

གཡུ་མཚོ་གཤམ་ལྷོ་གཤམ་ལྷོ་གཤམ་ལྷོ་གཤམ་ལྷོ་གཤམ་ལྷོ་གཤམ་ལྷོ་

འགྲོ་ལོ་འགྲོ་ལོ་འགྲོ་ལོ་འགྲོ་ལོ་འགྲོ་ལོ་འགྲོ་ལོ་

# FOLLOWING THE HERDS

RHYTHMS OF TIBETAN PASTORAL LIFE IN A MDO

by

ཚོས་བསྐྱེད་རྒྱལ། Chos bstan rgyal

Edited by Gerald Roche

*ASIAN HIGHLANDS PERSPECTIVES (AHP)* is a trans-disciplinary journal focused on the Tibetan Plateau and surrounding regions, including the Southeast Asian Massif, Himalayan Massif, the Extended Eastern Himalayas, the Mongolian Plateau, and other contiguous areas.

HARD COPY: [www.lulu.com/asianhp](http://www.lulu.com/asianhp); ONLINE: [www.platauculture.org/asian-highlands-perspectives](http://www.platauculture.org/asian-highlands-perspectives); E-MAIL: [ahpjournal@gmail.com](mailto:ahpjournal@gmail.com)

ISSN (print): 1835-7741; (electronic): 1925-6329; LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CONTROL NUMBER: 2008944256; CALL NUMBER: DS1.A4739; SUBJECTS: Uplands-Asia-Periodicals; Tibet, Plateau of-Periodicals

EDITORIAL BOARD: Barbara Brower, Portland State University; Bianca Horlemann, Humboldt University; Bill Bleisch, China Exploration & Research Society; Charlene Makley, Reed College; Daniel Berounský, Charles University; Daniel Miller, US AID; Emily Yeh, University of Colorado; Fernanda Pirie, University of Oxford; Geoffrey Samuel, Cardiff University; Gray Tuttle, Columbia University; Hildegard Diemberger, University of Cambridge; Huadan Zhaxi (Dpal ldan bkra shis དཔལ་ལྷན་བཀའ་ཤིས་), Humboldt University; Jermy Jamsu ('Gyur med rgya mtsho འགྲུ་མེད་རྒྱ་མཚོ་), Independent Scholar; Juha Janhunen, University of Helsinki; Katherine Morton, Australian National University; Keith Dede, Lewis and Clark College; Keith Slater, SIL International, East Asia Group and University of North Dakota; Mark Bender, The Ohio State University; Mark Turin, Yale University; Paul K Nietupski, John Carroll University; Sarah E Fraser, Northwestern University; Sienna Craig, Dartmouth College; Toni Huber, Humboldt University; and Veronika Zikmundova, Charles University.

OPEN ACCESS, COPYRIGHT, AND PUBLISHING FEES: *AHP* is a green open access journal; we do not charge publishing fees. All works published in *AHP* are subject to a Creative Commons, Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License: [http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/deed.en\\_US](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/deed.en_US). Contributing authors may self-archive and disseminate their work.

SUMMARY: This book focuses on the traditional ecological knowledge of Tibetan pastoralists in Smug po, a community on the northeast Tibetan Plateau. Following an introduction to the community, its territory, history, and other salient features, local pastoral production and the annual pastoral cycle are described. Remaining chapters deal with the naming, breeding, and management of livestock; wildlife; grassland plants; pasture management; weather prediction; rituals to ensure good fortune; and the treatment of livestock illnesses. Includes two maps, fifteen tables, sixty-six figures, a list of non-English terms with original orthography, and an index.

COVER: Winter landscape in Smug po (photograph by Chos bstan rgyal, 2012).



## CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	9
EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION	10
AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION	13
CONSULTANTS	17
CHAPTER ONE: SHORT STORY - CRY OF THE BLACK YAK	21
CHAPTER TWO: SMUG PO COMMUNITY	35
Location and Territory	36
Population	43
Language	43
Local History	44
Homes	47
Houses	47
Tents	49
The Local Economy	52
Caterpillar Fungus	53
Livestock Loans	54
Education	54
Local Deities	56
<i>Gzhi bdag</i> 'Mountain Deities'	56
<i>Klu</i> 'Water Deities'	60
Household and Personal Deities	63
<i>Btsan</i> 'Mountain Spirits'	65
The Local Monastery	66
CHAPTER THREE: PASTORALISM IN SMUG PO	69
Pastoral Production	70
Milk Products	70
Meat	75
Hair and Leather	79
Dung	81

The Pastoral Cycle	83
Winter	85
Spring	90
<i>Sos ka</i>	92
Summer	94
Autumn	101
CHAPTER FOUR: LIVESTOCK AND OTHER ANIMALS	107
Introduction	108
Yaks	108
Determining the Age of Yaks	110
Differentiating Yaks	116
Yak Breeding	120
Breaking in Yaks	122
Hybrid Cattle	125
Sheep	126
Determining the Age of Sheep	127
Differentiating Sheep	131
Sheep Breeding	133
Horses	135
Horse Naming	143
Gelding Horses	146
Dogs	147
Wildlife	148
<i>Brong</i> 'Wild Yak' ( <i>Bos mutus</i> )	148
<i>Kha 'chang</i> 'Wolf' ( <i>Canis lupus chanco</i> )	150
<i>Phar ba</i> 'Dhole' ( <i>Cuon alpinus</i> )	151
<i>Wa</i> 'Fox' ( <i>Vulpes vulpes</i> )	152
<i>Mi la tse tse</i>	152
<i>Phye</i> 'Marmot' ( <i>Marmota himalayana</i> )	153
<i>Ri bong</i> 'Rabbit' ( <i>Lepus oiostolus</i> )	153
<i>Dred mong</i> 'Brown Bear' ( <i>Ursus arctos pruinosus</i> )	154
<i>A bra</i> 'Pika' ( <i>Ochotona himalayana</i> )	156
<i>G.yi dbur</i> 'Lynx' ( <i>Lynx lynx</i> )	156
<i>Khu byug</i> 'Cuckoo' ( <i>Cuculus spp.</i> )	156
<i>Skya ka</i> 'Eurasian Magpie' ( <i>Pica pica</i> )	157

<i>Ho rog</i> 'Raven' ( <i>Corvus spp.</i> )	157
<i>Skyung ka</i> 'Red-billed Chough' ( <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> )	158
'Sparrow' – <i>Khang byi'u</i> and <i>Byi'u skya leb</i>	159
CHAPTER FIVE: HERD AND PASTURE MANAGEMENT	161
Introduction	162
Local Plants	163
Pasture Management	165
Weather and Weather Prediction	166
Ensuring Fortune	168
<i>G.yang</i>	169
<i>Tshe thar</i>	172
<i>Srung g.yag</i>	175
Divination with Sheep Body Parts	180
Treating Livestock Illnesses	182
CONCLUSION	187
NON-ENGLISH TERMS	191
INDEX	205

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### Maps

Map 1: The location of Brag dkar County.	36
Map 2: Lung bzang Township within Brag dkar County.	37

### Tables

Table 1. Smug po's seasonal pastures.	85
Table 2. A female pastoralist's typical winter day.	89
Table 3. A male pastoralist's typical winter day.	89
Table 4. A female pastoralist's typical spring day.	91
Table 5. A male pastoralist's typical spring day.	92
Table 6. A female pastoralist's typical <i>sos ka</i> day.	93
Table 7. A male pastoralist's typical <i>sos ka</i> day.	94
Table 8. A female pastoralist's typical summer day.	100
Table 9. A male pastoralist's typical summer day.	101
Table 10. A female pastoralist's typical autumn day.	104
Table 11. A male pastoralist's typical autumn day.	104
Table 12. Yak terms.	117
Table 13. Sheep terms.	131
Table 14. Horse terms.	144
Table 15. Weather terms.	166

### Figures

Figure 1. Dpal bo.	18
Figure 2. Sngags dpal ldan smyon pa.	19
Figure 3. Yo ne.	19
Figure 4. A narrow section of the Dbus Valley.	38
Figure 5. Phun sum tshogs pa Mountain.	40
Figure 6. Go rdza Mountain.	40
Figure 7. The incense altar atop Go rdza Mountain.	41
Figure 8. Zur gsum ki lha Mountain.	41
Figure 9. The interior of my family's house.	48
Figure 10. A black tent.	49

Figure 11. The <i>thab kha</i> 'stove'.	50
Figure 12. Inside Smug po's kindergarten.	55
Figure 13. An incense offering for the whole community.	57
Figure 14. A family incense offering.	57
Figure 15. Offering incense at Sha rwa Lab rtse.	60
Figure 16. A spring rises on a hillside.	61
Figure 17. Prayer flags and an incense altar for a <i>srung ma</i> .	63
Figure 18. Milking a yak in the summer pasture.	71
Figure 19. Pouring fresh milk in preparation for processing.	71
Figure 20. Liquid is squeezed from freshly churned butter.	73
Figure 21. Processing cheese.	73
Figure 22. Making yogurt.	74
Figure 23. A sheep being suffocated.	76
Figure 24. A yak tethered with a wool rope.	80
Figure 25. A <i>sgye mo</i> .	81
Figure 26. Collecting dung in the yak enclosure.	82
Figure 27. Collected dung is stored in piles.	82
Figure 28. The annual pastoral cycle.	84
Figure 29. Seasons in Smug po.	84
Figure 30. Yaks drink meltwater from a frozen spring.	84
Figure 31. Chipping away ice to collect drinking water.	86
Figure 32. Winter houses (center right) seen from a hilltop.	87
Figures 33 and 34. Calves are fed extra fodder during winter.	88
Figure 35. Returning to the tent after milking.	95
Figure 36. The summer pasture.	96
Figure 37. Moving camp to the autumn pasture.	97
Figure 38. Separating a calf from its mother.	100
Figure 39. The autumn pasture.	102
Figures 40 and 41. Receiving religious teachings.	105
Figure 42. A <i>be'u</i> .	111
Figure 43. A <i>ya ru</i> .	111
Figure 44. A four-year-old yak.	113
Figure 45. A five-year-old yak.	113
Figure 46. A seven-year-old yak.	115
Figure 47. An elderly adult yak with worn, yellow teeth.	115
Figure 48. A yak horn with ridges.	116
Figure 49. A <i>glang sga</i> , a pack frame for yaks.	124

Figure 50. Sheep in the enclosure next to the winter house.	127
Figure 51. A three-year-old sheep.	130
Figure 52. A four-year-old sheep.	130
Figure 53. A <i>kha gang</i> sheep.	131
Figure 54. A groomed and decorated horse.	135
Figure 55. A <i>rta sga</i> 'horse saddle'.	139
Figure 56. Riders assemble before a horse race.	140
Figures 57 and 58. Racing horses during winter.	141
Figure 59. A horse dressed to participate in a race.	142
Figure 60. A family's watch dog.	147
Figure 61. A patch of <i>mkhan pa</i> grass.	164
Figure 62. A <i>tshe thar</i> .	172
Figure 63. A <i>srung g.yag</i> .	177
Figures 64 and 65. Scapula and spleen used in divination.	182
Figure 66. A yak with <i>ri phye</i> .	183

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the following people for helping to make this book possible:

'Brug rgyal mkhar  
Bernard Roche  
Brook Bryant  
Catherine Schuetze  
CK Stuart  
Elena McKinlay  
Françoise Pommaret  
Natasha Fijn  
Rin chen rdo rje  
Rowena Hamer  
Sarah Oliphant  
Timothy Thurston

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Chos bstan rgyal was a dual Tibetan-English major at Qinghai Normal University and began this book as a graduation thesis at the end of his four-year bachelor's degree. I was one of Chos bstan rgyal's teachers at this time. His original thesis focused on the ways yak and sheep of different ages are identified and named by pastoralists. After Chos bstan rgyal graduated, I encouraged him to continue working on his materials, and happily, he was enthusiastic to do so.

Chos bstan rgyal's thesis became this book through a gradual process of expansion. We started with free writing. Chos bstan rgyal wrote on whatever topics related to pastoralism in his hometown that he felt were important. I then edited those texts (English is Chos bstan rgyal's third language) and also requested clarification, explanation, and illustration. Over the course of several years, we sometimes worked together side by side for several days at a time, and sometimes worked remotely from one another, communicating via email, with days or weeks passing between exchanges.

Several people read the text at various stages and asked questions that helped structure the finished text: 'Brug rgyal mkhar, CK Stuart, Timothy Thurston, Natasha Fijn, and Rowena Hamer all provided helpful feedback. Throughout the process of writing and rewriting, Chos bstan rgyal also frequently called family members and villagers in Smug po seeking their advice, and made numerous trips back home to conduct research, including taking all the photographs that appear in the book.

Writing, editing, asking, and exploring was self-generative. Questions led to more questions, new topics, and greater curiosity, which all fed off each other in a 'virtuous cycle'. We thus worked our way from a short text focusing on a relatively narrow topic, to a large number of loosely related, but unstructured fragments.

We left these materials unstructured until we had compiled a reasonably large body of writing, and then began organizing it. We both agreed that breadth was more important than depth, as we wanted to give a sense of the extent of pastoralists' knowledge, rather than to exhaustively catalog everything that pastoralists know.



The finished text focuses more on certain aspects of life than others. This reflects Chos bstan's rgyal's personal interests, but also in some respects represents the community's view of itself – what features of the community's traditional knowledge they consider important, interesting, and worth talking about.

A challenging aspect of creating this text was conferring structure and unity on the whole text, by including elements such as introductory and concluding sections, hedges, qualification, and bridging passages. These elements are fairly high-level aspects of English non-fiction prose with which many educated native English speakers struggle. These were mostly produced in the present case by writing according to formulas, for example, that a conclusion should summarize the main findings in chronological order, and then suggest possibilities for future research. Thus, if some of the writing seems formulaic at points, it is because those parts were probably written to formulas. Despite the occasional lack of fluidity, the reader will hopefully recognize the significant achievement that this book represents.

This is a scholarly book, but not an academic one. By this, I mean that the work upholds certain standards of intellectual rigor, aspires to veracity and objectivity, and tries to avoid biased, inaccurate, or incomplete portrayals of reality. However, this is not an academic book in so far as it makes no reference to theoretical debates, and is therefore not particularly locatable within any specific contemporary discourse or discipline. The book is certainly ethnographic, but is not necessarily anthropological. Chos bstan rgyal has not made reference to the extensive literature on Tibetan pastoralism or, more broadly, to the literature on traditional ecological knowledge, though readers familiar with such literature will likely notice many points of articulation with those fields.

The issue of citations and references is particularly complex when considering the sourcing of Tibetan oral traditions. Chos bstan rgyal has endeavored to cite sources for all quotes given in the book, however, many of the texts are too widely known within his community to merit citation to a single person. Some texts exist in a complex gray area between textuality and orality – for example, they may have been oral texts that were written down, published, and

then learned and re-circulated orally before Chos bstan rgyal recorded them from villagers. Several texts given in the book fall into this category. We have opted to leave them without citations.

Another feature that sets this book apart from more standard academic works is the inclusion of a fictional prelude to the non-fiction content. Told from the perspective of a yak, this story gives rich insight into a very Tibetan view of the non-human world. Livestock contemplate their karma, tutor their children, adore and respect their mothers, and fall in love. This narrative, simultaneously from the perspective of a yak and from within the Tibetan worldview, illuminates, frames, and juxtaposes the descriptive content that follows.

Finally, it should be noted that readers who are familiar with literary Tibetan might notice 'errors' in the Tibetan texts. This is because we decided to render words as they are pronounced in the Smug po context, even when formal literary equivalents exist. We have endeavored to standardize the spelling of these local oral terms (using the Wylie system), and to provide literary equivalents where possible, but some inconsistencies may remain.

This is an important book that I am proud to have been a part of. It is suggestive of the many things that we do not currently know about how Tibetan pastoralists interact with their environment. It is our hope that readers will find it provocative, and that it serves as impetus for new research, particularly by Tibetans, into the knowledge and practices that have sustained the Tibetan grasslands for millennia.

Gerald Roche

Uppsala, Sweden 2014

## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

I am from Smug po (Muguo) Community, Lung bzang (Longzang) Township, Brag dkar (Xinghai)<sup>1</sup> County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. I was born in a black yak-hair tent in 1985. I don't know the exact date, and neither do my parents.

I started herding calves when I was seven, and most of my childhood memories are of livestock. I helped my family herd yaks until I began school at the age of eleven. Nowadays, I teach Tibetan and English in Brag dkar County Number Two Nationalities Middle School, and I often remember my pastoral life fondly.

I remember that my family moved seasonally during my childhood. Summer was the busiest season for the whole family, including the children. My younger brother, who is four years younger than me, was my only companion when I watched the calves, which needed to be kept apart from their mothers during the day. Every day, we drove the calves near the river and played games together as we herded.

Father herded sheep on the mountain every day. We had over 1,000 sheep at that time, and were thus one of the richest families in Smug po. Uncle Mkhar byams (my father's younger brother, who lived with us until he married in 1999) herded yaks at that time. His job was the hardest, because yaks are very difficult to control in summer. He lost several yaks every day, and had to search for them on horseback, carrying a rifle for protection against wolves.

Life was very difficult in winter. Many of our livestock starved to death or succumbed to disease due to their weakened condition. We divided the sheep into two flocks. Pregnant ewes were herded separately because they needed more grass and water. Father herded the ewes and Uncle herded the other sheep. At that time, we largely ignored the yaks, which spent most of the winter wandering freely in the hills. Only some old, weak yaks needed to be fed, so during winter, our attention was focused on the sheep. Younger Brother,

---

<sup>1</sup> Locals also refer to Brag dkar as Dar mtsho.

Mother, and I went to collect a grass called *rdza rtswa*<sup>2</sup> from mountaintops to feed the sheep and the weak yaks. This was hard work. We had to climb to the top of high rocky mountains, and uproot the grass by hand, because it was too tough to cut. We then tied the grass into bundles with ropes and carried it down the mountain to home on our backs, taking about four hours.

My most unforgettable herding experience happened in late summer one year, when I was around ten years old. Father and Uncle had taken pack yaks and gone to town to buy provisions. It usually took them eight to ten days for the round trip, and while they were away, Brother and I herded the yaks.

We drove all the yaks home one afternoon, but, when we arrived, Mother noticed that seven yaks were missing. I hadn't noticed their absence, because we had over 300 yaks at that time. We lost the yaks because we were too young and irresponsible, and mostly concentrated on playing rather than herding. We were also unfamiliar with our yaks, and couldn't recognize that some were missing. So, it was no surprise that we had lost a few yaks.

I was afraid, because I knew if we didn't find them, that wolves would probably kill them.

"Seven yaks is not a small number! We must find them tonight," Mother said.

"OK," I reluctantly agreed.

Mother looked at me sternly and said, "If they are killed by wolves tonight, we will be humiliated." Mother was more worried about our reputation than our livestock.

Darkness had fallen. "Drink some milk and go to sleep," Mother said to Younger Brother. "We will find the yaks and come back." Younger Brother nodded slowly in agreement.

Mother got two flashlights and then she and I set out to look for the lost yaks. On the way, we met Rgyal lo, an old man from another community. In the summer we lived in the same valley.

He said, "Tsho bo, don't go searching for them tonight. I'll help you find them tomorrow. It's too dangerous. You might be attacked by wolves."

---

<sup>2</sup> *Rdza rtswa* grows lushly atop rocky mountains, where sheep and yaks cannot reach it.

Mother said, "We have to find them tonight, or the wolves will get them."

He replied, "I heard that wolves killed and ate someone around here recently. Are you sure you have to go?"

Mother hesitated, and said, "We should go and find them. It would be a shame if our yaks were killed."

We walked over one mountain and then another and another. All this time we heard wolves howling. Sometimes they were in the distance, and sometimes it seemed that they were right beside us.

"Are you scared?" Mother asked.

"No, I'm not afraid, because I am with you," I said bravely.

"You're a big man. You can do anything. That's why your mother isn't frightened to look for yaks with you tonight," Mother said.

"Yeah, I understand," I said. I suddenly felt that I had a big responsibility for our family, because Father was not at home. As the howling of wolves echoed around us, I felt encouraged by Mother's words.

"We've almost caught up with the yaks," Mother said, after inspecting some yak dung on the ground.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"See?" she said, pointing her flashlight at the ground. "This dung is very fresh. It's still steaming. If it was older, it would have already started to dry."<sup>3</sup>

"I see," I said, slowly nodding.

Suddenly, we saw something blurry and black in the darkness. We were sure that it was our lost yaks and quickened our pace. When we got there, all seven yaks were there. We drove them home, arriving at three o'clock in the morning. We were exhausted.

That was my most memorable experience of being out on the grasslands at night. For Father and Uncle, such adventures were commonplace. Finding yaks at night is burdensome and dangerous, so herders usually take good care of yaks throughout the day, and do their best to bring all the yaks home at the end of the day. Only the

---

<sup>3</sup> The dryness of dung indicates its age even when the dung is frozen. Relatively recent dung is frozen on the outside, but still wet inside, whereas older frozen dung is completely dry and frozen solid.

strongest yaks are allowed to roam free in winter, as they are able to defend themselves against wolves.

After that hazardous night, I took better care of the yaks during the day, and never lost any again.



One afternoon in 2008, when I was a college student, it had just finished raining. My class monitor said Teacher Gerald had summoned me and a few other students. When we reached his home, he encouraged us to write something about local culture during our summer holiday. That was the first step in writing this book.

I visited many places in Smug po, on several occasions, in order to collect information for this book. I took photos, interviewed elders, and observed pastoral life. I also read Tibetan and English materials to increase my understanding of Tibetan pastoralism.

I felt compelled to write this book because so many new things are appearing in Smug po these days. Many pastoralists are leaving the grasslands to live in towns. Fewer and fewer people ride horses, use yaks to transport things, live in black yak-hair tents, herd livestock, and remember our traditions. In this book, I want to tell young Tibetans about our traditions and thus preserve a record of local Tibetan customs that may help us in the future. I hope readers learn something from this book, and I also welcome suggestions from readers.

I thank my family and the consultants who provided me with information. I thank my teacher, Dr. Roche, who helped me finish this book. I also thank Brooke Bryant, Elena McKinlay, and Sarah Oliphant for their editorial assistance with the short story. Finally, I thank Klu mo skyid, who supported me during the time I wrote this book.

## CONSULTANTS

Yum skyid (female, b. ~1935) is well known in Smug po for her ability to recite mantras and short prayers. She has seven children. Her family was considered wealthy when she was around twenty years old. At that time, she milked at least forty yaks two or three times every day. She is the most knowledgeable local woman in matters related to milking. Furthermore, though most local women are illiterate, Yum skyid learned to read and write a little when she was approximately ten years old. At that time, Yum skyid's younger brother was a local *bla ma*, whom she accompanied when he visited families to read scriptures. This provided her with an opportunity to learn to read.

Klu pa thar (female, b. ~1935) is my paternal grandmother. She has six children. Her life has been difficult because Grandfather's work meant he only returned home twice a year. She raised her children and managed her family's herds alone. She milked all the female yaks in the morning, and then took food with her and herded all day, before bringing livestock home in the dark. Her life continued in this way until Grandfather retired in 1985.

Chos dar (male, b. ~1936) is my paternal grandfather. He was a township leader from 1963 to 1985. He was a monk before 1958. He was the first man in Smug po to build a house, and is locally well known for his knowledge of livestock. He provided information about livestock naming.

Dpal bo (male, b. ~1943, below) was Smug po's head accountant from 1966 to 1973. Among other things, he provided information about his perception of environmental changes during his lifetime. During an interview in 2011, he said, "The weather is becoming hotter every year. There are more big storms and it floods more often than in the past. Such changes began around 1987."

Figure 1. Dpal bo.<sup>4</sup>



Dpal ldan (male, b. ~1928) was the vice-leader of Smug po from 1973 until 1980. He is locally famous for his knowledge of livestock diseases, which he claims to have learned from his father.

Sngags dpal ldan smyon pa (male, b. 1935, below) was a monk until 1963, when, at the age of twenty-three, he became a veterinarian. He left this job several years later and traveled throughout A mdo, studying Tibetan medicine, and collecting medicinal plants in such pastoral areas as Mtsho sngon po and Rtse khog. He later became a Traditional Tibetan Medicine doctor in Smug po, and now treats both people and livestock. He is also a *sngags pa* 'tantrin' and is skillful at chanting and performing tantric rituals. He is proud of his knowledge of chanting and making herbal remedies. He provided information about *klu*, *btsan*, and local history.

---

<sup>4</sup> All photographs were taken by the author between 2008 and 2012.



Figure 2. Sngags dpal ldan smyon pa.



Yo ne (male, b. 1933, below) was a monk until the age of twenty-five. He said that he had enjoyed being a monk, because he was good at chanting and many locals invited him to chant for them. He also mentioned that monastic life was very relaxing. He provided information about *srung g.yag* and breaking in yaks.

Figure 3. Yo ne.





# CHAPTER ONE



## SHORT STORY CRY OF THE BLACK YAK

I wrote the following short story in 2010, when I was an undergraduate in the English Training Program at Qinghai Normal University. At that time, I loved reading stories, and had tried several times to write something, but had repeatedly failed. However, writing this short story, based on my own experiences and intimate understanding of livestock, was easier than writing about things I'd never experienced. I finally succeeded in writing a story that satisfied me.

The idea to write this story first came to me during the summer holiday of 2009. I went home and saw my neighbors slaughtering a mother yak. When I saw this, I reflected on how cruel pastoralists are to livestock. Our animals sacrifice their lives for us. All their effort benefits humans, but, in the end, even that is not enough for us, for livestock must even sacrifice their flesh to satisfy us. As I watched my neighbors lead their old female yak away, I realized how unfair our treatment of domestic animals is. Through writing this short story, I wanted to show how livestock themselves might think about this situation, and what their perspective on humans might be. Like us, I think that yaks also know true love between mother and child, and between one another.

I use personification in this story to describe the life of a yak as if it were human. The main roles in the story are me – a young male yak – and my mother. When I first came to this world, I saw a beautiful environment and felt my mother's warm tongue. People treated me well and I thought it was a perfect world. I gradually matured and people started to use me as a beast of burden. Although it was a very big responsibility, I tried my best to not disappoint my owners. Later, my owners slaughtered my mother, and ate her flesh. Finally, I escaped from the flock with my lover but, pitifully, wolves came and took my lover from me. I was then without a home or friend.

The story illustrates how humans dominate other living beings. As a yak, I tell my own experience from my first day until my death. I show how humans treat livestock unfairly, and never pity yaks for their bad karma. When yaks see other yaks being slaughtered or treated badly, they resent humans and no longer want to sacrifice themselves for them. This story also tells us that there is real love between a mother yak and her calf; even on the morning she is to be slaughtered, the mother yak encourages her son to be strong and to continue faithfully serving their owners. I hope this story helps people be more sympathetic towards all sentient beings.

My arrival happened without sniveling or affliction. My body appeared, entirely encased in flexible afterbirth. The wet ground under me was extremely uncomfortable. I couldn't open my eyes, but I felt my dear mother carefully licking my body with her warm tongue.

The mild weather and the warm tongue made me joyful. My damp body gradually dried. When I could open my eyes, a beautiful sight appeared. The grassland was surrounded by high mountains, with snow-capped peaks that soared into the clouds. Lush forest covered the mountains, like a giant wearing a green coat, and the limpid water flowed at the foot of the slopes, like a gentle woman walking slowly. It was a good season to be born. Fragrant flowers grew everywhere, making the environment even more beautiful. This place made a good impression on me.

There were more than one hundred bulls and cows circling Mother and me. Most of them looked happy, and said, "Congratulations, you have a baby." However, a strong bull stood at the edge of the gathering, looking quite unhappy. I thought there must have been a problem between Mother and that strong bull, but surrounded by all those other yaks, I didn't have the courage to ask. Afterwards, a tall, thin female emerged from the gathering and walked slowly towards us with great effort. This old yak licked my head carefully and whispered something in Mother's ear that I didn't hear. Perhaps she told Mother how to protect me, because I was Mother's first calf. After a few minutes, she disappeared back into the herd.

I saw many young calves playing near us. Suddenly, happiness filled my heart. I wanted to play and make friends with them, but it was impossible at that moment because I could not stand. I struggled, but standing was too difficult. My desire to stand increased. I stretched my foot in front of me and tried again. It was difficult. My whole body shook uncontrollably, and I fell back to the ground. Mother silently smiled at me. Encouraged by her smile, I decided to try again. I promised with all my heart that I would stand this time and never fall again. Summoning all my strength, I slowly rose, and, at once, I could stand. I was overjoyed and glanced up at

Mother's face. She saw that her lovely baby was standing and raised her head with pride.



As the sun set behind the western mountains, the afterglow moved slowly to the edge of the sky while the high mountains' shadow covered the valley. Suddenly, a short, fat old woman appeared at the gate of the enclosure. She wore a brown robe and a blue scarf covered her head. The long right sleeve of her robe brushed the ground. A younger woman and small boy followed her. The younger woman wore a black robe without a cover on her head. Her sleeves were tied around her waist and she was walking as quickly as the winter wind. Her cheeks were as red as apples. The boy was wearing modern clothes instead of a Tibetan robe. He walked slowly behind the two women, looking unhappy. He held a long bamboo stick, and it seemed he might be planning to beat a member of my herd. As they moved close to us, the young woman saw us first.

"Mother, our good female yak has given birth!" she stopped and cried out. The old woman and young boy rushed over and looked at me. Kindness and charity shone on their faces. The younger woman sat by me and said, "What a lovely young calf!" and touched my head. This angered Mother, who shook her head, as though she was going to gore the young woman, who was frightened and ran away. None of them came close again until Mother calmed down. Then those people went and tied each yak to a rope. When they finished, it was already dusk. Fortunately, they didn't come again and make Mother angry. They closed the gate of the livestock yard and went to their warm tent.

Darkness gradually covered the ground. The moon appeared and shone in the dark sky, and small stars appeared, one after another beside the moon. The weather was warm and damp. Most of the yaks lay on the ground, sleeping deeply, but Mother just stood silently by my side. She didn't tell me why, but I knew she was protecting me. I went to sleep quickly.

It was daytime when I awoke. It was the second day that I had spent in this world. I stood up and walked slowly. The sun gradually warmed the earth. The yaks got up and looked into the distance. I

thought my herd members must be hungry. Mother sniffed beside me. Maybe she was hungry too.

After a while, the old woman, the young woman, and the young boy emerged from the tent and entered our enclosure. The old woman held an empty wooden bucket. They were coming directly toward us. I didn't know what they wanted to do. The little boy came to me and guided my head to Mother's udder. She licked my body carefully as I drank her milk. Without warning, the old woman moved near us, and the boy suddenly pulled me away. The old woman hobbled Mother's feet with a short rope, sat under Mother, and started milking her. Ten minutes later, she happily left with a full bucket of milk, and went into the tent.

Meanwhile, the young woman was collecting yak dung in the livestock yard. All the yaks were happy because they would soon be free. They gazed at the young woman as if to encourage her hard work. The boy pushed me to suckle again, but I refused, because I was already full. The young woman finished collecting dung and began untying all the yaks, who ran immediately to the boundless grassland. The small boy took a stone and cast it toward the herd with a shout. The yaks were startled and ran faster than before. Mother, an older female, and I walked slowly behind them. Mother wanted to protect me and didn't want to run. The older female could not run because she was the oldest female in our herd. She had three calves, and after her last child was born, she became unhappy and her husband renounced her. He married another cow, so she was unhappy about that. Probably there was not much time left in her life.

•••

I was soon one month old. Everything was going perfectly. Mother's warm milk helped me grow quickly. My hair and small horns grew longer. My whole body seemed stronger than any other calf my age. In fact, even though I could have beaten anyone my age, I never fought, especially with yaks smaller than me. Mother was proud that I had a good relationship with the other calves. The people who lived in the tent loved me dearly.

One morning they surrounded me and Mother, and talked about something for a long time. I didn't understand what they said.

"Mother, what was that about?" I asked.

"They praised you, and said that you are the best calf in our community. They hope you will be very capable when you grow up," Mother answered proudly.

The next day they came again and gave me a beautiful name, Rog Idang, which means 'black yak with sharp horns'. The name showed that I was strong and energetic. Mother and I were proud of my beautiful new name.

Mother explained how difficult and tortuous yaks' lives are. "You are male and have a difficult path ahead of you. You must be stronger than the others. When you are the herd leader, everybody will obey and respect you," she said with a wishful face.

One day when the sun still hadn't risen in the sky, people hurried to take down the tent, in preparation for moving. I asked Mother what they were doing. "They are going to move to the top of the mountain because it is too hot down here in summer. Up on the mountaintop, it is very cool and comfortable. We live at the foot of the mountains in winter because it is warmer here," Mother answered slowly.

The people loaded everything into plastic boxes. The men put a wooden pack frame on some male yaks' backs. It didn't look very heavy, but it must have been uncomfortable for them.

I asked Mother, "What are they doing?"

"Herders pack everything on a yak's back, even their small children. Yaks always suffer from this work," Mother answered with a little sadness.

We started off. Some bulls walked in front of us, while Mother and I stayed in the middle of the herd. The people followed us. Some of them were on horseback, but most of them went on foot. The boy picked up stones and threw them at us. After a while, we reached a large river. I thought it would be difficult to cross the river, as it seemed very deep. I asked Mother what we should do next. She told me that I needed to be brave, and, if I could not cross the river, she said I would never be a real yak. This was the first real danger I had ever faced. I was scared, and trembling, but I didn't say anything. Mother looked back at me after she crossed the river, and then I jumped in quickly and crossed safely.



After crossing the river, we passed through a forest, and then came to our destination, a vast grassland. The fragrance of countless flowers and grasses freshened the environment and filled us with vitality. We were all pleased to eat such nice grass. A small stream hummed an endless melody. The people were busy setting up the tents. Some tired yaks lay on the ground and rested. Everyone seemed truly relaxed.



On the second day at our new home, I awoke with an ominous feeling. Thick clouds covered the horizon and a little rain fell. Blue smoke from the tent looked like a long, blue bolt of silk unfolding endlessly into the sky. All the yaks were gathered in the enclosure, lying on the ground, feeling sleepy.

About an hour later, the old woman brought a bucket and walked directly toward us with her slow steps. After she finished milking, the old woman did something truly remarkable. She separated the adult yaks and drove them away from the calves. However, Mother persevered and stayed with me. Annoyed with my mother's persistence, the woman threw sharp stones at her. I was puzzled and didn't understand why they had tried to separate us. After Mother at last joined the other yaks and moved away, the woman allowed the calves to go near the tent. She wanted us to stay nearby. The small boy herded us by the stream, which was near the tent. He was a cruel boy, and beat us without reason, causing us much misery.

We were calves and too young to eat grass. We depended on our mother's milk. We were not accustomed to drinking cold water and eating grass, so we got very hungry. But, when our mothers returned in the evening, the people did not let us drink milk immediately. They took milk from our mothers' udders twice each day. We had nothing to drink from early morning until late afternoon. Sometimes we drank a little water and nibbled a little grass. I was angry with how people had deprived me of Mother's milk, but I knew there was nothing I could do about it. As animals, our lives are different from humans'. They are our masters and we have to obey them. We are just unfortunate livestock.

One of my relatives often told me, "Yaks' lives are miserable and filled with maltreatment. A good yak must be a real yak, and a real yak needs to do plenty of dangerous things in his life. This is a rule we yaks must follow." It made a deep impression on me. My name, Rog ldang, always encouraged me to be a brave yak.

That night, everyone went to sleep except Mother and me.

I asked Mother, "Why don't people let us drink milk?"

"Winter is coming, and they need to store butter, cheese, and dry yogurt, all of which are made from milk. The way you suffer when you can't drink milk is the result of yaks' bad karma," Mother said slowly. I then realized the reason why they were selfish, and decided I would eat more grass and drink more water.



Several months passed. The weather became increasingly chilly, as the harsh winter descended without mercy. Snow fell, turning the world white. We moved to the foot of the mountains, but it was still cold there, and we couldn't find any warm places to live. Thick snow covered the grass, so we had no way to get food. We all suffered from hunger, and gradually, our bodies became thinner and thinner. Sometimes we found a few bits of dry grass during the daytime, but by nighttime we were hungry again. Mother had become weak from hunger and fell seriously ill. Some older females nearly died. They found it very difficult to move, so they just lay on the ground.

One dark night when snow was falling heavily, we could not find any comfortable place to lie. All the livestock stood with their bodies shaking. I stood beside Mother. My feet were extremely cold from the snow. Everything was silent. I went under Mother, where it was a little warmer.

"My dear! This is our bad fate. Many in our herd will die this winter. The sky has punished us with snow, and the earth has punished us by hiding the grass. We don't know why our karma is so bad. Perhaps we did something wrong in our previous lives. However, you need to continue doing your best," Mother whispered.

"Yes, Mother, I'll try my best. I won't give up," I said. The night was very cold and we couldn't sleep for a while.

The next morning, I opened my eyes and saw all the animals standing around, looking unhappy.

"Mother, what happened?" I asked.

"The oldest female died. She was the kindest member of our herd. I hope her soul will go to the sky," Mother said sympathetically. We could only stand and shed tears. The tent was calm and silent in the snow. When the old woman came outside, she saw the oldest female was dead and came toward us. "The bad karma has gone," she murmured under her breath and went back into the tent.



We had a hard time that winter. Nearly all the oldest members in our herd died. It was their destiny, I suppose, so there was no way we could change it. I encountered many dangers that winter, and so, afterwards, I wasn't afraid of anything.

One morning, a bright spring sun hung in the clear sky, filling the vast grassland with vitality. All our lives had improved since the harsh winter. We were satisfied just to be alive.

In my second year, the herders called me *ya ru*. I had grown quickly and was already a big yak. I was the biggest calf in our herd. My horns were unimaginably sharp. They were weapons that I could use when I faced danger. My friends said that I should be proud of my sharp horns. Mother and all my relatives were delighted with my strong body and wonderful horns. They told me that they hoped I would grow up to be a big, strong bull.

One morning during my second year, something unusual happened. An old man and some other people brought a bowl of water, another bowl of water mixed with milk, and a piece of butter. The old man began chanting scriptures. When he finished chanting, he took the bowl of water and poured some of it on my head three times, and then he poured the rest of the water over my body from my head to rump. Then, he took the other bowl and poured it on me from rump to head. Next, he took the piece of butter, smeared it on my forehead, and said kindly, "From now on, you are safe. We won't eat your meat after you die and we won't sell you. We hope you will give us many offspring. You now belong to the mountain deity, and you are free until you die." The herders then left quickly.

Mother approached me with a smile more joyful than I had ever seen before. She said, "Every year this family chooses the best young yak and saves it from death. You are the lucky one this year.

You are the free male in this group, but still you must serve our masters your whole life, otherwise they will change your name and slaughter you for food." Mother's explanation made me happy, but also frightened me.

Mother looked at me and said, "Your father was also a strong male."

I asked, "Where is my father?"

She told me with a trembling voice, "He passed away before you came."

"How did he die?" I asked.

She came a little closer to me and said, "It's a long story, but I'll make it short. I was one of the most beautiful females in our group before your birth. At that time, many males were circling me and telling me that they were in love with me, but your father and I loved each other deeply and were often together. He protected me from harm. He died after a big blizzard before you were born." She lowered her head as tears filled her eyes.

"Mother, I'll protect and love you forever," I tried to say, but no sound came out. I then promised in my heart that I would create a comfortable life for my dear mother.

•••

From my second year to my sixth year, many things happened, but they aren't worth describing.

One morning in May, when I was seven and Mother was seventeen, five tall, rugged men came and murmured something to each other that I didn't understand. They took a rough rope, put it around my neck, and pulled it tight with all their strength. Two strong men pulled the rope and led me to their tent. A boy beat my back with a stick. I was terrified and didn't want to go with them. However, there was no way I could flee. I then understood that they wanted to teach me how to carry packs with a wooden frame.

First, they tied my front legs together with a short rope, put a pack frame on my back, put a rope under my neck, put a second rope around my chest, put a third rope under my tail, and fastened the ropes to the pack frame so it was steady on my back. Afterward, two men took two bags of barley and put one bag on either side of the frame.

When they finished, my body was shaking. I was so bewildered that I lay on the ground. The men angrily threw stones at me and beat me with sticks. I tried to stand, but it was impossible. The men said that I was lazy and that they ought to beat me to death.

Rgya mtsho, their old grandfather, suddenly shouted, "That's enough! Stop! Stop beating him!" The men then untied the ropes and took off the pack frame. I couldn't stand because one of my front legs was almost broken. There was blood everywhere. The people silently looked at each other, regretting that they had beaten me.



After three months the pain had lessened. Mother was really happy. Since the day I was injured, the people had become extremely kind to me and I enjoyed a comfortable life. Time elapsed quickly. Later, however, my life became terrible again.

One night, after everyone had gone to sleep, a breeze disturbed my wonderful dream. Everything was calm and quiet, except for the snoring of the old bulls. Before I went to sleep again, I saw that my dear mother was awake. It seemed that she was thinking about something.

I approached Mother and said, "Dear Mother, what are you thinking? You're unhappy about something, aren't you?"

She looked at me and didn't say anything for a while. Then she said, "I'm thinking about you. You're too disobedient."

I said, "Sorry, Mother, for the trouble I've caused. I'll listen to you."

She looked at me sternly and said, "Your mother is anxious about you every minute. You must listen to people and do what they say. If you don't obey them, perhaps they will be cruel to you."

I lowered my head and said, "Mother, I will do as you tell me."

Then she said, "Before you were here, there was a strong bull who never obeyed people and fought them with his horns. Finally, they caught him and slaughtered him with their sharp knives. Your father wasn't like that. He always listened to people and sacrificed himself for them. Our masters hope you will become a tame yak who will work for them your whole life. You must obey them."

I nodded my head and said, "Mother, I will follow your advice."

Mother said sorrowfully, "I am weak these days. Something may happen to me tomorrow."

"Mother! Don't worry, I'll take care of you," I said.

She looked at me, smiled, and said, "I'm really proud to have a son like you."

I knew Mother wanted to sleep, so I said goodbye, and left her.

When I opened my eyes, the sun had risen in the sky. Bright light reflected off grassland streams, resembling shards of broken glass. Some smoke appeared above the tent and floated across the blue sky. Everyone was asleep, and I went to see Mother. Suddenly, two strong men came out from the tent and approached us with a long rope. Mother stood up immediately, and said, "I knew they would slaughter me today."

I was confused and said, "Why?"

Mother's voice quivered as she said, "No reason... this is just what humans do to us. I sacrificed my whole life for this family, but finally my flesh must be their food. Darling, I need to go, just remember to do what I told you."

The two men tied a rough rope around Mother's neck and led her over to the tent. Mother pulled back a few times, but didn't succeed in getting free. A woman came and untied the rest of us from where we were tethered. I tried to run towards Mother, but they threw stones at me, hurting my left leg. I was so sad that they had taken Mother away. I went to the mountain, but didn't eat any grass all day.

We came back home at dusk. I saw a fire burning brightly inside the black tent, and heard people laughing and talking excitedly. I knew that the dishes of meat in front of them were my dear mother's flesh. Tears brimmed in my eyes.



During that long hot summer, I lived alone in the herd. I didn't want to eat or drink. I felt everything was meaningless and empty without Mother's companionship.

One of the females from our group was the same age as me. Her name was 'Bri mo. She was not very beautiful, but her compassionate heart was revealed in her shining eyes.

One day she said, "I know you feel bad, but don't be too upset. That's how life is. Yesterday is history, and nobody knows the future. You are not responsible for your mother's death. Our lives depend on herders. We don't know who will die next. Perhaps you or me, who knows?"

I nodded my head and said, "Yes, what you say is true."

Afterwards, she and I were constantly together. She told me her life experiences and I told her mine.

One day, she said, "Let's leave and go somewhere."

"Where?" I said.

"Anywhere, so long as there is plenty of grass to eat," she said.

I agreed, since it was very hot on the grassland. We spent three days and nights walking, sharing everything as we went. I felt my heart grow closer to her day by day. Finally, we reached our destination. It was a good place, with plenty of grass and water. It was near a big forest with lots of shade where we rested when we felt hot. We were happy there.

On the first day, we were curious and ran around. When we were full from eating grass, we rested in the forest. One night it looked like a big storm was coming, so we sheltered under the trees. It was so dark that we couldn't see any stars.

"I'm in love with you," I said hesitantly.

"I know you are a good bull," she said with a smile.

We talked for a long time, and in the end, we shared our first kiss.

A short time later, we heard the terrifying sound of wolves in the mountains. 'Bri mo shook in fright. I didn't know what to do. I told her to run to the west. We heard the wolves howling behind us. When I looked back, I saw a huge, powerful wolf jump on 'Bri mo. I felt pity, but I lacked the power to save her. Suddenly, a wolf bit my hind leg. It was so painful that I almost stopped running. I turned and gored him with my horns. While running, I looked back, and then tumbled down a cliff. I don't know what happened next.

The next morning, I found I was injured and my lover had become the wolves' meal. I felt empty. I had nothing left. I wandered for the rest of my life. The herders never came looking for me. I was alone and could only hear the sound of my own hooves, the sound of rivers, and the howling of wolves. Day after day, year after year, time crawled by. I had lost everything. Probably my masters and even my herd had forgotten me. I wished that the sky above me would take my soul back home.



# CHAPTER TWO



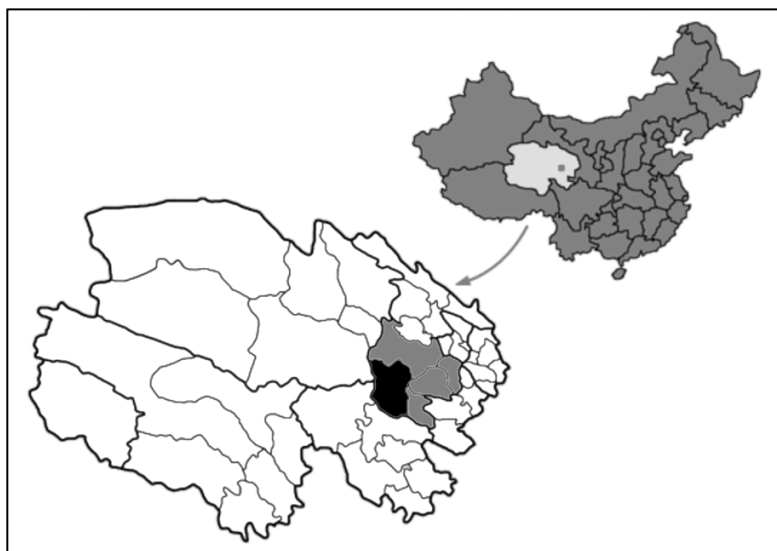
SMUG PO COMMUNITY

## LOCATION AND TERRITORY

Smug po is approximately 380 kilometers southwest of Zi ling (Xining) City, 100 kilometers southeast of Brag dkar (Xinghai) County Town, and approximately forty kilometers southeast of Lung bzang (Longzang) Township Town. It is located in Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China. Smug po is southeast of neighboring Glang chen Community<sup>1</sup> and southwest of Ri phyor Community, both of which are in Lung bzang Township.

Smug po is in the wide Dbus Valley, surrounded by mountains. It is relatively isolated from other communities and the county town. After a road was built to Smug po in 2012, the travel time by car from the county town was reduced from around twelve, to five hours. During summer, vehicles face difficulty in crossing the swollen Dbus River, while during winter the river freezes and driving on the ice is dangerous.

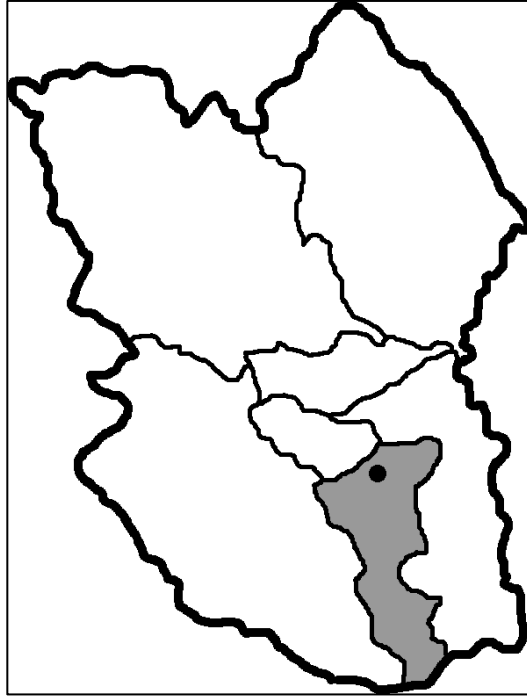
Map 1.<sup>2</sup> The location of Brag dkar County (black).



<sup>1</sup> 'Community' here refers to the administrative term '*cun*', which is often translated as village, but is inappropriate for a pastoral context.

<sup>2</sup> This map is modified from [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fo/Location\\_of\\_Xinghai\\_within\\_Qinghai\\_%28China%29.png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fo/Location_of_Xinghai_within_Qinghai_%28China%29.png).

Map 2. Lung bzang Township (gray) within Brag dkar County. The dot is Smug po Community.



Following is a description of some of the most significant features in the local landscape, including the origin of the toponyms.

Smug po spun gsum refers to three peaks that are often covered by fog during summer, hence their name – 'Three Fog Brothers'. According to local elders, there was once a large pot atop the mountain, and people who went near it became dizzy. At some point that large pot disappeared. Locals said that the mountain deities had taken it to use in their home. Smug po Community is named after these local mountain deities. Smug po mdun Valley is in front of Smug po spun gsum Mountain.

The following account explains why Smug po is also known as Dbus Valley (Dpal bo):<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Identifiable sources for oral accounts and other information are acknowledged wherever possible, however, sources are not given for accounts or other information that are common local knowledge. Gender and birth dates are given for consultants other than those who appear in the consultant section at the beginning of the book.

An enlightened monk named Klu 'bum mi rgod<sup>4</sup> went to Dbus (central Tibet) with some other monks. On the way, they rested in Smug po Valley. Klu 'bum mi rgod looked at the beautiful landscape and said, "We are going to Dbus, the most beautiful and holy place on the Tibetan Plateau, but I have never seen such a beautiful place as this before. It's just like Dbus." Later, the valley became called Dbus Valley.

Figure 4. A narrow section of the Dbus Valley.



Ser 'khyog Valley is full of bends and twists. Many unnamed yellow flowers bloom there during summer, hence the name, which means 'Yellow Crooked'. A few families live here during summer.

Bkra shis la ring Mountain was called La nag zhar 'Black Slope' until some time in the 1960s. At that time, a *bla ma* named Che mchog rdo rje changed the name to Bkra shis la ring because he considered the former name to be inauspicious.

Zang chag 'Broken Pot' Valley is named after an incident that occurred at some unknown time in the past. Not long after a family pitched their tent in this valley, their cooking pot suddenly and

---

<sup>4</sup> Klu 'bum mi rgod is a culture hero mentioned in local oral accounts that portray him as being an enlightened religious practitioner.

inexplicably broke. Afterwards, the valley was named Broken Pot Valley.

Rta rgan khra ldang 'White Spotted Horse' is a valley named after a family's white spotted horse that died there.

Rdo rtsig 'Mani Stone Pile' Valley is named after the *mani* stone pile at the valley's mouth.

The name Sgam 'khor 'Mani Wheel' Valley is explained by the following story:<sup>5</sup>

Many years ago, a man brought a *mani* wheel from somewhere in Reb gong. He used it for a while, but family members began to sicken and die one after another. The family decided that something was wrong with the *mani* wheel and abandoned it in this valley when they next moved camp.

Shur thung 'Short' Valley's name prosaically reflects its length.

Khya mo spun gsum Valley is named after three female deities – a *klu* 'water deity', a *lha* 'deity', and a *gzhi bdag* 'mountain deity' – who live in the valley and bring prosperity to and protect local females. Some families live in this valley during winter.

Rdza lung sngo ldang is a high rocky mountain where many pheasants live.

Bsang khri 'Incense Altar' Valley is named after a large incense altar that was built at the mouth of the valley several centuries ago, when Smug po was inhabited by Mongols.<sup>6</sup> The ruins of the incense altar are still visible.

Phun sum tshogs pa Mountain is located in the east of Smug po territory. A mountain deity that has the same name as the mountain, inhabits this mountain and protects the community.

Go rdza Mountain is a high peak topped with an incense altar. Families living in the valleys around Go rdza Mountain offer incense here on the fifth, fifteenth, and twenty-fifth days of each lunar month.

---

<sup>5</sup> A *sgam 'khor* refers specifically to a *mani* wheel that is inside a box. It is typically used in the home, and is spun by pulling a cord attached to the wheel.

<sup>6</sup> See below for oral history relating the region's historical Mongol presence.

Figure 5. Phun sum tshogs pa Mountain.



Figure 6. Go rdza Mountain.





Figure 7. The incense altar atop Go rdza Mountain.



Figure 8. Zur gsum ki lha Mountain (see below).



Sha rwa 'Deer Antler' Valley is named after a *lab rste* 'mountain deity cairn' at the site, where people used to put deer antlers. Nowadays, around thirty families live in the Sha rwa Valley in winter. As described later, the community holds an annual ritual at Sha rwa Lab rtse to venerate the mountain deity.

Khams mdo refers to the confluence of three valleys. A local *bla ma*, Zla ba, was born in Khams mdo, which locals therefore consider holy. Many prayer flags are hung there, and the community holds its annual chanting ritual in Khams mdo.

Zur gsum ki lha Mountain (Figure 8) is the abode of a local deity. The name originated when Smug po was inhabited by Mongols. At that time, a herder beat the mountain, causing it to cry out. Zur gsum is the mountain's name, and '*ki lha*' translates, very roughly, as 'the deity that cried out'.

Though these toponyms and stories give Smug po a unique identity, Tibetan Buddhism integrates locals into a wider Tibetan civilization. Smug po residents regularly visit their local monastery, Mtshan thog gong ma, on auspicious days during each lunar month. Furthermore, once in every twelve-year calendric cycle, locals may make circumambulatory pilgrimages to holy sites in A mdo,<sup>7</sup> including Brag dkar sprel rdzong (the largest monastery in Brag dkar County), the holy mountain A myes Rma rgyal, or Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake). The few locals who are able, also invest considerable time and resources to undertake pilgrimages to the Byang gi dgon chen bzhi, the Four Great Monasteries of the North, i.e., Gser khog, Bya khyung, Chu bzang, and Dgon lung monasteries.

Importantly, locals believe that the most sacred place on earth is Lha sa, which elders say is somewhere west of Smug po. They also believe that there is a special connection between Lha sa and Smug po because both are called Dbus. All locals fervently hope to visit Lha sa, however, traditionally, very few did so because of the long distance and difficulty of the journey. Travel took about five months by horse. Going on foot was more common and required more than a year. Because the journey was dangerous, people

---

<sup>7</sup> A mdo refers to northeastern Tibet. It is one of three traditionally recognized Tibetan linguistic and cultural areas. Dbus gtsang (central Tibet) and Khams (southeast Tibet) are the other two.



typically went on pilgrimage in groups. Sometimes, more than fifty people went together in a caravan, using yaks to haul their tents and cooking equipment.

## POPULATION

There were 180 households with approximately 700 people in Smug po in 2010. Dpal ldan told me that there were only five or six households in the community when he was about ten years old, in the late 1930s.<sup>8</sup> They were located together in Sna slas, on the shady side of Smug po territory. All current residents were classified by the government as Tibetan and considered themselves as such in 2010. There were 370 women and 330 men, among whom eighty were considered elders. The oldest man was eighty-nine and the oldest woman was eighty-seven. There were eighty children under the age of ten. The largest household had twelve members, whereas the smallest had only one. An average household had about six members, typically consisting of three generations. Beginning in the early twenty-first century, the government limited the number of children in each family to three. Each household had a (typically male) *khyim bdag* 'family head' who was responsible for making decisions that affected the household, for instance, purchasing annual provisions and directing household labor.

## LANGUAGE

All people in Smug po speak the local pastoral dialect of A mdo Tibetan, which they call 'Brog skad 'Pastorists' Language'. Around ten students speak a little Modern Standard Chinese and approximately twenty locals (mostly men) speak the Qinghai Chinese dialect.

---

<sup>8</sup> The population has increased significantly in absolute terms, due to an increase in birth rates and a decrease in infant mortality. However, household size has also shrunk over the same period as fewer generations live together in the same home.

Smug po dialect differs from farming dialects, which are locally referred to as Rong skad 'Farmers' Language'. For example, locals pronounce *rna* 'ear' and *sna* 'nose' differently, whereas Rong skad-speakers from such communities as Reb gong<sup>9</sup> pronounce these two words identically. Many lexical items also differ between pastoral and farming dialects, for instance yak dung is called '*ong ba* in Smug po but '*bud chos* [*'bud chu*] in Reb gong. People from Ba yan (Hualong) Hui Autonomous County<sup>10</sup> call water *chus*, which is different from the Smug po colloquial term *chu*. Despite these differences, speakers of 'Brog skad and Rong skad can easily communicate.

Varieties of A mdo pastoral dialect also exist, for example, most Mgo log pastoralists say *tshe ring* when parting, whereas *bde mo* is said in Smug po, though both share the same figurative meaning. In Mgo log, books are typically called *yi ge* but are called *dpe cha* in Smug po.

#### LOCAL HISTORY

Smug po residents are not indigenous to the area. Elders suggest that the area was originally inhabited by a group of Mongols named A rig. Present-day residents were originally from the Reb gong area and belonged to the Sngags sa and Lo ba tribes.<sup>11</sup> Members of these tribes reside in Reb gong today. They are said to have fled from Reb gong due to conflicts in the area. The Sngags sa Tribe settled in Ri phyor, while the Lo ba Tribe settled in a nearby area known today as Lo ba. At that time, only Sngags sa (also known as Rong bo blon chos) people lived in Ri phyor and surrounding areas, but no one lived in Smug po.

---

<sup>9</sup> Reb gong (Tongren) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province. When locals say 'Reb gong' they refer exclusively to farmers from that county, as opposed to agro-pastoralists and pastoralists from nearby communities that may have traditionally been part of the region.

<sup>10</sup> In Mtsho shar (Haidong) Municipality, Mtsho sngon Province.

<sup>11</sup> Local elders use the term *tsho ba* to refer to 'tribe' in general, but most locals simply call tribes by their names without using this term.

The Sngags sa Tribe had an intelligent, powerful leader named A myes Yi dam skyabs. Desiring new territory, he attacked the A rig people and forced them to abandon their homeland. Prior to A myes yi dam's attack, an A rig fortune-teller had told his local leader:

<sup>1</sup>འབྲོང་རི་ནས་མི་འདུག་མཚོ་ལ་གཤར།།

<sup>1</sup>'brong ri nas mi 'dug mtsho la gshar

<sup>1</sup>The wild yak can no longer stay in the mountains, but must go to the lake.

The A rig people then knew it was time to leave their homeland, and fled.

Afterwards, only the Sngags sa Tribe dwelled in Ri phyor and the surrounding areas for four generations. The population began dividing into present-day tribes when a man named Rgya ring left the Ri phyor Sngags sa Tribe and moved to Smug po with his people and livestock. His descendants became the Rgya skor Tribe.

A man named Snyan grags founded a tribe and became its leader, and this tribe came to be known as Dpon skor 'Leader's Camp'. Dpon skor Tribe members now live in Ri phyor Community. Another man named Mkhar bu rgyal later founded a tribe known as Mkhar skor.

The origin of another tribe, Mgo skyang, is described in the following account (Sngags dpal ldan smyon pa):

Many years ago, a man was lying on the grassland with his bald head raised off the ground. A hunter came along, mistook his head for a marmot, and shot it. The descendants of the dead man were called Mgo 'chug 'Head Mistake' at first, but later changed the name to Mgo skyang 'Swollen Head', because the original name was considered inauspicious. Later, a man came from Reb gong and married a girl who was related to the person who was killed, and their descendants became the Mgo skyang Tribe.

The following narrative relates the origin of Smug po's most important tribe, 'Phar ba (Dpal bo):

There were once three brothers called Rgya ring, Mgo skyang,<sup>12</sup> and A ni. The eldest brother was tallest and had a long, dark beard. His descendants became the small Rgya skor Tribe. Approximately twenty families belonging to this tribe lived in the southern part of Smug po's territory in 2011. The offspring of the second eldest brother, who was short and fat, became a part of the Ser ba Tribe and migrated north of Smug po.

Long ago, the youngest brother, A ni, went to the northern bank of the Yellow River to steal livestock. On the way he was nearly caught and was then too frightened to steal anything, so he just cut a piece of flesh from a cow's thigh and ran away. His descendants became the 'Phar ba Tribe.

'Phar ba refers to a dhole, also known as the Asiatic wild dog. It is an animal similar to a fox that typically eats animals' thighs. Most contemporary locals are members of the 'Phar ba Tribe – descendants of A ni and his three sons: A skya, A grags, and Sne kha thar. A skya was the richest man and his family had over 1,000 sheep while he was alive, but his descendants became poor after his death, due to disease repeatedly afflicting people and livestock. Then the Sngags sa Bla ma<sup>13</sup> said to an elder, "Maybe I put A skya's corpse in the wrong place. Tomorrow, bring some food, and we'll go examine the location of A skya's corpse." That place is called Kyang ring, and is in Ri phyor Community. After examining the site, the *bla ma* said to his companion, "I didn't choose a bad place. In the future A skya's descendants will become rich, and the 'Phar ba Tribe will become the biggest in Dbus Valley." Currently, 'Phar ba is the largest tribe in Smug po, with 180 households.

Another tribe in Smug po is called Thung ba, which elders say originated in Reb gong. Dbyang rgyal and Tshag tho were famous members of the Thung ba Tribe. Tshag tho's descendants now live in

---

<sup>12</sup> This is the same Mgo skyang referred to above. During his life he was called by another name that locals have forgotten.

<sup>13</sup> The Sngags sa Bla ma founded Mtshams thog gong ma Monastery in Ri phyor Community and was the most respected *bla ma* among all *bla ma* in Sngag sa areas. All monks and pilgrims maintain vegetarianism in the monastery. I implemented a solar cooker project in this monastery in the summer of 2008, which helped monks while they were in *dbyar gnas* 'summer retreat'.

Sha rwa Valley, while Dbyang rgyal's descendants live outside of Smug po.

The Mkhar skor and Mgo skyang tribes constitute the majority of the Ser ba Tribe, which lives approximately forty kilometers from Smug po.

## HOMES

There are two main types of dwelling in Smug po: *sa khang* 'adobe houses' and *sbra nag* 'black tents'.

### Houses

The first adobe house in Smug po was built in 1976 by Chos dar. At that time, he was the only person who could afford to travel outside the local area, because he was a government official. After seeing people elsewhere living in comfortable adobe houses, he invited skilled workers from other areas to build the first house in Smug po.

Houses typically have rammed earth walls and wood roofs. However, in 2012, locals began building with bricks. In most local houses, the main room is used for both cooking and sleeping, and contains a large metal stove in the center of the room, a *sa skyag* 'heated sleeping platform', and some wooden boxes for storing household property, stacked on one side of the sleeping platform. Yak leather bags filled with flour and barley are usually kept in a separate room<sup>14</sup> adjacent to the main room. The house also has a guest room decorated with color pictures of various religious figures and a dedicated space for a shrine, typically in the form of a cabinet on the back wall that displays Buddhist images and pictures of holy people. All guests stay in that room. For instance, when my mother's siblings visit my household, they stay in the guest room, where *bla ma* or monks also stay when they come to chant.

---

<sup>14</sup> This room has no certain name; in fact, none of the rooms are called by specific names.

Figure 9. The interior of my family's house.



Locals place great importance on finding a suitable place to build a new house, as the house's location will affect the collective fortune of all its residents. A household head typically asks a local *bla ma* to choose a good site for a new house before construction begins. A stream or water source behind the new house signifies that the household will cry ceaselessly due to a member's death. If water flows in front of the house, it suggests that the family will never become wealthy. A small path behind the new house is thought to cause family members to fall sick. Fresh, flourishing grass in front of the house indicates that livestock will multiply, and a small path west of the house indicates that a holy person will be born into the household. If the mountain to the right of the house is higher than the mountain to the left, the household head will be a man. The household head will otherwise be a woman.

## Tents

The characteristic local dwelling is the *sbra nag* 'black tent'. Locals consider the *sbra nag* an important part of their identity. The *sbra nag* cloth is woven from the hair of both male and female yaks. Men shear the yaks. Women spin the hair and weave it into narrow panels, which are then sewn together by men, though women may also help with sewing.

Figure 10. A *sbra nag*. The left side of the tent features several panels made from commercially available white cloth.



*Sbra nag* are made in two sections: the right-hand side<sup>15</sup> is known as the *pho sbra* 'male tent' and the left-hand side is known as *mo sbra* 'female tent'. Each section can be carried by one yak. A gap in the tent roof between the two sections is called *gung*. A cloth flap

---

<sup>15</sup> Left- and right-hand are determined according to the perspective of facing into the tent from the front door. This perspective is consistently adopted by Tibetans, whereas the opposite (i.e., facing the door from the back of the tent) is the case for most Mongols.



covering the *gung* is called *kha tshub* and is used when it rains, snows, and when the wind blows. Elders do not allow the *kha tshub* to be used if the weather is fine, as this offends a deity known as Gung lha, who then takes retribution by sending disaster to livestock and people.

Two interior poles, known as *nang ka* 'inner columns', support the *sbra nag*. Elders say that the rear interior pole must be made from birch, and the front interior pole must be juniper. External ropes at the *gru chon* 'corners' and *dkyus chon* 'sides' of the roof are stretched over eight *ka* 'exterior poles' and then pegged to the ground. The tent walls are stretched outward and pegged at the bottom. Women spin the pitching ropes from yak-hair. The wooden tent-poles and heavy iron or wooden pegs must be used to stretch this cloth taut.

Figure 11. The *thab kha* inside a tent (see below).



A *thab kha* 'adobe stove' is in the center of the tent. Fuel is stored behind it, against the back of the tent. An altar is situated in



the back right-hand corner of the tent, where guests are also seated. Wooden boxes, as well as bags made from leather or yarn, are stacked along the wall of the male side of the tent. Kitchen utensils, food, and milking tools are kept on the women's side. Men sit on the male side and women do all their work on the female side, for example, cooking and processing dairy products. Men and women usually sleep separately on their own sides, covered by sheepskin robes and blankets.

A celebration, known as a *sbra ston* 'Tent Party', is held when a tent is pitched for a new couple. The couple's kin and other community members bring such gifts as bags, boxes, and food for the couple. An elder man is asked to drive the *phug phur* 'peg for the tent's center back rope' first. Ideally, he is rich, powerful, lucky, has never been divorced, and all his children are still living. After the elder has driven the first peg, the men gather and help set up the new tent. After they finish, several elders put pieces of butter on the back and front ropes and say:

1. ཕུག་ཚོན་རྩ་བོ་ཁལ་བཀལ་འདྲ།
2. རྩ་འདོ་བ་མི་འབྲལ་བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག།
3. སྐྱོ་ཚོན་འབྲི་མོ་ལག་སྐྱེལ་འདྲ།
4. འབྲི་བྱུལ་མ་མི་འབྲལ་བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག།

- 1-phug chon rta bo khal bkal 'dra
- 2-rta 'do ba mi 'bral bkra shis shog
- 3-sgo chon 'bri mo lag sbrel 'dra
- 4-'bri thul ma mi 'bral bkra shis shog

- 1-The back rope resembles a loaded horse,
- 2-May horses never part from men.
- 3-The front rope resembles a female yak,
- 4-May female yaks never separate from women.

This auspicious saying expresses the wish that the new couple will have many livestock and thus become rich.

The annual renewal of the *sbra nag* is known as *sbra gso ba* and is usually done in *sos ka* – a brief period between spring and

summer – though any time is permissible. Pieces of cloth are added if the family has become larger and the size of the tent is increased. Damaged panels are also replaced.

Smoke from yak dung fires is thought to make the fabric more water-resistant, as described in a traditional description:

<sup>1</sup>.སྤྲ་རྒྱ་དུ་བ་ཅན།

<sup>1</sup>sbra rgan du ba can

<sup>1</sup>An old smoky tent.

A tent described thus is thought to be an old one in which a family has passed many generations.

Starting in around 2010, it became increasingly common for locals to add panels of commercially available white cloth to their black tents. In 2013, approximately twenty percent of local households had abandoned their black tents to live in white cloth tents. Although black tents are still an important part of locals' identity, white cloth tents are considered easier to transport, set up, and maintain.

## THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Smug po residents herd yaks, sheep, and horses to subsist and earn income. There is no agriculture in Smug po, due to the high altitude and unsuitable climate.

Locals earn cash income by renting their grassland to others who dig caterpillar fungus (*Orphiocordyceps sinensis*)<sup>16</sup> or by digging this medicinal substance themselves, and by selling sheep, sheep wool, yaks, yak hair, sheep and yak skins, and such milk products as butter, dried cheese, and yogurt. Family heads typically sell these products to Hui and Han who come to Smug po in late autumn. Prices vary, however in 2012, sheep wool sold for ten RMB per kilogram, yaks skins sold for between 100 and 170 RMB each,

---

<sup>16</sup> *Orphiocordyceps sinensis* is a fungus that parasitizes grassland moth caterpillars.

depending on the size; sheep skin sold for between eighty and 100 RMB, again depending on the size; butter sold for fifty to sixty RMB per kilogram; cheese sold for sixty to 100 RMB per kilogram; sheep sold for 700-1,000 RMB each; and yaks sold for 2,000-4,000 RMB each.

A typical wealthy family earned around 6,000-9,000 RMB per year in Smug po in 2010, whereas a poor family made 4,000-5,000 RMB.<sup>17</sup> Locals usually spend around 1,000 RMB to buy items for Lo sar 'New Year'. They also spend approximately 2,000 RMB annually to buy food, clothes, and other necessities.

### Caterpillar Fungus

Chos dar states that caterpillar fungus has always been locally abundant on the shady side of local mountains. In the past, however, it was never sold, but was fed to horses to help them gain weight and strength quickly. In the 1950s, a small group of people could dig several bags of caterpillar fungus in a day. The bags were loaded onto yaks, brought back to the camp, dried, and fed to horses and other livestock.

People began selling caterpillar fungus in around 1987, fetching 0.005 RMB or less per fungus. From the late 1990s onwards, the caterpillar fungus industry rapidly expanded. Locals began renting their land to Hui and Han. Some locals now also buy and sell caterpillar fungus. Caterpillar fungus collection begins around the fifteenth of the fifth lunar month. One person can typically find eighty to 100 fungi per day. Between 200 and 500 people come to Smug po annually to collect caterpillar fungus.

Approximately eighty percent of local households earned income from caterpillar fungus in 2012. The most successful families earned around 90,000 RMB per year, but average annual family income from caterpillar fungus was 7,000-10,000 RMB.

The negative aspects of this business include the garbage that collectors leave, which pollutes the environment. Increasingly,

---

<sup>17</sup> This excludes income from caterpillar fungus, which is described in a separate section.

intensive digging also damages the grasslands. In some areas, grass does not regrow where diggers have collected caterpillar fungus. In terms of social impacts, many pastoralists have sold their livestock, given up herding, and now rely solely on income from caterpillar fungus. Finally, many herders do not know how to use their income responsibly, and spend all the money they earn, rather than investing it in the future. Gambling in the county town, mostly mahjong and cards, has become a problem since the late 1990s.

### Livestock Loans

*Shed nor* referred to female yaks that wealthy families or monasteries lent to poor families. This system of livestock loans ceased being practiced in the late 1990s. *Grus ma* were female yaks that had a calf and thus were producing plenty of milk. A family that borrowed a *grus ma* as *shed nor* was typically required to produce ten kilograms of butter annually for the owner. *Yar ma* were female yaks that had a two-year-old calf. Such yaks produced little milk and so only five kilograms of butter were required as annual payment to the owner. If the yak died, the loanee family gave the meat and skin to the owner to prove that the animal was dead. Every summer, the heads of the households that owned the *shed nor* went to each loanee families and collected butter, referred to as *shed rtsi*.

### EDUCATION

Smug po residents have, until recently, had few opportunities to send their children to school, due to poor transportation and isolation. The only school in Smug po is a kindergarten, and because of locals' limited cash income, they could not afford to pay the approximately 1,000-1,500 RMB needed annually to send students to the county primary school. Since 2007, however, the local government has met all education costs, and this has helped increase local enrollment rates.

There were four university students, one senior high school student, one junior high school student, and about ten primary school students in Smug po in 2010. Among the forty-eight school-aged children, twenty-eight had dropped out of school. In 2013, there were only around ten local children enrolled in the township and county town primary schools.

Parents do not like to send daughters to school, because they feel uncomfortable sending young girls far from home. Instead, they are keen that their daughters marry out as soon as possible after the age of eighteen (though traditionally women married younger), in order to receive *A ma'i nu rin* 'bridewealth', which was around 20,000 RMB in 2013.

Figure 12. Inside the single classroom of Smug po's kindergarten, which was built in 2011.



## LOCAL DEITIES

A central religious practice for locals is offering *bsang*, a type of incense that typically consists of barley grain, juniper leaves, and butter. It is burned so that deities may consume it and thus be delighted. A local saying goes:

<sup>1</sup>བསང་རྗེས་མང་ན་ལྷ་དགའ།

<sup>1</sup>bsang rdzas mang na lha dga'

<sup>1</sup>The mountain deity is delighted if there is much material for *bsang*.

Offering *bsang* is believed to ensure good luck and prosperity for individuals, families, and communities.

*Bsang* may be classified according to who offers it, and what is offered. *Khyim bsang* 'family *bsang*' is offered every dawn and dusk, usually by the family head. *Spyi bsang* 'public *bsang*' is offered together by all men in the community on certain auspicious days, such as the fifteenth and twenty-fifth days of each lunar month.

Offerings may consist of *dmar mchod* 'red offerings', which involve the slaughter of an animal, or *dkar mchod* 'white offerings' of such vegetarian foods as flour, sugar, and fruit.

### *Gzhi bdag* 'Mountain Deities'

*Gzhi bdag* 'mountain deities' are gods and goddesses that inhabit mountains.

Smug po is protected by Smug po spun gsum 'The Three Fog Brothers'. The middle peak is the tallest and is deemed to be the eldest of the three sibling deities. The two other peaks are the same height, and are believed to be the two younger brothers of the oldest one.

Zur gsum ki lha is a tall mountain located northwest of Smug po that embodies another of the community's mountain deities, as described in the following story (Klu pa thar):

Figure 13. Male villagers participate in making *spyi bsang* – a public incense offering on behalf of the whole community.



Figure 14. A family *bsang* offering on the courtyard wall of a winter house.



Once upon a time, Smug po had only a few residents. They moved seasonally between pastures, seeking fresh water and abundant grass. Their livelihood was based on their livestock, which depended on grass.

One day, a family came to the slopes of Zur gsum ki lha, pitched camp, ate a delicious dinner, and then went to bed. The next day, while the man was still dreaming under his warm sheep-skin robe, his wife shouted, "Our horses were stolen last night!" He immediately got up and went to the top of Zur gsum ki lha with his horsewhip. When he reached the peak he struck it with his whip. "Where are the bandits who took my horses? Tell me quickly!" he demanded of the mountain deity. He struck the mountain twice, but received no response, so he struck it again and asked once more.

"They went to the west," the mountain deity answered. The man then worshipped the mountain deity and returned home. He next set out to the west, and found his horses.

A small mountain topped by juniper trees, in the middle of Smug po territory, is the abode of three goddesses called Khya mo spun gsum. A local tantrin, Kun bzang, once said that when local households migrate to the summer pasture each year, the three goddesses purify the area with a pot of holy water. When the herders return to their winter pastures, the three goddesses return to the winter pastures with another pot of water and purify that place. This protects the people and ensures their wellbeing. Elders say that it is difficult for Smug po women to find husbands from other places, because the three goddesses want Smug po women to remain in the area.

Phun gsum tshogs pa is a tall mountain east of Smug po. Locals believe that the deity embodied by the mountain rides a blue yak. Many years ago, locals made a very large *bsang khri* 'incense altar' atop the mountain. All males in the community over the age of fifteen gather on the fifth, fifteenth, and twenty-fifth days of each lunar month to make *bsang* offerings to the deity, and to request good fortune and luck.

Sha rwa Lab rtse is renewed annually on the sixteenth day of the fifth lunar month. Men begin preparations about one week before this by making large wooden arrows, taller than a person, for the *lab rtse*. Such arrows are usually about one and a half meters long and are made from juniper. Men paint the wooden fletching yellow and red, or, less commonly, blue or green. Men also prepare *bsang rdzas*



'incense ingredients' the day before they go to renew the *lab rtse*. They put barley grains, juniper leaves, a piece of butter, and a bowl of water in a pot. The ingredients are mixed over a fire until steam rises, and then the *bsang rdzas* is poured into a bag.

On the day of the ritual, men wake early in the morning and eat breakfast. Women help saddle horses and the men then set out, bringing their household's arrow, as well as *bsang rdzas* and some wool. Depending on where their house is located, participants may need between ten minutes and three hours to reach the *lab rtse*.

When men from a household reach the site, they first dig a hole together<sup>18</sup> and place their household's arrow in it, pointing down. When all the household's arrows have been tied, they bind the *lab rtse* with a wool rope<sup>19</sup> and sheep wool to make it stable and strong. Next, monks and local *bla ma* purify the *lab rtse* by chanting scriptures and blowing onto barley grains that are later tossed at the *lab rste*.

A large incense altar is located beside the *lab rste*. After the monks have purified the renewed *lab rtse*, the participants burn *bsang* on the altar. They then circumambulate the incense altar and pray to the deities for good luck and fortune. Those who can recite incense scriptures do so loudly, while those who cannot, improvise personal prayers in a regular voice. Meanwhile, men punctuate their prayers and recitations with loud, high-pitched calls of, "Ki!" and toss handfuls of *rlung rta* 'wind horses' into the air.

After making these prayers and offerings, a horse race is held. About twenty horses race, five at a time. The four winning horses are then raced to choose the best three horses, and their owners are given prizes of cash or cloth. After the race, a meeting may be held if there is something important to discuss, as this is one of the few occasions in the year when all the men of the community are present. Finally, everyone disperses and goes home.

---

<sup>18</sup> This hole is called *lab dung*.

<sup>19</sup> Known as a *dmu thag*.

Figure 15. Offering *bsang* at Sha rwa Lab rtse; *rlung rta* fill the air.



### *Klu* 'Water Deities'

A local sacred site is known as Khams mdo. It was the birthplace and residence of the community's *bla ma*, A lags Zla ba (b. ~1970), as well as his former incarnation, A lags Rdzong sngon. A valley extends southwest of the dwelling. A sacred spring at the foot of the valley is believed to be home to a *klu*.

When I was a child, a local elder called Nyi ma was very sick for many years. I never saw him, but it is said that he had a serious problem with his foot, and could not walk unassisted. He took medicine, visited doctors, and invited monks to chant, but nothing cured him. In 2007, his relatives invited a *bla ma* from Gser rta,<sup>20</sup> named Thang ris, and asked about his sickness. The *bla ma* said that his family had contaminated the holy spring and therefore the *klu* was punishing him with illness.

---

<sup>20</sup> Gser rta County is in Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Si khron (Sichuan) Province.

Figure 16. A spring, visible from its frozen outflow, rises on a hillside.



*Klu* are thought to possess great wealth, including gold, silver, and coral. However, *klu* cannot protect themselves by practicing religion, so if people make abundant offerings of *bsang* to them, then *klu* will be fed and delighted, and will therefore reward people by ensuring wealth and prosperity. Mountain deities, in contrast, can protect livestock and humans from calamity, but cannot ensure wealth and prosperity. For instance, the *klu*, Khya mo, is venerated in Smug po in the hope of obtaining good fortune. People who let drops of blood or milk spill into springs offend the *klu*, and are punished by the *klu* sending disasters, primarily diseases, to both livestock and humans. The following account (Sngags dpal ldan smyon pa) provides an example of local beliefs about *klu*.

Once upon time, an elderly woman lived with her son. One day, the son went hunting on a mountain and saw a *g.yu dgo rwa*, a deer-like animal with jade horns. He shot it, but the injured animal fell down the mountain and he was unable to capture it. He then shot it a second time, and the animal fell still further down the mountain and he was unable to get it. He then shot it a third time, and it died and fell further down the slope. Finally, he took the animal's jade horn, but when he tried to return

home, he became lost and could not return to his mother. While he was wandering, he was joined by a mouse, a frog, and a wolf.

The jade horn was very valuable and the mountain deities, *klu*, and all the local kings were constantly looking for it. One day, a local king discovered that the son had acquired the jade horn, and so ordered his guards to bring him to his palace. The terrified son didn't know what to do, and so he gave the jade horn to the frog, who took it to the lake, where he was caught by a *klu* who took the jade horn. The frog said to the *klu* who had taken the horn, "OK! Tell the king of the *klu* that you leave me no choice. Tomorrow I will bring my army and destroy your kingdom."

"You!? A little frog!? Let's see what you can do," said the *klu*.

Then the frog returned home, where he learned that his master had been arrested by the local king.

"We have to think of a way to regain our master and the jade horn," said the frog to the wolf and mouse.

"Wolf, go get an animal, but don't kill it. Bring it to me alive. I'll destroy the *klu* kingdom," said the frog before the wolf and mouse could reply.

Then the wolf found an old goat and brought it to the frog. The next day they killed the goat beside the lake and prepared to pour the blood into the water.

"I'll go tell the *klu* that my army is coming," said the frog, and dove into the lake.

When the frog came to the *klu*, he told them his army would come destroy them if they didn't return the jade horn. The *klu* saw a few drops of blood falling into the lake and were terrified, because blood is the *klu*'s enemy. Then the king of the *klu* begged the frog not to attack, and returned his jade horn along with other precious gifts of gold and coral. Ultimately, the frog returned happily home.

Then the frog, wolf, and mouse took the jade horn to the local king, offering to exchange it for the boy.

The local king was delighted and released the boy. The king then asked diviners to explain how to protect the jade horn. They replied that it had to be protected by eight cats, otherwise, it would be lost.

The boy, the frog, the mouse, and the wolf returned home and had a small party.

"I need my jade horn back. If I can get it, then I can beseech it to help regain my mother," said the boy.

"OK! Mouse, it's your turn to get the jade horn back," said the frog.

The mouse agreed and went to the king's home. He saw that the jade horn was protected by eight cats, was terrified, and ran back. When he arrived home, he reported what he had seen.

"Go back and eat the queen's hair," said the frog.

The mouse then returned to the palace and ate all the queen's hair. The next day the king and his guards were enraged with the diviners. The king then demanded that the eight cats protect the queen instead of the jade horn. That night, the mouse retrieved the jade horn. Finally, they beseeched the jade horn to return the boy's mother. She soon returned and they all lived happily ever after.

### Household and Personal Deities

Each tribe has their own *srung ma* 'protector deity' and each family in the tribe enshrines this deity in their home, painted on a *thang kha*. The protector deity of the 'Phar ba Tribe, for example, is the deity Dpal ldan lha mo, locally called Dpal ldan srung ma.

Each family or group of relatives has an incense altar and some prayer flags on a nearby peak. They offer *bsang* to protector and mountain deities, for example, on the eighth, fifteenth, and twenty-fifth days of each lunar month. *Bsang* is offered on these peaks prior to such important undertakings as college entrance exams or medical operations.

Figure 17. Prayer flags and an incense altar for a *srung ma* atop a hill.



Locals carefully and discretely inquire about the *srung ma* of a prospective spouse before agreeing to a marriage. People believe that if the families have different *srung ma*, the new couple will not get along. People also never borrow things from or lend things to a family with a different *srung ma*. The following account illustrates the consequences:

Once a woman borrowed a lambskin robe to wear to a wedding party. She inadvertently passed the robe over her sleeping daughter. The daughter then cried for the whole night and became blind several days later. The girl's father went to ask a *bla ma* and was told that a borrowed robe had caused the problem.

Borrowing certain items is more likely to anger *srung ma*. Metal objects, especially jewelry and knives, as well as wooden objects, should never be borrowed, as reflected in this local saying:

1. སྐད་པ་རོ་ཐག་ཡིན་ཡང་བཟང་།།  
2. ཤིང་གསེར་ལྷན་ཡིན་ཡང་ངན།།

<sup>1</sup>skud pa ro thag yin yang bzang  
<sup>2</sup>shing gser thur yin yang ngan

<sup>1</sup>Ropes are good, even if they have been used to tie a corpse.  
<sup>2</sup>Wood is bad, even if it is gold.

Disaster strikes if a *srung ma* is unhappy with a family, for example, a whole flock of sheep or herd of yaks will suddenly die, or many livestock will be killed by wolves. Calamity may spread to family members, especially children, if the problem is not addressed at this point. In such cases, *bla ma* will identify what the borrowed object is, advise that it be discarded, and determine in which direction it should be discarded.

Local elders define *the'u rang* as a distinct class of *srung ma*. *The'u rang* are like *srung ma*, but more malicious. For example, if smoke from a family with *the'u rang* wafts from their chimney and mingles with the smoke from another family's chimney, the latter family will experience calamity.

Household stoves are believed to have a *thab lha* 'stove deity' and it is therefore taboo to put feet on or dry pants above the stove. It is also forbidden to cook meat and fat directly on the stove; such food is always cooked in pots or pans. Locals never burn horse dung for fuel or to make *bsang*, believing that burning horse dung for fuel is bad for horses, and burning it in *bsang* or in stoves offends deities. It is considered disrespectful and unlucky to allow spit to enter the stove while blowing on the fire. As another sign of respect to the *thab lha*, adobe stoves are renewed annually, immediately prior to the New Year period, and also when arriving at a new camp. The stove deity is said to relocate with the family when they move camp.

Locals also believe that every person has a *lus lha* 'body deity'. If a person puts shoes, feet, or women's pants above their head, the body deity is angered and leaves the body. That person then becomes sick, blind, deaf, or mentally ill. Locals divide their body into upper and lower portions from their navel. Because the body deity resides on the upper body, locals are particularly careful about their upper body, especially males, who usually do not let women or unfamiliar people touch their head and shoulders, believing that if they do, their body deity will leave their body and cease protecting them. Clothes for the upper and lower body are never washed together. If they feel uncomfortable, locals often purify their body by fumigating it with juniper smoke as an offering to their body deity.

### *Btsan* 'Mountain Spirits'

*Btsan* are malevolent spirits that live in the mountains. Those attacked by *btsan* suddenly collapse, become disabled, their mouth becomes crooked, and their spine becomes twisted. The following account (Sngags dpal ldan smyon pa) concerns *btsan*:

Many years ago, a shepherd was sleeping while herding on the mountain. An old man was sitting beside a tent enjoying the sunshine. Then he saw seven red men riding seven red horses approach the shepherd. The old man was scared and wondered who they were. He looked again and saw seven red dogs appear and protect the herder

from the seven riders. That afternoon the herder returned to his tent, which was nearby where the old man lived.

"Are you wearing anything special, like an amulet?"<sup>21</sup> the old man asked the shepherd.

"No, nothing really special, just seven amulets blown on by seven *bla ma*," said the shepherd.

"Can you give me one?" said the old man.

"OK, sure," said the shepherd, and gave one to the old man.

The next day, the shepherd drove his sheep to the mountain as usual, and lay down to sleep. The old man watched from afar, and saw the seven red riders approach once again. This time only six red dogs protected the sleeping man, but they were able to fend off the riders.

When the shepherd returned home, the old man asked him for another blessed amulet, and, over the ensuing days, the shepherd gave away all his amulets to the old man.

The day after he had given away all his amulets, the shepherd went to sleep in the pasture as usual. As the old man watched, the seven riders came and took his life. When the old man reached there, blood was coming from the shepherd's mouth and he was already dead.

Elders say that herders should not sleep while herding, otherwise, *bstan* will come and attack them.

## THE LOCAL MONASTERY

Mtshams thog gong ma Monastery is located about twenty kilometers south of Smug po. There were around 130 monks in the monastery in 2013. The monastery is famous throughout Brag dkar County and is respected by the majority of locals due to the fact that all monks are forbidden to eat meat in or in the vicinity of the monastery.

There are several important annual rituals in Mtshams thog gong ma Monastery. Rgya lo smon lam, the New Year Great Prayer Festival, is held on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. All monks circumambulate the monastery, followed by lay people in procession. When they finish, monks display a *gos sku* 'large cloth icon' to lay people. Gsum pa'i skor chen takes place during the third

---

<sup>21</sup> Small wooden amulets known as *kya rta* are hung around the neck on a string.



lunar month. All locals who are able make a pilgrimage to and circumambulate the monastery. Bzhi pa'i smyung gnas is a fasting ritual that takes place in the fourth lunar month. During the fifth lunar month, monks from the monastery join local laypeople in the renewal of the community *lab rtse*. Bdun pa'i ma Ni is held in the seventh lunar month. During this ritual, all the monks from the monastery chant mantra, and, when they finish, lay people gather at the monastery to hold a celebration known as *byung ston*, during which monks perform masked '*cham* dances.

There is a *dur khrod* 'sky burial site' near the monastery, where corpses are dismembered and then eaten by vultures.



# CHAPTER THREE



## PASTORALISM IN SMUG PO

## PASTORAL PRODUCTION

Locals in Smug po have no accounts as to when Tibetans first domesticated livestock. However, everyone in Smug po understands that humans and livestock have come to intimately rely on each other. Pastoralists owe their entire existence to livestock. Skins are used to make clothes. Hair is used to make the fiber to weave tents. Milk is processed to make a variety of foods, and herders eat the flesh, tendons, and organs of livestock. Bones are boiled to extract oil. Horns are used to create milk bottles for human infants and young livestock. Livestock dung is burned for fuel and has numerous other uses. Hooves and brains are the only part of the livestock that locals do not use. Herders exchange livestock products to obtain the things they cannot get from livestock, for example, barley flour. Historically, livestock were everything to pastoralists, who were unable to survive without them.

### Milk Products

Milk from female yaks and yak-cow hybrids is called *'o ma*. The importance of dairy products in the pastoral diet is evident from the following traditional saying:

<sup>1</sup>མར་ཚུར་རྩམ་གསུམ་འབྲོག་མིའི་ཁ་བས་ཡིན།

<sup>1</sup>mar chur rtsam gsum 'brog mi'i kha zas yin

<sup>1</sup>Butter, cheese, and *rtsam pa* are pastoralists' three foods.

People in Smug po rarely drink cold milk; warm milk is often given to children. Children may also be given *'o thug* – warm milk containing chunks of dough. Adults drink *'o ja*, tea with milk, with every meal. Milk is added to a kettle of boiled tea and allowed to continue heating for a short while. In addition to drinking milk tea, every morning when the first batch of milk tea is made, the senior woman of the house uses a ladle to asperse milk tea three times in the direction of local mountain deities.

Figure 18. Milking a yak in the summer pasture.



Figure 19. Pouring fresh milk in preparation for processing.



Milk is also used to make a variety of dairy products, including *mar* 'butter', which was traditionally churned in wooden churns, though metal hand-turned separators have been common since about the year 2000. Locals put butter in their staple food, *rtsam pa*, and consider using more butter better. For example, before transporting something or moving pastures, men eat a large helping of *rtsam pa* with extra butter, which gives them energy and satisfies their appetite.

Butter is often melted in hot tea. It is also an essential ingredient of several other foods: *nyog*, *phye thud*, *gro 'bras*, and *zhun*. *Nyog* is made by boiling water, and then adding flour to make a thick paste that is stirred until the mixture boils again. Finally, the *nyog* is put in a bowl and eaten hot with butter and sugar. *Phye thud* is similar to noodles. Wheat flour is mixed into dough and then cut into thin squares about twelve centimeters long and eight centimeters wide. These pieces are boiled, put in a bowl, and eaten with butter, sugar, and dried cheese. *Gro 'bras* is made from *gro ma* (*Potentilla fruticosa*) – small edible tubers that grow in damp soil – rice, melted butter, and sugar. *Zhun* is a type of dense, hard cake that is made from butter, cheese, sugar, and *gro ma* flour. To make *zhun*, butter is melted and poured into a basin. Then cheese, sugar, and *gro ma* flour are added. The mixture is then left to cool. Butter is also put on fresh bread.

In the recent past, butter was rubbed on exposed skin to protect it, especially during winter. Butter is also an essential ingredient of the *bsang* offered daily to deities. Finally, butter is sold to generate income.<sup>1</sup> Because of this, families with more stored butter are wealthier than others. Each time a family stores new butter, they distribute *mar lo* 'butter balls' to all local children, and thus nearby families have some idea of each other's wealth.

The liquid remaining after the butter has been removed is *da ra* 'buttermilk'. Buttermilk is used to make *chur ra* 'cheese', and sometimes to make *zho* 'yogurt'. It is also consumed by people and livestock. People make tea with buttermilk, and feeding it to livestock is considered to help them gain weight. When locals prepare to make leather robes or leather bags, they first soak the hide in buttermilk for more than a month.

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2013, a kilogram of butter sold for sixty RMB.



Figure 20. Liquid is squeezed from freshly churned butter, in preparation for storage.



Figure 21. Processing cheese.



Once made, cheese is dried in the sun. *Chur rdzas* – cheese mixed with butter – is a common food, especially in summer. Cheese is also the main ingredient of *zhun* (see above), and is also used in *phye thud*. Locals also eat *gro chur* made from cheese mixed with water, *gro ma*, and sometimes butter. Dried cheese is also sold for income; in 2013, it fetched approximately 100 RMB per kilogram.

The liquid byproduct that remains when cheese is made from buttermilk is called *chur khu*. *Chur khu* is given to livestock to drink, is used to wash hair as a treatment for dandruff, and is also used to clean buckets, clothes, and pots.

Yogurt may be made from milk or buttermilk. Though both types of yogurt taste the same, yogurt made with buttermilk has a lower fat content than yogurt made with milk, and is thus considered inferior. Yogurt is a common food in summer and autumn, but is only eaten on special occasions in winter and spring. Elders typically eat yogurt with *gro ma* or *gro khu*,<sup>2</sup> whereas young people prefer to eat it with sugar.

Figure 22. Making yogurt.



---

<sup>2</sup> *Gro khu* is the water in which *gro ma* has been boiled.



## Meat

*Lug sha* 'mutton' and *nor sha* 'yak beef' are important daily foods in Smug po. Locals rarely eat marmot or rabbit, and never eat dog, horse, or fox. Small pieces of wolf tongue are sometimes eaten as medicine for stomach complaints, but wolf meat is never eaten as food.

Livestock are suffocated to death by tying a rope around their muzzle, which blocks the nose and closes the mouth. This method takes approximately ten minutes to kill sheep (slightly longer for a yak). Blood is thus conserved, and later collected and cooked as blood sausages. Relatives and friends are invited to eat fresh meat, and neighbors are usually given dishes of meat, *sha ska*,<sup>3</sup> which consists of a dish of sausage and chest meat, sufficient for one meal for a whole family. If these relatives and friends help with the slaughter and butchering, a family member will return the favor later.

Male and female yaks are slaughtered for meat, though not in summer, because it is hot and meat may rot before it is consumed. During summer and autumn, a yak is sometimes slaughtered and divided among three or four households. Yaks are usually slaughtered in late autumn, for winter and spring use. This meat is called *dgun sha*. Households typically slaughter one big yak and four to five sheep for winter use per year. The meat is stored in a small temporary room known as a *sha khang*, which is made from yak dung and used only to store meat. It is made in such cold places as outside the courtyard of the winter house, or in the shady leeway of a courtyard wall. Households usually finish all their *dgun sha* very late in the spring.

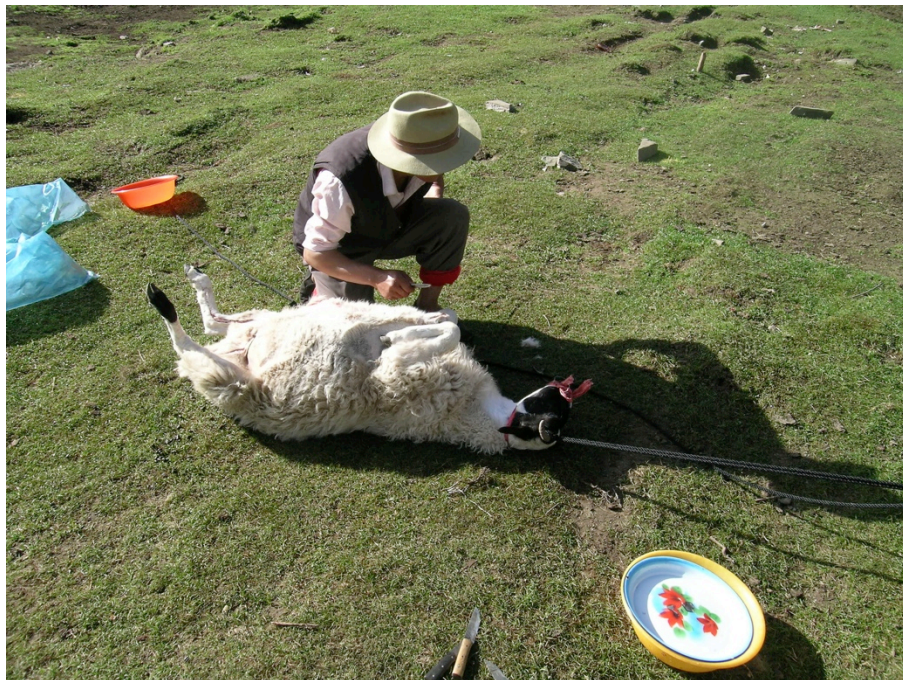
*O tshe* is a method of slaughtering sheep and storing the mutton. A sheep is slaughtered in late autumn but is not skinned. The carcass is cut open, intestines and other organs are removed, and sausages are made. The sausages are then placed inside the carcass, which is sewn closed. This carcass is then stored in the *sha khang*, where it freezes. The frozen carcass is next taken out in late

---

<sup>3</sup> The literary form is *sha skal*.

spring, when the livestock are weak and have little flesh. During a time of scarcity, the family is thus able to eat meat from an animal that was killed at its physical peak.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 23. A sheep being suffocated.



Meat from a recently slaughtered animal is called *sha gsar* 'fresh meat' and is a delicacy. However, certain people, usually elders, do not eat *nyin sha*, the meat of animal that has been slaughtered that day, believing that that eating it accumulates more *sdug pa* 'sin' than eating other meat. *Sha rnying*, 'old meat' is meat that remains at the end of a season. Such meat is not necessarily rotten, but may be starting to turn. *Sha rnying* is considered an unhealthy food, nevertheless, elders like it, considering it tastier than fresh meat. When a household's winter meat is not finished by summer, *sha skam* 'dry meat' is made by cutting the meat into pieces and salting it, either by rubbing salt directly onto the meat, or soaking it in salty water. The meat is then hung up to dry, typically on the verandah of

---

<sup>4</sup> This was done rarely in the past, and is not currently practiced.

the winter house. Dry meat that remains in summer is hung above the stove and the smoke repels insects, particularly flies. In contrast to dry meat, *sha rlon* 'wet meat' refers to raw meat, which is not eaten. Meat is generally divided into *nang sha* (also called *rgyu ma*) 'organs' and *phyi sha* 'flesh'.

*Nang sha* is typically eaten first after an animal is slaughtered, while *phyi sha* is only served when guests come. The *grod pu* 'stomach' is cleaned and eaten. The *mtsher ba* 'spleen' is thought to be good for general health, and is given to elders and pregnant women. Other organs are minced and used to make sausage: *khrag rgyu* 'blood sausage', *g.yos rgyu* 'big sausage', and *phye rgyu* 'flour sausage'. Blood sausages are made by cutting organs into pieces that are mixed with blood, salt, diced onion or prickly ash, and fat and then poured into small intestines to make a sausage. 'Big sausages' are made with minced flesh mixed with water, wheat flour, salt, diced onion or prickly ash, and fat which are poured into the large intestines. Yak beef is not used to make 'big sausages'. Fat, wheat flour, salt, and diced onion or prickly ash, are mixed together and stuffed into the small intestine to make flour sausages. This is done only for sheep.

*Phyi sha* includes *lag yos* 'foreleg meat', *rkang yos* 'hind leg meat', *tshang ra* 'back meat', *ske sha* 'neck meat', and *brang* 'chest meat'. Such meat is often minced and used to make noodles or *sha thum* 'fried meat pockets'. People also boil meat on the bone and eat it by cutting it from the bone when visitors come. Dumplings, which require much minced meat, are eaten during such special occasions as New Year and weddings, though sometimes they may be made for regular meals. Locals generally consider mutton to be tastier than yak beef.

Sheep heads are considered a delicacy. The head is skinned, then boiled, and the meat is then picked from the skull. The boiled tongue is also eaten. Eyes, and particularly the connective tissue that surrounds them, are considered delicious, though the pupil is not eaten. Although children crave eyes, it is considered inauspicious for a parent to take the eyes from the skull and give them to a child, as indicated by the following saying:

<sup>1</sup>མིག་བྱས་ནས་ལག་ལ་མི་འཛོག།

<sup>1</sup>mig brus nas lag la mi 'jog<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Don't take out the eyes and put them in other's hands.

When the meat, tongue,<sup>6</sup> and eyes have been eaten, the skull is cracked open and *gdung khyim* 'meat from the sinuses' is eaten.<sup>7</sup> The brain is not eaten. The head is usually boiled with the *sug thu* 'trotters' and eaten several days after an animal is slaughtered.

Meat is never put in the fire, in fear of angering the *thab lha* and *srung ma*.

*Rkang* 'marrow' is considered a delicacy, but it is never given to children, as indicated by the following saying:

<sup>1</sup>བུ་ཕྱུག་རྐང་གིས་མ་གསོ།

<sup>1</sup>bu phrug rkang gis ma gso

<sup>1</sup>Don't feed children marrow.

This is because marrow is very fatty, and thus considered unhealthy. Usually, only elders eat marrow, as they are less concerned about their health. The following saying explains that this is due, in part, to the appetite generated by a lifetime of eating meat:

<sup>1</sup>ཤ་ཟ་གིན་ཟ་གིན་རྐང་ལ་བདལ།

<sup>1</sup>sha za gin za gin rkang la bda'

<sup>1</sup>After eating meat, you desire marrow.

Fatty meat is preferred to lean. When visiting other families, the hosts' hospitality is judged by the fattiness of the meat. Lean meat is considered a sign of stinginess, whereas fatty meat is interpreted as an indication of generosity.

*Rgyu rka* 'tendon/ ligament' is eaten, but is not considered a delicacy. It is boiled for a long time before eating, but is still tough and difficult to chew.

---

<sup>5</sup> The literary form is *mig blangs nas mi ster ba*.

<sup>6</sup> The tough, fibrous tip of the tongue is cut off and discarded.

<sup>7</sup> The sinus meat of yaks is not eaten.

## Hair and Leather

Herders use livestock hair and skin in many ways. For example, leather products made by herders include: *sgyo ba* 'yak skin bag' used to store wheat flour, *rtsam pa*, butter, and rice; and *brong ba* 'leather cords'. Leather is prepared by soaking the hide in water for three months. It is then taken out of the water, dried, and softened by rubbing it with a stone. Yak and sheep hides are prepared in the same way.

Herders shear sheep, thus obtaining *bal* 'sheep's wool', which they use to make ropes, and sell to generate income.<sup>8</sup> Sheep wool was used to make the following products: *rdang* 'ropes for tying yaks'; *ske thug* 'ropes to tie on yak necks'; *lag sdom* 'front leg hobbles'; *rgyu thag* 'back leg hobbles'; and *mgo byang* 'felt raincoat'.

Sheep are sheared annually at the end of *sos ka* – a brief period between spring and summer – and the beginning of summer, between the fifth and sixth lunar months. Scissors are used to shear the sheep.

*Rtsid pa* 'yak hair' is used to make black tents, ropes, and bags. People collect<sup>9</sup> hair and *khu lu* 'yak cashmere' at the same time, and sell *khu lu* for income.<sup>10</sup> Traditionally, people used *khu lu* to make carpets, but this is no longer done.

Women begin to process yak hair by separating *rtsid pa* and *khu lu*, and then remove dirt that is clinging to the fibers by hand. They then use a spindle consisting of a '*phang* 'a short wood stick', and a '*phang lo* 'a round stone with a hole in center' to make yarn. They roll the yarn into a ball. Women do this work during their free time, often after meals (men never spin yarn). Then, at the beginning of spring, women weave the yarn into cloth using a backstrap loom. This cloth is then used to make tents.

---

<sup>8</sup> In 2013, one kilogram of wool sold for ten RMB.

<sup>9</sup> Traditionally, hair was pulled, but in recent years scissors have been used.

<sup>10</sup> In 2013, *khu lu* sold for fifty to sixty RMB per kilogram.



Figure 24. A yak tethered with a wool rope.



Yak hair yarn is used to make the following products: *sgye mo* 'yak hair bag', used to store such things as barley and *rtsam pa*; black tents; *chon thag* 'ropes for tent poles'; *kha tshub* 'tent smoke hole covering'; and *sgo phab* 'tent door'. Hair is collected from female yaks that do not have calves and any yaks older than five years, except for females that are suckling calves and animals that

will be used as pack animals. Collecting hair from these animals is considered cruel, because it is thought to weaken them when they need strength. Gossip may circulate about families that collect hair in this way – "They even collect hair from mother yaks."

Figure 25. A *sgye mo*.



## Dung

Dung is mostly used as fuel, but it also has several other uses. It is used to create temporary structures such as storehouses for meat and seasonal livestock enclosures. Dung ash has several uses. If livestock fall ill or die in an enclosure, scattering a layer of dung ash over the ground is thought to purify the earth and prevent further disease outbreak. Bowls used by unfamiliar guests are buried in the ash pit for approximately an hour after a guest leaves. Dung ash is also used to create a diaper for infants, who are laid in a *mdzong khug*, a cloth bag filled with ash that absorbs moisture and odor from the infant.



Figure 26. Collecting dung in the yak enclosure.



Figure 27. Collected dung is stored in piles.





## THE PASTORAL CYCLE

Herders migrate annually between three seasonal pastures: *dgun sa* 'winter pasture', *dbyar sa* 'summer pasture', and *ston sa* 'autumn pasture' (Figure 28 and Table 1). They stay longest at the winter pasture, located in the lower valley, where they live in adobe houses, starting late in the eighth lunar month or early in the ninth lunar month. At the beginning of summer, at the start of the sixth lunar month, households load their possessions on yaks and relocate from winter pastures to higher altitude summer pasture for around two months. They then move to their autumn pastures, near their winter house, late in the seventh month.

These migrations take place within the framework of five annual seasons: *dgun ka* 'winter', *dpyid ka* 'spring', *sos ka* – a short season between spring and summer – *dbyar ka* 'summer', and *ston ka* 'autumn' (see Figure 29).

The exact timing of moves is decided when all local males gather for a meeting called a *ru gros* 'camp discussion'. Everyone pays particular attention to the input of elders at such meetings. Usually people decide to move on the next day that has good, sunny weather. The entire community must move on the same day to ensure that everyone has equal access to the fresh grass at the new camp. Although everyone must move on the same day, individual households set off to the new camp at different times, to avoid congestion on the way. Some people may even set out in the middle of the night.

Figure 28. The annual pastoral cycle.

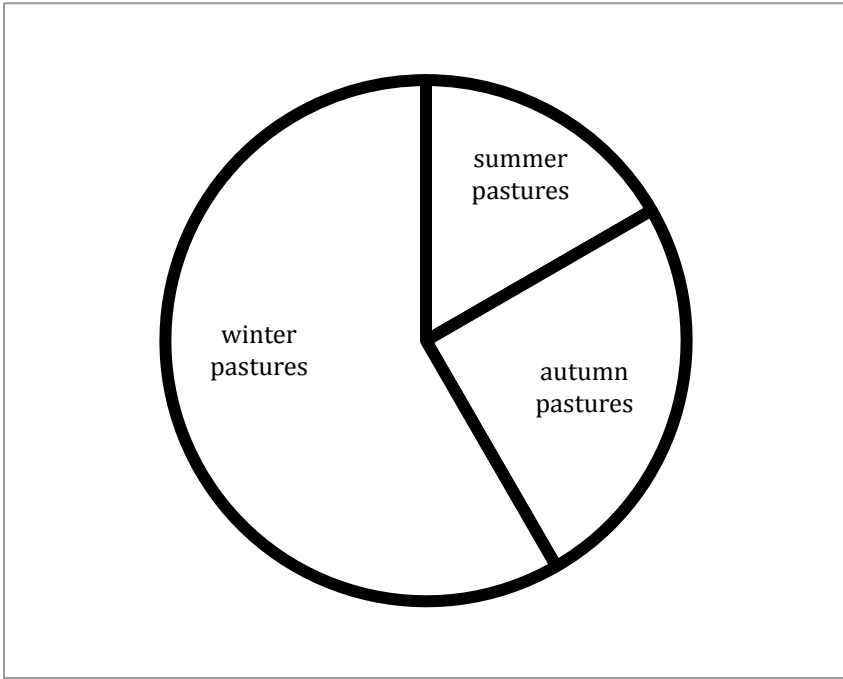


Figure 29. Seasons in Smug po.

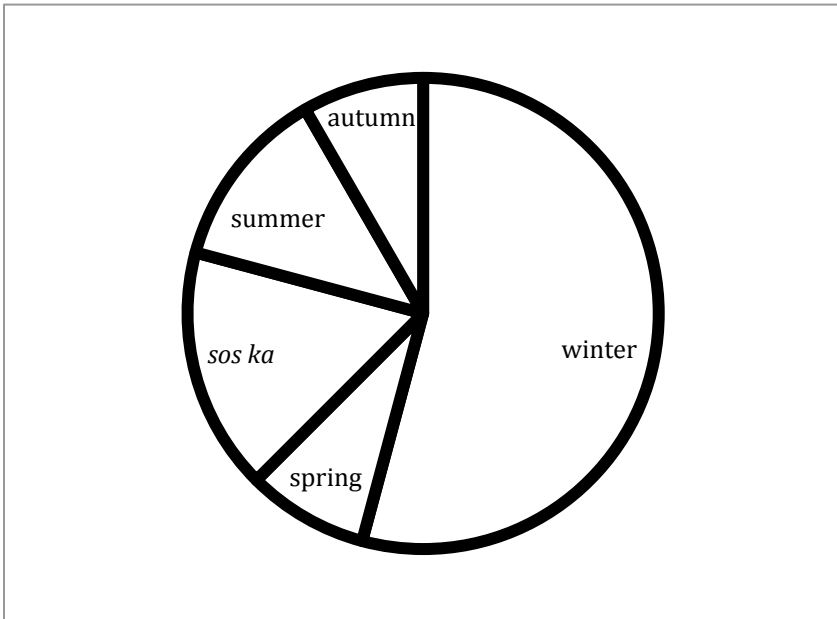


Table 1. Smug po's seasonal pastures.

Pasture	Lunar Month	Season	Distance	Altitude (meters)
summer pasture	6-7	summer	20-30 kilometers from the winter pasture to the summer pasture	3,800-4,000
autumn pasture	8-9	autumn	10-15 kilometers from the summer pasture	~3,800
winter pasture	10-5	winter <i>sos ka</i> spring	adjacent to the autumn camp	~3,600

## Winter

Winter is the longest season and lasts for six and a half months, from the ninth lunar month to the middle of the third lunar month. Temperatures are extremely cold, both day and night, but especially in the morning and immediately after sunset. It is warm by midday and remains so until sunset. Winter nights are longer than the days. Ten to fifteen centimeters of snow falls once or twice a month and may stay on the ground until the next snowfall. Humidity is so low in winter that frost does not form in the morning. Strong winds blow daily. All water is covered in thick layers of ice, and plants are reduced to dry, brittle stalks.

Winter is the most difficult season for herders. Livestock encounter many hardships finding both grass and water. Grass becomes short, stiff, and difficult to digest, and rivers freeze. A family member, usually a man, cuts a hole in the ice with either an axe or a shovel every morning, so people and livestock can drink from a nearby spring.

Figure 30. Yaks drink meltwater from a frozen spring.



Figure 31. Chipping away ice to collect drinking water is one of winter's most arduous tasks.



He then spends all day grazing livestock on the mountains. If it snows heavily, livestock are covered with tattered clothes to keep them warm during the night. Herding takes longer than in other seasons because older yaks and calves lack energy to keep up with the herd. Livestock are not beaten to make them go faster, because they are very weak during winter and may die if beaten.

Women get up at about seven a.m. to collect frozen yak dung in the yak enclosure, regardless of the weather. After breakfast, they give hay to livestock before sending them to pasture. In the afternoon, women boil *phye ldur* 'flour soup' and make flour balls that are fed to livestock each morning. Sheep give birth during the winter, and it is extremely difficult to look after ewes that give birth at night, when lambs may freeze to death.

During winter and spring, families live dispersed in their winter houses. Female yaks are tied during the night, and released in the morning. After they are milked, they are led to graze in the mountains. Newly fallen snow melts soonest on sunny, north-facing slopes, where herders guide their stock when snow is still deep on the shady slopes. Throughout winter, male yaks are left to roam freely in the mountains.

Figure 32. Winter houses (center right) seen from a hilltop.





Figures 33 and 34. Calves are fed extra fodder during winter.



Table 2. A female pastoralist's typical winter day.

Time	Activities
7:00-9:00	Make morning fire, prepare to cook (wash teapots, bowls, and other utensils), collect 20-25 bags of yak dung, cook breakfast for the family, eat breakfast, feed dogs.
9:00-10:00	Milk and tether yaks, give hay to livestock when needed, for example, when it snows.
10:00-11:00	Fetch water, clean inside the house and courtyard, dry yak dung.
11:00-12:00	Cook and eat lunch.
12:00-1:00	Prepare dog food, feed dogs, collect dried yak dung and sheep dung for fuel.
1:00-2:00	Wash family members' clothes or look after older and pregnant yaks.
2:00-3:00	Dry yak dung.
3:00-4:00	Cook <i>phyi ja</i> 'afternoon tea'.
4:00-5:00	Prepare fodder for livestock.
5:00-6:00	Untie yaks, put sheep in their enclosure, cover old and young yaks with tattered clothes.
6:00-7:00	Cook and eat dinner, feed dogs.
8:00-10:00	Mend children's clothes, make ropes, make yogurt, go to bed at around ten p.m.

Table 3. A male pastoralist's typical winter day.

Time	Activities
7:00-9:00	Get up, check the sheep, offer <i>bsang</i> , eat breakfast.
9:00-10:00	Go to break ice so that women can fetch water and livestock can drink.
10:00-11:00	Drive sheep to drink water, then to an enclosure to eat hay.
11:00-12:00	Drive yaks to drink water, then to the mountain, return home to eat lunch.
12:00-1:00	Herd sheep.
1:00-2:00	
2:00-3:00	
3:00-4:00	
4:00-5:00	
5:00-6:00	Drive yaks back home and give them fodder and then drive sheep back home and give them fodder.
6:00-7:00	Offers <i>bsang</i> , eat dinner, chant after dinner.

Herders are relatively free during winter and so many festivities are held in this season. Lo sar 'New Year' is the most important annual festival for locals, and is held from the first to the sixteenth day of the first lunar month, though preparations start almost one week earlier. Women are very busy during these days. On the twenty-ninth of the twelfth lunar month, all family members gather and eat a special meal known as *dgu thug* 'nine noodles'. Locals say that Gshin rje chos rgyal, the King of Hell, comes to weigh each person that night and elders therefore encourage children to eat more. On the first day of Lo sar, people rise at midnight, men offer *bsang*, women fetch water, and children set off firecrackers. They first visit local *bla ma* and elders and then relatives, followed by other households, except those homes in which a member has died in the past year. Nobody makes visits on the seventh and eighth days of the first lunar month, which locals call *nag chen* 'big black' and *nag chung* 'small black' respectively. They believe these days are unlucky. Many celebrations take place during Lo sar, including *gnyen ston* 'weddings', *mnol skra* 'third birthday', and *gya ston*, the celebration of an eightieth birthday. Horse races, described in detail later, may also be held during winter.

## Spring

Spring lasts from the middle of the third to the middle of the fourth lunar months. During spring, temperatures begin to rise, but remain low. Humidity increases. Snowfall typically ceases at the beginning of spring and sleet falls every three to four days. In late spring, grass begins to sprout in such warm places as around houses and yak enclosures, and ice begins to thaw. Frost is seen every morning, and, while nights remain long, days noticeably lengthen.

Spring is a difficult time for herders. Many livestock die during spring, because what little grass remains is difficult to eat, especially for older yaks and sheep whose teeth are worn down. Older livestock may starve to death because they have difficulty grazing. People attend closely to livestock during the spring.



Women give pregnant yaks more hay than usual. Pregnant yaks are also separated from the herd to prevent other livestock from accidentally injuring them, for example, with their horns. Both men and women check pregnant yaks two or three times each night to see if they have given birth. If no herder is present, inexperienced mothers may not be able to break the amniotic sac, in which case, the calf dies. Herders therefore need to assist by breaking the sac. Also, if a yak has trouble giving birth, a man may need to remove the stillborn calf. Such skills are learned from elders.

After a yak gives birth, women typically care for the mother by feeding it dough balls. A good female yak that is placid and produces much milk is milked the day after giving birth, but female yaks with less milk may not be milked until summer. If *spri* 'colostrum' is milked, it is considered healthier and tastier than normal milk. It is yellowish, and is used to make bread, which is called *spri dbor*.

There are no communal gatherings or celebrations in Spring.

Table 4. A female pastoralist's typical spring day.

Time	Activities
6:00-9:00	Get up at five-thirty or six, drive all female yaks home, collect yak dung, prepare and eat breakfast, feed dogs.
9:00-11:00	Milk yaks with her daughter, tether adults, separate calves from adults.
11:00-12:00	Boil milk, churn butter, tether calves.
12:00-1:00	Fetch water, cook and eat lunch, clean inside the tent.
1:00-2:00	Process and dry cheese, sometimes make bread.
2:00-3:00	Feed the dogs, collect dried yak dung and sheep dung for fuel, wash family members' clothes.
3:00-4:00	Collect yak dung if necessary.
4:00-5:00	Cook <i>phyi ja</i> , drive calves home, tether them.
5:00-7:00	Tie mother yaks and start to milk.
7:00-9:00	Release all adult yaks and drive them away from calves to wander at night, cook and eat dinner, feed dogs.

Table 5. A male pastoralist's typical spring day.

Time	Activities
6:00-9:00	Rise at seven-thirty and offer <i>bsang</i> , go to check on the sheep, eat breakfast.
9:00-11:00	Drive the sheep to drink water, drive them to pasture.
11:00-12:00	Drive both sheep and yaks to the mountains.
12:00-1:00	Herd in the mountains.
1:00-2:00	
2:00-3:00	
3:00-4:00	
4:00-5:00	Return home to eat <i>phyi ja</i> .
5:00-7:00	Drive yaks home.
7:00-9:00	Drive sheep home, make <i>bsang</i> , eat dinner, chat, chant scriptures.

### *Sos ka*

*Sos ka* is between spring and summer, from the sixteenth day of the fourth lunar month until the fifteenth day of the sixth lunar month. It is considered a better time than winter and spring, but less pleasant than summer. Temperatures rise, sleet turns to rain, which falls every two or three days, and morning frost is replaced by dew. The howling winds of spring diminish. Day and night are of approximately equal length during *sos ka*, and the first flowers begin to bloom.

Herding remains difficult for men during *sos ka*. They graze livestock on the mountains every day, and also break in yaks, because grass has just started to grow at this time, and yaks are neither too strong nor too weak to break.

During *sos ka*, herders still live on the winter pasture. Yaks are tethered at night, and then released to graze in the morning before milking. After the family has eaten breakfast, the female yaks are herded back home, and milked. They are then released after milking, and herded back in the afternoon.

Women begin digging small, edible wild tubers, *gro ma*, for family consumption near their homes during *sos ka*. A few yaks give birth during *sos ka*. Taking care of and observing female yaks is women's responsibility.

Caterpillar fungus is collected during *sos ka*. All except about twenty households in Smug po have caterpillar fungus on their land. Approximately ten households lease their land to Hui and Han while other families collect and sell it to these people. Caterpillar fungus is usually dug by the whole family and sold by the household head.

Local males participate in the renewal of the community's *lab rtse* at the end of *sos ka*. Neighboring houses also hold small parties to celebrate the ear-marking and castration of lambs.

Table 6. A female pastoralist's typical *sos ka* day.

Time	Activities
6:00-9:00	Get up at five-thirty or six, drive all female yaks home, collect yak dung, prepare and eat breakfast, feed dogs.
9:00-11:00	Milk yaks with her daughter, tether adults, separate calves from adults.
11:00-12:00	Boil milk, churn butter, tether calves.
12:00-1:00	Fetch water, cook and eat lunch, clean inside the tent.
1:00-2:00	Process and dry cheese, sometimes make bread.
2:00-3:00	Feed the dogs, collect dried yak dung and sheep dung for fuel, wash family members' clothes.
3:00-4:00	Collect yak dung if necessary.
4:00-5:00	Cook <i>phyi ja</i> , drive calves home, tether them.
5:00-7:00	Tie mother yaks, milk them.
7:00-9:00	Release all adult yaks and drive them away from calves to wander during the night, cook and eat dinner, feed dogs.

Table 7. A male pastoralist's typical *sos ka* day.

Time	Activities
6:00-9:00	Get up at seven-thirty, offer <i>bsang</i> , check the sheep, eat breakfast, begin looking for caterpillar fungus.
9:00-11:00	Drive sheep to drink water, look for caterpillar fungus while herding sheep.
11:00-12:00	Drive both sheep and yaks to the mountain, continue looking for caterpillar fungus.
12:00-1:00	Herd in the mountains and continue looking for caterpillar fungus.
1:00-2:00	
2:00-3:00	
3:00-4:00	
4:00-5:00	Return home for <i>phyi ja</i> .
5:00-7:00	Drive yaks home.
7:00-9:00	Drive sheep home, make <i>bsang</i> , eat dinner, chat, chant, go to bed.

### Summer

Summer is the best season in Smug po, because livestock have much fresh grass to eat. The following love song describes summer:

<sup>1</sup> ཏ་འདོ་བའི་དུག་ཁ་གང་དུས་རེད།  
<sup>2</sup> ལྷག་ཤར་པའི་སྣང་བ་སྦྱིད་དུས་རེད།  
<sup>3</sup> འབྲི་ཐུལ་མའི་ལུ་བ་གང་དུས་རེད།  
<sup>4</sup> སྐམ་བུ་མོའི་འདོད་ལོ་གང་དུས་རེད།

<sup>1</sup>ta 'do ba'i drug kha gang dus red  
<sup>2</sup>stag shar pa'i snang ba skyid dus red  
<sup>3</sup>'bru thul ma'i nu kha gang dus red  
<sup>4</sup>sman bu mo'i 'dod lo gang dus red

- <sup>1</sup>It is the time when horses are full of energy and strength.
- <sup>2</sup>It is the time when young men are full of passion and excitement.
- <sup>3</sup>It is the time when mother yaks' udders are full of milk.
- <sup>4</sup>It is the time when young women are full of satisfaction.

Figure 35. Returning to the tent after milking, in the summer pasture.



Summer lasts from the mid-sixth lunar month to the beginning of the eighth lunar month. Morning and afternoons are temperate, though the middle of the day is hot. It rains every day, and light snow may fall during summer on upper mountain slopes, though sometimes it blankets the entire valley. Big storms with thunder, lightning, and sometimes hail, occur every three or four days. If no such storms occur, there is generally little wind in summer. There is dew every morning, and the grassland is coated in green, dotted with many-colored flowers. During summer, the day is considerably longer than the night.

Livestock are difficult to herd during the summer because thick fog covers the mountains where livestock graze, and therefore,

livestock are easily lost. Though fog may dissipate in the morning, it often lasts all day. In such situations, herders may only be able to see four paces in front of themselves and therefore must rely solely on the sound of the livestock to drive them.

Figure 36. The summer pasture.



During summer, approximately ten related households pitch their tents near one another, forming a *ru skor* 'encampment'. Each household milks their own livestock in the morning. Then, the animals are herded collectively by a representative of one household according to a rotating schedule. At the end of the day, livestock are driven back to their owner's tent for milking. After this second round of milking, the livestock are released to wander freely during the night. They are rounded up and driven back to the tent for more milking in the morning.

Moving camp is summer's most difficult task, especially if it rains, as the black tent then becomes wet, heavy, and difficult to load on yaks. Whenever a seasonal move is approaching, a meeting is held, attended by a representative of each local household. The date for the move is discussed and determined, and all households in the community will then move within a day or two of each other. Each household is responsible for their own move.



On the day before the move, all family members prepare to move camp, for example, by packing such things as cooking utensils, food, and herding equipment in bags. Then the family head takes about half of the household's possessions – food and cooking utensils – to the new camp in wooden boxes and leather or woven bags. This first move is locally known as *or ska*. The family head leaves these items at the new camp and returns to the old camp the same day.

Meanwhile, the tent is taken down and most other possessions packed up, leaving only the utensils that are necessary to prepare remaining meals. All livestock are herded back from the pastures and counted. That night all family members sleep outside.

Figure 37. Moving camp to the autumn pasture.



The next morning, they get up very early and pack up the bedding. Women cook breakfast, and men load the pack yaks and saddle the horses. When the pack yaks are loaded, the horses saddled, and breakfast is ready, the family eats breakfast around the stove at the old tent site. After breakfast, family members divide into three

groups. Elder men, children, and some adult men ride horses and drive the loaded yaks. The mother and one or two children ride yaks and drive the unloaded yaks. If they have several children, toddlers may be placed in baskets that are tied to a yak, but infants are carried by the parents. Another man rides a horse and drives the sheep. They then start moving to the new camp, typically driving yaks first, then loaded yaks, and then sheep.

When everyone reaches the new camp, the men unload yaks and horses while women make a fire and prepare a simple meal of milk tea and bread; this first meal in the new camp is locally known as *mtsher chu*. After eating, men set up the tent while women tether the yaks. Children tend sheep, because wolves may be nearby when they first move to the new camp.

Another significant activity in summer is collecting yak hair, at the end of the sixth lunar month. Although hair is now cut with scissors, until recently, herders pulled out a yak's belly and tail hair by hand. This was painful for the yaks, which would become difficult to catch and tie for some time afterwards. Uncooperative yaks are tied and put on the ground, or they will run away.

Summer is not a busy season for men, as the rotating herding schedule means they do not need to graze livestock on the mountains every day. Relatives live near each other and men from these households graze livestock in turns. For example, today a member of Bkra shis's household herds several neighboring families' livestock, so tomorrow a member of a different household will herd. Households share their burden with each other, creating free time for men to go to town and purchase necessities, or to visit friends and relatives.<sup>11</sup>

Smug po women are especially busy in summer and autumn. They milk female yaks twice daily. They rise between 5:30 and 6:00 a.m., collect yak dung in the yak enclosure, return to the tent after milking, and cook breakfast for the family. After a brief breakfast, they go to the livestock enclosure again, untie the yaks, separate adults and calves, and herd them apart from each other, in order to increase milk yield by preventing calves from suckling. The adult

---

<sup>11</sup> This can be done in summer because families live close together. However, they live more dispersed in other seasons.



yaks are then left to graze freely, while calves are cared for by the women.

They next make butter and cheese, and collect dried yak dung for fuel. I once met Phag mo skyid (b. 1942) an elderly local woman, at her yak enclosure, who said, "Most pastoral women spend their whole lives collecting yak dung."

Because summer weather is changeable, and because children do not know how to deal with the difficulties caused by rain, children are usually only allowed to herd calves adjacent to the tent. I started herding calves when I was seven, and below relate some of my experiences of herding:

When I was seven, my family moved to a new summer camp away from the rest of our tribe. Separated from our relatives, we could not rely on anyone else to help herd our many livestock. So, every day I grazed the calves in a small valley where a limpid stream flowed and grass flourished.

The calves were very disobedient, making it difficult to herd them. Some calves escaped from the herd while I was driving them. They especially did this when they saw their mothers in the distance at the foot of the mountains. Of course, I never abandoned calves that broke free from the herd. I desperately ran after them, because, if any calves escaped, Mother's punishment awaited me.

One day the hot sun shone in the cloudless sky. The calves were spread out on the grassland. It all looked very relaxing. I lay down on the grass and listened to the euphonious sound of the water, while a soft breeze blew and filled the air with the fragrance of flowers. Happiness filled my heart and I fell asleep in seconds. When I opened my eyes, Mother was running toward me. I stood up immediately.

"Oh! My Buddha!" The words came out under my breath. I realized that my calves had fled. I saw them waving their tails in the air, running toward the mountains, eager to be united with their mothers. Mother rolled up her sleeves and threw pieces of yak dung at me. She scolded me in a wild voice and chased me as I fled.

I chased the calves and Mother chased me. However, she soon gave up and returned home. After I ran as long I could, I was out of breath and my heart was pounding in my chest like someone's fist knocking on a door. I finally rounded up the calves, and was so furious with them that I hurled stones at them with all my might.

The calves ran toward home, their tongues hanging out. They, like me, were exhausted. Sweat dripped from my brow and off my nose, like water dropping from the eaves of a house after a downpour. I was dying of thirst. All I desired was a bowl of warm milk.

Some tents had been recently pitched in the middle of the valley. Their watchdogs barked madly at me, filling the valley with their clamor. An old woman came out of her tent and yelled at the watchdogs. After a while, everything became silent and I was able to pass safely by.

When I approached my family's tent, I saw smoke pouring from the chimney, and so I knew that Mother had prepared food and milk for me. I was filled with joy and ran home.

Figure 38. Separating a calf from its mother.



Table 8. A female pastoralist's typical summer day.

Time	Activity
6:00-9:00	Get up at five-thirty or six, drive all female yaks home, collect yak dung, prepare and eat breakfast, feed dogs.
9:00-11:00	Milk yaks with her daughter, tether adults, separate calves from adults.
11:00-12:00	Boil milk, churn butter, tether calves.
12:00-1:00	Fetch water, cook and eat lunch, clean inside the tent.
1:00-2:00	Process and dry cheese, make bread if necessary.
2:00-3:00	Feed dogs, collect dry yak dung and sheep dung for fuel, wash family members' clothes.
3:00-4:00	Collect yak dung if necessary.
4:00-5:00	Cook <i>phyi ja</i> , drive calves home, tether them.
5:00-7:00	Tie mother yaks, begin milking.
7:00-9:00	Release all adult yaks and drive them away from calves to wander during the night, cook and eat dinner, feed dogs.

Table 9. A male pastoralist's typical summer day.

Time	Activity
6:00-9:00	Get up at seven-thirty, offer <i>bsang</i> , assist female yaks to couple with bulls, eat breakfast, drive yaks home from the mountain.
9:00-11:00	Drive sheep to the mountains.
11:00-12:00	Drive yaks to the mountains after milking.
12:00-1:00	Herd both sheep and yaks on the mountain.
1:00-2:00	
2:00-3:00	
3:00-4:00	
4:00-5:00	Return home to eat <i>phyi ja</i> and then visit other families and chat.
5:00-7:00	Drive yaks home.
7:00-9:00	Drive sheep home, make <i>bsang</i> , eat dinner, chat, chant scriptures.

Horse races are held during summer. Also, new couples celebrate the establishment of their new tent with a *sbra ston* 'tent party'. In 2011, locals began celebrating summer picnics. Several neighboring families gather together and celebrate.

### Autumn

Autumn lasts from the early eighth lunar month to the early ninth lunar month. Temperatures are generally warm during autumn, but rapidly cool towards the end of the season. It rains almost every day, but large storms occur rarely. There is little wind. Plants remain green throughout most of autumn, but there are fewer flowers. Days become shorter and nights lengthen. Dew forms in the morning and frost is seen towards the end of the season.

Households move to the autumn pasture – which is both geographically and altitudinally similar to the summer pasture, but left untouched during the summer months – at the start of autumn, and stay there for around twenty days. They live in tents on the

slopes above their winter house, and so families are dispersed at this time. Livestock are tethered at night during autumn and remain tied up until after milking the next morning. They are then released to graze at around eleven or twelve o'clock. They are driven home in the evening, milked, and tethered to keep the calves from suckling during the night.

Herders return to the summer pasture in late autumn for around one month, in order to allow more grass to grow on the winter pasture. This practice is called *zog ba*. Not all livestock are taken; old and young livestock remain in the winter pasture. Also, livestock that will be slaughtered for winter use stay in the winter pasture. Family members divide into two groups; some stay at the winter pasture, while others go with most of the family's livestock. Newly married couples typically go for *zog ba*, while elders stay in the winter pasture, because the summer pasture is colder than the winter pasture and herding work there is difficult at this time of year, with wolves and heavy snowfall. Youths are considered more capable in dealing with such difficulties.

Figure 39. The autumn pasture.



A group of close relatives choose one household to herd all their livestock. Meanwhile, relatives who take care of that families' weak and old livestock remain at the winter pasture. *Zog ba* is very different from herding during summer, because livestock are only milked for herders' personal consumption. The herders focus on pasturing the livestock and thus strengthening them for the lean times ahead. Wolves are a potential problem at this time, because there are many livestock and few people. Livestock are thus carefully tethered each night and then released in the morning. Herds are brought back to the winter pasture again when the first deep snow of winter falls.

Autumn is a relatively free and happy time for herders. The most important work in this season is selling yaks and sheep to Hui and Han people. Men sell yaks and sheep at this time, because livestock are at their fattest and therefore fetch high prices. A large male yak was sold for 4,500-5,000 RMB in 2010, while female yaks went for 3,500-4,000 RMB. A big ram sold for 700-1,000 RMB, and a ewe for 400-600 RMB in 2010. A one-year-old sheep sold for 200 RMB in 2010. Smug po men do such business but women never do. Men also go to the county town and buy winter provisions.

Because livestock are healthy and strong in autumn, yaks produce much milk, and autumn is therefore a time for women to process and store butter and cheese. Milking is a heavy burden for women during this time.

In late autumn or early winter, a local *bla ma* organizes chanting and religious teachings for the community. Although the date is flexible, it usually begins on the fifteenth day of a lunar month, and lasts for a week. Attendees chant *mani* together for several days, and then listen to the *bla ma's* teachings for one or two days. All community members who are able to, participate.

Table 10. A female pastoralist's typical autumn day.

Time	Activities
6:00-9:00	Get up at five-thirty or six, drive all female yaks home, collect yak dung, prepare and eat breakfast, feed dogs.
9:00-11:00	Milk yaks, tether adults, separate calves from adults.
11:00-12:00	Boil milk, churn butter, tether calves.
12:00-1:00	Fetch water, cook and eat lunch, clean inside the tent.
1:00-2:00	Process and dry cheese, make bread if necessary.
2:00-3:00	Feed dogs, collect yak dung and sheep dung for fuel, wash family members' clothes.
3:00-4:00	Collect yak dung if necessary.
4:00-5:00	Cook <i>phyi ja</i> , drive calves home, tether them.
5:00-7:00	Tie mother yaks, milk.
7:00-9:00	Release all adult yaks and drive them away from calves to wander during the night, cook and eat dinner, feed dogs.

Table 11. A male pastoralist's typical autumn day.

Time	Activities
6:00-9:00	Get up at seven-thirty, offer <i>bsang</i> , eat breakfast, help drive mother yaks home if necessary.
9:00-11:00	Drive sheep to the mountains.
11:00-12:00	Drive yaks to the mountains after milking.
12:00-1:00	Herd both sheep and yaks on the mountains.
1:00-2:00	
2:00-3:00	
3:00-4:00	
4:00-5:00	Return home to eat <i>phyi ja</i> , visit other families to chat.
5:00-7:00	Drive yaks home.
7:00-9:00	Drive sheep home, make <i>bsang</i> , eat dinner, chat, chant scriptures.



Figures 40 and 41. Receiving religious teachings during late autumn.







# CHAPTER FOUR



## LIVESTOCK AND OTHER ANIMALS

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I look at the important animals in Smug po. First and foremost are livestock. In the section on livestock, I deal with yaks, sheep, horses, and dogs. Dogs are only dealt with briefly, but for other livestock, I discuss how they are bred, aged, and named. I also provide several tables listing the many terms pastoralists in Smug po use to refer to livestock. Additionally, I discuss aspects unique to each type of livestock, for example, the training of racehorses and the breaking in of pack yaks.

In the section on wildlife, I introduce some of the prominent non-domestic animals in Smug po. This is not an exhaustive exploration of all the wildlife in the area, nor of the sum total of all local knowledge about wildlife. Rather, it is a representation of what a typical herder might know about wild animals in the Smug po area. Most animals introduced here are rare, and some have never been seen. Much of this knowledge comes from oral tradition. Local knowledge of wildlife usually focuses on the symbolic significance of animals and their moral character. I provide scientific names for animals, except in cases where accurate identification to at least the genus level was impossible.

## YAKS

Yaks are referred to as *nor* 'wealth/ property', a name that suggests their value to pastoralists. Ecologically, they are better adapted to the conditions of the high altitude environment than other livestock, since they have long hair, and can graze very short grass. Yaks are often thought to characterize Tibetan culture, because they feature prominently in Tibetan traditional songs, riddles, legends, folktales, history, and orations about the mythical king, Ge sar, as symbols of mobility and strength. For example, a famous minister in the Tibetan government, Ri las skyes,<sup>1</sup> was born during the reign of Gri gum

---

<sup>1</sup> Ri las skyes is considered an important Tibetan minister who pioneered the use of yak hair, sheep wool, butter, cheese, and irrigation.

bstan po, the eighth Tibetan king.<sup>2</sup> His mother became a refugee and herded for others in order to survive. One day, she took a very short nap while herding, and dreamt that she had a son. She saw a white yak when she woke up – a good omen that someone special would be born.

Yaks are herders' prize possessions and are treated differently from other livestock. When yaks are not being used for transportation, milking, or having their hair cut, they are free to roam the pastures day and night. Male yaks are freer than females because they are not tethered, milked, and kept in enclosures.

*Ri rgyag* is the local dialect term for the practice of free-ranging livestock. This can be for as short as a day, but may be as long as a season. Smug po herders traditionally practiced this for male yaks in late spring until almost mid-summer. Since there is limited grass at this time, male yaks were released to find ample grass and water elsewhere. Such livestock are not bothered by wolves because they are strong and able to defend themselves. Thus, young livestock are never released to range freely. However, this has changed since land was divided and family pastures were fenced.

When yaks finish transporting goods and are returned to the pasture, their backs may be injured from the heavy loads, and their wounds often bleed. Such injured yaks are tended to until their wounds heal. They are tied near the home, and grass and water are brought to them. If a yak is sick, the family asks the local veterinarian, Dpal ldan, to come and treat it.

Horses or yaks that are ridden are known as *zhon pa*. A rope is put through a yak's nose and used as a rein while riding. Such yaks are called *rna lo ma* and are ridden while herding or moving pasture.

Yaks were used for transportation, loading food, and moving camps until 2010, but since then, most locals have purchased motorcycles or four-wheel drive vehicles.<sup>3</sup> A few elders used yaks when moving pastures in 2011, but people under twenty-five now generally use motorcycles or four-wheel drive vehicles when changing pasture, as they find it easier and faster.

---

<sup>2</sup> Locals believe that this king lived approximately 1,800 years ago, in the second century CE.

<sup>3</sup> Locals first began purchasing such vehicles around 2005.

## Determining the Age of Yaks

The age of yaks is determined by counting their teeth. Yaks grow two sets of teeth in their lives: calf teeth and adult teeth. The calf teeth are lost gradually, two every year, and replaced by adult teeth. The calf teeth are not used to determine age, rather, animals are aged according to the number of adult teeth.

A *be'u* is a one-year-old yak. Like people in Smug po, livestock are considered one-year-old at birth, and years are added successively at the New Year. A *pho be'u* is a male *be'u* and a female is a *mo be'u*. Herders separate the *be'u* from *nor nag* 'adult livestock' during the summer and autumn, so they can obtain more milk from mother yaks. It is very difficult to separate *be'u* from their mothers the first time, because they are not accustomed to being apart. Women herd the mothers far from their calves before untying the calves, otherwise mothers and calves run back together. A snake day<sup>4</sup> is chosen to separate the *be'u* from the adults for the first time. A snake day is chosen because snakes move slowly, and calves are therefore considered easier to herd on such days. *Be'u* are never separated from adults on a bird day because *be'u* are thought to run around like birds on this day.

Two-year-old yaks are called *ya ru* or *rnga bcos* 'washed tail' interchangeably. A *pho yar* is a male two-year-old and a *mo yar* is a female two-year-old. Women wash *ya ru*'s tails and then cut a little hair from the tail tip. They collect all the hair and use it to make such things as ropes for tethering yaks. On the morning the tails are cut, women take a bucket of water mixed with milk and a sharp pair of scissors or a knife. They go to the yak enclosure and wash their *ya ru*'s tails one by one. After washing, they cut a little hair from each *ya ru*'s tail. The eleventh day of the fourth lunar month is considered an auspicious day for any activity involving livestock, and therefore, *ya ru* tails are washed and cut on this day. The hair cut from the tails is sometimes stored by the family as a way of maintaining the household *g.yang* 'prosperity/ potency'.

---

<sup>4</sup> According to the Tibetan calendar, days and years are divided into tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, bird, dog, pig, mice, and cow days and years.

Figure 42. A *be'u*.



Figure 43. A *ya ru*.



New ropes are prepared by women for *be'u* and *ya ru*. Such ropes are usually made from sheep wool but may also be made from yak or goat hair. These ropes are used to hobble the front legs of disobedient *be'u* and *ya ru*, to prevent them from escaping. Other *be'u* and *ya ru* are not hobbled, except during the first few days after calves are separated from their mothers, a time when all *be'u* are hobbled.

Children older than six or seven usually herd *be'u* and *ya ru*. They do not herd far from the home but herd calves beside a river that most homes are near. Children play together while herding calves.

Three-year-old male yaks are called *shad* or *nyos bcos* 'washed twice'. *Shad mo* is the common name for a female three-year-old, though they may also be called *ar mo*. The following proverb describes how a family's good fortune is indicated by its three-year-old female yaks giving birth.

<sup>1</sup>ཁ་ཡར་གྲོ་ཚང་འར་མོ་རྩེབ།

<sup>1</sup>kha yar 'gro tshang 'ar mo rtseb<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[An] upwardly mobile family's *ar mo* gives birth.

Some *nyos bcos* may still suckle if their mother has not yet given birth again, and are therefore herded with *be'u* and *ya ru*. However, if the mother has bred again the *nyos bcos* are herded with the adult livestock. Women may wash and cut a little hair from the tips of the tails of *nyos bcos* that are still herded with *be'u* and *ya ru*.

Four-year-old yaks are called *so gnyis* 'two teeth', as *so gnyis* have two big bottom teeth at the front of their mouths. Male yaks of this age are called *g.yu gu* while females are called *thul ma*, though if they give birth for the first time they are called *rtseb ris*. There is no difference between *thul ma* and *rtseb ris* locally, but in literary Tibetan, *thul ma* refers to all female four-year-old yaks, while *rtseb ris* is a female four-year-old yak that is pregnant and will give birth in the coming year.

---

<sup>5</sup> The literary form is *btsas*.

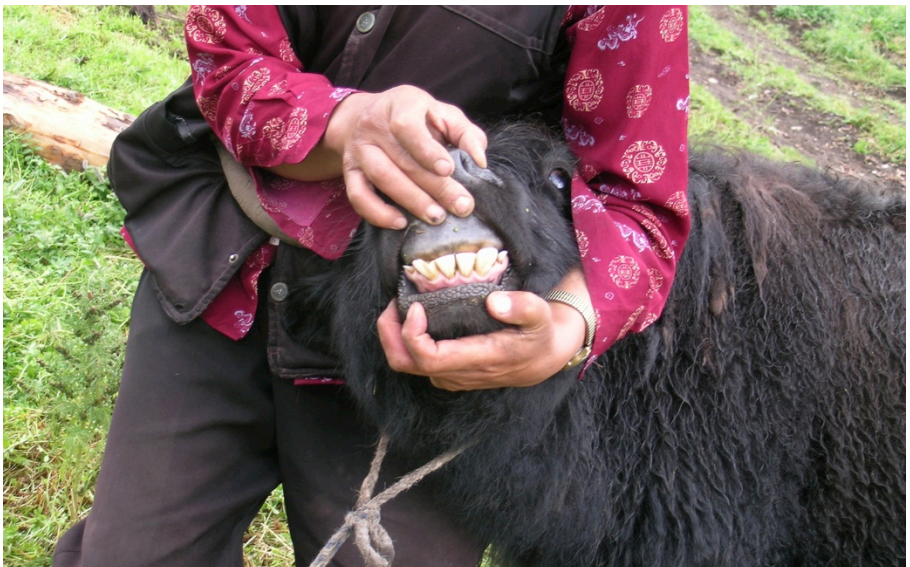


Five-year-old yaks are named *so bzhi* 'four teeth'. Males are called *g.yag sar* and females *'bri*. At this age there are four large, similar-sized teeth at the front of the yak's mouth.

Figure 44. A four-year-old yak, or *so gnyis* 'two teeth'.



Figure 45. A five-year-old yak, or *so bzhi* 'four teeth'.



Six-year-old yaks are called *so drug* 'six teeth' and have six large teeth at the front of their mouth. Their teeth sizes are identical and their color extremely white, showing that the yak is still young.

Seven-year-old yaks are all called *kha gang* 'full mouth'. People afterwards check the color and size of teeth annually to determine the age of their livestock. Yaks lose their old teeth in late autumn and grow new sets of teeth every year prior to seven years of age. Permanent teeth appear after the age of seven. These teeth are initially white, but after one or two years start to become dark, and then after another two or more years become yellow. Once a yak has a full set of adult teeth, its age is determined by examining the teeth's color. A local saying goes:

<sup>1</sup>.རེ་སེར་རེ་ནག

<sup>1</sup>re ser re nag

<sup>1</sup>.[Tooth] color changes between black and yellow.

Full-grown male yaks are all called *g.yag* and are compared to mountains because of their great strength:

<sup>1</sup>.གཡག་རྫོང་རི་རབ་དང་འདྲ།

<sup>1</sup>g.yag rgod ri rab dang 'dra

<sup>1</sup>The yak is as large as a big mountain.

Female yaks are called *'bri rgan* and are kept for milking and breeding. *'Bri rgan* that no longer produce offspring or milk are slaughtered, though sometimes they are slaughtered even though they have provided many offspring and dairy products, simply because they are old, infirm, and difficult to manage. Herders, especially women, are fonder of female yaks than males, and sing songs to mother yaks when milking. A traditional local saying demonstrates the care lavished on *'bri*:

<sup>1</sup>.འབྲི་མོ་འི་དྲིན་ལན།

<sup>1</sup>'bri mo drin len

<sup>1</sup>Repaying the *'bri mo*'s kindness.



Figure 46. A seven-year-old yak or *kha gang* 'full mouth'.



Figure 47. An elderly adult yak with worn, yellow teeth.



Yaks live for seventeen to nineteen years. The oldest yaks are called *nor lo lon* and may have few or no teeth.

Male yak horns are called *g.yag rwa* and are sometimes used to approximate of an animal's age. After yaks and sheep mature, ridges appear on the horns that accumulate with age. However, the marks on the horn are indistinct and do not precisely determine the animal's age, and are therefore rarely used to determine an animal's age.

Figure 48. A yak horn with ridges.



### Differentiating Yaks

Human names are never given to animals. Local herders name and differentiate livestock according to hair color, horns, and whether they have undergone religious rituals (detailed below). Hair color is the most important factor for differentiating animals. Black yaks are the most common in Smug po.

*Nag tho* are black yaks without horns. Male *nag tho* are called *g.yag nag tho* and females *'bri nag tho*. Small black *g.yag nag tho*

are called *nag tho chung ba*. *Rog rog* refers to black yaks with horns; males are called *g.yag rog rog*, females *'bri rog rog*. *Ya ru* with horns are called *ya ru rog rog*, and so on. Other color-based names include *rag rag* 'black and yellow', *dkar dkar* 'white' (all-white yaks are the most uncommon variety), *ser ser* 'light yellow', and *khra khra* 'piebald'. *'Dzi 'dzi* are black with a white spot on their forehead. Such animals are called *'dzi lang* if they have horns, whereas hornless ones are called *'dzi tho* and so on. See the table below.

Table 12. Yak terms.

		No Horns		Horns	
Age	Color	Male	Female	Male	Female
be'u	black	<i>pho be'u nag tho</i>	<i>mo be'u nag tho</i>	<i>pho be'u rog rog</i>	<i>mo be'u rog rog</i>
	white	<i>pho be'u dkar tho</i>	<i>mo be'u dkar tho</i>	<i>pho be'u dkar dkar</i>	<i>mo be'u dkar dkar</i>
	piebald	<i>pho be'u khra tho</i>	<i>mo be'u khra tho</i>	<i>pho be'u khra khra</i>	<i>mo be'u khra khra</i>
	gray <sup>6</sup>	<i>pho be'u sngo tho</i>	<i>mo be'u sngo tho</i>	<i>pho be'u sngo sngo</i>	<i>mo be'u sngo sngo</i>
	brown	<i>pho be'u rgya tho</i>	<i>mo be'u rgya tho</i>	<i>pho be'u rgya rgya</i>	<i>mo be'u rgya rgya</i>
	light yellow	<i>pho be'u rag tho</i>	<i>mo be'u rag tho</i>	<i>pho be'u rag rag</i>	<i>mo be'u rag rag</i>
	white upper	<i>pho be'u dkar tho</i>	<i>mo be'u dkar tho</i>	<i>pho be'u dkar cha</i>	<i>mo be'u dkar cha</i>

<sup>6</sup> Locally referred to as *sngon po* 'blue'.

<i>ya ru</i>	black	<i>pho yar nag tho</i>	<i>mo yar nag tho</i>	<i>pho yar rog rog</i>	<i>mo yar rog rog</i>
	white	<i>pho yar dkar tho</i>	<i>mo yar dkar tho</i>	<i>pho yar dkar dkar</i>	<i>mo yar dkar dkar</i>
	piebald	<i>pho yar khra tho</i>	<i>mo yar khra tho</i>	<i>pho yar khra khra</i>	<i>mo yar khra khra</i>
	gray	<i>pho yar sngo tho</i>	<i>mo yar sngo tho</i>	<i>pho yar sngo sngo</i>	<i>mo yar sngo sngo</i>
	brown	<i>pho yar rgya tho</i>	<i>mo yar rgya tho</i>	<i>pho yar rgya rgya</i>	<i>mo yar rgya rgya</i>
	light yellow	<i>pho yar rag tho</i>	<i>mo yar rag tho</i>	<i>pho yar rag rag</i>	<i>mo yar rag rag</i>
	white upper	<i>pho yar dkar tho</i>	<i>mo yar dkar tho</i>	<i>pho yar dkar cha</i>	<i>mo yar dkar cha</i>
<i>shad</i>	black	<i>shad nag tho</i>	<i>shad mo nag tho</i>	<i>shad rog rog</i>	<i>shad mo rog rog</i>
	white	<i>shad dkar tho</i>	<i>shad mo dkar tho</i>	<i>shad dkar dkar</i>	<i>shad mo dkar dkar</i>
	piebald	<i>shad khra tho</i>	<i>shad mo khra tho</i>	<i>shad khra khra</i>	<i>shad mo khra khra</i>
	gray	<i>shad sngo tho</i>	<i>shad mo sngo tho</i>	<i>shad sngo sngo</i>	<i>shad mo sngo sngo</i>
	light yellow	<i>shad rag tho</i>	<i>shad mo rgya tho</i>	<i>shad rgya rgya</i>	<i>shad mo rgya rgya</i>

	brown	<i>shad rgya tho</i>	<i>shad mo rgya tho</i>	<i>shad rag rag</i>	<i>shad mo rag rag</i>
	white upper	<i>shad dkar tho</i>	<i>shad mo dkar tho</i>	<i>shad dkar khra</i>	<i>shad mo dkar khra</i>
<i>g.yu gu and thul ma</i>	black	<i>g.yu gu nag tho</i>	<i>thul ma nag tho</i>	<i>g.yu gu rog rog</i>	<i>shad mo rog rog</i>
	white	<i>g.yu gu dkar tho</i>	<i>thul ma dkar tho</i>	<i>g.yu gu dkar dkar</i>	<i>shad mo dkar dkar</i>
	piebald	<i>g.yu gu khra tho</i>	<i>thul ma khra tho</i>	<i>g.yu gu khra khra</i>	<i>shad mo khra khra</i>
	gray	<i>g.yu gu sngo tho</i>	<i>thul ma sngo tho</i>	<i>g.yu gu sngo sngo</i>	<i>shad mo sngo sngo</i>
	light yellow	<i>g.yu gu ser tho</i>	<i>thul ma ser tho</i>	<i>g.yu gu rgya rgya</i>	<i>shad mo rgya rgya</i>
	brown	<i>g.yu gu rag tho</i>	<i>thul ma rgya tho</i>	<i>g.yu gu rag rag</i>	<i>shad mo rag rag</i>
	white upper	<i>g.yu gu khra tho</i>	<i>thul ma khra tho</i>	<i>g.yu gu khra khra</i>	<i>shad mo dkar khra</i>
<i>g.yag and 'bri</i>	black	<i>g.yag nag tho</i>	<i>'bri nag tho</i>	<i>g.yag rog rog</i>	<i>bri rog rog</i>
	white	<i>g.yag dkar tho</i>	<i>'bri dkar tho</i>	<i>g.yag dkar dkar</i>	<i>'bri dkar dkar</i>
	piebald	<i>g.yag khra tho</i>	<i>'bri khra tho</i>	<i>g.yag khra khra</i>	<i>'bri khra khra</i>

	gray	<i>g.yag sngo tho</i>	<i>'bri sngo tho</i>	<i>g.yag sngo sngo</i>	<i>'bri sngo sngo</i>
	light yellow	<i>g.yag rgya tho</i>	<i>'bri rag tho</i>	<i>g.yag rgya rgya</i>	<i>'bri rgya rgya</i>
	brown	<i>g.yag rgya tho</i>	<i>'bri rgya tho</i>	<i>g.yag rag rag</i>	<i>'bri rag rag</i>
	white upper	<i>g.yag dkar tho</i>	<i>'bri dkar tho</i>	<i>g.yag dkar cha</i>	<i>'bri dkar cha</i>

### Yak Breeding

Having a *bag rdu* 'stud bull' is essential for yak breeding. Much attention is paid when selecting a stud bull from among the herd, but the number of stud animals is kept to a minimum. Therefore, only five to six (usually two older and three to four younger) stud bulls are kept. Tibetan pastoralists usually select stud bulls once a year, during the spring.

Two important things are considered when choosing a stud: its heritage and individual characteristics. Its heritage includes the bull's mother's reputation for quality, long hair, size, and tractability. Selection of a stud animal is also decided based on its size and tameness, which can be determined when the animal is one or two years old. Sometimes black animals are preferred, because black hair is considered preferable for making tents and so on. After a stud bull is chosen from among bull calves, the other bulls are castrated. Alcohol is rubbed on the scrotum, an incision is made with a sharp knife, and the testicles are pulled out by hand. They are then discarded; people do not eat them and they are not fed to dogs. Wool ash is rubbed on the wound to staunch the bleeding, and the top of the scrotum is then tied tightly with string. Within the following two months, the scrotum falls off. Only men castrate animals.

When a stud animal has been selected, herders focus on insemination and pregnancy. Female yaks are *brgyugs* 'in heat' or

'fertile' from mid-summer to late autumn. Not all female yaks are fertile at the same time. If a stud follows a female wherever she goes and repeatedly tries to mount her, pastoralists know she is in heat.

Some female yaks fall pregnant without any assistance, but most need help. When a female yak is receptive, herders bring several families' stud animals together and tie the female yak's front legs together so she will not move when mounted. A special whistle in short, repeated bursts is used to call the bull if he runs away from the female yak or does not notice her. Five or six stud bulls are allowed to couple with the 'bri. Wet yak dung is then smeared on the 'bri's back to discourage further couplings (if the bull mounts the cow, his face will be directly against the dung, which discourages mating). While smearing the dung, the man says:

<sup>1</sup>བེའི་མགོ་གྱེན་ལ་འཁོར།

<sup>1</sup>be'i mgo gyen la 'khor

<sup>1</sup>[May the] calf's head turn upwards.

This is said in the hope that during pregnancy, the calf's head will face in the same direction as the mother, but when the calf is born, the head will emerge first. Calves born backwards are often stillborn, or die soon after birth.

After several days, studs give up following the female yak, and herders know she is probably pregnant, but cannot be completely sure; sometimes one female yak needs to be coupled several times.

Pastoralists usually attempt to arrange couplings for all female yaks, but a few female yaks are still not pregnant in late autumn. If the *nyos bcos* still suckle their mother's teats, it is clear that a female yak has not become pregnant. Some female yaks do not become pregnant even though they are coupled several times. Such individuals are called 'bri *skam pa* 'dry yak cow' and are usually sold or slaughtered, especially if they are difficult to manage.

Yaks usually give birth once every two years. Pregnant female yaks are called *be'u ma*, and female yaks that gave birth during the past year are called *steng ma*. Pregnant yaks are given special care during winter. They are fed *gso chas* before they leave for pasture, especially on snowy days. When a female yak first gives birth, women



tie sheep wool on its tail and back to show others that the family's new female has given birth. *Yar ma* are female yaks that have a two-year-old calf.

### Breaking in Yaks

Only *khal ma* 'pack yaks' are loaded and used to transport things.<sup>7</sup> Breaking in yaks is a long, difficult process. Before a domestic yak becomes a pack yak it is referred to as an '*ur ra* or *g.yag sar* 'wild' or 'new one'. Yaks are broken in *sos ka* when they are strong enough to work, but not strong enough to resist.

Yaks are selected to become pack yaks when they are *so bzhi*, *so drug*, or *kha gang*, as these are the biggest, strongest yaks. Yaks older than *kha gang* are not made into pack yaks. Hair is usually not collected from male yaks that will be broken, otherwise, they become wilder and more difficult to tame. A traditional saying implies that male yaks cannot be broken by any means after their hair has been collected (unlike female yaks):

<sup>1</sup>.འབྲི་རྫོད་ཐག་ལ་འདོགས།

<sup>1</sup>'*bri rgod thag la 'dogs*

<sup>1</sup>Wild female yaks can only be tamed<sup>8</sup> with ropes.

Catching yaks to become pack yaks is difficult and dangerous. '*Ur ra* have sharp horns, agile legs, and great strength that make them extremely dangerous. However, herders, especially men, enjoy the challenge and are thus enthusiastic about breaking in yaks. Elders typically encourage youths to participate in yak-breaking and thus test themselves. All household males typically participate in the process of breaking a yak. If there is only one male in the family he usually calls some relatives or close friends to help him.

---

<sup>7</sup> Yaks can carry around eighty kilograms and travel twenty to thirty kilometers per day.

<sup>8</sup> Literally, tied.

After an unbroken yak has been roped, it is immobilized by hobbling it with *lag sdom*, a soft, short rope usually made of sheep wool, which will not harm the yak's legs.<sup>9</sup> When the yak has been caught and hobbled, the man stands beside the yak and loudly says:

1.གཡག་རྒྱུབ་བལ་གྱིས་གང་།  
 2.གཡག་གཤིས་རྟ་ལས་དྲང་།  
 3.མི་གཡག་ཞེ་འགལ་ལ་མི་འགྲོ།

<sup>1</sup>g.yag rgyab bal gyis gang  
<sup>2</sup>g.yag gshis rta las drang  
<sup>3</sup>mi g.yag zhe 'gal la mi 'gro

<sup>1</sup>Yaks' backs are covered with wool.  
<sup>2</sup>Yaks' attitudes are better than horses'.  
<sup>3</sup>Herders and yaks will never grow apart.

This is the first time that the yak becomes a pack yak and, because in Tibetan areas every first time is considered important and auspicious, herders are particularly concerned about the success of the endeavor on this occasion. The words spoken to the yak are thought to ensure success on that day and in the yak's future career as a pack animal. In order to further ensure good luck, some herders also spit on the yak's back before putting on the new *glang sga* 'yak pack frame'.

Next, the herder puts the pack frame on the yak's back and fastens it with three ropes. The first is *glo* 'girth', a long rope around the yak's chest that is fastened to the frame. The second is *gong thag*, a long rope tied under the yak's neck. Third is *snyed*, a short rope tied under the tail. These ropes are all made of sheep wool and are tied in this order every time a yak is loaded.

The animal is then unhobbled and allowed to join the herd for a half day, so it may become accustomed to the pack frame. The yak jumps, runs, and bucks when released.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Lag sdom* are used only for hobbling livestock. In addition to being used when breaking in yaks, they are also used when milking.

Figure 49. A *glang sga*, a pack frame for yaks.



When the yak has grazed freely for half a day, it is hobbled again with *lag sdom*. Two men then load *do yas* – two equally weighted objects – simultaneously on either side of the yak. The first *do yas* loaded on a yak should not be too heavy – they are typically around forty kilograms each. Herders often use two bags of barley as *do yas* on this occasion, and fasten them tightly to the yak so they will be stable if the animal jumps and bucks. After loading the yak, the hobble is untied, and the animal runs, bucks, and jumps. It is thought that the animal will never become a good pack yak if the pack frame and objects fall. However, if the items remain, this indicates that it will become a good pack yak.

Herders also take the following precautions to ensure the success of the breaking-in process. The pack yak's pack frame, *glo*, *gong thag*, and *snyed* must all be new, because if any of these breaks, the yak's back will be injured. Meat and household utensils must not be put on the pack frame the first time the yak is loaded, because the smell of meat may frighten the yak, whereas household utensils such as pots may make noises that frighten the yak. Importantly, the yak

must never be loaded with objects borrowed from a family that has a different protector deity, as doing so may cause the yak to become blind, grow weak, and eventually die. Men should not sleep with their wives the night before breaking a yak, as doing so may cause the ropes to break and the pack frame to fall from the yak.<sup>10</sup>

### Hybrid Cattle

A *mdzo* is a male crossbreed of a cow and a yak, whereas females hybrids are known as *mdzo mo*. These may be the offspring of a male yak and female cow or male cow and female yak; the latter are more common in Smug po. Several families share one male cow, which is used to sire hybrid offspring.

Hybrid numbers are kept to a minimum in Smug po. The first generation hybrid offspring is more slender than a yak, and has very short hair, a hairless tail except for a tuft of hair at the end, and comparatively long legs. These animals are not well suited to local environmental conditions. They easily get cold in winter, and since they require more fodder than yaks, hybrids sometimes starve to death. These animals therefore require special care during the winter. Nevertheless, first generation crossbreeds have advantages. Compared to yaks, they can carry heavier loads, walk faster, and are easier to handle and break. Female *mdzo* give more milk than yaks, though it is less fatty and less nutritious than yak milk. First-generation hybrids live for up to twenty-five years, compared to about seventeen or eighteen years for pure-bred yaks.

Second generation hybrids, the descendants of *mdzo mo* and male yaks, are called *sto lu* if male and *sto mo* if female. *Sto lu* and *sto mo* are disliked because they are considered lazy, difficult to manage, and unable to carry heavy loads. Females can reproduce, but do not produce sufficient milk for their offspring and human consumption; males cannot reproduce. Both the first- and second-generation hybrids are difficult to herd. During summer they lead other yaks high into the mountains and onto other people's

---

<sup>10</sup> In fact, men typically never sleep with their wives the night before any important new undertaking.

pastures. During winter they jump through fences to eat grass that pastoralists have left for winter use. Hybrid livestock are thus considered a mixed blessing. However, Smug po pastoralists rarely slaughter hybrid animals for meat, as doing so would accrue bad karma. Instead they sell unwanted hybrids to Han and Hui traders.

## SHEEP

Sheep have various uses for herders. They are slaughtered for meat, sold to earn cash income, and produce wool that is important for making ropes and generating income. Traditionally, sheep's wool was used to make carpets known as *g.yang si*<sup>11</sup> and to make *ngo phying* 'felt raincoats'. Sheepskin is useful for making traditional robes: *slog pa*,<sup>12</sup> *tsha ru*,<sup>13</sup> and *tshar zhwa*.<sup>14</sup>

A traditional song describes the value of sheep (Mtsho po, female, b. 1965):

1. ལུག་གཡང་དཀར་ཡན་ན་རྩིན་ཆེན་མེད།།
2. སྤྱི་རྩོ་བལ་དང་པགས་པས་གསོས།།
3. ཕྱི་རྩོ་ཤ་དང་ཁྲག་གིས་གསོས།།
4. ལུག་གཡང་དཀར་རྩིན་ལན་འཇལ་ཐབས་མེད།།

1. lug g.yang dkar yan na drin chen med
2. snga dro bal dang pags pas gsos
3. phyi dro sha dang khrag gis gsos
4. lug g.yang dkar drin lan 'jal thabs med

<sup>1</sup>None are kinder than white sheep.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *G.yang si* is similar to felt, but is somewhat less processed. There are no designs or motifs on such carpets.

<sup>12</sup> *Slog pa* is made from sheepskin and fleece and worn in winter.

<sup>13</sup> *Tshar ru* is made from lambskin and fleece and is only worn on such special occasions as New Year and weddings.

<sup>14</sup> *Tshar zhwa* is a hat made from lambskin and fleece and worn on special occasions.

<sup>15</sup> The color white indicates purity and good fortune.

- 2>In the morning they feed people with their wool and skin.
- 3>In the afternoon they feed people with their meat and blood.
- 4There is no way at all to repay the kindness of sheep.

Figure 50. Sheep in the enclosure next to the winter house.



### Determining the Age of Sheep

Sheep are aged according to the number of lower incisors. A one-year-old lamb is called *lu gu*. Females are called *mo lug* and males *pho lug*.

*Rna kha byed pa* 'ear-marking and castrating'<sup>16</sup> is usually carried out on the first day of the fifth lunar month. To begin, a man catches the best male lamb from among all the lambs. His selection is based on the lamb's size and strength, and its mother's productivity in terms of offspring and milk. This lamb will be the breeding ram

---

<sup>16</sup> *Rna kha byed pa* literally refers to only ear marking, but elliptically refers to both ear marking and castrating.

among that cohort. Having caught the lamb, he ties some wool (not from this lamb) around its horns, dabs some butter on its forehead, and then purifies its body with smoke from smoldering juniper leaves. This lamb is also ear-marked, as described below. Finally, he puts his mouth close to the lamb's ear and says (Sgrol b+he, male, b. 1961):

- <sup>1</sup> རྒྱུད་ལུག་སྟོང་ལུག་ཞིག་གི་ཕ་ཡིན།།
- <sup>2</sup> རྒྱུད་གྱི་གཡོས་རྒྱ་གསེར་གྱིས་ཤེན།།
- <sup>3</sup> རྒྱུད་གྱི་གཡོན་རྒྱ་དངུལ་གྱིས་བརྒྱན།།

- <sup>1</sup>kyod lug stong lug zhig gi pha yin
- <sup>2</sup>kyod kyi g.yos rwa gser gyis shan
- <sup>3</sup>kyod kyi g.yon rwa dngul gyis brgyan

- <sup>1</sup>You are the father of a thousand sheep.
- <sup>2</sup>Your right horn will be decorated with gold.
- <sup>3</sup>Your left horn will be adorned with silver.

All the family's new lambs, both male and female, are then ear-marked. After the best lamb, others are caught one by one regardless of gender and quality. Each family ear-marks their lambs differently from others, but ear-marks all their sheep with the same mark, in order to distinguish their sheep from those of others. If a herder finds an unfamiliar sheep, they therefore know who it belongs to. For example, one family may cut a small piece of skin from the edge of the sheep's ear, while another family may make a small hole in the middle of the ear.<sup>17</sup> Men always ear-mark lambs.

After ear-marking, the family keeps each piece of lambskin that was cut from the ears, wraps them together in wool, and places the bundle in a high place in the winter house, usually on the wall, where it is kept for as long as possible. This protects and generates

---

<sup>17</sup> A household may consist of several nuclear families. All sheep belonging to the household have the same ear mark, but individual families distinguish their own sheep within this flock by, for example, marking their horns with paint, or tying cloth to the sheep.



auspiciousness for the sheep, and also helps maintain the family's *g.yang*.

On the same day that lambs are ear-marked, all male lambs born that year, apart from the chosen breeder, are castrated. Only men participate in castrating. In preparation, a knife is sharpened and a large pot of milk and water is prepared. Then, when a lamb is caught for ear-marking, the man checks its gender. If it is a male, he makes an incision in the scrotum and removes the testicles, which he places in the pot of milk and water. He then takes a piece of wool from a small pile beside him, burns it, and applies it to the wound. He next ties a string around the scrotum before releasing the lamb from the enclosure. Once all lambs have been released from the enclosure, only adult sheep remain inside. The enclosure is then opened, and ewes rush to find their lamb. The melodious sound of many bleating lambs and ewes signals the successful completion of the day's important work. Next, the liquid is drained from the pot and the testicles are discarded. They are either buried in a hole, or placed in a hole, burned, and then covered with earth; this prevents dogs or other animals from eating the testicles, which is considered to bring misfortune to the family. Finally, the men enjoy a special meal prepared by women. Neighbors and relatives, especially children, gather to enjoy this small celebration.

Two-year-old sheep are called *lag ga*. Males are called *pho lag* and females are called *lag mo* or *mo la*. It is difficult to care for *lag ga* during winter, because they are weak and easily die. *Lag ga* are thus fed dried grass and wheat dough balls to build their strength in winter.

Three-year-old sheep are called *so gnyis*. Males are called *thong ba* and females are called *tsher mo*. Both *thong ba* and *tsher mo* have two big incisors at the front of their mouth. Some ewes first give birth when they are three years old and then give birth annually.

Four-year-old sheep are called *so bzhi*. Males are called *shab gzan* and females *ma mo*. *So bzhi* are sheep nearly at their strongest. Five-year-old sheep are called *so drug*. All ewes have begun to give birth yearly by this age.

Six-year-old sheep are called *kha gang*. *Shab rgan* or *shab gzan* refer to male sheep and *ma rgan* or *ma mo* to ewes. After the age of six, sheep are called *shab rgan*, *ma rgan*, or *kha gang* and then one year is added to the name for each successive year, for

example an eight-year-old sheep is called a *kha gang nas lo gnyis* 'a two-year-old *kha gang*'.

Figure 51. A three-year-old sheep or *so gnyis* 'two teeth'.



Figure 52. A four-year-old sheep or *so bzhi* 'four teeth'.



Figure 53. A *kha gang* sheep.



### Differentiating Sheep

The horns, color, and size of individual animals are used to distinguish sheep, as shown in the following table.

Table 13. Sheep terms.

		No Horns		Horns	
Age	Color	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>lu gu</i>	white	<i>pho lug dkar tho</i>	<i>mo lug dkar tho</i>	<i>pho lug dkar dkar</i>	<i>mo lug dkar dkar</i>
	white with black head	<i>pho lug smug tho</i>	<i>mo lug smug tho</i>	<i>pho lug smug ro</i>	<i>mo lug smug ro</i>
	yellow, or white with yellow head	<i>pho lug kham tho</i>	<i>mo lug kham tho</i>	<i>pho lug kham kham</i>	<i>mo lug kham kham</i>

<i>lu gu</i>	white with yellow spots on head	<i>pho lug rgya tho</i>	<i>mo lug rgya tho</i>	<i>pho lug rgya rgya</i>	<i>mo lug rgya rgya</i>
	black	<i>pho lug nag tho</i>	<i>mo lug nag tho</i>	<i>pho lug nag nag</i>	<i>mo lug nag nag</i>
	white with black spots on head	<i>pho lug khra tho</i>	<i>mo lu khra tho</i>	<i>pho lug khra bzhos</i>	<i>mo lug khra bzhos</i>
<i>lag ga</i>	white	<i>pho lag dkar tho</i>	<i>mo lag dkar tho</i>	<i>pho lag dkar dkar</i>	<i>mo lag dkar dkar</i>
	white with black head	<i>pho lag smug tho</i>	<i>mo lag smug tho</i>	<i>pho lag smug ro</i>	<i>mo lag smug ro</i>
	yellow, or white with yellow head	<i>pho lag kham tho</i>	<i>mo lag kham tho</i>	<i>pho lag kham kham</i>	<i>mo lag kham kham</i>
	white with yellow spots on head	<i>pho lag rgya tho</i>	<i>mo lag rgya tho</i>	<i>pho lag rgya rgya</i>	<i>mo lag rgya rgya</i>
	black	<i>pho lag nag tho</i>	<i>mo lag nag tho</i>	<i>pho lag nag nag</i>	<i>mo lag nag nag</i>
	white with black spots on head	<i>pho lag khra tho</i>	<i>mo lag khra tho</i>	<i>pho lag khra khra</i>	<i>mo lag khra khra</i>
<i>thong ba and tsher mo</i>	white	<i>thong ba dkar tho</i>	<i>tsher mo dkar tho</i>	<i>thong ba dkar dkar</i>	<i>tsher mo dkar dkar</i>
	white with black head	<i>thong ba smug tho</i>	<i>tsher mo smug tho</i>	<i>thong ba smug ro</i>	<i>tsher mo smug ro</i>
	yellow, or white with yellow head	<i>thong ba kham tho</i>	<i>tsher mo kham tho</i>	<i>thong ba kham kham</i>	<i>tsher mo kham kham</i>
	white with yellow spots on head	<i>thong ba rgya tho</i>	<i>tsher mo rgya tho</i>	<i>thong ba rgya rgya</i>	<i>tsher mo rgya rgya</i>
	black	<i>thong ba nag tho</i>	<i>tsher mo nag tho</i>	<i>thong ba nag nag</i>	<i>thong ba nag nag</i>
	white with black spots on head	<i>thong ba khra tho</i>	<i>tsher mo khra tho</i>	<i>thong ba khra khra</i>	<i>tsher mo khra khra</i>
<i>shab gzan and ma mo</i>	white	<i>thong ba dkar tho</i>	<i>tsher mo dkar tho</i>	<i>thong ba dkar dkar</i>	<i>tsher mo dkar dkar</i>
	white with black head	<i>thong ba smug tho</i>	<i>tsher mo smug tho</i>	<i>thong ba smug ro</i>	<i>tsher mo smug ro</i>

	yellow, or white with yellow head	<i>thong ba kham tho</i>	<i>tsher mo kham tho</i>	<i>thong ba kham kham</i>	<i>tsher mo kham kham</i>
<i>shab gzan and ma mo</i>	white with yellow spots on head	<i>thong ba rgya tho</i>	<i>tsher mo rgya tho</i>	<i>thong ba rgya rgya</i>	<i>tsher mo rgya rgya</i>
	black	<i>thong ba nag tho</i>	<i>tsher mo nag tho</i>	<i>thong ba nag nag</i>	<i>tsher mo nag nag</i>
	white with black spots on head	<i>thong ba khra tho</i>	<i>tsher mo khra tho</i>	<i>thong ba khra khra</i>	<i>tsher mo khra khra</i>
<i>shab rgan and ma rgan</i>	white	<i>shab rgan dkar tho</i>	<i>ma rgan dkar tho</i>	<i>shab rgan dkar dkar</i>	<i>ma rgan dkar dkar</i>
	white with black head	<i>shab rgan smug tho</i>	<i>ma rgan smug tho</i>	<i>shab rgan smug ro</i>	<i>ma rgan smug ro</i>
	yellow, or white with yellow head	<i>shab rgan kham tho</i>	<i>ma rgan kham tho</i>	<i>shab rgan kham kham</i>	<i>ma rgan kham kham</i>
	white with yellow spots on head	<i>shab rgan rgya tho</i>	<i>ma rgan rgya tho</i>	<i>shab rgan rgya rgya</i>	<i>ma rgan rgya rgya</i>
	black	<i>shab rgan nag tho</i>	<i>ma rgan nag tho</i>	<i>shab rgan nag nag</i>	<i>ma rgan nag nag</i>
	white with black spots on head	<i>shab rgan khra tho</i>	<i>ma rgan khra tho</i>	<i>shab rgan khra khra</i>	<i>ma rgan khra khra</i>

### Sheep Breeding

Selection of a *khrom* 'ram' is based on its mother's breeding capacity and size. Rams are relatively numerous compared to yak studs and breeding stallions. A flock typically has five to eight rams. Breeding rams are sheared as other sheep, except a tuft of wool on the hind legs, known as *brla tshar* 'leg hair' is left, as is another on the two front legs, known as *lag rtsid* 'arm hair'. Breeding rams are thus distinguished from other sheep by their wool, coiled horns, and larger size.

If a ram no longer has energy or strength for breeding, it is castrated. It may then be slaughtered, though the meat is not tasty.

Two sheep-breeding schedules are employed: *bkag lug* 'restricted sheep' and *dgun lug* 'winter sheep'. *Bkag lug* is implemented before the pastoralists move to the summer pasture. Herders use a *dbo kheb*, a cloth that covers the ram's abdomen, to prevent it from impregnating ewes in summer. The cloth is removed and the ram is allowed to mate with ewes in autumn, so that ewes will give birth during spring. *Dgun lug*, which is when pastoralists allow rams to mate during summer, results in ewes giving birth during winter.

Each breeding strategy has advantages and disadvantages. *Bkag lug* delays breeding until late in the year and delays birth until grass sprouts. Consequently, herders do not feed ewes with fodder. However, because ewes give birth late, they will breed again that year and the herders will need to feed such lambs next winter.

When *dgun lug* is employed, lambs are full-grown when the mother is ready to breed again in summer. The disadvantage of *dgun lug* is that giving birth in early winter means the ewes and lambs must be given extra care in winter to prevent them from freezing to death.

An exceptional ewe may give birth to eleven lambs in her lifetime, though a ewe that gives birth nine or ten times is considered a good sheep, and is usually not slaughtered. Such animals often become *tshé thar* 'consecrated livestock' that are described in more detail in a later section on ensuring fortune.

Smug po herders feed stored fodder to breeding ewes and weak sheep in autumn and winter. Ewes may give birth day or night, and the ewe and lamb must be cared for, especially ewes that give birth for the first time. New mothers may reject their lambs, and to avoid this, herders may separate the ewe and her lamb from the flock until she accepts her lamb. If a lamb dies soon after birth, the mother is given another lamb to suckle. Lambs that suckle from two ewes grow faster than others.

Locals began selling off their sheep in 2005, and by 2013, less than ten households in Smug po still owned sheep. Several reasons explain this. Firstly, because sheep breed and grow quickly, many sheep must be sold and slaughtered every year, otherwise there is not enough grass to feed them all. People feel uncomfortable killing large



numbers of animals. The local *bla ma*, A lags Zla ba, has also encouraged locals to not raise sheep. Furthermore, *bla ma* from other areas have made DVDs showing the cruelty of animal slaughter and explaining how this results in the accumulation of sin that negatively influences one's next reincarnation. Secondly, the grassland is becoming degraded, and there is insufficient fodder for a family to herd both sheep and yaks. Thirdly, an increasing number of young people sell off all their livestock and settle in the county town. Herding is considered to be too much work for too little money. Income from the caterpillar fungus business has also encouraged people to sell their herds. People who become rich from caterpillar fungus can afford to buy meat in local markets instead of slaughtering animals.

## HORSES

*La lo* 'horses' are never eaten and their milk is never drunk. However, horses are sometimes sold for income. Horses are ridden, especially when herding and moving camp. The number of horses is kept to a minimum compared to sheep and yaks. There are seven to ten horses per average family in Smug po, but the number has decreased since locals began using motorcycles and other vehicles.

Figure 54. A groomed and decorated horse ready to attend the *lab rtse* festival.





Horses must work hard, unlike sheep and yaks, and their lives are thus considered difficult, as described in this well-known traditional song:

1. ད་རྩ་ཅག་བྱ་ཅག་དོད་ལྷན།།
2. ཁོ་སྤྱི་དོད་ལི་དུས་ན།།
3. ས་བཟང་དཔོན་པོའི་ཚིགས་པ།།
4. རྩ་ཚིད་སྤོམ་གསུམ་རེ་འདོག་གི།།
5. དབྱར་རྩ་གསུམ་མེར་ལ་ཡུལ་ཐལ།།
6. དགུན་རྩ་གསུམ་ཆས་ཀྱི་གསོས་ཐལ།།
7. དའི་བཟང་རྒྱ་ལོ་དང་ནས་རེད།།
8. མགོ་སྤོམ་རྒྱ་དཔུལ་དཀར་སྤབ་རེད།།
9. རྩ་འདོད་པ་གྱི་ཅི་ནང་ན།།
10. དའི་སྤྱིད་གི་རྩ་ཞིག་མེད་ཀི།།
11. ཁོ་སྤྱི་དོད་ལི་དུས་ན།།
12. ལྷག་མི་དན་ལག་ལ་སྤྱུང་ཐལ།།
13. དའི་མགོ་ལ་ལྷག་སྤབ་བཞག་ཐལ།།
14. དའི་རྒྱབ་ལ་མོ་སྤ་བསྟད་ཐལ།།
15. ས་ཐང་ཚེན་བ་ཡུལ་ཐང་གི།།
16. དབྱར་རྩ་གསུམ་བྱ་མེའི་རྩི་རྩ།།
17. དགུན་རྩ་གསུམ་མཁོ་མེད་སྤོམ་པོ།།
18. རྩ་ཁམ་གང་མེད་ས་ཞིག་ནས།།
19. ལྷ་བཀུག་ནས་ས་ཅག་ལྷག་ཅི།།
20. ད་ལུས་དན་དུད་འགོའི་ལུས་སྤངས།།
21. དཔག་འདོད་རུད་སྤོམ་མེད་སྤྱག་པ།།
22. དའི་ལས་སྤྱག་རི་མོ་སྤོམ་མོ།།
23. དའི་ཡ་ཁོག་སེམས་རྒྱུད་དེ་གྱིལ་ནས།།
24. དཔུབ་དང་ན་མེད་རྒྱ་མེད་གི།།
25. དའི་ལས་དབང་ཁབ་རྩ་འདྲ་བོ།།
26. དའི་སྤྱག་མ་སྤངས་ནི་མེད།།
27. མོམ་འཕྲོད་ལ་སྤོམ་རྩ་མེད་གི།།

28. ལྷ་རྩལ་གང་ཁ་ལ་མ་རེག།  
 29. ས་དོག་འཕྲང་ལྷུང་པ་ནང་ནས།  
 30. བྱ་རྩོགས་སྤྱུག་ཤར་བའི་ལྷུ་ལ།  
 31. དའི་ལྷས་སྐམ་རུས་པས་བར་གང་།  
 32. གནང་སྤྱིན་པའི་ལྷས་ཞིག་བསྐྱུང་རྒྱ།  
 33. འཕྲ་ཡང་ཡང་རྟ་ལྷས་མི་ལོན།  
 34. རིགས་ང་འདྲ་དག་ལ་མ་ཅི།  
 35. ལམ་དཀར་པོ་ཚོས་ལ་གསོལ་འདེབས།  
 36. སྤྱིང་བར་དོ་ཞིག་ལ་སྤོན་ལམ།

- 1.nga rta nag bya nag dong ldan  
 2.kho snga dro dar gi dus na  
 3.pha bzang dpon pa'i bcibs pa  
 4.ske rtsid ldom gsum re 'dog gi  
 5.dbyar zla gsum ser la phul thal  
 6.dgun zla gsum chos kyi gsos tha|  
 7.nga'i bza' rgyu gro dang nus red  
 8.mgo skon rgyu dngul dkar srab red  
 9.rta 'do ba gya ci nang na  
 10.nga'i skyid gi rta zhig med gi  
 11.kho phyi dro sdug gi dus na  
 12.sdug mi ngan lag la lhung thal  
 13.nga'i mgo la thug srab bzhag thal  
 14.nga'i rgyab la go sga bstad thal  
 15.sa thang chen ba yul thang gi  
 16.dbyar zla gsum bu mo'i rdzi rta  
 17.dgun zla gsum mkho med sdom po  
 18.rtswa kham gang med sa zhig nas  
 19.nywa bkug nas sa nag ldag ni  
 20.nga lus ngan dud 'gro'i lus blangs  
 21.bshad 'do rung smra med skug pa  
 22.nga'i lus sdug ri mo phra mo  
 23.nga'i ya khog sems chung dkyil nas  
 24.bsub dang na med rgyu med gi  
 25.nga'i lus dbang khab rtse 'dra bo

26.nga'i sdug ma myangs ni med  
27.gom 'phred la spo rgyu med gi  
28.chu hub gang kha la ma reg  
29.sa dog phrang lung ba nang nas  
30.bya ltogs sdug shar ba'i khyu la  
31.nga'i lus skam rus bas bar gang  
32.gnang sbyin pa'i lus zhig bsgrub rgyu  
33.'phro yang yang rta las mi len  
34.rigs nga 'dra dag la ma n-i  
35.lam dkar bo chos la gsol 'debs  
36.skyid bar do zhig la smon lam

1.I, the black horse, am like the king of birds.  
2.I was powerful and energetic in my youth,  
3.And belonged to a wealthy family.  
4.They tied a rough, strong rope around my neck,  
5.Gave me freedom during summer's three months,  
6.And gave me food during winter's three months.  
7.My food was wheat and barley,  
8.And my bridle was made from white silver.  
9.Among the entire herd of horses,  
10.I had the most perfect life.  
11.When I became an old horse,  
12.I belonged to the worst family  
13.They put a bridle on my head,  
14.And put a rough leather saddle on my back.  
15.On the endless Ba yul grassland,  
16.The girl herder rode me during summer's three months,  
17.And I was useless and wandered hungry during winter's three  
months.  
18.In a place without even one mouthful of grass,  
19.I stooped and licked black soil.  
20.I am an animal with terrible karma.  
21.I have many things to say, but I am mute.  
22.My bad karma is like an indiscernible pattern.  
23.In the depths of my feelings,  
24.I suppressed my bad emotion, but it didn't disappear.

25. My life is on a needle point.  
26. I have experienced every bad thing in my life,  
27. And now lack the energy to carry on.  
28. I haven't drunk a drop of water for a long time.  
29. In this narrow and treacherous valley,  
30. Are a flock of hungry eagles.  
31. My bones and blood,  
32. Are offered to you.  
33. I won't be a horse in my next life.  
34. Pray for all livestock who share my terrible karma!  
35. I pray that the dharma will show me the good path.  
36. May there be a realm between death and rebirth.

Figure 55. A *rta sga* 'horse saddle'.



There are usually two horse races in Smug po after Lo sar, and another after renewing the *lab rtse*. During summer, several people sometimes gather with friends or neighbors and hold informal horse races. Races are held at the center of Smug po, where there is a large open plain belonging to the local school. Horse races now attract few participants, as only elders still commonly ride horses. Participants in formal races train their horses three to six months before the race, taking them regularly for short sprints.

Racehorses are also fed a special diet that includes wheat and barley grain. Before a race, a rider offers *bsang* at home and prays to mountain deities for victory.

The racetrack is 10,000 paces long, in a straight line. The race is run from the beginning to the end of this track. Horses are raced in groups and then the winners from each group compete against each other. For example, if there are twenty horses, they are raced in four groups of five. The four winners then race. The top three horses receive a prize collectively awarded by the community, which is usually 1,000 RMB and *kha btags* or bolts of cotton. The winner's friends and relatives also give him small cash prizes and *kha btags*. All the riders in the race are adult men.

Locals recognize two categories of horse gait. *Gom pa* 'pacing' is slower than galloping, but most locals prefer this gait, considering it more beautiful. Horses that can pace gracefully are expensive and receive special care. When a pacing race is held, a horse cannot be chosen as the winner if it breaks its gait during the race. *Rgyugs ma* 'galloping' is faster than pacing, but considered less graceful.

Figure 56. Riders assemble before a horse race.





Figures 57 and 58. Racing horses during winter.



Figure 59. This horse is dressed to participate in a race after a communal *bsang* offering.



The increasing number of motorcycles has negatively influenced the popularity of horses. The first motorcycle appeared in Smug po in 1992. They were relatively rare until the first few years of the twenty-first century, when more families began buying them. As the number of motorcycles has increased, horses have proportionately decreased. Horses were rarely purchased in 2012. Nowadays, each family has at least one motorcycle, and some wealthy families have as many as five. All the members of a poor family generally share one motorcycle while wealthy families often have one motorcycle for each young man in the home. Young people in Smug po prefer to use motorcycles, finding them faster and more exciting and convenient, whereas elders still prefer to ride horses. In the past, it took four hours to ride from the winter camp to the summer camp, but now only half an hour is required on motorcycle. Small motorcycle accidents happen daily in Smug po, but, as of 2013, no serious accidents had occurred. Since motorcycles have become common, young men increasingly stay away from home, visiting each



other or carousing in such urban centers as the county town. Locals believe this has caused divorce rates to rise.

### Horse Naming

Horses are named according to their physical features, and their age is determined by examining their teeth. People's names are never given to horses.

One-year-old male horses are called *pho rte'u* and females *mo rte'u*.

Two-year-old horses are called *rngogs blang*; males are called *tho ru* and females are *thor mo*. A little hair is cut from the two-year-old horses' tails. As with clipping sheep's ear marks, this hair is kept inside the home in a high, clean place.

Three-year-old horses are called *nyis blang*; males are called *rgya* and females are called *rgya mo*. Particular attention is paid to female horses when they are about to give birth, because the foal is born encased in a thick amniotic sac that the mother cannot break, and the foal may die if no one is present to break the sac.

Four-year-old horses are called *pho gzhi*; males are called *lhog bzhi* and females are called *mo gzhi*.

Five-year-old horses are called *na so gcig pa*; males are called *rta* and females are called *rgod ma*.

Six-year-old horses are called *na so gnyis pa*; males are called *rta* and females are called *rgod ma*.

Seven-year-old horses are called *na so gsum pa*; males are called *rta* and females are called *rgod ma*. Horses' names are also given based on the horse's perceived quality. The best horses are called *rta mchog* 'perfect horse'.

Table 14. Horse terms.

Age	Color	Male	Female
<i>rte'u</i>	white	<i>pho rte'u dkar dkar</i>	<i>mo rte'u dkar dkar</i>
	black	<i>pho rte'u nag nag</i>	<i>mo rte'u nag nag</i>
	gray	<i>pho rte'u sngo sngo</i>	<i>mo rte'u sngo sngo</i>
	red	<i>pho rte'u rkyang rkyang</i>	<i>mo rte'u rkyang rkyang</i>
	black with white spot on forehead	<i>pho rte'u nag 'dzi</i>	<i>mo rte'u nag 'dzi</i>
	red mixed with yellow hair	<i>pho rte'u kham kham</i>	<i>mo rte'u kham kham</i>
<i>thor ru and thor mo</i>	white	<i>pho thor dkar dkar</i>	<i>thor mo dkar dkar</i>
	black	<i>pho thor nag nag</i>	<i>mo thor nag nag</i>
	gray	<i>pho thor sngo sngo</i>	<i>mo thor sngo sngo</i>
	red	<i>pho thor rkyang rkyang</i>	<i>thor mo rkyang rkyang</i>
	black with white spot on forehead	<i>pho thor nag 'dzi</i>	<i>thor mo nag 'dzi</i>
	red mixed with yellow hair	<i>pho thor kham kham</i>	<i>thor mo kham kham</i>
<i>rgya and rgya mo</i>	white	<i>rgya dkar dkar</i>	<i>rgya mo dkar dkar</i>
	black	<i>rgya nag nag</i>	<i>rgya mo nag nag</i>
	gray	<i>rgya sngo sngo</i>	<i>rgya mo sngo sngo</i>

	red	<i>rgya rkyang rkyang</i>	<i>rgya mo rkyang rkyang</i>
	black with white spot on forehead	<i>rgya nag 'dzi</i>	<i>rgya mo nag 'dzi</i>
	red mixed with yellow hair	<i>rgya kham kham</i>	<i>rgya mo kham kham</i>
<i>pho gzhi and mo gzhi</i>	white	<i>pho gzhi dkar dkar</i>	<i>mo gzhi dkar dkar</i>
	black	<i>pho gzhi nag nag</i>	<i>mo gzhi nag nag</i>
	gray	<i>pho gzhi sngo sngo</i>	<i>mo gzhi sngo sngo</i>
	red	<i>pho gzhi rkyang rkyang</i>	<i>mo gzhi rkyang rkyang</i>
	black with white spot on forehead	<i>pho gzhi nag 'dzi</i>	<i>mo gzhi nag 'dzi</i>
	red mixed with yellow hair	<i>pho gzhi kham kham</i>	<i>mo gzhi kham kham</i>
<i>rta and rgod ma</i>	white	<i>rta dkar dkar</i>	<i>rgod ma dkar dkar</i>
	black	<i>rta nag nag</i>	<i>rgod ma nag nag</i>
	gray	<i>rta sngo sngo</i>	<i>rgod ma sngo sngo</i>
	red	<i>rta rkyang rkyang</i>	<i>rgod ma rkyang rkyang</i>
	black with white spot on forehead	<i>rta nag 'dzi</i>	<i>rgod ma nag 'dzi</i>
	red mixed with yellow hair	<i>rta kham kham</i>	<i>rgod ma kham kham</i>

## Gelding Horses

Not every Smug po family has a mature stallion. One stallion is shared by several encampments or between relatives. Since the number of mature stallions is kept to a minimum, gelding horses is done with great care.

When a horse reaches the age of three, a family member finds someone who can geld horses. In 2013, only two people in Smug po knew how to geld horses: Tshe dpal (male, b. ~1960) and Bla rgan (male, b. ~1963).

Several men gather, tie the horse's front and hind legs together, and then slowly lay it on the ground on its side. A knife is sharpened and purified with *bsang* smoke. They then put a stick between the horse's teeth to prevent it from biting its tongue during castration. The man who will geld the horse first washes the horse's scrotum with water and then with liquor, before using a very sharp knife to make an incision in the scrotum, through which he removes the testicles with his hands; the testicles are then discarded. When he finishes, he uses a hot iron to cauterize the wound, and then ties the scrotum very tightly with a string. Bleeding then stops and the scrotum drops off within the next two months.

The men untie the horse's legs and, then, because the horse is weak and in pain, they help it to stand up, and cover it with robes. Afterwards, the horse is referred to as a *bung bu*. Family members pay attention to new *bung bu*, because they cannot lie down for at least one month, so they ensure that the horse remains standing. After around ten days, they start riding the horse to strengthen it, but they sit on the horse's rump rather than its back. The horse becomes accustomed to whatever it is taught during this period. If the household wants a racehorse, then they train the horse during this time by making it run very quickly two or three times in the morning and again in the afternoon. If they want a powerful packhorse, they load it with such heavy burdens as two bags of grain.

## DOGS

Herders raise *sgo khyi* 'watch dogs'. Chained dogs are called *btag khyi* and free dogs are called *btang khyi*. Brown dogs with yellow eyebrows are preferred because they delight local deities. Black and white dogs can chase ghosts away. Black dogs with white paws are disliked, because they call ghosts to the home. Being born a dog is a good reincarnation because dogs will become human in their next life. Dogs should thus be well treated. This is why dogs are never locally bought or sold, as suggested in the following saying:

<sup>1</sup> ལྷི་འཚོང་ཚང་ལ་ཡར་འགྲོ་མེད།

<sup>1</sup>khyi 'tshong tshang la yar 'gro med

<sup>1</sup>A family that sells dogs will never improve.

Dogs are usually fed boiled leftovers mixed with water and flour three times a day. However, when livestock are killed, household dogs receive a *skal* 'share' like neighboring families, and during Lo sar, they receive a mixture of all the special foods prepared for family members thrice daily.

Figure 60. My family's watch dog is chained up.



Dogs are usually tied during the daytime, but allowed to run free at night to protect livestock from wolves, and to guard the tent against robbers. Dogs sometimes attack people wandering in the camp at night. When a dog attacks, the best course of action is to pick up a stone and throw it at the dog. If this does not discourage the dog, locals sometimes use a knife or a *mgo skor* 'dog beater' to defend themselves. A dog beater is a sharp, heavy metal weight attached to a long leather cord.

## WILDLIFE

### 'Brong 'Wild Yak' (*Bos mutus*)

Wild yaks did not exist in Smug po in 2011, but Chos dar reported seeing them numerous times in Dmar mo, approximately fifty kilometers southeast of Smug po, during the mid-1970s.

Love songs and folk songs often use wild yaks as important positive images:

1. རྩ་ཡག་པའི་རྩ་སྐད་ལྷོ་མོ་ན།།
2. རྩ་ཡག་པའི་བྲེ་སེར་འབྲོང་མོ་ཡོད།།
3. རྩ་ཡག་པའི་ཡིད་སེམས་ཨེ་བྲང་བལ།།
4. རྩ་ཡག་པའི་ཡིད་སེམས་བྲང་དང་ན།།
5. བྲང་ལ་རྩ་རི་མི་ལྷུ་ལྷོད་ལ་སྐྱུག།

- 1-rdza yag pa'i rdza sked phra mo na
- 2-rwa yag pa'i bre ser 'brong mo yod
- 3-rwa yag pa'i yid sems e drang thal
- 4-rwa yag pa'i yid sems drang dang na
- 5-nags rdza ri mi nyul khyod la sgug

- 1-On the beautiful rocky mountain peak,
- 2-Is a female wild yak with beautiful horns.
- 3-Are you attracted by the beautiful horns?

- 4-If you have fallen in love with the horns,  
 5-I won't go to the forests or rocky mountains, but will wait for you.

1.ང་གྲེ་མེར་འབྲོང་གི་རྒྱ་བར་ན།  
 2.མཚོན་ཆ་ར་མ་རིགས་ཆ་ཡོད།  
 3.རྒྱ་ཅི་ལྟར་གཡུག་ན་གཡུག་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་ཡིན།

<sup>1</sup>nga bre ser 'brong gi rwa bar na  
<sup>2</sup>mtshon cha ra ma rigs cha yod  
<sup>3</sup>rwa ci ltar g.yug na g.yug rkyang yin

- <sup>1</sup>I am the Bre ser Wild Yak, and between my sharp horns,  
<sup>2</sup>There is a variety of weapons,  
<sup>3</sup> I am ready to wield them however I want.

A *'brong khyu* is a herd of wild yaks, an animal which is renowned for acting collectively, such as when they encounter wolves. Adult male yaks make a circle to defend the females and calves.

*'Brong ru dmar* are wild yaks that wander individually, dislike joining herds, and are considered especially brave and powerful. Such animals – also called *be'u kha da* 'orphaned calf' – are thought to have been orphaned as *be'u* by predators or hunters. If they join a herd of wild yaks, other mother yaks beat them with their horns and kick them, and so they live alone. Such animals are more unpredictable than other wild yaks and lead boring, difficult lives, in constant fear of wolves and other wild animals. Wild yaks can use their horns to hit a bee flying over their head, or a piece of sheep dung blowing in the wind.

Wild yaks are bigger than *'ur ra* and *g.yag sar*, which, though they are the wildest and largest male yaks in a flock of domestic yak, are still comparatively small. Wild yaks are thought to be wild and free and to belong to nobody, whereas *'ur ra* and *g.yag sar* are domesticated. Wild yaks are always black or brown.



*Kha 'chang* 'Wolf' (*Canis lupus chanco*)

*Kha 'chang* is the Smug po colloquial term for 'wolf'; *spyang ki* is the literary term. Special wolves, known as *rta spyang* 'horse wolf', are experts at killing horses, and are bigger and stronger than common wolves. A wolf's diet includes yaks (young and old), sheep, rabbits, marmots, and mice. They may also eat horses if there is a *spyang tshogs* 'wolf pack'. The wolves encircle the horses, howl to frighten them, and wait for a horse to break from the herd. They then run it down and kill it by biting its belly. Many wolves kill one horse at the same time. The wolves leave if no horse breaks from the herd.

Wolves usually give birth during *sos ka*. Whenever the mother kills such small animals as sheep, she takes the animals' heads to her pups so they may practice their hunting skills: leaping, biting, and so on.

Elders say that gunfire attracts wolves, which are, however, terrified of fire. A large fire should be made to discourage wolves if you find yourself alone in a strange place on the grassland. Mtsho po (female, b. 1965) provided the following account about an encounter with wolves.

A herder once lost some of his sheep and went searching for them in the mountains. As the sun was setting, he heard the howls of wolves echoing around him. At that time, a man carrying a gun rode by on a horse. "Can I come with you?" the herder asked him.

"No, you can't come with me. I have a gun and a horse, but you have nothing," said the man, and left.

After a while, the man heard gunfire and terrible howling. He was terrified of the wolves. He then found and hid inside a pile of dried yak dung. Wolves appeared, approached the dung pile, and began digging down to where he was. He burned the first wolf's nose using a flint, climbed out, set fire to the dung, and then all the wolves fled.

The next day, he found the place where the wolves had killed the other man, took the gun, and returned home.

Wolves inhabit dens called *spyang tshang*, usually in places far from human habitation. If wolves make their home in somebody's territory, they will not kill their livestock, even if they are herded right past the den, in order to keep the location of their dens secret.

If wolves kill a household's sheep only once a year, people consider this is a good omen, indicating that their sheep will not get sick in the coming year. Wolves kill livestock whenever they have an opportunity. Attacks are most common during *zog ba*, and otherwise occur most commonly if a family is isolated from others, for example, if most families are in the winter pasture but one family is in another pasture. Wolves are thought to be very avaricious and do not stop after killing one animal. Sometimes a pack may kill more than 100 head of livestock. Wolves tear the animals' throats, drink the warm blood, and only eat flesh from the last animal they kill.

Protecting yaks from wolves is an important responsibility for herders. If, during the day, a family learns that livestock are lost and may be attacked by wolves, the strongest family male promptly takes a rifle and rides in search of the lost livestock, or to kill the wolf. If livestock are lost at night, herders do not generally go searching for them. Instead, a household woman takes a needle, threads a string through the eye, and then covers the eye with mud. She sometimes ties the sleeves of her children's robes together and then places the robes under her pillow. Family members also chant the mantra *hUM ma rtse ma*. All this is thought to protect the lost livestock.

*'Phar ba 'Dhole'*<sup>18</sup> (*Cuon alpinus*)

Dholes, also called Asiatic wild dogs, are small agile animals that reside secretly in remote caves. Groups of dholes kill such animals as horses and yaks by entering an animal's body and eating the viscera, thus quickly killing them. Dholes walk in single file, and therefore only one animal's footprints can be seen after a group has passed. A local saying goes:

- 1. ཕོ་རབ་ཚིག་ཐོག
- 2. འཕར་བ་རྗེས་ཐོག

<sup>1</sup>pho rab tshig thog

---

<sup>18</sup> I thank Richard Harris for suggesting that *'phar ba* are dholes.

<sup>2</sup>'phar ba rjes thog

<sup>1</sup>A good man follows his words.

<sup>2</sup>Dholes always follow each other's footprints.

### *Wa 'Fox' (Vulpes vulpes)*

Foxes eat mice and lambs. In summer they eat *gya li*<sup>19</sup> and in winter they kill lambs by biting their throat. Foxes are healthy and their coats luxuriant in autumn, and so were hunted at this time of year prior to 1998. However, locals stopped such hunting after the government confiscated their guns. Foxes dwell in hidden caves and find food by travelling along small paths and through extremely narrow mountain valleys. Foxes make distinctive sounds during the night. First, one makes the sound, "*Ga ga ga*," and then others repeat this one after another continually. Elders say that a female ghost is using a person's hand to beat the fox's cheeks when they make this sorrowful sound.

### *Mi la tse tse*

*Mi la tse tse* is an extraordinary animal that resembles a three- or four-year-old child whose torso is covered in long hair. It lives in remote places on high mountains, from where it can observe people approaching. No one in the community has seen this creature, but they believe they lived in Smug po until the mid-twentieth century, and may still exist today. Elders still frequently mention them, and take special care of children who may be abducted by *mi la tse tse*. *Mi la tse tse* never hurt children, but take them as playmates. *Mi la tse tse* give the children stones and other objects that then turn into fruit and candies, so the child never starves. When the child grows up, the *mi la tse tse* sends them home. If a child is taken by a *mi la tse tse*,

---

<sup>19</sup> Baby marmots.

their family must not move to another place, or the child will be unable to find the family again.

*Phye* 'Marmot' (*Marmota himalayana*)

*Phye* is Smug po dialect for marmot; *phyi ba* is the literary form. Marmots live in dens in which they hibernate throughout winter, only emerging at the beginning of *sos ka*, as explained in the following account (Yum skyid):

Many years ago, Rabbit and Marmot were eating grass together at the foot of a mountain. "The grass here is limited, so I will eat grass in the winter and you can eat it in the summer," Rabbit said to Marmot.

"OK, no problem, but we have to promise," replied Marmot.

"What shall we swear on?" said Rabbit.

"Let's do this: if you eat grass in the summer, your offspring will get terrible diseases that will plague their descendants forever. If I eat grass in the winter I will get the same punishment as you," said Marmot.

Since that time, the marmot never ate grass in the winter but hibernated instead. However, the rabbit broke his promise and ate grass in the summer. Now all rabbits are sickly and cannot run fast because of breaking that promise.

*Ri bong* 'Rabbit' (*Lepus oiostolus*)

Rabbits are thought to eat grass and live in caves, valleys, and mountains. Locals believe that rabbits are the cleverest animals in the world and therefore give their children rabbit meat when they first eat meat, so that the child may become as clever as a rabbit. Locals kill rabbits by throwing stones at them, and then boil the meat. Only a small piece is needed to feed the child, and the heart is considered the best.

*Dred mong 'Brown Bear' (Ursus arctos pruinosus)*

Brown bears are black with white shoulders, and are about the same size as female yaks. They are thought to inhabit slate mountains, deep forests, and narrow valleys. They live in dens and wander in places where humans rarely venture.

Brown bears are also symbolic of greedy stupidity. They are said to hunt for marmots by digging into their dens. They then catch marmots as they run from the den, and place them one by one in their armpit. However, when the bear puts a new marmot in its armpit, the previous one escapes. In this way, a brown bear may catch many marmots, but it only keeps one to eat. A Tibetan oral traditional saying warns:

<sup>1</sup> དྲེད་མོང་གི་འཕྱི་བ་འཛིན་འཛིན་མ་བྱེད།

<sup>1</sup>dred mong gi phyé 'dzin 'dzin ma byed

<sup>1</sup>Do not act like a brown bear grabbing marmots.

This saying is used when someone tries to undertake too many tasks at once, especially by parents to their children.

Brown bears sometimes eat yaks (calves and full grown, male and female), sheep, and people. After killing a person, a brown bear is thought to tear off the person's arm, take out their scapula, and examine it to perform a divination, to determine if pursuers are following. If the divination shows nobody is in pursuit, the brown bear relaxes and eats the flesh.

When I was nine years old, Father was planning to go to the township to buy provisions. The night before he left, Father asked me to drive the male yaks from the mountain back to camp. The next morning I set out to fetch the yaks before dawn, and it was too dark to see where I was going. I was terrified, but kept going, and after around an hour I could dimly make out my surroundings. When I arrived at a pass, a gale blew. A black shape with white spots loomed out of the dark, retreated a little, and then slipped backwards on the snow. I turned and ran back home, and after I arrived, breathlessly told my family what had happened. Father, who still hadn't left, and his two younger brothers, took guns and went searching for the

creature, but did not find it. They were sure that it was a brown bear, however, because they saw its footprints in the snow and also saw its dung. I felt lucky to have survived this encounter.

Klu pa thar provided the following account of a brown bear:

Many years ago, two monks went on pilgrimage to Lha sa. Carrying their provisions, they walked on and on, but never seemed to reach Lha sa. One day, one of the monks injured his foot. The more he walked, the worse it got. His condition deteriorated over time, and eventually the healthy monk told his companion to rest and added, "I'll make this pilgrimage for both of us. Stay here and wait for me. Follow me if your foot gets better."

"OK, let's do that. My condition is getting worse and there is really no hope that I can accompany you," said the injured monk.

The other monk left most of the food, the tent, and a malfunctioning gun with the injured monk, and went on his way.

Afterwards, the injured monk sat in front of his small tent every day, gazing towards Lha sa. Day by day, one and a half years passed. He heard nothing from his companion and his condition did not improve.

One day, he saw the silhouettes of two animals in the distance, chasing each other. The first then ran straight towards him. When they both got closer, he saw that the first animal was a brown bear and the second was a black bear.<sup>20</sup>

He went into his tent and pointed his gun out the tent's opening. He thought, "Even if I kill the first wild animal, the second will kill me." He was so frightened that his hands shook and he couldn't aim well. The two wild animals came into his tent, one after the other. When the brown bear stuck its head into the tent it gestured to the man to kill the black bear that was chasing it. The monk then shot the black bear in the heart, killing it instantly. Then, the brown bear didn't kill him, but instead skinned the black bear, took out its gall bladder, and used it to treat the man's foot.

One day, the brown bear gave him raw meat, but the man gestured to the brown bear that he didn't eat raw meat. Then the brown bear gave him cooked meat and he lived comfortably afterwards.

Time passed quickly and his foot healed. One day, the brown bear drove a cow to the tent and gestured for the monk to load his belongings on the cow. He did what the brown bear suggested, and then the brown bear accompanied him until he could see Lha sa in the distance. The brown bear then gestured for him to go there alone because a brown bear could not go to Lha sa. It waved its paw and tears fell from its eyes. As the monk approached Lha sa, he looked back and saw the brown bear still watching him.

---

<sup>20</sup> Known as *dom*, black bears are not found in Smug po.

In Lha sa, the man visited a *bla ma* and told him everything that had happened. The *bla ma* said that the brown bear was his mother's reincarnation. He recommended that if he found that brown bear again, he should take her home. However, the monk never found the brown bear again.

*A bra 'Pika' (Ochotona himalayana)*

Pika eat grass and other small plants. Pika are weak, vulnerable to predation, and are startled by the slightest sound. When feeding, they eat a little grass, look around to check for danger and, if it is safe, they continue feeding. Herders think that pika contribute to grassland degradation by digging many dens and eating a lot of grass. Though locals dislike having pika on their land, they avoid killing them. Government projects to poison pika have been conducted elsewhere in Qinghai, but locals have not implemented such initiatives because they do not want to poison pika, and also believe that poisoning actually causes the pika population to increase. Elders say that the number of pika in Smug po has increased in recent years due to a decrease in their natural predators.

*G.yi dbur 'Lynx' (Lynx lynx)*

Lynxes have not been seen in the area in living memory. Nevertheless, elders claim that they were once present, and ate rabbits, lambs, and other small animals. They prowled around sheep enclosures at night and killed lambs, biting their throats and drinking their blood. Elders state that if a lynx was seen in a sheep enclosure, it would flee and never return to its den.

*Khu byug 'Cuckoo' (Cuculus spp.)*

Cuckoos are thought to be propitious because their presence heralds the arrival of the best season of the year. They are migratory, arriving at the beginning of *sos ka* and departing in late autumn. People are



happy to hear the sound of cuckoos the first time each year because it signifies summer's return. When the sound of cuckoos is no longer heard, it means winter will soon arrive.

*Skya ka 'Eurasian Magpie' (Pica pica)*

Locals believe that magpies predict when guests will visit, especially when they sing in the morning. When I was a child, Father periodically went to the township to buy provisions. While he was away, Mother told me that when a magpie visited, Father would return that day.

*Ho rog 'Raven' (Corvus spp.)*

*Ho rog* is a Smug po colloquial term meaning 'raven',<sup>21</sup> a bird locally well known for its sorrowful sound – "Wa! Wa! Wa!" The raven is ominous, because its black color is unlucky and its call is not melodious, unlike that of other birds. Locals who hear ravens believe somebody has recently died, or that a disaster will soon ensue. The following account provided by Tshe ring (male, b. 1945), illustrates this:

Once a female raven always played jokes wherever she went, but she actually had a compassionate, sympathetic heart. One day she brought dried grass and other plants to the top of a big tree to make a nest. When she got tired, she took a nap by her new nest. When she woke up, she saw that a fox had fallen into a deep crevice. The raven went to the edge of the crevice and called, "Hi! Aunt Fox, how did you get into such a deep crevice?"

The fox thought for a moment and said, "My dear friend, I thought that there would be some food here, but, unfortunately, there was none. Now, I can't get out because I'm weak from hunger."

Feeling sympathy for the fox's miserable predicament, the raven decided to help and gave her one of her own babies to eat.

"Kind raven, you are so wonderful! Now I need something to drink," said the fox.

---

<sup>21</sup> The literary form is *pho rog*.

The raven went to a well and brought a bucket of water for the fox. The fox finished the water in one gulp. "Thank you for giving me meat to eat and water to drink. Before I was too weak, but now, please, help me climb up," said the fox.

The raven trusted the fox, and so went over to help her up.

"My dear raven, you gave me your own baby to eat, brought water for me to drink, and pulled me up from the deep crevice. However, I'm still hungry, so I think you should give me some of your own flesh to eat," the fox said.

The raven suddenly understood how untrustworthy the fox was.

"Sure, but, you have to wait a bit. I need to finish gathering dried plants for my nest. When my babies have grown, you will have a lot of meat to eat," said the raven.

The fox looked at the raven and said, "Go! Quickly! Do everything as quickly as you can!"

The raven then left and told everything to the villagers, who came with their guns and dogs to kill the fox.

The raven reflected on her own stupidity and called out, "Wa! Wa! Wa!" and then flew away.

### *Skyung ka 'Red-billed Chough' (Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax)*

Elders say that damaging a red-billed chough's nest results in the family's best female yak dying or being injured. The following saying was provided by Mtsho po (female, b. 1965):

<sup>1</sup>སྐུང་མོ་འབྲི་ལེན་མ།

<sup>1</sup>skyung mo 'bri len ma

<sup>1</sup>The female red-billed chough will take a yak cow.

Local herders therefore never hurt this bird in fear of the consequences. The following riddle is also about red-billed choughs:

<sup>1</sup>རྩ་མ་ནག་པོ་བྱ་རུ་འཁོར་ཅན་ཅི་ཁོད། ལན། སྐུང་ཀ།

<sup>1</sup>rdza ma nag po byi ru'i kha to can ci khed lan skyung ka

<sup>1</sup>What is a pot with a coral lid? Answer – the red-billed chough.

'Sparrow' – *Khang byi'u* and *Byi'u skya leb*

Sparrows are known by two names, depending on where they are found. Sparrows that live around homes are called *khang byi'u*, whereas those that live in the grassland are known as *byi'u skya leb*.

*Khang byi'u* usually live on house roofs, do not fly far from homes, and eat garbage that people discard. Before living in fixed houses, these birds often built nests in spaces between stones in livestock enclosures. These birds have many enemies because they are so small and helpless. They are usually very vigilant, and do not fly far from the home. Young children, particularly boys, use homemade slingshots to hunt *khang byi'u* near the house. These birds become snow-blind after a snowfall and are easy to catch. Children hunt secretly because their parents will scold them severely if they are caught.

*Byi'u skya leb* is a local colloquial term.<sup>22</sup> This bird forages in flocks in search of small plants and insects to eat. They live in woody shrubs called *spen ma* that grow on the shady side of mountains. There are many folk accounts about *byi'u skya leb*. I heard this story when I was in high school:

Every year, a farmer put out his barley to dry in the shining sun. A flock of *byi'u skya leb* came and ate his barley until they were full, and then shat on the remaining barley. The farmer was furious.

In revenge, the farmer soaked all his barley in liquor, put it outside to dry, and hid nearby. A flock of *byi'u skya leb* arrived and after they had eaten the barley, fell down drunk, one after another.

---

<sup>22</sup> The literary form is *mchil ba*.



# CHAPTER FIVE



## HERD AND PASTURE MANAGEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

In this section, I discuss some of the most important ways in which Smug po pastoralists manage their land and livestock. I look at local plants, pasture management, weather and weather prediction, how pastoralists ensure fortune for themselves and their livestock, and how they treat livestock illnesses.

As with the treatment of wild animals, the description of local plants is not intended as an exhaustive catalog of local plant knowledge. Instead, it is a survey of the most significant local plants that herders have some knowledge of. Pastoralists exhibit a wide range of knowledge regarding local grassland plants, and even children can recognize and use at least a dozen different species. A complete document of pastoralists' ethnobotanical knowledge would be an entire work in itself. I focus only on major fodder plants.

The section on pasture management is also necessarily brief. I focus primarily on how livestock are grazed to ensure their health. A full treatment of pasture management would include, for example, a discussion of issues related to the ownership of and access to pasture and water, long-term versus short-term management strategies, as well as disaster mitigation methods. Time and space constraints make such a treatment unfeasible in the present case.

I also discuss locals' knowledge of weather and weather prediction. Again, I focus on a few key details of what locals know, mostly on how weather and weather prediction are imbedded in local oral tradition. I also discuss one important feature of the local climate that pastoralists must periodically deal with – snow disasters.

The section on ensuring fortune is somewhat longer and more detailed than other sections in this chapter. Here, I discuss several rituals that pastoralists in Smug po perform to ensure livestock prosperity and productivity. These rituals include the livestock themselves as a significant focus, and typically involve the dedication of an individual animal to local deities, to ensure protection for the entire herd, and thus prosperity for the household.

A brief discussion of divinations performed by local pastoralists using various sheep body parts (bones and organs)

follows. These divinations seek to chart possible obstructions or declines in a household's fortune, so that these might be averted by ritual means.

One of the most significant challenges herders face is livestock illness. In the final section, I discuss common livestock illnesses in Smug po, and methods to treat them.

#### LOCAL PLANTS

*Gling ma* is a deciduous woody shrub that grows in large stands on the shady side of mountains and was historically used for fuel. The tallest *gling ma* is as tall as a man. Its elliptic leaves are approximately five centimeters long, and appear at the end of spring or beginning of *sos ka*. All livestock eat *gling ma* leaves. Seedpods open in late autumn and release seeds with a cottony seed case.

*Spem ma* are woody shrubs that mostly grow in small stands on the shady side of mountains, though they are also sometimes found on the sunny side. The tallest *spem ma* is one meter high. Yellow, and very rarely white, blossoms appear in summer and autumn. *Spem ma* leaves are ovate and about three centimeters in diameter. People use *spem ma* for fuel and to make brooms to sweep houses. Horses and yaks, but not sheep, eat *spem ma*. Horses eat *spem ma* often, especially in winter. This may have a destructive impact on the plant, as the horse consumes the entire plant, sometimes including the roots.

*G.yu mo* are small herbaceous plants that grow to about twenty centimeters in height on the shady side of mountains, usually on upper slopes with red soil. Leaves are elliptic and about five centimeters long. Horses eat *g.yu mo* but yaks and sheep do not.

*Mkhan pa* is a yellow or black grass that only goats eat.



Figure 61. A patch of *mkhan pa* grass.



*Sgog pa* 'wild garlic' is divided into two main types. *Srib sgog* grows on the shady side of mountains and is eaten by sheep, yaks, and horses. In contrast, *brag sgog* grows only on the sunny side of rocky mountains and includes *'brong sgog*, which has an edible tuber, and *sgog dmar*, which has an edible tuber and edible shoots.<sup>1</sup> Goats are the only livestock able to access the rocky slopes where *brag sgog* grows, but there are few goats in Smug po. *Srib sgog* is approximately twelve centimeters tall – just taller than the average height of grass – and *brag sgog* is a few centimeters taller than *srib sgog*. *Sgog thog ser dris* is a third type of wild garlic that is less common than the other two. It is about four centimeters tall and sprouts a bulbet on a long stalk in summer or autumn. The bulbet, rather than the subterranean bulb, is collected and eaten. While all forms of wild garlic are eaten, *sgog thog ser dris* is locally considered the most delicious.

*Rdza rtswa* 'rock grass' grows atop rocky mountains. Livestock do not eat this grass, except when it is collected as fodder

---

<sup>1</sup> Wild garlic is most commonly dug in *sos ka*.

during snow disasters, when they are starving. Since *rdza rtswa* is rarely eaten, it grows very tall on rocky mountain peaks.

#### PASTURE MANAGEMENT

Herders divide pastures into two parts: *lug sa*, where mostly sheep are herded, and *nor sa*, where mostly yaks are herded. Yaks are herded on the shady (north-facing) side of valleys and sheep on the sunny (south-facing) side. The shady side is cooler than the sunny side and yaks tolerate this cold better than sheep. In addition to the micro-climates being suitable for different livestock, the plants that grow in each pasture are also appropriate for the animals that graze there.

Herders graze sheep at the top of the sunny side of mountains in late summer and throughout autumn. Sheep eat wild garlic (*srib sgog*, *'brong sgog*, and *sgog dmar*), which protects them from diseases of the head, lungs, and intestines. If sheep eat garlic from the valley bottom or on shady slopes, they may be infected by various diseases.

Sheep are fed ten to fifteen small bags of salt (around 500 grams to one kilogram in total) during the autumn because it makes them healthier and fatter. Salt is spread on the ground for sheep to consume three or four times during autumn. Yaks may be fed salt in autumn, but not all local herders do this, as yaks are given *chur khu* to drink, which is considered nutritious. Before salt became commercially available, herders drove livestock to one of several local salt licks within Smug po territory. They typically took the livestock there once a year in autumn, and stayed there for approximately ten days.

## WEATHER AND WEATHER PREDICTION

The following terms are used to refer to the weather in Smug po.

Table 15. Weather terms.

<i>khangs</i>	snow
<i>khangs chag</i>	snow disaster
<i>khangs chen</i>	'big' snow
<i>char ba</i>	rain
<i>char sha</i>	storm
<i>char nag</i>	downpour (no thunder, lightning)
<i>char zhod, chu shag</i>	stronger than a downpour
<i>smug ga</i>	fog, mist
<i>smug sas</i>	a light mist that can be felt but not seen
<i>ser ra</i>	hail
<i>bsil chu</i>	dew
<i>kha char 'dres ma</i>	sleet
<i>zam me zim me</i>	drizzle
<i>glog dmar</i>	lightening
<i>'brug sgra</i>	thunder
<i>thog</i>	thunderbolt
<i>dar</i>	ice
<i>dar zhu ba</i>	ice melts
<i>rlung, bser bu</i>	wind (in general)
<i>rlung chen</i>	'big wind'
<i>tsag</i>	piercing winter wind
<i>rlung tshub</i>	whirlwind
<i>sprin</i>	cloud
<i>sprin dmar</i>	'red cloud' at dawn or dusk
<i>sprin dkar</i>	'white cloud'
<i>sprin nag</i>	'black cloud', storm clouds
<i>ngar</i>	hot
<i>gyang, 'khyag</i>	cold
<i>skam po</i>	dry
<i>rlon pa</i>	humid

Weather is a major concern for herders and, though men are typically more concerned with weather prediction than women, weather prediction skills vary from man to man. Much weather knowledge is expressed in sayings, such as:

<sup>1</sup>དགུན་གསུམ་ཁ་བ་འབྲུག་ན་འབབ།

<sup>2</sup>དབྱར་གསུམ་ཆར་བ་རྫོན་འབབ།

<sup>1</sup>dgun gsum kha ba 'khyag na 'bab

<sup>2</sup>dbyar gsum char ba dro na 'bab

<sup>1</sup>It snows when it is cold in winter's three months.

<sup>2</sup>It rains when it is hot in summer's three months.

<sup>1</sup>དགུང་ཕྱི་དྲོ་སློན་དམར་མེ།

<sup>2</sup>ནངས་སྣ་མོ་སློན་དམར་ཚུ།

<sup>1</sup>dgung phyi dro sprin dmar me

<sup>2</sup>nangs snga mo sprin dmar chu

<sup>1</sup>Afternoon's red clouds are fire.

<sup>2</sup>Morning's red clouds are water.

Red clouds after sunset indicate that tomorrow will be sunny, whereas red clouds in the morning indicate it will rain or snow the next day.

If it rains for one month in summer it is called *zla 'bab* 'month (of) precipitation'.

<sup>1</sup>བརྒྱད་ཆད་དགུ་ཐང་མིན་ན་བཙོ་ལྔ་རང་ཐང་རྒྱག

<sup>1</sup>brgyad chad dgu thang min na bco lnga rang thang rgyag

<sup>1</sup>If rain stops on the eighth, but the ninth is not sunny, then it will surely be sunny on the fifteenth.

Locals throw salt into a fire to predict rain. A silent fire indicates imminent rain while a crackling fire suggests that it will not rain soon.

Rain affects herders and their work. Women must milk even if it rains. There is much water in the yak enclosure and the ground becomes muddy after rain. Locals do not hide under cliffs during

storms, because lightning strikes such places.<sup>2</sup> If at home when a storm breaks, locals place a knife or other piece of metal in the ground outside the tent to prevent the tent being struck by lightning.

*Khangs chag* is the local word for snow disasters, which happen when it snows for several days and nights. Livestock die during snow disasters because snow covers grass and they cannot find fodder. Over the past century, snow disasters have happened approximately every five years.

The biggest snow disaster in living memory happened in 1992, when more than half of my family's livestock died. On some days, as many as ten of our yaks were found dead of starvation in the morning. Livestock that die in this way are not eaten, because they have little flesh and smell bad. The next snow disaster was in the winter of 2011-2012. It was a comparatively mild snow disaster, and no livestock died. The list below, of snow disasters in the past fifty years, was provided by Chos dar.

1966. A serious snow disaster. Two of the family's yaks and eleven sheep died.

1973. A serious snow disaster. Ten yaks and fifteen sheep died.

1985. A very serious snow disaster. Many of the family's livestock died.

1986. A mild snow disaster. No livestock died.

1992. Severe snow disaster. Half the family's livestock died.

2011. A mild snow disaster. No livestock died.

#### ENSURING FORTUNE

In this section I describe *g.yang*, *tshe thar*, and *srung g.yang*. *G.yang* refers to livestock with distinctive appearances that are thought to bring prosperity. *Tshe thar* and *srung g.yang* are both livestock that have been dedicated to local deities, though they are offered by means of different rituals. These three types of livestock each ensure fortune for a household.

Ensuring fortune, or *g.yang*, is a common concern for pastoralists. *G.yang* generally refers to prosperity, potency,

---

<sup>2</sup> Locals worry about being struck by *thog* 'thunderbolts', rather than by *glog dmar* 'lightning'.

enrichment, or good fortune, and also refers to anything that encourages these things for people or livestock. Each family is thought to have its own collective *g.yang* that influences each member and all the family's livestock. Whenever a girl marries and leaves her family to live in her new husband's home, a ritual is performed to disentangle her from her natal family's *g.yang*. The following saying relates to this practice:

<sup>1</sup>གཡང་ཞིག་ཡོད་ན་ཨ་མར་ཚོགས།།

<sup>2</sup>སྲིད་ཅིག་ཡོད་ན་རང་གིས་སྲིད།།

<sup>1</sup>*G.yang zhig yod na a mar zhogs*

<sup>2</sup>*skyid cig yod na rang gis khyer*

<sup>1</sup>If there is *g.yang*, leave it with Mother.

<sup>2</sup>If there is happiness, take it with you.

During weddings, monks chant a *G.yang 'bod 'Beckoning Fortune'* scripture when the girl leaves her home and as she arrives at the groom's home. *Bla ma* from the local monastery also encourage households to invite monks and chant the Beckoning Fortune scripture each year in order to ensure the family's prosperity.

In addition to asking monks to chant for good fortune, herders perform their own rituals to ensure prosperity and fortune for themselves and their livestock, as described below.

### *G.yang*

*G.yang* generally refers to something that brings prosperity, enrichment, or good fortune, for instance, a family's *g.yang sgam* 'treasure-chest', or an area's *g.yang gi mtsho mo* 'lake of prosperity'.

*G.yang* may also specifically refer to physically unique livestock that can be male or female, horses, goats, yaks, or sheep, which are collectively referred to as the *g.yang ra sgo bzhi* 'the four types of *g.yang*'. *G.yang* are thought to be more auspicious than other livestock. A saying goes:

<sup>1</sup>གཡང་ནི་ཕུགས་ཀྱི་ཁ་ཚབ་ལོན།

<sup>1</sup>*g.yang* ni phyugs kyi kha zhabs yin

<sup>1</sup>*G.yang* are the most important livestock in the herd.

A *g.yang* might be chosen, for example, if an animal's hair is unusually thick or long. Sheep with unusually small ears are a type of *g.yang* referred to as *tsu lu*.<sup>3</sup> Though some sheep are born with three or four horns, these are not considered *g.yang* because such sheep are considered proud, and to desire to stand out. They therefore secretly wish for the flock to decrease. Sheep with small ears, however, are shy and wish to hide within a large flock. The differing hopes of these sheep are thought to somehow affect the size of the flock.

When a family discovers a *g.yang* in their herd, they take special care of this animal, never beating or killing it, in the belief that doing so brings calamity to the family.

When I was very young, my family had a *g.yang*, a white yak with black spots on both sides of its stomach. It also had four ears – two small ears grew on the tips of its regular ears. It was due to these unusual ears that my family recognized it as a *g.yang* when it was a calf. Before we had a *g.yang*, wolves killed a number of my family's calves each year, but not one calf was eaten by wolves after the *g.yang* was born. My maternal grandmother, Mo ko (~1910 - 1993), passed away when I was very young, but I recall her telling me that this fortuitous circumstance was due to the *g.yang*'s protection. All my family members liked that *g.yang*, and never hurt him. He died in 2007 at the age of nineteen.

Phag tho (male, b. 1962), the head of his family, told me about their *g.yang*:

Our *g.yang* is very different from our other yaks. It has longer and thicker hair and doesn't molt annually. Its hair is like a carpet covering its body throughout the year. Our *g.yang* can no longer move quickly, and never goes far from our winter home. I once casually mentioned to someone that I might sell our *g.yang*, and the next morning I found that my

---

<sup>3</sup> This term is also used among friends and close relatives to jokingly refer to a person who has small ears, and may also be used as an insult during quarrels.

favorite yak had died mysteriously during the night. I assume that the mountain deity was punishing me for considering selling the *g.yang*.

Stobs chen rgyal (male, b. 1965) provided the following account about a local family's *g.yang*:

A family once had a very large yak bull that had horns as sharp as knives. One day, it suddenly killed the family's two best horses. The family head immediately visited a *bla ma* and asked why this had happened. The *bla ma* said that the bull was that household's *g.yang* and if it hadn't killed the two horses, one of their family members would have died. The yak had thus saved a person's life. Afterward, that family treated that bull as their *g.yang*.

If a mother yak or sheep has many offspring, they are considered a *g.yang*, even if their appearance is ordinary. Herders will say like something like, "This mother yak contributed greatly to our family's herd. She is our *g.yang*. We shouldn't hurt her."

When Dpal ldan was around ten years old, his family had a mare that they recognized as a *g.yang*. It was considered special because it was hunch-backed and could not stand as other animals, but was locally the fastest horse. This horse died of natural causes when it was twenty-two years old. A saying goes:

<sup>1</sup> རོག་སྐུ་རུ་ཕུགས་ཀྱི་གཡང་།

<sup>2</sup> མི་སྐུ་རུ་གཏམ་གྱི་སྒོ་མོ།

<sup>3</sup> རྟ་སྐུ་རུ་བང་གིས་རྒྱུག།

<sup>1</sup>zog sgu ru phyugs kyi g.yang

<sup>2</sup>mi sgu ru gtam gyi sgo mo

<sup>3</sup>rta sgu ru bang gis rgyugs

<sup>1</sup>A hunch-backed yak is the good fortune of the herd.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>A hunch-backed person is skilled at giving speeches.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>A hunch-backed horse runs fast.

---

4 The proverb states that the hunch-backed yak is the *ru ma* of livestock. *Ru ma* refers to the culture used to seed a fresh batch of yogurt, and, more figuratively to the core, or essence, of something.

5 Literally, the door of speech.



## *Tshe thar*

*Tshe thar* are animals that are spared from being killed or sold. A *bla ma* usually recommends that a family nominate a *tshe thar* if a family member is sick. The *tshe thar* is then ransomed for the sick person, who will recover from their illness.

Pastoralists typically keep around ten head of livestock as *tshe thar*. Such animals must be more beautiful or stronger than other animals, though any kind of livestock can be *tshe thar*.

Figure 62. A *tshe thar*.



The ritual of consecrating a *tshe thar* is referred to as *tshe thar la gtang ba* 'doing *tshe thar*'. A pot of water referred to as *chu nag po* 'black water' is required.<sup>6</sup> Black is considered an ominous color and the pot of 'black water' therefore serves to exorcise sickness, misfortune, and evils from the family. The second requirement is a

---

<sup>6</sup> The water is not actually black. It is plain water, and is referred to as 'black water' in opposition to 'white water' (water mixed with milk).

pot of water mixed with milk. Finally, a piece of butter and a sharp knife are needed. Men typically perform this ritual, but a woman may do it if there are no men at home.

The person conducting the ritual first puts a piece of butter on the animal's forehead and then cuts a little skin from the top of the animal's ear.<sup>7</sup> The black water is then poured over the animal from its head to its rump, in order to exorcise the family's misfortune. The milk and water mixture is then poured over the animal from the rump to the head, in order to bring auspiciousness to the family. The person undertaking the ritual next leans near the animal and says:

1. དེ་རིང་ནས་བཟུང་སྲོད་ཚེ་ཐར་ཡིན།།
2. སྲོད་བསང་ནས་ཤམི་ཟ།།
3. སྲོད་བཙོངས་ནས་རིན་མི་ལེན།།
4. སྲོད་ཀྱིས་འཕེལ་ཁ་བྲང་།།
5. སྲོད་ནི་གཞི་བདག་གི་སློ་ཚོག་ཡིན།།
6. སྲོད་འཆི་རག་བར་དུ་ཚེ་ཐར་ཡིན།།
7. ལྷ་རྒྱལ་ལོ།། ལྷ་རྒྱལ་ལོ།། ལྷ་རྒྱལ་ལོ།།

- 1·de ring nas bzung khyod tshe thar yin
- 2·khyod bsad nas sha mi za
- 3·khyod btsongs nas rin mi len
- 4·khyod kyis 'phel kha drang
- 5·khyod ni gzhi bdag gi sgo zog yin
- 6·khyod 'chi rag bar du tshe thar yin
- 7·lha rgyal lo lha rgyal lo lha rgyal lo

- 1·From today on you are a *tshe thar*.
- 2·We will not slaughter you for meat.
- 3·We will not sell you to make money.
- 4·We hope you will give us many offspring.
- 5·You are the livestock of the mountain deity.
- 6·You will be a *tshe thar* until your death.
- 7·Praise the deities! Praise the deities! Praise the deities!

---

7 Like the skin removed when marking lambs' ears, this skin is usually kept.

A small piece is cut from the ear of the *tshe thar* to permanently mark it as a sacred animal.

Consecrating a *tshe thar* is also thought to benefit locals after death, when they will come to a wide river with no bridge, ferry, or other means of crossing. They believe that the *tshe thar* they nominated while alive will carry them across this river to a paradisiacal, worry-free place.

According to elders, killing a *tshe thar* has the same result as killing 100 people or 100 horses. The following two accounts illustrate the advantages of having a *tshe thar*, and the consequences of killing *tshe thar*:<sup>8</sup>

Around thirty years ago, a child named A bde contracted a serious fever. Dpal Idan went to his home, gave him injections and other medicines, but nothing helped. As the child's health deteriorated, his parents felt helpless, and wept.

"Does your family have an animal that will soon be slaughtered?" asked Dpal Idan.

"We have a ram that we will kill when my son recovers," replied A bde's father.

"Great, let's make it a *tshe thar* instead," said Dpal Idan.

Dpal Idan and A bde's father went outside, caught the ram, brought it in front of the tent, and washed it with *kros chu*.<sup>9</sup> Dpal Idan next poured black water from the sheep's head to its rump, and then white water from the rump to its head, while saying:

1. དེ་རིང་ནས་བཟུང་ཚུད་ཚེ་ཐར་ཡིན།།

2. བཤས་ཤམ་མི་ཟ།།

3. བཙོངས་ནས་རིན་མི་ལེན།།

4. ཚུད་ཨ་བདེའི་སྲོག་ཚབ་ཡིན།།

1. de ring nas bzung khyod tshe thar yin;

2. bshas sha mi za;

3. btsongs nas rin mi len

4. khyod a bde srog tshab yin

1. From today you are a *tshe thar*,

2. We won't kill you for meat,

---

<sup>8</sup> First account from Sngags dpal Idan smyon pa, second from Dpal bo.

<sup>9</sup> *Kros chu* is holy water that has been breathed on by a *bla ma*.

- 3.We won't sell you for money,  
4.You are the substitute for A bde's life.

Then the sheep shook several times, which was a good omen that it had taken A bde's life back.

During dinner that evening, A bde ate with the other family members. The next day, he was completely free from sickness.

Nowadays, A bde is one of the richest men in Brag dkar County.

Once there was a very disobedient young man in Smug po, whose family's several different *tshe thar* included yellow and gray yak bulls that had been designated *tshe thar* under the instruction of A lags Rdzong sngon Bla ma.

One day, that young man took two *tshe thar* to market and exchanged them for food for his family. When the *bla ma* heard this, he said it was a very bad omen. Three months later, the young man died mysteriously while herding. There were no marks on his corpse. Locals considered this punishment for selling his family's *tshe thar*.

### *Srung g.yag*

*Srung g.yag* refers to male yaks that are dedicated to the mountain deities, often Smug po spun gsum and Zur gsum ki lha, or to *klu*. They are usually dedicated to mountain deities in general rather than specific deities, though people may occasionally dedicate livestock to specific deities if a *bla ma* recommends that they do so. Dedicating livestock to deities is one way to venerate the deities and beseech them for protection.

*Srung g.yag* and *tshe thar* are different. Whereas *tshe thar* must never be killed, a *srung g.yag* sometimes may be. If a *srung g.yag* behaves badly, family members may come to dislike it, dedicate another animal in its place, and slaughter the original animal. The process by which a yak becomes a *srung g.yag* also differs from that by which livestock become a *tshe thar*.

A *srung g.yag* is typically dedicated at a *bla ma's* request. To dedicate the chosen animal, an elder man or woman ties colored pieces of cloth on the yak's back hair while offering *bsang* on the first

morning of the New Year.<sup>10</sup> *Srung g.yag* are re-dedicated annually on the first morning of the New Year, by changing the colored pieces of cloth while offering *bsang*.

Elders say that the color of the *srung g.yag* is determined by the deity to which it is dedicated. 'Bri rog rog 'a female black yak with horns' or *rgod ma nag nag* 'a black mare' are dedicated to goddesses and black male livestock including yaks, horses, and sheep are dedicated to male mountain deities. White, gray, or other colored livestock may be required for certain deities.

White male yaks, white male horses, and white male sheep are dedicated to the deity Rong bo A myes gur.<sup>11</sup> Smug po herders also offer white male yaks, horses, and sheep to A myes Rma rgyal.<sup>12</sup> According to elders, Rgyal bo is the most important *srung ma* for Smug po residents; white yaks are dedicated to him.

Black female livestock are dedicated to Khya mo spun gsum.

Locals also dedicate *srung g.yag* to Dpal ldan mgon po. The following proverb describes animals dedicated to Dpal ldan mgon po.

- 1.རྒྱུང་ལྷ་མཚོ་མཚོ་ལའི་རྩ་ཚག་དང་།
- 2.རབ་བརྗེད་འབྲིངས་བའི་གཡག་རྩོག་སོགས།
- 3.ལྷག་ཚག་མཛེས་པའི་རྒྱན་གྱིས་བརྒྱན།
- 4.འཕྱར་ལྷིང་ཅན་གྱི་བྱ་ཚག་འདི།
- 5.དཔལ་ལྷན་མཚོ་ན་པོ་འཁོར་བཅས་ལ།

- 1.rlung ltar mgyogs pa'i rta nag dang
- 2.rab brjid 'gyings ba'i g.yag rog sogs
- 3.lug nag mdzes ba'i rgyan gyis brgyan

---

<sup>10</sup> Some locals also tie such colored cloth to their favorite yaks as decoration.

<sup>11</sup> Sngags dpal ldan snyon pa stated that Rong bo A myes gur is a mountain deity from Reb gong. There is no *lab rtse* for this deity, however, all local people invoke Rong bo A myes gur when offering *bsang* and chanting *bsang yig*.

<sup>12</sup> A myes rma rgyal, also known as Rma chen spom ra, is the mountain deity associated with the mountain A mye rma chen in Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. As with Rong bo A myes gur, there is no *lab rtse* for this deity, but he is invoked in all local *bsang yig*.

4.'phur lding can gyi bya nag 'di'i  
5 dpal ldan mgon po 'khor bcas la

- 1-A black horse as fast as the wind,
- 2-A majestic black yak,
- 3-A beautiful black sheep,
- 4-A flying black bird,
- 5-Are all for Dpal ldan mgon po and his retinue.

Dedicating livestock to deities is one way to venerate them and also beseech them for protection.

Figure 63. A *srung g.yag*.



The best dates to dedicate a *srung g.yag* are considered to be the first, third, and thirteenth days of the first lunar month, the eleventh day of the second lunar month, the eleventh day of the fourth lunar month, the ninth day of the fifth lunar month, and the fifteenth day of the eleventh lunar month.

If a household experiences frequent disasters and illness, the local *bla ma* will tell them to dedicate a *srung g.yag* to their mountain deity. The family then chooses an animal according to the mountain deity. Sheep wool and wool strings were traditionally tied on the dedicated animal, but now five different-colored cloth strips are more commonly tied. Elders complain about this, stating that white sheep's wool is auspicious and preferred by mountain deities. While tying the wool or cloth, the person conducting the ritual makes a short speech. They begin by announcing the name of the deity to whom the animal is being dedicated. For example:

Dpal ldan lha mo...  
 Ma cig tshe ring mkhyen lnga...  
 Ma cig grub pa'i rgyal po...

...and then dedicates the animal to the deity, saying:

- 1.འདི་མི་འཇིག་ལ་འབྲེན་ནས།
- 2.ཕུགས་ཀྱི་གོང་ཁ་འབྲེན་ནས།
- 3.ཁ་ལས་རླུང་རྟ་འབྲེན་ནས།
- 4.ཁ་ལས་དག་དཔོན།
- 5.རླུང་རྟ་དར་དཔོན།
- 6.དག་ལྷ་དར་དཔོན།
- 7.བསམ་དོན་འགྲུབ་དཔོན།
- 8.བཀའ་ཤིས་ཤོག།

- 1.'di mi'i srog la 'then nas
- 2.phyugs kyi god kha 'then nas
- 3.kha las rlung rta 'then nas
- 4.kha las dge dgos
- 5.rlung rta dar dgos
- 6.dgra lha dar dgos
- 7.bsam don 'grub dgos
- 8.bkra shis shog

- 1-It is (given to you) for family members' longevity,
- 2-It is (given to you) for livestock's wellbeing.
- 3-It is (given to you) for our good luck,
- 4-Give us flourishing luck,
- 5-Give us good fortune,
- 6-Give us protection from evil deities,
- 7-Give us our hearts' desires,
- 8-May auspiciousness come!

The following is said when a horse is dedicated to a mountain deity:

- 1-དེ་རིང་བརླུང་རྟ་འདི་ཚྱོད་ཀྱི་ཚོན་རྟ་ཡིན།།
- 2-འདི་ལ་ཁ་བསྐྱོས་པ་ཡིན།།
- 3-ཁྲག་འཕྲོད་པ།།
- 4-བདག་ཅག་སྐལ་བ་ལྡན་པ།།
- 5-སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་བརྟན་པ་དར་བ།།
- 6-སེམས་ཅན་ལ་བདེ་སྲིད་འབྱུང་བ།།

- 1-de ring bzung rta 'di khyod kyis zhon rta yin
- 2-'di la kha bskos ba yin
- 3-khrag 'phrod pa
- 4-bdag cag skal ba ldan pa
- 5-sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa dar ba
- 6-sems can la bde skyid 'byung ba

- 1-From today this horse is yours.
- 2-May it be good for you,
- 3-May it help you,
- 4-May we have a better life,
- 5-May Buddhism flourish,
- 6-May all sentient beings have a great life.

Each local family invites monks to chant for the family annually. After this ritual, known as *ca ba*, herders re-dedicate their



*srung g.yag*, in order to confirm their commitment to them and to delight the deity.

If a sheep is dedicated to a mountain deity, its wool is never shorn, and it is thereafter referred to as a *gnam lug* 'sky sheep'.

#### DIVINATION WITH SHEEP BODY PARTS

*Lug rdzi mig chu* 'shepherd's tear' refers to liquid found in sacs within sheep flesh after slaughter. A small amount is found in summer and much more is found in autumn if the herder did not herd well. A herder's sheep will have a big shepherd's tear if he dislikes herding. People say that the herder dislikes his work, and cries while herding. However, there will only be a small shepherd's tear if a herder enjoys herding, indicating that he took good care of the sheep and their subsequent good health. After slaughtering a sheep, the size of the tear is used to encourage and punish young herders.

*Sog ga*<sup>13</sup> 'sheep scapula' may be used for divination once meat has been removed. The bone is divided into *rang phyogs* 'one's own side' and *gzhan phyogs* 'others' side'. At the end of the scapula is a piece of weak bone called the *kha chem*. Local male elders predict the future using these parts. It is considered a good sign if the *rang phyogs* is higher than the *gzhan phyogs*, indicating that there will be no enemies, no death, and everything will go as the family wishes. However, the family will lose their wealth and will be defeated by their enemies if the *gzhan phyogs* is higher than the *rang phyogs*.

The family will be lucky if the middle of the *kha chem* is higher than the two sides. If the edge of the *kha chem* is very thick, it means the household has a good network of relatives helping and protecting them. If the edge of *kha chem* is thick and the middle is thin, this suggests that many bad things will happen to the family.

Several small black spots or a single large black spot may also be found on the scapula. If a single large spot is found, its position is examined. If it is located close to the spine in the middle of the

---

<sup>13</sup> The literary form is *sog pa*.

scapula, this is interpreted as a sign of good fortune. However, if the spot is located at the edge of the bone, it indicates the imminent end of the world.

The scapula is checked after it is scraped clean of meat. Livestock are never slaughtered solely for a divination. It is uncommon for the *gzhan phyogs* to be higher than the *rang phyogs* but, if this happens, locals consult a *bla ma* or fortuneteller for another divination for the household. If the result confirms that given by the scapula, the family invites monks to chant for the family's protection.

*Lug mtsher* 'sheep spleen' are also used to predict the future. A household's eldest man, usually the grandfather, takes out the warm spleen just after slaughtering the sheep and beats it on the sheep's stomach five to ten times while saying (Chos dar):

<sup>1</sup>བཟང་བམས་ཅད་མཚོར་བར་ཤོག།

<sup>2</sup>ངན་བམས་ཅད་གྱུད་ལུར་སོང།།

<sup>1</sup>bzang thams cad mtsher bar shog

<sup>2</sup>ngan thams cad gyod pur<sup>14</sup> song

<sup>1</sup>All good things come to the spleen.

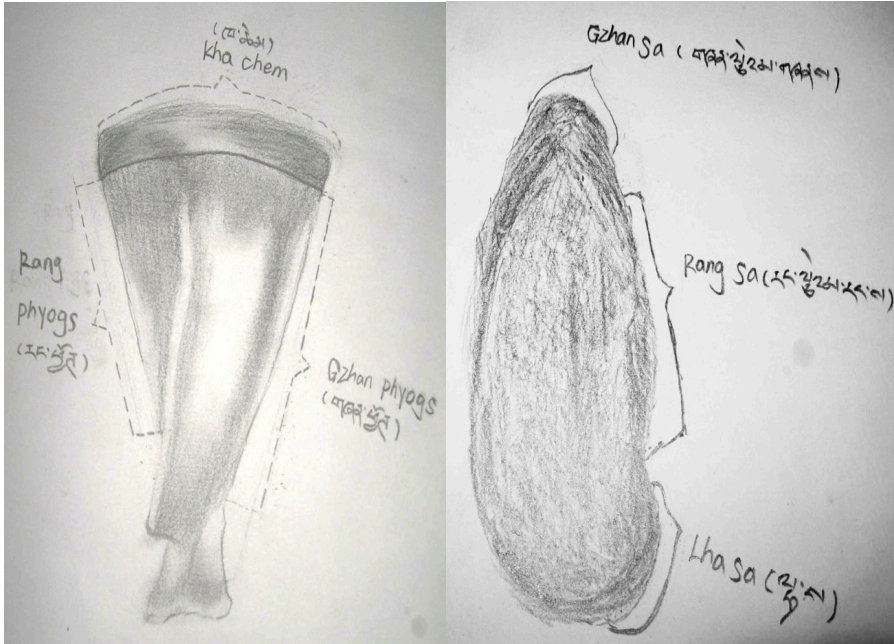
<sup>2</sup>All bad things go to the stomach.

The spleen is divided into *gzhan sa* 'others' side', *rang sa* 'one's own side', and *lha sa* 'deities' place'. It is uncommon for the *gzhan sa* to be higher than the *rang sa*. It is a good sign if the *lha sa* is high because this indicates that offerings made to deities have been received. It is a bad sign if it is low, as this indicates that the family has been making insufficient offerings to deities. In such cases, more offerings should be made in the future, otherwise deities will not protect the household and its livestock from disease.

---

<sup>14</sup> The literary form is *grod pu*.

Figures 64 and 65. Illustrations showing the scapula (left) and spleen (right) and the various features used in divination.



### TREATING LIVESTOCK ILLNESS

Herders prevent and treat certain livestock diseases. *Ri phye*, *glo nad*, *gza'*, *gor nag*, and *sa skyon* are five common yak diseases with which local herders contend. In addition to describing these diseases below, I identify them by their English name wherever possible.

There are no known warning signs prior to the onset of *ri phye*. When an animal gets this sickness – possibly bovine botulism – it abruptly collapses, sticks its tongue out as far as possible, and soon begins to pant and convulse. If not treated immediately, *ri phye* kills the yak, though it does not spread to other animals or humans. Treatment involves taking mud from where the yak fell ill and beating it on the animal's body in the same place nine times in rapid succession. The animal then usually recovers; if not, it dies quickly. There is no other method to treat this disease.

Figure 66. A yak with *ri phye*.



In 1993, one of Mkhar byams's yak cows contracted *ri phye*. He did not treat it immediately, because all his family members were at home and nobody was on the mountain with the grazing livestock. When someone went to fetch the livestock, the yak cow had already died. Mkhar byams later said, "If somebody experienced had been grazing with the yaks, there would have been an opportunity to save her life, but unfortunately she died."

*Glo nad* refers to infectious lung diseases, probably including bovine tuberculosis, bovine viral disease, and mucosal disease. The spread of this disease is prevented by feeding yaks a liquid made by boiling rabbit meat with certain mountain herbs. Herders also prevent the spread of *glo nad* using '*gog rtsi*, a concoction made from blood and grass collected from the stomach of a yak that has died of *glo nad*. After an infected yak dies, herders feed its '*gog rtsi* to a sick yak, and, if this yak dies, its '*gog rtsi* is fed to the next sick yak. By the fourth transfer of '*gog rtsi*, the disease no longer spreads.

*Gza'* is a parasitic encystation and is the most common sheep and yak disease, though it most frequently affects sheep. It is

contagious. The infected animal cannot go far from the home, and turns constantly in circles. Pastoralists treat this illness without medicine. Only four elder men knew how to treat this disease in Smug po in 2010. I interviewed one such elder, Dpal ldan, who said that *gza'* is a very dangerous disease that can probably infect people.

In the summer of 2008, one of my family's sheep contracted *gza'* 'coenurosis'. Although coenurosis occurs frequently, that was the first time I had ever seen Dpal ldan treat the disease. Our flock of sheep had gone to the mountains to graze one morning, but one sheep stayed behind, turning uncontrollably to the left, and thus alerting the herders to the fact that it was infected. Dpal ldan felt the infected sheep's head to locate the *gza'* 'cyst', but could not find it. He said, "This is only the beginning, so we won't find anything for at least ten days." People then watched the sheep and did not allow it to go far from the home. Dpal ldan examined the head later and found the cyst on the left side of the head. The next day he used an especially sharp knife to remove the cyst, which was then burned.

An animal is observed for one month after contracting coenurosis. If the cyst is on the left side of the head, the animal turns to the left and if the cyst is on the right side, it turns to the right. Usually the cyst remains in the head, damaging the brain and skull, and after one month, the bone is eaten away by the cyst. At that time, people knock on the animal's head, listen for a hollow sound to find where the cyst is located, and then remove the cyst, which is a whitish skin sac filled with a transparent liquid, about seven centimeters in diameter. The cyst must be taken out carefully because, if it breaks, the disease will recur. After it is taken out, the surrounding skin is sewn up with hair and covered with a small piece of cloth.

A cyst that has been removed must be destroyed to prevent the infection from spreading. A hole about forty centimeters deep and twenty centimeters wide is dug in a place that people and livestock do not frequent. Dung and wood are placed in the hole, the *gza'* is placed on top of this fuel, and more fuel is added atop it. The fire is checked regularly after it is lit, to ensure that it burns continuously for one whole day and night, after which the *gza'* is considered permanently destroyed. The hole is then filled and people avoid the site. Livestock are also kept away.

The main symptom of *gor nag*, or simply *gor*, is bloody diarrhea. It is possibly rinderpest or anthrax, but could be any variety of viral, bacterial, or parasitic hemorrhagic gastro-enteritis. Animals infected with *gor* die slowly over a long period of time. In order to treat this disease, the male head of the household hunts for a pregnant antelope, which he kills. He then removes the fetus, afterbirth, and amniotic fluid. The dead mother's blood is mixed with the amniotic fluid and fed to the infected animal. This treatment is considered capable of curing most animals infected with *gor*. The sick animal will surely die if the disease is left untreated.

Elders say *gor* spreads like a fever throughout a herd, as demonstrated in the following account (Sngags Dpal ldan smyon pa):

Once *gor* was spreading rapidly and widely among livestock somewhere in Tibetan areas. An elderly woman was frightened that her only female yak would get the disease, so she fled with her yak. On the way she met an old man wearing a small white cap. "Where are you going?" asked the old man.

"*Gor* is spreading very rapidly these days. I'm afraid that my yak will get sick, so I'm trying to escape," said the woman.

"OK! Try wearing my cap and tell me what you can see," said the old man. She put on the cap and saw that *gor* was everywhere on the mountain, grassland, and rivers.

"I am the leader of *gor*. There is nowhere for you to escape but, please believe me, I won't kill your female yak. You will be safe if you go home," said the old man.

So the old woman returned home and in the end, her yak was the only animal that survived the *gor* epidemic.

*Ri phye, glo nad*, and *gor nag* are described in the following account, in which the diseases are anthropomorphized (Sngags dpal ldan smyon pa):

Once upon a time, one mountain deity visited another mountain deity. "Gor, go fetch some meat for my guest," said the host mountain deity.

"I won't be able to return with meat very soon, because I take a long time to kill livestock," said Gor.

"OK. Glo, you go fetch some meat for the guest," said the deity.

"I also won't be able to return quickly, because the animal will only die after I finish consuming its lungs. That will take a long time," said Glo.

The deity thought for a while, and decided that the fastest one

would be Ri phye. "Ri phye, go and get some meat for our guest," said the deity."

"OK! No problem, I will be back soon," said Ri phye, and left.

He reached a large herding camp and saw a rich family's daughter milking a white female yak, while chanting Sgrol ma 'Tara'. He went near the female yak and pulled its hair. The yak kicked the girl.

"Oh! My lovely white yak! You have never behaved like this before. You will be protected by Tara," said the girl, instead of scolding the yak. Ri phye thus didn't get anything and went to another family.<sup>15</sup>

Ri phye came to another family and saw a girl milking a female yak. He did the same things again and the female yak kicked the girl. "Oh! My female yak! You have never behaved like this. You will be protected by *bla ma*," said the girl. So, once again, Ri phye couldn't get anything and went on his way.

Finally, he saw a poor family's daughter milking her only female yak. He believed rich families had lots of money because they never scolded their livestock or called them bad names, and poor families were poor because they often scolded their animals and called them bad names. Hence, the poor family's animals died very often. So, he went and pulled the female yak's hair, and it kicked her.

"Oh! Unlucky yak, you will be eaten by *ri phye*," said the girl. Ri phye was delighted, killed the yak, and took it to the mountain deity.

*Sa skyon* is considered to be a non-infectious, typically lethal disease caused by an object, also called a *sa skyon*, that is found underground. A *sa skyon* resembles a sheep's stomach filled with spiders. Grass grows sparsely above a *sa skyon*'s dwelling place. Livestock contract the disease if they touch a *sa skyon* or eat the grass above it. The animal's horns then become cold,<sup>16</sup> and a very small cyst may appear on the left side of the animal's chest. To treat the disease, an awl is inserted into the cyst and blood is drained from it. The animal may also be bled from the tip of the nose.

If a *sa skyon* is discovered on the surface of the ground, it is covered with a pot and fuel is heaped on top and burned. The pot is then removed and the cooked *sa skyon* is fed to livestock that have been infected, which ensures rapid recovery.

No living elder in Smug po has ever seen a *sa skyon*.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ri phye is unable to harm an animal unless someone scolds it using the disease's name. Locals often scold animals using the names of diseases.

<sup>16</sup> All but the tip of the horns are typically at body temperature. Horns contain blood and a *rwa snying* 'horn heart', a bone that emerges from the skull into the base of the horn.

## CONCLUSION

This book has focused on the relationship between herders and their livestock in the pastoral community of Smug po (Lung bzang Township, Brag dkar County, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province, China).

I began with a short story, told from the perspective of a yak, in Chapter One, and then, in Chapter Two, I introduced the general context of local life and religion in Smug po. I described the community's location and territory, population, language, history, housing, economy, education, and local deities. I also provided maps showing the location of Smug po Community.

In Chapter Three, I discussed pastoralism in Smug po, providing detailed information on pastoral production and the pastoral cycle. I described what pastoralists do and produce in the different seasons. Furthermore, I provided diagrams showing where pastoralists live with their herds at different times of the year.

In Chapter Four, I introduced livestock and other animals. The section on yaks discussed determining the age of yaks, differentiating yaks, yak breeding, breaking in yaks, and hybrids. The section on sheep discussed determining the age of sheep, differentiating sheep, and breeding. Horses, horse naming, and horse racing were also discussed, as were domestic dogs. The section on wildlife introduced local knowledge about wild yaks, wolves, dholes, marmots, rabbits, black bears, pika, lynx, cuckoos, black birds, ravens, and sparrows.

Chapter Five provided an introduction to herding and pasture management. In this section I discussed local plants, pasture management, weather and weather prediction, ensuring fortune, as well as livestock illnesses and their treatment.

Nowadays, the knowledge recorded in this book, and the skills that embody that knowledge, are rarely practiced in Smug po. For example, now only a few elders can divine with sheep body parts. Most of the information in this book was recorded from elders because young people lack knowledge of such things. Now, whenever an elder passes away, Tibetan pastoralists lose something that we



had maintained for many generations. There is a great need for this kind of study to preserve Tibetan herders' livestock knowledge.

I am twenty-eight years old this year (2014), and I have seen many changes in my short lifetime. When I began herding at the age of seven, there were no roads, cars, or motorcycles in Smug po or nearby communities. When I began school, Father sent me to the county seat on horseback. It took at least two days. Everything then changed with incredible rapidity in a very short time. The first motorcycle appeared in Smug po in 1997 then, year by year, more and more motorcycles appeared. The first large vehicle appeared in 2001, when the whole community collected money from each household and bought a big truck to use for transport rather than using yaks. Soon afterwards, families began buying cars. Nowadays, most families in Smug po own a car. Cellphones are now common – most families have at least three.

The first television appeared in Smug po in 1997. At that time, Grandfather went to Zi ling where he knew a Han man from Beijing, who sold him the television. The Han man returned with my grandfather to help install the television, and stayed with us for twenty days. Local herders did not know anything about that new and strange thing and could not even imagine what it was for. The first afternoon that the Han man showed us how to use the television, all our neighbors gathered in our home. They were amazed. Afterwards, neighbor families and relatives often gathered in our home to watch television. Starting in around 2003, more and more locals bought televisions, and now over ninety percent of local families have one.

There is still no grid electricity in Smug po. People rely on solar electricity to watch television, and for lighting. The electricity generated by solar panels is very limited, so families only use electricity for a few hours each day. They eat supper under electric light bulbs, and then watch television together for an hour or two afterwards. They usually watch the provincial Tibetan language station, as most people in Smug po do not understand much Chinese.

Many of these changes are the result of increasing prosperity from the caterpillar fungus trade. Before 2008, locals earned a little income by renting their land to Hui and Han, who hired people to

collect caterpillar fungi on the rented land. After 2008, however, locals began earning good incomes by collecting and selling caterpillar fungi themselves. Nowadays, the vast majority of families collect caterpillar fungus on their own land, and earn about twice as much as they did previously. In 2013, each caterpillar fungus sold for between seventy and 100 RMB, and a family could sell up to around 10,000 fungi.

Land divisions have also changed the fabric of traditional pastoral life. Elders told me that the first pasture division in Smug po was made in 1986. At that time, the winter pasture was divided according to the number of members in each family, and the community's livestock were also divided at this time. The summer and autumn pastures continued to be shared until 1998, when the government divided the summer pasture among individual families. Nonetheless, many encampments continued to share their summer pastures until 2010. Beginning at this time, however, fewer and fewer families shared their land with others. This was due mostly to the sharp increase in caterpillar fungus prices, and families' increasing unwillingness to share profits with others. At present, very few people share their land, except with close relatives, such as brothers, parents, and children.

Smug po residents increasingly move to the county town, where they buy houses and permanently relocate. In their new urban environment, people have many new experiences, their worldview broadens, they dream new dreams, and begin to imagine themselves in different ways.

Starting in 2010, gold miners from inner China began building a large road through the mountains. As a result, locals can now travel from Smug po to the county town in two hours. Before this road was built, there was a low quality dirt road that was frequently damaged by summer rains and covered by ice in winter. It took more than one day to reach the county town on this road. The new dirt road is much more convenient. It has two lanes and is passable regardless of the weather.

These dramatic changes have undoubtedly improved some aspects of life for Smug po's pastoralists. However, as their environment changes, pastoralists acquire new concerns and develop

new skills and knowledge to deal with those concerns, and the knowledge that sustained their ancestors for centuries becomes irrelevant. This book hopefully preserves some memory of traditional life in Smug po. I hope a young Tibetan will read this book many years later, perhaps even after my death, and find a record of something unique that truly existed among their ancestors.

Chos bstan rgyal  
Zi ling, 2014

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'bri འབྲི	'dzi tho འདྲི་ཐོ
'bri dkar dkar འབྲི་དཀར་དཀར	'gog rtsi འགོག་རྩི
'bri dkar khra འབྲི་དཀར་ཁྲ	'khyag འབྲུག
'bri dkar tho འབྲི་དཀར་ཐོ	'o ja འོ་ཇ
'bri khra khra འབྲི་ཁྲ་ཁྲ	'o ma འོ་མ
'bri khra tho འབྲི་ཁྲ་ཐོ	'o thug འོ་ཐུག
'bri mo འབྲི་མོ	'ong ba འོང་བ
'bri nag tho འབྲི་ནག་ཐོ	'phang lo འཕང་ལོ
'bri rag rag འབྲི་རག་རག	'phang འཕང
'bri rag tho འབྲི་རག་ཐོ	'Phar ba/ 'phar ba འཕར་བ
'bri rgan འབྲི་རྒན	'ur ra འུར་ར
'bri rgya rgya འབྲི་རྒྱ་རྒྱ	A bde ཨ་བདེ
'bri rgya tho འབྲི་རྒྱ་ཐོ	a bra ཨ་བ
'bri rog rog འབྲི་རོག་རོག	A grags ཨ་གཤགས
'bri skam pa འབྲི་སྐམ་པ	A lags Rdzong sngon Bla ma
'bri sngo sngo འབྲི་སྒོ་སྒོ	ཨ་ལགས་རྫོང་སྒོ་སྒོ་མ
'bri sngo tho འབྲི་སྒོ་ཐོ	A lags Zla ba ཨ་ལགས་ལྷ་བ
'Brog skad འབྲོག་སྐད	A ma'i nu rin ཨ་མའི་ལུ་རིན
'brong འབྲོང	A mdo ཨ་མདོ
'brong khyu འབྲོང་ཁྱུ	A myes Rma rgyal ཨ་བྲེས་མ་རྒྱལ
'brong ru dmar འབྲོང་རུ་དམར	A myes Yi dam skyabs
'brong sgog འབྲོང་སྒོག	ཨ་བྲེས་ཡི་དམ་སྐབས
'Brug rgyal mkhar འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་མཁར	A ni ཨ་ནི
'brug sgra འབྲུག་སྐྱ	A rig ཨ་རིག
'bud chos འབྲུད་ཚོས	A skya ཨ་སྐྱུ
'bud chu འབྲུད་ཚུ	ar mo ཨ་རམོ
'cham འཆམ	Ba yan བ་ཡན
'dzi 'dzi འདྲི་འདྲི	bag rdu བག་རུ
'dzi lang འདྲི་ལང	bal བལ

*bde mo* བདེ་མོ།  
*Bdun pa'i ma Ni* བདུན་པའི་མ་ཎི།  
*be'u* བེ་ལུ།  
*be'u kha da* བེ་ལུ་ཁ་ད  
*be'u ma* བེ་ལུ་མ།  
*Beijing* 北 京།  
*bkag lug* བཀག་ལུག།  
*Bkra shis* བཀྱ་ཤིས།  
*Bkra shis la ring* བཀྱ་ཤིས་ལ་རིང།  
*bla ma* ལྷ་མ།  
*Bla rgan* ལྷ་རྟན།  
*Brag dkar sprel rdzong*  
     བྲག་དཀར་སྤེལ་རྫོང།  
*Brag dkar* བྲག་དཀར།  
*brag sgog* བྲག་སྐོག།  
*brang* བྲང།  
*brgyugs* བརྟུགས།  
*brla tshar* བརྟ་ཚར།  
*brong ba* བྲོང་བ།  
*bsang* བསང།  
*Bsang khri* བསང་ཁྲི།  
*bsang rdzas* བསང་རྫས།  
*bsang yig* བསང་ཡིག།  
*bser bu* བསེར་བུ།  
*bsil chu* བསིལ་ཚུ།  
*btag khyi* བཏག་ཁྲི།  
*btang khyi* བཏང་ཁྲི།  
*btsan* བཙན།  
*btsas* བཙས།  
*bung bu* བུང་བུ།

*Bya khyung* བྱ་ཁྱུང།  
*Byang gi dgon chen bzhi*  
     བྱང་གི་དགོན་ཆེན་བཞི།  
*byi'u skya leb* བྱི་ལུ་སྐུ་ལེབ།  
*byung ston* བྱུང་སྟོན།  
*Bzhi pa'i smyung gnas*  
     བཞི་པའི་སྐུང་གནས།  
*ca ba* ཅ་བ།  
*char nag* ཅར་ནག།  
*char sha* ཅར་ཤ།  
*char zhod* ཅར་ཞོད།  
*Che mchog rdo rje* ཅེ་མཚོག་རྡོ་རྗེ།  
*chon thag* ཅོན་ཐག།  
*Chos bstan rgyal* ཅོས་བསྐྱར་རྒྱལ།  
*Chos dar* ཅོས་དར།  
*chu* ཚུ།  
*Chu bzang* ཚུ་བཟང།  
*chu nag po* ཚུ་ནག་པོ།  
*chu shag* ཚུ་ཤག།  
*chur ba* ཚུར་བ།  
*chur khu* ཚུར་ཁུ།  
*chur ra* ཚུར་ར།  
*chur rdzas* ཚུར་རྫས།  
*chus* ཚུས།  
*cun* ཚུ།  
*Dar mtsho* དར་མཚོ།  
*dar* དར།  
*dar ra* དར་ར།  
*dar zhu ba* དར་ཚུ་བ།  
*dbo kheb* དབོ་ཁེབ།

Dbus དབུས  
 Dbus gtsang དབུས་གཙང་  
 Dbyang rgyal དབྱང་རྒྱལ་  
 dbyar gnas དབྱར་གནས་  
 dbyar ka དབྱར་ཀ་  
 dbyar sa དབྱར་ས་  
 Dgon lung དགོན་ལུང་  
 dgu thug དགུ་ཐུག་  
 dgun ka དགུན་ཀ་  
 dgun lug དགུན་ལུག་  
 dgun sa དགུན་ས་  
 dgun sha དགུན་ཤ་  
 dkar dkar དཀར་དཀར་  
 dkar mchod དཀར་མཚོད་  
 Dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས་  
 dkyus chon དཀྱུས་ཚོན་  
 dmar mchod དམར་མཚོད་  
 Dmar mo དམར་མོ་  
 dmu thag དམུ་ཐག་  
 do yas འོ་ཡས་  
 dom འོ་མ་  
 Dpal bo དཔལ་བོ་  
 Dpal ldan དཔལ་ལྷན་  
 Dpal ldan lha mo དཔལ་ལྷན་ལྷ་མོ་  
 Dpal ldan mgon po  
     དཔལ་ལྷན་མགོན་པོ་  
 Dpal ldan srung ma དཔལ་ལྷན་སྲུང་མ་  
 dpe cha དཔེ་ཚལ་  
 Dpon skor དཔོན་སྐོར་  
 dpyid ka དཔྱིད་ཀ་  
 dred mong རྗེད་མོང་

dur khrod དུར་ཁྲོད་  
 g.yag གཡམ་ག་  
 g.yag dkar cha གཡམ་ག་དཀར་ཆ་  
 g.yag dkar dkar གཡམ་ག་དཀར་དཀར་  
 g.yag dkar tho གཡམ་ག་དཀར་ཚོ་  
 g.yag khra khra གཡམ་ག་ཁྲ་ཁྲ་  
 g.yag khra tho གཡམ་ག་ཁྲ་ཚོ་  
 g.yag nag tho གཡམ་ག་ནག་ཚོ་  
 g.yag rag rag གཡམ་ག་རག་རག་  
 g.yag rgya rgya གཡམ་ག་རྒྱ་རྒྱ་  
 g.yag rgya tho གཡམ་ག་རྒྱ་ཚོ་  
 g.yag rog rog གཡམ་ག་རོག་རོག་  
 g.yag rwa གཡམ་ག་རུ་  
 g.yag sar གཡམ་ག་སར་  
 g.yag sngo tho གཡམ་ག་སྐོ་ཚོ་  
 g.yang གཡམ་དང་  
 G.yang 'bod གཡམ་དང་འབོད་  
 g.yang gi mtsho mo གཡམ་དང་གི་མཚོ་མོ་  
 g.yang ra sgo bzhi གཡམ་དང་ར་སྐོ་བཞི་  
 g.yang sgam གཡམ་དང་སྐམ་  
 g.yang si གཡམ་དང་སི་  
 g.yi dbur གཡམི་དབུར་  
 g.yos rgyu གཡམོས་རྒྱུ་  
 g.yu dgo rwa གཡམུ་དགོ་རུ་  
 g.yu gu གཡམུ་གུ་  
 g.yu gu dkar tho གཡམུ་གུ་དཀར་ཚོ་  
 g.yu gu khra khra གཡམུ་གུ་ཁྲ་ཁྲ་  
 g.yu gu khra tho གཡམུ་གུ་ཁྲ་ཚོ་  
 g.yu gu nag tho གཡམུ་གུ་ནག་ཚོ་  
 g.yu gu rag rag གཡམུ་གུ་རག་རག་

*g.yu gu rag tho* གཡུ་གུ་རག་ཐོ  
*g.yu gu rgya rgya* གཡུ་གུ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ  
*g.yu gu rog rog* གཡུ་གུ་རོག་རོག  
*g.yu gu ser tho* གཡུ་གུ་སེར་ཐོ  
*g.yu gu sngo sngo* གཡུ་གུ་སྒོ་སྒོ  
*g.yu gu sngo tho* གཡུ་གུ་སྒོ་ཐོ  
*g.yu mo* གཡུ་མོ  
*ga ga ga* ག་ག་ག  
*gdung khyim* གདུང་ཁྱིམ  
*Ge sar* གེ་སར  
*Glang chen* གླང་ཆེན  
*glang sga* གླང་སྐ  
*gling ma* གླིང་མ  
*glo* གློ  
*glo nad* གློ་ནད  
*glog dmar* གློག་དམར  
*gnam lug* གནམ་ལུག  
*gnyen ston* གཉེན་སྟོན  
*Go rdza* གོ་རྩ  
*gom pa* གོམ་པ  
*gong thag* གོང་ཐག  
*gor* གོར  
*gor nag* གོར་ནག  
*gos sku* གོས་སྐུ  
*Gri gum btsan po* གླི་གུམ་བཙན་པོ  
*gro 'bras* གྲོ་འབྲས  
*gro chur* གྲོ་ཚུར  
*gro khu* གྲོ་ཁུ  
*gro ma* གྲོ་མ  
*grod pu* གྲོད་པུ  
*gru chon* གུ་ཚོན

*grus ma* གུས་མ  
*Gser khog* གསེར་ཁོག  
*Gser rta* གསེར་རྟ  
*Gshin rje chos rgyal* གཤིན་རྗེ་ཚོས་རྒྱལ  
*gso chas* གསོ་ཆས  
*Gsum pa'i skor chen*  
 གསུམ་པའི་སྐོར་ཆེན  
*gung* གུང  
*Gung lha* གུང་ལྷ  
*gya li* གཡ་ལི  
*gya ston* གཡ་སྟོན  
*gyang* གཡང  
*gza'* གཟའ  
*gzhan phyogs* གཞན་ཕྱོགས  
*gzhan sa* གཞན་ས  
*gzhi bdag* གཞི་བདག  
*Haidong* 海东  
*Hainan* 海南  
*Han* 汉  
*ho rog* ཧོ་རོག  
*Hualong* 化隆  
*Huangnan* 黄南  
*Hui* 回  
*hUM ma rtse ma* ཧུཾ་མ་རྩེ་མ  
*ka* ཀ  
*kha 'chang* ཁ་འཆང  
*kha btags* ཁ་བཏགས  
*kha char 'dres ma* ཁ་ཆར་འདྲེས་མ  
*kha chem* ཁ་ཆེམ  
*kha gang* ཁ་གང

kha gang nas lo gcig

ཁ་གང་ནས་ལོ་གཅིག

kha tshub ཁ་ཚུབ

khal ma ཁལ་མ

kham tho ཁམ་ཐོ

Khams ཁམས

Khams mdo ཁམས་མདོ

khang byi'u ཁང་བྱི་འུ

khangs ཁངས

khangs chag ཁངས་ཆག

khangs chen ཁངས་ཆེན

khra khra ཁྲ་ཁྲ

khrag rgyu ཁྲག་རྒྱུ

khrom ཁྲོམ

khu byug ཁུ་བྱུག

khu lu ཁུ་ལུ

Khya mo ཁྱ་མོ

Khya mo spun gsum ཁྱ་མོ་སྤུན་གསུམ

khyim bdag ཁྱིམ་བདག

khyim bsang ཁྱིམ་བསང

ki ཀི

Klu 'bum mi rgod ལུ་འབུམ་མི་རྟོག

Klu mo skyid ལུ་མོ་སྐྱིད

Klu pa thar ལུ་པ་ཐར

klu ལུ

kros chu ཀྲོས་ཚུ

Kun bzang ལུན་བཟང

kya rta ལྷ་རྟ

Kyang ring ལྷ་རིང

la lo ལ་ལོ

La nag zhar ལ་ནག་ཞར

lab dung ལལ་དུང

lab rtse ལལ་རྩེ

lag ga ལག་ག

lag mo ལག་མོ

lag rtsid ལག་རྩིད

lag sdom ལག་སྐྱོམ

lag yos ལག་ཡོས

Lha sa/ lha sa ལྷ་ས

lha zas ལྷ་ཟས

lha ལྷ

lhog bzhi ལྷོག་བཞི

Lo ba ལོ་བ

Lo sar ལོ་སར

Longzang ལོང་ཚང

lu gu ལུ་གུ

lug mtsher ལུག་མཚར

lug rdzi mig chu ལུག་རྩི་མིག་ཚུ

lug sa ལུག་ས

lug sha ལུག་ཤ

Lung bzang ལུང་བཟང

lus lha ལུས་ལྷ

Ma cig grub pa'i rgyal po

མ་ཅིག་གུབ་པའི་རྒྱལ་པོ

Ma cig tshe ring mkhyen lnga

མ་ཅིག་ཚེ་རིང་མཁྱེན་ལྷ

ma mo མ་མོ

ma rgan མ་རྒན

ma rgan dkar dkar

མ་རྒན་དཀར་དཀར

ma rgan dkar tho མ་རྒན་དཀར་ཐོ

ma rgan kham kham མ་རྒན་ཁམ་ཁམ



ma rgan kham tho མ་རྒྱན་ཁམ་ཐོ  
 ma rgan khra khra མ་རྒྱན་ཁྲ་ཁྲ  
 ma rgan khra tho མ་རྒྱན་ཁྲ་ཐོ  
 ma rgan nag nag མ་རྒྱན་ནག་ནག  
 ma rgan nag tho མ་རྒྱན་ནག་ཐོ  
 ma rgan rgya rgya མ་རྒྱན་རྒྱ་རྒྱ  
 ma rgan rgya tho མ་རྒྱན་རྒྱ་ཐོ  
 ma rgan smug ro མ་རྒྱན་སྐྱུག་རོ  
 ma rgan smug tho མ་རྒྱན་སྐྱུག་ཐོ  
 mar མར  
 mar lo མར་ལོ  
 mchil ba མཚེལ་བ  
 mdzo མཛོ  
 mdzo mo མཛོ་མོ  
 mdzong khug མཛོང་ཁུག  
 Mgo 'chug མགོ་འཇུག  
 Mgo log མགོ་ལོག  
 mgo phying མགོ་ཕྱིང  
 mgo skor མགོ་སྐྱར  
 Mgo skyang མགོ་སྐྱང  
 mi la tse tse མི་ལ་ཙེ་ཙེ  
 mkhan pa མཁན་པ་  
 Mkhar bu rgyal མཁར་བུ་རྒྱལ  
 Mkhar byams མཁར་བྱམས  
 Mkhar skor མཁར་སྐྱར  
 mnol skra མནོལ་སྐྱ  
 mo be'u མོ་བེུ  
 mo be'u dkar cha མོ་བེུ་དཀར་ཇ  
 mo be'u dkar dkar མོ་བེུ་དཀར་དཀར  
 mo be'u dkar tho མོ་བེུ་དཀར་ཐོ  
 mo be'u khra khra མོ་བེུ་ཁྲ་ཁྲ

mo be'u khra tho མོ་བེུ་ཁྲ་ཐོ  
 mo be'u nag tho མོ་བེུ་ནག་ཐོ  
 mo be'u rag rag མོ་བེུ་རག་རག  
 mo be'u rag tho མོ་བེུ་རག་ཐོ  
 mo be'u rgya rgya མོ་བེུ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ  
 mo be'u rgya tho མོ་བེུ་རྒྱ་ཐོ  
 mo be'u rog rog མོ་བེུ་རོག་རོག  
 mo be'u sngo sngo མོ་བེུ་སྐྱ་སྐྱ  
 mo be'u sngo tho མོ་བེུ་སྐྱ་ཐོ  
 mo gzhi མོ་གཞི  
 mo gzhi dkar dkar མོ་གཞི་དཀར་དཀར  
 mo gzhi kham kham མོ་གཞི་ཁམ་ཁམ  
 mo gzhi nag 'dzi མོ་གཞི་ནག་འཛི  
 mo gzhi nag nag མོ་གཞི་ནག་ནག  
 mo gzhi rkyang rkyang  
 མོ་གཞི་རྒྱང་རྒྱང  
 mo gzhi sngo sngo མོ་གཞི་སྐྱ་སྐྱ  
 Mo ko མོ་ཀོ  
 mo la མོ་ལ  
 mo lag dkar dkar མོ་ལག་དཀར་དཀར  
 mo lag dkar tho མོ་ལག་དཀར་ཐོ  
 mo lag kham kham མོ་ལག་ཁམ་ཁམ  
 mo lag kham tho མོ་ལག་ཁམ་ཐོ  
 mo lag khra khra མོ་ལག་ཁྲ་ཁྲ  
 mo lag khra tho མོ་ལག་ཁྲ་ཐོ  
 mo lag nag nag མོ་ལག་ནག་ནག  
 mo lag nag tho མོ་ལག་ནག་ཐོ  
 mo lag rgya rgya མོ་ལག་རྒྱ་རྒྱ  
 mo lag rgya tho མོ་ལག་རྒྱ་ཐོ  
 mo lag smug ro མོ་ལག་སྐྱུག་རོ  
 mo lag smug tho མོ་ལག་སྐྱུག་ཐོ

mo lug མོ་ལུག  
 mo lug dkar dkar མོ་ལུག་དཀར་དཀར  
 mo lug dkar tho མོ་ལུག་དཀར་ཐོ  
 mo lug kham kham མོ་ལུག་ཁམ་ཁམ  
 mo lug kham tho མོ་ལུག་ཁམ་ཐོ  
 mo lug khra bzhos མོ་ལུག་ཁྲ་བཞེས  
 mo lug khra tho མོ་ལུག་ཁྲ་ཐོ  
 mo lug nag nag མོ་ལུག་ནག་ནག  
 mo lug nag tho མོ་ལུག་ནག་ཐོ  
 mo lug rgya rgya མོ་ལུག་རྒྱ་རྒྱ  
 mo lug rgya tho མོ་ལུག་རྒྱ་ཐོ  
 mo lug smug ro མོ་ལུག་སྐྱུག་རོ  
 mo lug smug tho མོ་ལུག་སྐྱུག་ཐོ  
 mo rte'u མོ་རྟེ་འུ  
 mo rte'u dkar dkar  
     མོ་རྟེ་འུ་དཀར་དཀར  
 mo rte'u kham kham མོ་རྟེ་འུ་ཁམ་ཁམ  
 mo rte'u nag 'dzi མོ་རྟེ་འུ་ནག་འདྲི  
 mo rte'u nag nag མོ་རྟེ་འུ་ནག་ནག  
 mo rte'u rkyang rkyang  
     མོ་རྟེ་འུ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ  
 mo rte'u sngo sngo མོ་རྟེ་འུ་སྐྱ་སྐྱ  
 mo sbra མོ་སྐྱ  
 mo thor nag nag མོ་ཐོར་ནག་ནག  
 mo thor sngo sngo མོ་ཐོར་སྐྱ་སྐྱ  
 mo yar མོ་ཡར  
 mo yar dkar cha མོ་ཡར་དཀར་ཆ  
 mo yar dkar dkar མོ་ཡར་དཀར་དཀར  
 mo yar dkar tho མོ་ཡར་དཀར་ཐོ  
 mo yar khra khra མོ་ཡར་ཁྲ་ཁྲ  
 mo yar khra tho མོ་ཡར་ཁྲ་ཐོ

mo yar nag tho མོ་ཡར་ནག་ཐོ  
 mo yar rag rag མོ་ཡར་རག་རག  
 mo yar rgya rgya མོ་ཡར་རྒྱ་རྒྱ  
 mo yar rgya tho མོ་ཡར་རྒྱ་ཐོ  
 mo yar rog rog མོ་ཡར་རོག་རོག  
 mo yar sngo sngo མོ་ཡར་སྐྱ་སྐྱ  
 mo yar sngo tho མོ་ཡར་སྐྱ་ཐོ  
 Mtshams thog gong ma  
     མཚམས་ཐོག་གོང་མ  
 mtsher ba མཚེར་བ  
 mtsher chu མཚེར་ཚུ  
 Mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ  
 Mtsho po མཚོ་པོ  
 Mtsho shar མཚོ་ཤར  
 Mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒྲོན  
 Mtsho sngon po མཚོ་སྒྲོན་པོ  
 Muguo 木果  
 na so gcig ba ན་སོ་གཅིག་པ  
 na so gnyis pa ན་སོ་གཉིས་པ  
 na so gsum pa ན་སོ་གསུམ་པ  
 nag chen ནག་ཆེན  
 nag chung ནག་ཚུང  
 nag tho ནག་ཐོ  
 nag tho chung ba ནག་ཐོ་ཚུང་བ  
 nang ka ནང་ཀ  
 nang sha ནང་ཤ  
 ngar ནར  
 nor ནོར  
 nor lo lon ནོར་ལོ་ལོན  
 nor nag ནོར་ནག  
 nor sa ནོར་ས

nor sha རྩོམ་པ།  
 Nyi ma རྩི་མ།  
 nyin sha རྩི་ན་པ།  
 nyis blang རྩིས་བླང་།  
 nyog རྩོག།  
 nyos bcos རྩོས་བཅོས།  
 o tshe ཨོ་ཚེ།  
 or ska ཨོར་སྐ།  
 Phag mo skyid ཕག་མོ་སྐྱིད།  
 Phag tho ཕག་ཐོ།  
 pho be'u ཕོ་བེ་འུ།  
 pho be'u dkar cha ཕོ་བེ་འུ་དཀར་ཇ།  
 pho be'u dkar dkar

ཕོ་བེ་འུ་དཀར་དཀར།  
 pho be'u dkar tho ཕོ་བེ་འུ་དཀར་ཐོ།  
 pho be'u khra khra ཕོ་བེ་འུ་ཁྲ་ཁྲ།  
 pho be'u khra tho ཕོ་བེ་འུ་ཁྲ་ཐོ།  
 pho be'u nag tho ཕོ་བེ་འུ་ནག་ཐོ།  
 pho be'u rag rag ཕོ་བེ་འུ་རག་རག།  
 pho be'u rag tho ཕོ་བེ་འུ་རག་ཐོ།  
 pho be'u rgya rgya ཕོ་བེ་འུ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ།  
 pho be'u rgya tho ཕོ་བེ་འུ་རྒྱ་ཐོ།  
 pho be'u rog rog ཕོ་བེ་འུ་རོག་རོག།  
 pho be'u sngo sngo ཕོ་བེ་འུ་སྔ་སྔ།  
 pho be'u sngo tho ཕོ་བེ་འུ་སྔ་ཐོ།  
 pho gzhi ཕོ་གཞི།  
 pho gzhi dkar dkar

ཕོ་གཞི་དཀར་དཀར།  
 pho gzhi kham kham ཕོ་གཞི་ཁམ་ཁམ།  
 pho gzhi nag 'dzi ཕོ་གཞི་ནག་འདྲི།  
 pho gzhi nag nag ཕོ་གཞི་ནག་ནག།

pho gzhi rkyang rkyang  
 ཕོ་གཞི་རྒྱང་རྒྱང།  
 pho gzhi sngo sngo ཕོ་གཞི་སྔ་སྔ།  
 pho lag dkar dkar ཕོ་ལག་དཀར་དཀར།  
 pho lag dkar tho ཕོ་ལག་དཀར་ཐོ།  
 pho lag kham kham ཕོ་ལག་ཁམ་ཁམ།  
 pho lag kham tho ཕོ་ལག་ཁམ་ཐོ།  
 pho lag khra khra ཕོ་ལག་ཁྲ་ཁྲ།  
 pho lag khra tho ཕོ་ལག་ཁྲ་ཐོ།  
 pho lag nag nag ཕོ་ལག་ནག་ནག།  
 pho lag nag tho ཕོ་ལག་ནག་ཐོ།  
 pho lag rgya rgya ཕོ་ལག་རྒྱ་རྒྱ།  
 pho lag rgya tho ཕོ་ལག་རྒྱ་ཐོ།  
 pho lag smug ro ཕོ་ལག་སྐྱུ་བ་རོ།  
 pho lag smug tho ཕོ་ལག་སྐྱུ་བ་ཐོ།  
 pho lag ཕོ་ལག།  
 pho lug ཕོ་ལུག།  
 pho lug dkar dkar ཕོ་ལུག་དཀར་དཀར།  
 pho lug dkar tho ཕོ་ལུག་དཀར་ཐོ།  
 pho lug kham kham ཕོ་ལུག་ཁམ་ཁམ།  
 pho lug kham tho ཕོ་ལུག་ཁམ་ཐོ།  
 pho lug khra bzhos ཕོ་ལུག་ཁྲ་བཞོས།  
 pho lug khra tho ཕོ་ལུག་ཁྲ་ཐོ།  
 pho lug nag nag ཕོ་ལུག་ནག་ནག།  
 pho lug nag tho ཕོ་ལུག་ནག་ཐོ།  
 pho lug rgya rgya ཕོ་ལུག་རྒྱ་རྒྱ།  
 pho lug rgya tho ཕོ་ལུག་རྒྱ་ཐོ།  
 pho lug smug ro ཕོ་ལུག་སྐྱུ་བ་རོ།  
 pho lug smug tho ཕོ་ལུག་སྐྱུ་བ་ཐོ།  
 pho rog ཕོ་རོག།  
 pho rte'u ཕོ་རྩེ་འུ།

pho rte'u dkar dkar

ཕོ་རྟེ་ལུ་དཀར་དཀར

pho rte'u kham kham

ཕོ་རྟེ་ལུ་ཁམ་ཁམ

pho rte'u nag 'dzi ཕོ་རྟེ་ལུ་ནག་འདྲི

pho rte'u nag nag ཕོ་རྟེ་ལུ་ནག་ནག

pho rte'u rkyang rkyang

ཕོ་རྟེ་ལུ་རྒྱང་རྒྱང

pho rte'u sngo sngo ཕོ་རྟེ་ལུ་སྔ་སྔ

pho sbra ཕོ་སྤྱ

pho thor dkar dkar

ཕོ་ཐོར་དཀར་དཀར

pho thor kham kham ཕོ་ཐོར་ཁམ་ཁམ

pho thor nag 'dzi ཕོ་ཐོར་ནག་འདྲི

pho thor nag nag ཕོ་ཐོར་ནག་ནག

pho thor rkyang rkyang

ཕོ་ཐོར་རྒྱང་རྒྱང

pho thor sngo sngo ཕོ་ཐོར་སྔ་སྔ

pho yar ཕོ་ཡར

pho yar dkar cha ཕོ་ཡར་དཀར་ཆ

pho yar dkar dkar ཕོ་ཡར་དཀར་དཀར

pho yar dkar tho ཕོ་ཡར་དཀར་ཐོ

pho yar khra khra ཕོ་ཡར་ཁྲ་ཁྲ

pho yar khra tho ཕོ་ཡར་ཁྲ་ཐོ

pho yar nag tho ཕོ་ཡར་ནག་ཐོ

pho yar rag rag ཕོ་ཡར་རག་རག

pho yar rag tho ཕོ་ཡར་རག་ཐོ

pho yar rgya rgya ཕོ་ཡར་རྒྱ་རྒྱ

pho yar rgya tho ཕོ་ཡར་རྒྱ་ཐོ

pho yar rog rog ཕོ་ཡར་རོག་རོག

pho yar sngo sngo ཕོ་ཡར་སྔ་སྔ

pho yar sngo tho ཕོ་ཡར་སྔ་ཐོ

phug phur ཕུག་ཕུར

Phun sum tshogs pa

ཕུན་སུམ་ཚོགས་པ

phye ldur ཕྱེ་ལུར

phye rgyu ཕྱེ་རྒྱུ

phye ཕྱེ

phye thud ཕྱེ་ཐུད

phyi ba ཕྱི་བ

phyi ja ཕྱི་ར

phyi sha ཕྱི་ཤ

Qinghai 青海

rag rag རག་རག

rang phyogs རང་ཕྱོགས

rang sa རང་ས

rdang རང

Rdo rtsig རོ་རྩིག

Rdza lung sngo ldang རྩ་ལུང་སྔ་ལྷང

rdza rtswa རྩ་རྩྭ

Reb gong རེབ་གོང

rgod ma རོད་མ

rgod ma dkar dkar

རོད་མ་དཀར་དཀར

rgod ma kham kham རོད་མ་ཁམ་ཁམ

rgod ma nag 'dzi རོད་མ་ནག་འདྲི

rgod ma nag nag རོད་མ་ནག་ནག

rgod ma rkyang rkyang

རོད་མ་རྒྱང་རྒྱང

rgod ma sngo sngo རོད་མ་སྔ་སྔ

rgya རྒྱ

rgya dkar dkar རྒྱ་དཀར་དཀར

rgya kham kham རྒྱ་ཁམ་ཁམ  
 Rgya lo smon lam རྒྱ་ལོ་སྐོན་ལམ  
 rgya mo རྒྱ་མོ  
 rgya mo dkar dkar རྒྱ་མོ་དཀར་དཀར  
 rgya mo kham kham རྒྱ་མོ་ཁམ་ཁམ  
 rgya mo nag 'dzi རྒྱ་མོ་ནག་འདྲི  
 rgya mo nag nag རྒྱ་མོ་ནག་ནག  
 rgya mo rkyang rkyang

རྒྱ་མོ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ

rgya mo sngo sngo རྒྱ་མོ་སྔ་སྔ  
 Rgya mtsho རྒྱ་མཚོ  
 rgya nag 'dzi རྒྱ་ནག་འདྲི  
 rgya nag nag རྒྱ་ནག་ནག  
 Rgya ring རྒྱ་རིང  
 rgya rkyang rkyang རྒྱ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ

Rgya skor རྒྱ་སྐོར

rgya sngo sngo རྒྱ་སྔ་སྔ

Rgyal bo རྒྱ་ལ་བོ

Rgyal lo རྒྱ་ལ་ལོ

rgyu ma རྒྱ་མ་

rgyu rka རྒྱ་རྐ

rgyu thag རྒྱ་ཐག

rgyugs ma རྒྱ་གསལ་མ

ri bong རི་བོང

Ri las skyes རི་ལས་སྐྱེས

ri phye རི་ཕྱེ

Ri phyor རི་ཕྱོར

ri rgyags རི་རྒྱགས

Rin chen rdo rje རིན་ཆེན་རྡོ་རྗེ

rkang རྐང

rkang yos རྐང་ཡོས

rlon pa རློན་པ

rlung རླུང

rlung chen རླུང་ཆེན

rlung rta རླུང་རྟ

rlung tshub རླུང་ཚུབ

Rma chen spom ra མ་ཆེན་སྐོམ་ར

Rma lho མ་ལྷོ

RMB Renminbi 人民幣

rna རྩ

rna kha byed pa རྩ་ཁ་བྱེད་པ

rna lo ma རྩ་ལོ་མ

rnga bcos ར་བཅོས

rngogs blang རོགས་བྲང

Rog ldang རོག་ལྗང

rog rog རོག་རོག

Rong bo A myes gur

རོང་བོ་ཨ་ལྷོས་གུར

Rong bo blon chos རོང་བོ་བློན་ཆོས

Rong skad རོང་སྐད

rta dkar dkar རྟ་དཀར་དཀར

rta kham kham རྟ་ཁམ་ཁམ

rta mchog རྟ་མཚོག

rta nag 'dzi རྟ་ནག་འདྲི

rta nag nag རྟ་ནག་ནག

Rta rgan khra ldang རྟ་རྒྱལ་ཁྲ་ལྗང

rta rkyang rkyang རྟ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ

rta རྟ

rta sga རྟ་སྐ

rta sngo sngo རྟ་སྔ་སྔ

rta spyang རྟ་སྤྱང

rtsam pa རུམ་པ

Rtse khog ཚེ་ཁོག  
 rtseb ris ཚེབ་རིས  
 rtsid pa ཚིད་པ  
 rtsog ba ཚོག་བ  
 ru gros རུ་གོས  
 ru ma རུ་མ  
 ru skor རུ་སྐོར  
 rwa snying རུ་སྟིང  
 sa khang ས་ཁང  
 sa skyag ས་སྐྱལ  
 sa skyon ས་སྐོན  
 sbra nag སྐྱ་ནག  
 sbra sgo ba སྐྱ་སྐོབ  
 sbra ston སྐྱ་སྟོན  
 sdug pa སྐྱལ་པ  
 Ser 'khyog སེར་འཁྲོག  
 Ser ba སེར་བ  
 ser ra སེར་ར  
 ser ser སེར་སེར  
 Sgam 'khor སྐམ་འཁོར  
 sgo khyi སྐོ་ཁྱི  
 sgo phab སྐོ་ཕབ  
 sgog dmar སྐོག་དམར  
 sgog pa སྐོག་པ  
 sgog thog ser dris སྐོག་ཐོག་སེར་རྟིས  
 Sgrol b+he སྐོལ་བྱེ  
 Sgrol ma སྐོལ་མ  
 sgye mo སྐོམ་མོ  
 sgyo ba སྐོལ་བ  
 sha gsar ས་གསར  
 sha khang ས་ཁང

sha rlon ས་ལྷོན  
 Sha rwa ས་རུ  
 Sha rwa Lab rtse ས་རུ་ལ་བ་ཚེ  
 sha ryning ས་རྟིང  
 sha ska ས་སྐ  
 sha skal ས་སྐལ  
 sha skam ས་སྐམ  
 sha thum ས་ཐུམ  
 shab gzan ས་བ་གཟན  
 shab rgan ས་བ་རྟན  
 shab rgan dkar dkar  
     འབ་རྟན་དཀར་དཀར  
 shab rgan dkar tho འབ་རྟན་དཀར་ཐོ  
 shab rgan kham kham  
     འབ་རྟན་ཁམ་ཁམ  
 shab rgan kham tho འབ་རྟན་ཁམ་ཐོ  
 shab rgan khra khra འབ་རྟན་ཁྲ་ཁྲ  
 shab rgan khra tho འབ་རྟན་ཁྲ་ཐོ  
 shab rgan nag nag འབ་རྟན་ནག་ནག  
 shab rgan nag tho འབ་རྟན་ནག་ཐོ  
 shab rgan rgya rgya འབ་རྟན་རྒྱ་རྒྱ  
 shab rgan rgya tho འབ་རྟན་རྒྱ་ཐོ  
 shab rgan smug ro འབ་རྟན་སྐུག་རོ  
 shab rgan smug tho འབ་རྟན་སྐུག་ཐོ  
 shad འད  
 shad dkar dkar འད་དཀར་དཀར  
 shad dkar khra འད་དཀར་ཁྲ  
 shad dkar tho འད་དཀར་ཐོ  
 shad khra khra འད་ཁྲ་ཁྲ  
 shad khra tho འད་ཁྲ་ཐོ  
 shad mo འད་མོ

shad mo dkar dkar

འདམ་མོ་དཀར་དཀར

shad mo dkar khra འདམ་མོ་དཀར་ཁྲ

shad mo dkar tho འདམ་མོ་དཀར་ཐོ

shad mo khra khra འདམ་མོ་ཁྲ་ཁྲ

shad mo khra tho འདམ་མོ་ཁྲ་ཐོ

shad mo nag tho འདམ་མོ་ནག་ཐོ

shad mo rag rag འདམ་མོ་རག་རག

shad mo rgya rgya འདམ་མོ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ

shad mo rgya tho འདམ་མོ་རྒྱ་ཐོ

shad mo rog rog འདམ་མོ་རོག་རོག

shad mo sngo sngo འདམ་མོ་སྒོ་སྒོ

shad mo sngo tho འདམ་མོ་སྒོ་ཐོ

shad nag tho འདམ་ནག་ཐོ

shad rag rag འདམ་རག་རག

shad rag tho འདམ་རག་ཐོ

shad rgya rgya འདམ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ

shad rgya tho འདམ་རྒྱ་ཐོ

shad rog rog འདམ་རོག་རོག

shad sngo sngo འདམ་སྒོ་སྒོ

shad sngo tho འདམ་སྒོ་ཐོ

shed nor འདམ་རྩོད

shed rtsi འདམ་རྩི

Shur thung ལུར་ལུང

Si khron སི་ཁྲོན

Sichuan ཡུ་ཁྲུང

skal སྐལ

skam ba སྐམ་བ

skam po སྐམ་པོ

ske sha སྐེ་ཤ

ske thug སྐེ་ཐུག

skya ka སྐྱེ་ཀ

skyung ka སྐྱུང་ཀ

slog pa སྐྱོག་པ

smug ga སྐུག་ག

Smug po སྐུག་པོ

Smug po mdun སྐུག་པོ་མདུན

Smug po spun gsum

སྐུག་པོ་སྐྱུན་གསུམ

smug sas སྐུག་སས

Sna las སྤ་ལས

sna སྤ

Sne kha སྤེ་ཁ

Sngags dpal ldan smyon pa

སྐྱག་ས་དཔལ་ལྷན་རྒྱུན་པ

sngags pa སྐྱག་ས་པ

Sngags sa སྐྱག་ས་ས

Sngags sa Bla ma སྐྱག་ས་ས་བླ་མ

sngon po སྐྱོན་པོ

Snyan grags སྐྱུན་གྲགས

snyed སྐྱེད

so bzhi སོ་བཞི

so drug སོ་དུག

so gnyis སོ་གཉིས

sog ga སོག་ག

sog pa སོག་པ

sos ka སོས་ཀ

spen ma སྤེན་མ

spri སྤྱི

spri dbyor སྤྱི་དབྱོར

sprin dkar སྤྱིན་དཀར

sprin dmar སྤྱིན་དམར

sprin nag སྤྲིན་ནག་  
 sprin སྤྲིན  
 spyang ki སྤྲུང་གི  
 spyang tshang སྤྲུང་ཚང  
 spyang tshogs སྤྲུང་ཚོགས་  
 spyi bsang སྤྲི་བསང་  
 srib sgog སྤོབ་སྒོག་  
 srung g.yag སྤྲུང་གཡག་  
 srung ma སྤྲུང་མ  
 steng ma སྤྲེང་མ  
 sto lu སྤོ་ལུ  
 sto mo སྤོ་མོ  
 Stobs chen rgyal སྤོབས་ཚེན་རྒྱལ་  
 ston ka སྤོན་ཀ  
 ston sa སྤོན་ས  
 sug thu སྤུག་ཐུ  
 sul chu སྤུལ་ཚུ  
 thab kha ཐབ་ཀ་  
 thab lha ཐབ་ལྷ  
 thang kha ཐང་ཀ་  
 the'u rang ཐེ་འུ་རང་  
 Thang ris ཐང་རིས་  
 tho ru ཐོ་རུ  
 thog ཐོག་  
 thong ba ཐོང་བ་  
 thong ba dkar dkar  
     ཐོང་བ་དཀར་དཀར་  
 thong ba dkar tho ཐོང་བ་དཀར་ཐོ  
 thong ba kham kham  
     ཐོང་བ་ཁམ་ཁམ་  
 thong ba kham tho ཐོང་བ་ཁམ་ཐོ

thong ba khra khra ཐོང་བ་ཁྲ་ཁྲ  
 thong ba khra tho ཐོང་བ་ཁྲ་ཐོ  
 thong ba nag nag ཐོང་བ་ནག་ནག  
 thong ba nag tho ཐོང་བ་ནག་ཐོ  
 thong ba rgya rgya ཐོང་བ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ  
 thong ba rgya tho ཐོང་བ་རྒྱ་ཐོ  
 thong ba smug ro ཐོང་བ་སྤུག་རོ  
 thong ba smug tho ཐོང་བ་སྤུག་ཐོ  
 thor mo ཐོར་མོ  
 thor mo dkar dkar ཐོར་མོ་དཀར་དཀར་  
 thor mo kham kham ཐོར་མོ་ཁམ་ཁམ་  
 thor mo nag 'dzi ཐོར་མོ་ནག་འདྲི  
 thor mo rkyang rkyang  
     ཐོར་མོ་རྒྱང་རྒྱང་  
 thul ma ཐུལ་མ  
 thul ma dkar tho ཐུལ་མ་དཀར་ཐོ  
 thul ma khra tho ཐུལ་མ་ཁྲ་ཐོ  
 thul ma nag tho ཐུལ་མ་ནག་ཐོ  
 thul ma rgya tho ཐུལ་མ་རྒྱ་ཐོ  
 thul ma ser tho ཐུལ་མ་ཤེར་ཐོ  
 thul ma sngo tho ཐུལ་མ་སྒོ་ཐོ  
 Thung ba ཐུང་བ་  
 Tongren 同仁  
 tsag ཐག་  
 Tshag tho ཐག་ཐོ  
 tshang ra ཐང་ར་  
 tshar ru ཐར་རུ  
 tshar zhwa ཐར་ཞུ  
 Tshe dpal ཐེ་དཔལ་  
 Tshe ring/ tshe ring ཐེ་རིང་  
 tshe thar ཐེ་ཐར་



*tshe thar la gtang ba*

ཚེ་ཐར་ལ་གཏང་བ

*tsher mo* ཚེ་མོ་

*tsher mo dkar dkar*

ཚེ་མོ་དཀར་དཀར

*tsher mo dkar tho* ཚེ་མོ་དཀར་ཐོ

*tsher mo kham kham*

ཚེ་མོ་ཁམ་ཁམ

*tsher mo kham tho* ཚེ་མོ་ཁམ་ཐོ

*tsher mo khra khra* ཚེ་མོ་ཁྲ་ཁྲ

*tsher mo khra tho* ཚེ་མོ་ཁྲ་ཐོ

*tsher mo nag nag* ཚེ་མོ་ནག་ནག

*tsher mo nag tho* ཚེ་མོ་ནག་ཐོ

*tsher mo rgya rgya* ཚེ་མོ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ

*tsher mo rgya tho* ཚེ་མོ་རྒྱ་ཐོ

*tsher mo smug ro* ཚེ་མོ་སྐྱུག་རོ

*tsher mo smug tho* ཚེ་མོ་སྐྱུག་ཐོ

*tsho ba* ཚོ་བོ

Tsho bo ཚོ་བོ

*tsu lu* ཚུ་ལུ

*wa* ལ

Xinghai 兴海

Xining 西宁

*ya ru* ཡ་རུ

*ya ru rog rog* ཡ་རུ་རོག་རོག

*yar ma* ཡར་མ

*yi ge* ཡི་གེ

Yo ne ཡོ་ནེ

Yum skyid ཡུམ་སྐྱིད

*zam me zim me* ཟམ་མེ་ཟིམ་མེ

Zang chag ཟང་ཆག

*zho* ཚོ

*zhon pa* ཚོན་པ

*zhun* ཚུན

Zi ling ཟི་ལིང

*zla 'bab* ཟླ་འབབ

Zla ba ཟླ་བ

*zog ba* ཟོག་བ

Zur gsum ki lha ལུར་གསུམ་གེ་ལྷ

## INDEX

- '*cham*, 67  
'*phar ba* (animal), 46, 151-2  
'Phar ba Tribe, 45-6, 63  
A grags, 46  
A lags Rdzong sngon, 60, 175  
A lags Zla ba, 60, 134  
A myes rma rgyal, 42, 176  
A myes Yi dam skyabs, 45  
A rig, 44-5  
A skya, 46  
accounts, 14-5, 38, 39, 45-6, 58,  
    64, 65, 99-100, 151, 155-6,  
    158-9, 170-1, 174-5, 185-6  
aging  
    horses, 143  
    sheep, 127-31  
    yaks, 110-6  
altar, 39, 41, 50-1, 58-9, 63  
anthrax, 185  
architecture, 47-51  
Asiatic wild dog, see dhole  
autumn, 52, 74, 75, 83, 85,  
    101-5, 110, 114, 121, 134, 152,  
    156, 163-5, 180  
autumn pasture, 83, 85, 97,  
    101-2, 189  
baby, 70, 81, 98  
Bdun pa'i ma Ni, 67  
beating livestock, 24, 27, 30, 31,  
    87, 170  
birds  
    cuckoo, 156-7  
    Eurasian magpie, 157  
    pheasant, 39  
    raven, 157-8  
    red-billed chough, 158  
    sparrow, 159  
    vulture, 67  
birthing difficulties, 87, 91, 134,  
    143  
Bkra shis la ring Mountain, 38  
*bla ma*, 17, 38, 42, 46, 47, 48,  
    59, 60, 64, 66, 90, 103, 134,  
    156, 169, 171, 172, 175, 178,  
    181, 186  
Bla rgan, 146  
black bear, 155 n19  
bones, 70, 77, 78, 139, 154, 162,  
    180-2  
*Bos mutus*, 148-9  
botany, see plants  
bovine botulism, 182-3, 185-6  
bovine tuberculosis, 183, 185  
Brag dkar sprel rdzong  
    Monastery, 42  
breaking in  
    horses, 146  
    yaks, 19, 122-6  
breeding  
    sheep, 133-4  
    yaks, 120-22  
bridewealth, 55  
brown bear, 154-6  
Bsang khri Valley, 39  
*btsan*, 18, 65-66  
butchering, see slaughtering  
    livestock  
butter, 28, 29, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56,  
    59, 70, 72-4, 79, 91, 93, 99, 00,  
    103, 104, 128, 173

buttermilk, 72, 74  
 Bya khyung Monastery, 42  
*byung ston*, see celebrations,  
     monastic  
 Bzhi pa'i smynug gnas, 67  
*Canis lupus chanco*, 150-1  
 carnivores, 147-8, 150-1, 152  
     156, 154-6, 157-8  
 cash economy, 52-4, 72, 74, 79,  
     126, 135, 188-9  
 castration  
     horses, 146  
     sheep, 128-9  
     yaks, 120  
 caterpillar fungus, 52-4, 188-9  
 celebrations  
     after ear-marking, 93, 129  
     eightieth birthday, 90  
     for a new tent, 101  
     monastic celebration  
         (*byung ston*), 67  
     New Year, 53, 65, 66, 77,  
         89, 110, 126 n13, 176  
     picnic, 101  
     third birthday, 90  
     wedding, 64, 77, 90, 126  
         n13, 169  
 Che mchog rdo rje, 38  
 cheese, 28, 52, 53, 70, 72-4, 91,  
     93, 99, 100, 103, 104  
 child/ children, 13, 17, 26, 43,  
     51, 54-5, 64, 70, 72, 77-8, 90,  
     98, 99, 112, 129, 151, 152-3,  
     154, 159, 162  
 Chos dar, 17, 47, 53, 148, 168,  
     181  
 Chu bzang Monastery, 42  
 climate change, 17  
 cooking, 47, 51, 65, 75, 89, 91,  
     93, 97, 98, 100, 104  
*Corvus spp.*, 157-8  
 cuckoo, 156-7  
*Cuculus spp.*, 156-7  
 cultural change, 16, 109, 134-5,  
     142, 187-90  
*Cuon alpinus*, 46, 151-2  
 dance, 67  
 Dbus Valley, 36, 37-8, 42, 46  
 Dbyang rgyal, 46-7  
 deities  
     A myes rma rgyal, 42, 176  
     *btsan*, 18, 65-66  
     Dpal ldan lha mo, 63, 178  
     Dpal ldan mgon po, 176-7  
     Gshin rje chos rgyal, 90  
     Gung lha, 50  
     *gzhi bdag*, 42, 56-60, 173,  
         175-8  
     Khya mo spun gsum, 39,  
         58, 176  
     *klu*, 18, 60-3, 175  
     *lus lha*, see 'personal deity'  
     personal deity, 64  
     Phun sum tshogs pa, 39-40  
     Rma chen spom ra, see A  
         myes rma rgyal  
     Rong bo a myes gur, 176  
     Sgrol ma (Tara), 186  
     *srung ma*, 63-4, 78, 175-8  
     *thab lha*, 65, 78  
     *the'u rang*, 64  
     Zur gsum ki lha, 41-2, 36,  
         38, 175

- demography, 43  
Dgon lung Monastery, 42  
dhole, 46, 151-2  
discussion, 59, 83, 96  
disease  
    *glo nad*, 183, 185  
    *gor nag*, 185  
    *gza'*, 183-4  
    *ri phye*, 182-3, 185-6  
    *sa skyon*, 186  
divination, 45, 154, 180-2  
dog beater, 148  
dogs, 65-6, 75, 89, 91, 93, 100,  
    104, 120, 129, 147-8  
Dpal bo, 17-8, 37, 45, 174 n8  
Dpal ldan, 18, 43, 109, 171, 174,  
    184  
Dpal ldan lha mo, 63, 178  
Dpal ldan mgon po, 176-7  
Dpon skor Tribe, 45  
dung, 15, 25, 44, 65, 75, 81-2, 87,  
    89, 91, 93, 98, 99, 100, 104,  
    121, 149, 150, 184  
ear-marking, 128-9  
ear-marking celebration, 129  
education, 54-5  
eightieth birthday, see *gya ston*  
elders, 16, 37, 42, 43, 46, 50, 51,  
    58, 64, 66, 74, 76, 77, 78, 83,  
    90, 91, 102, 109, 122, 139, 150,  
    152, 156, 158, 174, 175, 176,  
    178, 180, 184, 185, 186, 187,  
    189  
ensuring fortune, 168-178  
ethnobotany, see plants  
Eurasian magpie, 157  
flashlight, 14, 15  
fodder, 88, 89, 125, 134-5, 164,  
    168  
fortune, see *g.yang*  
fox, 152, 157-8  
*g.yang* (fortune), 48, 58, 59, 61,  
    112, 126, 129, 168-9  
*g.yang* (livestock), 169-71  
*g.yu mo*, 163  
garlic, 164, 165  
gelding, see castration  
gender, see men, women  
geomancy, 48  
*gling ma*, 163  
*glo nad*, 183, 185  
*gnyen ston*, 64, 77, 90, 126 n13,  
    169  
Go rdza Mountain, 39-41  
*gor nag*, 185  
*gro ma*, 72, 74, 93  
Gser khog Monastery, 42  
Gshin rje chos rgyal, 90  
Gsum pa'i skor chen, 66  
gun, see rifle  
Gung lha, 50  
*gya ston*, 90  
*gza'*, 183-4  
*gzhi bdag*, 42, 56-60, 173, 175-8  
hair, 49, 52, 62-3, 70, 74, 79-81,  
    98, 108-9, 110, 112, 116, 120,  
    122, 125, 143, 170, 174, 184  
healing, 60, 64, 172, 174-5  
history, 44-7  
hooves, 70  
horns, 70, 116-9, 122, 128, 131-3,  
    148-9, 170, 171

horses  
     breaking in, 146  
     naming, 142-5  
 horse race, 139-41  
 houses, 47-8, 87, 90, 159, 189  
 hybrid, see *mdzo*  
 incense, see *bsang*  
 income, 52-4, 72, 74, 79, 126,  
     188-9  
 Khams mdo Valley, 42, 60  
 Khya mo spun gsum, 39, 58,  
     176  
 Khya mo spun gsum Valley, 39  
*klu*, 18, 60-3, 175  
 Klu 'bum mi rgod, 38  
 Klu pa thar, 17, 56, 155  
 La nag zhar, see Bkra shis la  
     ring  
*lab rtse*, 42, 58-60, 67, 93, 135,  
     139, 176 n11,12  
 lama, see *bla ma*  
 language, 43-44  
 leather, 47, 51, 72, 79  
*Lepus oiostolus*, 153  
 Lha sa, 42-3, 155-6  
 livestock, see horse, sheep, yak  
 livestock loans, 54  
 Lo ba Tribe, 44  
 lost livestock, 13, 14-6, 96, 151  
*lug rdzi mig chu*, 180  
*lus lha*, see 'personal deity'  
 lynx, 156  
*Lynx lynx*, 156  
 mani wheel, 39  
 marmot, 45, 75, 150, 152 n18,  
     153, 154  
*Marmota himalayana*, 45, 75,  
     150, 152 n18, 153, 154  
 marrow, 78  
*mdzo*, 125-6  
 meat, 32, 54, 65, 66, 75-8, 124,  
     126, 133, 153, 155, 156, 183,  
     185  
 meeting, see discussion  
 men  
     rituals, 52, 42, 58-60, 67, 93,  
         135, 139, 166, 173,176  
         n11,12  
     work, 19, 89, 92, 94, 101,  
         104, 120-6, 128-9, 146,  
 meteorology, see weather  
 Mgo log, 44, 176 n12  
 Mgo skyang Tribe, 45-7  
*mi la tse tse*, 152-3  
 migration, rural-urban, 16, 189  
 migration, seasonal 26, 72, 83-5,  
     96-8, 109, 35  
 milk, 25, 27-8, 29, 54, 61, 70-2,  
     74, 95, 98, 99-100, 125, 127,  
     129, 135, 172-3  
 milk, colostrum, 93  
 milking, 17, 25, 27, 51, 71, 87,  
     89, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, 98,  
     100-1, 102, 103, 104, 109, 110,  
     114, 125, 167, 186  
*mkhan pa*, 163-4  
 Mkhar bu rgyal, 45  
 Mkhar skor Tribe, 45, 47  
*mnol skea*, 90  
 Mo ko, 170  
 monasteries  
     Brag dkar sprel rdzong, 42  
     Bya khyung, 42  
     Chu bzang, 42  
     Dgon lung, 42  
     Gser khog, 42  
     Mtshams thog gong ma, 46  
         n13, 66-7

- Mongols, 39, 42, 44-5, 49 n15  
 monks, 17, 18, 19, 38, 47, 59, 60,  
 66-7, 155-6, 169, 179, 181  
 motorcycles, 109, 135, 142, 188  
 mountains  
   A myes rma rgyal, 42, 176  
   Bkra shis la ring, 38  
   Go rdza, 39-41  
   La nag zhar, see Bkra shis la  
   ring  
   Phun sum tshogs pa, 39-40  
   Rdza lung sngo ldang, 39  
   Zur gsum ki lha, 41-2, 36,  
   38, 175  
 Mtshams thog gong ma  
   Monastery, 46 n13, 66-7  
 Mtsho po, 126, 150, 158  
 music, see songs  
 naming  
   horses, 142-5  
   sheep, 131-3  
   yaks, 116-20  
 new tent celebration, see *sbra  
 ston*  
 New Year, 53, 65, 66, 77, 89,  
 110, 126 n13, 176  
 nomenclature, see naming  
*Ochotona himalayana*, 156  
 oral traditions, 38, 39, 45, 51,  
 52, 56, 61-3, 64, 65, 70, 78,  
 94-5, 112, 114, 121, 122, 123,  
 126-7, 128, 136-9, 147, 149-50,  
 152, 154, 155-6, 158-9, 160,  
 167, 169-70, 171, 173, 174-5,  
 176-7, 178-9, 181, 185-6  
 pack frame, 26, 30-1, 123-5  
 parasitic encystation, 183-4  
 pasture  
   autumn pasture, 83, 85, 97,  
   101-2, 189  
   sheep pasture, 165  
   summer pasture, 58, 71, 83,  
   95-6, 102, 134, 189  
   winter pasture, 58, 83, 85,  
   92, 102-3, 151, 189  
   yak pasture, 165  
 pasture division, 189  
 pasture management, 162, 165  
 pasture management, see also  
 migration, seasonal  
 personal deity, 64  
 Phag mo skyid, 212  
 Phag tho, 170  
 pheasant, 39  
 Phun sum tshogs pa, 39-40  
*Pica pica*, 157  
 picnic, 101  
 pika, 156  
 pilgrimage, 42-3, 67, 155-6  
 plants  
   *g.yu mo*, 163  
   *gling ma*, 163  
   *gro ma*, 72, 74, 93  
   *mkhan pa*, 163-4  
   *rdza rtswa*, 14, 164-5  
   *sgog pa*, 164, 165  
   *spen ma*, 159, 163  
 prayer flags, 42, 63  
 prayer wheel, see mani wheel  
 prices, 52-3, 54, 55, 72 n1, 74,  
 79 n8 n10, 103, 189

*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, 158  
 rabbit, 75, 150, 153, 156, 183  
 rain, 50, 92, 95, 96, 99, 101, 166, 167, 189  
 ram, 103, 127, 133-4, 174  
 raven, 157-8  
 Rdo rtsig Valley, 39  
 Rdza lung sngo ldang Mountain, 39  
*rdza rtswa*, 14, 164-5  
 Reb gong, 39, 44-5, 46  
 red-billed chough, 158  
 religion, 18, 19, 29, 42, 47, 56-67, 89, 92, 94, 101, 103, 104, 151, 169, 179, 181, 186  
 religious teachings (ritual), 103, 105  
 Rgya lo smon lam, 66  
 Rgya ring, 45-6  
 Rgya skor Tribe, 45, 46  
 Ri las skyes, 108  
*ri phye*, 182-3, 185-6  
 Ri phyor Community, 36, 44, 45  
 rifle, 13, 151  
 rinderpest, 185  
 rituals  
     Bdun pa'i ma Ni, 67  
     Bzhi pa'i smynug gnas, 67  
     dedicating a *srung g.yag*, 175-80  
     Gsum pa'i skor chen, 66  
     *lab rtse* renewal, 42, 58-60, 67, 93, 135, 139  
     nominating a *tshe thar*, 172-5  
     religious teachings, 103, 105  
     Rgya lo smon lam, 66  
     river, 13, 26-7, 36, 46, 85-6, 112, 174  
     Rma chen spom ra, see A myes rma rgyal  
     Rong bo a myes gur, 176  
     Rong bo blon chos, see Sngags sa Tribe  
     Rta rgan khra ldang Valley, 39  
     Rtse khog, 18  
     *sa skyon*, 186  
     saddle, 139  
     saddle, see also pack frame  
     salt, 76, 77, 165, 167  
     sausage, 75, 77  
     *sbra ston*, 51, 101  
     school, see education  
     scripture, 17, 29, 59, 169, 176 n11, 186  
     seasons  
         autumn, 52, 74, 75, 83, 85, 101-5, 110, 114, 121, 134, 152, 156, 163-5, 180  
         *sos ka*, 51, 79, 83, 85, 92-4, 122, 150, 153, 156, 163  
         spring, 74-6, 79, 83, 85, 87, 90-2, 109, 120, 134, 163  
         summer, 13, 36, 37, 38, 54, 74, 75, 76-7, 79, 83, 85, 94-101, 110, 125, 134, 138, 139, 152, 153, 157, 163, 164, 165, 167, 180  
         winter, 13, 16, 28-9, 39, 42, 72, 74, 75, 76-7, 83, 85-90, 103, 121, 125-6, 129, 133-4, 138, 141, 152, 153, 157, 163, 166, 167-8  
     Ser 'khyog Valley, 38

Ser ba Tribe, 46, 47  
 sewing, 49, 89, 184  
 sexual intercourse, 125  
 Sgam 'khor Valley, 39  
*sgog pa*, 164, 165  
 Sgrol b+he, 128  
 Sgrol ma (Tara), 186  
 Sha rwa Valley, 42, 47  
 sheep  
     breeding, 133-4  
     naming, 131-3  
     selling off, 134-5  
 sheep pasture, 165  
 shepherd's tear, see *lug rdzi mig chu*  
 shrine, 47  
 Shur thung Valley, 39  
 sky burial, 67  
*skyung ka*, 158  
 slaughtering livestock, 22, 30,  
     32, 56, 75-7, 78, 102, 114, 121,  
     126, 133, 134-5, 173, 174, 175,  
     180-1  
 Smug po mdun, 37  
 Sne kha thar, 46  
 Sngags dpal ldan smyon pa,  
     18-9, 45, 61, 65, 185  
*sngags pa*, 18  
 Sngags sa Bla ma, 46  
 Sngags sa Tribe, 44-5  
 snow, 28-9, 50, 85, 87, 89, 90,  
     95, 102, 103, 121, 159, 166-8  
 snow disaster, 166, 168  
 songs, 94-5, 126-7, 136-9,  
     149-50  
*sos ka*, 51, 79, 83, 85, 92-4, 122,  
     150, 153, 156, 163  
 sparrow, 159  
*spen ma*, 159, 163  
 spring (water), 60-1, 85-6  
 spring (season), 74, 75-6, 79, 83,  
     85, 87, 90-2, 109, 120, 134,  
     163  
*srung g.yag*, 175-9  
*srung ma*, 63-4, 78, 175-8  
 Stobs chen rgyal, 171  
 stove, see *thab kha*  
 stove deity, see *thab lha*  
 summer, 13, 36, 37, 38, 54, 74,  
     75, 76-7, 79, 83, 85, 94-101,  
     110, 125, 134, 138, 139, 152,  
     153, 157, 163, 164, 165, 167,  
     180  
 summer pasture, 58, 71, 83,  
     95-6, 102, 134, 189  
 tantrin, see *sngags pa*  
 Tara, see Sgrol ma  
 television, 188  
 tents, 13, 49-52, 70, 79-80, 96,  
     97-8, 120, 168  
*thab kha*, 50-1  
*thab lha*, 65, 78  
*the'u rang*, 64  
 third birthday celebration, see  
     *mnol skra*  
 Thung ba Tribe, 46  
 tribes  
     'Phar ba, 45-6, 63  
     Dpon skor, 45  
     Lo ba, 44  
     Mgo skyang, 45-7  
     Mkhar skor, 45, 47  
     Rgya skor, 45, 46  
     Ser ba, 46, 47  
     Sngags sa, 44-5  
     Thung ba, 46



- Tshag tho, 46  
 Tshe dpal, 146  
 Tshe ring, 157  
*tshé thar*, 172-5  
*Ursus arctos pruinosus*, 154-6  
 valleys  
   Bsang khri, 39  
   Dbus, 36, 37-8, 42, 46  
   Khams mdo, 42, 60  
   Khya mo spun gsum, 39  
   Rdo rtsig, 39  
   Rta rgan khra ldang, 39  
   Ser 'khyog, 38  
   Sgam 'khor, 39  
   Sha rwa, 42, 47  
   Shur thung, 39  
   Smug po mdun, 37  
   Zang chag, 38  
*Vulpes vulpes*, 152, 157-8  
 vulture, 67  
 weather, 17, 50, 83, 87, 99, 166-8  
 weaving, 49, 70, 79  
 wedding, see *gnyen ston*  
 wildlife  
   black bear, 155 n19  
   brown bear, 154-6  
   cuckoo, 156-7  
   dhole, 46, 151-2  
   fox, 152, 157-8  
   lynx, 156  
   marmot, 45, 75, 150, 152 n18, 153, 154  
   *mi la tse tse*, 152-3  
   pika, 156  
   rabbit, 75, 150, 153, 156, 183  
   raven, 157-8  
   red-billed chough, 158  
   sparrow, 159  
   vulture, 67  
   wild yak, 45, 148-9  
   wolf, 14-5, 62, 64, 75, 102, 103, 109, 148, 149, 150-1, 170  
 wild yak, 45, 148-9  
 wind, 50, 85, 92, 95, 101, 166  
 winter, 13, 16, 28-9, 39, 42, 72, 74, 75, 76-7, 83, 85-90, 103, 121, 125-6, 129, 133-4, 138, 141, 152, 153, 157, 163, 166, 167-8  
 winter pasture, 58, 83, 85, 92, 102-3, 151, 189  
 wolf, 14-5, 62, 64, 75, 102, 103, 109, 148, 149, 150-1, 170  
 women  
   protector deities, 39, 58  
   rituals, 70, 152, 173  
   work, 51, 82, 89, 9, 93, 100, 104, 166  
 wool, 52, 59, 79, 112, 122, 123, 126, 127, 128, 129, 133, 178, 180  
 yak  
   breaking in, 19, 122-6  
   breeding, 120-22  
   naming, 116-20  
 yak pasture, 165  
 Yo ne, 19  
 yogurt, 28 n4, 52, 72, 74, 171, 89  
 Yum skyid, 17, 153  
 Zang chag Valley, 38  
 Zi ling, 36, 188, 190  
 zodiac, 110  
 Zur gsum ki lha, 41-2, 36, 38, 17