

Survey Report:

*Herding and Socio-economic Change Among Langtang Tibetans**

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Introduction

Livestock husbandry is an essential feature in the traditional economy of many high altitude Tibetans in Nepal. The importance of animals to Tibetan communities in the Himalayas is reflected in the intensity of ritual activity and sociopolitical organization which often accompany herding.

In some Himalayan areas there have been major socio-economic changes in recent years. Livestock and human overpopulation, the building of cheese factories and the advent of tourism, have all had a great effect on some Himalayan herders. Ecological problems caused by overpopulation of people and livestock have perhaps caused the most significant changes for some Himalayan herding groups.

This article is concerned with the Tibetan herdsman of Langtang, an east-west running Himalayan valley which lies in north-central Nepal. How are Langtang herdsman organized, socially and politically? How have recent socio-economic and ecological changes affected the traditional life of herders in Langtang? These and other questions will be discussed through the course of the article.

The inhabitants of Langtang valley include two distinct ethnic groups, Tibetans and Tamangs. The Tamangs, a people who speak a Tibeto-Burman language, inhabit the lower reaches of the Langtang valley, between 5,000 and 7,000 feet in elevation, where they practice subsistence farming, some trade and livestock husbandry. The Tamangs and Tibetans carry on a vigorous trade, which primarily involves livestock, grain and fabric. The Tamangs and Tibetans also have a political agreement which allows them, during certain times of the year, to use each others' land for grazing. The details of this arrangement will be discussed later in the paper.

The Winter Herding System of Langtang

The main village of the Langtang Tibetans is located at 11,500 feet. The herders of Langtang, however, pasture their animals as high as 15,500 feet in the summer, and south, to elevations as low as 6,000 feet in the winter. Since yak cannot live below 10,000 feet, one

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characteristic of the winter herding system is that it only involves Tibetan cattle and chauri (yak-Tibetan cow crossbreeds).

The cold weather and lack of winter rain causes much of the grass in the Langtang valley to dry up. Since the winter grass is thin and spread over a large area, the social organization of winter herders in Langtang is much different than in summer, when grass is plentiful. A close examination of the movements, livestock and people of one herding group reveals some general features of the winter herding system as a whole.

The herding group to be discussed is called Hongal, after the largest of the winter carcas (herding camps). In terms of numbers of livestock Hongal is the largest winter herding group. At Hongal there are 220 heads of livestock between just 5 families. The Hongal herds-men first leave Langtang village for their winter pastures in mid-October, October is an important time for all the Langtang herders, for it signals the end of the cheese-making season.

The first winter camp of the Hongal herders is made at the pastures of Ghora Tabella, which lie perhaps three miles below Langtang itself, at 10,000 feet. The herders stay just 10 to 15 days at Ghora Tabella before the autumn grass runs out and they have to move again. Where the herders go on their second move is a matter of individual choice. Two families usually go to camps in the forest on the south side of the Langtang river. The other three families usually make individual camps in the small side canyons which shoot off from the north side of the main Langtang valley.

After an approximately 2 to 3 week stay at their individual locations, the herders come together again at the Rimche pastures. These pastures lie just 5 miles south of Ghora Tabella, at 8,000 feet of altitude. After a ten-day stay at Rimche the herders take their livestock on the longest journey yet, to the pastures of Hongal, which lie 10 miles south of Langtang at 6,000 feet.

The pastures of Hongal belong to the residents of Syabru Bensi, a village inhabited by Tibetans and Tamangs. The Langtang herders have an agreement with the residents of Syabru Bensi. When the Langtang people pasture their livestock on Syabru Bensi land they must pay a tax of three rupees per animal to the village purdhan (headman). In the summer, when there is abundant grass in the alpine pastures, the Syabru Bensi people herd their sheep on Langtang land and pay a tax of one rupee per animal.

Good pasturage enables the Langtang herders to keep their animals at Hongal for a month and a half, before they have to scatter again. After leaving Hongal some of the herders take their livestock to the forested areas across the Langtang river. Other herders take their animals back to Langtang village, where they are kept in hokang (sheds under the houses) and fed on stored grass. Still other herders camp in various locations along the trail back to Rimche. In all cases the

herdsmen stay at their individual locations until June, when the grass sprouts anew and the livestock return to the alpine pastures.

The Hongal herders are, in many respects, representative of Langtang's winter herding system as a whole. The diffuse nature of winter pasturage forces the herdsmen, at certain times, to split up and make individual camps in order to more efficiently exploit what grass there is. Also, during the winter, Langtang Tibetans generally spend less time in the herding camps, and must travel longer distances to reach good pasturage, than herders do in the summer. Socio-politically, the winter herding system is much less organized than the summer one. Winter herders can break off from the group whenever they want and make new camps wherever they want. This is in sharp contrast to the summer herding system, which will now be discussed.

The Summer Herding System of Langtang

The summer herding season in Langtang begins in early June. At this time all the herders take their livestock to the alpine carcas (herding camps) which lie between 12,700 feet and 15,000 feet. There are 5 summer herding groups in Langtang. Each group has its own territory in which only the animals from that group can graze. The herding groups each have their own name, as does the territory they herd in. What follows is a list of the herding groups and their respective territories.

<u>Name of Herding Group</u>	<u>Name of Territory</u>
Turpuchey	Turpucheba
Yala	Yalacheba
Dakpuchey	Dakpucheba
Noobri	Noobricheba
Langsisha	Langsishacheba

Within each herding group's territory there are 4 to 5 carcas. The herdsmen spend an approximately equal amount of time at each carca during the course of a single herding season. Four of the five major herding groups are located on the north side of the Langtang river, where the best pasturage is found.

Because there is such an abundance of summer pasturage in Langtang, the herders, in and of themselves, are not overly destructive to the grass supply. However, over the last 20 years, livestock population increases in Langtang have caused some changes in the herding system. In the summer, for example, the herdsmen spend less amount of time at each carca than they used to. As soon as the grass in one area runs out the herders must move to a new carca. Previously, about twenty years ago, the herders could stay for up to two months at a time in each carca. However, as the animal population has grown, Langtang herders have been able to spend less time in each carca. At present, the herders can spend an average of only 3 weeks at a time in any given carca. Livestock overpopulation, however, has not yet affected summer milk production in Langtang.

The social organization of the summer herding system in Langtang differs considerably from that in the winter. The summer herders are, in general, highly organized and more protective of their herding territories than those in the winter. Each herding group has its own territory which a group, under no circumstances, can move out of. Every summer move to a carca involves all the herders, as a group. Individual herders are not allowed to break off and make their own camps, as they do in the winter.

There are two factors which explain the high degree of sociopolitical organization among summer herders in Langtang. In the summer, grass is plentiful in the alpine pastures, and milk production is high. Thus, there is more incentive for herders to protect their pastures in the summer than in the winter, when grass is scarce and milk production is low. The summer pastures are also smaller in area than the winter grazing areas, and the grass land is much more concentrated. As a result, the summer herding groups do not have to split up or cover long distances to exploit a diffuse grass supply, as they have in the winter.

Livestock

Tibetan cattle, yak, brimo (female yak) and all their hybrids make up the wide variety of livestock to be found in Langtang. What follows is a description of the types of livestock found in Langtang and the way in which they contribute to the economy.

Yak. Yak is often sold to Sherpas (who live in the neighbouring area of Halembu), or to the Tamang communities which lie to the southwest of Langtang. A healthy three year old yak can be sold for as much as 3,000 to 5,000 rupees (between 210 and 350 US dollars). The Tamangs and Sherpas usually keep the yak on the high passes above their villages. They then take their cows up to breed with the yak and sell the hybrid offspring back to the Langtang people for a considerable profit.

Brimo. A brimo is valued for the milk it produces. In the summer a brimo gives up to two litres of milk a day.

Pamoo (Tibetan cow). Tibetan cattle are small, weak animals which are especially adapted to live at high altitudes. Pamoo gives only about one and a half litres of milk a day during the summer.

Brimo + Tibetan Bull = (♀) Brimzo. The brimzo is a fairly rare cross breed since the brimo (female yak) does not always conceive when mated with a Tibetan bull. The brimzo are the most highly valued animals in Langtang, for they produce up to 4 litres of milk a day. They can cost up to 4,000 rupees each.

Brimo + Tibetan Bull = (♂) Towlboo. The Towlboo are huge, but sterile animals which can be used to plow fields. They are also taken to Tibet where one can be traded for up to 9 sheep.

Yak + Pamoo = (♀) Pamzo. The pamzo gives up to 3 litres of milk a day. When mated back to a yak they can produce a valuable female hybrid. This animal is also called a pamzo. After reaching maturity a pamzo can cost up to 3,000 rupees.

Yak + Pamoo = (♂) Zopkyo. The zopkyo are huge animals, very similar to the Towlboo in appearance, and have the same economic use.

Yak + Palang (lowland cow) = (♀) Shanzo. The shanzo gives up to 3½ litres of milk a day and may live up to 27 years of age. The shanzo is sold for about 3,000 rupees each.

As can be seen from the descriptions above; the Langtang Tibetans have a wide variety of livestock, with an equally diverse range of uses, including agricultural work (plowing), dairy production and trade. Besides yak, brimo, Tibetan cattle and their hybrids, the Langtang Tibetans also herd sheep, which are valued for the wool they produce.

It generally takes only one person to manage the dairy production of a single family's herd. However, since most milk is given to the cheese factory, it now requires a contribution of milk two or more families, within the same carca, in order to have enough milk to churn butter. For the sale of milk to the cheese factory, and in caring for livestock, the basic economic unit is the family. However, to make butter and cheese (the most important dairy products) the basic economic unit is two or more households, since one family is, in general, unable to provide enough milk on its own. When a Tibetan family donates milk for a butter churning session, they will receive the same amount of milk back when it is time for them to make butter.

Dairy Products

The Langtang herders produce 6 kinds of dairy products in the summer. Homa (milk) is usually sold to the cheese factory, but a substantial portion of each days yield is always kept for personal consumption. Mar (butter) is the most valuable dairy product, because it has so many uses. Butter is added to almost every kind of food in Langtang, and is recognized as a valuable nutritive supplement for children. Butter is also an essential ingredient in phucha (Tibetan tea) and is used in a wide variety of rituals. Churmee (butter lamps) accompany almost all ritual and festival activity in Langtang. Butter is also used to give people yerca (a spot on the head), an act that occurs in a wide range of ritual activities. Butter is also an essential component in the making of torma (representations of gods made for almost all rituals and festivals). Butter is so important that the herders are required to give a certain amount to the gompa (monastery) every year. This is done at a special ceremony called Marke Gyamzo, which is performed every fall at the Kyangin Gompa above Lantang. Butter and ser (cheese) are made at the same time. The cheese is dried for weeks before finally being eaten. The final dried product is called churpee. Show (yoghurt) is a highly valued food. Yoghurt, when it is available, is the food most often given when important people come to visit Langtang. Tarra

(buttermilk) is the least valued of dairy products. The taste and nutritive value of buttermilk is seen as inferior to that of other dairy products.

The Cheese Factory

The cheese factory of Langtang is located next to Kyangin Gompa, less than a day's walk from any one of the carcas. There are two cheese-makers collect the milk from the herders, record how much is given and save a sample to be tested for fat content, a procedure which is done at the factory itself. The amount of money the herders receive is dependent on both the amount of milk and the fat content. The higher the fat content the more money the herders receive.

After the cheese is made, in the early morning, it is carried down to the factory for storage. During the summer the cheese is periodically carried to Kathmandu by porters. The cheese makers who actually stay in the carcas are usually Langtang residents. But the cheese factory manager and his assistant belong to the Hindu caste.

The cheese factory has had a profound effect on the populace of Langtang. The vast proportion of milk now produced in Langtang is sold to the cheese factory. Thirty years ago, before the factory was built, the Langtang herders would trade their cheese and butter with lowland Nepalis, or other Tibetans, for wool, salt and sheep. With the advent of the cheese factory this trading system has died out. The Langtang people still occasionally go on trading expeditions to Tibet. However, in general, they do not trade in dairy products; but in supplies brought from Kathmandu (the capital city of Nepal), such as brown sugar, noodles and chili peppers.

The cheese factory has been partially responsible for bringing the Langtang people more into the cultural, political and economic mainstream of Nepal. Effective operation of the cheese factory requires a knowledge of the Nepali language and basic accounting. By settling conflicts with the cheese factory the herders have also learnt a great deal about the legal and political system of Nepal. Interaction with the cheese factory has also required the Langtang people to put more of a value on a Nepali education. In short, the cheese factory, along with the panchayat system (political system of Nepal) and Nepali schools, has been responsible for the gradual sanskritization of the Langtang herders.

Previously, trade with Tibet and isolation from Hindu-caste Nepali communities helped maintain Langtang's Tibetan identity. The cheese factory caused a decrease in trade with Tibet, and created a need for Langtang people to learn the Nepali language and culture. These factory combined with ecological problems, population growth and economic decline, combined with the encroachment of Hindu-caste Nepali civil servants, have helped undermine the traditional Tibetan culture of Langtang.

Herding and Ecological Problems

The sale of milk is by far the most important source of income for the residents of Langtang. Because of the harsh climate and high altitude, the Langtang Tibetans can grow only three crops--potato, barley and buckwheat--on what little land there is in the narrow, Langtang valley. Thus, the subsistence of each family in Langtang is, to a large degree, dependent on their ability to maintain a herd of animals.

The increase in the population of Langtang's livestock has primarily been in the numbers of yak and brimo. Although the zomoo (generic term for the female hybrids which include brimzo, pamzo and shanzo) are the most highly valued animals, they are rare in Langtang and very expensive to buy from Sherpas and Tamangs. Brimo, however, are relatively cheap (2,000 rupees each) and readily available in Langtang. Even though they give less milk than zomoo, brimo are still valued for their tseepa (belly hair used for making rope and clothing), and potential as breeding stock.

As was previously discussed, livestock population increase in Langtang has not caused serious grass shortage in the summer months. However, in the winter, when the grass dries up or is covered with snow, lack of pasturage becomes an acute problem and animals often starve. Even though many livestock go far south of Langtang in the winter, there is still insufficient grass for the yak which remain in the vicinity of the village. In middle and late October the villagers cut grass to feed livestock in the winter. However, as Langtang's livestock population has increased, harvested grass has been insufficient for the animals' winter needs.

There are two kinds of areas in Langtang where people may harvest grass; they are known as the tseetsu and cheetsu. Tseetsu are fields of grass which actually belong to a single person or family, and may not be cut by other people. Cheetsu are open areas of grass which belong to no particular person. The cheetsu can be cut by anyone, but the time of the grass harvest is carefully controlled by the purdhan (village headman). This is done to give everyone an equal chance to harvest an equal amount of grass. The grass harvest is a time of intense work and social interaction. To harvest as much grass in as little time possible, the Langtang people use a system called chooree tzegan. In this system one family will gather all of their friends and relatives together to help harvest as much grass as possible in a given amount of time (usually a few days). After a family harvests a sufficient amount of grass, they help their friends and relatives with their grass harvest. Despite the chooree tzegan system, the grass harvest is at a time of considerable tension and conflict. To make enough hay to last through the winter, Langtang herders will often attempt to steal grass from their neighbours tseetsu. As a result, fights often breakout, despite the efforts of the purdhan to keep peace.

The grass shortage in Langtang is so acute that in the winter of 1983, after a heavy snowfall, over 100 animals died. For families who own many tseetsu and have comparatively few animals (below 25) lack of grass may not be a problem. But for villagers with between 40 and 65 animals and very few tseetsu, starvation is a constant danger.

Membership in Carcas and Inheritance of Livestock

In Langtang, summer herding in the alpine pastures is dependent on obtaining membership in one of the five local herding groups. For the vast majority of Langtang herders, membership in a carca is obtained through patrilineal inheritance. When a Langtang man dies, his sons will continue to herd their animals together, in their father's carca.

Within a given household, one man usually has the responsibility of milking all of his brother's zomoo and brimo. The proceeds from selling milk to the cheese factory are divided equally between all the brothers.

After getting married, a man will usually build his own goray (Langtang word for herding hut, not to be confused with goth, the Nepali word) and herd his livestock separately from his brothers.

For Tibetans who were not born in Langtang, membership in a carca can sometimes take years to obtain, although in some cases it can be accomplished much more quickly. Most of those Tibetans who have settled in Langtang, but were not born there, are refugees from Tibet. The time it takes for a refugee to gain membership in a carca, is dependent on the nature of his kinship network in Langtang. In one case a Tibetan man, Khampa Renzin, married a Langtang woman and was able to pasture his livestock with her brothers in the Yala carca. In this case his rights to residence in Yala were obtained almost immediately after his marriage.

In another case, a Tibetan refugee man, Dame, has been unable to obtain permanent membership in a carca for 10 years from the time he started raising livestock. The reason for this is that Dame's wife does not have any livestock, or a father through which her husband can obtain herding rights. For 3 years Dame pastured his animals with his wife's aunt's herd. When Dame's herd increased to 16 animals it became too big for his wife's aunt to look after. By this time Dame's older sister was married, and he was able to pasture his animals with her husband. His makpa (brother-in-law) looked after the animals and milked them for 5 years. After this time the strain of caring for two herds of livestock proved to be too much, and Dame was forced to pasture his animals with his shangboo (sister-in-law's husband). For the last two years Dame's livestock have remained with his shangboo. In none of the places where Dame has kept his animals has he been allowed to build his own goray. When a man is allowed to build his own goray in Langtang it signifies that he has obtained permanent grazing rights to the pastures of the herding group he is staying with.

Current members of Langtang's carcas have great incentives for not allowing new families to have permanent grazing rights to the summer pastures. To give newcomers permanent herding rights would mean putting greater pressure on the alpine pastures, resulting in lower milk production and lower potential for herd growth. Ten years ago, sanctions against giving carca membership to new herdsmen were not so strict as they are today. But with livestock overpopulation, and grass shortages, carca membership is now difficult to obtain.

The case of Khampa Renzin illustrates another important factor in obtaining permanent grazing rights to the summer pastures. Khampa Renzin's livestock have never increased to more than 6 animals, meaning that it has not been difficult for his makpa to look after his livestock. Dame, on the other hand, has almost twenty yak and zomoo. Since Dame's relatives do not have many working-age members in their families, and Dame himself has not been able to gain permanent grazing rights with a herding group, obtaining enough manpower to look after his livestock has been difficult. For this reason Dame has had considerable trouble in finding a place to keep his livestock on a permanent basis. Thus, herd size is an important factor in obtaining permanent grazing rights to the alpine pastures of Langtang.

Change in Leadership

As was previously discussed, sanskritization, the advent of the cheese factory and ecological problems have all had a profound effect on many aspects of traditional life in Langtang. The purdhan-ship is one of the traditional institutions which has been profoundly affected by the sociocultural changes. Before the current grass shortage and influx of caste Hindus, tourists and mountaineers, livestock wealth was a necessary prerequisite for being a purdhan of Langtang. Without the wealth which animals represented, the purdhan could not make the frequent required trips to the government centres of Kathmandu or Dhunche, or even wield authority over his fellow villagers. For decades, before the current purdhan was elected, the headman of Langtang was always elected from a single clan, called the Tomaray, who owned most of the livestock in Langtang. Members of the Tomaray clan, besides previously being the purdhans of Langtang, were also the highest ranking lamas (monks). Ten years ago the Tomaray people owned close to 100 animals. However, due to starvation and sale of livestock, the Tomaray now own only 60 animals.

When epidemics, avalanches and/or crop failure used to strike Langtang, they were seen by the Tomaray purdhan as originating from within Langtang's own cultural universe, the work of unhappy gods or evil spirits. In accordance with this view, the Tomaray headman would usually prescribe a ritual solution to the problem. The form of ritual to be performed was decided by the purdhan, in conjunction with the local lamas. Occasionally, in times of severe food shortages, or in response to complaints against the cheese factory, the Tomaray headman would meet with Nepali government officials. However, because of the Tomaray headman's inability to read and write Nepali, and ignorance

concerning the legal and political systems of Nepal, they were generally unable to enlist significant amounts of aid from the Nepali government.

As sanskritization has eroded the traditional culture of Langtang, and the cheese factory, tourism and grass shortages have altered the local economy, the power base and quality of leadership in Langtang have changed. The current purdhan of Langtang, Dorjee (elected two years ago), is the wealthiest man in the village, even though he does not own the most livestock, or belong to the Tomaray clan. The basis of Dorjee's wealth is a hotel and a shop which cater to mountaineering and tourist groups. Dorjee is respected not for his religious and ritual knowledge, but for his ability to read and write Nepali, and deal with Nepali government officials. When avalanches, epidemics or crop failure strike Langtang now, Dorjee always enlists the aid of the Nepali government first, before consulting with the local lamas.

The business provided by tourism and mountaineering make Dorjee richer every year, while the Tomaray clan's livestock steadily decrease in number through starvation and sale to outside people. Livestock the traditional basis for wealth and power in Langtang, is no longer for everyone the most lucrative source of income. In Langtang, the fact that the Tomaray clan's power has declined, and that Dorjee is now a successful and popular purdhan, cannot be seen as an incident isolated from Langtang's society as a whole. The changes in the purdhan institution of Langtang are symptomatic of greater socioeconomic forces--the advent of tourism, decline of livestock husbandry, sanskritization--which have affected almost all aspects of Langtang's traditional culture.

Rituals Associated With Livestock Husbandry

The economic importance of livestock and, indeed, the very relationship between animals and their owners in a symbolic universe where rules and possibilities for life are set forth by Tibetan Buddhism, gives yak, Tibetan cattle and their hybrids, great ritual importance in Langtang. The ritual significance of yak, brimo and zomoo, manifests itself in two distinct kinds of rituals.

The most common type of rituals associated with livestock can be classified under the general heading of summer herding rituals. The summer herding rituals can be further broken down into 4 separate categories; daily rituals, rituals which are performed when a camp moves, curing rituals and a summer festival to secure the spiritual welfare of the herds.

The daily herding rituals of Langtang are short and relatively easy to perform. When the head of the goray rises in the morning, his first act is to place an offering of sacred plants (known as puma and sunshing) on the fire. While this offering burns the herder prays to the most important local deities, Gonelerop and Pegoong, and asks them to protect both the livestock and herders.

The ritual performed when herders move to a new camp is more elaborate than the daily ritual. The move ritual begins, as the daily ritual does, with an offering of sunshing and puma, and prayers to Gonelerop. After the offering and prayers to Gonelerop, all the brimo and zomoo in the carca are given a yerca (spot of butter on the forehead), as part of a blessing to protect them during the move. Just before the herders leave, they give themselves a yerca and make one last prayer to Gonelerop.

The move can be a dangerous time for the livestock of Langtang. The animals sometimes slip and break their legs. On other occasions livestock wander away and become lost. Sometimes a snow leopard will be waiting to kill livestock in the area of the new carca.

In Langtang there are a variety of rituals which are performed when livestock become sick. These rituals are generally exorcisms which are performed if a yak or zomoo is believed to be possessed by an evil spirit.

Kala Salgen, the summer festival of Langtang, takes place around July, at which time all the herders gather at Kyangin Compa, just below the alpine pastures. During Kala Salgen the herders dance, sing, and drink considerable amounts of chung, while the village lamas perform a day-long ritual to secure the spiritual welfare of the herds.

The curing rituals, summer festival, daily rituals and rituals performed when a herding group moves to a new location, all have one thing in common, they are done to protect the livestock from accidents, predators and disease. This complex of protection ceremonies are quite different from the second type of livestock associated rituals in Langtang, which will now be described.

The most important livestock related ritual in Langtang is known as Torpee. In Torpee yak becomes a living medium through which the most important deities are believed to express their feelings towards the people of Langtang. In response to this divine expression the Langtang people pay homage to the gods, through the medium of the dedicated yak, by performing elaborate rituals. This is in sharp contrast to the summer herding rituals, in which the herders only ask the gods for protection through prayers and small offerings of sacred plants.

Torpee is usually performed in February. At this time three yak, dedicated to the three most important gods of Langtang, are brought to the village gumpa. What follows is a list of these gods and the names of the yak which are dedicated to them.

Classificatory

<u>Deity</u>	<u>Name of the Yak Dedicated to the Deity</u>
Gonelerop	Oorea
Pegoong	Gomboo
Cheekyoom	Gonde

Those yaks which are dedicated to the gods are chosen on the basis of their colour and size. Oorea is by far the most important of the yak, since he is dedicated to Gonelerop, Langtang's most important god. Oorea is chosen on the basis of his large size and white and reddish-brown colouration. Gomboo is a solid black yak and Gonde is black, with a white spot on his forehead.

When Gonde, Gomboo and/or Oorea die, new yak with the same colouration must be found and dedicated anew. When the new Gonde, Gomboo and/or Oorea are recognized in someone's herd every villager donates some money so that the dedicated yak can be bought and, out of respect to the gods, allowed to roam free over the hills. Oorea, Gonde and Gomboo remain free until Torpee, when they are kept in front of the gompa. On the day of the Torpee ritual Oorea, Gonde and Gomboo are decorated with darna (multi-coloured ribbons with Buddhist prayers printed on them). After the darna are all in place, the lamas smear butter on the forehead and genital of Oorea. One lama then sprinkles water on Oorea's shoulders. If Oorea shrugs his shoulders it is a sign that Gonelerop is happy with the Langtang people. If Oorea remains still it is a sign that he is displeased, and more rituals must be performed. When the final kooroom (ritual), in which many sacred texts are read, is finished, the rest of the day is spent in dancing, watching performances by the azarey (clowns) and general celebration with the feeling that, once again, the gods have communicated their awareness and involvement in the lives of the Langtang people.

The symbolic importance of livestock in Langtang is reflected not only by the wide variety of livestock-associated rituals, but also by the existence of a ritual code of behaviour of people towards animals. For example, when this investigator was living with the herders some caste Hindus, who were working for a mountaineering expedition, came into our carca and purchased a sheep from one of the herders. The Nepalis slaughtered the sheep just outside our carca. Since the killing of any living creature is strictly against Tibetan Buddhist law, the members of our carca were both furious and scared. Many of the herders said the gods would have vengeance against both the mountaineers and the Langtang people for allowing such a thing to happen. Later, there was crop failure and one mountaineer did in fact perish. The sheep-killing incident was cited by the herders as the underlying reason for both disasters. The sheep-killing was a severe violation of the Tibetan's ritual code of behaviour towards animals. When this code was broken Langtang's symbolic world was seriously disturbed.