

ARTICLES, MEMORIES AND  
EXPERIENCES, INTERVIEWS,  
AND A PROFILE  
2017

---

E-MAIL: [ahpjournal@gmail.com](mailto:ahpjournal@gmail.com)  
 HARD COPY: [www.lulu.com/asianhp](http://www.lulu.com/asianhp)  
 ONLINE: <https://goo.gl/JycnYT>

ISSN (print): 1835-7741  
 ISSN (electronic): 1925-6329  
 Library of Congress Control Number: 2008944256

CALL NUMBER: DS1.A4739  
 SUBJECTS: Uplands-Asia-Periodicals, Tibet, Plateau of-Periodicals

All artwork contained herein is subject to a Creative Commons, Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License. You are free to quote, copy, and distribute these works for non-commercial purposes so long as appropriate attribution is given. See <https://goo.gl/nqO6vg> for more information.

FRONT COVER: G.yang mtsho གཡང་མཚོ། (b. 2003) holds a *gag le* གག་ལེ། (Literary Tibetan: 'jor འཛོར།) 'trowel' during a short rest from collecting *dbyar rtswa* དབྱར་རྩ། 'caterpillar fungus' in 2015 in A gсар ཨ་གསར། Community, Smin thang སླིན་ཐང། Township, Geig sgril གཅིག་སྐྱེལ། County, Mgo log མགོ་ལོག་ Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན། Province, China (photograph by Gu ru 'phrin las ལུ་རུ་འཕྲིན་ལས།).

BACK COVER: In 2016, this was the only black yak hair tent that was home to a family in A gсар ཨ་གསར། Community, Smin thang སླིན་ཐང། Township, Gcig sgril གཅིག་སྐྱེལ། County, Mgo log མགོ་ལོག་ Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན། Province, China (photograph by Gu ru 'phrin las ལུ་རུ་འཕྲིན་ལས།).

CITATION: Articles, Memories and Experiences, Interviews, and a Profile 2017. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 44.

---

*ASIAN HIGHLANDS PERSPECTIVES*

---

*Asian Highlands Perspectives (AHP)* is a trans-disciplinary journal focusing 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. The editors believe that cross-regional commonalities in history, culture, language, and socio-political context invite investigations of an interdisciplinary nature not served by current academic forums. *AHP* contributes to the regional research agendas of Sinologists, Tibetologists, Mongolists, and South and Southeast Asianists, while also forwarding theoretical discourse on grounded theory, interdisciplinary studies, and collaborative scholarship.

*AHP* publishes occasional monographs and essay collections both in hardcopy (ISSN 1835-7741) and online (ISSN 1925-6329). The online version is an open access source, freely available at <https://goo.gl/JOeYnq>. The print edition is available to libraries and individuals at-cost through print on demand publisher Lulu.com at <https://goo.gl/rIT9lI>. The journal currently has a core editorial team of four members and a consultative editorial board of twenty-five experts from a variety of disciplines. All submissions to the journal are peer-reviewed by the editorial board and independent, anonymous assessors.

*AHP* welcomes submissions from a wide range of scholars with an interest in the area. Given the dearth of current knowledge on this culturally complex area, we encourage submissions that contain descriptive accounts of local realities - especially by authors from communities in the Asian Highlands - as well as theory-oriented articles. We publish items of irregular format - long articles, short monographs, photo essays, fiction, auto-ethnography, etc. Authors receive a PDF version of their published work. Potential contributors are encouraged to consult previous issues.

## EDITORS

CK Stuart, Tshe dbang rdo rje ཚེ་དབང་རྡོ་རྗེ།, Rin chen rdo rje རིན་ཆེན་རྡོ་རྗེ།, and Susan Dan Su

## COPYEDITORS

Gaye Carlson  
Gabriela Samcewicz

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Barbara Brower *Portland State University*  
 Bianca Horlemann *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*  
 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་བཀྲ་ཤེས་) *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*  
 Jermay Jamsu ('Gyur med rgya mtsho འགྲུར་མེད་རྒྱ་མཚོ།) *Independent Scholar*  
 Juha Janhunen *University of Helsinki*  
 Katherine Morton *The University of Sheffield*  
 Keith Dede *Lewis and Clark College*  
 Keith Slater *SIL International and University of North Dakota*  
 Mark Bender *Ohio State University*  
 Mark Turin *University of British Columbia*  
 Paul K Nietupski *John Carroll University*  
 Sarah E Fraser *Universität Heidelberg*  
 Sienna Craig *Dartmouth College*  
 Toni Huber *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*  
 Veronika Zikmundova *Charles University*



285-316

Two Traditional Stau Stories  
*Sami Honkasalo*

317-350

Two Mangghuer Stories  
*Qi Xiaofang and Keith W Slater*

MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES

352-366

Little Boy With a Walking Stick:  
Who is Responsible  
*Sangs rgyas bkra shis*

367-382

Flaccid Humps, An Imp, and Precious  
Diamonds: Mtsho lho Childhood Memories  
1995-2010  
*Skal bzang tshe brtan*

INTERVIEWS

384-387

Filmmaker: Khashem gyal

388-393

Filmmaker: Gu ru 'phrins las

PROFILE

395-406

Dpal rgyal: Artist and Photographer  
*Klu thar rgyal*

# ARTICLES

---

THE DONG WORLD: A PROPOSAL FOR ANALYZING THE  
HIGHLANDS BETWEEN THE YANGZI VALLEY AND  
THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN LOWLANDS

James A. Anderson (University of North Carolina, Greensboro)  
and John K. Whitmore (University of Michigan)

ABSTRACT

We propose the concept of a Dong World, a mountainous territory lying south of the Yangzi valley and north of the lowlands of mainland Southeast Asia. In the highland valleys (*dong*) across this rugged terrain with its upland peoples, there emerged multiple communities based on wet rice agriculture and led by their chieftains. Much local rivalry, as well as conflict with more distant external powers, resulted among these chieftains. Using archaeological studies, Chinese texts, and other recent texts, we follow the history of the Dong World from the early last millennium BCE to the present day. We also establish a distinct periodization in this world's development. After the dominance of the Nanzhao realm (seventh-ninth centuries CE) and of Dali (tenth to thirteenth centuries), came the Mongol invasions and Ming (1368-1644) dominance, which split this world into its northern (Chinese) and southern (Southeast Asian) sectors. Since the early eighteenth century, lowland states (China, Burma, Thailand, and Vietnam) have carved out their pieces of this world, first with indirect rule (for China, *tusi*) before switching to direct rule (for China, *gaitu guiliu*) where possible. The result today is a world increasingly forced to cope with and benefit from external political and economic demands. The inhabitants of the *dong* communities are also in the process of accepting, rejecting, and/or accommodating these demands.

KEYWORDS

chiefdoms, China, Dali, Dong communities, highland history, mountain trade and communications, Nanzhao, Southeast Asia

---

Anderson, James A and John K Whitmore. 2017. The Dong World: A Proposal for Analyzing the Highlands Between the Yangzi Valley and the Southeast Asian Lowlands. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 44:8-71.

<sup>1</sup> This proposal is derived from our work in Anderson and Whitmore (2015). Our great thanks go to four anonymous reviewers who helped us sharpen the focus of our concept and to a close reading by Henry Wright. We have incorporated their thoughts into our investigations.



---

Many scholars and others have dealt with a multitude of parts within the mountainous region lying between the Yangzi Valley and the lowlands of mainland Southeast Asia, but few have considered the whole.<sup>1</sup> We join Jean Michaud (2006:149) in believing that "... all these different segments [of this mountain region] could be reconnected to form a meaningful, though far from uniform, physical, historical, social, and cultural space." While, as he himself noted (McKinnon and Michaud 2000:2), "only the fool" would try such an endeavor, what we wish to suggest is a "meta" approach in which we conceive of this highland world, spanning what is commonly perceived by the modern world as divided between China and Southeast Asia, instead as a single physical, socio-cultural, and political entity. Ours is not an effort to join any particular discourse (others may do that), but to construct from the ground up a specific concept for this particular region. This proposal is meant to be an abstracted sketch of the region as derived initially from the essays in our edited volume, *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest* (Anderson and Whitmore 2015). The latter contains the specifics from which our concept arose. As a sketch, this essay is not meant to be all-inclusive (such requires another book), and we hope others will help us fill out the world we are describing.

This world has existed into the modern age and has only in recent centuries begun to be pulled apart by the expanding lowland state forces of surrounding nations. By treating this world as

---

<sup>1</sup> Other designations for the entire mountain region and beyond include Zomia, Southeast Asian Massif, and Indo-Chinese massif. Zomia, employed by James C Scott (2009; 2016), has engendered much discussion over its external statist orientation, and we are content to leave it to that broader discourse. As for the Southeast Asian Massif, put forward by Jean Michaud (Michaud 2000; 2006; 2009; Forsyth and Michaud 2011; Turner et al. 2015), we believe, first, that it relates to a generalized physical description of the land, where our proposed concept is socio-political as well as physical; and, second, that this region is not part of Southeast Asia, but a separate entity, active in its own right and apart from, but influencing and influenced by both China and Southeast Asia. We feel that this term disregards the precise terrain characteristics of this region, as well as the deep historical connections between this region and dominant lowland peoples. This critique also holds for the Indo-Chinese massif (Robinne and Sadan 2007).

fundamentally autonomous and pursuing its own agency vis-à-vis the encroaching lowland forces, we gain a better perception of the actors involved and their shifting intentions. Pursuing the great variety of local agents within this world as they dealt with their immediate neighbors as well as with their distant antagonists, we see the contingencies and the personalities that have helped shape this world we know today. In this, we follow Hjørleifur Jonsson's (2014:24) call for the recognition of "negotiation and the mutual reliance or benefit" among these groups.

In this paper, we present our concept of the Dong World, that highlands area stretching from the Yangzi Valley to the Southeast Asian lowlands, from the hills of southeast coastal China to the eastern edges of the Tibetan Plateau.<sup>1</sup> This territory, centered on the Nanzhao/Dali/Yunnan Plateau, beneath the upland slopes, is made up of highland river valleys and the communities that live within them. In Tai languages, such a valley is a *djong*; which Catherine Churchman (2016:100) describes as "a mountain valley or level ground between cliffs beside a stream." Eventually seen by the Chinese as a political unit, the term became sinicized as *dong* 'mountain valley community' (often mistranslated as 'grotto/cave') with its chieftain.<sup>2</sup> We choose this Tai/Chinese term for this world, given how it reflects the core nature of the region. Herein we ask: What was its physical nature?

---

<sup>1</sup> We first developed this concept in Anderson and Whitmore (2015:14-19). Yao (2016:111-112) and Michaud (2006:5) also discuss this region and include the Sichuan territory. Michaud goes farther south in Southeast Asia as well.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the meaning of the term *dong*, see Churchman (2015:65, nn 19-20) and Baldanza (2015:171-172, nn 10-11); see also Baldanza (2016:122-123); Churchman (2016:100, 118, nn 1-2); Hargett (2010 [1170s]:li-lii); and Faure 2007:46-47). In the western Tibeto-Burman regions of the Dong World, the term for such "intramontane basins" is *bazi*; see Yao (2016:7-8); Harrell (2001:61); Wang (1997:41-42); and Yang (1997:270-71). Yang (2008:25-26, 148, 151, <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/yang/>, accessed 16 July 2016) speaks of "small fertile basins and valleys." Perhaps related to *djong/dong* is the eastern Zhuang ethnonym *cuengh/tsuengh* (Holm 2003:8-11, map p 10). The latter term appears in a region of early Han contact and may have been sinicized to *dong*.

---

Who were the peoples within it? What socio-economic pattern did these peoples develop? How did their political form come about? How did local power interact with external, particularly state, power?

## MOUNTAINS AND STREAMS

The physical nature of this world emerged when the Indian subcontinent collided with the Eurasian landmass causing the great uplift of the Tibetan Plateau.<sup>1</sup> On the eastern edge of this high plateau, the highlands descend in a step-down fashion all the way to what became the southeast coast of China. In height, this territory slopes down from the peak of Mt. Everest to sea level, the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau descends west-to-east from 7,000 feet to 4,000 and then on down to the coastal plains. Water and its flow have carved these heights into a series of river valleys and ridges, created by tectonic block faulting, to the east and the south, though only about one-tenth of this terrain is plateau/basin (*dong*) land. The streams here include the great rivers of the Yangzi, the Red (Hòng), the Mekong, the Salween, and the Irrawaddy, with numerous other streams in the watersheds amid these major rivers.<sup>2</sup>

Robert Marks (1998:24-44, 46-47, 52) describes the Lingnan 'South of the Passes' region on the east (downstream) of the Dong World as an area of limestone raised by the tectonic uplift to its west, forming an east-west mountain range that lies between the Guizhou Plateau and the Guangxi Basin. On the south are mountains that lead to present-day Vietnam, enclosing the Basin at a height of about 1,000 feet. The Basin's western edge rises sharply up to the Yao Hills and the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. With the plentiful monsoon rains in the summer months, streams have carved their paths sharply through the

---

<sup>1</sup> Indian Uplift (2015); Molnar (2015:89-105); Molnar and Stock (2009:1-11, figs 1-2); and Sigley (2016:184-186). Also see the map in Yao (2016:109).

<sup>2</sup> Miller (1994a:[2]-4); Higham (1996:137, map 5.1). For a look at ridges and valleys of the Dong World from the perspective of the highest eastern Himalayan peak (within northern Myanmar), see Jenkins (2015:60-91).

mountainous terrain. The upland valleys (*dong*) receive plentiful water both from the skies and from upstream. The flows change dramatically throughout the year and between years, cutting into this terrain. The result has been the valley (*dong*) lands scattered among the ridges. Travel, by both land and water, required patience and effort, and depended on the time of year. Seasonal flooding deposited silt into these limited valley spaces, creating fertile soil therein. Surrounded by thick forests on the slopes, these *dong* were rich pockets of agricultural land separated by the steep upland ridges with their great variety of flourishing flora and fauna.

Here, the streams worked their way through the limestone regions, creating the spectacular karst topography and the mountain valleys, the *dong*.<sup>1</sup> We are led, in the words of Mark Elvin (2004:216), "... into a subtropical labyrinth of mountains and plunging river valleys. Snakes, monkeys, tigers, deer, and many other animals and birds flourished in its forests."<sup>2</sup> To the south, one goes down the Great Descent (in Marco Polo's phrase) into the territory of the southwest monsoon, much warmer and wetter than up on the Plateau. As Rhoads Murphey (1994:62) noted from his time in Yunnan during the 1940s:

... one entered the monsoon rain forest, ... a new kind of world ..., through torrential downpours, oceans of mud, and almost frighteningly luxurious vegetation at all levels, ... wild orchids, plus occasional elephants and tigers.

Within the highland river valleys stretching off the Plateau, to both the east and the south, there emerged the agricultural communities of the *dong* that form the center of our proposed narrative. Above them, on the upland mountain slopes there existed other communities that

---

<sup>1</sup> The Zhuang on the eastern edge of the Dong World differentiate among large valleys, small valleys, and tiny karst hollows (Holm 2003:13).

<sup>2</sup> See also Weinstein (2014:15). These four animals are the remnants of a much different fauna (including elephants, wild water buffalo, apes such as gibbons and larger primates, and giant pandas) that disappeared by the second millennium CE (Henry Wright, personal communication, 11 November 2016).

---

interacted, economically, socially, culturally, and politically, with those in the mountain valleys (See Fig. 1).

### *DONG 'MOUNTAIN VALLEY COMMUNITIES'*

Speaking in general terms, the original ethno-linguistic pattern of the Dong World seems to have taken this form: on its western side, Tibeto-Burman; on its north, Miao-Yao (Hmong-Mien); on its east, in the Yue world of the Chinese, the Tai; and on the south, Mon-Khmer (such as the Wa). Through the centuries, the latter seem to have remained fairly stationary. At the same time, elements of the other three groups were in motion (possibly due to Chinese pressures from the north) as the Tibeto-Burmans moved south and southwest (some going down into the lowlands that would become Burma/Myanmar); the Miao-Yao moved south (eventually some into the high mountains of present-day northern mainland Southeast Asia); and the Tai pushed southwest and west (through northern Vietnam into areas of today's Yunnan, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, and Assam).<sup>1</sup> Overall, we believe that it has been not culture (ethnicity), but adaptation to ecology that has mattered in the Dong World. Yet, over the first millennium CE, it appears that Tibeto-Burman groups were most active and powerful, while Tai communities took the upper hand from the beginning of the second millennium. The Mongol incursion, followed by the Ming, tamped down an already weakened Tibeto-Burman presence and kept the Tai forces on their southern fringe (from the Gulf of Tonkin to the Brahmaputra River). In this way, the Dong World resembles Inner

---

<sup>1</sup> Taken from Miller (1994b:265-292), especially the map on p. 271; Turner et al. (2015:21, map 2.1); Harrell (2001:62-71, 177); Swope (2011:113, map 6); Marks (1998:53-55); McKinnon and Michaud (2000:2-5 maps); Turner et al. (2015:21 map). Bellwood and Glover (2004:5 map, 9, 11); Bellwood (2004:21-22 map, 24-25); Higham (2004:41-53); Holm (2003:159-160); Gedney (1995); Wang (1997:45-57); and Lee (2015:64-66) are the sources from which the ethnographic information above was obtained. For mid-twentieth century descriptions of these ethno-linguistic groups, see LeBar et al. (1964).

---

Asia, as its peoples and their wet rice agriculture have moved aggressively out of their environmental zone and into (and had major impacts on) the lowland territories along its flanks, particularly to the south. Like the "conquest dynasties" in China coming out of Inner Asia, descendants of political powers from the Dong World would become rulers in Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam.

As indicated above, within this mountain world the stream valleys (*dong*) form only a small percentage of its land mass, perhaps a tenth. The remainder of this world consists of the mountain slopes themselves. On these forested upland slopes, there are (and have been) a great variety of ethnic peoples living predominantly above the stream valleys. These upland peoples and those in the valleys have continued to interact through the centuries, economically, socially, culturally, and politically. Since we consider (and the records reflect) the *dong* as the hubs of these activities, our concept emphasizes these valleys, hence adopting this indigenous term as its name. Where possible, we speak of these upland peoples in relation to the *dong*. We do not consider there to have been a hard line between these peoples, but take an "interactionist" approach (Evrard 2007:159), as Edmund Leach (1954) did, believing that there existed a socio-cultural permeability and flexibility of the peoples above and within the *dong* contingent in certain circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Overall, the complex dynamics between the uplands and the *dong* need to be examined further. Wang (1997:42) has commented for western Yunnan that "The valleys are rich, the hills are poor, and the differentiation is increasing."

As we examine the socio-economic (this section) and political (next section) situations within the Dong World, we begin with archaeological evidence from the prehistoric period<sup>2</sup> before moving to Chinese texts. These texts are specifically Li Daoyuan's (d. 527) *Shui jing zhu* 'Commentary on the Water Classic' of the sixth century CE, Fan Chuo's *Man shu* 'Book of the Southern Barbarians' of the 860s,

---

<sup>1</sup> For discussions of Leach's work, see Wang (1997:11-34) and Robinne and Sadan (2007).

<sup>2</sup> Yao (2016).

and the writings of Fan Chengda and Zhou Qufei in the 1170s.<sup>1</sup> Thus, starting with an interior material view from the excavations, we utilize external texts to understand the human nature of the Dong World. The authors of these texts each had contact with the peoples they described. The commentator of the *Shui jing zhu* reflects the minimal contact of the post-Han<sup>2</sup> era in the far southwest where Fan Chuo served in the southern Tang<sup>3</sup> Protectorate of Annan (the Red [Hòng] River delta) during the western Nanzhao invasions of the 860s and where Fan Chengda and Zhou Qufei were provincial officials in the Song<sup>4</sup> southern province of Guangxi amongst the eastern *dong* communities during the 1170s.

In the last millennium BCE, the mountain valleys of the Dong World saw communities form along its streams and up its slopes. The plateau beyond Chengdu in modern-day Sichuan would become the cultural and political center of the Shu Kingdom, the eastern riverine valley region surrounding modern-day Chongqing would be the center of the Ba Kingdom, and the areas to the northwest and south of these centers would be the lands of the *xinan yi* 'southwestern barbarians'.<sup>5</sup> As Alice Yao describes these latter valleys, they had four zones: the flood plains of the streams, lower terraces and foothills, upland slopes, and side valleys. Through these centuries, the *dong* communities grew rice on the valley floors, up the slopes, and in the side valleys. Their graves had meat, grain, and liquid containers. The degree of their prosperity and power would have depended mainly on the space, large or small, accessible for agriculture.<sup>6</sup> They would also have developed exchange relations with peoples higher up the slopes and in adjacent, and eventually distant, valleys. Excavations indicate significant populations during the period in at least some of the valleys, as

---

<sup>1</sup> Taylor (1995), Li (1936 [6<sup>th</sup> c.]), Fan Ch'o (1961[860s]), and Fan Chengda (2010[1070s]).

<sup>2</sup> The Han Dynasty lasted from 206 BCE to 220 CE.

<sup>3</sup> The Tang Dynasty lasted from 618 CE to 907.

<sup>4</sup> The Song Dynasty lasted from 960 to 1279.

<sup>5</sup> He (2011:220).

<sup>6</sup> This can be seen in today's Zhuang conceptions of agriculture in the large and small valleys and the hollows (Holm 2003:15).

---

interrelated settlements emerged in well-spaced patterns with social differentiation. As these varied communities took shape, based on the mound burials of their ancestors, leadership emerged and chiefdoms appeared with the development of power and authority. With the chiefdoms came territorial conflict that is well documented in the centuries after 700 BCE. In Yao's terms (2016:104), the "fertile basins and key communication corridors" through this mountainous terrain became prime zones for this competition as the communities' sense of themselves grew and consolidated. These *dong* settlements, in their local variety, show different patterns in the eastern, central, and western sectors of the Dong World.<sup>1</sup>

Through the middle of this last millennium BCE, the pattern of local power and competition among the *dong* communities continued as they maintained their ritual burials, generation after generation. As Yao (2016:108) notes, "regional political processes" involving both exchange and strife took hold with the *dong* communities increasingly forming inter-valley networks. This led to the growth of trade links and the movement of prized objects along them and in particular, early bronze drums (with local design variations) signifying chiefly wealth and power.<sup>2</sup> Valleys large and small across the Dong World witnessed this. In such a way, the *dong* communities proceeded to grow both agriculturally and through commerce; some more, some less depending on the size of their valleys and their proximity to the growing interregional trade routes, particularly north-south. This was, in Yao's (2016:126) terms, "a new expanding regional network connecting remote highlands in the upper Jinsha River (2,600-3,000 meters above sea level) corridor to the low-lying alluvial valleys extending into [modern] Vietnam." She sees here (2016:129) what Edmund Leach (1954) saw in the Kachin Hills of Myanmar over sixty years ago, as Yao notes, "a simultaneous process of social segmentation

---

<sup>1</sup> Yao (2016:ch 3).

<sup>2</sup> For the growing discussion of bronze drums, see Yao (2016:108-174 passim, 226-230); Churchman (2011/2013:74-81; 2015:61-63, 67, 73-74; 2016:ch 1 and passim), and Li (2011/2013:45-48). Sprenger (2007:166-168) and Holm (2003:15) provide excellent examples of recent bronze drum usage.



---

and class stratification," as the burial mounds grew to be visible monuments.

Out of this pattern rose the Dian society in the Kunming plain during the fifth and fourth centuries BCE as its widespread influences moved across the mountain valleys. The chiefs of these *dong* communities came to interact and to compete much more with each other as the scale of wealth and artifacts rose considerably and the regional pattern grew stronger. Cowries from the Bay of Bengal became part of this inter-valley system, and the manufacture of the drums proceeded to be more elaborate, as Yao (2016:138) says, "for display and narration." The new drum form spread throughout the Dong World, especially down the Red (Hồng) River. Agriculture and textile production (linked to women) formed the economic basis, as trade grew within the Dong World and beyond it.<sup>1</sup>

With the initial entrance of the Chinese (Han Dynasty) political power into the Dong World over the third and second centuries BCE, the local *dong* communities acted to maintain their autonomy in the face of imperial demands and enticements. Economic penetration of the Dong World increased, and the Dian society of the Kunming plain showed ever-greater social differentiation. The horseman appeared as a marker of status and with him the raising of horses. In later centuries, horses would become the most important commodity to pass through the Dong World. Settlements continued to grow in the valleys and on their slopes, with the main ones lying along the streams in the center of the valleys. Artisans developed vigorously as iron working joined bronze. Overall, a distinct differentiation occurred among the *dong* communities depending on their resource control as well as between them and the upland peoples.<sup>2</sup>

Han political control in the late second century BCE followed existing trade routes, and their bestowal of titles and seals defined the social and political structure of nearby *dong* societies in Han terms. Moving particularly into the eastern portion of the Dong World, the Han declared the region their province of Yizhou, while adapting their

---

<sup>1</sup> Yao (2016:chs 4-5) and Higham (1996:chs 5, 9).

<sup>2</sup> Yao (2016:167-181).

---

contact to, in Yao's (2016:182) words, "existing [indigenous] territories and networks ... rel[ying] on local elites to negotiate cooperation among native subjects..." This meant that local societies allied themselves with the newly intrusive power where they did not actively resist it. Over the last century BCE, Han military strength subdued such outbreaks. Still the indigenous social structure remained, both affected by Han pressures and relied upon by the Chinese in their efforts at controlling them. As seen in Han coins and brick tombs, communities of the Dong World, in dealing with this presence and lowland influx, had unprecedented contact with the outside world. Yet many of these communities in their scattered mountain valleys and up the slopes had little direct involvement with the Han and continued their internal evolution. Within the Han province on the east, especially along the trade routes and in the major valleys (Kunming, Dali, etc.), there was significant impact as Chinese prestige goods entered the region, especially on the local elites and consequently the social hierarchy. Walled settlements sprang up there during this period. Yet, however entangled they were with the Han framework, the *dong* societies maintained a cultural continuity, and outside the limited areas of the Han administrative centers and their direct contact with local communities, the *dong* peoples continued in their bare feet and houses on stilts (as the Chinese viewed them).<sup>1</sup>

The Han disruption of *dong* communities at major locations, especially in the east, left the many river valleys of the mountains oriented to a greater or lesser degree to the new social and economic patterns. Through the first centuries CE and with the disappearance of the Han presence (along with their dynasty) in the third century, the *dong* communities emerged in a scattered and looser relationship with each other. The Cuan Clan<sup>2</sup> in the eastern sector of the Dong World, the region most affected by Han penetration, was strongly influenced

---

<sup>1</sup> Yao (2016:182-214) and Henry Wright (personal communication, 11 November 2016).

<sup>2</sup> The Cuan formed the Nanzhong daxing 'Great Clan of Nanzhong' in an area comprised of China's modern-day southern Sichuan, Guizhou, and Yunnan provinces.

---

by the Han presence, but was once again re-rooted in its mountain valleys. Hierarchy in the Dong World tended to be interrelated with the degree of external contact and exposure, specifically regarding locations in the mountains relative to the communication routes. Using both archaeological works and Chinese texts, Churchman (2011/2013; 2015; 2016) takes us to the far eastern side of the Dong World in these centuries. Here, on the edge of the mountain territory, *dong* communities benefited from their external contacts, both in status and in wealth, and manipulated the routes through their valley territories to their advantage. In addition, local production of precious metals, including copper and gold (in Guangxi and Cao Bằng), and forest products enriched these *dong* communities further. Building on their indigenous culture, these local societies gained from this wealth available to them. One result was that their bronze drums were locally produced with their own style of manufacture and distinctive design patterns, utilizing both their own copper and Chinese cash. All this existed on the wet rice agricultural base of the *dong* and their mountain streams.<sup>1</sup>

But the Chinese of these centuries retained little sense of the Dong World. Here we turn mainly to the Chinese texts. In the sixth century, Li Daoyuan compiled his *zhu* 'commentary' on the earlier *Shui jing* 'Water Classic' (third century CE). Looking at the river systems of this mountainous region as the Chinese perceived them, Li sought to describe the peoples there, reaching back to tropes employed by earlier chroniclers such as the scholar, Sima Qian (145-86 BCE). These peoples all appeared quite mysterious, and Li could only conceive of them in terms of magic and danger. Supernatural forces in animal form had power that humans had to appease and try to bring into their own hierarchy. This situation reflects the constant lowland/highland struggle. Avoiding such co-optation and standing apart from the lowland structure, the spirits (and the peoples) stubbornly insisted on their own ways of life. This Chinese view mainly concerned the eastern segment of the Dong World in which they saw scattered settlements

---

<sup>1</sup> Yao (2016:ch 7) and Churchman (2011/2013:74-78; 2015:61-67; 2016:ch 6).

with chiefs who were "arrogant and licentious" (Taylor 1995:33) attacking the lowlands. They sat astride a trade route to India. At best, these mountain peoples would guard the frontier for the Chinese. Beyond this eastern sector lay territory even less known, far beyond Chinese knowledge and influence, none of it deserving any great degree of Chinese attention.<sup>1</sup>

Three centuries later, the situation in the Dong World and the Chinese knowledge of it had changed completely. The *Man shu* 'Book of the Southern Barbarians' appeared in the late ninth century, written by Fan Chuo, an official in the Annan Protectorate of the Tang Dynasty (in the lower Red [Hồng] River) during the 860s. Having had direct contact with invaders out of the Dong World (Nanzhao), Fan provided extensive detail on both the western and eastern sectors of this area that was now of great interest to the Chinese. He described a region made up of *chuan dong* 'stream valley communities' or just *chuan* 'streams'. Indeed, this book is a detailed examination of the many *chuan* and their interactions.

These multiple *chuan dong* were settlements based on wet rice cultivation, many of which were linked to trade routes through the mountains and over the passes. They were constantly competing and fighting with each other. Led by their chiefs (*guizhu* 'Spirit Lords')<sup>2</sup> and protected by the fierce topography, climate, and wildlife, these *chuan dong* communities flourished in their highland valleys. The *Man shu* described them in these terms: cultivating wet rice in their irrigated fields (the soil being "rich and fertile" [Fan Ch'o 1961 [860s]:18, 53]), living in houses on stilts above their animals and surrounded by gardens, and growing millet, barley, and wheat between the rice harvests or up the slopes. Sources of salt were important, and a variety of fruits grew in the valleys and the mountainsides. Woods and bamboos were plentiful. Access to precious metals and horses provided wealth, as did the forest products and the commerce along

---

<sup>1</sup> Taylor (1995).

<sup>2</sup> Where the translators of the *Man shu* used the term "Devil Lord" for *guizhu* and Churchman and Backus employed "spirit master," we prefer the more political term "Spirit Lord."

the routes throughout the Dong World. The Chinese noted that everyone in these *dong* communities went barefoot and wore felt with locally-distinctive headgear. These were ranked societies with sumptuary rules, from the farmers to the chiefs ("Spirit Lords") on up to the Great Spirit Lord himself, the Meng Clan of Nanzhao (see below). All adult males served in military operations, equipped with rhinoceros hide shields, bamboo spears, and especially prized Nanzhao swords. Overall, Chinese influences appeared, particularly in the eastern sector. The latter buried their dead, where the western sector cremated theirs (an undoubtedly Buddhist influence).<sup>1</sup>

Three centuries later, back on the eastern edge of the Dong World during the 1170s, two regular Chinese provincial officials in Guangxi province, Fan Chengda and Zhou Qufei, provide us with a description of the *dong* communities there.<sup>2</sup> Theirs was the last major description of the Dong World before the Mongol invasions less than a century later, beginning in the 1250s. These officials began with the rugged topography, the precipices and caverns in the limestone karst countryside, and proceeded to give a detailed account of the great variety of fauna and flora across this mountain landscape. In an age of decreased political threat, the officials explicitly pointed out that the peoples there formed a lesser part of this grand landscape in their *dong* communities. These communities were predominantly Tai, led by clans named Nong and Huang,<sup>3</sup> Mo and Wang. Presenting them as "fierce and ferocious ... preposterous and strange" (Fan Chengda 2010 [1170s]:150, 161), the officials once again depict the *dong* communities as growing rice together with a great variety of garden produce, fruit trees in their valleys, and gathering other resources in the mountains surrounding them. Living in their houses on stilts above their many animals, these peoples also manufactured goods and took part in trade, dealing in horses and metals. They dressed in felt, but now at least

---

<sup>1</sup> Fan Ch'o (1961 [860s]:67-82). These economies had, together with millet and barley, various tree and root crops as key elements in their agriculture (Henry Wright personal communication, 11 November 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Fan Chengda (2010 [1170s]:ch 13).

<sup>3</sup> For more on the Huang Clan, see Anderson (2014).

some had footgear. Social structure was local with the chiefs, elites, farmers, and war captives. Local military forces entrusted with the defense of the region were armed with shields, crossbows, spears, and swords.

Unlike Fan Chuo, these two officials also mentioned upland peoples in the mountains above the valleys. Those in the northern region of the Dong World, called Yao, were less economically stable in their upland fields, even coupled with hunting and gathering, and thus posed a threat to those in the valleys.<sup>1</sup> Raiding and trade (in mountain products for salt and rice) sustained them. On the slopes to the south, generally beyond Chinese knowledge, were peoples called mountain Lao (no relation to the present Lao of Laos) hunting and gathering with some control over the horse trade routes. As with the earlier *Shui jing zhu*, fantastic tales enveloped these upland peoples. And looking westward beyond these territories stretching to Tibet lay the *dong* communities of the "true Southern Barbarians" (Fan Chengda 2010 [1070s]:182), still barefoot. Despite a general ignorance of the area Fan Chuo had described in such detail, these two officials did recognize the autonomy of the societies there. The horse trade was quite important, and all carried swords, with those from Dali (the old Nanzhao) especially valued.

While these *dong* communities appeared distant and isolated from the lowlands, they would, as Richard O'Connor (1995:968-96) pointed out, have an immense impact on the societies and economies of mainland Southeast Asia. He argues that out of the highland *dong* valleys it seems there came an "agro-culture" system of irrigated wet rice that emerged into the lowlands of the Irrawaddy, Chao Phraya, Mekong, and Red Rivers. Within the mountain valleys, the people (Tai, Tibeto-Burman) had developed irrigated wet rice agriculture by manipulating the rapid flow of the valley streams (the *chuan*, as the *Man shu* called them). With the agricultural system, there came concomitant ritual and ethnic change, as the new system drew other peoples into it. In this way, O'Connor argues, peoples either within or immediately adjacent to the Dong World (Burmans, Thai, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Fan Chengda (2010 [1170s]:171-79) and Faure (2007:46-47).

---

Vietnamese) brought this agro-cultural system with its weirs and water control onto the plains of their major river valleys. There, they established socio-economic systems on this agricultural and ritual basis, which were able to overcome the tank agro-cultural systems of the existing Pyu, Mon, Khmer, and Cham peoples to their south. Thereby, the socio-economic patterns forming within the *dong* valleys led to more efficient and productive forms than had developed in the lowlands of the Southeast Asian mainland. Led by their chieftains, these *dong* societies became cooperative and structured, bringing change to the lowland communities in the process.

### CHIEFDOMS<sup>1</sup>

Among the multitude of *dong* communities scattered across the mountain terrain of this world, what political relations existed within and between them? Based on the wet rice production of their valleys, large and small, supplemented by trade, the strength of these communities depended on both the extent of their resources, human and material, and the human capability of forging relations/alliances with, or dominating, other communities.

As the socio-economic nature of the Dong World continued through the centuries, affected to some degree by trade and contact with the external lowlands, its political structure changed with the ebb and flow of encroaching state power from surrounding regions. The rise of chiefdoms with their bronze drums in the *dong* communities emerged from the mountain valleys and culminated in the great lordships of Nanzhao and Dali. Through the last millennium BCE, per Alice Yao's study of excavated local cemeteries, there occurred "a new political time" (2016:103). She sees in the first half of the millennium the formation of *dong* communities with the "emergent territorial politics" (2016:20) and competition. This was followed by the rise of

---

<sup>1</sup> We use the term 'chiefdoms' here simply for local polities centered in the many *dong*. They formed the building blocks for the larger lordships and realms linking numerous *dong*.

---

the bronze drum chiefdoms in the fifth to third centuries BCE as trade involving both valleys and upland slopes brought wealth to the valleys. This culminated during the third century BCE with the Dian lordship before the Han Dynasty pressure brought Chinese domination to the eastern sector of the Dong World. At this point, *dong* chieftains utilized Han contacts to strengthen their positions locally.<sup>1</sup> A corresponding Han court campaign to extend direct communications into the Dong World through extensive road building failed due to excessive costs, and most areas of the Dian kingdom remained beyond direct Han contact.<sup>2</sup>

With the growth of the *dong* communities in the stream valleys among the mountains, the graves reveal in the early centuries the rise of the chiefs and, in Yao's words (2016:103), "war and territorial battles" among the valleys throughout the Dong World. Warriors became significant with the thriving competition across the eastern, central, and western territories, with no one valley dominating. By the middle of the millennium, the bronze culture was developing strongly, and with it, the linking of drums with chiefdoms, from the high valleys to the eastern coastal lowlands. This marked, in Yao's phrase (2016:126), "a different order of political time" as *dong* chiefs raised their status socially as well as politically, utilizing elements from the Sichuan culture to the north. Resources and leadership differentiated these *dong* communities in their power relations. During this "wider political time" (Yao 2016:131), there arose the Dian lordship in the Kunming plain which came to dominate the eastern sector of the Dong World by the third century BCE, taking advantage of the flow of goods along the mountain routes and controlling the chiefdoms' access to it.

This Dian realm consisted of alliances and control among the *dong* communities as its influence spread, setting the stylistic example for ritual and ceremony for the other valleys. Horses and the hunt began to stand out. Local chieftains used their Dian contacts to enhance their own authority. Here we see a great elaboration in the ritual use of bronze drums and cowrie-containing kettles within the

---

<sup>1</sup> Yao (2016:20-22).

<sup>2</sup> Yang (2008:ch 3).



---

Dian lordship, particularly the widespread use of drums. The *dong* chieftains, continuing their local traditions, adhered to the Dian lordship and its patterns. Defining themselves in relation to it, they undoubtedly sharpened their own definitions of themselves.<sup>1</sup>

From the third century BCE into the second century BCE, Qin and Han entrance into this eastern sector of the Dong World strongly affected both the Dian lordship (which eventually disappeared) and the *dong* chieftains. With the Han invasion of 109 BCE, elements of prestige and authority now began to be derived from the Chinese imperial system based in the Kunming plain in the east and extending west to the Dali plain. The *dong* communities generally maintained a continuity with their own pasts, resisting the Chinese effort at cultural domination. But the allure of imperial glory and the friction with its demands motivated and defined the *dong* chieftains' actions, even those in the western Dong World beyond the reach of the Han. Local lords, those of Dian and Pu Han, became allied with the Han court, receiving seals and imperial confirmation of their status. What was, in Yao's (2016:168, 181) phrase, "an upended Bronze Age political time" when "a sense of regionalism was reworked," saw the strengthening of local *dong* chieftains as they became *yishuai* 'barbarian chiefs', adapting to the greater Chinese influence. Iron spears and crossbows came to be major weapons adopted locally, no doubt from locals serving in Chinese armies.<sup>2</sup>

The Han thus allied with the local structure of the mountain valleys. Taking advantage of what the Han imperial system had to offer, *dong* chieftains in this eastern sector (no doubt followed by those in the west) applied the knowledge they gained to consolidate their own local situations. After more than a century of increasing Chinese social and economic presence in the region, a massive rising in 42 CE (at the same time as one in the present northern Vietnam) shook the Chinese hold. This Han domination had disrupted local Bronze Age patterns, and there followed a blending of the Sinitic features with ongoing local patterns to form valley chiefdoms of a different sort, able to deal more

---

<sup>1</sup> Yao (2016:ch 3-6).

<sup>2</sup> Henry Wright (personal communication, 11 November 2016).

effectively with outside powers. With this new form of local leadership, competition increased among the many *dong* communities. Operating within what Yao (2016:225) terms "a different juridical-political space" from either the Bronze Age or the Han imperial eras, these *yishuai* utilized both indigenous bronze drum traditions and Chinese elements (like seals) to establish their local authority, proving their ability to lead their *dong* as they engaged the outside world.<sup>1</sup>

The *Shui jing zhu* shows us the general Chinese ignorance of local politics in the Dong World from the dissolution of the Han empire during the second and third centuries CE through the sixth century, particularly of its western sector. Generally, *yishuai* (and in particular Cuan clans and their "Spirit Lords" [*guizhu*] in the eastern sector) thrived in the mountain valleys, especially after Zhuge Liang's third century campaign (225 CE) into the eastern sector from Sichuan. Yet tales within the *Shui jing zhu* reflected a deep respect of the Chinese for the indigenous powers of the Dong World, seen in the form of spirits and supernatural animals. Difficult to tame and bring under some sort of control, the many *dong* powers continued to thwart Chinese efforts to put them in their proper place. They threatened imperial expansion and sat across the overland trade routes.<sup>2</sup> We can see this in Churchman's studies (2011/2013; 2015; 2016) on the eastern edge of the Dong World.

Here, in the new situation of the *yishuai* (now *lishuai*), local chieftains in their *dong* valleys developed their new pattern of bronze drum leadership. This new form capitalized on their trade, on the resulting economic wealth, and on external contacts to enhance their local competitive edge against both other *dong* chiefdoms and the Chinese realms (Jin, Liu-Song, Liang, Qi, and Chen) attempting to control them. Focusing on their drums, the *lishuai* (locally called *dulao*),<sup>3</sup> "extremely powerful and heroic" (Churchman 2011/2013:76; 2015:63; 2016:68) in a contemporary Chinese description, increased their authority, organized their societies within their *dong* valleys, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Yao (2016:ch 6-7).

<sup>2</sup> Taylor (1995:33-34, 45-46), Yao (2016:127-131), and Backus (1981:6-9).

<sup>3</sup> For a mention of *dulao* in later centuries, see Holm (2003:170).

led them against other *dong* as well as the encroaching Chinese forces. These centuries appear to have seen the formation of the ruling 'clans' (entourages) bearing Chinese surnames (Huang, Nong) around the chieftains (Holm 2003:167-68). At times, such action might involve the forces of numerous allied *dong*, on occasion perhaps those of a single *dong*. Chinese texts record numbers from a few soldiers to many thousands. Indeed, local Chinese officials began to take on *dong* characteristics as they worked to control their territories.<sup>1</sup>

With first the Sui,<sup>2</sup> then the Tang dynasties in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, Chinese imperial power began to press into the Dong World anew, particularly in the east. The Guangxi territory described by Churchman came to be strongly dominated by the new imperial administrative structure. This brought an end to the chiefdoms there and their bronze drum leadership. They were replaced by imperial symbols of authority and *jimi* 'halter and bridle' alliances with the Chinese.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously, Sui and Tang forces were destabilizing the Cuan *dong* chiefdoms in the eastern sector, a bit to the west of the area Churchman has described. One Sui Dynasty expedition (597) penetrated the central Dong World, defeating over thirty *dong* chiefdoms. Disrupted by the Sui, the Cuan territories were then throttled by the Tang. Dealing first with the Cuan on the east, the Tang then pushed into the western sector, causing *jimi* alliances to form there. After a quiet period, the 640s and 650s saw the Tang push farther into the western sector in an effort to open the road to India for themselves. This led to local resistance and a major Tang response. Over seventy *dong* led by their Spirit Lords in the western sector submitted and allied with the Tang, including the Meng, a clan on the southwestern edge of the Chinese advance. In the process, the Cuan to the east had weakened and become targets of this rising power to the west, the Meng Clan of Nanzhao (see Fig. 2).<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Churchman (2011/2013:71-78; 2015:60-68; 2016:ch 4), and Holm (2003:170).

<sup>2</sup> The Sui Dynasty lasted from 581 to 617.

<sup>3</sup> Churchman (2011/2013:79-82; 2015:68-74; 2016:ch 6).

<sup>4</sup> Backus (1981:9-22, 64-68).

---

The Tang disruption of the eastern and central sectors of the Dong World allowed *dong* clans farther to the south and west to benefit from the Chinese actions and the resulting local power vacuum. The Meng Clan of the Nanzhao 'Southern Realm of six (or eight) Lordships', farthest from the Tang incursion, took advantage of the situation. Utilizing their contacts with the Tang and their *dong* leadership, the Meng moved from chieftain ("Spirit Lord") to overlord ("Great Spirit Lord") during the following two and a half centuries. We see this in great detail in Fan Chuo's late ninth century *Man shu*. Having become an equal player with the Tang and the Tubo court of Tibet, Nanzhao strove to dominate the Dong World from its far southwestern locale, requiring Chinese attention as exemplified in the *Man shu*. From the mid-seventh century to the mid-eighth, this *dong* clan worked with the Tang against Tibet and other local threats and gradually came to control the adjacent five (or seven) other major *dong* in their vicinity before moving east against the weakened Cuan.

The second half of the eighth century, following the great An Lushan rebellion of the 750s against the Tang, saw Nanzhao join the Tubo to challenge the Tang hold within the Dong World, before rejoining the Tang in the 790s against the increasingly aggressive Tubo and broader Tibetan designs. Nanzhao power culminated through the ninth century as it drove the weakening Tang out of the Dong World. Masters of their mountain domain, the Nanzhao Great Spirit Lords connected with the Irrawaddy valley and ultimately India, gaining both wealth and Buddhism. Becoming maharajas (with the Indic *Abhiseka* [consecration] ceremony) and Vajrayanists with a flourishing local form (using both Sanskrit and Chinese writing), the Meng lords of Nanzhao ruled a major realm within the Dong World.<sup>1</sup> In the process, they undoubtedly spread such political authority and Avalokitesvara worship deeper into the Dong World and threatened lowland Southeast Asia in the process.

While we have not pieced together a complete picture of Buddhism's introduction into the Dong World, we have found

---

<sup>1</sup> Fan Ch'o (1961 [860s]), Backus (1981:chs 3-6), Whitmore (2016), and Holm (2003:168).

distinguishing characteristics in the practices of Nanzhao and its successor, the Dali Kingdom. Henrik Sorensen (2011a; 2011b) observes that even though Mahayana Buddhist practices may have entered Yunnan by the late Han Dynasty (certainly into Nanzhao society by the seventh century) through Sichuan, and that Sinitic forms of Mahayana and Esoteric Buddhism (by the late ninth century) would take hold in both Nanzhao and Dali temple activity, "there are also many differences and anomalies special to the Buddhists of Dali." He concludes that "this indicates the existence of a flourishing local form of Esoteric Buddhism that was only partly under the influence of Chinese culture" (2011a:386). The reliance on spells, mantras, and talismans of all types and for many purposes is, in Sorensen's thinking, a distinguishing feature of Nanzhao and Dali Buddhism. The founding myth of the Nanzhao Kingdom is closely linked to the figure of the Bodhisattva Guanyin (Avalokitesvara), and Sorensen contends that this link extended into the Dali period.

Esoteric forms of veneration are widely depicted in Nanzhao cave art and in Zhang Shengwen's pictorial 1173-1176 "Long Scroll." Could this esoteric veneration of Avalokitesvara be a feature of Dong World Buddhism, or is the worship of this well-known figure too widespread to be considered a distinguishing characteristic? This point requires further exploration. The Bai people's burial practices of the Dali period incorporated Esoteric Buddhist features not widely practiced in China at this time, including the placement of funerary urns in small schist coffins, inscribed with Sanskrit *bija* mantras and containing the deceased individual's personal effects.<sup>1</sup> Chinese style funerary practices did not enter this region until after the era of Mongol conquest, which fits well with our periodization for the beginning of widespread political and cultural realignment.

Within the first decade of the tenth century, both the Tang and Nanzhao regimes collapsed and disappeared. We hear no more of the Meng Clan. In 937, the Dali realm, led by the Duan Clan, former

---

<sup>1</sup> Kao (2013:58-59) notes Guanyin (Avalokitesvara) cults in caves in modern Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, perhaps a continuation of Nanzhao-Dali practices.

bodyguards of the Meng, arose, based in that western plain. Twenty-three years later, the Song Dynasty unified China. Yet neither of these two new realms was as aggressive as their predecessors had been. For three centuries, until the Mongol invasions, they tended to co-exist and leave one another alone. It was predominantly the Song need for horses that required any contact, especially for the Southern Song from the 1120s on. The *dong* communities continued their local rivalries, with many bound to the new ruling Duan Clan, despite the latter's reduced and cautious stance.

Strongly Buddhist now, the Duan moved in 971 to extend their local power by joining clans of thirty-seven *dong* chiefdoms in the eastern sector together in a broad alliance (as recorded in a local stone inscription). In this way, the Duan kept the Dong World generally stable and the way east open for the horse trade. Later Vietnamese sources recorded Dali in the late eleventh century as the home of a man with magical powers.<sup>1</sup> Earlier, in the mid-eleventh century, Nùng in the mountains north of Đại Việt, led by Nong Zhigao/Nùng Trí Cao, established their own autonomous Tai realm among the valleys in the eastern Dong World.<sup>2</sup>

For the two Guangxi officials of the 1170s, Fan Chengda and Zhou Qufei, Dali was a distant, little-known place. It was "extensive and its population numerous, and its weapons and arms extensive" (Fan Chengda 2010 [1070s]:225), perhaps reviving a memory of Nanzhao. They knew of the horse trade into their territory, but generally focused on their immediate surroundings on the eastern edge of the Dong World. In their territory, filled with *dong* communities and the clans that ran them (Nong, Huang, et al.), the Chinese favored *jimi* 'alliances' with certain clans of the local chieftains who garnered titles and material benefits therefrom.

The chieftains in general directed the affairs, especially economic, of their *dong* and negotiated with the Chinese as they continued to compete with their fellow *dong* chieftains in neighboring

---

<sup>1</sup> Fan Chengda (2010 [1170s]:ch 13), Backus (1981:159-164), Anderson (2015:106-110), Sorensen (2014a; 2014b), and Whitmore (2011:107).

<sup>2</sup> Anderson (2007) and Holm (2003:168-169).

valleys (as well as within their own clans) for influence and manpower. Local feuds and conflicts among clans abounded. Much conniving took place, as chieftains sought to involve the Chinese in their own schemes against rivals. Backed by well-armed, tough local warriors, now with footwear and crossbows, these chieftains proved to be formidable local powers. Thus, into the thirteenth century, the Dong World retained its autonomy and activities (though not as active as in the Nanzhao era) and even on its eastern fringes remained pursuant of its own interests while being engaged with the Chinese imperial structure.<sup>1</sup>

The political impact of the Dong World on surrounding regions was significant, particularly to the south. At the peak of its power during the ninth century, Nanzhao campaigns might have pushed down into and strongly affected communities in the valleys of the Irrawaddy (830s) and the Red (Hồng) (860s) rivers, as well as attacking north into Sichuan (820s, 870s). Well-remembered in later centuries by the Burmans and the Vietnamese, these highland campaigns caused major disruptions among Pyu and other peoples of the Irrawaddy hills and plain, and the Vietnamese and Tai peoples in the hills and plain of the Red (Hồng) River.<sup>2</sup> Such activities helped open the way from the Dong World into the lowland plains of mainland Southeast Asia. Tai peoples, disrupted first by Nanzhao actions, then in the eleventh century by Nong Zhigao/Nùng Trí Cao's Tai realm and its defeat in the Dong World space between Chinese and Vietnamese domains, were willing and able to gain mutual advantage with neighbors and outsiders, and the chiefdoms practiced the art of this negotiation amid good or ill balances of power. In the last century BCE, the major Han presence had had a strong impact on the scattered *dong* communities, some greater, some lesser, especially on the east, but it did not last. Thereafter, into the seventh century CE, *dong* chieftains, now more experienced with external forces, developed their own strengths. Power in the Dong World had peaked with the Nanzhao realm of the Meng during the ninth century and had subsided to a stable level under the Duan Clan of Dali.

---

<sup>1</sup> Fan Ch'o (1961 [860s]:72-74, 149-171, 223-229).

<sup>2</sup> Fan Ch'o (1961 [860s]:ch 10) and Whitmore (2000; 2016).

---

STATES

The major break in the balance of the Dong World came in the second half of the thirteenth century when the Mongol empire crashed into its midst as they sought to outflank and defeat the Southern Song regime. Straight through its mountainous terrain (and out the other side), a deeper penetration than any earlier strike, the Mongols captured Dali, ending Duan dominance, and, following Nanzhao, plunged down the Great Descent (Marco Polo's phrase) into the Irrawaddy and Red (Hồng) River valleys.<sup>1</sup> In effect, the Yuan and succeeding Ming regimes split the Dong World in half, between the northern territory more or less controlled from their capital (becoming southwest China) and the southern territories (now northern Southeast Asia) eventually brought within the jurisdictions of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. As the early modern states developed, they increasingly engaged the *dong* regions.

Throughout these mountains, the many *dong* communities in the highland valleys struggled to maintain their autonomy and freedom of action. Whereas in earlier centuries, those *dong* in contact with Chinese administration had allied themselves in *jimi* 'halter and bridle' relations, now contacts with external forces, especially Chinese, became more direct and controlling. Still the Chinese regimes were in no position (and generally had little inclination) to apply their standard bureaucratic procedures to the *dong* they could reach. The result was indirect rule, for the Chinese via the *tusi*, native officials appointed by the emperor (often in fact merely confirming a local chieftain). A step up from the prior *jimi* relationship, it still allowed a significant amount of autonomy on the local scene and indeed helped consolidate the *tusi*'s local authority and control as he was now backed by the threat of imperial power. Over the centuries, as external powers north and south pushed to expand and define their jurisdictions, more and more of the *dong* chieftains came to have roles related to the lowland royal courts, whether in China, Myanmar, Thailand, or

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson (2015) and Sun (2015:193-231).



---

Vietnam.<sup>1</sup>

The *tusi* system developed within the Dong World over the next half millennium, through the Yuan and Ming dynasties into the Qing (thirteenth to eighteenth centuries). The system grew slowly as the *dong* chieftains and the northern administrative regimes adjusted to each other. When the Mongols came crashing through the Dong World in the last half of the thirteenth century, the Tantric Duan lords of Dali and the many *dong* chieftains in the mountain valleys had to adapt quickly to new circumstances and relationships. Being either in a large valley or on a major route, they were exposed to the direct force of Mongol power. Rejecting negotiations in the 1250s, the Duan eventually capitulated after coming under attack on three sides from Mongol as well as allied local forces. Becoming themselves part of and serving the Mongol machine, the Duan aided its further advances through the Dong World against Pagan (Myanmar) and Thăng Long (Đại Việt) in the southern lowlands. Overall, many *dong* chieftains in the Mongols' path chose either resistance and punishment (or flight deeper into the mountains) or alliance with the victors. Some not in the Duan power structure thereby took that opportunity to strengthen their own local positions.<sup>2</sup>

These latter *dong* chieftains became *tusi* in the Mongol commandery system under the auspices of newly-appointed Central Asian Muslim lords in what was now officially called Yunnan. The latter, Semuren 'non-Mongols' gathered during the great Mongol Eurasian conquests, stood between the new Yuan court of China<sup>3</sup> in Beijing and these allied *dong* chieftains. Introducing the Sinitic system (schools, markets, etc.) into Yunnan's administrative centers, these Muslim lords set up the *tusi* positions to incorporate their new local allies into the imperial administration. These chieftains received titles and material benefits as they were expected to serve Yuan demands by

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson and Whitmore (2015:21-30). Faure (2013a:1-2) also recognizes the development of *tusi* indirect rule, followed by the *gaitu guiliu* effort at direct rule.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson (2015:115-120), Herman (2007:48), and Sorensen (2014a:380-381).

<sup>3</sup> The Yuan Dynasty lasted from 1279 to 1367.

maintaining local order. Now part of the great Mongol order and its Chinese branch, yet generally left to their own devices locally for about a hundred years as *tusi*, the chieftains strengthened their immediate hold on power, cutting down on inter- and intra-valley rivalries. Their positions were hereditary and backed by the state power of the twelve provincial military garrisons. While *dong* resistance to this state power continued to exist deeper in the mountains and farther south, Yuan administration gradually extended more deeply into the Dong World and encompassed more *dong* communities within the imperial structure. Yet, as late as the 1320s, *dong* chieftains were telling Mongol officials to stay out of local rivalries and leave the locals alone – their affairs were of no concern to the Yuan (apparently with success).<sup>1</sup>

Deeper in the mountains beyond the Mongol reach and farther south stretching into the lowlands of Southeast Asia, the Yuan sought not *tusi* but *xuanweisi* 'pacification commissioners'. These were local chieftains and lords who would serve Mongol interests as guardians of the imperial flanks. They were not *guo* 'countries', but jurisdictions semi-attached to Beijing. The zone of such polities extended across the southern portion of the Dong World, that is, the northern Southeast Asian mainland, from Đại Việt in the Red River delta to Pagan on the Irrawaddy plain, and would eventually mark off 'Southeast Asia' from 'China.' We can see these relationships among four major *dong* lords (*chao*), Sipsongpanna on the north, Lan Sang to the east, Lanna on the south, and Keng Tung to the west: Lue, Lao, Yuan, and Shan peoples, respectively. They interacted among themselves and with the lowland powers around them, becoming *xuanweisi* 'pacification officers' for the Chinese, while dealing with Ava, Ayudhya, and other lowland Southeast Asian powers.<sup>2</sup>

Initially, the Mongol movement through the Dong World had been a great shock to the polities on its southern side. As Sun Laichen (2015:195) points out, Mongol envoys setting terms on the local regimes were seen locally as "harsh, tough, haughty, and rude." At a

---

<sup>1</sup> Brose (2015:135-145, 149, 151-152), Sun (2015:201-203), and Wade (2015:80).

<sup>2</sup> Hsieh (1995:303-309).

time (thirteenth-fourteenth centuries) when there were shifting power balances across mainland Southeast Asia,<sup>1</sup> the Mongol shattering of the Dong World for the first time opened its southern sector to direct pressure from the Chinese empire. Nevertheless, the Mongol ability to control this far southern region was limited, and the *dong* lords realized that distance and terrain were on their side. For example, the Yuan Dynasty warning to an alliance of Sipsongpanna and Lanna not to attack neighboring *dong* got nowhere as the two realms' aggressive moves continued. Pushing southwest into the Irrawaddy plain, on the other hand, the Mongols had success. Yet, while Pagan now took part in the Yuan imperial system, the Mongols did not attain direct control over this court. It was simply too far.<sup>2</sup>

When the Ming Dynasty defeated and replaced the Yuan over the second half of the fourteenth century, Yunnan and the northern Dong World served as the last close refuge of the Mongols. As the Ming took control of this territory during the 1380s (including the still-extant Buddhist Duan Clan), in effect they shifted this portion of the Dong World out of the great Mongol empire and for the first time into that of China. While continuing to utilize hereditary families of Muslim descent (Mu and Ma) to handle this frontier territory, the Ming bureaucratic system penetrated Yunnan (along with Han population) more deeply than had the Yuan regime and tied the northern Dong World more tightly to the Chinese state. Military garrisons sat at important points on the trans-regional routes. In the process, *dong* chieftains who accepted the Ming regime became *tusi* once more, but now, in Brose's description (2015:147), "within a three-tiered pacification bureau ... staffed by native chieftains with Chinese clerical offices and overseen by the provincial Regional Military Affairs office." Drawn more deeply into the Ming state, the *dong* chieftains serving as *tusi* gained Beijing's confirmation of their local leadership, recognized by hereditary succession, titles, seals, official tallies, and imperial gifts.

Divided into civil and military status, the former tended to be closer to Ming administrative centers and the latter deeper in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Lieberman (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Sun (2015:195, 202-206) and Hsieh (1995:309-310).

mountains. The civil *tusi* offices were staffed by a mixture of indigenous and Han personnel who followed more standard government procedure; the military *tusi* were mainly indigenous and less tied to such procedures. Where the former supplied records and resources, human and material, from their localities, the latter provided troops and information. The Ming expected the two types to keep proper order in their domains and to guard against both nearby resistance and distant threats and to supply native troops when required. In David Holm's words (2003:171), speaking of the Zhuang, "[They] were ferocious fighters and had an unparalleled knowledge of a complex terrain with subtropical jungle, jagged karst peaks, and underground watercourses." They were protecting not territory per se, but resources and the routes and passes through the Dong World. Performing to Ming expectations, the *dong* chieftains serving as *tusi* had great autonomy. Protected from both internal and external threats, these chieftains became fairly immune to *dong* social requirements.<sup>1</sup>

Through the first half of Ming rule, the royal court in Nanjing then Beijing, held the belief of *tianxia* 'all under Heaven' as one, under the Sinitic emperor. This included the *tusi*, as the Chinese felt the relationship between them to be close and only required exposure to the proper (Confucian) teaching. Unified in the human realm, the Ming court felt that *dong* communities along with *guo* 'realms' even farther south were not separate from themselves but linked all in one family. In the late fifteenth century, the Ming were bringing sons of *dong* chieftains into schools for proper education.<sup>2</sup> Increasingly, from the mid-fifteenth through the sixteenth centuries, *dong* rulers began to shift their connections from the locality (as with the old Dali lords) to the Ming state. In one instance, a *tusi* clan utilized the Chinese literati pattern of compiling local gazetteers to ensure that their status and stance would continue.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson and Whitmore (2015:22-26) summarizes studies of the *tusi*, including those by Took (2005), Herman (2007), Holm (2003:170, 217), and Yang (1997:280-295; 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Anderson and Whitmore (2015:43, 45), Whitmore (2015:148-150), and Wade (2015:83).

<sup>3</sup> Lian (2013:86-110) and Dennis (2015).

Yet, by this time, this Chinese attitude had begun to shift as a mood of separation and cultural distance was setting in. Why? The Dong World had demonstrated its intransigence and desire for its own autonomy. Four *dong* on the Sino-Vietnamese border had opted out of the Ming state and into that of Đại Việt. Huge battles had taken place for sixty years ending in the 1440s on the southwest frontier against Luchuan/Mongmao, the last successful effort by Tai (Shan) *dong* lords to establish a realm in the northern sector of the Dong World, while to the east there were Yao wars.<sup>1</sup> The resulting sense of separation took the form of Chinese literati like Qiu Jun and Wang Yangming expressing distaste for engaging with these peoples and the need to keep one's defense up against them. One result was the construction of walls and gates to maintain just such a separation, internal as well as external.<sup>2</sup> The *tusi* and other *dong* chieftains continued to pursue their own interests, not the state's.

These *tusi*, and scattered, non-affiliated *dong* chieftains, inhabited the larger northern portion of the Dong World cut out first by the Mongols, then incorporated by the Ming (eventually to be southwestern China). Farther south lay the band of *xuanweisi* 'Pacification Commissions', ten of which extended all the way into the Southeast Asian lowlands, in less direct contact with the Ming imperial court, but which Beijing hoped to influence in some fashion. Such *dong* chieftains and local lords (primarily Tai who adopted the title *xuanweisi* [Tai, *saenwifu*] for their own purposes) in places like Sipsongpanna, Lanna, and Mongmao interacted with and played off the Ming efforts in their direction. But lowland forces now came not only from the north. State power was developing simultaneously in the plains of mainland Southeast Asia, Đại Việt in the Red River delta, Ayudhya in the Chao Phraya, and Toungoo in the Irrawaddy.<sup>3</sup> Each of these three states was expanding its power into its northern highlands and contesting Ming dominance among the *xuanweisi*. In the fifteenth

---

<sup>1</sup> Baldanza (2015), Wade (2015:81-83), Faure (2007:93-98), Wang (1997:60-61), and Yang (1997:276, 279, 285-287).

<sup>2</sup> Anderson and Whitmore (2015:29).

<sup>3</sup> Lieberman (2003).

century, Đại Việt first drove the Ming out of the Red River delta after their two-decade occupation, getting the above-mentioned four *dong* to join it. In the late 1470s and early 1480s, Lê Thánh-tông and the Vietnamese drove across the *xuanweisi* zone as far as the Irrawaddy. In the sixteenth century, Toungoo under Bayinnaung pushed out of the Irrawaddy plain east across this zone, into Lanna and the Lao territories. Eventually, Thai power would move north out of the Chao Phraya as well. All the way into the mid-nineteenth century, both northern and southern states would contest this southern portion of the Dong World.<sup>1</sup>

With this contestation, and as the Ming tended to back off from the challenges and dangers of the Dong World as a whole, this territory grew more unstable and open to numerous activities, anarchic if you will, at a time of climatic and ecological change that led to cooler, drier weather.<sup>2</sup> *Tusi* seem to have become more locally powerful, supported but not interfered with by Ming officials. This possibly led to local corruption and oppression by *tusi* clans. Lying beyond tight official control, *dong* communities also became rife with heterodox thought and beliefs, refuges for those pursuing dreams and ideologies of their own making. Among these dreams were those held by deposed monarchs and their descendants, pretenders all. First there were the Mạc, former rulers of Đại Việt (1528-1592), surviving in the mountain valleys on both sides of the Sino-Vietnamese border through the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth. Then there came the remnants of the Southern Ming imperial court chased by the victorious Manchu conquerors across the Dong World east to west and into Ava territory on the Irrawaddy plain where they were captured and returned.<sup>3</sup>

The Manchu conquest of the Ming in the north opened the Dong World for both *dong* and southern external activities to thrive within the mountain valleys through the second half of the seventeenth century. First, it took years for the new Qing regime to gain control

---

<sup>1</sup> Sun (2000) and Hsieh (1995:313-315).

<sup>2</sup> Marks (1998:46-52).

<sup>3</sup> Ong (2015) and Baldanza (2015:184-188; 2016:204-20).

over the *tusi* regimes, relying on former Ming generals, including Wu Sangui. Then in the 1670s, the latter resisted Manchu control in their Revolt of the Three Feudatories. When the Qing did control a *dong* community, they tended to continue the *tusi* clan autonomy, with only minor efforts at managing succession within them. In the meantime, the Qing were increasing the extraction of metals from the mountains, an activity begun by the Mongols and continued by the Ming. In the 1720s, with a strong rise in this extraction and the new Yongzheng emperor's (r. 1723-1735) stress on bureaucratic control, there occurred a major change in policy towards the *dong* communities and their *tusi* clans. This was *gaitu guiliu*, which replaced the *tusi* with regular bureaucratic officials.<sup>1</sup> In the strong belief that *tusi* clans were local tyrants harmful to the people, selling their land, and oppressing their *dong* communities, Yongzheng acted to end indigenous rule across the Dong World. In its place would be direct state jurisdiction and a sharper sense of what was considered Qing territory and where the frontier lay.

Such displacement of the *tusi* with Chinese officials had been occurring episodically for centuries on a minor basis. As the Ming backed away from the Dong World over the second half of their dynasty, this effort had slowed even more. Yongzheng turned this around in a systematic fashion. Now, and in the following centuries, the Chinese and the mainland Southeast Asian states all worked to gain such direct control, removing local *dong* autonomy in the process. Beginning from the mid-1720s for a decade, this Chinese emperor and his chief lieutenant in the Dong World, E'ertai (1680-1745), with the barbarian image firmly in their minds, strongly reduced the number of *tusi* across the region. Removed from government office, these *dong* chieftains melted back into the social fabric of their communities under the thumb of the local state bureaucrat.

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson and Whitmore (2015:31-32) summarizes studies on *gaitu guiliu*, including those by Giersch (2006), Took (2005:226-257), Herman (2007:168-169), Holm (2003:170, 217), and Yang (1997:279-280, 296-298, 303-304). Puer tea also came out of the mountains around Sipsongpanna (Yu 2016:95, 98-99).

---

This direct control now reached as far south as Sipsongpanna, much deeper into the Dong World than before, as gazetteers and maps recorded by the Qing made the territory more legible. *Tusi* still remained (and would do so until the mid-twentieth century), generally on the far fringes of the empire or deep in the mountain recesses. In the court's eyes, they served as warning fences against external provocations. While the *gaitu guiliu* effort slackened with local resistance under Yongzheng's son, the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-96), through the rest of the eighteenth century and continued raggedly during the upheavals of the nineteenth, it set the pattern for states north and south as internationalization and greater mapping took place. State competition required better demarcation and jurisdictional control. The *dong* communities would increasingly become caught within this competition. On the one hand, they could play different states off against each other for their own benefit; on the other, they could suffer and be overrun by more powerful external forces.<sup>1</sup>

Competition in this conflict zone began in earnest over the second half of the eighteenth century. The centuries before this had seen states strengthen in mainland Southeast Asia. As noted, Đại Việt played a vigorous role in the southern Dong World during the fifteenth century. In Ava on the Irrawaddy plain, Toungoo power had pushed into the Shan *dong* as well as across Lanna into Lao territories. This Burmese dominance lasted among the Shan and in Lanna through the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. Burmese and Chinese state authority met and mixed in places like Kengtung and Sipsongpanna. The collision came when Qianlong of the Qing pushed his troops southwest into this zone during the 1760s and was badly beaten. In the 1780s, his troops moved out of the Dong World into Đại Việt and again lost catastrophically. In the nineteenth century, as the Qing weakened and were hammered by the British along the coast, their grip on the Dong World loosened.

A new player in these mountains was now the Thai Chakri monarchy in their new capital of Bangkok. This aggressive realm took

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson and Whitmore (2015:32-34) and Faure (2013b).



Lanna out of Ava's claim, eventually absorbing it in the 1870s, and fought for dominance in Kengtung and Sipsongpanna within the northern sector of the Dong World. The middle of the nineteenth century saw anti-Qing revolts across the northern Dong World, the Christian Taiping (1850-1864) in the east, the Miao (1854-1873) in the center, and the Muslim Panthay/Du Wenxiu Rebellion (1856-1873) on the west. Then the century's second half had the British out of the Irrawaddy plain and the French from the Red River delta, cutting their way into the southwest and southeast flanks of the Dong World, respectively.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout this century and a half, from the mid-eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth,<sup>2</sup> the *dong* communities in their mountain valleys, near and far, individually adjusted to the forces, social, economic, cultural, religious, and political, constantly intruding into their territories. *Dong* chieftains, *tusi* lords, and those in the uplands amidst the growing chaos resisted or took advantage of these forces and continued to maintain their autonomy and agency as best they could.<sup>3</sup> Upland peoples like the Khmu and the Hmong dealt with Tai chieftains in the *dong* valleys, owing them payments and labor.<sup>4</sup> With international borders imposed on them (in somewhat confusing ways; MacLean 2015:383) during these years and theoretically/actually configuring their lives in ways often out of their control, there came the formation of borderworlds (in Mandy Sadan's phrase 2013:45, 156-167). The *dong* inhabitants thus lost much of the agency and autonomy they had previously obtained. Having gone from the general period of alliance up into the thirteenth century, through the

---

<sup>1</sup> Lieberman (1984:130-137) and Smith (2013).

<sup>2</sup> For the southeast Dong World, see Lee (2015:70-78).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Davis (2015).

<sup>4</sup> Lee (2015:79-80). Evrard (2007), Bouté (2007), and Sprenger (2007) discuss the social and cultural impact (including titles, etc.) of the Tai in their *dong* on upland peoples, the Khmu, the Phunoy, and the Lamet. In inter-*dong* conflicts, these uplanders served as outer guardians of the valleys (Evrard 2007:133, Bouté 2007:188). In effect, the *dong* peoples in their relations with upland communities were replicating Chinese society's relationships with themselves.

half millennium of indirect rule of the *tusi* age (thirteenth to eighteenth centuries) into the increasingly-direct control of the *gaitu guiliu* era, the scattered *dong* communities in their mountain valleys have had to adapt to greater state control amid increasing external competition over the Dong World. The economic, political, and cultural forces from different directions have led to a *mélange* of local variations there. The increasing importance of imposed borders, though greatly porous, still tended to reduce and restrict cross-border interactions, sharpening the differences between the two sides.

The political turmoil of the first half of the twentieth century both loosened external control (in chaotic times) and tightened it (as the lowland states asserted themselves). The Chinese Nationalist and Communist regimes, though taking different approaches, both sought to assimilate the northern *dong* communities into the Chinese nation and play positive roles in the formation of their own modern nation-states.<sup>1</sup> Likewise in mainland Southeast Asia, forces working for independent and autonomous states saw their segments of the Dong World (as carved out by the colonial powers) forming part of the newly-recognized geo-body of their nations. Still the Dong World continued to allow for anti-state political and religious activities, as in prior centuries. The *dong* communities recognized by the British (Shan, Kachin, Lahu, Wa, et al.) on the southwest of the Dong World utilized this connection to maintain their authority in their own valleys, as the Communist Party of Burma also operated there (Smith 1991, especially ch 16).

To the east in the mountains of the Việt Bắc (the northern mountains of northern Vietnam), the Dong World provided room for anti-colonial forces to operate and to join with local Tai *dong* communities (especially Hồ Chí Minh and the base for his Việt Minh operations that culminated in the great battle of Điện Biên Phủ, a major *dong* valley). Upland Hmong clans also became heavily involved in these struggles (Lee 2015). To the north, through the northern portion of the northern Dong World, Mao Zedong led the Long March

---

<sup>1</sup> Hsieh (1995:324-25, 327), Mullaney (2011), Yang (1997:280, 285, 298-303), Anderson and Whitmore (2015:40-42), and Winichakul (1994).

---

of his Communist Party across Guizhou to establish their base in Yan'an. In this way, *dong* communities participated in significant political activities that set the future of every one of the soon-to-be national regimes of the region.

#### TODAY'S DONG WORLD

Since 1950, independent regimes have risen all around the Dong World and have sought to consolidate their portions of this world, as defined by the modern international borders. The peoples of the *dong* communities have had little to say in all these major events, however much they participated in them. Only in Burma/Myanmar have such *dong* communities continued to play a significant role in state developments. Many Hmong (Miao-Yao) joined US forces to oppose the lowland Vietnamese intrusions into their territory in Laos and lost in 1975. The Democratic/Socialist Republic of Vietnam (DRV/SRV) has worked to integrate the *dong* territories in its northern and northwestern mountains, while still battling the Chinese there in 1979. The Vietnamese joined with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in following the Stalinist nationalities model to define the ethnic minorities, both upland and *dong* peoples, and to set up autonomous regions for them. Overall, across both the northern and southern sectors of the Dong World, state efforts to displace local rule by *dong* chieftains and to apply direct control has continued through the second half of the twentieth century into the twenty-first (see Fig. 3).

What was the nature of the *dong* communities and chiefdoms in the modern age? The French anthropologist Georges Condominas (1980) has given us a mid-twentieth century analysis of Tai *muang* (*dong*) across the Dong World.<sup>1</sup> Based on *muang* of the highland valleys, Tai communities centered themselves on the local spirit hierarchy, focused on the *phi* 'spirit' of the *muang*, with larger *muang* encompassing smaller ones in the political-religious hierarchy formed of shifting *dong* chiefdoms (*chao*). Expanding power (as O'Connor

---

<sup>1</sup> See Tannenbaum (1995) for a description of Shan communities.

indicated above) meant moving into other *dong* valleys and developing their wet rice agriculture and its related customs, while maintaining relations among the many *dong*, whether ally or rival (or both).

The scheme was to create a network of *muang* (*dong*) lords and thus to dominate a territory and its routes (as in Sipsongpanna), while also integrating with local upland non-*dong* peoples. Out of such networks had emerged the *muang* overlords of Lanna, Lan Sang, and the Shan *sawbwa* (*chaofa*). Another report (Ma 2014:43-44, 47-48) has spoken of Dai chiefdoms in Yunnan having applied different types of "taxes" on the upland peoples as opposed to the valley (*dong*) communities. The impacts of the encroaching states have disrupted such relationships, first with the imposed borders, then with lowland-derived regulations ("civilization"), resettlement, and re-organization. Such actions have greatly affected the *dong* social structure of the elite (mainly of the dominant clan), religious and political leaders in agriculture and war; the people of the rice paddies and soldiers; those in bondage; and the upland non-*dong* peoples from the mountain slopes under *dong* domination and being absorbed into *dong* society.

The 1950s and 1960s saw much turbulence, especially in the southern Dong World as the politics of the newly-established nations worked themselves out. The PRC and the DRV moved strongly into their claimed segments of the Dong World, the PRC throughout the northern sector, and the DRV in the Việt Minh base at the eastern end of the southern sector. Elsewhere, the central and western territories of the southern sector, mainly across northern Thailand and Myanmar, became a refuge and open area for migrants from the PRC (from both upland and *dong* communities, but mainly defeated Kuomintang/Guomindang [KMT/GMD] troops) and for opium cultivation and movement (the Golden Triangle). Until they were all pulled out of these mountain valleys and relocated to Taiwan by 1961, the remaining Nationalist forces attempted attacks from the southern sector into the northern, often with the support of non-Communist lowland governments and the US.

Even with the move to Taiwan to rejoin the Nationalist regime there, KMT/GMD villages have remained in this southern sector, in

---

northeast Myanmar (especially Kokang, Shan State) and just across the border in far northern Thailand. There they (as well as the Communist Party of Burma) have often taken part in opium production and trafficking, providing protection for caravans throughout the Dong World, including within China. Some *dong* chieftains of varied ethnic groups, Tai, Kachin, Wa, and others, have joined them in these endeavors.<sup>1</sup>

These ethnic groups represent the movement of peoples, upland as well as *dong*, through the Dong World over the centuries. Tibeto-Burmans like the Kachin and Lahu, have traveled south into the southern sector and Tai like the Shan and Lue have moved west across this sector, while Mon-Khmer like the Wa have maintained their positions within this territory. This is particularly interesting for the previously-headhunting Wa who are apparently indigenous survivors in the midst of the Tibeto-Burman, Tai, and Miao-Yao migrations respectively out of the west, east, and north of the Dong World. The Wa to this day, have stood their ground across what has become the international PRC/Myanmar border. The Wa community and its orators have brought Tai (Shan) Buddhism into their political structure and to its lords. They have resisted other ethnic groups as well as British intrusions (in the 1930s), and over the past seven decades the surrounding states of the PRC and Myanmar, both politically and economically, licit and illicit in state terms. Though the *gaitu guiliu* has hampered the Wa in the northern sector, those across the border have staunchly resisted state intrusions.<sup>2</sup>

The *dong* chieftains and their communities in the southern sector have profited from the openness and its commercial possibilities in order to strengthen their local situations and to resist state advances from the lowlands into their mountain valleys. Violence, corruption, and clandestine trade have all played their roles in these

---

<sup>1</sup> Chang (2014), Steinberg and Fan (2012:46-55, map 6), and Siriphon (2016).

<sup>2</sup> Ma (2013:23-27; 2014:44-48), Liu (2015:83-86), Eimer (2014:ch 19), Steinberg and Fan (2012:56, 252, 277-278, 316), Smith (1991:315-316), and Fiskesjo (2010).

efforts to establish their local power. In the northern sector, the PRC gained control over the major *dong* chiefdoms, particularly Dai Sipsongpanna and its *chao* 'lord', formerly a pacification officer, thus cutting them off from Lan Sang, Lanna, and Keng Tung (respectively now in Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar) to the south.<sup>1</sup> Existing in the Kachin and Shan States of Myanmar and Lanna, such modern *dong* chiefdoms have included Tibeto-Burman Kachin, Tai Shan, and Mon-Khmer Wa and to the east in Laos the ill-fated Miao-Yao Hmong. They all have utilized their continuing frontier existence to keep their local autonomy against the lowland states, by any means necessary, through resistance, accommodation, or isolation.

Pursuing their own interests in their highland valleys, well-armed from their trade and/or opium profits, these communities and their chieftains have stood fast against state demands as best they could. With fellows of their same ethnic groups in the borderworld split off by imposed international borders, these *dong* communities can influence events in both China and Southeast Asia, as well as India. In the 1960s and 1970s, a number of such upland and *dong* groups from Yunnan, with PRC encouragement and radio broadcasts in Shan and Kachin, supported their compatriots in Myanmar. The opium trade also had its impact in both countries. Thus, from the 1950s through the 1980s, it was mainly political matters, reinforced by local economies that fed turbulent developments across a great part of the southern Dong World.<sup>2</sup>

For the past thirty years and on into the future, it is the economic developments coming out of the PRC, led by Deng Xiaoping's new commercial policies, that have come to dominate the Dong World, north and south. The northern sector had seen, first, the PRC work to complete *gaitu guiliu* and to establish its cadre structure through the 1950s, effectively ending the "feudal" *tusi* system and setting up ethnic ("nationality" - the fifty-six *minzu*) autonomous

---

<sup>1</sup> Hsieh (1995:314-319, 323-324).

<sup>2</sup> Steinberg and Fan (2012:61, 105, 138, 249, 269, 271-272, 314-316, 319, 326, 351), Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin (2012:237, 241, 246, 265-266), Eimer (2014:chs 15-20), and Sadan (2013:347-360).

---

regions in their stead, with Deng Xiaoping significantly involved in these actions. Second, in the 1960s and through the 1970s, the radical activities of the Cultural Revolution and its Red Guards and sent-down youth permeated the major mountain valleys. Meanwhile, roads and electricity had begun to appear throughout this territory.<sup>1</sup>

With Deng in power, commerce and economic development came to the fore, producing far-reaching implications for the Dong World. In the process, the PRC has demonstrated that it now wants peace and stability across the southern Dong World in order to gain economic access. Just as the Han and later dynasties had realized, the PRC too (and with it specifically Yunnan Province) see the Dong World as an overland path to the South Seas (Nanyang) and to India, not for the valuables of yesteryear, but for those of today, primarily energy sources. For the *dong* communities, this has again presented both opportunities and threats.

For the PRC, Yunnan and the Dong World at large have become not so much a barbarian "backwater" as a "bridgehead" reaching across the mountains through the *dong* communities to connect with economic forces on the far side. In this way, the decentralization of PRC's new socialist market economy has worked to open the commercial sector and thus the Dong World itself, both the Chinese northern and the Southeast Asian southern sectors. These past three decades have seen ever-increasing movement back and forth between the two.

This period has also seen cultural recognition as well as the international concept of "indigenous space" for the *dong* communities. Occurring simultaneously with the Chinese state's determination to push through the Dong World to utilize the resources lying therein and beyond, it has resulted in greater possibilities for local effort and demands (Oakes 2004:287). The desired extraction and tourism has required major infrastructure construction, which has proceeded actively through the mountains. For Yunnan, this has meant, in Tim

---

<sup>1</sup> Hsieh (1995:326-327), Liu (2015:84-85), Sigley (2016a:172, 188-190, 195-198), Kaup (2000:chs 3-4), Mullaney (2011), Holm (2003:6-8), Yang (1997:285, 287, 300, 304), and Anderson and Whitmore (2016:43-45).

---

Summers's words (2016:144), "a sophisticated road network, ... growing aviation routes, communications infrastructure, and rail networks, and an increase in the number and capacity of border crossings." This includes highways to the ports of Bangkok and Haiphong (via Hanoi). Presently, the Chinese are also constructing a high-speed railway to Vientiane in Laos. The purpose here, in one observer's eyes (Strangio 2016:A8), is to make Boten in northern Laos "a transportation hub facilitating greater Chinese penetration ..." of the southern sector.<sup>1</sup>

Even more important for the PRC is access to the West, to India, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, via the Dong World, the Irrawaddy plain of Myanmar, and the Indian Ocean. This requires stability in both the northern and southern sectors of the Dong World, so gaining the trust and favor of the *dong* communities is essential, hence the necessity for ceasefires with the upland and *dong* (minority) groups in northern Myanmar. Besides the transport network, there is the energy sector. This involves not only China as a whole, but more specifically the needs of the Dong World itself. The Chinese nation's economy and sustainability depend on access to energy, especially gas and oil, west of the Strait of Melaka. Development of the Dong World also requires it. This has taken the PRC into Myanmar's coastal oil sector as well as a port for supplies from the Middle East, all involving pipelines and their pump stations through the Dong World, south and north.

Security for these pipelines requires peaceful relations on both sides of the border. Specifically, in the southern sector, this means ceasefires with *dong* chieftains of the ethnic minorities – Kachin, Shan, Wa, and even Han living there. In the northern sector, the provincial government of Yunnan has actively pursued these projects. Wealth and energy are spreading throughout the northern Dong World into Guizhou and Guangxi. In addition, there are hydropower projects in both sectors of the Dong World and the power lines for electricity distribution. Damming the many fast-flowing streams and rivers can

---

<sup>1</sup> Summers (2013:ch 6), Hathaway (2010), Sigley (2016a:190-195), Strangio (2016:A4, 8), and Kaup (2000:chs 5-7).



be both beneficial and damaging to local and downstream *dong* communities, due to relocations and disruptions to water flow. How this affects the centuries-long irrigation pattern of the *dong* communities needs to be examined. Increasingly, over these three decades, Chinese, particularly Yunnanese, enterprises have pushed out of this northern sector into the southern.<sup>1</sup>

With infrastructure development and the consequent increase in cross-border trade and investment, has come a rapid rise in tourism and "lifestyle migration." Many Han and other travelers have been moving into the northern sector of the Dong World and going beyond into the southern sector, as the latter has itself gained from lowland and foreign visitors. Looking for the exotic among the "authentic" upland and *dong* communities and the natural wonders of this very different environment, Chinese visits have led to the (re)construction of the imagined ethnic world portrayed in the multi-*minzu* 'nationality' view of the PRC. Indeed, the very ruggedness of the Dong World has drawn Chinese and foreigners throughout the mountain territory in trekking and climbing expeditions. Many Chinese have also sought a more pleasant life there than their lowland existences allowed. In addition, crossing the border, especially on day-trips into Myanmar, allows for pleasures (such as casinos) not available in the PRC and frequently shut down by Beijing. More important are the business enterprises and their labor force (out of Yunnan specifically and the PRC more generally) moving ever more deeply into the southern sector, together with a PRC *renminbi* cash zone forming there. Many businessmen, particularly in the extractive industries, make deals with *dong* chieftains, notably in the Shan and Wa territories. The Chinese enclave of Kokang has gained much in these activities. This Chinese economic penetration now extends across the entirety of the southern sector.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Steinberg and Fan (2012:chs 6-10), Nijhuis (2015), Oakes (2004), and Giry and Wai Moe (2016).

<sup>2</sup> Steinberg and Fan (2012:242-265), Sigley (2016a:177, 180, 183, 191, 195, 199, 203, n 38; 2016b), Hernandez and Innes (2016), Eimer (2014:ch 20), Strangio (2016), Montague (2016), Hsieh (1995:327), Liu (2015:85), Bartsch (2000), Swain (2011), and Turner et al. (2015:133-135, 161-163).

---

Moving north, another aspect of this thriving Dong World economic growth has been the narcotics trade. Based in the southern sector among upland and *dong* communities, this production and distribution has had a strong effect on the northern sector and on into China proper, where it has been seen, in the words of Steinberg and Fan (2012:269), "as an existential threat to the state." Opium production in the Dong World had developed strongly from the mid-nineteenth century, with large amounts of supplies moving by caravan and railroad in the 1920s and 1930s. Heroin, and recently methamphetamines, have been hugely profitable for some upland and *dong* chieftains and have helped them strengthen their situations against state actions. The PRC looks to block this flow first in the western portion of the Dong World (Yunnan), then in its eastern portion (Guizhou, Guangxi), and finally along its southeast coast and in other provinces bordering the mountains. These anti-drug efforts have also led to PRC penetration of the southern sector, as it deals with *dong* chieftains there and uses satellites and drones for observation. In this, Chinese authority and power have gradually extended into zones of the southern sector considered threatening and dangerous to the PRC and its population. Chinese programs to provide economic alternatives to the narcotics production and distribution mean their further intrusion through the southern sector. The Chinese have pressured *dong* chieftains in Myanmar and Laos to cease their production and have also sought to educate local Chinese communities in the mountain valleys properly. Thus, the ever-watchful eye of the PRC, as in past centuries, has continued to try and determine events throughout the Dong World and to influence/control them in some fashion.<sup>1</sup>

Also moving from the southern sector have been influences emanating from the lowlands of the Southeast Asian mainland, particularly the Thai. From the first half of the twentieth century, Bangkok, changing the national name from Siam to Thailand, has been asserting its role as natural leader of all Tai peoples. Once seeing

---

<sup>1</sup> Steinberg and Fan (2012:269-280), Siriphon (2016:8-13), and Slack (2001:3-7, 13-16, 26-28).

Bangkok as a competitor with the highland *dong* lords, Tai in the northern sector of the Dong World now look to Bangkok and Thailand in general for an alternative view of the world. Though often resisted within the southern sector, the opening of the PRC border over the past four decades has allowed northern-sector Tai more exposure to Bangkok and its influences, seen in Shih-Chung Hsieh's (1995:328) words as "'a great and wealthy Buddhist country' ... a respectable and proud brother country ..." Theravada Buddhism is thus a major one of these southern influences, penetrating more deeply into the Dai world around Sipsongpanna. On the one hand, it reinforces the local tourist draw there; on the other, it might be seen as a separatist threat to the PRC *minzu* scheme. Buddhism, both Theravada and Mahayana, as well as Christianity, have also reached more deeply into upland communities like the Wa and the Lahu in response to modern intrusions.<sup>1</sup>

What has all this meant for the *dong* communities, north and south? For the states, as for Fan Chengda and Zhou Qufei eight centuries earlier, peoples of the *dong* communities have better contacts with the lowland powers and approach "civilization" in their highland valleys, unlike the peoples living up the mountainsides. This is especially the case with the Dai of Sipsongpanna who, according to Hathaway (following John McKinnon) (2013:61), "raised paddy rice, cultivated diversity-rich home gardens, grew their own fuel-wood in groves, and maintained 'sacred forests,'" and are thus more privileged than the highlands in the state's eyes. Yet many of the inhabitants of the northern sector of the Dong World, particularly those up the slopes, have seen major disruptions in their lives and their socio-economic relations. Various communities have been arbitrarily mashed together into single *minzu* and ranked against other such groups, another state aspect to be ignored or manipulated where possible.

Deprived of their guns and restricted in their hunting by PRC regulations, many of the mountain folk have become poachers and have seen an increasing lack of local autonomy under the eyes of direct

---

<sup>1</sup> Hsieh (1995:302, 327-28), Eimer (2014:ch 10), Hathaway (2013:346), Ma (2013:ch 1), Sadan (2013:ch 8), and Lee (2015:69).

state cadre presence. In the process, socio-cultural patterns have fractured. For upland peoples like the Jinuo and the Lahu, severe dislocations have led to individual problems. Poverty has increased and alcoholism and suicides have appeared. Religious beliefs, especially Buddhism, have become a refuge, while some people have moved, seeking less accessible territory, even across the international border to join their ethnic fellows in the more open southern sector (northern Southeast Asia). Another aspect of this situation has been the shortage of marriageable Han women in the PRC at large. A result is the movement of females (Lahu, Kachin, and others), some out of the southern sector, by both legal and illegal means, into Chinese society. The narcotics situation has brought further difficulties among upland and *dong* communities.<sup>1</sup>

In the southern sector, from northern Vietnam to northern Myanmar, both upland and *dong* communities have had to deal with the national configurations of each of their states. Whether socialist or not, these states place their "hill tribes" into subordinate categories. The peoples themselves take stands of their own - resistant, mimetic, compliant, or not - as they face the lowlanders and their particular capital. Myanmar sees strongly defined insurgent groups in the militarized and resource-rich hills and valleys of their Dong World. For Thailand, these peoples, more ignored than not, have to get the attention of Bangkok. In Laos, the distance between these peoples and the capital is even greater, while the Vietnamese maintain a tighter control on the *dong* valleys and uplands they claim, similar to the Chinese.<sup>2</sup> Overall, in both the northern and the southern sectors, life has become increasingly problematic in many of its relations with the great lowland state intrusions.

Thus, the peoples of the Dong World, in both the valleys and the uplands, have come to engage the modern world. Whether Tibeto-Burman, Miao-Yao (Hmong-Mien), Tai, or Mon-Khmer, regardless of

---

<sup>1</sup> Hsieh (1995:319-328), Hathaway (2013), Ma (2013), and Eimer (2014:ch 20).

<sup>2</sup> Pederson (2008), Ferguson (2015), Jonsson (2010), Turner et al. (2015), MacLean (2007), and Sadan (2013:ch 7).

their ecological circumstances, they have had to deal with intrusive state actions, increased international involvement, and the great technological advances of the age. Yet, as the volumes by Michaud and his colleagues (2000, Michaud and Forsyth 2011, Turner et al. 2015) so well illustrate, many of these peoples have applied degrees of agency in their actions and adapted their livelihoods to their new circumstances. While upland peoples have become increasingly and more directly involved in these activities, the *dong* and their valley inhabitants remain in key positions to vigorously mediate between this mountainous terrain and the actions of the outside world, negotiating and, where possible, benefitting.<sup>1</sup>

For almost 3,000 years in the Dong World, it has not been a question of openness to the outside world, but of the degree of this openness. Certain communities have been in closer contact, others less so, and some very little. By the twenty-first century, a stronger economic integration of the entire mountain region has taken place. Despite the imposed artificial international borders, the extent of new roads and rails, together with electronic connections, has meant a closeness for these *dong* communities that did not exist in past centuries. The state systems have intruded strongly, though not completely, especially in the southern sector where *dong* lords of past centuries remain in modern memory.<sup>2</sup> Some *dong* chiefdoms have held onto their autonomy to a certain extent, while others have been overwhelmed and re-organized. Among the many highland valleys across this world of the *dong*, coming to grips with their internal organization in this changing environment and negotiating their stances within their particular states and towards neighboring states continues to demand constant awareness and flexibility.

---

<sup>1</sup> Turner et al. (2015:136-140, 157-159) gives a good example of uplanders (Hmong) having to rely on *dong* inhabitants (Tày) and lowlanders (Vietnamese [Kinh] and Han) to market their increasingly desired products.

<sup>2</sup> For an example of such veneration, the cult of Nong Zhigao/Nùng Trí Cao, on both sides of the Sino-Vietnamese border, see Anderson (2007:ch 7) and Kao (2013).

Figure 1. Map of the Dong World (Anderson and Whitmore 2015:4).

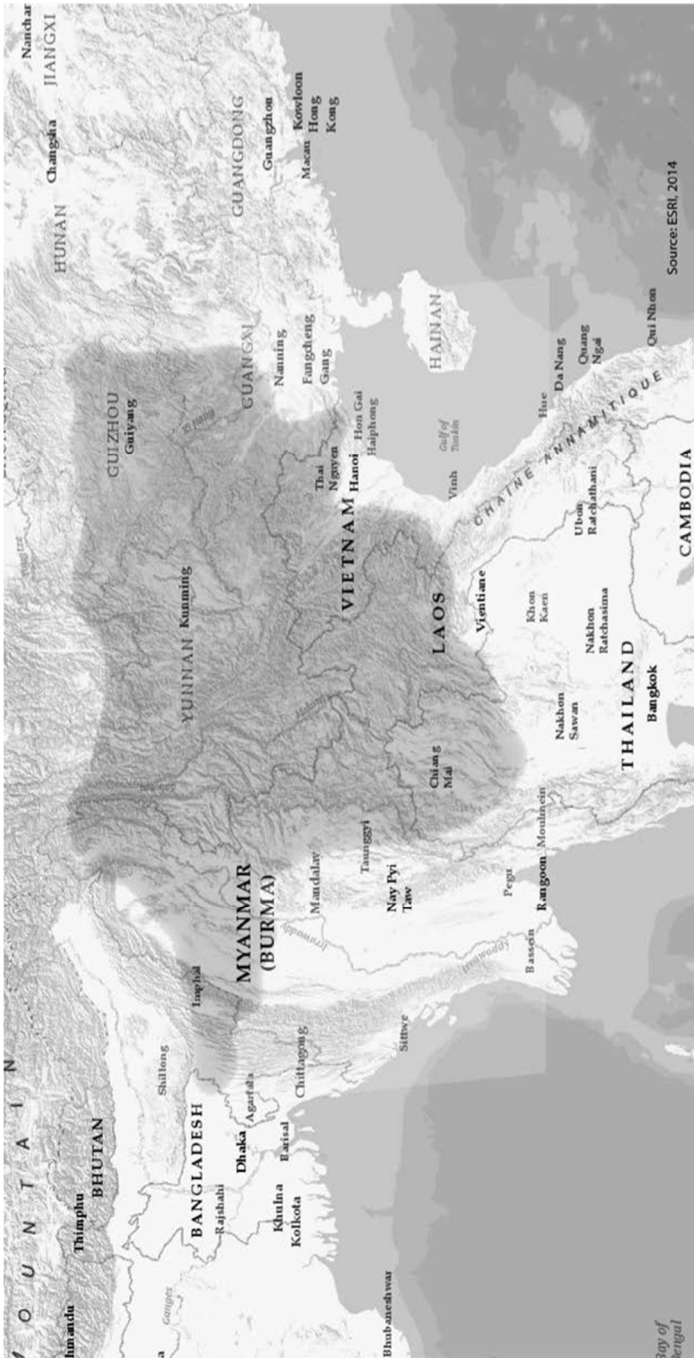


Figure 2. Map of the Nanzhao Kingdom (Anderson and Whitmore 2015:13).

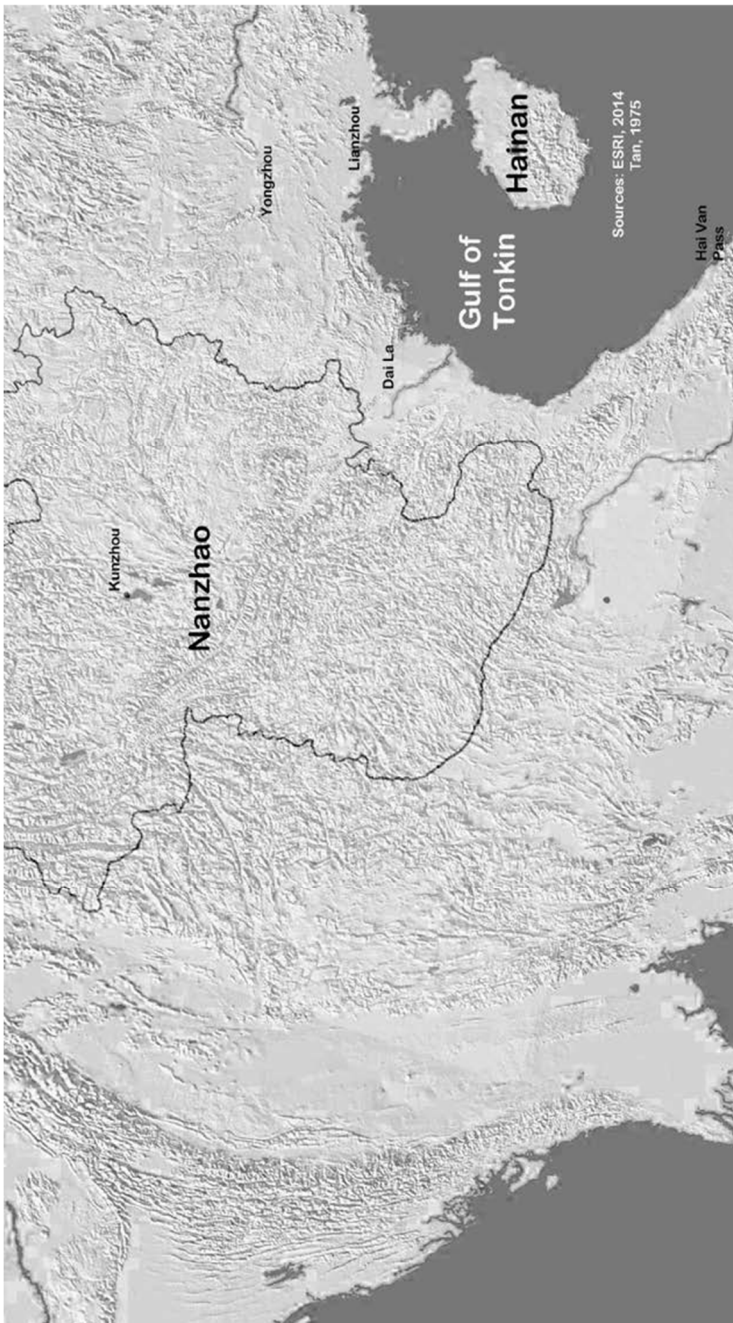
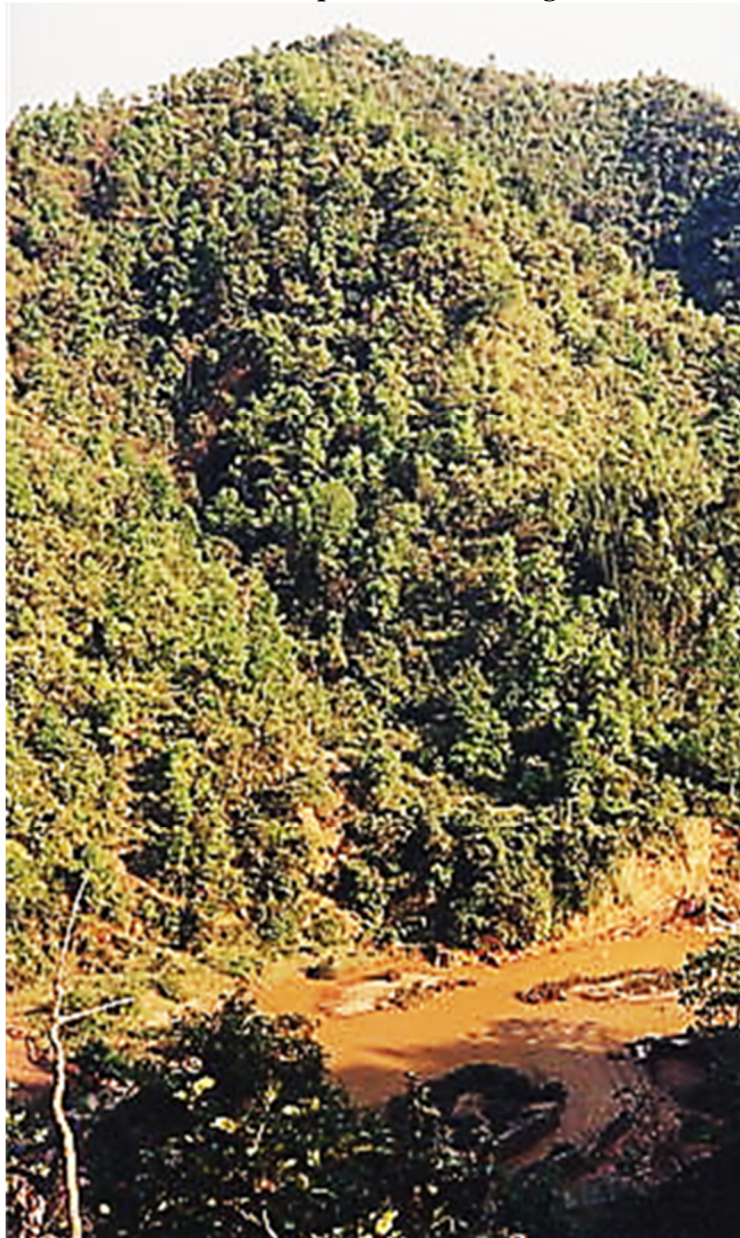


Figure 3: The Dong World landscape along the Sino-Vietnamese frontier (Xialei Township, southern Guangxi, James A Anderson).





## REFERENCES

- Anderson, James A. 2007. *The Rebel Den of Nùng Trí Cao*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2014. Commissioner Li and Prefect Huang: Sino-Vietnamese Frontier Trade Networks and Political Alliances in the Southern Seas in Erica Brindley and Kathlene Baldanza (eds) *Maritime Frontiers in Asia: Sino-Vietnamese Relations, ca. 900-1800 CE*. *Asia Major*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 27(2):29-51.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2015. *Man and Mongols, The Dali and Đại Việt Kingdoms in the Face of the Northern Invasions* in James A Anderson and John K Whitmore (eds) *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest, Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*. Leiden: Brill, 106-134.
- \_\_\_\_ and John K Whitmore. 2015. Introduction: The Fiery Frontier and the Dong World in James A Anderson and John K Whitmore (eds) *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest, Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*. Leiden: Brill, 1-55.
- Aung-Thwin, Michael. 1985. *Pagan, The Origins of Modern Burma*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- \_\_\_\_ and Maitrii Aung-Thwin. 2012. *A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times, Traditions and Transformations*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Backus, Charles. 1981. *The Nan-Chao Kingdom and T'ang China's Southwestern Frontier*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baldanza, Kathlene. 2015. A State Agent at Odds with the State: Lin Xiyuan and the Ming Recovery of the Four Dong in James A Anderson and John K Whitmore (eds) *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest: Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*. Leiden: Brill, 169-190.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2016. *Ming China and Vietnam: Negotiating Borders in Early Modern Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- 
- Bartsch, Henry. 2000. The Impact of Trekking in a Changing Society: A Karen Village in Northern Thailand in Jean Michaud (ed) *Turbulent Times and Enduring Peoples, Mountain Minorities in the South-East Asian Massif*. Richmond, England: Curzon. 195-215.
- Bellwood, Peter, The Origins and Dispersals of Agricultural Communities in Southeast Asia in Ian Glover and Peter Bellwood (eds) *Southeast Asia, From Prehistory to History*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 21-40.
- \_\_\_ and Ian Glover, 2004. Southeast Asia: Foundations for an Archaeological History in Ian Glover and Peter Bellwood (eds) *Southeast Asia, From Prehistory to History*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 4-20.
- Bouté, Vanina. 2007. Political Hierarchical Processes Among Some Highlanders of Laos in Francois Robinne and Mandy Sadan, (eds) *Social Dynamics in the Highlands of Southeast Asia, Reconsidering Political Systems of Highland Burma*. Leiden: Brill, 187-208.
- Brose, Michael C. 2015. Yunnan's Muslim Heritage in James A Anderson and John K Whitmore (eds) *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest: Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*. Leiden: Brill, 135-155.
- Bryson, Megan. 2015. Tsenpo Chung, Yunnan Wang, Maharaja: Royal Titles in Narratives of Nanzhao Kingship Between Tibet and Tang China *Cahiers d'Extreme-Asie* 24:59-76.
- Chang Wen-Chin. 2014. *Beyond Borders: Stories of Yunnanese Chinese Migrants of Burma*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Churchman, Catherine. 2015. Where to Draw the Line? The Chinese Southern Frontier in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries in James A Anderson and John K Whitmore (eds) *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest: Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*. Leiden: Brill, 59-77.

- 
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2016. *The Peoples Between the Rivers: The Rise and Fall of a Bronze Drum Culture, 200-750 CE*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Churchman, Michael. 2011/2013. 'The People in Between': The Li and Lao from the Han to the Sui in Nola Cooke, Li Tana, and James Anderson (eds) *The Tongking Gulf Through History*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press; Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 67-83.
- Condominas, Georges. 1980. Essai sur l'Évolution des Systemes Politiques Thais (1976) in Georges Condominas, *L'Espace Social à Propos de l'Asie de Sud-Est*. Paris: Flammarion, 259-316.
- Davis, Bradley C. 2015. Volatile Allies, Two Cases of Power-Brokers in the Nineteenth Century Vietnamese-Chinese Borderlands in James A Anderson and John K Whitmore (eds) *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest, Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*. Leiden: Brill, 322-338.
- Dennis, Joseph. 2015. Projecting Legitimacy in Ming Native Domains in James A Anderson and John K Whitmore (eds) *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest, Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*. Leiden: Brill, 259-272.
- Eimer, David. 2014. *The Emperor Far Away, Travels at the Edge of China*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Elvin, Mark. 2004. *Retreat of the Elephants, An Environmental History of China*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Evrard, Olivier. 2007. Interethnic Systems and Localized Identities: The Khmu Subgroups (Tmoy) in North-West Laos in Francois Robinne and Mandy Sadan (eds) *Social Dynamics in the Highlands of Southeast Asia, Reconsidering Political Systems of Highland Burma*. Leiden: Brill, 127-159.
- Fan Chengda (James M Hargett trans and ed). 2010 [1070s]. *Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea, The Natural World and Material Culture of 12<sup>th</sup> Century South China*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

- 
- Fan Ch'o [Fan Chuo] (GH Luce, trans and GP Oey, ed). 1961 [860s]. *Man shu, Book of the Southern Barbarians*. Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University.
- Faure, David. 2007. *Emperor and Ancestor, State and Lineage in South China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013a. Introduction in David Faure and Ho Ts'ui-p'ing (eds) *Chieftains Into Ancestors, Imperial Expansion and Indigenous Society in Southwest China*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 1-21.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013b. The Tusi That Never Was: Find an Ancestor, Connect to the State in David Faure and Ho Ts'ui-p'ing (eds) *Chieftains Into Ancestors, Imperial Expansion and Indigenous Society in Southwest China*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 171-186.
- Ferguson, Jane. 2015. Who's Counting? Ethnicity, Belonging, and the National Census in Burma/Myanmar, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, 171 (1):1-28.
- Fiskesjo, Magnus. 2010. Mining, History, and the Anti-State Wa: The Politics of Autonomy Between Burma and China. *Journal of Global History* 5(2):241-264.
- Forsyth, Tim, and Jean Michaud. 2011. Rethinking the Relationship Between livelihoods and Ethnicity in Highland China, Vietnam, and Laos in Jean Michaud (ed) *Moving Mountains: Ethnicity and Livelihoods in Highland China, Vietnam, and Laos*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 1-27.
- Gedney, William J. 1995. Linguistic Diversity Among Tai Dialects in Southern Kwangsi in Thomas John Hudak (ed) *Central Tai Dialects, Glossaries, Texts, and Terms*. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 805-808.
- Giry, Stephanie and Wai Moe. 2016. Myanmar Talks Feature Symbolism and Skepticism. *New York Times* 1 September:A6

- Hargett, James M. 2010. Introduction in Fan Chengda (James M Hargett, trans and ed) *Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea, The Natural World and Material Culture of 12<sup>th</sup> Century South China*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, xix-lxvi.
- Harrell, Stevan. 2001. *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington.
- Hathaway, Michael J. 2010. The Emergence of Indigeneity: Public Intellectuals and an Indigenous Space in Southwest China. *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (2):301-333.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013. *Environmental Winds, Making the Global in Southwest China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- He Wei 霍巍. 2011. *Xinan kaogu yu zhonghua wenming* 西南考古与中华文明 (*Southwestern Archeology and Chinese Civilization*). Chengdu 成都: Bashu shushe 巴蜀书社 [Bashu Publishing House].
- Herman, John E. 2007. *Amid the Clouds and Mist, China's Colonization of Guizhou*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Hernandez, Javier C and Michelle Innis. 2016. Detentions by Chinese Put Casinos in Tight Spot, *New York Times* 19 October:B1, 3.
- Higham, Charles. 1996. *The Bronze Age of Southeast Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. Mainland Southeast Asia From the Neolithic to the Iron Age in Ian Glover and Peter Bellwood (eds) *Southeast Asia, From Prehistory to History*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 41-67.
- Holm, David. 2003. *Killing a Buffalo for the Ancestors, A Zhuang Cosmological Text from Southwest China*. DeKalb, IL: Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University.
- Hsieh, Shih-Chung. 1995. On the Dynamics of Tai/Dai-Lue Ethnicity: An Ethnohistorical Analysis in Stevan Harrell (ed) *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 301-328.
- Indian Uplift. 2015. *New York Times* 5/19/2015:Science Section.

- Jenkins, Mark. 2015. Point of No Return. *National Geographic*. 228(3):60-91.
- Jonsson, Hjorleifur. 2010. Mimetic Minorities: National Identity and Desire on Thailand's Fringe. *Identities* 17 (2-3):108-130.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2014. *Slow Anthropology, Negotiating Difference with the Iu Mien*. Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University.
- Kao Ya-ning. 2013. Chief, God, or National Hero? Representing Nong Zhigao in Chinese Ethnic Minority Society in David Faure and Ho Ts'ui-p'ing (eds) *Chieftains Into Ancestors, Imperial Expansion and Indigenous Society in Southwest China*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 42-65.
- Kaup, Katherine Palmer. 2000. *Ethnic Politics in China, Creating the Zhuang*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Leach, Edmund R. 1954. *Political Systems of Highland Burma, A Study of Kachin Social Structure*. London: Athlone Press.
- LeBar, Frank M, Gerald C Hickey, and John K Musgrave. 1964. *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*. New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files Press.
- Lee, Mai Na M. 2015. *Dreams of the Hmong Kingdom, The Quest for Legitimation in French Indochina, 1850-1960*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Li Daoyuan 郦道元. 1936 [6<sup>th</sup> c]. *Shui jing zhu 水经注 [Commentary on the Book of Water Routes]*. Shanghai 上海: Zhonghua shu ju 中华书局 [Zhonghua Publishers].
- Li, Tana. 2011/2013. Jiaozhi (Giao Chi) in the Han Period Tongking Gulf in Nola Cooke, Li Tana, and James A Anderson (eds) *The Tongking Gulf Through History*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press; Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 39-52.
- Lian Ruizhi. 2013. Surviving Conquest in Dali: Chiefs, Deities, and Ancestors in David Faure and Ho Ts'ui-p'ing (eds) *Chieftains Into Ancestors, Imperial Expansion and Indigenous Society in Southwest China*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 86-110.

- Lieberman, Victor B. 1984. *Burmese Administrative Cycles, Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2003. *Strange Parallels, Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830. Vol. 1. Integration on the Mainland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. Charter State Collapse in Southeast Asia, ca. 1250-1400, as a Problem in Regional and World History. *American Historical Review* 116(4):917-963.
- Liu, Tzu-Kai. 2015. The Practice of Deference and Its Politics: Theravada Buddhist Beliefs and Hierarchical Dynamism in China's Southwest Border Areas. *Taiwan Journal of Anthropology* 13(2):67-100.
- Ma, Jianxiong. 2013. *The Lahu Minority in Southwest China, A Response to Ethnic Marginalization on the Frontier*. London: Routledge.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2014. The Rise of Gentry Power on the China-Burma Frontier Since the 1870s: The Case of the Peng Family. in Mianning, Southwest Yunnan. *International Journal of Asian Studies* 11(1):25-51.
- MacLean, Ken. 2007. Spaces of Extraction: Governance Along the Riverine Networks of Nyaunglebin District in Monique Skidmore and Trevor Wilson (eds) *Myanmar, The State, Community and the Environment*. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 246-270.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2015. From Land to Water: Fixing Fluid Frontiers and the Politics of Lines in the South China/Eastern Sea in James A Anderson and John K Whitmore (eds) *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest, Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*. Leiden: Brill: 370-394.
- Marks, Robert B. 1998. *Tigers, Rice, Silk, and Silt, Environment and Economy in Late Imperial South China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- McKinnon, John and Jean Michaud. 2000. Montagnard Domain in the South-East Asian Massif in Jean Michaud (ed) *Turbulent Times and Enduring Peoples, Mountain Minorities in the South-East Asian Massif*. Richmond, England: Curzon, 1-28.
- Michaud, Jean (ed). 2000. *Turbulent Times and Enduring Peoples, Mountain Minorities in the South-East Asian Massif*. Richmond, England: Curzon.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2006. *Historical Dictionary of the Peoples of the Southeast Asian Massif*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. *The A to Z of the Peoples of the Southeast Asian Massif*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- \_\_\_\_ and Tim Forsyth (eds). 2011. *Moving Mountains, Ethnicity and Livelihoods in Highland China, Vietnam, and Laos*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.
- Miller, Lucien. 1994a. General Introduction in Lucien Miller (ed) *South of the Clouds, Tales From Yunnan*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 3-40.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1994b. Traditional Yunnan Ethnic Minority Cultures in Lucien Miller (ed). *South of the Clouds, Tales From Yunnan*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 265-292.
- Molnar, Peter, 2015. *Plate Tectonics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_ and Joann M Stock. 2009. Slowing of India's Convergence with Eurasia Since 20 Ma and its Implications for Tibetan Mantle Dynamics. *Tectonics*, 28(3):1-11 (figs 1-2).
- Montague, Zach. 2016. 'Unexplored' China? Not for Long. *New York Times* 06/01/2016:B8, 11.
- Mullaney, Thomas S. 2011. *Coming to Terms With the Nation, Ethnic Classification in Modern China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Murphey, Rhoads. 1994. *Fifty Years of China to Me*. Ann Arbor, MI: Association of Asian Studies.
- Nijhuis, Michelle. 2015. Harnessing the Mekong or Killing It? *National Geographic* 227(5):102-129.



- 
- Oakes, Tim. 2004, Building a Southern Dynamo: Guizhou and State Power. *The China Quarterly*, 178:467-487.
- O'Connor, Richard A. 1995. Agricultural Change and Ethnic Succession in Southeast Asian States: A Case for Regional Anthropology. *Journal of Asian Studies* 54(4):968-496.
- Ong, Alexander. 2015. Royal Refuge and Heterodoxy: The Vietnamese Mạc Clan in Great Qing's Southern Frontier, 1673-1730 in James A Anderson and John K Whitmore (eds) *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest, Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*. Leiden: Brill: 273-287.
- Pedersen, Morten B. 2008. Burma's Ethnic Minorities: Charting Their Own Path to Peace. *Critical Asian Studies* 40(1):45-66.
- Robinne, Francois and Mandy Sadan (eds). 2007. *Social Dynamics in the Highlands of Southeast Asia, Reconsidering Political Systems of Highland Burma*. Leiden: Brill.
- Sadan, Mandy. 2013. *Being and Becoming Kachin, Histories Beyond the State in the Borderworlds of Burma*. Oxford: The British Academy.
- Scott, James C. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed, An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2016. A Brief History of Flight From the State, talk presented to the Department of Anthropology, the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, October 31.
- Sigley, Gary. 2016a. From 'Backwater' to 'Bridgehead:' Culture, Modernity, and the Reimagining of Yunnan in Michael E Clarke and Doug Smith (eds) *China's Frontier Regions, Ethnicity, Economic Integration, and Foreign Relations*. London: I.B. Taurus, 171-203.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2016b. The Mountain Changers: Lifestyle Migration in Southwest China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives*, 40:233-296.
- Siriphon, Aranya. 2016. The Qiaoban, the PRC Influence and Nationalist Chinese in the Northern Thai Borderland. *International Journal of Asian Studies* 13(1):1-17.

- 
- Slack, Edward R. 2001. *Opium, State, and Society, China's Narco-Economy and the Guomindang, 1924-1937*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii.
- Smith, John SF. 2013. *The Chiang Tung [Kengtung] Wars, War and Politics in Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century Siam and Burma*. Bangkok: Dept. of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University.
- Smith, Martin. 1991. *Burma, Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*. London: Zed Books.
- Sorensen, Henrik Hjort. 2011a. Esoteric Buddhism in the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdoms in Charles D Orzech, Henrik Hjort Sorensen, and Richard Karl Payne (eds) *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*. Leiden: Brill, 379-392.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011b. Esoteric Buddhist Art Under the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdoms in Charles D Orzech, Henrik Hjort Sorensen, and Richard Karl Payne (eds) *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*. Leiden: Brill, 487-497.
- Sprengrer, Guido. 2007. From Kettledrums to Coins: Social Transformation and the Flow of Valuables in Northern Laos in Francois Robinne and Mandy Sadan (eds) *Social Dynamics in the Highlands of Southeast Asia, Reconsidering Political Systems of Highland Burma*. Leiden: Brill, 161-185.
- Steinberg, David I and Hongwei Fan. 2012. *Modern China-Myanmar Relations, Dilemmas of Mutual Dependence*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Strangio, Sebastian. 2016. Rise, Fall, and Future of Laotian Town in China's Embrace. *New York Times* 07/07/2016:A4, 8.
- Summers, Tim. 2013. *Yunnan – A Chinese Bridgehead to Asia, A Case Study of China's Political and Economic Relations with Its Neighbors*. Oxford: Chandos Publ.
- Sun Laichen. 2000. Ming-Southeast Asian Overland Interactions, 1368-1644. PhD diss, University of Michigan.

- 
- . 2015. Imperial Ideal Compromised: Northern and Southern Courts Across the New Frontier in the Early Yuan Era *in* James A Anderson and John K Whitmore (eds) *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest, Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*. Leiden: Brill: 193-231.
- Swain, Margaret Byrne. 2011. Commoditized Ethnicity for Tourism Development in Yunnan *in* Jean Michaud and Tim Forsyth (eds) *Moving Mountains, Ethnicity and Livelihoods in Highland China, Vietnam, and Laos*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 173-192.
- Swope, Kenneth M. 2011. To Catch a Tiger: The Suppression of the Yang Yinglong Miao Uprising (1587-1600) as a Case Study in Ming Military and Borderlands History *in* Michael A Aung-Thwin and Kenneth R Hall (eds). *New Perspectives on the History and Historiography of Southeast Asia, Continuing Explorations*. London: Routledge, 112-140.
- Tannenbaum, Nicola. 1995. *Who Can Compete Against the World? Power-Protection and Buddhism in Shan Worldview*. Ann Arbor, MI: Association of Asian Studies.
- Taylor, Keith Weller. Perceptions of Encounter in *Shui Ching Chu* 37. *Asia Journal* 2(1):29-54.
- Took, Jennifer. 2005. *A Native Chieftaincy in Southwest China: Franchising a Tai Chieftaincy Under the Tusi System of Late Imperial China*. Leiden: Brill.
- Turner, Sarah, Christine Bonnin, and Jean Michaud. 2015. *Frontier Livelihoods: Hmong in the Sino-Vietnamese Borderlands*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Wade, Geoff. 2015. The "Native Office" (土司) System: A Chinese Mechanism for Southern Territorial Expansion Over Two Millennia *in* Geoff Wade (ed) *Asian Expansions, The Historical Experiences of Polity Expansion in Asia*. London: Routledge, 69-91.
- Wang Zhusheng. 1997. *The Jingpo, Kachin of the Yunnan Plateau*. Tempe, AZ: Program for Southeast Asian Studies, Arizona State University.

- Weinstein, Jodi L. 2013 *Empire and Identity in Guizhou, Local Resistance to Qing Expansion*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Whitmore, John K. 2000. Colliding Peoples, Tai-Việt Interactions in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries presented at the annual Association of Asian Studies meetings, San Diego, CA.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. Why Did Le Van Thinh Revolt? Buddhism and Political Integration in Early Twelfth Century Dai Viet in Kenneth R Hall (ed) *The Growth of Non-Western Cities, Primary and Secondary Urban Networking, c 900-1900*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 107-126.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2015. Northern Relations for Đại Việt: China Policy in the Age of Lê Thánh-tông (1460-1497) in James A Anderson and John K Whitmore (eds) *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest, Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*. Leiden: Brill, 232-258.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2016. Power, Belief, and Trade in Southeast Asia, Seventh to Ninth Centuries presented at the conference The Global Eighth Century: A Comparative Assessment of Socio-Economic and Political Developments in the Eighth Century Across Eurasia, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University, New York (4/2016).
- Winichakul, Thongchai. 1994. *Siam Mapped, A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- Wyatt, David K. 1984. *A Short History of Thailand*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Yang Bin. 2008. *Between Winds and Clouds, The Making of Yunnan, Second Century BCE to Twentieth Century CE*. New York: Columbia University Press, <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/yang/>, accessed 16 July 2016.
- Yang Hui. 1997. The Dai Tusi System and Its History in Dehong in Zhusheng Wang. 1997. *The Jingpo, Kachin of the Yunnan Plateau*. Tempe, AZ: Program for Southeast Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 267-304.

- 
- Yao, Alice. 2016. *The Ancient Highlands of Southwest China from the Bronze Age to the Han Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yu Shuenn-Der. 2016. The Authentic Taste of Puer Tea and Transnational Interests. *Taiwan Journal of Anthropology* 14(1):89-109.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

An Lushan 安祿山	Jinuo 基諾
Annan 安南	Kengtung <small>ເຮືອງທຸງ</small>
Ba 巴	Kuomintang, Guomindang 国 民党
Bai 白	Lahu 拉祜
bazi 坝子	Lan Sang <small>ລ້ານຊ້າງ</small>
Beijing 北京	Lanna <small>ອານາຈັກສ້ານນາ</small>
Bija <small>बीजा</small>	Lao <small>ລາວ</small>
Chao <small>朝</small>	Li Daoyuan 酈道元
Chen 陈	Liang 梁
Chengdu 成都	Lingnan 岭南
chuan 川	Lishuai 李帅
chuan dong 川洞	Liu-Song 刘宋
Cuan 爨	Lue 略
Dai 傣	Kunming 昆明
Dali 大理	Ma 马
Deng Xiaoping 邓小平	Man shu 蛮书
Dian 滇	Mao Zedong 毛泽东
dong 洞, 峒	Meng 蒙
Du Wenxiu 杜文秀	Mongmao, Luchuan 麓川
Dulao 都老	Miao 苗
E'ertai 鄂尔泰	Ming 明
Fan Chengda 范成大	Minzu 民族
Fan Chuo 樊绰	Mu 木
gaitu guiliu 改土歸流	Nanjing 南京
Guangxi 广西	Nanzhao 南诏
gui zhu 鬼主	nanzhong daxing 南中大姓
Guizhou 贵州	Nong 侬
guo 国	Nong Zhigao 侬智高
Han 汉	Pu Han 铺汉
Huang 黄	Qi 齐
jimi 羈縻	Qianlong 乾隆
Jin 金	Shan 禅
Jinsha 金沙	

---

Shu 蜀	xinan yi 西南夷
<i>Shui jing zhu</i> 水经注	<i>xuanweisi</i> 宣慰司
Sichuan 四川	Yangzi 揚子
Sima Qian 司马迁	Yan'an 延安
Sipsongpanna 西双版纳州	<i>yishuai</i> 夷帅
Song 宋	Yizhou 宜州
Sui 随	Yongzheng 雍正
Tai 泰	Yuan 元
Taiping 太平	Yao 瑶
Tang 唐	Yue 越
Tianxia 天下	Yunnan 雲南
Tubo 图伯	Zhang Shengwen 张胜温
tusi 土司	Zhou Qufei 周去非
Wa 佤	Zhuge Liang 诸葛亮
Wu Sangui 吴三桂	

---

THE TIBETAN A RIG TRIBE IN RMA LHO (HENAN) MONGOLIAN  
AUTONOMOUS COUNTY: PLACE, HISTORY,  
RITUAL, PARTIES, AND SONG

Phun tshogs dbang rgyal ཕུན་ཚོགས་དབང་རྒྱལ། (Independent Scholar) and  
Qi Huimin 祁慧民 (Ningbo University;  
Taishan Scholar Project, Shandong University of Arts)

ABSTRACT

Place, local history, ritual, parties, and songs (including three with musical notation) are described for an area in Rma lho (Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China that is home to the Tibetan Gtsang a rig Tribe. Rapid change from a traditional herding lifestyle to settlement in permanent housing, how tribal rituals maintain A rig Tribe identity, dramatic changes in the local songscape based on the author's personal experiences, and the songs' musical characteristics are addressed.

KEYWORDS

A rig, Gtsang lha sde, Henan Mongolian Autonomous County, Lha sde gong ma, Mtsho sngon, Rma lho, Sog rdzong, Tibetan tribal history

---

Phun tshogs dbang rgyal and Qi Huimin. 2017. The Tibetan A rig Tribe in Rma lho (Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County: Place, History, Ritual, Parties, and Song. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 44:72-121.



---

 INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

I<sup>2</sup> was born in 1994 and lived until 2007 in Lha sde gong ma<sup>3</sup> 'Upper Lha sde' (Ska chung, Gaqun) Community,<sup>4</sup> Gtsang a rig (Nyin mtha',<sup>5</sup> Ningmute) Township, Rma lho (Sog rdzong, Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. I and my family then moved to what is now the small community of Zam kha, which required about two hours by riding yak at that time.

The information that I provide in this paper is from my personal experiences and observations, conversations I had with local people, and various published references.

Rma lho County had a population of 30,100 in 2002, of whom 28,113 were classified as Mongolian (Tsering Dhondup 2014:87) and 490 were classified as Tibetan (Lin 2006:45). Pirie (2012:101) made this observation about Yul rgan nyin (Youganning), the county seat:

The Sokwo<sup>6</sup> people are descendants of the Mongol settlers and the current government has chosen to promote this identity - the town is full of signs in Mongol script, which no one can read. However, to all intents and purposes the Sokwo people are Tibetan...

---

<sup>1</sup> We thank *AHP* editors and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> All first person references refer to the first author, except as noted in the Appendix.

<sup>3</sup> "Lha sde" may be translated as 'deity community' and suggests that community residents are key supporters of a monastery. The term is not unique to Rma lho County, for example, Bla brang Monastery has eight *lha sde* - *lha sde shog kha brgyad* 'eight main supporter-communities'.

<sup>4</sup> My national identification card gives my residence as Gaqun Cun 'Village', however, the seal from the local community government lists "Gaqun Muweihui" 'Herding Community'. I have chosen to use the term "community" in this paper.

<sup>5</sup> Gtsang a rig is the local name of the township. The official name is Nyin mtha'/Ningmute.

<sup>6</sup> "Sokwo" was a general name that many Tibetans outside the county used to refer to residents of Rma lho County. However, Gtsang a rig Tribe members who lived in Rma lho County referred to themselves as Bod 'Tibetan'.

In 2016, herding communities in Nyin mtha' Township included Nyin mtha', 'Obs thung (Wutong), 'Brug lung (Zhoulong), Mdzo mo (Zuomao), Su'u chin (Suqing), Bde ldan (Dedan), Sha la (Xiala), Be'u la (Weila), Gser gzhung (Saieryong), Glang chen (Langqin), and Lha sde gong ma. Locally, these herding communities were collectively known as Gtsang a rig, and were located on the banks of the upper reaches of the Yellow River. 'Obs thung and Lha sde gong ma were west of the Yellow River, while the other communities mentioned above were on the east side. The total population of Nyin mtha' Township was 10,197 in 2013.<sup>1</sup>

"A rig" refers to a tribe (of which I am a member) that local elders say originally lived at the foot of A mye rma chen Mountain in the contemporary Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. In 2016, most A rig tribal people lived in Upper, Middle, and Lower A rig. Upper A rig refers to Rdza chu kha in Ser shul (Shiqu) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Middle A rig refers to Gtsang a rig; and Lower A rig refers to Mdo la (Qilian) County, Mtsho byangs (Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Though local A rig tribal members are officially classified as Mongolian, they consider themselves to be Tibetan.<sup>2</sup>

### THE RECENT HISTORY OF GTSANG LHA SDE<sup>3</sup>

Before the time of great social chaos that began in the 1950s and continued into the 1970s, a single group of people herded mainly in Mtha (Mtha ma), Dbu (Dbu ma), and Sdi (Sdi khog). Mtha refers to a large valley between Dbu ma and Sdi khog valleys. Dbu ma is located in the center of Lha sde gong ma and features such locally well-known places as Dbu ma'i sne'u rdza 'Holy Rock Mountain of Dbu ma'; Dbu

<sup>1</sup> This information is from Nyin mtha's official site: <http://goo.gl/NJzJPQ>, accessed 19 March 2016.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the complex issue of Mongolian-Tibetan identity in Nyin mtha', see Diemberger (2007).

<sup>3</sup> Gtsang lha sde is also called Gtsang sde ma.

---

ma'i gzhung chu 'River of Dbu ma', a Yellow River tributary; and Dbu ma'i bde skyid thang 'The Happy Plain of Dbu ma' where festivals and religious rituals were held. Sdi khog is situated in the vicinity of the Sdi chu River and Sdi khog Valley in the Lha sde zhol ma.

Mtha, Dbu, and Sdi were included in the Gtsang lha sde territory. However, historically Gtsang lha sde included other areas in both Upper Rta bo (Dawu) and Lower Rta bo (Xiadawu) in Rma chen (Maqin) County, Mgo log Prefecture and Gyu rngog in 'Ba' rdzong (Tongde) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

During the time of great social chaos, Lha sde gong ma residents fled to Dngul rwa (Oula Town), which at that time was not a town. Continued conflict meant that they moved near Ska chen Valley in the Mda tshan Tribe (Saierlong Township). The place where the Lha sde gong ma people lived was a valley named Ska chung near the larger Ska chen Valley. In 1983, Lha sde gong ma residents' repeated request that they be allowed to return to Lha sde gong ma was agreed to. Subsequently, Ska chung was the official name given to the community where the Lha sde gong ma people settled after returning to their original home area.

From about 1997-2005, the Gtsang a rig Tribe (Nyin mtha' Township) and the Dngul rwa Tribe in Rma chu (Maqu) County became locked in conflict. About thirty people from both sides died.<sup>1</sup>

## ZAM KHA

Zam kha 'bridge sides' (Huanghe yan 'Yellow River Banks') is also known as Lus sa. Located in Nyin mtha' Township, it is sandwiched between the Yellow and Rtse chu (Zequ) rivers near 'Obs thung, Lha sde gong ma, Gser gzhung, and 'Brug lhung herding communities.

In around 2009, the government built about 150 houses in Zam kha. Also in 2016, some families from 'Obs thung, 'Brug lung, Gser

---

<sup>1</sup> See Pirie (2012) for more on this conflict.

gzhung, and Lha sde gong ma communities lived in Zam kha, however, most families were from 'Obs thung.

Zam kha had several small health clinics, including the Nyin mtha' Number Two Primary School Clinic, 'Obs thung Community Health Clinic, and three privately-operated drugstores. Additionally, about eight shops sold snacks, drinks, cigarettes, liquor, *dar lcog*,<sup>1</sup> and articles for daily use. Three small Tibetan restaurants offered primarily yak-based meat dishes, e.g., noodles, both steamed and boiled stuffed dumplings, meat fried with green chilies, and rice. Each restaurant had one room, each with six to nine tables for customers.

A small Muslim restaurant with proprietors from Ka chu (Linxia), Gansu offered a variety of noodle dishes with the two most popular being *gtsab thug (paozhang)* and *'then thug (mianpian)*, which refer to, respectively, long noodles fried with vegetables and short flat noodles cooked in soup.

Zam kha was also home to the A rig Yellow River Stupa designed by A dkon mchog chos 'phel (b. 1944),<sup>2</sup> funded mainly by 'Obs thung residents, and completed in 2007. Situated in a location near both the old and new Yellow River bridges, the stupa featured a number of smaller subsidiary stupas.<sup>3</sup>

A wooden bridge was built here in about 1983. My maternal grandmother (Bskal bzang sgrol ma, Mgon po mtsho, Mgo pa, b. 1938)<sup>4</sup> told me that before that time, horses were forced to enter the river and then those people that wanted to cross held a horse's tail as the horse swam across. In 2012, the government built a new metal bridge.

<sup>1</sup> Locally, *dar lcog* generally refers to thin pieces of cloth printed with Tibetan scriptures that are used to adorn *lab tse* 'cairns'.

<sup>2</sup> A dkon mchog chos 'phel was the leader of Rma lho County in 1984 (Gtsang chu phran 2012:8).

<sup>3</sup> For more about the stupa see Chos 'phel rgya mtsho (2014:25-43).

<sup>4</sup> She is locally known as Mgo pa. After my maternal grandfather's (Blo bzang bsod nams, Blo bsod 1935-1998) death, Grandmother took religious vows and received the religious name Bskal bzang sgrol ma from a local *bla ma*. Hereafter "grandfather" refers to my maternal grandfather and "grandmother" refers to my maternal grandmother.

---

The bridge was three meters wide and sixteen meters long. In winter, the distance from the bridge to the river surface was about twenty meters and in summer it was eight to ten meters. The vertical distance from the top of the gully to the bridge was about eighty meters. The tracks to and from the bridge were slippery during rainy days and covered by snow and ice in winter. This resulted in many yaks and horses losing their footing and then plunging to their deaths into the depths of the gully.

Reaching the bridge required navigating down a very narrow zigzag path and then once the bridge was crossed, clambering up a similar path. Bicycles and motorcycles had to be carried on the backs of their owners down to the bridge and back up again. Consequently, very few bicycles and motorcycles crossed the river.

The only motorcycles I knew that ever crossed this bridge were operated by my maternal cousin, 'Jigs byed skyabs (b. 1987), and another relative, Mgon po (1970-2014). The sounds of their motorcycles were the first engines that I ever heard, which I vividly recall to this day. Yaks were so afraid when they first saw and heard such noisy machines that they ran away.

During the winter, the Yellow River froze and locals put stones about the size of a brick in a line on the surface of the frozen river from one side to the other while chanting *ma Ni* and blowing on each stone. This was locally called *gser zam 'phen pa* 'a golden bridge'.

In terms of local education, Number Two Nyin mtha' Town Primary School had six grades.<sup>1</sup>

In 2007, my family moved from Lha sde gong ma to Zam kha. At that time, this move required packing belongings on yaks and riding a horse or yak for about three hours. We moved to a two-room house in Zam kha because my parents wanted us to receive a formal education. Once we were in school, it meant that we could provide only limited assistance in herding. Furthermore, after land was fenced in 2007, my family had only my mother's (Nyi ma mtsho, Nyi do, b. 1968)

---

<sup>1</sup> I was one of fifteen students in the class that first graduated from this school in 2008.

portion of land, which was inadequate pasture for our sixty yaks and one hundred sheep.

When my family moved to Zam kha, my sister (Gyang 'dzin, b. 1997) was in grade two and I was in grade five. We boarded at the school. My family paid 4,000 RMB a year for the two-room house that we lived in. We also used it as a shop that sold flour, rice, barley, cooking oil, instant noodles, toilet paper, tampons, lotion, chopsticks, bowls, pots, thermoses, snacks, cigarettes, and a variety of beverages. Due to growth in our business, we eventually rented another two rooms to store goods. These two rooms were farther from the main road than our house, therefore, the rent was less - 3,500 RMB per year. We were busy, especially Mother. We frequently went back and forth between our shop and the storage area. This continued until 2014 when my family paid a Tibetan family (parents and their two sons in their twenties) from Gansu to build a house for my family on land we bought from a local family near the new bridge (Ningmute huanghe diaoqiao). We paid 70,000 RMB for about three *mu* (0.2 hectares). Altogether, my family spent approximately 350,000 RMB for the land and new house. The government gave 4,000 RMB.<sup>1</sup>

#### GTSANG LHA SDE IN 2016

In 2016, Gtsang lha sde included Lha sde zhol ma 'Lower Lha sde' (Lade) in Rwa rgya (Lajia) Township, Rma chen County; and Lha sde gong ma in Nyin mtha' Township. Administratively, Lha sde zhol ma is part of Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, while Lha sde gong ma is part of Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Gtsang sgar (Sgar, Gtsang dgon pa 'Gtsang Monastery'),<sup>2</sup> located in 'Ba' rdzong County, is Lha sde gong ma's key monastery,

<sup>1</sup> The government maintained that the cost of building a two-room house was 8,000 RMB, consequently, 4,000 RMB was provided as an incentive to families who moved to the town and built houses. This explains why my family received 4,000 RMB from the government.

<sup>2</sup> Gtsang dgon don 'grub rab brtan gling. The sixth Gtsang paN+Ti ta was the ranking *bla ma* at this monastery in 2016.

owing in part to Lha sde gong ma being one of Gtsang Monastery's *lha sde*.

Meanwhile, Rwa rgya Monastery in Rma chen County is Lha sde zhol ma residents' key monastery, largely because it is within the same township and is closer than Gtsang Monastery.

#### THE SPYI SRUNG RITUAL

Lha sde gong ma and Lha sde zhol maintained a strong sense of unity, considering themselves as being Gtsang lha sde. An example of this is the Spyi srung Ritual, which was revived in 1988. The Spyi srung Ritual in Gtsang a rig was initiated by Mig dmar dge bshes 'jam dbyings don 'grub rin po che<sup>1</sup> in 1861 (A dkon mchog chos 'phel 2014:44).

In the summer of 2016, this ritual was jointly held by the eleven communities in Nyin mtha' Township, near the Number Three Township Primary School. This is called Gtsang a rig spyi chen 'Gtsang a rig's Large Spyi srung Ritual'.

I will now describe Gtsang lha sde's Spyi srung Ritual, which is a smaller version of the Gtsang a rig spyi chen. It was held jointly by Lha sde gong ma and Lha sde zhol ma on the first through the seventh days of the sixth lunar month for two years running in Lha sde gong ma, the next two years in Lha sde zhol ma, and so on.

In 2015, the Gtsang lha sde'i Spyi srung Ritual was held on the Happy Plain of Dbu ma in Lha sde gong ma. About fifteen tents of varying sizes were pitched in a circle. All the *bla ma* and monks from both Lha sde gong ma and Lha sde zhol ma communities were invited to chant. People were forbidden to ride horses, motorcycles, or drive vehicles inside the circle of tents. *Bla ma* and monks chanted, men and boys offered *bsang* 'incense' on the *bsang khri* 'incense burning platform', and women and children made prostrations. Religious activities were held in the morning and the various entertainment programs were held in the afternoon. Activities during the ritual included horse races, running matches, singing, and competitions to

<sup>1</sup> More correctly, Dge bshes mig dmar 'jam dbyings don 'grub rin po che.

---

judge the "purity" of the Tibetan language spoken by contestants.<sup>1</sup>

Eleven tents were pitched. The '*du khang* 'assembly/congregation hall tent' was the largest tent, located in the upper (north) center where *bla ma* and monks chanted. A small tent decorated with colorful fringe at the top was to the right<sup>2</sup> of the assembly hall tent. A black yak-hair tent for *sngags pa* 'lay tantric specialists' was to the northwest, a black yak-hair tent to the southeast was used for cooking, and seven white tents of varying sizes were to the south, accommodating the ten groups of participants from Gtsang lha sde. On average, about 200 people attended the ritual per day.

The necessity of herding livestock meant that all able-bodied locals could not attend every day. Locals were expected to attend when they were free from herding. There were ten *tsho chung* 'groups living near each other', with each group having about thirty families. Lha sde gong ma had two groups. Every morning at six AM, two monks blew conch shells. After the *bla ma* and monks got up, they came to the '*du khang* and chanted for about three minutes before breakfast. At about eight AM, they began chanting and continued until about ten AM.

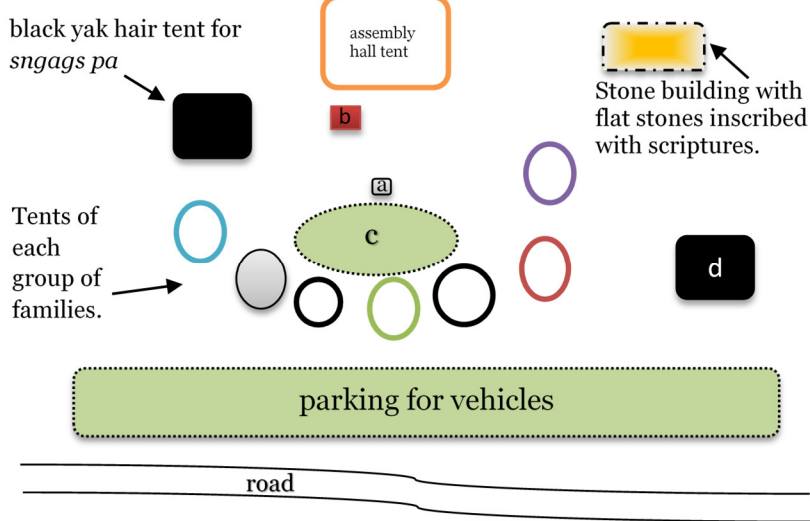
---

<sup>1</sup> The contestants' knowledge of Tibetan vocabulary for "new" terms, such as "WeChat," "motorcycle," and "mobile phone" was evaluated.

<sup>2</sup> While standing in the door of the tent, looking outside.



Figure 1. The Gtsang lha sde spyi srung Ritual on the Happy Plain of Dbu ma in Lha sde gong ma in 2015.



- (a) incense burning platform
- (b) a small tent for the monastery accountant
- (c) main gathering area
- (d) black yak-hair tent for cooking

In the mornings, lay participants circumambulated and prostrated to the assembly tent where monks and *bla ma* chanted and then the laity circumambulated the main tent. Locals usually made 108 prostrations, but counted it as one hundred to ensure that at least one hundred prostrations had been made.

There was a daily quota of chanting that included *Skyabs 'gro* 'Taking Refuge', *ma Ni, Sgrol ma* 'Scripture of Tara', and *Ltungs bshags* 'Scripture of Confession' for the whole community, but not for individuals. The entire community completed the daily quota. *Bla ma*, monks, and elders kept count and told those assembled when the daily quota was complete.

Men and boys offered incense consisting of *bsang rtsi* in a *bsang khug* 'incense bag' that contained loose *ja* 'tea leaves and twigs'<sup>1</sup> mixed with *rtsam pa* 'barley flour' and half-roasted barley; *shug pa* 'juniper needles'; fruits (when available) such as apples and pears; *mngar gsum* 'three sweets' that consisted of *shel ka ra* 'crystal sugar', *bu ram* 'brown sugar shaped like gold ingots', and *sbrang rtsi* 'honey'; *gos chen* 'satin and/or silk'; and *chab* 'clean water or liquor'.

Men and boys used matches to set dry yak dung on fire.<sup>2</sup> After the yak dung caught fire, juniper needles were added, which produced aromatic smoke. It was considered very auspicious and a very successful offering if there was a large quantity of smoke and if the smoke rose straight into the sky. Next, *bsang rtsi* from the *bsang khug* was added. The entire community gave the incense offered during the ritual. It was considered a richer offering because it included such materials as *mngar gsum* and expensive cloth.

Every afternoon there were games, e.g., men competed to see who could lift a *sa sgye* 'sack' (plastic bag filled with damp soil, tied with ropes weighing 150 to 200 kilograms). The winner was the man who could lift the sack to his chest, place it on his shoulder, and then walk around. If no man could do this, then the winner was the man who could lift it to his chest.

Another game was *glang chen sa gshag* 'elephant scrapes the ground', played by two men using a sash that had been tied together,

---

<sup>1</sup> Bought in the county town from mostly Muslim vendors (who spoke fluent Tibetan). Until about 2010, we purchased this tea in large wooden boxes that were commonly stacked in tents next to the wall directly across from the tent opening, along with yak-skin containers of barley, wheat, and rice. Such boxes of tea were common gifts at weddings. After about 2010, although large boxes of tea were still sold, it was common for tea to be sold by the *rgya ma* 'half kilo'.

<sup>2</sup> They generally did not use a cigarette lighter because the gas from the lighter was considered polluting and thus might irritate the deities. My maternal grandmother told me *me cha* 'flint' was used when she was young, however, the only time I saw anything resembling flint was *me cha* 'silver decorations resembling flint and steel' worn by men. Furthermore, *spen* (a shrub) was considered the best fuel for offerings and, when available, replaced the yak dung.

---

and passed between the two men's legs. The two men squatted/knelt and then each tried to pull his opponent across a line. There were three bouts and the winner was the man who won two bouts.

Other activities included singing *dmang glu* 'non-instrumental traditional folk songs' and giving speeches featuring many proverbs. The first day was a horse race. Riders were twelve to fifteen-year-old boys<sup>1</sup> who generally weighed sixty kilograms or less. In each of the first three races, in which nine to twelve horses competed, the five horses crossing the finish line first were selected for the final race in which fifteen horses competed. The length of the race course was about one kilometer. The start and finish lines were clearly marked. After the horses had been assembled and were ready to begin the race, a man shouted, "Ya!" and then the horses set out. Five men monitored the finish line. One man identified the first horse to cross the finish line, a second man identified the second, and so on.

For the final race, there were thirteen monitors at the finish line, each charged with identifying, for example, the first horse to cross the line, the second horse, and so on. The owners of these thirteen horses received satin, wool blankets, *kha btags* 'strips of silk offered to show respect', and cash. The amount of cash generally depended on the amount a person wanted to give to show appreciation, and the relationship between the man giving the cash and the owner of the horse. In 2015, gifts of from five to one hundred RMB were common.

At night, only some boys, young men, and some monks stayed in the tents. Other attendees generally returned home.

## MY EXTENDED FAMILY

I will now describe my extended family, beginning with my maternal grandparents. Grandmother had two sons and three daughters. The oldest son died when he was about twenty-seven during the time of great social chaos. The surviving son, my uncle (Dgnos grub, b. 1966)<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I have not seen nor heard of a local female jockey.

<sup>2</sup> "My uncle" refers to my maternal uncle in this article.

is a businessman and lives with his wife and son in Ziling (Xining)<sup>1</sup> City. Aunt Bkra mtsho (Bkra shis mtsho, b. 1962); Aunt Rgya mo (Rgya mo skyid, b. 1964); and my mother.

Next, I will describe the *kzhi rnying* 'root family'/*sbra rnying* 'old tent family'. Grandmother lives in the *kzhi rnying* with aunt Rgya mo; Aunt Rgya mo's husband, Rta mgrin tshe ring (Dmag pa,<sup>2</sup> b. 1955); and their five children. We refer to this family as *yul* 'home', while other locals say Dmag pa *tshang* "Dmag pa's home."<sup>3</sup>

Aunt Bkra mtsho lives with her husband (Bkra shis don 'grub, Bkra do, b. 1952) and their seven children. We refer to this family as *Bkra do tshang* 'Bkra do's home'.<sup>4</sup>

My family has five people: my mother, father (Tshe dpang skyab, A bo, b. 1962), my brother (Lha mo skyabs, b. 1988), my sister, and me. Locals call my family *A bo tshang* 'A bo's home'.

The homes of the three families above were near each other. Fifteen children lived in these families in the early years of the twenty-first century. During Lo sar 'New Year',<sup>5</sup> we children eagerly anticipated singing parties. During this time we had plenty of fruits, candies, and commercial beverages, which were a great attraction.

We did not sing *dmangs glu*<sup>6</sup> during these gatherings because we children thought such songs were out of fashion. I wanted to sing during these parties, but I was shy. I waited for my cousins or Brother to urge me to sing. Brother could play the mandolin very well. He also tied a chopstick across the neck of a guitar (so it would sound like a mandolin) and then played it. His sense of music was so astute that he accompanied us on the guitar regardless of what we sang.

---

<sup>1</sup> The capital of Mtsho sngon.

<sup>2</sup> Dmag pa 'groom who comes to live in his wife's home' is Rta mgrin tshe ring's nickname.

<sup>3</sup> Locally, the father's or the grandfather's name is used to designate a family. A female's name is never used unless there are no males in the family.

<sup>4</sup> *Yul* is a term that refers to one's home and *tshang* refers to another person's home.

<sup>5</sup> Locals follow the Chinese lunisolar calendar. However, in 2016, some local families followed the Tibetan lunisolar calendar.

<sup>6</sup> "*Dmangs glu* [are songs that] are not related to courtship and are not accompanied by musical instruments" (Sangs rgyas bkra shis et al. 2015:19).

Brother sang some songs and recorded them on a cassette tape that he entitled *Mjal du 'gro 'Let's Go on Pilgrimage!*<sup>1</sup>

In about 2007, each of our three families was assigned a certain amount of land that was then fenced. Before this time, all three families shared land and water resources. As mentioned earlier, the result of this division was that my parents no longer had enough land to raise enough livestock to make a living. Consequently, we moved to Zam kha where my family opened a store. This division of land and subsequent separation of families meant that the family song meetings also ended.

### MY EXPERIENCES WITH SINGING AND SONG PARTIES

My childhood experiences with songs and singing parties took place between about 2000 and 2007. Songs that were sung when I was a child included *dmangs glu*, *glu shags*,<sup>2</sup> *la gzhas*,<sup>3</sup> and *rdung len*. Nowadays, *deng gzhas* 'modern songs'<sup>4</sup> are also popular in my home

<sup>1</sup> Brother's favorite singers were Nam mkha' and Lhun 'grub, well-known *rdung len* singers from A mdo. Nam mkha' became widely known after release of his cassette tape *Btsan po'i pho nya 'King's Messenger'*. Lhun 'grub is from Lower Lha sde, which explains why local young people call him A ga lhun 'grub 'Brother Lhun 'grub', suggesting intimacy and adding to his local popularity. A ga locally means 'elder brother'. Local youth add a ga before the names of elders to show respect.

<sup>2</sup> The *glu shags* that I sang were sung antiphonally, and tease, insult, and embarrass those they are sung to. The content might have included the appearance of an individual, a family, or a community; clothing; being impoverished; and a poor singing voice. Curses, overt sexual language, and family ancestry were avoided. The lack of sexual content means that *glu shags* were often sung at wedding parties, singing competitions, and other secular gatherings as a form of entertainment. (This description is taken, with little alteration, from Sangs rgyas bkra shis (2015:20) because it so closely described my experiences and observations.)

<sup>3</sup> Love songs that are sung among young people when their relatives are absent.

<sup>4</sup> Songs that often feature Tibetan language lyrics and sung in a modern, pop style to instrumental accompaniment.

community, for example, Bde skyid tshe ring's<sup>1</sup> songs *Nomad Child* and *Await*.

The first song most children in my extended family learned was *Yar ston*.<sup>2</sup> It features positive lyrics creating clear images, and is easy and brief, making it an ideal children's song. I sang this song many times when I was encouraged to sing during family singing parties and when visiting community homes during Lo sar. *Yar bstod* was always easy for me to sing without embarrassment.

Neither I nor the relatives I consulted could explain the origin of this song.

ཡར་བསྟོན། Yar stod

### Song Text as Performed

<sup>1</sup>ཡ་སྟོན་ཡ་སྟོན་གསེར་གྱི་རི་ལ་ཡ་སྟོན།  
<sup>2</sup>མར་འབབ་མར་འབབ་ཚུ་བོའི་གཞུང་ལ་མར་འབབ།  
<sup>3</sup>ཚུ་བོའི་གཞུང་ལ་གསེར་ཟམ་དགུ་འགྲིག་འཛོམས་ཡོད།  
<sup>4</sup>གསེར་ཟམ་དགུ་འགྲིག་རི་མོ་པ་རྟམ་བརྟམ་ནི་ཡོད།  
<sup>5</sup>རི་མོ་པ་རྟམ་བརྟམ་ཞེས་རྟམ་བརྟམ་འཛོམས་ཡོད།  
<sup>6</sup>བརྟམ་ཞེས་རྟམ་བརྟམ་བརྟམ་བརྟམ་ལ་ཞེས་པ་ཞོག་ཞོག  
<sup>7</sup>བརྟམ་ཞེས་རྟམ་བརྟམ་བརྟམ་བརྟམ་ལ་ཞེས་པ་ཞོག་ཞོག

<sup>1</sup>ya ston ya ston gser gyi ri la ya ston  
<sup>2</sup>mar 'bab mar 'bab chu bo'i gzhung la mar 'bab  
<sup>3</sup>chu bo'i gzhung la gser zam dgu 'grig 'dzoms yod  
<sup>4</sup>gser zam dgu 'grig ri mo pa tras brgyan ni yod  
<sup>5</sup>ri mo pa tra brka shis rtags brgyad 'dzoms yod  
<sup>6</sup>bkra shis rtags brgyad bkra la shis pa shog shog  
<sup>7</sup>bkra shis rtags brgyad bkra la shis pa shog shog

<sup>1</sup> Dekyi Tsering (b. 1988) from Yul shul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province (<http://goo.gl/OrT48x>, accessed 10 June 2016).

<sup>2</sup> *Yar ston* is what local people call the song and was the term used when I and other local children sang it. However, those I consulted were unable to explain this term in the context of the song to my satisfaction. Therefore, I have chosen to use *yar bstod* in the poetic literary text.

## Literary Poetic Text

<sup>1</sup>ཡར་བསྟོན་ཡར་བསྟོན་གསེར་གྱི་རི་ལ་ཡར་བསྟོན།།  
<sup>2</sup>མར་འབབ་མར་འབབ་ཚུ་བོའི་གཞུང་ལ་མར་འབབ།།  
<sup>3</sup>ཚུ་བོའི་གཞུང་ལ་གསེར་ཟམ་དགུ་འགྲིག་འཛོམས་ཡོད།།  
<sup>4</sup>གསེར་ཟམ་དགུ་འགྲིག་རི་མོ་པ་ཏྲས་བརྟན་ཡོད།།  
<sup>5</sup>རི་མོ་པ་ཏྲ་བྲག་ཤེས་རྟགས་བརྟན་འཛོམས་ཡོད།།  
<sup>6</sup>བྲག་ཤེས་རྟགས་བརྟན་བྲག་ལ་ཤེས་པ་ཤོག་ཤོག།།  
<sup>7</sup>བྲག་ཤེས་རྟགས་བརྟན་བྲག་ལ་ཤེས་པ་ཤོག་ཤོག།།

<sup>1</sup>yar bstod yar bstod gser gyi ri la yar bstod  
<sup>2</sup>mar 'bab mar 'bab chu bo'i gzhung la mar 'bab  
<sup>3</sup>chu bo'i gzhung la gser zam dgu 'grig 'dzoms yod  
<sup>4</sup>gser zam dgu 'grig ri mo pa tras brgyan yod  
<sup>5</sup>ri mo pa tra brka shis rtags brgyad 'dzoms yod  
<sup>6</sup>bkra shis rtags brgyad bkra la shis pa shog shog  
<sup>7</sup>bkra shis rtags brgyad bkra la shis pa shog shog

<sup>1</sup>Praise, praise, praise to the golden mountain up there  
<sup>2</sup>Descend, descend, descend to mid-river  
<sup>3</sup>A well-matched gold bridge crosses the river  
<sup>4</sup>Well-matched gold bridge is adorned with Pa tra figures  
<sup>5</sup>Pa tra figures adorned with the Eight Auspicious Symbols  
<sup>6</sup>May auspiciousness arise from the Eight Auspicious Symbols  
<sup>7</sup>May auspiciousness arise from the Eight Auspicious Symbols

During the Lo sar period in the early years of this century, there was a singing party in my home with members of my extended family. I was with my cousin, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal<sup>1</sup> (b. 1993), eating some oranges, when a woman began singing. She had a beautiful voice. My cousin, Gdugs dkar skyid, (b. 1990), told me my mother was singing. It was the first time I had heard her sing and I have not heard her sing since. Later, when I asked her, she said it was a song by 'Jigs byid 'tsho.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We have the same name.

<sup>2</sup> A singer from Bla brang (Xiahe), Gan lho (Gannan), Gansu Province.

---

The locals I asked were unable to explain the origin of *dmangs glu* other than, "They have been passed down from our ancestors!" The subject of these songs can be almost anything except romance. Local *dmangs glu* feature lower tones at the beginning, very high tones in the middle of each stanza; and slow, relaxed, and long, drawn-out sounds at the end. They generally feature two to three stanzas. Local *dmangs glu* feature lyrics that can be improvised and singers add more or fewer vocables as they think appropriate. *Dmangs glu* are so flexible that singers might rest for about thirty seconds after a few lines, have a shot of liquor or a sip of milk tea, and then continue singing.

The *dmang glu* entitled *A long la mo* that I include in this paper is a good example of how this type of song can be sung for a longer or shorter period. I performed it within three to five minutes, depending on where I sang it and who was listening. While herding my family's ninety yaks, I sang it at my highest register, added vocables, and prolonged the sounds in the song. I truly enjoyed singing while herding in summer on the beautiful grassland ornamented with various, colorful flowers. If I sang high enough, the sound would echo from the rock mountains.

In contrast, when I sang it in front of many local people, and especially if locals were present, I felt nervous because some of those listening sang better than me. This meant that my performance was shorter than when I performed it while herding in valleys and on the mountains.

I never performed *la gzhas*. Brother told me that when he and 'Jigs byed skyabs drove their yaks to the top of Gser nya 'Golden Fish',<sup>1</sup> young women from Mgo log also drove their yaks there and then they sang *la gzhas*. However, I never heard a local person sing *la gzhas*, illustrating how a few years can make a great deal of difference in local performance. The only *la gzhas* that I heard as a child were from *la gzhas* DVDs that I watched and listened to in my aunts' homes when female family members were absent.

*Rdung len*, a term that translates as 'strumming and singing', are "performed with the musical accompaniment of a traditional

---

<sup>1</sup> A valley in my family's summer pasture.



Tibetan guitar (*sgra snyan*) or mandolin" (Lama Jabb 2015:30). Dbal mgon (b. 1948)<sup>1</sup> popularized *rdung len* beginning with a performance broadcast by the Mtsho sngon Tibetan Broadcast Station in late 1979 and in "a year his music was played also by radio stations in Gansu, Sichuan, Lhasa and Inner Mongolia," which was soon followed by cassette tapes of his music (Savolainen nd).<sup>2</sup> *Rdung len* features verses of lyrics that are:

characterized by brevity, a first-person speaker, plain speech, poetic figures and the passionate expression of subjective thoughts and emotions. They are mostly short, simple, and expressive metrical compositions that employ a mix of vernacular and literary idioms. This poeticity combined with the musical element widens the reach...as a vehicle of personal expression... (Lama Jabb 2015:31).

*Rdung len* were the most popular songs in Gtsang lha sde in 2016.<sup>3</sup>

When I was in primary school grade four, I sang *A khu pad+ma* in front of about thirty students who were practicing a dance performance for Children's Day. *A khu pad+ma* was a locally well-known *rdung len* created by Dbal mgon. Many locals sing various versions of this song, which were also performed by Nyi ma rol tshongs 'Sun Band'<sup>4</sup> and Rig 'dzin sgröl ma (Rigzin Drolma), among others.

Every winter holiday during Lo sar, my cousin, Bkra shis don 'grub (b. 1987), sang, bringing tears to the eyes of local elders due to the piercing clarity of his voice. The reach of his songs was such that

<sup>1</sup> <https://goo.gl/TaWrBp>, accessed 10 August 2016.

<sup>2</sup> See Savolainen (nd) for photographs of Dbal mgon with his students, at home, and while performing.

<sup>3</sup> See Sangs rgyas bkra shis et al. (2015) for a study of A mdo Tibetan songs, including *rdung len*, with music notation focused on Gcan tsha thang, a pastoral community in Gcan tsha thang (Jianzhatan) Township, Gcan tsha (Jianzha) County, Rma lho Prefecture. For a more general description of A mdo songs, see Anton-Luca (2012).

<sup>4</sup> The main singer was Pad ma bsam grub (Pema Samdrup), the drummer was Mgon po dbang rgyal (Gonpo Wanggyal), and the guitarist was Stag lha tshe ring (Thaglha Tsering) (<http://goo.gl/wjhois>, accessed 10 August 2016).



7o ye yi ye a long lo la mo len  
 8o ho yang long lo na zlas gcig nyon o ye yi go  
 9o ho nga da skyi la ye ye yi ye skad tsig lo yod kyi res na ye  
 10o ho a long lo la mo len o ye yi go  
 11o ho ngas da glu zig ye len rgyo lo rtsa mo res re  
 12o ho a long lo la mo len o ye yi go ye

### Literary Poetic Text

1ཇམ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ལེན།  
 2ཡང་ལོང་ན་ལྷན་ལོན།  
 3ང་སྐྱིད་ལ་སྐྱད་ཞིག་ཡོད་ཀྱི་ན།  
 4ངས་སྐྱེ་ཞིག་ལེན་ཀྱི་སྐྱེ་མོ་རེད།

5ཇམ་ལོང་ལ་མོ་ལེན།  
 6ཡང་ལོང་ན་ལྷན་ལོན།  
 7ང་སྐྱིད་ལ་སྐྱད་ཞིག་ཡོད་ཀྱི་ན།  
 8ངས་སྐྱེ་ཞིག་ལེན་ཀྱི་སྐྱེ་མོ་རེད།

1a long la mo len  
 2yang long na zlas nyon  
 3nga skyid la rta zhig yod rgyu na  
 4ngas sga zhig bstod rgyu sla mo red

5a long la mo len  
 6yang long na zlas nyon  
 7nga skyid la skad zhig yod rgyu na  
 8ngas glu zhig len rgyu sla mo red

1(I) sing, a long la mo  
 2(Please) listen, my yang long peers  
 3If I have a gentle horse  
 4It is much easier to saddle it

<sup>5</sup>(I) sing, *a long la mo*

<sup>6</sup>(Please) listen, my *yang long* peers

<sup>7</sup>If I have a good voice

<sup>8</sup>It is much easier to sing

During a sports meeting during the time I was attending Rma lho County Nationalities Middle School,<sup>1</sup> my roommate (b. 1993)<sup>2</sup> sang *Rta rkyang dmar 'Chestnut Horse'* (lyrics and musical notation given later), which was the first time I had heard it. He said it was a traditional A rig song. In 2014 when I was collecting examples of folk culture in the Gtsang a rig area, I visited a local singer and asked him to sing. He sang *Chestnut Horse*, which I then learned. I was attracted to this song because I wanted to be able to sing a song that reflected my identity as a member of the A rig Tribe and thus be prepared when I was asked to sing a song reflective of my home place.<sup>3</sup>

In about 2004, solar energy powered a small black-and-white TV in Dmag pa tshang. They owned some Chinese martial arts VCDs. Every time Brother, Sister, and I heard VCDs playing, we ran there to watch them. This meant that Brother drove the yaks home late and my neglect meant that the yak calves nursed their mothers so there was little milk. Mother then scolded us.

Until about 2010, people did not own mobile phones in Lha sde and in 2016, the only electricity in Lha sde was provided by solar panels and gasoline powered generators owned and operated by individual households.

In terms of song-sharing and listening to music, people in my extended family would record our songs with a battery-powered tape recorder and this is how we listened to music in about 2005. Singers in A mdo area published their tape albums and we bought them to

---

<sup>1</sup> This school consisted of only junior middle school classes. I attended this school from 2009 to 2011. In 2016, there had never been a senior middle school in Rma lho County.

<sup>2</sup> I do not remember his name.

<sup>3</sup> My sense that this song reflected A rig identity was reinforced by my maternal grandmother telling me only A rig people sang this song.

listen. Brother kept a mid-size, battery-powered tape player that used three batteries. It also was an audio recorder.

#### SINGING IN SENIOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

When I was in senior middle school, I learned some Chinese songs, for example, I could sing Tonghua 'Fairy Tale' by the Malaysian Chinese singer, Wang Guangliang (b. 1970).<sup>1</sup> I also listened to songs by such performers as Michael Jackson and Justin Bieber. However, most of the songs I learned and sang during the time I was in senior middle school were *deng gzhas*.

The nine boys in my senior middle school class shared one dormitory room. We sang many songs popularized by Gyu 'brug tshan sdeb 'Turquoise Dragon Band', a Tibetan boy band,<sup>2</sup> including Bye'u 'Baby Birds', Gyes kha ma' glu 'Separation Song', Snying nyi snying nyi 'Dear, Dear', Mi rabs gсар ba 'New Generation' and other songs all originally performed by Gyu 'brug tshan sdeb.

#### LO SAR PARTIES IN 2016

At about nine AM on the first day of the Lunar New Year (8 February 2016), I walked for about seven minutes from my home to the home of my good friend, Do kho (Mgon po 'don grub, b. 1993). I wore a red Tibetan shirt under my father's dark blue lambskin robe, a pair of KAMA jeans, and narrow, leather boots that reached my knees. I brought gifts in a bag - a white *kha btags*, some apples brought from Zi ling by my uncle who had told me, "These are very good apples from Xinjiang."<sup>3</sup> I also brought a *zhun*<sup>4</sup> 'Tibetan cake'.

<sup>1</sup> <http://goo.gl/aXlPYp>, accessed 20 September 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Gyu 'brug tshan sdeb had four members: Tshul khirms, Gnam chen, 'Jam dbal, and Bkra shis. 'Jam dbal left the band in 2014 after release of the album *Gyes kha ma' glu 'Separation Song'*.

<sup>3</sup> Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

<sup>4</sup> This *zhun* was made of powdered wild sweet potatoes, dried cheese, barley

When I neared my friend's home, he and his parents came out of the house and welcomed, "*Lo sar bzang!* 'Happy New Year'" with sincere, happy expressions.

I replied, "*Lo sar bzang! Lo sar bzang!*"

They enthusiastically ushered me into a room with a metal stove in the center. Nearby sat a plastic bag with dried yak dung for fuel. A big bed was in one corner near a sofa and three armchairs that were positioned around a wooden table with yak meat and mutton, Tibetan cakes, fried bread, and fruits on large plates. Candy and watermelon seeds were on smaller plates. Various beverages and fruit juices were also on the table.

I sat on the sofa. Do kho's mother immediately offered me a bowl of yak-milk tea in a bowl decorated with the Eight Auspicious Symbols and said, "It is very nice that you visit our home."

Do kho stood, scrutinizing my special clothing as I gazed at his sheepskin robe that the three men of his family wore occasionally during festivals. The robe fit Do kho the best. His father sat in an armchair near the stove and said, "Please eat what you like."

"*O ya* 'Yes'," I said politely.

"Today is a good day so why don't you young people sing and have fun?" he continued.

Realizing that he was asking me to sing, I said, "If you want me to sing, you should first sing a song to ask me to sing."<sup>1</sup>

"I'm older than you, so I don't need to do that, but I sang well when I was your age," he bantered. "Today is such an auspicious day, please sing!" he said.

"OK, I'm not a good singer but, as you want me to sing, I will," I said.

They applauded and I sang *Chestnut Horse*.

---

flour, white sugar, dark sugar, and ghee, which were combined in a pot, heated, and constantly stirred. A clean basin was rinsed with cold water. Once the ingredients were deemed to have mixed together sufficiently, the *zhun* mixture was poured into the basin. After some hours it congealed.

<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, the person who asks guests to sing does so in song.



<sup>5</sup>བྱ་སྐྱུག་པོ་དང་གི་སོ་སྐོ་ཅན།  
<sup>6</sup>ཡུལ་པ་མ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་སེམས་རྩོན་རེད།

<sup>1</sup>rta rkyang dmar gser gyi gdong srab can  
<sup>2</sup>dgung nyi zla gnyis kyi chibs pa red

<sup>3</sup>shwa jo skya dung gi ru thur can  
<sup>4</sup>shar rma rgyal sbom ra'i tshe thar red

<sup>5</sup>bu smug po dung gi so sgo can  
<sup>6</sup>yul pha ma gnyis kyi sems rten red

<sup>1</sup>Chestnut horse with a golden bridle  
<sup>2</sup>It is the horse of the sun and the moon

<sup>3</sup>Light gray stag with white antlers  
<sup>4</sup>It is the animal of East Rma rgyal sbom ra<sup>1</sup>

<sup>5</sup>The dark-brown son with white teeth  
<sup>6</sup>He is his parents' beloved child

Do kho surely had something humorous to say about my singing, given his big smile. I knew he was struggling not to make a joke at my expense. However, the auspiciousness of the day meant that he remained silent.

There were five people in Do kho's home; too few for a singing party, so I went home after about two hours. If more people had been there, I am sure that there would have been a singing party and I would not have been allowed to leave.

On the fifth day of Losar (13 February 2016), my community member, Rta te (Rta mgrin skyabs, b. 1973) held a wedding ceremony at his home. The day before, Dba' chen (b. 1993), my former classmate at Rma lho County Nationalities Middle School located in Yul rgan nyin, came to my home driving a Geely car that his father had bought

<sup>1</sup> A mye rma chen, Amnyi machen.



for Dba' chen's younger brother so that he could learn to drive. Dba' chen said he would attend the wedding festivities, which would also feature a party. I decided to go, too. Mother prepared a *skon* 'piece of satin often used to make clothing' and a *ske rags* 'sash'. These two items were locally given to families holding a wedding ceremony. Mother also prepared a case of Gyu mdog gang chab 'Sprite'.

I put the gifts in the trunk of Dba' chen's car, got in the front seat, and we then set out for Rta te's home. It was about four-thirty PM. En route, we crossed the new Yellow River Bridge and sped over gravel roads and two mountains. We reached our destination at approximately six PM. I presented the gifts to Rta te, who said he was very glad that we had come to the wedding. He escorted us inside a thirty-square-meter white tent that he had received from the government in 2013. He offered each of us milk tea in a disposable cup and a small plate of *khon*.<sup>1</sup>

"Please eat!" he said.

Dba' chen and I nodded. After I mentioned the party, he said, "You can have a party tonight at our home,<sup>2</sup> but I probably can't attend because I have to prepare for the wedding."

"OK, then let's see how many people come," I answered.

At eight PM, Rta te's wife (b. ~1965) and four young women cooked *then thug* in a large pot and then about thirteen of us had supper. There were also plates of *khon* 'steamed dumplings', *pa li* 'fried meat pie', and *ja dkar po*<sup>3</sup> 'milk tea'. Those present included seven guests from the Gser gzhung and Sha la communities, who were initially somewhat reserved. However, after eating, everyone was very sociable, making jokes, playing cards, and chatting.

Part of one room in Rta te's home was a shop where this family sold drinks, snacks, cards, bottles of gasoline,<sup>4</sup> and other necessities.

<sup>1</sup> Steamed, meat-stuffed dumplings are also known as *tshod ma* and *mog mog*.

<sup>2</sup> Locals say 'our home' instead of 'my home' to friends who visit.

<sup>3</sup> *Ja dkar po* 'white tea' refers to yak milk tea.

<sup>4</sup> Empty Coca-Cola and Sprite bottles with a capacity of 1.5 liters were typically refilled with gasoline and sold to those who wish to refuel their automobiles and motorcycles. In 2016, one bottle sold for twenty-five RMB.

---

We bought several decks of cards there and then played cards after dividing into three groups, with each group having four people further divided into two, two-member teams. Those not included in these groups waited to replace losing teams. The winning team beat the two members of the losing team by holding their right index and middle fingers together and beating the losers' forearms one time, which is called *tsi pa*<sup>1</sup> locally. Two other players then replaced the two losers. Rta te had told me earlier that many young people would come and then we would have a party, but few came. We began playing cards at about nine PM after supper, and continued until 5:45 AM the next day.

Seven guests were arranged to sleep in the tent. I was exhausted and went to bed with 'Jam dbal (b. 1990), my former primary school classmate who was Rta te's neighbor.

At ten AM on the wedding day, Rta te woke us and said that we needed to greet the bride's escorts and welcome them into the room that had been prepared for them, so I got up. 'Jam dbal did not. He stayed in bed until about one PM.

The groom and fifteen escorts arrived at ten-thirty AM. We greeted them in the room that we had prepared and offered them *rtsam pa* first, followed by rice with *gro ma* 'wild sweet potatoes' topped with sugar and melted butter. We played finger games with the escorts in an effort to get them to drink more and thus be high-spirited and happy.

Two players started the game by making a fist and then pointing their hands at each other with the thumb held up. The next time each player retracted their fist so it was near their face, with all the fingers inside the fist. Each player then said, "*Bzang!*" and pointed any finger they wished - but only one finger - at the other player. The thumb beat the index finger, which beat the middle finger, which beat the ring finger, which beat the little finger, which beat the thumb, which beat the index finger. If the pointed fingers were not in sequence, then no one won and the game continued. This game is also called *bzang*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Although not done during this party, other punishments include putting soot and toothpaste on a loser's face.

---

Typically, the loser drinks a cup of beverage that might contain alcohol (spirits or beer) or, if the loser does not drink alcohol, then they might drink a carbonated beverage. The loser might also eat a piece of fruit, dumpling, or a small bowl of yogurt.

Those who refused to drink alcohol were offered Coca-Cola, Sprite, and fruit juices.

Finally, we offered the groom and his escorts small bowls of yak-milk yogurt. They had already been offered yogurt so this was not intended to satisfy hunger, rather, it signaled an end to the wedding, which was understood. Some immediately stood and left.

There was no singing at all during the wedding and only a few sentences of wedding orations were spoken. I was disappointed, because I thought weddings in Lha sde would ideally feature a lot of singing and many speeches.

At about eleven-forty AM, the groom's escorts left. The wedding was finished. The bride helped her family do housework.

I asked Rta te if there would be a singing party that night. He replied, "We are going to have a party tonight and have fun!"

That night at around eight PM, thirty or so people gathered. Most were young men. Some chatted, some played a game with sheep anklebones, others played cards, and some drank beer.<sup>1</sup>

There was a lot of laughter.

Two hours later, Rta te and Rab brtan (b. 1986) organized a competition of cards and eventually, my primary school classmate, Gdugs dkar tshe ring (b. 1995), was rewarded with a blanket.

After the card competition, I suggested singing, but I was generally ignored. Some guests went home.

Later, Rab brtan organized another game. The people were put into two groups and then two leaders were chosen to hide a string of prayer beads. The other group had to guess who was hiding it.

Our game started with group *ka* (A) and group *kha* (B). I was in group A. Soon our group correctly guessed who was hiding the

---

<sup>1</sup> Drinking in front of elders was deemed disrespectful. When elders entered the room, youths quickly concealed their drinks.

prayer beads in the other group. A person from group *kha* then had to sing a song. I hoped someone would sing a traditional song, but the others urged an eleven-year-old girl to perform. She sang a Chinese children's song. When she finished, everyone applauded.

When it was my group's turn to sing, I was urged to sing an English song. I am unable to sing well in English and I also felt uncomfortable singing in English to people who understood no English. Consequently, I sang a rap song - *A pha 'Father'* originally sung by Bde skyid tshe ring.

During the New Year of 2016, I heard not one *dmangs glu*, nor a single *rdung len*. Furthermore, locals' enthusiasm for singing parties had been replaced by an interest in card parties and listening and posting *rdung len* on such smart phone apps as Skad 'phrin (WeChat, Weixin),<sup>1</sup> Changba,<sup>2</sup> and PaPa.<sup>3</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This paper has focused on my experiences and relatives' memories that relate to the Lha sde gong ma Community, Gtsang a rig Township, Rma lho Mongolian Autonomous County, Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon China. I have paid particular attention to

<sup>1</sup> WeChat, or Weixin in Chinese, is a popular messaging app, particularly in China. Developed by Tencent in 2011, it currently has nearly 700 million users (<http://goo.gl/K6iWmj>, accessed 10 June 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Founded by Chen Hua, Changba is a smart phone app that provides users with a portable KTV booth. Users may upload their own creations, browse others' songs and comment, and send virtual flowers to express appreciation. Changba also features sound mixers and echo effects (<https://goo.gl/c4yv1B>, accessed 10 June 2016). For more, see <http://changba.com/> (accessed 10 June 2016).

<sup>3</sup> PaPa is a social app fusing videos, photos, and other elements of Path, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, and Weibo all into one. Sending voice messages of up to sixty seconds, it can integrate with Chinese social networks. Launched on 8 October 2012 as an iPhone app from the PaPa.me homepage, it had a twenty million user base within a year (<https://goo.gl/Ll7ykr>, accessed 10 June 2016).

---

place, local history, ritual, parties, and songs (including three with musical notation). Rapid change from a traditional herding lifestyle to settlement in permanent housing, how local Tibetan identity was maintained through tribal rituals, and dramatic changes in the local songscape are evident, based on my personal experiences.

More specifically, I have provided particulars of the recent history of Gtsang lha sde, Zam kha, and the Gtsang a rig; the Spyi srung Ritual; my extended family; and my involvement with singing and song parties at my home, in senior middle school, and during Tibetan New Year parties in 2016.

Despite being separated for five decades, Lha sde gong ma residents in Rma lho Prefecture (who are classified as Mongolian) and Lha sde zhol ma residents living in Mgo log Prefecture (who are classified as Tibetan) maintained a very strong sense of common identity as Gtsang lha sde in 2016, although there was no place officially named Gtsang lha sde. People who identified as Gtsang lha sde said they were Tibetan.

In 2016, locals were using smart phones that displayed Tibetan. These new forms of technology meant that their engagement with oral Tibetan literature (storytelling, songs, orations, riddles, jokes, and so on) was not what it was historically, as they increasingly used phone apps and internet access to interact with each other.<sup>1</sup> How locals will communicate and interrelate with each other and the larger Tibetan community in the future is difficult to predict, given the rapid introduction of new forms of technology.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, my home was connected to the Internet in 2016 through China Telecom at no charge for a year. In addition, a smart phone was provided for free.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 2. Zam kha in 2003. Horses and yaks were utilized for transportation. The wooden bridge built in 1983 stretches across the Yellow River in the center of this picture (2003, Dngos grub).



Figure 3. In 2016, Zam kha had various small shops and a dirt road that saw a great deal of traffic, facilitated by a new bridge across the Yellow River (left center). Horses and yaks were rarely used for transportation (2016, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



Figure 4. Golden Fish Valley. The ridge in the background is where my cousins and brother sang *la gzhas* with other women. I was born on the ridge in the foreground where my mother was living in a black yak hair tent. More precisely, I was born when she had gone outside to milk yaks near the tent (2015, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



Figure 5. Bkra do's home. My family and Grandmother lived here before land division (2014, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).<sup>1</sup>



---

<sup>1</sup> My cousin.

Figure 6. A road built in about 2014 on the Happy Plain of Dbu ma (2015, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



Figure 7. The home where I lived before moving to Zam kha in 2007 (2015, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).





Figure 8. A Gtsang lha sde resident poses with an award for his performance during the proverb competition during the Gtsang lha sde spyi srung Ritual on the Happy Plain of Dbu ma (2015, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



Figure 9. The Yellow River wooden bridge built in 1983 in Zam kha (2016, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



Figure 10. The black yak-hair tent for cooking during the Gtsang lha sde spyi srung Ritual on the Happy Plain of Dbu ma in Lha sde gong ma. The stone building with flat stones inscribed with scriptures was under construction (2015, Phun tshogs dbang rgyal).



#### APPENDIX: MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

In November 2016, I (Qi Huimin)<sup>1</sup> communicated with Phun tshogs dbang rgyal via Skype. I asked about where, when, and how he learned the songs that he sang, and recordings of which are featured at <https://goo.gl/rKZKSC>.<sup>2</sup> I also asked about the environment that gives birth to these songs and so on.

Differences in the way the songs recorded in this paper are performed may be due to the singer's individual style of performance and variations in the lyrics. For example, the phrases in *Yar bstod* demonstrate slight alteration when different lyrics appear, as shown below:

<sup>1</sup> Qi Huimin wrote the music notation in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Accessed 12 November 2016.



*Yar bstod* was a song popular with children and a wider, more general audience, owing to its clear rhythm, simplicity, and because it did not demand extraordinary vocal skills.

*Rta rkyang dmar* and *A long la mo* are both free rhythm songs and share similar musical structures. *Rta rkyang dmar* has three stanzas. In terms of musical characteristics, the second and third stanzas are very similar to the first stanza. There are three phrases in the first stanza of *Rta rkyang dmar* with vocables comprising the first phrase. The second phrase is divided into three parts. The first consists of vocables, the second features Tibetan lyrics, and the third is made up of vocables that constitute a cadence. In essence, the second phrase is introduced by vocables, and the phrase ends in a cadence of vocables. The third phrase consists of Tibetan lyrics with the cadence comprised of vocables. Below is the cadence:



Notation for *Rta rkyang dmar* follows.

ཏྲ་ཏྲ་དམར།

sung by Phun tshogs dbang rgyal

transcribed by Qi Huimin

*A long la mo* has two stanzas of lyrics and bears close similarity to *Rta rkyang dmar*. The first phrase consists of vocables. The beginning vocables lead to the second phrase, a short cadence appears at the end of the second phrase, and so on. In *A long la mo*, the first stanza features six lines of lyrics that are divided into three music stanzas. One stanza of music is completed by two lines. One line is a phrase of vocables. The second line consists of Tibetan lyrics with a cadence of vocables. The cadence for *A long la mo* is shown below:

Comparing the first vocables phrase of each stanza in *A long la mo*, the other two stanzas' vocables phrases are almost the same, except in the beginning where there is a difference of about five beats



19  
22  
25  
28  
31  
34  
37  
40  
43  
46

## CONCLUSION

Notations may be used to indicate free rhythm (signature marked by ♩) and free extended notes (⌣). Tibetan folk songs may be transcribed in this way, however, how many meters should the free extended note be sung and what is the singing style of the song?

Singers of traditional songs can answer these questions. For this and many other reasons, they should be encouraged and the environment that gives birth to these songs should be protected.

## REFERENCES

- A dkon mchog chos 'phel ཨ་དཀོན་མཚོག་ཚོས་འཕེལ། (compiler; Skal bzang don ldan ལྷལ་བཟང་དོན་ལུན། and Gzugs mdzes rgya mtsho གཞུགས་མངོས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། (eds); Chun phran རྒྱ་ཕྱན། (copyeditor). 2014. *Gtsang a rig sa cha'i byin can sne'u mchog dag gi byung ba rags tsam brjod pa skal ldan mjal ba'i lam yig གཙང་ཨ་རིག་ས་ཚའི་བྱིན་ཅན་གནས་མཚོག་དག་གི་བྱང་བ་རགས་ཅམ་བརྗོད་པ་སྣལ་ལུན་མངའ་བའི་ལམ་ཡིག་<sup>1</sup> [A Map of Fortune-Possessors: General Description of Formation of Sacred Places of Gtsang a rig]*. np.
- Diemberger, Hildegard. 2007. Festivals and Their Leaders: the Management of Tradition in the Mongolian-Tibetan Borderlands in Uradyn E Bulag and Hildegard GM Diemberger (eds) *The Mongolia-Tibet Interface: Opening New Research Terrains in Inner Asia*. Leiden: Brill, 109-134.
- Gtsang chu phran གཙང་ཆུ་ཕྱན།. 2012. Thog ma'i gтам gleng ཐོག་མའི་གཏམ་སྐྱེང་། [Introduction] in A dkon mchog chos 'phel ཨ་དཀོན་མཚོག་ཚོས་འཕེལ།, A mchog 'phel rgya mtsho ཨ་མཚོག་འཕེལ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།, and A mtshungs med rgya mtsho ཨ་མཚུངས་མེད་རྒྱ་མཚོ།, (eds). 2012. *Sbra nag las mched pa'i gтам gleng སྤྲན་གཤམ་མཚེད་པའི་གཏམ་སྐྱེང་། [Discussion Spread From Black Tents]*. np, 4-10.
- Anton-Luca, Alexandru. 2002. Glu and La ye in A mdo: An Introduction to Contemporary Tibetan Folk Songs in Toni Huber (ed) *Amdo Tibetans in Transition: Society and Culture in the Post-Mao Era*. Leiden: Brill, 173-196.

<sup>1</sup> This might also be written གནས་མཚོག་བྱིན་ཅན།



- Chos 'phel rgya mtsho ཚོས་འཕེལ་རྒྱ་མཚོ། 2014. *Rma klung mchod rten brgya rtsa brgyad མ་རྒྱུང་མཚོད་རྟིན་བརྒྱུ་ཙ་བརྒྱད། [Yellow River Stupa Eight Hundred]* in A dkon mchog chos 'phel ཨ་དཀོན་མཚོག་ཚོས་འཕེལ། (compiler; Skal bzang don ldan ལྷལ་བཟང་དོན་ལྷན། and Gzugs mdzes rgya mtsho གཟུགས་མཛེས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། (eds); Chun phran རྩུ་ཕྱན། (copyeditor). 2014. *Gtsang a rig sa cha'i byin can sne'u mchog dag gi byung ba rags tsaṃ brjod pa skal ldan mjal ba'i lam yig གཙང་ཨ་རིག་ས་ཚའི་བྱིན་ཅན་གནས་མཚོག་དག་གི་བྱུང་བ་རགས་ཅམ་བརྗོད་པ་སྐལ་ལྷན་མཛེས་བའི་ལམ་ཡིག [A Map of Fortune-Possessors: General Description of Formation of Sacred Places of Gtsang a rig]*. np, 25-43.
- Lama Jabb. 2015. *Oral and Literary Continuities in Modern Tibetan Literature: The Inescapable Nation*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Lin Yi. 2006. Choosing between Ethnic and Chinese Citizenships: The Educational Trajectories of Tibetan Minority Children in Northwestern China in Vanessa L Fong and Rachel Murphy (eds) *Chinese Citizenship Views From the Margins*. London: Routledge, 41-67.
- Pirie, Fernanda. 2012. Legal Dramas on the Amdo Grasslands: Abolition, Transformation or Survival? in Katia Buffetrille (ed) *Revisiting Rituals in a Changing Tibetan World*. Leiden: Brill, 83-107.
- Sangs rgyas bkra shis, Qi Huimin, and CK Stuart. 2015. An A mdo Tibetan Auto-song-ography. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 39.
- Savolainen, Mari. nd. *Dunglen Lute Music and the Beginning of Popular Music in Amdo*, <http://goo.gl/kvcNOz>, accessed 17 August 2016.
- Tsering Dhondup. 2014. Three Tibetan-Mongolian Authors in Steven Venturino (ed) *Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the IATS, 2003 Contemporary Tibetan Literary Studies*. Boston: Brill, 87-93.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'ba' rdzong འབའ་རྫོང་།  
 'brug lung འབྲུག་ལུང་།  
 'du khang འདུ་ཁང་།  
 'jam dbal འཇམ་དཔལ་།  
 'jigs byed skyabs འཇིགས་བྱེད་སྐྱབས།  
 'jigs byid 'tsho འཇིགས་བྱེད་འཚོ།  
 'obs thung འོབས་ཐུང་།  
 'then thug འཐེན་ཐུག་།  
 a bo ཨ་བོ།  
 a bo tshang ཨ་བོ་ཚང་།  
 a dkon mchog chos 'phel ཨ་དཀོན་མཚོག་ཚོས་འཕེལ།  
 a ga ཨ་ག།  
 a khu pad+ma ཨ་ཁུ་པད་མ།  
 a mdo ཨ་མདོ།  
 a mye rma chen ཨ་མྱེ་མ་ཚེན།  
 a pha ཨ་ཕ།  
 a rig ཨ་རིག།  
 bde ldan བདེ་ལྷན།  
 bde skyid བདེ་སྐྱིད།  
 bde skyid tshe ring བདེ་སྐྱིད་ཚེ་རིང་།  
 bkra do བག་དོ།  
 bkra do tshang བག་དོ་ཚང་།  
 bkra mtsho བག་མཚོ།  
 bkra shis བག་ཤིས།  
 bkra shis don 'grub བག་ཤིས་དོན་འགྲུབ།  
 bkra shis mtsho བག་ཤིས་མཚོ།  
 bla brang ལྷ་བྲང་།  
 bla ma ལྷ་མ།  
 blo bsod ལྷོ་བསོད།  
 blo bzang bsod nams ལྷོ་བཟང་བསོད་ནམས།  
 bu ram ལུ་རམ།  
 bod བོད།  
 bsang བསང་།

bsang khri བསང་ཁྲི།  
 bsang khug བསང་ཁུག།  
 bsang rtsi བསང་རྩི།  
 bskal bzang sgrol ma བསྐལ་བཟང་སྒོལ་མ།  
 btsan po'i pho nya བཙན་པོའི་ཕོ་ལྷ།  
 bye'u བྱེ་ལུ།  
 bzang བཟང།  
 chab ཆབ།  
 Changba 唱吧  
 Chen Hua 陈华  
 chos 'phel rgya mtsho ཆོས་འཕེལ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།  
 chu phran ཚུ་ཕྱར།  
 dar lcog དར་ལྷོག།  
 Dawu 大武  
 dpa' chen དཔ་འ་ཚེན།  
 dpal mgon དཔལ་མགོན།  
 dbu དབུ།  
 dbu ma དབུ་མ།  
 dbu ma'i bde skyid thang དབུ་མའི་བདེ་སྲིད་ཐང།  
 dbu ma'i gzhung chu དབུ་མའི་གཞུང་ཚུ།  
 dbu ma'i sne'u rdza དབུ་མའི་སྡེ་ལུ་རྩ།  
 Dedan 德旦  
 deng gzhas དེང་གཞམ།  
 dge bshes mig dmar 'jam dbyangs don 'grub rin po che དགེ་བཤེས་མིག་དམར་  
     འཇམ་དབྱངས་དོན་འགྲུབ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
 dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས།  
 dmag pa དམག་པ།  
 dmag pa tshang དམག་པ་ཚང།  
 dmangs glu དམངས་གླུ།  
 dngos grub དངོས་གྲུབ།  
 dngul rwa དངུལ་རྩ།  
 do kho དོ་ཁོ།  
 Gannan 甘南  
 Gansu 甘肃  
 Ganzi 甘孜

Gaqun Cun 尕群村

Gaqun Muweihui 尕群牧委会

Gaqun 尕群

gcan tsha thang གཅན་ཚ་ཐང་།

gdugs dkar skyid གདུགས་དཀར་སྐྱིད་།

gdugs dkar tshe ring གདུགས་དཀར་ཚེ་རིང་།

gdugs dkar yag གདུགས་དཀར་ཡག་།

Geely, Jili 吉利

glang chen གླང་ཆེན་།

glang chen sa gshag གླང་ཆེན་ས་གཤག་།

glu shags གླུ་ཤགས་།

gnam chen གནམ་ཆེན་།

gos chen གོས་ཆེན་།

gro ma གོ་མ་།

gser gzhung གཤེར་གཞུང་།

gser nya གཤེར་ཉ་།

gser zam 'phen pa གཤེར་ཟམ་འཕེན་པ།

gtsab thug གཅོན་ཐུག་།

gtsang གཅོང་།

gtsang a rig གཅོང་ཨ་རིག་།

gtsang a rig spyi chen གཅོང་ཨ་རིག་སྐྱི་ཆེན་།

gtsang dgon don 'grub rab brtan gling གཅོང་དགོན་དོན་རྒྱུ་བ་རབ་བརྟན་གླིང་།

gtsang lha sde གཅོང་ལྷ་སྡེ།

gtsang lha sde'i spyi srung གཅོང་ལྷ་སྡེའི་སྐྱི་སྲུང་།

gtsang pan+ti ta གཅོང་པ་ཏི་ཏ།

gtsang sde ma གཅོང་སྡེ་མ་།

gtsang sgar གཅོང་སྐར་།

Guoluo 果洛

g.yang 'dzin གཡང་འཛིན་།

gyes kha ma'i glu གཤམ་ཁ་མའི་གླུ།

g.yu 'brug tshan sdeb གཡུ་འབྲུག་ཚན་སྡེ་བ།

g.yu mdog gangs chab གཡུ་མདོག་གངས་ཆབ་།

g.yu rngog གཡུ་རྫོག་།

gzugs mdzes rgya mtsho གཟུགས་མཛེས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།

Haibei 海北

Hainan 海南  
 Henan 河南  
 Huanghe yan 黄河沿  
 Huangnan 黄南  
 ja dkar po ར་དཀར་པོ།  
 Jianzha 尖扎  
 Jianzhatan 尖扎滩  
 ka ཀ  
 ka chu ཀ་ཚུ།  
 kan lho ཀན་ལྷོ།  
 kha ཀམ།  
 kha btags ཁ་བཏགས།  
 khon ཁོན།  
 kzhi rnying ཀམ་རྩིང་།  
 la gzhas ལ་གཞས།  
 lab tse ལ་བ་ཙེ།  
 Lade 拉德  
 Lajia 拉加  
 Langqin 浪琴  
 lha sde ལྷ་སྡེ།  
 lha sde gong ma ལྷ་སྡེ་གོང་མ།  
 lha sde shog kha brgyad ལྷ་སྡེ་ཤོག་ཀམ་བརྟམས།  
 lha sde zhol ma ལྷ་སྡེ་ཞོལ་མ།  
 lhun 'grub ལུན་འགུབ།  
 Linxia 临夏  
 lo sar ལོ་སར།  
 lo sar bzang ལོ་སར་བཟང་།  
 ltungs bshags ལཱུང་བཤགས།  
 lus sa ལུས་ས།  
 ma Ni མ་ཎི།  
 Maqin 玛沁  
 Maqu 玛曲  
 mdo la མདོ་ལ།  
 mdzo mo མདོ་མོ།  
 me cha མེ་ཆ།



Qinghai 青海  
 rab brtan རབ་བརྟན།  
 rdung len རུང་ལེན།  
 rdza chu kha རྩ་ཅུ་ཁ་  
 rgya ma རྒྱ་མ།  
 rgya mo རྒྱ་མོ།  
 rgya mo skyid རྒྱ་མོ་སྐོད།  
 rig 'dzin sgrol ma རྒྱ་འཛིན་སྐྱོད་མ།  
 rma chen ར་ཆེན།  
 rma chu ར་ཅུ།  
 rma lho ར་ལྷོ།  
 rta bo ར་བོ།  
 rta mgrin skyabs ར་མགོན་སྐུབ་ས།  
 rta mgrin tshe ring ར་མགོན་ཚེ་རིང་།  
 rta rkyang dmar ར་རྒྱང་དམར།  
 rtsam pa རུམ་པ།  
 rtse chu རེ་ཅུ།  
 ru skor རུ་སྐོར།  
 rwa rgya རུ་རྒྱ།  
 sa sgye ས་སྐྱེ།  
 Sai'eryong སའེ་ལེ་འུང་  
 sangs rgyas bkra shis སངས་རྒྱས་བཀའ་ཤིས།  
 sbra rnying སྐྱེ་རྒྱུང་།  
 sbrang rtsi སྐང་རུ་ཅི།  
 sdi སྐྱི།  
 sdi chu སྐྱི་ཅུ།  
 sdi khog སྐྱི་ཁོག་།  
 ser shul སེར་ཤུལ།  
 sgar སྐར།  
 sgra snyan སྐར་སྐྱོན།  
 sgrol ma སྐྱོད་མ།  
 sha la སཤལ།  
 Shandong 山东  
 shel ka ra སེལ་ཀ་ར།  
 Shiqu xian སུ་ཤུ་ཁྱེ་

shug pa ལུག་པ།  
 Sichuan ཡུ་ཁྱུང་།  
 ska chung སྐ་ཚུང་།  
 skad 'phrin སྐད་འཕྲིན།  
 skal bzang don ldan སྐལ་བཟང་དོན་ལྡན།  
 ske rags སྐ་རགས།  
 skon སྐོན།  
 skyabs 'gro སྐལ་བའོ།  
 sngags 'chang rin po che སྐགས་འཆང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
 sngags pa སྐགས་པ།  
 snying nye snying nye སྙིང་ཉེ། སྙིང་ཉེ།  
 so'u chen སོ་ལུ་ཆེན།  
 sog rdzong སོག་རྫོང་།  
 sokwo, sog po སོག་པོ།  
 spyi srung སྤྱི་སྤུང་།  
 srib lung སྤོལ་ལུང་།  
 stag lha tshe ring སྤག་ལྷ་ཚེ་རིང་།  
 su'u chen སུ་ལུ་ཆེན།  
 Suqing སུ་ཁྱུང་།  
 Taishan འཛོལ་མོ་མོ།  
 Tongde འཛོལ་མོ།  
 Tonghua འཛོལ་མོ།  
 tse dpag skyabs ཚེ་དཔག་སྐལ་བའོ།  
 tshang ཚང་།  
 tsho chung ཚོ་ཚུང་།  
 tshod ma ཚོད་མ།  
 tshul khriims ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས།  
 tsi pa ཚེ་པ།  
 Wang Guangliang འཛོལ་མོ་ལུང་།  
 be'u la འཛོལ་མོ།  
 Weila འཛོལ་མོ།  
 Weixin འཛོལ་མོ།  
 Wutong འཛོལ་མོ།  
 Xiadawu འཛོལ་མོ།  
 Xiahe འཛོལ་མོ།



Xiala 夏拉

Xining 西宁

Xinjiang 新疆

ya ཡ།

yar bstod ཡར་བསྟོན།

yar ston ཡར་སྟོན།

Youganning 优干宁

yul ཡུལ།

yul rgan nyin ཡུལ་རྒྱན་ཉིན།

zam kha ཟམ་ཁ།

Zequ 泽曲

Zhoulong 周龙

zhun ལྷུན།

ziling ཟིལ་ལོང།

Zuomao 作毛

---

DEVELOPMENT OF DAOHUA: SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF  
A CHINESE-TIBETAN CREOLE

Litong Chen 陳利砵 (University of Mount Union)

ABSTRACT

Daohua is a recently-discovered Chinese-Tibetan creole spoken in Yajiang County, Sichuan Province, China. While its lexicon is predominantly Chinese, its grammar is basically Tibetan. This study investigates the social contexts of the development of Daohua in the past three centuries, which is divided into two stages. The watershed is the early 1950s, when Chinese language classes started to be consistently taught in Yajiang. In each stage, Daohua presents specific characteristics and is compared with other well-known creoles. In the first stage, the formation process of Daohua resembles natural second language acquisition (SLA). Due to constant input of the superstrate language by continuous Chinese immigrants, Daohua in this stage developed as an intermediate creole without processes of radical restructuring. In the second stage, the formation of Daohua changed to a combination of both natural SLA and monitored SLA. Demographic evidence from historical records, especially local annals, supports this argument.

KEYWORDS

Chinese, Chinese-Tibetan creole, Daohua, immigration, language policy, second language acquisition (SLA), Sichuan, social context, Tibetan, Yajiang

---

**CAPITALIZED LINGUISTICS ABBREVIATIONS**

ABS absolutive case

ERG ergative case

OSV object-subject-verb (word order)

PFV perfective aspect

PROG progressive aspect

PRT particle

SOV subject-object-verb (word order)

SVO subject-verb-object (word order)

**INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>**

Daohua, literally "reversed speech," is a recently-discovered Chinese-Tibetan creole spoken in Yajiang County, Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China. It is the native language of 2,685 speakers from 504 households in eight villages (Acuo 2001, Sun et al. 2007).

In Yajiang County, since Mandarin Chinese is the official language, the clear majority of adult Daohua speakers can understand Chinese, and some can speak it. In addition, since Khams Tibetan (an eastern dialect) is widely spoken in Yajiang and neighboring counties, part of the adult Daohua population is also communicatively capable in Khams Tibetan (hereafter "Tibetan"). In school, children learn Chinese as a mandatory course. In some areas, Tibetan courses are also offered but before going to school, only Daohua is spoken (Acuo,

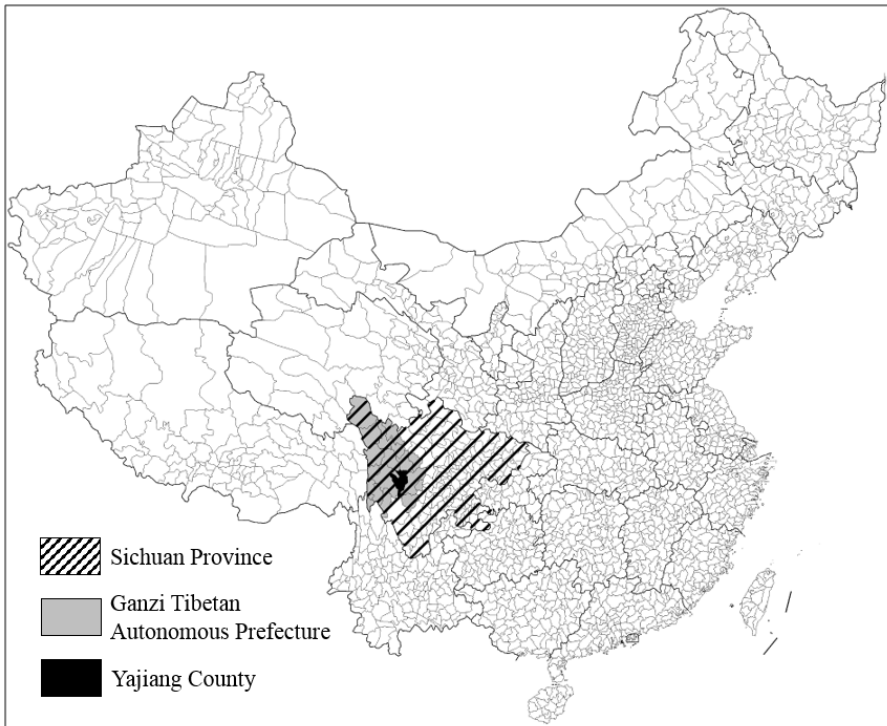
---

<sup>1</sup> I am deeply indebted to Dr. Yixiweisa Acuo (Yeshe Vodgsal Atshogs), who kindly shared with me his unpublished fieldwork observation reports. This study would have been impossible without his help and support. I also thank Dr. Donald Winford, whose lectures and comments have been a great help. I would also like to thank the AHP editors and two anonymous reviewers for suggestions. My appreciation also goes to Dr. Keith Dede for his generosity in sharing with me his pre-publication manuscript on mixed languages in China. I thank Nathaniel Carr for proofreading the drafts. Whatever errors remain are my own.

personal communication). Beyond the outlying villages, Daohua is also broadly spoken as a second language in Yajiang County Town, which is inhabited by both Tibetan and Chinese speakers. Acuo has suggested that Daohua has gained the status of common speech in the county town.

The geographic location of Yajiang County is shown in Map 1.

Map 1. Geographical Location of Yajiang County<sup>1</sup>



Acuo (2001, 2004) offers a comprehensive synchronic description of linguistic features of Daohua as well as a deep discussion on the mechanisms of the genesis of Daohua. However, his studies largely focus on linguistic analysis, and there is little on the social contexts of the development of Daohua. This research investigates

<sup>1</sup> The blank map of Chinese counties was retrieved 23 October 2016 from <https://goo.gl/pxKACr>. The locations of Sichuan Province, Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and Yajiang County were marked by the author.

---

such social contexts in order to extend Acuo's research. Based on data from local annals, we argue for two stages of development in the history of Daohua. In each stage, this Chinese-Tibetan creole presented specific characteristics. This argument is supported by both Acuo's data and demographic evidence from elsewhere. Before we start the discussion, however, we give an overall account of some major linguistic features of Daohua based on Acuo's studies.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF DAOHUA

The most striking feature of Daohua is that while its lexicon is predominantly Chinese,<sup>1</sup> its grammar is basically Tibetan. According to Acuo's (2001) report, among 2,240 lexical items in Daohua that he surveyed in at least two long-term fieldworks, more than eighty-eight percent are Chinese forms, while Tibetan forms constitute slightly more than five percent of these words. In addition, about six percent "innate created forms" are unique to Daohua. They are not found in either source language. Core words from both the Swadesh one hundred and two hundred lists are all Chinese forms. Tibetan words are only found in some highly culturally-specific domains, such as religion, ceremonies, customs, and local plants/animals.

Regarding grammar, the basic Daohua word order is SOV. The position of the verb is fixed at the end of the sentence, with the relative positions of the subject and object being free. That said, both SOV and OSV are permitted, a virtual duplication of the Tibetan word order. The Chinese word order, in contrast, is SVO, with the location of subject and object strictly fixed.<sup>2</sup> Below are examples cited from Acuo (2004:52). Example (1) shows a SOV sentence. (Italicized portions are Tibetan, underlined portions are specific to Daohua, and the rest is

---

<sup>1</sup> In this study, following Acuo's terminology, "Chinese" consistently refers to Southwestern Mandarin unless specified otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> The flexible word order is the main reason why the Chinese-Tibetan creole is called Daohua "reversed speech." From a Chinese perspective, when the word order changes from SVO (Mandarin) to SOV/OSV (Tibetan), sentences sound reversed.

from Chinese. Also, note that not all Chinese forms have corresponding characters.)

(1)	Daohua	狗	<i>ki</i>	他	<i>ʂɐ</i>	咬	<u><i>ɐ-lɔ</i></u>
		gou	<i>ki</i>	ta	<i>ʂɐ</i>	ngo	<u><i>ɐ-lɔ</i></u>
		dog	ERG	he	ABS	bite	PFV
	Tibetan	te' u <sup>51</sup> ge	-ki	k'o <sup>51</sup>	-la	so <sup>51</sup> ɔ <sup>51</sup>	-t'e <sup>31</sup> zə
	Chinese	狗		咬	了	他	
		gou		ngao	lo	ta	
		dog		bit	PRT- <i>le</i>	he	

"a dog bit him"

The same meaning can also be conveyed in both Daohua and Tibetan as in Example (2). Note that the word order in Chinese cannot be changed, and Example (1) presents the only possible word order unless a passive particle is used.

(2)	Daohua	他	<i>ʂɐ</i>	狗	<i>ki</i>	咬	<u><i>ɐ-lɔ</i></u>
		ta	<i>ʂɐ</i>	gou	<i>ki</i>	ngo	<u><i>ɐ-lɔ</i></u>
		he	ABS	dog	ERG	bite	PFV
	Tibetan	k'o <sup>51</sup>	-la	te' u <sup>51</sup> ge	-ki	so <sup>51</sup> ɔ <sup>51</sup>	-t'e <sup>31</sup> zə

"a dog bit him"

Examples (1) and (2) also show aspect and mood and are marked in Daohua by attaching certain suffixes to verbs. For instance, *-ɐ-lɔ* is the perfective aspect marker. Case assignment is also common. For instance, the ergative case marker is *-ki*, and the absolutive case marker is *-ʂɐ*. These features resemble the Tibetan morphosyntactic structures and are generally different from those in Chinese.

Like Tibetan, Daohua is an ergative-absolutive language, in which the subject of an intransitive verb behaves like the object of a transitive verb and not like the agent subject of a transitive verb. Chinese, on the other hand, is a nominative-accusative language, in

which the subject of an intransitive verb behaves like the agent subject of a transitive verb. Compare Examples (3) and (4) (Acuo 2004:63). Note that the subject in (3) and the object in (4) are marked identically with an empty case marker.

(3) Daohua	他	Ø	疼	di-jiu <sup>3</sup> li
	ta		tong	di-jiu <sup>3</sup> li
	he		pain	PROG

"he is sick (lit. he is in sickness)"

(4) Daohua	他	ki	飯	Ø	吃	di-jiu <sup>3</sup> li
	ta	ki	fan		ci	di-jiu <sup>3</sup> li
	he	ERG	meal		eat	PROG

"he is having meal"

With respect to the sound system, Daohua resembles Tibetan more than Chinese, though it contains features from both. Daohua has six prenasalized consonant cluster syllable onsets as well as a full set of voiced stops, both of which exist in Tibetan but not in Chinese. On the other hand, Daohua has seventeen diphthongs, which are fairly common in Chinese, but absent in Tibetan.

Also worth mentioning is the semantic correspondence among the three languages. Although the forms of lexical items in Daohua are predominantly from Chinese, the meanings of these words are usually closer to their Tibetan counterparts. For instance, the Daohua word *ji<sup>1</sup>ʃ<sup>2</sup>ʒ<sup>2</sup>* originates from the Chinese word *yi<sup>1</sup>sang<sup>2</sup>*. However, *yi<sup>1</sup>sang<sup>2</sup>* only refers to "clothes" in Chinese, whereas in Daohua *ji<sup>1</sup>ʃ<sup>2</sup>ʒ<sup>2</sup>* can also mean "blankets," which is the same as *ko<sup>13</sup>* in Tibetan. Another example is the absolutive case marker *-ʃv* as in (1) and (2). Its origin is in Chinese (from *sang<sup>4</sup>*); but *-ʃv* functions identically to the absolutive case marker *-la* in Tibetan. Therefore, Daohua in general has Tibetan lemma associated with Chinese lexeme. Table 1 summarizes the aforementioned main characteristics of Daohua.

Table 1. Two resources of Daohua.

		Tibetan	Chinese
Lexicon	Lemma	+	-
	Lexeme	-	+
Phonology		+	+
Morphosyntax		+	-

## SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF DAOHUA

No language is created and developed in a vacuum; therefore, creation and development of a language to be analyzed should not be without reference to particular socio-historical circumstances. As Singler has pointed out, "The scenario that is put forward must be consistent with what is known of the history of particular places and times, but it must also be consistent with linguistic evidence" (2008:351). Singler specifically refers to the necessity for consistency and balance between the investigation of both socio-historical and linguistic evidence in order to hypothesize the *genesis* of creoles. For research on the *development* of creoles, likewise, a consistency and balance between socio-historical and linguistic evidence should also be achieved.

A significant amount of linguistic data has been provided in previous research on Daohua (Acuo 2001 and 2004, Sun et al. 2007), therefore, the current study considers socio-historical contexts in which linguistic changes of Daohua happened and strives for consistency and balance between relevant socio-historical records and the Chinese-Tibetan mixed nature of Daohua as presented today. To the best of my knowledge, between the arguable genesis of Daohua in the early eighteenth century and its being more fully described in the early twenty-first century by Acuo (2001), the scholarly literature has provided few clues as to what happened in the more than two centuries in between.



---

This study aims to bridge the gap and expand our current understanding of the developmental nature of Daohua as a Chinese-Tibetan creole. Specifically, this study proposes two stages of development for Daohua, separated by the early 1950s, when Chinese language classes began to be consistently taught in Yajiang County. Whenever appropriate, Daohua and its social contexts are compared with other well-known creoles and their social contact situations as introduced in the literature.

#### FROM GENESIS TO THE EARLY 1950S

Based on historical accounts in the Yajiang County Annals (2000, hereafter YCA), Yajiang was a homogeneously Tibetan county up to the early eighteenth century. The earliest group of Chinese speakers immigrated to this region in 1719, when Chinese troops entered the area to suppress Tibetan unrest. After the suppression, twenty Chinese boatmen stayed, settled, and married local Tibetan women in Yajiang. According to Acuo (2004), these ethnically-mixed families gave rise to early Daohua.

Acuo (2004) further argues that Daohua is a product formed under a high degree of communicative pressure in the first generation, bi-ethnic families as Chinese boatmen and their Tibetan wives urgently sought a medium of verbal communication. He proposes an early version of Daohua as a combined result of imperfect learning on the Tibetan side and compromised or simplified "foreign talk" on the Chinese side. After it began to be acquired by the children of the first generation and later generations as their first language, this spontaneous and inconsistent intermediate speech gradually became stable and consistent. It was "fossilized" (as Acuo calls it) as Daohua by later generations.

It is insightful to point out the motivation behind the origins of Daohua from a socio-cultural perspective. However, in terms of the mechanisms of such genesis, more focus is put on the first generation, who were more or less monolingual; their bilingual children and later

generations who were capable in both Tibetan and Daohua<sup>1</sup> seem to not play an important role in this process other than readily learning Daohua from their parents. While it has been made clear that the first generation of ethnic contact initiated the genesis of Daohua, the contribution of later generations to the development and establishment of Daohua remains unclear.

According to the ethnic annals edited by Kangding Nationality Teachers College (1994, hereafter KNTC) and YCA (2000), the first twenty boatmen did not stay long after the 1719 suppression. They lived in Yajiang County for three years and were replaced by another group of Chinese boatmen. Every three years, the boatmen on duty were replaced. Presumably a pidgin of some sort was created by both Chinese boatmen and local Tibetans to facilitate simple inter-ethnic communication during the time the first group of boatmen was on duty.<sup>2</sup>

Later, due to recurrent ferry accidents caused by new boatmen who were unfamiliar with the conditions of the Yalong River, the main river in Yajiang County, the government stopped the rotation and settled boatmen as permanent residents in Yajiang. This new policy largely enabled inter-ethnic marriage between the Chinese boatmen who stayed permanently and local Tibetan women. Consequently, the pidgin began to be used at homes.

Despite the absence of an exact population figure, historical records (KNTC 1994 and YCA 2000) show small-scale, but continuous Chinese immigration after the final settlement of the boatmen. As a result of continuous immigration, the ethnically-mixed community of

---

<sup>1</sup> In fact, it is likely that later generations were also capable in Chinese in decades after the mid-twentieth century due to formal education as we discuss later.

<sup>2</sup> A reviewer noted that, beyond Yajiang, pidgins were used all across the Chinese-Tibetan frontier in Yunnan, Sichuan, and Gansu at different times in Chinese history. While this is the case, Dede (2016) has pointed out that not all early pidgins eventually evolved into bilingual mixed languages such as Daohua. Daohua speakers remain bilingual in the mixed language and Tibetan, whereas the speakers of many other mixed languages on the Chinese-Tibetan frontier are not bilingual with non-Sinitic languages.

---

families and extended families grew, which enabled children to fully interact on a daily basis not only with their parents, but also with their siblings, peers, and other adult role models in the community. As those children matured, the early pidgin further developed beyond the domestic realm and became a medium of community-wide communication in Yajiang. Therefore, Daohua as a somewhat stabilized language may not have occurred until one or two generations after the policy of permanent settlement was adopted.

The earliest traceable census was conducted in the early twentieth century. KNTC (1994) cites a 1936 government report that states there were approximately 430 Chinese households in Yajiang County in 1904. Supposing four people per household, the record suggests that there were around 1,700 Chinese dwelling in that area.

The census conducted in 1911 reported by YCA (2000), shows that there were 860 households in Yajiang County, accounting for approximately 4,600 people, with all ethnic groups included. Based on both historical reports, it is reasonable to conclude that by the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese residents constituted nearly half of the local population. These data show that from the early eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, continuous Chinese immigration changed the Yajiang demographic structure from purely Tibetan to more-or-less even.

If one compares the development of Daohua in this period with the two types of emergence of creoles as concluded in Winford (2003), it becomes clear that Daohua parallels the so-called "intermediate" creole. Winford distinguishes intermediate creole from radical creole: the formation of the former (for instance, Bajan and Reunionnais) is due to close and consistent contact with the superstrate source language based on natural increase of population, while the shaping of the latter (for instance, Suriname) is mainly due to the processes of (imperfect) second language acquisition of the English-lexicon contact varieties (rather than varieties of English *per se*) by constant resupply of African slaves.

In the case of the formation process of Daohua, from early versions on, it was spoken in a family setting with close contact

between the two source languages. Besides, as a living resource of the superstrate language, Chinese speakers were never recorded withdrawing from Yajiang on a large scale after their final settlement in this county. Therefore, it is likely that alongside continuous first language (Tibetan, hereafter L1) substratal input, early Daohua speakers also had constant access to their second language (Chinese, hereafter L2) as the superstrate language.

In other words, for each generation of early Daohua speakers, despite the existence of preliminary versions of Daohua, they still had the superstrate language (Chinese) as the target language, the direct input of which was not severely restricted as it was in cases of the emergence of many radical creoles. The availability and accessibility of Chinese prevented the restricting process of early Daohua from drastically shifting as far away from the superstrate language as the radical creoles.

By the 1950s, according to YCA (2000), the vast majority of early Chinese immigrants had merged with Tibetans in all aspects, including language, religious practice, life style, habit, and even mentality. Consequently, in the mid-twentieth century, the government reclassified the descendants of the early Chinese immigrants as ethnically Tibetan. Only new immigrants who moved to Yajiang County after the ethnic reclassification were recognized as Han Chinese.

This explains why in a roughly coeval document, Fu (1941) reports that out of 20,649 residents in Yajiang County, 20,018 were Tibetan, while the previous calculation suggests an approximately equal population of Chinese and Tibetans in the mid-twentieth century. Although it is not entirely clear why the overall Tibetan population dramatically increased between 1911 and 1941, it could be that most of the earlier Chinese immigrants had been Tibetanized to such an extent that they were recognized as *de facto* Tibetans. In the process of ethnic amalgamation, although it seems highly possible that some Chinese speakers shifted to Tibetan, Daohua probably played an important role in constructing a shared local ethnic identity.

---

FROM THE EARLY 1950S TO THE PRESENT

The earliest recorded Chinese school in Yajiang County opened in 1908. In the followings decades, a few other public and private schools opened to teach Chinese. Schools of this kind usually enrolled less than twenty students (YCA 2000). However, due to political unrest, enrollment was generally unstable over the years. Even if enrollment was sufficient for a time, those schools still functioned with difficulty. Chinese classes were inconsistently taught in Yajiang until the early 1950s.

Shortly after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Standard Mandarin became the official language and was promoted across the county as the common speech (Putonghua) of the new nation. In response to this policy, starting from the early 1950s, elementary and middle schools in Yajiang gradually began regularly offering mandatory Chinese courses (YCA 2000). Furthermore, starting from February 1953, some elementary schools also added Tibetan to their curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

The development of Daohua is divided into two periods based on the launch of nationwide mandatory Chinese language classes. This is because this event guaranteed consistent and formal access to the superstrate language for Daohua speakers as never before. As Winford

---

<sup>1</sup> A reviewer suggested that some Tibetan language educational opportunities might also have historically been available to the Daohua-speaking community, e.g., the monastic community might have played some educational role for Daohua speakers. While other forms of language education in Yajiang may have been present, we found no specific, direct evidence of such from the historical records available to this study. *The Annals of the Danba County* (Danba County Annals Committee 1996), a county neighboring Yajiang, reports that until the early twentieth century, Danba had *shisu* 'private schools' run by local religious practitioners who taught students to spell and read Tibetan scriptures. Such schools normally had only about ten students. This suggests that Tibetan language education was not easily accessible to the majority of the Danba population. Given the similar demographic landscape shared by Yajiang and Danba, the availability of Tibetan language education was perhaps also limited to Daohua speakers in Yajiang.

(2003) points out, most researchers have agreed that creole formation parallels second language acquisition (hereafter SLA), with the former being a special form of the latter under various degrees of restriction to the target language. Not monitored by native speakers, in general, creole formation does not resemble classroom SLA as much as it does natural SLA in terms of the processes of grammar restructuring.

In the case of Daohua, for more than a century before the mid-twentieth century, it had limited and yet constantly available access to Chinese due to consistent Chinese immigration. From the 1950s on, given the new language policy, Daohua speakers continued acquiring the target language in an everyday and natural way - the result of new waves of Chinese immigrants after the reclassification of ethnicity. They were also provided with superstrate speakers' institutional assistance. Both classroom SLA and natural SLA have been available to Daohua speakers since the 1950s.

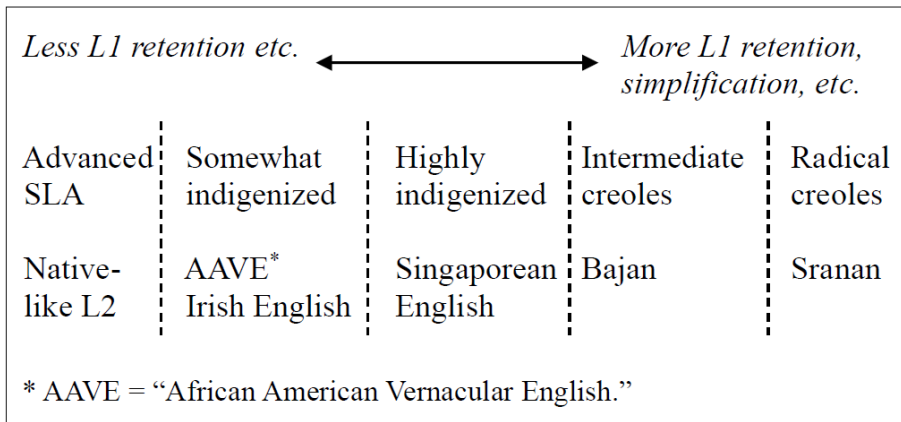
In the following section, I propose that after the 1950s, the development of Daohua highly resembles the formation process of Colloquial Singaporean English, commonly known as Singlish. Such resemblance is shown in both language structure and socio-historical context.

In terms of structure, there are a series of similarities. Both languages experienced substantial L1 influence. In the case of Singlish, L1 influence is so strong that it restructured the target language from a mildly agglutinative language (English) to a typically more isolated one resembling the substrate languages - Chinese and Malay (Ansaldo 2010). Similarly, Daohua speakers' L1 (Tibetan) affected their acquisition of the target language (Chinese) and changed the typology of the target language from nominative-accusative to ergative-absolutive. In Singlish, scholars have shown a systemic transfer of zero-copula, predicative adjectives, topic prominence, and aspectual system from the substrate language to the superstrate recipient (Bao 2005, Bao and Lye 2005, Ansaldo 2010). In Daohua, similarly, aspects and moods are marked by attaching certain morphemes to verbs as in Tibetan (Acuo 2004). In addition, most of the lexical forms are from the superstrate languages with a certain degree of reanalysis in both

Singlish and Daohua.

Similarities are also found in their socio-historical contexts. First, both superstrate languages are official languages of the creole speakers' communities and hence gained government support. Second, the promotion of both languages had institutional help. That is, students who are creole speakers learn these superstrate speeches as second languages in school. Both target languages, English and Chinese, have grown as the medium of classroom instruction in local schools, gradually replacing other languages in formal education. In the case of Singlish, Malay and Chinese are replaced (Ansaldo 2010); in the case of Daohua, Tibetan is replaced (YCA 2004). Both factors make Daohua different from more radical creoles that lie on the more L1 retention/simplification side of the continuum of outcomes of language shift (Winford 2003:256) in terms of less restricted access to the superstrate language, which gives rise to relatively successful SLA. Figure 1 shows this continuum.

Figure 1. A continuum of outcomes of language shift.



Status as a basilect in a multiethnic and multilingual society is another important social feature that Daohua shares with Singlish. Singlish is the low register *lingua franca* spoken by most Singaporeans as either a first or second language (Ansaldo 2010). According to Acuo's fieldwork (personal communication), this is the same case as Daohua in Yajiang. While Chinese is the official language, Daohua is

---

also widely used in the domestic setting and in various public domains. Nevertheless, Daohua is also widely used in the domestic setting and in various public domains.

In addition to being the first language for less than 3,000 people in no more than eight villages, Daohua also performs the role of a second language for speakers of both Tibetan and Chinese in Yajiang, both in the county town and in remote villages. Although there seems to be a Chinese-Daohua diglossia, with Chinese being the acrolect and Daohua being the basilect, Acuo points out that a large number of Chinese speakers are willing to learn and speak Daohua. The reason is that Daohua is generally valued by the local society as representing intimacy and localness. This contrasts with Yajiang people's perception of Chinese, which is usually regarded as more formal and authoritative.

Acuo has also noticed the variation that recently occurred within Daohua. In villages located closer to Yajiang County Town, Daohua varieties have begun to be influenced by Chinese in terms of both word use and grammar. These changes have not been found in remote villages. This observation hints at the possibility of a more advanced SLA, viz., moving further towards the end of relatively successful SLA in Winford's (2003) scale shown in Figure 1. If this is indeed the case, then we are able to infer the genesis of Daohua as some sort of pidgin and its earlier development as an intermediate creole. We are also able to observe its later development towards a more advanced SLA, in process of which the degree of indigenization is gradually bleached out.

## CONCLUSION

This study has briefly discussed the social contexts of the development of Daohua in the past three centuries and shows how such social contexts were not homogeneous through history. This study relies on social - especially demographic - evidence and divides the development of Daohua into two stages. The watershed moment is in



---

the early 1950s when Chinese began to be consistently offered in schools in Yajiang.

In the first stage, from the genesis of Daohua to the early 1950s, creole formation resembled natural SLA. Due to the constant input of the superstrate language by continuous Chinese immigration, Daohua developed as an intermediate creole without processes of radical restructuring. In the second stage, because of everyday contact with Chinese speakers and of the formal, consistent classroom instruction of Chinese, the formation of Daohua changed to a combination of both natural SLA and monitored SLA. Both the social contexts of Daohua in this stage and its linguistic features are reminiscent of Singlish. In addition, fieldwork observations suggest the potential for Daohua to move towards outcomes of more advanced SLA.

The case of Daohua suggests that the formation of creoles is not static. Rather, in different stages of its formation, a creole might develop in different directions in line with changes in the social context. Particular social contexts, for instance the degree and frequency of demographic change as well as educational policy, bring about very specific development of creoles. Only in considering social contexts alongside linguistic evidence can we see a whole picture of creole formation. This, again, echoes Winford (2003) and Singler (2008).

Further research might explore the synchronic difference between various versions of Daohua. Acuo's observations (personal communication) suggest, there are at least four versions of Daohua, namely, the varieties spoken in remote villages as L1, in more urban regions as L1, in the county town by Chinese speakers as L2, and in the county town by Tibetans as L2. The former two vary in terms of the extent to which Chinese influences them, and the latter two vary in terms of the Daohua learners' L1. The distinction between the native versions of Daohua as spoken by the first two groups and the non-native versions, which are acquired as L2 by Chinese and Tibetan speakers in the latter two groups, is unknown.

Between the latter two groups of L2 speakers of Daohua, it is also worth investigating how Chinese and Tibetan speakers impose

their more proficient languages (presumably Chinese and Tibetan, respectively) on Daohua, the less proficient language. Now that Daohua as a Chinese-Tibetan creole has become the target language for Chinese and Tibetan speakers, to what extent can they acquire it? What are the specific ways in which they compensate for their lack of proficiency in L2? How are the compensation strategies different between Chinese and Tibetan speakers? How would these non-native versions of Daohua impact the development of Daohua itself? These research questions are of great interest, given the tension among these three languages that are used side by side in Yajiang.

#### REFERENCES

- Acuo, Yixiweisa 意西微薩·阿錯. 2001. "Zang han hunhe yu "daohua" shulüe 藏漢混合語"倒話"述略 [A Survey of Daohua: a Sino-Tibet Creole]. *Yuyan yanjiu 語言研究 [Linguistic Research]* (3):109-126.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *Daohua yanjiu 倒話研究 [A Study of the Daohua Language]*. Beijing 北京: Minzu chubanshe 民族出版社 [Nationalities Press].
- Ansaldo, Umberto. 2010. Contact and Asian Varieties of English in R Hickey (ed) *The Handbook of Language Contact*. Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell, 498-517.
- Bao Zhiming. 2005. The Aspectual System of Singapore English and the Systemic Substratist Explanation. *Journal of Linguistics* 41:237-67.
- \_\_\_\_ and Lye Hui Min. 2005. Systemic Transfer, Topic Prominence, and the Bare Conditional in Singapore English. *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 20:269-291.
- Danba xian zhibian zuan weiyuanhui 丹巴縣誌編纂委員會 [Danba County Annals Committee, DCA]. 1996. *Danba xianzhi 丹巴縣誌 [The Annals of the Danba County]*. Beijing 北京: Minzu chubanshe 民族出版社 [Nationalities Press].

- Dede, Keith. 2016. Mixed Languages in Rint Sybesma, Wolfgang Behr, Zev Handel, and CT James Huang (eds) *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*. Leiden: Brill.
- Fu Shuangwu 傅雙無. 1941. *Sichuan bianqu ge minzu zhi renkou shuzi* 四川邊區各民族之人口數字 [*Population of Ethnic Groups in Border Areas of Sichuan*]. Chengdu 成都: Shu sheng shudian 書生書店 [Scholar Bookstore].
- Kangding minzu shifan gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao 康定民族師範高等專科學校 [Kangding Nationality Teachers College, KNTC]. 1994. *Ganzi zangzu zizhi zhou: minzu zhi* 甘孜藏族自治州: 民族誌 [*The Ethnic Annals of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture*]. Beijing 北京: Dangdai zhongguo chubanshe 當代中國出版社 [Contemporary China Press].
- Singler, John Victor. 2008. The Sociolinguistic Context of Creole Genesis in Silvia Kouwenberg and John Victor Singler (eds) *The Handbook of Pidgin and Creole Studies*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 332-358.
- Sun Hongkai 孫宏開, Hu Zengyi 胡增益, and Huang Xing 黃行 (eds). 2007. *Zhongguo de yuyan* 中國的語言 [*The Languages of China*]. Beijing 北京: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館 [Commercial Press].
- Yajiang xian zhibian zuan weiyuanhui 雅江縣誌編纂委員會 [Yajiang County Annals Committee, YCA]. 2000. *Yajiang xianzhi* 雅江縣誌 [*The Annals of Yajiang County*]. Chengdu 成都: Ba shu shushe 巴蜀書社 [Bashu Publishing House].
- Winford, Donald. 2003. *An Introduction to Contact Linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

---

**NON-ENGLISH TERMS**

Chen Litong 陳利砵

Danba 丹巴

Daohua 倒話

Gansu 甘肅

Ganzi 甘孜

Kangding 康定

Putonghua 普通話

Sichuan 四川

Sishu 私塾

Yajiang 雅江

Yalong 雅礮

*yi'sang*<sup>2</sup> 衣裳

Yunnan 雲南

---

TEACHING IN THE TRENCHES:  
WHAT ONE CAN DO IN AMDO

Mar me tshe 'bar མར་མེ་ཚེ་འབར། (Independent Scholar)

ABSTRACT

The reality of local education is described at a central boarding primary school in a pastoral area of a northeastern Tibetan community in China. I describe how I became a teacher; my personal relationships at the school; the school in general terms; the local teachers' backgrounds; school positions, ranks, and duties; adult education programs; teaching certificates; students' parents' backgrounds; school terms; student number and class sizes; students' daily schedule and curriculum; student monitors and their responsibilities; student food; student dormitories; textbooks; post-graduation; relationships between teachers and student families; teacher and student relationships; teachers' attitudes toward students; students' families' attitude toward education; what administrators expect from teachers; official evaluation of administrators; and evaluation of teachers. I conclude with observations and recommendations on how to improve rural Tibetan education.

KEYWORDS

Bilingual education, curriculum, Tibetan education, Tibetan primary school education

---

**INTRODUCTION**

Minority education has been part of a global conversation for at least the last three decades or so (Jacob and Jordan 1993, Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins 1988) - a conversation that has also included China (e.g., Lee 1986, Hansen 1999).

Attention to Tibetan education has included implementation of education policies (Bass 1998, Wang and Zhou 2003, Kalsang Wangdu 2011, Zhu 2008), family education (Zhoumaoji 2015, Postiglione et al. 2006), forms of social exclusion and inequality in schooling (Lin 2008, Postiglione 2006, Caixiangduojie 2010, Wang 2007), compulsory education (Tsang 2005), teaching methodology and curriculum (Upton 1999, Stuart and Wang 2003), bilingualism (Badeng Nima 2001, 2008, Gouleta 2012, Postiglione and Benjiao 2009), gender equality (Seeberg 2008), and basic education and its socio-economic implications (Lopsang Gelek 2006).

These and numerous other studies focusing on Tibetan education are important and welcomed. One area, however, that is often overlooked is in-depth studies of particular schools, especially by locals directly involved with the school. The study presented here is based on my experiences and observations of a rural Tibetan primary school in a northeastern Tibetan community as I attempt to describe local educational realities at the micro level. These are some of the questions I asked: Who were the teachers? What were their educational backgrounds? What textbooks were used? What was the language of these textbooks? What were the subjects studied? What were the students' daily schedules? What was a typical teacher's schedule? How were the teachers evaluated and by whom? Who were the students' parents? What was the relationship between teachers and students, and between teachers and parents? What were the basic facilities? What food did the school provide to the students? What did the school leaders see as their areas of responsibility?

I conclude with how rural primary schools might be improved.

---

## HOW I BECAME A TEACHER

In July 2013, I was in a large city in central China, eager to improve my English, hoping that this would lead to further educational opportunities. However, my paternal grandmother (b. 1933) had other ideas. She phoned repeatedly, urging me to take an exam that, if I passed, would eventually lead to an official government job. In her mind, this would lead to a stable, respectable livelihood.

I understood Grandmother. Obtaining an official job is the primary reason most families in China send their children to school. Grandmother wanted to see me "settled down," married, and with children, a description that typifies many of my "successful" former classmates. Families that have such children are respected and have higher social positions than families without such children.

This is the easy path, the comfortable life - according to most of my peers - but it was not at that particular time, the life that I wanted. Nevertheless, I eventually gave in, returned to my home autonomous Tibetan prefecture, and took part in an examination for an official teaching position in Serlong<sup>1</sup> County where most residents are Tibetan herders. The high altitude of the county does not allow for farming.

During the pre-exam procedure, I paid a registration fee, and indicated my teaching interests and major. At that time, fifteen primary school English teaching positions were advertised in Serlong County. Although I wanted to register for a junior or senior middle school English teaching position, I was only allowed to register for a primary school position. Around 4,000 people took the exam for the 250 teaching positions that were offered. Around 160 people were registered for English teaching positions for primary schools in Serlong County.

The registration process required listing all academic majors and higher education degrees earned. In general, registrants with

---

<sup>1</sup> Names of all people and places have been altered. Generally, I have used Wylie for the Tibetan, however, for terms that often appear, e.g., "Serlong," I use a term that readers might find easier to pronounce. I have also used Tibetan and Chinese terms based on local usage.

associate two-year college degrees registered for primary school positions, and candidates with BA and MA degrees registered for junior and senior middle school positions. The exam candidates' majors were also key in the registration procedure. I had earned a two-year associate degree in English and Tibetan language. Though I also had an MA degree, I was not allowed to register for a junior or senior middle school position because my MA degree was not in ESL (English as a Second Language), nor in English language and literature. My only choice was then to register for a primary school teaching position.

I took the examination in July 2013 in the prefecture capital. The written exam consisted of three sections: English, educational theory, and general knowledge. This last section covered many topics and included questions about politics, economics, law, culture, history, current affairs, and so on. After about three weeks, I was notified online that I had passed the written exam, which counted for sixty percent of the total score.

About two weeks later, I took exams to test how well I spoke Tibetan and Chinese, which counted for forty percent of the total score. About 750 candidates took the oral exam for 250 positions. Both men and women were required to dress formally. Candidates assembled on the examination day on the playground of a middle school in the prefectural capital. After attendance was taken, we were escorted to classrooms based on our majors and the county where we hoped to find employment. Around sixty candidates were in the room designated for English majors, hoping to become English teachers in Serlong County. Other counties had similar classrooms for candidates applying for teaching jobs in those counties.

A box at the front of the room had pieces of paper with a number written on each. Candidates were called individually and chose a number, which indicated interview order. I selected number seventeen. When each number was called, two invigilators escorted the candidate to another classroom where eight interviewers sat. A desk and chair were designated for the candidate. The interviewers, all of whom were Tibetan, included a former teacher, a former classmate, a friend, and an acquaintance. After I was seated, I was asked two



questions in Tibetan and one question in Chinese. All the questions were asked by the same person - the *kaoguan* 'test master'. After each question was asked the *kaoguan* told me I had five minutes to answer each. In the event, I answered all three questions: Why do you want to become a teacher? What are the three requirements of a good '*dzin bdag (banzhuren)* 'head of a class'? How would you resolve a conflict between two students? The first two questions were asked in Tibetan and I answered confidently in Tibetan.

The third question was asked in Chinese and I answered in Chinese. The third question was challenging because my oral Chinese is not nearly as good as my oral Tibetan. Furthermore, knowing four of the interviewers made me even more nervous. I answered all three questions in less than eight minutes. During the interview, Chinese was used as the language of communication. The only time Tibetan was spoken was when two of the three questions mentioned above were asked, and when I answered in Tibetan.

After each question was answered, the interviewers wrote a score on a piece of paper and passed it to a woman who was responsible for calculating scores. After I answered all the questions, I was told to wait outside in the corridor for five minutes. After five minutes, I was called in and informed of my final score by the exam master. I was asked, in Chinese, if I had any concerns about my final score.

I answered that I did not, and was then asked to sign a paper that I did not read. I assumed the paper said that I agreed to the score that I had been assigned. After signing the paper, I left the room. If a candidate did not agree with the score, they were given an opportunity to explain their objection. I assume that no one voiced an objection to the score they were assigned, in fear this would negatively affect the final decision.

Although I was only asked three questions, I had prepared for more. Before the exam, I had prepared, expecting that I might be given a text, given fifteen minutes to prepare a lesson plan, and then teach the text for five minutes. I also thought I might be asked to explain what my teaching methodology would be for a class and explain why I had chosen it. I was surprised that my oral exam consisted of only three

---

questions. Some candidates I knew had paid 5,000 to 10,000 RMB to professional training centers where they received coaching in preparing lesson plans, methodological skills, and oral Chinese. In my case, I had spent three days preparing with my uncle who had at that time, been teaching for more than twenty-five years. I had also talked to former classmates who had taken such oral exams previously.

The oral exam was given in mid-August and the results were announced a week after the exam. The candidates who passed both written and oral exams were told to report to a prefecture level hospital for a physical examination that included eyesight, hearing, a dental examination, various X-rays, and detailed blood work. A few candidates were told their results were abnormal and that they needed to repeat certain exams. From my contacts at this hospital, I knew that those with disqualifying results obtained results that allowed them to pass if they paid 500 to 2,000 RMB. I have never known anyone who was denied a government job because they failed a medical exam.

About a week after the hospital tests on 1 September 2013, I was notified that I had passed all the medical tests and that I had been selected as a new teacher. New teachers were then required to provide original copies of diplomas and degrees to the prefectural Renshi ju 'Personnel Bureau Office' for evaluation. After my documents were verified, I was told to report to the Serlong County Education Bureau for formal registration on 22 September 2013. When I arrived, there were papers posted on a wall inside this office listing candidates who had qualified to become teachers in Serlong County. It was then that I learned the school I had been assigned to.

It took me two days to finish all the paperwork. I had to line up for five different forms (one of which was a contract) from a small office, fill out the forms in a different office, obtain stamps from three different offices at the local education bureau, and then have two of the forms stamped by the school I had been assigned to.

Fortunately, all the headmasters in Serlong County were attending a meeting in the county town. I called a relative who had been working in Serlong County for years and obtained my headmaster's name and phone number. During my first call, the

---

headmaster said he would be at the education bureau office in twenty minutes, but after an hour he had still not appeared. When I called him a second time, he said he was busy meeting county leaders and that I should call the vice-headmaster and then he gave me his name and phone number. I called the second headmaster immediately. He promised to come very soon, and did so with the school stamp.

I was unable to submit the papers on the first day because of a lack of time. I submitted the papers around lunch time the next day. After all the papers were submitted to the Human Resource Office, I obtained forms from a financial office for salary payment. After filling out these forms, I was told to go to the Agricultural Bank of China and open a new bank account. I did so, returned to the financial office, and submitted my bank account number.

After finishing these steps, I was told to report to my assigned school. A relative came to the office when I finished all the paperwork. We then went back to his home where I prepared my bedding and got ready to leave for the school.

It was at this time that I received calls from two new teachers who had been assigned to the same school I had been assigned. I knew neither. Both were Tibetan. One was to teach the Tibetan language and the other had been assigned to teach the Chinese language. They proposed that we leave together. My relative then drove a four-door Cherry Tiggo SUV (owned by another relative) to where these two new teachers were waiting. We then left together to our school, which was located twenty-five kilometers from the county seat. After a twenty-minute drive over a bumpy, deserted road on a vast grassland, we reached a basin. We proceeded down a zigzag road that stretched to the bottom of the basin. The school buildings were near a huge monastery and a large resettlement community.

My relative driving the vehicle had phoned the headmaster, who said we should drive directly to the teachers' cafeteria for a welcome party. We arrived and were warmly greeted by the headmaster and other colleagues with a big noisy banquet that featured many meat dishes, singing, laughing, and liquor. The somewhat tipsy headmaster formally introduced all the assembled

---

twenty-three teachers - both new and old. The teachers were very respectful due to the presence of my relative, who happened to be the headmaster's friend. Furthermore, three other teachers there were my relative's former students.

After about an hour, the headmaster told us we could leave and return after National Day in early October. This was because no students were at the school. Classrooms were under construction and students were on holiday. After farewells, my relative and I left the school.

About two weeks later after the National Day Holiday on October First, I returned to the school. On the same day, I was assigned a room that I was to share with another new teacher. This room was in a row of long one-story buildings. There was a total of three rows of buildings with teachers' quarters. Each building featured three rooms - a total of nine teachers' quarters. Each room was assigned to two teachers. The room was about fifteen square meters in area and divided into two sections - a living room and a bedroom. Both had tiled floors. The room also had a small balcony with glass windows set in aluminum frames. We used this space to store yak dung and coal.

My roommate, a Tibetan language teacher, was in his late twenties and had been born and raised in a neighbor county.

The living room was next to the door and the weather had already turned cold. We decided to put both of our beds in the bedroom section which was warmer.

Our room was unfurnished so we went to the county town and purchased our own beds (350 RMB each), one metal stove (300 RMB), one desk (200 RMB), a TV (300 RMB), a satellite dish (150 RMB) that received forty-nine channels, and paid a delivery fee of one hundred RMB. Though the dorm building was less than one-year-old, the ceiling leaked and large chunks of plaster were falling off the walls.

In terms of basic living conditions, water was fetched from a well with a tap about fifty meters from my room. The only heating in the room came from the metal stove mentioned above. There were two barred windows in the room, not counting the balcony windows. The supply of electricity was very dependable. The school paid the

---

electricity fees.

We used the same outside toilet the students used, which was about one hundred meters from our living area. This pit toilet<sup>1</sup> was built of red bricks and was about twenty meters long and three meters wide. It featured a wooden roof that leaked in the rainy summer season and was freezing cold in winter.

The teachers ate in the teachers' dining room located 200 meters from the students' cafeteria. Teachers who ate in the cafeteria were charged 200 RMB a month, which purchased vegetables, spices, fruit, yogurt, and other items. The teachers' cook was a local Tibetan woman, who prepared three meals a day with about three dishes per meal e.g., potatoes with beef, cabbage with noodles, and chopped cucumber seasoned with chili powder. Milk tea was served daily. Hotpot and boiled mutton were served periodically by school leaders when appropriate occasions arose, for example, on Teachers' Day (10 September), Children's Day (1 June), and when officials visited to evaluate the school. Because the school had no clothes washing machines, most teachers washed their clothes by hand. There were also no refrigerators teachers could use to keep fruit, bread, or snacks.

I was initially thrilled to be an official teacher in this rural Tibetan community, despite the somewhat challenging living conditions. I had always wanted the opportunity to help children in rural areas - children whose eyes glittered with hope for a better future. From my own experience of growing up in the countryside, I believe rural children are as clever as children anywhere in the world and deserve qualified teachers and a good education to nurture their talents.

My initial enthusiasm, however, waned over time. The subjects I was assigned disturbed me. Before becoming an official teacher, I had accumulated ten years of English teaching with rural Tibetan youth during short-term holiday teaching programs and was confident that I

---

<sup>1</sup> It was divided into a section for females and one for males. There were eight squat holes per section. The toilet was about one hundred meters away from the students' dormitory and classroom, as well as the teachers' office and living quarters.

---

could teach English well. But, to my disappointment, I was assigned to teach Chinese language, math, and science because, the headmaster said, the school had enough English teachers.

I was challenged because I had no previous experience in teaching these subjects. A lengthy discussion with the headmaster changed nothing. He would not agree to allow me to teach English.

I often talked to the four English teachers of whom only two had majored in English. These two English majors knew very little English and their pronunciation was poor. The other teachers giving instruction in English included a computer science major and a Tibetan language and literature major. I was told their "English teaching" consisted of assigning student new vocabulary from the textbooks. They did not attempt other parts of the textbook lessons.

Time passed and I challenged myself in my spare time, observing classes taught by other teachers in addition to teaching my own assigned classes. I often heard the phrase "good teacher" and wished to learn what that meant in the local context. I observed a number of classes during my first two months at the school, noting how teachers taught and what the students did and did not do. I mostly observed Tibetan, Chinese, English language, and arithmetic classes.

The teachers I observed came to class punctually. Students stood and greeted "Good morning, Teacher!" in the English class, "*Laoshi hao!*" in the Chinese language classes, and "*Dge rgan bzang!*" in other classes while bowing their heads to show respect to the teachers. When a class was over, students said goodbye in the above languages.

Teachers usually did not reply to students' greetings. Instead, they immediately walked to the podium at the front of the room, ordered students to sit, and began class.

For the reader to better understand classroom dynamics, I will now describe a classroom in the school. It was about thirty-five square meters in area and featured three white plastic-framed windows. A blackboard was in the front on a concrete platform along with a podium. The floor was covered with white tile. The walls were completely plastered except for a one-meter section at the bottom that

was painted light green. Wooden student desks and chairs were placed on the floor.

There was another blackboard at the back of the classroom which was used as a notice board and featured written slogans such as 中国梦 *Zhong guo meng* གུང་གོ་ཕུགས་མདུན། *krung go'i phugs mdun* 'China Dream' in beautiful Chinese and Tibetan calligraphy.

Brooms, mops, and rubbish containers were in a corner at the back.

Tibetan and English language teachers immediately asked students to open their books and began with vocabulary. Typically, the teacher pronounced each new word three times and students repeated very loudly. Such repetition lasted ten to fifteen minutes. Students were then told to read all the words individually and repeat each word three times. This took about five minutes. The teacher then went on to the text, reading each line and explaining the meaning of each sentence in Tibetan. This lasted for twenty minutes. Students were then instructed to read the new text on their own.

At the end of every class, homework was assigned to the students to be completed by the following day. Generally, there was no group activity nor pair work in the classes I observed. Students asked few questions in class.

The Chinese language teachers were two native Chinese speakers and three who had acquired Chinese as a second language. They all had advanced knowledge of the Chinese language, which facilitated teaching, though they did not use student-centered methodologies to raise student interest. The teaching was teacher-centered with heavy emphasis on translation and repetition.

In contrast, the English teachers had very limited English, as already mentioned. Teaching English was very challenging for them. They focused on repeating vocabulary and reading texts for the entire class period. In most cases, students were told to memorize word lists. There were generally six units per textbook with each unit featuring twenty to thirty new vocabulary words.

Tibetan and math classes proceeded differently than Chinese and English language classes. Teachers wrote that day's lesson content

---

on the blackboard and explained it point by point. To better ensure that students understood the content, teachers wrote questions on the blackboard and then asked students to come and write answers (solve math problems and so on). Students were given coursework to do in class and encouraged to ask questions if they did not understand the assigned materials.

Although all the teachers had lesson plans as required by the school, no teachers that I observed followed a lesson plan in class. The lessons they prepared were to show to school leaders during evaluation periods.

#### PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AT THE SCHOOL

During my time at the school, I tried hard to maintain a positive relationship with my colleagues and helped them when I could. Maintaining such relationships was not always easy because the teachers had formed groups based on their home counties and whether they self-identified as a *'brog pa* 'herder' or *rong ba* 'farmer'. Those with herding backgrounds typically questioned the Tibetanness of those with farming backgrounds based on their close association with Han Chinese people, rarely wearing Tibetan robes (an indication of not being "true" Tibetans), and what they judged to be a lack of honesty.

Meanwhile, those with agricultural backgrounds typically suggested that those from herding communities were dirty, retained outdated ideas, lacked intelligence, and were at a level of economic development that lagged behind that of farmers and town residents.

In the face of such divisions and animosities, I maintained a neutral position and was friendly to all. I was successful enough to become close friends with several teachers from herding backgrounds who shared their teaching experience and general views on teaching and education. For example, one teacher who was regarded as a "good teacher" told me that the local township was known for its remoteness and had long been regarded as a dumping ground for unqualified, irresponsible teachers. He said that he hated being a teacher and that



---

the job he dreamed of was one in which he could perform secretarial duties in a government office. However, with no other options, he kept his teaching job to support his family and, importantly, he enjoyed the long summer and winter holidays that came with the job.

Several other teachers shared their thoughts: they disliked being where the quality of education and the management system were poor. I hasten to add that the teachers offering these opinions were Tibetans who were raised in Tibetan communities. They also said that they considered the students to be dirty, dishonest, and not intelligent enough to learn much in class. This judgment about lack of intelligence was based on their belief that the students did not learn as quickly as students attending schools in cities and county towns. They blamed this on the local students' herding backgrounds and their parents' illiteracy.

Teachers also often mentioned that the school's location was seriously lacking in comparison to county seat towns that provided a variety of shopping venues, where there were more people, more entertainment centers, more trade, easy and convenient transportation, and various cultural centers, such as cinemas, bars, tea houses, and internet cafes. County seat schools were where the local elite - rich people and officials - sent their children to receive the best local education consequently, the school conditions and teachers' qualifications were significantly better.

I rarely saw teachers spend time with students after classes in activities related to education, i.e., helping students with homework, organizing students to review their lessons, and doing exercises to help students learn. Instead, most teachers gathered in their private living quarters to gossip, play card games, drink, smoke, and watch TV. I participated in such gatherings. To better illustrate these gatherings, I summarize one below:

One night I was invited to one of the teacher's living quarters. Soon after I arrived, I realized it was going to be a long party, but I was lonely so I stayed. There were about nine teachers in the room that included six men and three women. All the women were married and had children. Only one man

was married and his wife was in the room. The five unmarried male teachers were all in their mid- to late-twenties. Five male teachers sat near a window around a student desk. Twenty bottles of Qingdao beer and plates of sunflower seeds and other snacks were on top of the desk. The group was drinking beer and smoking cigarettes in the smoke-filled room. Those sitting around the desk already looked tipsy so I immediately took a seat by the stove.

Three women were sitting on a double bed in the corner of the room, munching sunflower seeds, and giggling. I was not drinking at the time so I was offered a cup of hot water.

Suddenly, one of the tipsy men began recounting the first time he slept with a girl. He explained that he was so excited that he ejaculated before intercourse.

We all laughed hard.

More sexual stories followed, one after another, for about two hours. Women in the room were also very candid about their sexual lives, e.g., how their husbands were no longer interested in satisfying them sexually, their interest in finding young men as sexual partners, and so on. It was a long party with sex as the main topic for two hours.

The teachers were bored, lonely, and had relatively little to do. Such activity entertained most teachers. After attending a few similar parties, I felt tired and uncomfortable because sex and gossip were the main topics. I wondered why this group of teachers did not discuss our students, our classes, teaching methodologies, and how to improve the quality of local education.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHOOL

Derkyid Township is located twenty-five kilometers from the county seat and about 250 kilometers from the provincial capital. In 2006, Derkyid Township residents were offered the chance to have a house in the resettlement community if they paid 6,000 RMB each. No family was required to leave their grassland home and move to the

---

resettlement community. In the end, nearly all the township's 660 households paid 6,000 RMB each and received a house during the 2005-2007 period.

In 2015, local families earned income from selling animal products (yak dung for fuel, meat, sheep and yak skins, butter, yogurt, milk, dried cheese, and so on), herding for others, collecting and selling caterpillar fungus, and working in service sectors such as restaurants and hotels, and performing manual labor at construction sites. Elders typically lived in the resettlement community while younger people grazed livestock in the pastureland. Herding was generally little affected by choosing to own a house in the resettled community.

Time passed, property prices increased, and in 2015 these houses sold for 60,000 to 70,000 RMB each. Many locals found a settlement house convenient in terms of transportation, shopping, and medical care. The township government offices were also situated here, giving locals easy access to officials, who were consulted about government subsidies paid to local families and assisted in solving local conflicts. Furthermore, a nearby large monastery allowed elders a place to circumambulate, attend religious rituals, and consult *bla ma* for divinations, e.g., the direction in which to search for a missing yak or which hospital to take an ill person. In general, locals who had obtained housing in this community were glad they had done so.

According to a board posted on the classroom building, Derkyid Primary School was first built in 1953 by local people, demolished during the Cultural Revolution, and then rebuilt in the 1990s. In 2015, the school had an area of 20,000 square meters, including 15,000 square meters of open ground and 5,000 square meters of construction.

The school employed thirty-five individuals, including five cooks from the local community. Another woman spent two hours a day at the school heating a boiler to provide hot water for students to wash and brush their teeth in the morning. She also cleaned all the teachers' offices and made fires (with coal) in the stoves in the offices.

Most teachers earned 4,500 to 7,000 RMB a month. The exact amount depended on the length of their employment. Salaries were

---

also based on the degree (two-year, four year, graduate), the school location (distance to the local capital city/town), altitude, weather, and so on. For temporary teachers, the salary was 1,200 to 1,500 RMB a month. School cooks and the janitor received 800 to 1,000 RMB per month.

Before 2002, local roads were bumpy and muddy in warm weather. In 2015, the road from the county town to Derkyid School was paved and thus much improved.

In 2015, there were ten classes - a class of students generally between the ages of four and six, a class of preparatory students, one class each for grades one to four, and two classes each for grades five and six. In late 2015, there were 395 students at Derkyid School (203 boys, 192 girls).

Since early 2009, students were no longer required to pay tuition fees,<sup>1</sup> but were required to pay about thirty RMB for review books.<sup>2</sup> Students' miscellaneous expenses included medicine, pencils, pens, school bags, clothing, shoes, and snacks. A student's family generally spent 200 to 300 RMB per student per semester.

The school had two cars, a Changcheng 'Great Wall'<sup>3</sup> pickup truck with four doors and a Dongfeng<sup>4</sup> SUV with six doors. Both cars, officially, were only to be used for school affairs and only authorized leaders could use them. These two vehicles were used when school leaders attended meetings at the county, prefectural, and provincial centers. They were also used when transporting teaching equipment and food for students. The student food budget was around 300,000 RMB per semester.

---

<sup>1</sup> Before 2005 and 1990, tuition was 80-120 RMB per term.

<sup>2</sup> Review books were needed for Tibetan, Chinese, math, and English. The content included weekly quizzes and exercises for each lesson.

<sup>3</sup> Great Wall Motor Company Limited is China's largest SUV and pickup manufacturer.

<sup>4</sup> The Dongfeng Motor Corporation was established in 1969 in China.

---

**LOCAL TEACHERS' BACKGROUNDS**

In 2014, there were thirty teachers (twenty-two males, eight females) at Derkyid School of whom twenty-six were Tibetan and four were Han Chinese. Sixteen teachers were twenty-five to thirty years old, ten were between thirty and forty, and four teachers were between the ages of forty and fifty-one. All the teachers were from the same province where Derkyid School was located. All the Tibetan teachers spoke Tibetan well. The four Han teachers spoke a smattering of Tibetan, but none could read or write Tibetan. Lack of facility in Tibetan meant that the Han teachers had difficulty interacting with Tibetans both inside and outside classes.

In terms of educational attainment, sixteen teachers had BA degrees, twelve had Associate Degrees, one had an MA degree, and one had a '*bring rim (zhongzhuan)*' degree.<sup>1</sup> More than half of the BA degrees and most of the Associate Degrees were earned through adult education programs (described later). In fact, only five of the teachers had BA degrees earned by passing the Higher Education Examination and entering and graduating from colleges and universities.

Teachers had majored in Tibetan language and literature (thirteen), English (three), Chinese language and literature (nine), computer science (two), biology (one), and math (two). Of the thirty teachers total, twenty-one had received degrees from universities in the same province, eight had graduated from universities outside their home province, and one had received a degree from a vocational school in his home prefecture.

Eight of the thirty teachers worked as temporary hires because eight staff members were in administrative roles and did no teaching,

---

<sup>1</sup> Translated variously as secondary specialized, tertiary vocational, technical, or technical senior high schools. At one time, enrolling in these schools was extremely competitive because graduation led to permanent government employment. However, locally, the guarantee of a government job for *zhongzhuan* graduates ended in about 1997. In 2015, *zhongzhuan* schools were places parents paid to send their children who had failed to pass the senior middle school entrance examination. Locally, the quality of education in *zhongzhuan* schools was deemed to be poor.

hence the need for replacement teachers. These temporary hires received a monthly salary of 1,200 RMB from 2013 to 2014. In 2015, it increased to 1,500 RMB. As was the case with other teachers, the temporary teachers also paid 200 RMB per month to eat in the teachers' cafeteria.

The temporary teachers had few other options for employment, hence their willingness to work in a temporary capacity for a relatively low salary. They also hoped that such temporary employment would ultimately lead to an official, permanent job as a teacher.

In many cases, temporary teachers were not allowed to take exams for official positions on the grounds that they lacked teaching certificates. Graduates of normal universities who had majored in a field in education (e.g., math teaching, English teaching, and so on) automatically earned a teaching certificate. Otherwise, a teaching certificate could be obtained by passing a national test offered twice a year. Educational theory and psychology were the only test subjects.

Temporary hires obtained their jobs at this school through personal connections. Such positions were never filled through public advertisement and no exams were given to evaluate teaching qualifications. The hiring decision was made entirely by the school headmaster. Among the temporary teachers, three had BA degrees, three had two-year college degrees, and two had vocational school degrees.

#### POSITIONS, RANKS, AND DUTIES

Of the school's thirty teachers, one was the general headmaster, three were assistant headmasters, four were office directors, and twenty-three were teachers. In terms of teaching duties, eight teachers had administrative duties and did not teach. Another nine taught between ten and twenty hours a week, and twelve taught twenty to twenty-five hours a week. Nineteen of the teachers had begun their teaching career in the period 2010 to 2015, four began work in the period 1990 to 2000, and two had started work between 1980 and 1990.

The *slob gtso (xiaozhang)* 'general headmaster' oversaw all school affairs, had his own office, was not required to teach, and had a *drung yig (mishu)* 'secretary' who was a teacher with a reduced teaching load as compared to other teachers.

The *slob ston slob gtso (jiaowu xiaozhang)* 'teaching headmaster' oversaw the Office of Teaching Affairs, and shared an office with the *zhuren* 'director', who was responsible for implementing affairs related to teaching. In addition, the teaching headmaster worked as the school accountant and cashier. Overall, this office reviewed student homework and lesson plans, made teaching schedules, managed teacher leave requests, and organized all activities related to the performance of both teachers and students.

The *slob ston kru'u rin (jiaowu zhuren)* worked closely with the *jiaowu xiaozhang* to implement all the duties mentioned above. *Zhuren* also included the *jiaowu zhuren*, *zongwu zhuren*, and *deyu zhuren*. The first took care of teaching affairs and the other two were responsible for school facilities, political studies, and moral discipline. They were assisted by a teacher with good Tibetan and Chinese language skills and computer word processing skills, who obediently and enthusiastically undertook whatever duties they were assigned. This teacher was the *zhushou* 'assistant'.

The *kun sbyod slob gtso (deyu xiaozhang)* 'moral and disciplinary headmaster' administered the Office of Morals and Disciplines, which he shared with an office director. Duties included organizing the *slob ma'i tshogs ba (xuesheng hui)* 'Student Union', overseeing student safety, managing student permissions for temporary absences from the school, and ensuring the classrooms and dormitory rooms were clean and tidy. In terms of student hygiene, the Student Union ensured students wore clean clothes, brushed their teeth, and washed their hair. This office also made sure toilets were cleaned weekly by on-duty students.

This moral and disciplinary headmaster was also responsible for keeping school property (windows, desks, chairs, computers, and beds) in good condition, and mediating conflicts between students that might involve the families of the students.

In addition, this office oversaw reviewing teachers' political study essays. Teachers were told to study current political reforms and policies, and then write their opinions about what they had read. In practice, teachers copied materials from the internet to meet this requirement. This was generally done in the Chinese language. Although Tibetan written assignments were acceptable, related material in Chinese was more plentiful and, thus, most papers were prepared in Chinese.

The *kun spyod kru'u rin (deyu zhuren)* took orders from the 'moral and disciplinary headmaster' and also worked with a teacher designated as an assistant.

The *spyi gnyer kru'u rin (zongwu zhuren)* 'Director of Student Accommodation' worked closely with the general headmaster, accountant, and cashier. His responsibilities were to purchase meat, vegetables, and other necessities for the student cafeteria. These items were generally purchased in the county town in large amounts at wholesale prices and stored in a large refrigerator on campus. He closely monitored the preparation of food by five cooks who were all local Tibetan women born between 1973 and 1993. Their jobs were temporary and offered on a yearly contract basis. Salaries for such work ranged from 800 to 1,000 RMB per month.

The *zongwu zhuren's* duties were to ensure students and teachers had adequate, safe food. He directly supervised food preparation and general security of the students. He kept the student dining room in order and was also in charge of distributing bags of yak dung to students to use as fuel in their classrooms and dormitory rooms.

The *dudao* 'supervisor of school affairs' oversaw *gmang gnyis (liangji)* 'universalizing nine-year compulsory education and eliminating illiteracy among young and middle-aged adults'. His main duties were to compose reports on school enrollment in Derkyid Township, and compile information about students' families, e.g., number of family members, income, illiteracy rates, number of livestock, and so on. He also collected data on the annual reduction in illiteracy. Derkyid School was the only school in the township, which



---

made his work more challenging.

The *gmang gnyis* program, announced in 2003, was designed to address educational issues in China's western regions, including rural rangeland and mountain areas. The project aimed to build new classrooms, renovate old rooms to sustain indicators enforced by *liangji* implementation. To ensure that students in these areas had better school facilities and equal opportunity access to quality education, *liangji* included special funds from the Central Government to support poor students in rural areas, such as providing cash subsidies to students' families, abolishing tuition fees, free textbooks, and no boarding fees. Prior to the implementation of *liangji*, students had to pay for both tuition and textbooks.

The *dudao* was also responsible for making a budget once a school construction project was approved by relevant authorities, creating a need for proposals. He regularly reported to the County Education Bureau about the school's current situation and weekly activities, providing basic school information about teachers, students, and students' parents. He also collected and computerized all basic student information; e.g., age, name, and the number of household members.

The 'class supervisor' supervised all class affairs for one class of students and were paid an additional 200 RMB monthly. They shared an office with other 'ordinary' teachers in a huge room where seventeen teachers each had a table. Their responsibilities included teaching the class they supervised, collecting student information (names, ID numbers, home village name), writing weekly reports regarding students' study progress, and writing background summaries of students' families. They were required to submit whatever information the school leaders requested.

The *bslab bya dge rgan (putong laoshi)* 'ordinary teachers' were responsible for teaching students and had no administrative duties other than rotating weekly duties. In terms of weekly duties, two teachers were assigned to supervise school security and study affairs for seven consecutive days. These duties included ensuring students did morning exercises (each class stood in two lines and jogged around

the school campus three times) punctually beginning at six AM, and taking attendance of both teachers and students during the morning and evening review classes. Each review class lasted forty-five minutes. They were also required to complete forms that evaluated class discipline, neatness, and student attitudes. These forms also recorded teacher presence, i.e., was the teacher there?

Teachers on weekly duties were expected to maintain order in the dining hall during meals. At around nine-thirty PM, on-duty teachers visited the dorm rooms and noted student presence or absence, if the students were in bed, and ensured all was in order. At the end of the seven-day period, forms filled out during this time of duty were summarized and submitted to the *deyushi* 'discipline office'.

There was one teacher on the school employee list that I never met. He received a full salary, medical insurance, and an annual bonus. Colleagues suggested that he was a local resident in his fifties who had become a teacher in the late 1980s. A relative had once been Director of the County Education Bureau, a connection that allowed him to receive a long 'medical' leave. In certain cases, teachers on 'medical' leave were not ill at all. While on leave, they might have engaged in small business activities, or stayed at home enjoying themselves.

Three teaching titles were used in Derkyid School: *xiaojiao yiji* 'primary school level one' (P1, six teachers), *xiaojiao gaoji* 'primary school level three' (P3, eight teachers), and *shisanji* 'level thirteen' (L13, eight teachers). Temporary hire teachers were not assigned a level.

Teaching titles were granted by the County Education Bureau every October. Requirements for a title included having held a two- to three-year period of employment, having a teaching certificate and a certificate for competence in oral Mandarin, having passed a formal teaching observation by the County Education Bureau, and a published article.<sup>1</sup> Teachers with a minimum of three years of employment were selected for P1, which automatically brought a 200 RMB increase in monthly salary, along with an increase to the annual bonus and

---

<sup>1</sup> I was told that teachers bought already-written articles from a publisher that were guaranteed to be published. After purchase, the total cost to publish was 1,200 RMB per article.

---

medical insurance coverage. After about another five years, teachers with the qualifications and certificates mentioned above, and with additional merit awards or certificates, were selected for P3, which brought another 800 RMB increase in monthly salary and additional increases to the annual bonus and medical insurance coverage.

The school leadership had decision-making powers to select qualified candidates. Consequently, few teachers complained about the school leadership.

#### ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Higher adult education programs in China were designed to provide associate and BA degree level education for those who were unable to enroll in colleges and universities through the college entrance examination system. Some such programs were offered throughout the regular semester. Other programs were offered during holiday periods. I will focus on the program I attended that was held at a teachers' university in the provincial capital during summer and winter holidays for six terms. Each term lasted two weeks.<sup>1</sup> Acceptance into this program required passing an exam given by the provincial education department in the provincial capital and in prefectural capitals. The registration period was 15 September to 1 October. The registration fee was about 120 RMB. The exam was given in late October. *Xiandai hanyu* 'modern Chinese language' and politics were mandatory exam subjects. The third exam focused on the student's major field.

Enrolled students who passed the College English Test Level Four<sup>2</sup> and maintained an average grade of seventy-five or above in

---

<sup>1</sup> Those with a senior middle school diploma studied six terms for an Associate Degree. Those with only a junior middle school diploma were required to take ten terms of study (five years). An Associate Degree was required for entry into the BA program of the adult education system.

<sup>2</sup> The College English Test is a national, large-scale, standardized test annually administered by education departments of every province, autonomous region, and directly-controlled municipality in China. It includes listening, reading, writing, and grammar (Sun and Henrichsen

---

their classes received a diploma and a degree.<sup>1</sup>

To better illustrate what obtaining an adult education degree involved, I now provide an acquaintance's experience:

After I earned my Associate Degree, I went abroad to do MA study. I then returned to China with an MA degree and from 2011 to 2012, took two major exams that were given to select a university teacher. Both times I was told I was unqualified because I did not have a BA degree prior to my MA study. Realizing that a BA degree was important to my future career, I registered and took the adult education examination in October 2013. In addition to paying the registration fee and providing a copy of my Associate Degree diploma, I was also required to show my *khyim tho* (*hukou*) 'household registration' and a letter certifying that I was an official government employee.<sup>2</sup> My registration was deemed complete after presenting all the above papers and credentials.

I took the exam in October and received the results in December. The minimum passing mark was fifty out of 150 for each test. Acceptance required a minimum mark of 150 (total). My score was 278 so I passed and started my first term of study in January 2014.

Program cost was reasonable: a total of 800 RMB for textbooks for all three years plus 6,600 RMB (total) for tuition. Students were expected to also pay for dorm accommodation, which was 105 RMB per term (seven RMB per day) - a total of 630 RMB for six terms (three years).

There were fifty students in my class. Approximately thirty were either official teachers or government officials. The other students were young college graduates who lacked a BA degree. There was a sizable age gap between my classmates. The youngest were around twenty and the oldest were around forty years old. Almost ninety percent of the students had zero interest in learning. Everybody had one purpose - to obtain the

---

2011:11).

<sup>1</sup> A "diploma" certifies that the student took all the courses and studied at the education institution. A "degree" certifies the holder has graduated from a BA program, passed all the courses, and submitted an acceptable thesis.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, at this time, this interviewee was not an official government employee, but obtained such a statement through their network of connections.

---

diploma and degree.

Each semester lasted around fifteen days. Different subjects were offered per semester. The first term included Deng Xiaoping Theory, Advanced English Reading 1, English Listening and Speaking 1, and English Reading Skills 1.

For the second term, the classes were Education Theory, English Listening and Speaking 2, English Reading Skills 2, and English to Chinese Translation.

The third term featured Advanced English Reading 2, Psychology (in Chinese), English Reading Skills 2, and Computer Science.

For the fourth term, the classes were English Listening and Speaking 3, English Reading Skills 3, and Japanese.

Fifth term classes were British-American Classic Reading Collection, English Writing, and Japanese 2.

The sixth term was for the thesis.

All the teachers were from the English Department of the university that provided this program.

After I enrolled in the program, I attended all the classes and did my homework on time. Most teachers only required that we attend class and complete the homework, which we usually copied from textbooks. Teachers did not disturb students who slept in class.

Students with a reasonable foundation in English had the opportunity to learn, however, most students lacked a foundation in English and thus there was little that they could learn in the program.

Each subject was taught for four days. On the fourth day, class monitors followed the teacher to their office, presented 200 RMB in an envelope to the teacher, and said, "Thank you for your time and teaching us. This is from our class." The teacher then commonly gave eighty percent of the final exam answers to the class monitor, who later relayed these answers to their classmates, who were impatiently waiting in the classroom.

At the end of the semester (after fifteen days), we were given final exams. Each class had four proctors. The class monitor was expected to give 200 RMB to each proctor before the exam started. These expenses

---

were usually paid from a class fund.<sup>1</sup>

Thus favorably inclined, the proctors allowed students to copy answers from each other. When school leaders made an inspection visit for about two minutes, students were warned, which meant that they hid their cell phones, books, and small papers with answers written on them. After the school leaders finished the "inspection," students resumed copying answers.

After the exams, the class monitor went to the class supervisor's office and said something akin to, "Thank you for your hard work and taking care of our problems," and presented him with 500 RMB as a "gift." The class supervisor then told the monitor to arrange a dinner for teachers and department leaders, which "would open a smooth door" for students' graduation.

The class supervisor selected his favorite Sichuan-style restaurant near the university. Seven students and three teachers attended that dinner. I was one of the students. We all arrived at the restaurant around seven PM. I had never seen the class supervisor's two companions on campus. They were introduced as leaders of the Adult Education College Office. It was a grand dinner. We consumed two bottles of local liquor costing about 180 RMB per bottle, and five boxes of canned Budweiser beer.<sup>2</sup> The dinner went on for more than three hours and we all became intoxicated. We left the restaurant after the monitor paid the bill of 1,500 RMB.

Students pass the final exams unless they miss an exam. If an exam is missed, there is a second chance to pass at the beginning of the following semester. Overall, nobody fails if they pay all the tuition, do all the homework, and attend the final exams.

---

<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of each term, one hundred RMB was collected from each student and was used for class related affairs (electric hot water kettle for the classroom, tea, brooms, locks, paper cups, and white board pens and erasers). More than eighty percent of the funds were "gifts" for course subject teachers, proctors on exam day, and meals for the class supervisor and his companions, i.e., department leaders.

<sup>2</sup> One box held twelve cans and cost about sixty-four RMB.

---

## TEACHING CERTIFICATES

A teaching certificate was an official document certifying that the holder was qualified in teaching a specified major at a designated level, e.g., primary school, junior middle school, senior middle school, or college. There were three ways to obtain a teaching certificate: to study at a normal/teaching university with teaching as a major, pass a national examination in educational theory and psychology and scoring sixty or above in both subjects, or to apply for a teaching certificate from a local education bureau with scores in education theory and psychology earned in university courses. A teaching certificate was required when taking exams for official teaching positions.

For teachers with official teaching jobs, the serial numbers on teaching certificates were generally requested when completing forms for annual evaluations and promotions. At Derkyid School, twenty-four teachers held a teaching certificate: twelve in Tibetan, one in chemistry, four in Chinese, three in English, one in computer science, two in mathematics, and one in biology.

Despite requirements for a teaching certificate, teachers were often assigned to teach subjects that they were unfamiliar with.

## STUDENTS' PARENTS' BACKGROUNDS

All the students at Derkyid School were from Derkyid Township, one of five townships in Serlong County. In 2014, Derkyid Township was home to 660 households with a total population of 3,133 (1,540 males; 1,593 female). Derkyid Township had a total grassland area of 27,000 *mu* (1,800 hectares) and was divided among three large administrative villages.

The annual income for most township households was 6,000-8,000 RMB per year, which is low compared to the provincial average. Most income was earned from the sale of caterpillar fungus and animal products (discussed earlier). Locals were engaged as skilled workers

(ten percent), manual laborers (eighty percent), and small business activities (ten percent).

Income earned from collecting and selling caterpillar fungus was a vital part of family income. Collection occurred from May to June. The fungus grows in areas determined by altitude and weather and the local area did not produce fungus. Therefore, local families often traveled to distant prefectures in the same province. One person usually paid 5,000 to 30,000 RMB that entitled them to collect on a designated area of land without disturbance from the land owners. Some locals also worked for caterpillar fungus bosses as hired collectors and received 6,000 RMB in payment after thirty to forty-five days.

Some of the students' parents were also involved in skilled labor in Derkyid communities and the township seat, e.g., local tailors who earned 200 RMB per day when there was good business. Other skilled workers included masons, and carpenters. Other villagers were drivers, transporting people between the county seat and township, charging fifteen RMB per passenger in 2014.

Most parents, however, were employed as laborers in construction work, unloading bags of cement from trucks, carrying bricks to a second or higher floor, and as restaurant workers (washing dishes, cleaning floors, and cleaning vegetables). Such workers earned about 120 RMB per day.

Beginning in 2010, impoverished families were given annual subsidies from the local Civil Affairs Office to alleviate poverty in herding communities. These subsidies ranged from 2,000 to 3,000 RMB per household.

Some villagers owned cars and every family had a motorcycle. In 2015, almost everyone had smart phones (iPhone, Samsung, Oppo, Huawei, Nokia).

There were five stores and two health clinics in the township seat, as well as two locally run restaurants that sold dumplings and noodles. The two restaurants were similar. They were small - about fifteen square meters in area. The floors were covered with old, broken red bricks. Each restaurant had five old tables. Each table had



dispensers containing vinegar and chili sauce. Two women worked in each of the kitchens making dumplings and noodles. The walls were covered with *China Daily* newspapers. Pictures of Chinese celebrities were then affixed to the newspapers.

The shops were typically one-room affairs, about ten square meters in area. Shops had plastic-panel ceilings and plastered walls. Around five shelves were placed against three walls and were filled with bottles of liquor, bottles and tins of Snowflake and Qingdao beer, cigarettes (Lanzhou, Furong Wang, Red Mountain Pagoda, Yan'an, Yunyan, Baisha, Huangshan, Huangjinye, Hongmei), milk drinks, bottled yogurt, bottles of soda (Sprite, Pepsi, Jianlibao<sup>1</sup>), salt, vinegar, soy sauce, snacks, and clothing. Separating the proprietor and customers was a two-meter-long glass box filled with various snacks children were fond of, e.g., chewing gum, potato chips, peanuts, sunflower seeds, spicy tofu, and plastic-wrapped sausages made from highly processed meats and other ingredients that did not require refrigeration. The other half of the box was filled with matches, light bulbs, electrical sockets, nails, hammers, and screwdrivers. Hanging from the walls were such items as raincoats, rubber boots, Tibetan robes, down jackets, and umbrellas. Two shops sold green onions, cabbages, green chili, carrots, and radishes brought from the county town. Vegetables were often wilted and beginning to spoil.

The two clinics each had one proprietor. Both represented themselves as Traditional Tibetan Medicine (TTM) practitioners. I am unsure how they learned TTM. The clinics were very small and lacked such basic medical equipment as blood pressure measuring devices. Patients typically described their symptoms and then were given antibiotics in pill form or as injections.

Every family owned a TV set and a satellite dish. Before 2012, families usually bought large satellite dishes in county town shops. Beginning in 2012, local families were provided small satellite dishes.

---

<sup>1</sup> One of first sodas created in modern China, it was the official drink of the Chinese team at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles and was the most popular soft drink in China in the 1990s (<https://goo.gl/FQPXXC>, accessed 26 November 2016).

---

However, to obtain this satellite dish, the head of a family had to visit the local TV station in the county seat with their family registration book and valid ID to register the satellite dish. After paying 150 RMB, they received a dish, a remote control, and channel controller machine. The purpose of this procedure was to block access to illegal channels.

Occasionally, three-wheeled truck vendors came from the county town and neighboring counties with metal plates and bowls, toys, kettles, vegetables, fruits, and basic household goods, which they bartered for cash or animal products. In late autumn, Muslim traders came to purchase livestock and sheepskins.

Herders bought wheat and barley flour from stores. Barley flour was a main food that was usually eaten for breakfast and at other time as a snack. Dinner was often *guamian* 'dried noodles' boiled with meat. The most commonly consumed vegetables were potatoes, cabbage, and green onions. Local herders had distinct, negative ideas about eating vegetables which they believed made a person physically weak and more Han-like. Those who frequently ate vegetables were sometimes termed *rtsa gzan* 'grass eaters', which generally referred to such herbivores as sheep and yaks.

## SCHOOL TERMS

Each school year was divided into two semesters. Each semester was about seventeen weeks in duration. The spring semester started in March and the fall semester started in September.

Prior to 2014, students stayed in the school for twenty days of consecutive classes, followed by a ten-day break. The decision for this schedule was made by local education bureau leaders, not by the provincial government. One reason for this decision was to reduce cost and time for families because some students' homes were relatively far from the school and it was thus expensive for them to return home every weekend or to be escorted home by a family member. For example, when students had weekend holidays, most parents drove motorcycles for forty to sixty kilometers (roundtrip), which required

---

twenty to fifty RMB for gasoline. Students who had no one to pick them up paid ten to twenty-five RMB for a small van to go home. Such vans transported six to ten students at a time.

Another reason for this scheduling change was that most teachers were from other counties and this system allowed them more time to return to and stay at their homes.

This system changed in early 2015 after local parents, teachers, and students complained. Both teachers and students were exhausted after twenty consecutive days of classes. Teachers commented that many students forgot what they had learned after the ten-day break. Consequently, education bureau leaders then reinstated a weekend holiday. Every Saturday after lunch, students and teachers were free to go home, but were required to return before five PM on Sunday.

Students had several holidays annually; summer holiday from 20 July to 20 August (thirty days), winter holiday from 15 December to 15 March (ninety days), 1 October (National Day, seven days), 1 May (Labor Day, five days), the fifth day of the fifth lunar month (Dragon Boat Festival, three days), the first day of the fifth solar term of the traditional Chinese lunisolar calendar<sup>1</sup> (Tomb Sweeping Day, one day), and 1 June (Children's Day, three days).

## STUDENT STATISTICS AND CLASS SIZE

In this section, I focus on students and particularly on the number of students, gender division, age (both reported and actual), student monitors, subjects, student meals, and accommodation.

In 2014, there were 395 students at Derkyid School (203 boys, 192 girls) in grades one through six. However, grades five and six were each divided into a class A and a class B to make class size more manageable. Grades five and six in 2015 were the largest classes the school had ever enrolled. This was a time when nine-year compulsory education was strictly enforced in the area and all households were required to send their children to school.

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2015, Tomb Sweeping Day fell on 5 April.

---

There was also a class of fifty-four pre-school students who were all officially under the age of seven. These children slept in the nearby resettlement homes where a family member helped care for them. The size of each grade and group of students are listed below:

- Pre-school class, fifty-four students (twenty-seven boys and twenty-seven girls)
- Grade one, forty-nine (twenty-four boys and twenty-five girls)
- Grade two, fifty-four (twenty-two boys and thirty-two girls)
- Grade three, fifty-seven (thirty-two boys and twenty-five girls)
- Grade four, forty-six (twenty-five boys and twenty-one girls)
- Grade five class A, thirty-three (sixteen boys and seventeen girls)
- Grade five class B, thirty-one (eighteen boys and thirteen girls)
- Grade six class A, thirty-five (sixteen boys and nineteen girls)
- Grade six class B, thirty-six (twenty-three boys and thirteen girls)

The actual average age range was seven to sixteen. However, on official reports, student ages were reported as six for preparatory class, seven for grade one, eight for grade two, nine for grade three, ten for grade four, eleven for grade five, and twelve for grade six. Pre-school students aged five and six were cared for by teachers during the daytime and taught the Tibetan alphabet, Arabic numbers, and Chinese Pinyin. At other times, children played in the classroom or on the playground and watched Chinese-language cartoons before returning home at the end of the day.

The officially-reported ages for students in grades one to six were, respectively, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve. In actuality, ages ranged from about eight to nineteen during the time I taught. School leaders reported ideal ages to demonstrate that the school was following the Nine-year Compulsory Education Policy<sup>1</sup> and

---

<sup>1</sup> "In 1986, the Chinese government passed a compulsory education law, making nine years of education mandatory..." "Today, the Ministry of Education estimates that 99.7 percent of the population area of the country has achieved university nine-year basic education" (<http://goo.gl/GMFjgj>, accessed 2 August 2016).

---

thus received positive reviews from higher officials, increasing the possibility of promotion.

#### STUDENTS' DAILY SCHEDULES AND CURRICULUM

From Monday through Saturday, students got up at six AM and went to bed at ten PM. There were four, forty-five-minute class sessions in the morning. There were another four sessions in the afternoon. In addition, there were morning and evening review classes, each lasting forty-five minutes.

The first of the four classes began at eight-thirty. The lunch break began at twelve noon and lasted two and a half hours. The first afternoon class began at two-thirty. The last class ended at six-thirty PM. A ten-minute break followed each session.

Supper was served at six-fifty. The evening review class ran from eight-ten to eight-fifty-five. Afterwards, students were free to play and chat, but were expected to be in bed by ten, with lights out at ten-thirty.

I will now present class sessions for each grade per week from Monday through Saturday noon, based on the second school term in 2014.

The preschool class schedule featured a total of forty classes, consisting of eleven classes each of Chinese, Tibetan, and math; two PE classes, two life and behavior classes, two music classes, one art class, and one class that gave instruction in patriotism, love for the motherland, and faithfulness to the Party.

First-year students had fifty-three classes per week. Language courses included sixteen classes of Tibetan and twelve classes of Chinese. Other courses included fourteen classes of math, two health classes, one music class, two PE classes, one law class, two morality classes, one Chinese calligraphy class, one art class, and one Chinese language dialogue class.

The second-year schedule featured fifty-six classes per week. These included fifteen Tibetan classes; fifteen Chinese classes; fifteen

---

math classes; two PE classes; two morality classes; one law class; one art class; two labor periods that were used to clean the dormitory rooms, classrooms, and the campus; one music class; and one Chinese calligraphy class.

The third-year schedule featured fifty-three classes per week. These included ten Tibetan classes, ten Chinese classes, eleven math classes, eight English classes, two health classes, two behavior and society classes, one music class, two computer science classes, two PE classes, two science classes, one art class, one Chinese calligraphy class, and one Chinese language conversation class.

The fourth-year schedule had fifty-four classes including language classes (twelve Chinese, eleven Tibetan, seven English), eleven math classes, two science classes, two health classes, two behavior and society classes, one law class, one Chinese dialogue class, one music class, two computer science classes, one art class, and two PE periods.

The fifth-year schedule had fifty classes with twenty-nine language classes (ten Chinese, twelve Tibetan, seven English), eleven math classes, one law class, two behavior and society classes, two health classes, two computer science classes, two science classes, one music class, one art class, two PE classes, one Chinese language dialogue class, and one Chinese calligraphy class.

The sixth-year schedule had fifty-three classes with twenty-seven language classes (eleven Tibetan, ten Chinese, six English), eleven math classes, two computer science classes, two science classes, two behavior and society classes, one law class, two PE classes, one art class, one music class, three health classes, and one calligraphy class.

Students and teachers generally did not rest during lunch time. Instead, students played basketball or football, strolled about the campus, sang, ate snacks, chased each other, and so on. A few did homework assignments and a few studied if told to do so by teachers. Teachers walked around in the classrooms, busied themselves with their phones, and sometime wandered off into the small town located outside the school campus.

---

Most students prioritized Tibetan, Chinese, English, and math and spent study time memorizing and doing homework assignments. The education bureau emphasized these subjects because they later appeared on entrance exams for junior and senior middle school, and college.

#### STUDENT MONITORS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

Each class had a '*dzin dpon (banzhang)*' 'general monitor', study monitor, PE monitor, and sanitation monitor. The general monitor oversaw all class affairs related to student safety, sanitation, and study performance, and ensured students obeyed school regulations and behaved well during classes. They reported to the class supervisor if students were disobedient. The study monitor's responsibilities included collecting student homework, delivering completed homework to the teachers' office, distributing marked homework assignments to the students, and supervising the classroom while teachers were away or absent.

The PE monitor took attendance for morning exercise (discussed earlier), and led class break exercises between the first and second class in the morning, and kept classmates in line during PE class sessions if the teacher assigned them to do so.

A group of four "on-duty" students swept and mopped the classroom and corridor three times a day, cleaned the blackboard after every class, and cleaned the windows and teachers' podium. These duties lasted one day and then another four students were assigned this duty the next day. The sanitation monitor ensured these responsibilities were carried out, and was also responsible for ensuring the dorm rooms were neat and tidy. This was an important task because teachers on weekly duty and student union members checked twice a day to see if the on-duty students had completed their daily work duties.

Classrooms and dormitory rooms received stars based on completed teacher evaluation forms. Classrooms and dorm rooms that

---

received the most stars were rewarded five RMB per star. Classes and residents of dorm rooms with the fewest stars were criticized and warned about their poor performance.

## STUDENT FOOD

Students were provided daily meals in a one-story, red-brick building with an A-frame, red-tiled roof. This building was about 200 square meters in area. The interior walls were white-plastered and the dining hall had a white, plastic-paneled ceiling. Glass panels in aluminum frames separated the kitchen and student dining area. Student meals included breakfast (seven-thirty AM), lunch (twelve noon), dinner (six-twenty PM), and late dinner (eight PM). Student meals were cooked with yak meat and vegetables (cabbage, potatoes, green onions). A teacher who had worked at the school for more than twenty years told me that meals had improved considerably. In the past, meals had little meat and there were few vegetables. Instead, rice soup and *rtsam pa*<sup>1</sup> were mainstays.

There were twenty long metal tables with wooden benches that accommodated eight students per bench. Two large basins were atop a big table against the wall next to the cafeteria entrance. One basin was filled with washed metal bowls and the other was filled with steamed buns. A plastic container with chopsticks was also on the table. Two basins filled with long noodles made by a machine in the kitchen sat atop a long table against the glass-panel division. The noodles were served for dinner and lunch. The dinner noodles were in a soup of meat and radish. Lunch noodles had more vegetables than those served for breakfast and supper.

Students stood in queues, each holding a bowl and bun. When it was their turn, the cooks filled their bowls with soup and noodles.

Breakfast was served differently. Students took the bowls and sat at the tables. Cooks filled their bowls with milk tea. Milk tea and

---

<sup>1</sup> Barley flour mixed with butter, cheese, and hot tea. Other ingredients such as sugar were added depending on personal taste.



---

steamed buns were served on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. *Rtsam pa* was served for breakfast on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

Late supper was served right after the evening review class and usually consisted of supper leftovers.

Students were provided a snack at four-twenty PM. Apples and cookies were served one day, and individual packaged milk and boiled eggs (one per student) the next day. On-duty teachers kept the students in a long queue and then distributed the snacks, which students liked more than any other food.

Several students complained to me about the school meals because the vegetables were not fresh, the cabbage was unwashed, and an excessive amount of spice created unfamiliar flavors. They also complained that the food occasionally upset their stomach. I ate student meals several times and concluded that the food was generally good. There was plenty of meat and vegetables in the food and I thought spices were used appropriately.

The students particularly enjoyed junk food (cheap sausages, sweet frozen concoctions of highly processed ingredients on a stick, fried chips, chicken feet, chicken legs, pig skin, candy, cookies, and spicy dried starch) that were sold in campus shops run by two local teachers. Students competed among themselves on how much they spent on junk food and whom they bought snacks for. However, the school did not want to be responsible for students becoming ill so consequently, these shops were closed in March 2015 by school leaders because the snacks were generally unhealthy, old (expired dates), and some of the snacks were made by private food companies that had not been inspected by appropriate authorities.

## STUDENT DORMITORIES

Students in grades one to six boarded at the school, as has already been mentioned. The students' dorms were one-story, ten-year-old buildings with A-shaped roofs covered with red tile. There were two types of dorm rooms: a large room accommodating thirty-six students

---

and a smaller room that accommodated twelve students. Some dorm rooms leaked during summer rains. However, the government renovated the dorms in late 2013. In the winter, as the weather got colder, students made fires in stoves in the rooms.<sup>1</sup> Each dorm had one stove and bags of yak dung were given weekly for fuel.

In smaller dorms, two or three students slept together due to a lack of beds. Younger students were afraid to go to the toilet at night and often needed to be accompanied by older students.

Students were not allowed to spend Saturday night at the school. This was part of an elaborate, ongoing game between parents and the school administration. Parents contended that they had entrusted their children to the school. Therefore, whatever happened to the students while they were at school was the school's responsibility. Examples of this included student injuries, e.g., falling down stairs and out of bed, injuries that occurred during sports activities or fights between students, and illnesses.

The school administrators forbade students from staying on campus after noon on Saturday, thus turning responsibility for the students back to their parents.

There was no health clinic on campus. Taking a child to the township clinics (both located just outside the campus) or county town hospital depended on how seriously ill the student was thought to be. Colds, sore throats, coughing, fever, eye diseases, and diarrhea were common complaints. Students were responsible for medical fees.

Students were only offered hot drinks in the form of milk tea and black tea at breakfast. Students occasionally asked teachers for hot water. Also, if they were thirsty or were taking medicine, some took water directly from the well. In short, there was no readily available supply of boiled water for students. The school also had no laundry facilities. Students washed clothes at home.

---

<sup>1</sup> The metal stove was a square metal box with four legs. Fuel was added through a large round hole on top of the stove that had several metal concentric rims used as lids. A metal stovepipe took smoke out of the top of the stove. A square metal tray at the bottom collected ash and was emptied when full.

---

 TEXTBOOKS
 

---

Each grade consisted of one school year, or two semesters. Students received new textbooks at the beginning of each semester. All the textbooks were free and prepared in the Tibetan language, except for the Chinese language and English language textbooks. The primary school had six grades, thus there were generally a total of twelve books per subject over the course of six years. Nevertheless, some subjects were only taught beginning in a certain grade and the number of those textbooks were thus fewer than for other subjects. All the textbooks were supervised and produced by the 'Gan babs slob gso'i slob deb (Yiwu jiaoyu kecheng jiaoke shu) 'Compulsory Education Textbook Office'.

*Skad yig (Yuwen)* translates literally as 'language script' and appears as the title on all twelve of the Tibetan language textbooks. Prepared by Ljongs zhing Inga'i mnyam bsgrigs bslab gzhi (Wu shengqu xiezuo jiaocai) 'Five Provinces and Regions Cooperatively<sup>1</sup> Written Textbooks', these textbooks were published by Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe bskrun khang (Qinghai minzu chubanshe) 'Mtsho sngon Nationalities Press'.

*Hanyu 'Chinese Language'* textbooks (books one to twelve) were in the Chinese language with Tibetan translations for new vocabulary. They were prepared by the Hanyu kecheng jiaocai yanjiu kaifa zhongxin 'Chinese Textbook Research Development Center', and published by the Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe 'People's Education Press' in Beijing.

There were eight *Yingyu 'English Language'* textbooks, since English was not taught until grade three. The books were in English with Chinese translations for vocabulary and were prepared by the Yingyu kecheng jiaocai yanjiu kaifa zhongxin 'English Textbook Research Development Center' and published in Beijing by the People's Education Press.

*Grangs rig (Shuxue)* literally translates as 'study of numbers'

---

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the Tibet Autonomous Region, and the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan.

and consisted of twelve books used in math classes. All the lessons were in the Tibetan language (books One to Twelve) and prepared by the Xiaoxue shuxue kecheng jiaocai yanjiu kaifa zhongxin, 'Primary Arithmetic Textbook Research Development Center', and published by Qinghai Nationalities Press.

*Huihua* 'Chinese Conversation' textbooks were in the Chinese language (books One to Twelve) and were prepared by the Qinghai minzu jiaocai bianyi zhongxin 'Qinghai Nationalities Textbook Compilation Center' and published by Qinghai Nationalities Press. All the Chinese conversation textbooks were in Chinese with Tibetan translations for new words.

*Kun spyod dang tsho ba (Pinde yu shenghuo)* 'Behavior and Life' textbooks were in the Tibetan language (books One to Four) and taught to grades one and two students. Prepared by the Bod ljongs bslab gzhi rtsom bsgyur lte gnas (Xizang jiaocai bianyi zhongxin) 'Tibet Textbook Compilation Center', they were published by Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe bskrun khang (Xizang renmin chubanshe) 'Tibet People's Press'.

*Kun spyod dang spyi tshogs (Pinde yu shehui)* 'Behavior and Society' textbooks were in the Tibetan language (books Five to Twelve) and were taught to grades Three, Four, Five, and Six. Prepared by the Xizang jiaocai bianyi zhongxin 'Tibet Textbook Compilation Center', they were published by Tibet People's Press.

*Mdzes rtsal (Meishu)* 'Art' textbooks were in the Tibetan language (books One to Twelve) and taught to grades one to six. Prepared by the Xizang jiaocai bianyi zhongxin 'Tibetan Textbook Compilation Center'. They were published by Tibet People's Press.

*Rol dbyangs (Yinyue)* 'Music' textbooks were in the Tibetan language (books One to Twelve) and taught to grades one to six. They were prepared by the Tibet Textbook Compilation Center and published by Tibet People's Press.

*Tshan rig (Kexue)* 'Science' textbooks were in the Tibetan language (books One to Eight) and were only taught to grades three to six. Prepared by the Xizang jiaocai bianyi zhongxin 'Tibet Textbook Compilation Center', they were published by Tibet People's Press.

---

*Xiezi 'Chinese Calligraphy'* textbooks were in the Chinese language (books One to Twelve) and taught to grades one to six. Prepared by Li Yanshui, they were published by the Jiaoyu kexue chubanshe 'Education and Science Press' in Beijing.

*Cha 'phrin lag rtsal (Xinxi jishu) 'Information Technology'* textbooks were in Tibetan (books One to Eight) and were taught from grades three to six. The textbooks were prepared by the Mtsho sngon Nationalities Textbook Compilation Center and published by Xi'an jiaotong daxue chubanshe 'Xi'an Jiaotong University Press'.

#### STUDENT TEXTBOOKS: CRITICAL COMMENTS

Tibetan students need textbooks that are relevant to Tibetan culture. Such subject matter would bring dramatic, positive changes to current pedagogical efforts and concepts. To illustrate this issue, I cite the cultural irrelevance of the English teaching material in the dialogue below:<sup>1</sup>

1 Zoom: Wow! What a great job!

Zip: Yes. What other unusual jobs can you think of?

2 Zoom: How about a lion tamer?

Zip: Oh, no. Too dangerous.

3 Zoom: What about a bee farmer? I love honey.

Zip: Hmm. Maybe a bee farmer will get stung. That's not for me.

4 Zoom: Maybe you can be a computer game tester. You can play games and work at home.

Zip: I like to study. I don't like computer games.

5 Zoom: What about a magician's assistant? That would be cool.

Zip: Oh, no. I don't like that.

---

<sup>1</sup> Book 6 #1:55.

---

Zoom: Well, what do you want to be?

6 Zoom: I want to be a nut cracker. Yum! I like eating nuts.

Zip: Haha! You're nuts!

Carlson (nd) writes that the term "culturally relevant teaching" was created by Ladson-Billings (1992), who described this approach as a way that would empower students to excel. This was because the way in which they experience the curriculum makes sense in the context of their lives and helps them to develop confidence as learners. Ladson-Billings found that students were put more at risk for academic failure if they did not see themselves or their culture represented in the classroom or felt they had to assume another culture (in this case, of their mostly white, middle-class teachers in the United States) to be able to fit and excel in school. From this research, she created a framework that teachers can incorporate, to make learning relevant to students. Carlson points out that effective teaching involves teachers building a connection between students' home lives and their classroom experiences, allowing them to bring rudiments of the former into their daily learning at school that validate their culture, creating teachings that create a strong, personal impact because of those connections.<sup>1</sup>

Tibetan children being taught English in Derkyid School are presented with an unfamiliar culture in their textbooks as indicated in the dialogue above. Picture 1 shows a clown-like figure that the children would likely be unable to identify, having never encountered a "clown" before, especially when introduced by a chipmunk and bear, creatures that local children have never seen. The puzzlement continues as they are presented with other vocational options - a lion tamer, bee farmer, computer game tester, and magician's assistant in illustrations that would surely prove as baffling as the job titles. Unit Five is entitled "What does he do?" hence the above dialogue. The dialogue could have been rewritten, achieving the same pedagogic aims if the two animals had been a yak (large creature) and a pika

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://goo.gl/eFqKQ6> (accessed 18 September 2016).

---

(small creature) engaged in a dialogue about jobs that introduced a Traditional Tibetan Medicine doctor, a monk, a herdsman, a cook, and a store clerk, suitably attired to emphasize their place in the local world that children inhabit.

Similarly, the Chinese textbooks contain culturally irrelevant materials, that surely contribute to students' lack of enthusiasm in learning Chinese. For example, primary school Chinese textbook Twelve for grade six featured twenty-four lessons. Only three lessons are somewhat culturally relevant. In addition, certain Tibetan translations for the new vocabulary were inappropriate.

Tibetan language textbooks are also culturally problematic. Book Twelve for grade six, for example featured twenty-one lessons in total. Eight of these lessons were translated from Chinese and contained little that was culturally relevant to local Tibetan students.

Scholarly poems written by prominent Tibetan scholars are the focus of five lessons that, while rich in literary value, are inappropriate to teaching skills to language learners. Such lessons are often memorized by students who do not comprehend the meaning of the selections nor how to use such materials in real life situations.

#### POST-GRADUATION

After completing grade six, nearly all students entered one of the two junior middle schools in the county town. All students were accepted into these junior middle schools where education was free. There were no senior middle schools in the county.

I estimate about thirty-five percent of students who completed their studies at Derkyid School passed the entrance exam to senior middle school. If the parents chose to and paid tuition, entry into a vocational school was not difficult. However, many parents did not encourage their children to pursue such study because finding later employment was very difficult. Consequently, most parents wanted their children to stay at home and herd, make money for the family, and be near their parents and other family members. Most children

---

ended up in herding areas, though many did not like the herding lifestyle.

By this time, the "boys" were now young men aged nineteen to twenty-eight and did not see livestock herding as an attractive life. Many young men roamed about, riding motorcycles with loudspeakers playing *la gzhas*<sup>1</sup> and pop songs in Tibetan. Many motorcycles had no mufflers. They were thus very loud, which was seen as very cool. These young men also competed to see, for example, how many bottles of beer they could drink, the number of women they could sleep with, and the brand and price of cellphones that they owned. After nightfall, they typically went to small shops that offered commercial instant noodles in self-contained paper containers that only needed hot water added. After eating such noodles, they often set off looking for sex and heavy drinking at shops. They subsequently either slept with a woman or passed out in a shop. They wore heavy robes that provided warmth and thus protected the unconscious body wrapped within. The next morning, they rode back to the pastures to herd, returned in the afternoon, and repeated the same behavior.

Young women generally stayed at home, helping the family with herding, collecting yak dung, milking, churning butter, and so on. At the age of fifteen or sixteen, they began to receive suitors and eventually had children and/or married.

#### RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENT FAMILIES

Generally, there was no regular interaction between ordinary teachers and students' family members, except for the head of a class - a teacher assigned responsibility for a class. Each class had one such adviser who was responsible for all student affairs, such as dealing with student illness at which time the class adviser was expected to contact and

---

<sup>1</sup> Traditional Tibetan love songs are often sung between young lovers. Taboos prevent singing such songs in the presence of opposite sex relatives, e.g., between brothers and sisters, sons and mothers, and fathers and daughters.



---

inform the family head and relevant school leaders.

Occasionally, a parent visited the class adviser to ask for leave for their child. The leave system was uncertain. Parents could take their children home for various periods of time after signing an agreement between the school and parents and putting a fingerprint on it. The agreement stipulated that the parents were in charge of the student's safety. In a general sense, parents consulted advisers in relation to concerns about their child's study and other affairs, such as consulting the head of a class when students asked for money from parents. Parents wished to confirm the amount of money they should give their child and verify the information their child had provided. For such reasons, class advisers had frequent interaction with student family members. Conversely, ordinary teachers had little contact with family members. For example, in my case I never talked to a student family member for the period I taught there.

On occasion, parents visited students unannounced. For example, about ten minutes after I had started a class one afternoon, the door opened with a loud bang. When I turned and looked, a man with dark skin and long disheveled hair stood at the door for a few seconds and then strode to one of the students sitting at a desk in the front row. The man then removed a pair of new shoes from his robe pouch, took off the boy's old shoes, and put the new shoes on the boy. After about three minutes he slowly walked out. He did not speak to me.

When I described this to a colleague, he told me this was common in herding areas. Such visits reflected local culture. Herders did not knock on doors when they visited neighbors' homes.

#### TEACHER AND STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

The absence of intimacy between teachers and students was obvious, stemming in part from the cultural notion of what a student is and what a teacher is. Traditionally, Tibetans consider a teacher to be a guru or *bla ma* who is highly respected and occupies a high social

---

position. I observed teachers using this distinction to order students to clean their living quarters, wash their clothes, and fetch water. This distinction between teacher and student also gave teachers authority to dole out punishments such as beatings with sticks, reading scripture volumes, and even punishments with electrical wires. I personally witnessed such punishment at the school. Students played the role of subordinate as evidenced in bowing to teachers, remaining silent, and generally being terrified when in the presence of teachers. There was a general sense of unease when students were in the presence of teachers.

Students' fear of teachers' brutal beatings, scolding, and a commonly-held idea that students are stupid and hopeless, partly explains this teacher-student separation. Furthermore, many teachers were clearly frustrated by the working location and environment. They thought being away from their home county and working in this "remote place" was an embarrassment and indication that they were a failure. Consequently, they blamed the students and used their power over students to make themselves feel important and in charge.

A few teachers had favorite students and often asked them to clean their living quarters, fetch water, and carry bags of coal from a school storehouse to their living quarters - a distance of about 300 meters. These students were given one or two RMB as a reward, leftover food cooked in the teacher's living quarter, and hot water to drink and use to wash their hair. Conversely, some teachers ordered students to do such chores with no thought of compensation - they felt that the position of teacher entitled them to such privileges.

Many students fled or hid when they saw their teachers on campus or outside the school campus. This general sense of fear meant students seldom sought consultations with teachers and seldom asked questions in class.

To better illustrate such punishments, I interviewed a male teacher at the school about his experiences:

My patience came to an end. Two students in my grade six class did not pay attention throughout the entire class, passed notes to other classmates, laughed at me, and did not attempt to follow any of my

---

teaching instructions when I assigned them group and pair work. They deliberately spoke Tibetan to other students when I asked them not to. These students were older and bigger than other students in the class. They had been absent more than three times from my class and had done none of the homework assignments. I called the students to my office after class, told them to do fifty push-ups, struck their palms twenty times with a stick, and ordered them to stand on the playground for two hours with their arms outstretched in front of their bodies. After punishment, they behaved well.

From my personal experiences as a student and from chatting with friends who taught in different schools in Tibetan areas, I conclude that physical punishment is the most common technique teachers used to discipline and motivate students.

Regarding my own childhood, I was often punished for my poor performance in primary school. Once when I was about nine years old (grade three), I was called to the blackboard by a teacher who told me to write three new vocabulary items on the blackboard. I had not prepared, and had no idea what to put on the blackboard. I then made up three words and wrote them.

When the teacher saw what I had put on the blackboard, he furiously grabbed the hair at the back of my head and smashed my face against the window and a desk. My nose was broken. When the teacher saw me bleeding profusely, he immediately ordered me back to my seat. I quickly sat behind my desk and remained silent. I had nosebleeds for weeks. I did not report this beating to my family because I knew it would lead to further conflicts. If my father had realized that the teacher had broken my nose during a brutal beating, I was sure he would have gone to the school and complained. Consequently, the teacher would have been angry and would have berated me and made my time in his class more difficult.

This horrific incident motivated me. In fear of future beatings, I prepared for class on time.

In sum, I feel that in a local context physical punishment may be a practical way to get students' attention and achieve teaching goals

---

- until a better way is found and demonstrated to be effective. Students who are not interested in learning may not pay attention if the teacher does not inflict physical punishment. Student think teachers who physically punish them have power and can control them. This fear motivates students to work harder and behave well in classes.

### TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD STUDENTS

Derkyid School leaders blamed the children's poor school performance on the students' families. Parents were depicted as illiterate herders unable to properly educate their children at home, failing to encourage them to further their education, and failing to create a good atmosphere for study. The leaders contended that parents' negative to neutral view of the value of education directly and negatively influenced their children's view on the importance of schooling.

Teachers generally displayed a lack of dedication, sincerity, and devotion to teaching. They did not accept that the children they taught had the potential to learn well. Many thought it was not their responsibility to help students learn if they lacked the intelligence to learn in class. And generally, they did not want to spend additional time with students after class.

On their part, children had little interest in classes, because in their opinion, they were boring. They were often sleepy and their minds wandered in class.

I once asked a teacher if he really cared about the students' future and learning. His reply surprised me. He said he did not care, because whatever concerns he might have had made no difference because it was not his job to babysit students after class. Certain teachers also believed that they were incapable of teaching well. They felt, "I am a terrible teacher. I cannot teach well. There is nothing that I can do about becoming a better teacher."

One teacher had studied for two years at a vocational school and had received an Associate Degree in Commerce and Computer Science. He confided that he had learned practically nothing in the

program. In late 2004, he passed an official examination, obtained an official teaching position in Serlong County, and had been teaching the Tibetan language to grades five and six since 2005. He was greatly challenged by the difficulty of the material he was responsible for teaching and was full of self-loathing for not being able to teach well.

In addition to what is mentioned above, some teachers told me that even if students got a good education, a good life in the future was by no means assured because they would not find official jobs given the increasing difficulties of obtaining such employment. For the last fifteen years, a "useful education" meant spending years engaged in various activities at educational institutions that led to a *tie fan wan* 'iron rice bowl', a Chinese term used to describe a stable government salary and benefits such as housing, healthcare subsidies, and retirement benefits. State-sponsored education as exemplified in the primary, junior and senior middle schools, and colleges and universities were considered to have value because they led to a steady income.

The teachers generally concluded that there was nothing they could do to change the students' bleak prospects for obtaining government employment. In contrast, it was very different when official jobs were arranged for graduates with *zhongzhuan* diplomas; and *dazhuan* and BA diplomas until about 1997. Many of my relatives obtained government jobs in the 1980s and 1990s. None took official examinations. At that time, the local education bureau generally made job arrangements for students as soon as they graduated.

#### STUDENTS' FAMILIES' ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION

Certain parents firmly believed state-sponsored education was important, accepting that it could eventually lead to a stable government job. Such parents encouraged their children to study hard and be obedient at school. In cases where children obtained school awards, it elevated the family's social standing and parents enjoyed the ensuing compliments.

---

Other families considered school primarily an opportunity to avoid expenses for food and clothes, e.g., regular domestic and international donations made the student's life easier, e.g., schools provided free uniforms, food, shoes, and cash rewards. In addition, students received donations of new and secondhand clothes. Parents felt that their children ate good food at school and slept in accommodations that they considered better than at home, where students slept in tents or in adobe houses.

Some community elders were critical of schooling, believing that the children learned to speak Tibetan mixed with Chinese words and avoided wearing robes. Few children wore Tibetan robes on campus. However, on Children's Day, all the students wore Tibetan robes prepared by their parents, who came to see dancing and singing performances by children and teachers, and engaged in sports competitions, poetry recitations, comedy performances, and riddle competitions. Elders also criticized children for not preferring *rtsam pa*, a weakening of their knowledge and interest in herding livestock, and a weakening of their religious belief.

Certain parents felt education was a waste of time and money, pointing out that parents typically spent 500 RMB per year per child on miscellaneous expenses. They felt that when their children completed primary school, they had very limited ability in written Tibetan, not to mention the ability to understand and communicate in the Chinese and English languages. Furthermore, as obtaining official jobs became steadily more difficult, some parents concluded that it made more economic sense to keep children at home and provide them with opportunities to earn money for the family.

#### ADMINISTRATORS: TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS

The teachers who were critical of the school leadership and its management system, complained that they had to be deferential, obedient, and please the leaders by turning in lesson plans and lesson notes, adhere to strict time regulations for classes, and attend weekly

---

meetings on Wednesdays and Sundays from eight to ten PM.<sup>1</sup> Such teachers pointed out that in the past, the system was laxer and there was a much greater sense of equality between the headmaster and ordinary teachers. The situation I experienced was one of increasing power and authority given to the headmaster. In this context, pleasing school leaders was paramount, given their power in determining promotions, granting leaves of absence from the school, and providing opportunities to go for training elsewhere in China.

Meetings between the headmaster and teachers were held in a classroom. Three students' desks were placed at the front of the classroom where the headmaster sat in the center with one vice-headmaster on either side. Ordinary teachers sat at the remaining students' desks and pretended to take notes. The meetings began with the general headmaster saying something akin to, "Quiet! Let's start the meeting now."

As teachers sat silently, he asked his assistant to take attendance. Afterwards, he stressed the importance of the meeting and expressed the hope that all those present would take it seriously. This was often followed by a description of his participation in a meeting at the County Education Bureau, with the addition that the teachers were required to study a document that he had received. An assistant was then asked to read the document in Chinese.

When he finished, the general headmaster then talked about other school affairs, expressing the hope that the teachers would comply with school rules and the importance of being on time and preparing good lesson plans. He also stressed that teachers should not drink and become rowdy, gamble, or be absent from classes. This admonition did not vary from meeting to meeting.

---

<sup>1</sup> Tardiness was strictly monitored. If a teacher was one or two minutes late for class, an assigned assistant took note and the teacher was fined fifty RMB. At the end of each term, a final meeting was held at which incidents of tardiness and other such issues as absences, failure to assign a required amount of homework, unruly behavior (e.g., getting drunk and creating disturbances), playing mahjong, and failure to carry out assigned responsibilities when on-duty were dealt with.

---

The meetings rarely addressed issues of how to improve teaching and school/class management. Well-organized class observations have the potential of motivating teachers and could lead to better preparedness and an improved attitude toward teaching. These were, however, not sentiments the school headmaster entertained. He did not observe classes, though he had ample free time every day. This was likely due to his inability to identify problems in a classroom setting and then offering appropriate, constructive comments. Secondly, class observations did not figure into the equation of increasing the likelihood the headmaster would be promoted. If the headmaster was understood by his superiors as having good administrative skills, he was considered a good leader.

#### OFFICIAL EVALUATION OF ADMINISTRATORS

In 2013 and 2014, the headmaster was evaluated based on assigning teachers to *weiwēn* 'protect stability'. These were twenty-four hour periods of duty during "sensitive" periods (every March, during the lunar New Year period, religious gatherings, and Chinese National Day). A headmaster who did not assign *weiwēn* duties to teachers put his position in jeopardy.

When higher authorities visited, they went to the school janitor's room, and checked the most recent *weiwēn* duty schedule. These are forms signed by on-duty teachers after completing a duty period, and forms that recorded all school visitors. All forms recording weekly on-duty activities were reviewed to ensure no safety regulations had been violated, e.g., students were in bed, and in the classroom at the proper times, and no incidents such as fighting had taken place. These forms were completed by the on-duty teachers.

Before an inspection visit, an official phoned the school headmaster and gave notice of the impending visit, which set off a flurry of frantic preparation. Teachers energetically prepared political essays and lesson plans, while students were ordered to clean dorm rooms, classrooms, and the campus grounds. School leaders typically



prepared a meal featuring mutton, yogurt, fruit (bananas, apples, and oranges), liquor, and soft drinks. When the inspectors arrived, everything was well-planned. The school headmaster and his two chief assistants took inspectors around the school, showing them the classrooms, dormitory rooms, and areas that had been cleaned. The school leaders were utterly deferential to the inspectors and accompanied them for the entire period of their visit. The inspectors usually arrived an hour before lunch or supper and were, at the end of the visit, taken to the teachers' dining room for a small banquet.

As mentioned earlier, teachers were required to write essays expressing their understanding and thoughts on the documents received from the education bureau and County Government. Every month, County Education Bureau leaders came to inspect the school. During such visits, the political study essays were brought out. Visiting inspectors reviewed the numbers of essays and stamped and dated each essay (to ensure that the essays were not used again). They also ensured all the teachers had written political study essays, including the headmaster. The final marks of the school's students were not generally reviewed during such visits.

During my time at Derkyid School, the general headmaster was often not on campus. He frequently traveled to the county and prefecture towns to report and attend meetings and, in some cases, was engaged in family issues.

#### EVALUATION OF TEACHERS

Local teachers were occasionally evaluated by school leaders based on students' performance on final exams, homework, and the teacher's presence/absence during class time. The final exam was a core portion of a teacher's evaluation. When students' final exam marks on *bslab bya gtso bo (zhuke)* 'main subjects' (Tibetan, Chinese, English, math) did not reach school standards, teachers of assigned subjects were punished. School leaders felt such evaluations motivated teachers to work hard and be more responsible.

---

Final exams were prepared by the Jiaowu chu 'Teaching Affairs Office' and proctored by all the teachers. Teachers were not allowed to proctor exams to students they taught. Occasionally, when there was a single examination for all primary schools in Serlong County, the exams were made by the County Education Bureau and proctored by teachers from different schools.

The amounts of the fines varied. For instance, in the winter of 2013, five teachers had to pay fines because their students' marks were below the school standard. I was one of those five teachers. I taught third grade math. The average mark for the class was twenty while the school requirement was thirty-five. This was a difference of fifteen points and I was required to pay ten RMB per point. I thus was fined 150 RMB for not reaching the school requirement. I thought this "motivating" system of punishment did not encourage teachers to take their work more seriously, because teachers could afford to pay a few hundred RMB as a fine for not reaching the school standard. Reflecting on my students' low grades and the school requirement, I now believe that I could have taught better with more experience in math education. All the other math teachers' students scored high enough to meet the school requirement. These teachers said that they gave weekly exams to familiarize students with new questions and stimulate them to think beyond the exercises in the textbooks.

The school requirements were very low, e.g., sixty for the Tibetan course, and thirty-five for math, and the Chinese- and English-language courses. This coincided with a consensus on the part of teachers and administrators that the children of illiterate herders lacked intelligence. This was compounded by the oft-mentioned idea that working in a remote, high-altitude area is heroic and an adequate indication of their hard work and dedication. Furthermore, the maximum fine paid in the winter of 2013 was 500 RMB levied against a teacher whose monthly salary was about 5,000 RMB per month, excluding annual bonuses and other benefits. In short, fines were not steep enough to worry teachers.

It should also be pointed out that sixty points was the requirement for Tibetan language courses. Sixty was the standard for

---

Tibetan courses on the grounds that Tibetan was the students' mother tongue and it was easier for students to learn as compared to learning math, Chinese, and English. Once, during my time at the school, the headmaster proposed setting sixty as the standard for all four main subjects. However, teachers of math, English, and Chinese complained that this was unfair because such a standard ignored the difficulties involved. The headmaster did not insist, probably because he did not want to antagonize the teachers on an issue that did not make much difference to his personal future. There were no exams for minor courses. Instead, students received marks for minor courses based on their attendance and homework.

The second evaluation was based on students' homework. School leaders announced when and what homework would be reviewed. Tibetan, Chinese, math, and English were considered main courses, and it was homework for these subjects that was usually reviewed. Teachers were told to assign a minimum of five homework assignments per main subject per week. Teachers who failed to meet this requirement were warned shortly after the homework review process.

In actuality, most teachers did not assign homework until they learned that they must soon submit homework that they had assigned. At such times, the students copied "homework" from their textbooks. After the teachers had collected what they considered an adequate amount of student "homework," they summoned several good students from their class to come to their living quarters, gave the students model homework assignments, and told the students to mark all the homework. After marking, the student study monitor took the marked homework assignment to the Teaching Affairs Office for final student homework review.

This review was simple because no one took it seriously. Problems with homework rarely received comment. What mattered was the number of homework assignments and writing a date on every student's homework. Everything went smoothly during the review process if the required assigned amount of homework was turned in and the dates were recorded.

---

## CONCLUSION

In the above pages, I have sought to describe the realities at Derkyid School, focusing on teachers, students, parents, and the school leaders; evaluations of school leaders; teachers' educational backgrounds; how teachers were evaluated; food and meals for teachers and students; students' daily schedules; students' and parents' backgrounds; textbooks used at the school; and the textbooks' relevance to the students' futures and livelihood. In total, this provides a detailed picture of the day-to-day life of teachers, leaders, and students in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

I will now discuss several critical issues. While some parents held negative opinions about schooling, most believed that schooling empowered their children and provided them with useful skills, such as literacy in Tibetan and Chinese. If their children did well in school, they expected that their children would ultimately find lifetime employment in government offices.

Most children were not empowered to the extent such parents hoped. For example, in June 2014, all fifty-seven grade six students took graduation exams. Of this number, thirty-four scored less than twenty (out of one hundred) on each of the Tibetan, Chinese, English, and math sections. On the English exam, the students were instructed (in Chinese) to write all twenty-six letters of the English alphabet. Only five students did this task without mistakes. Furthermore, students who graduated from Derkyid School did not do well in junior middle school and were unable to pass competitive senior middle school entrance exams. According to a local village leader, in 2013, only ten out of fifty students who had attended Derkyid School passed senior middle school entrance exams. Most students who failed simply discontinued their education. Those who continued, enrolled in vocational schools.

In 2014, only one student from Derkyid Township scored high enough on the college entrance exam to enroll in a four-year BA program. This so rarely happened in Derkyid Township that banners in Tibetan and Chinese were created and hung from the wall along the

---

main street in the township town to congratulate the student. Moreover, school and township leaders visited the student's family with congratulatory gifts. According to a township government report in 2014, only ten people from the entire township had ever obtained college degrees in formal four-year degree programs. This further supports the contention that local school education failed to achieve the goal of empowering students with a solid, fundamental education that led to college degrees, ultimately leading to good employment.

Considerable improvement has been made. There are better classrooms, dormitory rooms, and cafeteria; a larger number of better-credentialed teachers; better food quality; an array of textbooks for each grade; and substantial financial support from government. However, teachers had negative, biased attitudes toward students from illiterate families and the school lacked a teaching management system that motivated teachers to improve their general level of knowledge. For example, I never observed teachers reading materials that might have supplemented the content of classes that they taught.

Every morning when I entered the large office that accommodated twenty teachers, seven to eight teachers sat around the stove, staring at and manipulating their mobile phones, reading internet news, chatting on WeChat, reading friends' messages, and so on. Two to three teachers used desktop computers (there were four computers in the office) to surf online or to watch South Korean soap operas. A few teachers were generally in a small cluster, gossiping, arguing, laughing, and so on. Teachers appeared confident in having a stable government job. Extra study was neither encouraged nor required.

School leadership could have created an atmosphere that encouraged teachers to build basic skills in the subjects that they taught to improve the general level of education at the school.

At the school, I never encountered a teacher who employed creative teaching methodologies, was sincere in their wish to help students, and was willing to spend time with slower students.

In terms of teachers' credentials, as noted earlier, few teachers had earned BA degrees by scoring high enough on the university

---

entrance exam to enter four-year BA programs. Many teachers lacked basic knowledge of the subject they taught and hence were unable to teach well, e.g., two English teachers at Derkyid School had little knowledge of English, and were unable to correctly pronounce most of the English vocabulary in the textbooks. They also did not read nor understand the long sentences in the texts. Another example was a Tibetan who taught a Chinese language class and had difficulty reading lessons in the textbook, had poor oral Chinese, and was unable to distinguish the tones used in Modern Standard Chinese.

A related problem was that the subjects the teachers taught in class were not necessarily related to their own area of study. For example, I was assigned to teach grade three math in the fall of 2013. I had a poor foundation in math and encountered problems solving basic math questions in class.

Many teachers did no class preparation prior to classes and had class without lesson plans. Almost all teachers downloaded lesson plans from the internet and copied the exact material into notebooks, which were never used in actual classes. Instead, the lesson plans were prepared to meet the requirements of teacher evaluation. Reform is needed. Lesson plans should be evaluated, as well as students' homework.

Critical shortcomings in the school administration system could be addressed under a better-regulated school system, e.g., evaluating teachers on a frequent basis. If, for example, the general headmaster taught one or two classes per week, other teachers would be inspired to work harder, and complaints about the school leadership would be minimized. If school leaders spent more time with teachers and students, it would help build a more intimate and harmonious relationship. Such intimacy would allow the leadership to better understand and deal with challenges limiting the quality of education, e.g., teachers would inform the headmaster if they had problems with students during class and report the mistakes<sup>1</sup> of other

---

<sup>1</sup> Teachers, for example, summoning students to their living quarters and asking them to mark other students' homework, being late or absent from class, and so on.

---

teachers to the headmaster. Open communication between the headmaster, teachers, and students would also lead to the resolution of problems through dispassionate discussion.

The headmaster might also implement a weekly class observation on his own time to identify shortcomings in teaching methodology. Feedback could then be given on how to improve. Teachers' strong points could be pointed out and such teachers might then share successful teaching techniques with other teachers.

School leaders should set higher requirements for student marks, which would encourage students to study more effectively.

The school administration might also consider holding weekly competitions for teachers and students. For example, for the first week a Tibetan language teacher could be given a specific lesson from their respective grade and class, provided time to prepare a lesson plan, and then teach a class. Other Tibetan language teachers would observe the class while school leaders gave scores based on the teacher's time management, methodology, blackboard design, homework, and student and teacher interaction and activities. All teachers could be observed in this way with those receiving the highest scores in each subject rewarded and complimented. Such activities would motivate teachers to develop innovative teaching methods, learn new teaching skills, and provide motivation to teach class more responsibly.

In general, Tibetan scholars have ignored basic education as a legitimate field of inquiry. Annual meetings held at the prefecture and provincial levels address Tibetan education issues. However, for the past two decades, education among Tibetan scholars has generally been discussed at the macro-level. Painful, unpleasant realities are generally ignored, but these realities are critically important.

Scholars tend to present broad assumptions about local education, for example, only Tibetan language is used as the medium of instruction in XX Prefecture, a bilingual method of education is used in YY Prefecture, only Chinese is used in ZZ School, and so on. These generalizations ignore existing problems at local levels, e.g., why students cannot read well when graduating from grade six and why students cannot correctly utter even a few complete, simple sentences

---

in Modern Standard Chinese.

Many schools in rural areas have long been dumping grounds for unqualified and irresponsible teachers, many of whom intensely dislike being there. Children of herding families are as clever and "good" as anywhere in the world, and deserve good teachers. Consequently, it is important that Tibetan scholars focus on real issues, such as teachers' and parents' backgrounds, evaluations, and school administration and search for solutions to improve education quality.

An important goal of schooling should be to empower and help students achieve their dreams. However, at Derkyid School, both teachers and school leaders shared a common interest - make their superiors happy by completing what they had been assigned. The associated game rules were understood by teachers and school leaders, who knew how to play the game well. School teachers knew exactly how to please their leaders by submitting required lesson plans and political essays, appear in class on time, and carry out weekly duty assignments in a timely manner.

School leaders also knew precisely what their superiors looked for when they came to inspect the school. Consequently, both teachers and all levels of leadership were generally unconcerned about actual educational realities in the classroom.

An initial impression when first arriving on campus was that all the teachers and students were occupied and busy. A teacher was required to teach six hours a day and prepare lesson plans and political essays. Students had classes from six-thirty AM to eight-fifty-five PM and were required to be in the classroom and supervised. However, despite the students' tight schedules, the result was very poor educational outcomes as mentioned above.

If I had the authority to improve this local education situation, I would first address issues of suitable textbooks and assemble a good leadership team capable of encouraging and managing teachers well. Some might argue for more funding and more teachers to improve education quality, however, based on the realities I have described, government support pumped into schools is generally not wisely distributed and does not result in improved educational outcomes.



---

Support from local, relevant authorities would allow the issues identified at this local school to be addressed and create opportunities giving children better opportunities to be successful.

My conclusions are generally reflective of many Chinese institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and government offices. Future research might focus on higher levels of education using specific schools as examples, e.g., junior and senior middle schools, vocational schools, and universities. Detailed narrative descriptions of these different levels of education institutions would offer better understandings of education institutions and thus provide better opportunities to address critical issues that need improvement and reform.

#### REFERENCES

- Badeng Nima. 2001. Problems Related to Bilingual Education in Tibet. *Chinese Education and Society* 34:91-102.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2008. The Choice of Languages in Tibetan School Education Revisited. *Chinese Education and Society* 41(6):50-60.
- Bass, Catriona. 1998. *Education in Tibet: Policy and Practice Since 1950*. London: Zed Books.
- Caixiangduojie, J. 2010. Thirty Years of Educational Reforms in Tibetans areas of Western China. *International Journal of Learning* 17(7):71-78.
- Carlson, Marin. nd. Culturally Relevant Teaching: Strategies & Definition. <http://goo.gl/eFqKQ6>, accessed 11 January 2016.
- Gouleta, Eirini. 2012. A Bilingual Education Professional Development Project for Primary Tibetan Teachers in China: The Experience and Lessons Learned. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 15(3):295-313.
- Hansen, Mette Halskov. 1999. *Lessons in Being Chinese: Minority Education and Ethnic Identity in Southwest China*. np: University of Washington Press.

- Jacob, Evelyn, and Cathie Jordan. 1993. *Minority Education: Anthropological Perspectives*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub. Corp.
- Kalsang Wangdu. 2011. China's Minority Education Policy With Reference to Tibet. *Tibetan Review* 6:19-23.
- Ladson-Billings, Gloria. 1992. Culturally Relevant Teaching: The Key to Making Multicultural Education Work in CA Grant (ed) *Research and Multicultural Education: From the Margins to the Mainstream*. London: Falmer Press, 106-121.
- Lee, Chae-Jin. 1986. *China's Korean Minority: The Politics of Ethnic Education*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Lin Yi. 2008. *Cultural Exclusion in China: State Education, Social Mobility and Cultural Difference*. London: Routledge.
- Lopsang Gelek. 2006. Anthropological Field Survey on Basic Education Development in the Tibetan Nomadic Community of Maqu, Gansu, China. *Asian Ethnicity* 7(1):103-109.
- Postiglione, Gerard A and Ben Jiao. 2009. Tibet's Relocated Schooling. *Asian Survey* 49(5):895-914.
- Postiglione, Gerard A, Ben Jiao, and Sonam Gyatso. 2006. Household Perspectives on School Attendance in Rural Tibet. *Education Review* 58(3):317-337.
- Seeberg, Vilma. 2008. Girls First! Promoting Early Education in Tibetan Areas of China, a Case Study. *Educational Review* 60(1):51-68.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove and Jim Cummins. 1988. *Minority Education: From Shame to Struggle*. Clevedon, Avon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Stuart, Kevin and Wang Shiyong. 2003. English Training Program for Tibetan Students. *China Education Forum* 4:1.
- Sun Caiping and Lynn Henrichsen. 2011. Major University English Tests in China: Their Importance, Nature, and Development. *TESL Reporter* 44(1/2):1-24.
- Tsang, Mun C and Yanqing Ding. 2005. Resources Utilization and Disparities in Compulsory Education in China. *The China Review* 5(1):1-31.

- Upton, Janet. 1999. *Schooling Shar-khog: Time, Space and the Place of Pedagogy in the Making of the Tibetan Modern*. PhD diss University of Washington.
- Wang Chengzhi and Quanhui Zhou. 2003. Minority Education in China: From State's Preferential Policies to Dislocated Tibetan Schools. *Education Studies* 29(1):85-104.
- Wang Shiyong. 2007. The Failure of Education in Preparing Tibetans for Market Participation. *Asian Ethnicity* 8(2):131-148.
- Zhoumaoji. 2015. Trends in Education and Their Impacts on Relationship in a Maba Village Family in Qinghai Province, PR China. *Global Studies of Childhood* 5(4):463-472.
- Zhu Zhiyong. 2008. Reflection on Basic Education Under the "Three Guarantees" Policy in Tibet's Pastoral Districts. *Chinese Education and Society* 41(1):44-50.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'bring rim འབྲིང་རིམ།

'brog pa འབྲོག་པ།

'dzin bdag འཛིན་བདག།

'dzin dpon འཛིན་དཔོན།

a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

Anhui 安徽

Baisha 白沙

banzhang 班长

banzhuren 班主任

Derkyid, bde skyid བདེ་སྦྱིད།

benke 本科

bla ma ལྷ་མ།

bslab bya dge rgan བསྐྱེད་བྱ་དགེ་རྒྱལ།

bslab bya gtso bo བསྐྱེད་བྱ་གཙོ་བོ།

Caixiangduojie 才项多杰

cha 'phrin lag rtsal ཆ་འཕྲིན་ལག་རྩལ།

Changcheng 长城

dazhuan 大专

deyu xiaozhang 德育校长

deyu zhuren 德育主任

deyushi 德育室

dge rgan bzang དགེ་རྒྱལ་བཟང་།

Dongfeng 东风

drung yig ལྷུང་ཡིག།

dudao 督导

Furong Wang 芙蓉王

gcan rong bstan 'zhin གཅན་རོང་བློན།

བསྐྱེད་འཛིན།

grangs rig གྲངས་རིག།

guamian 挂面

rtswa gzan རྩ་གཟན།

Hanyu 汉语

Hongmei 红梅

Hongtashan 红塔山

Huangjinye 黄金叶	meishu 美术
Huangnan 黄南	mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྗོ་
Huangshan 黄山	mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྣོན།
Huawei 华为	Neidi 内地
Huihua 会话	Pinde yu shehui 品德与社会
hukou 户口	Pinde yu shenghuo 品德与生活
Jiangsu 江苏	Pinyin 拼音
jianlibao 健力宝	putong laoshi 任课老师
jiaowu xiaozhang 教务校长	Putonghua 普通话
jiaowu zhuren 教务主任	Qingdao 青岛
jiaowuchu 教务处	Renshi ju 人事局
jiunian yiwu jiaoyu 九年义务教育	rmang gnyis རྩང་གཉིས།
kaoguan 考官	rol dbyangs རོལ་དབྱངས།
kexue 科学	rong ba རྩང་བ།
khri ka ཁྲི་ཀ།	rtsam pa རྩམ་པ།
khyim tho ཁྲིམ་ཐོ།	Serlong, gser lung གསེར་ལུང་།
krung go'i phugs mdun ཀུང་གོ་ཕུག་མདུན་	Shaanxi 陕西
	shuxue 数学
kun spyod dang spyi tshogs ཀུན་སྤྱོད་དང་སྤྱི་ཚོགས།	skad yig སྐད་ཡིག།
kun spyod dang 'tsho ba ཀུན་སྤྱོད་དང་འཚོ་བ།	slob gtso སློབ་གཙུག་པོ།
kun spyod kru'u rin ཀུན་སྤྱོད་ཀུའུ་རིན་པོ།	slob ma'i tshogs ba སློབ་མའི་ཚོགས་པ།
kun spyod slob gtso ཀུན་སྤྱོད་སློབ་གཙུག་པོ།	slob ston kru'u rin སློབ་སྐོར་ཀུའུ་རིན་པོ།
Lanzhou 兰州	slob ston slob gtso སློབ་སྐོར་སློབ་གཙུག་པོ།
lao shi hao 老师好	spyi gnyer kru'u rin སྤྱི་གཉེར་ཀུའུ་རིན་པོ།
liangji 两基	tiyu ke 体育课
Liaoning 辽宁	Tongren 同仁
Lin Yi 林一	tshan rig ཚན་རིག།
lo sar ལོ་སར།	Wang 王
mar me tshe 'bar མར་མེ་ཚེ་འབར།	weiwen 维稳
mdzes rtsal མཛེས་རྩལ།	<i>Xiandai hanyu</i> 现代汉语
	xiaojiao gaoji 小教高级
	xiaojiao Yiji 小教一级
	xiezi 写字
	xinxi jishu 信息技术

---

xuesheng hui 学生会  
xuexi banzhang 学习班长  
Yan'an 延安  
yingyu 英语  
yinyue 音乐  
Yunyan 云烟  
Yushu 玉树  
Yuwen 语文

Zhejiang 浙江  
zhongzhuan 中专  
Zhoumaoji 周毛吉  
zhuke 主课  
zhuren 主任  
zong xiaozhang 总校长  
zongwu zhuren 总务主任

---

BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN AMDO - A CASE STUDY OF  
KHRI KA NATIONALITIES BOARDING SCHOOL

Tshe dpal rdo rje ཚེ་དཔལ་རྡོ་རྗེ། (Caihuan Duojie 才还多杰;  
Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Nationalities University)

ABSTRACT

The state sponsored education of Tibetan children in Khri ka (Guide) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China, using Khri ka Nationalities Boarding School as a case study, is described. School history, the government rationale for closing village-based Tibetan primary schools, and the nationalities boarding schools operating in Khri ka in 2015 are introduced. Detailed descriptions of teachers; students; instructional materials; classes; language use; rules; punishments; home visiting; communication between students, parents, and teachers; school reports to the local authorities; and official local supervision and evaluation of Khri ka Nationalities Boarding School are also provided. An overall evaluation of this school concludes the paper.

KEYWORDS

boarding schools, Khri ka (Guide) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, Tibetan education

---

## INTRODUCTION

I focus on Khri ka (Guide)<sup>1</sup> Nationalities Boarding School (KNBS) located in Khri ka County Town,<sup>2</sup> Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China. KNBS was established in 2009, following the closure of fifty Tibetan primary schools in rural villages in Khri ka County. Generally, the primary schools had grades one to six, however, some schools had only grades one to two, or one to three, because the village population was small. In such cases, students who finished schooling in their own village enrolled in neighboring village schools to complete their elementary education. For example, children from Brag dmar nang Village where I was born and raised, were required to attend Sdong rgan thang (Dongguo tang) Village Primary School (about five kilometers away) after finishing grade two in Brag dmar nang Village Primary School. Moreover, there were no kindergartens in rural villages before 2009. I taught at KNBS from March 2012 to June 2013 and many of the details I provide are based on that experience, as well as interviews and conversations with school leaders and teachers.

Over eighty percent of Tibetan primary schools in Khri ka County were closed in 2009 by local government. At the age of seven, children were required to leave their families and live at KNBS for the stated purpose of providing better education to children living in rural Tibetan villages.

Given the lack of study this centralized education system has received, this paper provides a detailed description of KNBS in order to provide suggestions on how to improve bilingual<sup>3</sup> education in Khri ka by pointing out advantages and disadvantages of the new system. I first describe school history and the official reasons for closing the village-based Tibetan primary schools, followed by a description of

---

<sup>1</sup> I give Tibetan and Chinese terms where both were used locally.

<sup>2</sup> Also known as Chu srib in Tibetan and Heyin in Chinese.

<sup>3</sup> Bilingual education in this context refers to all subjects taught in the Tibetan language except for Chinese language classes, which were taught in the Chinese language.

---

nationalities boarding schools in Khri ka in 2015. I conclude with an overall evaluation of the school.

Numerous publications have been written on Tibetan education and Tibetan students. These include Bangsbo (2008) who described school conditions in Tibetan herding areas, employment opportunities for such students, and parents' perspectives on their children's schooling. Postiglione and Ben Jiao (2009) examined the origins and development of *neidi* 'inner China' schools for Tibetan students and the students' perspectives about their education. Baden Nima (1997) wrote about achievements in Tibetan education and the gap between Tibetan education and education in other regions of China. Zhu (2007) studied how state schooling affects the identity of Tibetan students based on a study of Changzhou Tibetan Middle School located in Jiangsu Province. However, to my knowledge, no study of a large, Tibetan centralized boarding school in Mtsho sngon has yet been published.

## SCHOOL HISTORY

Khri ka County, located in southeastern Mtsho sngon Province, is about 114 kilometers from Zi ling (Xining) City, the capital of Mtsho sngon Province, and 158 kilometers from Chab cha (Qiabuqia) Town, the capital of Mtsho lho Prefecture. There are four towns, three townships, and 119 administrative villages in Khri ka. In 2013, the total county population was 108,700, with about thirty-four percent being Tibetan.<sup>1</sup>

The creation of this central school was initiated by the Mtsho sngon provincial government and the subsequent plan was implemented in all five counties<sup>2</sup> in Mtsho lho Prefecture in 2009. The provincial government viewed the new centralized education system in

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://goo.gl/zjcobF>, accessed 4 March 2016.

<sup>2</sup> The five counties are Khri ka (Guide), Mang rdzong (Guinan), 'Ba' rdzong (Tongde), Gser chen (Gonghe), and Brag dkar (Xinghai).



---

Mtsho lho as a trial and, if it proved successful, it would be used in other prefectures in Mtsho sngon Province.<sup>1</sup>

In early 2009, the Khri ka Education Bureau selected a committee and made an official plan - *Xuesheng zhuanji fang'an* 'Student Transfer Plan' - stipulating that all village primary schools in Khri ka would be centralized. The plan was sent to local schools in Khri ka and listed relevant committee members who were all associated with the Khri ka Education Bureau.

The plan stipulated the closing of seventy-two primary and junior middle schools of the eighty-seven in Khri ka County, leaving only fifteen schools open. Of the eighty-seven primary schools in Khri ka County, fifty-four were bilingual schools where Tibetan language, Chinese language, mathematics, and physical education (PE) were taught. In schools where students' Tibetan language was better than their Chinese language ability, mathematics was taught in Tibetan. In others where students' Chinese was superior to their Tibetan language ability, mathematics was taught in Chinese. The fifty-four bilingual primary schools were located mostly in Tibetan villages. They were considered bilingual schools, because the Tibetan language was taught in these schools and in some schools, mathematics and PE were also taught in Tibetan.

The plan further stated that the Khri ka government would close fifty Tibetan primary schools located in Tibetan villages and centralize all Tibetan students in KNBS, Stong che (Dangche) Nationalities Boarding School, 'Phrang dmar (Changmu) Nationalities Boarding School, and La ze ba (Laxiwa) Nationalities Boarding School.

According to the *Student Transfer Plan*, eighty-four percent of the schools were to be closed, leaving only fifteen schools open in the county. The closed schools had been built mostly by the Khri ka County Government and education bureau during the previous decade.

---

<sup>1</sup> These prefectures are Mtsho byang (Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho nub (Haixi) Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Rmab lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and Yul shul (Yushu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

---

Several reasons were offered for closure, in addition to the provincial government directive. A former primary school headmaster told me there was a desire to equalize education quality between rural and town schools through better qualified teachers with BA and MA degrees teaching in the county town. Poorly qualified teachers generally worked in rural village schools. Consequently, the boarding schools in the township and county towns were seen as a way of providing new opportunities for rural children by providing better qualified teachers.

Second, local government wanted all children to access better library resources, computers, classrooms, and dining hall facilities. For example, before 2009, the education bureau bought one hundred computers for the primary school students, and then computers were allocated to several schools, with only a handful of students benefitting. Centralization, it was suggested, would result in such allocations directly benefitting more students.

Third, in the rural village schools, a shortage of teachers was a critical problem, mainly due to limited official teaching positions allocated to the County Education Bureau by higher level government. There was an especially serious lack of teachers who specialized in mathematics. Centralized schools meant that children would have teachers who specialized in a particular subject teaching that subject.

Fourth, though not stated officially, but widely discussed among teachers and local villagers, was the idea that local government would save money. Centralization meant that fewer teachers were needed, which helped solve the problem of a teacher shortage. Before 2009, there were fifty-four Tibetan primary schools, each of which had grades one to five. Each school had teachers who taught Tibetan language, even if the number of students in the class was small. Centralization meant that several small classes were combined into one larger class that required only one teacher.

There were four bilingual primary schools in Khri ka in 2015. KNBS is in Chu srib Town. Stong che Nationalities Boarding School<sup>1</sup> is

---

<sup>1</sup> SNBS did not exist until established by the Association for International Solidarity in Asia. For more on this organization, see <http://goo.gl/HRqP9I>

located in Stong che Village, Chu nub (Hexi) Town in the west of Khri ka County, twenty-five kilometers from the county town. 'Phrang dmar Nationalities Boarding School is situated in 'Phrang dmar Town, which is in the east of Khri ka County, thirty-five kilometers from the county town. La ze ba Nationalities Boarding School is located in Lha khang thang (Laohan Tang) Village, La ze ba Town, which is twenty-seven kilometers north of the county town.

KNBS had nine grades. Grades one to six were primary school, and grades seven to nine were junior middle school. As of 2014, PNBS, LNBS, and SNBS had grades one to six.

#### INTRODUCTION: KHRI KA NATIONALITIES BOARDING SCHOOL

The government invested 43.25 million RMB in KNBS, which helped build three four-story buildings for classrooms, three four-story buildings for dormitories, a two-story canteen, a five-story building for teachers' offices, and a four-story building for teacher housing. The school had nine grades and fifty-seven classes, of which twenty-nine were for primary students and twenty-eight were for junior middle school students.

Staff consisted of full-time teachers, cooks, cleaners, child-care workers, daily-life administrators, a boiler operator, electricians, medical care personnel, librarians, and two gatekeepers.

Most of the students from grades one to three were aged seven to eleven, and had child-care workers (all women) assist them in their daily life. Each child-care worker was responsible for five dorm rooms, each of which accommodated eight students. In total, each child-care worker was responsible for forty students. They cleaned students' bedrooms and beds, mended their clothing, organized the students to bathe in the school bathrooms, made their beds, put them to bed, and woke them in the morning.

Most students from grades four to nine were eleven to eighteen years old, and did not require child-care workers. Instead, they had

---

(accessed 23 May 2016).

---

daily life administrators. On each floor of the dormitory building, there was a daily life administrator who asked the students to clean themselves and the dormitory rooms, and go to bed and wake up on time. They also helped deal with conflicts among the students.

Cooks prepared three free meals a day for both teachers and students, who could eat as much as they wanted. Teachers could choose to eat in the school canteen or elsewhere, while the students had no choice because they were required to stay on campus, except during the bimonthly holiday.<sup>1</sup> Students, teachers, and janitors did the cleaning in the school. Janitors cleaned the doors, corridors, stairways, and toilets of every building and all public places inside the buildings. Full-time teachers were required to clean their own offices and quarters. Students cleaned their own classrooms and dormitory rooms, and the school grounds. This duty was divided among all the classes with each class cleaning its assigned area once in the morning before breakfast and again in the evening before supper.

The electrician was responsible for electricity and its safety on campus. The boiler operator was responsible for supplying hot water for heating in winter and providing hot water for showers throughout the school year. There was a small clinic in the school with two medical care personnel. Students could buy basic medicine from the clinic for such minor complaints as colds.

The gatekeepers were mainly responsible for security on the campus, which was enclosed by three-meter high brick walls. Only students and staff were officially allowed to enter the school. No student was allowed to leave the school, and no staff was allowed to leave the school during working hours without written permission from the Jiaowu chu 'Dean's Office'.

In total, there were 298 teachers and staff of whom 208 were full-time teachers in 2015. Sixty percent of the teachers and staff were Tibetan. The other forty percent were Han Chinese.

There were 2,534 students in 2015. Ninety-five percent of the students were from rural Tibetan villages in Khri ka County, according

---

<sup>1</sup> The school had classes for eleven consecutive days and then a four-day holiday.

---

to a school brochure printed in early 2015. All the students were Tibetan and studied the Tibetan language in the school.

Most teachers who had taught in village primary schools before centralization in 2009 were required to teach in KNBS. This was because, according to the Khri ka Education Bureau, they had no record of violating rules and importantly, they had good relationships with leaders of both their schools and the education bureau. Most teachers who taught junior middle students at KNBS had taught at Khri ka Nationalities Middle School (KNMS). KNMS was located in Chu shar (Hedong) Township Town and had students at both the junior middle school and senior middle school levels. In 2009, KNMS was discontinued, after which junior middle school students studied in KNBS. Senior middle school students studied in Mtsho lho Number Two Nationalities Senior Middle School that had been newly established in Khri ka County Town. Teachers considered to be superior were selected to teach in Mtsho lho Number Two Nationalities Senior Middle School while those considered inferior were assigned to teach in KNMS.

The county government selected new teachers through a two-part examination. The first part consisted of a written section with questions related to major and non-major subjects (commonly known as *jichu zhishi* 'basic knowledge'), accounting for sixty percent and forty percent, respectively, of this part of the exam. The second part was an oral exam. Examinees were given a subject related to their major, given twenty minutes to prepare, and then had twenty minutes to give a sample teaching performance. The written and oral exams accounted for eighty and twenty percent, respectively, of the entire examination.

## CURRICULUM

Six subjects were taught in grades one to three in primary school: Tibetan, Chinese, math, PE, music, and ideology and morality instruction. Nine subjects were taught in grades four to six: Tibetan,

Chinese, math, PE, music, ideology and morality instruction, English, science, and Information Technology (IT).

For grade seven (junior middle school), twelve subjects were taught: Tibetan, Chinese, English, math, politics, geography, history, biology, PE, music, art, and IT. For grade eight, thirteen subjects were taught: Tibetan, Chinese, English, math, politics, geography, history, biology, physics, PE, music, art, and IT. For grade nine, eleven subjects were taught: Tibetan, Chinese, English, math, politics, physics, chemistry, history, PE, art, and IT.

Until the early twenty-first century, all textbooks used in every school in PR China were selected by the Ministry of Education. Later, in the early years of this century, provincial and prefectural education bureaus were given permission to create textbooks according to strict rules and criteria set by the Ministry. Subsequently, the Qinghai jiaoyu ting jiaocai bianji chu 'Mtsho sngon Education Bureau Teaching Materials Department' created textbooks for schools in Mtsho sngon. Meanwhile, the Prefectural Education Bureau received permission to create their own Tibetan language textbooks. Consequently, the Mtsho lho Prefectural Education Bureau created their own Tibetan language textbooks in 2008.

All the textbooks for other subjects used in Tibetan schools in Mtsho sngon were the same, including the Tibetan language textbooks. KNBS was no exception. The Tibetan language textbooks were written and edited by the Mtsho lho khul gyi slob grwa chung 'bring gi bod yig slob deb sgrig rtsom tshogs pa 'Junior and Primary School Tibetan Textbook Editing Committee of Mtsho lho Prefecture'. There was a total of eighteen books with one book used for each term for nine years.

The main title of all Tibetan language textbooks for both primary and junior middle schools was *Mtsho lho khul gyi 'gan babs slob gso'i bod yig tshod lta'i slob deb 'Mtsho lho Prefecture Compulsory Education Trial Tibetan Textbook'*. The title of the primary school Tibetan textbooks was *Tibetan Language*, but each book clearly stated the target term and grade, for example, *Mtsho lho Prefecture Compulsory Education Trial Tibetan Textbook: Tibetan Language (First Term of Grade One)*. Junior middle school Tibetan

---

textbooks were *Vocabulary, Grammar, History, Philosophy, Poetry, and Literature*. These books were titled according to their content, e.g., during the second term of grade seven, the title of the textbook was *Tibetan Grammar*.

Besides Tibetan language class, Chinese, math, music, ideology and morality instruction, English, Science, and IT were also taught to primary school students. The titles of the textbooks were, respectively: *Compulsory Education Textbook-Chinese, Compulsory Education Textbook-Math, Compulsory Education Textbook-Music, Compulsory Education Textbook-Ideology and Morality Instruction, Compulsory Education Textbook-English, Compulsory Education Textbook-Science, and Compulsory Education Textbook-IT*. English, science, and IT were only taught to students from grades four to six of primary school.

Grade seven students had the Tibetan language class and Chinese, English, math, politics, geography, Chinese history, biology, music, art, and IT. The titles of the textbooks for these subjects followed the pattern given above.

Grade eight students had classes in Tibetan, Chinese, English, math, politics, geography, Chinese history, biology, physics, music, art, and IT. The titles of the textbooks for these subjects were as given above.

Grade nine students had classes in Tibetan, Chinese, English, math, politics, physics, chemistry, world history, art, and IT. The titles of the textbooks for these subjects were as given. There was no textbook for PE class during which students exercised and engaged in sports and physical activities on the school playground.

Teachers were forbidden to use their own materials during classes and thus only taught from the textbooks. This was in line with the general saying *kao shenme jiu jiao shenme* 'I teach what is on the test'. The school organized four exams to evaluate how well students had memorized materials, how well teachers used the textbooks, and how well teachers taught according to the syllabus. These exams consisted of two monthly exams, a mid-term exam, and a final exam. The first monthly exam was at the end of the first month of the term,

---

the mid-term exam was at the end of the second month of the term, the second monthly exam was at the end of the third month of the term, and the final exam was at the end of the term. Teachers were forbidden to prepare and give exams to their own class. For example, teacher A of class one made an exam for class two, and teacher B of class two made an exam for class one. The exams were based on the relevant textbooks. Using other material meant that students would probably do poorly on the exams.

## CLASSES

From grades one to three, there were four classes per grade, with each class having about forty students. From grades four to six, there were nine classes per grade. This was because students from Stong che Nationalities Boarding School, 'Phrang dmar Nationalities Boarding School, and La ze ba Nationalities Boarding School joined KNBS after three years of study in those schools. In 2013, the local county government and the education bureau thought that KNBS was crowded with more than 3,000 students, and decided that Stong che Nationalities Boarding School, 'Phrang dmar Nationalities Boarding School, and La ze ba Nationalities Boarding School would have classes through grade six. From September 2013 to July 2014, there were only four classes for grade four in KNBS, because the other three schools kept their own students for grade four. From September 2014 to July 2015, there were four classes for both grade four and five. From September 2015, there were only four classes for grades one to six.

From grades seven to nine, there were nine classes for each grade with each class having about forty-five students. In 2014, another grade seven class was added. All the students in this class were from two villages in Nang chen (Nangqian) County, Yul shul (Yushu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province.



Figure 1. Classes in KNBS

Grades	Class	Number of Students	Class Model	Total
Grade One	Class (1)	36	TL <sup>1</sup>	166
	Class (2)	43	TL	
	Class (3)	43	CL	
	Class (4)	44	CL	
Grade Two	Class (1)	35	TL	152
	Class (2)	37	TL	
	Class (3)	39	CL	
	Class (4)	41	CL	
Grade Three	Class (1)	38	TL	155
	Class (2)	38	TL	
	Class (3)	37	CL	
	Class (4)	42	CL	
Grade Four	Class (1)	42	TL	172
	Class (2)	42	TL	
	Class (3)	43	CL	
	Class (4)	45	CL	
Grade Five	Class (1)	49	TL	200
	Class (2)	51	TL	
	Class (3)	50	CL	
	Class (4)	50	CL	
Grade Six	Class (1)	43	TL	415
	Class (2)	45	TL	
	Class (3)	47	TL	
	Class (4)	45	TL	
	Class (5)	44	TL	
	Class (6)	45	CL	

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this paper, we use TL to signify 'Tibetan language class' and CL to signify 'Chinese language class'.

	Class (7)	47	CL	
	Class (8)	50	CL	
	Class (9)	49	CL	
Grade Seven	Class (1)	49	TL	434
	Class (2)	48	TL	
	Class (3)	46	TL	
	Class (4)	48	TL	
	Class (5)	48	TL	
	Class (6)	47	CL	
	Class (7)	50	CL	
	Class (8)	49	CL	
	Class (9)	49	CL	
	Class (10)	40	CL	
Grade Eight	Class (1)	50	TL	443
	Class (2)	51	TL	
	Class (3)	52	TL	
	Class (4)	52	TL	
	Class (5)	50	TL	
	Class (6)	51	CL	
	Class (7)	47	CL	
	Class (8)	45	CL	
	Class (9)	45	CL	
Grade Nine	Class (1)	43	TL	371
	Class (2)	40	TL	
	Class (3)	40	TL	
	Class (4)	40	TL	
	Class (5)	39	TL	
	Class (6)	42	CL	
	Class (7)	43	CL	
	Class (8)	42	CL	
	Class (9)	43	CL	

---

**CLASS DIVISION**

The classes of each grade were divided between the *shuangyu ban* 'bilingual class' and the *putong ban* 'ordinary class'. The former meant that all subjects were taught in the Tibetan language except for the Chinese and English languages; and the latter meant that all classes were taught in the Chinese language except for the Tibetan language class. Class size varied from thirty-five to fifty students. Students chose the class they wanted to join. Students who chose to be in CL classes were considered to have Chinese that was better than their Tibetan. For TL classes, for grades one to four, two classes were TL classes and two classes were CL classes. For grades from five to nine, five classes were TL classes and four classes were CL classes.

**'DZIN BDAG (BAN ZHUREN) CLASS HEADS**

Every class in school had a class head, who was a teacher and who generally taught a subject to the same class. The class head was responsible for all class affairs. The class head held meetings after first notifying the students, solving such matters as conflicts between students, and contacting students' parents if necessary, e.g., if a student was sick.

According to the *Workbook of Mtsho lho Prefecture Primary and Middle School Class Heads*,<sup>1</sup> the class head had twelve responsibilities regarding educating students on political and moral thought as listed below:

- setting a plan for class activities and class goals, as well as class heads' own work plan;
- educating students to improve their studies;

---

<sup>1</sup> *Hainanzhou zhongxiaoxue banzhuren gongzuo shouce 'Workbook of Mtsho lho Prefecture Primary and Middle School Class Heads'* gives duties and responsibilities for class heads. Class heads were required to record class activities in this book.

- 
- supervising students' daily life and health;
  - educating students on working hard and fostering their work skills;
  - leading class committee work<sup>1</sup> and fostering class cadres, as well as supervising Youth League<sup>2</sup> work;
  - understanding students, and recording the students' moral thoughts, studies, and health;
  - taking responsibility for public equipment in the classroom and educating students to take good care of public equipment;
  - working hard to improve their own qualities as a teacher and conducting scientific research on moral education;
  - accumulating information on plans, summaries, themes of class meetings, attendance, marks, and activities;
  - coordinating all students matters with the school;
  - educating students on developing good conduct, and character-building

## LANGUAGES

The school did not have strict rules about language use in classes. Teachers were expected to teach in the language they felt most comfortable speaking. All Tibetan teachers who taught Tibetan language as a subject used Tibetan in both TL and CL classes. All Chinese teachers who taught Chinese as a subject used Chinese in both TL and CL classes. The same textbooks that lacked Tibetan explanations were used. English teachers used either Chinese or Tibetan as a language of instruction to teach English. Han teachers who taught subjects other than English and Tibetan used Chinese in CL classes, and Tibetan teachers who taught other subjects than

---

<sup>1</sup> The class committee consisted of a general class monitor, the monitor in charge of studies, the PE monitor, and class labor monitor. The class head was responsible for assigning responsibilities to the committee and supervising their work.

<sup>2</sup> The Gong qing nian tuan 'Youth League' is an organization for youth between the ages of fourteen and twenty-eight. It is run by the Communist Party of China.

---

English and Chinese, used Tibetan in TL classes.

Tibetan teachers spoke Tibetan out of class among themselves and Chinese teachers spoke Chinese among themselves. Chinese was spoken when Tibetan and Chinese teachers communicated with one another, except for two or three Han teachers who spoke fluent Tibetan.

Chinese was spoken during general school faculty meetings. However, Tibetan was often spoken during Tibetan language teachers' meetings.

Language use during student meetings depended on who convened the meeting. All school leaders were Tibetan. If they held the meeting, Tibetan was usually spoken. If the meeting was held by departments other than the Tibetan Department, Chinese was commonly used because these departments had Chinese teachers who understood little Tibetan.

#### DISCIPLINE AND RULES

A significant portion of this paper is a listing of rules and punishments for violating these rules. While at first glance, this may seem an excessive use of space, they are important. KNBS was famous for its strict rules. The school leaders put more emphasis on enforcing school rules than on teaching. They held that adherence to rules meant teachers and students did their tasks well. Furthermore, local villagers tended to evaluate the school on the enforcement of school rules. For example, if parents knew that their child had to follow rigid rules, they considered the school to be good. Furthermore, they thought a requirement that teachers had to obey many strict rules translated into teachers teaching well. Local government also felt that unwanted issues with "social stability" were minimized through rule enforcement and that leaders who imposed such rules were superior leaders.

Based on student marks, the quality of education in KNBS outshone boarding schools in 'Ba' rdzong, Gser chen, and Brag dkar, supporting the notion that its strict rules were effective.

The school had a *xiaozhang* 'principal', a *shuji* 'Party Secretary',

and two *fu xiaozhang* 'vice-principals'. In addition, there were four management offices - the Dean's Office, Deyu chu 'Moral Education Management Department', Shenghuo guanli chu 'Daily-life Management Department', and Xiao Bangongshi 'General Administration Office'. One vice-principal and the Dean's Office were responsible for teaching, another vice-principal and the Daily-life Management Department were responsible for the students' and teachers' food and living quarters, and the Party Secretary directed the Moral Education Management Department, which was responsible for student and teacher discipline. The school principal was responsible for all school matters.

The Moral Education Management Department was responsible for educating, warning, inspecting, and punishing the students; maintaining student discipline; creating rules and passing them on to teachers and students; and punishing those who violated the rules.

#### Dormitory Management Rules<sup>1</sup>

- Students could not take visiting parents or relatives to the dormitory room. Instead, students were required to meet them in the duty office when they did not have class and were not involved in school activities.
- Without permission, students could not exchange rooms and beds, duplicate keys, and handle others' belongings. Violators received *jinggao chufen*<sup>2</sup> 'warning punishment'.
- Boys could not enter girls' dorm rooms and vice versa at any time without permission.
- Students were expected to respect others when they rested and not play music, speak loudly, and throw garbage or other objects out

---

<sup>1</sup> I have translated these rules from Chinese as given in *Xuesheng sushe guanli zhidu* 'School Dormitory Management Rules' and printed as *Xuexiao houqin guanli tiaoli* 'School Logistics Management Rules'.

<sup>2</sup> The school officially warned students who violated school rules.

---

of windows. Violators received *jiguo chufen*<sup>1</sup> 'demerit punishments'. Those who injured others by throwing things out of windows were expected to take legal responsibility.

- Gambling was forbidden with punishments dependent on the seriousness of the infraction. A student could be expelled for a serious infraction, otherwise it was a demerit.
- It was strictly prohibited to climb windows, fight, cause trouble to others, and drink alcoholic beverages in the dorms. Violators were expelled for serious infractions, otherwise they received a demerit.
- The use of electric cookers, connecting wires to the electricity lines, using table lamps, and installing plugs in the dorm rooms were forbidden.
- Discarding garbage in the corridor, drains, or in the toilet was prohibited. The responsible party was expected to pay to have resultant problems fixed. If the violator was not identified, all the students in the concerned dorm were charged. Those who intentionally damaged communal facilities, such as those related to electricity and water, compensated for all losses, and were given a demerit.
- All dorm rooms were checked for sanitation. If a dorm room was found to be unclean, untidy, and if cobwebs were on the wall, dorm residents were told to clean it again. If there was no improvement, all residents of this dorm room were punished.
- All students took turns being on duty. Those who did not serve were punished.
- All dorm facilities belonged to the school and moving anything out of the dorm room was forbidden. Doing so was regarded as theft of school property.
- Students were required to park their bicycles in the parking area;

---

<sup>1</sup> This punishment was approved by the Moral Education Management Department, and was announced during a general student meeting. The punishment was also posted on notice boards in the school yard and was noted in student's personal records. If the violator behaved well afterwards, the school removed the demerit punishment from the student's personal records.

---

otherwise they received a demerit.

- Students who violated dormitory rules and ignored administrators' directions were punished and were liable for all the consequences of their violations.

#### Daily Management Rules<sup>1</sup>

- Students were instructed to develop good habits of being polite when receiving things from others, giving things to others, speaking to others, and while being among others.
- Students were not to discard garbage randomly, draw graffiti on walls, damage public property, waste food, or damage flowers and lawns.
- Students were expected to use water economically. Violators had one to two points deducted from *banji kaopingfen* 'Class Assessment Points'.<sup>2</sup>
- Discarding paper, erasers, pencil stubs, and so on in toilets and wash basins resulted in violators compensating for losses if facilities were damaged or blocked.
- Students disconnecting or damaging pipes connected to the water tank were punished. Two to four points were deducted from their Class Assessment Points and they had to compensate for damages.
- Damage to heating pipes and heating equipment in the corridor and rooms resulted in two to four points deducted from their Class Assessment Points and compensating for resulting damage.
- Students were required to gently flush the toilet after defecation. One to three points were deducted from the Class Assessment Points and compensation paid for damage to flushing mechanisms.
- Classroom and dormitory doors were to be opened and closed gently and good care taken of the locks. One to five points were

---

<sup>1</sup> These rules were printed in *Xuexiao richang guanli zhidu* 'School Daily Management Rules' and released as *Guide minzu jisuzhi xuexiao zhidu huibian* 'Compilation of Guide Nationalities Boarding School Rules'.

<sup>2</sup> Each class received one hundred points at the beginning of the semester. Points were deducted when students violated school rules. At the end of the semester, the school rewarded the class with the most points.



- 
- deducted from Class Assessment Points and compensation paid for damage to doors and locks.
- Mops were to be rinsed in the mop basin, not in the toilet basin or wash basin, and then dried. Mops were not to be shaken, which dirtied and damaged the walls. One to five points were deducted from Class Assessment Points and compensation paid if walls were damaged.
  - Carving, painting, or sticking pictures on desks and stools were forbidden. One to five points were deducted from Class Assessment Points and compensation was paid for violations.
  - Moving fire extinguishers in the classrooms, dormitories, and canteen was forbidden. Violators were seriously punished and compensation was required.
  - Climbing or jumping over stair railings and other dangerous facilities was forbidden and subject to one to three points being deducted from Class Assessment Points.
  - Exit signs were not to be kicked or broken. Two to five points were deducted from Class Assessment Points. Violators had to compensate for damage.
  - Students were required to stand in line for food in the canteen. Students could eat as much as they wanted, but should not waste food. Class heads were expected to educate students if they wasted food. The school gave demerits to violators, who could not receive honors in the year of the violation.
  - In the dormitory, students had to obey administrators' directions. Students were not allowed to go to other dorm rooms, had to go to bed on time, and were required to turn off the room lights on time. Students who dirtied rooms lost two to five Class Assessment Points.
  - Students had to clean the school. Rooms had to be cleaned once during lunch time and again after supper. Classroom corridors and walls were to be cleaned and protected. Yards had to be cleaned twice a day, and more than twice a day if it rained, snowed, or if there was strong wind. Teachers made random checks. If any of these places were found to be dirty, two to ten points were

---

deducted from Class Assessment Points.

- Students were prohibited to walk on lawns. Violators had one to five points deducted from Class Assessment Points.
- Damage to school property, including passageways, walls, dust bins, windows, glass panes, stair railings, switches, lights, curtains, cabinets, beds, desks, stools, projectors, and computers had to be compensated. Offenders received no honors that year and one to ten points were deducted from their Class Assessment Points.
- It was strictly prohibited to use personal electrical devices and charge any personal electric device in the classrooms and dormitories. Making a fire in the dormitory and classrooms was strictly prohibited. Violators received demerits and one to ten points were deducted from their Class Assessment Points.
- Students were not to eat and drink bad products that had expired, nor were they to eat junk food. Students were to exercise good eating habits and consume healthy food.
- Stealing was prohibited. Vacant rooms were to be properly locked and no one could enter a room through a window.
- Students were not to allow others to stay in the dormitories. Strangers found in a dormitory without permission were sent to the local police station.
- Combustibles, explosives, knives, and other items unrelated to study were not allowed on campus. Students were not to set off firecrackers. Throwing items and pouring water out of windows were forbidden. Violators were given a demerit and one to ten points were deducted from Class Assessment Points for breaking this rule.
- Students were required to go to their dorm rooms immediately after the final evening class.
- Students involved in disputes had to consult teachers and ask for mediation. Violators were given a demerit and one to ten points were deducted from their Class Assessment Points.
- It was strictly prohibited to go near the electricity distribution room and other potentially hazardous areas. Damage to wires and

---

the running water inspection well<sup>1</sup> were prohibited. Injuries incurred when violating these rules were the violator's responsibility.

- Two copies of leave permission were required when leaving school. The class head and gate keeper had to have a copy. The student had to be accompanied by a relative when leaving the school and had to return to the school on time as stipulated on the leave paper. The student was responsible for what happened while absent from school.
- Students were expected to supervise each other and report to teachers when students violated school rules. Such students were praised for their report.

#### Class Management Rules for Students<sup>2</sup>

- Students were required to come to class on time and were not allowed to leave during class without the teacher's consent.
- The class monitor was required to take attendance and keep a record of students who were absent and the reasons for the absence.
- Before and after class, the class monitor was to say "Stand up" when the teacher entered the classroom, and then "Sit down."
- During class, students were to listen attentively and not talk to others. Students were to raise their hand if they had questions. During class, all electronic devices were to be turned off.
- Students should erase the blackboard during breaks.
- Students were not to smoke or eat in the classrooms, which were to be kept clean and tidy.
- Graffiti and drawing stick pictures on window ledges, desks, and stools, and moving desks, stools, and other items in the classroom

---

<sup>1</sup> This well contained a valve that was turned off if the water pipes were blocked or damaged.

<sup>2</sup> *Xuesheng ketang guanli guize* 'Class Management Rules for Students' were released as *Guide minzu jisuzhi xuexiao zhidu huibian* 'Compilation of Guide Nationalities Boarding School Rules'.

---

were all forbidden.

- The last person to leave the classroom was to turn off the lights.
- Students were required to dress properly for class.
- Students violating any of the above rules were subject to punishment according to the seriousness of the infraction.

## STUDENT PUNISHMENT

Punishments included oral warnings, serious warnings, recording demerits, and staying at home for a year under surveillance. Oral warnings were the least severe. The class head reported student infractions to the Dean's Office, which then gave permission to the class head to orally warn the student for their errors during class meetings.

Serious warnings required approval from the Moral Education Management Department, and the warning would be announced during a general student meeting. The warning was also posted on notice boards in the school yard. Serious warnings were noted in students' *dang'an*, 'personal records'.<sup>1</sup>

Recording demerit punishments required approval by the Dean's Office and were then sent on to the principal. After his approval and signature, the Dean's Office was required to announce the demerit during a meeting of the entire school. Additionally, the punishment was posted on notice boards, and the student's parents were informed. Demerit punishments were recorded in the student's personal record.

If a student received a serious warning and did not rectify their behavior, a demerit was recorded. If the student did not subsequently correct their behavior, they were told to leave school and stay at home for a year under their parent's surveillance. This was also reported to the County Education Bureau. During the student's stay at home, the parents were expected to educate them.

---

<sup>1</sup> Personal records refer to files that recorded the achievements, rule violations, and marks received from the school, and accompanied the student throughout their lifetime.

---

**MANAGEMENT RULES FOR TEACHERS<sup>1</sup>**

- Teachers were expected to follow various management rules. Teaching assessment was partly based on how well these rules were followed.
- During class, teachers were forbidden to use phones, play music, leave early, meet friends, and come to class late. They were also required to dress properly and to stand during class. They were expected to keep the class neat and tidy.
- Teachers were required to teach according to a syllabus and scheduled plan. Absences and exchanging classes with others without permission from the Dean's Office were prohibited. After class in the afternoon, teachers were required to ask the students to clean the classroom, close the windows and doors, and turn off the lights.
- Teachers were to take attendance before class started and report absences and the reasons for those absences to the Dean's Office.
- Student safety was first in the case of, for example, earthquakes and fires. Teachers were required to address problems wisely and report all student injuries to the school leaders in an emergency.
- Teachers were to have well-prepared lesson plans and actively communicate and listen to the leaders' suggestions.
- Teachers were to punctually attend meetings arranged by the school, take notes, and not make phone calls or talk idly to their neighbors.
- Teachers were forbidden to leave school when they had no classes because school leaders might look for them and assign tasks. If a teacher was absent for more than forty-five minutes, it was recorded as being absent for the whole day.
- Teachers were expected to speak Mandarin in Chinese classes, and maintain classroom control.
- Incidents such as disputes between students were to be properly dealt with. Students were never to be punished physically and were

---

<sup>1</sup> These rules - *Jiaoshi guanli zhidu 'Teachers' Management Rules'* - were posted on a wall of every office.

---

to be given moral education.

- Surfing the internet, playing games, and sleeping in the office were forbidden.
- Class heads were to closely observe students and report to school leaders and the student's parents if a student was absent or violated rules.
- Teacher achievement was directly related to the students' marks. Two exams were given to the students per term. Teachers were expected to take full responsibility if the students' marks did not increase.
- Teachers' performance was evaluated monthly. Those who failed were required to observe other teachers' classes and write a plan on how to improve.

#### PUNISHMENT FOR TEACHERS

Teachers who violated rules were fined by the headmasters and the deans, and instructed to change their behavior. If they were uncooperative, school leaders reported this to the education bureau and requested that these teachers be sent to rural schools.<sup>1</sup>

#### FACULTY MANAGEMENT RULES<sup>2</sup>

- All teachers were to be at school no later than eight-thirty AM and leave at five-thirty PM. Written leave permission from the Dean's Office was necessary if a teacher could not report to work or had

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2016, there were three Tibetan boarding schools in the county. Two were located in township towns and one was located in a village. These sites had relatively few people and transportation was inconvenient. Teachers did not want to work there.

<sup>2</sup> These rules, originally in Chinese, were known as *Xuexiao jiaozhigong guanli zhidu* 'School Faculty Members Management Rules' and were printed as *Xuexiao houqin guanli tiaoli* 'School Logistics Management Rules'.

- 
- to leave school during work hours. Violators were fined fifty RMB.
- Cleaners, child-care workers, and daily-life administrators were expected to keep their rooms and the school yard clean, and clean them twice a day. If leaders found unclean areas, they were fined twenty RMB.
  - Child-care workers, daily-life administrators, and gatekeepers were expected to speak to the students' parents politely, otherwise, they were fined thirty RMB.
  - All faculty members were required to stay in the office and work. They were not to chat, surf the internet, watch movies, play games, or engage in activities unrelated to their official work. Violators were subject to a fine of twenty RMB.
  - Printers, photocopy machines, and cars were not to be used for private matters. Violators were fined twenty to 200 RMB.
  - School facilities, including computers, were to be used in a way that did not result in damage.
  - Documents provided by the school leaders or the government could not be discarded. To do so resulted in fines of one hundred RMB.
  - After work, all lights and other electrical equipment were to be turned off, and all windows and doors closed. Violators were fined twenty RMB.

#### PARENTS' VISITS TO STUDENTS

From March 2009 to January 2015, students had twenty-two days consecutively (including weekends) of classes and then had an eight- or nine-day break. When the break began, parents were required to come to school and escort their children home. When the holiday ended, parents had to escort their children back to school.

Figure 3. First Term Monthly Holidays, 2015.

Month	Weekends Accumulated	Official Holidays	Days Off	Dates at School	Days at School	Holiday Start	Holiday End
Sept	8	1 day for Mid-Autumn Festival <sup>1</sup>	9	1-25 Sept	25	25 Sept	5 Oct
Oct	8	3 days for National Day	11	5-27 Oct	22	27 Oct	7 Nov
Nov	10	0	10	7-29 Nov	22	29 Nov	8 Dec
Dec	8	0	8	8-30 Dec	22	30 Dec	8 Jan
Jan	4	0	4	1-15 Jan	7	17 Jan	1 March
Sept	8	1 day for Mid-Autumn Festival <sup>2</sup>	9	1-25 Sept	25	25 Sept	5 Oct
Oct	8	3 days for National Day	11	5-27 Oct	22	27 Oct	7 Nov
Nov	10	0	10	7-29 Nov	22	29 Nov	8 Dec
Dec	8	0	8	8-30 Dec	22	30 Dec	8 Jan
Jan	4	0	4	1-15 Jan	7	17 Jan	1 March

<sup>1</sup> Zhongqiu jie 'Mid-Autumn Festival' is a harvest festival celebrated by Chinese.

<sup>2</sup> Zhongqiu jie 'Mid-Autumn Festival' is a harvest festival celebrated by Chinese.



Figure 4. Monthly Holidays for the Second Term, 2015.

Month	Weekends Accumulated	Official Holidays	Days Off	Dates at School	Days at School	Holiday Start	Holiday End
March	10	0	10	1-22 Mar	22	23 March	2 April
April	8	2 days for Tomb Sweeping Day <sup>1</sup> and Labor Day <sup>2</sup>	10	2-23 Apr	22	24 April	4 May
May	9	0	9	4-25 May	22	26 May	4 June
June	9	0	10	4-25 June	22	26 June	5 July
July	6	0	6	5-15 July	11	15 July	1 Sept

Parents could visit their children at school once a month on a day the school determined and announced when the parents came to take their children home. On visiting day, parents could enter the school to meet their children. Parents could not take their children out of school unless they were sick, a relative was very ill, or the family was holding an important event, such as a wedding or, for girls, a coming of age ritual.<sup>3</sup> In such cases, parents sought permission from the school by giving clear reasons orally, otherwise the gatekeeper would not allow a child to leave the school. If the parents simply took the child away, the school punished the gatekeeper. During the day parents visited, they could bring bread, fruit, meat, noodles, dumplings, and so on and eat with their children on the school sports ground. They were also allowed to leave food for their children. Parents were told not to bring

<sup>1</sup> Qingming jie 'Tomb Sweeping Day' generally falls in the fourth lunar month on the fifteenth day after the Spring Equinox and is a day Chinese offer sacrifices to their ancestors.

<sup>2</sup> Laodong jie 'Labor Day' is observed on May First.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Tshe dpal rdo rje et al. (2009).

instant noodles, beverages such as Coca-Cola and Sprite, and junk food such as cookies, chips, and candy.

In March 2015, the holiday system changed as indicated below:

Figure 5. March-July Holidays, March 2015.

Month	Weekends Accumulated	Official Holidays	Days Off	Days at School	Holiday Start	Holiday End
March	4	0	4	10.5	11 March PM	
March	5	0	5	10.5	26 March PM	1 April
April	4	1 day for Tomb Sweeping Day	5	10.5	11 April PM	April 17
April	4	0	4	10.5	27 April PM	May 2
May	6	1 day for Labor Day	6	10.5	May 12 PM	May 19
May	5	0	5	10.5	May 30 PM	June 5
June	4	0	4	10.5	June 16 PM	June 21
June	5	0	5	10.5	July 1 PM	July 7
July	4	0	4	14.0	July 21	1 Sept

Figure 6. September-January Holidays, 2015.

Month	Weekends Accumulated	Official Holidays	Days Off	Days at School	Holiday Starts	Holiday Ends
Sept	3	0	3	11	16 Sept	20 Sept
Sept	4	3 days for National Holiday	7	11	30 Sept	8 Oct
Oct	5		5	11	18 Oct	23 Oct
Oct	4	1 day for Mid-Autumn Festival	5	11	2 Nov	8 Nov

Nov	5		5	11	18 Nov	24 Nov
Nov	4		5	11	4 Dec	9 Dec
Dec	4		4	11	19 Dec	23 Dec
Dec	4		5	11	2 Jan	7Jan
January	4		4	9	15 Jan	

### COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Parents who came to take their children home or escorted them to school were required to find and inform the student's class head. These were the only times that parents met their child's class head. During the meeting, parents might have asked the class head about their children's behavior and study. Parents seldom met other teachers. When other teachers wanted to meet a student's parents, they first needed to discuss it with the student's class head. Afterwards, the class head discussed the issue with the student's parents when they met in the school.

### TEACHERS' VISITS TO PARENTS

Home visitation was a school activity aimed at improving the relationship between students and teachers by helping teachers better understand the students and their family background. The school began to organize such visits in about 2009. Teachers were told to visit students' homes in groups of three to four and spend ten days visiting as many homes as possible. During the visit, they discussed the student's studies and general behavior at school, the family's economic conditions (e.g., parents' jobs), how they earned cash income, and what students did at home. These questions sought to elicit information that would allow the teachers and school to better understand the students' family condition and background. Teachers were required to take notes while talking to the parents or relatives at their homes and complete the form below. From 2009 to 2015, teachers visited 1,600 rural homes.

Figure 7. Khri ka Nationalities Boarding School Form Completed by Visiting Teachers During Winter Holiday Home Visits.

Student Name	Class	Parents' Names
Name of Visitor	Name of visited student	Relationship between the student and their guardian
Parents' Phone Number	How did you visit? By car, by bus - specify.	Visit date
Student's Home address		
What did you discuss?		
Parents' opinions and suggestions.	Signature:	

SCHOOL LEADERS' REPORT TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Every term, the school reported to the local education bureau on how students' marks improved, how well both students and teachers adhered to the rules, and the achievements the students, teachers, and school had realized during the term. If the school principals had a good relationship with the Education Bureau leaders, there were generally no problems with evaluation.

---

## LOCAL AUTHORITIES' SUPERVISION OF SCHOOL LEADERS

The education bureaus of both Khri ka County and Mtsho lho Prefecture supervised the school leaders. Staff from the prefecture bureau visited the school at least once a year, while county bureau staff visited at least once a term. The school principal supervised other school leaders and had the authority to change them as he thought best. He, in turn, was closely supervised by the local education bureau. He was expected to deal with all issues "correctly," particularly political issues. For example, in December 2014, the principal invited a well-known monk scholar to give a speech to students, their parents, and teachers at the school. Later, the government concluded that the speech was politically sensitive and the principal was fired.

## SCHOOL EVALUATION

Several government departments evaluated the school each term. The County Education Bureau evaluated teaching, mainly on the basis of how well students performed on exams, especially the Senior High School Entrance Examination. Guide xian weisheng ju 'Public Health Bureau of Khri ka County' evaluated sanitation in the school canteen. Staff from Guide xian xiaofang dadui 'Khri ka County Fire Station' inspected potential fire dangers in the school. Guide xian shipin yaopin jian du guan li ju 'Khri ka County Food and Drug Supervision Administration' checked food quality. Guide xian gong'an ju 'Khri ka County Public Security Bureau' was responsible for political issues, and visited, especially during politically sensitive periods to ensure social stability. Staff from the listed government departments came to the school to inspect at least once a term.

---

## TEACHER EVALUATION

School principals and deans evaluated the teachers. A former KNBS principal told me that teachers were evaluated monthly based on how diligently they checked students' homework, the marks the teachers' students received, how well the teacher observed school rules, the number of observations a teacher made of other teachers' classes, and political study. For the latter point, teachers were assigned reading materials related to politics and told to take notes that were subsequently handed in to school leaders for inspection. School leaders were then required to give them a mark.

Teachers were also expected to obey school leaders. Teachers generally passed the evaluation, and marks given could be "fail," "pass," or "good." The school principals and deans then examined the results of the above evaluations and gave teachers a mark. If a teacher failed the evaluation, the local Education Bureau might have assigned them to rural areas to teach the next semester. Evaluation was thus taken very seriously by every teacher.

## CONCLUSION

Khri ka Nationalities Boarding School had 2,500 students and faculty members in 2015. This may have made it one of the largest boarding schools in Asia. Local government built KNBS, in theory, to provide better education to rural children with better facilities and to optimize resources. In my opinion, however, its disadvantages far outweighed its advantages.

Firstly, primary school students were too young to leave home and live at the school without the care of parents and/or other closely related, concerned elders. Constantly thinking about their parents made it difficult for the children to concentrate on study. Many children were so homesick that they often wept. For example, a grade three student (b. 2002) told me, "I cried many times at school because I missed my home and parents."

---

Importantly, children received less exposure to traditional family values from their relatives and community while at school. Such values stress moral behavior e.g., not stealing, respect for elders, and obedience to parents. Local Tibetans stressed the benefits of traditional family education by pointing out that Tibetan children raised in cities lacked such an education and, therefore, "Do not behave like Tibetans," e.g., lacked respect for elders and their parents and sometimes changed their religious beliefs. Local Tibetan villagers also commented that local government did not want children to grow up and be like their elders or Tibetans, which they felt was a key reason for the closure of village primary schools. There was also a widely-held belief among local Tibetans that the school was built to benefit local government by reducing the number of teachers teaching in primary schools and thus reducing educational expenditures.

Village Tibetans also complained that the new schooling system adversely affected their cash earning activities because they were compelled to come to the county town twice a month to take their children home and then escort them back to school. Sending a child to a village school would have allowed elders in the child's family to care for them. Conversely, sending a child to school in the county town meant an adult had to stay at home all year to care for the children.

As an example of the real expenses and time involved, I will describe a family that I know well. The father (b. 1976) and the mother (b. 1977) had three children whom they had to escort to and from the boarding school in Khri ka County Town. Consequently, a parent had to stay at home all year because the children's grandparents were too old to travel comfortably. Each month, one parent had to make two round trips to the county town to pick up and then return their children. Approximate expense for one round trip for this family was about one hundred RMB. One adult working outside the home earned 8,000 to 10,000 RMB annually. Total expenses, including lost income, for placing their children in KNBS were thus approximately 10,800 RMB per year.

Although nine-year compulsory education was represented as "free," villagers' expenses related to their children's education

---

increased after centralization due to transportation costs and other expenses. For example, parents generally ate in restaurants, and felt compelled to buy snacks for their children in town when they visited. In fact, expenses for students after centralization were more than double the expenses for students before centralization.

The school had classes for ten and a half days consecutively. Consequently, children were often exhausted and lacked motivation to learn. Young students truly disliked the school because they could not stay with their family members, especially their parents. Staying in school without the company of family members made it hard for them to focus on study. Young, homesick students were so emotionally distraught that they found it very difficult to concentrate on study and yearned to stay in the village schools so that they could be with their family. A teacher at KNBS said, "When the school just started, both parents and their children were crying, because they missed each other. Later, we continued to observe many children crying because they missed their homes and parents."

A villager confided that his son started grade one in KNBS in 2013 and that every time he visited his son at school, his son cried because he missed home. "It is a very sad situation, but we have no choice," he concluded.

Teachers also disliked the school system, complaining that their burden was heavy because they had too much work and responsibility, and too little time to rest. In addition to teaching (including on weekends), they had to ensure the students went to bed and that the children ate regularly.

Furthermore, Wang et al. (2016) raise serious questions about nutrition, health, and education in boarding schools after conducting research in fifty-nine counties in Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, and Guizhou provinces; and the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Their survey of 37,181 students aged eight to fifteen, compared the nutrition, health, and educational outcomes of students in boarding school students to those not in boarding school. They concluded that students in boarding school had poorer nutrition and health than those who were not, and also performed at lower academic levels.



---

Collectively, these challenges strongly suggest that students at KNBS were unable to learn well. I recommend keeping children in village schools until they finish grade three. Students at this age still need their parents and relatives to care for them.

Unquestionably, education quality at KNBS would be better if class size was reduced and classes were *not* held for ten and a half consecutive days followed by a four-day holiday.

Reopening village schools seems unlikely. Local government invested a great deal in building this school and represented it as so successful that other areas should emulate it. In addition, the millions of RMB and political capital invested in KNBS have surely influenced the provincial government to advocate that other county governments should copy this school system model in the near future in order to demonstrate their desire to positively reform the education system in Mtsho sngon.

The ultimate goal of education is to empower people, their families, their communities, and the nation with the new knowledge and skills that they learn. In the best of worlds, education should be a teaching and learning process through which people learn skills and new knowledge enabling them to think critically, to easily learn new skills, and thus be better prepared for future tasks in a modern, rapidly changing world. A school is, therefore, not only a place to score high on examinations and not violate many rules, but ideally an important site for the transmission of new skills and new knowledge.

#### REFERENCES

- Badan Nima. 1997. The Way Out for Tibetan Education. *Chinese Education and Society* 30(4):7-20.
- Bangsbo, Ellen. 2008. Schooling for Knowledge and Cultural Survival: Tibetan Community Schools in Nomadic Herding Areas. *Educational Review* 60:69-84.

- Guide minzu jisuzhi xuexiao zhidu huibian 贵德民族寄宿制学校制度汇编 [Compilation of Guide Nationalities Boarding School Rules]. 2009. Guide minzu jisuzhi xuexiao 贵德民族寄宿制学校 [Guide Nationalities Boarding School].
- Postiglione, Gerard A and Ben Jiao, 2009. Tibet's Relocated Schooling: Popularization Reconsidered. *Asian Survey* 49:895-914.
- Tshe dpal rdo rje, Rin chen rdo rje, Gerald Roche, and Charles Kevin Stuart. 2009. A Tibetan Girl's Hair Changing Ritual. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 5.
- Xuexiao houqin guanli tiaoli 学校后勤管理条例 [School Logistics Management Rules]. 2009. Guide minzu jisuzhi xuexiao 贵德民族寄宿制学校 [Guide Nationalities Boarding School].
- Wang Aiqing, Alexis Medina, Renfu Luo, Yaojiang Shi, and Ai Yue. 2016. To Board or Not to Board: Evidence from Nutrition, Health and Education Outcomes of Students in Rural China. *China & World Economy* 24(3):52-66.
- Zhu Zhiyong. 2007. *State Schooling and Ethnic Identity: the Politics of a Tibetan Neidi Secondary School in China*. Lanham, MD: Lexington.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- 'ba' rdzong འབའ་རྫོང་། (Tongde 同德),  
 'dzin dbag འཛིན་བདག་ (Ban zhuren 班主任)  
 'phrang dmar འཕྲང་དམར་། (Changmu 常牧)  
*banji kaopingfen* 班级考评分  
 brag dkar བྲག་དཀར་། (Xinghai 兴海)  
 brag dmar nang བྲག་དམར་ནང་། (Zheme ang 者么昂)  
 chab cha ཆབ་ཇ། (Qiabuqia 恰不恰)  
 Changzhou 常州  
 chu nub ལྷུ་ལྷུ་། (Hexi 河西)  
 chu shar ལྷུ་ཤར་། (Hedong 河东)  
 chu srib ལྷུ་སྲིབ་། (Heyin 河阴)  
 Deyu chu 德育处

Fu Xiaozhang 副校长

Gong qing nian tuan 共青团

gser chen གསེར་ཆེན། (Gonghe 共和)

Guide minzu jisuzhi xuexiao zhidu huibian 贵德民族寄宿制学校制度  
汇编

Guide xian gong'an ju 贵德县公安局

Guide xian shipin yaopin guanli ju 贵德县食品药品监督管理局

Guide xian weisheng ju 贵德县卫生局

Guide xian xiaofang dadui 贵德县消防大队

Hainan zhou zhong xiaoxue banzhuren gongzuo shouce 海南州中小学  
班主任工作手册

Jiangsu 江苏

Jiaoshi guanli zhidu 教师管理制度

Jiaowu chu 教务处

Jichu zhishi 基础知识

Jinggao chufen 警告处分

kao shenme jiu jiao shenme 考什么就教什么

khri ka ཁྲི་ཀ། (Guide 贵德)

la ze ba ལ་ཙེ་བ། (Laxiwa 拉西瓦)

laodong jie 劳动节

mang rdzong མང་རྫོང། (Guinan 贵南)

mgo log མགོ་ལོག། (Guoluo 果洛)

mtsho byang མཚོ་བྱང། (Haibei 海北)

mtsho lho khul gyi 'gan babs slob gso'i bod yig tshod lta'i slob deb མཚོ་  
སྡོ་ལུ་གྱི་འགན་བབས་སྡོ་བ་གསེའི་བོད་ཡིག་ཚོད་ལྷའི་སྡོ་བ་དེ། (Hainanzhou yiwu  
jiaoyu zangyuwen shiyong jiaocai 海南州义务教育藏语文试用  
教材)

mtsho lho khul gyi slob grwa chung 'bring gi bod yig slob deb sgrig  
rtsom tshogs pa མཚོ་སྡོ་ལུ་གྱི་སྡོ་བ་གྲ་ཚུང་འབྲིང་གི་བོད་ཡིག་སྡོ་བ་དེ་བ་རྒྱུ་གྱི་ཚོ་ཚོགས་  
ལ། Hainan zhou zhongxiaoxue zangyuwen jiaocai bianxie  
weiyuanhui 海南州中小学藏语文教材编写委员会

mtsho lho མཚོ་སྡོ། (Hainan 海南)

mtsho nub མཚོ་ལུ། (Haixi 海西)

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྐྱོ། (Qinghai 青海)

nang chen རང་ཆེན། (Nangqian 囊谦)

*neidi* 内地

Padan Nima, dpal ldan nyi ma དཔལ་ལྷན་ཉི་མ།

*putong ban* 普通班

Qinghai sheng jiaoyu ting jiaocai bianji chu 青海省教育厅教材编辑部

*qingming jie* 清明节

rmab lho མ་ལོ། (Huangnan 黄南)

sdong rgan thang སྣང་རྒན་ཐང། (Dongguo tang 东果堂)

*shuangyu ban* 双语班

Shenghuo guanli chu 生活管理处

*shuji* 书记

stong che སྟོང་ཅེ། (Dangche 当车)

tshe dpal rdo rje ཚེ་དཔལ་རྡོ་རྗེ།

*xiaozhang* 校长

Xuesheng ketang guanli guize 学生课堂管理规则

Xuesheng sushe guanli zhidu 学生宿舍管理制度

Xuesheng zhuan yi fang'an 学生转移方案

Xuexiao houqin guanli tiaoli 学校后勤管理条例

Xuexiao jiaozhigong guanli zhidu 学校教职工管理制度

Xuexiao richang guanli zhidu 学校日常管理制度

yul shul ཡུལ་ཤུལ། (Yushu 玉树)

zi ling ཟླ་ལིང། (Xining 西宁)

---

## A MONGGHUL EVIL EXPELLING WHIP

Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春, Joint Surgery Department,  
Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital)

### ABSTRACT

A whip used in exorcisms that was kept in a Mongghul (Tu) home in Huzhu Mongghul (Tu) Autonomous County, Qinghai Province, PR China in 2016 is described, including how it was made, the whip's creation during the time of a lunar eclipse, and the role of the whip in exorcisms. Four types of whip are described.

### KEYWORDS

exorcism, Huzhu, Mongghul, Mongol, Monguor, Qinghai, Tu, whips

Once the sun or moon is caught by a *zan*,<sup>1</sup> people immediately ring bells, beat iron shovels, gongs, and cooking pots; whisper; shout; scream; and blow conch shell horns to threaten the *zan* so it will set the sun or moon free as soon as possible. Once set free, the sun or moon slowly comes out from their trap.

On the eighth lunar month of 1940, when my mother - who was pregnant with me - and other family members were about to eat lunch after harvesting crops, the bright light of day suddenly turned to darkness. Sheep baaed and oxen bellowed in the fields. The hot noon weather abruptly became cooler. Soon, stars appeared in the sky. Mother and the others realized it was a solar eclipse,<sup>2</sup> and immediately beat their sickles together. A bit later, the sun slowly came out again.

Mongghul believe solar and lunar eclipses are bad omens. After this eclipse, some people visited Losiza Lamadii, a religious practitioner in Zhuashidi Village, Danma Town. At that time, the only well-known *szii pugh* 'diviner' in the Mongghul area was Losiza Lamadii. He made a divination and said, "After this solar eclipse, the scriptures indicate disaster will soon befall rich people."

True to this prediction, the implementation of Tudigaige 'the Land Reform Movement' in 1952 meant that rich families were placed in the *funong* 'rich man' and *dizhu* 'landlord' categories and consequently suffered during this movement.

*Jiraqog*<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> There are twelve types of *zan* (Tibetan, *btsan*) 'spirits' that can send disease. *Zan* travel on paths in straight lines. If a person's path intersects that of a *zan*, thus blocking their way, an illness such as paralysis or an epileptic fit results. *Zan* can also knock down such obstructions as trees. *Zan* are only encountered on the first, eighth, and fifteenth days of each lunar month (Limusishiden 2015:39).

<sup>2</sup> *Narani wari* 'sun in caught'.

<sup>3</sup> Jiraqog (b. 1940) is my father's (Limuzhunmaa, b. 1942) elder sister. She married and moved into her husband's home in Zhuashidi Village, Danma Town. Limusishiden visited her there on 28 June 2016, where she provided this account.

---

## A WHIP IN XANBU'S HOME

In 2016, a *luusiza* 'whip' was kept in Xanbu's (b. 1937) home in Wayog (Wayao) Mongghul (Tu) Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu Mongghul Autonomous County, Haidong City, Qinghai Province. It was used to exorcise evil.

Xanbu's husband, Darijii (1936-2016), was a farmer who died from a bowel obstruction in 2016 just before I had planned to visit his home to collect information about the whip.

The whip was made from two ox hide strands and featured a brass handle that was screw-threaded and about twenty cm in length. The long, twisted section of the whip (thong) was eighty-four cm long. The popper (cracker) was made of three thin hide strands with attached red cloth pieces. A red cloth was also attached to the midsection of the whip.

In 2016, Xanbu had two married daughters who lived in their husbands' homes, and two sons (Danjariduriji, b. 1976 and Zhumanbin, b. 1978). Danjariduriji lived with his wife and children in a newly-constructed home near his mother's home. Xanbu lived with Zhumanbin, who was a farmer, his wife (Caicangshiji, b. 1982), and their two daughters and a son.

Xanbu told me that in around 1957, there was one night at bed time when she suddenly heard pots being banged and blaring conch shell horns. When her family members hurriedly went outside, they saw that the moon had vanished. They realized it had been caught by a *zan*. Darijii told Xanbu to bring the cooking pot from the kitchen and beat it with an iron hammer to help frighten the *zan* away from the moon. Meanwhile, Darijii went to the roof of the house, lit incense, and made prostrations in all four directions to Tingere 'Heaven' and all the deities.

Afterwards, he went to a room where he took a piece of ox skin that was tanning in a vat. He cut a piece, twisted it into a whip, and cracked it in the air until the moon eventually reappeared. Afterwards, he thought it would be good to keep it in his home for exorcisms. He had heard that a whip made during a solar or lunar eclipse was more

powerful in expelling ghosts and ensuring security for family members against illness.

Ever since the night of the lunar eclipse on which it was made, the whip was hung on a nail driven into a wall inside the room where Darijii and Xanbu slept. This room was at the west side of their courtyard.

If someone felt discomfort, for example, dizziness and headaches, or if a child suffered from insomnia, unexplained crying, and feeling frail and in low spirits, Darijii might have concluded that ghosts or evils were responsible. He then performed a Yuiyanda 'whip\_by'/'use whip to drive away' Ritual. First the courtyard gate was opened wide, Darijii took the whip down from the wall, and went to the sleeping room where, if a child was ill, they were first put on a bed. Holding the whip, he patted the ailing child's head and upper body while cursing the evil spirits:

*Tui! Ndani kudu rdesa rdeguni gua, yanglajin szari mengu gua, musisa musiguni gua. Nige rogshdi xi! Qi ndirii yan shanglala rwa?! Nige rogshdi! Qi anji xgu duralasa anji xi!"*

*Tui!*<sup>1</sup> There is no food to eat, no gold and silver to use, and no clothes to wear in my home. Get away! Why do you come here?! Get way! Go wherever you want to go!"

Darijii then cracked the whip in the air of the room where the ailing child was lying. Then he walked out from the room, still cracking the whip, and rushed to the gate until all the evils were driven out through the gate. He then slammed the gate shut, and bolted it. This gate was not to be opened again until the next morning.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sounds of spitting.



---

THE *SUTANG PUGHA* RITUAL

Mongghul families held *sutang pugha* 'ritual with red hot stones'<sup>1</sup> twice a year in their homes. The ritual was held, according to the lunar calendar, on New Year's Eve and the fifteenth day of the first month. At night, Darijii first went to a riverbank where he gathered three round, bluish white stones. He then brought them home, and at around eight or nine PM before the families began their festival feast, Darijii heated the three stones inside the kitchen fire until they glowed red. Darijii next put them in a bucket of boiled water that also contained juniper twigs. As steam rose from the bucket, Darijii asked all his family members to purify their bodies and faces with the steam and thus expel evil. Some adults also rubbed the water from the bucket over their eyes and faces.

Next, Darijii's son took the bucket and walked bent over while Darijii followed behind, cracking the whip to threaten any evils and drive them away. After going into each room in the home compound (including the sheep pen) with the *sutang* and the whip, the courtyard gate was opened. Darijii's son went out through the gate and poured the stones and steaming water in front of the front gate as Darijii cracked the whip toward the courtyard gate. Once his son ran back inside and immediately barred the gate, Darijii stopped cracking the whip. This signified that all the evils had been driven away from their home.

Families in both Darijii's village and neighboring villages borrowed the whip to perform exorcisms.

It was taboo to use this whip to threaten and beat livestock in Darijii's home.

After Darijii's death, Xanbu put the whip under her pillow because she felt safer while in bed at night.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Limusishiden and Stuart (1994:415-416) for more.

---

WHIPS IN THE MONGGHUL AREA

General terms for whips include *luusiza* and *waila* (certain villages in Wushi Town, for example, Wayog and Yomajaa villages); *xjiu* (Jangja Village, Hongyazigou Township and Zhaxilunwa Village in Sunduo Township), and *yiuyan* (Tughuan and Shdangja villages, Danma Town).

The *yiuyan* in Tughuan Village, Danma Town was used to encourage fine horses. In the past, some well-to-do families had such whips. Having a fine, well-equipped horse was considered glorious and was the desire of many Mongghul men (Limusishiden et al. 2014:186-187). The *yiuyan* handle was generally made from birch and was about thirty cm in length. The thong was about sixty cm long and braided from four strands of ox hide. Its proximal section was laced with ox hide strands. An iron ring was fixed at the end of the handle, making it convenient to hang on a house pillar when not in use.

*Yiuyan* in Tughuan Village, Danma Town were also used to encourage horses, mules, donkeys, or oxen while they plowed fields. The wooden handle was about seventy cm in length and the thong was made with ox hide about sixty cm in length. This type of whip was used to encourage the livestock to walk quickly. The handle was also used to scrape soil or mud from the plow's surface, which explains the handle's length.

The *yiuyan* used on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month in Tughuan Village, Danma Town was made of twisted strands of hemp stems. It was about 250 cm in length with a cracker made of a thin strand of hemp about thirty cm in length. This whip was only used on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month (Mid-Autumn Festival).<sup>1</sup>

Before the moon had risen, a square table was placed in the courtyard center. A moon-cake<sup>2</sup> about sixty cm in diameter was

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2016, a few elders used the term "Niiman sarani haran-tawun" for this festival, however, most used the Chinese term "Bayue shiwu." Both translate as 'the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month'.

<sup>2</sup> After the superior wheat powder was fermented, women kneaded and rolled out the dough on a kneading board and spread bitter bean powder, red rice, curcuma, brown sugar, and rape oil on the dough. They applied it

---

prepared and placed on the square table. A couple of small apples were then pushed into the cake. A watermelon was also placed by the mooncake.

Next, an incense offering was made in the courtyard. The father of the home then cracked the hemp-stem whip in the air, sending forth a loud, clear sound. After cracking the whip about ten times, family members faced the rising moon and prostrated three times. Finally, the family members sat on the ground facing the moon and ate the apples, watermelon, and the big, steamed mooncake. Cracking this whip on this festival night was meant to scare the *zan* away and protect the moon so that it would rise smoothly into the sky.

Another *yiuyan* used in Tughuan Village, Danma Town often featured a wooden handle and was made of ox hide. With no cracker at the end of the whip, the handle and thong were about a meter in length. The thong usually consisted of ox hide without braiding or twists. The whip was often used to herd livestock, drive poultry into their coops, and drive pigs into their pens. It was also used to lash persons, for example, a husband used it to beat his wife if they quarreled and a father beat his son when he made mistakes or was disobedient.

#### AN EXORCISING WHIP IN DANGYAN VILLAGE, WEIYUAN TOWN

I interviewed Warimacairang (b. 1968) in my office in Xining on 30 June 2016. Warimacairang is a Mongghul from Dangyan (Dongyuan), Weiyuan Town and is fluent in the Mongghul language. He told me:

---

evenly with their hands, rolled it, kneaded it into round pieces of dough, and again flattened it with the rolling pin. They also again spread bitter bean powder, red rice, curcuma, brown sugar, and rape oil over the dough. In this way, two or three layers of color were added to the dough. Two chopsticks were used to make pieces of dough resembling flower petals, which were put on the top of the big moon-cake. A half-moon and a full-moon shape were made with the rim of a cup on the dough, which was then steamed.

Warimaxja (b. 1963) is a *shdenzin*<sup>1</sup> in my village. He has a whip with a thirty-cm long handle and a thong that is about two meters in length. The whip is made of twisted hemp stems. From the handle to the cracker, the thong becomes increasingly thin. An ill person commonly sends a representative to invite the *shdenzin*. Warimaxja and the representative then go to the village temple to consult Danjan, the village *purghan*.<sup>2</sup> If the *purghan* suggests that the *shdenzin* should go to the ailing person's home to conduct a rite to expel evil with the whip, Warimaxja visits the ailing person's home, and then whips the evil from the patient's body and drives the evil outside their home.

## CONCLUSION

In the early twenty-first century, the various locally-produced whips in Mongghul areas have vanished with very little documentation. Fine Mongghul riding horses have also disappeared. Mechanized agricultural production has replaced horses, mules, oxen, and donkeys or, with the exit of younger villagers pursuing employment in towns and cities, many fields were left uncultivated. Only in certain remote, steep mountain areas were livestock kept in 2016, and thus a few whips, other than those used in ritual exorcisms, were still in use.

In the Tibetan cultural sphere, the use of whips in exorcism may have been widespread, e.g., Geare (1907:132) notes "...for similar purposes of exorcism the Tibetan lama wields a whip with a handle of human bone and lashes, of human skin..." Similarly, in a study of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Spirit-spear/spirit-pole soothsayer, a *shdenzin* holds a pole *purghan* (explained in the next note) vertically in front of him with both hands. The spirit descends, the spear begins trembling, and a supplicant presents his case and receives instructions from the spirit in the spear as to what to do.

<sup>2</sup>"The *purghan* is a deity represented in the form of a sedaned image or a cloth-covered pole held by four men or a single man, respectively. The *purghan* permeates Mongghul village life. It is available for consultation and represents the possibility that supplicants' distresses may be alleviated. It is consulted to identify a suitable spouse, treat disease, exorcise evil, ensure well-being and good harvests, and alleviate droughts" (Limusishden and Jugui 2010:23).

origins of Korean dance, Hahn (1985:29) mentions "a golden mask dance in which evil spirits are exorcised with a whip ... all of them [dances] of Central Asian origin."

Given the realities of rapid cultural loss at a time of great social and cultural transition in China, this description of whips and their use among the Mongghul of Huzhu contributes to a better understanding of the worldview of local people, particularly as it relates to their perception of evil and exorcism.

#### IMAGES

The whip hung on a wall in Xanbu's (b. 1937) home in Wayog Village (June 2016, Limusishiden).



Xanbu holds the whip kept in her home in Wayog Village (June 2016, Limusishiden).



---

REFERENCES

- Geare, Randolph I. 1907. Magical Cures. *Scientific American* 97(8): 132-133.
- Hahn Man-young. 1985. The Origin of Korean Music. *The World of Music* 27(2):16-31.
- Limusishiden. 2015. Health and Illness Among the Mongghul in Gerald Roche and CK Stuart (eds) *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 36: Mapping the Monguor, 30-63, 301-332.
- \_\_\_ and Jugui. 2010. Passions and Colored Sleeves. Mongghul Lives in Eastern Tibet. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 7.
- \_\_\_, Jugui, Kelly Ward, and CK Stuart. 2014. Fading Memories, Faded Lives: Mongghul (Tu) Photographs from Qinghai, China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 34.
- \_\_\_ and Kevin Stuart. 1994. Caring for All the World: The Huzhu Monguor (Tu) *Pram* in H Kaplan and Donald Whisenhunt (eds) *Opuscula Altaica: Essays in Honor of Henry Schwarz*. Bellingham: Western Washington University Press, 408-426.

---

**NON-ENGLISH TERMS**

- Bayue shiwu 八月十五  
Dangyan, Dongyuan 东元  
Danma 丹麻  
Dizhu 地主  
Dongjia 东家  
Funong 富农  
Haidong 海东  
Huzhu 互助  
Jangja, Zhangjia 张家  
Li Dechun 李得春  
Qinghai 青海  
Sunduo, Songduo 松多  
Tu 土  
Tudigaige 土地改革  
Tughuan, Tuguan 土官  
Wayog, Wayao 瓦窑  
Weiyuan 威远  
Wushi 五十  
Xining 西宁  
Yomajaa, Yaomajia 姚麻家  
Zhuashidi, Baizhuazi 白瓜子

---

THE VITALITY OF KHAMS TIBETAN VARIETIES  
IN WEIXI COUNTY

Hiroyuki Suzuki (IKOS, University of Oslo)

ABSTRACT

This article presents an overview of the multilingual situation of Weixi County, Yunnan Province, in the southeastern Tibetosphere, and discusses the vitality of several Tibetan varieties currently used by Tibetans in Weixi who live alongside Naxi, Lisu, Bai, Yi, and Pumi people. In this borderland area, most Tibetans are multilingual, speaking Lisu and/or Naxi in addition to Yunnanese, a dialect of Mandarin. I focus on two local Tibetan varieties: Gagatang and Tacheng. The former has become endangered, while many speakers still use the latter. Intergenerational transmission of Gagatang appears to be declining, and community attitudes towards the language are increasingly negative, whereas Tacheng Tibetan appears relatively vital, speakers of this variety have strong positive attitudes towards their mother tongue, and generally consider multilingualism to be normal. I identify two factors that contribute to Gagatang's endangerment. First is the local demographic context, where none of the minority languages are supported by the majority of villagers. A second factor is the lack of strong identities attached to local languages. This research suggests that minority languages are more valued in communities that also value ethnic diversity, thus suggesting that a key to maintaining linguistic diversity in the Tibetosphere is the retention of diverse identities.

KEYWORDS

Khams, language endangerment, language vitality, multilingualism, Tibetan, Yunnan

---

Suzuki, Hiroyuki. 2017. The Vitality of Khams Tibetan Varieties in Weixi County. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 44:256-284.



---

**INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>**

Weixi Lisu Autonomous County is located in northwestern Yunnan Province, China, and is one of three counties within Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. It is located in a contact zone where multiple ethnic groups meet, including Tibetans, Naxi, and Lisu. This area is also in the southeastern corner of the Tibetosphere, i.e., the region under strong Tibetan cultural influence, which more specifically, means the region influenced by the Tibetan language. Weixi is a highly multilingual area, where Lisu, Khams Tibetan, Naxi, Pumi, Malimasa, Bai, and Weixi Chinese are spoken. Locally, minority languages have traditionally been held in high regard with both merchants and villagers speaking multiple languages other than their mother tongue. Though this persists, Chinese influence is growing and minority languages are becoming weaker. Despite this shared sociolinguistic context, the vitality of the ethnic languages in Weixi is not decreasing at the same pace; some now face endangerment while others do not. This paper explores why this disparity exists between the vitality of local minority languages.

I focus on Melung Tibetan, a dialectal subgroup of Khams Tibetan that is spoken mainly in the central area of Weixi. Melung Tibetan, a Tibetic language (Tournadre 2014), has not yet been discussed from the perspective of language endangerment, despite its linguistic peculiarity and value as a data source to both general

---

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of the paper was presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Workshop on the Sociolinguistics of Language Endangerment (Kunming, 2014). I thank Nicolas Tournadre, David Bradley, Gerald Roche, and AHP editors for their many insightful comments. I also thank my friends from Weixi for their generous assistance and support. Field research was funded by three Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science [JSPS]: "Dialectological Study of the Tibetan Minority Languages in the Tibetan Cultural Area in West Sichuan" (headed by the present author), "International Field Survey of the rGyalrongic Languages" (headed by Yasuhiko Nagano, No. 21251007), and "Study on the Dialectal Development of Tibetan Spoken in Yunnan, China, through a Description of the Linguistic Diversity" (headed by the present author, No. 25770167).

---

linguistics and Tibetic dialectology (Suzuki and Tshering mTshomo 2009). Furthermore, although the term "minority languages" within the Tibetosphere is generally used to refer to non-Tibetic languages (Roche 2014), it is important to note that many Tibetic varieties currently face endangerment (Suzuki 2012a, 2014a; Suzuki and Sonam Wangmo 2014, 2015). In addition, Melung Tibetan is not counted as a language minority among the ethnic minority languages spoken in Weixi County because of the general view regarding Tibetan as the Tibetan nationality's majority language. However, despite a language status, it may face endangerment under the circumstances of rapid modernization in contemporary society, including schooling, mass-media, and change of social environment and language use.

I will primarily focus on two cases of Melung Tibetan dialects: Gagatang and Tacheng. The situation of these two varieties is completely different. The former has become an endangered variety, while the latter is still used by many speakers. The paper aims to clarify the sociolinguistic context that has resulted in the differing vitalities of these varieties.

The data discussed in this article was collected during eight fieldtrips to Weixi between 2009 and 2014, ranging from four to ten days in duration. I conducted approximately ten interviews with around fifty consultants, ranging in age from their teens to their sixties. I also collected information on the sociolinguistic context of the area through interviews and informal conversation with villagers.

The article is divided into two main parts. The first section contains basic information regarding Weixi County's geography, inhabitants, and languages. Especially since the linguistic situation in Weixi is not widely known, I focus particularly on providing information on the various languages spoken in Weixi. This background is useful to understanding the sociolinguistic context that contributes to the differing vitality of Gagatang and Tagchen Tibetan, which is the subject of the second section of the paper. The discussion in this section deals with language use, speakers' attitude, vitality, and language endangerment. In conclusion, I summarize the findings of

---

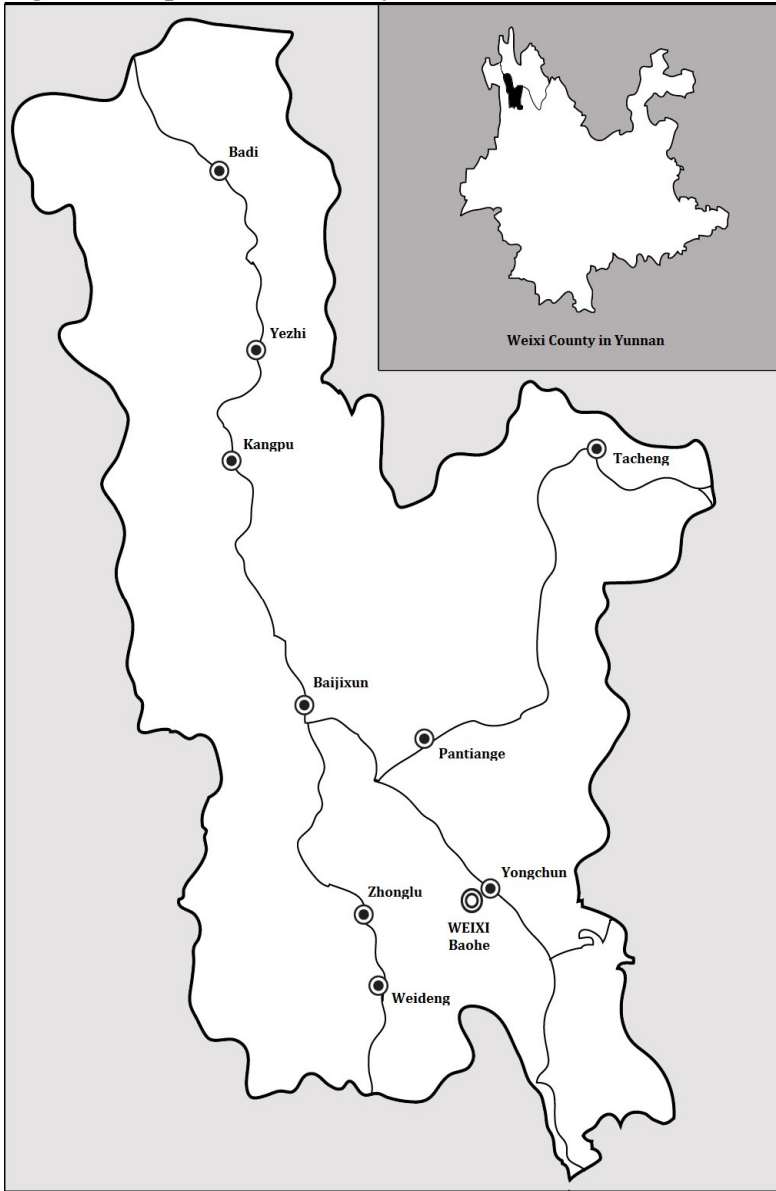
my research and discuss the relationship between language vitality and ethnic identity in the Tibetosphere.

#### GEOGRAPHY, ETHNIC GROUPS, AND LANGUAGES

##### Geographical Information and Inhabitants

Several ethnic groups inhabit Weixi County. According to Wu (2009:206), the population of Weixi is around 145,000 (in 2005), and consists mainly of Lisu, Naxi, Bai, Tibetan, Han, Yi, and Pumi. The majority of inhabitants live in the area alongside the Lancangjiang (Mekong), Yongchun, and Lapu rivers. The Yunling Range is the watershed between the Mekong and Yongchun in the west and the Lapu River in the east. Most Weixi residents are basically cultivators, keeping domestic animals such as cattle, pigs, and chickens. The Tibetans in this region mainly cultivate rice (Suzuki 2012b). People engaged in a nomadic lifestyle have not been reported.

Figure 1. Map of Weixi County.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Gerald Roche redrew this map based on a map in *Weixi Lisuzu Zizhixian Gaikuang* (2008).

---

Weixi Tibetans live primarily in Tacheng Town and Pantiange, and Badi (from east to west) townships. All villages in this area are inhabited by multiple ethnic groups, however, the proportion of each group differs in each village, as are the spoken dialects of each ethnic group. I mainly deal with the north and central areas of this county because the southern area is generally not inhabited by Tibetans.

### Linguistic Overview on the Languages in Weixi

Weixi County is a multiethnic, multilingual area. The area principally inhabited by Tibetans is limited. Traditional toponyms often reflect local languages and in our case, the ethnic and linguistic complexity in Weixi County is obvious regarding this aspect. For example, "Weixi" is a Chinese name created during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) (Wu 2009). The area is traditionally known as 'Ba' lung in Literary Tibetan (henceforth LT), whereas it is locally called /me lō/<sup>1</sup> in the northwest Tibetan area of Weixi (around Badi Township) and /ni na/ in the central area (around Tacheng Town and Pantiange Township). The former oral form corresponds to LT, whereas the latter is not of Tibetan origin (though many locals do not know it), but of Naxi origin (Rock 1999:206). In Weixi, even areas that are principally inhabited by Tibetans have non-Tibetan toponyms.

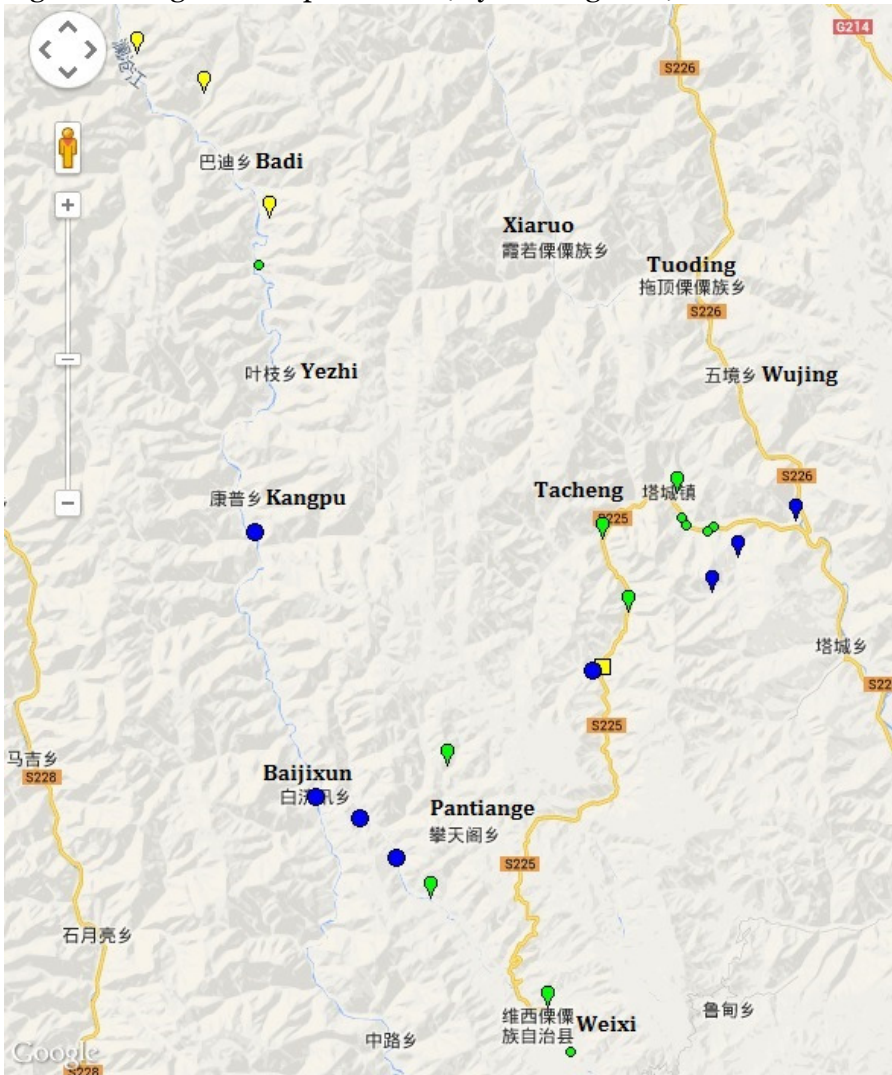
To better understand the sociolinguistic situation in Weixi County, I have intermittently conducted an overview survey of multiple languages spoken in this county for several years, concentrating on a descriptive linguistic study of the Tibetic languages. The following map (Fig. 2), designed with online Geocoding mapping,<sup>2</sup> demonstrates the distribution of languages that I have studied in Weixi County, including Khams Tibetan (divided into three sub-groups), Lisu, Malimasa, and Naxi.

---

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, tone markings are omitted for the sake of simplicity.

<sup>2</sup> <http://ktgis.net/gcode/lonlatmapping.html>, accessed 3 January 2015.

Figure 2. Linguistic map of Weixi (my investigation).



- 📍 East Yunling Mountain (Khams)
- 📍 West Yunling Mountain (Khams)
- 📍 Lisu
- 📍 Malimasa
- 📍 Melung (Khams)
- 📍 Naxi

This discussion mainly focuses on Melung Khams (indicated by 📍). As shown above, it is surrounded by non-Tibetic languages, such as Lisu, Naxi, and Malimasa. Furthermore, distribution of East Yunling Mountain Khams is close to Melung at the easternmost area of Fig. 2.

---

This implies that we need an overall understanding of related languages surrounding Melung in order to discuss its current situation. I shall thus briefly present an overview of these languages spoken in Weixi, including Khams Tibetan, Naxi, Lisu, Malimasa, and Weixi Chinese. None are well-documented. In terms of administrative divisions such as Weixi in this article, statistics and evaluation for language endangerment provided in *Ethnologue* (Lewis, et al. 2015) are not helpful because they are organized according to language, not the administrative units for each language. Furthermore, information on dialectal differences within languages is lacking. For example, the entry on Khams Tibetan (ISO 639-3: khg) provides no statistics based on possible dialectal divisions.

### Khams Tibetan

All the Tibetan dialects spoken in Weixi belong to Khams Tibetan. Based on my most recent claim (Suzuki 2013a; see also Table 1 below), there are three subgroups: Melung, East Yunling Mountain, and West Yunling Mountain. The first two subgroups belong to the Sems-kyi-nyila group, and the last one to the sDerong-nJol subgroup. Melung Tibetan is an independent dialectal subgroup of the Sems-kyi-nyila group, which has five subdialectal groups: rGyalthang, East Yunling Mountain, Melung, dNgo, and Lamdo. The last two varieties are spoken in one village or hamlet respectively, located on the boundary of two dialectal groups parallel to the Sems-kyi-nyila group. Melung is mainly spoken within Weixi County. The dialects belonging to the West Yunling Mountain subgroup are spoken in the northwest corner of Weixi County. Badi Township is probably the southernmost area where this subgroup is found. Linguistic features of Melung Tibetan are presented in detail below.

Table 1: Classification of Yunnan Tibetan (based on Suzuki 2013a).<sup>1</sup>

Group	Subgroup	Vernaculars
Sems-kyi-nyila	rGyalthang	rGyalthang, Yangthang
	East Yunling Mountain	Nyishe, Qizong
	Melung	mThachu, Zhollam
	dNgo	dNgo, Phuri
	Lamdo	Lamdo
sDerong-nJol	West Yunling Mountain	nJol, Yungling, Budy
	sPomtserag	sPomtserag, Shugsum
	mBalhag	mBalhag
	Bodgrong	Bodgrong
	gYagrwa	gYagrwa
Chaphreng	gTorwarong	gTorwarong, sNgonshod

## Naxi

According to He and Jiang (1985), Naxi dialects spoken in Weixi County are classified as belonging to the Lijiangba group. However, we can find local varieties between which speakers have slight difficulty communicating. These may be divided into Tacheng, Yongchun, and Yezhi (from west to east). Most Naxi living in Weixi practise Tibetan Buddhism, and have some competency in Tibetan, especially people living in Tacheng. An overview of Naxi dialects spoken in Weixi is still unavailable.

## Lisu

Lisu dialects spoken in Weixi County are classified as belonging to the Nujiang group (Mu and Sun 2012:12-14). There are, however, many different features between the dialects spoken in the west of Weixi (along the Lancangjiang and Yongchun rivers) and the east (along the Lapu River). This suggests that we can classify Lisu dialects in Weixi into two subgroups. However, the differences do not prevent speakers from communicating. Mu and Sun (2012) provide data on Weixi Lisu,

<sup>1</sup> The data provided in Table 1 is an updated version of Suzuki (2013a).



---

but do not specify which dialect is recorded. Compared with my data, the words listed in the vocabulary of Mu and Sun (2012) may be closest to the eastern Weixi (Tacheng) dialect.

### Malimasa

Malimasa is a Naish language spoken by around 1,000 inhabitants in Kenuo, Haini, and Chuanda administrative villages of Tacheng Town. It has two dialectal varieties, one of which is spoken only in Ruke Hamlet. The other is more widespread. Speakers do not belong to a single officially recognized nationality. Some are Naxi, others are Lisu, and others are Tibetan. Local folklore claims that their ancestors were Moso (Na-speaking people) from Muli (Sichuan) and that the autonym Malimasa originates from Muli-Moso. However, all the Malimasa-speaking people do not share this oral tradition. The Lisu Malimasa-speakers especially, do not have such an oral tradition. Short linguistic descriptions of Malimasa are available (Li 2013, Suzuki 2015).

### Weixi Chinese

Weixi Chinese is a member of Yunnanese, Southwest Mandarin (Wu 2007). Characterized by a heavy fricativised pronunciation of narrow vowels among the vernaculars of Yunnanese, it functions as a *lingua franca* throughout Weixi County. It is used in the central town and in villages for communication between speakers whose mother tongues differ.

Except for recent Han Chinese immigrants, monolingualism is uncommon in Weixi County. Most ethnic minorities are multilingual, and speak Naxi and/or Tibetan in addition to their mother tongue, as well as Weixi Chinese.

### Two Geographical Sites of Melung Tibetan

The dialects belonging to the Melung subgroup are mainly spoken in the central part of Weixi County, distributed in two towns and two townships: Baohe (capital town of Weixi), Yongchun, Pantiangge, and

Tacheng. The Tibetan inhabitants living in the first two are recent immigrants from Tacheng Town and Badi Township in the northwest corner of Weixi County. They immigrated mainly after the establishment of the PRC.

Pantiange Township<sup>1</sup> is located in central Weixi, and has two administrative villages where Tibetan is spoken: Gagatang and Gongnong. The three hamlets in Gagatang inhabited by Tibetans are Gaga, Shaoluo, and Bulu.<sup>2</sup> Gongnong<sup>3</sup> has only one hamlet inhabited by Tibetans.

Shaoluo Hamlet (Fig. 3), the main location of my fieldwork, is situated on a hillside along the Yongchun River. Houses are dispersed among crop fields and thus the population is not very dense within the hamlet. There are no sacred places or religious sites nearby.

---

<sup>1</sup> The toponym "Pantiange" is a Naxi name meaning 'plain of fireweeds (*epilobium angustifolium*)'. Most of the area of Pantiange Township is inhabited by Naxi and Lisu, with Tibetans in the minority. However, it also has a local Tibetan name, /pA d̥ʰ/ in the Zhollam dialect.

<sup>2</sup> The toponym of the first two hamlets is of Tibetan origin, Gaga, which is a Chinese transcription of the local Tibetan word /ka ka/ 'small'. It should be noted that this word does not exist in a local dialect, but rather in dialects spoken alongside the Lancangjiang from Badi to Deqin, that belong to the West Yunling subgroup of the sDerong-nJol group (Table 1). The local Tibetan name is /mu k<sup>h</sup>ɔŋ/. *Shaoluo* is the Chinese transcription of the Tibetan word *zhol lam* 'downwards road'.

<sup>3</sup> Gongnong, an isolate Tibetan hamlet in the north of Pantiange, is named according to the Lisu word designating a "plain like the bottom of a pot." Local Tibetans refer to it as /<sup>h</sup>tsə lɔŋ/ in Tibetan (Suzuki 2011a).

Figure 3. Shaoluo Hamlet (Gagatang).



Tacheng Town<sup>1</sup> in eastern Weixi, bordering Wujing Township of Xianggelila Municipality, is strongly influenced by Tibetan culture. Even the Naxi living there practise Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetan inhabitants of Tacheng live in two areas, divided by the Naxi people living in Qibie Administrative Village. The dialect of each area is different. The dialect east of Qibie belongs to the East Yunling Mountain subgroup, known as the Qizong and Bajo dialects, whereas

<sup>1</sup> The toponym "Tacheng" is of unclear origin. Some say it is the Tibetan *mtha' chu* 'high plain along the river'. Others contend it originates from a Naxi word. Lapu is the ancient name - the same as the river - and may have originated from Naxi or Tibetan *lha phu* or *gla phi* (Karma rGyal mtshan 2002:427-429). In Tacheng Town, several hamlets with a Tibetan name, e.g., Kenuo, corresponding to *'khor lo* 'place where the river turns its flow' in LT, and Gedeng, corresponding to *skobs steng* 'place on which concavities exist' in LT. Bazhu 'place where the people from Batang live' is also of Tibetan origin (*'ba'jo* in LT).

dialects to the west of Qibie belong to the Melung subgroup in three administrative villages: Tacheng (Fig. 4), Kenuo, and Haini.

Within Tacheng Town, I conducted research primarily in three locations along the Lapu River: Gedeng, Geluo, and Yingduwan (Fig. 4). Yingduwan inhabitants live in a small valley between two mountains. Close relationships have formed between inhabitants, for example, there are well-maintained traditional events in which most villagers participate. The mountain to the left in Fig. 4 is worshipped as a deity by villagers. Outside the hamlet, village crop fields exist along the river.

Figure 4. Yingduwan Hamlet (Tacheng).



### Linguistic Overview of the Dialects of the Melung Subgroup

This section describes the situation of language use in the two Melung-spoken areas: Gagatang and Tacheng. This is based on first-hand data obtained through elicitations and observations of language use. I provide an overview of several common but peculiar linguistic features

of Melung Tibetan before describing the sociolinguistic situation. This section describes the situation of language use in the two Melung-spoken areas: Gagatang and Tacheng. This is based on first-hand data obtained through elicitations and observations of language use. I provide an overview of several common but peculiar linguistic features of Melung Tibetan before describing the sociolinguistic situation.

A linguistic feature distinguishing Melung Tibetan from other subgroups of the Sems-kyi-nyila group is the phonological development of LT *r* in initial and glide positions (Suzuki 2009, 2010, 2011bcd, 2013bc; Suzuki and Tshering mTshomo 2009). The *r*-element in these positions causes a rhotacization, valorization, or pharyngealization of the following vowel without influence on the initial consonant. This type of sound correspondence is extremely rare among the Tibetic languages (Jiang 2002, Zhang 2009), but similar to phenomena attested in Naxi dialects in comparison with proto-Naish (Jacques and Michaud 2011). Because of this peculiar sound development, Melung Tibetan is essentially an unintelligible variety for speakers of other Tibetan dialects, including varieties classified in the Sems-kyi-nyila group. However, other phonetic developments are common to it, which is why Melung Tibetan belongs to the Sems-kyi-nyila group.

Other than the idiosyncrasy mentioned above, certain features are common to almost all varieties of Melung Tibetan, for example, a clear contrast between retroflex plosives and affricates, which has an evident LT origin (Suzuki 2011b, 2013bc); /ma, mA, mǎ/ for 'this' (no LT etymon); /ṅoŋ/ for a *copulative verb* (LT *snang*) (Suzuki 2012c); and the evidential encoding strategy exhibiting a visual vs. non-visual contrast (Suzuki 2012c). In addition, regarding the numeral system, the word form of "two" is /mǎ/ (no LT etymon; Suzuki 2014b); the unrounded numbers from twenty to twenty-nine do not require a connector (LT *rtsa*) and are simply formed with "twenty" plus a cardinal number from one to nine. A grammatical sketch of the Zhollam dialect is provided in Suzuki (2011a).

The dialectal difference within Melung Tibetan is somewhat high, and may be divided into two groups: Gagatang and Tacheng.

Conversations with a context are intelligible, whereas narratives without a context are not.

#### LANGUAGE USE IN THE TWO MELUNG-SPEAKING AREAS

I now describe language use in the two Melung-speaking areas, Gagatang and Tacheng, based on information obtained from interviews and elicitations during my fieldwork.

#### Gagatang

The area where Gagatang Tibetan is spoken is mainly inhabited by Tibetans, Lisu, and Han Chinese, who each live in separate hamlets where their native languages are dominant. Meanwhile, Chinese has become a lingua franca for communication between different ethnic groups. The number of Tibetan-speaking people is estimated to be less than 800.

Tibetans living in Gagatang have some lifestyle practices that are rare in other Tibetan cultural areas, such as 'pig pastoralism'<sup>1</sup> and burning lands after the harvest in the belief that it makes them more fertile.<sup>2</sup> These customs are common to those of Lisu living in surrounding area as well as along the Lancangjiang. This may imply frequent, robust contact between the two ethnic groups. Tibetans living in Tacheng often mention that the Tibetan dialect spoken in Gagatang has a "Lisu flavor." However, I have not yet found anything linguistically related to Lisu in Tibetan vernaculars spoken there, although the intonation of Gagatang Tibetan is clearly different from that of Tacheng, which may be one of its Lisu-like features.<sup>3</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> Locally called /p<sup>h</sup>a: <sup>n</sup>ts<sup>h</sup>v/ (LT *phag 'tsho*). This expression is absent in other Tibetan areas outside Weixi. Interestingly, this practice is also attested in the Thewo district, the northernmost part of Ruoergai County, Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan (Kondro Tsering 2012:74-78, 194-198).

<sup>2</sup> Primarily, dry corn plants are burned.

<sup>3</sup> As mentioned earlier, Lisu dialects spoken on the Tacheng side and the Gagatang side differ in lexical forms, not in the phonological system nor

prosodic feature is generally not described in a descriptive linguistic way, hence it is nearly impossible to point out its linguistic features in a few words.

The speakers of Gagatang Tibetan are typically conscious that their dialect is a unique variety that is essentially unintelligible outside of the village. The nearest Tibetan community, Gongnong Village, is far to the north<sup>1</sup> of Gagatang. Though the speakers of Gagatang Tibetan generally know of this community's existence, there are very few kinship and other social relations between the inhabitants of the two villages.

Gagatang Village with neither lamas nor monasteries is also distinctive in its lack of formal religious institutions. I was told that there was a local temple before the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), but this awaits confirmation. Contemporary annual cultural ceremonies and events lack obvious religious meaning. For example, the New Year celebration is conducted in the same way as Han Chinese Chunjie 'Spring Festival', during which villagers climb the hill on the opposite side of the Yongchun River and burn *bsangs* 'incense'. This might be counted as a religious event, but currently, according to my interviews, it is explained as a traditional custom transmitted from the elder generation. Its religious significance has been lost. Almost all Tibetan inhabitants only possess Chinese names.

No lamas give children Tibetan names. Gagatang Tibetan is not used in any cultural activities or religious ceremonies in the community. The language is used only in daily domestic and subsistence activities. Furthermore, villagers have no access to Written Tibetan.

Observing habitual conversations between local Tibetans, one observes that nouns and even the main verbs in a single sentence are

---

prosodic features. The expression "Lisu flavor" may thus indicate a quite similar phonetic phenomenon.

<sup>1</sup> The direct-line distance between Gagatang to Gongnong is around ten kilometers. However, the lack of a direct road between these two locations requires a detour via Pantiangge Village. Since contact between Gagatang and Gongnong is rare, Gagatang inhabitants generally describes Gongnong as "a place far to the north."

borrowed from Chinese. The degree of 'Sinicisation' is thus extremely high in this area. Nevertheless, case markers, verb affixes, and word order remain those of the original Tibetan dialect. Regarding numerals, many younger speakers merely count one to ten in Tibetan and use Chinese numerals for numbers greater than ten.

It is obvious that the speakers of Gagatang Tibetan are gradually losing a sense that it is important to transmit their mother tongue to the next generation. I interviewed four women who were in their twenties from Gagatang who had recently given birth. None of them expressed a wish to transmit Gagatang Tibetan to their children.<sup>1</sup> This situation began with the previous generation, and the four interviewees' parents did not wish to transmit the language to their children. However, because they use Gagatang Tibetan in everyday life, children have gradually acquired it. When Tibetans of the current generation have children, the transmission of the language becomes increasingly precarious. However, Tibetans of the current generation are concerned and some have chosen Tibetan names for their children.

### Tacheng

There are two subgroups of the Sems-kyi-nyila group spoken in Tacheng Town (as an administrative unit), as mentioned above. The description here is principally the case of dialects belonging to the Melung subgroup (henceforth Melung Tibetan). Tacheng Town is mainly inhabited by Tibetans, Naxi, Lisu, and Han Chinese. They generally live in different hamlets, but some villages are inhabited by multiple ethnic groups, particularly those along the main road. Tibetans who speak Melung Tibetan as a mother tongue live in villages where other ethnic languages are also spoken. All Tibetan-speakers live with speakers of other ethnic languages within one village, and are multilingual. However, curiously, the Tibetans do not learn the other Tibetan dialect of the subgroup that is different from their mother tongue. Hence, a conversation between Tibetans from Kenuo and Qizong is generally done in Weixi Chinese. Therefore, the number of

---

<sup>1</sup> Interview conducted in 2011.



---

Melung Tibetan-speakers living in Tacheng Town approximates the population of Tibetans in the town center, Kenuo, and Haini villages, which can be estimated as 4,000 to 5,000.

The situation in Tacheng Village is complicated in the sense that every ethnic group does not always speak the ethnic language presumed by the ethnic group name. Tibetans use two different dialects of the region: the East Yunling Mountain subgroup spoken in the eastern part of Tacheng, and the Melung subgroup spoken in its western part. Meanwhile, some Naxi and Lisu speak Malimasa, and also speak other ethnic languages such as Naxi, Lisu, and Melung Tibetan. The main part of the town is along the Lapu River, and inhabitants, including Tibetans, usually grow rice.<sup>1</sup> Mutual communication among different ethnic minorities are frequent, thanks to the convenient traffic conditions, but no lingua franca seems to exist. Basically, all the ethnic languages are spoken in habitual conversation among different ethnic groups. However, the use of Weixi Chinese is constantly increasing.

Speakers of Tacheng Tibetan generally accept the uniqueness of their variety, which is basically unintelligible outside of the village. This is probably because they know that all the ethnic minorities in Tacheng have their own language. Even though there are two varieties of Khams Tibetan in Tacheng Town, speakers of each variety recognize great difference between their mother tongues. It is natural for the inhabitants that they speak different varieties.

---

<sup>1</sup> For this reason, the Tibetan dialects including Tacheng have a difference of the word form between "rice plant" and "rice grain," which is rare in the Tibetic languages (Suzuki 2012b).

Figure 5. Naxi locals in a Tibetan Buddhist-style ceremony in Chongke Hamlet (2010).



Figure 6. Tibetans participate in a ritual on the fifteenth day of the New Year in Yingduwan Hamlet (2013).



Tibetan cultural and religious influence is stronger in Qizong than Tacheng, because Qizong has Damo Zushidong, a famous monastery that both Tibetans and Naxi within Tacheng regularly visit. Their strong religious belief manifests in their rituals, as shown in Fig. 6. It is noteworthy that Qibie Village, a border zone between the two Tibetan dialect subgroups spoken in Tacheng Town, is inhabited mostly by Naxi who practise Tibetan Buddhism (not the Dongba (Tonba) religion, see Fig. 5). Some Naxi also speak a Tibetan that belongs to the East Yunling Mountain group. This situation may be related to their religious affiliation. Because of the circumstances mentioned above, a peculiar phenomenon is observed: when a child is born, Tibetans ask a lama to name the child. Many Tibetans in Tacheng Town also visit the monastery in Qizong, whereas a small number of them ask a local lama for a child's name. The lamas are mainly from Qizong or further east, where the Yunling Mountain East subgroup is spoken, and lamas give their children a name following the pronunciation of that subgroup. Thus, for example, the name Tshe ring in LT is pronounced in two ways: /ts<sup>hə</sup> fiəŋ/ (Melung Tibetan) and /ts<sup>hə</sup> ri/ (East Yunling Mountain Tibetan). However, most laypeople do not know that these two names have the same origin.

Regarding the use of ethnic languages, the attitude of Tacheng inhabitants towards their own mother tongue is very positive, especially in the case of Malimasa-speakers, who have a strong independent identity. Those who live in Tacheng generally think that the multilingualism is natural and that the peculiarity of their language is easily accepted. This tolerance for linguistic diversity is probably related to the absence of a standard language or dialect within the Melung subgroup. Although the rGyalthang dialect has higher prestige, it is spoken far from Tacheng.

Although each ethnic language in the area has a small number of speakers, none appear endangered. Although the influence of Chinese is steadily increasing, the native speakers of ethnic languages feel that their mother tongue should be transmitted to the next generation, along with other aspects of local cultural heritage. This situation is also supported by Enwall's study (1995:162-164) of the

---

written language, in which he mentions the "desire to be unique" and "seeking dissimilarity instead of similarity" as beneficial to supporting language diversity and the vitality of individual languages. The linguistically complex situation in Tacheng Village enables speakers of minority languages to come to know the uniqueness of their mother tongue (Suzuki 2014a).

## CONCLUSION

This article presented an overview of the ethnic languages in Weixi County as part of the Khams Tibetan portion of the Tibetosphere. I then described the sociolinguistic situation of two varieties of Melung Khams, highlighting the varieties' differing vitality.

Weixi is a multiethnic, multilingual area, inhabited mainly by Lisu, Naxi, Bai, Tibetan, Han, Yi, and Pumi. They speak their own ethnic minority languages. Furthermore, they mutually learn several of these languages for habitual communications between different ethnic groups. In this article, I introduced Khams Tibetan (Melung Khams), Naxi, Lisu, Malimasa, and Weixi Chinese. By presenting the linguistic map, I have demonstrated that Melung Khams has two different dialectal areas within Weixi: Gagatang and Tacheng, followed by more detailed sociolinguistic descriptions.

In this regard, Gagatang Tibetan was seen to be a highly endangered variety. Even though there are still 800 speakers, Gagatang Tibetan is used in a highly restricted set of domains and intergenerational transmission appears to be failing, which is a clear sign of endangerment. An important reason for this phenomenon is the negative attitudes of speakers of Gagatang Tibetan towards maintaining their variety over generations. The reasons for such negative attitudes can be summarized as follows:

- Speakers' limited contact with other speakers of Tibetic languages reinforces their impression that the language is isolated and not part of a broader linguistic and cultural identity;

- 
- Gagatang is a highly Sinicized area and none of the ethnic languages are supported by the majority of villagers;
  - there are no ethnic groups with a strong independent identity; and
  - there are extremely few cultural activities, such as religious practices and a writing tradition in Tibetan that support ethnic identity connected to the Tibetan language.

In contrast, Tacheng Tibetan is much more vigorous, despite its sociolinguistically complex context. The positive attitude of speakers is supported by the following:

- Tacheng Tibetan speakers generally know the degree of the variation of Khams Tibetan because two different dialects are spoken;
- although Tacheng is inhabited by various ethnic groups, inhabitants to some extent maintain the old tradition of learning various minority languages;
- Tacheng Tibetan speakers live with different ethnic groups, one of which is Malimasa, having a strong independent identity, which maintains their own ethnic language; and
- there are cultural sites and activities in the Tacheng Tibetan-spoken area strongly related to Tibetan religious practices that support ethnic identity connected to the Tibetan language.

The situation outlined above, which likely exists in many other Tibetan communities, can mislead speakers of the ethnic minorities' languages to consider these languages to be less valuable for everyday communication. An important question is thus how to remind native speakers of the significance of maintaining a peculiar, unintelligible language to outsiders. Since Melung Tibetan, which is merely "one" subdialectal member of the Tibetic languages, has more than 5,000 speakers, it may be regarded as a non-endangered language. However, Melung Tibetan has many varieties, divided into two mutually unintelligible subgroups. A significant aspect of this diversity, i.e., the existence of different varieties within Melung Tibetan, appears to be

endangered, despite the overall vitality of Melung Tibetan itself. This research suggests that minority languages are more valued in communities that value ethnic diversity, indicating that a key to maintaining linguistic diversity in the Tibetosphere is the retention of diverse identities.

Coincidentally, I was able to begin investigating Gagatang Tibetan, and assess its endangerment. If I had first encountered the case of Tacheng Tibetan, I would not have considered the necessity of an urgent descriptive linguistic study of Melung Tibetan. This emphasizes the great value of having macro-sociolinguistic knowledge of dialectal groups of one language in the study of any group of endangered languages.

#### REFERENCES

- Enwall, Joakim. 1995. *A Myth Become Reality: History and Development of the Miao Written Language*, Volume 2. Stockholm: Institute of Oriental Languages, Stockholm University.
- He Jiren 和即仁 and Zhuyi Jiang 姜竹仪. 1985. *Naxi yu jian zhi* 纳西语简志 [*Short Description of Naxi*]. Beijing 北京: Minzu chubanshe 民族出版社 [Nationalities Press].
- Jacques, Guillaume and Alexis Michaud. 2011. Approaching the Historical Phonology of Three Highly Eroded Sino-Tibetan Languages: Naxi, Na and Laze. *Diachronica* 28(4):468-498.
- Jiang Di 江荻. 2002. *Zang yu yuyin shi yanjiu* 藏语语音史研究 [*Study on Tibetan Phonetic History*]. Beijing 北京: Min zu chu ban she 民族出版社 [Nationalities Press].
- Karma rGyal mtshan ཀར་རྒྱལ་མཚན། 2002. *mDo khams gnas yig phyogs bsgrigs dad bskul lha dbang rnga sgra zhes bya ba bzhugs so* མདོ་ཁམས་གནས་ཡིག་ཕྱོགས་བསྟོན་གསལ་བླ་དབང་རྒྱ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་སོ། [A Guide to Sacred Places of mDo Khams]. Pe cin བེ་ཅིན།: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྱུང་ཁང། [Nationalities Press].

- Kondro Tsering. 2012. A Zorgay Tibetan Childhood and the Swedish translation by Katrin Goldstein-Kyaga as Min tibetanska barndom i Zorgay. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 17. Online version at <http://goo.gl/G5DJLk>, accessed 3 March 2016.
- Lewis, M Paul, Gary F Simons, and Charles D Fennig (eds). 2015. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Eighteenth Edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>, accessed 11 November 2015.
- Li Zihe 李子鹤. 2013. Malimasa hua gaikuang 玛丽玛萨话概况 [Outline of Malimasa]. *Han zang yu xuebao* 汉藏语学报 [*Journal of Sino-Tibetan Languages*] 7:91-117.
- Mu Yuzhang 木玉璋 and Hongkai Sun 孙宏开. 2012. *Lisu yu fangyan yanjiu* 傈僳语方言研究 [*A Study of Lisu Dialects*]. Beijing 北京: Minzu chubanshe 民族出版社 [Nationalities Press].
- Roche, Gerald. 2014. The Vitality of Tibet's Minority Languages in the Twenty-first Century: Preliminary Remarks. *Multiethnica* 35:24-31.
- Rock, Joseph F (Zongyue Liu 刘宗岳 et al. translators). 1999. *Zhongguo xinan gu naxi wangguo* 中国西南古纳西王国. Kunming 昆明: Yunnan meishu chu ban she 云南美术出版社 [Yunnan Art Press]. [Original version: *The Ancient Na-khi Kingdom of Southwest China*, Harvard University Press, 1947].
- Suzuki, Hiroyuki 铃木博之. 2009. Naxi bunkaken no Tibettogo Yongshengxian Daan hoogen no hoogen syozoku [Dialectal Position of Daan Tibetan Spoken in the Naxi Cultural Area]. *Bulletin of National Museum of Ethnology* 34(1):167-189.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010. Khams-Tibettogo Weixi Tacheng [mThachu] hoogen ni okeru sorisitaka boin - sono onseigakuteki tokutyoo no kizyutu to bunseki [Retroflex Vowels in the mThachu Dialect of Khams Tibetan in Weixi - Description and Analysis of Their Phonetic Characteristics]. *Kyoto University Linguistic Research* 29:27-42.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011a. Khams-Tibettogo Gagatang Shaoluo [Zhollam] hoogen no bunpoo suketti [A Grammar Sketch of the Zhollam Dialect of Khams Tibetan]. *RIHN Descriptive Linguistics Series* 3:1-35.

- \_\_\_ . 2011b. Deux remarques supplémentaires à propos du développement du *ra-btags* en tibétain parlé. *Revue d'études tibétaines* 20:123-133. <https://goo.gl/EambT7>, accessed 10 December 2014.
- \_\_\_ . 2011c. Gagatang zang yu de yanhua yuanyin ji qi lai yuan 嘎嘎塘藏语的咽化元音及其来源 [Pharyngealised Vowels in Gagatang Tibetan and Their Origin]. *Language and Linguistics* 12(1):477-500.
- \_\_\_ . 2011d. Lijiang yongsheng xian da'an zang yu yuyin fenxi 丽江永胜县大安藏语语音分析 [Phonetic Analysis of Da'an Tibetan Spoken in Yongsheng County of Lijiang]. *Han zang yu xuebao* 汉藏语学报 [*Journal of Sino-Tibetan Languages*] 5:163-172.
- \_\_\_ . 2012a. "Endangered Dialects" in Tibetan: a Case of Eastern Khams Vernaculars in Xu Shixuan 徐世璇, Tjeerd de Graaf 郭天德, and Cecilia Brassett 廖乔婧 (eds) *Binwei yuyan: guoji renlei xue minzu xue lianhe hui di 16 jie dahui wenji* 濒危语言：国际人类学民族学联合会第 16 届大会文集 [*Issues of Language Endangerment: Book Series of the 16th World Congress of IUAES*]. Beijing 北京: Zhishi chanquan chubanshe 知识产权出版社 [Intellectual Property Press], 47-54.
- \_\_\_ . 2012b. À propos du terme 'riz' et de l'hypothèse du groupe dialectal Sems-kyi-nyila en tibétain du Khams. *Revue d'études tibétaines* 23:107-115. <http://goo.gl/EXqFzy>, accessed 10 December 2014.
- \_\_\_ . 2012c. Multiple Usages of the Verb *Snang* in Gagatang Tibetan (Weixi, Yunnan). *Himalayan Linguistics* 11(1):1-16. <https://goo.gl/fEaaqp>, accessed 10 January 2015.
- \_\_\_ . 2013a. *Overview of the Dialects Spoken in rGyalthang From the Historical Perspective*. Paper presented at 13<sup>th</sup> Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (Ulaanbaatar).
- \_\_\_ . 2013b. Yunnan weixi zang yu de r jieyin yuyin yanbian: jian tan "er hua" yu "jinhou" zhi jiaocha guanxi 云南维西藏语的 r 介音语音演变：兼谈"儿化"与"紧喉"之交叉关系 [Sound Change of r-glide in Weixi Tibetan of Yunnan: With a Short Consideration of the Crossing Relationship of *Rhotacisation* and *Tense-*



- throated]. *Dongfang yuyan xue* 东方语言学 [East Linguistics] 13:20-35.
- \_\_\_ . 2013c. Kamu-Tibettogo Tacheng-Gedeng [sKobsteng] hoogen no onsei bunseki [Phonetic Analysis of the sKobsteng Dialect of Khams Tibetan]. *Asian and African Languages and Linguistics (AALL)* 8:123-161. <https://goo.gl/Y5dmRf>, accessed 10 December 2014.
- \_\_\_ . 2014a. Brief Introduction to the Endangerment of Tibetic Languages: Special Reference to the Language Situation in Eastern Tibetan Cultural Area. *Journal of Linguistic Studies* 19(3):281-301.
- \_\_\_ . 2014b. Yunnan zang yu tuhua zhong de teshu shu ci xingshi: qi dili fenbu yu lishi lai yuan 云南藏语土话中的特殊数词形式：其地理分布与历史来源 [Special Numeral Forms in the Tibetan Dialects of Yunnan: Their Geographical Distribution and Historical Origin]. *Nankai yuyan xue kan* 南开语言学期刊 [Journal of Nankai Linguistics] 2014(2):68-76.
- \_\_\_ . 2015. Malimasa yu chuanchu hua yuyin fenxi 玛丽玛萨语川处话语音分析 [Phonetic Analysis of the Chuanchu Dialect of Malimasa]. *Naxi xue yanjiu* 纳西学研究 [Study on Naxiology] 1:245-256.
- Suzuki, Hiroyuki and Sonam Wangmo. 2014. *Language Evolution and Vitality of Lhagang Tibetan, a Tibetic Language as a Minority in Minyag Rabgang*. Paper presented at the Workshop on the Linguistic Minorities of the Chinese Tibetosphere (Uppsala) [Revised version to be published in *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 245, 2017].
- \_\_\_ . 2015. Challenge to Discover Endangered Tibetic Varieties in the Easternmost Tibetosphere: A Case Study on Dartsendo Tibetan. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 38(2):256-270. [DOI: 10.1075/ltba.38.2.07suz, accessed 15 February 2016.]
- Suzuki, Hiroyuki and Tshering mTshomo. 2009. Preliminary Analysis of the Phonological History of Melung Tibetan. *Language and Linguistics* 10(3):521-537.

- Tournadre, Nicolas. 2014. The Tibetic Languages and Their Classification in Thomas Owen-Smith and Nathan W Hill (eds) *Trans-Himalayan Linguistics: Historical and Descriptive Linguistics of the Himalayan Area*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 105-129.
- Weixi Lisuzu Zizhixian Gaikuang Bianxiezu 《维西傈僳族自治县概况》编写组 [Outline of Weixi Lisu Autonomous Prefecture Editing Group]. 2008. *Weixi lisu zu zizhixian gaikuang 维西傈僳族自治县概况 [Outline of Weixi Lisu Autonomous Prefecture]*. Beijing 北京: Minzu chubanshe 民族出版社 [Nationalities Press].
- Wu Chenghu 吴成虎. 2007. *Weixi hanyu fangyan cidian 维西汉语方言词典 [Dictionary of the Weixi Dialect of Chinese]*. Shanghai 上海: Shanghai cishu chubanshe 上海辞书出版社 [Shanghai Dictionary Press].
- Wu Guangfan 吴光范. 2009. *Diqing xianggelila luyou fengwu zhi-yan zhe diming de xiansuo 迪庆香格里拉旅游风物志-沿着地名的线索 [Annals of the Tourism Scenery in Diqing Xianggelila With an Annotation of Local Names]*. Kunming 昆明: Yunnan renmin chubanshe 云南人民出版社 [Yunnan People's Press].
- Zhang Jichuan 张济川. 1996. A Sketch of Tibetan Dialectology in China: Classifications of Tibetan Dialects. *Cahiers de Linguistique - Asie Orientale* 25(1):115-133.
- . 2009. *Zang yu ci zu yanjiu-gudai zangzu ruhe fengfu fazhan tamen de cihui 藏语词族研究-古代藏族如何丰富发展他们的词汇 [Study on the Word Family of Tibetan - How the Ancient Tibetans Enriched Their Vocabulary]*. Beijing 北京: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe 社会科学文献出版社 [Social Sciences Literature Press].

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Aba 阿坝 Prefecture

Badi 巴迪 Township

mBalhag, 'ba' lhag བབ་ལྷག་ dialectal subgroup/dialect

Baohe 保和 Town

Batang 巴塘 County

Bazhu 巴珠 Hamlet

Bodgrong, bod grong བོད་གྲོང་ dialectal subgroup/dialect

Budy, 'ba' sdod བབ་སྡོད་ dialect

Chongke 冲可 Hamlet

Chuanda 川达 Hamlet

Damo Zushidong 达摩祖师洞

Deqin 德钦 County

sDerong-nJol, sde rong dang 'jol སྡོ་རོང་དང་འཛོལ་ dialectal group

Diqing 迪庆 Prefecture

Dongba 东巴 religion

Gaga 嘎嘎 Hamlet

Gagatang 嘎嘎塘 Administrative Village

Gedeng 格登 Hamlet

Geluo 格洛 Hamlet

Gongnong 工农 Hamlet

rGyalthang, rgyal thang རྒྱལ་ཐང་ dialectal subgroup/dialect

Haini 海尼 Hamlet

nJol, 'jol འཛོལ་ dialect

Kenuo 柯那 Hamlet

Lamdo, la mdo ལ་མདོ་ dialectal subgroup/dialect

Lapu 腊普 River

Lancangjiang 澜沧江 River

Lijiangba 丽江坝 dialect group

Malimasa 玛丽玛萨 language

Melung, 'ba' lung བབ་ལུང་ dialectal subgroup

Muli 木里 County

dNgo, dngo དོ་དམོ་ dialectal subgroup/dialect

sNgonshod, sngon shod སྡོ་གོང་ dialect

- Nujiang 怒江 dialectal group  
 Nyishe, nyi shar ཉི་ཤར་ dialect  
 Pantiang 攀天阁 Township/Village  
 Phuri, phar ru ཕར་རུ་ dialect  
 sPomtserag, spom rtse rag སྤོམ་རྩེ་རག་ dialectal subgroup/dialect  
 Qibie 启别 Administrative Village  
 Qizong 其宗 Hamlet/dialect  
 Ruke 汝可 Hamlet  
 Ruoergai 若尔盖 County  
 Sems-kyi-nyila, sems kyi nyi zla སེམས་ཀྱི་ཉི་ལྷ་ dialectal group  
 Shaoluo 勺洛 Hamlet  
 Shugsum, shug gsum ལུག་གསུམ་ dialect  
 Tacheng 塔城 Town/ dialect  
 mThachu, mtha' chu མཐའ་ཚུ་ dialect  
 Thewo, the bo ཐེ་བོ་ district  
 gTorwarong, gtor ma rong གཏོར་མ་རོང་ dialectal subgroup/dialect  
 Weixi 维西 County  
 Wujing 五境 Township  
 Xianggelila 香格里拉 Municipality  
 gYagrwa, g.yag rwa གཡག་ར་ dialectal subgroup/dialect  
 Yangthang, yang thang ཡང་ཐང་ dialect  
 Yezhi 叶枝 Township  
 Yingduwan 英都湾 Hamlet  
 Yongchun 永春 River  
 Yungling, lung gling ལུང་གླིང་ dialect  
 Yunling 云岭 Mountain Range  
 Zhollam, zhol lam རྩོལ་ལམ་ dialect

---

## TWO TRADITIONAL STAU STORIES

Sami Honkasalo (University of Helsinki)

### ABSTRACT

The rich oral culture of the Stau of Rta'u (Daofu) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China has not been studied, nor have any of their folklore been published. The two stories presented here originating from Mazi Township are supplemented with background information on Stau storytelling culture. Stau stories that were once a popular form of entertainment and a means of transmitting knowledge now face rival forms of entertainment from television and mobile phones. Consequently, collecting traditional oral culture is important for the speakers and their local community, and research communities.

### KEYWORDS

China minorities, oral tradition, Rta'u County, Sichuan, Stau

---

 INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

I present two translated stories with a brief discussion concerning their cultural context. The stories were narrated by Gnas sgron lha mo, a native speaker of Stau. The Stau are classified by the PRC government as Tibetan and inhabit Rta'u (Daofu) County and parts of Brag 'go (Luhuo) County in Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in western Sichuan. Though the Stau and other ethnicities speaking the Horpa lects have received some recent interest from researchers, their traditional stories have remained hitherto unpublished. This is unfortunate, since intergenerational transmission of the stories is under threat. Perhaps this modest contribution will generate interest in traditional Horpa stories, leading to more preservation efforts.

## THE STAU PEOPLE

The Stau are an ethnic minority, many of whom, in addition to identifying themselves as Tibetans and Stau, also identify themselves under the wide umbrella term "Horpa." In general, the Horpa speak several lects that are closely related to each other, although not always mutually intelligible. According to Jacques et al. (2015:1), mutually unintelligible Horpa lects include at least Stau, Geshiz(h)a,<sup>2</sup> and Shangzhai.<sup>3</sup> Of these, the Stau lect and its speakers have received the

---

<sup>1</sup> The Langnet Doctoral Programme in Finland funded my linguistic fieldtrip in 2015 that allowed me to collect the stories. I thank my Stau teacher, Gnas sgron lha mo, for her insights into Stau language and culture, AHP editors, Jesse Gates whose familiarity with Mazi Stau resulted in transcription corrections, and Herbert/Lhundrop who helped me better understand the history of the concept "Horpa."

<sup>2</sup> Both Geshizha and Geshiza are technically correct Pinyin renditions. The latter more faithfully reflects the local pronunciation of the term and is used hereafter.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, the diversity of the Horpa lects somewhat exceeds this estimation. It is likely that four or five major Horpa lects exist, some of which can be further divided into separate subjects with only limited mutual intelligibility.

---

most attention from outsiders. The languages have no written form. Consequently, Literary Tibetan has traditionally functioned as the written language in the region. This role is now partially shifting to written Chinese.

In the linguistic context, I use Horpa synonymously to the term Western rGyalrongic. In other words, Horpa as used here does not refer to any individual lect or language, but to the whole agglomeration of related lects that might constitute a Western subgroup of the rGyalrongic languages. The use of the term Horpa in the linguistic context serves the purpose of maintaining a direct connection to previous research. Western research on the Horpa languages was commenced by the pioneering work of Hodgson (1853) and thereafter, Horpa has become a recognized term, both among Western and Chinese scholars.

Tibetans generally refer to the people around the contemporary Dkar mdzes, Brag 'go, and Rta'u counties as *hor pa*.<sup>1</sup> The term originally referred to the Uyghur, but it was later applied to the Mongols of Genghis Khan (Stein 1972:34). According to tradition, the Hor dpon khag lnga 'Five Hor States' were established after the thirteenth century Mongol conquest in the region, which is the approximate homeland of the Stau and other modern Horpa lect speakers. The Epic of King Gesar also mentions a war between gLing, the homeland of Gesar, and the Kingdom of Hor. The memory of Mongol immigrations still lives among locals. Furthermore, various local regional groups have accounts of a Mongol ancestry (Zeng 2007).

Zeng (2006) proposes that Horpa originally referred to Huangtou Huihu 'Yellowhead Uygur' who moved to the region north of Dar mdo (Kangding) where they were to some extent assimilated into culturally Tibetan groups. The Stau people can thus be understood as an amalgam of different cultural elements that exhibit Tibetan

---

<sup>1</sup> The Tibetan term *hor pa* combines the noun *hor* with the agent suffix *-pa*. The Tibetan root *hor* has no native etymology. Ren (1984) argues that etymologically, *hor* is likely to be a loan of the Chinese Hú 胡 used to refer to non-Chinese peoples of Central Asia.

---

influence, e.g., Tibetan Buddhism and various Tibetan loanwords, and who adopted a Tibetan identity.

Stau's heavy exposure to Tibetan culture is in stark contrast to the neighboring, linguistically closely related yet ethnically non-Horpa Geshiza people, whose culture in recent years has been greatly influenced by Han Chinese. Nevertheless, Stau and Geshiza traditional oral cultures have many similarities, for example, the appearance of shared characters, such as A khu Ston pa the trickster, narrative themes, and the social function the stories used to play in the past.

#### STORYTELLING AND THE CHALLENGES OF MODERNITY

The Stau possess a rich oral culture of traditional stories, which the Stau themselves recognize. For instance, a traditional storyteller I interviewed in Rta'u (Xianshui) County Town, sees the oral stories as the pivotal element of Stau culture and refers to the Stau homeland as the "Land of Stories."

The stories do not exist in isolation. Long coexistence with other ethnicities in the Sichuan Ethnic Corridor, explains why certain Stau stories are shared with other ethnicities in the region. For instance, A khu Ston pa - a notorious trickster, who ingeniously fools the privileged holding political and religious power, young women, and anyone else he can benefit from - are shared with surrounding Tibetans. Huan et al. (2015) estimate that more than 200 different A khu Ston pa stories exist in Tibetan.<sup>1</sup> The number of A khu Ston pa stories circulating in the Stau language is unknown.

In addition to the A khu Ston pa stories, the Stau also tell stories that have both entertainment value and often convey moral lessons to the listeners. These latter stories may be of Stau origin, but I cannot corroborate this. Historically, the Stau told stories in the evening before going to bed. At present, however, transgenerational transmission of traditional folklore has weakened and the stories are

---

<sup>1</sup> For a selection of A khu Ston pa stories in English, see Dorje (1997).



---

quickly being forgotten, although they seem to be better remembered among the Stau than their Geshiza neighbors.

Among the ethnic minorities of China, modernity is often negotiated by balancing cultural continuity and change in everyday life. Television portrays a global/Chinese modernity and thus functions as a tool of assimilation in a world that has little space for the Stau oral tradition. Now that many locals have access to new channels of entertainment with a continuous stream of audio-visual stimuli, many young people have little interest in traditional stories. Instead, they prefer television programs and mobile phone instant message services, such as Weixin/WeChat.

The Stau are not alone in facing changes caused by the introduction of modern technology. Libu et al. (2013) describes the irrevocable change that the arrival of electricity has brought the Namunyi (Namuzi) Tibetans in Sichuan. Change among the Namunyi resembles that of the Stau. Evening has changed from a communal time shared with friends and relatives into a silent period for watching television. Libu reports that before electrification, elders were the authority figures as well as providers of entertainment. After new forms of electronic entertainment were introduced, elders' roles have been much diminished, leading to a break in transmission of the oral tradition. The Stau face a similar situation.

The lack of a written language also means that traditional stories cannot be written in the Stau language, which contrasts starkly with Tibetan-speaking Tibetans. According to Kun Mchog et al. (1999:6), access to radio and television together with the publication of stories has led to increased awareness of trickster characters among the Tibetan-speaking Tibetans. Unlike the Stau, written Tibetan can be harnessed to disseminate traditional stories through a new medium. Seen against this backdrop, creating a writing system for the Stau language would serve as an important measure for cultural preservation. In practice, however, creating a writing system for Stau presents grave challenges. First, a culturally appropriate script must be selected. Tibetan script is likely to best serve this function, since many speakers are already familiar with it and owing to religious

reasons, mentally connect it with prestige that is necessary for its dissemination. Second, Stau has internal variation, which makes developing a unified orthography for the language a contentious task likely to raise controversies.

#### STORY METADATA

I recorded the stories "The Three Princesses and a Servant" and "The Boy and the Crow" from Gnas sgron lha mo, a native Stau speaker born in p<sup>h</sup>ozəwo Hamlet in Mazi/Ma zu(r)<sup>1</sup> Township. In 2015, she was in her late twenties and spoke Stau, Central Tibetan, and basic English. She acquired the latter two languages after leaving her home area. Central Tibetan was our lingua franca for the linguistic analysis of the recorded stories.

Conveying oral narrations from a non-literate culture in a translated written form to a new target audience is challenging. To make the stories more readable in English, repetition, rephrasing, and hesitation frequently present in spoken language have been omitted from the retold version. When deemed necessary, some words with mostly functional value have been added to the narrative to make the translation more idiomatic and natural. Elements omitted by the narrator due to abbreviation or lapse of memory have also been added to make the textual rendition of the stories easier for the reader to understand. The Stau language is represented through IPA in the stories.

I also named the stories based on their content. They have no fixed names in Stau.

Even though the speaker originates from the Mazi Township, the Stau language present in the stories differs somewhat from earlier known Mazi varieties. Hence, two factors must be considered. First, the Mazi Township is geographically wide, thus providing space for linguistic variation. It is unlikely that linguistic and political boundaries overlap completely, with the result that all Stau spoken

---

<sup>1</sup> In Tibetan, *ma zu* is also spelled *ma zur*.

within the confines of Mazi Township is not necessarily exclusively that of the Mazi Stau dialect. Second, the speaker has spent a considerable amount of her life in a community where speakers from many parts of Rta'u meet and live together in a multilingual environment. The interaction with speakers of various dialects has influenced the speaker's language. Noticeably, the stories exhibit some Tibetan influence that likely results from daily interaction with Tibetan speakers.

Vanderveen (2015) provides a phonological description of Mazi Stau, but no descriptive Stau grammars currently exist. My grammatical analysis of the language in the glossing below is based on my knowledge of the related Geshiza language in the Horpa subgroup and Jacques et al. (2015) that provides a sketch of the Khang gсар Stau dialect. Parts of the glossing and translation are tentative and will likely change as our understanding of Stau and the Horpa lects in general evolve.

#### THE THREE PRINCESSES AND A SERVANT<sup>1</sup>

1	<i>næ</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>ŋəma</i> <sup>3</sup>	<i>jeɾpə</i>	<i>ɬe</i>	<i>də-ji-regə</i> , <sup>4</sup>
	past	past	king	CLF	DIR-EXV.3-LNK
	A long time ago there was a king.				

<sup>1</sup> I am solely responsible for all errors that have remained in the English translation and Stau transcriptions presented here.

<sup>2</sup> Here, the word appears in with the consonant cluster *ɬnæ* reduced.

<sup>3</sup> *næ ŋəma* is a set expression used at the beginning stories. The former element is a native Mazi Stau word while the latter is a Tibetan loanword *sngon ma*.

<sup>4</sup> The actual vowel quality in the directional prefixes depends on their phonetic context. For instance, *də-ŋo-regə* DIR-COP.3-LNK is realized as *du-ŋo-regə* in rapid everyday speech. In addition to directional meanings, the prefixes are also used to express aspect and the imperative mood. In the stories, for the sake of simplicity, they are universally glossed as DIR regardless of their actual function.

- 2 *di:* *smi* *xsu* *ʁe* *də-ji-sə-rə.*<sup>1</sup>  
 DEM.GEN daughter three CLF DIR-EXV.3-IFR-SENS  
 He had three daughters.
- 3 *zə-cʰɛ* *də-gi* *xse-lə-zgri,*<sup>2</sup> *tʰi*<sup>3</sup> *vadə-gi*  
 SUPL-big DEF-DAT gold-NMLZ-star 3SG.GEN below-DAT  
*ɾɲe-lə-zgri,* *tʰi* *vadə-gi* *do-lə-zgri*  
 silver-NMLZ-star 3SG.GEN below-DAT bronze-NMLZ-star  
*də-rmə-sə-rə.*  
 DIR-name.3-IFR-SENS  
 The oldest was named Gold Star, the one below her was Silver Star, and the one below her was Bronze Star.
- 4 *tɛəgə*<sup>4</sup> *xse-lə-zgri:*<sup>5</sup> *xse-ndzu* *lu* *də-ji,*  
 PART gold-NMLZ-star.GEN gold-mdzo.mo CLF DIR-EXV.3  
 Then Gold Star had a gold *mdzo mo.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *-sə-rə*, consisting of two co-occurring evidential suffixes, is a genre marker that identifies the utterance as the genre of traditional stories. It is similar to Geshiza *-sʰə-mə-rə* and *-sə ɲə-rə* in Khang gсар Stau documented by Jacques et al. (2015), both of which frequently occur in traditional stories as genre indicators.

<sup>2</sup> The morphological structure of the three princesses' names, *xse-lə-zgri*, *ɾɲe-lə-zgri* and *do-lə-zgri*, is somewhat opaque and the names are interpreted here to be constructed with the nominalizer *-lə* similar to *ɲgə* 'to eat', *ɲgə-lə* 'things that are eaten, food'. Thus, *xse-lə* can be seen as 'thing that is of gold, golden one'. This interpretation would require that the noun *xse* has a stative verb counterpart formed by zero derivation.

<sup>3</sup> The form *tʰə* (GEN *tʰi*) is a distal demonstrative pronoun 'that' pairing with the proximal demonstrative pronoun *di* (GEN *di:*). However, *tʰə* (PL *tʰi-ɲi*) also carries the functions of a third person pronoun. Consequently, its most appropriate glossing has been determined by the context in the stories.

<sup>4</sup> *tɛəgə* is a particle that introduces a new topic or divides the narration into different segments. It can often be translated as "then."

<sup>5</sup> Vowel length in Stau is not contrastive in general. However, when the genitive case marker *-j* is added to a word ending with the vowel *-i*, the fusion results in a vowel with prolonged quality: *-i-j* > *-i:* in the speaker's idiolect.

<sup>6</sup> A *mdzo mo/dzomo* refers to female hybrid between a yak and a cow. In the story, each princess has a *dzo mo* corresponding to the metal in their names.

- 5 *rɲe-lə-zgri:*                      *rɲe-ndzu*                      (lu)<sup>1</sup>                      *də-ji,*  
 silver-NMLZ-star.GEN    silver-mdzo.mo                      CLF                      DIR-EXV.3  
 Silver Star had a silver *mdzo mo*.
- 6 *do-lə-zgri:*                      *do-ndzu*                      (lu)<sup>2</sup>                      *də-ji-regə,*  
 bronze-NMLZ-star.GEN    bronze-mdzo.mo                      CLF                      DIR.EXV.3-LNK  
 Bronze Star had a bronze *mdzo mo*.
- 7 *təgə*                      *di:*                      *ɟerpə*                      *di:*                      *joɣpo*                      *ɤe*  
 PART                      DEM.GEN                      king                      DEM.GEN                      servant                      CLF  
*də-ji-sə-rə.*  
 DIR.EXV.3-IFR-SENS  
 Then the king had a servant.
- 8 *təgə*                      *xse-lə-zgri-w*                      *xse-ndzu*                      *ts<sup>h</sup>u*  
 PART                      gold-NMLZ-star-ERG                      gold-mdzo.mo                      milk  
*nə-εə-regə,*  
 DIR-go.3-LNK  
 Then Gold Star went to milk (her) gold *mdzo mo*.
- 9 *məq<sup>h</sup>e*                      *q<sup>h</sup>e*                      *də-ji-regə,*                      *təgə*                      *t<sup>h</sup>i*                      *nə*  
 rain                      rain                      DIR-EXV.3-LNK                      PART                      DEM.GEN                      in  
*ɲɲamba ɲo-rə.*  
 mud                      COP.3-SENS  
 It was raining and then, there was mud.
- 10 (ɲε,<sup>3</sup>)<sup>3</sup>                      *di*                      *joɣpo-gi*                      "penti                      *q<sup>h</sup>a*                      *ɟe*                      *də-εə"*  
 1SG.GEN                      DEM                      servant-DAT                      stool                      CLF                      bring                      DIR-go.2  
*di-ji-regə,*  
 DIR-say.3-LNK

This likely refers to the animals' color.

<sup>1</sup> Element added by the speaker after the recording.

<sup>2</sup> Element added by the speaker after the recording.

<sup>3</sup> The pronoun ɲε likely starts an utterance that was left unfinished by the speaker and may be ignored in the translation.

- She (Gold Star) said to her servant, "Go fetch me a stool."
- 11 "ŋa tʰi nə məqʰe qʰe nə penti b̥ɛ  
1SG DEM.GEN in rain rain in stool bring  
ɛə-lə mu-ru~ru."<sup>1</sup>  
go-NMLZ NEG-RED~can.1  
"In the rain, I cannot go fetch a stool," he (the servant) said.
- 12 "ŋa rŋətso-ŋkʰə, ɲi ŋɛ tɛʰæ ju-ndzu"  
1SG kneel-NMLZ.A 2SG 1SG.GEN on DIR-sit.2  
di-ji-regə,  
DIR-say.3-LNK  
"I am a kneeler (I kneel down), so sit on me," he (the servant) said.
- 13 tɛəgə tʰi tɛʰæ ju-ndzu-tə nə xse-lə-zgri-w  
PART 3SG.GEN on DIR-sit.3-NF in gold-NMLZ-star-ERG  
xse-ndzu nu-f-tsʰu-sə-rə.  
gold-mdzo.mo DIR-INV-milk-3>3-IFR-SENS  
Then, sitting on him, Gold Star milked (her) gold *dzo mo*.
- 14 tʰi-ɛu rŋe-lə-zgri-w rŋe-ndzu  
DEM.GEN-after silver-NMLZ-star-ERG silver-mdzo.mo  
tsʰu nə-ɛə-regə,  
milk DIR-go.3-LNK  
Then, Silver Star went to milk (her) silver *mdzo mo*.
- 15 tɛəgə tʰi ædæ-w di-ji-sə də  
PART 3SG.GEN older.sister-ERG DIR-say.3-NMLZ DEF  
randza di-ji-tə di-ji-regə,  
same.manner DIR-say.3-NF DIR-say.3-LNK  
Then, she spoke in the same manner that her older sister had spoken.

<sup>1</sup> Reduplication appearing here with the modal *ru* has not been attested in previous research on Stau. Typically, verb stem reduplication indicates plurality and mutual action in the Horpa lects.

- 16 *tɛəgə* "ŋa *tʰə-bi* *ætɛʰim* *penti* *ɛæ*,  
 PART 1SG DEM-like what.to.say stool look.for  
*ɛæ* *ɛə-lə* *mu-ru~ru-rə*."  
 look.for go-NMLZ NEG-RED~can.3-SENS  
 Then, "I cannot do like that, I cannot go looking for a stool."
- 17 "ŋi *ŋɛ* *tɛʰæ* *ju-ndzu*. *ŋi:* *ædæ-w*  
 2SG 1SG.GEN on DIR-sit.2 2SG.GEN older.sister-ERG  
*ŋɛ* *tɛʰæ* *ju-ndzu*" *di-ji-sə-rə*.  
 1SG.GEN on DIR-sit.3 DIR-say.3-IFR-SENS  
 "You sit on me! Your elder sister sat on me," he (the servant)  
 said.
- 18 "*tʰə-bi* *də* *ju-ndzu* *nu-f-tsʰu*" *di-ji-regə*  
 DEM.like DEF DIR-sit.3 DIR-INV-milk.3>3 DIR-say.3-LNK  
 "Like this, sit and milk," he (the servant) said.
- 19 *tɛəgə* *di:* *tɛʰæ* (*atɛa-j*)<sup>1</sup> *ædæ-j*  
 PART DEM.GEN on older.sister-GEN older.sister-GEN  
*tʰə-bi* *randza* *ju-ndzu-tə*  
 DEM-like same.manner DIR-sit.3-NF  
*nu-f-tsʰu-sə-rə*.  
 DIR-INV-milk.3>3-IFR-SENS  
 Then, she sat like her older sister had done and milked.
- 20 *tɛəgə* *do-lə-zgri-w* *do-ndzu* *tsʰu*  
 PART bronze-NMLZ-star-ERG bronze-mdzo.mo milk  
*nə-ɛə-sə-rə*.  
 DIR-go.3-IFR-SENS  
 Then, Bronze Star went to milk (her) bronze *mdzo mo*.

<sup>1</sup> The word is Tibetan, and likely results from the speaker's long daily interactions with Tibetan speakers. Immediately after, the speaker rephrases with a native Stau word.

- 21 *tɛəgə* *do-ndzu* *tsʰu* *nə-ɛə-regə,*  
PART bronze-mzdo.mo milk DIR-go.3-LNK  
*məqʰe* *qʰe-ji-rə.*  
rain rain-EXV.3-SENS  
Then, when she went to milk her *mdzo mo*, it was raining.
- 22 *"penti* *ʔɛ* *də-ɛə"* *di-ji-regə,*  
stool bring DIR-go.2 DIR-say.3-LNK  
She said, "Go bring a stool!"
- 23 *"ni:* *ædæ* *yni-w* *læ,* *ŋɛ* *tɛʰæ*  
2SG.GEN older.sister two-ERG TOP 1SG.GEN on  
*tʰə-bi* *də* *ŋa* *gə-rŋətso,* *ŋɛ* *tɛʰæ*  
DEM-like DEF 1SG DIR-kneel.1 1SG.GEN on  
*ju-ndzu-tə* *nu-f-tsʰu.* *ni* *jo* *ju-ndzu"*  
DIR-sit-NF DIR-INV-milk.3>3 2SG also DIR-sit.2  
*di-ji-regə,*  
DIR-say.3-LNK  
"Your two older sisters sat on my back like this to milk while I was kneeling down like this, so you also, sit on me," he (the servant) said.
- 24 *"ni* *pʰu* *lu* *rəmputɛʰi* *ŋə-rə.* *ŋa* *ni:*  
2SG man CLF honorable COP.2-SENS 1SG 2SG.GEN  
*tɛʰæ* *ndzu* *mæ-ŋe.* *ŋa* *mə* *lu* *rəmputɛʰi*  
on sit NEG-good 1SG woman CLF honorable  
*ŋoŋ,* *ni:* *tɛʰæ* *(nə)ʰ-mæ-ndzoŋ."*  
COP.1 2SG.GEN on DIR-NEG-sit.1  
"You are a honorable man; it is not right for me to sit on you. I am an honorable woman; I will not sit on you."
- 25 *tʰi* *"ŋa* *ŋyamba* *nə* *rŋətso-ŋkʰə* *di-ji-tə*  
DEM.GEN 1SG mud in kneel-NMLZ.A DIR-say-NF

<sup>1</sup> Element added by the speaker after the recording.



- gə-rŋətsu-tə*      *nə-f-tʰu-sə-rə.*  
 DIR-kneel.3-NF      DIR-INV-milk.3>3-IFR-SENS  
 "I will kneel down in the mud," she (Bronze Star) said and knelt to milk.
- 26 *təəgə*    *xse-lə-zgri*      *putʰo*      *gə-nqʰrə-sə-rə.<sup>1</sup>*  
 PART    gold-NLMZ-star    husband    DIR-marry.3>3-IFR-SENS  
 Then, Gold Star married a husband.
- 27 *putʰo*      *rjerpə*      *ʁe-j*      *zi*      *ʁe*      *də*  
 husband    king      CLF-GEN    son      CLF      DEF  
*gə-nqʰrə-sə-rə.*  
 DIR-marry.3>3-IFR-SENS  
 The husband whom she (Gold Star) married was the son of a king.
- 28 *(r)ŋe-lə-zgri<sup>2</sup>*      *rjerpə*      *ʁe-j*      *zi*      *də*  
 silver-NMLZ.star    king      CLF-GEN    son      DEF  
*gə-nqʰrə-regə,*  
 DIR-marry.3>3-LNK  
 Silver Star married the son of a king.
- 29 *təəgə*    *do-lə-zgri-w*      *gə*      *di*      *joypə-pʰæ*  
 PART    bronze-NMLZ-star-ERG    INDF?    DEM    servant-COM  
*ju-ndzu-sə-rə.*  
 DIR-stay.3-IFR-SENS  
 Then Bronze Star stayed with the servant.
- 30 *təəgə tʰi-ni:*,      *xse-lə-zgri*      *re*    *rjə-lə-zgri-ni:*,  
 PART    3-PL.GEN    gold-NMLZ-star and    silver-NMLZ-star-PL.GEN

<sup>1</sup> The inverse prefix *f/v-* appears in 3>3 interactions, unless blocked by phonological factors.

<sup>2</sup> The speaker drops the preinitial *r* in the consonant cluster.

- (*rje..*)<sup>1</sup>      *put<sup>h</sup>o-ni*      *rjerpə*      *ŋo-rə*.  
 rich.person    husband-PL    rich.person    COP.3-SENS  
 Then, the husbands of Gold Star and Silver Star were rich.
- 31    *t<sup>h</sup>i-ni:*      *jə-taypə-ni-w*      *rjə*      *səts<sup>h</sup>æ*  
 3-PL.GEN      house?-owner-PL.GEN    property    lot  
*du-f-k<sup>h</sup>u-sə-rə*.  
 DIR-INV-give.3>3-IFR-SENS  
 Their family heads gave them a lot of property.
- 32    *do-lə-zgri*      *də*      *t<sup>h</sup>ontə<sup>h</sup>o*      *nə-və-tə-tə<sup>2</sup>*  
 bronze-NMLZ-star    DEF      look.down      DIR-do.3-RED~NF  
*də-mæ-f-k<sup>h</sup>u-sə-rə*.  
 DIR-NEG-INV-give.3>3-IFR-SENS  
 They looked down on Bronze Star and did not give her (any property).
- 33    *tɛəgə*    *t<sup>h</sup>i-ni*      *k<sup>h</sup>æ~k<sup>h</sup>æ*      *sətɛ<sup>h</sup>æ*      *gə*  
 PART    3-PL      RED~different    place      INDF  
*də-ɛə-sə-regə*,  
 DIR-go.3-LNK  
 Then, they (the three married couples) went to a different place.
- 34    *tɛəgə*    *gəzə*      *p<sup>h</sup>æ*      *ŋe*      *mə*      *go-ɸnæ-regə*,  
 PART    evening    other    place    sky      DIR-dark-LNK  
*sətɛ<sup>h</sup>æ*    *gə*      *nə*      *ji-ta~ta-regə*,  
 place    INDF    in      DIR-RED~stay.3-LNK  
 Then, when night fell in that different place, they stayed there.

<sup>1</sup> The element in parenthesis is the word *rjerpə* 'rich person, king, chieftain'. The speaker corrects herself immediately after.

<sup>2</sup> The reduplication of *tə* is likely accidental. The speaker reports the segment without the reduplication audible in the recording.

- 35 *do-lə-xgri:* *put<sup>h</sup>o-w* *di-ji-tə,*  
bronze-NMLZ-star.GEN husband-ERG DIR-say.3-NF  
Bronze Star's husband said,
- 36 *"t<sup>h</sup>i-ni læ, q<sup>h</sup>asi gə yvo kɛ-yri xi-regə,*  
3-PL TOP tomorrow INDF ice DIR-lot EXV-LNK  
*nə kə~kəŋ-gu. t<sup>h</sup>i yvo tɛ<sup>h</sup>æ ji-ve mə-sku."*  
in RED~come.1-NMLZ 3 ice on DIR-go NEG-can.3  
"We will reach a place with a lot of ice tomorrow. They (Gold Star and Silver Star and their husbands) cannot walk on the ice."
- 37 *"t<sup>h</sup>i-ni læ məde rjə də-gə-rə."*  
3-PL TOP DEM.honorific? property DIR-have-SENS  
"They have a lot of property."
- 38 *"ydzu rlə səts<sup>h</sup>æ də-gə-rə."*  
rtsam.pa wheat.flour lot DIR-have-SENS  
"They have a lot of *rtsam pa*<sup>1</sup> and wheat flour."
- 39 *"ydzu rlə də nə-sp<sup>h</sup>rə læ, ηɛ-yne<sup>2</sup>*  
rtsampa wheat.flour DEF DIR-spread.3>3 PART 1-DU  
*læ ydzu rlə-bi læ tɛ<sup>h</sup>u mə-gə-rə."*  
TOP rtsam.pa wheat.flour-like TOP PART NEG-have-SENS  
"They can spread the *rtsam pa* and flour on the ice (so that it is possible to walk on it)," he (the servant) said. "We two don't have provisions like that."
- 40 *"t<sup>h</sup>i tɛ<sup>h</sup>æ ji-rə t<sup>h</sup>ə~t<sup>h</sup>əŋ-rə mə<sup>h</sup>"*  
DEM.GEN on DIR-direction RED~reach?.1-SENS NEG

<sup>1</sup> *Rtsam pa* refers to roasted barley flour.

<sup>2</sup> The existence of dual, *sensu stricto*, is dubious in Stau. Unlike in Geshiza where the number two and the dual marker are clearly distinct, Stau utilizes only one form in both contexts. Consequently, a conservative interpretation would gloss *yne* simply as a numeral in the stories.

*di-ji-sə-rə.*

DIR-say.3-IFR-SENS

"We cannot walk on the ice and get to the other side," he (the servant) said.

- 41 *tɛəgə di xse-lə-zgri rɲe-lə-zgri-ni-w*  
 PART DEM gold-NMLZ-star silver-NMLZ-star-PL-ERG  
*tʰi-yne-ka gu-ntsotsə. tʰi-yne-w ætɛʰə*  
 3-DU-ALL DIR-eavesdrop.3 3-DU-ERG what  
*fɛe mə-fɛe gu-ntsotsə-regə,*  
 speak NEG-speak DIR-eavesdrop.3-LNK

Then, both Gold Star and Silver Star were listening secretly to what the two of them (Bronze Star and her husband) were saying.

- 42 *tɛəgə tʰi-ji-w tɛʰu ŋo-rə də-ntsʰə-tə*  
 PART 3-PL-ERG PART COP.3-SENS DIR-think.3-NF  
*ɣdzu rlə tʰi tɛʰə nə-sɲi ɣvo*  
 rtsam.pa wheat flour DEM.GEN on after-day ice  
*tɛʰə ji-ve-kʰə, tʰi tɛʰə nə-spʰrə-sə-rə.*  
 on DIR-go-time DEM.GEN on DIR-spread.3>3-IFR-SENS  
 Then, they thought that things were like they (Bronze Star and her husband) had said. The next day, when walking on the ice, they spread (their provisions on the ice in order to walk on it).

- 43 *tɛəgə wu gəzə tʰə-bi ji-ɛə~ɛə-regə,*  
 PART again evening DEM-like DIR-RED~go.3-LNK  
 Then again, like that, they went on in the evening.

- 44 *wu sətɛʰə gə nə də-lə-regə,*  
 again place INDF in DIR-remain.3-LNK  
 The spent again the night in a (new) place.

- 45 *di joɣpo də-regə do-lə-zgri yne-w*  
 DEM servant DEF-LNK bronze-NMLZ-star two-ERG

- k<sup>h</sup>ævdæ* *nə-və-tə* *joypə* *du* *di-ji-tə*,  
discussion DIR-do.3-NF servant DEM.ERG DIR-say.3-NF  
The servant and Bronze Star spoke. The servant said,
- 46 *"q<sup>h</sup>asi* *læ* *yrə* *mə-re* *yrə*  
tomorrow TOP water NEG-NMLZ.L water  
*mə-təə-regə* *nə* *ʒə~ʒaŋ-gu."*  
NEG-EXV-LNK in RED~come.1-NMLZ  
"Tomorrow we will reach a place without water. "
- 47 *t<sup>h</sup>i-ni* *læ* *məde* *ypi* *kɛ-ypi*, *ypi* *kɛ-ypi*  
3-PL TOP DEM.honorific? urine DIR-lot urine DIR-lot  
*də-gə-rə.* *t<sup>h</sup>ə* *jæ-f-t<sup>h</sup>i.* *ŋa-ɣne* *læ*  
DIR-have-SENS DEM DIR-INV-drink.3>3 1-DU TOP  
*ypi* *nə-q<sup>h</sup>a* *də-mæ."*  
urine two-CLF DIR-NEG  
"Your sisters and their husbands will have a lot of urine to drink.  
We, however, (only) have two people's share of urine to drink."
- 48 *"t<sup>h</sup>i-k<sup>h</sup>æ* *tɛ<sup>h</sup>u* *mi-fk<sup>h</sup>u~k<sup>h</sup>oŋ-rə"* *di(-ji-regə)<sup>1</sup>*,  
DEM.GEN-time PART NEG-RED~be.full.1-SENS DIR-say.3-LNK  
At that time, we will not be able to quench our thirst," he (the  
servant) said.
- 49 *t<sup>h</sup>i-ni-w* *tɛ<sup>h</sup>u* *ŋə-rə* *də-nts<sup>h</sup>ə-regə*,  
3-PL-ERG PART be.3-SENS DIR-think.3-LNK  
They (Gold Star and Silver Star with their husbands) thought  
things were just like Bronze Star and her husband had said.
- 50 *q<sup>h</sup>asi* *gə* *ajitu* *yrə* *mə-təə-re-q<sup>h</sup>e*  
tomorrow INDF DIR.ADV water NEG-EXV-NMLZ.L-LOC  
*ʒɛ-regə*,  
come.3-LNK

<sup>1</sup> The end of the segment is not clearly audible since it is pronounced in a whispered voice.

The next day, they reached a place without water.

- 51 *ypi də nə-v-læ-regə, ypi də*  
 urine DEF DIR-INV-urinate.3>3-LNK urine DEF  
*ji-f-t<sup>hi</sup>~t<sup>hi</sup>-regə do-γdu~du-sə-rə.*  
 DIR-INV-RED~drink.3>3-LNK DIR-RED~poison.3-IFR-SENS  
 After having urinated and drunk their own urine, they were  
 poisoned.

- 52 *təgə zgru gə-nza-sə-rə.*  
 PART story DIR-end?-IFR-SENS  
 Then, this is the end of the story.

#### THE BOY AND THE CROW

- 1 *vadə mə-zə ɛe də-ji-regə,*  
 old.woman mother-child CLF DIR-EXV.3-LNK  
 There was an old woman - a mother and a child.
- 2 *di: dāvə ɛe də-ji-sə-rə.*  
 DEM.GEN son CLF DIR-EXV.3-IFR-SENS  
 She had a son.
- 3 *təgə t<sup>hi</sup>-yne o rjə mə-ŋk<sup>h</sup>ə du-ŋo-regə,*  
 PART 3-DU INTERJ property NEG-NMLZ.A DIR-COP.3-LNK  
 Then, they were persons with no property.
- 4 *dāv-d-i amə də joypo<sup>1</sup> ɛə də-ɛə.*  
 son-GEN mother DEF servant go DIR-go.3  
 The mother of the son went to work as a servant.

<sup>1</sup> The term *joypo* refers to a male servant. A female servant is usually called *jomo*.

- 5 *joypo də-εə-regə, ama-gi læ də*  
servant DIR-go.3-LNK mother-DAT payment DEF  
*εi du-f-k<sup>h</sup>u-sə-rə.*  
barley DIR-INV-give.3>3-IFR-SENS  
She went to work as a servant and she was given barley as a payment.
- 6 *εi du-f-k<sup>h</sup>u-regə, tεəgə ji-f-k<sup>h</sup>i-regə,*  
barley DIR-INV-give.3>3-LNK PART DIR-INV-dry.3>3-LNK  
She was given barley and then she dried it.
- 7 *dəvdə də t<sup>h</sup>ə-q<sup>h</sup>e ɣro ju-ɣsu-regə,*  
son DEF DEM-LOC dry DIR-guard?.3>3-LNK  
The son guarded it drying there.
- 8 *dəvd-u qaʒi-gi εi də-mə-sə-rə.*  
son-ERG crow-DAT barley DIR-feed.3>3-IFR-SENS  
The son fed it to the crows.
- 9 *tεəgə amow dəvdə nə-f-təpa-sə-rə.*  
PART mother.ERG son DIR-INV-drive.away.3>3-IFR-SENS  
Then the mother drove the son away from home.
- 10 *dəvdə qarwə-gu qarwə-gu də-εə-regə,*  
son cry-NMLZ cry-NMLZ DIR-go.3-LNK  
The son left, crying and crying.
- 11 *qaʒi "atε<sup>h</sup>ə mə-ŋe" di-ji-regə,*  
crow what NEG-good DIR-say.3-LNK  
"What is wrong?" a crow asked.
- 12 *"ŋa amə-j εi-ntεi də*  
1SG mother-GEN barley-small.amount DEF  
*ji-f-k<sup>h</sup>i-sə də qaʒi-gi εi*  
DIR-INV-dry.3>3-NMLZ DEF crow-DAT barley

- də-mə*                      *gə.*                      *amow*                      *ŋa*  
 DIR-feed.1>3              PART                      mother.ERG              1SG  
*nə-f-təpa ."*  
 DIR-INV-drive.away.3>3  
 "I gave crows a little barley that my mother had put to dry, so  
 my mother drove me away from home," (he said).
- 13    *qaʒi-w*                      *di-gi*                      *rata*                      *lu*  
 crow-ERG                      DEM-DAT                      millstone                      CLF  
*du-f-kʰu-sə-rə.*  
 DIR-INV-give.3>3-IFR-SENS  
 The crow gave him a millstone.
- 14    *rata*                      *lu*                      *du-f-kʰu-regə,*                      *tʰə*                      *"rə-εə*  
 millstone                      CLF                      DIR-INV-give.3>3-LNK                      DEM                      DIR-go.2  
*nde*                      *gə.*                      *'atεʰə*                      *nə-ydʒi"*                      *di-ji-tə*  
 PART                      PART                      what(ever)                      DIR-grind.2                      DIR-say.3-NF  
*"ydzu-nkʰə*                      *lu*                      *ŋu.*                      *rə-εə*                      *nde.*                      *rə-qʰe*  
 grind-NMLZ.A                      CLF                      COP.3.IRR                      DIR-go.2                      PART                      DIR-LOC  
*ji-di-ndzu"*                      *di-ji-regə.*  
 DIR-PROH-stay.2                      DIR-say.3-LNK  
 After giving the millstone, the crow said, "Go! It is a grinder (i.e.,  
 grinds) whatever you tell it to grind. Go and don't stay there (at  
 a stranger's home)!" the crow said.<sup>1</sup>
- 15    *davdə*                      *rə-εə-regə,*                      *gəzə*                      *mitsa*                      *ke-qʰe*  
 son                      DIR-go.3-LNK                      evening                      stranger<sup>2</sup>                      CLF-LOC  
*ju-ndzu-regə,*  
 DIR-stay.3-LNK

<sup>1</sup> This part refers to the millstone's magical properties to produce whatever it is told to grind.

<sup>2</sup> The consultant translates the Stau term *mitsa* as *nang mi* 'family member' into Tibetan. Since these family members clearly belong to a family distinct from that of the protagonist, the term is glossed as 'stranger' in the stories.



The son went away and stayed at the house of strangers in the evening.

- 16 *mitsa-ni-gi*                      *di-ji-regə*,  
stranger-PL-DAT              DIR-say.3-LNK  
The son said to the strangers.
- 17 *"gəzə*              *nə*              *mæ-rgə-kʰæ*,              *ni-ni*              *ŋɛ*  
evening              in              NEG-sleep-time              2-PL              1SG.GEN  
*di*              *rata-gi*              *tɛʰu*              *'nə-ɣdzi'-bi*              *tɛʰu*  
DEM              millstone-DAT PART              DIR-grind.2-like              PART  
*də-di-ji*                      *m(o)ʰ*"              *di-ji-regə*,  
DIR-PROH-say.2              PART              DIR-say.3-LNK  
"At night, at the time when not yet going to sleep, do not tell my millstone to grind or anything."
- 18 *tʰi-ni-w*              *tʰi*              *mitsa-ni-w*              *"atɛʰə*              *ŋu*              *gə"*  
3-PL.ERG              3              stranger-PL-ERG              what              COP.3.IRR              PART  
*də-ntsʰə-regə*,              *tɛʰu*              *"nə-ɣdzi"*              *di-ji-regə*,  
DIR-think.3-LNK              PART              DIR-grind.2              DIR-say.3-LNK  
The strangers thought, "Why is this?" and told the millstone, "Grind!"
- 19 *rata-w*                      *"atɛʰə*                      *nə-ɣdzi"*                      *di-ji-tə*  
millstone-ERG              what(ever)              DIR-grind.2              DIR-say.3-NF  
*ɣdzu-ŋkʰə*                      *lu*              *du-ŋo-regə*,              *rata*              *də*  
grind-NMLZ.A              CLF              DIR-be.3-LNK              millstone              DEF  
*gə-zbji~zbji-sə-rə*.  
DIR-RED~change.3>3-IFR-SENS  
After the telling the millstone, "Grind something!" it ground, and they changed the millstone with theirs.

<sup>1</sup> The full form of the discourse particle is *mo*, but the speaker drops the vowel here.

- 20 *tɛəgə* *rə-ɛə-regə,* *ɲə-sni* *rə-ɛə-regə,*  
 PART DIR-go.3-LNK after-day DIR-go.3-LNK  
*rata* *də* *arutu* *"nə-ɣdʒi"* *ji-kʰæ* *gə,*  
 millstone DEF DIR.ADV DIR-grind.2 say-time PART  
*rata-j* *tɛʰu* *ætsʰi* *ɣdzu* *lu* *də-mæ-sə-rə.*  
 millstone-GEN PART little grind CLF DIR-NEG-IFR-SENS  
 Then the boy went away, he went away the next day and when  
 telling the millstone, "Grind!" it did not grind anything.
- 21 *wu* *wu* *nə-ɛə* *qarwæ-gu qarwæ-gu* *nə-ɛə-regə,*  
 again again DIR-go.3 cry-NMLZ cry-NMLZ DIR-go.3-LNK  
 Again, the son went away crying and crying.
- 22 *qali-w* *"atɛʰə* *mæ-ŋe"* *di-ji-regə,*  
 crow-ERG what NEG-good DIR-say.3-LNK  
 The crow asked, "What is wrong?"
- 23 *"ɲi:* *rata* *də* *tɛʰu* *ɣdzu-sci*  
 2SG.GEN millstone DEF PART grind-NMLZ.INSTR  
*lu* *ɲɲæ-rə"* *di-ji-sə-rə.*  
 CLF NEG.3-SENS DIR-say.3-IFR-SENS  
 "Your millstone is no good," said the boy.
- 24 *tɛəgə* *"ɲi,* *"ætsʰim,* *"rə-qʰe* *je-e-ndzu"*  
 PART 2SG what.to.say DIR-LOC DIR-Q-stay.2  
*di-ji-regə,*  
 DIR-say.2-LNK  
 Then the crow said, "Did you stay there?"
- 25 *"ju-ndzoŋ"* *di-ji-regə,* *tɛəgə* *"tʰi-ɲi-w*  
 DIR-stay.1 DIR-say.3-LNK PART 3-PL-ERG  
*gə-zbji~zbji-sə-rə."*  
 DIR-RED~change.3>3-IFR-SENS  
 "I did," the son said. Then, "They changed the (millstone)," the  
 son said.

- 26 *jaŋ*      *rji*      *lu*      *du-f-kʰu-sə-rə.*  
again      horse      CLF      DIR-INV-give.3>3-IFR-SENS  
Again, the crow gave the son a horse.
- 27 *"rji-gi*      *'xse*      *rŋə*      *jo*      *xsu*      *nə-lɛ"*  
horse-DAT      gold      silver      jade      three      DIR-defecate.2  
*di-ji-regə,*      *"xse*      *rŋə*      *jo*      *xsu*  
DIR-say.3-LNK      gold      silver      jade      three  
*lə-ŋkʰə*      *du-ŋo-regə,"*  
defecate-NMLZ.A      DIR-COP.3-LNK  
"Tell the horse to defecate the three - gold, silver, and jade," the  
crow said. "It defecates the three - gold, silver, and jade."
- 28 *o*      *(rji)ʰ*      *o*      *"tʰi-ni-qʰe*      *ji-di-ndzu."*  
INTERJ      horse      INTER      3-PL-LOC      DIR-PROH-stay.2  
"Do not stay with them (strangers)!"
- 29 *rə-ɕə-regə,*      *tʰi-ni-qʰe*      *ju-ndzu-regə,*  
DIR-go.3-LNK      they-PL-LOC      DIR-stay.3-LNK  
*tʰi-ni-w*      *wu*      *də*      *gə-zbji-zbji-sə-rə.*  
they-PL-ERG      again      DEM      DIR-RED-change.3>3-IFR-SENS  
The son went away and stayed with them (strangers). Again,  
they changed it (the horse).
- 30 *"gəzə*      *ŋɛ*      *rji-gi*      *tɕʰu*      *'nə-lɛ'*  
evening      1SG.GEN      horse-DAT      PART      DIR-defecate.2  
*də-di-ji*      *mo"*      *di-ji-regə,*  
DIR-PROH-say.2      PART      DIR-say.3-LNK  
"In the evening, don't tell the horse to defecate," the boy said.
- 31 *tʰi-ni-w*      *rji-gi*      *"nə-lɛ"*      *di-ji-regə,*  
3-PL.ERG      horse-DAT      DIR-defecate.2      DIR-say.3-LNK

<sup>1</sup> The speaker is looking for the right words and the word "horse" should not occur here.

*gə-zbji~zbji-sə-rə.*

DIR-RED~change.3>3-IFR-SENS

They (the strangers) told the horse to defecate and changed it.

- 32 *tɛəgə* "ni: rji-w tɛ<sup>h</sup>u læ-ŋk<sup>h</sup>ə  
 PART 2SG.GEN horse-ERG PART defecate-NMLZ-A  
*lu* də-mɲæ-sə, də-mɲæ-sə" di-ji-regə,  
 CLF DIR-NEG.3-IFR DIR-NEG.3-IFR DIR-say.3-LNK  
 Then, "Your horse is not a defecator (i.e., did not defecate)," the son said.

- 33 *o* tɛəgə bəcæ q<sup>h</sup>a du-f-k<sup>h</sup>u-sə-rə.  
 INTERJ PART stick CLF DIR-INV-give.3>3-IFR-SENS  
 Then the crow gave the son a stick.

- 34 *o* bəcæ q<sup>h</sup>a du-f-k<sup>h</sup>u-regə, "bəcæ-gi  
 INTERJ stick CLF DIR-INV-give.3>3-LNK stick-DAT  
*'nə-zbəci'* də-di-ji mo" di-ji-regə,  
 DIR-hit.2 DIR-PROH-say.2 PART DIR-say.3-LNK  
 After giving the stick, the crow told the son, "Do not tell the stick to hit."

- 35 *gəzə* t<sup>h</sup>i-ni-q<sup>h</sup>e rə-ɛə-regə, mitsa-ni-q<sup>h</sup>e  
 evening 3.PL-LOC DIR-go.3-LNK stranger-PL-LOC  
*ju-ndzu-regə,*  
 DIR-stay.3-LNK  
 In the evening, the son went to their place and stayed with the strangers.

- 36 *gəzə* rgə-k<sup>h</sup>æ gə, "ŋɛ bəcæ-gi  
 evening sleep-time INDF 1SG.GEN stick-DAT  
*'də-rjɛ'-bi* tɛ<sup>h</sup>u də-di-ji mo"  
 DIR-get.up.2-like PART DIR-PROH-say.2 PART  
*di-ji-sə-rə.*  
 DIR-say.3-IFR-SENS

When going to sleep in the evening, the son said, "Do not tell my stick to get up or anything like that."

- 37 *bəcæ-gi* "də-rjɛ" *di-ji-tə* *tʰi-ni-w*  
 stick-DAT DIR-get.up.2 DIR-say.3-NF 3-PL-ERG  
*mitsa-ni-w* *tʰi* *tɛʰu* *a-rgə* *də*  
 stranger-PL-ERG 3 PART one-CLF DEF  
*rə-zbəcæ-sə-rə.*  
 DIR-hit.3>3-IFR-SENS  
 They told the stick to get up and the stick hit them.
- 38 *tɛəgə* *dəvdə-ze-gi* *gə-skiri-tə,*  
 PART son-DIM-DAT DIR-shout.3-NF  
 Then they screamed at the boy.
- 39 *"ni:* *bəcæ-gi* *ju-ndzu* *di-jin<sup>1</sup>* *gə.*  
 2SG.GEN stick-DAT DIR-sit.2 DIR-say.2 PART  
*ni:* *ni:* *tɛala* *mbji-ŋkʰə* *jidi-ni*  
 2SG.GEN 2SG.GEN thing change-NMLZ.A we.ourselves?-PL  
*ŋu~ŋoŋ.* *xsəmə* *xtɛ"* *di-ji-regə,*  
 RED~COP.1 everything return DIR-say-LNK  
 "Tell your stick to stop! We are the changers of your things! We  
 will give everything back!"
- 40 *tɛəgə* *to-xtɛ-regə,* *tɛəgə* *dəvdə-zi-regə,*  
 PART DIR-return.3>3-LNK PART son-DIM-LNK  
*tʰi* *amo-w* *ɣne* *rjerpə* .  
 3SG.GEN mother-ERG two rich.person  
*də-tɛɛ~tɛɛ-sə-rə.*  
 DIR-RED~become.3-IFR-SENS

<sup>1</sup> The final nasal is problematic. In this Stau dialect, the second and third person intransitive verbs appear in the identical stem form with no person indexation suffixes. The form *jin* (say.2) is thus not expected, even though it is attested in the related Geshiza. As an alternative interpretation, the nasal can be seen to belong to a previously undocumented particle *ŋgə*.

---

Then, after they gave everything back, the two - the boy and (his) mother - became rich.

## RETOLD ENGLISH VERSIONS

### THE THREE PRINCESSES AND A SERVANT

Long ago, a king had three daughters. The oldest one was Gold Star, the next was Silver Star, and the youngest was Bronze Star. Gold Star had a gold *mdzo mo*, Silver Star a silver *mdzo mo*, and Bronze Star had a bronze *mdzo mo*. The king also had a servant.

One rainy, muddy day, Gold Star went to milk her *mdzo mo*. Gold Star said to the servant, "Go fetch me a stool."

"Since it's raining heavily, I cannot fetch a stool for you so I'll kneel and you can sit on me instead," the servant replied.

Gold Star then sat on the servant and milked her gold *mdzo mo*.

After Gold Star, Silver Star went to milk her silver *mdzo mo* and told the servant to bring her a stool.

The servant replied, "When it's raining like this, I cannot go look for a stool. Please sit on me as your older sister did."

Like her older sister, Silver Star sat on the servant's back to milk.

Bronze Star then went to milk her bronze *mdzo mo*. It was still raining and she said to the servant, "Please go bring me a stool."

The servant replied, "Your two sisters sat on my back to milk while I knelt like this so you also sit on me."

"You're an honorable man so it's not right for me to sit on you. I'm an honorable woman so I can't sit on you. Instead, I'll kneel in the mud to milk," Bronze Star declared, and knelt to milk her bronze *mdzo mo*.

Later, Gold Star married the son of a king. Silver Star also married the son of a king. On the other hand, Bronze Star stayed with the family servant. Since the husbands of both Gold Star and Silver Star were princes, their family members gave the newlyweds many

---

valuable things. They also looked down on Bronze Star, and did not give her anything valuable as a dowry.

Later, the three married couples left home. When night fell, they had to spend the night where they were. Bronze Star's husband said to her, "Gold Star and Silver Star and their husbands will reach a place with a lot of ice tomorrow, but they cannot walk on the ice. But they have a lot of *rtsam pa* and flour that they can scatter on the ice, and then they can walk on it. However, we don't have any such provisions, so it will be hard for us to reach the other side."

Gold Star and Silver Star were secretly listening to Bronze Star and her husband, and believed what they said. The next day, they spread their provisions on the ice to walk across the frozen river.

That night, they stayed in a new place. The servant said to Bronze Star, "Tomorrow, we will reach a place without water. Your sisters and their husbands will have a lot of urine to drink, but we will only have two people's share of urine to drink. We won't be able to quench our thirst as they will."

Again, the others believed this. The next day, they reached a place without water. After having urinated, they drank their own urine and then became very ill.

The story ends here.

#### THE BOY AND A CROW

An old woman and her son were very poor. The mother often worked as a servant and was paid in barley, which she washed and told her son to guard as it dried. The son, however, gave the crows a bit of the barley. This made the boy's mother so angry that she drove him out of their home.

While the boy was crying on the road, he met a crow that asked, "What's wrong?"

"I often gave crows a little of the barley that my mother put out to dry, so my mother drove me away from home," the boy said.

---

The crow gave him a millstone and said, "Take this millstone with you. It grinds whatever you tell it to grind. Remember, however, never stay with strangers at night."

The son then left, but ignored what the crow said and stayed with some strangers that evening. The son said to the family he was staying with, "At night, when I go to sleep, do not tell my millstone to grind or anything."

The family members thought, "Why did the boy say that?" and then ordered the millstone, "Grind some grain!" After the millstone ground, they were amazed and exchanged the boy's millstone for their millstone.

The next day, the boy took the family's millstone and left. When he got back to his own home, he told the millstone to grind, but it did nothing.

Again, the son left home crying and crying. On the road, he met the crow again. The crow asked, "What is wrong?"

"Your millstone is no good," replied the boy.

"Did you stay in a house of strangers?" the crow asked.

"I did. And then, they changed the millstone," the son replied.

This time the crow gave the son a horse and warned, "This horse defecates gold, silver, and jade. Don't stay with those strangers again."

However, the son left and again stayed with the strangers. "In the evening, don't tell the horse to defecate," the boy said to the family members, who then told the horse to defecate. After they saw the treasures that appeared, they replaced the boy's horse with their own horse.

The next day, the boy left and took the horse back to his own home. When he told it to defecate, the horse defecated nothing.

Again, the boy left home, crying and crying. On the road, he again met the crow, who asked, "What's wrong?"

"Your horse did not defecate even one of the promised treasures when I got back home," the boy said.

Then the crow gave him a stick and said, "Don't tell the stick to get up."



The boy stayed with the family of strangers again. When going to bed in the evening, the boy said, "Don't tell my stick to get up or anything like that."

The family members, however, told the stick to get up and the stick started beating them. They then screamed, "Tell your stick to stop! We are the ones who exchanged your things! We will give you everything back!"

After getting everything back, both the boy and his mother became very rich.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

1	1st person
2	2nd person
3	3rd person
ALL	allative
CLF	classifier
COM	comitative
COP	copula
DAT	dative
DEM	demonstrative pronoun
DIM	diminutive
DIR	directional prefix
DIR.ADV	directional adverb
DU	dual
ERG	ergative
EXV	existential verb
NF	non-finite
GEN	genitive
IFR	inferential evidential
INDF	indefinite
INTERJ	interjection
LNK	linker
LOC	locative
NEG	negative

---

NMLZ	nominalizer
NMLZ.A	agentive nominalizer
NMLZ.INSTR	instrumental nominalizer
NMLZ.L	locative nominalizer
PART	particle
PL	plural
Q	question
RED	reduplication
TOP	topic
SENS	sensory evidential
SG	singular
SUPL	superlative
>	direction of action in persons

## REFERENCES

- Hodgson, Brian Houghton. 1853. Sifán and Hórsók Vocabularies, With Another Special Exposition Into the Wide Range of Mongolian Affinities and Remarks on the Lingual and Physical Characteristics of the Family. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* XXII(II):121-151.
- Jacques, Guillaume, Lai Yunfan, Anton Antonov, and Lobsang Nima. 2016. *Sketch of Stau*. <https://goo.gl/zdiUjx>, accessed 27 October 2016.
- Kun Mchog Dge Legs, Dpal Ldan Bkra Shis, and Kevin Stuart. 1999. Tibetan Tricksters. *Asian Folklore Studies* 58:5-30.
- Libu Lakhi (Li Jianfu), CK Stuart, and Gerald Roche. 2013. Namuyi Tibetans: Electrified Change. *Studia Orientalia* 113:111-126.
- Ren Naiqiang 任乃强. 1984. Qiangzu yuanliu tansuo 羌族源流探索 [An Inquiry Into the Origin of the Qiang People]. Chongqing 重庆: Chongqing chubanshe 重庆出版社 [Chongqing Press].
- Rinjing Dorje. 1997. *Tales of Uncle Tompa: The Legendary Rascal of Tibet*. Barrytown: Station Hill Arts.

- Stein, Rolf Alfred. 1972. *Tibetan Civilization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Vanderveen, Chantel. 2015. *A Phonology of Stau*. MA thesis. Trinity Western University.
- Zeng Xianjiang 曾现江. 2007. Cang yi zoulang de mengguzu yuan jiyi 藏彝走廊的蒙古族源记忆 [The Historic Mark of Mongolian Culture in the Zang Yi Corridor]. *Xinan minzu daxue xuebao* 西南民族大学学报 [Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities] 28(2):21-22.
- Yuan Haiwang, Kunga Awang, and Li Bo. 2015. *Tibetan Folktales*. Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- a khu ston pa ཨ་ཁུ་སོན་པ།  
 brag 'go བྲག་འགོ།  
 Daofu 道孚  
 dar mdo དར་མདོ།  
 dge bshes དགེ་བཤེས།  
 dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས།  
 Ganzi 甘孜  
 Gesar, ge sar གེ་སར།  
 Geshiz(h)a 革什扎, 格什扎  
 gling ལྷིང།  
 gnas sgron lha mo གནས་སྒྲོན་ལྷ་མོ།  
 hor dpon khag lnga ཧོར་དཔོན་ཁག་ལྷ།  
 hor ཧོར།  
 hor pa ཧོར་པ།  
 hu 胡  
 Huangtou Huihu 黄頭回鶻  
 Kangding 康定  
 khang gsar ཁང་གསར།  
 Luhuo 炉霍  
 ma zu མ་བུ།

ma zur མ་རུར།

Mazi 麻孜

mdzo mo མཛོ་མོ།

Namuyi 纳木依

Namuzi, na mu zhi ནམ་མཁུ་ཞི།

nang mi ནང་མི།

p<sup>h</sup>ozəwo (consultant's native hamlet)

rta'u རྟཱུ།

rtsam pa རུ་སམ་པ།

sngon ma སྤོན་མ།

Shangzhai 上寨

Sichuan 四川

Stau, rta'u རྟཱུ།

Weixin 微信

Xianshui 鲜水

---

TWO MANGGHUER STORIES

Qi Xiaofang 祁小芳 (Qinghai Normal University 青海師範大學) and  
Keith W Slater (SIL International and University of North Dakota)

ABSTRACT

Two Mangghuer (Minhe Monguor) stories are given with grammatical analysis and English translation. Qi Xiaofang wrote the stories based on versions she learned from elders in her home area.

KEYWORDS

folklore, Mangghuer, Minhe, Mongol, Monguor, Qinghai,

INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

These two stories contribute to the growing body of published Mangghuer literature and are particularly valuable to folklorists, students of Mangghuer culture, and linguists. The stories were written by Qi Xiaofang, who learned them from elders in her home area. The orthographic conventions and grammatical analysis of the stories basically follow that of Slater (2003) and Chen et al. (2005). A glossary of grammatical abbreviations is at the end of this paper. Line numbering indicates paragraph and sentence boundaries; for example, lines 8.1 and 8.2 of "Good Daughter Ping" are the first and second sentences, respectively, of the eighth paragraph of the story.

## STORY NUMBER ONE

*Gezaini Aguer Ping* "Good Daughter Ping"

1 **Gezaini Aguer Ping**  
*gezai =ni aguer Ping*  
 good GEN daughter Ping

**Good Daughter Ping**

2 **Tiedongdu, yige shinagudu aguer liangkuer**  
*tiedong =du yi -ge shinagu =du aguer liang -kuer*  
 past DAT oneCL woman DAT daughter two CL

**bang.**  
*bang*  
 OBJ.COP

**Long ago, a woman had two daughters.**

---

<sup>1</sup> The authors thank Wang Xianzhen 王献珍, Zhu Yongzhong 朱永忠, Wen Xiangcheng 文祥呈, and AHP editors for help with the translation, editing, and publication of these stories. Any remaining errors are ours, not theirs.

- 3 **Yige qinni bang, niereni Hua**  
*yi -ge qin =ni bang niere =ni Hua*  
 oneCL self GEN OBJ.COP name POSS Hua

**gelang.**

*ge -lang*  
 QUOTE OBJ.IMPERF

**One was her own daughter, named Hua.**

- 4 **Han yige ganni kuergan ma mieshiku bieri**  
*han yi -ge gan =ni kuergan ma mieshi -ku bieri*  
 other oneCL 3.SG GEN husband and first IMPERF wife

**ghulani aguer bang, niereni Ping**  
*ghula =ni aguer bang niere =ni Ping*  
 together GEN daughter OBJ.COP name POSS Ping

**gelang.**

*ge -lang*  
 QUOTE OBJ.IMPERF

The other was the daughter of her husband and his ex-wife, and was named Ping.

- 5 **Gan jianni qin aguer Huadu jiaoye arong shini**  
*gan jian =ni qin aguer Hua =du jiaoye arong shini*  
 3.SG self GEN self daughter Hua DAT always clean new

**gezaidada diersini musigha saolang,**  
*gezai -dada dier -si =ni musi -gha sao -lang*  
 good such clothes PL ACC wear CAUSE sit OBJ.IMPERF

**Hua yang gesa berlang.**  
*Hua yang ge -sa ber -lang*  
 Hua what do COND become OBJ.IMPERF

She dressed her own daughter, Hua, in beautiful clothes, and Hua could do whatever she wanted.

6 **Ai xiderakuni shi, gan Pingla**  
*ai xidera -ku =ni shi gan Ping =la*  
 NEG be.like IMPERFGEN COP 3.SG Ping INST

**gerku yigua weiliesini gegha**  
*ger -ku yigua weilie -si =ni ge -gha*  
 house IMPERF totally work PL ACC do CAUSE

**saolang, gerku kunsidu shidieni**  
*sao -lang ger -ku kun -si =du shidie =ni*  
 sit OBJ. IMPERF house IMPERF person PL DAT early ACC

**yama bajiaghani a, chushensidu wuyi**  
*yama baja -gha -ni a chushen -si =du wuyi*  
 food prepare CAUSE SUBJ. FUT PRT animal PL DAT fodder

**hughani a, gerku kunsini**  
*hu -gha -ni a ger -ku kun -si =ni*  
 give CAUSE SUBJ. FUT PRT house IMPERF person PL GEN

**diersini ghua ghani a ting**  
*dier -si =ni ghua -gha -ni a ting*  
 clothes PL ACC wash CAUSE SUBJ. FUT PRT that

**gelang.**  
*ge -lang*  
 QUOTE OBJ. IMPERF

On the contrary, she ordered Ping to do all kinds of housework, like cooking breakfast for the family, feeding domestic animals, and washing all the family's clothes.

7 **Han ganni Pingdu chudulang yama ma**  
*han gan =ni Ping =du chudu -lang yama ma*  
 also 3.SG GEN Ping DAT fill OBJ. IMPERF food and

**khalen dier a guang.**  
*khalen dier a guang*  
 hot clothes also OBJ. NEG. COP

In addition, Ping never had filling food or warm clothes.



8.1 **Tiyitiandu, yige naosa nuoyanni**  
*ti yi tian =du yi -ge nao -sa nuoyan =ni*  
 thatoneday DAT oneCL see COND official ACC

**xideraku bayasiku ningger ge ni**  
*xidera -ku bayasi -ku ningger ge ni*  
 be.like IMPERF glad IMPERF old.woman SG.INDEF this

**shinaguni gerdu ri danang gandu keliji,**  
*shinagu =ni ger =du ri danang gan =du keli -ji*  
 woman GEN houseDAT come after 3.SGDAT say IMPERF

**"Qi dameidu yige aguernang**  
*qi damei =du yi -ge aguer =nang*  
 2.SG 1.SG.DATDAT oneCL daughterREFLPOSS

**jieliegha, bi gerku weilienang ge**  
*jielie -gha bi ger -ku weilie =nang ge*  
 borrowCAUSE 1.SG houseIMPERF work REFLPOSS once

**geghasa bernu?**  
*ge -gha -sa ber -nu*  
 do CAUSECOND becomeSUBJ.FUT.QUEST

One day, an old woman who looked easily approachable and like an official came to her house and said to her, "Would you mind sending one of your daughters to help me with some housework?"

8.2 **Dan gan geji gezai bisa, bi**  
*dan gan ge -ji gezai bi -sa bi*  
 if 3.SG do IMPERF good SUBJ.COPCOND 1.SG

**gandu ertang yimadai huwa."**  
*gan =du ertang yi madai hu -wa*  
 3.SGDAT gold onejute bag giveVOL

If she does well, I'll give her a jute bag full of gold."

9 **Ni shinagu mulaser ni ninggerni terghaila**  
*ni shinagu mula -ser ni ningger =ni terghai =la*  
 this woman think PROG this old.womanGEN head INST

**nao khuer duoruo kuerghajiang, ni ningger**  
*nao khuer duoruo kuer -gha -jiang ni ningger*  
 see foot under arriveCAUSEOBJ.PERF this old.woman

**zanjin diersini musidandang, xinhuo**  
*zanjin dier -si =ni musidandang xinhuo*  
 beautiful.and.luxuriant clothesPL ACC wear after believe

**geku kun mubang zha, tingge, gan**  
*ge -ku kun mubang zha ting ge gan*  
 do IMPERF person OBJ.COP OK that do 3.SG

**tongyirajiang.**  
*tongyira -jiang*  
 agree OBJ.PERF

As she looked the old lady up and down, she found her beautiful and ornately dressed, and decided she was a trustworthy person, so at last she agreed.

10 **You yige yuanyin shi, gan qiardu hudu**  
*you yi -ge yuanyin shi gan qiar =du hudu*  
 also oneCL reason COP 3.SG moneyDAT very

**shangjin bang, qiarla gan zehang dier**  
*shangjin bang qiar =la gan zehang dier*  
 addicted OBJ.COP moneyINST 3.SG beautiful clothes

**zehang dier durji berlang.**  
*zehang dier dur -ji ber -lang*  
 beautiful clothes buy IMPERF becomeOBJ.IMPERF

Another reason was that she was very much addicted to money, so she could buy beautiful clothes.

- 11 **Tingku,** **ganni ninggerdu bayasiji**  
*ting -ku gan =ni ningger =du bayasi -ji*  
 that IMPERF 3.SG POSS old.woman DAT glad IMPERF
- kualaji,** **"Shihuanang kelisa, bi**  
*kuala -ji shihua =nang keli -sa bi*  
 praise IMPERF truth REFLPOSS say COND 1.SG
- liangge aguernang qimeidu jielieji**  
*liang -ge aguer =nang qimei =du jielie -ji*  
 two CL daughter REFLPOSS 2.SG.DAT DAT borrow IMPERF
- nukuer berhawa, ni ajiadiao**  
*nukuer ber -gha -wa ni ajia diao*  
 companion become CAUSEVOL this elder.sister younger.sibling
- ghulani qi geghasa yang a geji**  
*ghula =ni qi ge -gha -sa yang a ge -ji*  
 together ACC 2.SG do CAUSECOND what also do IMPERF
- naghulang, han gezeidada ge**  
*naghu -lang han gezei -dada ge*  
 can OBJ.IMPERF other good such SG.INDEF
- geni a."**  
*ge -ni a*  
 do SUBJ.FUT PRT

Therefore, she said to the old lady proudly and boastfully, "In fact, I can send you my two daughters to help you, the two sisters can do anything you ask, and (since they will pull together) they will do everything efficiently and perfectly."

- 12 **Ni ningger shiniser keliji, "Ni zhuyi**  
*ni ningger shini -ser keli -ji ni zhuyi*  
 this old.woman new PROG say IMPERF this idea

**gezai bang."**  
*gezai bang*  
 good OBJ.COP

The old lady smiled and said, "That's a good idea."

13 **Tingku,**                    **gan Hua ma Pingni mula tingda,**  
*ting -ku*                    *gan Hua ma Ping =ni mula tingda*  
 that IMPERF                3.SG Hua and Ping ACC small such

**zangnang, popolanlandi biesi ger gedu**  
*zangnang popolanlan -di biesi ger ge =du*  
 dirty broken.downADV straw house SG.INDEFDAT

**duer xijiang.**

*duer xi -jiang*  
 lead go OBJ.PERF

Then, she took Hua and Ping to a very small, dirty, untidy, and poor straw storehouse.

14 **Yixiazi,**                **gan maosai                zangnang tingda**  
*yixiazi gan mao sai zangnang tingda*  
 all.at.once 3.SG bad beautiful dirty such

**ningger ge                ber saojiang,                gan Huani**  
*ningger ge ber sao -jiang gan Hua =ni*  
 old.woman SG.INDEF become sit OBJ.PERF 3.SG Hua ACC

**xian ni gerni a arong shou ge geji.**

*xian ni ger =ni a arong shou ge ge -ji*  
 first this houseACC PRT clean sweep do QUOTEIMPERF

Suddenly, she became a very ugly, dirty old lady, and she ordered Hua first of all to clean the house entirely.

15.1 **Tingku,**                **keliji                gandu angtidun yama**  
*ting -ku keli -ji gan =du angtidun yama*  
 that IMPERF say IMPERF 3.SGDAT delicious food

**yidun chinagha geji.**

*yi -dun china -gha ge -ji*  
 oneCL cook CAUSE QUOTEIMPERF

Next, she ordered Hua to cook a delicious meal for her.

15.2 **Zui khuainao, ganni ge dabanlagha**  
*zui khuainao gan =ni ge dabanla -gha*  
 most back 3.SGACC once dress.up CAUSE

**suzuni gezaiher ge sangbulagha geji.**  
*suzu =ni gezai -her ge sangbula -gha ge -ji*  
 hair ACC good COMP once comb CAUSE QUOTEIMPERF

Last of all, she told Hua to make her up and comb her tangled hair.

16 **Hua ni maogerni ge nao houhuiraji**  
*Hua ni mao ger =ni ge nao houhuira -ji*  
 Hua this bad houseACC once see regret IMPERF

**suguoji ting gelang, Hua geji you**  
*suguo -ji ting ge -lang Hua ge -ji you*  
 curse IMPERF that do OBJ.IMPERF Hua do IMPERF also

**wudang you mao bang.**  
*wudang you mao bang*  
 slowly also bad OBJ.COP

As Hua was looking around the poor house, she regretted and complained that she had come here, and Hua did all the work very slowly and ineffectively.

17 **Gan yama bajiaji a shun guang,**  
*gan yama bajia -ji a shun guang*  
 3.SG food prepareIMPERF also smooth OBJ.NEG.COP

**yinwei ni gan touyici saijin yama**  
*yinwei ni gan touyici saijin yama*  
 because this 3.SG first.time spend.time food

**bajialang.**  
*bajia -lang*  
 prepareOBJ.IMPERF

Her cooking did not go smoothly, either, because this was the first time that she had spent much time cooking.

18 **Khuainao,**      **ganni**    **suzuni**  
*khuainao*      *gan =ni*    *suzu =ni*  
 back              3.SGGEN hair ACC

**sangbulaghaku**      **shijiedu,**      **ganmei dangdadage**  
*sangbula -gha -ku*      *shijie =du*      *ganmei dangdadage*  
 comb CAUSEIMPERF time DAT      3.SG      strongly

**ganni ninggerni**      **you werkuer**    **you**  
*gan =ni ningger =ni*    *you werkuer*    *you*  
 3.SGACC old.womanACC also be.angry also

**bieteghalang.**

*biete -gha -lang*  
 suffer.painCAUSEOBJ.IMPERF

After that, when she combed the old lady' white hair, she did it purposely and strongly so that she made the old lady angry and hurt.

19 **Khuainao,**      **gan Pingla**      **xideraku**      **weilieni**  
*khuainao*      *gan Ping =la*      *xidera -ku*      *weilie =ni*  
 back              3.SG Ping INST be.like IMPERF work ACC

**geghajiang,**      **Ping ni mula gerni**      **shou**  
*ge -gha -jiang*      *Ping ni mula ger =ni*      *shou*  
 do CAUSEOBJ.PERF      Ping this small houseACC sweep

**ghergha**      **danang nongminni**      **ger shige zhuangxiu**  
*gher -gha danang nongmin =ni*      *ger shige zhuangxiu*  
 go.outCAUSE after      peasant GEN house like      decorate

**gherghajiang.**

*gher -gha -jiang*  
 go.outCAUSEOBJ.PERF

Later, when she had Ping do the same task, Ping cleaned and decorated the small house very tidily so it was like a normal peasant's house.

20 **Khuainao,**      **ganni ninggerdu**      **angtidun yama**  
*khuainao*      *gan =ni ningger =du*      *angtidun yama*  
 back              3.SGACC old.womanDAT delicious food

**yidun chinaghajiang, ni ningger ganni**  
*yi -dun china -gha -jiang ni ningger gan =ni*  
 oneCL cook CAUSE.OBJ.PERF this old.woman 3.SGGEN

**touliangge gesang weiliedu hudu bayasi danang**  
*tou liang -ge ge -sang weilie =du hudu bayasi danang*  
 firsttwo CL do PERF work DAT very glad after

**puza ganni gedalasang suzuni banlagha**  
*puza gan =ni gedala -sang suzu =ni banla -gha*  
 another 3.SGGEN tangle PERF hair ACC tie CAUSE

**geji.**

*ge -ji*  
 QUOTEIMPERF

Later, after she had cooked a very delicious meal for the old lady, the old lady was very satisfied with the first two tasks she had done and asked her to comb her tangled long hair.

21 **Ping bian marmardi sangbulalang bian**  
*Ping bian marmar -di sangbula -lang bian*  
 Ping side slow ADV comb OBJ.IMPERF side

**ganni shiqingsini erseghelang.**  
*gan =ni shiqing -si =ni erseghe -lang*  
 3.SGGEN matter PL ACC ask OBJ.IMPERF

While Ping combed gently, she asked the old lady about her former life.

22 **Gan han ersegheji yang puza geku**  
*gan han erseghe -ji yang puza ge -ku*  
 3.SG other ask IMPERF what another do IMPERF

**weilie bainu geji, ni ningger**  
*weilie bainu ge -ji ni ningger*  
 work OBJ.COP.QUEST QUOTEIMPERF this old.woman

**ganni khalen zhuerge ma renzhengni nao danang**  
*gan =ni khalen zhuerge ma renzheng =ni nao danang*  
 3.SG.GEN hot heart and diligence ACC see after

**hudu bayasilang.**  
*hudu bayasi -lang*  
 very glad OBJ.IMPERF

Ping also asked if she had other things need to do for her, and the old lady was delighted with Ping's carefulness and enthusiasm.

23 **Khuainao ni liangge ajiadiao**  
*khuainao ni liang -ge aja diao*  
 back this two CL elder.sisteryounger.sibling

**gerdunang xiku shijie kuerjiang, ni**  
*ger =du =nang xi -ku shijie kuer -jiang ni*  
 house.DATREFLPOSS go.IMPERF time arrive.OBJ.PERF this

**ningger yijiadu shuguo madai ge hu danang**  
*ningger yijia =du shuguo madai ge hu danang*  
 old.woman each DAT big jute bag SG.INDEF give after

**keliji, "Aguer liangge, muni ertang dong**  
*keli -ji aguer liang -ge muni ertang dong*  
 say IMPERF daughter two CL 1.SG.GEN gold hole

**mula wula geni khuainao bang, ni**  
*mula wula ge =ni khuainao bang ni*  
 small mountain SG.INDEFACC back OBJ.COP this

**wula mieshi suzu yitiao bang, qi xian**  
*wula mieshi suzu yi -tiao bang qi xian*  
 mountain front water oneCL OBJ.COP 2.SG first

**suzuni nuoqiku kerlikunang, tasi jienang**  
*suzu =ni nuoqi -ku kerli -kunang tasi jie =nang*  
 waterACC pass IMPERF must.OBJ.FUT 2.PL selfREFLPOSS

**kedu hesa a berni."**  
*kedu he -sa a ber -ni*  
 how.much takeCOND also become.SUBJ.FUT



Later, when it was the time for the two sisters to go back home, the old lady gave each of them a big jute bag and said, "You two girls, the cave where I put gold is behind a small mountain, and there is a river in front of the mountain. You have to cross the river first, and then each of you may take as much gold as you can."

24 **Gansi zaijian keli danang, ni**  
*gan -si zaijian keli danang ni*  
 3.SGPL goodbye say after this

**ajiadiao ghula kaishi shuguo**  
*ajia diao ghula kaishi shuguo*  
 elder.sister.younger.sibling together begin big

**madainang bari danang ertang wulani**  
*madai =nang bari danang ertang wula =ni*  
 jute bagREFLPOSS take after gold mountainACC

**yerrila xijiang.**  
*yerri -la xi -jiang*  
 look.forPURP goOBJ.PERF

After they said goodbye, the sisters carried their big jute bags and went to look for the gold cave.

25 **Gansini suzuni nuoqi wulani pake**  
*gan -si =ni suzu =ni nuoqi wula =ni pake*  
 3.SGPL POSS waterACC pass mountainACC climb

**nuoqisa, yishu geigandada ertang yanshuini**  
*nuoqi -sa yi -shu geigan -dada ertang yanshui =ni*  
 pass COND oneCL clear such gold color GEN

**guang gansini nududu ruojiang.**  
*guang gan -si =ni nudu =du ruo -jiang*  
 light 3.SGPL GEN eye DAT enterOBJ.PERF

When they crossed the river and climbed the mountain, a bright, golden light appeared to their eyes.

26 **Hua shuguo khailaji,**                      **"Bi bayang aguer**  
*Hua shuguo khaila -ji*                      *bi bayang aguer*  
 Hua big shout IMPERF                      1.SG rich daughter

**berjiang a," gan kaishi shuguo**  
*ber -jiang a gan kaishi shuguo*  
 becomeOBJ.PERF PRT 3.SG begin big

**madainang zhuoluojiang.**  
*madai =nang zhuoluo -jiang*  
 jute bagREFLPOSS put.into OBJ.PERF

Hua yelled, "I am a rich girl now," and she started to put the gold into her big jute bag.

27 **Yige tegherduni, shuguo madai tiduoruo**  
*yi -ge tegher =du =ni shuguo madai tiduoruo*  
 oneCL while DATPOSS big jute bag inside

**chan kunni nuduni yinkeku ertang bang.**  
*chan kun =ni nudu =ni yinke -ku ertang bang*  
 totally personGEN eye ACC attractIMPERF gold OBJ.COP

In a short time, the big jute bag was filled with attractive gold.

28 **Danshi, Ping nisini nao jiandunang**  
*danshi Ping ni -si =ni nao jian =du =nang*  
 but Ping thisPL ACC see self DATREFLPOSS

**keliji, "Bi zhang jian nigenang heji**  
*keli -ji bi zhang jian nige =nang he -ji*  
 say IMPERF 1.SG only self one REFLPOSS takeIMPERF

**xiya a," khuainao, ertang tashi jige**  
*xi -ya a khuainao ertang tashi ji -ge*  
 goVOL PRT back gold stone severalCL

**tiaoke danang madainang zhuoluojiang.**  
*tiaoke danang madai =nang zhuoluo -jiang*  
 choose after jute bagREFLPOSS put.into OBJ.PERF

However, Ping looked at the gold and said to herself, "I just want the part that belongs to me," and then she selected only a few gold chunks and put them in her own jute bag.

29 **Zuihou,**      **ni ajiadiao**                      **ghula**  
*zuihou*              *ni aji*              *diao*                      *ghula*  
 at last              this elder.sister.younger.sibling together

**madainang**              **beila gerdunang**                      **xijiang.**  
*madai =nang*              *beila ger =du =nang*              *xi -jiang*  
 jute bag REFLPOSS carry house DAT REFLPOSS go OBJ.PERF

Finally, the two sisters shouldered their jute bags and went home.

30 **Gansini ana,**      **nige mianzini shuguo**  
*gan -si =ni ana*              *nige mianzi =ni shuguo*  
 3.SG PL GEN mother one face ACC big

**naoku shinagu xian Huani madaini**  
*nao -ku shinagu xian Hua =ni madai =ni*  
 see IMPERF woman first Hua GEN jute bag ACC

**kaikeghajiang,**                      **yinwei gan nige naosa**  
*kaike -gha -jiang*                      *yinwei gan nige nao -sa*  
 begin CAUSE OBJ.PERF because 3.SG one see COND

**shuguo bang.**  
*shuguo bang*  
 big OBJ.COP

Their mother, the vain and greedy woman, opened Hua's jute bag first because hers<sup>1</sup> looked big.

31 **Gansini geiharakuni shi, Hua**  
*gan -si =ni geihara -ku =ni shi Hua*  
 3.SG PL ACC surprise IMPERF GEN COP Hua

<sup>1</sup> *gan nige* 'hers' might instead be analyzed as *gan=ni ge* 3SG=ACC SG.INDEF. We are not sure which analysis is correct.

**zhensibahuo beilaji risang ertang ti**  
 zhensibahuo beila -ji ri -sang ertang ti  
 with.great.difficulty carry IMPERF come PERF gold that

**madai kungsi ai a naoku tashi ber**  
 madai kun -si ai a nao -ku tashi ber  
 jute bag person PL NEG also see IMPERF stone become

**saojiang.**

sao -jiang  
 sit OBJ.PERF

To their astonishment, the gold that Hua had carried on her back with great difficulties had become a bag of worthless stones.

32 **Gan geiharaser werkuerji ting gelang,**  
 gan geihara -ser werkuer -ji ting ge -lang  
 3.SG surprise PROG be.angry IMPERF that do OBJ.IMPERF

**puza zhuergenang khedengteghaji Ping**  
 puza zhuerge =nang khedengte -gha -ji Ping  
 another heart REFLPOSS steel CAUSE IMPERF Ping

**nigeni kaikeghajiang, naosa chan ertang**  
 nige =ni kaike -gha -jiang nao -sa chan ertang  
 one ACC open CAUSE OBJ.PERF see COND totally gold

**bang.**

bang  
 OBJ.COP

The mother was very shocked and angry, and then steeling her heart she started to open Ping's jute bag, but discovered that the bag was full of gold.

33 **Niker shijiedu, ganni yanziku gongji**  
 niker shijie =du gan =ni yanzi -ku gongji  
 this time DAT 3.SG GEN yard IMPERF rooster

**kaishi khailalang, "Ping gezai aguer bang,**  
*kaishi khaila -lang Ping gezai aguer bang*  
 begin shout OBJ.IMPERF Ping good daughter OBJ.COP

**Hua mao aguer bang."**  
*Hua mao aguer bang*  
 Hua bad daughter OBJ.COP

At that moment, the rooster in their yard started to crow, "Ping is a good girl, while Hua is a bad girl."

## STORY NUMBER TWO

*Mang'huzi Ningger* "The Long-haired Devil"

1 ***Mang'huzi Ningger***  
*mang'huzi ningger*  
 monster old.woman

The Long-haired Devil<sup>1</sup>

2.1 ***Tiedongdu a, ningger yigedu kao yikuer***  
*tiedong =du a ningger yi -ge =du kao yi -kuer*  
 past DAT PRT old.woman oneCL DAT son oneCL

***xijin yikuer bang bai.***  
*xijin yi -kuer bang bai*  
 daughter oneCL OBJ.COP EMPH

Long long ago, an old woman had a son and a daughter.

2.2 ***Ni ningger jiaoduer bulailanang khuoni***  
*ni ningger jiaoduer bulai =la =nang khuoni*  
 this old.woman every.day child INSTREFLPOSS sheep

<sup>1</sup> The term *mang'huzi ningger* is literally 'monster old lady.' The person indicated, though, seems to be a young woman, not an old woman. However, the monster may not be the same individual as the younger sister - as the conclusion of the story suggests. We use the translation 'long-haired devil,' indicating the monstrous nature of the unnatural creature.

**danglaghala xilang, tingku, ni bulai**  
*dangla -gha -la xi -lang ting -ku ni bulai*  
 herd CAUSEPURP goOBJ.IMPERF that IMPERF this child

**xujundiaonang a dur xilang.**  
*xujun diao =nang a dur xi -lang*  
 daughteryounger.siblingREFLPOSS also lead goOBJ.IMPERF

The old woman sent her boy to herd sheep every day, and the boy used to take his younger sister with him, too.

2.3 **Ni bulai yibian khuoni danglalang yibian**  
*ni bulai yi bian khuoni dangla -lang yi bian*  
 this child onese side sheep herd OBJ.IMPERF onese side

**ganni xujundiaoni terghaiku bosini**  
*gan =ni xujun diao =ni terghai -ku bosini =ni*  
 3.SGGEN daughteryounger.siblingGEN head IMPERF lice ACC

**alaghalang.**  
*ala -gha -lang*  
 kill CAUSEOBJ.IMPERF

While the boy was herding sheep, he killed lice from his sister's head.

2.4 **Jiaoduer ning ge murgurdi bosini ala danang**  
*jiaoduer ning ge murgurdi bosini =ni ala danang*  
 every.day this do pinch lice ACC kill after

**ganni xujundiaoni terghaidi yeber**  
*gan =ni xujun diao =ni terghai =di yeber*  
 3.SGGEN daughteryounger.siblingGEN head LOC horn

**liangge gher rijiang, ganni yeber**  
*liang -ge gher ri -jiang gan =ni yeber*  
 two CL go.out comeOBJ.PERF 3.SGGEN horn

**yitiantian shuguotulang.**  
*yi tian tian shuguotu -lang*  
 oneday day grow.up OBJ.IMPERF

Because of his cleaning every day, a couple of horns grew on his sister's head, and the horns were becoming bigger and bigger each day.

3.1 **Ti yitiandu, jiaoduerla xideraji**  
*ti yi tian =du jiaoduer =la xidera -ji*  
 that oneday DAT every.dayINST be.like IMPERF

**gaga ma xujundiao ghula khuoni**  
*gaga ma xujun diao ghula khuoni*  
 elder.brother and daughteryounger.sibling together sheep

**danglala xijiang.**  
*dangla -la xi -jiang*  
 herd PURP goOBJ.PERF

One day, the brother together with his younger sister went to herd sheep like every day.

3.2 **Zheng ni gagani bosi alaghaku**  
*zheng ni gaga =ni bosi ala -gha -ku*  
 just.then this elder.brotherPOSS lice kill CAUSEIMPERF

**shijiedu, ni xujundiaoni khailaji,**  
*shijie =du ni xujun diao =ni khaila -ji*  
 time DAT this daughteryounger.siblingPOSS shout IMPERF

**"Gaga, qi xian bao ala a, bi ge**  
*gaga qi xian bao ala a bi ge*  
 elder.brother 2.SG first PROHIB kill PRT 1.SG once

**sherla xiya."**  
*sher -la xi -ya*  
 urinatePURP goVOL

Just as her brother was killing lice, this younger sister shouted "Brother, you stop killing lice for a minute, I will go to pee."

3.3 **Yuanlai ganni xujundiao jiaoduer bosi**  
*yuanlai gan =ni xujun diao jiaoduer bosi*  
 actually 3.SGGEN daughteryounger.sibling every.day lice

**alagha danang khuonisini diku mang'huzi**  
*ala -gha danang khuoni -si =ni di -ku mang'huzi*  
 kill CAUSE after sheep PL ACC eat IMPERF monster

**ningger ge ber saojiang.**  
*ningger ge ber sao -jiang*  
 old.woman SG.INDEF become sit OBJ.PERF

Actually, the fact was that after he killed his sister's lice every day, she had become a long-haired devil who ate sheep.

4.1 **Tiaoshuliandu, gansi gerdunang xisa,**  
*tiao shulian =du gan -si ger =du =nang xi -sa*  
 that evening DAT 3.SGPL house DAT REFL POSS go COND

**ganni ana xigua ni bulaini suguoji nadu**  
*gan =ni ana xigua ni bulai =ni suguo -ji nadu*  
 3.SG GEN mother totally this child ACC curse IMPERF play

**sao khuonini ai nao danang chuna diaoke**  
*sao khuoni =ni ai nao danang chuna diaoke*  
 sit sheep ACC NEG see after wolf snatch.with.teeth

**yaojiang geji.**  
*yao -jiang ge -ji*  
 go OBJ.PERF QUOTE IMPERF

That night, when they went home, their mother complained that the boy was addicted to playing instead of caring for the sheep; consequently, she thought that one of their sheep was eaten by a wolf.

4.2 **Khuainao, ganni khuonini puza yige**  
*khuainao gan =ni khuoni =ni puza yi -ge*  
 back 3.SG GEN sheep POSS another one CL

**guidajiang, naohui ni bulai ganni**  
*guida -jiang nao hui ni bulai gan =ni*  
 disappear OBJ.PERF this instance this child 3.SG GEN



**xujundiao**                      **disangni**      **miedie gejiang,**  
*xujun diao*                      *di -sang =ni miedie ge -jiang*  
 daughteryounger.sibling eatPERF ACC know do OBJ.PERF

**yinwei gan diaonang**                                      **yitian dagha**  
*yinwei gan diao*                                      *=nang yi tian dagha*  
 because 3.SG younger.siblingREFLPOSS oneday follow

**saojiang.**  
*sao -jiang*  
 sit OBJ.PERF

Later, another one of the family's sheep disappeared, and this time the boy realized that his sister had eaten it, because he had been following his sister all day.

4.3 **Ganni xujundiao**                                      **sherla xila**  
*gan =ni xujun diao*                                      *sher -la xi -la*  
 3.SG GEN daughteryounger.sibling urinatePURP goPURP

**bi ge jiekouni yerriji**                                      **shijishang gan**  
*bi ge jiekou =ni yerri -ji*                                      *shiji shang gan*  
 SUBJ.COP QUOTE excuseACC look.forIMPERF truthup 3.SG

**khuoninang dila xilang.**  
*khuoni =nang di -la xi -lang*  
 sheep REFLPOSS eatPURP goOBJ.IMPERF

His sister made the excuse of saying she had to go to the toilet but actually she went to eat their sheep.

5.1 **Ni bulai ananang**                                      **kelisa,**                      **ganni ana**  
*ni bulai ana =nang keli -sa gan =ni ana*  
 this child motherREFLPOSS say COND 3.SG GEN mother

**ai xinhuoluolang,**                                      **gan mulaji,**                      **"Ai,**  
*ai xinhuoluo -lang gan mula -ji ai*  
 NEG believe OBJ.IMPERF 3.SG think IMPERF EXCL

**bi khuoni yanyerni diamangduni aguerni**  
*bi khuoni yanyer =ni diamang =du =ni aguer =ni*  
 1.SG sheep sheeppyardGEN door DATPOSS daughterACC

**xige saowa."**

*xige sao -wa*  
 watch sit VOL

He talked to his mother about this surprising thing but his mother did not believe it, then he thought, "Hey, maybe I can wait for my sister around the sheeppyard gate (to capture some evidence)."

5.2 **Tiaoshulianduni, gan khudang**  
*tiao shulian =du =ni gan khudang*  
 that evening DATPOSS 3.SG shed

**diamangdunang xige saojiang, hudu**  
*diamang =du =nang xige sao -jiang hudu*  
 door DATREFLPOSS watch sit OBJ.PERF very

**yizheng xigesa ganni mang'huzi ningger**  
*yizheng xige -sa gan =ni mang'huzi ningger*  
 after.a.short.time watchCOND 3.SGGEN monster old.woman

**bersang xijindiao khuonini dila**  
*ber -sang xijin diao khuoni =ni di -la*  
 becomePERF daughteryounger.sibling sheep ACC eatPURP

**rijiang.**

*ri -jiang*  
 comeOBJ.PERF

That night, he waited at the gate of the sheep pen, and just as he thought, his sister, who had already become a long hair devil, came to eat sheep.

5.3 **Gan ananang daodaji riji**  
*gan ana =nang daoda -ji ri -ji*  
 3.SG motherREFLPOSS call IMPERF comeIMPERF

**kelighaji hulang, niher shijiedu,**  
*keli -gha -ji hu -lang ni -her shijie =du*  
 say CAUSEIMPERF giveOBJ.IMPERF thisCL time DAT

**ganni ni xijundiao anadunang**  
*gan =ni ni xijun diao ana =du =nang*  
 3.SGGEN this daughteryounger.sibling motherDATREFLPOSS

**piankeji keliji, "Ana, qini bulai**  
*pianke -ji keli -ji ana qi =ni bulai*  
 trick IMPERF say IMPERF mother 2.SGGEN child

**dameidu begheba."**  
*damei =du beghe -ba*  
 1.SG.DATDAT hit SUBJ.PERF

He called his mother to tell her (the truth that he had discovered), but at this time, his sister lied to her mother, saying, "Mother, your son hit me."

5.4 **Ni anani ganni wugeni chenli danang**  
*ni ana =ni gan =ni wuge =ni chenli danang*  
 this motherPOSS 3.SGGEN word ACC hear after

**bulainang gerla zhua gherghajiang.**  
*bulai =nang ger =la zhua gher -gha -jiang*  
 child REFLPOSS houseINST catch go.outCAUSEOBJ.PERF

After hearing her words, the mother decided to drive her boy from home without any hesitation.

5.5 **Ni bulai niezhangni, yidao mer kunsisa**  
*ni bulai niezhang =ni yidao mer kun -si =sa*  
 this child wretched GEN at.once road personPL ABL

**kerliji diji gediesinang**  
*kerli -ji di -ji gedie -si =nang*  
 want IMPERF eatIMPERF belly PL REFLPOSS

**chudughalang.**  
*chudu -gha -lang*  
 fill CAUSEOBJ.IMPERF

The boy was pitiful, begging food to fill his belly from strangers who lived near the road.

5.6 **Khuainao, gan bayang aguer geni**  
*khuainao gan bayang aguer ge =ni*  
 back 3.SG rich daughter SG.INDEFACC

**shangmen nüxu danglajiang.**  
*shang men nüxu dangla -jiang*  
 up gate son.in.law serve.asOBJ.PERF

Eventually, he became the husband of a rich girl.

5.7 **Duer nuoqiji gezaitjiang.**  
*duer nuoqi -ji gezaitu -jiang*  
 day pass IMPERF become.goodOBJ.PERF

They lived happily.

6.1 **Yige shijiandu, gan gersinang**  
*yi -ge shijian =du gan ger -si =nang*  
 oneCL time DAT 3.SG housePL REFLPOSS

**sanajiang, tingku gan gerku**  
*sana -jiang ting -ku gan ger -ku*  
 rememberOBJ.PERF that IMPERF 3.SG houseIMPERF

**kundunang keli danang mieshiku**  
*kun =du =nang keli danang mieshi -ku*  
 person DATREFLPOSS say after front IMPERF

**gernang naola xijiang.**  
*ger =nang nao -la xi -jiang*  
 houseREFLPOSS see PURP goOBJ.PERF

At one point, he missed his hometown, so after speaking to his wife's family he went to visit his former family.

6.2 **Xisa zhenge hangtoudu yikuer kun**  
*xi -sa zhenge hangtou =du yi -kuer kun*  
 goCOND total together DAT oneCL person

**guang, gan mulaji ni kending shi**  
*guang gan mula -ji ni kending shi*  
 OBJ.NEG.COP 3.SG think IMPERF this certainly COP

**mang'huzi ningger di geji bi a**  
*mang'huzi ningger di ge -ji bi a*  
 monster old.woman eat do IMPERF SUBJ.COP PRT

**geji.**

*ge -ji*  
 QUOTE IMPERF

Going into the village, he found that there was nobody on the paths, so he believed that the long-hair devil must have eaten all the villagers.

6.3 **Gan mang'huzi ninggerni yerrila xiji**  
*gan mang'huzi ningger =ni yerri -la xi -ji*  
 3.SG monster old.womanACC look.forPURP go IMPERF

**alagha geji, gernang ruoji**  
*ala -gha ge -ji ger =nang ruo -ji*  
 kill CAUSE do IMPERF houseREFLPOSS enter IMPERF

**xisa, mang'huzi ganni gerdu sao saoser**  
*xi -sa mang'huzi gan =ni ger =du sao sao -ser*  
 goCOND monster 3.SG GEN houseDAT sit sit PROG

**bang.**

*bang*  
 OBJ.COP

He decided to look for and kill it, and when he entered his old house, he found the devil was living in his home.

6.4 **Mang'huzi keliji, "Aya, gaga**  
*mang'huzi keli -ji aya gaga*  
 monster say IMPERF EXCL elder.brother



**gan puza guori kunni dila xini ya.**  
 gan puza guori kun =ni di -la xi -ni ya  
 3.SG another more.than personACC eatPURP goSUBJ.FUT PRT

The boy guessed correctly her intention to eat him, and he made a promise to kill the devil, because otherwise he was sure she would eat more people in the future.

7.2 **Gan ger khuainaoni shuguo beghe sankuo**  
 gan ger khuainao =ni shuguo beghe san -kuo  
 3.SG house back GEN big tree three CL

**khagha xi danang, qizhong yikuodi pabula**  
 khagha xi danang qizhong yi -kuo =di pabula  
 near go after among oneCL LOC crawl

**gher xijiang.**  
 gher xi -jiang  
 go.out goOBJ.PERF

He went behind his house to where there were three tall trees, and climbed to the top of one of them.

8.1 **Niker shijiedu, mang'huzi ningger**  
 ni -ker shijie =du mang'huzi ningger  
 thisCL time DAT monster old.woman

**zouhanglanang gherji ri danang**  
 zouhang =la =nang gher -ji ri danang  
 kitchen INSTREFLPOSS go.outIMPERF come after

**"Gaga gaga" di khailaji.**  
 gaga gaga di khaila -ji  
 elder.brother elder.brother QUOTE shout IMPERF

At this time, the devil came out of her kitchen shouting, "Brother, Brother!"

8.2 **Danshi kunni bantian qigela guang,**  
 danshi kun =ni bantian qige -la guang  
 but personACC long.time see IMPERF OBJ.NEG.COP

**gan pudera yaosangni meidiejiang.**

gan pudera yao -sang =ni meidie -jiang  
3.SG run go PERF ACC know OBJ.PERF

But she didn't see anyone for a long time, so she realized that the boy had already run away.

8.3 **Gan mani ghada pudera gher xi danang**

gan mani ghada pudera gher xi danang  
3.SG immediately outside run go.out go after

**yerri lujiang (beghe jianjierdu bang),**

yerri lu -jiang beghe jianjier =du bang  
look.for findOBJ.PERF tree peak DAT OBJ.COP

**"Gaga a, qi yaji gherji**

gaga a qi ya -ji gher -ji  
elder.brother PRT 2.SG whatIMPERF go.outIMPERF

**xiba ya?"**

xi -ba ya  
goSUBJ.PERF PRT

She ran outside and found him immediately (at the top of the high tree), "My dear brother, could you tell me how you climbed to that height?"

9 **Ni bulai keliji, "Bi zhuazilanang pake**

ni bulai keli -ji bi zhuazi =la =nang pake  
this child say IMPERF 1.SG claw INSTREFLPOSS climb

**gher riba."**

gher ri -ba  
go.out comeSUBJ.PERF

The boy said, "I climbed with my paws."

10.1 **Ni mang'huzi ningger a**

ni mang'huzi ningger a  
this monster old.woman also



**pakeni geji, danshi ni beghe you**  
*pake -ni ge -ji danshi ni beghe you*  
 climbSUBJ.FUT QUOTEIMPERF but this tree also

**shuguo you wenduer bang, zuihou ganni zhuazi**  
*shuguo you wenduer bang zuihou gan =ni zhuazi*  
 big also high OBJ.COP at last 3.SG GEN claw

**khughuer burajiang.**  
*khughuer bura -jiang*  
 break finishOBJ.PERF

The devil thought to climb up with her claws, but because the tree was large and tall, in the end her paws were broken off.

10.2 **Gan puza ersegheji, "Gaga, qi**  
*gan puza erseghe -ji gaga qi*  
 3.SG another ask IMPERF elder.brother 2.SG

**zhenni yaji gherba sha?"**  
*zhen =ni ya -ji gher -ba sha*  
 true GEN whatIMPERF go.outSUBJ.PERF PRT

She inquired again, "Brother, please tell truly me how you came up, OK?"

11 **Ni bulai keliji gan shudulanang**  
*ni bulai keli -ji gan shudu =la =nang*  
 this child say IMPERF 3.SG teeth INSTREFLPOSS

**ghazha gherba geji, tingku,**  
*ghazha gher -ba ge -ji ting -ku*  
 bite go.outSUBJ.PERF QUOTEIMPERF that IMPERF

**mang'huzi ningger you shudulanang**  
*mang'huzi ningger you shudu =la =nang*  
 monster old.woman also teeth INSTREFLPOSS

**ghazhaji**      **gherwa geji,**      **ganni shudu**  
*ghazha -ji*      *gher -wa ge -ji*      *gan =ni shudu*  
 bite IMPERF go.outVOL QUOTEIMPERF 3.SG GEN teeth

**yigua deghela bao rijiang.**  
*yigua deghela bao ri -jiang*  
 totally fall go.down comeOBJ.PERF

The boy replied that he used his teeth to climb, and so, and she intended to use her teeth to climb, but all her teeth fell out.

12 **Mang'huzi jilajiang,**      **"Qi**  
*mang'huzi jila -jiang*      *qi*  
 monster get.worked.upOBJ.PERF 2.SG

**shihuanang keli qi yaji gherba."**  
*shihua =nang keli qi ya -ji*      *gher -ba*  
 truth REFLPOSS say 2.SG whatIMPERF go.outSUBJ.PERF

The devil roared violently and impatiently, "You must tell me truly how you got up."

13.1 **Ni bulai keliji,**      **"Bi shighailanang**  
*ni bulai keli -ji*      *bi shighai =la =nang*  
 this child say IMPERF 1.SG leg INSTREFLPOSS

**pake gherba."**  
*pake gher -ba*  
 climb go.outSUBJ.PERF

The boy answered, "I climbed with my legs."

13.2 **Tingku,**      **gan shighailanang**      **pakeji**  
*ting -ku*      *gan shighai =la =nang*      *pake -ji*  
 that IMPERF 3.SG leg INSTREFLPOSS climbIMPERF

**gherjiang,**      **danshi gan yadaji**      **ting**  
*gher -jiang*      *danshi gan yada -ji*      *ting*  
 go.outOBJ.PERF but 3.SG be.tiredIMPERF that

**gelang.***ge -lang*

do OBJ.IMPERF

Then, she climbed with her legs; unfortunately, it was very difficult for her (because she had already wasted most of her energy with the former useless way).

14 **Niker shijiedu, tiangerela shuguo tashi**  
*ni -ker shijie =du tiangere =la shuguo tashi*  
 thisCL time DAT sky INST big stone

**ge bao ri gang'hao ganni zake**  
*ge bao ri gang'hao gan =ni zake*  
 SG.INDEF go.down come exactly 3.SGACC crush

**baoghajiang, ni mang'huzi ningger**  
*bao -gha -jiang ni mang'huzi ningger*  
 go.downCAUSEOBJ.PERF this monster old.woman

**fugujiang.***fugu -jiang*

die OBJ.PERF

At this moment, a huge stone dropped from the sky, exactly onto her head, and this long-haired devil died.

15.1 **Ni bulai bughe jianjierdila bao ri**  
*ni bulai bughe jianjier =di =la bao ri*  
 this child tree peak LOCINST go.down come

**danang, gernang puza yidao xijiang,**  
*danang ger =nang puza yidao xi -jiang*  
 after houseREFLPOSS another at.once goOBJ.PERF

**xisa ganni xujundiaoni hegangdi**  
*xi -sa gan =ni xujun diao =ni hegang =di*  
 goCOND 3.SGGEN daughteryounger.siblingPOSS kang LOC

**anjindi nerriser bang, gan ayi danang khaila**  
*anjin -di nerri -ser bang gan ayi danang khaila*  
 quiet ADV sleep PROG OBJ.COP 3.SG fear after shout

***bosighajiang.***

*bosi -gha -jiang*  
 get.up CAUSE OBJ.PERF

The boy climbed down from the top of the tree and went back to his house; when he went in, (to his surprise) he found his sister was sleeping peacefully on the bed, and he was so shocked that he shouted and awakened her.

15.2 **Ganni xujundiao keliji,**  
*gan =ni xujun diao keli -ji*  
 3.SG GEN daughteryounger.sibling say IMPERF

**"Gaga, bi mao jiaodong ge**  
*gaga bi mao jiaodong ge*  
 elder.brother 1.SG bad dream SG.INDEF

**jiaodonglijiang, ayi fugukunang a."**  
*jiaodongli -jiang ayi fugu -kunang a*  
 dream OBJ.PERF fear die OBJ.FUT PRT

His sister said, "Brother, I had a long nightmare, it scared me to death."

---

ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ABL	ablative case
ACC	accusative case
ADV	adverbializer
CAUSE	causativizer
CL	classifier
COMP	comparative
COND	conditional
COP	copula
DAT	dative case
EXCL	exclamation
FUT	future tense
GEN	genitive case
INDEF	indefinite
IMPERF	imperfective aspect
INST	instrumental case
LOC	locative case
NEG	negative
OBJ	objective perspective
PERF	perfective aspect
PL	plural number
POSS	possessive (non-reflexive)
PRT	particle
PROG	progressive aspect
PROHIB	prohibitive negative
PURP	purpose
QUEST	interrogative (question)
QUOTE	direct quotation marker
REFLPOSS	reflexive possessive
SG	singular number
SUBJ	subjective perspective
VOL	voluntative

---

**REFERENCES**

- Chen Zhaojun, Li Xingzhong, Lü Jinliang, Kevin Stuart, Wang Xianzhen, Wang Yongwei, Wang Zhenlin, Xin Huaizhi, Zhu Meilan, Zhu Shanzhong, Zhu Wenhui, and Zhu Yongzhong. 2005. *Folktales of China's Minhe Mangghuer*. München: Lincom Europa.
- Slater, Keith W. 2003. *A Grammar of Mangghuer: a Mongolic Language of China's Qinghai-Gansu Sprachbund*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

# MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES

## LITTLE BOY WITH A WALKING STICK: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Sangs rgyas bkra shis སངས་རྒྱལ་བཀྲ་ཤིས། (Duke University)

It is our responsibility to share information about what is happening in our world and try to improve life for, particularly, illiterate rural residents. The narrative that follows is just one amid countless sad stories representing life in rural areas. This tragedy happened because of irresponsible teachers, poor school management, and poor medical care.

I know Tshe ring<sup>1</sup> well. He told me this story during the Tibetan New Year in 2016 when I visited his family in the county town where he and his wife took turns looking after their children who attended primary school.

Locals also often lack language skills that would enable them to communicate with non-Tibetan speaking doctors in the city and thus are reluctant to attempt visiting large hospitals even when they realize that they are very ill.

One of many recent "developments" in rural A mdo is the emergence of new, modern school classrooms, teachers' offices, canteens, living quarters, and so on that are generally constructed in township and county towns. A distance, both physical and emotional, is thus created between children who are required to attend school, and their parents and other care-giving relatives, who remain at home. Tshe ring don 'grub's tragic story is an example of what can happen in this "improved" system of basic education.

Countless safety rules in schools are enforced for the most part to ensure school security, stability and a "harmonious" society, and staff promotion. Such rules often have little to do with genuine concern for the health and safety of individual students. It is unusual to find a teacher who looks after each individual student closely in their class.

---

Sangs rgyas bkra shis. 2017. Little Boy With a Walking Stick: Who is Responsible? *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 44:352-366.

<sup>1</sup> All names have been changed.



---

There are several reasons for this. Class sizes are usually large and the teacher-student ratio is too high for teachers to come to understand each student's individual situation.

Often, as in the case of Tshe ring don 'grub's school, teachers (who are Tibetan), are "outsiders" who leave the school and return to their own homes whenever possible. The future they hope for is to be reassigned to another "better" school and leave the area. The quality of education would improve if responsible, qualified teachers who enjoy teaching in rural Tibetan areas were hired, instead of those who only do it to earn money and care little about the students' welfare. Consequently, tragedies like that of Tshe ring don 'grub are inevitable.

Poor medical care in rural Tibetan areas is a critical problem locals face in daily life. Locals have great faith in medical practitioners, but these "doctors" are often poorly trained and lack basic medical knowledge. Some have never studied medicine at all and simply give intravenous injections (IVs) to all those who come for treatment because it is a way of earning an income, as well as meeting the expectation of patients who equate "treatment" with receiving IVs.

Lack of basic health and hygiene knowledge is another pressing issue, especially in areas where religious and traditional medical treatment continue to play an important role. Limited household income, limited knowledge of the Chinese language, little understanding of how to register at a hospital or clinic, and a poor understanding of how to take modern medicine. Choices are limited given such conditions, which explains why religious and traditional treatments are often the only affordable and culturally accessible choices.

General illiteracy (in any language), lack of knowledge of the Chinese language and legal responsibilities related to the consequences of what a student experiences at school, and limited communication between local and non-local Tibetans leads to more delay and inaction as Tshe ring don 'grub's experience so vividly demonstrates.

Resolutions often begin to form when a situation starts to attract the attention of the legal system, police officers, and/or

---

important local officials. Unfortunately, when action does begin to take place, it often produces results that are delayed and thus the victim experiences grave consequences.

There are many young local dropouts who are chronically underemployed. If the brightest and most motivated of these young people were placed in a medical training program they might then choose to return to their home community and offer medical services. For example, a monk from a neighboring village attended a private Tibetan medical school for three years in a rural, herding area. He now has his own clinic in his local community. He told me that that his clinic is visited by a number of locals on a daily basis.

Finally, basic empowering approaches to overcome the issues mentioned above might include implementing basic legal and medical awareness training programs in local communities and building accessible platforms/networks that provide legal and medical consulting services. Though somewhat limited, the Internet increasingly plays a critical role in disseminating information on issues such as the case of Tshe ring don 'grub. An example of this is WeChat, a Chinese social networking cellphone application that enables users to post pictures, text (in the Tibetan language as well as other languages), videos, and audio messages. Such tools could then be deployed to raise awareness of the possibility for legal processes related to prosecution, medical treatment, hospital admittance, and so on.

...

It was the fifth day of the Eleventh Lunar Month in 2014. My family was busy preparing for my niece's wedding. Some relatives and friends were coming to help my family make fried bread, which is a major task for weddings because many guests attend. We need to prepare a lot of bread as a main food item. We can't fry bread without many people.

I got up earlier than usual because I had to go pick up my eight-year-old twins at the local primary school, which is four kilometers from my home. Then I pulled on my tattered Tibetan robe and went to check to see if any ewes had given birth.

The sun was beginning to appear across the valleys and, as the

wind blew, the dry bushes on the wall of the sheep shed whistled. Lha mo and my sister, Bde skyid, were putting chunks of frozen yak dung into *sle bo* 'baskets woven from shrubs'. The yaks were chewing their cud and liquid from their mouths had frozen and was hanging like dangling teats.

I moved over the sheep-shed door made of frozen yak dung and slowly walked among the sheep. Two little wet sticky lambs were wandering and crying among the sheep, but this brought no reaction from their mother. Another lamb was dead. Its mother was still busy licking its carcass. I brought the dead lamb into the house and put it in the sunshine in the glass-enclosed verandah so that it would dry and then be easier to skin.

My fifteen-year-old daughter, Tsho mo, who has never attended school, feels embarrassed that we have only a few sheep, while other families have hundreds. She complained that the lamb would not have died if I had checked the sheep at midnight as I do occasionally.

After a breakfast of bread, *rtsam pa*, and milk tea, I asked my wife and daughter to identify the mothers of those two wandering lambs, put them in the sheep-shed and keep them there until they let their lambs nurse. I reminded them not to forget to feed the sheep some dried grass, and gave instructions about what to do when the helpers came to fry bread.

"Such a year! Everybody is talking about the scarcity of forage and the low price of livestock. It wasn't like this before. What is happening to this world?" Bde skyid commented.

It was cold outside. I started my motorcycle and let it run for some minutes to warm up, told Lha mo that I would be back soon, and then headed to the school.

It took me thirty minutes to get there. That was longer than usual because the wind was strong. The racket of the wind would have made me deaf if I had not been wearing a helmet.

The winter holiday was beginning, and I was there to take my twin eight-year old sons - Tshe ring don 'grub and Bkra shis rgya - home with me. Usually I visited my twins once in two days, but this time it had been three days. Tshe ring don 'grub, the elder son, was crying when I found him. He said that his feet were very cold.

---

I thought this was just a normal reaction to a cold winter and didn't pay much attention.

All the parents were busy folding up their children's mats and quilts. I did the same with my twins' mats and quilts and tied them to my motorcycle.

The school was distributing boxes of milk and commercial bread to the students. I told Bkra shis rgyal to get the milk and bread allotment for himself and his brother, since Tshe ring don 'grub said he couldn't walk. Meanwhile, I took the blanket that I had on the back of my motorcycle and wrapped Tshe ring don 'grub's feet in it.

"I'm afraid to go there and get the milk and bread. Father! Please come with me!" Bkra shis rgyal pleaded.

"Who are you afraid of?" I asked.

"Teachers!" he exclaimed and clutched my hand.

I accompanied him, because I understand what it means to be afraid of teachers. I was also very afraid of my teachers when I attended school for about a year in the 1980s.

"I am Tshe ring don 'grub's father. May I have my sons' milk and bread please? Tshe ring don 'grub says his feet are very cold and painful and he can't come," I explained to the head teacher of my sons' class, who was a new teacher.

She agreed.

This sort of milk and bread has had chemicals added to it and I encourage my sons not eat to drink and eat it, but they often don't listen.

It was getting colder. It was probably around minus twenty degrees Celsius. I wrapped my twins in a thick fur-lined mat and headed home on my motorcycle.

We arrived and I was stressed and impatient because about twenty people had come to help fry bread for my niece's wedding ceremony and I needed to organize them and provide whatever they needed.

Tshe ring don 'grub said that his feet were still very cold. I told Bde skyid to take off his shoes and put him near the adobe stove in the main room.

"A ha wo! A ha wo! This boy is finished! This boy is finished!" my

wife and sister exclaimed together. Everybody dropped what they were doing and ran over to Tshe ring don 'grub. I then realized something terrible had happened from the frightened faces. My wife and sister were crying.

Tshe ring don 'grub's feet were dark from the ankles to the toes and swollen. I was terrified and at a loss.

When I asked Tshe ring don 'grub what had happened, he only sobbed.

"He peed in his pants the day before yesterday or yesterday during class," said Bkra shis rgyal.

Later, I learned that Tshe ring don 'grub had had diarrhea and had asked his teacher several times for permission to go to the toilet during class. Finally, when he needed to pee, the teacher angrily scolded, "What's wrong with you? You can't go to the toilet repeatedly during class time. Look at the others! They aren't asking to go to the toilet during class."

Tshe ring don 'grub was then afraid, peed in his pants, and didn't tell others because he was so embarrassed. Tshe ring don 'grub later said that it was too painful to remove his shoes, so he wore them at night while he was sleeping in his dorm room, which had no heating.

I took Tshe ring don 'grub back to school to look for his head teacher but, when we got there, nobody was there. This is what I had expected. All the teachers are from farming areas and they go home immediately after school is finished.

I didn't know the teacher's contact information and there was no one to ask so I then took Tshe ring don 'grub to the local clinic and consulted a local doctor.

He said that there was nothing he could do.

Tshe ring don 'grub was now screaming loudly from the severe pain and I didn't know what to do so I called the local *bla ma* on my cellphone, hoping to get some advice. He didn't answer. I decided to go back home and then on to the county town.

When I got home, the local helpers had nearly finished frying the bread. I thanked them and took my son to the county town, which was about two and half hours away by motorcycle.

When I arrived, I asked some doctors for advice. They told me

there was an experienced Tibetan doctor in her sixties who might have some ideas about what to do when feet were injured by cold. I then took my boy to her.

She has her own clinic and many patients. She didn't say the boy's feet were very seriously injured, but she did ask me who had allowed this to happen.

The people around us were all shocked and asked questions like: "Where did this happen?" "Who let this happen?"

I answered that it had happened in the school.

"What a parent! Where were the teachers? You didn't know his feet were frozen?" some strangers in the clinic said.

I replied that he boarded at the school and only came home during holidays.

Everybody was murmuring, but I concentrated on what the doctor was saying.

"The boy needs IVs," she said.

I then calmed down somewhat because the doctor seemed to know what to do. The boy received IVs for about five days and his feet did look better.

The doctor then suggested that I take him home and ensure he continued IV treatment at the local clinic, so I brought him back home. The wedding was approaching and there were a lot of things I had to do.

I was eventually able to talk to the local *bla ma* through the phone. He said that there were some chanting rituals that had to be done for the boy.

I took him to another local clinic where the monk doctor gave him an IV and purified the boy with sacred water while he chanted scriptures.

I also invited some monks from the local monastery to come to my home and hold the rituals the *bla ma* suggested.

About ten days later, I found the contact information for the school headmaster, school director, and the boy's class's head teacher. I explained my boy's situation. They suggested that we discuss it when I was next in the county town. I then took Tshe ring don 'grub to the county town and asked the school people to come and talk about the boy's situation, but they ignored me and didn't come.

---

The boy received IVs for about twenty days from the local clinic. Everyday I took him to the clinic and took him back home after the IV. The swelling almost disappeared except for his toes. The local doctor said that he was recovering and Tshe ring don 'grub said that he felt less pain, but I discovered that something was wrong - something was not normal about his feet. I felt that his feet looked like they were drying.

I decided to have him checked in a Chinese hospital in the county town. The Chinese doctors in the hospital were shocked when they saw his feet, said that all they could do was amputate his feet, and suggested that I take Tshe ring don 'grub to Zi ling (Xining) immediately.

I was disappointed and hopeless. I can't understand a single word of Chinese and I also didn't have the money to take him to Zi ling. I took Tshe ring don 'grub back home and asked some locals for loans.

Two days later, I had managed to collect some money and then asked 'Brug thar, one of my relatives who knows some Qinghai Chinese dialect, to go with my wife and me to Hospital Number Twenty-One in Zi ling City. The doctors there said that there was nothing they could do because they had no experience with such problems.

Then we took the boy to Hospital Number Twenty-Two - a military hospital. The doctors said that Tshe ring don 'grub's feet had been frozen and that it was too late. They added that they would have been able to help had we brought him in the first twenty-four hours, but now it was too late and the only solution was to amputate. They also said that he needed to receive IVs for about twenty days before the amputation. I didn't know why he needed IVs for that many days. I supposed it was related to reducing the swelling.

Twenty days passed and the doctors said the time had come for amputation and we needed to prepare the payment. We were told that his left foot was to be cut off from the ankle and the right foot from mid-foot.

My wife wept and I didn't agree, because I hoped for a better solution.

I had no savings and there was no way that I could sell my family's livestock in winter. I had no choice except to contact some of my relatives. The doctors would not do the amputation until I put enough money on my account. My close relatives collected some money and brought it to me,

---

along with mutton, bread, and *rtsam pa* from their homes.

I then called the headmaster again and explained that the boy needed surgery. After several days, the headmaster, the boy's class head teacher, and some other teachers visited and talked to the doctors to better learn the boy's situation.

It then seemed that they would help. They said they would find a better hospital. However, the next day, they said they couldn't find a better hospital.

I told them that I didn't have enough money to pay for the surgery and thus needed the school's financial support.

The headmaster replied that they had just come to visit the boy because he was a student in their school and that they didn't know if the school had responsibility for the boy, and then they left.

The doctors said, "We have had cases like your son's. Some parents refused to allow their children's feet to be amputated. We explained that the feet had to be amputated from the ankle, but they insisted that we amputate from the mid-foot. When we did so, the procedure was not successful and then we had to amputate from the knees. You should think carefully."

After several negotiations with doctors, the doctors decided to cut off two toes from the right foot, and all the toes from the left and remove black flesh from the middle part of the foot. After the surgery, the feet were wrapped with bandages and blood and yellow liquid were oozing from plastic tubes. The doctors said that we would know if he needed more surgery after fifteen days.

My wife and I did pretty much whatever the doctors said, because we really didn't know what our choices were.

The boy received IVs everyday. He was in severe pain, cried often, and slept when he was exhausted. My wife and I took turns caring for him at night. The hospital said that only two people could stay with him at night. 'Brug thar sometimes found a cheap hotel and then sometimes secretly came back to the hospital at midnight to sleep.

'Brug thar went out to buy food for us. My wife and I had never stayed in a big city like Zi ling and didn't even know how to get back to the room once we were some distance away from the hospital.



---

My two monk relatives in the local monastery gathered all the monks in the monastery and chanted for the boy.

Fifteen days later, the doctors said that the boy needed more surgery because his left foot bones from which they had removed flesh had turned black, but that the boy would have to wait for three more days.

Meanwhile, 'Brug thar had to return home, because his wife and three children were rebuilding their house and they needed his help. After he left, my wife and I could not communicate with the doctors and nurses, so I called a relative who was a college student and he came to help us for about a week.

When a nurse informed me that the money on my account was finished, I called the former leader of my community, Rta 'grin, who knows the teachers at my son's school. I asked him to talk to the teachers about my boy's situation, hoping that the school would provide financial support.

Rta 'grin called me back the next day and reported, "The school director was very angry this time. He said, 'The school has no money to support the boy and it is not the school's responsibility. It is the boy's parents' responsibility. I hate this kind of family. We will try to find someone who will, however, help the boy with finances. We will also talk to the insurance organization."<sup>1</sup>

I felt hopeless and called my monk uncle. I asked him to loan me funds from the monastery.

The next day, he did loan some money from the monastery, put it on my account, and said that I needed to return it with interest when the boy came home.

I agreed.

We did not inform my son before the second surgery, because he often cried loudly and said that he wanted to go home. The doctors said that the boy's left foot had to be cut off from mid-foot and a slice of flesh had to be cut from his thigh to wrap the head of his left foot.

My wife and I asked the doctor if this could be taken from one of

---

<sup>1</sup> I asked Tshe ring what "insurance company" means and he said that he did not know what it meant or how the insurance scheme worked. He said the school contacted the insurance company and asked for money. Tshe ring had no direct contact with the insurance company.

our thighs because the boy was so thin that it seemed there was nothing to take from his thigh except bone.

The doctors said this was impossible.

We were very worried that the boy would not be able to deal with such serious surgery, because he was so thin and small.

The surgery was successful.

I was very disappointed by the school and didn't know what to do. I then went to the county town, met Rta 'grin, and asked him to tell the school leaders to give me a clear answer: Would the school take responsibility for my son?

Rta 'grin called the school director while I was with him. I could overhear the director scolding, saying that the school had no money and what had happened to the boy was not the school's responsibility.

Not knowing what else to do, I said to Rta 'grin, "I know I am incapable of forcing the school to do anything, but I will spread news of what has happened to my boy as widely as I can. Please let me know if the school has something new to say."

I returned to Zi ling with a hopeless heart.

Rta 'grin phoned the next morning and reported that the school had contacted him. They were asking me not to spread news of my boy's situation because they would reconsider.

That afternoon, Rta 'grin called and said that the school wanted me to come to the county town to have discussions.

I replied that I couldn't come, because I had to care for the boy in Zi ling.

Some days later, the school called and said that they would pay for the boy's medical expenses and provide an additional forty-five thousand *yuan*.

I said it was not enough, because I had spent more than that on living expenses while in Zi ling and also, that my livestock were dying at home from not being cared for properly. I added that I would have to pay even more if the boy required an artificial leg.

The next morning, my monk uncle told me that he had negotiated with the school, that they had agreed to add 10,000 *yuan*, and he had agreed. "This is the best we can do. Don't negotiate with the school further,

---

because I decided it," he concluded.

This monk uncle is the man my family respects the most. I couldn't question his decision, but I did say that they had to give me the money the day my boy was released from the hospital and I would at that time hand over all the medical expense receipts.

The school agreed.

After about a month had passed after the first surgery, the hospital said that the boy was ready to go home, though Tshe ring don 'grub could barely stand. We took the bus to the county town and I called the school people. They said that the school's director was not there and I should come back some days later.

Three days later, I called the school director. He told me that the school couldn't pay what they had promised because others who were also responsible for the decision had disagreed.

I was enraged and said that I would take the case to court to see if there was any justice.

Rta 'grin called me that evening and said, "The school asked that you not take this to court. They'll give you the money, but they need some time. They are asking for the funds from somebody else. Maybe you should wait. The school leaders have strong connections with higher officials. We won't win if we take this case to court."

I thought this was reasonable. I have no connections and no money, and I also didn't know how to take a case to court. I agreed to wait.

After about fifteen days, no one called me. I was worried, so I called local elders, including my monk uncle, who then went to meet the school people and asked them why they had not provided funds.

The next day, the director of the school called me and angrily said, "What a strange person you are! We told you to wait so why didn't you wait? Why did you ask those people to talk to us? We aren't your servants."

This made me so angry that I said, "You are the strange ones! You promised that the school would give me the money the day my boy returned home from the hospital. But two months have passed and I've still received no money from the school. I borrowed money for the medical care from others and promised I would return it when my family got back home from the hospital. I have to pay about thirty percent interest on

these loans. These interest fees are increasing day by day. Who will pay for that? If the school is going to pay the medical expenses, pay it today and if you will not, then tell me honestly. Don't lie to me anymore. I am sick of being abused and lied to."

I hung up.

He called me back, but I didn't answer.

The next morning Rta 'grin called and said, "The school has agreed to give you the money in five days. They have asked for funds from the insurance company and some other people. They were told to provide the victim's bank account information and were told the funds would only be sent to the victim's bank account to help the boy. If the insurance company or other people send any money to your account, you must give all the money to the school, because the school asked for the money."

I agreed, because I knew that I would get no money if I disagreed.

Five days later, I went to the county town with some other local people. We met four school representatives, who gave me 50,000 *yuan* for medical expenses and 67,000 *yuan* in addition to the medical expenses in cash. I then gave them the 10,000 *yuan* in cash that the insurance company had put on my bank account about two weeks earlier. After we calculated the medical expenses according to the hospital receipts, they still owed me 280 *yuan*. They said that they would give it to me later. I didn't believe that, but I told them I needed that 280 *yuan*.

Tshe ring don 'grub now walks with a stick. We are hoping that he can walk without that stick soon. I often recall Tshe ring don 'grub's active behavior before this unfortunate thing happened and I feel pain, regret, and guilt because I strongly encouraged him to go to school and even forced him sometimes.

Still, I know it is better for him to continue to attend school. If he gets an education, he will have an easier life.

I also worry about who will care for him after his parents are gone.

We want to provide Tshe ring don 'grub and his brother a better educational environment so I rented a small room in the county town and send my two sons to school here.

I get up at five AM, cook for the children, take them to school, come back, and chant for a bit. Sometimes I visit local people who are

---

also taking care of their children in the county town and we chat. Then I prepare lunch for my two sons and myself. At eleven-thirty AM, I walk to the school to pick up my sons, which takes about twenty minutes.

After lunch, I encourage them to write their homework, but it is not very effective, because I can only read some Tibetan, and don't know other subjects, so I don't know if the children tell me the truth about their homework.

I take them to school at one-thirty PM. In the afternoon, I wash the children's clothes when it is necessary, but most of the time I chant, because I have nothing to do. I want to find a part time job, but it is very difficult, because I can't read or write Chinese.

I prepare supper and go to pick up the boys at five-thirty PM and we have dinner together. After dinner, I take them out, let them play for a while, and then bring them back to finish their homework.

My wife and daughter, who have never been to school, herd our livestock. They send food to us regularly through local people coming to the county town. Sometimes my wife takes care of the children in the county town, but she doesn't like to stay here because it is boring and too crowded. I have the same feeling, but I must endure it.

My boys enjoy school here. They can come home to eat and also can stay at home at night.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'brug thar འབྲུག་ཐར།  
 bde skyid བདེ་སྦྱིང།  
 bkra shis rgya བརྒྱ་ཤིས་རྒྱལ།  
 bla ma ལྷ་མ།  
 lha mo ལྷ་མོ།  
 rta 'grin ཏ་མགྲིན།  
 rtsam pa རུམ་པ།  
 sle bo ལྷོ་བོ།  
 tshe ring ཚེ་རིང།  
 tshe ring don 'grub ཚེ་རིང་དོན་འགྲུབ།  
 tsho mo མཚོ་མོ།  
 Xining ཅི་ཡིང།  
 yuan 元  
 zi ling ཟླ་ལིང།

---

FLACCID HUMPS, AN IMP, AND PRECIOUS DIAMONDS:  
MTSHO LHO CHILDHOOD MEMORIES 1995-2010

Skal bzang tshe brtan སྐལ་བཟང་ཚེ་བརྟན། (Independent Scholar)

I was born in 1995 in Chu ring (Qurang) Village<sup>1</sup> Thang dkar ma (Tanggemu) Town, Gser chen (Gonghe) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China. Due to my previous life in which I did many charitable acts I was reborn as a human being. There is a local saying emphasizing the preciousness of a human life:

*Dal 'byor gyi mi lus rin po che 'di len pa ni spar gang gi sran ma de gyang ngos la gtor rjes de gyang dngos nas bsdod pas go skabs ni phran bu tsam yin pa ci bzhin no.*

The chance of obtaining a human life is comparable to that of a single soybean sticking to a wall among a handful of soybeans thrown at the wall.

Many locals believe that a human life is more precious than a diamond because it provides an opportunity to prostrate to and circumambulate sacred mountains and temples, chant mantras, meditate in seclusion, and aid others, all resulting in the accumulation of merits. They believe that this will eventually lead to enlightenment - freedom from the cycle of mindless existence.

My parents told me that when I was a little child I often murmured that I was the reincarnation of Baobei. From Grandfather (Mchog rus, b. 1942), I learned that Baobei was a Chinese landowner's child.

---

Skal bzang tshe brtan. 2017. Flaccid Humps, An Imp, and Precious Diamonds: Mtsho lho Childhood Memories 1995-2010. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 44:367-383.

<sup>1</sup> I use "village" in line with the official Chinese administrative designation *cun* 'village'.

---

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the government declared that all landowners' descendants should be punished and encouraged the idea that true proletarian dictatorship should flow from those who had been at the bottom of the old society.

Consequently, Baobei was imprisoned in Thang dkar ma. Grandfather said that Baobei was a good man with a kind heart who generously treated those who worked for him and others struggling in poverty.

Baobei went mad during his imprisonment because of persecution and bad conditions. He was allowed to wander around the prison with dirtied trousers because the guards paid little attention to insane prisoners.

I had many questions as I grew older and was able to talk to my parents. I asked Father (Snying thar rgyal, b. 1962) countless questions. When I asked, "At the time of death, a human must meet the terrible Gshin rje chos rgyal 'God of Death', but where does Gshin rje chos rgyal go when he dies?" Father only tittered in reply.

One foggy summer day, we moved to our summer pasture and pitched a big triangular white tent. Mother (Lha mo rgya b. 1967) milked cows in the early morning, piled up cow dung, and then prepared food for the three of us. While we were enjoying breakfast, Father was the commander, assigning tasks for the day. Mother was to stay at home and do chores, while Father and I would take the cattle and sheep to the grassland.

Father then went to bring a camel for me to ride because the grassland was far away. I was a small child - as short as a *mi la tsi tsi*, which I was afraid of, especially after one of my aunts told me this story:

Long ago, a young couple and their five-year-old son lived in a rural community. The boy's father herded during the day while the mother busily collected cow dung, fetched water, and went to the mountain where she gathered herbs that she took to a market to trade for salt, sugar, flour, tea, and other necessities. When the parents were away from the home, they tied their little boy to a post so he would be safe and not wander off.



---

One day the couple tied their son to a post and left as usual. At first, the little boy cried, but he quickly forgot his discomfort and played with this and that.

Suddenly what seemed to be an ordinary child with a pale, oval face dressed in a black robe appeared. The little boy was astonished since he had not noticed the arrival of this black-robed child.

"If you come with me, I'll give you candies, toys, and whatever you want," the *mi la tsi tsi* said.

"If you untie my sash from the post, we can play," the little boy replied

The *mi la tsi tsi* saw that the rope was tied and knotted on the post high out of his reach so he used his magic to loosen the rope from both the boy's waist and post. Then he took the boy to his home, which was in a cave. The *mi la tsi tsi* offered a handful of sand that, to the boy, was a handful of sugar and was the tastiest he had ever had. Then the *mi la tsi tsi* offered several animal-shaped stones that appeared to the boy as delightful toys.

Time passed quickly as they played together. When it was almost time for his parents to return home, the *mi la tsi tsi* took the little boy back to his home in the twinkling of an eye, tied him to the post, and said he would see the boy the next day and left.

The little boy knew that if he revealed the truth to his parents, they would stop him playing with the *mi la tsi tsi*. In his childish mind, the *mi la tsi tsi* was just a little boy who also wanted to play and enjoy sugar.

The next day when the boy's parents left, the *mi la tsi tsi* came, untied the rope, and they went to the cave for many fun activities. After the *mi la tsi tsi* took the little boy home, his mother, noticing some sand on his lips, asked why he was eating sand.

"Mother, it's sugar," declared the little boy.

"Where did you get it?" his mother asked.

"I got it from..." he stammered, looked at the ground, and fell silent. While they were eating, the boy found his tongue and described his adventure with the pale-faced boy.

His parents were suspicious. The anxious father went to see his own father. After listening to this account, the boy's grandfather said the

---

pale-faced boy was a *mi la tsi tsi* and would eventually take his grandson and not return him.

Afterwards, the boy's parents carefully supervised their son.

I thus thought *mi la tsi tsi* were very dangerous because of this and other stories told by elders to remind children not to go places alone. Once in the clutches of a *mi la tsi tsi*, a child would not feel hungry and would play until they starved to death. When I went outside at night, I was afraid of *mi la tsi tsi*, whom I believed had all sorts of magic powers.

•••

I was surprised when Father returned with a camel, pulled the *sna thig* 'nose rope', said, "*Tshugs*," and the camel knelt.

I mounted the camel, Father pulled the nose rope and said, "*Shugs*," and the camel stood.

The camel was more than two meters tall at the shoulders and was covered with wooly, sandy hair. To my eyes, the camel strongly resembled a tea pot.

At first I was a little scared because I had never ridden a camel before. Two humps like Mount Gangs te se (Kailash) and Mount Jo mo glang ma (Everest) faced each other. Father explained that to avoid a beating from the flaccid humps, an inexperienced rider should not make a camel run, as it might cause injury.

When I asked Father why we have camels when many other Tibetans do not, he said he did not know. However, he told me this story about a camel:

Long ago some of our ancestors went into Mongolian territory and after stealing two little boys, they began to return to our home area. On the way back, one little boy periodically fed salt to the camel he was riding. Because it had been fed salt the camel ran so fast that even though our ancestors pursued it, they could not catch it. About halfway to our home area, this little boy rode back to his own home on the camel.

The other little boy was brought back to our home area, grew up, married a local woman, and had many descendants.

---

After a bit, we reached our fenced pasture and Father again said, "*Tshugs*." The camel knelt obediently.

I ran to Father, curiously looked at the camel, and inquired, "We already have cattle. They are better than camels because they can transport our belongings and we can eat their flesh, so why do we need a camel?"

Father explained that because the camel embodies the twelve zodiac animals Tibetans do not generally eat camel meat. He added that if a pregnant woman rode a camel, the period of her pregnancy would increase by three months, which explains why local pregnant women do not ride camels.

Historically, locals crossed the mountains with several camels to fetch salt. Once, a camel died near our local territory. Afterwards, the area where the camel had died began to produce salt and then people no longer needed to go far away to obtain salt.

I practiced giving the camel commands and riding it. While Father sat cross-legged, patiently watching me and the livestock from a distance, the obedient camel followed my commands.

As dusk approached, Father waved, indicating I should round up the cattle and sheep. I did so, and then with rumbling stomachs, we set off for home. When we arrived, Mother offered us bowls of noodles cooked in mutton soup. I attacked the food voraciously. Mother, who sat to the right of the adobe stove, gently suggested that I eat slowly, worrying that I might choke on chunks of meat in the noodles.

Meanwhile, Father made some jokes, creating an even more pleasant atmosphere. After dinner, we slept on a big rectangular bed that Father had made from pieces of sod, which he had then covered with carpets. As usual I slept in the middle and, to the rhythm of water boiling in a kettle left on the stove heated by cow dung, I began dreaming.

The next morning, I woke up and found myself alone in a corner of the tent. It was very cold. Frigid winds pierced my bones, struck my heart, and then bounced away. Mother stopped milking. Almost every sentient being that could hibernate had done so.

---

One bitterly cold day, Mother got up first as usual, put on her winter robe, went to the cow dung shed, and brought back dried dung to make a fire. After the fire was bright and hot, she boiled milk tea. The sound of the bubbling tea made me even more sleepy and comfortable. Father's call brought me out of bed. I pulled on my brown winter robe and tied the sash. I was glad that I still wore a robe, though local children often wore fashionable overcoats.

After a meal of milk tea with Mother's homemade bread, Father and I covered the bread with a plastic bag and filled two plastic bottles with cow-milk tea. We put this food in a *ta len* 'saddlebag' which sat on the camel.

It was a very tough job to herd in cold weather, especially for a little boy. While Father preferred to walk among the grazing livestock, I did not. If there was nothing for me to ride, I was very reluctant to herd, even if Mother beat me.

One sunny day, when Father went to the county town to sell several sheepskins and to purchase some necessities, Mother yelled at me to tend the sheep and cattle with one of my elder cousins. As there was no horse or camel for me to ride, I refused. Mother began beating me like an anti-Japanese war hero.<sup>1</sup> She showed no mercy. Finally, I mounted a bull in our cattle enclosure and drove all the livestock to our pasture.

The bull moved as slowly as a snail creeping on a tree branch. I was in a bad mood from Mother's beating and did not speak to my elder cousin until we reached the pasture, where I promptly forgot my unhappiness. Then, Cousin and I grabbed each other's sashes and began wrestling, trying to throw each other onto the ground. Cousin knew that I had many strategies so he pushed me with one hand, using all his strength. None of my peers could defeat me in wrestling, including Cousin, who was two years older than me, and this time was no exception.

---

<sup>1</sup> In China, the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) is often termed the Eight Year War of Anti-Japanese Resistance. It began in 1937 and ended in 1945 with Japan's surrender ([goo.gl/DrDWjN](http://goo.gl/DrDWjN), accessed 24 August 2016).

---

Three hours passed and soon the sun was setting. Using binoculars, we saw Father returning on his stallion, riding to where we were herding. He had come to help us round up the livestock. Thinking we looked a bit gloomy, he gave us a bunch of candy. Munching and sucking contentedly on this candy we then happily drove the livestock home.

During supper, I asked Father why Uncle Rta b+he's bull camel had attacked a man a few days before. Father explained that bull camels attack people during winter, because it is their courtship season. Father also added that camels can live without water for more than one month in summer, and generally defecate once every two weeks at which time the dung can fill a large plastic sack. In winter, a camel only needs to eat once in two weeks at most.

I was proud of Father for seemingly knowing everything. I remain proud of Father who cares about others regardless of their ethnicity, and helps others enthusiastically and benevolently. I hope Father maintains this caring attitude for as long as the Yar klung River flows.

Seven different relatives occasionally borrowed our camel to move their tent and other belongings from pasture to pasture, campsite to campsite. Once, when the Bdud b+he family returned our camel, I noticed that it was not eating well. When we gave it water in a *leags gzhong* 'metal trough', Mother complained that those who had borrowed it had forced it to carry very heavy loads. After that, we ensured that our camel did no heavy work for some days to let it rest and recover.

In about 2006, motorcycles and jeeps began appearing in the local area. In no time, everyone was busy selling their horses, sheep, goats, donkeys, and cattle. Some households also sold their camels. My family was very fond of our camel, but Father also eventually sold it and a few head of cattle in order to buy a motorcycle. A man wearing a white skullcap, black suit, and brown leather shoes came to our home. From a distance, I saw Father and the white-capped man making a deal. Since birth, my relatives had warned me to avoid white-capped men, so I felt uncomfortable. Finally, the outsider rode the camel from our

---

pasture down a narrow dirt road. The camel seemed to be reluctant to leave the land of his birth where he had spent his life.

As I gazed at the camel leaving and realized it would never return, I felt a sorrow that I had never experienced before. Tears flowed from my eyes. I escaped Mother and Father's notice and went back home, where I stopped crying. "A bloody death on the battlefield is better than a man crying," Father had often said.

Historically, a household with a camel suggests that this family is endowed with *kha rje* 'good fortune', *dbang thang* 'karmic power', and more *rlung rta* 'positive personal energy'/'wind horse'.

I want to explain the idea of 'positive personal energy' as local people understand it. Locals frequently comment on one's *rlung rta*. For instance, in 2015, Bla ma Khams btsan po ma (b. 1986) predicted that my family's *rlung rta* was unfavorable. How true! Father broke his leg in a car accident. To make things worse, a truck accidentally crashed into a flock of our sheep, killing ten. We eventually accepted that the driver was unable to compensate us fully, and agreed to take compensation for five sheep. And the last straw was that year when our horses that regularly won the races we competed in won nothing.

Father told me this story:

Bstan 'dzin and his family members set out on a pilgrimage to Lha sa with horses to ride, camels to carry their belongings, and some sheep for food. They encountered terrible weather while crossing Mya ngam thang/Hoh Xil. At first, they endured fiercely hot weather. Concerned that the water they had brought was inadequate to satisfy themselves and their livestock, they were relieved to remember the camels did not require water. Calamity was averted.

Later on a bitterly cold day when they reached the snow-capped Mount A chen gangs, their horses and sheep found it very difficult to walk and some died, but the camels continued walking and crossed the mountain successfully.

A month later, they reached their destination. Stories of this successful pilgrimage further supported locals' belief in the usefulness of camels.

Rnam rgyal (b. ~1968) of Kun dga' Village had watered his livestock and was returning home with this camel carrying water stored in a tire inner tube (2016, Rnam rgyal).



In 2016 Mother's cousin, Tshul khrims (b. ~1980), herded for a Mongol family in the Tsha kha Lake<sup>1</sup> area. Uncle Tshul khrims rode a camel as he moved from his autumn camp to his winter home with his family members (2015, Mtsho mo).



---

<sup>1</sup> Located in Ulan County, Mtsho nub (Haixi) Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.



Uncle Tshul khrim and his wife, Mtsho mo (b. ~1985), moved from their autumn camp to their winter home. On foot, this trip took one day (2016, Mtsho mo).



Uncle Tshul khrim's camels en route from the autumn camp to their winter house (2016, Tshul khrim).



Uncle Tshul khrim's camels grazing (2016, Tshul khrim's).



Mother told me a camel could carry 1,000 *rgya ma* (500 kilograms). The image below is of a *sna thur* 'nose peg' made by Father. The left part of the peg is the *sna stong* 'nose fletching'. It is thought to help prevent the camel from feeling dizzy when carrying heavy loads up slopes. The nose peg also features two *sna ljibs* 'nose pads'. A dizzy camel might fall to the ground and locals believe that the red color of the nose pads helps lessen the camel's sense of dizziness (2016, Skal bzang tshe brtan).



Our winter home, pictured below, was built in about 1986. Such homes are called *sa 'gul khang ba* 'earthquake-resistant houses' (2015, Skal bzang tshe brtan). A sheep enclosure is in the background. In about 2008, the government and our family jointly paid for a house located in Ru chen gsum pa, a settlement that consisted of two Han communities, one Tibetan community, and a Hui 'Chinese Muslim' community. By 2016, good roads, a few shops, and wi-fi accessibility made living in Ru chen gsum pa attractive. In addition, our family had 0.37 hectares of fields on which we cultivated barley that generally yielded a total of about 3,000 *rgya ma* (1,500 kilograms) per year.



Our summer camp near Mtsho sngon po 'Qinghai Lake' (2016, Skal bzang tshe brtan).



## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a chen gangs ri ཨ་ཆེན་གངས་རི།

Baobei 宝贝

bdud b+he བདུད་བླ།

bla ma khams btsan po ma ལྷ་མ་ཁམས་བཙན་པོ་མ།

bstan 'dzin བསྟན་འཛིན།

chu ring ཚུ་རིང།

cun 村

dal 'byor gyi mi lus rin po che 'di len pa ni spar gang gi sran ma de

gyang ngos la gtor rjes de gyang ngos nas sdod pa'i go skabs ni

phran bu tsam yin pa ji bzhin no དལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་མི་ལུས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་འདི་ལེན་པ་ནི་

སྲུང་གང་གི་སྲན་མ་དེ་གུང་དོས་ལ་གཏོར་རྗེས་དེ་གུང་དོས་ནས་སྣོད་པའི་གོ་སྐབས་ནི་སྲན་བྱ་ཙམ་

ཡིན་པ་རྗེ་བཞིན་ནོ།

dal 'byor gyi mi lus rin po che 'di len pa ni spar gang gi sran ma de

gyang ngos la gtor rjes de gyang dngos nas bsdod pas go skabs

ni phran bu tsam yin pa ci bzhin no དལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་མི་ལུས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་འདི་ལེན་

པ་ནི་སྲུང་གང་གི་སྲན་མ་དེ་གུང་དོས་ལ་གཏོར་རྗེས་དེ་གུང་དོས་ནས་སྣོད་པས་གོ་སྐབས་ནི་སྲན་བྱ་

ཙམ་ཡིན་པ་ཅི་བཞིན་ནོ།

dbang thang དབང་ཐང།

gangs te se གངས་ཏེ་སེ།

gshin rje chos rgyal གཤིན་རྗེ་ཚོས་རྒྱལ།

Han 汉

Haixi 海西

Hui 回

jo mo glang ma རྫོ་མོ་གླང་མ།

kha rje ཁ་རྗེ།

kun dga' ཀུན་དགལ།

lcags gzhong ལུགས་གཞོང།

lha mo rgyal ལྷ་མོ་རྒྱ།

Lhasa, lha sa ལྷ་ས།

mchog rus མཚོ་གུ་རུས།

mi la tsi tsi མི་ལ་ཙི་ཙི།

mtsho mo མཚོ་མོ།

mtsho nub མཚོ་རུབ།

mtsho sngon po མཚོ་སྒོན་པོ།  
 mya ngam thang མྱ་ངམ་ཐང་།  
 Qinghai 青海  
 rgya ma རྒྱ་མ།  
 rlung rta རྩུང་རྟ།  
 rnam rgyal རྣམ་རྒྱལ།  
 rta b+he རྟ་བེ།  
 ru chen gsum pa རུ་ཚེན་གསུམ་པ།  
 sa 'gul khang ba ས་འགུལ་ཁང་བ།  
 shugs ལྷུག་ས།  
 skal bzang tshe brtan སྐལ་བཟང་ཚེ་བརྟན།  
 sna ljibs ལྷ་ལྷེབས།  
 sna stong ལྷ་སྟོང་།  
 sna thig ལྷ་ཐིག་།  
 sna thur ལྷ་ཐུར།  
 sning thar rgyal ལྷིང་ཐར་རྒྱལ།  
 ta len ཏ་ལེན།  
 tshugs ལྷུག་ས།  
 tshul khrims ལྷུལ་ཁྲིམས།  
 Ulan 乌兰  
 yar klung ཡར་ལྷུང་།

# INTERVIEWS

## FILMMAKER: KHASHEM GYAL

*Please introduce yourself.*

My name is Khashem Gyal. I was born in Chu ma, a small farming community in Reb gong, in the northeastern part of the Tibetan Plateau, where we herd yaks, sheep, and cows, and also cultivate wheat, barley, and potatoes. I graduated from Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) University for Nationalities in 2013 with a BA in Tibetan Language and Literature. While a student there, I came to realize that photography and film have the power of sculpting time and preserving certain times in our lives.



My initial inspiration was to preserve Tibetan culture and promote it through photography and film. I thus started a journey of self-study in an environment where there was limited understanding of film, and an even more limited number of mentors.

About a year later, I established *Amilolo Films*, the first filmmaking group at the university, in the hope of educating and encouraging a new generation of Tibetan filmmakers. In 2013, the year of my graduation, I finished a two-year long production, a feature-length documentary *Valley of the Heroes* with my team.

Never having attended kindergarten, I spent most of my childhood on sacred mountains, near clean rivers, and with various forest birds. This created an intimate relationship between the environment and myself. I eventually realized that I had learned so



<sup>1</sup> Interview: Filmmaker: Khashem gyal. 2017. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 44:384-387.



many things in nature's embrace that I could never have learned from books and in school. In addition, some of the most unforgettable memories from my childhood are the vivid characters and narratives presented in folktales, passed from generation to generation, and that I heard from my parents and brothers after dinner. Without television, films, and even radios, stories were one of the few forms of entertainment that I enjoyed a lot. It gave me the imagination to create my own world each night. Those were like hundreds of "invisible" films in my childhood that planted the seed of storytelling in my life.

### *What films have you made?*

I have made several films in the past few years, e.g., a short documentary *Molam* (2010), a short fiction film, *After a Rain* (2011); a feature-length documentary *Valley of the Heroes* (2013); and *Nomad* (2015). I also made such promotional videos as *2013 Machik SEP* (2013), *2014 Machik SEP* (2014), and *Sorig Tour* (2015).



Besides making films, I frequently take photographs. I have been working on a photography project - "Framed City" - over the past three years. It documents ordinary people's lives in cities in the context of China's dramatic social change in recent years. Each form of art - fiction, documentaries, and photography - has its own characteristics that represent society, and reflect myself on some level.

### *What films are you planning?*

I'm working on two film projects. One is about a family of twelve from Xinjiang who live in Xi'an City in Shaanxi Province. I want to document their life and challenges between their home, a rural village

---

in Xinjiang, and the modern, metropolitan Xi'an. After the past few years of working on Tibet-themed films, I want to do something else to challenge myself. Challenges are the most precious parts of life and I have been thinking about how to transcend my identity to approach another human being while minimizing intervention from my identity, religion, and values.

The second film is about the advance and challenges Traditional Tibetan Medicine (TTM) is facing in the West and how to maintain TTM's integrity in Tibet in the context of globalization and climate change.

*What explains your interest in film?*

My interest in and desire to make films have been contoured by my life's journey. Film and photography are touch-stones, purifying my heart and inner world. They give me a way to interact and understand life. I wouldn't do so if a "camera" had not come into my life. A "camera" gives me a platform to engage with others and to be a good listener by really listening to stories from someone else's heart. The people in my works who are the soul of every single photograph and video clip teach me about the beauty of life and the similarities we share as human beings. That is what gives me the power to keep moving forward on this painstaking yet enjoyable journey. I hope that through the exploration of Tibetan stories, audiences beyond the territory of Tibet can feel a resonance, and that these stories can transcend different boundaries to explore an understanding of life through different lenses.

*Where can we find your films?*

- Most of the promotional videos are on Youtube and Vimeo, but some are not online yet. I hope to upload them soon.

*Nomad* will premiere in Tokyo in February 2017 and is not currently online.

- A trailer for *Valley of the Heroes* is available at <https://goo.gl/ehFE1K> and for purchase at <https://goo.gl/VK4Prm>. A discussion guide to complement *Valley of the Heroes* with detailed information about the film, discussion questions, activities, and additional resources is available at <https://goo.gl/J2XjPj>.
- *2013 Machik SEP* <https://goo.gl/CH1z3s>.
- *2014 Machik SEP* <https://goo.gl/ZDzbIQ>.
- *Sorig Tour* <https://goo.gl/IFXGM7>

#### NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Amilolo, a ma'i lo lo ཨ་མའི་ལོ་ལོ།

chu ma ལུ་མ།

Khashem Gyal, mkha' byams rgyal མཁའ་འབྲུམ་སྐུ་ལ།

Machik, ma gcig མ་གཅིག་།

Molam, smon lam མོ་ལ་ལ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོ་ན།

reb gong རེབ་གོང་།

sorig, gso rig གསེང་རིག་།

Xi'an 西安

Xinjiang 新疆

## FILMMAKER: GU RU 'PHRINS LAS

*Please introduce yourself.*

I am Gu ru 'phrin las, born in 1993 in Smin thang Township, Gjig sgril County, Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. My family members are herders.

My paternal grandmother (Ngang rus, 1923-2008) raised me. My family had neither a radio nor television, so Grandmother's folktales and stories about her childhood were the main form of entertainment for me. When I was six years old, Father began to teach me basic Tibetan and mathematics. I started school when I was eight years old. I later studied at Mgo log High School in Rta bo (Dawu), at Northwest Nationalities University in Lan gru (Lanzhou), and in Zhi an (Xi'an).

My dream is to become a film director.



*What films have you made?*

In 2016, I made a short film, *Painful Transformation* (20'28") with an iPhone 6. The plot is based on the real life of a herder who is now in her sixties. I will call her Lha mo. She now lives for most of the year at a local monastery. I know her well and spent some time with her. This film is the outcome.

---

Interview: Filmmaker: Gu ru 'phrin las. 2017. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 44:388-393.

Lha mo experienced three great events in her life. Consequently, I chose three times - morning, noon, and evening - to illustrate this film: (1) She first lived with her two sons. Her youngest son was brave, good-looking, strong, and a very good fighter. Many of his peers were jealous. He was murdered during a gambling session. (2) This murder was followed by Lha mo's youngest son - a primary school headmaster - committing suicide. This is the most painful thing that has ever happened to Lha mo. She was gripped by despair after these two tragic events and, to make things worse, cruel rumors swirled about her and her family. The fires of hate burned in her heart. (3) Time passed. Lha mo thought about life and no longer hated those responsible for the death of her sons. She wanted a peaceful, simple life.



The beginning shot features Lha mo worshipping a deity image, carving a *ma Ni* stone, and a pigeon, suggesting that inner peace is possible with a disciplined mind, cultivation of feelings of compassion, and entirely relinquishing anger. Achieving this will allow you to move, in the same way a pigeon flies, to a peaceful place.

Lha mo first comes into the house using a walking stick. The act of entering the room is an invitation for us to share her inner world, a realm that has gained much value over the years. Leaving the door open suggests that she can confront whatever conflicts and problems that arise. She sits down.



Her inner world is as peaceful as her external life. Desire to stand up and be fully occupied in mundane activity is something she no longer feels. We see very little around her, only a metal bucket of fuel, a plastic bottle of water for making tea, and a box of *rtsam pa*. She makes a fire and cooks for herself. She has no companions. She is lonely, but we also realize that she can face loneliness.

---

Lha mo sits in the center of a shape created by three doors and the stove. She faces the fire, indicative of the pain in her earlier life and the flames of hate that she lit in retaliation. She has *rtsam pa* with tea and butter for breakfast as do many herders, reminding us that her life with her two sons at one time was similar to that of other herders.

Lunch bustles with noise, reminding us how dramatic the middle period of her life was. She has wild yams for lunch, which herdsman often give guests because it is considered the best food. She serves herself this food for she has no visitors after the miserable death of her two sons. The fire burns strongly in the stove, meaning that, at that time, she fed the fires of hate she felt for her enemies suggesting that she cared only for herself, totally absorbed in and by her own life.

The shots at lunch are narrower than breakfast and supper and, at times, the camera moves, evoking an uncertainty and a desire for revenge. The door to the adjoining room is open, hinting that those she considered her enemies disturbed her inner world.

Supper is a quiet time for a meal of *rtsam pa*. Her views are more enlightened and she has fewer desires as she leads a simple, tranquil life. She sits in the center of her world, caring little about the outside world. Her focus is on her interior world. The open doors intimate that she is unafraid of whatever may present itself. She sits very peacefully by the stove that no longer burns energetically.

I am critical of impulses that create conflict between herders and destroy their strong sense of unity. I encourage us all to control our minds and feel compassion as does Lha mo. If we live such a life, rather than only talking about such a life, conflict will be replaced by the peace that we all ultimately seek.

I also shot and edited an additional twenty short documentaries in 2016 that seek to make a visual record of a part of my home place's traditional cultures. For instance, how to pack a yak, how to saddle a horse, teaching children how to play traditional games, and so on. Sustaining traditional culture is difficult. What I can do is record and preserve a record of part of it and share it with others. I also

made a slideshow in 2016 that provides insight into my home place's culture, landscape, livestock, people, grassland, and wild flowers. It also provides images of the local township center and ongoing changes there.



*What films are you planning?*

I want my next film to focus on generational poverty with particular attention to an impoverished family in my community. All the members of that family have very little formal education. The family head is a monk whose mother is extremely devoted to *bla ma*. The way the family lives is determined by traditional Tibetan culture, Buddhist ideas, and suggestions from *bla ma*. This family system applies to many local families.

While much "intellectual" discussion swirls about the Tibetan economy and religious belief, these deliberations have little relevance to herders who live in isolated areas.

It is of great value to better understand the lives of real people and understand their life challenges from their own perspective, e.g., why do members of the focus family have very little to eat and rarely eat meat unless neighbors give it to them? This is despite owning about eighty yaks and twenty horses. Why does this family have a history of such poverty that they are unable to pay for higher education opportunities for their children?

I also want to make short films focusing on how to make leather shoes, process sheep skin, and make black yak-hair tents, including the terms locals use to refer to each part of the tent. There are fewer and fewer yak hair tents and I fear my children may never see a genuine black yak-hair tent again. I also want to film the daily lives of different people and follow them in their daily activities.

---

*What explains your interest in film?*

One day when I was about eight or nine years old, I was playing with my siblings outside my home when my right ear began to feel warm and I could twitch it. I was astonished! Part of my astonishment came from having watched an action film the day before in a restaurant in the local township town. This film featured an actor whose ear would warn him if his enemies were near, giving him time to prepare. I decided that I could also be an actor and ran to my home and told my parents about my ear. They were shocked when I showed them how my ear could twitch. Several days later, however, I was disappointed when I found I could no longer twitch my right ear. Time passed and I felt my left ear become warm and then I could twitch my left ear.

When I was in senior middle school, I liked to read short stories. A favorite from that time was "Sdom pa srung ba" by Co ne yum tshe ring. After I graduated, I watched a lot of feature films and documentaries that exposed me to a wider world and enriched my life. I gradually realized that films about the culture and lives of the people in my home area could interest and bring happiness to others.



## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

co ne yum tshe ring ཅོ་ནེ་ཡུམ་ཚེ་རིང་།

Dawu 大武

gcig sgril གཅིག་སྒྲིལ།

gu ru 'phrin las གུ་རུ་འཕྲིན་ལས།

Guolou 果洛

lan gru ལན་གུ།

Lanzhou 兰州

lha mo ལྷ་མོ།

ma Ni མ་ཎི།

mgo log མགོ་ལོག།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།

ngang rus ངང་རུས།

Qinghai 青海

rta bo རྟ་བོ།

rtsam pa རྩམ་པ།

sdom pa srung ba སྡོམ་པ་སྲུང་བ།

smin thang སླིན་ཐང།

Xi'an 西安

zhi an ཞི་ཨན།

# PROFILE

---

 DPAL RGYAL: ARTIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER
 

---

Klu thar rgyal ལུ་ཐར་རྒྱལ། (Independent Scholar)

One sweltering summer afternoon in 2016, my family was enjoying yogurt while sitting in order of age around a table at my home. Father suddenly clapped his leg and blurted out "Oh! I remember!" took his cell phone from his coat pocket and said, "Klu kho, please translate these new Chinese messages for me."

"China Mobile is really your best friend! It texts you almost every day!" I joked, taking the phone from his hand.

One message was for my older brother, Dpal rgyal. The prefecture government informed Brother (b. 1980) that he was chosen to represent Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture for the 2016 Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province Disabled Persons vocational skills competition in the photography category. Photography contestants were required to bring their own camera and would take photographs at the competition venue.

Father, as usual, was very supportive, urging Brother to take advantage of this opportunity. "We don't expect Dpal rgyal to win the first prize, but it will be an excellent experience!" he said, and planned to borrow a better camera from one of his friends, because Brother's camera was not new and small. Brother had spent 2,500 RMB to buy it four years earlier.

However, Brother wanted to use his own familiar camera during the match. He communicated through sign language that he was used to it, and that picture-taking skill was more important than the quality of the camera.

Brother Dpal rgyal is deaf and mute. When he was about two years old, he had a bad cold that became steadily worse. Father then decided to take him to the township clinic. At that time, we lived on the remote grassland and our living conditions were very poor. We had no

---

Klu thar rgyal. 2017. Dpal rgyal: Artist and Photographer. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 44:395-406.

---

motorcycle or horse, so Father carried Brother over several mountains in the snow. It took one day to reach the clinic.

The doctor didn't know what was wrong and gave Brother injections of streptomycin, a common treatment at that time in our community because it was very effective. Indeed, Brother quickly recovered, however, he became deaf.

Brother never attended school because there are no schools for deaf children where we live. Father and Grandfather took him to see various doctors and famous *bla ma* and diviners, and donated half of our family's property to our local monastery in the hope Brother would improve.

He remained deaf.

Still, my parents await the day when Brother will hear and speak again as predicted by one famous *bla ma*.

Brother is an excellent photographer and herdsman. He studied drawing by himself and draws beautiful pictures about herding life. He also trained with one of Father's friends and is an excellent carpenter. Brother's many talents have earned him lots of friends.

The contest was to be held on the third of August, but Brother was to arrive on August first with a companion, which is why I went with him. After we bought tickets at our county bus station, a man came over to us and asked if we were attending the competition. I looked at him and asked in surprise, "How did you know?"

He replied, "I'm also participating in the provincial professional skills competition for the disabled. I saw you using your hands to communicate with each other, so I guessed you were also attending. Oh, and my name is Gnam rtse 'bum," he concluded with a smile, revealing two gold teeth.

"Who is your companion?" I asked.

"I have no companion..." but before he could finish, the driver called us to board the bus. I looked at Gnam rtse 'bum again and wondered how he was disabled.

Brother and I sat behind his seat on the bus. Later he turned to me and asked about Brother and what he would do during the competition.

---

I introduced Brother and then said, "You mentioned that you are disabled, but how?"

"Well, actually, I have no feet," he said in a friendly way.

"How is that possible? You walk normally!" I exclaimed.

"Haha... everybody asks the same question! I have artificial feet," he said, slapping his calves with his hands.

Seeing that he was humorous, I was glad that we had met. I was sure we would not be bored on our four-hour journey!

"Oh! There must have a miraculous story about your feet. Please tell us about it!" I encouraged.

"OK, but you must promise me that you will help me carry my luggage after we get off," he said.

"With pleasure," I agreed.

"Well... I lost my feet when I was twenty-five. One cold winter night as usual, I rode my horse to meet one of my girlfriends. I was drunk, lost consciousness, and fell off my horse when I was returning home. When I woke up the next morning, I realized my feet were frozen. Actually, it was the top of my feet that had frozen. To make a long story short, I was hospitalized in the county hospital, the tops of my feet were cut away, and I was unable to get out of bed for a year. My wife and most of my friends left me."

An old herder sitting in front of Gnam rtse 'bum turning around and exclaimed, "How could she do that! Do you have a wife now?"

"I married two more times. I have two lovely children with my present wife. I've never lacked for women in my life," he answered with a warm smile.

We all laughed and he continued:

My father died years ago. My mother was in her sixties and in poor health, my brother was married and teaching at a middle school, and my sister lived in another village with her husband. Mother was the only one who could care for me until I could walk again. I knew that it was impossible for either her or my siblings to look after me for a long time. Also, the doctors told me I was very healthy. I then began to think about living independently.

---

My wounds had completely recovered after a year. I then visited some experienced tailors in my community and learned how to make traditional robes. We chatted while we were sewing. Life was much happier than being in bed. Sometimes I forgot I was unable to walk."

Four years later, I was introduced to an organization called ASIA. They gave me prosthetic feet and I eventually learned to walk again. It was a very happy moment when I could again stand. No one had ever thought I would walk again, but I did it! It was just like I had been reborn!

While I was in bed, I had a lot of time to think about my past and about my future. I would surely be in prison now if I had not had that accident. All my best friends are in prison now. I had lots of friends from local communities when I was in my twenties. We had a lot in common and I was always proud of it. We fought those who we didn't like or whose manner offended us. We thought we could do anything and that nothing would control us. All the locals knew us.

Those circumstances and that way of thinking led to my greatest transformation, making me a real, independent man. What happened to me was retribution for my sins. I have a strong belief in karma that only gets stronger with time.

I have worked as a tailor for seven years and, compared to my peers, I have a good income. I have my own car, apartment, and family. I am satisfied with my current life conditions. I am planning to open a workshop with some local disabled people. I want to help them change their life.

His story led me to recall a disabled primary school classmate - Tshe ring. He was a good singer and very good at telling Ge sar stories. I and other classmates often went to his dorm and listened to him tell stories during our lunch break.

He herded yaks as well as his father when he was only eight years old. One day, one of his family's yaks was killed by another yak while they were fighting near a clean stream. The family decided to cut up the yak carcass so it would be easier to take home.

After cooking and eating some of the fresh beef, Tshe ring was unable to stand. His parents took him to the hospital and also

---

consulted a *bla ma* to learn what rituals they should hold to aid in Tshe ring's recovery. The family subsequently sponsored various rituals as the *bla ma* suggested, but the rituals, hospital visits, and treatments were equally ineffective.

His family believed that they had offended the water deity in the place where they had cut up the yak carcass which, they reasoned, had polluted the clean stream.

Tshe ring believed that he was guilty of many sins in his previous life and was now receiving retribution.

After a pleasant journey, we reached our destination. The prefecture government had arranged everything, including a place for us to sleep and eat. They treated us very well. There were eleven people from our prefecture - nine contestants and two companions.

I saw two blind people wearing dark glasses while we were enjoying our supper that evening. One of the blind men suddenly told the leaders he had to leave after a phone conversation. His uncle was about to have an emergency operation and he needed to visit him. I was curious why his uncle was more important than the competition, and later heard more about him. His name was Rdo rje, he had been born in 1980 in a farming area, his parents died when he was very young, he lost his eyesight when he was about three years old from a disease, and he had been raised by his paternal grandparents and uncle.

He attended a school for the blind when he was eighteen. In 2012, he was employed at the prefecture Tibetan hospital as a masseuse. Many visited him for massages and his life condition was much improved.

The next morning, we headed to the capital of our province, Ziling (Xining) City. This required three hours by bus. The other blind man, Don 'grub (b. 1990) from a farming area, made the trip very enjoyable. He was a gifted singer of Tibetan traditional songs, especially *la gzhaz* 'love songs'. He sang lots of songs and made jokes, which made the time pass quickly.

Our final destination was a school in Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, which was located near Ziling. This is where the 2016 Qinghai

---

Province Disabled Persons Vocational Skills Competition was held. Everything had been arranged and contestants were treated very well.

There were nearly seventy participants from the province's six prefectures, as well as cities and schools. The competition included health care massage, computer operation, *thang ka* painting, poster design, tailoring, and photography. There were a few Tibetans and Tu. The rest were Chinese.

Brother made friends with different people through signing.

Our prefecture leader suggested that Brother use their department's camera during the competition after he saw Brother's camera and compared it to the cameras of the other competitors, most of whom seemed to be professional photographers with large, very expensive cameras.

Brother insisted on using his own camera. There were six competitors. Brother was the youngest. Most of the others were in their forties and fifties.

The photography event began at eight-thirty AM on August third. Participants could take whatever photographs they liked, but everyone had to submit ten photographs before ten-thirty AM. I noticed Brother was a little bit shocked by this piece of information, as well as the other contestants' elaborate cameras.

I encouraged him and then left. I waited outside for two hours and then met Brother, who seemed tired and less confident. He signed that there was little to photograph in the area they had been assigned to take pictures, but that he had done his best.

That afternoon we received a phone call informing us that Brother had been awarded Second Place. We jumped in excitement and then went to meet Gnam rtse 'bum. He had not won a prize, however, he was not upset. He said it was his first time to attend such a competition and that this was a very meaningful experience. He was also happy for Brother's achievement.

Several of the people I met during my time with Brother had faced life challenges and defeated what it seemed fate had decreed for them. Their joyful expressions, open sincere way of interacting with



people, and the way they communicated deeply impacted me. Though most did not receive awards, they still valued the experience.

## IMAGES

Dpal rgyal at his home, which he built and designed (2016, Lha mo mtsho).



Dpal rgyal painting at his home (2015, Klu thar rgyal).



(Left) The Tenth Panchen Bla ma (1938-1989) (2015, Dpal rgyal). (Right) Tibetan educator, 'Jigs med rgyal mtsho (b. 1965) (2015, Dpal rgyal).



(Left) Tibetan scholar, Shes rab rgya mtsho (1884-1968) (2013, Dpal rgyal). (Right) An old neighbor (2013, Dpal rgyal).



Tibetan Lo sar (New Year) cake made by Dpal rgyal at his home in 2015, the Year of the Sheep (2015, Dpal rgyal).



Home mural painted by Dpal rgyal (2016, Dpal rgyal).



*Thang ka* painting competition in Huzhu County during the 2016 Qinghai Province Disabled Persons Vocational Skills Competition (August 2016, Dpal rgyal).



Dpal rgyal with his award at the 2016 Qinghai Province Disabled Persons Vocational Skills Competition in Huzhu County (August 2016, Klu thar rgyal).



Dpal rgyal has bought Tibetan clothing for the disabled in his home community since 2013. Below, disabled community members and some of their household members with new clothes provided by Dpal rgyal in Mgo mang (Guomaying) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho Prefecture (2015, Dpal rgyal).



## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'jigs med rgyal mtshan འཇིགས་མེད་རྒྱལ་མཚན།  
 bla ma ལྷ་མ།  
 dpal rgyal དཔལ་རྒྱལ།  
 dpon ngan དཔོན་ངན།  
 ge sar གེ་སར།  
 gnam rtse 'bum གནམ་རྩེ་འབུམ།  
 Guinan 贵南  
 Guomaying 过马营  
 Huzhu 互助  
 Hainan 海南  
 klu kho ལུ་ཁོ།  
 klu thar rgyal ལུ་ཐར་རྒྱལ།  
 la gzhas ལ་གཞས།  
 lha mo mtsho ལྷ་མོ་མཚོ།  
 lo sar ལོ་སར།  
 mang ra མང་ར།  
 mgo mang མགོ་མང།  
 mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།  
 mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།  
 Panchen Bla ma, paN chen bla ma པཎ་ཚེན་ལྷ་མ།  
 rdo rje རྡོ་རྗེ།  
 shes rab rgya mtsho ཤེས་རབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།  
 thang ka ཐང་ཀ།  
 tshe ring ཚེ་རིང།  
 Tu 土  
 Xining 西宁  
 zi ling ཟི་ལིང།