other tribes who wanted to pillage our land. Bombs were in the tower all the time and when villagers received information of an imminent attack,

⁵⁹ Today, only ruins remain of this tower. In 1988, two families found eight-faced tower foundations, arrowheads, and broken swords when they built houses.

⁶⁰ The local pronunciation is *dzʰafɔ*. *Sgom pa* described it as being similar to a bomb (*dzwa*).

⁶¹ In the local context, *mthu sgrub mi* are meditators who live in caves or hermitages. Two *mthu sgrub mi* were said to live in Rong brag County in 2010.

they asked *mthu sgrub mi* to chant and immediately launch bombs at the enemy in a preemptive strike. Launching a bomb required huge force, so our ancestors made the eight-faced stone houses round. My grandfather told me that a thirteen-faced tower in the village was the most powerful tower in this region for launching bombs and was shared by two tribes. Because of the many wars between tribes, conflicts with invaders, and the stress and strain of launching bombs, the thirteen-faced tower nearly collapsed.

The following account further attests to the antiquity of the towers and how extensively their power was appreciated:

Once Lha sa ba 'Lha sa people' were defeated and asked our ancestors for help. Because Lha sa's enemies were far away and beyond the range of bombs, our ancestors went to Gong bo rong⁶² and built two four-sided towers that faced each other. A year later they helped the Lha sa ba repel their enemies with bombs. The Lha sa ba chief then asked two *mthu sgrub mi* to stay in Gong bo rong in the event the enemy forces staged a counteroffensive. All but five of our ancestors died from disease on their return home.

In the 1960s, officials ordered locals to demolish the thirteen-faced tower to build a *shechang* 'community square', a large two-floored Chinese style building in Rgyas bzang Village. In 1984, the *shechang* was sold to a family who wanted to build a house with its stones. During the same period, the Shuizi Commune leader forced locals to take stones from the four-faced towers to build a *cangku* 'committee storehouse'.⁶³ Subsequently, one of the four towers was destroyed. Villagers built a *ma Ni 'khor khang* 'prayer room' in the village center in 1999 where the former *cangku*

⁶² Locals use the term 'Gong bo rong' to refer collectively to Nying khri, Kong po rgya mda', and Sman gling.

⁶³ After some years, this building was sold to a village family who used the stone to build a new stone house.

was located. Three four-faced towers stood in the village in 2010.

Only Sgom pa Blo bzang (1927-2008), a Bon practitioner, could efficaciously chant to ensure the safety of a family who took stones from a stone tower to build stone houses. Several *sgom pa* chanted for such families, but were deemed inept because those families later had accidents when they were building stone houses. People gradually realized that only Blo bzang's chanting ensured safety when taking stones from the stone towers. Afterwards, nearly all families asked him to chant when needed.

Blo bzang's background is worth describing in some detail: At the age of twenty, he became a student of the 'Bru smad⁶⁴ Reincarnation Bla ma at 'Bru smad Monastery and stayed there until forced to leave in the 1960s. He then worked in a collective in the Rgyal rong region. During this time, he met Brag steng sgom pa, who was considered the most knowledgeable and adept *mthu sgrub mi* in the Rgyal rong region. Blo bzang subsequently became Brag steng sgom pa's student for five years.

Blo bzang studied Buddhism in Gser thar Monastery from 1979 to 1981, and later served as a *sgom pa* for Rgyas bzang, Sgang bzang, and La rgyab villages. Few monks could match him in debating skills. However, when he was returning home, he met his match in a herdsman, which led him to say, "Don't be proud. You may think you are the best in one area, but when you leave that place, you will learn that you are very ordinary."

When *bla ma* visited and were welcomed by the villagers, Blo bzang asked them to sit higher than him to show his respect for them. After some time of debate, however, most *bla ma* asked him to take their seats.

⁶⁴ There is a monastery in 'Bru smad Village, Stong dgu Township that Rgyas bzang villagers often refer to as 'Bru smad Monastery. The reincarnation *bla ma* of this monastery is called 'Bru smad Reincarnation Bla ma.

Sa skya, Bka' brgyud, and Rnying ma *sgom pa* periodically challenged him, but were always defeated. For example:

Once during a terrible drought, *sgom pa* gathered and chanted for rain, except for Blo bzang, because he was chanting in a nearby village. They chanted for two days but no rain fell. When Blo bzang returned home on the third day, villagers took him to chant with the other *sgom pa*. There was light rain that evening. Villagers thought this was because of Blo bzang. A Rnying ma *sgom pa* said to the villagers, "There is no connection between rain and Blo bzang's chanting. Our (Bka' brgyud and Rnying ma *sgom pa*) chanting has brought rain."

Blo bzang said nothing and had noodles with the other *sgom pa*. That night, only *sgom pa* were in the tent. The other *sgom pa* asked Blo bzang to demonstrate his power to convince them that he could do magic. A Rnying ma *sgom pa* said that if Blo bzang could convincingly show his ability, then he would do the same, thinking this was an excellent opportunity to humiliate Blo bzang.

Sgom pa Blo bzang chanted for about twenty minutes and then the sound of wind was heard and his long hair fluttered in the wind. The other *sgom pa* could not feel the wind. Afterwards, *Sgom pa* Blo bzang was respected by other *sgom pa*, who viewed him as a teacher.

Sgom pa Blo bzang disliked the reincarnation of his teacher, who drank, played cards, could make a basketball stick to a backboard for about five minutes, and who could twist a glass liquor bottle into a round shape with his hands.

TABOOS AND CUSTOMS

The following taboos and customs are observed in Rgyas bzang Village.

- Horses, dogs, cats, eagles, sparrows, donkeys, frogs, fish,

and snakes cannot be eaten.

- Death and dreams cannot be mentioned in the morning.
- Offering cracked or chipped bowls to guests shows great disrespect, and is especially inauspicious when family members start a long trip or leave the village.
- Removing garbage and sweeping the floor after someone leaves the home courtyard in the morning is taboo.
- Hosts offer tea, liquor, and food to elders and guests with both hands and receivers use both hands to accept, in order to show respect to the host.
- To avoid angering the Door Deity and bringing misfortune to a family, the threshold is not stepped on, nor is the top of the doorframe touched.
- Men sit to the left of the *thab rdo* and women sit to the right. Elders are asked to sit in the *gor stod* (upper place on the second floor of the home) to show them respect. Slightly lowering the head when talking to elders also shows respect.
- Men sit cross-legged, particularly in the *gor khang* because stretching the legs forward with the soles of the feet facing the hearthstone is a grave insult to the host and angers the Hearth Deity. The offender is suspected of doing it purposefully and is likely asked to stop.
- The one addressed should not answer directly when called from outside the house gate at night, but instead steps out of the house, listens, tries to identify the caller, and then replies, or otherwise risks losing their soul. They might also pause, spit, and then answer.
- A woman cannot let her hair down until after sunset,

otherwise she might become a *bsen mo*.⁶⁵

- A man may respond violently to anyone who touches his head other than high *bla ma*, *sgom pa*, parents, and grandparents. It is very inauspicious for a woman to touch a man's head.
- Villagers never sit on a bed in the place where the sleeper puts their head because doing so suggests a deliberate insult.
- Men who see women urinating on the side of a road or in fields will have three years of bad luck.
- The Hearth Deity punishes those who eat a meal before offering food on the head □*dza b*□ by ensuring they later lack food.
- Disrespectful language includes calling elders' names and saying 'you' to elders. Language with sexual innuendo, including love songs, must not be spoken or performed in front of relatives and elders. People stand when an elder enters a room and do not walk upright past a sitting elder.
- A person meeting a *bla ma* should stand in a place lower than the *bla ma*'s, remove their hat, put their palms together under their chin, bend toward the *bla ma*, and allow him to place his hand on their head.
- Locals never whistle when passing the gate of a home or entering a village, as this is thought to summon ghosts. Whistling is generally only done in herding areas.
- Women never participate in *la btsas* renewal and never

⁶⁵ A living woman who becomes a *bsen mo* might be seen in the village, though she is sleeping at home. Neither she nor her family members are aware of her nocturnal activity outside her home.

enter a home shrine room or visit monasteries when menstruating.

- The deceased's clothing may be put in a cave in a mountain near the village or it might be washed and kept at home but it cannot be discarded for a year after death, otherwise the deceased's soul may return looking for the clothing.
- Livestock must not be beaten with metal in fear that this will cause the beater to not be reincarnated and suffer in the netherworld.
- Crying at the gate of a home brings misfortune to the family.

PART TWO: FOLKTALES AND A SHORT STORY

INTRODUCTION

The folktales presented are retold from what G.yu 'brug collected and remembers hearing while living in the village. G.yu 'brug also wrote a fictional story - *Torn Between Two Lovers* - to better illustrate villagers' lives and experiences.

SGANG BZANG STOBS LDAN

Sgang bzung stobs ldan is known as Stobs ldan by locals in Rong brag County who consider him to be a reincarnation *blama* originally from Sgang bzung Village. *Swapping Sheep and Goat Heads*, *The Origin of a Village Spring*, and *A Monastery of Pebbles* are local Stobs ldan stories.

Swapping Sheep and Goat Heads

The sun rose and villagers finished their breakfast. Each household waited for Stobs ldan's call to release their sheep and goats from enclosures so he could take them to the mountains to graze. As Stobs ldan grew up, herding for villagers became his job and was the only way for him to support his mother and himself.

One day, Stobs ldan was bored with doing the same thing all the time and switched the sheep and goats' heads for fun. When he was about to replace their heads, a big storm blew up and the sheep and goats fled back to the village. When he reached the village, it was already evening and villagers were complaining that they could not identify their sheep and goats. They asked Stobs ldan to separate them according to household ownership. Stobs ldan knew that he should not reveal what he had done to the sheep and goats. He told villagers that it was dark and that they should keep whatever animals were in their enclosures until the next day when he would separate them.

The next morning after Stobs ldan set off for the day's herding, some villagers began talking about how the

animals' heads had been exchanged. Other villagers said they were crazy and were sure this would be proved true when Stobs Idan returned from herding that evening.

When Stobs Idan reached the mountains, he saw how much the animals were enjoying eating grass and decided to wait some time before switching their heads again. A monk from outside the local area happened to pass near Stobs Idan, who was sleeping on the back of a tiger. Next to him, a large snake was using its head to shade Stobs Idan's face from the hot sun. The monk sat there, closed his eyes, and quietly chanted. About an hour later, the monk was interrupted by Stobs Idan asking why he was sitting in the middle of the path, chanting. The monk immediately bowed to Stobs Idan, and asked him for a blessing. Stobs Idan asked how a herder could bless a monk, and then walked to the sheep and goats. Stobs Idan was sure that he had just slept on a rock under a small tree.

The monk reported what he had seen to the locals and told them to take good care of Stobs Idan and send him to a monastery to study. Locals considered this to be a joke but said nothing because of the monk's respected status.

Stobs Idan exchanged the sheep and goats heads by holding a sheep's head and a goat's head, and calling, "All sheep heads replace goat heads!" Several villagers wanted to know what had happened to their sheep and goats and came, waiting for Stobs Idan halfway from the mountains.

Stobs Idan understood the villagers' motivation when he later met them on his way back to the village. He then tossed a handful of soil at the herd, which separated into small groups according to family household ownership. It was clear to the villagers there was nothing wrong with their sheep and goats, because the herd moved in groups with some distance between the sheep and goats. Villagers were amazed by Stobs Idan's power, and said nothing about the monk's suggestion because they did not want Stobs Idan to stop herding and study in a monastery.

The Origin of a Village Spring

One day, a large bird flew from the mountains to the village. The villagers had never seen such a bird before. The bird flew around the roof of Stobs Idan's home. Stobs Idan tried to catch it but failed. The bird flew to the village fields and Stobs Idan followed. He was tired, picked up a stone, put it into his robe pouch for two seconds, and then threw it at the bird. The bird fell to the ground not far from him. When he walked over to take a look, the bird had vanished. In its place was a bowl of melted butter. Without thinking, he picked up the bowl, drank all the butter, and urinated on the spot. Later, a small spring appeared where he had urinated. Locals currently use this spring as a source of drinking water.

A Monastery of Pebbles

Stobs Idan was asked to study with a local *sgom pa*, who was in seclusion in a stone tower by a mountain. The *sgom pa* asked him to fetch water from the spring where he had urinated, but Stobs Idan did not go to the spring. Instead, he used pebbles to make a miniature Bon monastery. One of the *sgom pa*'s students discovered this when he went looking for Stobs Idan after a long while had passed without Stobs Idan returning.

The *sgom pa* heard a drum beat at midnight, went to the top of the stone tower to see what was happening, saw lit lamps where Stobs Idan had made a miniature Bon monastery of pebbles, and realized that Stobs Idan was so powerful that he could not teach him. He sent Stobs Idan back to the village the next day with one of his students, and told villagers to send him elsewhere to study.

The villagers then sent Stobs Idan to Tibet to study. Many years later, his deeds came to be told by ensuing generations in the local area.

Nor bu bzang po was a well-known merchant in Tibetan, Mongolian, and Chinese areas. His wealth was equal to that of local kings. His workers were treated as well as if they were of noble birth. He was also considered to be compassionate because he helped people without thought of reward and, regardless of the supplicant's status, he tried his best to assist them. He was known as Tshong dpon Nor bu bzang po. His parents, sister (Rgya dkar),⁶⁷ and locals were greatly concerned about his safety when he went out trading gold, silver, and turquoise with his mastiff, pack mule, and a horse. He never lost in his transactions.

Leaves began falling, again attiring the earth. After recovering from an illness for about two years, Nor bu bzang po was busy making plans to trade. His sister suggested there was little business during that time of year and, trying to convince him not to go, said, "Our parents are getting older and I'm just a woman. Father is like the sun at the mountaintop, Mother is like a bridge over the river, and I am just like dew on the grass. How can you possibly leave us behind?"

Nor bu bzang po vividly described business opportunities, said he would return soon, and then set off with a servant named A cog, a pack mule, horse, and his mastiff. He headed down the track he had walked many times before and sang many folksongs on the way. Everything around him was idyllic - birds sang, beasts ran, and people were relaxed. Then harsh weather interrupted his enjoyment of the beautiful scenery.

At home, Nor bu bzang po's sister and parents impatiently waited for his return. Rgya dkar guessed something was wrong because she felt A cog coveted her

⁶⁶ Nor bzang is a well known figure in Tibetan narrations in many Tibetan cultural areas.

⁶⁷ She assumes various names in differing versions of the story, e.g., Sog po 'Mongol', suggesting she spoke fluent Mongolian, and other names to suggest that she spoke fluent Chinese.

family's property. The family waited anxiously and his sister frequently stood on the rooftop looking into the distance, hoping to see her brother on his way home.

A cog put poison in Nor bu bzang po's bowl on the way back home, hoping to kill him, but he failed because Nor bu bzang po used ivory chopsticks to test all the food, tea, and soup he was offered. The chopsticks turned dark when poison touched them. A cog finally put poison on the tail of a fox skin hat when Nor bu bzang po was washing his face. Later, he told Nor bu bzang po to hold the fox's tail, put it close to his mouth, breathe deeply, and exhale. He said he would feel warmer after doing this. Nor bu bzang po did so and died.

A cog donned Nor bu bzang po's clothing and impersonated the man he had murdered. He returned and became the house master, forcibly taking the family's property. Nor bu bzang po's sister knew he was not her brother, which was confirmed by the mastiff, who told her that his master had died while returning home.⁶⁸ She decided to search for her brother, even though she knew she might only locate his bones, and told her parents that she would visit a distant relative for several days. She then set off with the mastiff. One evening, she saw two blind ghosts eating each other's flesh and then using a container to rub each other's body where flesh had been cut off. The flesh then regrew immediately. Rgya dkar slowly approached, quietly took the container as they were passing it back and forth, and fled.

The mastiff led Nor bu bzang po's sister to a complete human skeleton that lay in the snow. The mastiff began howling pitifully and told her that this was her brother. The sister held the container, lay on the skeleton, and cried. After a little while, the mastiff began barking in a happy way and put its head under her armpit. She raised her head and saw that flesh had grown on the skeleton. She then rubbed the container everywhere on the skeleton. When she

⁶⁸ The story suggests the mastiff could talk to Rgya dkar in her own language.

finished, her brother was restored to life and spoke to her. Brother and sister wept and then returned home.

A cog was enjoying a comfortable life but, when he saw Nor bu bzang po, Nor bu bzang po's sister, and the mastiff returning, he was so terrified that he jumped off the roof and died. Nor bu bzang po stopped going out to trade and helped local people with the magic container, and the family then lived a happy life.

A DOG SAVES HUMANITY FROM STARVATION

Long ago with the blessings of the Buddha and local deities, people lived a happy, peaceful life in Rgyal mo tsha ba rong. People respected the Buddha and local deities. When they ate something, they offered a bit of it to the Buddha and local deities while giving a short offering speech.

They had very good harvests every year. Nine heads of barley, which they called '*bru*', grew on each stalk. Later, misfortune struck and they began to call barley *khyi mchod* 'offering to the dog', because only one head of barley grew on each barley stalk. This story is about how that happened.

Long ago, people ground barley with a water mill and baked and steamed bread made of barley flour. With plenty of food, locals became wasteful and gradually forgot to offer food to the Buddha and local deities. They threw away bread if it was even slightly burned. Buddha and local deities noticed this but compassionately forgave them.

Later, locals became so wealthy that they even began using the outer part of steamed bread to clean babies' dirty bottoms when they defecated. Local deities were so upset by this that they stopped barley from growing in the fields. People soon began to die from starvation.

An elderly couple had an old dog that they treated as their child. They also could not escape hunger and almost died from starvation, too. One day, the dog went to the couple's field, sat by the white stone in the middle of the field, and started howling. After nine days of howling, local deities

came and asked the dog why he was howling by the white stone.

The old dog said that people were suffering from starvation and his masters were dying. He asked the deities to show compassion and let the barley grow again. Finally, they decided to allow barley to grow again but with only one head per stalk.

Satisfied, the old dog returned to the old couple and communicated this information. The old couple then told other locals that their dog had begged the deities to allow barley to grow again. Locals doubted the old couple. Some said that if their barley really was growing the next morning, they would provide the old couple with food afterwards.

Locals discovered that barley was growing and that the old dog had disappeared early the next morning. The old couple explained that that their dog had an agreement with the deities that it would become a deity if local deities kept their promise.

Locals sincerely respected the old couple, kept their promise, and took good care of them. Importantly, they appreciated the dog's dedication and began calling barley *khyi mchod*. Whenever they made offerings to deities, they mentioned the dog.⁶⁹

THE THREE BROTHERS

Long ago, a Han Chinese family with the surname Ha moved to Kha mdo Valley. There were five people in the family - the parents and three sons. The family had a good relationship with local Tibetans, and were ambitious. Sadly, however, this led to a family tragedy.

Men in Kha mdo Valley must have skills to support a family in order to marry. Without such skills as metal smithing, carpentry, and painting, no woman would marry them. The father held a family meeting, and said he wanted his sons to

⁶⁹ Villages did not mention this dog when making offerings to deities in 2010.

find local Tibetan women to marry for this would empower the family and strengthen their position in the local community. He told his sons that they must leave the home and learn skills.

The three brothers could not understand Tibetan, so they set off to a Chinese area to learn skills. One day, the three brothers came to a valley where there were three roads leading in three different directions. Each chose a different road.

Gunfire sounded when the oldest brother was drinking at a spring. He went in that direction and found a middle-aged hunter sitting by a fire, roasting and eating meat with great gusto. The oldest brother asked for some meat from the hunter, chatted with him, relished the meat, and decided to become a hunter. He asked the hunter to teach him how to hunt. The lonely hunter agreed. Quickly, the oldest brother became a good marksman and was ready to return home.

The second brother met a blacksmith and became his apprentice. He had learned most of his teacher's skills after a few months and left.

The youngest brother encountered a funeral. A woman very emotionally called, "My dear son..." He thought this was very interesting and decided to learn how to lament. After several months his lamentation skills were such that everyone who heard him was deeply touched.

The three brothers returned home at the same time. The father invited several Tibetans to their home for a meal to welcome his sons' return. The three brothers were drunk by the time their father asked them to demonstrate their newly-acquired skills. The oldest brother took out his gun and shot his father in the forehead. As the father fell, he pointed at the second son, who thought his father was asking him to demonstrate his skill. He then took his smithing tools and used a piece of silver to plug the bullet hole in his father's forehead.

The shocked mother looked at her youngest son, who stood up, held his father, and began lamenting, "My dear son..."

TORN BETWEEN TWO LOVERS (a short story)

I travelled to Dar rtse mdo and met my old friend, Rdo rje, quite by accident in a cheap restaurant. He was eating alone so I sat down. After we had drunk about three bottles of beer each, he told me this story.

I was terribly sleepy on the way to Kunming, but the bumpy track the bus was on shook me from left to right, banging my head against the window whenever I dozed off, making my sleep very fitful.

A man dressed fashionably with a refined expression sat by me. He offered me a brown-paper cigarette and asked if I was a Kunming native.

I said, "I'm from Dkar mdzes County, and I'm going to Kunming to care for my ailing sister in the hospital. She's a student there," and politely returned the cigarette because I do not smoke. We chatted, and he invited me to have lunch with him when the bus reached the usual lunch stop.

I learned that he was a government official in Kunming, his name was Nibushigu, and that he was of the Yi nationality. He gave me his phone number and encouraged me to call him if I needed help. I saw a very nice car pick him up at the bus station after we reached our destination.

I reached the hospital where my seventeen-year-old sister was recovering from an appendectomy. The hospital fee was high and, in a few days, the 3,000 RMB I had brought from home was gone. The doctor said that I should prepare another 2,000 RMB because Sister needed to stay in the hospital at least two additional weeks. I did not tell Sister about this because I did not want her to worry. I also did not inform my family. I knew there was no more money to send unless they borrowed from relatives and villagers.

I mustered my courage and phoned Nibushigu. He said he was very busy and asked me to call him later. I dejectedly returned to the hospital, thinking that he had just made an excuse because we did not know each other well. "Why should he help me - a stranger?" I thought.

Sister noticed my depression when I returned and asked me what had happened.

I said I was only concerned about her studies, told her to read her books, and said that once she was discharged from the hospital she should catch up with her classmates.

The next day I reluctantly called Nibushigu again. He said he was pleased that I had called and gave me the name of a restaurant where he said we would meet. I happily went there and found a group of people sitting at a table in a posh restaurant. Nibushigu was sitting at the center of the table in the seat of honor. The waiter told me to join them.

Nibushigu stood as I approached. They all shook hands with me as Nibushigu introduced me.

As I ate with them, they offered me a mug of beer. I said that I did not drink and thanked them profusely. Then they urged me to sing. I sang one song. A pretty young woman asked me if I was a professional singer. I was embarrassed by her interest and said that I liked singing but had no singing job.

I accompanied Nibushigu to the toilet a bit later. He handed me 2,500 RMB and told me to keep it as a friend's gift. Astonished, I stood in front of the toilet mirror. I had asked him to lend me 2,500 RMB but, instead, he had given me that sum as an outright gift. I wondered why he gave the money rather than lending it. I worried that he wanted something from me. I returned to the table and continued dinner, my mind full of questions.

"Hi, Rdo rje. My name is Bamo. How's your sister?" asked the woman who had commented on my singing.

"She's fine and will soon return to school," I said.

"You said you're from Dkar mdzes. That's a very nice place, a natural oxygen bar. I was there once. What's your job, or are you still in school?" asked Bamo.

"I'm a social investigator! When I find a job that pays enough, I'll take it, but that hasn't happened yet," I said, laughing at my own joke.

"Are you looking for a job?" asked Bamo.

"Yes, but after my sister gets well," I said.

"What's your phone number? I'll call you later, and we can talk about a job," said Bamo.

"I don't have a cell phone. Please give me your phone number and I'll call you," I said in embarrassment. I could tell she was a bit surprised, but did her best to conceal it.

"How did you become Uncle's friend?" she asked.

I had guessed Nibushigu was her uncle. What a pretty girl! Sharp nose, snow-white teeth, sparkling eyes, and dimples surrounding floating lips. An irrepressible emotion rose within me. I pretended that I had not heard what she said, leaned near her, and asked, "What did you ask?"

"How did you become Uncle's friend? Do you have any relatives working here?" she said.

"Who's your uncle? I don't have any relatives working here," I said, my face turning red.

She explained that Nibushigu was her uncle, he was a city leader, his wife was Tibetan, and that they had lost their only son the year before in a traffic accident. Bamo was living with them and doing restaurant, night-club, and clothing shop business. I learned she was twenty years old, which was older than I was at the time.

A tall man reeking of alcohol interrupted our chat, held Bamo's hand, and said, "This is my girlfriend. I work in the City Planning Bureau. You can call me Brother Wang." He added that if I had any trouble in the city, I should call him and ask for help.

I thanked him and moved away from Bamo and headed to the toilet again. When I reached the toilet, Bamo was standing outside. She gave me a piece of paper with her phone number on it and told me to call her the next day. Then she left without her boyfriend. I thanked Nibushigu, who told me to stay in touch.

I then left, went to another restaurant, got some beef and soup to take to Sister, and bought a T-shirt for her in a small shop. When I returned to the hospital and entered her room, I found she was reading a book. She got up and told me that the doctor had asked her to pay the hospital charges.

Sister and I took our usual walk after she ate the soup and beef. I asked Sister how much she needed to return to school. She told me about 1,500 RMB.

I said, "I'm going to find a short-term job. This will let me look after you and earn some money."

I paid the hospital charges and called Bamo, who asked me to meet her at the gate of the city zoo. When I got there, she said, "Rdo rje, do you like this city? What are your plans after your sister returns to school?"

"I like this place as much as my home place. People here are very nice. It all gives me a feeling that I'm in my village. I want to find a short-term job while looking after Sister," I said.

"I have a present for you," said Bamo. She took out a small box from her handbag, and gave it to me. It was a cell phone with a phone card already installed.

"Why should you give me such a present? It must have cost a lot," I said, trying to return it to her, but she was very insistent. I thanked her and invited her to have lunch.

She said, "This is my home place so I'll treat you. When I'm in your place you treat me."

During lunch, she asked me to go to her nightclub and sing. She said she would pay me 2,300 RMB a month.

I was very happy but told her I had little confidence singing in front of an audience.

"There's no problem with your voice. Practice more and be self-confident," she said.

She then said that she wanted to see Sister and bought some fruit and other food for her. Sister was puzzled at her obvious interest in me. After Bamo left, Sister told me to be careful as we took our usual walk.

The night club was open from nine p.m. to midnight. The six male and six female dancers, and five singers (they were all Yi except me) practiced in the daytime. Their average salary was about 2,000 RMB per month, and the club provided room and board. I usually reached the club at seven p.m. to practice, but several times I arrived earlier because of Adu, a very talented, kind dancer whose slender figure was admired by all. She was invariably asked to dance solo by the audience. Adu asked me to help her prepare her solo performance.

I told her that I had no idea about dances, especially modern ones. However, I joined her, and we became good

friends. One day, only Adu and I were in the practice room. As her snaky waist moved at top speed, she suddenly fell. I jumped to the stage, held the back of her neck, and asked her if she was injured.

She laughed and said she was fine. I tried to get up, but her left hand was already on the back of my neck.

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"I'm sorry, I was overly excited. Are you all right?" I asked.

"I'm fine. We should throw your jacket away. See? It's got my blood on it," said Adu, picking at my jacket with a pale face. As Adu busily untangled her hair, I rolled up my jacket, worried somebody might see the blood. I was surprised at our carelessness. We had not even closed the door. She took my jacket, went out, and returned twenty minutes later with a new one.

I asked why she chose me and not somebody else.

She said, "Every man who approached me wanted a nice time with me, but you just ignored me."

I am still confused by that attitude.

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"Bamo, I'm afraid I'll forget the lyrics on stage," I whined before it was my turn to sing. As I peeked at the audience, I saw many people sitting, watching the dancing, drinking beer, smoking, pointing at the dancers, and laughing. Some were kissing in the corners.

Bamo said, "Rdo rje, come on! You can do it perfectly," and kissed my cheek in encouragement.

I blushed and gripped the microphone tightly.

"Welcome our young Tibetan singer - Rdo rje! He's a club member and is going to be here for some months. Let's enjoy his song - The Beautiful Red Plateau!"

The music started and I walked onto the stage. As I sang, people came up and offered me beer, wine, and unknown alcohol. I was drunk by the time I finished. Bamo

was waiting for me behind the stage. She was very happy with my performance and gave me a big hug.

I learned that people in that club offered alcohol to show respect and admiration. Those who frequented the club generously tipped the waitresses and waiters.

"What happened?" asked Adu in the changing room when the evening performances were over.

"What do you mean?" I said, changing my clothes.

"Bamo hugged you. Some say she kissed you. Why?" said Adu.

"She did it very suddenly. I didn't expect that would happen," I said. Adu was about to cry. I did not know why. My guess was that she thought I was her boyfriend.

"Rdo rje, what are you doing?" Bamo asked, outside the club changing room.

"I'm changing clothes. I'm just about to leave. Please wait for me at the club gate," I said.

"What will you do with our boss? Are you dating her?" Adu asked in a trembling voice.

"I have no special relationship with her. Don't be suspicious. She's just very kind to me," I explained.

"Nothing? Then why does she come to you after work is over?" Adu asked, hugging me.

I told Adu that Bamo often drove me back to the hospital after the club closed, not mentioning that Bamo had given me a phone. When I told Adu I would not be her boyfriend, she insisted that she would not let me not be her boyfriend.

"You took a long time to change clothes. Are you still drunk?" asked Bamo when I got in her car.

I smiled and said nothing. She tried to kiss me as usual when she drove to the hospital gate, and I reacted as usual, touching my forehead to hers and said goodbye, then got out of the car.

The next morning Sister said, "I'll be at school next week. What are your plans?"

"I must stay here at least twenty days. I promised Bamo I would stay here at least a month," I said and brought breakfast to Sister.

A couple of hours later my phone rang as I was about to sleep, exhausted from the night's activities. It was Bamo. "Rdo rje, please come to the hospital gate," she said.

"Why? I want to sleep." I said impatiently.

"I need your help," said Bamo and hung up.

"Get in. Uncle is inviting you to have a meal at his home," said Bamo when I reached her car.

"Nibushigu has helped me a lot. There's no reason for him to invite me to lunch. Instead, I should invite him to have a meal to thank him for his help," I thought.

When we reached Nibushigu's home, he and his wife warmly welcomed me. During lunch, Nibushigu said that Bamo often talked about me and said I was a very nice young man. He also added that he had felt very happy helping me when I first arrived in Kunming.

After lunch, Nibushigu and his wife said goodbye and went to their home place to visit relatives. I was drunk. I tried to get up and return to the hospital, but I could not. I woke up about an hour later and found I was still on the sofa. Bamo had disappeared. I wanted to leave but not without saying goodbye.

"Where have you been?" I asked when Bamo eventually returned.

"I went to the hospital to take food to your sister. How are you?" said Bamo.

"I'm good. Thanks for caring about my sister," I said. As I stood up she started to cry. I was confused and asked, "What's happening, Bamo?"

"I broke up with my boyfriend because of you!" Bamo sobbed.

"What? Did I tell you to break up with your boyfriend?" I asked.

"No, but I like you. I love you. I want to be with you. That's why I broke up with my boyfriend," she wept.

"I'm sorry I disappointed you. My parents won't allow me to have a girlfriend who isn't Tibetan," I said.

"Do you look down on me?" questioned Bamo.

"No, this is the custom in my home area," I said and then explained how negatively villagers treat cross-ethnic marriage in my village. Though I was trying to persuade her

not to not have a crush on me, we started working on each other's clothes as soon as her lips touched my ear.

After I had worked for about two weeks at the club, Sister was ready to return to school. I asked for half of my salary, gave the money to Sister, and started staying at the club's dormitory while maintaining a relationship with both Bamo and Adu.

The nightclub business was good. One day, Bamo invited all the performers to lunch. Adu sat by me. I was getting drunk. Adu stopped me from drinking more and asked me to return to the dormitory room. Bamo stopped her and said that she had a relationship with me.

"Rdo rje, you can't have two girls at the same time. You must choose between Bamo and me," said Adu angrily.

"Rdo rje, you have no choice - maybe I'll be a mother after a few months," said Bamo approaching me.

My friend stopped Bamo and signaled for me to leave. I regretted everything and planned to leave the city. I went to see my sister the day after this unpleasant event and told her I would leave and send her the money she needed after I got home. I then went to her head teacher and asked for help with Sister's fees. The teacher said he would help.

I told Bamo I was leaving because one of my uncles was very sick, and that I had to return to care for him since he had no children. She was very upset but decided to pay me a month's wage because of the club's excellent earnings.

The club members had a banquet for my departure, but I only drank a little beer. I knew both Bamo and Adu would try to talk to me after dinner. I said goodbye to the group and Adu followed me to the bus station hotel. She was very quiet that evening. We went to bed and got up at nine p.m., because she had to return to the club. She said she would not enjoy life without me.

Bamo came to see me at eleven p.m. that night. We chatted and held each other until I had to go catch the bus the next morning at six a.m.

Nibushigu had reached Chengdu before I left Kunming. I phoned him on the way back home. He said that he would like to visit my home some day and told me to keep in touch.

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This story had taken about an hour, and we had drunk another couple of bottles of beer apiece. My phone rang. It was my older brother. He said his wife had just given birth. I was glad to have a new nephew and told him I would be home soon. I said goodbye to Rdo rje. As I left, he ordered another two bottles of beer.

PART THREE: RELIGIOUS LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Thousands of years have passed and now we are losing many aspects of our culture. Ritual activities are being simplified each year as elders pass away.⁷⁰

Rgyas bzang villagers are culturally and historically followers of both Tibetan Buddhism and Bon. For example, if a high *bla ma* visits the village, all the villagers welcome him and ask him for a blessing regardless of his religious affiliation.

Twenty-five village households profess faith in Bon, fifteen follow the Rnying ma Sect, and eight follow the Sa skya Sect. There is no serious conflict between the sects and villagers invite *sgom pa*, regardless of their Bon, Rnying ma, or Sa skya affiliation to their homes to chant.

Bon provides practical solutions to such problems as drought and illness caused by evil spirits. Bon *sgom pa* chant during droughts, and rain comes within about one and half days. Unfortunately, with the passing of the old Bon *sgom pa*, no one can do this as successfully as in the past. Nowadays, it is said that only a few Bon *sgom pa* can perform religious rituals as well as old *sgom pa* did in the past.

Each family has a *mchod khang*, which is a room on the third floor where religious images, implements, deity images, and photographs of locally important religious personalities are kept. Every morning, seven copper containers of purified water are offered here, along with three lit sticks of incense in front of the religious images.⁷¹ A Dmu rdo image is also kept in the shrine. A butter lamp is lit every night, and prostrations are made in the hope that all will go well. Menstruating women may not enter the *mchod khang*.

The village monastery was destroyed in the 1960s. In 1982, Bon devotees put Buddhist and Bon images, and scriptures in an ancient stone tower in the village. These sacred articles were taken from mountain caves where they

⁷⁰ A village elder.

⁷¹ Grandparents in a home most commonly make these offerings.

had been hidden by villagers who risked their lives to protect them from destruction during the period of great social turmoil beginning in the 1950s. The stone tower then became a Bon shrine room that is both object and place of worship.

DAILY RITUALS: MORNING *BSANG* AND DAILY PRAYERS

Every morning before villagers have tea, a family member washes their face, takes coals in a pot to the family *bsang khang*, puts coals in the *bsang khang*, adds juniper leaves, dips a juniper twig three times in sacred water from a copper container, and uses a wood stick to dip wheat flour three times from a wood container and sprinkle the flour onto the juniper leaves in the *bsang khang* as an offering to such local mountain deities as Dmu rdo and Tsa ri spun gsum in the hope that they will protect their family and livestock.

Elders sit in bed chanting until tea is served. They afterwards bring wheat flour, sacred water, and prayer wheels to the village prayer room to chant and offer *bsang*. They leave the prayer room for breakfast at their homes at about nine a.m. Those aged above thirty chant for about thirty minutes before they go to bed.

ANNUAL RITUALS

Renewing *La btsas*

On the thirteenth day of the first lunar month, Rdo rgyag⁷² *La btsas* is renewed by boys and men from each household according to a local monk's instruction. About thirty boys and men go to the *la btsas* with bags containing block-printed scriptures, conches, drums, wheat liquor, wheat flour, incense,

⁷² A mountain northeast of Rgyas bzang Village.

auspicious wheat seed,⁷³ and wind horses. Before setting off at about eight a.m., they wait for everyone who will go to the *la btsas* - usually at least one representative from each family - and then ask a monk or a *sgom pa* to perform *bsang skor* to purify their bags. Pork, candy, dumplings, and sausage are taken to eat. *Bsang* is offered at a stupa near the village to inform Rdo rgyag La btsas that they are coming. They then walk about four hours to the *la btsas*.

Buddhist participants chant *oM ma Ni pad+me hU~M* while Bon participants chant *oM ma tri mu ye sa le 'du*⁷⁴ enroute to the *la btsas*, and do not rest while enroute. Upon arrival, ash from the *bsang khang* is removed, a big *bsang* is offered, and then participants rest while elders plan the renewal of the *la btsas*.

A monk or *sgom pa* chants for about an hour, and then the *la btsas* renewal begins. Old *rlung rta*⁷⁵ from the old prayer flags are burned in the *bsang khang*, and then new *rlung rta* are attached to the prayer flags. The prayer flags are replaced once every three years. Another big *bsang* is offered and conches are blown notifying villagers, who then burn *bsang* in their *bsang khang* to welcome the mountain deity. If a household does not offer *bsang*, those at the *la btsas* refuse to return. Every household offers *bsang* when the conches blare and those at the *la btsas* then circumambulate, scatter wheat seed and wind horses, and chant.

All the food is put together and eaten as lunch after circumambulating. People sit in a circle. After lunch, much alcohol is drunk, songs are sung, and then the group returns

⁷³ Wheat seed that have been put in the presence of a lama or *sgom pa* while they chant are considered auspicious.

⁷⁴ A Bon mantra.

⁷⁵ *Rlung rta* 'wind horses' refers to square pieces of paper about six centimeters square imprinted with a horse in the center bearing a wish-fulfilling gem and a tiger, lion, garuda, and dragon in the four corners. These images may also be printed on pieces of white, green, and red cloth (about twenty centimeters long and twelve centimeters wide) (Don 'grub dbang 'dul 2001).

home with birch branches from the *la btsas*, yelling "*O g.yang shog!* Oh! Let good fortune come!" Failure to arrive before sunset angers the deity of Rdo rgyag.

A birch branch is put on the pillar in the *gor khang* where butter is smeared when a family has a new calf, and then they go to the roof where each home has four *la btsas*, each of which features one birch branch and one prayer flag.

Those who have returned drink wheat liquor and eat leftovers from the *la btsas* meal with their family members. Villagers do not visit each other that night, believing that doing so results in the loss of the auspiciousness acquired from the day's ritual.

Sa bdag⁷⁶

Every household holds Sa bdag during the third lunar month and, consequently, *sgom pa* are busy. There is no specific time for *sgom pa* to go to a particular home to chant. The schedule depends on the order in which the families ask.⁷⁷

Families prepare for chanting before *sgom pa* arrive by cutting about thirty birch sticks in the mountains and bringing them home. They also collect seven small walnut branches, seven prickly ash tree sticks, seven apple branches, seven pear tree sticks, and use fifty kilograms of clean soil to make a symbolic *lha shing*.⁷⁸ The sticks represent sacred trees. A *spang rdog*, which is put on rooftops to the left of the *bsang khang*, is made using about seven kilograms of dug-up sod and thirteen eye-sized white stones. Twelve black stones the same size as the white stones are collected and taken to the third floor where *sgom pa* hold the ritual.

Sgom pa arrive with scriptures, religious implements, and request *rtsam pa*, corn flour, and sacred water. They use

⁷⁶ Locally, this refers to local earth-owner spirits as well as the ritual held for these spirits.

⁷⁷ The male family head generally extends the invitation.

⁷⁸ A sacred wood where the Buddha, Bon deities, and local deities are believed to dwell.

rtsam pa with water to make *mchod pa*⁷⁹ 'offerings' to the Buddha and local deities who they ask to protect the family. Corn flour with water and twelve black stones are used to make other *mchod pa*, which are an offering to evil spirits thought to appease them and discourage them from troubling the family's livestock.

Sgom pa print images of the Sgo lha 'Door Deity' and *klu* 'naga' on pieces of paper using woodblocks, and paste three rectangular-shaped pieces of paper on every door of the home. Each of the three papers is a different color - white, green, or red. The paste is made by mixing wheat flour with hot water. G.yu 'brug's home has thirteen doors and, when the *sgom pa* finish chanting, these papers are pasted on all the doors about one and a half meters from the floor or ground.

Finally, a *klu* image is made out of *rtsam pa* and butter and put in with *lha shing* and *spang rdog* in a line. After the *sgom pa* finish chanting, it is placed in the village drinking water pool with water mixed with milk and cooked barley. This delights naga, thus avoiding drought.

Females in a home cook pork, *rtsam pa* dumplings, and a pig's head because eating the best food is thought to help bring a good harvest. The family holding this ritual invites close relatives for the meal.

At about five p.m., family members go to the third floor and sit in a semicircle around the *lha shing*, *spang rdog*, and *gtor ma*. Family members follow as a *sgom pa* gestures. Each member puts their palm up to touch the bottom of the copper plates on which the offerings rest. If the *sgom pa* comes with *mchod pa* that will be sent to evil spirits, then the

⁷⁹ Images made by *bla ma* and *sgom pa* when they chant. *Mchod pa* made with *rtsam pa*, wheat flour, corn flour, buckwheat, or mud may be used to make stupa-shaped statues. Generally, *mchod pa* made with corn meal or buckwheat flour are only offered to malevolent spirits. *Mchod pa* made of *rtsam pa* and wheat flour with pieces of butter on top are burned in the family *bsang khang*. *Mchod pa* made of mud may be placed by the family *bsang khang* or offered to evil spirits. *Mchod pa* are one type of *gtor ma*.

palm is put atop it. Villagers turn the *gtor ma* so that it faces south or southwest when making offerings to evil beings. Next, *sgom pa* position *gtor ma* on the third floor so that it faces south. About thirty minutes later, a *sgom pa* hangs a 1.3 meter long black string around the *gtor ma* neck and then tells family members to put beans, buckwheat, corn, and pieces of cloth cut from their clothing into the box where the *gtor ma* is placed. These seed must not be scattered out of the box, otherwise evil spirits will be angered because it suggests the family does not want to make offerings to them.

Family members stand in a line from young to old irrespective of gender, and lower their heads. The *sgom pa* puts sacred water⁸⁰ on their heads. The sacred water that drops from their heads into the box is thought to wash away illness. The *sgom pa* holds the end of the black string in his right hand and a knife in his left hand. Family members in turn fully extend their right arms in a downward direction, holding the string in the right hand. The hand clasps the string so that the thumb is down and the fingers are up. The head is bent slightly forward and the person holding the string looks at their hand holding the string. The person holding the string must not look up and must not change the position of the hand. Holding the string in this position prevents evil spirits from entering the home. In contrast, holding the clasped hand so that the thumb is in an upward position invites evil spirits into the home.

When the family finishes the black string ritual, the *sgom pa* cuts the black string into pieces that are put in the box where the *gtor ma* are placed. A family member takes the *gtor ma* behind the village, positions it so that it faces southwest, and then burns it.

Before sunset, the *sgom pa* inserts seven *lha shing* in the *spang rdog*, puts it on the fourth floor, and offers *bsang*. A male household member puts cooked wheat, water mixed with milk in a bucket, seven small walnut branches, seven prickly ash tree sticks, seven apple branches, and seven pear tree sticks in the village water pool. Other members take a *lha*

⁸⁰ Water purified by a high *bla ma* or *sgom pa* who blows on it while chanting.

shing with a little water mixed with milk and place it in the middle of the field where the *zhing dkyil rtsa dkar* is located. A family generally has fields in four different locations around the village.

The *sgom pa* and a family's older members put a *lha shing* with each of the family's four *la btsas*.

'Khyags 'grig

On the eleventh day of the second lunar month, young people aged seven to sixteen called '*khyags 'grig 'du mi* participate in the 'Khyags 'grig ritual, which welcomes the arrival of spring. This is a time when snow begins melting from mountains, willows begin germinating, peach blossoms bloom, and offerings are made to Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities.

Unmarried youths bring auspiciousness because Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities are very fond of children and this ritual pleases them. The deities had a very brief childhood that was brought to an end by their parents' death. Afterwards, they separated to seek their fortunes. Three centuries later, they met on a mountain and decided to always stay together, while recalling their short, wonderful childhood. They see and relive their childhood in village children's happiness. Children's happiness thus delights local mountain deities, who also miss their parents very much; they consequently punish villagers who treat old people badly.

Fifty percent of '*khyags 'grig 'du mi* are primary and junior middle school students, who find any excuse to be absent from school on the afternoon of the eleventh day of the second lunar month, return home, and prepare for 'Khyags 'grig. They buy candy in the township town. Other '*khyags 'grig 'du mi* who stay in the village, will marry, and take care of their families without attending school, or who are only allowed to attend primary school, collect about five kilograms of peach blossoms in the morning when they take livestock to the mountains.

The '*khyags 'grig 'du mi* gather in the prayer wheel room in the village center. Elders discuss which family should

cook dinner. 'Khyags 'grig 'du mi traditionally choose to cook dinner in a household with a young couple. Married couples who have not had a baby after about three years of marriage are considered ideal choices.

The 'Khyags 'grig auspicious speech is considered more efficacious than such other speeches as wedding speeches. Villagers believe the family will have a good harvest and the new couple will have a baby if they have not had a child when the 'khyags 'grig 'du mi cook, stay in their home, and the 'Khyags 'grig speech is given.

About forty 'khyags 'grig 'du mi participate in 'Khyags 'grig. After elders select the family to cook dinner, three or four 'khyags 'grig 'du mi go to the designated home and tell them to prepare three butter lamps, a goat skin, and a conch. At about six p.m., the 'khyags 'grig 'du mi gather seven leather bags to hold offerings from households. Everyone holds branches with peach blossoms. The youngest holds three incense sticks and is the leader. The seven oldest children carry leather bags. The 'khyags 'grig 'du mi begin the auspicious speech offering. There are about four 'Khyags 'grig songs, and participants sing them from home to home, give auspicious speeches in every household, and put peach blossoms in each home's drinking water bucket and on the *thab rdo*. A part of a 'Khyags 'grig ritual song, sung by all the 'khyags 'grig 'du mi follows:

ta riə ɲiæ la, ʔo jɔ tɛ^ha ɲtʂī tə^h
 dza ʃə tɛə tɛi dzɔ maŋ, ʔo jɔ jə həŋ ʔla
 ʔla hə ka mpə mpə tu i, ʔo jɔ jə ɲgə ʔla
 kɛ sə^htɛə rə, ʔo jɔ jə ɲai ʔla
 ra dzi tsə wɔ, ʔo jɔ jə loŋ ʔla
 ts^hə rə p^ha rə, ʔo jɔ jə ɲhæ ʔla

A part of a 'Khyags 'grig speech follows:

ʔa ni lə^h lə^h rɛ ki tsɛ təŋ mə^hkə koŋ
 tsɛ rau ts^hu kə koŋ
 ʔla hə tə tɛə ja, boŋ hə zə tɛə ja
 boŋ ka loŋ lu ka gə koŋ

bon ɲjɛ loŋ lu ɲjɛ gə koŋ
 ɲtʂə ɲtʂə p^hɛ roŋ ɲtʂə
 sui maŋ ta^heiŋ ɲtʂə
 tɛ nə də tʂa rə bæŋ saŋ kɛ tʂa ʃə jə

The *'khyags 'grig 'du mi* give a slightly different *'Khyags 'grig* speech at each home. For example, if a family has an old man who will soon pass away, the speech extends the wish that he will have good health and longevity.

When *'khyags 'grig 'du mi* finish giving auspicious speeches in a home, the family gives them butter, wheat flour, pork, *rtsam pa*, walnuts, and buckwheat. *'Khyags 'grig 'du mi* visit every household and families offer the same gifts.

Next, the *'khyags 'grig 'du mi* return to the designated household to cook dinner. When dinner is ready, each *'khyags 'grig 'du mi* gives an auspicious speech to the family that cooked the meal and then offer food to the *thab rdo* from dishes, while offering an auspicious speech on their own behalf. Afterwards, the *'khyags 'grig 'du mi* go to the third floor, put three butter lamps on the goat skin, light three incense sticks and put them in the center of the third floor, shout "*O g.yang shog!*" while facing each of the four directions in turn, and then prostrate to *Rdo rgyag La btsas* three times. The youngest holds the conch. Three boys and three girls take three butter lamps and a goatskin with tea to the altar, which is a big rock about nine meters high, where *Rgyas bzang* villagers kill a goat as an offering to *Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities*. The youngest blows the conch three times to *Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities*. Three girls and boys begin singing a *'Khyags 'grig* song, put the goat skin on the rock, light three butter lamps on the skin, and offer tea around the butter lamps.

'Khyags 'grig 'du mi shout "*O g.yang shog!*" for about ten minutes. If there is a person from the family where the *'khyags 'grig 'du mi* cook, they approach the altar with a rifle and shoot it into the air, while *'khyags 'grig 'du mi* give a speech, asking *Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities* to give a son to the family, indicating the family has no son. If a rifle is not fired, it indicates the family wants a daughter.

A person from the family that cooked goes to the altar and brings the goatskin home about three o'clock the next morning. They make a shirt with the goat skin that day if the family has a childless young couple. It is believed that this brings luck and has power to give the new couple a baby.

If Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities are unhappy with the *'khyags 'grig 'du mi's* speech or the family has a bad reputation, the deities are said to take away the goatskin and hence deny the family a child.

Ra mchod

On the thirteenth day of the seventh lunar month, Rnying ma and Bon *sgom pa* jointly hold Ra mchod in the prayer wheel room in the village center. Three households form a group and are responsible for village rituals each year in turn. On the twelfth day of the seventh lunar month, the three designated families collect *rtsam pa*, wheat flour, pork, beef, and cash to buy candy that is given to children and old people in each village household.

On the morning of the thirteenth day of the seventh lunar month, the three families welcome the local *sgom pa* before the sun shines on the mountain.

Villagers believe that making elders happy is important, because local mountain deities punish those who do not take good care of elders in daily life. When elders die, villagers do not leave the village to earn money for at least a week while close relatives of the deceased customarily stay in the village for forty-nine days. If someone leaves the village, it is thought that the local mountain deities will punish them and they will have accidents with knives, terrible dreams, or their livestock will die without apparent cause.

The three designated families must welcome the local *sgom pa* before the sun shines on Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain on the morning of the thirteenth day of the seventh lunar month. While a designated male from each household takes the goat to the altar, village elders from each household are invited to the prayer wheel room to chant.

There is no certain time for Rnying ma *sgom pa* to chant on the thirteenth day of the seventh lunar month. They generally come to the prayer wheel room to chant at about ten a.m. Rnying ma and Bon *sgom pa* never sit together when chanting. Instead, they use a large piece of plastic held up with a string to partition the prayer wheel room.

Bon devotees think Buddhism is an alien culture, while Rnying ma *sgom pa* assert that Bon *sgom pa* use magic and cause unnatural events to occur, as indicated by the following account:

Once, Rnying ma and Bon *sgom pa* disagreed about the time to kill a goat. The Rnying ma *sgom pa* wanted to change the time of killing the goat from the traditional time of nine a.m., and then wanted the three families to go to Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities to offer *bsang* and the goat skin on the fourteenth day of the seventh lunar month.

Bon devotees believed changing the time to kill the goat would anger Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities, and bring disaster to the village. In 1981, the Rnying ma ignored Bon devotees, killed the goat on the altar at one p.m., went to Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month, and did not offer the goat skin. Those who went to Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities were struck by a hailstorm while returning to the village.

Rnying ma *sgom pa* had broken traditional village rules. In that year, the villagers lost their wheat harvest from hailstorms; a flood killed a hundred goats, fifty sheep, and several cows; and drought resulted in stunted corn. Villagers asked Rnying ma *sgom pa* to chant for rain. They did, but to no avail. Later, villagers asked Bon *sgom pa* to chant for rain. The Bon *sgom pa* first offered *bsang* to Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities, and then chanted. Early the next morning, rain fell, and villagers did not lose their only remaining crop - corn. In this case, Bon was seen as stronger than Rnying ma.

Nevertheless, they eat together, chat, and offer candy to old people and children from their chanting table as *tshogs*.⁸¹

Bon *sgom pa* chant about thirty minutes and then go to the altar, offer *bsang*, and put sacred water on the goat. A man from the three designated families slits the goat's throat and places the goat skin, feet, and head in front of the table where Bon *sgom pa* and Rnying ma *sgom pa* chant. Other parts of the goat are boiled. The soup is fed to livestock, and the three families eat the meat. When *sgom pa* finish chanting, villagers perform an offering dance while singing a dance song to Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities while elders teach children how to chant *oM ma Ni pad+me hU~M* and *oM ma tri mu ye sa le 'du*.

Sgrub lha

Every household observes Sgrub lha for male family members who leave the village to earn extra cash income. Men's chanting brings power and good fortune, and makes it difficult for evil to attack them. This ritual is only held for males. There is no certain time to hold this ritual but it cannot be held between the ninth lunar month and the first day of the first lunar month. The best times for the ritual are when the earth becomes green because it is thought that the *nor lha* will then provide what people ask for that year.

Men working outside the village lose some of their *bla* 'spirit' and may be punished by local deities when they dig caterpillar fungus, assist in building hydroelectric projects, urinate in water sources, or cut sacred wood. While not necessarily done intentionally, these actions anger deities. Villagers ask *sgom pa* to chant to call back the man's spirit.

⁸¹ Bon and Rnying ma practitioners put candy, sacred water, walnuts, apples, pears, wheat liquor, and eyeball-sized balls of *rtsam pa* mixed with sugar and water in a plate on a table when they chant in the belief that chanting empowers these foods and eating them prevents illness.

When a family has several men working outside the village to earn money, *Sgrub lha* is held for the oldest one because elders are respected. Every household holds this ritual once a year on the zodiac day of the oldest man of the home, i.e., if he was born in a Tiger Year they hold the ritual on a Tiger Day. Family members may participate in the ritual but if they have other urgent matters, they leave home. However, the man who was born on a Tiger Day must stay at home, sit by the *sgom pa*, and follow their instructions.

Sgom pa come to the home at about nine a.m.; make three butter lamps, *mchod pa*, and *tshogs*; chant for about an hour; offer *bsang*; and then tell the man who will leave the village to prostrate to the butter lamps and pray for himself, and then place a butter lamp in the *bsang khang*.

Sgom pa use chalk to make a circle on the third floor at about three p.m. The man stands inside the circle. *Sgom pa* chant and blow a conch. According to the *sgom pa's* instruction, he turns to face the four directions and periodically shouts "*O g.yang shog!*" for about thirteen minutes. Next, a second butter lamp is put in the *bsang khang*, while the man prays that all will be well for family members.

The third lamp and a *mchod pa* are taken to the *mchod khang* 'family shrine room' and offered to deity images by the man. This ritual should be completed before sunset.

Smyung gnas

Older village women practice *Smyung gnas*, a three-day fasting ritual that begins on the first day of each lunar month. Each household with elder women takes responsibility for organizing the ceremony in turn.

The fasting practitioners gather in the host family's home at about six p.m. Each participant brings a handheld prayer wheel, a bowl of melted butter, a copper spoon, and a string of prayer beads. The host family prepares beds on the second floor, puts deity images on the wall in front of the beds, and places candy and *rtsam pa* on the table. Participants rinse their mouths at about eight p.m. with sacred water the host

family brought earlier from a mountain stream flowing from a spring in Po rtsa Hamlet. Speaking, eating, and drinking are forbidden until the next morning at seven a.m. They light butter lamps, sit on the beds, and chant until about ten when they go to bed.

The next morning at seven a.m., the host family offers the fasting practitioners sacred water to rinse their mouths and, afterwards, they have butter tea and *rtsam pa*. The host family must offer tea on time or be considered disrespectful and to have sinned. Participants chat, rinse their mouths with sacred water, light butter lamps, begin chanting, and do not speak anything other than mantras. Bon participants chant *oM ma tri mu ye sa le 'du* while Buddhists chant *oM ma Ni pad+me hU~M*. At twelve p.m., the family brings sacred water, asks the practitioners to rinse their mouths, and then offers tea and *rtsam pa*. They go to the prayer wheel room after lunch where they light butter lamps, chant, and pray. At six p.m., they have tea and chat, and then wash their mouths at seven p.m., begin chanting, and do not speak anything other than mantras until seven the next morning.

A *bla ma* or *sgom pa* sometimes teaches Buddhism during the fasting period. If a *bla ma* has time to teach Buddhism, aged men join the fasting gathering, listen to teachings about how to obtain inner peace, the evil inherent in killing, and how to peacefully coexist with all living beings. Elders are particularly fascinated by these teachings and repeat what they have heard to their families.

'Bum 'gyur ma Ni⁸²

Villagers hold 'Bum 'gyur ma Ni in the village prayer room during the twelfth lunar month. Three households form a group and are responsible for the ritual each year. On the eleventh day of the twelfth lunar month at about five p.m., males from the three designated families collect *rtsam pa*, butter, wheat flour, pork, beef, and corn flour from each household. Villagers are happy to offer these things, believing that they took much from the earth and if they offer *rtsam pa* and butter in the form of *mchod pa* and butter lamps, this thanks the earth for giving them water, trees, land, plants, and animals. The Buddha and local mountain deities receive the most generous offering from villagers.

Sgom pa come to the prayer room at about seven p.m. Bon and Rnying ma *sgom pa* jointly make *mchod pa* and 108 butter lamps, which are kept burning for four days. They sit and chant when they finish preparations for chanting.

Three male *mchod g.yog* 'assistants' from the three designated families stay with *sgom pa* in the prayer room. They help *sgom pa* offer *mchod pa* in the *bsang khang*; arrange offerings of auspicious seed, butter lamps, and sacred water; and give *bsang* when *sgom pa* need it. *Sgom pa* start chanting at about six p.m. and the three families offer them dinner about two hours later. They do not get up when they eat. They chant a food offering before they eat, which villagers also commonly chant before meals.

There is a short debate between the two religious points of view after the meal as each *sgom pa* extols his own religion. They are aware, however, that they co-habit a small area and conclude by agreeing that Bon is the original indigenous religion. The day's ritual is thus concluded and the

⁸² The twelfth lunar month is considered the best time to chant *oM ma Ni pad+me hUM* and scriptures. Chanting once during the first fifteen days of this month is thought to be equivalent to chanting *oM ma Ni pad+me hUM* 100,000 times during other months. This explains why the twelfth lunar month is called 'bum 'gyur ('bum =100,000; 'gyur = become).

next day at around eight a.m., about sixty village elders come to the prayer room and sit on the ground in front of the prayer room to chant. As mentioned earlier, participants who identify as Buddhist chant *oM ma Ni pad+me hU~M*, while Bon participants chant *oM ma tri mu ye sa le 'du*. Participants hold prayer wheels in their right hands, count prayer beads in their left hands, and insist on chanting for four days despite harsh winter weather. The three designated families offer food and prepare tents for them if there is snow and rain.

The *sgom pa* finish four days of chanting at about seven p.m. on the eleventh day of the twelfth lunar month. About sixty percent of all villagers dressed in warm clothing assemble in front of the prayer room. Some hold flashlights. *Sgom pa* face east and blow *rgya gling* 'shawms' and order the three *mchod g.yog* to give all attendees auspicious seed to scatter to the east while the villagers shout "*O g.yang shog!*" Those aged sixty and above return to their homes. About 160 people accompany the *sgom pa* on their journey to visit graves. Those in this group are called *ma skor po* and walk while chanting through Rgyas bzang and Sgang bzang villages. *Ma skor po* proceed in a clockwise direction and all chant *oM ma Ni pad+me hU~M* one year. Participants proceed in a counterclockwise direction the next year while chanting *oM ma tri mu ye sa le 'du*. The eldest son in a family makes a fire in front of graves and welcomes this group. *Sgom pa* sit by the graves and chant. Villagers also sit around the graves and chant in concern that the deceased cannot find the way to the next life - perhaps evil spirits stopped them and forced them to go to Dmyal ba 'Purgatory'. However, if *ma skor po* chant for the dead, then they will find the way to the next life. The fire in front of the grave is a signal to show *ma skor po* that families want them to chant by the grave. *Ma skor po* chant for about fifteen minutes at each grave and are offered liquor by the oldest son of the relevant family. The *ma skor po* spend about twenty minutes chanting in front of graves of the ashes of those cremated within the last two years. Most who die at an advanced age choose their own gravesites.

Ma skor po visit at least 120 graves during the six kilometer journey and return to the village prayer room at about five a.m.

Village women aged forty to fifty hope to live in the village during their next life and, consequently, hold *phyag 'tshal* 'prostration' every year. About thirty women gather in the village prayer room on the third day of the twelfth lunar month at about six a.m., chant, and offer a big *bsang* by the prayer room. They start off to Rwa rste Temple in the township town at about six-thirty a.m. They chant on the way and do not otherwise speak until they reach Rwa rtse Temple. When they arrive, they signal a *sgom pa* or a monk to give sacred water to rinse their mouths so that they can speak, then they circumambulate Rwa rtse Temple for half an hour while walking, circumambulate the temple while prostrating three times, and next begin prostrating back to the village prayer room.

About halfway back to the village, village children bring *rtsam pa* and tea. Participants rinse their mouths and do not speak. They do not respond if spoken to. They must reach the prayer room before sunset, otherwise the journey is considered meaningless.

DEATH RITUALS

Funerals

Rgyas bzang villagers believe existence is endless because they are eternally reborn if they have a good guide after death, but the quality of the rebirth depends on having a good heart. Villagers are thus mindful of treating each other kindly. A funeral should include abundant food for the *bla ma*, *sgom pa*, and other guests.

When people are very sick, relatives and elders visit. Elders are experienced in predicting the time of death for an ill person. If they think death will come in about seven days, they suggest that the family make a coffin⁸³ and summon the

⁸³ A simple, long rectangular wooden box that is unpainted and undecorated.

concerned sons, daughters, sisters, and brothers who must visit the dying person. Not doing so incurs public condemnation.

The dying person is not lonely because relatives and elders stay with them, hold their hands if they are conscious, and express auspicious wishes for their next life. The dying person may apologize to the Buddha, mountain deities, and villagers for bad things they have done.

Relatives and elders put the deceased's bed on the fourth floor. The family washes the bedding seven days after the death and, after a *bla ma* or *sgom pa* offers *bsang skor*, everyone weeps. Neighbors come to console the family and also weep. Elders arrange the funeral.

Villagers use hearth ash to make three lines in front of their home gate when they learn of a death. Every line is about one and a half meters long, twenty centimeters wide, and the distance between the lines is about fifty centimeters. Charcoal is used to draw straight lines on the surface of two pieces of wood, each of which is about one meter long, about seven centimeters wide, and three to four centimeters thick. One wood piece is put on either side of the gate to the home. They also put a bucket of water to the right of the gate to prevent *byad*⁸⁴ from attacking the family and livestock. People attacked by *byad* may die immediately but, if they merely become ill, family members ask *bla ma* or *sgom pa* to chant and beat them with their strings of prayer beads. Livestock are given sacred water if they are afflicted by *byad*.

Men aged forty to sixty years of age wash the corpse with warm water, cut the fingernails and toenails, put the corpse on a clean blanket, and smear the orifices with butter. The corpse is then put in a fetal position and placed in the coffin. A relative of the deceased asks a *sgom pa* when and where they should burn the corpse. The *sgom pa* makes his divination on a mountainside because divining for the dead in the home brings a family bad luck. The *sgom pa* questions the person asking help, "When was the deceased born?" "What

⁸⁴ Villagers believe a dead person's evil forces leave the corpse and enter the village. *Byad* refers to the dangerous soul of a dead person that leaves the corpse and visits the village.

time did they die?" The *sgom pa* divines and in about ten minutes, stipulates a certain time for the coffin to be taken out of the home and a particular place where the coffin should be burned.

The *sgom pa* and *bla ma* are invited to chant for the deceased on the third floor of the home where the coffin has been placed. Villagers light 108 butter lamps in front of the coffin every day before the coffin is taken to the field to be cremated. Wealthy families sometimes invite high *bla ma* from other places to chant. Approximately thirty elders chant *oM ma Ni pad+me hU~M* and *oM ma tri mu ye sa le 'du* on the fourth floor.

About twenty young people go to the mountains to cut *dar shing*⁸⁵ and *gdugs*,⁸⁶ which they carry back on their shoulders. They do not remove the bark in fear the deceased's soul will wander in the mountains looking for bark for his *ma Ni* flags. Young people must return to the village before sunset. When they reach the deceased's home, a waiting guide tells them to put *dar shing* and *gdugs* in the field where the grave will be.

About twenty people go to the mountain to cut *tsan dan*,⁸⁷ which is challenging because the best *tsan dan* grow in precipitous gorges. They are expected to collect the best *tsan*

⁸⁵ More than thirty straight juniper poles (two meters long, with a diameter of five to six centimeters), cut for *ma Ni* flags are placed around the grave. The juniper *ma Ni* flags are burned three years later in front of the grave.

⁸⁶ *Gdugs* refers to a juniper pole about three meters tall, with a diameter of about seven centimeters, and several leaves on top, which is put behind the grave to the right. White, blue, and red cloths are tied in the tree. The IPA for this term as locally pronounced is *d□*.

⁸⁷ A conifer with a low burning point is used for cremation fires, and is also used when offering *bsang*. A piece of *tsan dan* is placed in charcoal in the dining room every morning as an offering. At least one hundred kilograms of *tsan dan*, cut by about twenty people, are needed for a cremation.

dan for the deceased and are expected to return to the village before sunset.

About ten villagers go to Brag mgo to buy cloth that is sixty centimeters wide, one hundred meters long, and printed with Buddhist or Bon mantras depending on the deceased's beliefs; twenty-five kilograms of liquor; a hundred kilograms of brick tea; thirty-six kilograms of rape seed oil; a hundred kilograms of rice; twenty-five kilograms of vegetables; and twenty cartons of cigarettes. The total cost of these items was about 2,600 RMB in 2010.

The deceased's family mourns for the next forty-nine days. During this time, they do not eat meat, women remove their *spa ras*⁸⁸ to show respect for the deceased, and men stop smoking. An important maternal relative of the deceased organizes villagers to help do housework for the deceased's family; women neighbors care for their livestock for a week.

Sgom pa usually suggest cremating the corpse between seven p.m. and six a.m., but may advise cremating the corpse later in the daytime if they think the deceased might bring trouble to villagers. Before the coffin is put in a field designated by the *sgom pa*, each household wraps their family *bsang khang* in a robe to avoid contact with smoke from the burning corpse, which is believed to bring bad luck. A *mchod g.yog* gives each household a small piece of paper that is about five centimeters long and 1.5 centimeters wide inscribed with two lines of scriptures written by *sgom pa*. The oldest son of a family puts it on his home courtyard gate to repel evil.

The deceased's family and close relatives prostrate to the coffin on the third floor. This is the last moment for the deceased in the home. Everyone understands that one of the deceased's relatives will take the coffin away. Family members wail and utter such lamentations as, "Please go slowly." "We will ask *bla ma*, *sgom pa*, and monks to chant for you." "Why did you leave us behind?" It is difficult for villagers to console them. *Sgom pa* and the *bla ma* tell them

⁸⁸ Thick, embroidered pieces of cloth used to cover women's heads.

not to wail because this makes it difficult for the deceased to return to their next life and be with them.

The deceased's son aged seventeen or older carries the coffin on his back to the field. Men walk alongside and help carry the coffin if needed. After the coffin is placed on the *tsan dan*, one or two persons escort the son home so that he does not witness the cremation. The *sgom pa* chooses a man who is the deceased's closest male relative to carry the coffin if there is no suitably aged son. The deceased's other family members stay in a room to avoid seeing the coffin leave. Furthermore, those of the same zodiac sign and other zodiac signs determined by a *bla ma* or *sgom pa* avoid the corpse.

About sixty males sit around the coffin in the field chanting and holding their hats in their hands to show respect for the deceased. Meanwhile, women and children wail at home. The corpse cannot be burned if women are near the coffin for this is believed to bring bad luck to locals. *Sgom pa* and *bla ma* sit near the coffin and chant for about thirty minutes. Two elders set fire to the coffin. The deceased's closest relatives cry silently because the *sgom pa* say that they cannot concentrate on preparing the soul to come to the next life if they cry loudly.

About three hours is needed to burn a corpse. If a corpse is particularly hard to burn, it is believed that the deceased may have taken a great deal of modern medicine while alive and/ or eaten food that contained chemicals, such as vegetables and fruits cultivated with commercial fertilizers and pesticides. It is also thought that the deceased may be trying to become a ghost. A *bla ma* brings sacred water to pour on the coffin or adds butter to the coffin to assist the cremation. If the deceased was male and the corpse is hard to burn, it is additionally thought that the deceased might have been a hunter and hunted mountain deities' mounts. The *sgom pa* has foreknowledge of this from his divinations, and has made an image of the mountain deity's mount that the deceased hunted in the mountain when they were alive. He chants for a while, which returns the mount to the mountain deities and asks them to not trouble the deceased.

Most people return to their homes after the corpse is burned. The closest relatives, *bla ma*, and *sgom pa* go to the deceased's home, but someone stays at the cremation site until daybreak. The next day, under the direction of the *sgom pa*, the closest male relatives collect what remains of the deceased's bones and puts them in a white bag. At the deceased's home, the *sgom pa* determines if the deceased's bones should be put in a grave or in Yak River.

When a grave is required, villagers help dig a square about twenty centimeters deep and ten centimeters wide in the earth to make the grave where the deceased was burned, ensuring there are no footprints inside the hole before they place stones in the hole. Soil from the cremation area is used to make a small structure resembling a stupa consisting of four parts. The base is thirty centimeters tall and about thirty centimeters wide. The deceased's bones in a white bag are put in the center of the square. Atop this is a cylinder made of the same soil mixed with water and topped by a round stone. This cylinder is about twenty centimeters tall and about fifteen centimeters in diameter. The upper part is joined to the cylinder top by soil and smaller white stones. *Dar shing* and *gdugs* are placed around the grave. Those who prepared the grave return to the deceased's home to wash their hands with water, and ask *sgom pa* or *bla ma* for sacred water to drink to guard against such evil.

Visitors bring a small amount of money (at least five RMB) or a piece of pork and bread to the deceased's home on the third day after the death. Such people (*'gro lta pa*) have a meal at the deceased's home of dishes and rice cooked by ten to thirteen other villagers who generally assume the role of cooks at village weddings and funerals. The deceased's closest relatives⁸⁹ offer alcohol and cigarettes.

'Gro lta pa give money or a piece of pork and bread to two of the closest relatives on the third floor who sit by a table registering names in a book. Another relative has a bag on a strap around his neck that holds the cash that is given. Some

⁸⁹ Such relatives are called *khur tshe*, and does not include relatives outside the village. They also help at weddings.

'gro lta pa talk to the deceased's family members, express concern, and say good things about the deceased.

'Gro lta pa visit the grave and chant for about fifteen minutes. The closest relatives give every 'gro lta pa a piece of brick tea, and a piece of pork while they chant. Some 'gro lta pa weep when they chant and say good things about the deceased to each other. They all wish the deceased to be reborn into the village.

Sgom pa and bla ma chant for one week in the deceased's home where they light 108 butter lamps on the third floor each day. The closest relatives help with housework. Every evening, family members, close relatives, and villagers light butter lamps at the grave, give *spos me mchod*,⁹⁰ chant, and weep.

Bdun

Bdun 'seven' refers to a ritual held every seventh day after death for a forty-nine day period by the deceased's family and close relatives. Village elders come and help make butter lamps. The family prepares dishes for *sgom pa* and *bla ma*. The presence of *sgom pa* and *bla ma* reassures family members, for they release the deceased's *bla* from Dmyal ba so that they may be reborn. At about one p.m., a *sgom pa* with a family member goes to the grave to swab the grave with white soil mixed with water in a clean bucket. Clean pieces of cloth are used to swab the grave. A butter lamp is lit and placed inside the grave when they finish. When *sgom pa* and *bla ma* finish chanting at about five p.m., a family member gives each ten RMB per day.

⁹⁰ A family burns juniper needles, wheat flour, several drops of liquor, nuts, sliced apples, sliced pears, candies, and a piece of brick tea in front of the grave in the morning and evening.

Zhe dgu

The deceased's family holds Zhe dgu on the forty-ninth day after death. About thirty villagers come to help. *Sgom pa* and *bla ma* come at approximately seven a.m. and begin chanting. About thirty elders arrive with their prayer wheels and beads at nine a.m., sit on the third floor, and chant. Several others assist the family to light the 108 butter lamps. Helpers offer noodles to *sgom pa*, *bla ma*, and elders on the third floor at noon.

About one hundred *'gro lta pa* visit the deceased's family with bread at around two p.m. and usually give five RMB each. The specific amount, however, depends on how much the deceased's family previously gave at a particular funeral. If, for example, the family of the deceased gave five RMB and bread to another family, that family will repay six RMB and bread, or five RMB and two pieces of bread. Visitors eat in the deceased's home.

Elders go to the grave at about four p.m. after the meal, light a butter lamp, and chant. Elders return to their own homes after the butter lamp burns out.

'Das mchod⁹¹

'Das mchod is held three years after a person's death. It is identical to Bdun and Zhe dgu, except no family members weep. *Sgom pa* and *bla ma* explain that the deceased's soul is searching for a next life and the family's sadness might prevent the deceased from having a next incarnation.

⁹¹ Offering to the deceased.

PILGRIMAGE TO MOUNT DMU RDO⁹²

Introduction

Many boys beg their parents for candy, new clothes, and toys, but Rgyas bzang children want to grow up quickly and visit Dmu rdo Mountain to see the hero described in stories told by village elders. When boys are disobedient, parents say, "Don't be naughty, or we won't take you to Dmu rdo Mountain."

Villagers believe seven year old boys should circumambulate Dmu rdo Mountain on the tenth day of the seventh lunar month - Dmu rdo's birthday. Dmu rdo gives power that makes boys brave, honest, and good men. Evil avoids those who have visited Dmu rdo Mountain.

G.yu 'brug Visits Dmu rdo

On Dmu rdo's birthday, my parents, eighteen other villagers, and I made a pilgrimage to Dmu rdo Mountain. We left home at seven a.m. Father dressed me in an unusual way - I had a red tassel about two centimeters wide and thirty centimeters long around my head. Though the weather was already hot, I wore a winter robe. A Tibetan knife with a pair of ivory chopsticks encased in a sheath hung from my sash. Tibetan boots made me hotter. I found other boys dressed like me when my parents and I met village pilgrims just before setting off.

I wondered why we were walking to Dmu rdo Temple when many cars passed by. Father held my hand tightly, because he was worried I would be struck by a car. Villagers never waved to the cars to stop them. Father said we should walk when on pilgrimage and added that if we took a car our journey would be meaningless because the Buddha and the mountain deity would think we were insincere and would not grant our wishes. Those in cars

⁹² See G.yung 'brug and Rin chen rdo rje (2011) for a longer version of this section.

were city dwellers and Han. People who lived in the mountains walked to Dmu rdo Temple and then climbed Dmu rdo Mountain.

We reached Dmu rdo Temple at about noon to find it thronged with countless people. It was the first time I had seen such a big crowd. I ran toward the crowd but Father caught me and said that some children had gotten lost in this festival in the last three years and he did not want to lose his son. Our group wanted to prostrate to the Dmu rdo image but we were unable to move forward. Finally we gave up because our destination was still far away. Father and two men from our group hung *rlung rta* on the *la btsas* by Dmu rdo Temple.

Our group went on and came to a village where an old man offered us tea and candy when he learned we were going to Dmu rdo Mountain. He gave Father a bag of wheat flour and asked him to offer it to Dmu rdo. There were two groups on pilgrimage to Dmu rdo Mountain in front of us and another close behind.

We met about 200 people who had visited Dmu rdo Mountain and were returning home. Father said about 6,000 people visit Dmu rdo Mountain every year. There was a different route to Dmu rdo Mountain for Bon adherents. We later saw them from atop Dmu rdo Mountain. I then realized why some of our group members seemed to have disappeared.

It was already dark when our group reached Nor bu phug, the halfway point to Dmu rdo Mountain, where there are several large caves about one hundred square meters in area. These caves are considered Bai ro tsa na's (Vairotsana)⁹³ meditation places. According to local accounts, he came to Rgyal mo tsha ba rong for about sixteen years to meditate and spent much of this time in the vicinity of Dmu rdo Mountain.

⁹³ See Schaeffer (2000) for a detailed treatment of this important Tibetan translator who lived during King Khri srong lde btsan's reign (755-797) and who was Pad+ma 'byung gnas's student.

We luckily found a vacant cave. Father told us to rest and then he went with another man to fetch water from a spring. The women made beds with our cloth bags and outer clothes. We had brought butter tea, *rtsam pa*, bread, pork, and wheat liquor. We had a nice meal. I wore my winter robe when it was time to sleep. Boys slept without blankets at the front of the cave with the men. We boys made a big fire, sat around it, and then slept.

The next day we reached a grassland where many stupas lined the road. Father said Bai ro tsa na made 108 stupas there in one night. We scattered auspicious wheat grains to the stupas as an offering. After we passed the stupas, Father and elders prostrated to a *la btsas* where many people were burning *bsang*, circumambulating, and hanging wind horses on the prayer flags. Our group chanted Skyabs 'gro:⁹⁴

Bla ma la skyabs su mchi'o
Sangs rgyas la skyabs su mchi'o
Chos la skyabs su mchi'o
Dge 'dun la skyabs su mchi 'o

and then asked the boys to prostrate to Dmu rdo Mountain. We followed, chanting, prostrating, and praying to Dmu rdo La btsas as we passed along a narrow rocky path. I was told bad people fell into the valley as they walked along this path.

Father handed me auspicious wheat grains, which I scattered to Dmu rdo La btsas, which more than one hundred people were circumambulating. Money, clothes, candy, and wind horses were inside the *la btsas*. Mothers gave boys *kha btags* to offer Dmu rdo La btsas. I offered mine and prayed that I would become powerful in the future.

Later, from atop Dmu rdo Mountain, we saw a lake changing from green to blue and back to green near Dmu

⁹⁴ Take refuge (in the *bla ma*, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha), a short scripture Tibetans chant before reciting Buddhist prayers and scriptures.

rdo La btsas. I was told that those who circumambulate the lake once would be reborn as a human in their next life.

Several herding families lived near the lake. It was the first time I saw yaks.

One of our group members felt dizzy so we did not visit the lake but returned home. On the way back, we visited a stupa that had arisen in a place where Dmu rdo had rested. I tried to understand Dmu rdo's magic power but failed, because my little brain could not figure it out.

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By 2010, I had visited Dmu rdo Temple five times on Dmu rdo's birthday. A recent visit was with Younger Brother on the seventh day of the first lunar month in 2009. We left home at eight a.m. and walked to Kha mdo Township Town, which we reached at about nine-thirty a.m. We then hired a taxi to Dmu rdo Temple for fifteen RMB (one way) and reached the temple at around ten a.m. Younger Brother offered *bsang* at the *la btsas* by the temple and hung wind horses on the prayer flags. A few people were circumambulating the temple. A monk was chanting beside the *la btsas* as people offered *bsang*. Visitors asked the monk to give them *srung mdud*⁹⁵ and asked such questions as "Where should I go to earn money?" "When will my son get a job?" or "What's the best time to hold a wedding?"

The monk used his thumb to quickly move beads on this string of prayer beads, closed his eyes, and gave an answer a couple of minutes later. Once satisfied with the monk's response, they put a few RMB in a box by his side. My younger brother and I asked the monk for about twenty *srung mdud* for our family and relatives, put a total of ten RMB in his box, and thanked him when he gave them to us.

⁹⁵ A red or yellow string about twenty centimeters long. A *bla ma*, monk, or *sgom pa* uses a conifer twig to flick sacred water on such strings and blows on them while chanting. Such strings are worn around the neck to bring good luck and prevent sickness. The strings may or may not feature knots.

After an hour of circumambulating the temple and prostrating to the Dmu rdo image inside, we left in a taxi. On the way back to the township town, I asked Younger Brother what he had prayed for. He said he had asked for power, and help in passing exams to get a government job (which he later got). Dmu rdo really can empower people to achieve their goals.

•••

I liked listening to elders tell stories when I was a child. Villagers finished dinner then often visited homes with good storytellers. Children particularly loved to hear stories at night, and dared not go outside to the toilet when elders told ghost stories. People sat around the *thab rdo* and listened to the storyteller, who sat on a cow or sheep skin near the head of the *thab rdo* with a bottle of liquor, made three offerings of liquor before beginning, held a tobacco pipe, and when he told the climactic part of the story, frequently stopped and puffed, heightening interest and causing children to impatiently beg him to continue. If the storyteller was female, she held prayer beads and counted the beads while telling the stories.

Several people often came to my home to listen to stories, and brought candy for Grandmother. We offered tea to the audience when Grandmother finished. Listeners drank liquor and commented on the story by criticizing characters. However, when television came to the village in the early twenty-first century, people lost interest in stories.

Villagers in Rong brag County tell different versions of Dmu rdo stories. I learned this Dmu rdo story from my paternal grandmother, A rtse (1940-1993).

Dmu rdo's Birth and Power

Several centuries ago, under the deities' protection, all was well in the mystical, auspicious place known as Rgyal mo tsha ba rong, where the teachings of the Buddha were strictly observed by local Tibetans. There were many ancient,

multi-faced stone towers. Some had four, others had eight, and still others had thirteen faces. This famous place of local kings and heroes was also known as 'the Earth's flower'.

One day, a Tibetan woman went into the forest to cut firewood. Feeling more tired than usual, she lay down on a bright green rock under a towering tree, fell asleep, and dreamed of a dark sky full of black clouds from which emerged a dragon that glanced at her. She awoke full of fear. Thus it was that she became pregnant and later gave birth to a son, Dmu rdo.

When Dmu rdo grew up, his mother could not satisfy his voracious appetite, which exceeded that of eight people. She then sent him to a primeval forest on Dmu rdo Mountain where he gained immense power. Thanks to the deities' teachings, he became very strong and clever. Hunters in the forest saw him run faster than the wild animals he hunted - some said he could run as fast as the wind.

In time the villagers were threatened by ghosts and demons. The tribal chief sent boys and girls every day to be eaten by demons and ghosts. All the local people felt they were in terrible danger and began to discuss Dmu rdo's supernatural abilities. Certain villagers finally suggested to the tribal chief that they ask Dmu rdo to deal with the demons and ghosts. The chief then asked Dmu rdo's mother to invite her son back to the village.

Dmu rdo's mother took eighteen pig ears, ten pig legs, eight pig tails, and *rtsam pa* to the forest. Standing on the bright green rock where she had given birth to her son, she called, "Dmu rdo!"

There was no reply. All she could see were piles of animal bones. Then she sang the lullaby she had sung to Dmu rdo when he was a little child. Suddenly, a man flew to her from a mountain peak and acknowledged her as his mother. She embraced him, wept, and related all that had happened in the village.

Dmu rdo told her to tell the chief to prepare plenty of food for his arrival three days later. His mother returned to the village and, three days later, Dmu rdo appeared atop the highest stone tower in the village. He shouted three times

and the clouds in the sky vanished. He then flew into the chief's home, ate the prepared food, and told the villagers that they should no longer fear demons and ghosts.

After he finished eating, he gathered his bow and arrows, flew to the demons and ghosts' lair, and fought with 'Dre mo spun bdun, the leader of the ghosts, for one whole night before finally killing her. The other ghosts then fled. Thereafter, the village resumed its normal life. Villagers were grateful to Dmu rdo and sincerely wanted him to live in the village with them, but he had to return to Dmu rdo Mountain. However, Dmu rdo agreed to spend the New Year holidays with the villagers each year. Afterwards, villagers painted the outside of their houses with white soil before the New Year to signal that it was time for Dmu rdo to visit. This is why every household in the Rgal mo tsha ba rong area whitewashes the outside of their houses with paint made from white soil.

PART FOUR: MARRIAGE

INTRODUCTION

A groom moves into a bride's home only when the girl's family has no son. The oldest son or daughter usually stays in the home to care for their parents, while other daughters and sons marry and leave the home.

When proposing marriage, a matchmaker explains how many people will be in the household, if the family will build a house for the new couple, the situation of fields and crop production, and identifies the oldest son and daughter in the family that has dispatched him. Engagement and marriage is easily made for oldest sons and daughters. Engagement is more challenging for other children because families must build new houses, make or purchase new furniture, and can only give the new couple a relatively small amount of land.

As mentioned earlier, deforestation has led to streams drying up and the watermill stopping. Villagers must now go to Kha mdo Town to mill wheat, barley, and corn. Villagers must also now go far from the village to cut firewood. This is all women's work and, after 2003, it became increasingly difficult for village boys to find wives outside the village because few women wished to live such a hard life.

When arranging marriages, wealth, reputation, and absence of diseases thought to be inherited such as leprosy are considered. A family's reputation is of central concern. A family with a good reputation is characterized by, for example, a lack of conflict within the home and with other families, being mild-tempered, showing respect for others regardless of their financial condition, and a lack of alcoholism. These characteristics are all thought to be inherited. Bad body odor was a concern historically but as of 2010, it was unimportant in marriage considerations.

LHA MO'S MARRIAGE

Lha mo and her father attended a relative's wedding in her Aunt Dkar mo's village, where a Tibetan dialect different from Lha mo's is spoken. It was Lha mo's first time to visit such a village and hear such a dialect. Villagers herd and farm and the village is easily accessible by vehicle. Lha mo was twenty-one years old at the time of the visit, and her beauty attracted the local boys' attention. Lha mo is a gifted dancer, sings well, and represented her village during the party by performing a dance and a song, further attracting the local boys, who decided among themselves to pursue her. They invited her to join them in modern dances but she politely refused. Rdo rje, who later became her husband, said to Lha mo and her father, "You are welcome to visit our village again!" when they were leaving for home.

Rdo rje was not very handsome but he was honest. He lived with his three younger sisters and parents in the village center. He stayed at home to support his three sisters' schooling. His mother could not do heavy work because of chronic illness. His father was a local *sgom pa* and was often away from home chanting for villagers. Rdo rje did both male and female work tasks.

Aunt Dkar mo visited Lha mo's home a month after the wedding party. That night, Lha mo's parents suggested she go to bed early. When the family had tea the next morning, Aunt Dkar mo asked Lha mo if she liked her (Aunt Dkar mo's) village.

Lha mo said, "It would be very nice to live in your village." Aunt Dkar mo was delighted with this answer and returned to her husband's village.

Lha mo's mother told her, "Rdo rje wants to marry you. His parents asked your aunt to arrange the marriage." Lha mo's parents knew that there was no heavy work to do in Rdo rje's village, certainly less work than in their own village, and encouraged Lha mo to marry Rdo rje. Lha mo was saddened by the thought of being unable to care for her parents if she married and lived outside her village. However,

following her relatives and parents' advice, she finally consented to the marriage.

Two of Rdo rje's uncles, an aged aunt, and a boy brought a box of liquor and two cartons of cigarettes to Lha mo's home before sunset one day soon after Dkar mo's visit. While in her home, ten of Lha mo's aged relatives gathered and welcomed Rdo rje's relatives. To bring auspiciousness to the proceedings, one of Rdo rje's uncles put a white stone as big as an eyeball on the right side of the family gate where the family's *sgo dar*⁹⁶ stand as they entered Lha mo's home.

Lha mo went to her best friend's home to spend the night. Her friend's brother told her that Rdo rje was nice and responsible. He said they were friends and had collected caterpillar fungus in the mountains together.

Several new carpets were put around the family hearth on the second floor of Lha mo's home prior to Rdo rje's relatives' visit. Her grandfather sat in front of the head *thab rdo* holding a pipe in his right hand, smoke incessantly wafting from his mouth. From his body language, Lha mo's relatives knew that he was waiting for one of Rdo rje's uncles to speak.

Village custom dictates that when people visit a home to propose marriage engagement, the relatives enthusiastically welcome them, but never mention marriage - they wait for the visitors to do so. If the visitors do not mention marriage within about an hour after dinner, the host's relatives return to their homes, thinking the visitors do not understand local convention.

Rdo rje's relatives were prepared. One of his uncles began to talk about the purpose of their visit about twenty minutes after dinner. He took a *spal par*⁹⁷ from his robe,

⁹⁶ Poles three to four meters long with two meter lengths of cloth that feature scriptures. *Sgo dar* are inserted into the stone base on either side of the gate to the home.

⁹⁷ This particular *spal par* is made of pottery and old enough that no one knows when the family came to have it. It holds

wrapped a *kha btags* round its neck, removed a piece of plastic from the bottle mouth, put a ten centimeter long hollow wheat stalk inside the *spal par*, offered it to Lha mo's Grandfather, and said, "Wise grandfather, please taste this auspicious liquor."

Lha mo's Grandfather slowly placed his pipe by the head *thab rdo*, took the *spal par* from Rdo rje's uncle, offered three drops of liquor on the head □*dza b*□, looked around the hearth, gave a short auspicious speech, drank a mouthful of liquor, and then passed the *spal par* around.

One of Rdo rje's uncles explained the purpose of their visit after everyone had sipped the liquor, "My nephew, Rdo rje, likes Lha mo very much, and will care for her. He is responsible. Please give your beloved daughter to our virtuous nephew, Rdo rje. We'll ensure Lha mo has a good life in our village." Next, he introduced Rdo rje's family members, relatives in the village, how many *mu* of fields Rdo rje's family had, how it was easy to collect firewood and tend livestock in Rdo rje's home, how villagers helped each other when they needed assistance, how kind Rdo rje's parents and sisters were, and he also mentioned that if any of the sisters got official jobs, they would help Lha mo and Rdo rje.

Lha mo's grandfather responded, "As you know, Lha mo is nice, hard-working, and a real beauty. Several boys from our village are pursuing her and several families have requested marriage, but she has refused. Rdo rje is lucky that Lha mo has agreed to this marriage. Rdo rje and his relatives must take good care of her."

Rdo rje's aunt said, "We want Lha mo to go with us to visit Rdo rje's home tomorrow. When Lha mo sees Rdo rje's home, she won't regret her decision," and went on to proudly describe the house in great detail.

Lha mo's grandfather slowly exhaled smoke, shaking his head, saying nothing.

One of Lha mo's aunts impatiently said, "Our Lha mo won't marry a man who has relatives who only think about

about two liters of liquor. The *spal par* is used during Lo sar, marriage rituals, and dancing parties.

property. One rich family wanted to marry our Lha mo, but because that family thought they were rich and could easily marry our Lha mo, she refused. If Rdo rje's family also think their wealth entitles Rdo rje to marry our Lha mo, please give up this marriage, and take away what you've brought."

Rdo rje's uncles were very embarrassed by their sister's mistake. The spokesman said, "My sister spoke unthinkingly after she had a drink. Please ignore her." Then he said to his sister, "Where can our Rdo rje find a girl as capable as Lha mo?"

Rdo rje's aunt remained silent.

Lha mo's grandfather was satisfied and said, "We are happy to hear Lha mo will have a good life in Rdo rje's village. I would like to visit Rdo rje's home when they marry."

Lha mo's parents, aunts, and uncles talked to Rdo rje's aunt and uncles, and made the necessary arrangements. They decided to hold the wedding during the seventh lunar month of 2000.

On the day before the wedding, eight bride-takers from Rdo rje's home reached Lha mo's home at about eleven a.m. Their spokesman held a *mda' dar* 'talisman'⁹⁸ in his right hand. Two elders from Lha mo's village welcomed them when they entered Lha mo's village gate. One elder held a *spal par* and offered auspicious liquor to the bride-takers. The two elders then offered a *kha btags* and hung it around the *mda' dar*. Firecrackers were lit by villagers when the bride-takers reached Lha mo's family's gate. Inside the yard, three of Lha mo's uncles welcomed the bride-takers. One held a plastic container holding five liters of liquor and one held a china bowl. Each bride-taker was offered a small bowl of liquor and cigarettes. The bride-takers were each required to drink one bowl of liquor. To not do so would have shown disrespect to Lha mo's family.

The bride-takers were escorted to the third floor where much fruit was on the tables. About 160 guests from three different villages attended celebrations in Lha mo's home. Each visitor gave a gift of twenty to one hundred RMB.

⁹⁸ An arrow with a *kha btags* tied to it.

Lha mo's family and villagers prepared pork, beef, and so on for the visitors and bride-takers. After expenses, Lha mo's family was left with about 900 RMB, which was given to Lha mo.

At about seven p.m., Lha mo's girlfriends came to see her with gifts of five to ten RMB each. Some of her friends cried when Lha mo wept. Relatives asked her girlfriends to have a meal. At about nine p.m., Lha mo and one of her friends whom *sgom pa* designated as Lha mo's companion, were asked to go to the third floor to receive elders who would each give auspicious speeches and offer auspicious *kha btags*.

On the third floor, *sgom pa*, six elders, and three of Rdo rje's uncles sat on the *phra*.⁹⁹ A bed was made for Lha mo and her companion in the center of the third floor. They were under the quilt with only their hair visible. Villagers came from each household to offer auspicious *kha btags* and came to hear the wedding speeches that they would remember in order to be able to recite such when they themselves were older and asked to give speeches.

Sgom pa chanted for about half an hour and then offered a wedding speech and an auspicious *kha btags*. Next, others in succession offered wedding speeches and auspicious *kha btags*. After two hours of wedding speeches, Lha mo went to her companion's home to spend the night. Villagers danced traditional dances on the second floor with Rdo rje's uncles.

The next morning at about six a.m., Lha mo was dressed in valuable Tibetan jewelry provided by her family.¹⁰⁰ The bride had to enter Rdo rje's home at a designated time time, therefore the bridetakers urged her to hurry. After breakfast, four uncles, two aunts, three cousins, and two

⁹⁹ There are five wood boxes of the same size. Each box is for a particular grain - wheat, rice, corn, barley, and buckwheat. Beans are placed in the buckwheat box. These boxes are placed side by side and people sit and sleep on them.

¹⁰⁰ She was allowed to take ownership of the jewelry when her first baby was one year old.

younger brothers prepared to escort her and her companion with the bride takers to Rdo rje's home. Lha mo held her parents' hands and wept. Her parents could hardly control their tears. Her friends came to see her and said goodbye in tears.

When this group stepped out of the Rgyas bzang Village gate, several aged women stood by a carpet. A *spal par* was on a table. A woman passed the *spal par* around and urged everyone to drink. Next, one of Rdo rje's uncles put fifty RMB with a *kha btags* on the table to thank the villagers for helping with the marriage. Lha mo wept again. Women consoled that she would have a good life in Rdo rje's home, and promised to help her parents if they needed it. They then started to sing escort songs as the group began to leave Lha mo's village.

About two hours later, the bride and her entourage reached the foot of Sgang bzang Mountain where Rdo rje's family had arranged ten taxis to transport the group. Ten minutes later, Lha mo's group reached Rdo rje's home. *Sgom pa* and Rdo rje's grandfather came and asked Lha mo to go with Rdo rje to the shrine room on the fourth floor and prostrate to the *nor lha*. Rdo rje's parents came to see Lha mo. Rdo rje's mother gave Lha mo the key to the family's storeroom. Lha mo bowed and took the key, indicating she was now part of Rdo rje's family.

RGYA MTSHO'S TWO MARRIAGES

Rgya mtsho was delighted with his marriage, because it was very difficult for most village males aged twenty-five to thirty to find a wife. Additionally, one of his legs had limited mobility. When villagers heard about Rgya mtsho's marriage, they could not believe it. Mtsho mo was beautiful, capable, and concerned about her family. Many wondered how handicapped Rgya mtsho could marry her, while so many other young village men had pursued her without success.

Villagers only believed the planned marriage was real when Rgya mtsho and Mtsho mo's relatives reached an agreement.

Rgya mtsho and Mtsho mo's families' friendship spanned several generations, thus the two families knew each other very well. When doing farm work together, Mtsho mo's mother mentioned to Rgya mtsho's mother, "If Rgya mtsho and Mtsho mo marry, our families' relationship will be stronger. You also need a girl to help you. Your life would then be easier, otherwise hard work will make your sickness reappear."

Rgya mtsho's mother's eyes brimmed with tears. She had never dared mention marriage to Mtsho mo's mother, because of her son's handicap.

When Rgya mtsho's mother told her husband what Mtsho mo's mother had said, he reacted strongly, saying, "It must be a joke! There are plenty of young men in our village with better prospects. Why would she choose our son?"

Mtsho mo's grandfather, who helped Rgya mtsho's family by herding sheep and goats in the mountains, returned with the animals and came to visit Rgya mtsho's home as he usually did at about seven p.m. Rgya mtsho's mother asked him if Rgya mtsho and Mtsho mo might become engaged. Mtsho mo's grandfather said that he was very glad about the prospect of such a marriage.

Rgya mtsho and Mtsho mo were engaged and a formal wedding was held in 2002. After they received a marriage certificate, Rgya mtsho's mother asked Mtsho mo to stay in their home, but Mtsho mo found many excuses. Every day she came to Rgya mtsho's home at about eight a.m., and helped with housework, and then returned to her natal home after supper. Rgya mtsho's father's business failed in 2003, and one of his younger brothers then dropped out of school because the family could not pay tuition for two students. Mtsho mo's mother suggested to Rgya mtsho's mother that if Rgya mtsho and his younger brother, who had just dropped out of school, stayed at home, Mtsho mo would come live with both of them, and be a wife to both brothers.

Rgya mtsho angrily said nothing. Mtsho mo's family then sent her to Brag mgo to work in a restaurant for about a

year without asking her husband's permission. Much gossip about Mtsho mo spread in the village during this year.

Finally, Rgya mtsho went to Brag mgo with the intention of telling his wife to return home. When he found her, she was with a group of hooligans in a shop that sold televisions. When she saw Rgya mtsho coming, she left the shop, went with Rgya mtsho to a restaurant, and told him she wanted a divorce. She said that her family had forced her to marry him, living in the city had changed her, and she now wanted to choose her own husband. She added that if he came again, she would ask her friends to beat him, and then she hurriedly left.

Later, Rgya mtsho received a court order to appear for divorce proceedings that included a demand for 5,000 RMB from his wife. Rgya mtsho was surprised, sad, and angry. His family had given her 3,000 RMB and valuable Tibetan traditional clothes.

Rgya mtsho's younger brother bought some books about marriage law. When Rgya mtsho went to court, the judge, Ms. Huang, said the courtroom was being used and told Rgya mtsho and his wife to go to her office. She said she would give the judgment with her secretary in her office. When Rgya mtsho's younger brother was stopped by Ms. Huang from entering her office, he asked, "Why should I not enter your office to hear your judgment? Did Mtsho mo ask you to keep witnesses away?"

Ms. Huang said, "Yes."

When he asked to see the letter that Mtsho mo had submitted with her application asking for no witnesses, Ms. Huang said there was no application from Mtsho mo, and that this was her provisional decision. Without such written application, the younger brother was finally allowed to enter Ms. Huang's office.

Ms. Huang asked no questions and ordered Rgya mtsho to pay Mtsho mo 2,000 RMB within a month. When Rgya mtsho asked why, Ms. Huang said that Mtsho mo had worked in his home and he should compensate her.

Rgya mtsho's brother asked Ms. Huang to show the relevant law stipulating Rgya mtsho should pay wages to his wife.

Ms. Huang replied that the law was in her marriage book, but she could not prove exactly which law stipulated this, and added, "I am a judge and, as a citizen of the People's Republic of China, you should obey and respect an official's decision or you will be punished. I hope you will pay before our bailiff takes legal action to force the payment."

The younger brother insisted Ms. Huang could not make such a judgment and said that if she made such a decision that was not based on law, he would appeal to a higher-level court. Finally, Ms. Huang made no judgment and asked Rgya mtsho and his wife to return home and use traditional law to find a solution.

Village elders advised against divorce, stressing that though Rgya mtsho was handicapped, he was a good man. The couple nevertheless divorced, and Mtsho mo's family returned 2,000 RMB and the Tibetan traditional clothing to Rgya mtsho's family.

In 2008, one of Rgya mtsho's friends from another township town said, "My wife's sister, G.yang mtsho, is single. I would like to introduce her to you."

Rgya mtsho gladly agreed. His friend then arranged a time and Rgya mtsho went to Brag mgo to meet G.yang mtsho. They had a meal together and chatted for about five hours.

G.yang mtsho did not think his handicap would shame her and felt he was honest when he candidly told her about his former wife. Her sister and brother-in-law had described his personality and, in the end, she decided to marry Rgya mtsho.

G.yang mtsho's family, however, did not agree because Rgya mtsho was handicapped. G.yang mtsho was kept at home for ten days when her family discovered she wanted to go to Rgya mtsho's home. G.yang mtsho was worried about Rgya mtsho because they had agreed to meet in Brag mgo five days after their first conversation.

Rgya mtsho waited for G.yang mtsho for two days in Brag mgo. She did not come and he was worried. On the eleventh day after they met, G.yang mtsho pretended that she was going to her aunt's home to help haul manure to the fields. With none of her family watching her, she went directly to Brag mgo, called Rgya mtsho, and asked him to come and take her to his home. She explained what had happened in her home, and apologized for not meeting him. Rgya mtsho rushed to Brag mgo without having lunch upon receiving G.yang mtsho's phone call.

Rgya mtsho and G.yang mtsho then went to Rgya mtsho's home. On the way, they discussed what they would do when G.yang mtsho's family members came to take her back to her home. They decided to sleep together and then her family would be unable to separate them. That night, Rgya mtsho violated village rules that stipulate when a new bride comes to the village, the groom must invite elders to his home to see the bride and give an auspicious speech. Traditionally, the new couple can only sleep together three days after these proceedings.

Five of G.yang mtsho's relatives came to Rgya mtsho's home three days later and asked the family to return her. They said that Rgya mtsho had kidnapped her and threatened to beat him. G.yang mtsho wept, told her relatives that she had become Rgya mtsho's wife, and entreated her relatives to allow her to live with Rgya mtsho. She knelt pitifully before one of her uncles. Village elders came and asked G.yang mtsho's relatives to permit them to become a couple. G.yang mtsho's sister also came and asked her uncle to agree to the marriage, and added that she wanted to have a relative from her home place in the village. G.yang mtsho's relatives finally consented.

There was no wedding ritual. The couple went to the Civil Bureau Registry and received a marriage certificate. Rgya mtsho regretted breaking village marriage rules.

PART FIVE: EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Rgyas bzang Village Primary School was established in Po rtsa Hamlet in 1972. Villagers are uncomfortable with the fact that the school was built on the site where Rgyas bzang Monastery once stood. The monastery monks were forced to become laymen, the villagers had nowhere to circumambulate, and villagers could no longer listen to reincarnation *bla ma's* teachings.

Most villagers born before 1987 are illiterate. In 2009, there were twenty village students, including two university students (one boy studied at Xichang University in Xichang City, Sichuan and another studied at Yan'an Medical College), three senior middle school students (one boy, two girls) at Rong brag Middle School, five junior middle school students (one girl, four boys), and ten primary school students (seven boys and three girls) at Kha mdo Center Primary School. Eleven village children in 2009 had not continued their education beyond the village primary school, which offered grades one to six until 1982, when the government stopped teaching Tibetan and reduced the number of grades to three. Children in grades four to six then had to attend Kha mdo Center Primary School to continue their education. Most students, however, stopped attending school because teachers in Kha mdo Center Primary School only taught in Chinese. Additionally, teachers harshly punished students, especially those from rural areas, as illustrated by a consultant's (b. 1969) account:

I had two teachers. Mgon po was a local Tibetan with a two-year college degree. He lived in Brag mgo and rode a bicycle to school. He taught Chinese language and often told stories about his college experiences in class. Zhang Mingxiang was a Han Chinese from Dujiangyan,¹⁰¹ had a two-year college degree, and taught mathematics. He said Tibetans were dirty, lazy, and impertinent. He was very kind to Han

¹⁰¹ A county level city within the administrative district of Chengdu City, Sichuan Province.

students, especially those whose parents had official jobs or were rich.

I never did homework for Teacher Zhang's class because he never checked it. I often fought with Han students in school. I did not wash and lice were often on my jacket and in my hair. Zhang Mingxiang took a louse from my hair one day when I was in his class, showed it to my classmates, and said that I was just like an animal, terribly insulting me in front of the class. My ears and face blushed and I plotted revenge. I finished class at five-thirty and then went behind the teachers' quarters stealthily, picked up a stone, and threw it at a third floor window in the room where Teacher Zhang lived. I then happily left school.

Teacher Zhang announced the next day in class that someone had broken his window, and said he knew who it was. I panicked. That afternoon he asked me to stay after class and asked, "Why did you break my window?"

"I didn't. You are my teacher," I responded

"If you study in my class you should tell the truth, otherwise you must leave," he said.

"I want to continue in your class and I'll study hard," I answered. I was delighted that he did not know I had broken his window. He had only wanted to bully me into confessing.

He then asked me to bring my homework to him. "The Three Jewels! What's happening?" I asked myself, because Teacher Zhang had never checked my homework before. I took out the previous week's assignment from my jacket pocket and handed it to him.

"Animal! I asked you for yesterday's homework!" he yelled, hitting my face with a notebook. "Silly boy! OK, I'll let you see the result of your actions," he continued and ordered me to do the previous day's homework. He said he would return in an hour to check and then he locked the door behind him.

I had no idea about anything related to math, and so put my head on the desk, and slept. It was dark outside. When he returned, he told me to go home and finish my homework by the next day.

I left the classroom, began running, and then stopped. I could not see the road. Realizing that the moon would emerge, I sat near the school and waited. I was afraid as I recalled some of Grandfather's ghost stories. I took out my amulet and put it on my forehead because Mother said, "Buddhas and images of high *bla ma* protect against dangers." I closed my eyes and prayed to the Three Jewels. I did not know how much time passed, but when I opened my eyes, I saw the road, and began to run with my shadow under the moonlight.

My family did not know what had happened. Father asked my classmates where I was. They said they had not seen me after class. They knew what had happened, but were worried the teacher would make trouble if he learned they had informed my parents that he had kept me after class. My family then stopped my schooling.

In 1997, the local government decreed that boys could not become monks and thus they lost the opportunity to receive *bla ma's* teachings and learn Tibetan.

In 2004, the government punished several families whose children had not finished nine years of compulsory education. Some families each paid 500 RMB over a three-year period and their children were ordered back to school. One father said his son was married and had a child, nevertheless, he had to attend primary school to comply with the government's compulsory education requirement.

On average, one child per two families attended school in 2010. Certain families thought education wasted money and time because several local villagers with two-year college degrees returned to the village, and had no official jobs, or else worked in restaurants.

Girls are often not sent to school in the belief they should stay at home to fetch water and fuel, do housework, and help with farm work.

G.YU 'BRUG'S EXPERIENCES

Village Primary School

One sunny morning in 1992 Mother said, "A rje,¹⁰² get up, your father is ready to go." She removed my quilt and put new clothing near me. I sleepily got up, dressed, and went near the stove where I ate breakfast without washing my hands.

"A rje, will you go with me or should I ask a teacher to come here and invite you to attend school?" Father asked. Children were very scared of the Han teacher at school. I quickly picked up my Tibetan jacket and caught up with Father, who was already walking to school.

"Father, does the school have Tibetan teachers?" I asked hopefully.

"The school doesn't have Tibetan teachers," Father responded.

When I heard this, I almost stopped, because I could not speak Chinese. Father held my hand as we entered the school gate, and approached a crowd where two teachers were sitting at a desk. One was writing in a notebook. The other one was counting money. Father spoke Chinese to the two teachers. We finished registering and found my classroom.

I shook like a leaf the next day as I walked into the classroom. It seemed hundreds of mice were scratching at my heart. I took a plastic gun from my jacket pocket, held it, and swaggered into the classroom. I saw an empty seat and walked toward it. On my way, a boy stuck out his foot, sending me sprawling to the floor, breaking my gun in the process. The students laughed. I slowly got up, laughed, and walked to the boy who had put out his foot. I thought, "You stupid boy, you'll pay for this," and then I beat his head with my broken gun until red appeared in his sooty hair, and then I vanished out of the classroom an instant later.

¹⁰² My nickname.

I returned home and played with Younger Brother. "What are you doing here? Did you go to school?" Mother asked, coming in with a bucket of water from a spring-fed pool near the village. She looked at my schoolbag and asked, "What's happening? Your father said that you would get books today but your bag seems empty. What's the matter?" and then she entered the kitchen with the water.

Mother soon returned, picked up my schoolbag, held my left hand, and we left. "Mother, where will we go?" I asked, struggling.

She held my hand tightly and asked, "Did you go to school with your older brother this morning? Did you find your classroom?"

I was worried the injured boy's father would beat me. I saw a hatchet near a handful of nails in a field, asked Mother to pick it up, and said, "We can use it to protect ourselves if anyone attacks us."

Mother ignored me.

When we reached the school gate, I saw teachers and the injured boy, whose head was wrapped in a bandage. Mother instantly knew what had happened. She touched the injured boy's head and asked, "Is it still painful?" Then she said, "This dead boy! I'll teach you a lesson," and beat my bottom with her palm.

I did not cry. The two teachers pointed at me and said something and then Mother and the teachers went into a room.

The two-floored school building was made of stone, mud, and wood. The first floor had three classrooms. Each classroom had a window, nine desks, nine stools, and a blackboard. The second floor had two classrooms and a teachers' living quarter. There was no electricity and no running water. The schoolyard was a small rectangle with a basketball backboard made of a single piece of wood. The school had no toilet. We went behind the school to urinate and defecated in pigsties of nearby homes.

We spent much time sweeping the classrooms and schoolyard every morning. A path ran through the schoolyard. Chickens, pigs, cattle, and sheep often got into

the classrooms, turning the schoolyard into a livestock pen at night.

Water dripped into the classroom from the second floor when it rained. The teachers said they could not be responsible for students under such conditions, and then they dismissed classes. A piece of plastic on the rooftop prevented water dripping into the teacher's living quarter. In winter, teachers were afraid the roof would collapse from heavy snow and dismissed classes.

Wu Xiaodong was a Han Chinese math teacher without a college degree. He lived in the school and never cooked because he visited different homes, talked about study, and enjoyed local hospitality that dictated offering good food to visitors and inviting them to spend the night in their homes. He spent almost no money on food. I heard that Teacher Wu had been unable to teach grade three math and that was why he taught grade one.

Wang Hua was Han, taught Chinese, had a two-year college degree, came from Chengdu, and lived with his friend in the village. Every weekend he went to Brag mgo and bought goods for himself and his friend. He was an expert basketball player and taught students to play basketball, which made students closer to him.

There were about four hours of classes each day, but no certain time for classes. The teachers liked to play cards, and often did not come to class on time. When villagers came to play basketball, the teachers sometimes played with them, even during class times.

Teachers were greatly respected and villagers did not criticize them when classes were cancelled. Every student's family invited teachers to their homes during the first and second lunar months when pigs are butchered and meat is cooked and served to guests at meals.

Every day, I sat with Rgya mtsho, a girl with messy hair, untidy clothing, and who never had a pencil box in three years. We had endless arguments during class. One day, Teacher Wu entered the classroom with a stick and a math book, which he placed on the teacher's desk. He said

something and then looked at us. The class was very quiet. Slowly, his face turned dark.

After a bit, two boys who were repeating grade one stood and said something. He brightened and replied with a smile. I watched Teacher Wu, afraid that he would beat me with the stick. Upper level students told us he liked to beat pupils' palms with that stick. The two students translated what Teacher Wu had said, "When the teacher enters the classroom, students should stand and greet him."

"Laoshi hao!" Teacher Wu said, an abbreviated form of "Good morning, Teacher."

"Laosi hao," the class repeated, unable to pronounce *laoshi* 'teacher'.

"Bao gao?" Teacher Wu said, meaning "May I enter the classroom?"

"Be ge?" the students repeated, unable to correctly pronounce what he said.

Some days later, Rgya mtsho kicked my left calf when I was using a pencil to draw lines in my math book. I wanted to kick back but felt my hand go numb as Teacher Wu's stick struck. I rubbed my hands between my legs, and dared not raise my head. I stood and tried to leave the classroom, but Teacher Wu stopped me. I was very unhappy and wanted to never return. I noticed the floor under Rgya mtsho was wet when she went out so I thought she had spilled some water. I also saw our bench was wet. I then followed her to see what had happened and realized her trousers were wet. She did not return to class that day. She had urinated. She later explained that she did not know how to ask Teacher Wu in Chinese for permission to leave the classroom to relieve herself.

I then put a plastic bottle in my school bag, thinking I could use it during classes if I had to urinate, but I never did.

Two months later, Teacher Wu wrote 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 on the blackboard and asked the class to say the numbers when he pointed to them. Only the two boys who were repeating grade one could do this. Teacher Wu then put his book and papers in his bag and left class.

One day, Teacher Wang came with a diagram of the mouth, put it on the blackboard, and tried to teach us how to pronounce Chinese *pinyin*. None of us understood what he was teaching. I was happy Teacher Wang never beat students when they could not understand what he said or when students played together.

Teacher Wang held my right hand and helped me write *pinyin*. I followed his model and, when he was satisfied, he nodded his head and went to help another student. Teacher Wang was very patient. He spent two days teaching how to write Chinese *pinyin*, because students never practiced after class. During class, we watched as Teacher Wang tried to teach or we played together with nearby students.

As I was sleeping at my desk one day, Teacher Wu pulled my left ear and made me stand up. He said something and I nodded. His voice became louder, and he pulled my ear again. I did not understand and said, "Yin 'OK'," when he said something I did not understand. I yelled in pain when he twisted my ear, then stared at him and said in Tibetan, "Please stop!" He became angrier and twisted my ear even harder. Tears trickled into my mouth and I clutched my pencil.

Later that day, I sat at my desk and stared out the window. My classmates had gone for lunch. I was very hungry. Teacher Wu sat in a chair in the courtyard, munching an apple. He had made me stay in the classroom and write the numbers one to five as punishment, not because I could not write the numbers but because he saw that I had held a pencil tightly and looked at him angrily.

A villager told me that afternoon after he had played basketball with Teacher Wu, "A rje, you are so disobedient. Your teacher said you slept during class."

"I did. Grandfather finished telling stories late last night," I said.

"Why did you grip your pencil so tightly when Teacher Wu pulled your ear?" he asked.

"My Lama! It was very painful. Teacher Wu has boney fingers," I replied.

"Teacher Wu said that you scolded him and wanted to stab him with your pencil," the villager said.

"I would never do that. My parents would disown me if I did," I said.

I thought I was very lucky, however, when I saw Teacher Wu punish Rdo gor when he could not write the Chinese character 三 'three' on the blackboard. Instead, he wrote 五 'five'. Teacher Wu then took three benches, stacked them up, and made Rdo gor stand on them. Rdo gor shook and sobbed. His eyes were closed. I stared at Rdo gor, worried that he would fall.

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I walked to school, carrying my schoolbag as birds sang along the road. "A rje, where are you going?" Aunt A mo asked in a joyful voice.

"I'm going to school," I responded. "Aunt A mo, where are you going?"

"To Brag mgo. Don't be naughty at school. Listen to your teachers," she said.

A bomb seemed to have exploded in the schoolyard when I arrived. It was deserted. I realized that morning sweeping was over and that I was the last student to arrive. I entered the classroom, said nothing to the teacher, and went to take a seat. I became upset because I did not understand what Teacher Wu was saying. Only the two students who were repeating grade one could understand. When the first class was finished, Teacher Wu took me to a corner of the schoolyard, and spoke Chinese. I understood nothing, but nodded in agreement. His voice became angrier and he pointed his forefinger at my forehead. I continued to nod, because I thought nodding showed respect or agreement. This is a local custom when old people criticize young people's mistakes. After a while, he stamped his foot and dragged me to my home. On the way, he continued talking. Father was at home and they talked for a while. Teacher Wu then shook his head and left.

After he left, Father laughed, held my hand, and gently said, "Son, if you do not know Chinese, just keep quiet.

Don't worry about what will happen next." He explained that teacher Wu had asked me, "Will you be late next time? Will you miss morning sweeping again? Will you not apologize to teachers when you are late?" My answers were affirmative because I had nodded my head

We did what the two students who had not been promoted told us in class and imitated their actions. Often they did not translate what the teachers said. We had very little homework. We waited for the bell to ring, swept the classroom, and played. I searched for pictures to look at when I was bored and sometimes I slept in the classroom with my head on the desk.

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One day my best friend, Tshe ring bkra shis, and I got to school at eighty-thirty. Most students had escaped from morning cleaning, and were playing outside where they could see the teachers approach. When a teacher was spotted, the students ran to the classroom. This was the usual ritual for grades two and three. Grade one students had no chance to play before the morning sweeping because the grade three monitor was responsible for supervising us.

We finished morning sweeping at nine a.m. Tshe ring bkra shis and I went to Thug don's desk to arm wrestle. Students surrounded us, watching. Some moved their desks away and played. Two students sat outside to watch for the teachers. At nine-forty, the teachers were sighted and we quickly moved the desks back to their places, took books from our schoolbags, and pretended to read. Teacher Wu had us play a game, and then he went to the grade two classrooms.

Two teachers taught three classes. We often heard the teachers playing cards in the teachers' room with villagers. Once a teacher left, students went home for lunch if it was at least eleven a.m. If it was earlier and the teacher was gone, students fought each other. The sounds of crying, laughing, and yelling filled our classroom.

Learning Tibetan

Villagers knew that their sons could not be monks and so sent them to the homes of local *sgom pa* to study Tibetan one summer holiday. There were about twenty students when the classes started. The grade one class had only three girls.

There were nine students in Sgom pa Tshe ring's home. We brought *rtsam pa*, milk tea, and bread from our own homes and ate lunch in his home. The first few days we learned Bon chants without a book. We listened to Sgom pa Tshe ring carefully and repeated after he finished one line. He said there was no mispronunciation. Everyone could perfectly recite what he had taught when he tested us the next morning. We sat in a row and listened as he taught how to be a good person and how to treat sentient beings.

Several local officials came to Sgom pa Tshe ring's home a few days later, and asked him to show his teaching materials, suggesting he needed official permission. There is no traditional rule that a *sgom pa* should have a textbook to teach students knowledge handed down from our ancestors. The officials knew that Sgom pa Tshe ring had no official book and ordered him to immediately cease teaching.

Likewise, the officials went to Sgom pa Tshe skya, who was teaching eleven students in his home, and ordered him to stop teaching Tibetan. Villagers then stopped sending their children to the village school. They said they wanted their children to study their own language. The officials warned villagers to send their children to school to study Chinese or they would be taken to the local government office for patriotic instruction. Without a choice, we picked up our schoolbags again. Such summer holiday instruction in Tibetan was not attempted again.

Primary School Grade Two

I had more confidence when I was in grade two because there was less tension in the classroom. We had learned to

send signals to the teachers; we had learned to look at the teacher during class and regardless if we listened or understood, we nodded and said, "Shi," the Chinese word for 'yes'. The teachers then concluded that the class was going well. This was important for we had less trouble with the teachers, who commented that we had made substantial progress.

I could speak a little Chinese after the second term of my first year. My older brother, who was attending grade three, helped me with my homework during the summer holiday. We secretly finished it in a half-day, because we were afraid our parents would punish us if they learned he had done it for me.

"A rje, you should study. You will be a grade two student. Where are your books?" Father asked, as he left to fetch water.

"What should I do?" I asked Older Brother and ran to my classmate, Lha mo's, home. "Lha mo are you there?" I yelled.

"Hi, A rje! Come in and watch TV!" she shouted back. At that time, Lha mo's home was the only one in the village that had a television.

"No, Lha mo, I dare not. I just want to borrow your books. Father will check my study," I said.

"Where are your books?" she asked and gave me a walnut. I picked up her books and ran back home without her permission.

"A rje, are you studying?" Father asked, looking at me a bit later.

"Yeah, I'm studying." I responded.

Fortunately, Father did not check my study. I then stopped using book pages to make paper planes and stopped giving Older Brother pages, which he used to roll tobacco in and smoke.

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"Where were you yesterday?" Teacher Wu demanded, holding my right ear, forcing me to stand.

"Let me explain, please, Teacher Wu," I implored. "My family held a harvest ritual." When harvest is finished, villagers ask *sgom pa* to chant, thanking Buddha and the local mountain deities for providing food and well-being.

Teacher Wu dropped his hand immediately. "Why didn't you tell me earlier?" he said and went to the teacher's platform. He said students should tell him when their families held such rituals so he could visit and check. Other students, however, told me Teacher Wu liked to visit homes at this time because he knew he would be offered such tasty food as pork, beef, and mutton. Teacher Wu talked about children's study until night came during such visits. Families were used to Teacher Wu staying in their homes overnight.

After three years, I could count from one to one hundred in Chinese, could understand about forty percent of simple oral Chinese, and could write a few sentences in Chinese, e. g., Who is my father? Where are you from? What is your name?

Kha mdo Center Primary School

We had no exam during my first three years of schooling, after which I attended Kha mdo Center Primary School, which is about five kilometers from Rgyas bzang Village.

"Who will cook for us at the Center School?" I asked Older Brother.

"Just bring bread. You'll understand when you get there," Older Brother said, picking up his schoolbag.

"A bzang, are you ready to go?" one of Older Brother's classmates yelled from outside.

"Yeah, wait a moment," Older Brother said, picking up a flashlight. "My Lama! It's already six o'clock. We must arrive by eight," he said.

"OK, let's go," I said.

Kha mdo Center Primary School is located between Yak River and Provincial Road 303. Kha mdo Township Town had twelve households, several shops, and a monastery in 2000. Transportation and fetching water were

very convenient for both Kha mdo Center School and the few families living in the township town.

Older Brother pointed to the gate, which was twice the size of our home gate, and said, "This is the gate to Center School." The big metal gate hung from adobe gateposts with 'Rong brag County, Kha mdo Center Primary School' written in Chinese to the left of the gate.

"A rje, look around the school, I'll come help you register at ten o'clock," said Older Brother. Mother was sick and Father had no time to help me register. Some of my classmates' older siblings were helping them, too.

"OK, I'll wait for you at the flagpole by the gate," I said.

Three buildings were positioned around a big playground, marked off with white lines. I walked along the lines trying to figure out what they meant, but found no answer.

I wanted to urinate, but a small building with two doors near the classroom building confused me. I read 'male' and 'female' on the doors. I saw people coming and going. I thought this nice building could not be a toilet and pretended to play. I took out my squirt gun and approached the door marked 'male'. I detected the odor of urine, and then watched a man go inside. A few seconds later, I heard urine splattering on the ground and then I entered.

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"A rje, let's go. You'll be in Teacher Qin's class. We need to register," said Older Brother.

"Older Brother, is Teacher Qin kind to students?" I asked.

"I don't know. I heard he likes some students, but not those from rural areas," he answered.

Older Brother led me to the three-floor classroom building made of concrete and steel. Each floor had four classrooms. Older Brother and I entered the first classroom on the third floor, where several students were clustered around the teacher's desk. The classroom was tidy, bright, and clean. Four fluorescent lamps hung from the ceiling.

There was a map of China on the classroom's back wall. There were also several basins and a dustbin in the right corner. A teacher's desk stood in front of the classroom and a teacher's platform was nearby.

"Teacher Qin, please register my brother. May I pay fifty RMB tomorrow?" Older Brother said.

"Yes, but you should ask your village mates to lend you fifty RMB now. I must give the registration fee to the headmaster. A rje won't get new books today unless the fee is paid," said Teacher Qin.

Older Brother went outside to find some friends to borrow the tuition fee from and then returned after a bit with fifty RMB in his hand and said, "Teacher Qin, I have the money. May my brother have books?"

"Surely. Tomorrow you should bring a new basin, and be on time," said Teacher Qin, pointing to me.

"The school fee had increased. Your total fee for this year is 200 RMB. Last year I paid 150 RMB," Older Brother said and gave me a piece of bread.

"Where did you get the money?" I asked in surprise. I knew our village mates had little money.

"From Teacher A mo," said Older Brother.

"Does she trust you to return the money?" I asked.

"Yes. She is very kind to students. She said I can return the money anytime," Older Brother said.

"My Lama! Teacher A mo is a good person. Tomorrow we should bring her some fruit," I said

"Right, but Teacher A mo often rejects gifts," said Older Brother.

"Why are there no notebooks? We paid fifty RMB to the school," I said.

"I don't know. Last year, the school gave them to us," said Older Brother, and then we went to a shop to buy notebooks.

It was easy to walk to school, but hard not to get sick with a cold because it was frigid at the school in winter. We ran to warm up and were soon covered in sweat. There was no sun until eleven. Broken windows in the classroom were

never repaired and there was no heating. The sun radiated little warmth.

"Older Brother, I want to go home," I whimpered when he came to get me for lunch.

"This is your first day. What's wrong with you?" he asked in surprise.

"There are several boys stronger than me. They often hit my desk with their fists. They have a relationship with Teacher Qin, my math teacher," I said.

"Don't worry, I'll teach them a lesson," Older Brother said.

I saw two groups of students sitting around two buckets in the back of the classroom. I stopped, gripped Older Brother's hand tightly, and asked. "What are they doing?" but he just walked ahead.

"Brother A bzang, come have lunch with us," Nyi ma, one of Older Brother's friends, said and stood up.

Two groups of students sat around two buckets of tea. The school offered two buckets of tea for thirty-five students from rural areas to share. Older Brother took out a bowl and bread from home and gave them to me. I said nothing and decided to return home.

"Mother, I don't want to go to school anymore," I said tearfully when I got home.

"What's the matter?" Mother said, feeding the pigs.

"Nobody cooks for us. We only have tea but it's not hot," I said.

"Son, you should be strong and learn how to face life like your older brother. He never lets difficulties defeat him," she said.

I nodded my head and wanted to help Mother feed the pigs, but she refused to let me near the dirty pigsty.

"My dear son, I hope you study hard and find a job in the city. Don't become a parent who has no choice but to work in all kinds of weather. Difficulty can create success," she said.

"OK Mother, I'll study hard," I said and went into the kitchen to fetch another bucket of pig food.

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A rainstorm struck Older Brother, some schoolmates, and me a few days later when we were midway to school. Most schoolmates ran to a big grotto by the path, not wanting to walk on to school. Villagers said rainstorms could lead to mud rushing down the mountains.

"What should we do?" I asked Older Brother.

"Just keep going, otherwise we'll be late for class," Older Brother said, removing his jacket, putting it on me, and then trotting ahead.

"Older Brother, are you OK? I yelled when I saw him stumble. I held his arm.

He stood and said, "Don't worry. It was just a little accident. It won't kill me." Blood dripped from under his chin.

"Please stop and tend your wound," I begged, returning his jacket.

"Don't worry, A rje. Accidents like this are common in the rainy season," he said smiling. "If you are absent four times, the school will expel you."

"Yes, that's right. My brother, Pad ma, was expelled from school because he was absent four times," Nyi ma said.

Classes had already started when we reached school. I was afraid of Teacher Qin, who punished us by beating our palms with a stick. He had also beaten Rdo rje tshe ring's back with his fist because he slept during class.

"May I come in?" I asked, standing by the door.

Teacher Qin opened the door and said, "Come in and stand at the back of the classroom."

"I want to sit. I'm very cold," I pleaded.

"What did you say? Are you the teacher or am I?" he said, walking over to me. "Why are you late? Don't you know when class begins?" he said, gripping my chin.

I told him why I was late.

"OK, you can sit but I'll note that you were late for class," he said

I wanted to leave immediately. I had never met such an unhelpful person as Teacher Qin. If students asked questions, he said, "I have no time. I already told you in class. Where were you during class?"

When we had lunch, I noticed Older Brother and Nyi ma were wearing big jackets. I asked in surprised, "Whose jackets are you wearing?"

"They are from Teacher A mo," said Nyi ma happily.

Teacher A mo was a local Tibetan who had married a Han. She was the kindest person in the school and often gave us hot tea and candy. She gave medicine to students who had colds and diarrhea, or helped them see a doctor.

"Teacher A mo saw we were wet, stopped teaching, and brought her husband's jackets," said Older Brother.

"How nice your teacher is! I'm still cold," I said.

"Come. We will have lunch with Teacher A mo in her home. She said to bring you, too," said Older Brother, holding my hand.

"Is this your younger brother?" Teacher A mo asked, offering us butter tea. "What would you like to be in the future?" she asked, giving me a piece of pork.

"I want to be a teacher, but not like Teacher Qin," I said shyly.

"Don't be shy. I know the teachers. Some dislike students from the countryside. Anyway, you should study as hard as your brother," said Teacher A mo. She was very kind to students, especially Older Brother, because he studied hard and got the highest marks in class. He never made excuses about being absent. Brother never backed down and if students made trouble, he took revenge, making serious trouble for them.

"If there are any issues with teachers or students just remember what your goals are," Teacher A mo said before we left her home.

"OK! Thanks for the meal," I said.

The Center School had about 320 students. Forty percent were Tibetan. The schoolmaster was a middle-aged man named Zhang Tao. He was very special. He never thought of us as dirty, always treated students equally, often held meetings for students and teachers, and said, "Teachers are second parents. Children leave their homes and come to school. We should treat students as our children, like Teacher A mo does." Teacher Zhang checked

the teachers to be sure they were not late or absent from class. If he saw teachers beating students, pulling their hair, or making students stand outside the classroom building in winter, he punished them by reducing their monthly wage by fifty RMB.

We had a twenty minute break after two classes, and then had a ten minute exercise program broadcast over the school loudspeakers. Blo bzang and I didn't know how to do the exercises and went to the river to play with our squirt guns. However, Teacher Qin saw us when he came to fetch water.

"What are you brats doing here?" he demanded. "Why did you two escape?"

"We don't know how to do the exercises," I said, hiding my squirt gun.

"You troublemakers often make me lose face in front of other teachers," Teacher Qin said, getting a switch.

It was true that teachers gossiped about teachers whose students broke rules.

"Sorry, Teacher Qin. I'm embarrassed doing the exercise when I make mistakes and others laugh at me," I said.

"Is that a good reason to be absent? Give me your squirt guns and raise your palms," he said and beat Blo bzang's palm.

"What are you doing Teacher Qin? Who said you could beat students?" Teacher Zhang said, suddenly appearing.

"These two students often escape from exercises," said Teacher Qin in shame.

"I told you that teachers cannot beat students, but you did anyway. I will reduce your salary fifty RMB for this month," said Teacher Zhang, who then left.

"You two remember today. One day you will know what a teacher is," Teacher Qin said, leaving in anger.

I was very sorry we had made Teacher Qin lose fifty RMB. I wondered if he would take revenge. "What should we do? We will now get no peace in his class," Blo bzang said.

"Don't worry. We will ask Teacher Zhang to change the exercise program to our traditional dancing. We must also apologize to Teacher Qin for our mistake," I said

"OK, but do you have the courage to ask Teacher Zhang?" Blo bzang said.

"I'll try," I said. I thought if my request was accepted then I wanted to see how the students who often laughed at us would dance.

I did ask Teacher Zhang and later, at a meeting, he said, "We are living in a minority ethnic area and we should have a minority character. From tomorrow, rather than following the daily radio broadcast ten minute exercise program, we will do traditional Tibetan dancing. Teacher A mo will be responsible and the time for this program will be twenty minutes. The teachers will also join the students in the dance program."

I rapturously yelled, hugged Blo bzang, and said, "We are adept at traditional dancing, and very soon our relationship will change with Teacher Qin."

"Yes, we can teach Teacher Qin to dance, and he won't make trouble for us," said Blo bzang.

"Afterward, we will study hard and I won't shame Older Brother," I said and then happily returned home.

On the way, village students talked about the meeting. Some students said, "We will show Han students how great we are."

Older Brother said, "We have already learned the daily radio broadcast exercise program. Now the exercise has changed. It seems Teacher Zhang has mental problems and made this decision even though he doesn't understand our culture."

When we met an old man and told him, he said, "You students are very lucky! Recently nobody cares about folk culture in the village schools. There are no classes in which to learn our culture. Villagers are also losing their language. But today, your teacher made a great decision to give you children a chance to inherit your own culture."

I felt sad when the old man left.

When the bell rang the next morning, I was happy because we would have traditional dance during the exercise period. Blo bzang and I stood close to students who often laughed at us during exercise. We wanted to see their mistakes when they danced. When we moved our left legs, they moved their right legs, and so on. However, they were not embarrassed nor did they escape from dance time.

Three weeks later, the Han students could dance as well as we, although they could not sing the dance songs. I realized that there was no need to be embarrassed if you did not know something. After that, I began to talk to Han students and made Han friends.

One winter morning when Older Brother and I were preparing breakfast, Nyi ma yelled from outside the window, "A bzang, today we should stay at home. Father said the snow is twenty centimeters thick."

Older Brother said, "We must go. This is our last year in primary school and we must pass the exam, otherwise we cannot enroll in junior middle school. I don't know what Nyi ma is thinking. The snow won't kill us."

I went outside to investigate. "My Lama, the snow is over my calves. I think we should stay at home," I said.

Father came out to check the snow and said, "You should stay at home, my sons. It's still snowing. I think nobody will go to school," and then he went back to bed.

"OK, you stay at home and I'll ask the teachers to excuse you," said Older Brother and left.

"No, Older Brother, I'll go with you, otherwise you'll be alone," I said and dashed out. Actually, I was worried about his health.

"Are you sure you'll come? It's not a game. When we reach school, our shoes will be frozen," he said, taking a stick to use as a walking stick.

"Don't try to frighten me. I don't believe our shoes will be frozen," I said, walking behind Older Brother.

"If you slip, grab my back, otherwise, you might fall into the canyon," said Older Brother.

"OK. You also be careful," I said. The snow fell heavier.

Older Brother's Accident

Older Brother slipped and fell into a stream when we were halfway to school. He tried to stand but could not. "Older Brother, are you OK? What about your leg?" I asked. When I helped him stand, he yelled and fell.

"A rje, go home and ask Father for help. My right leg hurts. I can't move it. The snow will not stop soon. Go, quickly!" he said, clutching his right leg.

"No, I'll carry you back home. I can do it," I said and put Older Brother on my back. After three or four steps, I said, "Don't worry, Older Brother, soon we'll be back home." After about ten minutes, I could not walk further.

"A rje, stop and go ask Father to come help," Brother said, struggling off my back.

"What's happening? Are you OK, my dear sons?" Father said, suddenly appearing.

"Father, Older Brother is injured," I said, wanting to cry. Father checked Brother's leg. Brother yelled when he touched certain areas.

"What should we do Father?" I sobbed.

"A rje, go home and tell your mother that your older brother is injured, and ask your uncle to come to Rong brag Hospital," Father said.

"OK, but do you have money to pay for the hospital?" I asked, taking out five RMB that one of my uncles had given me three weeks earlier and handing it to Father.

"That's why you must ask your uncle to come," said Father, taking the five RMB and putting it his pocket. At that time, Uncle had no children attending school and was thus relatively wealthy.

I was panting when I reached home. I wondered if I should tell Mother first or Uncle. If I told Mother that Older Brother was injured, I worried she would faint because of her bad heart. I turned and went to Uncle's home.

"Uncle, please open the door!" I yelled.

"Come in. You're very early. Your uncle is still sleeping," said Aunt.

"Aunt, please call Uncle. I have something to tell him," I said.

"A rje, you didn't go to school?" Uncle asked with inquiring eyes a bit later.

"Uncle, Older Brother is injured. Father asks you to help," I said tears in my eyes

"Where are they?" Uncle asked, putting on his robe.

"Rong brag Hospital. Older Brother can't move his right leg," I said.

"I'll come right now," Uncle said, taking his bankbook and leaving without eating anything.

"Mother, I'm back. Did you have breakfast?" I asked, entering the bedroom to change clothes.

"Where are your brother and father?" said Mother, bringing hot, butter tea. Grandmother had worried about us and asked Father to follow us.

"Mother, Older Brother has diarrhea, so Father took him to Rong brag Hospital for medicine," I said.

"OK, let's have breakfast. Please wake up your younger brother," Mother said and went upstairs to call Grandmother to breakfast.

"A rje, why did you make up a story and lie to Mother?" I asked myself in a depressed mood as we had breakfast.

Grandmother discovered something in my face and said, "A rje, we have diarrhea medicine at home. Why would your Father take your brother to hospital?"

"OK. Mother, don't worry. Older Brother was hurt," I said looking at Mother.

"My Lama! Which part of his body did he injure?" Mother asked.

I told Mother and Grandmother what had happened to Older Brother. Mother cried, I put my arms around her, and said, "Mother, don't worry, I'll go with Grandfather and ask the *bla ma* to chant for Older Brother."

Older Brother spent a month in the hospital. During this time, a new schoolmaster came to our school. He was about fifty years old and arrogant.

I told Teacher A mo what had happened to Older Brother. She said that Older Brother could stay at home when he left the hospital. However, when Teacher Jining became schoolmaster two weeks later, he said Older Brother would be expelled according to the school rules.

I told Teacher A mo this, and asked her to persuade Teacher Jining to allow Older Brother to resume his study.

"Teacher Jining, my student, A bzung, was injured. Our previous schoolmaster gave permission for him to stay at home," said Teacher A mo.

"Teacher A mo, you're a good teacher, but nobody informed me about A bzung. This is a school, not a game or a party. We must comply with school rules," said Teacher Jining.

"Teacher Jining, you should give A bzung a chance to continue studying," Teacher A mo said.

"Are you going to teach me how to be a schoolmaster? You should be careful with your language," responded Teacher Jining.

"OK, let me explain," said Teacher A mo, and then related everything that had happened to Older Brother.

"I only know the school rules," said Teacher Jining.

"You don't even believe me?" Teacher A mo said in surprise.

"Teacher A mo, I won't argue with you. Do what you need to do," said Teacher Jining and left.

"A rje, don't worry, I'll talk to Teacher Jining again," said Teacher A mo.

I thanked Teacher A mo, went to my classroom, and wept.

Older Brother was thus expelled when he was in grade six. I then had to learn how to be independent and concentrate on my study. During lunch and break times, certain students pointed at me and said that I would not pass the junior middle school entrance exam because my study results were poor. I never gave up. I was confident my hard work would enable me to overcome whatever obstacles presented themselves.

Rong brag Junior Middle School

I passed the entrance examination and enrolled in Rong brag Junior Middle School, the best school in Rong brag County. It was located southeast of Kha mdo Township Town, and consisted of four buildings in a quadrangle creating a playground about 160 meters wide and 180 meters long. The two playgrounds had three ping-pong tables. The six-floored, concrete and steel classroom building had six classrooms per floor. A stairway was in the center of the building and another was on the right side of the building.

There was no difference between Kha mdo Center Primary School's classrooms and the junior middle school's classrooms, except that the desks were bigger. The four buildings included two apartment buildings for teachers. A student dormitory building was to the left of the classroom building. The boys' and girls' dormitories were identical and built around two small quadrangles. There was no dining room. Local Han sold food to students, who took it to their dormitory rooms to eat. The school did not provide boiled drinking water.

There were 480 students in Rong brag Junior Middle School of whom 360 boarded at the school. The others rented rooms or slept at home. Most students were from Kha mdo and Dgu rtsong townships. Younger Brother and I lived in the kitchen of a monastery located near Kha mdo Township Town. I cooked for Younger Brother, who was attending Center Primary School.

I studied Chinese, Math, Chemistry, Chinese History, Geography, and Biology. Students were divided into advanced and ordinary classes in each grade. There was only one advanced class each year. Entry into the advanced class depended on your marks and relationship with the schoolmaster. English was only taught to the advanced classes, which I was never part of.

The school had forty-three teachers. Six were Tibetans from Rong brag, and the others were Han Chinese,

mostly from Chengdu. The schoolmaster was a handsome, middle-aged man.

I sat with a Han student, Chen Dengji, who was nice and earnestly lent aid when others needed help. We never argued as other students often did.

I had six teachers. They were Han except for Ga lo and Rgya mtsho. Teacher Ga lo had a two-year college degree and taught Biology. He had taught for twenty years in Rong brag Junior Middle School, and never brought teaching materials to class because he had memorized the textbook. Students could pass his tests. Teacher Ga lo talked with students during the break, and sometimes invited students who lacked money to eat meals in his home.

I was friendly with my Chinese teacher, Rgya mtsho. I got the highest mark on the first test in his class, and he said that I should write essays and I did so. After he checked them, the school announcer read them over the loudspeaker at lunchtime. Every week I had an essay read, such as 'Spring Comes to the School' and 'My Teacher'. Teacher Rgya mtsho was very happy with my writing. I regret not continuing to write regularly in Chinese after finishing junior middle school.

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"Where is your math book?" Teacher Hu asked me angrily one day.

"In my drawer," I responded, taking out my math book and putting it on my desk.

"Which page are we discussing?" Teacher Hu asked, looking at my notebook.

I could not find the page the class was discussing, because I had not been paying attention. "This is math class, not your writing class," said Teacher Hu and took my notebook to his desk. "I don't want to spend class time talking about this. Come to my room during the break," he said and continued class.

"You don't like math class or you don't like me?" Teacher Hu asked when I got to his room.

"I had a headache last night. I didn't feel well," I said.

"Is it still painful?" Teacher Hu asked in concern.

"No, I'm getting better. Sorry, Teacher Hu," I said

"I have no further questions. Think about how to manage your time. I know your math is poor, but you need to work harder at it. Come see me if you have questions and I'll help you," Teacher Hu said, returning my notebook.

I thanked him and left. Afterwards, I worked hard at math, and Teacher Hu often helped me. Teacher Hu and I became good friends, and he often visited me in the monastery kitchen.

The school planned to hold a festival on Teacher's Day and our class was told to give a performance. We discussed what to do. I said I would write an article to thank the teachers for caring about us.

Teacher Rgya mtsho's encouragement and help resulted in much improvement in my Chinese reading and writing skills. I received fifty RMB from the school as a prize for the articles I contributed to the school broadcast station. Because of Teacher Rgya mtsho's intervention, I had time to cook for Younger Brother instead of doing morning exercises at school.

As time passed, I wanted to be class monitor and speak in front of the class. I felt that I could do something special and asked Teacher Rgya mtsho to appoint me class monitor.

"G.yu 'brug, if the class wants to change monitors, then the students should vote," said Teacher Rgya mtsho.

"The class told me that they want me to be the monitor," I said.

"OK, we will discuss this during class, but the most important thing is for you to study hard," said Teacher Rgya mtsho.

"OK, I'll study hard, and I'll think about what you've said," I replied. I wondered why Teacher Rgya mtsho said studying hard was most important. My Chinese was the best in the class. "Maybe Teacher Rgya mtsho thinks I am too proud," I thought.

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Teacher Wang put the chemistry test mark list on the teacher's desk. He shook his head and shouted furiously, "Idiots! What is this class doing? Why are you here?"

"Teacher Wang how was my test mark?" asked Chen Dengji, who was excellent at chemistry.

"You are the only one who passed," said Teacher Wang.

I sat silently at my desk and realized that Teacher Rgya mtsho wanted me to study every subject, not only Chinese.

I then understood why I needed to concentrate on study. I needed time to cook and care for Younger Brother, and also time to study. I had no time to manage a class, as did monitors who lived at the school.

I liked political theory class. There was no need to think. If you memorized the sections the teacher indicated in the text, you scored ninety percent on the exams. Almost everyone else disliked political theory class for precisely the same reason that I liked it. Their study consisted of memorizing sections of the text for an exam a week ahead of an exam. I, on the other hand, often asked teachers questions and sometimes we debated in class.

"Material wealth is easy to acquire but not spiritual wealth," Teacher Gao said one day in class.

"Why?" I asked.

"Firstly, material wealth is food, a house, a car, and so on. They are easy to get. Secondly, people are greedy, and always want more. For example, if you have a bicycle, you want a motorcycle, and then a car. People living in cities have an insatiable appetite for wealth," said Teacher Gao.

"Spiritual and material wealth can't be compared. When people have material wealth, they obtain spiritual wealth. The desire for material wealth is never satisfied if you don't understand spiritual wealth," I said

"Why do you think so?" Teacher Gao asked.

"Two old men often sit together in my village. One is content with his life. The other is unhappy, because he thinks his children should give him money to play mahjong with others who retired from working in Brag mgo," I responded.

"OK, but anyway, we should learn from books, not your village," said Teacher Gao.

"We should face society's realities," I said, and thus our debate ended. I appreciated the fact that he had given me a chance to express my opinion.

My Chinese history teacher was a tall, strong man, and loved basketball. People called him Three Points, because he often helped the school win basketball competitions. He was a local man whose parents were classified as Han and Qiang.

"Please give your book to me. You and Chen Dengji share," Teacher Luo said, taking my book from the desk. He often did not bring his book, because he was busy playing basketball.

"Sorry, Teacher, he didn't bring his book," I said.

"Why are you here?" Teacher Luo asked Chen Dengji.

"I left my book in my dorm room," Chen Dengji said.

"Stand at the back of the classroom. Next time, remember to have your book in class," said Teacher Luo.

Students often found excuses to be absent from Chinese history class. Upper grade students said that they found the official view of Chinese history and local accounts very different. I disagreed with the official depiction because it cast China as innocent in every conflict. About one month later, I went to sleep or did other work in Chinese history class and I was pleased if Teacher Luo made me stand in the back of the classroom.

I had only two geography classes because the geography teacher was assigned to another school. The school then gave exercise classes instead of geography classes.

The third year of junior middle school was the time for us to decide our future. My family wanted me to take the exams for both senior middle school and vocational school.¹⁰³ Students who studied well generally only took the

¹⁰³ Vocational school generally refers to a three to four year program in a school that awards degrees for such specialties as

middle school exam, because it was believed that we would probably qualify for university and thus be better able to acquire a lifetime government job.

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"A rje, you have a letter!" Uncle yelled from the gate.

"Come in, and have tea," I said, and went to open the gate.

"Where did you get this letter?" I asked.

"Kha mdo Township Town. Where's your mother? Please call her to come here," Uncle said, putting the letter back in his pocket.

I went to the fields and told Mother that Uncle had a message. She asked fearfully, "What happened to your uncle?"

"Nothing. He brought a letter for me and asked you to come," I said.

On the way home, Mother worried that I was lying. "What's the letter about?" she asked.

"I don't know, but Uncle is very happy," I said.

Mother doubted me and ran home, thinking something was wrong that I did not know about. When I arrived, Older Brother was reading the letter and translating. Everyone seemed delighted.

"You have been accepted by the vocational school. You didn't disgrace us," Mother said happily.

I said nothing. I worried that I had not passed the exam to senior middle school, and that my family lacked the 3,040 RMB for the vocational school fee. Younger Brother's school fees also had to be paid.

Uncle knew what I was thinking and said, "Dear Nephew, don't worry about the fees. Prepare your

medical practitioners, accountants, computer specialists, and veterinarians. A job in the specialty is the goal of this education. Senior middle school requires an additional three years of study beyond junior middle school with the goal of passing the university entrance examination.

belongings. School starts in six days. I have money to pay your fees."

"Thank you Uncle, but I want to wait another week," I said.

Kangding Senior Middle School

I was also one of only two students from Kha mdo Township accepted by Kangding Senior Middle School. I was glad because it was cheaper than the vocational school. Because Father had gone away to work, I took my acceptance letter and visited Uncle to ask for help. I told him everything about the tuition fee.

"I'll pay your fee, so don't worry," he said.

I thanked him and went home to prepare for school. Mother cried, and said that all our money had been spent on treating her illness. Older Brother and I consoled Mother and said that only I from our village had passed the exam to Kangding Senior Middle School. Mother's heart disease was triggered by sadness.

I carried thirty kilograms of dry mushrooms that Older Brother and I had collected during the holiday to Brag mgo and sold them for 200 RMB. I used part of the money to buy a pair of shoes for Younger Brother.

I registered in Kangding Senior Middle School and paid 1,000 RMB for tuition. I kept 1,000 RMB and said I would pay 1,000 RMB more in a month. I thought if Father did not return, then I would have to send money to Younger Brother, because there was only 200 RMB at home after I had taken a total of 2,300 RMB from our family funds.

We had military training the first week. I had no plans to be a soldier and the training surprised me. I phoned one of Younger Brother's teachers, who told me Younger Brother had not come to school.

We got new books the second week and also started an English class. I was the only student in the class who knew no English. The English teacher was very patient and taught me the alphabet when she had time.

I made a second phone call to Younger Brother's teacher. On my tenth day at Kangding Senior Middle School, he said that if Younger Brother would fail if he did not come that week. I then went to the schoolmaster's office and asked him to return the money I had paid.

"G.yu 'brug, you are very young, why are you leaving school? Many students want to join this school," said the schoolmaster.

When I explained everything to the schoolmaster, he said, "OK, we can return some money. Your books cost 200 RMB and the school's administrative fee is 150 RMB, which means we can only return 650 RMB."

I then returned home, and forced Younger Brother to attend Rong brag Junior Middle School. I waited for Father's return for a month, and then I went to Brag mgo and worked in a brick factory to earn money for Younger Brother. During that time, I began studying Chinese law by myself after work.

CONCLUSION

This study of Rgyas bzang Village has been informed by G.yu 'brug's lifetime experiences as a native villager and local accounts. The study includes local languages; subsistence activities including farming, herding, and livestock raising; where family members sleep in the home; where, when, and what people eat; childbirth and child rearing; the construction and architecture of stone houses; historical accounts related to stone towers; taboos and customs; folktales; a short story; daily religious rituals, annual religious rituals, death rituals, pilgrimage to Mount Dmu rdo - including an account by G.yu 'brug of his own visits - and a remembered account of the origins of Dmu rdo; marriage; education; a glossary of non-English terms; a Rgyas bzang Tibetan Dialect-English word list; and an English-Rgyas bzang Tibetan Dialect word list.

Villagers often mention their concern for future generations. This is confusing. If they are concerned, why do they destroy the environment to benefit themselves, ensuring that following generations will have to search for hard-to-find solutions? For example, from the early 1970s to 1988, Rgyas bzang villagers cut ninety percent of trees around the village. This has led today's youth to want to live outside the village because obtaining firewood is increasingly dangerous and difficult. There is presently no road to the village that a vehicle can traverse, but this will certainly change, bringing great convenience to local people but great loss to local culture, a loss that is accelerating every year.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

?

ʔdza bʘ the *thab rdo* 'hearth stones' or 'hearth' is made up of three stones, each of which is a *ʔdza bʘ*

A

A **'brug** ཨ་འབྲུག། person's name

A **bzang** ཨ་བཟང་། person's name

A **cog** ཨ་ཙོག། person's name

A**du** ཨ་འདུ། person's name

A **mdo** ཨ་མདོ། one of the three traditional Tibetan areas

A **mo** ཨ་མོ། person's name

A **rje** ཨ་རྗེ། G.yu 'brug's nickname

A **rtse** ཨ་རྗེ། (1940-1993), G.yu 'brug's paternal grandmother

B

'**Ba' thang** འབར་ཐང་། Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

'**Bar khams** འབར་ཁམས། County, Rnga ba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture

'**Brog skad** འབྲོག་སྐད། nomad language

'**bru** འབྲུ། grain; locally it often refers to barley

'**Bru smad** འབྲུ་སྐད། place name

'**Bum 'gyur ma Ni** འབྲུམ་འགྱུར་མ་རྗེ། ritual held in the twelfth lunar month at what is considered to be the best time to chant *oM ma Ni pad+me hU~M* and scriptures. Chanting once during the first fifteen days of this month is thought to be equivalent to chanting *oM ma Ni pad+me hU~M* 100,000 times during other months, explaining why the twelfth lunar month is called '*bum 'gyur* (*'bum* = 100,000; '*gyur* = become).

'Bum mtsho འབྲུམ་མཚོ། person's name

'byung ba འབྲུང་བ། elements; metal, fire, water, wood, and earth

ba བ། people are referred to by adding *ba* after their home location

Badi 巴底 Township, Rong brag County

Bai ro tsa na བེ་རོ་ཙ་ན། (Vairotsana), an important student of Padmasambhava and Tibetan translator who lived during the reign (755-797) of King Khri srong lde btsan

Baiyu 白玉 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

bang ma བང་མ། room where meat, butter, lard, and so on are stored

Banshanmen 半扇门 Township, Rong brag County

bao gao བཤུགས་ཀྱི་འཇམ་མཁའ་། 'May I enter the classroom?'

Batang 巴塘, 'Ba' thang འབའ་ཐང་། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Bawang 巴旺 Township, Rong brag County

Bdun བདུན། ritual held every seven days for forty-nine days after a death

Beijing 北京 China's capital city

Bian'er 边尔 Township, Rong brag County

Bka' brgyud བཀའ་བརྒྱུད། a Tibetan Buddhist sect

Bkra shis བཀྱ་ཤིས། person's name

bla ལྷ། spirit, soul

Bla ri ལྷ་རི། Township, Rong brag County

Blo bzang ལྷོ་བཟང་། person's name

Bon dga' yul བོན་དགའ་ཡུལ། Village, Brag mgo Township, Rong brag County

Bod skad བོད་སྐད། Tibetan language

Brag 'go བྲག་འགོ། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Brag mgo བྲག་མགོ། Town, the county seat of Rong brag County

Brag steng བྲག་སྟེང། Township, Rong brag County

Brag steng sgom pa བྲག་སྟེང་སློམ་པ། a *sgom pa* from Brag steng Township, Rong brag County

Brag tse བྲག་ཚེ། Shuizi yi cun (Shuizi Number One Village)

Brgyad zur བརྒྱད་རུར། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

bsang བསང། incense with the main ingredients being juniper and wheat flour that is burned every morning; a fumigation/ purification ritual

bsang khang བསང་ཁང། place where *bsang*/ incense is burned

bsang skor བསང་སྐོར། a *bla ma*, monk, or *sgom pa* chants *bsang* scriptures and burns juniper needles to purify a room, clothing, prayer wheels, and prayer flags

bsen mo བསེན་མོ། a living woman who becomes a *bsen mo* might be seen in the village, though she is sleeping at home; neither she nor her family members are aware of her nocturnal activity outside the home

Btsan lha བཙུན་ལྷ། County, Rnga ba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture

bya khyung khyung བྱ་ཁྱུང་ཁྱུང། locally understood to mean 'deity bird', it is believed to eat snakes. An image of a *bya khyung khyung* may be placed above the gate to the home to repel evil.

bya rgod བྱ་རྩོད། vulture; large bird with keen eyesight that catches and eats birds

byad བྱད། dangerous soul of a dead person that leaves the corpse and visits the village

byang 'khor བྱང་འཁོར། open room about the size of the *mar 'khor*

C

cangku 仓库 village storehouse

Changna 长纳 Village, Kha mdo Township

Chen Dengji 陈登记 person's name

Chengdu 成都 capital of Sichuan Province

chu zhing ཟུ་ཞིང་། irrigated fields

cun 村 village

D

'Dab pa འདབ་པ། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

'Das mchod འདས་མཚོད། ritual held three years after a person's death in the area of study; offering to the deceased

'do thos འདོ་ཐོས། a piece of slotted wood one meter long leading rainwater *khang phyi* 'outside the house'

'Dre mo spun bdun འདྲེ་མོ་སྤུན་བདུན། a female ghost leader

Dama 大马 Village, Kha mdo Township

Danba 丹巴 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Dandong 丹东 Township, Rong brag County

Daocheng 稻城 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Daofu 道孚 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Dar rtse mdo དར་རྩེ་མདོ། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

dar shing དར་ཤིང་། straight juniper poles (two meters long, with a diameter of five to six centimeters) with *ma Ni* flags attached that are placed around a grave

dazhuan 大专 two or three year college program leading to an associate degree

Dege 德格 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Derong 得荣 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Dge bshes rtsa དགོ་བཤེས་མཁུ་ Township, Rong brag County

Dge lugs དགོ་ལུགས། a Tibetan religious sect (Yellow Sect)

Dgu rtsong དགུ་རྩོང་། Township, Rong brag County

Dkar mdzes དཀར་མངའ་སྡེ། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Dkar mo དཀར་མོ། person's name

Dmyal ba དམུལ་བ། Purgatory, Hell

Dmu rdo དམུ་རྫོ། local hero, deity, and mountain in Rgyal rong

Donggu 东谷 Township, Rong brag County

Dpa' bo དཔའ་བོ། Township, Rong brag County

Dpal yul དཔལ་ཡུལ། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Dujiangyan 都江堰 county level city within the administrative district of Chengdu City, Sichuan Province

Dwags po དུགས་པོ། ancient Tibetan army regiment; a language; Baima

dzwa ཇྱ། similar to a bomb

E

Ergong 尔龚 a language that locals consider to be a Tibetan dialect

G

'gro lta pa འགྲོ་ལྷ་བ། visitors who bring a small amount of money (five RMB minimum in 2010) or a piece of

pork and bread to the deceased's home on the third day after the death

'grul khang འགྲུལ་ཁང་། small, two-floored building attached to the *ma khyim*

G.yang 'bod གཡང་འབོད། a ritual in which both *sgom pa* and a *bla ma* chant for families to bring wealth to the family

G.yang skor གཡང་སྐོར། ritual during which Bon *sgom pa* chant to bring wealth to a family, whose members circle smoldering *bsang* and call "*O g.yang shog!*" to bring wealth

G.yang mtsho གཡང་མཚོ། person's name

G.yu 'brug གཡུ་འབྲུག། person's name; Yongzhong 拥忠

g.yung drung གཡུང་བྱུང་། the Bon swastika; this term is used locally for a home with a multi-floored extension made to the main houses by Bon families. The structure, after the addition, is thought to resemble a Bon swastika.

Ga lo གཤོ། person's name

Ganzi 甘孜 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Gao 高 surname

gdung phra གདུང་ཕྱ། a wood pole about thirty-five centimeters in diameter

gdugs གདུགས། juniper pole about three meters long, seven centimeters in diameter, and with several twigs on top that is set behind the grave to the right. White, blue, and red cloths are tied to the pole. The IPA for this term is *du*.

Ge sar གེ་སར། a Tibetan hero who ruled the legendary Kingdom of Gling

Geshizha 革什扎 Township, Rong brag County

Gezong 格宗 Township, Rong brag County; 各宗 Village, Kha mdo Township

glang ma shing ལྷང་མ་ཤིང་། each floor of a home is made up of thousands of *glang ma shing* 'willow sticks', each of which is about three meters long and has a diameter of about two centimeters. Dried grass is used to fill the spaces between the sticks.

Gnyan zhing གཉན་ཞིང་། a sacred forest where cutting trees and other plants is forbidden

Gong bo rong གོང་བོ་རོང་། location also known as Nyingchi; locals use the term 'Gong bo rong' to refer collectively to Nying khri, Kong po rgya mda', and Sman gling

gor khang གོར་ཁང་། the main room of a village home with the *thab rdo* in the center where family members cook, eat, sit, and sleep

gor stod གོར་སྟོང་། place in the *gor khang* usually reserved for elders

Gser shul གཤེར་ཤུལ། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Gser thar གཤེར་ཐར། County and Monastery, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

gtor ma གདོར་མ། an offering to evil spirits

H

Han 汉 Han Chinese

Heishui 黑水 County, Rnga ba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture

Hu 胡 surname

Huang 黄 surname

J

Jinchuan 金川 County, Rnga ba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture

Jining 吉宁 person's name

Jiulong 九龙 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Jizong 吉宗 Village, Kha mdo Township

K

'Khyags 'grig འབྲུགས་འབྲིག་ festival held on the eleventh day of the second lunar month enjoyed by those aged about seven to sixteen (known as *'khyags 'grig mi*). Unmarried youths bring auspiciousness because Tsa ri spun gsum Mountain Deities are fond of children.

'khyags 'grig 'du mi འབྲུགས་འབྲིག་འདུ་མི། 'Khyags 'grig ritual participants

Kangding 康定 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Keli 科里 Village, Kha mdo Township

kha btags ཁ་བཏགས། ceremonial scarf offered to show respect

Kha mdo ཁ་མདོ། Township, Rong brag County; Shuizi er cun (Shuizi Number Two Village)

Khams ཁམས། a Tibetan dialect spoken in Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture with smaller groups of speakers in Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan provinces, and the Tibet Autonomous Region

khang 'dabs ཁང་འདབས། the edges of the *khang che*

khang che ཁང་ཆེ། floor between the *mar 'khor* and *byang 'khor*

khang phyi ཁང་ཕྱི། outside the house

Kho lo ཁོ་ལོ། Village, Kha mdo Township

Khri srong lde btsan ཁྲི་སྲོང་ལྷེ་བཙུན། the second of the Three Dharma Kings of Tibet who ruled 755 to 797 or 804 CE, and was instrumental in introducing Buddhism to Tibet

Khrims ra ཁྲིམས་ར། Village, Kha mdo Township

Khro chu ཁྲོ་ཅུ། County, Rnga ba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture

Khyab pa lag ring ལྷལ་པ་ལག་རིང་། according to local accounts, Ston pa gshen rab's efforts to propagate Bon were obstructed by the demon, Khyab pa lag ring, who had come from another place and was the worst demon on earth. Ston pa gshen rab asked Khyab pa lag ring to leave and become a good creature. Khyab pa lag ring only wished to destroy his religious work and defeat him but, eventually, the demon was converted and became Ston pa gshen rab's disciple.

khyi mchod ལྷི་མཚོད། 'offering to the dog' local term for barley

khur tshe ལུར་ཚེ། one's closest relatives within the village who help during funerals and weddings

klu ལྷ། water deity, naga

Kong po rgya mda' ཀོང་པོ་རྒྱ་མདའ། location

Kunming ཀུམ་མིང། capital of Yunnan Province

L

la btsas ལ་བཙུན། local meanings include the family *la btsas* and sacred mountain peaks

La rgyab ལ་རྒྱལ། Village, Kha mdo Township

laoshi hao ལོ་ཤི་འཛོ། a greeting students make to teachers that literally means 'teacher good'

Lcags zam kha ལུགས་ཟམ་ཁ། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

ma khyim མ་ཁྱིམ། 'mother house'; five-floored, stone house

ma Ni 'khor khang མ་ཉི་འཁོར་ཁང། prayer wheel room

ma skor po མ་སྐོར་པོ། people who accompany the *sgom pa* when they visit graves on a specified date

Ma'erkang མ་ལ་ར་ཁང། County, Rnga ba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture

mchod g.yog མཚོད་གཡོག། person who assists *sgom pa*

mchod khang མཚོད་ཁང། individual families have a *mchod khang* in their homes, which is a separate room where Buddha images are kept. Seven copper containers of sacred water are offered here every morning, along with three lit incense sticks in front of the religious images. A butter lamp is also lit and prostrations are made in the hope that all will go well. Menstruating women never enter the *mchod khang*. An image of Dmu rdo is kept in the shrine.

mchod pa མཚོད་པ། images made by *bla ma* and *sgom pa* when they chant. *Mchod pa* made with *rtsam pa*, wheat flour, corn flour, buckwheat, or mud may be used to make stupa-shaped statues. Generally, *mchod pa* made with corn meal or buckwheat flour are only offered to evil beings. *Mchod pa* made of *rtsam pa* and wheat flour with pieces of butter on top are burned in the family *bsang khang*. *Mchod pa* made of mud may be placed by the family *bsang khang* or offered to evil spirits. *Mchod pa* are a type of *gtor ma*.

Mchod rten rang byon མཚོད་རྟེན་རང་བྱོན། self-arisen stupa in Dpa' bo Township, Rong brag County

Mchod rten sgang མཚོད་རྟེན་སྐང། Township, Rong brag County

mda' dar མདའ་དར། talisman

Mda' mdo མདའ་མདོ། Township, Rong brag County

mdzo མཚོ། cross between a yak (mother) and bull

mdzod sgo མཚོད་སྒོ། in the *gor khang*, there is a one and a half meter long, one meter wide, and three centimeters thick wood cover over a hole in the floor by the wall near the *rogs nyal khang* entrance. *Mdzod sgo* refers to the cover.

Mgo gsum མགོ་གསུམ། has the heads of an ox, pig, and wolf, hence the name 'Three Heads'. Locals believe it to be the most powerful evil deity. Its image is made by *sgom pa* when families have unexpected troubles, such as a sudden death and when livestock become sick.

Mgon po མགོན་པོ། person's name

Mi nyag མི་ཉག། locals consider this language to be a Tibetan dialect

mkhar bang མཁར་བང། a room on the second floor; directly across from the *skas rtsa* is the *mkhar bang*, a room where potatoes and turnips are stored

Mkhas pa bkra shis མཁས་པ་བཀྲ་ཤིས། person's name

Mtsho mo མཚོ་མོ། person's name

mthu sgrub mi མཐུ་སྐྱབ་མི། meditators who lived in caves or stone towers

mtshams lhag མཚམས་ལྷག། shingle stones put around *khang 'dabs* to protect the *'dung phra* and *ntṣ'ā kã* from rainwater

mu 亩 one *mu* = 0.0667 hectares

N

Najiao 纳交 Village, Kha mdo Township

nang ra ནང་ར། inner stable on the first floor

Ngag dbang phun tshogs ངག་དབང་ཕུན་ཚོགས། person's name

Nibushigu 尼布石古 person's name

Niexia 聂呷 Township, Rong brag County

Nor bu bzang po རོར་བུ་བཟང་པོ། person's name; well-known figure in many Tibetan cultural areas

Nor lha རོར་ལྷ། syncretic figure combining elements of the Indian deity of wealth, Dzam bha la, and native wealth-bestowing zoomorphic spirits; a deity of wealth who dwells on a lotus and accumulates jewels

Nor bu phug རོར་བུ་ཕུག། sacred site in Rong brag County

nts^hə kã crossbeam about six meters long with a diameter of twenty centimeters

Nyag chu kha ཉག་ཇུ་ཀ། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Nyag rong ཉག་རོང། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Nyi ma ཉི་མ། person's name

Nyin dkar ཉིན་དཀར། Township, Rong brag County

Nying khri ཉིང་ཁྲི། location

nyog nyog ཉོག་ཉོག། lard, liquid from boiling turnip leaves, salt, chili powder, and prickly ash are mixed and put in a bowl. Bread is dipped in this and eaten.

O

'o zom འོ་ཟོམ། milk bucket

o g.yang shog ཨོ་གཡང་ཤོག། a call made to bring prosperity

oM ma Ni pad+me hU~M ཨོཾ་མ་ཉི་པདྨེ་ཧཱུྃ། a common six syllable mantra associated with Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion

oM ma tri mu ye sa le 'du ཨོཾ་མ་རྩི་མུ་ཡེ་ས་ལེ་འདུ། Bon practitioners' chant

P

Pad ma པད་མ། person's name

Pad+ma 'byung gnas པད་མ་འབྱུང་གནས། important figure in the dissemination of Buddhism in Tibetan areas;
Padmasambhava

Panzhuhua 攀枝花 prefecture-level city in Sichuan Province

Peng Jianzhong 彭建中 person's name

phra ཕྱ། five same-sized wood boxes, each of which is for a particular grain - wheat, rice, corn, barley, and buckwheat. Beans are placed in the buckwheat box. The boxes are linked together and people sit or sleep on them.

phyag 'tshal ཕྱག་འཚལ། prostration

Phyag phreng ཕྱག་ཐེང་། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

phyi ra ཕྱི་ར། sty

pinyin 拼音 Romanized Chinese writing system

Po rtsa བོ་རྗེ། Hamlet, Rgyas bzang Village

Q

Qiang 羌 an officially recognized ethnic group in China that local Tibetans consider to be Tibetan

Qin 秦 surname

Qing 清 Dynasty (1644-1912)

Qinghai 青海 Province

R

Ra mchod ར་མཚོད། a ritual during which a goat is slaughtered

rdo dkar རྫོང་ཀར། a white stone as large as ten fists placed in the center of each field as an offering to Sa bdag; an honorific is *zhing dkyil rtsa dkar*

Rdo gor རྫོག་ར། person's name

Rdo rgyag ལྷོ་རྒྱལ། a mountain

Rdo rje ལྷོ་རྗེ། person's name

red རེད། suffix added after a location indicating where a person is from

rgya gling རྒྱལ་གླིང། horns

Rgya mtsho རྒྱལ་མཚོ། person's name

Rgya mtsho lha mo རྒྱལ་མཚོ་ལྷ་མོ། person's name

Rgya ngan རྒྱ་ངན། pejorative term for 'Han Chinese'

Rgyal mo tsha ba rong རྒྱལ་མོ་ཙ་བ་རོང། 'Rgyal rong' is a contraction of 'Rgyal mo tsha ba rong'. For an overview of related historical, linguistic, and geographical features see <http://places.thlib.org/features/23680/descriptions/1288> and <http://places.thlib.org/features/15376/descriptions/1220>.

Rgyal rong རྒྱལ་རོང། short name for Rgyal mo tsha ba rong

Rgyas bzang རྒྱས་བཟང། Village, Kha mdo Township

Rgyas bzang mchod rten རྒྱས་བཟང་མཚོ་དཀྱིལ། stupa in the center of Rgyas bzang Village established in 2006

rlung rta ལྷུང་རྟ། square pieces of paper about six centimeters square imprinted with a horse in the center bearing a wish-fulfilling gem and a tiger, lion, garuda, and dragon in the four corners. In the local context, the *rlung rta* refers to pieces of white, green, and red cloth (about twenty centimeters long and twelve centimeters wide) with images from wood blocks of a horse in the center bearing a wish-fulfilling gem. Scriptures appear around the horse.

RMB (Renminbi) 人民币 unit of Chinese currency

Rnying ma རྩིང་མ། Tibetan Buddhist sect also known as the Red Hat Sect; the oldest sect

Rnying ma pa རྟིང་མ་པ། Rnying ma follower
rogs nyal khang རོགས་ལྷམ་ཁང་། room for a newly married couple. When their youngest child is three years old, they leave this room for their children, and then sleep in the *gor khang*.

Rong brag རོང་བྲག་ County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Rong skad རོང་སྐད། farmer's language

Rta'u རྟུ་ County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

rtsam pa རྩམ་པ། roasted barley or roasted wheat flour

Rtswa khang རྩཱུ་ཁང་། Shuizi san cun (Shuizi Number Three Village)

Rwa rtse རཱ་རྩེ། a temple

S

Sa bdag ས་བདག་ a ritual; Land Deity

Sa skya ས་སྐུ། Tibetan Buddhist sect

Sde dge རྩེ་དགེ། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Sde rong རྩེ་རོང་། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Seda སེ་ཌ། County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Sgang bzang སྐང་བཟང་། Village, Kha mdo Township

Sgang bzang rgyas bzang སྐང་བཟང་རྒྱལ་བཟང་། name for Sgang bzang and Rgyas bzang villages

Sgang bzang stobs ldan སྐལ་བཟང་སྟོབས་ལྡན། person's name

sgo dar སྐོ་དར། pole three to four meters long with a two meter length of cloth that features scriptures that is inserted

in a hole about five centimeters in diameter in a stone on either side of the gate to the home

Sgo lha སྒོ་ལྷ། Door Deity

sgom pa སྒོམ་པ། in the local context, this refers to a yogin, meditator, ascetic, practitioner of Tibetan religion who may marry and who chants for local villagers. In 2010, there were six *sgom pa* in Rgyas bzang Village. Three were Bon and three were Rnying ma *sgom pa*. Historically, these were often lineage positions.

Sgom pa Blo bzang སྒོམ་པ་བློ་བཟང་། locals put *sgom pa* before a yogin, meditator, ascetic, practitioner's name to show respect and, at times, to indicate the area the *sgom pa* is from

Sgrub lha སྐྱབ་ལྷ། a ritual

ShAkya tshe ring སྐྱུ་ཚེ་རིང་། person's name

Shanghai 上海 City

shechang བསྐྱེད་ཆུང་། community square

shi 是 yes

Shiqu 石渠 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Shuizi 水子 Township, Rong brag County

Shuizi er cun 水子二村 Shuizi Number Two Village

Shuizi san cun 水子三村 Shuizi Number Three Village

Shuizi yi cun 水子一村 Shuizi Number One Village

Sichuan 四川 Province

skad སྐད། language, voice, sound

Skad cha སྐད་ཅ། language, dialect, words, conversation, talk

Skal bzang dbang 'dul སྐལ་བཟང་དབང་འདུལ། person's name

skam zhing སྐམ་ཞིང་། fields that are not irrigated

skas rtsa གསལ་རྩལ། a room where tools are kept directly in front after entering the gate to the home compound. To the left in this room are ladders or stairs leading to the second floor. To the right of the *skas rtsa* is the *gor khang*.

skor sbrang རྩོད་སྤྲང་། candy brought from pilgrimage and given to family members

Skyabs 'gro ལྷོ་བའ་འགྲོ། taking refuge (in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha); a short scripture often chanted before starting longer periods of chanting Buddhist texts

skyabs su mchi'o ལྷོ་བའ་སུ་མཚོའོ། take refuge

skyur skam ལྷུར་སྐམ། pickled turnip leaves are put in hot water, the water is then removed, and the leaves are formed into round cakes. This is done in winter. Freezing is believed to improve the taste.

Sman gling ལྷན་གླིང་། location

Smyung gnas 'dug ལྷུང་གནས་འདུག། religious fasting ritual ('*dug* is used in the local context)

Sog po རོག་པོ། Township, Rong brag County; Mongolian

spa ras ལྷ་རས། embroidered pieces of thick cloth women use to cover their heads

spal par ལྷལ་པར། pottery vessel that holds about .75 kg of liquor and used during the New Year period, marriage rituals, and dancing parties

spang rdog ལྷང་རྟོག། made using about seven kilograms of dug-up sod and thirteen eye-sized white stones; it is put on rooftops to the left of the *bsang khang*

Spang sgang ལྷང་སྐང་། mountaintop meadow

spos me mchod ལྷོས་མེ་མཚོད། burning juniper needles, wheat flour, and a piece of brick tea in front of graves in the morning and evening

Spro snang ལྷོ་སྐང་། Township, Rong brag County

srung mdud ལྷུང་མདུད། strings that *bla ma* and *sgom pa* empower and give those who ask to prevent sickness

Stag gsum ལྷག་གསུམ། Village, Dge bshes rtsa Township

Stag mo ལྷག་མོ། Village, Kha mdo Township

Stobs ldan ལྷོབས་ལྷན། person's name

Ston pa gshen rab ལྷོན་པ་གཤེན་རབ། the founder of Bon

Stong dgu ལྷོང་དགུ། Township, Rong brag County

Suopo ལུ་པོ། Township, Rong brag County

T

Taipingqiao ི་ཕིང་ཕྱུའ། Township, Rong brag County

Tang ི་ Tang Dynasty (618-907)

thab kha ི་བ་ཀ། place on the upper hearthstone for offering food to the Hearth Deity

thab rdo ི་བ་རྫོ། hearth stone

Thug don ི་ལ་དོན། person's name

Tsa ri spun gsum ི་རི་སྐུན་གསུམ། Three Brother Mountain Deities

tsan dan ི་ན་དན། a conifer with a low burning point used for cremation fires

tsha gdan ི་གདན། woven goat hair fabric

Tshe dbang g.yung drung ི་དབང་གཡུང་རྩུང་། person's name

Tshe ring ི་རིང་། person's name

Tshe ring bkra shis ི་རིང་བརྒྱ་ཤེས། person's name

Tshe ring rdo rje ི་རིང་རྫོ་རྗེ། person's name

tshogs ི་གསལ། Bon and Rnying ma *sgom pa* put candy, pure water, walnuts, apples, pears, wheat liquor, and eyeball-sized

balls of *rtsam pa* mixed with sugar and water in a plate that is placed on a table when they chant to, it is believed, help prevent illness

tshogs shing ka ba ཚོགས་ཤིང་ཀ་བ། a column by the stone water reservoir on the second floor on which fresh butter is smeared

Tshong dpon nor bu bzang po ཚོང་དཔོན་ནོར་བུ་བཟང་པོ། person's name; see Nor bu bzang po

V

vānā (equivalent to *ba* བ།) people are referred to by adding *vānā* after their home location

W

wa thog ལ་ཐོག་ slotted wood used to drain water from the house roof

Wang Hua 王华 person's name

Wu Xiaodong 吴晓东 person's name

X

Xiangcheng 乡城 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Xiaojin 小金 County, Rnga ba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture

Xichang 西昌 capital city of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province

Xinlong 新龙 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Y

Ya'an 雅安 a prefecture-level city in Sichuan Province

Yajiang 雅江 County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Yi 彝 officially recognized ethnic group in China

Yongzhong 拥忠 person's name, G.yu 'brug

Yuezha 岳扎 Township, Rong brag County

Yunnan 云南 Province

Z

Zas lha ཟས་ལྷ། Food Deity

Zhang Mingxiang 张明向 person's name

Zhang Tao 张涛 person's name

Zhanggu 章谷 Town, the seat of Rong brag County

Zhe dgu ཞེ་དགུ། a ritual held on the forty-ninth day after a person's death

zhen 镇 town

zhing dkyil rtsa dkar ཞིང་དཀྱིལ་རཱ་དཀར། white stone as big as ten fists located in the center of the fields; an honorific term for *rdo dkar*

Zhonglu 中路 Township, Rong brag County

Zhu Rongji 朱镕基 (b. 1928) mayor and Communist Party chief of Shanghai from 1987-1991, and Vice-Premier and Premier of China from 1998-2003

RGYAS BZANG TIBETAN DIALECT-
ENGLISH WORD LIST¹⁰⁴

IPA	English
	p
pɔ	to hide it
pə.t ^h ɔ	stick of wood
pə.wɔ	bubble
pə.wɔ p ^h ə	to bubble
pu.p ^h ə	to breathe
pu.rɪŋ	sigh, to sigh
	p ^h a
p ^h a.bæ	brother (same father, different mothers)
p ^h a.ŋja	after (time)
p ^h ai	to fly
p ^h əŋ.tsə	bottle
p ^h i	to push
	b
ba.be	skin
ba.be.ku ^c	to peel
ba.la	between
bə	hair (of skin)
bə.bæ.mɛŋ.sɪŋ	siblings
bə.məŋ	daughter, knee
bə.rɪə	man, male, son
bəŋ.bɔ ⁷	shoulder

¹⁰⁴ This glossary incorporates data elicited for the Nagano rGyalrongic survey in 2009. The full survey data will be published in 2012 as *International Field Survey of the rGyalrongic Languages* supported by the JSPS Grant for Overseas Field Research (2009-2012) #A-21251007 on a website hosted by the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka. The Museum will also print an accompanying volume.

bəŋ.bəh ⁷	arm
bɪŋ.təŋ	calf (baby yak, cow, etc)
bu.pə	hole
	t
tã.rɪŋ	today
tæ	because; seven; to show it
tæ.kəŋ.mɛ.ləŋ	bad
tah ⁷	to give, to hand
tæ	to fold
tai.tɕi	one
təŋ	also
təŋ.sa	to speak
tau.ʃə.sɪŋ	to be hurt
tɛ	to tie it
tə	he, him; that
tə.bəh ⁷	smoke
tə.bə	hair (pubic, female)
tə.bu	penis; thumb; vagina
tə.nəŋ	there
tə.red.næ	they, them (plural)
tə.t ^h ɛ	umbilical cord
tə.wə	belly
tə.wə.tʃɛ	to get hungry
təŋ.ŋgə	to meet
tɛ ¹ mi?	woman, female
təŋ	short; to hit
təŋ.bə	empty
təŋ.lu ^c	to dig (a hole)
təŋ.tu	heel (of the foot)
tɪlu?	milk
tɪ ¹ ʃnə?	nose
təŋ	and; to untie it
tu	thick (and flat)
tu ^c	narrow

tu ^c .t ^h u.ɬæ	to kick
	t ^h a
t ^h a	to live
t ^h æ.ju-ʃoŋ	but
t ^h au	to fight, to argue, to quarrel
t ^h e.bəh ^ˀ	rope
t ^h ɛ.wə	ashes
t ^h əŋ	low; to drink, to suck
t ^h oŋ.t ^h oŋ	plain
t ^h u	high

d

dã.ndzu	end of a month
dã.nku	beginning of a month
dah ^ˀ	to stop
daŋ	grass; to meet, to crush; yet, still
də	arrow
dɛ	to lick
də.gəŋ	stone
də.lu	wheel
de.wə	dust
d ^ˀ a wah ^ˀ	month
dəŋ.rə	face
du	blunt (not sharp)
du ^c .soŋ	yesterday

ʃ

ʃa	to have
ʃah ^ˀ k ^h ə	summer
ʃau	lard
ʃə	to make
ʃə.lɛ	left
ʃə.loŋ	to stand up, to rise
ʃə.ʃoŋ	to chase
ʃə.tɕu	soon
ʃəwə	louse

ʃoŋ	light
ʃæ.le	branch (of a tree)
	k
ka	voice
kã.ma ^ˊ	minute (time)
ka.maŋ	star
ka.noŋ	where
ka.pu	white
ka.siŋ	when
ka.tɕə	language
ka.tə	which
ka.ts ^h ue	direction
kæ.p ^h u.tɕ ^h ə.du	uvula
kai	to touch
kaka.tɕə	some
kaŋ	to feel thirsty; to wither
kau	to cover it (up)
kauh ^ˊ	to get tired
kə	to carry on the back; to hold
kə.bə	thread; waist
kə.dzi	clothing
kə.pə	leg
kə.rau	under
kə.təŋ	on
kəh ^ˊ	to steal
kəkə.ri	round
kən ^h kuə	illness
koŋ	full
koŋ.be	to limp
koŋ.ku	toe
koŋ.sau	sole (bottom of the foot)
ku	to carve
kũ	to bend it
kue.maŋ	Adam's apple

ku ^c dzu	to run away
ku ^c maŋ	throat
kuh ^ˊ .tɕau	back (behind)
	k ^h a
k ^h a.tɕə	saliva
k ^h a.wə	snow
k ^h au	needle
k ^h axə	other
k ^h ɔ tɕə	bitter (taste)
k ^h ɔ.tɕɛ.mɛ.ɕɛ	dumb (can't speak)
k ^h ə.ngə	to take off
	g
gæ.xə	winter
gaŋ	to dry
gə	to laugh
gəh ^ˊ	to like it
gə	to walk
gə.bə	foot
gə.dzau	outside
gə.dzau.səŋ	to get out
gə.kəŋ	egg
ge.tɕə	back (of the body)
gə.təŋ	to rise
goŋ.dzə	to fill
goŋ.ku.ntsə.gi	toenail
gu ^c	thin
	ʔ
ʔa.ŋæ	sister
ʔa.tə	now
ʔa.tə.mæsiŋ	up to, till
ʔa.tɕ ^h i	sneeze
ʔa.tɕ ^h i	belch
ʔa.tɕ ^h i jə	to sneeze
ʔa.wah ^ˊ	father

ʔa ¹ ma	mother
ʔka	breast
ʔka.bu.bi	chalk
ʔka.ju	can (metal container, e.g., can of food)
ʔto.fiɔ	a minute ago
	tsa
tsa.tɕ ^h ə	beak
tsæ	phlegm (thick mucus)
tsæ.ləŋ	calf (lower leg)
tsau	to sew
tse	to split
tsə.maŋ	rib; sand; body dirt (that builds up over time)
tsə.tɕu	number
tsoŋ.maŋ	clean
tsoŋ.maŋ.dzə	to clean
tsoŋ.maŋ.zə	to dust (to clean)
tsoŋ.tɕə	river
tsu	to cook by boiling
tsubɔ	wall
	ts ^h
ts ^h ah ⁷ .tɕ ^h e	sweat
ts ^h ai	to stab
ts ^h ɔ	hot; salt
ts ^h e	ripe
ts ^h ɛ	to open
ts ^h ə	color; late
ts ^h ə.ke.tɕə	half
ts ^h ə.ŋtɕe	evening
ts ^h ə.p ^h e	animal (livestock)
ts ^h əh ⁷	to wipe
ts ^h i	wheat flour
ts ^h i.tɕi	fat (e.g., fat meat)
ts ^h u	lake
ts ^h u.ts ^h ŋ	wrist

ts ^h æ.rəŋ	midnight
	tʃ ^h
tʃ ^h aŋ	to tread on it
tʃ ^h aŋ.tsu	to build (a house)
	tɕ
tɕæ	urine
tɕæ̃	to clothe
tɕæ.təŋ	to urinate
tɕah ^ˀ	to cut
tɕaŋ	noise; to shout
tɕaŋ.təŋ	roof
tɕe	to grow up
tɕe	to play
tɕə	ten; you
tɕə.ba	to defecate
tɕɜ.bah ^ˀ	feces
tɕə.bə	hair (pubic, male)
tɕə.bu.tɕau	meeting
tɕə.ku	mouth
tɕə.ŋtɕə.jə	how?
tɕə.ŋtɕə.tɕəh ^ˀ .ja	how many?
tɕə.tɕæ.ŋæ	you (plural)
tɕɜ.tə	what?
tɕə.xə	shore
tɕəh ^ˀ	dog
tɕəɾə	cheese (dried cheese)
tɕi	tongue
tɕu	to vomit
	tɕ ^h a
tɕ ^h a.tɕaŋ	ice
tɕ ^h a.tɕaŋ.kei	to freeze
tɕ ^h æ.rəŋ	chest
tɕ ^h ah ^ˀ .bə	rain
tɕ ^h aŋ	house

tɕ ^h ɔ	can (able to)
tɕ ^h ə	water
tɕ ^h ə sə	watch (timepiece)
tɕ ^h ə. tɕi.dzau	to swim
tɕ ^h ə.be	lips
tɕ ^h ə.bə	moustache
tɕ ^h ə.k ^h ə	yogurt
tɕ ^h ɜ.manɲ.dzoŋ	to spit
tɕ ^h ə.tu	to get wet
tɕ ^h əʃu ^c	wave (of water)
tɕ ^h i.bo	bird
	tɕa
tɕæ	fat (e.g., fat man)
tɕah ^ʔ	to feel itchy
tɕai.si	shadow
tɕau	six
tɕe	afraid; strong
tɕə	boat; glad; to ask; to wash (it)
tɕə.ku	to turn
tɕə.məŋ	elbow
tɕə.su	cutting edge
tɕə.tɕaŋ	to dance
tɕə.tɕ ^h u	knife
tɕəŋ	village
tɕi	snake
tɕi.ku	forehead
tɕoŋ	to extinguish; to swell
tɕoŋ.le	right
tɕoŋ.ŋɛ	fly (insect)
tɕoŋ.tɕoŋ	straight
tɕu.loŋ	to get angry
tɕu ^ɛ .manman	ant
tɕuh ^ʔ	warm (of weather)

tʂ^ha

tʂ ^h a	to find it
tʂ ^h e	blood
tʂ ^h ə	to be born
tʂ ^h ə.kʰi	child
tʂ ^h ɛ.tsau	vein (blood vein)
tʂ ^h u	little; to scratch

dz

dza	big
dzə.bə	root
dzoŋ	to throw
dzoŋ.tɕã	wide
dzu	to run

m

mæ	not
mæ bə	beard
mæ.ke	jaw
mæ.ɕi	chin
mah ^ˊ .bə	brother (same mother, different fathers)
mah ^ˊ .bu	red
mah ^ˊ .tu	naked
mai	butter
mau.rau	dark (time)
mbə.lu	worm
mbə.ts ^h ai	mosquito
mə	husband
mɛ.dəɬæ	to shoot (a gun)
mə.laŋ	dream
mə.laŋ.mɛ	to dream
mɛ.laŋ.məzə	to destroy it
mə.ngə	to go down, to step down
mɛ.ŋtə	spear
mə.ræ	young
mɛ.sauh ^ˊ	shallow

mε.sau	soft (pliable)
mə.tɕəŋ	to fall
mε.tɕ ^h ai	weak
məh ^ˈ	person, man in general
məŋ	eye; name; to swallow (food or drink)
məŋ.bə	eyebrow
məŋ.bəh ^ˈ	eyelid
məŋ.ləŋ	to blink (the eye); blind
məŋ.ŋɕ	pupil (eye)
məŋ.tauh ^ˈ	eyeball
məŋ.tɕəh ^ˈ	tear (from crying)
miŋ	fire
məŋ	many, much
məŋ.ʃə.məŋ	to be alive
mɔpəh ^ˈ	to call
mɔp ^h ε	to fly

n

na.bu	nostril
na.ləŋ	earlobe
na.tu	eardrum
na.məŋ	wife
na.ŋæ	deaf
na.tɕe	ear wax
næma.katsə	times
nah ^ˈ tɕu	ear
nah ^ˈ .ŋjəŋ	moon
naŋ	to be painful, to feel pain; sky
naŋ.tɕə.ka	everyday
naŋ.tɕə.xa.hə	often
naŋsu	to cure
nau	to sink
ndũ	to sit, to stay
nə	this
nə.lə.ʃə	to tear

nə.noŋ	here
nə.wə	nipple (of a breast)
nəh ^ˈ	to cry, to weep
ngə	nine; to flow; to go
ngi	to move
noŋ.tɕ ^h ɔ	guts, internal organs, viscera
ntɕau	to seek
ntɕə.be	foreskin
ntɕ ^h e	to float
ntɕa	to bite
ntse	to creep
ntɕu	thunder

ŋ

ŋah ^ˈ .tɕəh ^ˈ	neck
ŋaŋ	fish; with
ŋaŋ.ʃɛ	together
ŋaŋ.ŋtɕə	to fish
ŋɛ	pus
ŋɛ	good
ŋə	two
ŋɛ.bu	black (color)
ŋə.kə	both
ŋɛ.la	correct
ŋə.ma	day
ŋə.maŋ	sun
ŋɛ.ʃə	twenty
ŋɛ.su	to rest
ŋi.bə	old
ŋæ.la	daytime

ŋ̊

ŋ̊bə.tu ^c	flower
ŋ̊dau.bau	feather
ŋ̊dzə	heavy
ŋ̊dzə.wə	flea

ŋeiŋ	heart
	ŋ
ŋah ^ˀ	I, me
ŋai	sweet
ŋaŋ	five; sky; to smell
ŋaŋ.təka	always
ŋda.k ^h oŋ	bow (as in bow and arrow)
ŋdza.ndzo	same
ŋdzah ^ˀ	eight
ŋdzau	to look at
ŋdzə	rainbow
ŋdze	quick
ŋdzə.tɕɛ	semen
ŋdzu.maŋ	tail
ŋdzu ^c	swift
ŋdz ^w e	fast
ŋɛ	to listen to
ŋə.maŋ.bæ.tɕɛ	brother (same mother and father)
ŋə.mbu	green
ŋə.m ^ə uh ^ˀ	blue
ŋə.tɕænæ	we, us (plural)
ŋ ^ə aŋŋ ^ə aŋ.yə	to smell
ŋəau.tɕɛ	snot
ŋəiŋ	soft (to the touch)
ŋgə.be	scalp
ŋgə.bə	hair (of the head)
ŋgu	door
ŋgɥ	skull
ŋtau.bau	wing
ŋtɕəh ^ˀ	to chew
ŋtɕɛ	to be cold
ŋtɕə	to seize
ŋtɕu ^c .siŋ	early
ŋte.riŋ	far

ηtəŋ	sharp
ηtʃaŋ.bə	hair (of the face)
ηtʃaŋ.liŋ	earth (world)
ηtʃaŋ.rə	cheek (of the face)
ηtse	pretty, cute
ηtsə	slow
ηtsə.ki	finger
ηts ^h æ	fart
ηts ^h æ.la	night
ηts ^h æ.təŋ	to fart
ηtʃəŋ.ŋæ	dirty; to dirty
ηza.rə.tʃəu	afternoon
ηziŋ	to fight

r

rəxə	valley
rəŋ.bu	anus

r

rau	to burn
rə.bə	bone
rə.loŋ	forest
rəh ⁷	four
rəŋ	long
ri	rotten
riŋ	to come out
rəŋ	buttocks
rəŋ.re	oneself
ru ^c .bə	to menstruate

s

sa.bə	new
sa.ŋəɛ	flesh
sæ.məŋ	claw; fingernail
sæ.tʃəu.	to claw
sæfuo	cuticle
sah ⁷	to kill

sah ^ˊ .bɔ	bridge
sah ^ˊ .gæ	seed
sah ^ˊ si	to mix it
səŋ	three
səŋ.nə.təŋ	to think
səŋ.tɕə	mind
sau	cough; to cough; deep; thin (and flat)
sə	earth (dirt); hard
səh ^ˊ	to eat
səh ^ˊ .tɕə	food, food stuff
səbu	yellow
səh ^ˊ	who?
səŋ	to wait
səu	bark (of a dog)
si.t ^h ue	fruit
səŋ	bright (e.g., bright light); light; pot
su	teeth (adult); tooth
su ^c .məŋ	stem
susuɣə	to wave

z

zə	to repair
----	-----------

ʃ

ʃa	meat; to say
ʃəŋ	tasty
ʃəŋ.ləŋ	sword
ʃɔ.bɔ	tomorrow
ʃe	to sleep; to die; to melt
ʃə.məŋ	strength
ʃɛ.nje	morning
ʃəh.təŋ	cream
ʃəŋ	to chase
ʃəŋ.ɣə	to hunt
ʃu.ru	to milk
ʃu ^c	to come

		3
ʒə	to forget	
		ɸ
ɸɛ	to put it	
ɸiŋ.be	bark (tree)	
ɸiŋ.p ^h oŋ	trunk	
		ɰ
ɰɛ	to release	
		x
xæ.lah ^ˀ	previously	
xæ.ləŋ	front	
xɔ.he	hiccup	
xɔ.xi	yawn	
		fi
fi.e.bæ	blackboard	
		ɬ
ɬau	to teach	
ɬau.tʂ ^h u	pupil (young student)	
ɬu.be	testicle	
ɬɛ.bɔ.ts ^h ə	to rub hands together	
		ɮ
ɮɔ	god	
		l
læ.tʂ ^h u	dumb (stupid)	
lælæ	to sing	
lah ^ˀ .bæ	fog	
laŋ	road; to take	
laŋ.tə	all	
lɔ	mountain	
le.bɔ	hand	
lə.bu	body	
le.kɔ	to work	
le.ŋxæ	palm (of the hand)	
lə.pɔh ^ˀ	leaf	

lən.mah [˧]	wind
ləŋ.mah [˧] .ʒə	to blow
ləŋ	in
ləŋ.bəh [˧]	smell
ləŋ.ləŋgəh [˧]	to enter
ləŋ.nə	inside
lu	year
luə ⁱ .mah [˧]	lightning
	w
wə.tsi	finger (little finger)
wəh [˧]	horn

ENGLISH-RGYAS BZANG TIBETAN
DIALECT WORD LIST

English	IPA
	a
Adam's apple	kue.maŋ
after (time)	p ^h a.ŋja
afternoon	ŋza.rə.tɕau
to be alive	moŋ.ʃə.maŋ
all	laŋ.tə
also	taŋ
always	ŋaŋ.tɕəka
and	toŋ
animal (livestock)	ts ^h ə.p ^h e
ant	tʂu ^ɛ .maŋmaŋ
anus	roŋ.bu
arm	bəŋ.bəh ^ʔ
arrow	də
ashes	t ^h ɛ.wə
to ask	tʂə
	b
back (behind)	kuh ^ʔ .tɕau
back (of the body)	ge.tɕə
bad	tæ.kəŋ.mɛ.laŋ
bark (of a dog)	səu
bark (tree)	ɕiŋ.be
beak	tsa.tɕ ^h ə
beard	mæ bə
because; to show it; to fold; seven	tæ
beginning of a month	dã.nku
belch	ʒa.tʂ ^h i
belly	tə.wə
between	ba.la
big	dza

bird	tɕ ^{hi} .bɔ
to bite	ntʂa
bitter (taste)	k ^h ɔ tɕə
black (color)	ŋɛ.bu
blackboard	fiɛ.bæ
to blink (the eye)	məŋ.ləŋ
blood	tʂ ^h e
to blow	ləŋ.mah ^ˈ .jə
blue	ŋə.m ^ˈ uh ^ˈ
blunt (not sharp)	du
boat	tʂə
body	lə.bu
body dirt (that builds up over time)	tʂə.man
bone	rə.bɔ
to be born	tʂ ^h ə
both	ŋə.kɔ
bottle	p ^h əŋ.tsə
bow (as in bow and arrow)	ŋda.k ^h oŋ
branch (of a tree)	ʃæ.lɛ
breast	ʔka
to breathe	pu.p ^h ə
bridge	sah ^ˈ .bɔ
brother (same father, different mothers)	p ^h a.bæ
brother (same mother and father)	ŋə.man.bæ.tʂɛ
brother (same mother, different fathers)	mah ^ˈ .bæ
bubble	pə.wɔ
to bubble	pə.wɔ p ^h ə
to build (a house)	tʂ ^h əŋ.tsu
to burn	rau
but	t ^h æ.ju-ʃoŋ
butter	mai
buttocks	roŋ

c

calf (baby yak, cow, etc)	bɪŋ.təŋ
calf (lower leg)	tsæ.ləŋ
to call	mpəh ⁷
can (able to)	tɕ ^h ɔ
can (metal container, e.g., can of food)	ʔka.ju
to carry on the back	kə
to carve	ku
chalk	ʔka.bu.bi
to chase	ʃə.ʃəŋ
cheek (of the face)	ŋtʃəŋ.rə
cheese (dried cheese)	tɕərə
chest	tɕ ^h æ.rəŋ
to chew	ŋtɕəh ⁷
child	tʃ ^h ə.k ² i
chin	mæ.ɕi
claw	sæ.məŋ
to claw	sæ.tʃau.
clean	tsoŋ/maŋ
to clean	tsoŋ.maŋ.dzə
to clothe	tɕæ
clothing	kə.dzi
to be cold	ŋtɕe
color	ts ^h ə
to come	ʃu ^c
to come out	riŋ
to cook by boiling	tsu
correct	ŋɕ.la
cough	sau
to cough	sau
to cover it (up)	kau
cream	ʃəh.təŋ
to creep	ntse
to crush	daŋ

to cry, to weep	nəhˊ
to cure	naŋsu
to cut	tɕahˊ
cute	ŋtse
cuticle	sæfuo
cutting edge	tʂə.su

d

to dance	tʂə.tɕaŋ
dark (color)	ŋɛ.bu
dark (time)	mau.rau
daughter, knee	bə.məŋ
day	ŋə.ma
daytime	ŋæ.la
deaf	na.ŋæ
deep	sau
to defecate	tɕə.ba
to destroy it	me.laŋ.məzə
to dig (a hole)	təŋ.luːc
direction	ka.tsʰue
dirt (on the body that builds up over time)	tsə.maŋ
dirty	ŋtʂoŋ.ŋæ
to dirty	ŋtʂoŋ.ŋæ
dog	tɕəhˊ
door	ŋgu
dream	mə.laŋ
to dream	mə.laŋ.mɛ
to drink	tʰəŋ
to dry	gaŋ
dumb (can't speak)	kʰə.tʂɛ.mɛ.ɕɛ
dumb (stupid)	læ.tʂʰu
dust	dɛ.wə
to dust (to clean)	tsəŋ.maŋ.zə

e

ear	nah [˧] tɕu
ear wax	na.tɕe
eardrum	na.tu
earlobe	na.ləŋ
early	ŋtɕu ^c .siŋ
earth (dirt)	sə
earth (world)	ŋtʂaŋ.liŋ
to eat	səh [˧]
egg	gə.kəŋ
eight	ŋdzah [˧]
elbow	tʂə.məŋ
empty	təŋ.bə
end of a month	dã.ndzu
to enter	ləŋ.ləŋgəh [˧]
evening	ts ^h ə.ŋtʂe
everyday	naŋ.tɕə.ka
to extinguish	tʂoŋ
eye	məŋ
eyeball	məŋ.tauh [˧]
eyebrow	məŋ.bə
eyelid	məŋ.bəh [˧]

f

face	dəŋ.rə
to fall	mə.tɕəŋ
far	ŋte.rinŋ
fart	ŋts ^h æ
to fart	ŋts ^h æ.təŋ
fast	ŋdz ^w e
fat (e.g., fat man)	tʂæ
fat (e.g., fat meat)	ts ^h i.tʂi
father	ʔa.wah [˧]
feather	ŋdau.bau
feces	tɕʒ.bah [˧]

to feel itchy	tʃah˧
finger	ŋtsə.ki
finger (little finger)	wɔ.tsi
fingernail	sæ.məŋ
to fight	ŋziŋ
to fight, to argue, quarrel	tʰau
to fill	gəŋ.dzə
to find it	tʃʰa
fire	miŋ
to fish	ŋaŋ.ŋtɕə
five	ŋaŋ
flea	ŋdzə.wɔ
flesh	sa.ŋɛ
to float	ntɕʰe
to flow	ngə
flower	ŋbə.tu˨˩
fly (insect)	tʃəŋ.ŋɛ
fog	lah˧.bæ
to fold	tæ
food, food stuff	səh˧.tɕə
foot	gə.bɔ
to freeze	tɕʰa.tʃaŋ.kei
forehead	tʃi.ku
foreskin	ntɕə.be
forest	rə.loŋ
to forget	ʒə
four	rəh˧
front	xə.ləŋ
fruit	si.tʰue
full	koŋ
g	
to get angry	tʃu.loŋ
to get hungry	tə.wɔ.tʃɛ
to get out	gə.dzau.səŋ

to get tired	kauh ⁷
to get wet	tɕ ^h ə.tu
to give, to hand	tah ⁷
glad	tɕə
to go	ngə
to go down, to step down	mə.ngə
god	ɬɔ
good (in a general sense)	ŋɛ
green	ŋə.mbu
to grow up	tɕe
guts (internal organs)	noŋ.tɕ ^h ɔ

h

hair (armpit)	ŋæ bə
hair (of skin)	bə
hair (of the face)	ŋtɕaŋ.bə
hair (of the head)	ŋgə.bə
hair (pubic, female)	tə.bə
hair (pubic, male)	tɕə.bə
half	ts ^h ə.ke.tɕə
hand	le.bə
hard	sə
to have	ɟa
heavy	ŋɟdzə
heel (of the foot)	təŋ.tu
here	nə.noŋ
hiccup	xɔ.he
to hide it	pɔ
high	t ^h u
to hit	təŋ
to hold	kə
hole	bu.pɔ
horn	wəh ⁷
house	tɕ ^h aŋ
how many?	tɕə.ŋtɕə.tɕəh ⁷ .ja

how?		tɕə.ŋtɕə.jə
to hunt		ʃoŋ.jə
to be hurt		tau.ʃə.siŋ
husband		mə
	i	
I, me		ŋah ^ˊ
ice		tɕ ^h a.tɕaŋ
illness		kɛn ^ˈ kuə
in		loŋ
inside		loŋ.nə
to bend		kũ
	j	
jaw		mæ.kɛ
	k	
knife		tɕə.tɕ ^h u
	l	
lake		ts ^h u
language		ka.tɕə
lard		ʃau
late		ts ^h ə
to laugh		gə
leaf		lə.pəh ^ˊ
left		ʃə.lɛ
leg		kə.pə
to lick		dɛ
lightning		lue ⁱ .mah ^ˊ
light (opposite of heavy)		ʃoŋ
to like it		gəh ^ˊ
to limp		koŋ.bɛ
lips		tɕ ^h ə.be
to listen to		ŋɛ
little		tɕ ^h u
to live		t ^h a

liver		ə wə
long		rəŋ
to look at		ŋdzau
louse		ʃəwə
	m	
to make		ʃə
man, male		bə.riə
many, much		moŋ
meat, to say		ʃa
to meet		təŋ.ŋgə
meeting		tçə.bu.tçau
to melt, to die		ʃə
to menstruate		ru ^c .bə
midnight		ts ^h æ.rəŋ
milk (from a mammal)		tɪluʔ
to milk		ʃu.ru
mind		saŋ.tçə
minute (time)		kā.ma ^ˀ
a minute ago		ʔtə.fiə
month		d ^ə wah ^ˀ
to mix it		sah ^ˀ si
moon		nah ^ˀ .ŋjoŋ
morning		ʃɛ.ŋje
mosquito		mbə.ts ^h əi
mother		ʔa ^ˀ ma
mountain		lə
moustache		tç ^h ə.bə
mouth		tçə.ku
to move		ŋgi
	n	
naked		mah ^ˀ .tu
name		məŋ
narrow		tu ^c
neck		ŋah ^ˀ .tçəh ^ˀ

needle	k ^h au
new	sa.bɔ
night	ŋts ^h æ.la
nine	ngə
nipple (of a breast)	nə.wɔ
nose	tɪ'fɲəʔ
nostril	na.bu
not	mæ
now	ʔa.tɔ
number	tsə.tʂu

o

often	naŋ.tɕə.xa.hɔ
old	ŋi.bɔ
on	kə.təŋ
one	tai.tɕi
oneself	rɔŋ.rɛ
to open	ts ^h ɛ
other	k ^h axɔ
outside	gə.dzau

p

to be painful	naŋ
palm (of the hand)	le.ŋxæ
to peel	ba.be.ku ^c
penis	tə.bu
person (man in general)	məh ^ˊ
phlegm (thick mucus)	tsæ
plain	t ^h oŋ.t ^h oŋ
to play	tɕɛ
pot	sɔŋ
pretty	ŋtse
previously	xæ.lah ^ˊ
pupil (eye)	məŋ.ŋɛ
pupil (young student)	ʔau.tʂ ^h u
pus	ŋɛ

to push		p ^h i
to put it		ɕɛ
	q	
quick		ŋdze
	r	
rain		tɕ ^h ah [˧] .bɔ
rainbow		ŋdzɔ
red		mah [˧] .bu
to release		ʃɛ
to repair		zə
to rest		ŋɛ.su
rib		tsə.məŋ
right		tʃɔŋ.le
ripe		ts ^h e
to rise		gə.təŋ
river		tsɔŋ.tɕə
road		laŋ
roof		tɕaŋ.təŋ
root		dzə.bɔ
rope		t ^h e.bɔh [˧]
rotten		ri
round		kəkə.ri
to rub hands		ʃɛ.bɔ.ts ^h ə
to run		dzu
to run away		ku ^c dzu
	s	
saliva		k ^h a.tɕə
salt, hot		ts ^h ɔ
same		ŋdza.ndzɔ
sand		tsə.məŋ
scalp		ŋgə.be
to scratch		tʃ ^h u
seed		sah [˧] .gæ
to seek		ntɕau

to seize	ητϕə
semen	ηdzə.tϕε
seven	tæ
to sew	tsau
shadow	tʃai.si
shallow	me.sauh ⁷
sharp	ητəŋ
to shoot (a gun)	mε.dəʔæ
shore	tϕə.xə
short	təŋ
shoulder	bəŋ.bə ⁷
to show it	tæ
siblings	bə.bæ.məŋ.siŋ
sigh, to sigh	pu.rɪŋ
to sing	lælə
to sink	nau
sister	ʔa.ŋæ
six	tʃau
skin	ba.be
skull	ηg#
sky	naŋ
to sleep	ʃe
slow	ηtsə
to smell	ηaŋ
smoke	tə.bəh ⁷
snake	tʃi
sneeze	ʔa.tʃ ^{hi} i
to sneeze	ʔa.tʃ ^{hi} i ʃə
snot	ηəu.ϕε
snow	k ^h a ⁷ .wə
soft (pliable)	mε.sau
soft (to the touch)	ηəiŋ
sole (of the foot)	koŋ.sau
some	kaka.tϕə

son	bə.riə
soon	ʃə.tɕu
to speak	taŋ.sa
spear	me.ŋto
to spit	tɕ ^h ɜ.maŋ.dzoŋ
to split	tɕe
to stab	ts ^h ai
to stand up, to rise	ʃə.loŋ
star	ka.maŋ
to steal	kəh ^ˀ
stem	su ^c .maŋ
stick of wood	pə.t ^h ɔ
stone	də.gəŋ
to stop	dah ^ˀ
straight	tɕoŋ/tɕoŋ
strength	ʃə.məŋ
strong; afraid	tɕe
to suck, to drink; low	t ^h əŋ
summer	jah ^ˀ k ^h ɔ
sun	ŋə.maŋ
to swallow (food or drink)	məŋ
sweat	ts ^h ah ^ˀ .tɕ ^h e
sweet	ŋai
to swell	tɕoŋ
swift	ŋdzu ^c
to swim	tɕ ^h ə. tɕi.dzau
sword	ʃaŋ.laŋ
	t
tail	ŋdzu.maŋ
to take	laŋ
tasty	ʃaŋ
tear (from crying)	məŋ.tɕəh ^ˀ
to tear	nə.lɔ.ʃə
ten; you (singular)	tɕə

testicle	tu.be
that, he, him	tə
there	tə.noŋ
they, them (plural)	tə.red.næ
thick (and flat)	tu
thin	gu ^c
thin (and flat)	sau
to feel thirsty	kaŋ
this	nə
thread	kə.bə
three	saŋ
throat	ku ^c maŋ
thumb	tə.bu
thunder	ntʂu
times	næma.katsə
today	tã.rin
toe	koŋ.ku
toenail	goŋ.ku.ntsə.gi
together	ŋaŋ.ʃe
tomorrow	ʃə.bə
tongue	tʂi
trunk	ʂin.p ^h oŋ
twenty	ŋe.ʃə
two	ŋə

u

umbilical cord	tə.t ^h e
under	kə.rau
to untie it	toŋ
up to, till	?a.tə.mæsiŋ
urinate	tʂæ.toŋ
urine	tʂæ
us	ŋə.tʂænæ
uvula	kæ.p ^h u.tʂ ^h ə.du

v

vagina	tə.bu
valley	rəxɔ
vein (blood vein)	tʂ ^h ɛ.tsau
village	tʂəŋ
voice	ka
to vomit	tɕu

w

to wait	səŋ
waist	kə.bɔ
to walk	gə
wall	tsubɔ
warm (of weather)	tʂuh ^ˊ
to wash (it)	tʂə
watch (timepiece)	tɕ ^h ə sə
water	tɕ ^h ə
wave (of water)	tɕ ^h əʃu ^c
to wave	susuɣə
we	ŋə.tɕænæ
weak	me.tʂ ^h ai
what	tɕɜ.tə
wheat flour	ts ^h i
wheel	də.lu
when	ka.siŋ
where	ka.noŋ
which	ka.tə
white	ka.pu
who?	səh ^ˊ
wide	dzoŋ.tɕã
wife	na.maŋ
wind	lən.mah ^ˊ
wing	ŋtau.bau
winter	gæ.xɔ
to wipe	ts ^h əh ^ˊ

with, fish
to wither
woman, female
to work
worm
wrist

ŋaŋ
kaŋ
tɛ^lmi?
lɛ.kə
mbə.lu
ts^hu.ts^hŋ

y

yawn
year
yellow
yesterday
yet
yogurt
you (plural)
young

xə.xi
lu
səbu
du^c.soŋ
daŋ
tɕ^hə.k^hə
tɕə.tɕæ.ŋæ
mə.ræ

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