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A Multi-Ethnic Village in Northeast Tibet:
History, Ritual, and Daily Life in Chu cha

སྲོབས་སྲུག་ལྷ། Stobs stag lha

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SUMMARY: Multi-ethnic Chu cha Village in Mchod rten thang Township, Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province, China is described in terms of location; population; clothing; language; religion; history; and personal, family, and community rituals. Photographs provide additional information.

FRONT COVER: Three villagers toss *rlung rta* into the sky for good luck on the way to a *lab rtse* (4 August 2009, Chu cha Village, Stobs 'brug rgyal).

BACK COVER: Stobs stag lha records traditional songs from MA 'chi med (31 July 2009, Chu cha Village, Stobs 'brug rgyal).

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དཔེ་ཆ་འདི་ནི་བདག་གི་སྣོད་དབུས་སུ་གནས་པའི་ཨ་ཕེ་ལྷོ་བས་དབང་ལྷུག་(༡༩༣༢-༢༠༡༠)ལགས་ལ་ཕུལ་བ་ཡིན།

Dedicated to my beloved and much-respected grandfather,
Stobs dbang phyug (1932-2010).

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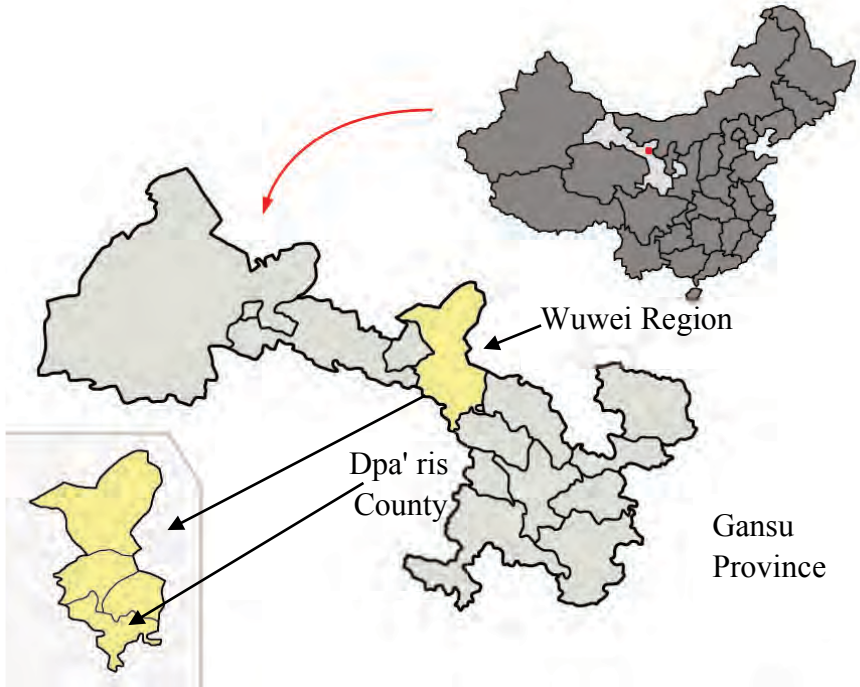
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MAPS

Map One. Dpa' ris County, Wuwei Prefecture, Gansu Province, PR China.¹



¹This is a modified version of the map by Croquant at [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Location_of_Wuwei_Prefecture_within_Gansu_\(China\).png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Location_of_Wuwei_Prefecture_within_Gansu_(China).png), accessed 7 September 2012.

Map Two. Dpa' ris County.



1. Gan chen mdo (Ganchang kuo)
2. Mgal mo nang
3. Rta rdzong nang (Dazong tai)
4. Mchod rten thang (Tiantang si)
5. Chu cha (Zhucha)
6. Tanshanling
7. Gser skyid (Saishi si)
8. Rab rgyas (Huazang si)

CONSULTANTS

An skal bzang, male, born 1947, interviewed August 2009 in Chu cha Village.

Gan Gagao, male, born 1972, interviewed July 2009 in Chu cha Village.

Lan tshe ring, female, born 1936, interviewed August 2009 in Rab rgyas Town.

MA 'chi med, male, born 1937, interviewed February 2009 in Chu cha Village.

Niu Xieyang, male, born 1945, interviewed August 2009 in Chu cha Village.

Song Ding, male, born 1935, interviewed February 2010 in Rab rgyas Town.

Stobs bla ma tshe ring, male, born 1946, interviewed August 2009 in Chu cha Village.

Stobs bsam 'grub, male, born 1940, interviewed July 2009 at Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery.

Stobs dbang phyug, male, 1932-2010, interviewed February 2009 in Chu cha Village.

Wang Danjian, male, born 1954, interviewed August 2009 in Chu cha Village.

Wang g.yang mo, female, born 1961, interviewed August 2009 in Rab rgyas Town.

PREFACE

This is a study of the ethnically and culturally diverse Chu cha Village, which is located in Mchod rten thang Township, Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province, China. Chu cha's five most significant rituals are described: soul calling, weddings, funerals, mountain deity worship, and New Year celebrations. All four ethnic groups in Chu cha Village practice these rituals. Thirty-five images of village life and ritual are also provided.

•••

I am not a native Tibetan speaker, though I was born in a Tibetan family of ten people – my paternal grandparents; my parents; my father's elder brother and his wife, and their two children; and my younger brother. At home, we speak a Chinese dialect similar to the Qinghai dialect. My grandparents also speak the Dpa' ris Tibetan dialect. A few villagers born before 1960 speak fluent Dpa' ris Tibetan dialect. Those born in the 1960s do speak Tibetan, but not very well, although they have excellent listening ability. Villagers born after 1970 speak only a few words of Tibetan and can understand very little. My parents do not speak Tibetan, but they can understand it.

All my family members spoke to me in Chinese when I was a child, although Grandfather taught me Tibetan words for such items as window, bowl, chopsticks, stove, and so on.

I began to learn Tibetan in grade three in primary school when I was ten years old. All my courses, including my Tibetan class, were taught in Chinese. My Tibetan language teacher used Chinese to explain Tibetan. He translated Tibetan texts and words into Chinese and asked us to repeat the Tibetan after him. My middle school Tibetan language teacher taught in the same way. We were required to memorize long texts and recite them in front of the teacher, though we did not know the meaning of the texts.

Tu,² Chinese, and Tibetan languages are spoken in Chu cha

² I use the term 'Tu' rather than 'Mongghul' or 'Monguor' because Tu villagers refer to themselves as 'Tu' and trace their ancestry to Huzhu and

Village. Chinese is the lingua franca and the language most often spoken. Tibetan elders who speak Tibetan talk to each other in Tibetan and Tu elders who speak Tu talk to each other in Tu. During Lo sar, all Tibetans in the village gather in front of the village stupa to celebrate Lo sar and, on this occasion, everyone tries to greet each other in Tibetan.

When I enrolled in Qinghai Normal University in 2004, I had Tibetan classmates from the Tibet Autonomous Region, and Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai provinces. Interacting with my classmates emphasized the importance of learning Tibetan. I tried to speak Tibetan with them and was glad if they talked to me in Tibetan rather than Chinese. At the beginning, I listened carefully as others spoke in Tibetan. It took me some time to have enough confidence to speak Tibetan. I also realized that my grandparents were a great source for language learning. They were very willing to speak Tibetan to me but sadly, I was unable to spend more than a few days with them each year.

I also wondered why many of my classmates did not have surnames while I did. "Aren't I Tibetan?" I asked myself. This uncertainty encouraged me to research my origins and ethnic identity. The research I undertook in writing this book has helped me gain a better idea of who I am.

Yongdeng counties. The Tu originally from Yongdeng County speak only local Chinese.

ONE

INTRODUCTION

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are few Tibetan language publications on Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County, though there are many in Chinese. A Google search for 天祝 produced 7,130,000 hits on 17 April 2011 and a Google search on 'Tianzhu' produced 658,000 hits on the same date – none were relevant to Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County. A Google search on 'Dpa' ris' in Tibetan produced 51,400 hits on 17 April 2011, but only a few were relevant to Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County. Most of these sites were not accessible in China.

Few academics have published about Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County. Materials published by Qiaogao Cairang, et al. (1998) and Zhouta (1996) mainly focus on regional history and religion. Qiaogao Cairang et al. (1998) suggest that Dpa' ris refers to the region that includes the contemporary counties of Ledu, Huzhu, Datong, Menyuan (in Qinghai Province); and Tianzhu, Sunan, and parts of Wuwei, Yongdeng, and Gulang (in Gansu Province). Tsehuajia (2010) states that geographically, Dpa' ris is located in the northeast part of the Tibetan Plateau, and covers the north and south sides of the eastern end of the Qilian Mountains. He also examines the origin of Dpa' ris Tibetans. Qiaogao Cairang et al. (1998) claim that the earliest Tibetans came to the Dpa' ris area in 699 CE. Dor zhi gdong drug snyems blo (1996) disputes this claim, maintaining that Tibetans have been in the area for more than 3,000 years, though the term 'Tibetan' was not used to refer to them. Qiaogao Cairang (2005) describes the most influential people in Dpa' ris history, primarily for

their Buddhist achievements.

In terms of religion, Tuttle (2011) discusses Tibetan Buddhism in Dpa' ris from 838 to 1895, examining how Tibetan Buddhism began in Dpa' ris, how Tibetan Buddhism flourished over time, the shift from one sect to another, and prominent local religious personalities.

A major flaw in work on Dpa' ris is its general nature. Tianzhu County Committee (2000) collected traditional Tibetan names and new Chinese place names in Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County, including the 'Ju lag mthon po bcu gsum 'Thirteen Mountain Deities' in Dpa' ris and their locations. This source allows comparison of seldom-used Tibetan names with their new Chinese names, but lacks specificity as to where these places are located. Wuwei History Compiling Group (1995) provides a wealth of information about Dpa' ris history, population, ethnicity, governmental policy, cultural relics, traditions, customs, and so on. Published by the local government, the general information provided is based on official statistics.

Han, Hui, Tu, Tibetan, Yugur, Uighur, Manchu, Mongol, Salar (Sala), Dongxiang, Miao, Zhuang, and Bonan are listed as living in Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County, with a total minority population of 82,702, constituting thirty-nine percent of the total population.³ Few publications discuss the origins of these groups.

Li and Lu (2010) describe the life of three generations of a Tu family in Huzhu Tu Autonomous County (Qinghai Province) spanning the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century and illustrate how life changed. The reasons why certain Tu women migrated to Dpa' ris are discussed, but such women constitute only a small number of Tu in Dpa' ris.

Tuttle (2011) states:

³ <http://www.gstianzhu.gov.cn/huarui/news/tzgz/2009/630/0963011423B7F1FE0CFAEGJH3486IB.html>, accessed 9 January 2012.

Dpa' ris could be characterized as the most ethnically mixed of all Tibetan areas, since the people practicing Tibetan Buddhism in this region include not only Tibetans and Mongols, but also Chinese, Tu, and Uighur peoples. Long contact with non-Tibetans has led these people to be open to different ideas, from eating rice as a staple of their diet to considering the validity of Kepler's astronomy.

Though this description is accurate, the study lacks examples and accounts to give readers deeper insight into the circumstances leading to such diversity and openness.

Descriptions of Dpa' ris culture focus primarily on Tibetan culture which, in turn, is mostly reduced to formal institutional religion, e.g., when Brtson 'grus rab rgyas (1999) discusses Tibetan painting, literature, folktales, and important historical sites, most are in sections about religion and lack separate chapters. Zhao's (2006) study of Dpa' ris clothing, for example, actually focuses on Tibetan traditional clothing in general, and not specifically on Dpa' ris clothing.

Much local knowledge is disappearing with the death of local elders. For example, my paternal grandfather, Stobs dbang phyug, was a very knowledgeable villager who provided much information about local history unavailable elsewhere. This study of Chu cha Village uses such detailed local knowledge to better illustrate how Chu cha ethnic groups interact.

DPA' RIS COUNTY

The county seat of Dpa' ris (Tianzhu) Tibetan Autonomous County is 320 kilometers north of Lanzhou City, the capital of Gansu Province. Ninety minutes by highway, or two and a half hours by train, are required from Lanzhou to reach Dpa' ris County Town, also known as

Rab rgyas (Huazang si). There are eight towns⁴ and eleven townships⁵ in this county.⁶ In 2011, approximately thirty percent of the population of 174,790 was Tibetan, while sixty-three percent was Han Chinese (Wuwei City Bureau of Civil Affairs 2011). In 1952, the central government designated Dpa' ris as the first Tibetan autonomous county in China. The only other Tibetan autonomous county in China is Muli Tibetan Autonomous County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Prior to this designation, the area was part of the Dpa' ris region in A mdo (the northeast Tibetan Plateau).

CHU CHA VILLAGE

Chu cha (Zhucha) 'a pair of streams' owes its name to its location at the confluence of two unnamed streams. Chu cha Village is located seventy-five kilometers west of Rab rgyas and twelve kilometers east of Mchod rten thang (Tiantang) Township center. Chu cha Village is divided into three sections known locally as Xiakou, Yangwa, and Geshu. The village lies along the base of a mountain range on a tributary of the 'Ju lag (Daitong) River that separates Qinghai and Gansu provinces. The total population of Chu cha Village is 872 people (212 households), which includes one hundred Tu households, sixty-three Chinese households, forty-five Tibetan households, and four Hui households. The approximate percentage of each ethnic group is forty-six percent Tu, thirty percent Han Chinese, twenty-two percent Tibetan, and two percent Hui. Households of the four ethnic

⁴ Huazang si, Anyuan, Tanshanling, Dachai gou, Haxi, Songshan, Shimen, and Saishi si towns.

⁵ Zhuaxi xiulong, Dahong gou, Maozang, Qilian, Danma, Duoshi, Xida tan, Dongda tan, Tiantang, Sailalong, and Dongping townships.

⁶ <http://baike.baidu.com/view/480871.htm>, accessed 7 April 2011.

groups are mixed within village territory.

CLOTHES

Tibetans in Chu cha Village generally wear modern clothes (Figure Three). However, they wear traditional Tibetan clothes during Tibetan New Year (Figure Four), at weddings (Figure Five), when welcoming or visiting a *bla ma*, and sometimes when visiting the monastery in the town center.⁷ When *bla ma* occasionally visit Chu cha Village to perform religious rituals, all Tibetan residents hold *kha btags*,⁸ wear Tibetan robes, and line both sides of the road that passes through the village. As the *bla ma* walks along the road, villagers piously bow their heads and the *bla ma* blesses them by touching their heads. Villagers may also consult the *bla ma* in Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery when they lose livestock or if a spouse or child goes missing.

Dpa' ris Tibetan women's traditional attire is handmade at home, except for silver panels, which are made by silversmiths from the county seat or in inner China. A long robe worn on ceremonial or festive occasions is called *lwa* and the two silver panels in front of the robe are called *ja shee*. There are four or five pairs of *dngul* '(pieces of silver' attached to the *ja shee*. One or two pairs of panels are attached to the hair – *ja ka*. The beads connecting the two panels of the *dngul* are *sngon 'jog*. The pieces of cloth on the two sides are called *wa ri*. There is also a cloth piece at the back - *je ma*.⁹ The decorations collectively are referred to as *bian taozi* in local Chinese. Local

⁷ Only certain elders wear traditional Tibetan robes when visiting Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery in the town center.

⁸ Long strips of silk used to welcome guests, as offerings to deities and religious figures, and as gifts to friends and relatives.

⁹ *Ja shee*, *ja ka*, *wa ri*, and *je ma* are approximations of the local pronunciation.

women also wear a *gong chen* 'collar' on their shoulders and *wa zhwa*¹⁰ on their heads (Figure Five). Dpa' ris Tibetan men's traditional clothes are without decoration. Otter skin was historically sewn on robe edges as a decoration, but this practice ended in about 2000.

LANGUAGES

All Chu cha villagers speak a Chinese dialect similar to the Qinghai dialect, but mixed with Tibetan lexical items. For example, villagers say *guoka* for 'kitchen' – *guoka* is the local pronunciation for the Tibetan term *sgo kha*.¹¹ There is some variation with ethnic group, as can be seen in the table below of selected kinship terms:

Table One. Selected kinship terms used in Chu cha Village.

Kinship Term	Tibetan	Tu	Han
grandfather, one's parents' father	<i>a myes</i>	<i>a die</i>	<i>a ye, yeye</i>
grandmother, one's parents' mother	<i>a mes</i>	<i>a nie</i>	<i>a nei, nainai</i>
father	<i>a pha</i>	<i>a ba</i>	<i>a da</i>
mother	<i>a ma</i>	<i>a ma</i>	<i>a ma</i>
mother's brothers	<i>a zhang</i>	<i>a jiu</i>	<i>a jiu, jiu jiu</i>
mother's sister	<i>a ma ni</i>	<i>a yei</i>	<i>yi niang</i>
father's elder brother	<i>a kha</i>	<i>a ga</i>	<i>dada</i>
father's young brother	<i>a kha</i>	<i>a ga</i>	<i>baba</i>
father's sister	<i>a ni</i>	<i>a gu</i>	<i>niangniang</i>
elder sister	<i>a di</i>	<i>a jie</i>	<i>jiejie</i>
elder brother	<i>a bo</i>	<i>a jia</i>	<i>a gao, gaogao</i>

¹⁰ *Wa*: fox; *zhwa*: hat.

¹¹ In most parts of A mdo, the term *sgo kha* would be understood as 'at the door/ gate,' but in Dpa' ris, this term refers to the kitchen.

Han Chinese and Tu are now the majority of the population in Chu cha Village, and have lived there for half a century. Only some elders born before 1960 speak Tibetan, partly because of the numerical superiority of Chinese in Chu cha Village, and partly because of events during the Cultural Revolution.¹² The following account from Stobs dbang phyug describes this situation:

During the 1960s and 1970s, we had to carefully monitor what we said. We dared not speak Tibetan because the local government would suspect us of sedition if we did and punish us publically. My children don't speak Tibetan because they got used to speaking Chinese when they were young and it's the same for my grandchildren.

Some Tibetan villagers born before 1960 still sing traditional Tibetan songs, including *chang glu*¹³ and *bstod glu*¹⁴ during New Year parties, wedding parties, and informal gatherings. Tibetan villagers born after 1980 do not understand traditional songs.

The lyrics below are from a *bstod glu* collected from MA 'chi med:

¹² The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was set into motion by Mao Zedong (1893-1976). The main goals of the Cultural Revolution were to promote the proletariat and to eradicate bourgeois influence from the cultural front; to place culture at the service of workers, farmers, and soldiers; to follow policies dictated by the proletariat; and to consolidate and develop the socialist system. The movement significantly affected the country economically and socially (Vogeli 1970).

¹³ Drinking songs.

¹⁴ Songs praising the singers' hometown, parents, *bla ma*, nature, and good harvests.

- 1ཞང་ཨ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ཨ་ལོང་ལེན།།
- 2ཤེལ་དཀར་རོ་མཚོད་རྟེན་བཞེངས།།
- 3སྟོད་མངའ་རིས་གངས་དཀར་བསེ་རུའི་རྟ།།
- 4ལྷ་འཕགས་མཚོག་ནོར་བུའི་ཕོ་བྲང་རེད།།
- 5འདི་མཇལ་ནོ་ལུས་ཀྱི་བསོད་ནམས་རེད།།

- 6གཡུ་སྟོན་མོ་མེ་ལོང་ལྱིས་འབྲ།།
- 7ལྷ་མ་རྟོས་ཡར་གྱི་མཚོ་མོ་རེད།།
- 8ཕ་བདེ་བཞེགས་སྟོང་གི་ཡོན་ཆབ་རེད།།
- 9འདི་མཇལ་ནོ་ངག་གི་བསོད་ནམས་རེད།།

- 10སྟུན་ལྷ་ཡི་བྱ་ཁ་བཀང་འབྲ་འདི།།
- 11སྟེད་རྒྱ་ནག་རི་ཕོ་ཅེ་ལྷ་རེད།།
- 12ལྷ་འཇམ་པའི་དབྱངས་ཀྱི་བཞུགས་གནས་རེད།།
- 13འདི་མཇལ་ནོ་ཡིད་ཀྱི་བསོད་ནམས་རེད།།
- 14ངས་ལུས་ངག་ཡིད་གསུམ་སྐྱུ་རེ་བསྟོད།།
- 15ཞང་ཨ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ཨ་ལོང་ལེན།།

1zhang a long la mo a long len
 2shel dkar ro mchod rten bzhengs
 3stod mnga' ris gangs dkar bse ru'i rwa

⁴*lha 'phags mchog nor bu'i pho brang red*
⁵*di mjal no lus kyi bsod nams red*

⁶*g.yu sngon mo me long phyis 'dra*
⁷*klu ma dros yar gyi mtsho mo red*
⁸*pha bde gshegs stong gi yon chab red*
⁹*di mjal no ngag gi bsod nams red*

¹⁰*spun lnga yi bu kha bkang 'dra 'di*
¹¹*smad rgya nag ri bo rtse lnga red*
¹²*lha 'Jam pa'i dbyangs kyi bzhugs gnas red*
¹³*'di mjal no yid kyi bsod nams red*
¹⁴*ngas lus ngag yid gsum sku re bstod*
¹⁵*zhang a long la mo a long len*

¹*zhang a long la mo a long len*¹⁵

²Like white crystal stupas being built
³Mnga' ris white snow mountains are as sharp as rhinoceros horns
⁴The Palace of the God, Exalted Noble One
⁵Going there is good karma of the body

⁶Like a blue turquoise mirror being polished
⁷It is the nagas' Ma dros mtsho mo Lake¹⁶
⁸It is the holy water for thousands of *bde gshegs*¹⁷
⁹Going there is good karma of speech

¹⁰Five brothers fill up a home
¹¹They are like Wutai Mountain¹⁸ in inner China

¹⁵ Vocables with no identifiable lexical meaning.

¹⁶ Manasarowar Lake near Mount Kailash (Mtsho ma dros pa/ Ma pham g.yu mtsho).

¹⁷ Buddha.

¹²It is the place where Manjushri lives

¹³Going there is good karma of the mind

¹⁴I praise each, the body, speech, and mind

¹⁵*zhang a long la mo a long len*

¹ཞང་ཨ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ཨ་ལོང་ལེན།།

²དགུང་ཨ་སྒྲོན་མ་ཕུབ་མཚོད་ཁང་ཡ།།

³འབྲུག་པོ་རྒྱུང་མ་བཞེངས་ལྷ་སྐྱུ་ཡ།།

⁴སྒྲིན་དཀར་པོ་མ་འཕེན་སྟོན་མདའ་རེད།།

⁵བཞེངས་མི་དགོས་མཚོད་ཁང་རང་འགྲུབ་རེད།།

⁶རྩ་བུ་ཡག་མ་བཞེངས་མཚོད་རྟེན་ཡ།།

⁷རྩོག་ཡའ་མ་མ་བརྩིགས་བང་རིམ་ཡ།།

⁸ཁངས་དཀར་པོ་མ་བརྒྱབ་ཞག་རྩི་ཡ།།

⁹བཞེངས་མི་དགོས་མཚོད་རྟེན་རང་འགྲུབ་ཡ།།

¹⁰བསང་སེར་པོ་མ་ཕུད་རང་ཕུད་རེད།།

¹¹ནགས་ཅན་དན་མ་འབར་སྒོས་ཐུར་ཡ།།

¹²རྒྱ་གཙང་པོ་མ་ཕུབ་ཡོན་ཆབ་ཡ།།

¹³འབྲུལ་མི་དགོས་ཡོན་ཆབ་རང་འགྲུབ་རེད།།

¹⁸ Wutai Mountain has five peaks and is a sacred Buddhist site in Shanxi Province.

14ཞང་ཨ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ཨ་ལོང་ལེན།།

¹*zhang a long la mo a long len*

²*dgung a sngon ma phub mchod khang ya*

³*brug pho chung ma bzhengs lha sku ya*

⁴*sprin dkar po ma 'phen snyan mda' red*

⁵*bzhengs mi dgos mchod khang rang 'grub red*

⁶*rdza khra yag ma bzhengs mchod rten ya*

⁷*rdo g.ya' ma ma brtsigs bang rim ya*

⁸*khangs dkar po ma brgyab zhag rtsi ya*

⁹*bzhengs mi dgos mchod rten rang 'grub ya*

¹⁰*bsang ser po ma phud rang phud red*

¹¹*nags tsan dan ma 'bar spos thur ya*

¹²*chu gtsang bo ma phub yon chab ya*

¹³*'bul mi dgos yon chab rang 'grub red*

¹⁴*zhang a long la mo a long len*

¹*zhang a long la mo a long len*

²The azure sky is an unbuilt shrine

³The young male dragon is an unsculpted deity

⁴The white cloud is an unshot arrow

⁵It needs no building – it is a natural shrine

⁶The multihued cliff is an unbuilt stupa

⁷The slate rocks are unmanufactured levels

⁸The white snow is undaubed marrow¹⁹

⁹It needs no building – it is a natural stupa

¹⁰Yellow *bsang*²⁰ need not be burned, but burns on its own

¹⁹ In this case, signifying the white paint that is typically daubed on stupas.

¹¹The sandalwood is the unburned incense stick

¹²The clean water is unblest holy water

¹³It needs no offering – it is a natural oblation

¹⁴*zhang a long la mo a long len*

The lyrics below are from a *bstod glu* sung by An skal bzang:

¹ཞང་ཨ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ཨ་ལོང་ལེན།།

²ངས་མཚོད་མཚོད་མཚོད་ལ་སྣ་ས་མཚོད།།

³ངས་སྣ་ས་མ་མཚོད་མ་བཏུར་ན།།

⁴སྣ་བྱམས་པ་བཞེངས་ས་སྣ་ས་ཡིན།།

⁵ངས་མཚོད་མཚོད་མཚོད་ལ་རྒྱ་གར་མཚོད།།

⁶ངས་རྒྱ་གར་མ་མཚོད་མ་བཏུར་ན།།

⁷ཞེས་ཀ་ལ་འབྲུངས་ས་རྒྱ་གར་ཡིན།།

⁸ངས་མཚོད་མཚོད་མཚོད་ལ་ཨ་འདོ་མཚོད།།

⁹ངས་ཨ་འདོ་མ་མཚོད་མ་བཏུར་ན།།

²⁰ *Bsang* is a fumigation ritual, or smoke offering that commonly involves burning juniper to create smoke. The ritual is based on the concept that human presence and activities defile the environment, and that this impurity can be removed with fumigation. The basic function of the ritual is *bsang ba* 'to purify'. The *bsang* ritual is also conceived as an offering to divinities. *Bsang* is also frequently offered when an important person such as a *bla ma* arrives in an area (http://dictionary.thlib.org/internal_definitions/find_head_terms, accessed 25 June 2012).

¹⁰ལྷ་རྒྱལ་བ་འབྲུངས་ས་ཨ་མོ་ཡིན།།

¹¹ལྷ་ཡར་བལྟོད་སྒྲ་མའི་ཚོས་ལ་བལྟོད།།

¹²ཞང་ཨ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ཨ་ལོང་ལེན།།

¹*zhang a long la mo a long len*

²*ngas mchod mchod mchod la lha sa mchod*

³*ngas lha sa ma mchod ma bkur na*

⁴*sku byams pa bzhugs sa lha sa yin*

⁵*ngas mchod mchod mchod la rgya gar mchod*

⁶*ngas rgya gar ma mchod ma bkur na*

⁷*shes ka kha 'khrungs sa rgya gar yin*

⁸*ngas mchod mchod mchod la a mdo mchod*

⁹*ngas a mdo ma mchod ma bkur na*

¹⁰*lha rgyal ba 'khrungs sa a mdo yin*

¹¹*sku yar bstod bla ma'i chos la bstod*

¹²*zhang a long la mo a long len*

¹*zhang a long la mo a long len*

²I pray, pray, pray for Lha sa

³If I don't pray to and respect Lha sa (it is not appropriate because)

⁴Lha sa is where the holy Maitreya image was made

⁵I pray, pray, pray for India

⁶If I don't pray to and respect India (it is not appropriate because)

⁷India is the birthplace of knowledge

⁸I pray, pray, pray for A mdo

⁹If I don't pray to and respect A mdo (it is not appropriate because)

¹⁰A mdo is the birthplace of Rgyal pa rin po che

¹¹In order to praise him, I praise the *bla ma's* teachings

¹²*zhang a long la mo a long len*

The lyrics below are *chang glu* and *bstod glu* collected from Niu Xieyang:

¹ཞང་ཨ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ཨ་ལོང་ལེན།།

²ངའི་ལག་གི་ཁ་བཏགས་གཡང་དཀར་འདི།།

³ཕྱི་བསྐོར་ན་དྲིན་ཆེན་པ་མ་ཡོད།།

⁴དེའི་ནང་ན་སངས་རྒྱས་རྣོང་སྐུ་ཡོད།།

⁵ངས་དེ་རིང་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་འོམ་ལ་འབུལ།།

⁶ངའི་ལག་གི་རྩ་དཀར་བུམ་པ་འདི།།

⁷ཕྱི་བསྐོར་ན་འབུག་སང་རི་མོ་ཡོད།།

⁸དེའི་ནང་ན་འབྲི་རྩ་སེར་པོ་ཡོད།།

⁹ངས་དེ་རིང་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་འོམ་ལ་འབུལ།།

¹⁰ངའི་ལག་གི་ཆང་དཀར་བུམ་པ་འདི།།

¹¹ཕྱི་བསྐོར་ན་མེ་ཏོག་བྲ་ལྟང་ཡོད།།

¹²དེའི་ནང་ན་བདུད་རྩི་བསིལ་མ་ཡོད།།

¹³ངས་དེ་རིང་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་འོམ་ལ་འབུལ།།

14ཞང་ཨ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ཨ་ལོང་ལེན།།

¹*zhang a long la mo a long len*
²*nga'i lag gi kha btags g,yang dkar 'di*
³*phyi bskor na drin chen pha ma yod*
⁴*de'i nang na sangs rgyas stong sku yod*
⁵*ngas de ring grogs kyi khrom la 'bul*

⁶*nga'i lag gi rdza dkar bum pa 'di*
⁷*phyi bskor na 'brug seng ri mo yod*
⁸*de'i nang na 'bri ja ser po yod*
⁹*ngas de ring grogs kyi khrom la 'bul*

¹⁰*nga'i lag gi chang dkar bum pa 'di*
¹¹*phyi bskor na me tog khra ldang yod*
¹²*de'i nang na bdud rtsi bsil ma yod*
¹³*ngas de ring grogs kyi khrom la 'bul*
¹⁴*zhang a long la mo a long len*

¹*zhang a long la mo a long len*
²The white *kha btags* in my hands
³My kind parents are on one side of the *kha btags*
⁴Thousands of Buddhas are on the other side of the *kha btags*
⁵Today I offer it to my friends

⁶The white vase in my hands
⁷Images of dragons and lions decorate its exterior
⁸Delicious tea is in the vase
⁹Today I offer it to my friends

¹⁰The bowl of white liquor in my hands

¹¹Colorful flowers adorn the outside of the bowl

¹²Tasty liquor the inside of the bowl

¹³Today I offer it to my friends

¹⁴*zhang a long la mo a long len*

1ཞང་ཨ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ཨ་ལོང་ལེན།།

2མཐོ་ལ་དགུང་སྟོན་གནམ་གི་མཐོ།།

3བྱམས་ལ་ཐང་དཀར་ཚོད་པོ་བྱམས།།

4མཐོ་བྱམས་ལ་འཛོམས་པའི་སྐུ་རེ་བསྟོད།།

5འདི་མཚོགས་ལ་ཁ་དཀར་རྒྱུང་གི་མཚོགས།།

6འདི་བདེ་ལ་དཀར་ཡག་ཐང་གི་བདེ།།

7བདེ་མཚོགས་ལ་འཛོམས་པའི་སྐུ་རེ་བསྟོད།།

8འདི་ཡག་ལ་མ་བྱུ་སྟོ་གི་ཡག།།

9འདི་སྟན་ལ་ཁུ་བྱུག་གསུང་གི་སྟན།།

10ཡག་སྟན་ལ་འཛོམས་པའི་སྐུ་རེ་བསྟོད།།

11ཞང་ཨ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ཨ་ལོང་ལེན།།

¹*zhang a long la mo a long len*

²*mtho la dgung sngon gnam gi mtho*

³*byams la thang dkar rgod po byams*

⁴*mtho byams la 'dzoms pa'i sku re bstod*

5'di mgyogs la kha dkar rkyng gi mgyogs
6'di bde la dkar yag thang gi bde
7bde mgyogs la 'dzoms pa'i sku re bstod

8'di yag la rma bya sgro gi yag
9'di snyan la khu byug gsung gi snyan
10'yag snyan 'dzoms pa'i sku re bstod
11zhang a long la mo a long len

1zhang a long la mo a long len
²The highest thing is the sky
³The kindest bird is the eagle
⁴I praise the image for its height and kind appearance

⁵The fastest animal is the wild ass
⁶The flattest land is Dkar yag thang²¹
⁷I praise the flatness and the speed

⁸The most beautiful bird is the peacock
⁹The most melodious sound is from the cuckoo
¹⁰I praise the beauty and the sound
11zhang a long la mo a long len

Hui in Chu cha Village speak Dpa' ris Chinese dialect. Some Tu over the age of fifty speak Tu, while most young Tu speak only Dpa' ris Chinese dialect, however, a few understand a few common Tu sentences. Wang (2010) states that Wang Yongfu (b. 1931), a resident of Chu cha Village, is the only performer in China who can sing the entire Tu Ge sar epic. However, he no longer sings it since few people can now understand him (Stobs bla ma tshe ring).

²¹ A location in Dpa' ris that I was unable to further identify.

TWO

HISTORY

DPA' RIS COUNTY

Dpa' ris is derived from the Tibetan phrase *dpa' bo'i yul*, 'land of heroes'. During the seventh century, Tibetan King Srong btsan sgam po (~617-650) created a powerful kingdom and sent troops to Tibet's east border with Tang China,²² where the troops subsequently settled. These guards were seen as heroes and thus people came to call this area Dpa' bo'i yul.

Qiaogao Cairang et al. (1998) states that Dpa' ris previously referred to the contemporary Ledu County, Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, Datong Hui and Tu Autonomous County, and Menyuan County, Qinghai Province; and the eastern part of Sunan Yugur Autonomous County, certain parts of Wuwei City, Gulong County, Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, and Yongdeng County in Gansu Province.

Stobs dbang phyug stated that a long spear was kept in his family home when he was young, and suggested that there must have once been a soldier in his family. MA 'chi med said that a long spear in his home went missing when he was around fifteen years old. These two elders guessed that the government was confiscating weapons from communities, and family members burned their spears rather than turn them in.

²²An Introduction to Huare (Dpa' ris, Pari) (<http://places.thlib.org/features/15540/descriptions/86>, accessed 20 January 2011).

CHU CHA VILLAGE

There were originally seven households – five Tibetan households and two Chinese households – in Chu cha Village (Stobs dbang phyug). The Chinese and Tu families moved to Chu cha Village from the 1940s to the 1960s. The original seven households still live in Chu cha Village. Tu and Chinese from Qinghai Province came to Chu cha Village to avoid military conscription by Ma Bufang²³ to fight the Communists in the 1940s.

After the thirty-fifth (1946) year of the Minguo era (1912-1949), Ma Bufang expanded his army and conscripted troops. People from Hualong, Ledu, Datong, Huzhu, and Menyuan counties in Qinghai Province, and Yongdeng, Gulang, and Minqin counties and Wuwei Region in Gansu Province escaped to Tianzhu and settled, thus Tianzhu's population suddenly increased (Wuwei History Compiling Group 1995:215).

After 1950, Chinese and Tu migrated to Chu cha Village from Huzhu and Yongdeng counties to exploit uncultivated lands (Song Ding). Some people, particularly, female Tu from Huzhu County, came to Chu cha to escape abuse in their husbands' home (Li and Lu 2010).

Most Tu are from Qinghai though a few are from Yongdeng County, Gansu Province. All the Dong households in Chu cha Village, for example, are originally from Donggou, Huzhu County. The Tu families who have lived in Chu cha the longest are the Qiao, Lan, Dawa, and Dong families, who migrated around the same time.

Hui in Chu cha Village all came from Datong County.

The oldest Chinese families are the Yang and Wang families in

²³ Ma Bufang was born in Gansu in 1903, a Muslim, a high-ranking army officer of the Nationalist Party, and a warlord in northwest China from the 1930s to the 1940s. He died in Saudi Arabia in 1975.

Yinwa, and the Wang families in Xiakou. Other Chinese came to Chu cha around or after the 1950s. The Chinese in Chu cha Village were originally from Yongdeng and Huzhu counties.

Residents of Tianzhu, which was part of Yongdeng during the Minguo era, went to Yongdeng to pay land taxes. A local Chinese saying goes, "*Shang liao liangcao bu pa guan, jing liao fu mu bu pa tian*. If you pay land taxes, there is no need to fear the government officers; if you respect your parents, there is no need to fear Heaven." Song Ding gave the following account:

I am from Yongdeng County. My father had four sons, but my father's elder brother had only two daughters. In 1945 when I was ten years old, my father sent me to my uncle's home in Chu cha to be his adopted son. Father had some education and taught me how to calculate. Tianzhu separated from Yongdeng County and became a Tibetan autonomous county in 1952. After 1949, people in Chu cha knew I could read and do basic arithmetic, so I was appointed the township secretary in 1955. In 1956, I was promoted to township leader. Tianzhu was divided into thirty-six *zu*²⁴ based on tribal organization and fourteen monasteries. Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery was the largest monastery in this area. When I was the leader of the *zu*, there were 208 monks in Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery.

TRIBES AND TRIBAL HISTORY

The origin of Tibetans in Dpa' ris is given in this account provided by Stobs bsam 'grub:

Long ago, a couple from the west settled in Dpa' ris in Rung stag

²⁴ A *zu* is equivalent to a modern township.

Valley. The old couple had three sons. One day the father built a *lab rtse*²⁵ on a mountaintop and then went there to worship every day. He knew his death was approaching when his sons grew up, and wished to arrange his affairs. The father summoned his sons one afternoon after they had finished eating and said, "I am going to worship at the *lab rtse* early tomorrow morning. You must also come to the mountaintop immediately after you get up, and bring something from home that you think is important." Then they went to bed.

The oldest son noticed that his father had already left when he woke up the next morning. He decided the sling that he used to herd yaks was important and took it to the mountaintop. When the second son awoke, he decided the spear he used to defend against wild animals and invaders was important and took it to the mountaintop. The third son woke up and decided that juniper was important and took a bundle of juniper to the mountaintop.

After the sons arrived, the father and his sons piously worshiped at the *lab rtse*. They burned juniper and *bsang rdzas*,²⁶ prostrated to the *lab rtse* three times, and circumambulated it three times. The father sensed something was wrong with his wife and instructed his sons, "Go check on your mother. Bring her here regardless of what has happened."

After some time, the father saw his sons carrying their mother's corpse up the winding mountain path. Together with his sons, he buried his wife beside the *lab rtse*. Then the father told his children not to feel sorrowful about their mother's death and continued, "I will also die this day," and told them that the only thing they needed to do was to bury his body beside their mother's after his death.

He then examined the things in his sons' hands. Seeing that his oldest son held a sling, he said, "Go and become the

²⁵ *Lab rtse* are on mountaintops and are considered the residence of mountain deities.

²⁶ 'Incense ingredients' – a mixture of barley flour, candy, tea leaves, bread, and fruit that is offered to deities.

leader of the herdsmen of Sngo kho tsho ba."²⁷ Seeing that his second eldest son held a spear, he said, "Go and become the leader of the heroes of Stobs tshang tsho ba." Seeing a bundle of juniper in his third son's hand, he said, "Go and become the leader of the Rgya tig tsho ba religious devotees." He died immediately after instructing his sons, who did as they were told, burying their father beside their mother, and then set off in different directions in obedience to their father's instructions.

After many years, the descendants of those three sons flourished and spread throughout Dpa' ris. All Dpa' ris Tibetans are their descendants. Tibetan elders in Dpa' ris always remind youths not to say, "You are from Stobs tshang tsho ba and I am from Rgya tig tsho ba," but instead, "We are all the descendants of one ancestor."

Chu cha Village elders state that the three Dpa' ris tribes once had their own territories, mountain deities, reincarnation *bla ma*, and festivals, and were all also part of Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling's monastic estate.

Stobs tshang tsho ba included inhabitants of Chu cha, Rgya thang, and Rna bug villages. Rgya tig tsho ba included inhabitants of Me thur, Kho ra, Rta rdzong, Ba zA, Zab lung, and Gan chen mdo villages. Sngo kho tsho ba included inhabitants of Khor brtan gong ma, Khor brtan zhol ma, G.yon lung, and Skom mdo villages, and Gser rko 'gag Gorge.

Each tribe has its own mountain deity. A myes²⁸ Rab bzang (Figure One) is the mountain deity of Stobs tshang tsho ba, who renew this *lab rtse* on the fifteenth day of the sixth lunar month (Figure Two). Rgya tig tsho ba's mountain deity, A myes Stag btsan, is worshipped during the fifth and the sixth lunar months. Sngo kho tsho ba has two mountain deities – Dkar brag mtsho kha and A myes

²⁷ *Tsho ba*: tribe.

²⁸ *A myes* refers to elders in the local Tibetan dialect.

Stobs ldan. The former is a rocky mountain on which there is a lake. Dkar brag mtsho kha and A myes Stobs ldan are worshipped at the same time on the twenty-third day of the sixth lunar month. Rituals for each of the two deities are held at the same time.

All villagers worship and beseech their mountain deities to protect their livestock and ensure a good harvest in the coming year. The three tribes previously shared certain festivals, for example, they jointly participated in horse races. However, each tribe also has its own festivals.

Each tribe previously had a reincarnation *bla ma*²⁹ who was recognized by the reincarnation *bla ma* at Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery. These tribal reincarnation *bla ma* played important roles and owned land, livestock, and buildings. Land and property conflicts, e.g., when one tribe's livestock trespassed on another tribe's field, were mediated by tribal elders in consultation with reincarnation *bla ma* of the involved tribes. Elders also mediated conflicts between households and organized religious rituals.

The eighth Sngo kho reincarnation *bla ma* was studying at Bla brang Monastery, Kan lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province in 2012. The reincarnation *bla ma* from Stobs tshang tsho ba and Rgya tig tsho ba were not recognized by the government after the 1950s.

Despite their distinctiveness, much emphasis was placed on tribal unity, as illustrated by the following account from Lan tshe ring:

A Tibetan A *mchog*³⁰ once lived in a cave on a mountain near

²⁹ Reincarnation monks and very knowledgeable monks are respectfully called *bla ma* locally.

³⁰ An A *mchog* is a lay person who is invited to homes to chant to exorcise evils.

Stobs tshang tsho ba's territory. He always wanted to get something for nothing. His renown as a conjurer meant Stobs tshang tsho ba members feared him. Villagers sometimes invited him to perform rituals in their homes, at which time he typically did things casually and carelessly, dissatisfying the villagers. However, if they said anything unpleasant about him behind his back, he knew and magically punished them by sending storms to destroy their crops or causing sickness in their family or to their livestock.

Gradually villagers came to dislike the *A mchog* and wanted to get rid of him, but had no idea how. He refused to leave and continued to cause problems for the villagers. Finally, unable to tolerate the situation, the villagers met and reached a decision after a long discussion – they would throw the *A mchog* into the 'Ju lag River the next morning.

They captured the *A mchog* the following morning, brought him to the river bank, tied a rope tightly around him, and threw him into the river. Unexpectedly, he floated upstream. The astonished villagers caught him again, tied a boulder to the end of the rope, and tossed him into the river again. Before he drowned, he said, "If you drown me, the Stobs tshang tsho ba will have no offspring for the next few decades."

This prophecy came true. Young people in Stobs tshang tsho ba remained childless after marriage. Stobs tshang tsho ba had no male descendants and only a few female descendants. Consequently, they adopted male children from Rgya tig tsho ba and Sngo kho tsho ba to continue their lineage. Some families even adopted children from Chinese families. In addition to their common descent, this event closely linked the tribes as kin – a close relationship they have maintained.

Four generations after drowning the *A mchog*, Stobs tshang tsho ba began to have male descendants again. My generation, as well as your grandfather's generation, are genuine male descendants of Stobs tshang tsho ba; we were not adopted into the clan.

The tribes lost the power to control local communities after 1949. The government redistributed land, livestock, and other property to the three tribes. The authority the tribes had exerted in controlling migration in and out of their territory before 1949 also ended, and the population structure subsequently changed dramatically and increasing numbers of non-Tibetans moved in.

VILLAGE SURNAMES

A Tibetan from Dpa' ris County may be called Stobs tshe ring don 'grub, where Stobs is the family name and Tshe ring don 'grub is his personal name. There are eleven surnames in Chu cha Village. Stobs (Duo) and Tshang (Cang) are associated with Stobs tshang tsho ba, while Rgya (Jia) is associated with Rgya tig tsho ba.

Of the forty-five Tibetan households in Chu cha Village, thirteen are Stobs (Duo) families, nine are Tshang (Cang), eight are Ma,³¹ two are An, four are Niu, three are Rgya (Jia), two are Wang, one is Qi, one is Hua, one is Yan, and one is Zeng. Table Two gives village surnames and the number of families sharing that surname.

³¹ Chu cha Hui are also surnamed Ma.

Table Two. Number of village Tibetan families and their surnames.

Family Surname	Number of Village Families
Stobs (Duo)	13
Tshang (Cang)	9
Ma	8
An	2
Niu	4
Rgya (Jia)	3
Wang	2
Qi	1
Hua	1
Yan	1
Zeng	1

Tibetans in Chu cha Village did not have family names before 1949. The Stobs and Tshang families are descendants of members of the Stobs tshang tsho ba and the oldest native population in Chu cha Village. The government began registering families after 1949 and announced that locals could not register without family names and, without registration, the government would not distribute land to them. Tibetans in Stobs tshang tsho ba then randomly chose Stobs or Tshang as their family names. The following account from Stobs dbang phyug is illustrative:

When I was young, villagers referred to my family as the Bra shul Family, because there was only one family in Bra shul Valley. People would say, "I'm going to the Bra shul Family to ask if they've seen my lost sheep." After 1949, people no longer used 'Bra shul Family' to refer to my family, because newly immigrated Chinese and Tu could not pronounce it correctly, and because more than one family had then settled in Bra shul Valley. People then used Stobs Tshang to refer to my family.

Locals now use Tshang Valley to refer to the valley where the Tshang Family lives, because only the Tshang Family lived there previously. There are now eight families in Tshang Valley. The Tshang Family derived their surname from the second syllable of their tribal name, Stobs tshang tsho ba.

The Ma families are Tibetans from Ledu County who fled to Chu cha Village in about 1945 to escape Ma Bufang's oppressive rule. Ma villagers had that surname before coming to Chu cha Village, but do not know its origin.

The An families are from Gser skyid (Saishi si) in Dpa' ris County. A reincarnation *bla ma* surnamed An was known as A ban bla ma. Later, A ban was used to refer to the family. Gradually, Ban became their family name. They use the Chinese character 安 'An' as their family name.

The Niu families were some of the earliest, non-indigenous migrants to Chu cha Village, arriving prior to 1949 from Menyuan County, and already had their surname. They were Tu when they reached Chu cha and beseeched the tribal leaders to accept them as members of the Stobs tshang tsho ba. Once permission was granted, they gradually integrated into the Stobs tshang tsho ba to the extent that they came to consider themselves Tibetan.

The Rgya (Jia) Family originated in Rgya tig tsho ba and are also among the earliest non-indigenous families to migrate to Chu cha Village. Their surname is based on their tribal name, Rgya tig tsho ba.

The Wang Family has a complex history. A woman named A ne sgron dkar came from Ledu County before 1950 and married three times. Her first two husbands were Tibetans, and both died. She had two sons by her second husband. She then married a Chinese man, Wang Gezi, from east China. After A ne sgron dkar married Wang Gezi, her two sons took their stepfather's family name – Wang.

The Qi Family came to Chu cha Village from Gu dog 'gag gong

ma³² in 1967 and had their surname before arriving. The Qi Family has three daughters, who all married and moved to other villages. Only the old couple remains at home in Chu cha Village. The Qi Family will vanish from Chu cha after the old couple die.

The Hua Family has a single member in Chu cha Village. Around 1957, a Tibetan man from Huzhu County settled in a cave in Rdo dkar Valley (Huashitou xia) near Chu cha Village, since he had no shelter in Chu cha Village. He stayed in the cave for several years, which led Chu cha villagers to refer to him as Old Hua (华 *hua* is the first character of Huashitou xia). Hua gradually became his family name. He never married and this name will disappear from the village after his death.

The one Yan family and one Zeng family both obtained surnames from their maternal ancestors. A custom in Chu cha Village dictated that if a man married and moved into his Chinese or Tu wife's household, he and his children took his wife's family name, while the children assumed the father's ethnic identity. In the case of the Yan and Zeng families, two Tibetan men married and moved into two Tu families, and assumed their wives' family names, but kept their Tibetan ethnicity.

There is also intermarriage between Hui and the other village ethnic groups, for example, a Hui man married a Tu and divorced her in 2005. He then married a Tibetan. He fell into a pit while intoxicated and died in 2009.

³² A neighboring village.

THREE

VILLAGE RITUALS

RELIGION

All Tibetans and Tu in Chu cha Village follow the Dge lugs pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, as do most local Han Chinese. The Tu Dong families in Chu cha Village also believe in the deity, Dongjia Niangniang, whose temple is in Donggou Township, Huzhu County. The Dong Shengying family in Chu cha Village keeps a piece of wood from the Dongjia Niangniang sedan in their home. Local Dong families visit this family if they need help from Dongjia Niangniang. The piece of wood instructs people through a spirit medium.

Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery (Tiantang si) is a Dge lugs pa monastery in the town center twelve kilometers west of the village. It is the largest monastery in Dpa' ris County in terms of number of monks and number of monastery buildings. Originally built during the Tang Dynasty (618-970), it was first a Bon monastery called G.yung drung dgon pa. During the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) in around 1360, Ka rma Nor bu rdo rje bla ma³³ was on his way to Beijing and passed G.yung drung dgon pa. He found that local people were being attacked by a monster, 'Ju, from the 'Ju lag River that flows near the monastery. 'Ju repeatedly emerged from the river, attacked local people, and ate their livestock. Locals suffered greatly from this monster, but could not subdue it.

The *bla ma* felt great sympathy for locals and resolved to

³³ Ka rma Nor bu rdo rje (1340-1383) was the fourth head *bla ma* of the Ka rma Kagyu Sect. He was born in the Cham mdo Region of the contemporary Tibet Autonomous Region (Qiaogao Cairang 2005:178).

subdue the monster. Using a *mgal mo* 'cow' and a *rta* 'horse', he lured the monster out of the river, performed rituals, and finally subdued it. Ka rma Nor bu rdo rje then built 108 stupas locally to prevent the monster from harming people again, and named that place Mchod rten thang 'Plain of Stupas'. The *bla ma* released the two animals he had used in the ritual into two valleys. The valley where the cow was released is called Mgal mo nang and the valley where the horse was released is called Rta rdzong nang (Qiaogao Cairang 2005). The Bon monastery became a Kagyu monastery and the Kagyu Sect flourished in Dpa' ris.

In the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), a Dge lugs monk named 'Dan ma tshul khrims rgya mtsho³⁴ built a meditation temple in Mchod rten thang. During the early Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), the fourth Stong 'khor bla ma Mdo rgyud rgya mtsho³⁵ converted the meditation temple into a monastery and named it Mchod rten thang Monastery. Some years later, the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682), passed Mchod rten thang Monastery on his way to meet the Qing Emperor and named this monastery Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling.

At its peak in the early Qing Dynasty, the monastery had 800 monks, thirty *lha khang* 'temples', residences of seventeen reincarnation *bla ma*, many livestock and buildings, and much land. The monastery was destroyed in 1958, leaving only one *lha khang* and a reincarnation *bla ma's* residence. During the Cultural Revolution, the remaining *lha khang* and *bla ma* residences were destroyed and most scriptures were burned. In 1981, the monastery was rebuilt, locals were permitted to visit and worship, and additional

³⁴ 'Dan ma tshul khrims rgya mtsho (1587-1665) was born in Huzhu and built Kan chen Monastery in Huzhu (Qiaogao Cairang 2005:194).

³⁵ Stong 'khor bla ma Mdo rgyud rgya mtsho (1639-1683) was a student of the fourth Pan chen Bla ma (Qiaogao Cairang 2005:82).

buildings were constructed. Rje tsong kha pa³⁶ Temple was built from 1998 to 2001 with donations from devotees. The wooden image of Rje tsong kha pa in this temple is said to be the biggest Rje tsong kha pa image in the world. The monastery had sixty-two monks, two reincarnation *bla ma*, six buildings, and many stupas in 2010.

Buddhists from Chu cha visit this monastery on the following occasions:

- During Lo sar, villagers visit and offer fresh bread and tea bricks to the monastery and the monks. On the final day of Lo sar, the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, monastery monks perform '*cham*³⁷ and many villagers come by truck and motorcycle to watch.
- When a person dies, relatives and family members visit the monastery to ask monks to chant scriptures for the deceased to help them have a better reincarnation.
- Local Buddhists consult *bla ma* about where to find lost livestock, their fortune in the coming year, and in which direction to search for a suitable spouse for a child.
- Locals attend religious rituals such as opening ceremonies for newly built temples.

Some elders rent rooms near the monastery to conveniently prostrate, circumambulate, and worship every day.

A stupa in the village center (Figure Six) was built in June 2004. A Han Chinese woman from Fujian Province donated most of

³⁶ Rje tsong kha ba (1357-1419) was the founder of the Dge lugs pa Sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

³⁷ '*Cham* is a masked dance performed in Buddhist and Bon monasteries.

the funds for the stupa. Locals offer *bsang* at this stupa and circumambulate it when they wish. Elders spend much of their leisure time circumambulating the stupa.

A *smyung gnas khang* 'fasting room' was also built in 2004 with funds from the same Fujian donor. Chu cha Village's annual *smyung gnas* 'fasting' ritual lasts for three days. Participants do not eat or speak during the ritual, but sit in the *smyung gnas khang* and chant scriptures with monks from Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery. The monks also fast during the ritual. Locals believe this activity purifies both body and soul. A *mchod khang* 'shrine' adjoins this *smyung gnas khang* where locals make daily offerings of butter lamps and holy water. Statues of Ston pa,³⁸ 'Jam pa'i dbyangs,³⁹ and Spyan ras gzigs⁴⁰ are enshrined here and *thang ga*⁴¹ of Sgrol ma,⁴² Rje tsong kha pa, and A myes Rab bzang are kept here. A Tibetan New Year party is held annually in an open space in front of the *smyung gnas khang* (Figure Four).

Every Tibetan household has a *mchod khang* where *thang ga* of the Buddha and *bla ma* are displayed on the walls. Small Buddha images are placed on the altar. Butter lamps are lit and pure water is put in seven small copper bowls in front of the altar every morning. Every Tibetan household also has a *bsang khri* 'offering altar' in the center of their courtyard where *bsang* is offered on the first and fifteenth days of every lunar month.

There is a mosque in Tanshanling Town, around thirty kilometers southwest of the village that Chu cha Hui residents visit on such special occasions as the Muslim New Year⁴³ and when family

³⁸ Buddha.

³⁹ Manjughosha.

⁴⁰ Avalokiteshvara.

⁴¹ Tibetan religious painting.

⁴² Tara.

⁴³ The Muslim New Year period begins the day after Ramadan concludes and lasts for a month.

members die.

Some Chinese believe in Dge lugs pa Buddhism, and often visit the local monastery, *lab rtse*, village stupa, and *smjung gnas khang*. Other local Chinese profess no particular religious belief but do visit their ancestors' graves at least twice a year, once on Grave Sweeping Day⁴⁴ and once at Danian sanshi.⁴⁵

INDIVIDUAL RITUAL: SOULS AND SOUL-CALLING

THE SOUL

Hun is a term used by village Tibetans, Tu, and Han for 'soul'. People have three souls, one of which leaves the body when a person dies or is frightened.

Tibetans and Tu villagers visit Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery to hold a *mang ja* ritual⁴⁶ for the deceased, in the belief it helps them be reborn as a human. Family members choose an auspicious day on which to visit Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery and ask monks to chant *mang ja* for the deceased, prostrate in front of the *lha khang*,⁴⁷ circumambulate while monks chant *mang ja*, and light butter lamps in temples.

⁴⁴ The 104th day after the winter solstice.

⁴⁵ This local Chinese dialect term refers to the eve of the Lunar New Year. It is on the last day of the twelfth lunar month. Danian is local Chinese dialect term for Spring Festival, or the Lunar New Year Festival.

⁴⁶ *Mang ja* literally translates as community tea or meal. It is an offering ceremony sponsored by laity to accumulate merit on behalf of their deceased relatives. All the resident lamas and monks are fed a meal and given offerings such as tea bricks and cash for their chanting service during the ceremony. Locals also consider *mang ja* to be the name of the scripture chanted at this ritual.

⁴⁷ *Lha khang*: temple. In this context, it refers to the main temple in Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery where a Sakyamuni image is enshrined.

Monks assign a certain number of butter lamps to light and a certain number of circumambulations and prostrations to perform. The number is usually one hundred – *brgya mchod*⁴⁸ in the local Tibetan dialect – or 1,000 – *stong mchod*⁴⁹ in the local Tibetan dialect. The families may offer as many *mang ja* as they wish. Villagers pay around thirty RMB to the monastery for each *mang ja*. Villagers are assigned a certain number of circumambulations, prostrations, and a certain number of butter lamps to light in the monastery for each *mang ja*. For example, after a death, family members may go to the monastery where they might be instructed to offer five *mang ja*. For each *mang ja*, they must offer a *brgya mchod*, meaning they circumambulate 500 times, prostrate 500 times, and light 500 butter lamps.

Soul belief is also evident in villagers' twice annual visits to their ancestors' graves, where they believe one of the souls of the deceased resides. The first visit is on Grave Sweeping Day and the second visit is on Danian sanshi. They beseech their ancestors to give them a prosperous life. Most ancestors' graves are in the mountains behind the village.

The process of worshipping graves during both visits is the same. Male descendants normally visit their ancestors' graves, bringing juniper, *bsang rdzas*, liquor, *shaozhi*,⁵⁰ *gsur*,⁵¹ firewood, and fruit. They travel by motorcycle, truck, or on foot. *Bsang* is offered near the graves to the mountain deities. Three prostrations

⁴⁸ *Brgya mchod* means 'one hundred offerings' in the local Tibetan dialect. Villagers who offer *brgya mchod* must prostrate one hundred times, circumambulate one hundred times, and light one hundred butter lamps.

⁴⁹ *Stong mchod* means '1,000 offerings' in the local Tibetan dialect. Villagers offering *stong mchod* must prostrate 1,000 times, circumambulate 1,000 times, and light 1,000 butter lamps.

⁵⁰ Villagers burn white paper, which is considered to be money that can be used in Heaven by souls of the deceased. Yellow paper is burned for deities.

⁵¹ *Gsur* is a mixture of meat, bread, candy, rapeseed oil, and tea leaves. It is offered to deceased souls.

are made facing the mountaintops. As family members kneel before their ancestral graves, one member makes a fire with firewood brought from home or gathered along the way, puts *gsur* on the fire, and splashes liquor into the flames. *Gsur* is considered food for ancestors. The *shaozhi*, which is believed to be money for the ancestors, is burned one piece at a time. Other *shaozhi* are also lit and put on each grave mound. Finally, three prostrations are made before the graves, fireworks are lit, and people return home.

SOUL LOSS

A person may lose their soul when frightened or shocked. Adults who are physically weak and children are more likely to lose their souls when terribly frightened. For example, if a child accidentally falls, or a dog surprises the child suddenly, they might lose their soul. The soul leaves the body and lingers in the place where the person was frightened.

Children less than three years old cry violently if they lose their soul, but children above three years old feel listless and have frequent nightmares. Children who lose their soul also feel dizzy, lethargic, and sleepy. Locals commonly criticize others who lack energy by saying, "You seem to have lost your soul. Tell your mother to call it back."

Two rituals may be performed if a person loses their soul. Neither has a specific name. In the first type, the mother goes to the place where her child lost their soul, holds her child to her bosom, squats down, picks up a pinch of dirt, and sprinkles some on the child's head three times, symbolically uniting the child's three souls. While doing this she may chant, for example:

- ¹拉尕, 不要害怕
²拉尕, 不要害怕
³拉尕, 不要害怕

- ¹*Laga, bu yao hai pa*
²*Laga, bu yao hai pa*
³*Laga, bu yao hai pa*

- ¹Lha dkar,⁵² don't be afraid
²Lha dkar, don't be afraid
³Lha dkar, don't be afraid

She then lulls her child into a deep, peaceful sleep.

A second ritual is performed if family members are unsure where the child has lost their soul. On the night of the day when soul-loss occurs, the mother offers *bsang* in the adobe stove in the kitchen, prostrates three times to the stove, pours water into a big pot, and places it on the stove, adds three dried jujubes, and stirs the water and jujubes with a rolling pin with a red string tied around it. She stirs counterclockwise three times and then stirs clockwise three times. The mother puts the rolling pin across the pot with the red string touching the water. She next finds an item of the child's underclothes, wraps a piece of bread in it, and goes to a place where the child often goes, for example, a place where the child often plays, and calls the lost soul back. Alternatively, she may go up on the roof to call the soul back, because the roof is high and the soul can thus hear the call from far away. Wang g.yang mo told me, "I usually go to the roof to call back a lost soul because the soul can see and hear me easily and call":

⁵² An example of a child's name.

¹周加, 不要害怕,
²馍馍吃来,
³周加, 不要害怕,
⁴衣裳穿来,
⁵周加, 不要害怕,
⁶茶喝来,

¹*Zhoujia, bu yao hai pa*
²*Mo mo chi lai*
³*Zhoujia, bu yao hai pa*
⁴*Yi shang chuan lai*
⁵*Zhoujia, bu yao hai pa*
⁶*Cha he lai*

¹Brug rgyal,⁵³ don't be afraid
²Come eat bread
³Brug rgyal, don't be afraid
⁴Come wear clothes
⁵Brug rgyal, don't be afraid
⁶Come drink tea

The mother chants such verses three times where the child likes to play or on the roof, while holding the clothes and the bread, and then loudly asks a family member, "Has 'Brug rgyal returned?"

The family member responds loudly from the room where the child sleeps, "Yes, he has returned." Then the mother puts the clothes and the bread under the child's pillow and the child sleeps with their head on the pillow.

The next morning, the child puts on the clothes and eats some of the bread for breakfast. Family members eat the remaining bread.

⁵³ An example of a child's name.

The mother then goes to the kitchen to check the pot. Three jujubes floating together on the water surface in the pot center signifies that the soul has returned. If the jujubes are separated, it means the ritual was unsuccessful and the soul has not returned, in which case the mother performs the ritual again that night. She repeats the ritual until it is deemed that the soul has returned.

When I was a child, my mother performed soul-calling rituals for my brother and me. However, as I grew older, villagers performed soul calling rituals less frequently. In 2012, soul calling was rare in Chu cha Village. Villagers now typically take sick children to local clinics and hospitals instead of performing rituals.

The following is my personal account of my mother calling back my soul:

My family was preparing to go to bed one night at about ten o'clock when I was ten years old. First, my younger brother and I went to the toilet outside the family courtyard. Darkness had so utterly conquered every corner of the world that I could not even see my fingers. We fumbled towards the toilet. When we had almost reached our destination, I suddenly felt an unusual object underfoot – it was a long, soft, elastic thing. I kneaded it back and forth with my foot, trying to figure out what it was. To my surprise, its ends pounded the ground again and again, and I suddenly realized that it was a snake. Paralyzed by this realization, I stood like a stone. I wanted to flee, but my legs would not obey. Instead of bracing to run, they wobbled and trembled atop that dreadful creature.

Eventually, my brother tugged my sleeve and suggested that we return to the house. A shrill scream came uncontrollably out of my throat, and I rushed back to the house. Mother dashed out when she heard my scream.

I ran into her arms, drenched in tears. She knelt, held me tightly to her bosom, and asked gently, "What happened, my dear?"

"Snake!" was the only word I could squeeze out.

Immediately, she rolled up my trousers and checked my ankles and shins to see if I had been bitten. She heaved a sigh of relief after finding nothing.

"Don't be afraid, my dear. There's nothing to fear. A snake is just an ordinary creature," she said reassuringly. At that moment, I felt warm blood churning in my heart and flowing throughout my whole body. I felt much better.

Mother grabbed a pinch of dirt, sprinkled it on my head, and began murmuring, "Stag lha, don't be afraid, please come back. Stag lha, don't be afraid, please come back. Stag lha, don't be afraid, please come back." She chanted this again and again.

FAMILY RITUALS

WEDDINGS

During wedding parties, if both the bride and groom are Tibetan, they wear Tibetan robes, as do their relatives who attend the wedding party (Figure Five). If the bride or groom is not Tibetan, then the two families negotiate the issue of wearing Tibetan robes at the wedding party. Dpa' ris Tibetans practice village and ethnic endogamy and exogamy. The five main steps – finding a partner, becoming acquainted, negotiating the brideprice, holding a feast in the bride's home, and sending the bride to the groom's home – are described below.

If a family identifies an appropriate bride for their son, they ask someone who knows both families very well to be the *jieshaoren* 'matchmaker'. The boy's father and the matchmaker then visit the girl's home and ask if they agree to the marriage. If they do, the boy's family later visits the girl's home. This visit is called *ti pingzi*,⁵⁴ and

⁵⁴ *Ti*: bring; *pingzi*: bottle.

the boy's family brings two or three bottles of liquor, which they drink together in order to become better acquainted. The girl's family fills the empty bottles with grain after they finish drinking and the boy's family takes the bottles home.

The third visit is called *jiang caili*.⁵⁵ The boy's family visits the girl's family to ask the amount of brideprice they require, which was around 35,000 RMB in 2010. Then the boy's family consults a fortuneteller for an auspicious wedding date and then visits the girl's family to tell them.

The girl's family holds a feast for their neighbors and relatives who come to offer congratulations on the day before the wedding. The next day, the groom's family sends several cars to the bride's home to bring her and her close relatives to the groom's home, where a feast is held after guests arrive.

FUNERALS

Three types of funerals are held in Chu cha Village by the different ethnic groups. Chinese funerals in Chu cha Village fall into three categories based on the scale. Rich families hold *da sanyuan*, which requires at least twelve *daoye*,⁵⁶ who chant scriptures for a minimum of seven days, during which time feasts are offered to the *daoye* and neighbors.

Middle income families hold the *zhong sanyuan* funeral, in which about six *daoye* chant scripture for around five days, thus families need to offer five days of feasts to the *daoye* and neighbors.

The least expensive funeral is *xiao sanyuan*, requiring three *daoye* who chant for about three days. Families need to offer feasts to the *daoye* and neighbors during this time.

⁵⁵ *Jiang*: bargain; *caili*: brideprice.

⁵⁶ *Daoye*: Daoist practitioner.

During the funeral days, the *daoye* make *zhihuo* 'paper property' such as miniature houses, cars, and livestock for their deceased relatives to use in the next life. Relatives are expected to lament loudly, otherwise their deceased relative will be unhappy and cause them trouble. The Chinese put corpses in coffins and bury them in their family graveyard.

Hui keep their deceased relative at home for at most one night, then take the corpse to a mosque, wash it, ask an *ahong*⁵⁷ to chant scripture, and then place the corpse in a coffin. In Dpa' ris, every mosque has a single coffin that is used for all corpses. The coffin is taken to their family grave, the bottom of the coffin is removed, and the corpse falls into a previously dug hole in the grave. Hui bury younger generations in a higher location than that of older generations, which is the opposite of what village Tibetans and Han practice. They visit the grave seven times after the funeral at seven-day intervals to burn incense. On the forty-ninth day after the death, they bring a whole cooked sheep to the grave and eat it at the grave. They bow to their deceased relatives when they visit the graves and sometimes ask an *ahong* to go to the grave to conduct a ceremony.

Tibetans and Tu have very similar funerals. The following is my account illustrating how a Tibetan funeral is held in Chu cha:

It was the twenty-eighth day of the fifth lunar month in 2010 when I received a phone call from my cousin,⁵⁸ who told me that our grandfather was terribly sick. He told me to visit Grandfather if I had time. I told him I would go home as soon as I finished my final examinations.

Grandfather herded our family goats for around forty years and did not stop herding until he was seventy-two. He was

⁵⁷ An *ahong* is an Islamic religious leader who resides in a mosque, organizes religious activities, and gives religious teachings to Muslims.

⁵⁸ Father's elder brother's son.

strong and healthy and could walk in the forest for several hours without stopping. Even young men had difficulty keeping up with him. After he stopped herding, he was sick for several years, but remained talkative and liked to share his memories with us.

I received another phone call from my cousin on the afternoon of the thirtieth day of the fifth lunar month. "When will you come home?" he asked.

"I'll come home as soon as I finish my final examination. How about you?" I said.

"I'm on the way now. Grandfather passed away," Cousin said.

"When?" I said in disbelief.

"This morning at three o'clock. Your parents don't want you to know because they're afraid it will negatively influence your final exam," Cousin said.

"I'm going home," I said, my face drenched in tears. Although Grandfather had been sick for several years, I never imagined that he would leave us. I thought we still had a long time to be together, and for him to share his memories and his knowledge of our village, farming, and herding.

I went home by bus the next day without finishing my final examinations. I met Cousin, who was waiting at the gate of my home. His eyes were very red. He said, "Don't cry, or you'll make everybody else cry. Lha dkar⁵⁹ just arrived and she cried wildly, causing our mothers to cry." I nodded, but could not stop tears from dropping from my eyes like a broken string of prayer beads.

"Calm down," he consoled, as some villagers came out to comfort me.

I entered the courtyard and saw many villagers. Women were cooking in the kitchen. Men were chopping firewood, others were fetching water, and some were sawing tea bricks into two pieces. I was led directly to the *shangfang*,⁶⁰ where I saw

⁵⁹ Father's elder brother's daughter.

⁶⁰ The *shangfang* is the main room in a home where guests are usually received.

Grandfather's sedan in the middle of the room at the back. All my family members were sitting and kneeling by the sedan, chanting the Six Sacred Syllables. Mother told me to burn *shaozhi* in the basin in front of the sedan, which I did, and then prostrated three times, before joining my family members. Mother saw me sobbing and comforted me, "Grandfather passed away peacefully and without pain, held to your father's bosom." I felt much better when I heard this.

Village women placed a bowl of noodles in front of Grandfather's sedan at noon. I also noticed that a dish of fruit and a dish of bread were there. Butter lamps were lit in front of the sedan every morning by Uncle. The women brought a bowl of noodles to each of us, encouraged us to eat more, and urged us not to be sad. They also offered noodles to villagers who came to my home to help. The women also ate noodles and after everybody had finished eating, they washed the bowls, dishes, and pots and then went home.

We remained by Grandfather's sedan, chanting scriptures. At that time I noticed that my uncle was missing, so I asked Father where he was.

"He went to Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery to ask the monks to give an auspicious day for the funeral, and also to invite monks to our home to chant scriptures," Father said.

"Who are the funeral managers?" I asked.

"Uncle Danjian and Gashou er⁶¹ are the *sangguan*.⁶² Uncle Kun dga' ⁶³ is making all the purchases. Uncle Sanshenbao⁶⁴ is the registrar, and Uncle Liu Yonglin⁶⁵ is the

⁶¹ Neighbors.

⁶² *Sangguan*: funeral manager. His main responsibility is to divide work among the villagers and organize the funeral. We chose Danjian and Gashou er because our families had a good relationship. We chose Sanshenbao to be the registrar because he was our neighbor and was one of few literate villagers. Liu Yonglin was a good cook and had previous experience at village gatherings.

⁶³ My paternal grandmother's brother's son.

⁶⁴ A neighbor.

cook."

"Why are there so many people in our home?" I asked.

"Each household in Geshu⁶⁶ has sent a person to help. Some of my friends and your uncle's friends have also come to help."

Our family members continued chanting scripture by Grandfather's sedan. That afternoon, Uncle returned from Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery, joined us, and said to Father, "The monks said that the third day of the sixth lunar month is an auspicious time to hold the funeral. We should take A myes' sedan out of the gate before four in the morning. People born in the Year of the Bull should hide somewhere as we take A myes to be cremated."

"When will the monks come chant scriptures?" asked Father.

"Tomorrow, but they said they are very busy and can only send one monk," Uncle answered disappointedly.

"In which direction did the monks say we should cremate A myes?" Father asked.

"To the west," replied Uncle.

"The valley behind the Wang home is the right place," said Father.

"Yes, I agree," said Uncle. "Please notify our relatives who live far away and tell them the funeral date. I will tell Uncle Danjian and Gashou er the date, so they can make arrangements."

"Don't forget to tell Gagou and Sangjieshijia⁶⁷ to make the cremation stove," said Father.

"Oh yes, you are right. They are experts at that," Uncle said.

An old monk from the monastery came to my home the

⁶⁵ A neighbor.

⁶⁶ Chu cha Village is divided into three hamlets: Yangwa, Geshu, and Xiakou.

⁶⁷ Neighbors.

next day. Uncle asked him to sit on the *kang*⁶⁸ in the *shangfang*. Stobs bkra shis⁶⁹ was appointed to serve the monk. During the day, the monk chanted by himself. During the night, he chanted a line and then my family members repeated it before he moved on to the next line. Many of our close relatives joined us, including Grandfather's younger sister's and younger brother's children and Grandfather's daughter and her children. Many wept for Grandfather.

Uncle Danjian made an announcement in front of the villagers in the yard that afternoon, "Tomorrow is the funeral day. Please be here before five in the morning. Many guests will come tomorrow. There will be five tables in the yard and two people should serve each table. Some people also need to welcome guests at the gate. Tomorrow, women need to help Liu Yonglin in the kitchen, and some people need to bring food to the guests and take empty bowls to the kitchen. I will make the duty list and put it on the wall later. Please look for your names and know your duties. Be responsible. Every family experiences something like this, and if you aren't responsible now, we will also not be responsible when it is your turn to ask us for help."

Many people came to my home on the third day of the sixth lunar month. The helpers were very busy. Women assisted Liu Yonglin in the kitchen washing vegetables, bowls, and dishes. Men fetched water, chopped firewood, and arranged tables in the yard. Some helpers waited at the gate to welcome guests, and accompanied them to the registrar, Uncle Sanshenbao. Most guests were male adults. Villagers seldom send children to funerals because it is considered inauspicious for them to attend such events.

The guests brought tea bricks, sugar, bread, grain, cloth, liquor, money, and *kha btags* as gifts. Uncle Sanshenbao registered them in a white notebook especially used for funerals. After Uncle Sanshenbao finished registering everything, the

⁶⁸ A *kang* is a heatable platform inside a room where guests are fed and entertained and where family members and guests sleep.

⁶⁹ Uncle's brother-in-law.

guests tied *kha btags* atop Grandfather's sedan, burned white paper in a basin in front of the sedan, and prostrated three times.

The guests were served tea, bread, and *san pianpian*⁷⁰ by local village women in the yard. After eating, some guests returned home, some remained at my home chatting with others, and others assisted the helpers.

My family members knelt or sat by Grandfather's sedan and chanted scriptures as we had done earlier. Some of our close relatives occasionally joined us. Some village women came from time to time and asked if we wanted anything to eat or drink.

Everyone left in the afternoon except for some close relatives and the funeral organizers, who stayed to accompany us.

I was awakened by noise from the yard at around four in the morning of the fourth day. I got up and saw about twenty young men in the yard. After Uncle put a butter lamp on the sedan, four villagers ran to the cremation place carrying the sedan on their shoulders. I ran behind with Father, Uncle, and other young village men. One villager chopped the sedan open with an ax. Father and Uncle then put Grandfather in the adobe cremation stove built by Uncle Gagou and Uncle Sangjieshijia. Uncle poured a pot of melted butter on Grandfather's head and a fire was lit under the stove, using wood from the sedan. Everybody left except Uncle Gagou and Uncle Sangjieshijia, who remained to tend the fire until Grandfather was fully cremated. After returning from the cremation place, I felt I had lost my beloved grandfather forever and was extremely depressed.

On the sixth day of the sixth lunar month, all my family members went to the cremation place, broke open the stove, collected bone fragments, and put them into a small wood box. My family members and several other relatives and neighbors went to Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery

⁷⁰ *San pianpian* is a local boiled food containing two eggs, one chicken leg, pork, and vegetables in a bowl.

where we lit one hundred butter lamps in the monastery, prostrated one hundred times, and circumambulated the monastery one hundred times. The monks chanted *mang ja* for Grandfather.

We were supposed to bury Grandfather's bones down the slope from where his parents' bones were buried on the following Grave Sweeping Day. However, a local *yinyang*⁷¹ said that Grave Sweeping Day was inauspicious, so we buried the bones a day before Grave Sweeping Day.

Grandmother became very ill a few days after the funeral. We all worried about her. Father went to the local clinic and brought a doctor home. He prescribed medicine for Grandmother and gave her some injections. However, there was no indication of recovery, and Grandmother became steadily worse despite the doctor's daily visits. On the fourth day, Aunt went to the home of Liu Yonglin, the cook at Grandfather's funeral, and asked what was wrong with Grandmother. Liu Yonglin was a *yinyang*. He looked in an old book and said Grandfather was angry with Grandmother but he didn't know why. He said he could placate Grandfather with a ritual. After Aunt reported what Liu said, Mother said Grandmother did not burn any white paper for Grandfather and that was why she was ill. All my family members agreed.

Liu came to my home to perform the ritual the same night. After he drank some tea and ate some bread, he cut ten pieces of white paper (Figure Seven) and wrapped pieces of bread in white paper (Figure Eight). Then he cut a figure from a piece of white paper that resembled a person and asked Mother and Aunt to find pieces of cloth, each of a different color (Figure Nine). He then began the ritual. He took each item and circled Grandmother's head clockwise three times and then counterclockwise three times while murmuring incomprehensibly. We all retreated from Grandmother's room after the ritual. Liu told us he was going to burn the items used during the ritual west of our home, and told us to close the gate after he left. We

⁷¹ *Yinyang*: Daoist fortuneteller. The term *daoye* is also used locally.

did as were told, and Grandmother fully recovered two days later.

COMMUNITY RITUALS

THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE SIXTH LUNAR MONTH

On Liuyue shiwu, the fifteenth day of the sixth lunar month, villagers gather to worship A myes Rab bzang, a local mountain deity (figures One and Two). 'Ju lag mthon po bcu gsum is the collective name of the thirteen mountain deities situated along the 'Ju lag River in Dpa' ris. 'Ju lag refers to the 'Ju lag River (Daitong River); *mthon po* means 'high', referring to the mountains; and *bcu gsum* means 'thirteen'. These mountain deities are some of many located in Dpa' ris. The thirteen mountain deities are: A myes Me la gangs dkar, A myes Mgon po gdong dmar, A myes Gnam skas, A myes Bya dur,⁷² A myes Khra leb,⁷³ A myes Ra rgod,⁷⁴ A myes Stag btsang,⁷⁵ A myes Phyor rdzong,⁷⁶ A myes Dmar mtho, A myes Skya ka ri,⁷⁷ A myes Lhun po rtse,⁷⁸ A myes Rab bzang,⁷⁹ and A myes Klu ri.⁸⁰ The thirteen mountain deities are all male. Such mountain deities as A

⁷² A myes Me la gangs dkar, A myes Mgon po gdong dmar, A myes Gnam skas, and A myes Bya dur are located in Menyuan County, Qinghai Province.

⁷³ A myes Khra leb is located in Huzhu County, on the border with Menyuan County. The Tu name for the mountain is Chileb.

⁷⁴ A myes Ra rgod is located on the border of Mchod rten thang Township, Tianzhu County and Ba za Township, Huzhu County.

⁷⁵ A myes Stag btsang is located on the border between Tianzhu and Huzhu counties.

⁷⁶ A myes Phyor rdzong is located on the border between Tianzhu and Menyuan counties.

⁷⁷ Both A myes Dmar mtho and A myes Skya ka ri are located in Mchod rten thang Township, Tianzhu County.

⁷⁸ A myes Lhun po rtse is located in Tanshanling Town, Tianzhu County.

⁷⁹ A myes Rab bzang is located in Chu cha Village.

⁸⁰ A myes Klu ri is located in Gser skyid Township, Tianzhu County.

myes Skya ka ri share their names with the mountains they are located on, but some do not. For example, the mountain on which A myes Rab bzang is located is called Rab bzang gong rather than A myes Rab bzang. Some of the thirteen mountain deities have specific functions for their devotees. For example, A myes Dmar mtho is believed to provide knowledge to those who worship him and thus is mainly visited by students from nearby villages.

Mountain deities are believed to bless worshippers who venerate them at least once a year. Locals say that certain mountain deities protect specific areas and thus a mountain deity is worshipped by those residing near him. In these cases the deity is seen as belonging to the village, area, or tribe. For example, A myes Rab bzang is Stobs tshang tsho ba's deity and only Stobs tshang tsho ba members visit him. If a mountain deity is thought to have a certain ability, such as Dmar mtho, outsiders as well as locals may visit the deity's *lab rtse*.

Mountain deities and their veneration are a significant aspect of Chu cha villagers' religious practice. A myes Rab bzang is the mountain deity of Stobs tshang tsho ba. The *lab rtse* in which A myes Rab bzang resides is atop Rab bzang gong Mountain near Chu cha Village. It is a four to five hour walk to the *lab rtse* from my home. The *lab rtse* consists of a wood fence with many *lab rtse g.yang mda*⁸¹ inserted in the ground within it (Figure Two). Locals bring *lab rtse g.yang mda'* on the annual day of worship (Figure Ten). They are held upright by the wooden enclosure. Locals say there are more than 10,000 *bum pa*⁸² buried at the center of the *lab rtse*. A *bsang*

⁸¹ *Lab rtse g.yang mda'* are long pieces of pointed wood that are considered to be weapons the mountain deity uses to fight devils. A *lab rtse* has many *lab rtse g.yang mda'*.

⁸² A *bum pa* is a china bottle containing five different grains, gold, silver, coral, turquoise, and water from five lakes in Tibetan areas, including Dkar brag mtho kha in Tianzhu County, Qinghai Lake, and Lha mo lha mtho in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

khri is in front of the *lab rtse*. Both are enclosed by wire netting. Colorful pieces of silk and *kha btags* are tied to the *lab rtse*'s wooden enclosure. Chu cha villagers renew and worship A myes Rab bzang *lab rtse*, beseeching A myes Rab bzang to protect their crops, livestock, and families.

Apart from the annual replenishing ritual, some villagers visit the A myes Rab bzang *lab rtse* on the first day of the first lunar month, the first day of Danian.⁸³ Villagers may visit the *lab rtse* at this time because they wish to delight A myes Rab bzang by visiting him at the beginning of a year and in the hope that he will bless them throughout the year. Chu cha pastoralists who live near A myes Rab bzang *lab rtse* visit the *lab rtse* on the first and fifteenth days of each lunar month because it is a convenient time to do so. In the following accounts, villagers describe their relationship with the deity:

I am a herder and I visit A myes Rab bzang because I want him to protect my livestock. I drive my livestock near A myes Rab bzang, especially when all of my family members are busy with agricultural work and do not have time to care for our livestock. I offer *bsang* and beseech A myes Rab bzang to protect my livestock (Wang Danjian).

I work outside the village to pay for my two children's school expenses and our living expenses. I visit A myes Rab bzang the day before I leave the village to ask him to help me earn enough money (Stobs bla ma tshe ring).

I visit A myes Rab bzang because I want everything and everyone to be safe. I ask A myes Rab bzang to protect livestock from disease and theft, to protect crops from disasters, and to keep people safe (Lan tshe ring).

⁸³ Danian is local Chinese dialect term for Spring Festival, or the Lunar New Year Festival.

Nobody I talked to knew when the *lab rtse* was built. However, a local account by Gan Gagao suggests why people built a *lab rtse* here:

Pests destroyed crops every year, and local people suffered terribly from hunger. Then one summer, people saw a huge bird land atop Rab bzang gong Mountain. The bird went to fields and ate the pests during the daytime, and rested on the mountaintop at night. The pests were gone a few days later and the bird also vanished into the sky. Local people thought that the bird was a deity who had become a bird to save them. They considered the place where the bird landed to be holy, built a *lab rtse* there, and have worshipped it every year since.

Certain preparations must be completed before Liuyue shiwu. Villagers first dye loose sheep wool yellow, orange, blue, and red.⁸⁴ Each Tibetan household prepares three *lab rtse g.yang mda'*. Some Tu households prepare three *lab rtse g.yang mda'* while others do not because of the time and energy required. All Tibetans, some Tu and Han, but no Hui, visit the *lab rtse* with three *lab rtse g.yang mda'*. Those preparing the *lab rtse g.yang mda'* cut trees from nearby forests that are about five meters tall with a diameter of around ten centimeters. The trunk must be straight and flawless. After felling a tree, villagers peel off the bark, sharpen one end, and then dry the pole in the sun for at least fifteen days. The pole is decorated with a painted red spiral around the trunk near the sharpened ends and tying a tuft of dyed sheep wool around the trunk near the sharpened end.

Villagers make *bsang rdzas* the day before Liuyue shiwu. Organizers go to the *lab rtse* on this day and pitch a tent for the

⁸⁴ The red dye comes from red stone in the area that villagers crush and mix with water. Artificial dyes purchased from local stores are used to create other colors.

monks who will chant during Liuyue shiwu. *Lab rtse* ritual organizers serve for three years, after which villagers choose new organizers.

Villagers carry *lab rtse g.yang mda'* to the *lab rtse* early on Liuyue shiwu (Figure Ten). Any villager may visit or renew the *lab rtse*. Those who are too ill or infirm to negotiate the long, arduous climb do not attend.

On the way to the *lab rtse*, branches of *su ru*⁸⁵ are collected from the mountainside (Figure Eleven) and decorated with tufts of sheep wool previously dyed while resting. The old *ma Ni dar cha*⁸⁶ are replaced with new ones en route to the *lab rtse* (Figure Twelve), in the belief that this brings good luck. After renewing the *ma Ni dar cha*, *rlung rta*⁸⁷ are tossed skyward (Figure Thirteen), in the belief that the higher the *rlung rta* fly, the better their future luck.

Once villagers reach the *lab rtse*, they thrust the *su ru* and the *lab rtse g.yang mda'* into the ground in the space between the *lab rtse* and the *bsang khri*, where *bsang* smoke purifies the *lab rtse g.yang mda'* and *su ru* (Figure Fourteen) while offering *bsang*. They next offer *bsang* on the *bsang khri* (Figure Fifteen), prostrate three times in front of the *bsang khri*, and circumambulate the *lab rtse* inside the wire net three times.

Dyed sheep wool and *ma Ni dar cha* around the outside of the *lab rtse* are renewed after attendees complete circumambulating the *lab rtse* (Figure Sixteen). Some villagers bring previously prepared *brgya mchod* 'one hundred lamps' to A myes Rab bzang. Dough lamps are always brought instead of copper lamps to the *lab rtse*, because the dough lamps are more convenient to carry for long distances (figures Ten and Seventeen). Family members present the *brgya mchod* together in front of the *lab rtse* after offering *bsang*

⁸⁵ *Su ru* is a shrub that grows locally at high altitude.

⁸⁶ *Ma Ni dar cha* are cloth with printed scriptures.

⁸⁷ *Rlung rta* are pieces of paper printed with horses and scriptures that are usually five centimeters long, and three centimeters wide.

(Figure Eighteen).

While locals offer *bsang*, prostrate, or circumambulate, two monks from Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery make *gtor ma*⁸⁸ with the help of four male villagers (Figure Nineteen). They work in the tent the ritual organizers previously pitched. These *gtor ma* are burned in the *bsang* later as another offering for A myes Rab bzang. After finishing the *gtor ma*, the monks purify the *gtor ma*, liquor, water, tea bricks,⁸⁹ and such fruit as apples, pears, and oranges (Figure Twenty) by chanting scriptures. These items are then offered to A myes Rab bzang. The monks next chant (Figure Twenty-one) *Lha gnyan chen por Rab bzang la gsol mchod kyi cho ga phan bde'i char 'bebs zhes bya ba bzhugs so* 'The Prayer and Offering Rituals for A myes Rab bzang for Rainfall,' A myes Rab bzang scripture (figures Twenty-two and Twenty-three) for about two hours. There are piles of stones on the mountaintop about 200 meters east of the *lab rtse* that villagers say are the scripture of A myes Rab bzang (Figure Twenty-four).

Villagers offer *bsang* individually and then wait for the monks' instructions on making the collective *bsang* offering. Some make additional circumambulations of the *lab rtse* while waiting, believing that more circumambulations bring more protection from A myes Rab bzang. Some eat bread brought from home, while other adults twenty-five to fifty-five years old gather and drink liquor in small groups (Figure Twenty-five).

A SUMMARY OF THE SCRIPTURE FOR A MYES RAB BZANG

The first few lines of the scripture express reverence for enlightened

⁸⁸ *Gtor ma* are figures of *mchod rten*, stupas, people, or animals made from barley flour dough.

⁸⁹ All are provided by villagers.

deities, reincarnation *bla ma*, Padmasambhava, and the thirteen highest ranks of protective deities of Dpa' ris. Part two describes the offering and the sacrificial objects, and how they are made and displayed. These offerings include articles made from *rtsam pa*,⁹⁰ milk, water, gold, Tibetan tea, yak butter, and auspicious symbols. The text states that when making offerings to A myes Rab bzang, one must also chant. Part three in the scripture beseeches enlightened beings and Buddhist protector spirits for peace and prosperity.

Part four is a prayer to A myes Rab bzang and describes his appearance, and beseeches other local deities to come enjoy the offerings. The next section describes the offerings and ritual performance. Part six praises A myes Rab bzang and sacred Buddhist protector spirits. The final part beseeches A myes Rab bzang to protect locals and ensure auspiciousness.

The monks instruct villagers to make the collective *bsang* offering during the two hours of chanting the A myes Rab bzang scripture several times. Juniper and *bsang rdzas* are burned (Figure Twenty-six) and *gtor ma* are put into the burning *bsang* (Figure Twenty-seven). Villagers prostrate three times in front of the *bsang* altar and then circumambulate the *lab rtse* three times. They asperse the previously purified liquor and water into the sky as they circumambulate (Figure Twenty-eight). Some locals wave *rlung rta dpal*⁹¹ in the *bsang* smoke, believing that the smoke goes directly to Tiantang,⁹² and that the deities receive their wishes for good luck through this smoke.

At the conclusion of the collective *bsang* offering, villagers take the *su ru* branches and the *lab rtse g.yang mda'* that they had previously thrust in the ground and circumambulate the *lab rtse* three times holding them (Figure Twenty-nine). Villagers insert the

⁹⁰ Barley flour.

⁹¹ A *rlung rta dpal* is a piece of wood on which a flying horse and scriptures are carved.

⁹² *Tiantang*: local Chinese for 'Heaven' or 'Sky,' a realm inhabited by deities.

arrows and *su ru* into the *lab rtse* base (Figure Thirty) and do not remove any of the old *lab rtse g.yang mda'* and *su ru* branches.

THE HORSE RACE

Boys and men competing in the horse race walk their horses around the *lab rtse* to warm them up (Figure Thirty-one). Though there are no restrictions on the number or age of riders, women and girls have never joined the horse race. There were four riders in 2009 (Figure Thirty-two). The riders murmur the Six Sacred Syllables repeatedly, beseeching A myes Rab bzang to give their horses the energy to win. According to local tradition, the organizers give prizes to the first three and the thirteenth place winners. There should be at least thirteen participants and the thirteenth place winner receives the same prize as the first – a tea brick and around one hundred RMB. The second place winner is awarded a tea brick and about eighty RMB. The third place winner receives a tea brick and about sixty RMB. Thirteen is considered a lucky number, which is explained by a local account told by Gan Gagao, one of the few Chu cha residents literate in Tibetan:

King Ge sar once came to Dpa' ris to fight his enemies. After many violent battles, King Ge sar finally defeated his foes and celebrated victory with locals, competing in a horse race with them and coming in thirteenth place. Afterwards, locals believed that thirteen was a lucky number.

Villagers have kept fewer horses since about 2005 because the exodus of adults from the village to work outside means few adults who are able to care for the horses remain during much of the year. Additionally, horses have become less important to villagers now that

modern vehicles and agricultural machinery have been introduced to the area. Since 2005, only four or five horses have competed in the annual horse race.

The race is held around 200 meters east of the *lab rtse* on a 400 meter long stretch of land that features several small paths with bushes lining the sides. A *lab rtse* ritual organizer acts as referee and signals the riders to start. Four adults wait at the finish line, each holding a paper numbered from one to four. The person holding the paper labeled one gives this paper to the winner and so on. Competitors ride back to the *lab rtse* after resting for about ten minutes at the finish line. The organizers confirm the places in the race according to the papers the riders return with.

When the riders return to the *lab rtse*, villagers take turns congratulating each rider by tying *kha btags* on the backs of all the horses (Figure Thirty-Three) and then offer liquor in bottles to the riders, who have a few sips.

A running race follows the horse race (Figure Thirty-four). The organizers ask a male elder to randomly choose a point a certain distance from the *lab rtse* as the finish line. The track is usually around one hundred meters long. The elder chooses thirteen young male and female villagers to race, who then run from the *lab rtse* to the finish line.

The final activity of the entire ritual involves awarding prizes to the winners of the horse race and the running race in front of the *lab rtse* (Figure Thirty-Five). The organizers put money atop the tea brick and offer one brick to each winner. Riders of the four horses competing in the horse race in 2009 were awarded eighty-five RMB, sixty-five RMB, forty-five RMB, and thirty-five RMB, respectively. Running race winners were rewarded fifteen RMB for the first and the thirteenth place winners. The second and third place winners received ten and five RMB, respectively. Each winner also received a tea brick and a *kha btags*.

Economic improvement and interaction with other ethnic groups have strongly influenced mountain deity veneration and fewer people worship the *lab rtse* nowadays. For example, a family originally from Chu cha Village has a stable income, moves to the county town, and no longer comes to worship A myes Rab bzang. Tibetans increasingly consult Daoist fortunetellers as Han do, rather than going to A myes Rab bzang.

LAB RTSE FESTIVALS IN THE MID-1990s

My personal experience illustrates the *lab rtse* festival during its post-Cultural Revolution heyday in the mid-1990s, several years after restrictions on religious freedom were relaxed, but prior to the economic reforms of the early twenty-first century that have dramatically impacted local cultures in western China.

On the morning of the fifteenth day of the sixth lunar month, Grandfather woke me. "Grandfather, why are you waking me up so early?" I asked groggily, rubbing my sleepy eyes with the backs of my hands.

"Today is the horse race. Don't you want to go?" Grandfather teased.

I said, "I love the horse race," and scrambled up.

Grandfather had completed all the preparations over the previous few days. We set out as soon as I finished breakfast.

It was drizzling outside, but that didn't dampen my enthusiasm. I dashed forward with two *lab rtse g.yang mda'*. It was my first time to carry them. Grandfather carried another *lab rtse g.yang mda'*, a bundle of juniper branches, *rlung rta*, *rlung rta dpal*, and *bsang rdzas*.

Water drenched the path, and our climb up the mountain was slippery and slow. I soon felt tired and said, "Grandfather, if I had a lot of money, I would buy a helicopter to go worship the

mountain deity and see the horse race."

"Hush, boy. Saying such things will anger the mountain deity and he won't bless you." Grandfather said.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because he judges your sincerity by your deeds and words. If you went to worship him like that he would know you were insincere, and not bless you," Grandfather said, patting my head.

"You mean he'll be happy if I walk along this rugged path to go worship him?" I said.

"Yes! The mountain deity believes that the more predicaments you experience in order to worship him, the greater your sincerity," Grandfather said.

"Oh, I see," I said and continued slogging along the path with the *lab rtse g.yang mda'* on my shoulders.

We trudged along in silence because we were panting and lacked energy to talk. I followed a few steps behind Grandfather, who occasionally turned to check if I was all right.

"It's wrong to carry the *lab rtse g.yang mda'* that way," he said when he noticed that I carried them with the sharp tips pointing down. "You should carry them like this," he demonstrated, with the sharp ends pointing up.

"Why do I need to carry them like this?" I said.

"That's just the way it is," he replied.

"Why do we carry these *lab rtse g.yang mda'* to the mountain deity?" I said.

"These are weapons the mountain deity uses to fight demons and ghosts, which he kills to prevent them from harming us," he said.

I caught sight of the *lab rtse* atop a mountain in the distance about four hours later. My throat was burning and my body ached, but I recovered when I saw the *lab rtse*.

We reached our destination an hour later. I saw some of my friends chatting near the *lab rtse*. I rushed over, dropping the *lab rtse g.yang mda'* on the ground.

"Hey, Stag lha! Come back!" Grandfather yelled. "Don't drop them like that. You'll have bad luck if you break them."

My friends stared at me and I felt foolish.

"It's inappropriate to put them on the ground like that. You should thrust them into the earth and let them be purified by the *bsang* smoke," Grandfather said, stabbing our *lab rtse g.yang mda'* into the earth.

Grandfather and I offered *bsang* to the mountain deity with other villagers, and prostrated many times. Grandfather then handed me a bottle of liquor with a juniper sprig inserted in the neck and said, "Circumambulate the *lab rtse*." I did so, scattering the liquor on the *lab rtse* with the juniper leaves as I circumambulated.

After I finished circumambulating, I took the *rlung rta dpal* from Grandfather and stood by the stone altar, waving it in the smoke of the juniper leaves to accumulate good fortune.

When chanting became audible in the distance at midday, I ran to Grandfather, who was sitting cross-legged in some grass, chatting with other elders. "Grandfather, why are they chanting scriptures?" I asked, sitting down by him.

He stopped chatting and replied, "We'll harvest our crops in a month. We chant scriptures beseeching the mountain deity to bless our crops and to prevent thunderstorms and other natural disasters."

Content with his reply, I rejoined my friends. A few minutes later, we saw the horse riders leading their horses around the *lab rtse* and knew that the horse race would soon begin. One friend suggested that we go to the starting line where there were about fifteen horses decorated with multicolored pieces of silk and *kha btags*. We were astonished by the solemn scene; the riders seemed like a troop of soldiers preparing for battle. The horses' neighs made me impatient for the race to begin.

A powerful sound burst from a white conch and the horses dashed forward like arrows released in search of their targets. My friends and I ran behind the galloping horses as fast as we could, but the distance between the horses and us rapidly increased.

Our exhausted legs eventually brought us to the finish

line. We noticed that some horses were surrounded by people offering bolts of multicolored silk and *kha btags*, draping them around the horses' necks and on their backs so only their heads and hooves were visible. We supposed those horses were the winners. The organizers and some elders began presenting cash on a tea brick covered in a long *kha btags* to the first three place winners, then to the thirteenth. I was confused and asked. "Why did they give a reward to the thirteenth? In our school, teachers only give rewards to the first three."

"Thirteen is a lucky number," Grandfather replied.

"Oh, I see. Next time I'll try to get thirteenth in my class, not fourth or fifth, so our teacher will give me a reward," I said.

Grandfather glared at me and left. I followed and noticed more people had gathered around the winners' horses. Some applauded joyfully while others were arguing among themselves.

"Why are they quarreling?" I asked Grandfather.

"They want a chance to ride the winners' horses," Grandfather said.

"Why?" I said.

"You'll have good fortune if you ride a winner's horse," Grandfather replied.

"I want to ride the horses, Grandfather," I said.

"It's impossible for such a chance today. See the crowd around the horses? They're all waiting to ride one. Maybe next time you'll get a chance," Grandfather said.

I was really disappointed, but I knew I could do nothing about it. "Next time, I'll make sure I ride the winners' horse, so I'll also have good luck," I said.

"It's time to go home," said Grandfather, and we then trudged down the mountain.

THE NEW YEAR

Tu, Tibetan, and Han in Chu cha Village all celebrate Spring Festival – which they call Danian – at the same time. Villagers begin preparing from the twentieth day of the twelfth lunar month by purchasing vegetables, liquor, sunflower seeds, meat, candy, fireworks, and new clothes from the local market; cleaning their homes; making bread; and each household slaughters one or two pigs raised that year especially for Spring Festival consumption. On the last day of the twelfth lunar month, some family members paste couplets on the gate, some visit their ancestors' graves, and some prepare Danian sanshi feasts for family members. Villagers usually eat boiled pork and dumplings on Danian sanshi. Some rich families also eat mutton and chicken. Tibetan families light butter lamps and offer food in their home shrines this night.

The Spring Festival period is from the first to the fifteenth days of the first lunar month. Only families with elders are visited on the first day of Spring Festival. Villagers commonly bring a tea brick, two bottles of liquor, and two homemade baked bread loaves. The host family treats guests with boiled tea, bread, fried vegetables, and meat. From the second to the eighth days, villagers visit friends and neighbors in the village or nearby villages. From the ninth to the fifteenth days, villagers visit distant friends and relatives by motorcycles, truck, or public bus. Han families visit Han, Tu, Hui, and Tibetan families; Tu families visit Tu, Han, Hui, and Tibetan families; Hui families visit Han, Tu and Tibetan families; Tibetan families visit Tu and Han families, but do not visit each other, as they have already exchanged gifts at the *smyung gnas khang* (see below). Hui do not celebrate Spring Festival, but do bring gifts to other villagers who celebrate.

Spring Festival concludes with *tiao maohuo* on the night of the fifteenth day. Each household contributes straw and makes

around twenty small straw piles that are linked together along the lanes. The straw piles are lit and people energetically jump over the fires one by one. They believe that this ritual stops the past year's bad luck. From the sixteenth day, villagers prepare to plow and fertilize their fields.

The Hui New Year starts after Ramadan ends. Hui do not paste couplets on their gates. Hui visit each other at this time and do not visit other villagers. Other villagers bring gifts to Hui families.

Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year' starts from the first day of the first month according to the Lha sa calendar. Tibetans in Chu cha Village began celebrating the Tibetan New Year in 1992. Before that year, Tibetans in Chu cha Village only celebrated the Chinese Spring Festival. The Lo sar party lasts a day and a night. Chu cha Tibetans wear traditional Tibetan robes, gather in front of the village *smyung gnas khang*, and celebrate Tibetan New Year (Figure Four). They greet each other with "*Lo sar bzang!* Happy New Year!" and then offer *chang* 'liquor' and *kha btags* to each other as New Year gifts, sing Tibetan traditional songs such as *chang glu* 'drinking songs' and *bstod glu* 'praise songs', perform circle dances, and engage in such contests as tug-of-war⁹³ and weightlifting⁹⁴ until evening.

⁹³ Tibetan robe sashes are tied together in a loop and then put between the contestants' legs.

⁹⁴ Villagers lift a bag filled with sand. The longer the bag is held, the more points are earned.

CONCLUSION

Chu cha villagers have a strong sense of community and willingly participate in such village rituals as New Year, mountain deity veneration, contributing labor to such village activities as weddings, funerals, and renewing religious infrastructure. Balikci (2008:281) comments:

Attendance at and contributing to these domestic rituals are mandatory for each corporate household. Participation and contribution define village membership and non-participation or non-invitation suggests exclusion from the village's community. It is these household rituals that are the main avenue for social interaction and that in turn maintain and define the community.

Some rituals facilitate interaction between certain ethnic groups in Chu cha Village. For example, different ethnic groups interact during such rituals as weddings and funerals. Other rituals separate ethnic groups. For example, soul-calling rituals are exclusively held in a few Tibetan, Han, and Tu families.

Culture assimilation is ongoing in Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County. Such factors as government policy, economic improvement, and interaction with other ethnic groups strongly influence local culture. Tibetans in Dpa' ris with surnames is a symbol of assimilation enforced by the local government. Economic improvement strongly influences the worship of mountain deities. Every year fewer people come to worship the *lab rtse*. For example, one family in Chu cha Village has a stable income, moved to the county town, and no longer comes to worship A myes Rab bzang as they used to. Tu and Han Chinese in Chu cha Village visiting the local monastery is an example of how Tibetan culture has impacted other ethnic groups.

Tibetans in Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County have gradually lost some of their traditional ethnic markers. In the next few years, Tibetans in Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County will perhaps lose every ethnic identity marker and will no longer know who they are.

At the beginning, I mentioned that I am not a native Tibetan speaker. I had an identity crisis during my first two years at Qinghai Normal University and was so depressed for a while that I was unable to concentrate on my studies. I then became interested in my family history and village. I learnt from villagers, especially from my grandfather, that I am a Tibetan and now have a much clearer idea of what this means. During my last four years at Qinghai Normal University, I learned to speak and read Tibetan well. This strengthened my self-identity as a Tibetan and gave me confidence in communicating with whomever I meet that speaks Tibetan.

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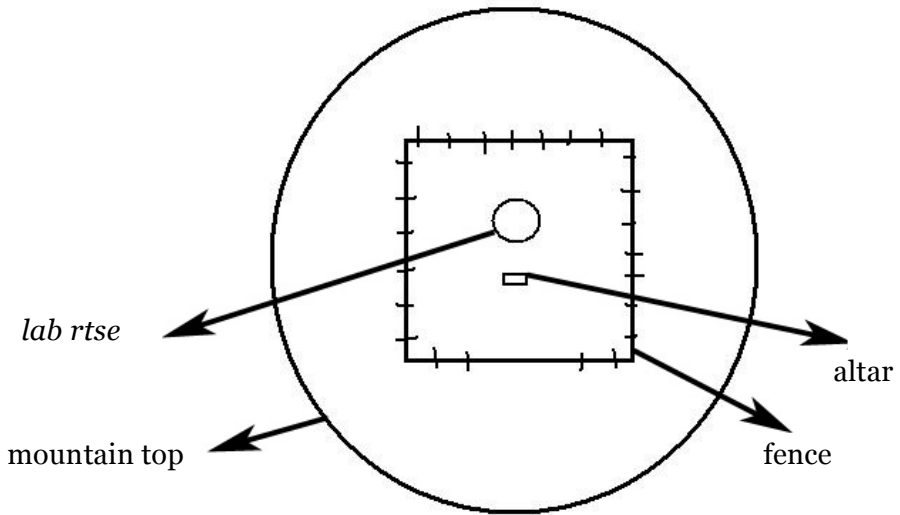
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APPENDIX ONE: DIAGRAM OF A MYES RAB BZANG LAB RTSE

North



APPENDIX TWO: IMAGES

Figure One. *Thang ga* of A myes Rab bzang in Chu cha Village's Smyung gnas khang. The original *thang ga* was damaged during the Cultural Revolution. In 2009, villagers asked Bla brang Monastery monks to paint a new *thang ga* of A myes Rab bzang. The monks painted this image according to the description in the A myes Rab bzang scripture.

Figure Two. The A myes Rab bzang *lab rtse*. Villagers used three juniper poles to make an entrance in the enclosure. The outer enclosure was made from materials transported by villagers and their horses. The enclosure was made to prevent livestock, especially yaks, from destroying the *lab rtse*.

Figure Three. Chu cha villagers wear modern clothes in daily life.

Figure Four. Chu cha Village children perform during the Tibetan New Year.

Figure Five. Chu cha Village women wear traditional clothes during a wedding.

Figure Six. Chu cha Village stupa and shrine.

Figure Seven. Liu Yonglin, a Daoist fortuneteller, cuts white papers for a home ritual.

Figure Eight. Liu Yonglin wraps pieces of bread in a piece of paper during the home ritual.

Figure Nine. Items needed for the home ritual are prepared.

Figure Ten. Villagers go to worship A myes Rab bzang. The girl holding *su ru* branches decorated with dyed sheep wool is a middle school student. The woman on the left holds a milk box containing *brgya mchod* (dough with one hundred inserted wicks). The woman on the right carries a *lab rtse g.yang mda'*.

Figure Eleven. Stobs bla ma tshe ring, a Tibetan, collects *su ru* branches enroute to the mountaintop. Villagers cut thirteen *su ru* branches with knives and carry them to the *lab rtse*.

Figure Twelve. Three villagers renew a *ma Ni dar cha* enroute to the mountaintop. They bought the *ma Ni dar cha* from Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery and asked monks there to purify them. They take the *ma Ni dar cha* down, remove the old *ma Ni* flags, and replace them with new ones.

Figure Thirteen. After renewing the *ma Ni dar cha*, three village men toss *rlung rta* into the sky for good luck.

Figure Fourteen. The *su ru* branches collected on the way are inserted in the ground in front of the *lab rtse* by four Tu villagers.

Figure Fifteen. Villagers offer *bsang* individually after reaching the *lab rtse*. The man in the center has just arrived. He adds juniper leaves to the *bsang* fire, puts *bsang rdzas* atop the juniper leaves, scatters holy water he has brought from home on the *bsang* fire, and holds a *bsang rdzas* bag made by his wife in his left hand.

Figure Sixteen. A villager ties sheep wool around the *lab rtse* enclosure. Some villagers dye their sheep wool. Others, like this man, do not.

Figure Seventeen. A Tu man pours rapeseed oil into the *brgya mchod*, which will then be placed near the *lab rtse* as an offering to A myes Rab bzang. Villagers think butter is better for burning than rapeseed oil, however, villagers use rapeseed oil for lamp fuel because there is little butter in Chu cha Village.

Figure Eighteen. *Brgya mchod* are lit with wicks made from cotton and twigs. Wicks are made by rolling cotton around dry twigs.

Figure Nineteen. A monk from Chu cha Village and his four assistants (all Tibetan villagers) make *gtor ma* with *rtsam pa* dough and yak butter in a tent.

Figure Twenty. After making *gtor ma*, the monks purify them as well as liquor, tea bricks, fruit, water, and grain. These items will all be offered to A myes Rab bzang by burning in the *bsang* fire or aspersing them onto the *lab rtse*.

Figure Twenty-one. The two monks are from Mchod rten thang Monastery, about twenty kilometers west of Chu cha Village. They chant the A myes Rab bzang scripture they brought from the monastery. There are few copies of this scripture in Chu cha Village.

Figure Twenty-two. The cover page of the A myes rab bzang scripture.

Figure Twenty-three. Part of the A myes rab bzang scripture.

Figure Twenty-four. These stones are located about a hundred meters east of the *lab rtse* and are considered to be A myes Rab bzang's scripture. Villagers do not sit or stand on them. Some villagers make *bsang* offerings here.

Figure Twenty-five. These Tibetan men from Chu cha speak the Dpa' ris Tibetan dialect. They rest after offering *bsang* individually. They play a game of chance with their hands. The loser drinks a small cup of barley liquor.

Figure Twenty-six. Monks tell the villagers to make the large *bsang* offering and villagers then add juniper leaves to the *bsang* fire, and put *bsang rdzas* atop the *bsang* fire. Water is scattered onto this offering. Villagers then prostrate and circumambulate the *lab rtse*.

Figure Twenty-seven. *Gtor ma* purified by the monks are burned in the large *bsang* offering fire. The man is a Tu from Chu cha Village. Those making *gtor ma* must have clean hands, and their breath must not touch the *gtor ma*.

Figure Twenty-eight. Villagers circumambulate and asperse liquor and water onto the *lab rtse*. The third man (wearing a hat) is Tu and a ritual organizer.

Figure Twenty-nine. After villagers have completed the large *bsang* offering, they circumambulate the *lab rtse* three times holding *lab rtse g.yang mda'* and *su ru* branches. The *lab rtse g.yang mda'* and *su ru* branches are then inserted into the *lab rtse* base.

Figure Thirty. The *lab rtse g.yang mda'* and *su ru* branches are inserted into the *lab rtse*. One man climbs onto the *lab rtse* and helps others insert their arrows. Only on this occasion may people climb onto the *lab rtse*.

Figure Thirty-one. Two riders warm up their horses around the *lab rtse*. The first man (b. 1988) stopped attending school after he finished senior middle school and has since worked as a migrant laborer.

Figure Thirty-two. Four riders compete in a race in 2009. One rider lost control of his horse, which ran in the wrong direction.

Figure Thirty-three. Villagers congratulate competitors with *kha btags* and liquor after the horse race and the footrace. The riders must accept the *kha btags* and liquor.

Figure Thirty-four. An elder chooses thirteen young people to have a running race.

Figure Thirty-five. An organizer rewards the man who came last. He is rewarded with thirty-five RMB and a tea brick. All the riders were rewarded since only four horses competed.







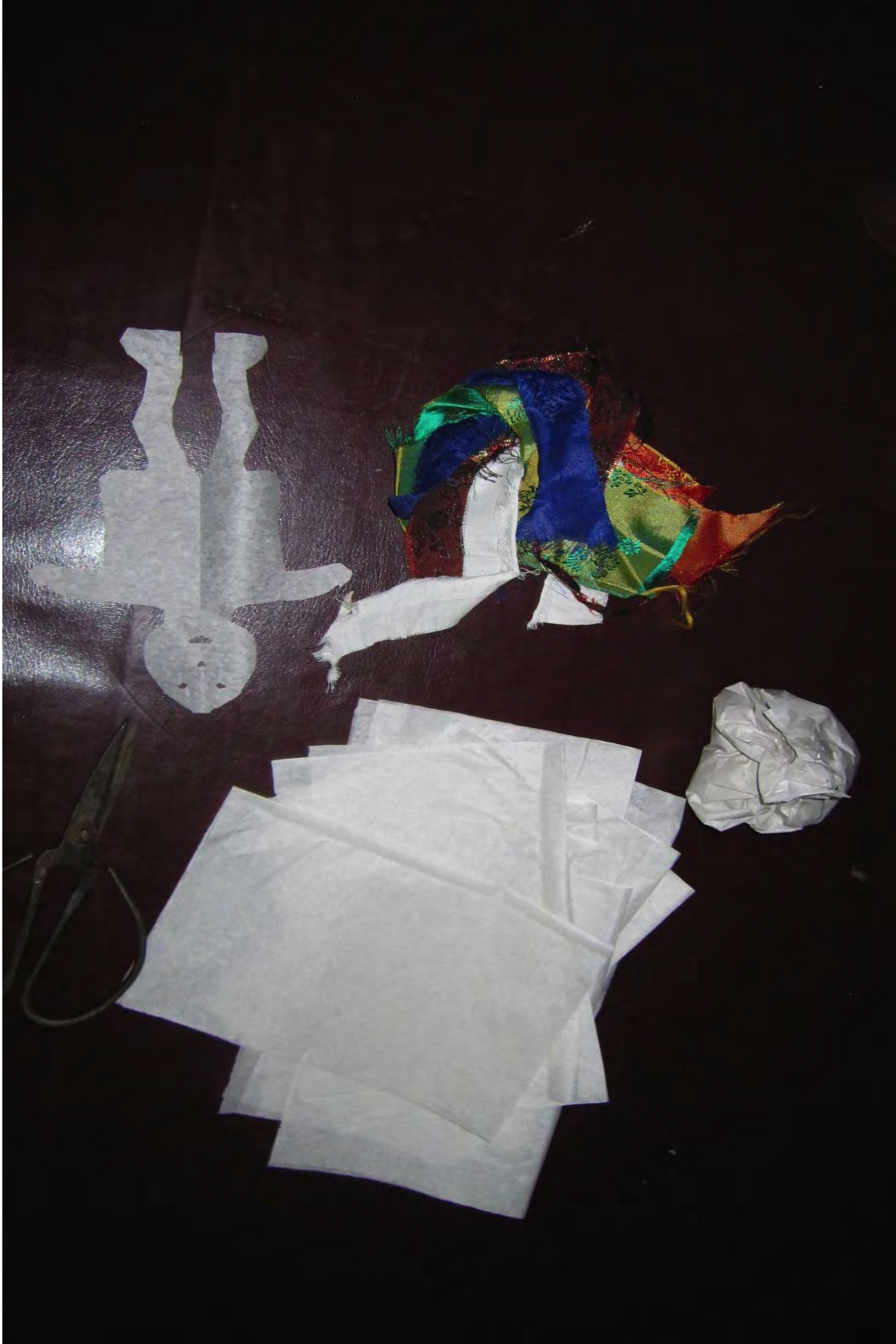






























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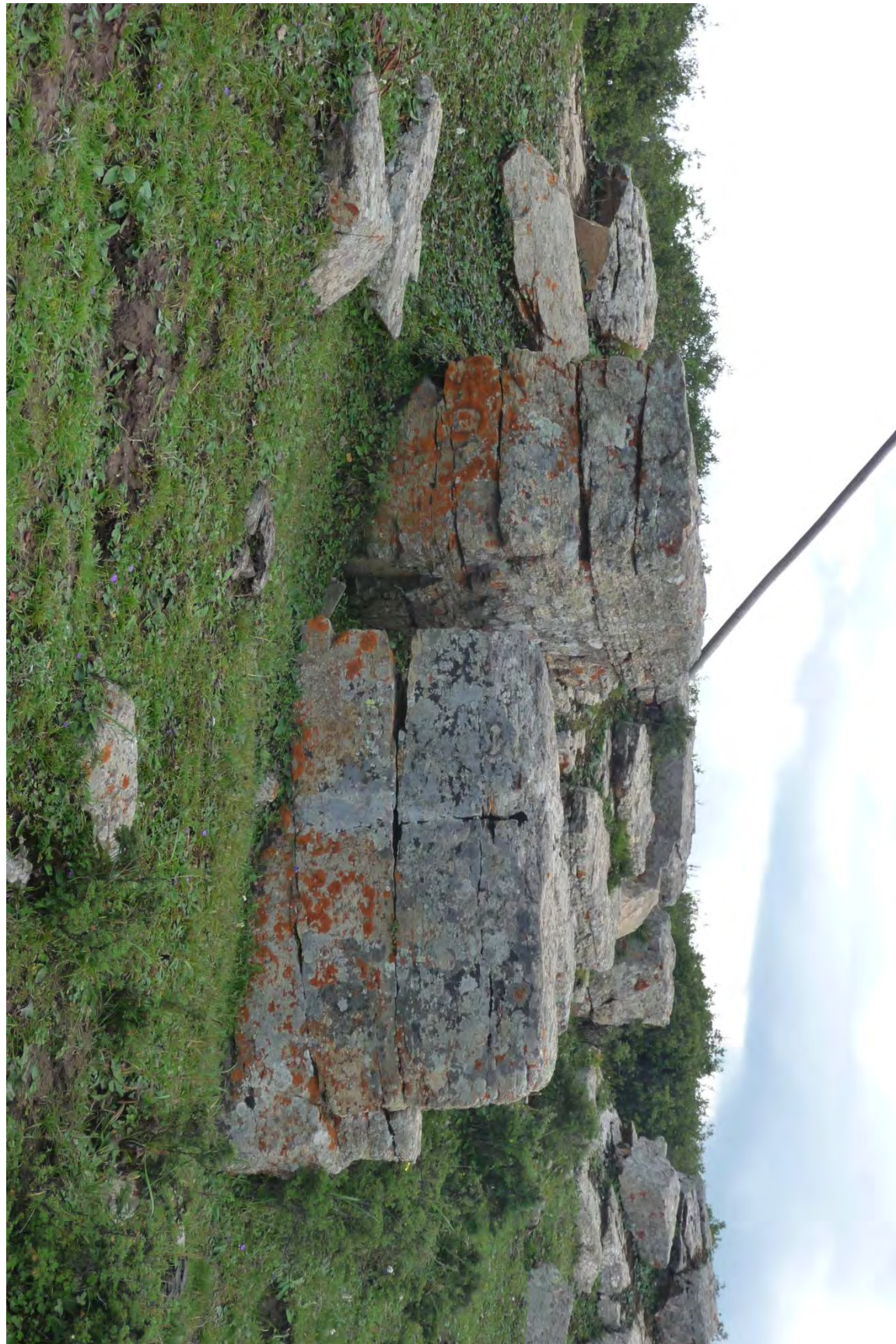
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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'Brug rgyal འབྲུག་རྒྱལ།, person's name

'*cham* འཇམ, Tibetan religious dance

'Dan ma tshul khrimts rgya mtsho འདན་མ་ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། (1587-1665);
Tibetan monk from the contemporary Huzhu County

'Jam pa'i dbyangs འཇམ་པའི་དབྱུངས།, Manjughosa, god of wisdom

'Ju འཇུ།, monster's name

'Ju lag འཇུ་ལག་ River, Mchod rten thang Township

'Ju lag mthon po bcu gsum འཇུ་ལག་མཚོན་པོ་བརྒྱ་གསུམ།, collective name for
the thirteen mountain deities situated along the 'Ju lag River
in Dpa' ris

A

a ba (local Tu), father

A ban ཨ་བན།, reincarnation *bla ma*

a bo (local Tibetan), elder brother

a da (local Chinese), father

a di (local Tibetan), elder sister

a ga (local Tu), father's brother

a gao (local Chinese), elder brother

a gu (local Tu), father's sister

a jia (local Tu), elder brother

a jie (local Tu), elder sister

a jiu ཨ་ཇུ། (local Chinese), mother's brothers

a kha (local Tibetan), father's brother

a ma ཨ་མ།, mother

a ma ni (local Tibetan), mother's sister

A mchog ཨ་མཚོན།, man who chants scriptures in homes

A mdo ཨ་མདོ།, Tibetan cultural region

a mes (local Tibetan), parents' mother

a myes ཨ་བྱེས།, grandfather; (local Tibetan), one's parents' fathers
A myes བྱ་དུར་ཨ་བྱེས་བྱ་དུར།, mountain deity
A myes བྱ་དམར་མཐོ། ཨ་བྱེས་དམར་མཐོ།, mountain deity
A myes གཤམ་སྐས། ཨ་བྱེས་གཤམ་སྐས།, mountain deity
A myes མེ་ལེ། ཨ་བྱེས་མེ་ལེ།, mountain deity
A myes ལུ་རི། ཨ་བྱེས་ལུ་རི།, mountain deity
A myes ལུ་པོ་རེ། ཨ་བྱེས་ལུ་པོ་རེ།, mountain deity
A myes མེ་ལ་གངས་དགར། ཨ་བྱེས་མེ་ལ་གངས་དགར།, mountain deity
A myes མགོན་པོ་གདོང་དམར། ཨ་བྱེས་མགོན་པོ་གདོང་དམར།, mountain deity
A myes ཕུ་རུང་ཨ་བྱེས་ཕུ་རུང་།, mountain deity
A myes ར་རྩོད། ཨ་བྱེས་ར་རྩོད།, mountain deity
A myes ར་བཟང། ཨ་བྱེས་ར་བཟང།, mountain deity
A myes སྐ་ཀ་རི། ཨ་བྱེས་སྐ་ཀ་རི།, mountain deity
A myes སྐ་བཅན། ཨ་བྱེས་སྐ་བཅན།, mountain deity
A myes སུ་ལྷན། ཨ་བྱེས་སུ་ལྷན།, mountain deity
A ne སྐ་མཚོ་དགར། ཨ་ཞེ་སྐོན་དགར།, name of a Chu cha villager
a ne ཨ་ཞེ།, aunt
a nei (local Chinese), grandmother
a ni (local Tibetan), father's sister
a nie (local Tu), grandmother
a pa (local Tibetan), father
a ye (local Chinese), grandfather
a yei (local Tu), mother's sister
a zhang ཨ་ཞང།, mother's brother
ahong འུ་མོ།, Islamic religious leader
An skal མཚོ་སྐལ་བཟང། ཨ་སྐལ་བཟང།, name of a Chu cha villager
An 安, family name
Anyuan 安远 Town, Tianzhu County

B

Ba zA བ་ཟླ། Village, Huzhu County
baba (local Chinese), father's younger brother
bcu gsum བཅུ་གསུམ།, thirteen

Beijing 北京, China's capital

bian taozi 辨套子, Tibetan robe decorations

Bka' brgyud pa བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་པ།, Tibetan Buddhist sect

Bla brang ལྷ་བླ་མ། Monastery, Kan lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

bla ma ལྷ་མ།, Tibetan reincarnation *bla ma* and/ or knowledgeable monks

Bon བོན།, Tibetan native religion

Bra shul བྲ་ཤུ། Valley, Chu cha Village

brgya mchod བརྒྱ་མཚོད།, one hundred butter lamps

bsang བསང།, a fumigation ritual, or smoke offering that commonly involves burning juniper to create smoke. The ritual is based on the concept that human presence and activities defile the environment, and that this impurity can be removed with fumigation. The basic function of the ritual is *bsang ba* 'to purify'. The *bsang* ritual is also conceived as an offering to divinities. *Bsang* is also frequently offered when an important person such as a *bla ma* arrives in an area (<http://dictionary.thlib.org/>, accessed 25 June 2012).

bsang khri བསང་ཁྲི།, altar where *bsang* is offered

bsang rdzas བསང་རྫས།, mixture of barley flour, candy, and tea leaves offered to deities

bstod glu བསོད་གླུ།, praise songs

bum pa བུམ་པ།, china bottle containing five different grains, gold, silver, coral, turquoise, and water from sacred lakes

C

Cang 仓, family name

chang glu ཇང་གླུ།, drinking songs

Chu cha ཅུ་ཇ། Village, Mchod rten thang Township

D

da sanyuan 大三園, type of Chinese funeral

Dachai gou 大柴沟 Town, Tianzhu County

dada (local Han dialect), father's elder brother

Dahong gou 大红沟 Township, Tianzhu County
Daitong River 大通河 River, Tiantang Township
Dakeshidan 大科什旦 Village, Tiantang Township
Danian 大年, lunar New Year
Danian sanshi 大年三十, lunar New Year Eve
Danma 旦马 Township, Tianzhu County
daoshi 道士, Daoist fortuneteller
daoye 道爷, Taoist practitioner
Datong 大通 Hui and Tu Autonomous County, Qinghai Province
Dge lugs pa དགེ་ལུགས་པ།, Tibetan Buddhist sect
Dkar brag mtsho kha དཀར་བྲག་མཚོ་ཁ།, mountain deity
Dkar yag thang དཀར་ཡག་ཐང།, place in Dpa' ris County
dngul དངུལ།, a silver decoration on Tibetan traditional clothes
Dong 东, family name
Dong Shengying 东生英, name of a Zhucha villager
Dongda tan 东大滩 Township, Tianzhu County
Donggou 东沟 Township, Huzhu County, Qinghai Province
Dongjia Niangniang 东家娘娘, Dong families' protective deity
Dongping 东坪 Township, Tianzhu County
Dongxiang 东乡 ethnic group in China
dpa' po'i yul དཔལ་པོའི་ཡུལ།, place where heroes live
Dpa' ris དཔལ་རིལ། County, Gansu Province
Duo 朵, family name
Duoshi 朵什 Township, Tianzhu County

F

Fujian 福建 Province

G

G.yon lung གཡོན་ལུང། Valley, Mchod rten thang Township
G.yung drung dgon pa གཡུང་རྩུང་དགོན་པ། Monastery
Gagou 尕狗, name of a Zhucha villager
Gan chen mdo གན་ཚེན་མདོ། Village, Huzhu County
Gan Gagao 干尕高, name of a Zhucha villager

Gansu 甘肃 Province

gaogao (local Han dialect), elder brother

Gashou er 尕寿尔, name of a Zhucha villager

Ge sar 格萨尔, legendary Tibetan king and hero

Geshu 格树, location in Zhucha Village

gong chen (local Tibetan dialect), collar

Gser rgo 'gag གསེར་རྫོང་འགག་ Gorge, Dpa' ris County

Gser skyid གསེར་སྐྱིད། Town, Dpa' ris County

gsur གསུམ། mixture of meat, bread, candy, rapeseed oil, and tea leaves
offered to deceased people and ghosts

gtor ma གཏོར་མ།, figures of *mchod rten* (stupas), people, and animals
made from barley flour dough

Gu dog 'gag gong ma གུ་དོག་འགག་གོང་མ། Village, Mchod rten thang
Township

Gulang 古浪, County, Gansu Province

guoka (local Chinese dialect), kitchen

H

Han 汉 Majority ethnic group in China

Haxi 哈溪 Town, Tianzhu County

Hua 华, family name

Hualong 化隆 Hui Autonomous County, Qinghai Province

Huashitou xia 华石头峡 Valley, near Zhucha Village

Huazang si 华藏寺 Town in Tianzhu County

Hui 回, Muslim ethnic group in China

hun 魂, local dialect for soul

Huzhu 互助 Mongghul (Tu) Autonomous County, Qinghai Province

J

ja ka (local Tibetan dialect), decoration on Tibetan traditional clothes

ja shee (local Tibetan dialect), decoration on Tibetan traditional
clothes

je ma (local Tibetan dialect), decoration on Tibetan traditional
clothes

Jia 贾, family name

jiang caili 讲彩礼, negotiate the brideprice

jiejie 姐姐, older sister

jieshaoren 介绍人, marriage matchmaker

jiujiu 舅舅 (local Chinese), mother's brother

K

Kan lho ཀན་ལྷོ། Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province

kang 炕, heatable platform in a room where people sleep, eat, chat, and entertain guests

Karma Nor bu rdo rje ཀམ་ནོར་བུ་རྩེ།, Tibetan reincarnation *bla ma* who lived in the fourteenth century

kha btags ཁ་བཏགས།, strip of silk offered to guests, deities, and religious figures, friends, and relatives to show respect

Kho ra ཁོ་ར། Village, Mchod rten thang Township

Khor brtan gong ma ཁོར་བརྟན་གོང་མ། Village, Mchod rten thang Township

Khor brtan zhol ma ཁོར་བརྟན་ཞོལ་མ། Village, Mchod rten thang Township

Kun dga' ཀུན་དགའ།, name of a Chu cha villager

L

lwa, ལྷ། clothes

lab rtse ལམ་རྩེ།, wood or stone structure on a mountaintop considered to be the residence of mountain deities

lab rtse g.yang mda' ལམ་རྩེ་གཡང་མདའ།, arrows offered to mountain deities as weapons to fight against devils

Laga ལྷ་ཤ།, person's name

Lan 兰, family name

Lan tshe ring ལན་ཚེ་རིང།, name of a Chu cha villager

Lanzhou 兰州 City, capital of Gansu Province

Ledu 乐都 County, Qinghai Province

Lha dkar ལྷ་དགའ། person's name

lha gnyan chen po Rab bzang la gsol mchod kyi cho ga phan bde'i char 'bebs zhes bya ba bzhugs so ལྷ་གཉན་ཆེན་པོ་འབྲས་བུ་བཟང་ལ་གསོལ་མཚན་གྱི་ཚོགས་པ་ལྷན་བཤེས་ཆར་འབེབས་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་སོ། name of a

scripture

lha khang ལྷ་ཁང། temple

Liangshan 凉山 Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province

Liu Yonglin 刘永林, name of a Zhucha villager

Liuyue shiwu 六月十五, *lab rtse* ritual held in Zhucha Village on the
fifteenth day of the sixth lunar month

Lo sar ལོ་སར།, Tibetan New Year

lo sar bzang ལོ་སར་བཟང།, Happy New Year

M

Ma 马, family name

MA 'chi med མ་འཛི་མེད།, name of a Chu cha villager

Ma Bufang 马步芳, warlord in northwest China from the 1930s to
1949

Ma pham g.yu mtsho མ་ཕམ་གཡུ་མཚོ།, Manasarowar Lake

Ma dros mtsho mo མ་རྫོས་མཚོ་མོ།, Manasarowar Lake near Mount Kailash

ma Ni dar cha མ་ཉི་དར་ཅ།, flags featuring printed scriptures

mang ja མང་ཇ།, *Mang ja* literally translates as community tea or meal.

It is an offering ceremony sponsored by laity to accumulate merit on behalf of their deceased relatives. All the resident lamas and monks are fed a meal and given offerings such as tea bricks and cash for their chanting service during the ceremony. Locals also consider *mang ja* to be the name of the scripture chanted at this ritual.

Maozang 毛藏 Township, Tianzhu County

mchod khang མཚོད་ཁང།, shrine

mchod rten མཚོད་རྟེན། stupa

Mchod rten thang མཚོད་རྟེན་ཐང། Township, Dpa' ris County

Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling Monastery

མཚོད་རྟེན་ཐང་བཀྲ་ཤིས་དར་རྒྱས་སྐོང། Monastery, Mchod rten thang
Township

Me thur མེ་ཐུར། Village, Mchod rten thang Township

Menyuan 门源 County, Qinghai Province

mgal mo མགལ་མོ།, cow

Mgal mo nang མགལ་མོ་ནང། Valley, Mchod rten thang Township

Miao 苗 ethnic group in China

Ming 明 Dynasty

Minguo 民国, period of time in China from 1912 to 1949

Minqin 民勤 County, Gansu Province

mthon po མཐོན་པོ།, 'high', with reference to mountains

Mtsho ma dros pa མཚོ་མ་རྫོས་པ།, Manasarowar Lake near Mount Kailash

Muli 木里 Tibetan Autonomous County, Sichuan Province

mu མུ།, unit of land

N

nainai 奶奶, grandmother

Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho ངག་དབང་བློ་བཟང་རྒྱ་མཚོ།, the fifth Dalai

Bla ma

niangniang 娘娘, father's sister

Niu 牛, family name

Niu Xieyang 牛谢洋, name of a Zhucha villager

Q

Qi 祁, family name

Qiao 乔, family name

Qilian 祁连 Township, Tianzhu County

Qing 清 Dynasty

Qinghai 青海 Province

R

Rab rgyas རབ་རྒྱས།, capital of Dpa' ris County

Rdo dkar རོ་དཀར།, location near Chu cha Village

Rgya རྒྱ།, surname

Rgya thang རྒྱ་ཐང། Village, Mchod rten thang Township

Rgya tig tsho ba རྒྱ་ཏིག་ཚོ་བ།, tribe name

Rje tsong kha pa རྗེ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ།, founder of the Dge lugs Sect of Tibetan
Buddhism

rlung rta རླུང་རྟ།, wind horse

rlung rta dpal ལྷུང་རྩ་དཔལ།, piece of wood on which a flying horse and scriptures are carved

Rna bug རྩ་བུག། Village, Mchod rten thang Township

rta རྩ།, horse

Rta rdzong nang རྩ་རྫོང་ནང། Valley, Mchod rten thang Township

rtsam pa རྩམ་པ།, barley flour

Rung stag རུང་སྟག། Valley, Dpa' ris

S

Sailalong 赛拉龙 Township, Tianzhu County

Saishi si 赛什斯 Town, Tianzhu County

Salar 撒拉 Muslim ethnic group in China

san pianpian 三片片, local food

sanguan 丧官, funeral manager

Sangjieshijia, name of a Zhucha Tu villager

Sanshenbao 三神保, name of a Zhucha villager

sgo kha སྟོ་ཁ།, kitchen

Sgrol ma སྟོ་ལ་མ།, Tara

Sgron dkar སྟོང་དཀར།, woman from Ledu County who came to Dpa' ris

shang liao liangcao bu pa guan, jing liao fu mu bu pa tian. 上了粮草不怕官, 敬了父母不怕天, if you pay land taxes, no need to fear the government officers; respect your parents, no need to fear Heaven

shangfang 上房, main room in a home where guests are received

Shanxi 山西 Province

shaozhi 烧纸, papers burned for deities, the deceased, and ghosts

Shimen 石门 Town, Tianzhu County

Sichuan 四川 Province

Skom mdo སྐོམ་མདོ། Village, Dpa' ris County

smyung gnas སྟུང་གནས།, Tibetan fasting ritual

smyung gnas khang སྟུང་གནས་ཁང།, room where the Smyung gnas Ritual is held

Sngo kho tsho ba སྟོ་ཁོ་ཚོ་བ།, tribe name

sngon 'jog སྒོན་འཛོལ།, decoration on Tibetan traditional clothes

Song Ding 宋丁, name of a Zhucha villager

Songshan 松山 Town, Tianzhu County

Spyan ras gzigs སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས།, Avalokiteshvara, Deity of Mercy and Compassion

Srong btsan sgam po སྲོང་བཙུན་སྐམ་པོ།, Tibetan emperor in the seventh century

Stobs སྟོབས།, surname

Stobs Bkra shis སྟོབས་བཀྲ་ཤིས།, name of a Chu cha villager

Stobs bla ma tshe ring སྟོབས་བླ་མ་ཚེ་རིང།, name of a Chu cha villager

Stobs bsam 'grub སྟོབས་བསམ་འགྲུབ།, name of a Chu cha villager

Stobs dbang phyug སྟོབས་དབང་ཕྱུག།, name of a Chu cha villager

Stobs stag lha སྟོབས་སྟག་ལྷ།, name of a Chu cha villager

Stobs tshang tsho ba སྟོབས་ཚང་ཚོ།, tribe name

Stobs tshe ring don 'grub སྟོབས་ཚེ་རིང་དོན་འགྲུབ།, person's name

Ston pa སྟོན་པ།, Skakyamuni, Buddha

Stong 'khor bla ma Mdo rgyud rgya mtsho སྟོང་འཁོར་བླ་མ་མདོ་རྒྱུད་རྒྱ་མཚོ།, Tibetan reincarnation *bla ma* who lived in the seventeenth century

stong mchod སྟོང་མཚོད།, ritual involving offering 1,000 butter lamps, 1,000 prostrations, and 1,000 circumambulations

su ru སུ་རུ།, a shrub

Sunan 肃南 County, Gansu Province

T

Tang 唐 Dynasty

Tanshanling 炭山岭 Town, Tianzhu County

thang ཐང།, vast area

thang ga ཐང་ག།, Tibetan religious painting

ti pingzi 提瓶子, a visit paid by the groom's family to the bride's family before the marriage

Tiantang 天堂 Township, Tianzhu County; Heaven

Tiantang si 天堂寺 Monastery, Tianzhu County

Tianzhu 天祝 County, Gansu Province

tiao maohuo 跳茅火, local activity held on the last day of the Lunar
New Year

tshang ཚང།, family, surname

Tshe ring don 'grub ཚེ་རིང་དོན་འགྲུབ།, person's name

tsho ba ཚོ་བ།, tribe

Tu 土, Monguor, Mongghul, Mangghuer

W

wa ri (local Tibetan dialect), decoration on Tibetan traditional
clothes

wa zhwa བ་ཞལ།, traditional Tibetan fox skin hat

Wang 王, family name

Wang Danjian 王旦尖, name of a Zhucha villager

Wang g.yang mo བང་གཡང་མོ།, name of a Chu cha villager

Wang Gezi 王格子, name of a Chu cha villager

Wang Yongfu 王永福, name of a Zhucha villager

Wutai 五台 Mountain

Wuwei 武威 City, Gansu Province

X

Xiakou 峡口, place in Zhucha Village

xiao sanyuan 小三圆, type of Chinese funeral

Xida tan 西大滩 Township, Tianzhu County

Y

Yinwa 阴岔, location in Zhucha Village

Yan 严, family name

Yang 杨, family name

ye ye 爷爷, grandfather

yi niang 姨娘, mother's sister

yinyang 阴阳, fortuneteller

Yongdeng 永登 County, Gansu Province

Yuan 元 Dynasty

Yunnan 云南 Province

Z

Zab lung ཟབ་ལུང། Village, Huzhu County

Zal ba ཟལ་བ།, person's name

Zeng 曾, family name

zhihuo 纸货, paper articles made for a deceased person

zhong sanyuan 中三圆, type of Chinese funeral

Zhoujia 周加, name of a Zhucha villager

Zhuang 壮 ethnic group in China

Zhuaxi xiulong 抓西秀龙 Township, Tianzhu County

Zhucha 朱岔 Village, Tianzhu County