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Kelsang Norbu

(Gesang Norbu, Skal bzang nor bu གསང་བཟང་རོན་བུ།)

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ARTICLES

THE FULAAN BULOG 'RED SPRINGS' AND THE MONGOL PRESENCE IN THE HUZHU TU (MONGGHUL) AREA, QINGHAI PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春), Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital

Susan Dan Su, University of Chicago

JA Janhunen (Yang Hunen 楊虎嫩), University of Helsinki

Kelsang Norbu (Gesang Nuobu, Skal bzang nor bu གསལ་བཟང་རོ་བུ།)
and Chuluu Ujyediin*

ABSTRACT

Mongghul origins are controversial. One argument holds that the Xianbei or Tuyuhun are origins of the modern-day Mongghul (Monguor ethnicity, officially recognized in China today as the Tu nationality), while a second suggests that the Mongghul language and everyday practices exhibit Mongol lineage. This article provides further insight into the origins of the Mongghul people, particularly through evidence provided by individuals from Huzhu Tu (Mongghul) Autonomous County. Oral narratives contain valuable accounts of the history of the Fulaan Bulog 'Red Springs' region, local religious practices, customs surrounding field boundary rituals of the Mongghul of Huzhu, and other aspects of Mongghul history and culture in Huzhu.

KEYWORDS

Mongghul (Tu), Monguor origins, Huzhu Tu, Qinghai, Xianbei, Tuyuhun, Red Springs, *chansi*

Oral accounts help round out the story of the past, providing a fuller, more accurate picture provided by other historical materials and, at times, even contradicting the written record by giving accounts absent from other records. Oral accounts may serve as the only source of information available about a certain idea and enable people to share their versions of the past in their own words, with their own voices, through their own understandings. Complicating the story of origins with memories of elders passed down over generations, historians may avoid sweeping generalizations that overlook important variables in the historical context.¹

*Limusishiden (Li Dechun), Susan Dan Su, JA Janhunen (Yang Hunen), Kelsang Norbu (Gesang Nuobu, Skal bzang nor bu), and Chuluu Ujyediin. 2021. The Fulaan Bulog 'Red Springs' and the Mongol Presence in the Huzhu Tu (Mongghul) Area, Qinghai Province, PR China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:8-46.

¹ A revised version of <https://bit.ly/39tE5J7> (accessed 28 March 2020).

LOCATION: MAPS

FIG 1. The People's Republic of China (with Qinghai Province in blue).¹

FIG 2. Qinghai Province.² Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Xining City, Haidong City, Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Golok (Mgo log, Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and Yushu (Yul shul) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (next page).

¹ <https://bit.ly/38gvpWw> (accessed 6 March 2020).

² From <https://bit.ly/3klnZrX> (accessed 8 August 2020).

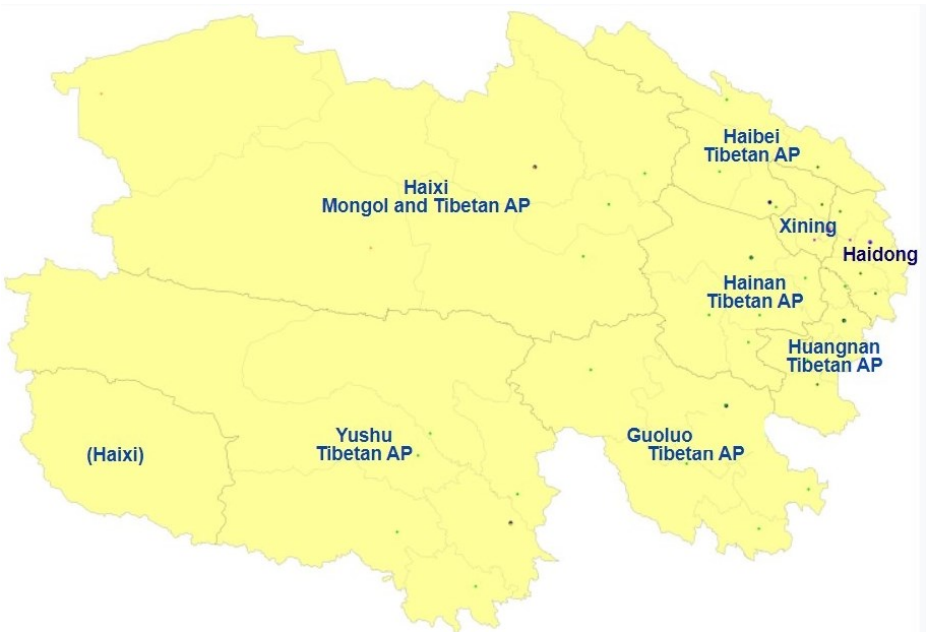
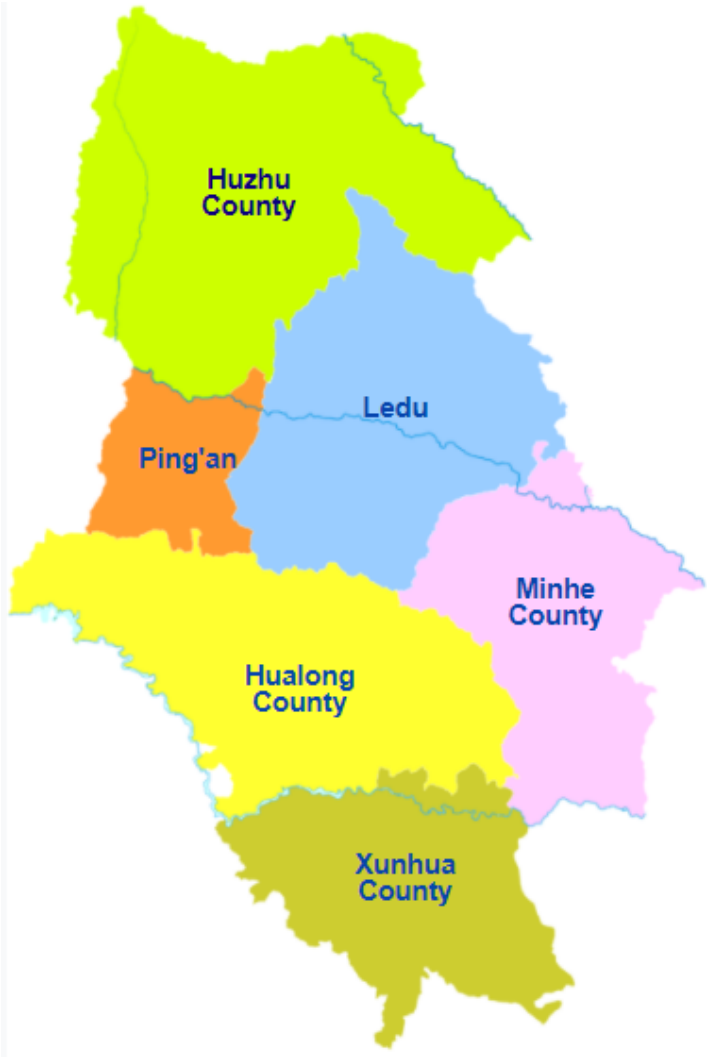
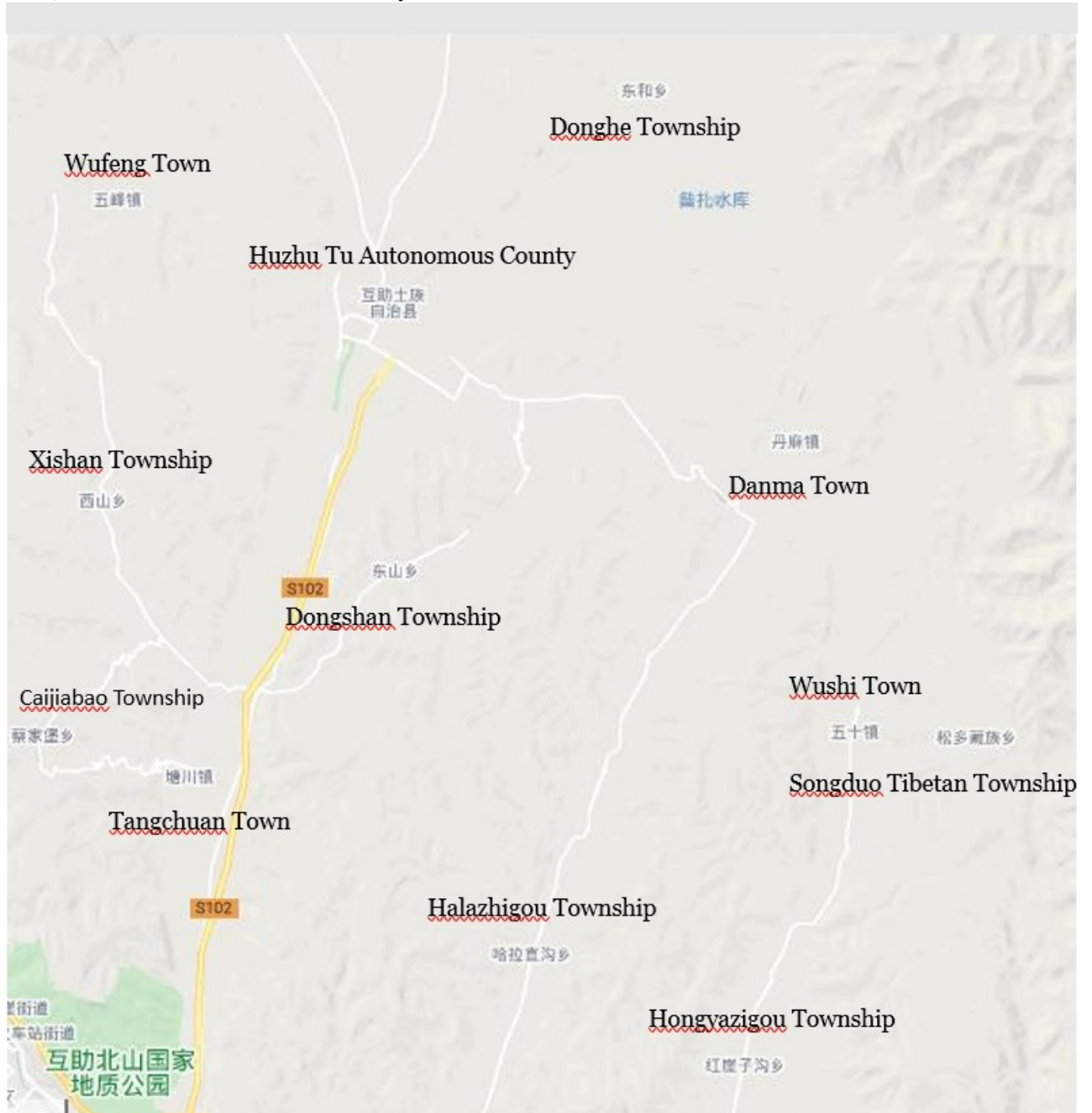


FIG 3. Haidong City.¹ Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, Ledu Region, Ping'an Region, Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous County, Hualong Hui Autonomous County, and Xunhua Salar (Sala) Autonomous County.

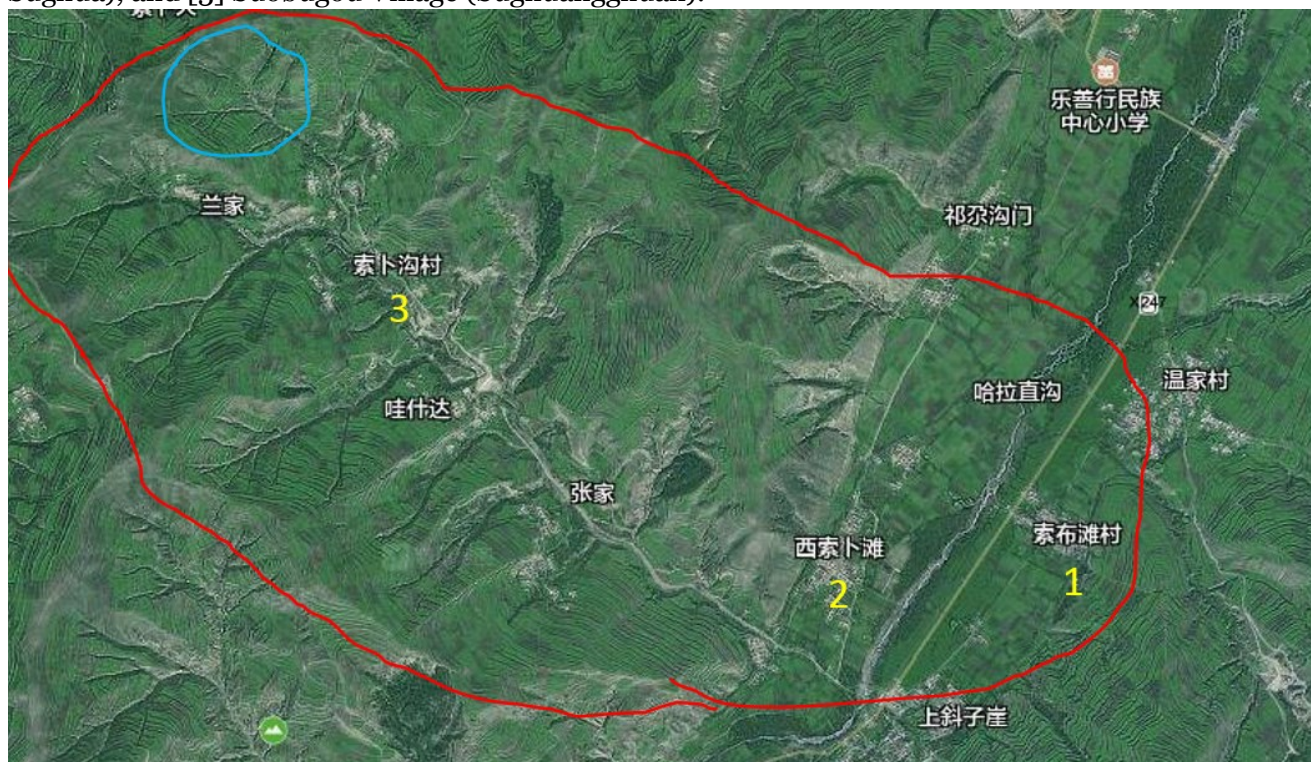


¹ From <https://bit.ly/2PFAyjq> (accessed 9 August 2020).

FIG 4. Huzhu Tu Autonomous County.¹

¹ <https://bit.ly/2Uqyx8> (accessed 8 March 2020).

FIG 5. Sughua Valley, and the Sughuanghuali villages and vicinity.¹ Mongols historically resided inside the red circle. The blue circle indicates the Moluu Ula 'Round Hills' and Fulaan Bulog 'Red Springs' location. [1] East Suobutan Village (Girili Sughua), [2] West Suobutan Village (Narasirigu Sughua), and [3] Suobugou Village (Sughuangghuali).



INTRODUCTION

We begin with a brief outline of scholars arguing that the Mongghul² are descendants of the Xianbei or Tuyuhun ethnic group. However, other scholars refute this claim, citing linguistic and cultural evidence that points instead toward the Mongols as the ancestors of modern-day Mongghul. The relationship between Mongghul and Mongols is particularly compelling when examining evidence from the Red Springs region in Huzhu Tu (Mongghul) Autonomous County. Thus, the bulk of the article provides Mongghul oral narratives from Huzhu detailing this relationship that involves important information on the Red Springs region, the Sughua *chansi*,³ and other historical and contemporary aspects of Mongghul culture, life, and governance in the Huzhu area. The article concludes with sixteen photographs taken September-October 2013 in the Sughua Village vicinity.

The difficulties encountered when attempting to determine the "origins" of any ethnic group are illustrated by this article, particularly one which involves a relatively homogeneous and geographically localizable population whose members share a common language, a common cultural

¹ <https://bit.ly/3cFVgdt> (accessed 6 March 2020).

² Mongghul in the Huzhu area were historically divided into Haliqi (meaning unknown) and Fulaan Nara 'Red Sun'. Haliqi includes the present Danma, Donggou, Wei yuan, Taizi, and Dongshan townships. Fulaan Nara refers to Wushi, Songduo, and Hongyazigou townships (Huzhu County) and Shdara Township (Ledu Region). Fulaan Nara is located northeast of the Dongyuan Mountains, while Haliqi is southwest of the same mountains. Before 1980, all Fulaan Nara residents referred to themselves as "Karilang" and not as "Mongghul." Slight differences exist between dialects and dress in the two areas (Limusishiden 2019:20). After about 1980, more and more young Karilang began saying they were "Mongghul." In the year 2020, teenagers attending school would reply "Tu" if they were asked to comment on their ethnicity, regardless of their home area in Huzhu.

³ A local official title similar to *tusi* (Zi and Limusishiden, 5 January 2014, personal communication).

base, and a common gene pool. However, when it comes to "origins," language, culture, and genes can point in very different directions. This is the case with the Huzhu Mongghul. Genetically, the Huzhu Mongghul continue the heritage of the old local populations that, since ancient times, have inhabited the Huangshui River Basin and neighboring areas on the upper Yellow River. Culturally, they belong to the sphere of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, but with a significant admixture of Chinese and Mongolian elements and old local traditions.

Linguistically, the Mongghul are Mongols, in the sense that the lineage of their language derives from the language of the historical Mongols who, under Chinggis Khan and his heirs, left Mongolian-speaking communities, probably military troops, in the region. With the language also came genes and cultural features. Still, ultimately the number of Mongolian ancestors among the Huzhu Mongghul is probably relatively small compared with the number of local individuals absorbed into the Mongghul linguistic sphere by political, economic, or such social ties as marriage. Also, the language of the Huzhu Mongghul has absorbed many features and elements from both Tibetan and Chinese, although the affiliation of the language remains unambiguously Mongolic. All of this makes the definition of the ethnic origins of the Huzhu Mongghul, like that of their close relatives, the Minhe Mangghuer, a complicated question with no simple answer.

Even so, this study shows that the folk memory of the Huzhu Mongghul preserves knowledge of their linguistic and historical connection with the Mongols, and not with any other group. Thanks to the relatively short time - 700 to 800 years - that has elapsed after the separation of the Huangshui Mongols from the Mongols of Mongolia, even non-sophisticated speakers can notice the similarity of the languages. They are also conscious of the elements shared by the Huzhu Mongghul with the mainstream Mongols in material and spiritual culture. This is important to understand when other connections are sought for the Huzhu Mongghul.

In some circles, it is popular to view the Huzhu Mongghul as heirs of the ancient Tuyuhun people (T, 'A zha), who had a kingdom in this same region centuries before the Mongol conquest, and who are represented to have migrated to this region from the context of the Xianbei, a protohistorical ethnic complex that originated further northeast in Mongolia and Manchuria. However, the Tuyuhun "theory" of Mongghul origins has no base in folk memory. Although there is no reason to doubt that the genes of the ancient Tuyuhun survive in the local populations of the region, including the Huzhu Mongghul, and although it is possible that some of the local cultural features also go back to Tuyuhun times, the language of the Huzhu Mongghul has no direct connection with the Tuyuhun language. In fact, we do not know what language or languages the Tuyuhun spoke. However, historical sources suggest that the Tuyuhun kingdom's founders may originally have spoken a Para-Mongolic language related to the language of the Khitan (Qidan) of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125).¹ Whatever the case may be, the whole notion of linking the Huzhu Mongghul with the Tuyuhun is based on a modern confusion of the two ethnonyms - Tu 土族 (Tuzu) and Tuyuhun 吐谷浑 - and has no specific historical or linguistic foundation.

While the origins of the Mongghul remain controversial, certain scholars continue to point to the Xianbei or Tuyuhun ethnic group as the origin of modern-day Mongghul. However, other Mongghul specialists (Li Shenghua 2004:149-160; Li Keyu 1992:6; Janhunen 2003:287) contend that the Mongghul language and everyday practice indicate Mongol lineage. Currently, as Mongghul culture rapidly disappears, the lack of clarity on Mongghul origins creates urgency in continuing

¹ On the "migration" and possible linguistic identity of the Tuyuhun, see Janhunen (2006) and Vovin (2015). Even the assumption that the Tuyuhun "arrived" from the northeast and spoke a Para-Mongolic language does not mean that they kept this language during the centuries of their presence in the upper Yellow River region. More likely, they adopted one or several local languages that had been spoken in the region earlier. All these former languages were subsequently lost and covered by the ancestral forms of the Tibetan, Mongolic, Turkic, and Chinese varieties spoken today by the local ethnic groups.

research and cultural preservation. This article provides oral accounts, linguistic evidence, and examples of everyday practice illustrating the Mongol influence on the Mongghul.

ACADEMIC CONTROVERSY

A number of academics and the official Tu association in China argue that Mongghul are descended from the Xianbei¹ or Tuyuhun ethnic group, a nomadic people living in the regions now known as Qinghai, Gansu, and northwestern Sichuan between the fourth and seventh centuries CE. Scholars such as Zhou Weizhou, author of the *Tuyuhun Data Collection* (1991:1-2),² support this claim:

吐谷浑国共存三百多年，于唐龙朔三年（公元 663 年）为吐蕃所灭。此后，除原青海及甘南等地吐谷浑部众为吐蕃统治而外，其余则散居于今甘肃河西、宁夏、内蒙、山西、陕西北部及河北北部等地；直到北宋后，吐谷浑部活动才基本上不见于中国史籍。而留存在青海和甘肃的吐谷浑余部，北宋以后逐渐与藏、蒙等族融合，形成为今天我国西部的少数民族--土族。

The Tuyuhun Kingdom lasted more than 300 years and was extinguished by Tibetans in the third year of Tang Longshuo (663 CE). After that, apart from those Tuyuhun tribes formerly living in the areas of Qinghai and Gannan who Tibetans ruled, the remaining tribes scattered over the areas of today's Hexi in Gansu Province, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Shanxi Province, the northern part of Shaanxi Province, and the northern part of Hebei Province. Until after the Northern Song Dynasty,³ the Tuyuhun tribes' activities are nearly invisible in Chinese historical records. After the Northern Song Dynasty, the remaining Tuyuhun tribes living in Qinghai and Gansu provinces gradually mixed with Tibetan and Mongolian peoples and formed today's small ethnic group in the northwest of China - the Tu Nationality.

Similarly, the Qinghai Tu Nationality Association and Lü Jianfu, author of *History of the Tu Nationality* (2002), assert that Mongghul are Tuyuhun descendants:

青海土族研究会于 2003 年 8 月在西宁为吕建福先生《土族史》的正式出版举办了首发式和学术研讨会。并正式向社会宣布青海土族研究会采纳吕建福教授的研究成果，认定土族是鲜卑--吐谷浑的后裔。

The Qinghai Tu Nationality Association held the launch ceremony and symposium for Mr. Lü Jianfu's publication of *History of the Tu Nationality* in August 2003 in Xining and formally announced that the Qinghai Tu Nationality Association accepted Professor Lü Jianfu's research findings that affirm the Tu Nationality is descended from the Xianbei, that is, the Tuyuhun (Bao Spring 2006:10).⁴

These announcements brought criticism, particularly among Mongghul scholars from the Huzhu region as neither Zhou's nor Lü's works include information related to contemporary Mongghul culture and practice in regions such as Huzhu Tu Autonomous County in Qinghai Province. Li Shenghua refutes: "The Mongghul are absolutely not the descendants of the Tuyuhun" (2004:149-160). Ji Junde also stated in a conversation on 5 January 2014: "It is complete nonsense to represent the Tuyuhun as the origins of the Mongghul. We are Mongol descendants. In fact, I am currently

¹ Hu (2010:2) writes, "Ethnically they [the Tu] are Xianbei as part of the Donghu federation in Manchuria."

² The *Tuyuhun Data Collection* is a collection of information concerning the Tuyuhun from a number of disparate sources and is the most comprehensive source on the topic.

³ 960-1127 CE.

⁴ See Hu's (2010) review of Lü's book.

writing a book arguing that the Mongghul are Mongol." Both Li and Ji suspect that those who insist that the Tuyuhun are the ancestors of modern-day Mongghul have not done field research in the Mongghul areas and have relied solely on textual sources.

In contrast, Li Shenghua and Ji Junde argue that today's Mongghul nationality is descended from the Mongols. Li Keyu (1992:6) contends that his research over the years on Mongghul social history and language has led him to conclude that modern Mongghul are descended from Mongols who settled in the Hehuang and Haomen at various times. Language, culture, and everyday practices of contemporary Mongghul lend credence to the close ties between Mongghul and Mongol peoples. Examples of linguistic and cultural similarities include:

- Among other similarities, Mongghul language shares Mongolic-based lexical items (Limusishiden et al. 2014:13).
- Mongol linguistics professor, Qinggeertai, argues: "The language spoken by Mongghul is genuine Mongol language" (Li Keyu 1992:59).
- In 1956, Tuodayewa [Bulyash Khoichievna Todaeva, 1915-2014] researched Mongghul areas and concluded that the Mongghul language includes characteristics of the Mongol language from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, characteristics which had vanished from the language of contemporary Mongols. In addition, the Mongghul language has also been influenced by the Chinese and Tibetan languages (Li Keyu, 1992:57).
- "Tangdarihgiima," a well-known song sung in Mongghul in Huzhu areas, suggests Mongghul are Mongol descendants:

Tangdarihgiima,
Mongghul hanni kuu xjunwa,
Mongghul dognangi dolaya.
Mongghul darisuuna bii mashida,
Mongghul ugonu guleya,
Xjiribu adalngi layaju,
Mongghul ghajarida npleenju.

Tangdarihgiima,
Mongghul khan's descendants,
Singing Mongghul songs.
Do not forget our Mongghul customs,
Keep speaking our Mongghul language,
We joyfully make our lives,
Mongghul lives will be prosperous.

- Both Mongghul and Mongols practice the traditional Mongghul *bog* ritual.¹ In the Mongghul case, the central ritual activity involves inviting deities and ancestral souls to a sumptuous "banquet" where religious practitioners known as *fashi* chant scriptures, dance, tell jokes, and burn incense to delight the "guests."²
- Limuzhunmaa (b. 1942), father of Limusishiden, recalls wearing coarse woolen robes, sheepskin robes, and cloth robes when he was a child. Each robe featured a small, narrow collar and buttons that buttoned on the right side of the upper chest in the Mongolic style. Later, owing to the

¹ See Zhao 2008:138.

² For more, see Limusishiden and Roche (2016:35-74).

influence of Tibetan culture, robes tended to feature a large, wide collar, with the top right portion of the chest unbuttoned and the fabric turned over.

- Mongghul scholars Li and Li find that the historical headdress of the Mongghul, the *niudaari*,¹ is similar to the headdress worn by Mongol noblewomen during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). They conclude:

the Mongghul *niudaari* and *paotu*² both derived from the ancient Mongols, but over a long period of time, as the nomadic lifestyle of the Mongghul became more agricultural, the historical headdress also changed. The changing names of the headdresses - Tughuan *niudaari*, *njasi niudaari*, *shge niudaari*, and *xuugulang niudaari* reflect the process of the Mongghul turning to an agricultural way of life (2005:91).

Janhunnen comments on the relationship between Mongghul origins and the Mongols (2003:287):

Little is known about the early history of the Mongghul, but it seems safe to assume that the current Mongolic presence in Qinghai does not antedate the occupation of the region by Mongol troops in 1227. When the Yuan Dynasty fell in 1368, the ancestors of the present-day Mongghul and Mangghuer, who apparently shared much of their history until premodern times, instead of following other Mongol groups back to the northern homeland beyond the Great Wall, declared themselves loyal to the Ming, and later to the Qing. From Ming times onward, they are known as border guards in the vicinity of Lanzhou. The fact that they early adopted the lifestyle of sedentary agriculturalists is likely to have been instrumental in their ethnic, linguistic, and ideological separation from the traditional nomadic society of the Mongols.³

More extensive study, particularly fieldwork, is necessary to further clarify the Mongghul ethnic group's origins. In the meantime, this article offers information from oral accounts supporting the claim that the Mongghul are descended from the Mongols.

EVIDENCE FROM ORAL ACCOUNTS

This article provides further insight into the origins of the Mongghul people, particularly through evidence provided by individuals from Huzhu Tu (Mongghul) Autonomous County. The oral accounts contain valuable information about the history of the Red Springs region, local religious practices, customs surrounding the *chansi*, field boundary rituals of the Mongghul of Huzhu, and other aspects of Mongghul history and culture in Huzhu.

The Mongghul villages of Sughuatang (T, Sog po thang 'Mongol Plain'; C, Suobutan, Sughua Plain), and Sughuangghuali (C, Suobugou, Sughua Valley) are both located in today's Danma (T, 'Dan ma) Town in Huzhu. All the people living in these villages today speak Mongghul and are classified as

¹ *Niudaari* 'headdress'. In 1934, the ruling Ma Family forced Mongghul women to stop wearing their distinctive clothing; consequently, *niudaari* disappeared. *Niudaari* included the Tughuan *niudaari*, *boqi* 'winnowing tray' *niudaari*, *njasi* 'plow' *niudaari*, and *shge* 'big' *niudaari*. The Tughuan *niudaari* was worn only by women living under the jurisdiction of the Tughuan Living Buddha. *Niudaari* were made of paper and easily damaged by rain, explaining why local Chinese urged each other to hurry once they noticed Mongghul women running back home from the fields - a sign of imminent rain (Limusishiden et al. 2014:86).

² A headscarf a Mongghul woman wears when she leaves her home to go to her husband's home as part of marriage rituals.

³ See Dede's comments (2015:18) on Monguor origins: "The Mongol Theory, which is given most space in this text, suggests that the Monguor are descendants of thirteenth-century Mongol soldiers."

Tu. In 2016, there were a total of 386 households with a population of 1,589 in Sughuatang and 207 households with a population of 854 in Sughuangghuali.¹ The latter is located in a valley behind a hill bordering Sughuatang. It takes one hour to walk from one village to the other.

The Mongghul name of the region where the villages are located, "Sughua," is derived from Tibetan "Sog po" 'Mongol'. Both villages are thought to be historically Mongolian (Li Keyu 1992:96; Limusishiden and Stuart 1998:172-181). The Tibetan "Sog po" is also present in Mongghul in "Suhu," which refers to Mongols and is used in some of the folk narratives below.

Aside from Sughuatang and Sughuangghuali villages, the Mongghul village of Gurija near the Sughuatang area, near Danma (T, 'Dan ma) Town consisted, in the year 2000, of sixty-five families with a total of 325 villagers.²

ORAL ACCOUNT ONE: LIMUSISHIDEN

I was about eleven years old when Granny Duranzin (~1906-1982) from my village visited my home and chatted with my grandparents and parents. She told us this story during her visit:

In the past, some Mongghul traveled to Aloxa [Alxa, Alashan] in a Mongol area. They walked past large deserts to reach their destination. At night, they placed a wooden stick on the ground in the direction they were walking so that the following morning, they would not become disoriented by the strong winds that blew at night. They stayed there for a few months and returned home after finishing their business. They were able to communicate with the Mongols when they were in Aloxa.

Because of that story, I felt that the Mongghul were similar to the Mongols. Granny Duranzin also regarded Mongghul and Mongols as the same people.

In the past few years, many Mongolian-speaking Mongols have visited the hospital where I work to obtain medical treatment. When I said that I was a Qighaan Mongghul 'White Mongol', they immediately commented that I must be from Huzhu County. Some of them directly stated that Mongghul and Mongols were once the same people.

Many older Mongghul still refer to themselves as Mongol. Until about 2014, most Mongghul born before the 1980s referred to Mongols as "Hara Mongghul" 'Black Mongols'. Mongolians from Haixi Mongol and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture often call Mongghul "Qighaan Mongghul" 'White Mongols'.³ Mongghul typically refer to themselves as "Mongghul" without the prefix "Qighaan." The full term "Qighaan Mongghul" is only used on specific occasions, such as when Mongol and Mongghul people are together. Those born after 1980 tend to use the Chinese term "Mengguzu" to refer to Mongols. To distinguish between them, they may still refer to them as Hara and Qighaan Mongghul, respectively.

¹ According to Luusi Jansan, a resident of Sughuatang Village, local residents lived in Sughuatang until the population increased to the point that some moved into the valley.

² Limusishiden collected this data from the village in 2000. Qiao writes that *gurija* means 'one hundred tents' in Mongol (2013:72). However, if this information concerning the meaning is correct, the name must be based on Tibetan *gur brgya* 'one hundred tents', in modern pronunciation [kər dʒa], where the word *gur* [kər] is a borrowing from Mongolian *ger* [kər] 'tent'. In Mongolian, 'one hundred tents', would be *nigen jaxun ger*, in the modern language *neg juu ger* [nək tsu[:]gər], which cannot possibly be the source of the form *gurija*.

³ Mongghul, "*qighaan*" and Mongolian *cagaan* 'white' are often used in a commendatory sense, while Mongghul "*hara*" and Mongolian *har* 'black' are derogatory. However, there is no derogatory connotation when Mongghul refer to Mongols as "Hara." It is simply a historical custom of address. In fact, 'white' in Mongolian can also connote 'pure, noble, aristocratic', while 'black' can refer to 'profane, secular, general'. In view of this, it is possible that the term 'Black Mongols' is used simply in reference to the mainstream Mongols, while the term 'White Mongols' refers to the Mongghul as a special group of professional border guards led by hereditary officials and noblemen (*tusi* and *chansi*).

An opinion at odds with the above is illustrated by Limusishiden's interview with Wang Caihua (b. 1952), a Mongolian from Keke Town, Wulan County, Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture who, in 2020, was the chief editor of *Chaidamu Baoshe* 'Chaidamu Newspaper Office'. While in Limusishiden's office at Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital on 25 March 2020, he stated:

"Caghan Mongghul" doesn't refer to "White Mongghul." *Caghan*, as used here, means "long ago" "long before." "Caghan Mongghul" refers to Mongols who lived here very early. That is to say, the Mongols [refers to Mongghul] lived in today's Huzhu and Minhe areas before the Yuan Dynasty was founded.¹

ORAL ACCOUNT TWO: LUOBUJIA

Luobujia (T, Nor bu rgyal, b. 1940) is a Mongol from Haiyan County, Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. He speaks Mongolian. On 19 February 2016, he gave the following account in the Qinghai Chinese dialect to Limusishiden in his office:

The Mongols in Haiyan are called "Qighaan Mongol" by the Mongols who live in Haixi Mongol Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. There is a derogatory connotation, meaning that Mongols in Haiyan are not to be considered real Mongols because they have been Sinicized and have an agricultural economy.

This suggests that the term "Qighaan Mongghul" refers to the Mongghul people and those Mongols who live among Han Chinese communities or those who do not live a pastoral lifestyle. Such use of the concept of 'White Mongols' may be due to confusion connected with the fact that the Haiyan Mongols are a numerically small group who live in a region dominated by Mongghul and Tibetans. In contrast, the Haixi Mongols live traditionally in a more monoethnic Mongolian environment. Both the Haiyan Mongols (east of Lake Koko Nor) and the Haixi Mongols (west of the Lake) are descendants of the Western Mongol Dzungar or Oirat groups that entered the region in the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries.

ORAL ACCOUNT THREE: LUUSI JANSAN

Luusi Jansan (b. 1949), a middle school graduate who had worked at a salaried government job in Huzhu County, has been living in Sughuatang Village since he retired in 2009. He is the uncle of Hgalazang Danzhu (T, Skal bzang don grub; see oral accounts Eight, Nine, and Ten). He is also the grandson of the last Sughua *chansi*. He gave the following accounts (Three, Four, Five, Six, and Seven) to Limusishiden on 22 September 2013 at his home in Sughuatang Village. Account Three details the founding of the Sughua region with Mongol ancestry at the center:

Long ago, Mongol soldiers were defeated by their rivals in the area known today as Weiyuan Town, Huzhu Tu Autonomous County. Giriliti,² a general under Chinggis Khan, fled with his defeated armies to what is known as the Sughua area today. They never returned to their original home regions but lived permanently in the Sughua area and married local Tibetan women. Their population grew over time, and many of them moved away.

Originally, we lived in camps in the Sughua area. Later, we built houses with enclosing walls. Many

¹ We were unable to confirm the claim that "white" would mean "ancient" in Mongolian, nor is it clear why "ancient" would, in this case, imply "more ancient than the Yuan Dynasty." See also the preceding footnote.

² Mongol: Gereltu 'light' (Limusishiden et al. 2013:127-143). The exact Mongolian form is *gereltü*, composed of *gerel* 'light' and *-tu/-tü*, a variant of the suffix for possessive nouns ('possessing something', 'with something'), that is: *gereltü* 'with light, having light' > 'shining'.

years after that, the Suhu population increased so much that they built a *tuan* 'castle' in Sughuangghuali Village. Castle walls were built to guard against invaders. It was said that the enclosing walls of the *tuan* were built under the rule of the Mongolian general, Giriliti.

ORAL ACCOUNT FOUR: LUUSI JANSAN

The Sughua region today and expansion into Sughuangghuali Valley:

Sughuatang includes the natural villages of Zangwa Ama (with thirty households) and Giri Sughua (fifty households). Sughuangghuali Village is located in the valley behind the hill of Sughuatang Village. Sughuangghuali includes the natural villages of Warishida (about seventy households), Suriguniu (thirty households), Linja (fifteen households), and Xaraghuali (about twenty households). Both Sughuatang and Sughuangghuali villagers have the same ancestors, and all villagers worship *purghan*¹ in their temples.

Once the population of Sughuatang Village increased, the Sughua *chansi* arranged for some of them to move to Sughuangghuali Valley. Meanwhile, a new temple was built in Sughuangghuali supported by the Sughua *chansi* to encourage them to live in the valley. Sughuangghuali villagers worship two Dragon King *purghan*. One is the Black Dragon King *purghan*, which was said to have been unearthed from Dadunling, atop Dadunling Hill behind Sughuangghuali Village where the big *lasizi*,² the Sughua Lasizi [T, Sog po lab tse 'Mongol Lab tse'] is located. Once, someone unearthed it and sent it to the Sughuangghuali Village temple. Sughuangghuali villagers called it the Second Dragon King *purghan*. People outside the village called it the *chansi* Dragon King *purghan*, meaning the Second Dragon King *purghan* connected to the Sughua *chansi*.

ORAL ACCOUNT FIVE: LUUSI JANSAN

After the addition of a monastery, Sughua *tuan* was later renamed Sughua Rgunba (Sughua Monastery)³ (Nian and Bai 1993:132):

It was said that Rgulang [T, Dgon lung] Monastery⁴ had not yet been built before my family was given the official position of *chansi*, and my family, along with the other twelve headmen from the region, went to Lhasa to apply to build the monastery known today as Rgulang.

After Rgulang Monastery was constructed, the Tughuan [T, Thu'u bkwan] Living Buddha [unclear incarnation] suggested the Sughua *chansi* build a monastery since the Sughua area had built a *tuan*. Thus,

¹ The *purghan* [*pram*] is a deity represented in the form of an image in a sedan or a cloth-covered pole held by four men or a man, respectively. The *purghan* permeates Mongghul village life. It is available for consultation and represents the possibility that supplicants' distresses may be alleviated. For more on the *purghan*, see Limusishiden (2015:79-98). The Huzhu Mongghul word *purghan* is a regular development of Mongolic *burkan* (*burqan*) that basically means 'Buddha' and secondarily, any 'deity', 'god'. Etymologically, the Mongolic word is a borrowing from Ancient Uighur *burkan* (*burqan*), which is a compound of *bur* 'Buddha' and *kan* (*qan*) 'prince'. The first part, *bur*, is a borrowing from ancient Northwest Chinese **pur*, from an earlier **put*, which yields *fo* 佛 in modern Mandarin. In Huzhu Mongghul, as in regular Mongolian, the word is used both for the Buddha and of various other deities.

² *Lasizi* (T, *lab tse*) refers to mountain deities and the site where mountain deities are worshipped, often on a mountain peak. The *lasizi* is where offerings are made to the mountain deity, as well as the deity's dwelling/palace.

³ Sughua Rgunba refers to Sog po dgon ba 'Mongol Monastery'. *Rgunba* = (T) *dgon pa* 'monastery'.

⁴ Rgulang (T, Dgon lung; C, Youningsi), a Dge lugs monastery located in Sitan Village, Wushi Town. There were 197 monks in 1990 (Nian and Bai 1993:122-126). Pu (2013:71-75) reports 396 monks in 1957, while Smith (2013:291) reports over 300 monks. See also Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (1982:54-76).

a monastery was also needed to protect the local people. The Tughuan Living Buddha also promised to assign thirteen monks from Rgulang Monastery to this new monastery after it was completed.

Years later, villagers built a monastery. However, in the end, only nine monks were sent there rather than the original thirteen. In the following years, the Sughua people became too poor to support those monks, who returned to Rgulang Monastery.

After the monastery was built, Sughua *tuan* was renamed Sughua Rgunba [Sughua Monastery]. Once the monks left Sughua Monastery, its name was changed again to Sughuatang [the Sughua Plain] and was cared for by local villagers.

Today, my village temple has Sakyamuni, Tsongkhapa, and Wughuangmiile¹ images, *Guanjiri* (Kanjur, T, *Bka' 'gyur*), a spear of Danjansang *purghan*² and also its *tangka* [T, *thang ga*], and a *tangka* of Lamusang.³

ORAL ACCOUNT SIX: LUUSI JANSAN

The Sughua *chansi* and his important responsibility for managing local villages' irrigation are described below:

My family was called the Sughua *chansi*, an official position given by the governor. My family was the head of the Suhu people and ruled the people until the position was abolished around 1935.

The Sughua *chansi* was in charge of Sughua Village's daily activities and managed the irrigation water in Haliqi Valley, including modern-day Danma Town and Halazhigou Township. Sughua is located in the middle of Haliqi Valley, where the Danma River flows from the foot of the Chilib Mountain in the north to the opening of Xiaoxia in the south, and finally merges into a large branch of the Yellow River. All the villages south of Sughuatang Village in the lower reaches of the Danma River require irrigation for their fields twice a year. The villages in the upper areas of the valley do not require irrigation because of the high altitude and cold climate. Years ago, the spring in Sughuatang Village was large, and water flowed from it into the Danma River.

The first irrigation occurs in winter during the first frost, which falls between late in the ninth to the middle of the tenth lunar months. If certain fields are not irrigated in the winter, they must be irrigated once the crops sprout the following year. The second irrigation occurs once the crops are tall enough to hide a pigeon. This typically dates from the twentieth of the third lunar month to the first day of the fourth lunar month.

The individual villages needing irrigation for their fields are, from north to south: Sughuatang → Shancheng → Chaergoumen → Maohebu → Songbu → Weijiabu → Xinzhuang → Baiya → Jiangjiazhuang → Shijiawan → Feijia → Caijia → Sunjia → Yanchang → Xinyuan. Sughuatang, Shancheng, Chaergoumen, and Maohebu belong to present-day Danma Town. The remaining towns are part of Halazhigou Township. Songbu Village is the only Mongghul village in Halazhigou Township. The others are Han Chinese. Thus, most of the fields to be irrigated are owned by Han.

Villagers located in the lower reaches of the Danma River would come to the Sughua *chansi*'s home before the twice-yearly irrigation periods and ask when their village fields could be irrigated. The Sughua

¹ Wughuangmiile (T, 'Od dpag med) is said to have flown to the Huzhu Mongghul area from the Potala and lived in the temple of Xewarishidi (Wughuangmiile) Village, Songduo Township, Huzhu County (Limusishiden and Stuart 2010:67).

² The *purghan* of Danjansang (T, Dam can tshang) is originally from Rgulang Monastery. It is a male *purghan* with three brothers. The older brother is Danjan Qijii Rjewu (T, Dam can chos kyi rgyal po), the second is Danjan Duriji Luhu, and the third is Danjan Guran Luhu. The Danjansang *purghan* in the Sughua area is the third one.

³ T, Lha mo tshang.

chansi first told them to go to Sughua Monastery, burn juniper branches, light butter lamps, and make prostrations. Delighting the *purghan* at Sughua Monastery meant more water for villagers to irrigate their fields. Afterward, they were to return and receive a specialized wooden plate inscribed with words that we did not understand.

Typically, each village was allowed two days and two nights of irrigation. Once that time was over, the village sent people to the *chansi*'s home to return the wooden plate, which was given to the waiting representatives from another village. This was how it went twice a year, every year. This was my family's official power given by the government.

If the *chansi* was upset by a particular village, he asked his people to change the direction of the water to have it flow into another plains area. This would anger the villagers who were supposed to receive irrigation water, and they would come to fight with the *chansi*. Knowing this, the *chansi* would order villagers from Sughuatang and Sughuangghuali to come to fight them. They would assemble at what today is known as the Janba Taigai area, where there is a small hill with many stones, and stand there with their slingshots prepared. Seeing them, the upset village did not dare walk forward to fight, but their urgent need for water caused them to implore the *chansi* again until he promised to provide irrigation water for their fields.

The following accounts regard the Sughua *chansi* and his higher position relative to other regional headmen.

ORAL ACCOUNT SEVEN: LUUSI JANSAN

The Sughua *chansi* had a high position in the Mongghul area. In addition, the *chansi* decided the date of the yearly *hguara*,¹ further indicating his important position:

Historically, the Sughua *chansi* held a high position among the thirteen headmen in the Huzhu area. In the past, Suhga [T, Gsol kha]² was held once a year for the deity, Lamusang. Buddhist scriptures were chanted to Lamusang yearly in Rgulang Monastery, where all thirteen headmen gathered. The ritual could not start without the Sughua *chansi*, but if he had already arrived and some of the other headmen had not, the ritual could begin.

During the yearly *hguara*, the *chansi* led the march mounted on a horse, with a man leading the horse by the reins. On this occasion, the *purghan* did not designate where villagers should perform the hail-prevention rites. Instead, the *chansi* decided, demonstrating his important position. Besides, whenever the *chansi* came to Sughuangghuali Valley from Sughuatang, the Dragon King *purghan* carried by the villagers quickly went out of the temple to receive the *chansi*, who did not dismount before the Dragon King *purghan*.

ORAL ACCOUNT EIGHT: HGAZANG DANZHU

Hgalazang Danzhu (T, Skal bzang don grub, b. 1972), a farmer living in Sughuatang Village, studied for two years in his village primary school and is the great-grandson of the last Sughua *chansi*. On 22 September 2013, he gave the following account to Limusishiden in his home in Sughuatang. He maintained that Mongghul in Sughuatang and Sughuangghuali were originally Mongols. Historically,

¹ During the fourth, fifth, and sixth lunisolar months, every Mongghul village has their own designated dates to perform a march in their village fields. The participants include green crop officers, temple keepers, village *purghan*, and at least one male representative from each of the households. See the latter part of this article that presents the *hguara* of the two Sughua villages.

² A ritual focusing on Lamusang. In 2019, this ritual was no longer held at Rgulang Monastery.

as the population grew and the grassland became insufficient, many villagers from Sughuatang and Sughuangghuali moved away:

We were originally Mongols. During the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960), an official work team gave all the Suhu people the surname "Suo," derived from the "Su" of Suhu. Now, we are all officially registered as Tu. Mongols had lived in this area for a long time. Later, as the Suhu population grew and the grassland became insufficient, many Suhu people left the Sughua area and moved to areas in [the contemporary] Datong [Hui and Tu Autonomous County, Xining City], Qilian, and Menyuan counties [Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture], and Dulan and Wulan counties [Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture].

All the Suhu residents in today's Sughuatang and Sughuangghuali villages are those who did not leave [not people who later moved in]. We have made our living by farming. Also, those surnamed Su living in Szanghuali Village in Donggou Township and Xangshida Village in Danma Town and the Su-surnamed people in Huzhu, were all originally Suhu people who moved away from the Sughua area.

ORAL ACCOUNT NINE: H GALAZANG DANZHU

An account of the Red Springs region and its familiarity to Mongols is given:

In the past, there were three big springs in Waliga, located in Sughuangghuali Village. Historically, Suhu soldiers who their rivals had defeated settled there because of the plentiful water from the three springs and the fertile grassland. The springs are called "Ghuran Bulog" 'Three Springs' by local people. They are also referred to as Red Springs because of the red soil in the springs' vicinity. One spring is located atop the Round Hills while the other two are located at the foot of the hills. The largest one on top of the Round Hills formed a *cuan* 'large pool' where water flowed in.

ORAL ACCOUNT TEN: H GALAZANG DANZHU

This account reflects on how the larger spring and the *cuan* disappeared:

A woman once fled here after conflict with her husband. When she passed by the larger spring, menstrual discomfort led her to remove her pants and wash them in the spring. This caused the large spring to disappear because it had been polluted. However, a new spring soon formed at the foot of the Round Hills. Initially, red water flowed out of the spring. Later, the red water returned to a normal color and was clean again. However, the soil surrounding the new spring turned red, so locals call it Red Springs.

In the past, my grandfather's (b. ~1931) and great-grandfather's (b. ~1907) generations traveled to areas where Mongols from the Sughuatang and Sughuangghuali areas had migrated, for instance, Qilian, Tianjun, Dulan, and Wulan. The main reason they went there was population increase and a limited amount of cultivatable land, which limited their ability to make a living. Some of them moved to areas surrounding Suhu while others traveled to distant Mongol regions to live. When local Mongols learned that they were White Mongols, they often excitedly asked where they were from. Though the Mongols often did not know the Sughua area very well, they did recognize Round Hills and Red Springs.

What's more, they said, "We are happy to know you are from Red Springs. Our ancestors were originally from there, too. We are the same people. You are from our natal homeland." Thus, they were warmly welcomed and entertained.

ORAL ACCOUNT ELEVEN: GINDIN DANZHU

Limusishiden visited Sughuangghuali Village and spoke to Gindin Danzhu (T, Dge 'dun don grub, b. 1958), a farmer who studied for two years in primary school. According to his oral account, the history of Mongols in the modern-day Huzhu region is also evident in certain discovered artifacts. The following is their edited conversation from 6 October 2013:

When I was a child, I once followed my mother to a field where she harvested as I played at one of the Red Springs. The soil beside the spring is red. I dug out a copper object that had small grooves, a flower pattern, and some lettering. I gave it to my mother. She didn't know what it was, so she asked other people harvesting in their fields, but they also didn't understand the lettering. They believed it might be a copper dog 'headdress ornament' used to decorate the *yejuari*¹ headdress. Mongghul men and women in some places in Huzhu Mongghul areas used to wear this *yejuari* headdress. Thus, I thought Mongols might have lived here before. My grandfather often told us:

The Mongols in Chaka, Dulan County and Tianjun, Haixi Mongol and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture know us and our Sughua area when you talk with them, so tell them you are from the Sughua area. They specifically know the names of the Red Springs and Round Hills. They will treat you well because they think we were originally the same people. We are all Mongols, but they eventually left the Sughua area.

Contemporary cultural practices, such as local customs for the fifteenth night of the eighth month, also point to Mongolian influence:

It is said Han people offer a watermelon to the moon on the fifteenth night of the eighth month to represent the head of a Mongol soldier and cut it into pieces. We never venerate the moon rising from the sky that night. Instead, we take a handful of ash from the kitchen stove and throw it outside the window to express our unwillingness to see the moon that evening. We throw ash because it covers the blood on the Mongols' heads.

Han people also make mooncakes on that night, but we never do. This is because that was the night Han people put notices inside the mooncakes informing each other that they would join together in an uprising on the night of the thirtieth day, and that is the night they suddenly rose up and killed the Mongol soldiers.

The two Dragon King *purghan* of the area and local customs surrounding the *hguara* are related below:

There are two temples in Sughuangghuali Village. The two Dragon King *purghan* are in one temple while another temple enshrines images of Sakyamuni, Wughuangmiile, and Zhunmaasangqan and the spears of Danjansang and Bagharisang.

The first Dragon King *purghan* in our village is the Yellow Dragon King. The second is the Black Dragon King. The second *purghan* has a more extended history than the first one. Our ancestors told us that the Black Dragon King *purghan* came out from the spring in Sughuatang, appearing as a square stone

¹ T, *g.yu byu ru* 'turquoise/coral ornament'. A conical women's headdress featuring a hole in the center and made with copper and an agate fixed in the copper. Historically, Mongghul women wore the *yejuari* headdress. For example, Danjansuu (b. 1936), the mother of Limusishiden's wife Jugui, wore this headdress before 1980. Danjansuu said both Mongol and Mongghul women wore this headdress. After the 1980s, *yejuari* headdresses vanished among the Huzhu Mongghul.

the size of an adult man's hand with a *tangka* pattern on it. Later, it became our *purghan* when the *tangka*-patterned stone was placed inside the wooden sedan. Because of his origins from under the earth, he dislikes seeing blood. He also dislikes visiting family homes because he believes the house's front gates are unclean. If visiting a house is necessary, he is carried over the compound walls into the house's courtyard.

The Yellow Dragon King *purghan* is different. He visits families if he is invited for a consultation. In the sedan, his head and face are shown to the public, while the head and face of the Black Dragon King are covered with black cloth.

The Dragon King *purghan* decides the Sughua *hguara* date in our village temple on the eighth day of the fifth month. The day is typically the ninth or tenth day of the fifth month. On that day, the spear *purghan* of Danjansang is brought by Sughuatang people to Sughuangghuali Village. Once the spear of Danjansang and the Sughuatang villagers arrive at the temple in Sughuangghuali Valley, villagers there welcome them with a slaughtered sheep. When the *hguara* marching time approaches, participants from both of the two villages start marching.

During the march, the male drummers walk first,¹ followed by the man with a conch shell horn and the Buddhist umbrella holders. In total, thirteen Buddhist flags are part of the march. Ten to twenty men walk in a line between every two flags. One hundred and eight volumes of Buddhist scripture are carried on the march. The Dragon King *purghan* and spear *purghan* are not carried in strict order. Sometimes they are at the front, and sometimes, they are at the sides of the procession. The parade circles the villagers' fields to delineate and patrol the village boundaries.

During *hguara*, villagers ask the *purghan* where and in which direction they should hold a *padila* 'suppress evil rite' to prevent disasters such as floods, drought, hail, frost, and so forth from afflicting the young crops. Once the *purghan* designates the site, the villagers dig a hole and bury an upturned black bowl, pot, earthenware vase, or triangular plow, as well as a piece of sacred cloth from the sedan. Most locations for this rite are at a mountain pass or ridge where it is thought to be easier to attack the entryway of evils during the crop-growing time.

Once *hguara* is finished, the parade participants return to the temple where they decide the *chin* 'annual village rules' that involve several prohibitions: no quarreling and fighting, particularly between husbands and wives; no herding on slopes; no constructing or demolishing houses; and no logging in the village. There are also specific requirements, e.g., every family must go to the temple, light butter lamps to the Dragon King *purghan*, burn juniper branches, and make three prostrations. Importantly, *chin* ensures a successful harvest. Rules and requirements are dismissed once the crops are harvested in late autumn after the villagers again consult the Dragon King *purghan*.

FURTHER SUPPORT FOR MONGOL ORIGINS

Further information supporting the claim that Mongghul from the Huzhu area are Mongol descendants includes Gerilete, a general under Chinggis Khan, who once garrisoned the modern-day Suobutan areas, Danma Town, Huzhu County. Later, Gerilete died from a disease. His subordinates married local Huo'er people and became Tu people (Yan and Wang 1994:881).

In *Youningsizhi (sanzhong)* 'Three Histories of Youning Monastery' (1990:25), a minister, Gerilete, of the Dzungar, is described as leading his subordinates to current-day Huzhu County to settle and that most Huo'er people are his descendants. Gerilete was reincarnated after his death as a devil, living on the rocks of Guolong Mountain where Rgulang Monastery is located. Jiase² Living

¹ In the past, the *chansi* went first, mounted on his horse. A man led the horse by its reins.

² Jiase = Rgyal sras don yod chos kyi rgya mtsho, Jiaseduanyuequejijiacuo (Limusishiden 2019:37).

Buddha subdued Gerilete and ordered him to protect the local area.

Li and Li (2005:164) suggest:

郭尔朵即格勒特, "奥丹"是嘉赛活佛给格勒特的名字, 它又是奥鲁特·丹巴嘉措的简缩形式, 奥鲁特就是奥鲁赤。民和三川地区崖尔寺供奉的郭尔朵和互助佑宁寺石崖上土地庙中供奉的格勒特都是西平王奥鲁赤的塑像。奥鲁赤是始祖忽必烈的儿子, 成吉思汗的第四代孙, 是土族西祁土司贡哥的祖父。

Guo'erduo is actually Gelete [Niidosang, Giriliti]; the [Tibetan] name 'Aodan' was given to him [Giriliti] by Jiase Living Buddha, and is an abbreviation for Aolute Danbajiacuo; Aolute is also rendered Aoluchi. The image of Guo'erduo worshipped in Ya'er Monastery¹ in Sanchuan, Minhe County, and the image of Gelete kept in Tudi Temple behind Youning [Rgulang, Dgon lung] Monastery are both images of Aoluchi, Xiping Wang, or the Prince of Xiping. Aoluchi refers to Kublai Khan's [1215-1294] son, the fourth generation of Chinggis Khan, and the grandfather of the Tu West Qi *tusi*, Gongge.

As is typical of folk narratives, the above accounts are somewhat diffuse and contain various confusions, although they are based on a kernel of historical fact. For one thing, the name of Gerilete, due to its passing through a number of Mongolic, Tibetan, and Chinese varieties, is quoted in different shapes, including Guo'erduo, Gelete, Giriliti, or Girilitu (also mentioned in Oral Account Three above). Also, the accounts are mutually contradictory as to the period when this Gerilete was active. Was he a general under the historical Mongols of Chinggis Khan (twelfth to thirteenth centuries) or an official under the much later Western Mongols of the Dzungar empire (sixteenth to seventeenth centuries)? Unless we are dealing with two different persons with this name, the latter version appears more likely. In that case, it may be assumed that a group of Western Mongols (Oirat) mixed with the ancestors of the Mongghul and thus entered the composition of the modern "Tu" nationality. This does not mean that the Mongghul as a linguistic group would not date back to Chinggis Khan's times, but only that they may have received additional Mongol elements from the later Western Mongols in this same region. This further complicates the question concerning the ethnic "origins" of the Mongghul.

In this connection, the ethnonym Huo'er is also a source of confusion. In Chinese scholarship, it is occasionally claimed that *huo'er* is connected with the ancient ethnonym *hu*, a name the Chinese used during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) for their northern neighbors. Huo'er is the Chinese rendering of Tibetan *hor*, which is the conventional name for the peoples living north of Tibet.² In modern usage, this name refers specifically to the Mongghul and Mangghuer (Yan and Wang 1994:822), while "regular" Mongols are called by the name *sog* (*sog po*). In some sources, the terms *hor* and *sog* are used interchangeably. Krang dbyi sung (Zhang Yisun) suggests:

Hor, the meaning varies at different times, i.e., it meant Yu gur (Huiqi) during the Tang and Song dynasties; Mongol during the Yuan Dynasty; 'A zha (Tuyuhun) between the Yuan and Ming dynasties; and it currently refers to herders in the north of the Tibet Autonomous Region and the Tu nationality in northeast Qinghai (1993:3071).

¹ Also known as Wushigousi (Wushigou Monastery), Yasi (Ya Monastery), Maojiasi (Maojia Monastery), Wushizhihegongqinxiazhiqunkelin, 'Ai shi brag dgon chen bshad sgrub chos 'khor gling, located one hundred kilometers south of Chuankou Town, Minhe County and fourteen kilometers northwest of Wushi Village, Guanting Town (Nian and Bai 1993:93). See also Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (1982:225).

² "Hor" appears regularly in Tibetan historical literature. Hor sog/Hor sog po is the general Tibetan name for the Mongols. Hor and Sog po are used separately and interchangeably, but refer to the same ethnic group, the Mongols.

As far as the ultimate origins of the terms *hor* and *sog* are concerned, a widely accepted explanation is that both are names of historical peoples that lived north of Tibet. *Hor* derives from Turkic *uygur* (*uygur*, *uighur*), the name of the Ancient Uighur in Xinjiang (ninth to thirteenth centuries), while *sog* derives from *sogd* of the Sogdians, a group of Central Asian Iranians. The reference to Mongolic-speaking groups is secondary in both cases. It may be noted that the term *horpa* is also used for the Horpa peoples, speaking Sino-Tibetan (Transhimalayan) languages of the Rgyalrongic group in Sichuan. It remains unclear how the name came to be applied to these particular Horpa people.

Manzhun, a Mongghul folktale, supports the idea that Mongol soldiers settled in the region in its description of how Mongol soldiers had initial conflicts with local people, defeated them, and came to live permanently in the Sughuatang area:

Perhaps during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), soldiers of Chinggis Khan (1162-1227) reached Koko Nor and camped on a great plain lying on the shady morning side at the foot of the Chilib Mountains. Afterward, many of Chinggis Khan's soldiers did not return home but resided there. The local people called those Black Mongol soldiers Suhuu, and the great plain where the soldiers camped was called the Suhuu Plain.

After the Suhuu settled in this area, to find women to start families with (to "keep their chimneys smoking"), they began marrying local women. The people of the two areas got along well. There soon arose some unpleasantness and conflict, however... (Limusishiden and Stuart 1998:172-181).

Numerous accounts concerning the Mongols are available in Tibetan language history books, testimony to the close contact between the two peoples, particularly since the establishment of a patron-priest relationship by Godan (T, Hor go tan rgyal po; C, Kuoduan, uncle of Kublai Khan, and Sa skya kung dga' rgyal mtshan (Sakya Pandita, 1182-1251). Certain Tibetan history books have chapters on the Mongols, some of which specifically address A mdo, including the current Huzhu and Minhe areas, and use "Sog po" and "Hor" interchangeably, or "Hor sog," a combination of the two. However, a few of these classics use "Xianbei" 'Tuyuhun'.¹

In the *Chos sde chen po dgon lung byams pa gling gi dkar chag 'History of Dgon lung Monastery'*, Thu'u bkwan blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma² writes:

The current Hor people are descendants of Chinggis Khan's minister, Ke rel thu [Gereltü], and his entourage who moved to this place. After his death, Ke rel thu's spirit became a powerful ghost dwelling in the rocky mountain in Dgon lung due to his karmic deeds. The spirit manifested in his original Mongol appearance before Rgyal sras rin po che [the founder of this monastery], who subdued it and ordained it to be a regional protector deity (1988:12-13).

We now present information about Mongols and the Huzhu Tu in the form of short comments made in late March 2020 by fourteen Mongghul elders (all illiterate) in Fintai (C, Fengtai) Village, Weiuyan Town; Shgeayili and Qighaan Dawa villages, Dongshan Township; Yomaja and Tangra villages, Donggou Township; Huarin Village, Danma Town; Xuangwa and Foorijang villages, Wushi Town, Huzhu County; and Shgeayili Village, Dala Township, Ledu Region.

¹ Brag dgon pa bstan pa rab rgyas (1982); Thu'u bkwan blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1988); Dbal mang paN+Di ta dkon mchog rgyal mtshan (2015); Sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor (1992); Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba (1986); and Tshal pa kun dga' rdo rje (1981). The last reference mentions Hor and Thu lu hun 'Tuyuhun' separately (1981:17).

² The third incarnation of the Thu'u bkwan Bla ma lineage (1737-1802) was born in the Pra sti Tribe in the contemporary Songlin Township, Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province and lived in Dgon lung Monastery for many years.

Limusishiden asked, "*Qi qanglaji Mongghul dangmani anjisa rsanna?* 'What have you heard about where the Mongghul originally came from'?"

FIG 6. Consultants and location of interview.

Consultant	Location of Interview
Qi Chenghai (male, b. 1938)	Fintai Village, Weiyuan Town, Huzhu County
Qi Daicai (male, b. 1950)	Fintai Village, Weiyuan Town, Huzhu County
Defuzi (male, b. 1950)	Shgeayili Village, Dongshan Township, Huzhu County
Bailong (male, b. 1953)	Qighaan Dawa Village, Dongshan Township, Huzhu County
Jiuchinzi (C, Dong Xinling, male, b. 1939)	Qighaan Dawa Village, Dongshan Township, Huzhu County
Qishiai (male, b. 1952)	Tangra Village, Donggou Township, Huzhu County
Lama (C, Wang Guolu, male, b. 1947)	Yomaja Village, Donggou Township, Huzhu County
Huarighasirang (C, Yi Dehu, male, b. 1960)	Huarin Village, Danma Town, Huzhu County
Saibin (female, b. 1948)	Xuangwa Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County
Baghasirang (male, b. 1952)	Xuangwa Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County
Limurinqan (C, Li Yongfu, male, b. 1932)	Xuangwa Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County
Limuxja (male, b. 1956)	Xuangwa Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County
Dunzhi (male, b. 1954)	Foorijang Village, Wushi Town
Durijisirang (male, b. 1950)	Shgeayili Village, Dala Township, Ledu Region

ORAL ACCOUNTS FROM ILLITERATE MONGGHUL ELDERS IN MARCH 2020

Qi Chenghai

When I was young, some old men in our village said we were Mongol descendants. Mongol soldiers came here and some stayed. Today's Mongghul are descendants of those Mongol soldiers who stayed. The place-name "Bawataizi" in Taizi Township, Huzhu County, is Bawantai meaning "eighty thousand Mongol soldiers gathering place." Eighty thousand Mongol soldiers once gathered there.

Qi Daicai

When I was young, there was a picture of a Mongol couple hung in my shrine room. The man was standing, gazing into the distance with a bow and arrows on his back. The woman was bent over, making butter in a churn. Both wore tall conical hats with tassels. My grandfather said the couple was known as Jamaji - our first ancestors. We worshiped them as our ancestors. They are the ancestors of all Mongghul. We don't know who they were. What does Jamaji mean? The portrait was burned during the Anti-superstition Movement in 1958.¹

Defuzi

Our village old men said Mongghul ancestors were from Mongol areas. We are Mongol descendants. Today, I don't know why Mongghul are called the Tu nationality.

¹ "Jamaji" is possibly a cognate of Mongolian *jamci*, from *jam* 'road' and the actor noun suffix *-ci*, yielding *jam-ci* 'the one on the road' > 'guide'. In Mongghul, "guide" is *moori durijin* – *moori* 'road' *durijin* 'leader'. Mongghul *moori* 'road' is the cognate of 'Mongolian *mör* 'path, trace, track'. See Limusishiden and Stuart (1998:56) for *jamujee* 'go-between' in a song sung when the matchmaker was in the bride's parents' room and women from the bride's side were abusing the matchmaker. In this context, *jamujee* is similar in meaning to "guide."

Bailong

When I was young, my grandfathers said Mongghul were descended from the Mongols.

Jiuchinzi

When I was young, my great-grandfather sometimes told us that Chinggis Khan once came to our Mongghul areas with his troops. Later, his troops escaped after they were defeated - except for a father and his son. We are descendants of that father and son. When Chinggis Khan's generals and troops fled from our Mongghul areas to Mongol areas, they took the written Mongol language with them. That's why we now don't know written Mongol and have not been successful in recording our Mongghul history.

Qishiai

When I was young, village old men chatted and said Mongghul historically were from Aloxia areas [Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region].

Lama

In the past, old people in our village said Mongghul are originally from today's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

Huarighasirang

When I was young, old men in my village said Mongghul roots are Mongol. We have no Mongol written language, so we have not recorded our history.

Saibin

My paternal grandfather told us one of Chinggis Khan's younger brothers came here with his family and soldiers. We are their descendants.

Baghasirang

In the past, our village old men sometimes gathered and talked. They said Mongghul are Mongol. Niidosang Deity¹ in Rgulang Monastery first lived in Qaaghuali Village, Danma Town. Niidosang was a real man - a Mongol general. When Niidosang died, his soul wandered on mountain cliffs where the monastery is now located. Later, his soul was designated as a guardian deity of Rgulang Monastery. From this, we knew we were Mongol descendants. Another comment was that Chinggis Khan's utterly defeated soldiers and generals came, lived here, and gradually became today's Mongghul.

Limurinqan

I heard from old people that Mongghul ancestors were from the Mongol area. It is unclear how, when, and why they came here.

Limuxja

When I was young, some old men said that Mongol soldiers came to our Mongghul area from the south of China after they were defeated. They left some of their defeated soldiers here who became today's Mongghul people.

¹ See Limusishiden et al. (2013) for more on Niidosang.

Dunzhi

Some of our old village men said Chinggis Khan's soldiers in the south of China were defeated. They retreated to our area, where some stayed and became today's Mongghul. Many years ago, some Mongols came to my village and asked some old men about our origins. The old men told them we were from Mongol areas in the past.

Durijisirang

My father told me our roots are Mongol because the Mongghul term for a wooden house is *ger*, which is similar to what Mongols call their yurts. The columns of Mongghul wooden houses are called *tuligha*. Mongols also refer to "column" as *tuligha*.¹ Chinese is used for the remaining parts of a wooden house. In the past, we lived in Mongol yurts but later lived in houses of wood. When Mongol soldiers came to Huzhu and Ledu areas, they married Tibetan women. Others stayed in Minhe and married Chinese women. Therefore, there are differences between Huzhu Mongghul and Minhe Mongghul [Mangghuer], including songs, dress, and dialects.

CONCLUSION

Although official sources have formally stated that the Mongghul are not Mongol descendants, much of the evidence for this claim derives from textual sources. However, oral accounts, linguistic similarities, folklore, and everyday practice among the Mongghul of the Huzhu region presented in this paper provide evidence to the contrary. Mongghul in rural Huzhu would be unable to identify "Tuyuhun" or "Xianbei," particularly those who are illiterate and born before 1960. However, they are familiar with oral accounts and the Mongols and believe Mongghul have strong historical ties and may be descended from the Mongols.

Lineage is a notion that is easily complicated. For example, a Han or a Tibetan man moves into a Mongghul home and lives with a woman. They have children who grow up speaking Mongghul, take the woman's surname, and are officially classified as Tu. Or, a Tibetan woman who speaks only Tibetan moves into a Mongghul home and lives with a Mongghul man, whose mother might be classified as Han or Tibetan, but their children grow up speaking Mongghul and are classified as Tu. Given these examples, what is the meaning of the question, "Are our ancestors Mongol, Tuyuhun, or Xianbei?" People may speak a language fluently but have no clear lineage relationship with most of those who speak it. For example, most Tu raised in Xining speak no Mongghul/Mangghuer, but are classified as Tu. However, the fact that they only speak Chinese does not mean that all their ancestors were Han. Certain names of Mongghul people and places in this paper are influenced by Tibetan (and Chinese), suggesting broader cultural associations.

Three suggestions are made to deepen understanding of Tu history. First, a survey of geographical names in Huzhu and Minhe counties, including Mongghul/Mangghuer names for every village, gully, valley, hill, mountain, and field. An analysis of these names would help determine relations with other languages.

Second, comparing DNA analysis results from Mongghul/Mangghuer with DNA analysis results from Mongols in China and local Tibetans (including Tibetans in Huzhu County, Ledu and Ping'an regions, and Xunhua and Hualong counties, Haidong City).

Thirdly, collect historical records in Mongolian and Tibetan that deal with the

¹ Mongghul *ger*, Mongol, *ger*. Regarding, *tuligha*, Mongolian *tulga* (*tulgha/n*) refers to the iron support for fire, according to Lessing: 'iron support consisting of four legs and two or more rings on which a kettle is placed' (1962:840). The word is based on the root *tul-* 'to lean against'. The *tulga* marks the center of the Mongol yurt.

Mongghul/Mangghuer, including oral accounts from Tibetan elders living in Huzhu County regarding their perspective on Mongghul origins. This would add to the current discussion that is primarily based on Chinese and English language materials.

At a time of rapid Mongghul culture disappearance, study and fieldwork are urgently needed to examine Mongghul origins and better support continued research and cultural preservation. Furthermore, in closely examining the origin of the Mongghul people, we recognize the value of interrogating the evolution of "Mongghul" as an ethnic concept and relate that evolving process to social and political contexts of historical and modern sources including contemporary official and local histories. We are also aware of the risk of conflating oral accounts and memories as factual histories and retrieving the "real" past from contemporary cultural life and practices that risk reading our own concerns and meanings into the historical and contemporary data we collect.

We pause and ask why the question of Mongghul origins is important, and to whom? This is particularly relevant in light of archaeological work at Fintai Village, which is about three kilometers from the center of the Huzhu County Town where excavation of a site at the rim of a fertile valley (2,500 m) unearthed remains of wooden houses (~1,190--~920 BC), mud brick constructions (~980-750 BC), and barley remains, suggesting a well-established, mixed agropastoral economy (Wagner et al. 2011:15736).

Meanwhile, in nearby Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous County, human remains from Lajia Village dating back 3,800-4,000 years have been found (Gao et al. 2007). A bowl of well-preserved 4,000-year-old noodles found at this site allows for the reconstruction of the earliest recorded preparation of noodles (Liu et al. 2005:967-968). Furthermore, a "white proto-porcelain sherd with a glossy surface" found here "is likely to be the earliest high-temperature glazed and kaolin-based proto-porcelain so far found in China, and even in the world" (Zhou et al. 2019:598). Additionally:

sequences in the DNA of the Tu people from modern China indicate that Europeans similar to modern Greeks mixed with an East Asian population around 1200 BC. The source of this European DNA might have been merchants travelling the Silk Road (Cossins 2014).¹

On-going DNA and archaeological research promise to complicate in exciting, revelatory ways the question of Tu/Mongghul/Monguor ancestry beyond Xianbei-Tuyuhun-Mongol. What is, however, already clear today is that the origins of the Mongghul, with their unique combination of genetic, cultural, and linguistic features, involve a complex system of many chronological layers. At the bottom lie the genes and cultural features inherited from the ancient local populations of the region. But genes and cultural features were also contributed by the later population movements connected with the Tuyuhun, the Tibetans, the Han Chinese, the historical Mongols, and the Western Mongols.

Ultimately, it is only language that can be traced backward in a single uniform lineage. The language spoken by the Mongghul is a direct heir of the language spoken by the historical Mongols. From this perspective, it is correct to say that the Mongghul are "Mongols" despite all the other elements they have absorbed. Folk memory of the Mongol connection is still retained today in the historical consciousness of the Mongghul people.

¹ See also Hellenthal et al. (2014).

PHOTOGRAPHS

FIG 7. Sughuatang Village and Sughua Monastery (22 September 2013, Jugui).

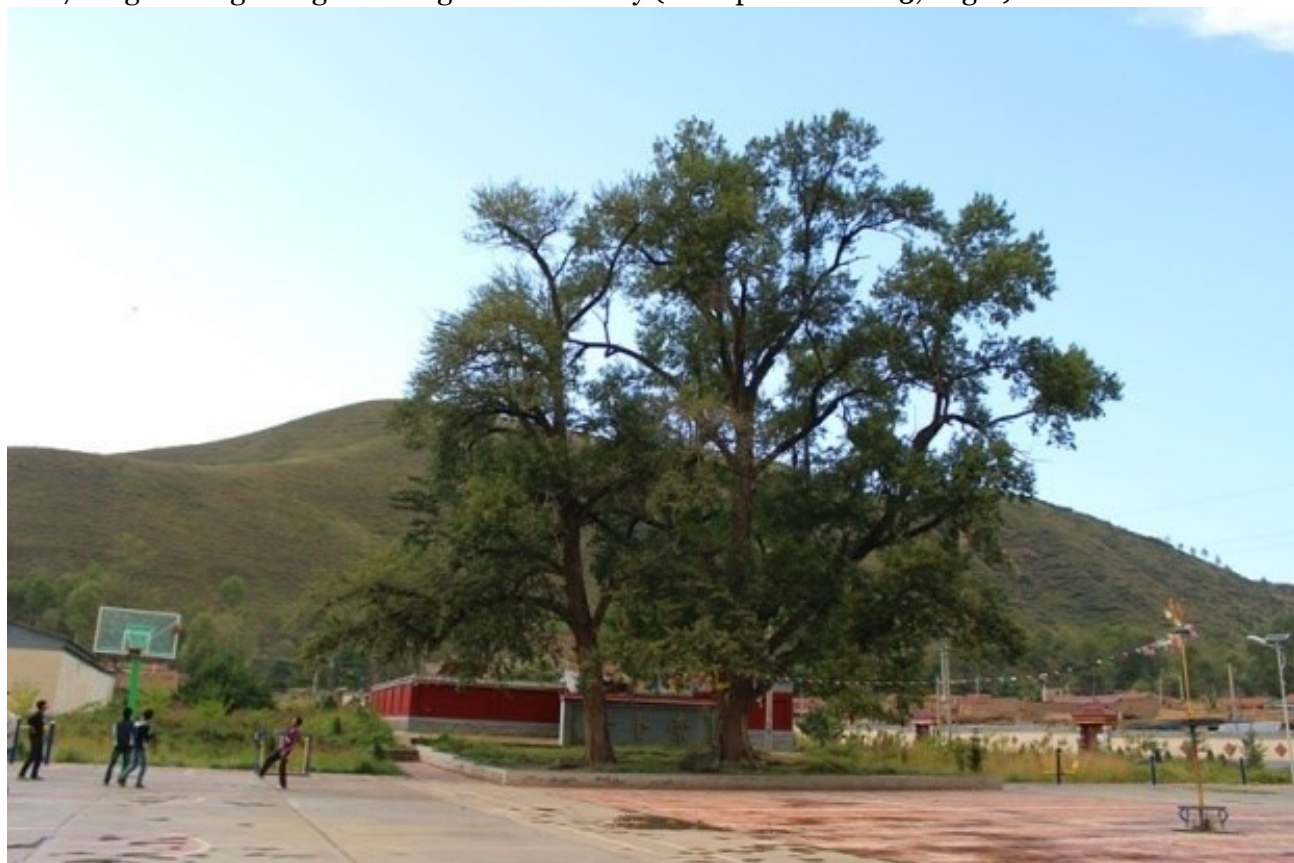


FIG 8. The spring located at the tip of the Round Hills and the pool have both disappeared. The site has been plowed and planted to wheat (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 9. The Round Hills (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 10. One of the springs located at the foot of the Round Hills. Water is only within the spring pit. No water flows out (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 11. A spring located at the foot of the Round Hills. No water flows out (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 12. Sughua Castle's (*tuan*) broken enclosing wall. The castle was built on an "island" surrounded by deep gullies in the valley of Sughuangghuali Village (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 13. A hole made in the castle wall by invaders during the Qing Dynasty in order to attack the Sughua people *chansi*, and villages' *purghan* (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 14. The remnants of the castle's front gate (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 15. The only remaining wooden room inside the castle was built atop the front gate for night guard duty (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 16. This enclosing wall was built inside the castle for the Sughua *chansi* and his family members to live during invasions. Double enclosing walls made the *chansi* safer from attacks from outside the castle (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 17. The hole in the wall was the castle's back gate (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 18. Outside view of the castle's enclosing walls (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 19. The holes in the wall were used as shelves and chimneys by households when they were forced to take refuge (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 20. Historically, the bare space was a hidden place for the *purghan* when the *chansi*, his people, and the *purghan* took refuge inside the castle during invasions. Nowadays, villagers from Sughuangghuali offer incense and make prostrations here (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 21. Sughuangghuali Village's *muyiu* 'temple' where the two Dragon Kings' *purghan* are enshrined and worshipped (7 October 2013, Jugui).



FIG 22. Sughuangghuali Village 'laghang' deity room'. Inside are images of Sakyamuni, Wughuangmiile, and Zhunmaasangqan; and the spears of Danjansang and Bagharisang (7 October 2013, Jugui).



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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'a zha འ་ཇ་ Tuyuhun	<i>bog</i> , a ritual featuring spirit mediums
<i>adalngi</i> , life	<i>boqi</i> , winnowing tray
Aloxa, Alashan 阿拉善, place name in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region	Caijia 蔡家 Village
Aodan 奥丹, a person's name	Caijiabao 蔡家堡 Township
Aoluchi 奥鲁赤, a person's name	Chaergoumen 岔尔沟门 Village
Aolute Danbajiacuo 奥鲁特丹巴嘉措, Bstan pa rgya mthso འཕུལ་པ་བླ་མ་ཆོ།, Aoluchi, Xiping Wang	Chaka 茶卡 Town, Wulan County
Bagharisang, Baghari (King Foorigisigari; T, hor gur dkar rgyal po རྩོམ་གུར་དཀར་རྒྱལ་པོ།), a well-known deity worshipped by Mongghul, and a rival of King Gesar (ge sar rgyal po གེ་སར་རྒྱལ་པོ།)	<i>chansi</i> 禅司, a former local official title
Baiya 白崖 Village	Chileb (Longwangshan 龙王山) Mountains
Bao Yizhi 鲍义志, a person's name	<i>chin</i> , annual village rules
<i>bojitou</i> 簸箕头, a traditional headdress	Chuankou 川口 Town
	Chuluu, a person's name
	<i>cuan</i> , big pond
	Dadunling 大敦岭, a hilltop
	Danjan Qijiji Rjewe, dam can chos kyi rgyal po དམ་ཅན་ཆོས་གྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ། Yama Samayi, Dharmaraja 'Lord of Hell'

Danjan Duriji Luhu,¹ dam can bdud kyi lu hu
 དམ་ཅན་བདེ་ཤིང་ལུ་ལུ།
 Danjan Guran Luhu, dam can gu ru lu hu དམ་
 ཅན་གུ་རུ་ལུ་ལུ།
 Danjansang, dam can tshang དམ་ཅན་ཚང་།, a male
purghan; dam 'byar ma དམ་འབྱར་མ།
 Danjansuu, possibly: dam can mtsho དམ་ཅན་
 མཚོ། or bstan rgyal mtsho བསྟན་རྒྱལ་མཚོ།, a
 person's name
 Danma 丹麻 'dan ma འདན་མ་ Town
darisuuna, custom
 Datong 大通 Hui and Tu Autonomous County
 dgon lung དགོན་ལུང་།, Rgulang
dog, a headdress adornment
dognangi, songs
dolaya, sing
 Donggou 东沟 Township
 Donghe 东和 Township
 Donghu 东胡, a name of a tribal confederation
 of nomads
 Dongshan 东山 Township
 Dongyuan 东元 Mountains
 Dulan 都兰 County
 Duranzin, a person's name
fashi 法师, master of magic
 Feijia 费家, a village name
 Fintai, Fengtai 丰台 Village
 Fulaan Bulog 'Red Springs', a place name
 Fulaan Nara 'Red Sun', a place name
 Gannan 甘南 Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
 Gansu 甘肃 Province
ghajarida, earth
 Ghuran Bulog 'Three Springs'
 Girili Sughua, a village name

Gindin Danzhu, dge 'dun don grub དགེ་འདུན་དོན་
 གུབ། a person's name
 Giri Sughua, a village name
 Giriliti, Niidosang, Guo'erduo, Gelete, Aodan,
 Aolute Danbajiacuo, bstan pa rgya mthso
 བསྟན་པ་རྒྱལ་མཚོ།, Aolute, Aoluchi, one of Chinggis
 Khan's generals
 Golok, mgo log མགོ་ལོག་ Guoluo 果洛 Tibetan
 Autonomous Prefecture
 Gongge 贡哥, a person's name
Guanjiri, bka' 'gyur བཀའ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱ་ volumes of
 Buddha's teachings in Tibetan translation
 Guanting 官亭 Town
guleya, speak
 Guolong 郭隆
 Gurija, Qiaojigou 乔吉沟 Village
 gur brgya གུར་བརྒྱ། 'one hundred tents'
 Ha Mingzong 哈明宗, a person's name
 Haibei 海北 Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
 Hainan 海南 Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
 Haixi 海西 Mongol and Tibetan Autonomous
 Prefecture
 Haiyan 海晏 County
 Halazhigou 哈拉直沟 Township
 Haliqi, a place name
 Han 汉, an ethnic group in China
 Han 汉 Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD)
hanni, khan
 Haomen 浩门, a place name
 Hara Mongghul (Black Mongol), a term
 Mongghul use to designate Mongolians
 Hebei 河北 Province
 Hehuang 河湟, a place name
 Hexi 河西, a place name

¹ The meaning of *luhu* is unknown.

Hgalazang Danzhu, skal bzang don grub གླུ་མ་བཟང་དྲུག་གུ་བཟང་, a person's name

hguara, skor ba མཱ་ར་བ་, during the fourth, fifth, and sixth months each year every Mongghul village has a designated date to march through or around their own fields or territory

Hongyazigou 红崖子沟 Township

hor go tan rgyal po ཧོར་གོ་ཏན་རྒྱལ་པོ་, Kuoduan 阔端, Godan

Hu 胡, a surname

Hualong 化隆 Hui Autonomous County

Huangnan 黄南 Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Huangshui 湟水 River Basin

Huo'er 霍尔 (Hu'er 胡尔, hor ཧོར་), an ethnonym

Hui 回, an Islamic ethnic group in China

Huiqi 回讫, Yu gur ཡུ་གུར་, Yugu 裕固

Huzhu 互助 Tu 土 Autonomous County

Janba Taigai, a place name

Ji Junde 吉俊德, a person's name

Jiangjiazhuang 蒋家庄 Village

Jiase, Jiaseduanquejijiacuo 嘉色端悦却吉嘉措, rgyal sras don yod chos kyi rgya mtsho རྒྱལ་སྐལ་སྐྱོད་ཡོད་ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱུ་མཚོ་, a living Buddha's name

Cing gir han ཅིང་གིར་ཧན་ Chinggis (Genghis) Khan

Jugui, a person's name

Karilang, Tu 土族, Monguor

ke rel thu ཀེ་རེ་ལ་ཐུ་

Koko Nor, Qinghaihu 青海湖 'Qinghai Lake', a lake located in Qinghai Province

kuu, son

laghang, lha khang ལྷ་ཁང་, fokang 佛康, deity room

Lamusang, lha mo tshang ལྷ་མོ་ཙམ་, a guardian deity

Lanzhou 兰州 City

lasizi, lab tse ལ་སུ་ཙེ་ a stone pile with pieces of wood resembling spears and arrows stuck into the pile

layaju, make a life

Ledu 乐都 Region

Li Keyu 李克郁, a person's name

Li Meiling 李美玲, a person's name

Li Shenghua 李生华, a person's name

Limusishiden, klu 'bum tshe brtan ལྷུ་འབུམ་ཙམ་བརྟན་ Li Dechun 李得春, a person's name

Limuzhunmaa, klu mo sgrol ma ལྷུ་མོ་སྐྱོལ་མ་ a person's name

Linja (Linjia 林家) Village

Lü Jianfu 吕建福, a person's name

Luobuji 罗布加, nor bu rgyal རོར་བུ་རྒྱལ་ a person's name

Luusi Jansan, a person's name

Ma 马, a surname

Manzihun, a Mongghul folktale name

mashida, forget

Maohebu 毛荷堡 Village

Mengguzu 蒙古族, Mongol

Menyuan 门源 County

Ming 明 Dynasty (1368-1644)

Minhe 民和 Hui and Tu Autonomous County

Moluu Ula (Round Hills), a place name

Mongghul (Tuzu 土族), Monguor, Mangghuer muyiu (miao 庙), temple

Narasirigu Sughua, a village name

Ningxia 宁夏 Hui Autonomous Region

niudaari, a traditional headdress

njasi, plow

npleenju, develop

padila, suppress evil rite

paotu, a headscarf a Mongghul women wears
when she marries and leaves her home to go
to her husband's home

Ping'an 平安 Region

purghan, a deity represented in the form of a
sedaned image or a cloth-covered pole held
by four men or a man, respectively

Qi Tusi 祁土司, a chieftain's name

Qiao Zhiliang 乔志良, a person's name

Qighaan Mongghul, White Mongol, a term
Mongols use to refer to Mongghul in the
Mongolian language

Qilian 祁连 County

Qing 清 Dynasty (1644-1912)

Qinggeertai, a person's name

Qinghai 青海 Province

Rgulang (Youningsi 佑宁寺, dgon lung dgon pa
དགོང་ལུང་དགོང་པ།), a Tibetan Buddhist
monastery in Huzhu County

rgunba, dgon pa དགོང་པ། monastery

sa skya kung dga' rgyal mtshan ས་སྐུ་རྒྱུན་དགའ་རྒྱལ་
མཚན།

Salar, Sala 撒拉, an ethnic group

Sanchuan 三川, a Mangghuer area in Minhe
Hui and Tu Autonomous County

Shaanxi 陕西 Province

Shancheng 山城 Village

Shanxi 山西 Province

Shdara (rta ra རྩ་ར།, Dala 达拉) Township
shge, big

Shijiawan 师家湾 Village

Sichuan 四川 Province

Sitan 寺滩 Village

sog po lab tse སོག་པོ་ལ་བ་ཙེ།, 'Mongol Lab tse'

Song 宋 Dynasty (960-1127 CE)

Songbu 松布 Village

Songduo 松多, sum mdo ལུང་མདོ། Township

Su 苏, a surname

Sughua 索卜, place name

Sughuangghuali (Suobugou 索卜沟) Village

Sughuatang (sog po thang སོག་པོ་ཐང། Suobutan
索卜滩) Village

Suhga, gsol kha གསལ་ཁ།, a ritual focused on
Lamusang

Suhu, sog po སོག་པོ།, Mongolian

Sunjia 孙家 Village

Suo 索, a surname

Suobugou 索卜沟 Village

Suobutan 索卜滩 Village

Suriguniu, a village name

Szanghuali (Nianxian 年先) Village

Taizi 台子 Township

Tang 唐 Dynasty (618-907)

Tang Longshuo 唐龙朔, a Tang Emperor Reign
(AD 661-663)

Tangchuan 塘川 Town

Tangdarihgiima, the name of a Mongghul
folksong

tangka, thang ga ཐང་ག།, a form of primarily
Tibetan sacred representation consisting of
an image panel that is painted, embroidered,
or appliquéd. The image panel frequently
depicts mandalas, deities, famous scenes, or
prominent local religious personalities.

Thu'u bkwan ཐུ་འུ་བཀྱའ།, a person's name

Tianjun 天峻 County

Tu 土 Monguor, Mongghul, Mangghuer

tuan, an administrative unit similar to a
modern town or township seat

Tudi 土地 Temple

Tughuan (Tuguan 土官) Village

AN A MDO SMYUNG GNAS: YO LAG TIBETAN COMMUNITY,
THUN RIN (REB GONG, TONGREN) CITY, MTSHO SNGON
(QINGHAI) PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Pad+ma rig 'dzin བཅུ་རིག་འཛིན། (Wanmarenzeng 完么仁增)*

ABSTRACT

Personal experiences, observations, preparations, daily activities, including recreational events, and interviews with locals, inform this study of a community A mdo Tibetan Smyung gnas held on the fourteenth to sixteenth days of the fourth (Chinese lunisolar calendar) in Yo lag (Zhiyue) Village, Mdo ba (Duowa) Town, Thun rin (Reb gong, Tongren) City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China during the mid-twentieth to the early twenty-first centuries. Cultural preservation is served by this study, which is also a model of how local rituals might be presented at a time of rapid cultural transformation.

KEYWORDS

Mtsho sngon (Qinghai), Reb gong (Thun rin, Tongren), Sa ga zla ba, *sbyin bdag*, *sdom pa*, Smyung gnas, *thun*, Tibetan cultural preservation, Tibetan gathering, Tibetan ritual

INTRODUCTION

It was morning on the fourteenth day of the fourth lunisolar month,¹ 2016, in Yo lag (Zhiyue) Village, Mdo ba (Duowa) Town, Thun rin (Reb gong, Tongren) City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China.²

"Hello! Are you all ready to head out?" asked Wu ba (b. 1967), my neighbor, as she stepped inside my family house holding a string handle in her right hand that served as a bail for a stainless-steel pail full of yogurt. Her left hand clutched a small bag with a plastic container and several bowls inside.

"Yes, sit for a moment," responded my older brother's wife as she finished getting dressed.

My other family members had already gone to the Bzhi ba'i smyung gnas³ 'Fasting of the Fourth Month' (FFLM hereafter) site⁴ after we all had prostrated three times to scriptures, images of *bla ma*, and two metal images on a wooden shelf in our home that is near where we sleep and eat. We

*Pad+ma rig 'dzin (Wanmarenzeng). 2021. An A mdo Smyung gnas: Yo lag Tibetan Community, Thun rin (Reb gong, Tongren) City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:47-73.

¹ In about 2000, several Mdo ba Town residents encouraged locals to celebrate the New Year according to the Central Tibetan calendar. Few families did so. In 2019, most of the few locals who observed the Central Tibetan New Year were monks. "Month" as used in this paper refers to the Chinese lunisolar calendar. It is also noteworthy that 'Phags pa (1235-1280), Kublai Khan's (1215-1294) tutor, introduced the system of Mongolian months to the Tibetan calendrical year (Berzin 1987:23), known as *hor zla* 'Mongol month'. Most locals born before about 1980 are illiterate, except for monks. Although locals may be unfamiliar with the historical background, they are familiar with the term *hor zla*, e.g., the twelfth Chinese lunisolar month is locally known as *hor zla bcu gnyis ba* 'the twelfth Mongol month'.

³² In 2014, Mdo ba Township became Mdo ba Town and, in 2020, Thun rin (Reb gong, Thun rin) County became a city.

³ Smyung gnas locally refers to Bzhi ba'i smyung gnas and *thun* 'fasting sessions'.

⁴ Located near the center of the Ra rgan (the name of our community) winter pasture. The current FFLM location is conveniently situated by a road that runs from the town center to Rong bo Town.

did this before *sdom ja*¹ and rinsing our mouths three times after having milk tea. Brother was a *sbyin bdag* 'manager',² so he was expected to reach the FFLM site before nine AM. Sister, Father, and I went to the FFLM site in Brother's small van, and then I drove back home to pick up Sister-in-law and Wu ba.

"Sister Wu ba, are you going to give this yogurt to the managers?" asked Sister-in-law as she prepared bowls and two long carpets for my family members to sit on.

"Yes. Last year I gave some milk, but yogurt is good, so I've prepared this," Wu ba answered.

They were soon ready, so we got into the van and started off to the FFLM site.

Twenty years earlier, we had walked to the FFLM site, which had taken about thirty minutes, but now it takes only a few minutes by vehicle. We arrived at around ten AM to find most local community members already there or just arriving. The managers were busy preparing '*bras thug* 'rice cooked in butter with red dates and raisins' and *gro ma* (*Potentilla anserina* L, 'wild yams'³) for the midday meal. Some women were sitting in front of the meeting tent, chatting. Others were chanting *ma Ni*.⁴ Some male elders seated on the right side of the storage tent laughed and talked loudly. Teenagers were standing around the elders and listening. A dozen pre-school children were wandering here and there on the grassland near the tents.

My first memory of FFLM is a gathering in Yo lag in about 1997 when I was seven years old. My most recent participation was in 2016. As of early 2020, I had attended five times.

FFLM is held annually on the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth days of the fourth month. While religious fasting is central to this gathering, other activities such as food and tea preparation and entertainment activities such as tug-of-war, foot races, weight-lifting, and wrestling matches also occur. There may only be religious fasting in the case of a death in the local community or rainy weather. To better explain this gathering and its importance, it is necessary to describe certain local religious ideas and their relation to FFLM.

Locals believe that human misdeeds include physical, verbal, and mental obscuration (*lus kyi sgrib pa*, *ngag gi sgrib pa*, and *yid kyi sgrib pa*, respectively). Consequently, FFLM is practiced to diminish non-virtuous activity by not drinking, eating, and speaking. Practitioners with sincere faith may eliminate all the non-virtues they have accumulated/created in previous lives as well as present lives. This, they hope, may lead to enlightenment or incarnation in a heavenly realm.

This belief is true today due to more regular religious instruction by monks and other local religious teachers, advising people to aim for a higher goal and condemning the more mundane goals such as good health and a better rebirth. This is in contrast to the past when people mostly wished for a better human rebirth. Smyung gnas 'fasting rituals' may also be done at home, for example, on the first, fifteenth, twenty-first, and thirtieth days of each month, and for the benefit of deceased relatives and clan members. For example, my paternal cousin, Lcags thar skyid (b. 1970), often ritually fasts on auspicious days and the death anniversary of relatives.

After a death, the affected family invites monks to chant and asks local women to practice fasting. During this period, men are occupied receiving guests, cooking, and watching over the corpse at night until the time of sky burial; consequently, women are more available to engage in fasting

¹ Explained later.

² *Sbyin bdag* 'sponsors' 'patrons' 'donors' is a term for those who manage Smyung gnas. In the local context described here, the *sbyin bdag* do not use personal resources to finance the gathering. Instead, they manage it, therefore, I use the term "managers." A different English term for *sbyin bdag* may be better suited to particular local circumstances elsewhere.

³ *Gro ma* is translated variously as 'wild miniature sweet potatoes', 'wild sweet potatoes', 'wild yams', and so on. I use "wild yam."

⁴ A six-syllable mantra devoted to Avalokiteśvara, the Buddhist deity of compassion.

rituals. However, a few men, who are generally relatives of the deceased, might also participate. Typically, each family in the local community chants 10,000 *ma Ni* in the hope the deceased will be reincarnated as a human. Moreover, the deceased's family may give candy or small amounts of cash (e.g., one RMB) to children for chanting *ma Ni*. Locals chant *ma Ni* after eating food from the affected family, so children know what to do when they receive candy or money from strangers.

Furthermore, elders may tell students to chant *ma Ni*. Usually, candy and small amounts of cash are given to students when they gather on the school playground or outside the school when students go home during breaks. For example, when I attended the local primary school in 2001, a family cooked '*bras thug*' for our lunch, and we chanted *ma Ni* before having this lunch. In 2019, I visited Bla brang Monastery and observed several people giving candy to pilgrims circumambulating the monastery. The pilgrims accepted the candy and began chanting *ma Ni* while eating the candy.

Why are many locals intimately and regularly involved in religious practice? As a local community member, I share my own experiences and interactions over the years with my maternal grandmother (Sgro b+ha, 1923-2010), sister (Bzung 'dus mtsho, b. 1985), sister-in-law (G.yang mo, b. 1985), and neighbor women. They are quietly confident that religious practice on sacred dates leads to an accumulation of merit. Not knowing abstract explanations for the dates' special sacredness does not minimize their belief in their importance. The women I mentioned seldom interact and exchange views with monks and other literate males who have religious ideas based on what they have read and learned in monastery-based teachings. Nevertheless, these women have sincere faith and place great value on sacred times when all positive deeds are doubled in karmic value, which they have heard repeatedly since childhood. During this time, self-restraint and austerity are believed to help attain a more positive attitude toward life and significantly contribute to a better afterlife.

The FFLM period is divided into two phases. The first - *sdom pa* 'vow of abstinence' (maintaining a pure body, mind, and speech) - is practiced on the fourteenth day, during which participants have a midday meal known as *gung tshigs*, and a milk tea break known as *sdom ja* in the morning and *rung ja* in the afternoon and evening. Fruit, candy,¹ fried bread, *rtsam pa*, yogurt, milk tea, and wild yams with ghee and rice are typical meal items. Meat, garlic, onion, and spices such as chili are not served.

The second phase is regarded as the crucial part of this period. FFLM practitioners do not speak, eat, or drink after having a tea break at dusk on the fourteenth day to the morning of the sixteenth day. Both males and females who practice *sdom pa* are locally known as *sdom pa ba* 'fasting session participants'. They decide for themselves if they are capable of participating in the fasting session. If they choose negatively, they might continue to practice *sdom pa* on the second day until the dawn of the third day. Thus, at times, the term *smyung gnas ba* loosely refers to both the fasting session and *sdom pa* practitioners.²

My community has a long history of practicing FFLM. Until about 1995, locals were mobile, tent-dwelling herders.³ Since about 1998, locals have held FFLM at a location near the center of the Ra rgan winter pasture.

In terms of attendance, all local community members participate in FFLM unless they are very weak, old, or in school. Managers are responsible for preparing and arranging a meeting tent, a kitchen tent, and a storage tent. The team consists of around twenty local men (if men are unavailable,

¹ *Ka ra* refers to various types of candy wrapped in colorful paper or plastic and also includes *ka ra rdo* 'crystal sugar'.

² On the first day of FFLM, those who will practice *thun*, could have, if they wanted, lunch and milk tea before dark (around seven PM). These practitioners do not eat or drink, nor do they speak until the early morning of the third day.

³ In 2020, a majority of locals lived in tents during the summer.

women join the managers) who take turns each year. Individual families also make cash contributions, who also provide *gro ma*, butter, dry cheese, ghee, and yogurt.

Later, I detail rituals, management, clothing, food, participants, and other activities. Local males and females of all ages are involved in this opportunity to engage in religious rituals, participate in recreational activities, and wear attractive clothing.

I now present locations used in the text, followed by relevant maps.

LOCATIONS AND MAPS

Bsang khog (Sangke) Township, Bsang chu¹ (Xiahe) County, Kan lho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Kan su'u (Gansu) Province

Mkha' skya (Kashijia) Village, a small herding community of Mdo ba Town

Ra rgya (Lajia) a township in Rma chen (Maqin) County, Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province

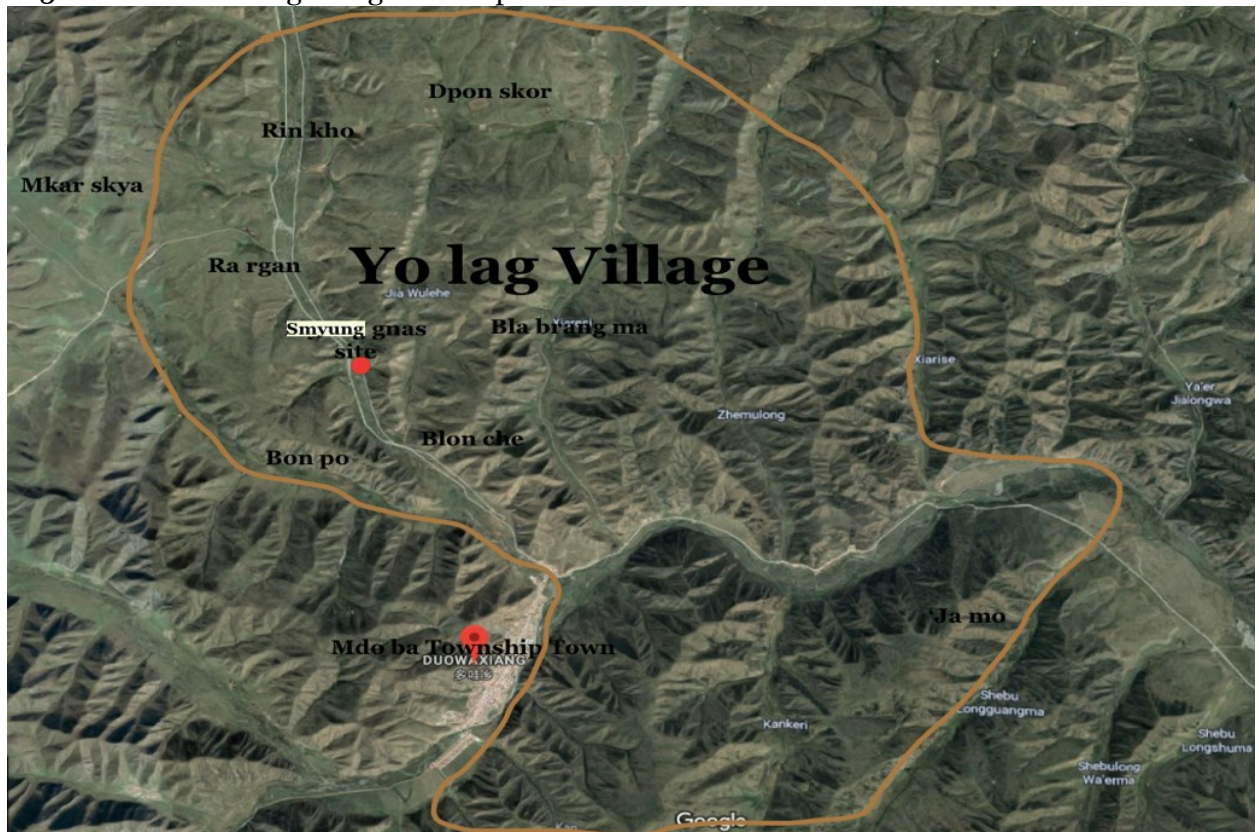
Yo lag (Zhiyue) Village, the official name for a small herding community in Mdo ba Town. It is also a local term for residents of Ra rgan, Rin kho, and 'Ja' mo ru khag 'dui' 'brigades' 'small local communities'.

FIG 1. Mtsho sngon Province.²



¹ Locally known as Bla brang.

² Edited versions of <https://bit.ly/2LzoTSG> (accessed 6 July 2019).

FIG 2. Thun rin City.¹FIG 3. The official Yo lag Village winter pasture.²

¹ Edited version of <https://bit.ly/2xyGmCE> (accessed 6 July 2019).

² An edited version of <https://bit.ly/2MY4eXo> (accessed 20 October 2019). Families typically had a winter pasture (ninth to sixth months) and a summer pasture (seventh to eighth months). Certain families also rented pastures for about one month where they herded livestock and afterward, went to their own winter pasture in the tenth month. These times were approximate.

YO LAG VILLAGE - OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL

The officially designated Yo lag Village is a herding community in Mdo ba Town. In 2010, it had about 253 families and 1,119 residents.¹ Officially, Yo lag is home to the seven brigades listed below:

'Ja' mo	Bla brang ma	Blon che	Bon po
Dpon skor	Ra rgan	Rin kho	

Before 1958, Yo lag designated Ra rgan, Rin kho, and 'Ja' mo brigades. In 2018, these three brigades had about ninety families (300 people). Locals continue to use this designation today. However, in about 1958, the government created the following administrative divisions:

- 'Ja' mo → Tos bzhi ba (Sidui) 'Brigade Number Four'
- Bla brang ma → Tos gsum pa (Sandui) 'Brigade Number Three'
- Blon che → Tos drug pa (Liudui) 'Brigade Number Six'
- Bon po → Tos gnyis ba (Erdui) 'Brigade Number Two'
- Dbon skor → Tos bdun pa (Qidui) 'Brigade Number Seven'
- Ra rgan → Tos dang po (Yidui) 'Brigade Number One'
- Rin kho → Tos lnga ba (Wudui) 'Brigade Number Five'

These seven brigades collectively comprise the officially designated Yo lag Village whose residents follow the Dge lugs School and hold religious activities in the local monastery, Mdo sngags dar rgyas gling located on a hill, southwest of Grong brdal thog.²

A majority of adult residents are illiterate. However, from around 1998, the enrolment of children in the local primary school located in Grong brdal thog increased, coinciding with the implementation of the Nine-Year Compulsory Education policy and parents' realization there was a direct relationship between schooling and social mobility.³ After graduation, a majority of the students attend middle schools in Rong bo (Longwu) Town. Boys who do not continue their education become monks, herders, or find employment outside their home (described later). Girls usually marry and become housewives or find work elsewhere.

Traditionally, all community members were herders, except for monks. Those who live in Grong brdal thog are locally called Mtha' ba 'outsider residents'. Later, with the implementation of the Meili xiangcun jianshe 'Construction of the Beautiful Countryside' policy,⁴ the number of people leaving Yo lag to live at least part-time in Grong brdal thog increased. From 2015 to the present, the government subsidized and built 240 houses for villagers. In 2018, almost every Yo lag family had a house in Grong brdal thog.

The project relocating families to Grong brdal thog was known as Yidi fupin banqian 'Relocating the Poor'⁵ that was part of China's thirteenth five-year plan for economic and social development targeting poverty elimination and constructing a comprehensive well-off society in five years. Mdo ba leaders began implementing this policy in 2018.

During a meeting I attended on 13 September 2018, town and village leaders announced that families were required to put furniture in their new houses to appear to be living there. Failure to

¹ The 2018 population data here and below were provided by village leaders in August 2018.

² This is the local term for the Mdo ba Town center. For a video of this location made in 2019, see <https://bit.ly/2KBllP3> (accessed 14 August 2010).

³ China's education policy requires all school-aged children to receive education for a minimum of nine years.

⁴ See Gonier and Rgyal yum sgrol ma (2012) for more on resettlement policies.

⁵ <https://bit.ly/2PsjKMc> (accessed 22 April 2019).

comply, the leaders stated, could result in confiscation of the house that had been provided, which might be given to another family.

In 2015, resettled locals worked at construction sites in Grong brdal thog, and were paid about 120 RMB per day. In 2018, the building that was part of Construction of the Beautiful Countryside ended, resulting in many fewer construction jobs. Additionally, many laborers were available from outside the township, including Tibetans from farming areas and Chinese. Finding employment in Grong brdal thog became very difficult for resettled locals.

In the autumn of 2018, about six men and three women originally from Yo lag Village moved to urban areas such as Chongqing, Guangdong, and Guangzhou to work in response to advertisements on WeChat translated into Tibetan. The ads sought to recruit cheap labor from rural Tibetan areas for jobs welding and assembling and pasting labels on computer shells.¹

Some young villagers told me that working for a large company was not very difficult, and the payment was acceptable. However, some elders voiced disappointment, commenting that the middleman who introduced locals to the company was dishonest, e.g., if the company paid seventeen RMB per hour, the middleman paid the laborers only thirteen RMB per hour. Unfortunately, some villagers signed a contract with the middleman and did not receive payment directly from the company. These employees complained that the labor was difficult and worried that the middleman might not pay them promptly.

In the following sections, I examine Bzhi ba'i smyung gnas, preparation, the first day, the second day, the third day, and recreational/entertainment activities; and present and analyze interviews with villagers that provide a local historical context for FFLM.

FASTING OF THE FOURTH MONTH

The first day of Smyung gnas is the practice of *sdom pa*, the preliminary part of the ritual, before *thun* 'the more ascetic or intensification of the *sdom pa* vow by remaining silent, not drinking and eating' on the second day, which continues until the dawn of the third day. Sa ga zla ba² is a term indicating the fourth month. Sa ga zla ba'i dus chen refers to the gathering.

Locals and scholars such as Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me³ (nd) and Blo bzang bstan dar (1994) write that the ritual system for Smyung gnas originated with Dge slong ma dpal mo. Vargas-O'bryan (2001) identifies her as Bhiksuni Lakssmi, who most likely lived during the tenth to eleventh centuries. Blo bzang bstan dar (1994) notes that Dge slong ma dpal mo was born as a princess of Indian King Indrabhūti and Queen Yid 'ong bzang mo on the fifteenth day of the first month. Similarly, a local elder, Lha mo skyabs (b. 1958), narrated:

If monk scholars or a *bla ma* were invited to Smyung gnas, they gave a sermon on Smyung gnas transmission, instruction, virtues, and achievements of the Smyung gnas founder, Dge slong ma dpal mo. She suffered from leprosy, but in practicing Smyung gnas, she completely recovered.

A paragraph of Dge slong ma dpal mo's hagiography follows:

¹ From interviews, I learned that a Chinese man (a go-between) had paid a Tibetan acquaintance to translate an ad into Tibetan and post the translation in his WeChat groups that have many Tibetan subscribers. The go-between would then keep part of what the company paid to a worker recruited in this way. A second method is for a Tibetan worker at a company to recruit workers from his home area and subsequently receive compensation. Local labor migration in the Reb gong area deserves more study. There may be other ways of communication involved. Some local reports suggest that a family member or friend already working in an urban area encourages locals to follow their example.

² Illiterate locals born before about 1980 might be unfamiliar with the term "Sa ga zla ba."

³ For biographical details, see <https://bit.ly/2JI9oVS> (accessed 16 July 2019).

After she had been staying in the vicinity of the eleven-faced and practicing *smyung gnas*, she vowed not to go anywhere else until she had achieved the supreme attainment in that place. So, not thinking about food or drink, day and night she continuously performed the *sādhana* of the eleven-faced. After a year had passed, her bodily illness had completely disappeared like a snake shedding its skin (Sangseraima Ujeed 2016:138).

Ritual implications, virtue, and the meaning of *Smyung gnas* have been dealt with elsewhere (Dkon mchog sbtan pa'i sgron me, nd:160-189), including how it helps in the afterlife and how it assists practitioners to have notable life achievements such as visualizing eleven manifestations of Avalokitesvara, which is an indicator of diligent practice.

In 2019, online searches for "*Smyung gnas*" and "*Sa ga zla ba*" produced few results in Tibetan, Chinese, and English. Vargas-O'bryan (2001), Sangseraima Ujeed (2016), and a hagiography (Blo bzang bstan dar 1994) of Dge slong ma dpal mo were consulted; however, little information relates to ritual gatherings.

Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me (nd:160-189) explains the principles and religious merits of practicing *Smyung gnas* in the context of Buddhist theology as it applies to ordinary people. Tshen brtan (1993), 'Brug mo thar (2014), and Sang rgyas skyabs (2018) describe *Smyung gnas* in the Bsang chu area, including explanations for principles of practice and daily activities during the *Smyung gnas* period. Sang rgyas skyabs (2018) provides the origins of *Smyung gnas* and gives a short life history of Dge slong ma dpal mo, emphasizing the virtue of practicing *Smyung gnas* and explaining the implications of *Smyung gnas* customs in the Buddhist context, as well as the local practical benefits of *Smyung gnas* based on Bsang khog Township, which he identifies as strengthening a sense of community and also having health benefits.¹

Sang rgyas skyabs (2018) observed changes in this ritual in Bsang khog, and how it compares to Ramadan through interviews with Muslims² living in Bsang khog.

Yu Shiyu, a Chinese Tibetologist, sketches (1941:359-362) general activities of ritual days, expenses, and other details two days before the ritual when women combed their hair and plaited small braids with the help of three women, and wore elaborate clothing and expensive jewelry. Female practitioners outnumbered the male practitioners. Of the upper and lower Mtha' ba 'outskirt residents' in Bsang chu (Xiahe) County Town, the former comprised 300 families. Twenty-five families annually alternated, making preparations for the ritual each year. The lower Mtha' ba had about one hundred families. Each year eleven families took turns managing the ritual. During the midday meal, all practitioners gathered at the public hall to eat.

Lcags mo 'tsho describes the *Smyung gnas* of Reb gong Bon followers³ and mentions Bzhi ba'i *smyung gnas* but does not describe it. Details for the practice of *Smyung gnas* in the context of Bon scripture, and time and location of observing a collective *Smyung gnas* practice, as well as religious implications and *Smyung gnas* taboos are provided.⁴

¹ It is locally thought that very old people and ill people should not abstain from eating and drinking for a prolonged period, but that such practice does not harm younger, healthy people.

² They lived in Bsang khog for several decades (Sang rgyas skyabs 2018:35).

³ Sang rgyas skyabs (2018) indicated this paper was written in 2008. I located it on <https://bit.ly/2YxIs1u> (accessed 1 July 2019).

⁴ Yang Xianhui's (2009) short story "Niangnai jie," based on *Smyung gnas* in the Kan lho area, misrepresents *Smyung gnas* activity.

BZHI BA'I SMYUNG GNAS

Sa ga zla ba is a term for the fourth month, which locals consider the date Siddhārtha Gautama entered the womb, was enlightened, and died. Sangs rgas skyabs (2018:09) points out six auspicious days per month to practice Smyung gnas. Religious virtues accrued on the significantly auspicious fifteenth day of Sa ga zla ba are magnified. Consequently, Tibetans often cultivate virtue and shun wrong deeds by practicing *Smyung gnas*. As Cabezón notes:

The fourth Tibetan month, called Sagadawa (*sa ga zla ba*), is arguably the holiest month of the Buddhist liturgical year, the month in which Tibetans celebrate the Buddha's birth, and according to some sources, also his enlightenment and death. Sagadawa is a particularly popular time for engaging in communal fasting rites known as *nyungné* (*Smyung gnas*) (2010:02).

Historically, there was no fixed location for FFLM. However, since about 2012, locals have observed FFLM in the same general location, which is four kilometers from Grong brdal thog as already described. Therefore, it is convenient for villagers in terms of transportation, although it is not the entire community's exact geographical center.

On the first day of FFLM, local ritual participants have only a midday meal and *rung ja*. Those observing this schedule are known as *sdom pa ba*. *Thun* is observed after a final consumption of tea and food on the evening of the second day, followed by not talking, eating, or drinking until the dawn of the third day. However, practitioners may continue to be *sdom pa* if they so choose.

At daybreak on the third and final day of FFLM, *thun* ends with a meal of *thor thug* 'milk boiled with dried cheese and wheat flour'. After a communal lunch, attendees return home. Certain locals do not eat meat for the entire fourth month.

Residents of the official Yo lag Village do not observe FFLM together. Instead, each community has a particular location for FFLM. For example, residents of Bon po, Blon che, and Bla brang ma (collectively known as 'Gro skor by locals),¹ observe FFLM together near Grong brdal thog. Dbon skor is an independent community and holds FFLM in the center of their winter pasture.

FFLM PREPARATION

FFLM preparation begins on the twelfth day of the fourth month. The *sbyin bdag*² are responsible for FFLM from beginning to end, collecting *rus cha* 'contributions' from villagers; and pitching a large *tshogs ras* 'meeting/assembly tent', a *ja ras* 'kitchen tent', and a small tent for storing food. They also cook lunch for the *sdom pa ba*, who only have lunch and milk tea in the morning and afternoon. The managers neither practice *sdom pa* nor *thun* in recognition of the many tasks they must perform. Yo lag families are divided into two groups.³ In 2018, one group had forty-six members, and the other had fifty-five. These groups assumed responsibility for FFLM activities in alternating years. The

¹ 'Gro skor is a local term for residents of Bon po, Blon che, and Bla brang ma brigades who collectively participate in Smyung gnas.

² Sang rgyas skyabs (2018:15) mentions *sbyin bdag* in Bsang khog Township and gives the daily cost for attendees during the Smyung gnas period.

³ During Smyung gnas in 2019, elders announced that all traditional Yo lag families must participate in Smyung gnas and further, that the names of those absent would be announced. The managers were divided into four groups. Two groups each had twenty-three members, one group had twenty-eight, and another had twenty-seven members. The four groups were to take turns being managers. Rnam lo (b. 1991) provided this information via WeChat 25 June 2019 on images of four pages of handwritten notebook paper. At the top of one paper appeared the date: the sixteenth day of the fourth month 2019.

managers bring the meeting tent, pots, and the large metal stove stored in their homes and pitch the three tents at the same location as in previous years.

Beginning on the thirteenth day of the fourth month, families take contributions to the FFLM location. The managers write the names of those who gave contributions (wild yams, butter, and dry cheese) in a notebook.

In about 2013, *rtsam pa* was collected. However, at present (2019), the managers buy *rtsam pa* from Grong brdal thog shops. Contributions are collected according to *sa skal* 'land allotment' - the land assigned to a single individual. Food is collected according to the land size of a family's winter pasture and cash according to a family's summer pasture size.

Skal 'portion' refers to a certain amount of food given to each practitioner at the midday meal each day of this period and is described later in more detail. Ritual practitioners are both male and female. The youngest participants are generally around sixteen-years-old.

Contributions and *skal* are now described based on FFLM in 2018. Two families' contributions are given in FIG 4.

FIG 4. FFLM contributions (2018).

		Family Leader's Name	
		Chos kho	Tshe 'phags
land allotment	summer pasture	5 people	5 people
	winter pasture	6 people	5 people
<i>rus cha</i>	butter (0.4 kg/person)	2.4 kg	2.0 kg
	cheese (0.5 kg/person)	3.0 kg	2.5 kg
	wild yams (1 bowl/ person)	6 Tibetan bowls	5 Tibetan bowls
	cash	200 RMB	200 RMB
<i>smyung gnas ba</i>		4 people	3 people
<i>skal</i>	wild yams (1 bowl/ person)	4 Tibetan bowls	3 Tibetan bowls
	<i>mar khu</i> 'ghee' (1 ladle/person)	4 ladles	3 ladles
	bread (3/person)	12	9
	sugar (1 bowl/person)	4 Tibetan bowls	3 Tibetan bowls

FIG 5. Tibetan bowl. Local shop owners purchase bowls from Ka chu (Linxia, Gansu Province) and sell them in Grong brdal thog. The bowl in this photo is referred to as *tshe ring lo brgya* 'long life' and features conch shell patterns considered auspicious and suggestive of a life of one hundred years (2019, Pad+ma rig 'dzin's home, Pad+ma rig 'dzin).



The managers must be present during preparation days unless there is an urgent reason to be absent, e.g., serious illness. Otherwise, a fine of fifty RMB per day is charged.

Older managers purchase *rtsam pa*, bread, sugar, and other foods based on their experience. They heat ghee, boil wild yams, and cook '*bras thug* using their previous experience to

determine amounts of the ingredients and cooking time. For example, the proportion of butter and sugar in the rice affects its taste. It might be too oily and/or too sweet. Heating butter and ghee is also challenging. Excessive heat might ignite the liquid ghee when heating butter to make ghee, but the butter does not separate into solids and ghee if the heat is too low. FIG 6 describes the process of cooking rice, making ghee, and boiling wild yams.

FIG 6. Cooking rice, making ghee, and boiling wild yams.

Food	Process
'bras thug	(1) Wash the rice; (2) heat a pot, smear butter inside the pot to prevent the rice from burning, and add water; (3) heat water, add rice, sugar, raisins, and jujubes, and gradually reduce the heat after the mixture begins boiling to avoid burning.
butter	(1) Heat a thick pot and add butter; (2) use electric bellows and when the butter melts, stir with a stick when the butter boils; (3) it is <i>btsags thag chod pa</i> 'purified completely' when large bubbles are gone. Reduce the heat. If tiny bubbles appear, the butter is burning. A drop of ghee is dropped into the fire. It is a good sign if only smoke is given off. If the sound " <i>tsag tsag</i> " is heard, the ghee should boil longer.
wild yams	The wild yams are boiled. If there is a large quantity, it is removed from the pot, put on a piece of plastic, and carried to a river. Water is dipped with a basin from the river and poured on the wild yams to cool them; otherwise, gray liquid forms on the wild yams, which is locally termed <i>tsha langs ba</i> 'got a fever', and the color and taste are negatively affected.

On the thirteenth day of the fourth month, the managers have usually completed preparations. *Su ru* 'dry rhododendron' for kindling and *ong ba* 'dried yak dung' were historically prepared. However, in the early twenty-first century, coal was purchased, replacing yak dung as fuel. Previously, the managers' wives made an adobe stove that accommodated two or three pots. However, once coal was available beginning in about 2008, a large metal stove was purchased. A coal-fired flame produced more heat than a dung-fueled fire.

FIG 7. In summer and autumn, local women collect rhododendron, which is dried and used to start a fire. In about 2014, the local Forestry Bureau announced that cutting rhododendron was forbidden. However, collecting continues in remote pasture areas (summer pasture, Yo log; 2019, Sha bo don grub).



FIG 8. The large metal stove, butter lamps, pots, and bags of coal in the kitchen tent (2016, Yo lag, Pad+ma rig 'dzin).



Managers' families provide milk. Some locals voluntarily contribute milk, which is used to make milk tea and yogurt for the ritual practitioners. In the early twenty-first century, milk was used to make *yar tshogs thug pa*, which is similar to but much thicker than *thor thug*. This was done on the evening of the thirteenth day for those who would later practice *sdom pa* or *thun*. Traditionally, certain managers shouted, "*Ki! Yar tshogs thug pa 'thung gi shog! 'Hey! Everyone come eat yar tshogs thug pa!'*"

Before about the year 2000, transportation was inconvenient, e.g., there were no motorcycles. At that time and earlier, attendees came to FFLM on the thirteenth day of the fourth month and pitched tents around the meeting tent. Locals' memories of FFLM in their childhood suggest that it was very different from the contemporary gathering. For example, Tshe brtan (b. 1970) said that families far from the FFLM site drove their livestock to FFLM. Furthermore, before about 1980, there was no private grassland. This changed in the 1990s when the land was twice divided among locals. In about 1997, I recall families far from the FFLM site arriving early and pitching tents for elders and children. Meanwhile, young couples went to and from their homes on horseback to tend their livestock in the mornings and evenings.

Motorcycles and cars were in everyday use in about 2005. Therefore, no private tents were pitched near the meeting tent. Today, if someone must spend the night at or near the gathering site and cannot easily return home, families near the FFLM site provide a room.

In about 2007, the managers no longer shouted for people to come because nobody attended. The ritual participants did not spend the night at the FFLM site because that required a tent, blankets, and sheets. It was considered more convenient to go home by car or motorcycle. Moreover, FFLM falls during the time caterpillar fungus (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*) is collected. At this time, many local ritual participants camp in distant mountains for days. Consequently, female ritual participants who collected caterpillar fungus in the winter pastures had many chores at their homes when they returned such as collecting, piling up, and carrying dry yak dung to their home for use as fuel. Once male ritual participants who collected caterpillar fungus returned home, they fed ill and weak lambs and purchased supplies for the area where they were camping.

THE FIRST DAY

On the fourteenth day of the fourth month participants drink milk tea around eight AM, eat a meal at noon, and have milk tea again at seven PM. This practice is locally known as *sdom pa*. Certain taboos are observed before engaging in *sdom pa*. Practitioners must be *gtsang ma* 'clean' from the fourteenth to sixteenth days, which requires avoiding alcohol and *dmar* 'meat'. Furthermore, practitioners do not drink or eat from unwashed containers to ensure that they are unpolluted. Sexual intercourse during this period for those observing *sdom pa* is also taboo. Garlic and onions are usually not eaten in the seven days before FFLM.

Before eight AM, practitioners wash their face and hands, remove their shoes, and do three prostrations. This is known as *bskums phyag*.¹ From about eight AM, *sdom pa ba* have *sdom ja*. Practitioners sit comfortably before drinking milk tea, and if they like, eat candy. There are no limits on time or the amount of tea to drink. However, practitioners should not move or stand before rinsing their mouths three times with water known as *chab* 'water used in a ritual context' that the managers pour into one of their palms. The practitioners sip the *chab* in their palm, rinse their mouths, and spit it on the ground. Participants do this three times and may then move and stand up as they like. Next, participants should not eat or drink until the midday meal. During FFLM, most locals wear Tibetan robes.

After *sdom ja* at about nine AM, locals begin gathering for FFLM, wearing their '*phyor l+wa* 'fancy clothes' if nobody has passed away in the community. *Rgya zhwa* 'Tibetan felt hat', coral necklaces, gold necklaces, *ras l+wa* 'textile robes', high-heeled leather shoes, belts featuring silver panels inlaid with coral, and coral-pendant-gold earrings are considered ideal traditional adornments for young women. New, fashionable shirts and pants are also popular attire worn under *ras l+wa*.

Young men commonly wear *phrug l+wa* 'red woolen robes', leather boots, and gold necklaces. A majority wear *ras l+wa*, sports or leather shoes, and new shirts and pants.

The managers busily prepare the midday meal, milk tea, and '*bras thug*'; melt butter; and boil wild yams for the ritual practitioners in the morning to ensure that they are well prepared before noon.

At about eleven-thirty AM, the ritual practitioners prepare to eat a midday meal. They first wash their hands, and bowls and other containers that are used during lunch. The practitioners prostrate three times to the *mchod khri* 'altar' in the upper-middle section of the meeting tent where butter lamps and Buddha and high bla ma images are placed. Afterward, they sit in lines on carpets brought from their homes. Local monks or *bla ma* are sometimes invited to chant in front of the altar.

¹ Locally, a form of prostration, *bskums phyag* involves touching one's knees, elbows, and forehead to the ground. In contrast, *brkyangs phyag* is a full-body prostration.

FIG 9. The three FFLM tents (2016, Yo lag, Pad+ma rig 'dzin).



FIG 10. The new meeting tent and two other tents (Yo lag, 2019, 'Brug dkar tshe ring).



During the midday meal, the managers ask participating families, "*Khyed tshang la smyung gnas ba du yod* 'How many practitioners does your family have'?"

The reply determines how many portions are given. Fruit, ghee, bread, and white sugar are provided according to the number of ritual practitioners a family has. A family without ritual practitioners does not receive a share, but they are expected to contribute *rus cha* to the managers. Though no one is punished, there is a general willingness to contribute because it is believed to be a way to acquire merit. *Rtsam pa*, dry cheese, and butter are placed in small plastic bags along the lines of ritual practitioners seated on carpets.

FIG 11. Ritual practitioners have a midday meal in the meeting tent (2016, Yo lag, Pad+ma rig 'dzin).



Ritual practitioners eat as much as they like during the midday meal. Once satisfied, they make three *changs bu*¹ to which they add bits of each food they had for *gung tshigs*. The managers bring water in teapots and offer it to the ritual practitioners as described earlier. After the participants rinse their mouths three times, they stand and move about as usual. They take their *changs bu* outside the meeting tent and put them where they will not be stepped on. Ritual practitioners take leftover food to their homes except for *rtsam pa*, dry cheese, and butter. Previously, practitioners mixed wild yams and ghee with *rtsam pa*, creating a small ball locally known as *rtsam pa sgor log/gro log 'gro ma ball*', which was convenient to take home. In 2016, each food offered by the managers was placed in containers, e.g., wild yams and ghee were put in different containers.

Next, it is lunchtime for children, who sit outside the meeting tent in a circle. The managers offer them the various foods they have prepared. *'Bras thug*, milk tea, fruit, and bread are placed in the center of the children. Nowadays, however, few children attend FFLM because they are in school. Afterward, it is lunchtime for the managers, who sit in a circle outside if it is sunny. Otherwise, they sit in the kitchen tent and meeting tent to enjoy the food. Finally, young managers serve food to the elders.

¹ This is done by making *rtsam pa* without cheese in a bowl, gripping it tightly in the hand, and using the thumb to press down on the top of the *rtsam pa*. The other four fingers make prints on the *rtsam pa*, putting a small ball of *rtsam pa* in the ring finger indentation, and adding small bits of each food in plastic plates for *gung tshigs*. Three *changs bu* of similar size are made after *gung tshigs*.

FIG 12. Pre-schoolers have 'bras thug and yogurt for lunch (2016, Yo lag, Pad+ma rig 'dzin).



FIG 13. The managers have lunch (2016, Yo lag, Pad+ma rig 'dzin).



Locals return home at around five PM. In the past, many participants stayed and slept in the meeting tent. However, in 2016, only the managers stayed overnight to protect food from dogs and the tents from damage by livestock and strong wind. After returning home at about eight PM, the practitioners have *rung ja*, the same as the morning milk tea break. First, they drink milk tea and eat

candy. Next, they rinse their mouths with water three times and prostrate before having *rung ja*.¹ The ritual practitioners may move their upper torsos but are expected not to move their buttocks during tea time. They do not eat dinner, and they go to bed early.

THE SECOND DAY

The fifteenth day of the fourth month is *thun*. Ritual practitioners do not speak, eat, and drink until the dawn of the third day. Those unable to practice *thun* may choose to be *sdom pa* on the second day of FFLM. According to Gcod le (b. 1937), all ritual practitioners had to be *thun* during the second day until a monk of Dar zhing Monastery² permitted locals to continue *sdom pa* on the second day without the intensified form of *thun*. Later, increasing numbers of villagers were *sdom pa* during the second day of FFLM. He added it was embarrassing that, other than a few older women who were *thun*, many young people were *sdom pa* during the second day of FFLM in 2018. He felt that it would be better to be *thun* on this special day, especially for young males and females.

Practitioners who are *thun* generally abstain from all food and drinks (including water); however, if some cannot bear discomfort from hunger and thirst, they break the *thun* rules and have yogurt known as *dkar cog* at mid-day.³ However, they must continue not to speak.

THE THIRD DAY

In the past, at dawn on the sixteenth day of the fourth month, the managers shouted, "*Ki thor thug 'thung gi shog!* 'Hey everybody! Come eat *thor thug!*'" announcing a soup made of wheat flour, a little cheese, and milk.

Before about 2003, most of those in the meeting tent at night and neighbor families assembled to eat *thor thug*. It was thus necessary to cook *thor thug* for the *smyung gnas ba*. After the managers shouted, the ritual practitioners began to get up and wash their faces, hands, and bowls; prostrate three times; and sit in lines.

The managers bring *thor thug* in small metal basins to the *smyung gnas ba*, who sip the *thor thug*, rinse their mouths three times, and begin eating the *thor thug*. While eating *thor thug*, the practitioners are not allowed to eat such solid food as bread. *Thor thug* is a soup composed of the same ingredients as *yar tshogs thug pa* but with more liquid. After having *thor thug*, the ritual practitioners were expected to stay awake and not eat until sunrise.

In the morning, people greet participants who practiced *thun* with "*Smyung gnas e bde thal?* 'How is your *thun* going?'"

The reply is very positive if there have been no problems with the practice, for example, too hungry to sleep at night, extreme thirst, and sleepiness during the daytime.⁴ *Sdom pa* practitioners

¹ In Sgro b+ha's time, in the absence of timepieces, attendees observed their palms at dusk. If palm lines were not visible, it was time for *rung ja*.

² Located on a mountain about three kilometers south of Chu khog (Qukuhu) Township Town, it was constructed around 1938 (Nian and Bai 1993:167). In 2013, because of a landslide and warnings that the hill would continue to slide, the monastery was moved two kilometers southeast of Chu khog Township Town. In 2019, the monastery had around fifty monks (based on information I received from a resident monk (Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin, b. 1994), via WeChat on 11 June 2019).

³ When I was about twelve-years-old (~2002), Bzung 'dus mtshol practiced *thun*, and our grandmother allowed her to have *dkar cog*. *Dkar* 'white' may refer to yogurt. *Cog* probably derives from *gcog* 'discount', so the combination of the two terms suggests 'reduce hunger by eating yogurt'.

⁴ Locals believe ritual practitioners should not sleep during the daytime.

were not greeted in this way because *sdom pa* practice was considered easier than *thun*.¹

During *gung tshigs*, ritual practitioners are given *skal* on the first day of FFLM. The midday meal is followed by tea time for those who will be managers the following year. All the managers for the next gathering sit in two lines or a circle in the meeting tent. The current managers hospitably offer food. These two different groups of managers tease each other and make the audience laugh. In the past, some future managers teased the current managers very humorously, e.g., "Your food is bad." "You didn't offer as much food to the ritual practitioners as we did last year." "Where is your ghee? We haven't seen it."

In response, the current managers forced them to drink ghee or poured a bowl of liquid ghee on their heads, which was not done in 2019.

The main foods at this time are ghee, wild yams, and yogurt. A bowl of yogurt with a topping of wild yams for each person who will be managers the following year is offered. Historically, they teased managers, and a ladle of yogurt was poured on their heads. Locals considered this auspicious, so a little yogurt was poured on the heads of the following year's managers. Elders said that such teasing as pouring yogurt and ghee on the head and forcing people to overeat were once common, but is rare today. For example, yogurt was poured on the head of all the following year's managers in the past. However, in 2016, very few people had yogurt poured on their heads.

FIG 14. Yogurt on the head (2016, Yo lag, Pad+ma rig 'dzin).



Next, it is time to distribute the meeting tent, poles, metal stove, kitchen tent, and the *mdzod ras* 'storage tent' to the following year's managers. Names are written on pieces of paper and chosen randomly from a hat. Those selected carefully keep these public items until the next year when they bring them to the FFLM site and prepare.

¹ A personal experience of practicing *thun* in Dkar mdzes¹ in about 1998 illustrates difficulties: "...Mother and Aunt looked at me occasionally but said nothing. They were afraid I would forget and speak. My stomach was churning. My throat was very dry, and I was breathless" (Sonam 2011:94).

ACTIVITIES DURING FFLM

Activities are arranged on the first day of FFLM after *gung tshigs* and on the morning of the last day. During the second day of FFLM, the majority of ritual participants were *thun* participants, so a great deal of physical activity was difficult. Physical activities while serving as *thun* increase the level of hunger.

Activities such as foot races, singing, wrestling, tug-of-war, and back hip rotations¹ on a horizontal pole do not follow a fixed schedule. If a community member passes away, or there are few attendees, such activities are not held for a year.

A large ceremony is held when the number of FFLM (a *sdom pa* and a *thun* are counted as one) reaches 1,000. Locals invite a *bla ma* to FFLM and solemnly celebrate. According to Lha mo skyabs (b. 1958), a local elder, Stong skor ston mo 'Celebration of One Thousand' was held in the past. A *bla ma* was invited to conduct Thugs rje chen po'i sbyin sbreg 'Burnt-offering for the Great Compassionate' during the celebration.

The races have two sections based on age. One section is for children divided by, for example, five-to-nine and ten-to-sixteen. The second section is the seventeen-and-older group and might include runners forty-or-older if they would like to compete.² The top five runners in the second section are awarded cash or such items as towels. The second group champion receives about 200 RMB in cash or other items; for example, the first-place finisher in 2007 won a cellphone with a cash value of about 500 RMB. Children are awarded candy or a small amount of cash.

The *thag 'then* 'tug-of-war'³ is often between the current managers and the future ones. Both groups have an equal number of people. If there are many people, one group is divided into two teams in the same group. Women participate in this activity in women's teams and are divided, as are the men. The two female groups are made up of wives or members of current or future managers' families. Each winning team member receives a thermos, towel, or bag of washing powder.

Elders are fond of singing activities during FFLM. Locals sit in a circle while the singer stands in the center and performs traditional songs. The audience asks those who sing well to perform, although anyone may volunteer to sing. Singers are given gifts, e.g., a new *ska rags* 'sash' or *ling* 'strip of expensive silk'.

G.yug res or *'ju res* 'wrestling' measures two people's strength by holding each other's sashes and trying to make the competitor fall. Both can be males or females. This was popular before the mid-1980s. In the past, if two men or boys met in the mountains while herding, they might have wrestled to see who was stronger. During FFLM, young males who thought they were physically strong might have visited another village's FFLM to wrestle. The winner received no award but became well-known among locals. In 2019, locals wrestled but did not visit other FFLM to wrestle.

Another activity - *'gyogs rdo* or *sa sgye* - is lifting one hundred kilograms of earth in a bag and putting it on the shoulder or holding it in front of the chest. Contestants walk as far as they can. The person who covers the longest distance⁴ is declared the winner, receives a small gift of about fifty RMB, and is known as the strongest community member. A man of great strength might toss a bag

¹ Locally known as *ka thog nas 'khor*.

² The divisions of these groups are flexible, for example, if someone is fifteen, tall, and strong, he might join the second section.

³ Lha mo skyabs (b. 1958), a local villager, told me that hemp ropes were used in competition in his childhood. He had heard that leather ropes had been used before his time, suggesting a long local history of tug-of-war.

⁴ The longest distance might be about twenty meters.

full of earth over his head or one of his shoulders without touching his body.¹ Generally, a man can only put the heavy bag on his shoulder and let it fall off.

In the past, locals made back hip rotations on a pole. Several people held the pole ends on their shoulders. I saw a man make back hip rotations on a pole dozens of times without a pause in my childhood. Nowadays, people no longer do this.

In the end, managers scatter candies among the crowd, which locals scramble to collect. Leftover food is sold for a low price to whoever wants it. For example, if several people want a bag of cheese or *rtsam pa*, their names might be written on pieces of paper, which are put in a hat. After stirring the folded papers in a hat with their hand, someone randomly chooses a paper, opens it, and shows the name of the person who may buy the item. Managers next collect rubbish, which will be piled and burned near the FFLM site. Locals gradually leave.

INTERVIEWS WITH VILLAGERS

I interviewed young people and elders via WeChat. I also met the oldest men in our local community - Gcod le (b. 1937) and Tshe bkra (b. 1946) - in Gcod le's home. I also consulted Khon thar (b. 1970) in his home in Grong brdal thog. Elders provided information about FFLM in the past, including accounts of teasing each other during FFLM. I now focus on FFLM in the past and how people gathered during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

ACCOUNT ONE: GCOD LE

The first FFLM I remember, was held on the fourteenth to sixteenth days of the fifth month. The meeting tent was borrowed from 'Gro skor. We couldn't hold it on time, because those were very difficult times. In that year, Mdo ba'i dpon po 'the great leader of Mdo ba' was killed by A mchog [Amuquhu]² during a conflict over livestock stealing [~1947].³

Our meeting tent was taken to Dar zhing Monastery for safekeeping but was burned when Rgya mA jag tshang 'Ma Bufang's army'⁴ attacked.

At that time, 'Gro skor kept their meeting tent, so it was fine during those hard times. I was really fond of the meeting tent's lining with its colorful designs.

We continued to hold FFLM in the following years until about 1958. We didn't have a meeting tent, so we put up a *ras gur klad nag* 'tent with a *re lde* "black yak-hair cloth" top' and a *ras gur dkar mdong* 'small white fabric tent'. We had a small number of residents at that time, so the two tents collectively provided enough space to accommodate all the traditional Yo lag Village residents. Three pillars supported an interior horizontal wooden pole.

¹ Ordinary men may raise a heavy bag easily, prop it up with bent knees, continue to raise the bag, hold it against their chest, and finally slowly position it on one of their shoulders from which the bag falls off.

² A herding township in Kan lho Prefecture.

³ Gcod le dates this event with, "Tshe bkra was a baby and his father often carried him on his back."

⁴ Ma Bufang (1903-1975) was governor of Mtsho sngon Province from 1938-1949 (<https://bit.ly/32ISK1am> (accessed 21 July 2019). Local elders referred to Ma's Army as Rgya mA chi tshang because Ma Bufang's father was Ma Qi (1869-1931).

We couldn't hold Smung gnas during the hard times for a while, but policies relaxed in about 1962. Locals then held FFLM, horse races, and Chos thog.¹ I was released from prison in 1963.² Policies tightened again, and locals who had managed the religious activities in 1962 were criticized, so we didn't hold FFLM for a long time.

We couldn't afford a meeting tent until the government hired some of our pack yaks to deliver bags of flour from Reb gong to Ra rgya (Lajia).³ We used the money we were paid to buy material that community members used to make a new meeting tent. We held a big FFLM that year [1978] to celebrate the new tent, which we kept for about forty years. We changed it [made a new tent] and celebrated a grand FFLM this year [2018]. A lags rgya mtsho [a local *bla ma*] was invited and gave teachings on the second day of FFLM.

In the past, all locals came for *yar tshogs thug pa* and *thor thug* when the managers shouted. All the ritual practitioners above sixteen-years-old were *thun*. Nobody practiced *sdom pa* on the second day of FFLM.

People often teased each other seriously, but no one got angry. Strangers were afraid to go near a place holding FFLM. Managers or other locals would catch the men and force them to overeat, locally known as *tsa rdzi* 'be hospitable'. Those skilled at *brtag re*⁴ and other talkative people were forced to drink liquid ghee if they resisted doing what was demanded. They might also have been teased by pouring yogurt or ghee on their heads. Such amusements are absent today. If we treat strangers or men from other communities like this, they might get angry.

¹ This ritual is held annually from the first to the seventh days of the eighth month near Grong brdal thog with monks from Dar zhing Monastery. The ritual is managed by men from the different local communities who take turns managing the ritual. At around three PM each day, participants sit around the meeting tent. Men and boys remove their shirts, or roll up their shirts to their neck. Girls and women roll up their shirts, exposing their backs. All place their palms together, touch their foreheads, and bend forward toward their knees. Monks walk in a line where participants sit in whatever order they like. The monks hold wooden bowls with water, sip water from the bowls, and spray it on the bare backs of participants who now kneel in a circle around the meeting tent. Two or three monks hold teapots with water to add when water in the bowls is finished. There is no debating, only chanting. See <https://bit.ly/2ImywSp> (accessed 4 October 2019) and <https://bit.ly/2lETOC6> (accessed 4 October 2019) for relevant video.

² He was imprisoned from 1958 to 1963.

³ A township in Rma chen (Maqin) County, Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province.

⁴ *Btags sa* and *brtag re* denote teasing. *Brtag re* was popular among locals in 2019. *Btags sa* was less popular. *Btags sa* discloses secrets/hidden weaknesses. *Brtag re* occurs when two people or a group of people gather and tease each other face to face. The main purpose is to amuse the onlookers. I give examples related to *btags sa* of locals teasing each other during Smung gnas.

FIG 15. Chos thog in 2019. Monks from Dar zhing Monastery chant and spray water from their mouths on people. This is locally known as *sngags gral* (7 September 2019, Pad+ma rig 'dzin).



Account Two: Gcod le and Tshe bkra

Once a year, Yo lag held FFLM at Bre ka'i thang. 'Gro skor held their FFLM at Khug rgan mdo. Two 'Gro skor villagers visited the Yo lag FFLM, and the managers treated them very hospitably. Later, one of them went some distance from the Yo lag FFLM, thinking he could elude the Yo lag villagers if they tried to catch him, and shouted, "*Ma mo yod no'i rig ga, mar khus shag wa yed ki, ma mo med no'i rig ga, ma rig kha bo bca' gi*." [You] offered a lot of ghee to those who have a lot of female sheep, [you] pretended not to see those with no sheep!"¹

Yo lag villagers chased that man on a hill between the 'Gro skor FFLM and the Yo lag FFLM. Both sides then came and wrestled for a long time. Some people were forcibly taken to an FFLM and made to overeat. Nobody was angry, even if they were uncomfortable.

Another incident occurred during the FFLM of Mkha' skya [Yo lag's neighbor] about forty years ago. A person nicknamed Bshur rkyal 'Boaster' visited the FFLM of that community. The Mkha' skya managers were hospitable. However, some elders advised the managers not to insist he overeat or he would be ill. This advice was accepted, and they released him.

That man went some distance, turned back on his horse, and shouted, "You guys didn't offer me any food today! I'm hungry, and now I'm eating my cold *rtsam pa*!" and pretended to eat a solid bit of *rtsam pa* from his robe pouch.

Some managers started chasing him, but some clever men shouted, "No, let him go!"

¹ Meaning: "You people are not very hospitable. You are only hospitable to my rich friend and ignore poor people like me." Locals greatly value hospitality, consequently, this man questioned their values to irritate them.

The man believed this and slowly continued on his way. After he went behind a hill, several Mkha' skya members secretly rode after him. The man suddenly kicked his horse with the stirrups when he realized he was being chased. His saddle's crupper broke, he fell off his horse, was brought back to his pursuers' FFLM, forced to overeat, and was mercilessly teased. He was made to drink bowls of ghee and eat *rtsam pa*. When he stopped eating, ghee and yogurt were poured on his head. This sort of teasing was typical during FFLM, and this man didn't get angry.

Account Three: Khon thar

When I (b. 1970) was twelve years old, we held FFLM in two adjoining brigades. We didn't have a meeting tent. Managers were not divided like today. All the villagers were managers. One summer [1978], some elders made a new meeting tent, which was the old one we put up last year [2017] for FFLM. [In 1978] we divided the managers into two groups like today. Those two groups have been taking turns holding Smyung gnas since that time. Today, we still follow these rules.

CONCLUSION

The Sa ga zla ba smyung gnas gathering described in this paper strengthens a sense of community among locals as they collectively eat, work, worship, and engage in recreational activities over three days.¹ In 1997, children played 'ba'² in groups of girls and boys. I knew all those children, though some were not my neighbors. This is an example illustrating how a strong sense of community membership was inculcated.

In 2019, many children attended school and had never experienced Smyung gnas. Furthermore, some children may not be acquainted unless they are from the same local community. Caterpillar fungus collecting is another reason some locals do not participate in Smyung gnas. It would be very positive if local primary school students were allowed to join in Smyung gnas in recognition of the value of traditional cultural activities that are rapidly changing.

Finally, I encourage locals throughout the Tibetosphere to consider giving careful, detailed attention to such rituals/gatherings as they are held locally, including reflections from local elders about how these activities have changed since their youth and what they think about these changes.

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¹ The recreational activities following the *smyung gnas* proper occur because of the significance of the fourth month, as mentioned earlier. Such recreational activities do not occur following *smyung gnas* held in other months.

² See a description of this game at <https://at.virginia.edu/2XBuFFE> (accessed 8 July 2019), which involves choosing a certain number of stones and tossing up and catching an agreed upon number of stones while simultaneously arranging the other stones.

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TIBETAN TERMS

'ba' འབལ།	btsags thag chod pa བཅགས་ཐག་ཚོད་པ།
'ba' rde'u འབའ་རེ་ལུ།	bzhi ba'i smyung gnas བཞི་བའི་སྤྱུང་གནས།
'bras thug འབྲས་ཐུག།	bzung 'dus mtsho བཟུང་འདུས་མཚོ།
'brug dkar tshe ring འབྲུག་དཀར་ཚེ་རིང་།	chab ཆབ།
'gro skor འགྲོ་སྐོར།	changs bu ཆངས་བུ།
'gyogs rdo འགྲོགས་རྡོ།	chos kho ཆོས་ཁོ།
'ja' mo འཇའ་མོ།	chos thog ཆོས་ཐོག།
'ju res འཇུ་རེས།	chu khog ཟུ་ཁོག།
'phyor l+wa འཕྱོར་ལ།	dar zhing དར་ཞིང་།
a mchog ཨ་མཚོག།	dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས།
bla brang ལྷ་བྲང་།	dge slong ma dpal mo དགེ་སྤྱོད་མ་དཔལ་མོ།
bla brang ma ལྷ་བྲང་མ།	dkar cog དཀར་ཚོག།
bla ma ལྷ་མ།	dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས།
blon che ལྷོན་ཆེ།	dmar དམར།
bon po བོན་པོ།	dpon skor དཔོན་སྐོར།
bre ka'i thang བླེ་ཀའི་ཐང་།	g.yang mo གཡང་མོ།
brkyangs phyag བརྟམས་ཕྱག།	g.yug res གཡུག་རེས།
brtag res བརྟག་རེས།	gcod le གཙོད་ལེ།
bsang chu བསང་ཆུ།	gcog གཙོག།
bsang khog བསང་ཁོག།	gro ma གྲོ་མ།
bshur rkyal བཤུར་རྒྱལ།	gtsang ma གཙང་མ།
bskums phyag བསྐུམས་ཕྱག།	gtsod གཙོད།
btags sa བཏགས་ས།	gung tshigs གུང་ཚིགས།

ja ras ར་རས།
 ka chu ཀ་ཅུ།
 ka ra ཀ་ར།
 ka ra rdo ཀ་ར་རོ།
 ka thog nas 'khor ཀ་ཐོག་ནས་འཁོར།
 kan lho ཀ་ན་ལྷོ།
 kan su'u ཀ་ན་སུ་ཡ།
 khon thar ཁོན་ཐར།
 khug rgan mdo ཁུག་རྒྱན་མདོ།
 khyed tshang la smyung gnas ba du yod ཁྱེད་ཚང་
 ལ་སྐྱུང་གནས་བ་དུ་ཡོད།
 khyi lnga ཁྱི་ལ།
 ki thor thug 'thung gi shog ཀི། ཐོར་ཐུག་འབྲུང་གི་ཤོག
 ki yar tshogs thug pa 'thung gi shog ཀི་ཡར་ཚོགས་
 ཐུག་པ་འབྲུང་གི་ཤོག
 lcags mo 'tsho ལཱ་གསལ་མོ་འཚོ།
 ldong nge ལྷོང་ངེ།
 lha mo skyabs ལྷ་མོ་སྐྱབས།
 ling ལིང།
 lus kyi sgrib pa ལུས་ཀྱི་སྒྲིབ་པ།
 ma mo yod no'i rig ga/mar khus shag wa yed
 ki/ma mo med no'i rig ga/ma rig kha bo bca'
 gi མཚོ་ཡོད་ནོའི་རིག་ག མར་ལུས་ཤག་ལ་ཡོད་ཀི། མཚོ་མེད་ནོའི་
 རིག་ག མ་རིག་ཁ་བོ་བཅའ་གི།
 mar khu མར་ཁུ།
 mchod khri མཚོད་ཁྲི།
 mdo ba མདོ་བ།
 mdo sngags dar rgyas gling མདོ་སྒྲགས་དར་རྒྱས་གླིང་།
 mdzod ras མཛོད་རས།
 mgo log མགོ་ལོག
 mkha' skya མཁའ་སྐྱེ།
 mtha' ba མཐའ་བ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།
 ngag gi sgrib pa ངག་གི་སྒྲིབ་པ།
 ong ba ཨོང་བ།
 pad+ma rig 'dzin པདྨ་རིག་འཛིན།
 phrug l+wa ཕུག་ལ།
 ra rgan ར་རྒྱན།
 ra rgya ར་རྒྱ།
 ras gur རས་གུར།
 ras gur dkar mdong རས་གུར་དཀར་མདོང་།
 ras gur klad nag རས་གུར་ལྗང་ནག
 ras l+wa རས་ལ།
 reb gong རེབ་གོང་།
 rgya ma khyi tshang རྒྱ་མ་ཁྱི་ཚང་།
 rgya zhwa རྒྱ་ཞ།
 rin kho རིན་ཁོ།
 rma chen རྩ་ཆེན།
 rma lho རྩ་ལྷོ།
 rnam lo རྩམ་ལོ།
 rtsam pa རུམ་པ།
 rtsam pa sgor log/gro log རུམ་པ་སྒོར་ལོག་གོ་ལོག
 ru khag རུ་ཁག།
 rung ja རུང་ཇ།
 rus cha རུས་ཆ།
 sa ga zla ba ས་ག་རྩ་བ།
 sa ga zla ba'i dus chen ས་ག་རྩ་བའི་དུས་ཆེན།
 sa sgye ས་སྐྱེ།
 sa skal ས་སྐལ།
 sbyin bdag སྤྱིན་བདག
 sdom ja སྡོམ་ཇ།
 sdom pa སྡོམ་པ།
 sdom pa ba སྡོམ་པ་བ།
 sgro b+ha སྒོ་བ།

sha bo don grub ཤ་བོ་དོན་གུབ།
 si khron སེ་ཁྲོན།
 ska rags སྐ་རགས།
 smyung gnas སྤྱང་གནས།
 smyung gnas ba སྤྱང་གནས་བ།
 smyung gnas e bde thal སྤྱང་གནས་ཨེ་བདེ་ཐལ།
 sngags gral སྔགས་གྲལ།
 stong skor ston mo སྟོང་སྐོར་སྟོན་མོ།
 su ru སུ་རུ།
 thag 'then ཐག་འཛེན།
 thor thug ཐོར་ཐུག།
 thugs rje chen po'i sbyin bsreg ཐུགས་རྟེན་ཆེན་པོའི་སྤྱིན་བསྐྱེད།
 thun ཐུན།
 tos ཏོས།
 tos bdun pa ཏོས་བདུན་པ།
 tos bzhi ba ཏོས་བཞི་བ།
 tos dang po ཏོས་དང་པོ།

CHINESE TERMS

Amuquhu 阿木去乎
 Chongqing 重庆
 dui 队
 Duowa 多哇
 Erdui 二队
 Gannan 甘南
 Gansu 甘肃
 Ganzi 甘孜
 Guangdong 广东
 Guangzhou 广州
 Guoluo 果洛
 Huangnan 黄南
 Kashijia 卡什加
 Lajia 拉加
 Linxia 临夏
 Liudui 六队
 Longwu 隆务
 Ma Bufang 马步芳

tos drug pa ཏོས་ལྷུག་པ།
 tos gnyis ba ཏོས་གཉིས་བ།
 tos gsum pa ཏོས་གསུམ་པ།
 tos lnga ba ཏོས་ལྔ་བ།
 tsa rdzi ཅ་རྩེ།
 tsag tsag ཅག་ཅག།
 tsha langs ba ཅ་ལངས་བ།
 tshe 'phags ཅེ་འཕགས།
 tshe bkra ཅེ་བཀྲ།
 tshe brtan ཅེ་བརྟན།
 tshe ring lo brgya ཅེ་རིང་ལོ་བརྟུ།
 tshogs ras ཅོགས་རས།
 tshul khirms bstan 'dzin ཅུལ་ཁྲིམས་བསྟན་འཛིན།
 wu ba ལུ་བ།
 yar tshogs thug pa ཡར་ཅོགས་ཐུག་པ།
 yid 'ong bzang mo ཡིད་འོང་བཟང་མོ།
 yid kyi sgrib pa ཡིད་ཀྱི་སྒྲིབ་པ།
 yo lag ཡོ་ལག

Ma Qi 马麒
 Maqin 玛沁
 Meili xiangcun jianshe 美丽乡村建设
 Qidui 七队
 Qinghai 青海
 Qukuhu 曲库乎
 Sandui 三队
 Sangke 桑科
 Sichuan 四川
 Sidui 四队
 Tongren 同仁
 Wanmarenzeng 完么仁增
 Wudui 五队
 Xiahe 夏河
 Yidi fupin banqian 易地扶贫变迁
 Yidui 一队
 Zhiyue 直跃

MULTILINGUALISM AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN WUJI VILLAGE, HAINAN PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Fu Qidu 符气都*

ABSTRACT

Wuji Village, situated in Hainan Province, PR China, is linguistically diverse with Danzhounese, Modern Standard Chinese (MSC), Hakka, Cantonese, Hainanese, and Lin'gao regularly spoken. In profiling vernacular languages and language attitudes in Wuji Village, this paper features a survey investigating the villagers' language abilities and perspectives. A literature review of the linguistic situation and language attitudes in Hainan Province is followed by an introduction to Wuji Village, including its location, residents, villagers' livelihoods, village religion, and the local linguistic environment. A survey of language abilities and attitudes in Wuji Village indicates that villagers' attitudes towards the village languages vary. While emotional attachment to Danzhounese is deeply rooted, it is weakening, with most participants agreeing that all villagers must learn MSC. Wuji Village's linguistic profile merits further study in the context of vernacular language marginalization, language attrition, language shift, and vernacular language maintenance.

KEYWORDS

Chinese language attitudes, Chinese multilingualism, Chinese vernaculars, Danzhou, dialects of China, Hainan Province languages

INTRODUCTION

Wuji Village (19°38'18.64"N and 109°31'54.17"E) is within the administration of Nada Town, Danzhou City, in northwestern Hainan Province, PR China. Subject to a tropical monsoon ocean climate, with an average annual temperature of 23.1°C and rainfall of 1,823 mm,¹ Wuji borders Zixi, Zhongjianxiang, and Dalandi villages.

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¹ From https://www.danzhou.gov.cn/danzhou/zjdz/201712/t20171221_1519295.html (accessed 14 June 2020).

FIG 1. Wuji Village, Nada Town, Danzhou City, Hainan Province, the People's Republic of China.¹



Wuji is linguistically diverse with Danzhounese/the Tan-Chou dialect,² Modern Standard Mandarin (MSC),³ Hakka,⁴ Cantonese,⁵ Hainanese (MSC, Hainanhua),⁶ and the Lin'gao

¹ This map is a compilation of images from <https://bit.ly/3hyIaRC>, <https://bit.ly/3fqcige>, and <https://bit.ly/2Y5ccVt> (accessed 16 June 2020).

² A Sino-Tibetan language/dialect (Chen 1986). For more on Danzhounese, see Ting (1980), Liang (1984), Chen (1988), and Liu (2001). "Danzhounese" is used hereafter.

³ Also known as Putonghua "the official name of the standard language in the People's Republic of China" (Norman 1988:137). MSC accents adjust to the language environments in Hainan Province and change accordingly (Liu 1998). The MSC accents in Wuji Village and urban Danzhou City differ; nevertheless, MSC is used hereafter for the sake of simplicity.

⁴ A southern Chinese language/dialect (Chen 1986:1). For more on Hakka, see Liu (2001) and Kurpaska (2010).

⁵ A Yue dialect (Matthews and Yip 2011). For more on Cantonese, see Kurpaska (2010).

⁶ A Southern Min dialect (Kurpaska 2010:39, Solnit 1982:219, Liu 2001:48, and Chen 1986:88).

language/dialect¹ commonly spoken. To profile the linguistic situation in Wuji Village and better describe villagers' language attitudes, I conducted a language study.

This paper features a literature review of the linguistic situation and language attitudes in Hainan Province and Wuji Village's location, residents, villagers' livelihoods, village religion, and the local linguistic environment. The results of a survey of Wuji Villagers' language abilities and sentiments regarding Danzhounese, Hakka, and MSC profile languages spoken in Wuji Village and villagers' language attitudes. The survey explores the villagers' language competencies, ages and MSC fluency, language attitudes, and how they acquired these (vernacular) languages. Finally, findings and limitations are included, and suggestions are made regarding future research to advance studies of Danzhounese and other vernaculars spoken in the village.

THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN HAINAN PROVINCE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Liang (1984), Chen (1986), Wurm et al. (1988), Liu (2001), Zhang (2006), and Ouyang (2010) researched Hainan Province's languages/dialects and their classification/distribution, including languages/dialects in Danzhou City, and described Hainan Province as linguistically diverse and deserving further studies. Liang (1984:264-265) reported that apart from MSC, vernacular languages spoken in Danzhou City include Danzhounese, Junhua,² and Hakka, neglecting other vernaculars, e.g., Hainanese and Cantonese. Chen (1986), Wu (1988), and Liu (2001) noted that MSC, Hakka, Danzhounese, Cantonese, and Junhua are spoken in Danzhou City. Furthermore, Hainan Miaoyu,³ Hainanese, and Lin'gao are also spoken in Danzhou City (Liu 2001; Chen 1986).

According to Liang (1984:267) and Ting (1980:7-16), colloquial and literary Danzhounese are two Danzhounese spoken codes with differing phonological features, representing the primary spoken form of conversational Danzhounese and conventional pronunciations/ sounds used for reading Chinese characters, respectively.

Concerning the classification of Danzhounese, Wurm et al. (1988) placed it in the Yue group while Ting (1980:24-25) reported that Danzhounese, from a phonological perspective, is an unclassified "new dialect of South China" rather than a variety of Min, Yue, or Hakka. Liang (1984:267) argued that colloquial Danzhounese retains Cantonese linguistic properties and belongs to the Yue group; however, literary Danzhounese and the dialects of North China (Mandarin dialects) have shared phonological features; consequently, literary Danzhounese is a Mandarin dialect. According to Lin (2009), Danzhounese shares linguistic features of the Yue, Hakka, and Gan dialects (as cited in Chin 2015:142).

Chen (1988), based on a comparison of Danzhounese phonology and vocabulary from a historical perspective, concludes Danzhounese is a variant of old Cantonese. Liu (2001), Wu (1988), and Liang (1984) considered Danzhounese "an unclassified non-Mandarin dialect" (as cited in Kurpaska 2010:73). As is apparent, the classification of Danzhounese is an ongoing discussion.

Although there has been little investigation of language attitudes towards vernaculars in Danzhou City, a few studies on attitudes towards vernacular languages in Sanya City, Hainan Province have been conducted. Feng (2013) used questionnaires to explore Li language attitudes in four villages of Sanya City and reported that Li people, whose Liyu abilities varied significantly, were passionate

¹ Also known as the Ong-be language, a subgroup of the Kra-Dai language family (Zhang and Ma 1983:45, Liu 2001:47-48, and Chen 2018:1-3). See Chen (1986) for more on Lin'gao language, which I hereafter refer to as Lin'gao.

² A Southwest Mandarin dialect (Liu 2001, Qiu 2002, Norquest 2015).

³ A Mian language/dialect (Liu 2001, Chen 1986).

about learning and preserving Liyu, while also feeling positive about learning MSC and Hainanese, which they believed brought economic benefit. Using questionnaires and interviews, Mao (2019) studied Dan¹ speakers' language attitudes about the Dan language/dialect, Hainanese, and MSC in Sanya City villages from a sociolinguistic perspective and reported that Dan was viewed less positively than in the past. Its domain of use was predominantly at home or when fishing at sea. Dan speakers actively learned MSC, which had gradually replaced the Dan's position as the dominant language spoken in the Sanya City focus villages.

WUJI VILLAGE

VILLAGE RESIDENTS

In March 2020, Wuji Village had 218 households (941 residents). Han and Li people are ninety-eight and two percent of Wuji's population, respectively.²

Most Wuji Han residents report that their ancestors migrated from Guangdong and Fujian provinces, or Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Li residents in the village state that they are descendants of Hainan Province's indigenous Li people. Peng et al. (2011) argued that Li ancestors in Hainan Province were likely from southern mainland China and Vietnam, based on mitochondrial DNA tests of 285 Li people.

According to the 1977 Hainan census (Ouyang and Zheng 1980),³ most Li (626,000) live in Hainan Li-Miao Autonomous Prefecture and speak Liyu 'the Hlai languages'; other Li live in the prefecture's nearby cities and *sheng zhixia xianji xingzhengqu* 'provincial-controlled counties', such as Chengmai County in northern Hainan Province; and a small number reside in the counties of Wanning, Qionghai, and Baisha⁴ (Ouyang and Zheng 1980:1). Shearer and Hongkai (2002) reported Liyu speakers numbered about 747,000, including Cunhua⁵ and Nadouhua⁶ speakers (as cited in Norquest 2015:4). Guo (2006) noted that the Li population approached 1,247,814 in 2000, with some Li residing in Danzhou City. The Statistics Bureau of Hainan Province (2019) reports 1,514,780 Li accounted for approximately ninety percent of Hainan Province's total ethnic minority population.⁷

A small percentage of Li residents primarily communicate in MSC in Wanning, Qionghai, and Baisha counties. In contrast, Li residents in Baoting, Ya, Lingshui, and Qiongzhong counties are bilingual in Liyu and MSC (Ouyang and Zheng 1980:1). According to Liu (2001:45-46) and Chen (1986:93-96), Liyu includes the Xiao, Qi, Bendi, Meifu, and Jiamao dialects;⁸ and a majority of speakers of the Xiao, Qi, and Meifu dialects are fluent in MSC and Hainanese. Bendi speakers are generally proficient in Danzhounese, and most also speak Hainanese and MSC. Liu (2001:46) also noted that the five dialects of Liyu mentioned above share similar phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. Additionally, Cunhua is a language branch of Liyu rather than a dialect of Liyu (Ouyang and Fu 1988). Nadouhua is a subgroup of Liyu (Fu 1990).

¹ A Chinese indigenous language (Lin 1931 in Mao 2019:93) that is considered a Yue dialect (Chen 1986:98) with features of the Min group (Zhuang 2009 in Mao 2019:93).

² A prefecture government employee provided village population data.

³ I was unable to find more recent data on the number of Liyu speakers.

⁴ The contemporary Wanning City, Qionghai City, and Baisha Li Autonomous County, Hainan Province, respectively.

⁵ A Hlai language/dialect. For more on Cunhua, see Norquest (2015).

⁶ A critically endangered Hlai language/dialect with about 2,500 speakers (Fu 1990:14, Norquest 2015:5).

⁷ From www.hainan.gov.cn (accessed 1 April 2020).

⁸ Liyu includes the Xiao, Qi, Miefu, Bendi, and Jiamao dialects (Liu 2001). For more on Liyu dialects, see Norquest (2015).

VILLAGE LIVELIHOODS

Villagers self-report to the government that they are farmers, cultivating wetland rice, rubber, and Hainan *capsicum chinense* 'habanero peppers'; and raising chicken, ducks, buffalo, and pigs.¹ After marriage, young villagers generally engage in migrant labor in Guangdong Province in manufacturing, i.e., mask- and clothes-making, steel production, or water-cleaning factories. Typically, they leave their children with their parents at home and provide financial support. Some villagers work in municipal Danzhou City as truck drivers, hotel cleaners, restaurant staff, and manual laborers in building construction.

Villagers born around the year 2000 typically discontinued education after high school, married, had children, and engaged in migrant labor in Guangdong Province. Villagers born before 1980 were generally satisfied with their current lives and were unwilling to engage in migrant labor outside of Hainan Province. Most had built their own two-story brick-concrete house; had grandchildren to care for; and worked as cooks in K-12 school cafeterias, truck drivers, and neighborhood security guards in municipal Danzhou or Haikou cities.

FIG 2. A wetland rice field in Wuji Village (May 2020, Fu Qidu). Wuji and neighboring villages are known for their *zongzi* 'leaf-wrapped sticky rice dumplings' (Roufs and Roufs 2014:81), especially meat *zongzi*. *Zongzi* in Wuji Village are variously shaped, stuffed with different fillings, and wrapped in bamboo leaves. In general, Wuji villagers make and eat meat *zongzi* during Duanwu 'the Dragon Boat Festival' on the fifth day of the fifth Chinese month and Chunjie 'the Chinese New Year'.² In mainland China, eating *zongzi* is common during Duanwu, but not Chunjie.



¹⁹ A prefecture government employee provided data on villager occupations.

² The first day of the first Chinese lunisolar month.

FIG 3. A rubber tree field in Wuji Village (May 2020, Fu Qidu).



FIG 4. Residents surnamed Fu in Wuji, Zhongjianxiang, Zixi, and Dalandi villages honor General Fu Nanjin as their ancestor. The characters on his tomb, located in Zhongjianxiang Village, read (center) *Ming huangtaizu chifeng weiwu dajiangjun funanjin gong zhi* '(Tomb) of Fu Nanjin, entitled "mighty general" by the first Ming emperor' (June 2020, Fu Qidu).



FIG 5. The General Fu Nanjin image in Zhongjiangxiang Village (June 2020, Fu Qidu). The characters read *Fu nanjin mingdai weiwu dajiangjun* 'Fu Nanjin - Ming Dynasty mighty general'.



VILLAGE RELIGION

Some Wuji villagers engage in religious practices and activities. For instance, some worship *dwuen* (MSC, *shen*¹) 'deities', including Taoist and Buddhist deities and historical figures such as Yudi,² Guanyin/Kuan-yin,³ and Guanyu.⁴ There are multiple public *szihueng* (MSC, *citang*) 'ancestral temples' and *dwuenwo* (MSC, *shenwu*) 'temples for deity-worship' in the village.

When seeing indications in one's house of *ling*,⁵ e.g., frogs or bats, villagers may consult a *tongzi*.⁶ When a deity possesses a *tongzi*, the *tongzi* communicates with and speaks for the deity. Some villagers believed that the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic was because of *baoying* 'cosmic moral retribution' (Brokaw 1991:28) in response to people's lax religious faith and practice. *Dwuen* were angry that some people venerated them in times of difficulty but neglected them during good times. When villagers encounter bad luck, they may pray to a deity for better fortune during a *dwungwuen* (MSC, *shengyun*) 'upturn of fortune' (Lust 1996:139).

¹ Spiritual beings (Chan 1963:790) that also represent reason guided by principles and morals rather than instincts or needs (Morant 1994:87).

² The Jade Emperor "the avatar of the Three Pure Ones" (Khoo 2014:23).

³ Known as Avalokitesvara "Goddess of Mercy" (Yu 2001:127).

⁴ A historical figure and a deity of imperial China (Terhaar 2017:1).

⁵ The magic effect or demonstration of a deity (Zavidovskaya 2012:191).

⁶ A spirit medium of a god (DeBernardi 2006:31).

FIG 6. A *szihueng* in Wuji Village (April 2020, Fu Qidu). The characters above the middle pillar read *Fu shi zongci* 'Fu Family Ancestral Hall'. The couplets on the left entrance read (right) *Xi ju baodi caiyuwang* '(We are) happy to live in such a wonderful place filled with wealth and prosperity'; (left) *Fu zhao jiamen fu sheng hui* 'Blessings come to the doors of our homes, and wealth comes to our families'. The couplets on the right entrance read (right) *Ji shan qianqiu cheng fofa* 'Accumulating goodness for a thousand years becomes a dharma'; (left) *Cibei wanzai xian shenming* 'Being compassionate for 10,000 years demonstrates the wisdom of deities'.



FIG 7. A *dwuenwo* in Wuji Village (April 2020, Fu Qidu). The horizontal scroll above the entrance reads *Shenling baoyou* 'Deities bless'. The couplets read (right) *Xian shi you ling zitaishun'an ge dezhi* 'Deities' magic effects are in the world and bless offspring who chant to their rule of virtue'; (left) *Ying ren suoyuan shanfeng haisheng nian gong'en* '(Deities) answer people's wishes for abundant food and people express gratitude to the deities for their blessings'.



FIG 8. A *dwuenwo* in Wuji Village (April 2020, Fu Qidu). The couplets read (right) *Baoyou tang zhong chang fawang* '(Deities) bless (our) homes to be forever prosperous'; (left) *Fuchi zhainei yong Xinglong* '(Deities) support the eternal prosperity of (our) families'.



LOCAL LANGUAGES

Based on my experiences and conversations with my family members, at least six (vernacular) languages are spoken in Wuji Village - Danzhounese, MSC, Cantonese, Hainanese, Hakka, and Lin'gao. Danzhounese and MSC are mutually unintelligible. Only certain Wuji villagers born in or before 1970 are conversant in Cantonese, Danzhounese, Hakka, MSC, and/or Lin'gao, whereas most villagers born after 1970 are fluent in MSC and Danzhounese. Around 1970, parents in Wuji Village devalued official schooling because it was expensive, rarely brought economic return, and occupied children's time that could be better spent on activities that would benefit the family, such as doing agricultural work outside the village to earn income. For example, one villager (b. 1970) gained fluency in Hakka and basic fluency in Cantonese through working with Hakka and Cantonese speakers outside of Wuji Village. In general, Danzhounese is the lingua franca and dominant language in Wuji Village.

A SURVEY OF THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN WUJI VILLAGE

In describing Wuji villagers' linguistic abilities as reported from interviews, I asked: 1) What is the linguistic situation in Wuji Village? and 2) What are the villagers' sentiments about Danzhounese, Hakka, and MSC?

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected during fieldwork in February-March 2020¹ from interviews with thirty-two villagers in Wuji Village. Of the thirty-two participants, twenty-nine agreed to be recorded. Handwritten notes on data from the other three participants were taken. Genealogically-based sampling² was used to select interviewees.

The interviews were carried out primarily in Danzhounese and MSC. Moreover, to better assess research participants' language abilities, I encouraged interviewees to speak whatever (vernacular) languages they claimed proficiency in. Consequently, Hakka, Cantonese, and English were also used during certain interviews.

A consultant fluent in Danzhounese, Hakka, MSC, and a little Cantonese analyzed the Hakka interview recordings to ensure data validity and reliability.

The mean age of research participants (b. 1942-2010) was thirty-five. Twenty-three participants were Wuji villagers who had lived in Wuji Village for at least five years. Nine were visitors in Wuji Village (six from Huangkan and three from Panzhen villages).³ Participants' natal homes included the villages of Wuji (nineteen), Huangkan (five), Panzhen (three), Pingdi (Two), Tiejiang (one), and Lebian (one) in Danzhou City. One participant did not provide her natal home.

¹ I and all research participants had been in Wuji, Huangkan, Dalandi, Zixi, Zhongjianxiang, and Panzhen villages for at least twenty-two days before interviews were conducted. All participants consented to being interviewed and were aware of the COVID-19 pandemic. We all wore masks during the interviews. The prefecture government subdivision in charge of the local area had closed village borders, requiring outsiders to register and be tested before they were allowed entry. As of June 2020, no one in these villages had been reported as infected.

² Genealogically-based sampling "involves interviewing the kinsmen of one's assistant [and it] can be used profitably in field situations where random sampling is not possible" (O'Barr 1971:289).

³ Huangkan and Panzhen villages are both within a five-minute car-ride from Wuji Village and, based on my personal experiences, linguistically similar to Wuji Village. My mother's natal home is Huangkan Village and my father's sister married a Panzhen villager.

EVALUATION AND CATEGORIES

Participants' speaking abilities were evaluated and categorized as "speak fluently," "speak a little," and "do not speak" (see O' Barr 1971) based on self-reports. The consultant or I also evaluated their proficiency during interviews or by listening to the interview recordings. For Danzhounese and MSC proficiency, I assessed participants' speaking abilities as follows:

- Those who reported being fluent and responded to my Danzhounese/MSD questions without difficulties were considered "fluent speakers."
- Participants "speaking a little" had difficulty in understanding or speaking the language(s).
- Those who did not speak the language(s) included participants who, although self-reporting ability to speak the language(s) fluently or a little, when asked in the language(s), did not respond and gave no indication of understanding.

Six participants who claimed to speak a little MSD were unwilling to speak MSD, or spoke only a few words in MSD during the interviews. Therefore, I inquired about their MSD-related experiences and evaluated their MSD proficiency: 1) What were your MSD educational experiences? 2) When were you exposed to MSD, when did you begin speaking MSD, and how long have you spoken MSD? Based on their answers, I assessed their MSD competencies. "Fluent speakers" used MSD at work and interacted with MSD-speaking workmates or had at least completed elementary school education in which MSD was the instructional language. Of six, two completed elementary school and were, therefore, "fluent speakers." The other four "spoke a little" since they neither completed elementary education nor had much interaction with MSD speakers. Moreover, they did not understand some of my questions in MSD. However, they stated that they had learned a little MSD while attending elementary school, from their grandchildren, and/or association with MSD-speakers.

In terms of Hakka proficiency, I used the consultant's assessments. If the evaluations were unavailable, I used the participants' self-reports. In this study, fifteen participants self-reported speaking Hakka fluently or a little, but only two spoke Hakka during the interviews. Therefore, the consultant only evaluated these two participants' Hakka recordings. Data of the other thirteen participants' Hakka oral proficiency was based on self-reports.

I evaluated the English proficiency of the single participant who claimed to know English by asking questions and listening to her responses in English.

For Cantonese, Hainanese, and Lin'gao, data was based on participants' self-reports.

RESULTS

Language Abilities

FIG 9 shows participants' language abilities in Danzhounese, MSD, Hakka, and other (vernacular) languages.¹ Within the category of "other (vernacular) languages," participants were placed in one of the three groups: "speaks fluently," "speaks a little," or "does not speak," based on vernacular language proficiency assessment. If participants had varied proficiency in multiple vernaculars, they were placed in one of the three groups mentioned earlier according to their highest language proficiency.

¹ The category of "other (vernacular) languages" includes MSD, Hakka, and Danzhounese, but includes any other dialects and languages (e.g., English) spoken by research participants.

For instance, if a participant spoke fluent Hainanese, a little Cantonese, and a little Lin'gao, they were placed in "speaks fluently."

FIG 10. Participants' language proficiency in Danzhounese, MSC, Hakka, and other (vernacular) languages.

Language/Dialect	Speaks Fluently		Speaks A Little		Does Not Speak		All Participants	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Danzhounese	32	100	0	0	0	0	32	100
MSC	27	84	5	16	0	0	32	100
Hakka	6	19	9	28	17	53	32	100
Other (vernacular) Languages	6	19	10	31	16	50	32	100

FIG 10 shows that all research participants spoke Danzhounese fluently, with thirty speaking Danzhounese as their first language regardless of their origins. The youngest participants - Xue Li and Xue Wang (twin sisters, b. 2010 in Wuji Village) - attended elementary school in urban Danzhou City and often stayed in Wuji Village with their paternal grandmother during school breaks in summer and winter holidays, and weekends. The Xue twins acquired MSC as their first language from communication with family members fluent in MSC and from K-4 education. They learned Danzhounese from interacting with their paternal grandmother, who is monolingual. The twins' family members converse in Danzhounese but speak MSC to Xue Li and Xue Wang. Danzhounese use and exposure in Wuji Village contribute to the sisters' Danzhounese fluency.

Regarding MSC proficiency, twenty-seven participants (eighty-four percent) spoke MSC fluently, achieved mainly through formal education, work, or communication with those who did not speak Danzhounese.

Five participants (sixteen percent) spoke a little MSC. However, they neither completed elementary education nor had much interaction with MSC speakers.

Regarding Hakka proficiency, six participants (nineteen percent) spoke fluent Hakka acquired while attending schools, working with Hakka speakers, or interacting with Hakka-speaking spouses/relatives. For example, a female participant whose first language is Danzhounese had been married to her Hakka-speaking husband for twenty years and gained Hakka proficiency through interaction with him, his relatives, and Hakka-speaking customers she sells clothing to.

"Other (vernacular) languages" in Wuji Village included five and nine participants who spoke fluent and a little Cantonese, respectively; two knew a little Hainanese; two spoke Lin'gao - one fluently and one "a little"; and one (b. 1990) was fluent in English. The five research participants fluent in these vernacular languages were born in 1961 (one) and 1970 (four). Of these five, one was proficient in Cantonese and Lin'gao. They learned a little or gained fluency in these vernacular languages through interaction with speakers of these languages. For instance, one participant (b. 1970) became a driver after returning home from factory work in Guangdong Province, where he had learned to speak Cantonese by communicating with workmates. The participant (b. 1990) with fluent English graduated from a vocational college with a major in English in 2013 and then worked in a Singapore restaurant (2013-2016).

Age and MSC Fluency

Age and fluency in MSC are shown in Table Two. Participants were divided into two groups based on age. Participants' median age was thirty-five (b. 1985). "Speak MSC less than fluently" included those who "speak a little MSC" and "do not speak MSC."

FIG 11. Participants' age and MSC proficiency.

<div>MSC Proficiency</div> <div>Age</div>	Speak MSC Fluently		Speak MSC Less Than Fluently		All Participants	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Born After 1985	16	100	0	0	16	100
Born Before 1985	11	69	5	31	16	100

FIG 11 shows that those born after 1985 were all fluent in MSC; however, only sixty-nine percent of the older generation (born before 1985) were fluent in MSC. Five participants (thirty-one percent) spoke a little MSC.

The younger cohorts were schooled in MSC. Xiao Ming (b. 2009) and Xue Li (b. 2010) are fifth-grade and fourth-grade students in Luoji Village and urban Danzhou City, respectively. Their education is in MSC. Textbooks are in MSC, teachers instruct in MSC at school, and schoolmates mostly speak MSC. Other participants born after 1985 who completed elementary education gained MSC fluency through schooling or language use after schooling by working with MSC speakers, using MSC media, or texting in MSC.

However, five participants (thirty-one percent; b. 1973, 1971, 1967, 1965, and 1942) who neither went to nor completed elementary school and had little interaction with MSC speakers spoke only a little MSC. The highest school education among these participants was fourth-grade. Unable to read or write a letter or a text message in MSC, they had been farmers for their entire lives. They lived at home caring for their grandchildren; cultivating tomatoes, eggplants, carrots, and so on for self-consumption; or "doing nothing" (unemployed). They learned a little MSC through interaction with their grandchildren and communicating with non-Danzhounese speakers.

The group just described expressed interest in learning MSC during the interviews. The oldest participant, Ma Ya (b. 1942), who spoke a little MSC, said:

I am especially delighted that all my grandchildren have attended or are attending school. Literate people move my heart a lot. However, I cannot wholly support my grandchildren financially. That said, I try to save my monthly government subsidies for the elderly to help my grandchildren in school. ... I hope that everyone knows Putonghua. But what can you do when people just do not know Putonghua? ... When going (to a bank) to get monthly subsidies from the government for the elderly with my friends - all eight of us - I sign their names for them [at their request]. ... Even if some are illiterate, like me,¹ they can still speak Putonghua. If people try their best to learn, they can speak Putonghua without being literate.

¹ She wrote the Chinese characters for her own name and the names of her friends, and recognized a few characters, such as the characters in her name when they were put together in the order of family and given names. She found it difficult to recognize the characters in her name individually when they were separated.

Language Attitudes

FIG 12. Participants' language attitudes towards the use of Danzhounese, MSC, and Hakka.

Question	Answer		Yes		No		Participants	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Is it better to use/learn Danzhounese than MSC?	4	14	25	86	29	100		
Is it better to use/learn Hakka than Danzhounese?	1	4	27	96	28	100		
Is MSC a must for everyone to learn nowadays?	25	86	4	14	29	100		
Will you teach future generations Danzhounese, i.e., your children or grandchildren?	31	100	0	0	31	100		

Eighty-six percent of participants believed that learning MSC was a must for everyone to learn nowadays and that it was better to use MSC than Danzhounese because:

- MSC is Guoyu 'the national language', so every Chinese citizen should put it first.
- MSC is the lingua franca for all the people of China, and speaking it allows interaction with those who do not speak Danzhounese.
- MSC brings economic benefit since most people speak MSC when engaging in business in formal settings.
- Villagers can show hospitality by speaking MSC to visitors who do not understand Danzhounese.
- Society is becoming more MSC-centered; therefore, MSC fluency keeps pace with social development.
- Learning MSC facilitates literacy acquisition.

Xiao Ming's and Xue Li's aforementioned educational experiences demonstrate that the language of K-5 schooling in local areas is all in MSC. Children who do not speak MSC early in their lives may have lower literacy levels than those who speak MSC as their first language, and they may be at a disadvantage in understanding teachers' instructions and textbooks. Furthermore, interaction with schoolmates during their first year at school may be limited.

From my experiences in local elementary and secondary schools, education at elementary and secondary levels in Danzhou City was in MSC, and speaking MSC was encouraged. Posters and signs reminded students to speak only MSC at school, and teachers (bilingual in MSC and Danzhounese) answered students' questions in MSC, even when students raised questions in Danzhounese. Non-native speakers of MSC were at a disadvantage in terms of gaining literacy and educational achievements.

Ninety-six percent of participants asserted that learning/using Danzhounese is better than Hakka. Fourteen percent of participants agreed learning/using Danzhounese is better than MSC for the following reasons:

- Danzhounese is the language of Wuji Village's history, traditions, customs, and culture. Danzhou *ediang*¹ (MSC, *diaosheng*) and *dango*² (MSC, *shan'ge*) 'folksongs' are expressed in Danzhounese. According to Yang (1988; 1993), *ediang* is a vital aspect of Danzhou local customs, cultures, and traditions.
- Danzhounese is the language that villagers use daily in Wuji Village and is integral to their identity.
- Hakka or MSC is thirty participants' second/third/fourth language, even for those fluent in Hakka/MSC. Consequently, they might feel more comfortable speaking Danzhounese than Hakka/MSC. Feeling more comfortable speaking their first language explains why six participants were unwilling to speak or spoke only a little MSC during the interviews.
- With greater proficiency in Danzhounese than Hakka/MSC, Danzhounese should be used more than Hakka/MSC. On the contrary, they lacked confidence in communicating in MSC with speakers of greater MSC proficiency. During interviews, when asked about their oral MSC competencies, they responded, "I know a little Putonghua;" "my Putonghua is not good;" or "my Putonghua is strongly accented;" even though the majority spoke easily comprehensible MSC fluently. They might have lacked confidence in communicating in MSC because they believed I had greater MSC competency.

However, one participant suggested that Hakka is better than Danzhounese because Hakka is "soft" - it sounds nice and friendly - while Danzhounese is "hard" - it sounds harsh and unfriendly to those who do not speak it.

Four participants (fourteen percent) said MSC is not a must to learn because, as declared earlier, Danzhounese is the language medium of their traditions and integral to their identity, e.g., "I am a Danzhou person, so I should speak Danzhounese."

All participants declared they would teach Danzhounese to the future generations for its communicative functions with village elders and function as the language medium of village traditions. However, eighty-six percent (not indicated in the tables), who valued MSC more than Danzhounese, stated that learning Danzhounese is not essential but valuable to have as a language; MSC is the priority in terms of language learning. While participants had a strong affection for Danzhounese, it is probably less intense than in the past.

DISCUSSION

The linguistic environment in Wuji Village includes Danzhounese, Hakka, MSC, Lin'gao, Cantonese, Hainanese, and English. There may be more vernacular language(s) spoken in Wuji Village, such as Junhua. Wuji villagers regularly interact with Junhua speakers who often live in Nada Town (Liu 2001:50), particularly in urban areas. All participants in this study were fluent in Danzhounese. Eighty-four percent were fluent MSC speakers (sixteen percent could speak a little). All Wuji villagers are proficient in Danzhounese; most are bilingual (Danzhounese and MSC); and some are multilingual (conversant in Danzhounese, MSC, Hakka, Cantonese, and/or Hainanese).

Emotional attachment to Danzhounese, though deeply rooted, is weakening. Participants expressed affection for Danzhounese and encouraged Danzhounese learning. Nevertheless, eighty-four percent stated that it was not necessary to be proficient in Danzhounese. From my childhood experiences as a Wuji Villager, villagers my age and older easily acquired Danzhounese as a first language. Before 2005, villagers, including children, actively engaged in village *ediang* and *dango*

¹ A "variant" of Han folksongs (Yang 1988; 1993).

² A type of folksong (Chen 2016; Fu 1996).

gatherings. During the Mooncake Festival (the fifteenth day of the eighth lunisolar month), villagers went to municipal areas in Danzhou City to enjoy or participate in *ediang*. I performed *ediang* when I was a child but later forgot *ediang* melodies and lyrics. In 2020, I was unable to perform *ediang*.

Furthermore, performing *ediang* during Chunjie was a village tradition before 2005. Villagers gathered and made plans for *ediang* approximately ten days before Chunjie. However, after that time, I rarely heard mention of village *ediang* or *dango* gatherings. Instead, villagers focused on MSC media for entertainment, such as Weixin 'WeChat' and Douyin 'TikTok'.

Wuji Villagers' attitudes towards Danzhounese, Hakka, and MSC vary. Ninety-six percent felt that the use of Danzhounese is better than that of Hakka, and eighty-six percent held the idea that MSC use is better vis-à-vis Danzhounese. In terms of MSC learning, eighty-six percent agreed that everyone should learn MSC nowadays, including Ma Ya, the oldest participant.

The linguistic situation of Wuji Village will inevitably continue altering with the increase in MSC learning and use and a decline in village vernacular language learning and use. Furthermore, based on this study and my life experiences, fluent Hakka, Hainanese, Cantonese, and/or Lin'gao speakers were generally born in 1970 or earlier. Those born after this time were generally unable to speak these village languages. As mentioned earlier, these vernaculars are minority languages in Wuji Village, and pressure from Danzhounese and MSC negatively impacts learning these minority languages. This is a general trend, e.g., minority languages in Tibet (Roche 2017), in western Sichuan Province (Roche and Tsomu 2018), across China (Xu 2013:261), and in Asia as a whole (Loh and Harmon 2014:39).

However, in 2020, bilingual ability in Danzhounese and MSC seems assured in the near future. All villagers are expected to be fluent in Danzhounese and MSC. Eighty-six percent of participants prioritized MSC learning because MSC fluency facilitates success, leading to more income-earning opportunities. Fourteen percent viewed Danzhounese as the priority with language learning due to its functions of constructing villagers' identity as "a Danzhou person" and inheriting village traditions.

Eventually, MSC is likely to replace Danzhounese as the dominant village language. Though this study suggests villagers have a deep emotional attachment to Danzhounese and Danzhounese learning, the practical use of MSC beyond the village has a significant negative impact. The economic and communicative benefits of MSC-speaking may limit villagers' motivation to learn Danzhounese. This finding aligns with the general trend of minority language marginalization in China. Examples are the marginalization of Guiqiongyu 'the Gochang language'¹ in Sichuan Province (Roche and Tsomu 2018), and the Dan language/dialect in Hainan Province (Mao 2019). Minority languages in China have become marginalized in "their social domain and communicative functions," because of economic globalization and language imperialism (Xu 2013:269).

Xiao Ming's, Xue Li's, and my educational experiences indicate the use of MSC in education may further impede the learning of Wuji vernaculars. Wang et al. noted (2013:57-65) sustainable mechanisms involving "working systems, institutions and research teams" have been established to ensure language standardization in China, including standardized assessments, Chinese characters, and Chinese pronunciations/sounds in education. Chen et al. (2014:9-11) reported that the Ministry of Education's Language Information Administration launched Putonghua and Chinese character usage proficiency tests in 1994 and 2007, respectively, to evaluate "the ability of educated users" MSC, including "pronunciation, meaning, and usage." As students in a university teacher education program, my cohorts and I, regardless of our ethnicities, were required to pass a Putonghua proficiency test as part of teacher professional certification.

¹ A Qiangish language in the Tibeto-Burman subfamily (Sun 2015:551).

Besides, ethnic minority teachers were provided Putonghua training on a national level to improve their MSC pronunciation (Chen et al. 2014:13-14). However, education in the standardized language(s) plays a role in the decline of learning minority languages across China (Xu 2013). For example, minority languages in China's Tibetan areas are vanishing due to education and "assimilatory pressure" from dominant and standardized languages (Roche 2017:24). Moreover, Xue Li's and Xue Wang's MSC language learning experiences suggest that their parents' communication with them primarily in MSC will diminish their fluency in Danzhounese.

This study's limitations include data from participant self-reports of Hakka, Cantonese, Hainanese, and Lin'gao proficiency. Only two participants spoke Hakka during the interviews, with their Hakka proficiency later assessed by the consultant. Thirteen other participants claimed fluency in or self-reported knowing a little Hakka did not speak Hakka during interviews. Data on oral competency in Cantonese, Hainanese, and Lin'gao was based on participants' self-reports.

This study suggests various vernaculars may be marginalized due to education in MSC and pressure from MSC and Danzhounese. MSC is likely to displace Danzhounese as Wuji Village's majority language. Investigation into the causes of marginalization and decline of vernacular language promises insights into attrition, shift, and degree of maintenance in Wuji Village.

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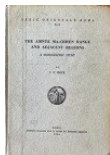
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CHINESE TERMS

- Baisha 白沙 County
 Baoting 保亭 County
baoying 报应
Baoyou tang zhong chang fawang 保佑堂中长
 发旺
 Bendi 本地 dialects
 Chengmai 澄迈 County
 Chunjie 春节
 Cibei wanzai xian shenming 慈悲万载显神明
citing 祠堂
 Cunhua 村话
 Dalandi 大兰地 Village
 Dan 蛋 language/dialect
 Danzhou 儋州 City
diaosheng 调声
 Douyin 抖音
 Duanwu 端午
 Fu nanjin 符南进 mingdai weiwu dajiangjun 明
 代威武大将军
 Fu shi zongci 符氏祠堂
 Fu zhao jiamen fu sheng hui 福照家门富生辉
Fuchi zhainei yong xinglong 扶持宅内永兴隆
 Fujian 福建 Province
 Gan 赣 dialects
 Guangdong 广东 Province
 Guangxi 广西 Zhuang 壮族 Autonomous
 Region
 Guanyin 观音
 Guanyu 关羽
 Guiqiongyu 贵琼语
 Guoyu 国语
 Haikou 海口 City
 Hainan 海南 Province
 Hainanhua 海南话
 Han 汉族
 Huangkan 黄坎 Village
Ji shan qianqiu cheng fofa 积善千秋成佛
 Jiamao 加茂 dialects
 Jilin 吉林 Province
 Junhua 军话
 Lebian 乐便 Village
 Li 黎族
 Li-Miao 黎苗
 Lin'gao 临高 language/dialect
ling 灵
 Lingshui 陵水
 Liyu 黎语
 Luoji 洛基 Village
 Meifu 美孚 dialects
 Mian 勉 language/dialect
 Miaoyu 苗语
 Min 闽南 dialects
 Ming huangtaizu chifeng weiwu dajiangjun
 funanjin gong zhi 明太祖敕封威武大将军符
 南进公之
 Nada 那大 Town
 Nadouhua 那斗话
 Panzhen 番真 Village
 Pingdi 平地 Village
 Putonghua 普通话
 Qi 杞 dialects
 Qionghai 琼海 City
 Sanya 三亚 City
shange 山歌
shen 神
 Sheng zhixia xianji xingzhengqu 省直辖县级行
 政区
shengyun 升运
Shenling baoyou 神灵保佑
shenwu 神屋
 Shenzhen 深圳 City
 Sichuan 四川 Province
 Tiejiang 铁匠 Village
tongzi 童子
 Wangning 万宁 City
 weixin 微信, WeChat
 Wuhan 武汉 City
 Wuji 屋基 Village
Xi ju baodi caiyuwang 喜居宝地财与旺
Xian shi you ling zitaishun'an ge dezhi 显世有灵
 子泰孙安歌德治
 Xiao 俸 dialects
 Ying ren suoyuan shanfeng haisheng nian
 gong'en 应人所愿山丰海盛念公恩
 Yudi 玉帝
 Yue 粤 dialects
 Zhongjianxiang 中间巷 Village
 Zixi 子熙 Village
zongzi 粽子

REVIEW ARTICLE: *THE AMNYE MA-CHHEN RANGE
AND ADJACENT REGION* BY JOSEPH ROCK

Nyangchakja*



Joseph Francis Charles Rock. 1956. *The Amnye Ma-Chhen Range and Adjacent Region: a Monographic Study*. Rome: Serie Orientale Roma, vol. XII. 194 pp. 82 BW photographs. 5 color maps (English, hardcover).¹²

As of 10 June 2020, HOLLIS² and Google searches produced four reviews of *The Amnye Ma-Chhen Range*³ and *Adjacent Region: a Monographic Study* (Lionello Lanciotti (1956) in English, Rolf A Stein (1956) in French and, in German, Ulrich Schweinfurth (1958) and Dominik Schröder (1958). The small number of reviews may be due to the lesser-known areas AMCR addressed, which has encouraged me to write this review and include place names as they existed in 2020.⁴

AMCR documented geographical, botanical, ornithological, ethnographical, and local historical accounts in parts of AMCR during Joseph Rock's expedition in 1926. The trip was part of a program from 1924 to 1927 sponsored by Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum. Published in 1956, Rock prioritized finding the precise height of Amnye Ma-Chhen (Rma rgyal spom ra, Animaqing) Mountain,⁵ solving the mystery of the Mgo log (Guoluo) Queen,⁶ and exploring botanically unexplored valleys and gorges of the Yellow River.

The orthographic (letter by letter) transliteration system and phonetic transcription system provided by Basil John Gould (1883-1956) and Hugh Edward Richardson⁷ (1905-2000) with minor changes, was employed to Romanize Tibetan terms. Tibetan script is also provided for people and place names. Wade-Giles was used for Chinese terms, along with Chinese characters.

The introduction described the administrative structure of Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) before and after its establishment as a province in 1928 when it was divided into nineteen districts or *xian* 'counties'. Rock recorded the old and new names of districts, monasteries, and rivers. Tibet, Xinjiang, Gansu, Xikang, and Sichuan, which bordered Mtsho sngon, were mentioned. Citing the *Records of*

*Nyangchakja (Snying lcags rgyal, Niangjijia). 2021. Review Article: The Amnye Ma-Chhen Range and Adjacent Region by Joseph Rock. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:94-107.

¹ On 12 June 1956, in the preface of this book, Rock thanked Giuseppe Tucci and the University of Washington's Far Eastern and Russian Institute for facilitating publication as Volume 12 of the Eastern Roma Series. Correspondence between Rock, Tucci, and Tucci's colleagues is available at <https://bit.ly/36F16cl> (accessed 29 May 2020).

² Harvard On-Line Library Information System.

³ Hereafter: AMCR.

⁴ I am a native of Mang ra (Guinan) County and familiar with the region AMCR addresses (Nangchukja 2011, 2015; Nyangchakja 2016, 2018).

⁵ In 1922, Rock met Brigadier General George Edward Pereira (1865-1923) in Yunnan. Pereira told Rock that he had seen Amnye Ma-Chhen Mountain on his way from Beijing to Lhasa and claimed that the mountain would prove taller than Mount Everest. Intrigued, Rock wished to explore the mountain.

⁶ Rock described the "queen" as a tribal leader of about 600 households and the first Mgo log tribal ruler who submitted to Muslim Warlord Ma Qi (1869-1931). She was subsequently taken prisoner and released later. Her relationship with Ma Qi made her a "queen," a title that only Ma Qi promoted in an effort to further control the Mgo log area. She was not a favorite of other Mgo log tribes.

⁷ For more on this system, see Basil and Richardson (1943).

Qinghai,¹ Rock also described the establishment and changes of eight counties including Zi ling (Xining) and their subdivisions.

Rock postponed his plan to explore A myes rma chen in 1925 after conflict between Tibetan tribes from west Bla brang (Labuleng) and Muslims, who later controlled Mtsho sngon and Ningxia.² Instead, Rock traveled from Kunming to Chengdu, Co ne (Zhuoni) County, Zi ling, Sku 'bum (Kumbum, Ta'er) Monastery, Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake), Mdo la ri bo (Qilian Mountains), Zhangye City, and back to Co ne County, where he was a guest of the Co ne Prince.

On 26 April 1926, Rock set out from Co ne Monastery to A myes rma chen with armed Naxi (Nakhi) men from Lijiang. They first traveled to Bla brang Monastery. Then, following a trail along the Klu chu (Tao River) to the ruined city of Taozhou (Lintan County), Rock headed to Gtsod (Hezuo City), and on to Bla brang.³ Rock photographed and made brief observations of towns, villages, monasteries, mountain ranges, and rivers from Co ne to Bla brang.

Rock gave a brief historical account of the Bsang chu (Xiahe) area, including the time of China's First Emperor (Qin Shi Huang, 259-210 BC), the Tibetan Empire (seventh to ninth centuries AD), the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), Song Dynasty (960-1279), the Tea-horse Trade, the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Imperial Preceptors, Buddhist Patriarchs, and the construction of Taoyang City (later known as Taozhou; contemporary Lintan County, Gansu Province). Rock also described Seng ge gshong (Wutun) Village in Reb gong (Huangnan), the Mongolian settlement of the Bsang chu area during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911/12), the establishment of Bla brang Monastery, the Mongol Prince of the South Yellow River, and the Bajiaocheng 'Eight-edged City' in Rgan rgya (Ganjia Township, Xiahe County). Rock depicted Bsang chu as a center for Tibetans in China's northwest borderland and Linxia as a Muslim center. A history of antagonistic relationships between Tibetans and Muslims was also given.

Much of the historical accounts on the topics above were likely drawn from Chinese-language works; however, references are not given.

Rock detailed the history of Bla brang Monastery and its academic schools, reincarnations, monks, finances, and buildings. A brief historical account was given of the Mongol tribes, the Mongol Prince of the South Yellow River, and their relationship with the monastery founder. Rock estimated 3,000 monks resided at the monastery at the time of his visit.⁴ A brief overview was given of the Fifth 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1916-1947), his family members, and earlier incarnations.

In 1925, Rock had met and photographed the Fifth 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa at the age of ten, and the *bla ma*'s father, Mgon po don grub (Huang Weizhong), at the age of fifty-five in Brag dkar (Baishiya) Monastery in Co ne⁵ after they were exiled because of conflict with Muslims.⁶

In 1954, when Rock was no longer in China, he received a letter from Marion Grant Griebenow (1899-1972),⁷ a missionary in Bla brang from 1922 to 1949, who had met Rock when he was in Bla

¹ *Qinghaiji*, a historical manuscript Rock managed to have copied from a library in Nanking (Nanjing). A handwritten manuscript with the same title written by Kang Furong, a post-Qing officer who served in today's Stong skor (Huangyuan) County, was published in 1968.

² Ill-equipped Tibetans led by Mgon po don grub (?) were defeated by the Zi ling-based Ninghai Army led by Ma Bufang (1902-1973) (Nietupski 2009).

³ Originating from the east side of the Klu'i chab brag 'Naga Bathing Place' (Xiqing), a Kunlun Mountain range between contemporary Rma chu County and Klu chu County, the Klu chu (Tao River) is a Yellow River tributary.

⁴ Rock (1930a:145) reported 5,000 elsewhere.

⁵ Currently located in Wad mar (Wanmao) Township. Not to be confused with the location of the same name near Lab rang.

⁶ Mgon po don grub, A pa a blo, the Fifth 'Jam dbyangs bshad pa, and the *bla ma*'s other family members left Bla brang Monastery and remained in exile from July 1924 to 1927 (Nietupski 2009).

⁷ Nietupski (1999, 2011) studied and published Griebenow's experiences and photographs from Bla brang Monastery.

brang. The letter stated that 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa had died from smallpox in 1947 and described the condition of the *bla ma*'s elder brother, Blo bsang tshe dbang (Huang Zhengqing, 1903-1997, aka A pa a blo). In 1936, A pa a blo was the commander of the Bla brang Peace Preservation Corps.

Rock's interpreter, William E Simpson (1901-1932), was an American missionary fluent in Amdo Tibetan.¹ They started off, traveling from Bla brang Monastery to Ra rgya Monastery. The Sog po A rig Tribe from today's Rma lho Mongol Autonomous County had arranged sixty pack yaks, fourteen horses, four *mdzo* 'cow-yak hybrids', and a number of nomads for Rock's expedition. While traveling through Bsang khog (Sangke) Valley and upper grassland in A rig territory, Rock noted the Mongol origin of A rig nomads and observed nomads living in yurts and speaking Tibetan; however, none were able to speak Mongolian.² Rock named and described the valleys, grassland, rivers, plants, and tribes that he encountered.³ Rock also photographed local Tibetans and places and recorded elevations of certain areas. On 10-11 May, Rock traveled across the Rma lho grassland and passed the Rtse chu (Zequ) River, noting thousands of yaks and sheep belonging to the A rig Tribe. Rock also encountered nomads from the Rong bo Tribe in today's Rtse khog (Zeku) County. A key encounter was with eighty-year-old A lags la kha tshang, a respected *bla ma* from Gtsang (Shizang) Monastery. According to a history of this monastery, the *bla ma* passed away at the age of eighty-one in 1927 (Chos 'phel rgya mtsho 2000). Rock photographed the *bla ma* seated in front of a yurt with a young incarnate *bla ma*. Another photograph has the *bla ma* in a litter transported by four mules, accompanied by several monks on horseback.

Rock reached Ra rgya Monastery in Go srib Valley on 12 May 1927, where he spent two days. He described the location, geographic features, and plant life. Rock explored Yellow River gorges with their native spruce (*Picea asperata*), birch, willows, junipers, and cotoneasters near the monastery where some 500 monks resided. Rock met the fifth reincarnation of Gtsang paN+Di ta (1888-1942),⁴ abbot of the monastery, whose first incarnation founded the monastery. A photograph of the *bla ma* with several other monks is given.

On 15 May, Rock left to return to Ra rgya Monastery while observing the area's geographic features and soon reached the monastery at the foot of A myes khyung mgon Mountain. Rarely visited by foreigners, the monastery was either absent from or inaccurately represented on most contemporary maps. Rock mentioned maps by the British War Office (1939), Albert Tafel (1914), Karl Futterer (1943), Günther Köhler (1928), Vladimir Roborowski (1893), Sven Hedin (1900), VK Ting [Ding Wenjiang ?], William Rockhill [?], Fernand Grenard (1898), Nikolay M Przewalski (1883), Pyotr K Koslof (1905, 1908), and Wilhelm Filchner (1903).

Ra rgya Monastery, founded by A rig dge bshes when Bla brang Monastery was established, had eight major temples and 800-900 monks who lived in several hundred small rooms at the time of Rock's visit. No Chinese lived in Ra rgya at the time. The area was later considered part of 'Ba' (Tongde) County, established by the Nationalist Government in 1935. The monastery served as a trade center with Muslims from Taozhou traveling to high-risk places where the Chinese dared not venture. Local nomads brought butter and cheese to feed the religious community. Muslims traded barley and

¹ Simpson "was killed by bandits near the Tibetan border in China" (<https://bit.ly/2TxCAtk> (accessed 22 May 2020)).

² A small population in Rma lho spoke a variety of Oirat Mongolian and lived in yurts in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Li 1994, Diemberger 2007, Nietupski 2011, Ai 2012, Lha mo sgrol ma and Roche 2014, Roche 2015, and Wallenböck 2016).

³ Klu thar rgyal et al. (2020) records accounts of ordinary Tibetan herders who traveled in the same region in 1929-1958.

⁴ Birth and death dates are from Chos 'phel rgya mtsho (2000).

tea for sheep wool and musk. Cloth, salt, sugar, jujubes, and metal utensils were also traded. Rock noted the woodblock printing of the *Bka' 'gyur* at the monastery.¹

Rock gave a brief local history of Shing bza' paN+Di ta (1898-1937),² aka Shing bza' rin po che, the abbot of Ra rgya Monastery, who was deemed the reincarnation of Tsong kha pa's mother and carried her name. Rock was granted an audience with the *bla ma* and presented gifts, and recommendation letters written by Bla brang Monastery's abbot to the abbot of Ra rgya Monastery and Mgo log tribal leaders. The letters asked that Rock be protected during the expedition. At the meeting, Rock expressed his intention to explore A mnye ma chen Mountain, Yellow River gorges, and Rgyud par Mountain and hoped the *bla ma* would help him forward the letters to Mgo log tribal leaders for protection against robbery. The *bla ma* spoke of the Ri mang, a prominent Mgo log tribe, who were at odds with Ra rgya Monastery because the *bla ma* had forwarded letters from Ma Qi demanding grass and water tax from local tribes. The Mgo log tribes refused to pay. In 1921, Ma Qi had sent 5,000 troops and subjugated the Ri mang Tribe, who then paid the tax. However, nomads killed Ma Qi's tax collectors in the following year, and Ma Qi's men did not return.

Shing bza' rin po che wrote letters to three major Mgo log tribal leaders, requesting that they protect Rock's expedition. Rock waited over a month for their response. A photograph of the *bla ma* is included in *AMCR*. After spending a few days in Ra rgya observing monastic activities, Rock explored the Yellow River's downstream gorges to the north.

On 27 May, Rock set out with ten pack yaks and several horses for the Rgyud par³ Mountains, located between present-day 'Ba' County and Mang ra County. The area between Ra rgya Monastery and his destination had been reported by the German geographer, Karl Futterer (1866-1906), who had explored the mountain range in 1898 (Futterer 1903). Rock's descriptions include local tribes, monasteries, valleys, mountains, districts, rivers, plants, and birds. Brief histories of tribes, their relationships, and territories were documented.

Arriving in 'Ba' Valley, the seat of 'Ba' County (in 2020), Rock studied the flora and gave a brief history of the Hor T'u-yü-hun [Tuyuhun]. After reaching the Rgyud par, Rock spent about two weeks camping in several locations. Local Tibetan nomads from the Klu tshang Tribe from today's Mang ra County were paid to take him to the heart of the mountain range and its forests. Plant specimens were photographed, and their scientific names were provided. Spruce was as tall as forty-six meters. Many of the forests were confined to inaccessible steep valleys and ridges. Accessible ones were in small, dying patches, a condition Rock attributed to local nomads and livestock, without further explanation. Certain plants identified were also found in the Northwestern Himalayas, Siberia, Central Asia, and Alaska, as noted in *AMCR*.

Rock explored most of the mountain range and observed the Yellow River gorge at the west end of the range. Climbing to a vantage point, he observed A tshogs Monastery, Mang ra, Mang ra'i mdo, Mang ra'i bye ma, Smu dge thang, and A myes brag dkar Mountain that are administratively in today's Mang ra County. Unfortunately, Rock did not state the sources for information on tribes and place names related to this trip. On 30 June 1927, Rock returned to Ra rgya Monastery.

Rock gave spellings of "A myes rma chen" in English, Russian, Chinese, and Tibetan, arguing that most non-Tibetan names were incorrect due to a lack of attention to the local language. Based on published sources and local folklore, Rock discussed the etymological origin of A myes rma chen and

¹ In 1925, Rock purchased a copy of the *Bka' 'gyur* and *Bstan 'gyur* from Co ne Monastery with 2,500 taels of silver for the Library of Congress.

² Birth and death dates are from Mkhas btsun bzang po (2017:151).

³ Variant spellings include Kye phur, Kye phur rdza rgan (Ye shes bzang po 2001), Kye pur (Nangchukja 2015), Ju par (Rock 1930a), Dju-par (Rock 1956), Dschupar (Futterer 1903; Przhevskii 1884), and Jubu (Chinese) on a Chinese map (<https://bit.ly/3h23zCI> (accessed 7 June 2020)). For a google map location, see <https://bit.ly/2XFN9lh> (accessed 7 June 2020).

complained about the mountain's inaccurate location on maps. A section described the A myes rma chen Mountain peak names and surrounding areas while discussing estimates of peak heights and range lengths of A myes rma chen by other explorers.

A description of the mountain pilgrim trail was provided by a local tribal leader, whom Rock met at Ra rgya Monastery. The description included key places, rivers, and deities of A myes rma chen Mountain, and how people circumambulated and prostrated. About 10,000 pilgrims had circumambulated during the Year of the Horse, according to the Tibetan Calendar.¹ Rock also described the A myes rma chen deity in *thang ka* and murals that he saw in Gtsang and Co ne monasteries. In a Sgrol ma 'Tara' *thang ka* he was given by Shing bza' rin po che, Rock identified an image of A myes rma chen and noted that the Naxi of Lijiang worshiped the same mountain deity. A photograph of a Naxi *thang ka* was included in *AMCR*, along with a Naxi manuscript written in pictographic glyphs that was translated into English.

A detailed history of Mgo log with its main tribes, territories, and independently-minded people was given, along with a folktale on the origin of the Mgo log people (from Rolf A Stein, 1911-1999). There were about 50,000 households in the Mgo log area.² Rock described the Mgo log people as rebellious, lawless, and notorious, who obeyed no one but their tribe. People from other countries were not allowed to come near most tribal camps. Banditry was rampant and foreign explorers were subject to attack. Rock (1956:137) wrote, "such hostile and unfriendly people I have never met anywhere in the world; it seems that a smile never crosses their coarse features."

Lacking high-powered rifles, the nomads carried rifles originally from the Franco-Russian War in 1870 and American-made rifles from the First World War. Rock noted that such rifles cost nine dollars in the US. The nomads paid much more to Mongolian and Muslim traders who bought them and smuggled them in from the Russians.

AMCR also described Gnyan po g.yu rtse (Nianbo yuze) Mountain with its peaks, rivers, lakes, trails, surrounding tribes, and monasteries. Unseen by previous foreign explorers, it was located in the heart of the Mgo log tribes. Foreign visitors were forbidden. There is no evidence in *AMCR* that Rock ever saw the mountain. Information on Gnyan po g.yu rtse and other survey maps in the book was provided by Simpson, who traveled widely in A mdo and occasionally helped local Tibetans present their disputes with Muslims to the governor of Lanzhou. Simpson was a trusted friend of Ra rgya and Bla brang monasteries and, later, of the Mgo log tribes.

Two of the responses to Shing bza' rin po che's letters to Mgo log tribal leaders were rejections, threatening death to Rock and his party if they approached their encampments. However, the Khang gsar tribal leader agreed to protect and receive Rock, delegating the responsibility to the Rta bo dme tshang tribal leader to protect and take Rock to the Khang gsar territory. The letter was given in *AMCR* in a Romanized transliteration and an English translation.

One of the tribal leaders who disapproved of Rock's exploration to A myes rma chen Mountain threatened death to anyone who helped Rock and his men cross the Yellow River. Consequently, no one at Ra rgya dared help Rock. The monks at Ra rgya also discouraged Rock from crossing. Rock finally communicated to the abbot of Ra rgya Monastery that if he did not support his travel, he would ask Ma Qi, who had told Rock he would protect his expedition, to send soldiers from Zi ling or Bla brang and escort him to A myes rma chen. Subsequently, the abbot arranged for the leader of the nearby Rgya bza' Tribe to escort Rock and his interpreter. The tribal leader then ordered all of his armed men to prepare Rock's expedition to A myes rma chen.

¹ For a documentary on A myes rma chen Mountain and related pilgrimage, see <https://tinyurl.com/y7jklppb> (accessed 3 June 2020; Nangchukja and Tashi Dorje 2014) and Bleisch (2017).

² Elsewhere, Rock (1930a:131) reported 90,000.

On 14 July, Rock's group crossed the Yellow River on goatskin rafts as their horses swam across. Rock's nomad protectors knew the mountains and encampment locations of the Mgo log tribes. They were anxious that anyone seeing them in the area would alert the Mgo log tribes to rob Rock and his party. In an attempt to move quickly, they rode fast horses and traveled light along mountain ridges. With limited provisions, the armed nomads hunted musk deer for food.

Rock collected botanical specimens, gave descriptions and names, and explored virgin juniper forests. His party also observed distant mountains at vantage points, recording heights and temperatures of certain passes and summits. While on the summit of A myes 'brug dgu,¹ Rock estimated the elevation of A myes rma chen at 6,400.8 meters, which is close to its actual elevation of 6,282 meters (Rowell 1982). However, Rock (1930a:185) first concluded the height to be "more than 28,000 feet" (8,534.4 meters) in a 1930 article for the *National Geographic Magazine*.

On 20 July 1926, Rock and Simpson reached the foot of a mountain² and climbed to the summit, the closest Rock got to A myes rma chen. Enjoying the view of the mountain, Rock elsewhere (1930a:185) wrote:

With difficulty I tore myself from that sublime view—a view of the eastern massif of the mountain from west of the Yellow River which no other foreigners had ever had. I remained for some time alone on that isolated summit, lost in reverie and easily comprehending why the Tibetans should worship these snowy peaks as emblems of purity.

As Rock and Simpson were photographing the mountain, a local nomad suddenly appeared on a nearby peak, burned incense, chanted prayers, and disappeared without interacting with Rock and Simpson. In fear of the nomad alerting the notorious Mgo log tribes of their presence, Rock reluctantly descended.³ In great disappointment, Rock and his nomad guards hurried to Ra rgya, retracing their route. *AMCR* does not provide further information on how and where Rock traveled afterward. In correspondence, Rock expressed disappointment in not finding more tree species in the region. In correspondence with Charles S Sargent (1841-1927) of the Arnold Arboretum on 12 August 1926, Rock described his return to Co ne via Bla brang Monastery. On the way to Bla brang, he encountered conflict between the Wuja (O'u rgya) and Gartse (Mgar rtse) tribes.⁴ Afterward, he explored The bo (Diebu) County.

AMCR's five maps provide trail lines indicating explored areas other than the places Rock mentioned in *AMCR*, such as today's Khri ka (Guide) County and Ya rdzi (Xunhua Salar (Sala) Autonomous) County. Simpson's trails also appear in the map undifferentiated from Rock's.

Early geographers and botanists such as Nikolay Przhevalskii (1884), Pyotr Kozloff (1902), Karl Futterer (1903), and Joseph Rock (1956) traveled off beaten paths, crossing today's Mang ra County and 'Ba' County in A mdo. Most other explorers in A mdo traveled well-known routes to and from Mtsho sngon po Lake, Sku 'bum Monastery, Zi ling, and Bla brang.

¹ See the probable location of this summit at <https://bit.ly/3onTjhU> (accessed 6 June 2020). A search of the same location on map.baidu.com shows Zhaga'er and Zhege, that bear some phonetic resemblance to 'Brug dgu.

² Rock gave "Sha chu'i yim khar" as the name of the mountain, which I did not locate in local historical records (Bkra shis rgya mtsho and Thugs mchog rdo rje 1991; A bu dkar lo et al. 2000; Tshogs drug rang grol 2002; Pad ma tshe ring 2004; Bkra shis don grub 2016). It was also unknown to several locals I interviewed. Based on Rock's map and descriptions, the probable location of "Sha chu'i yim khar" Mountain is <https://bit.ly/2UjTAyF> (accessed 6 June 2020). Shaqie appears near the same location and has some phonetic similarity to "Sha chu'u." See <https://bit.ly/2UlsKX7> (accessed 6 June 2020).

³ The area was accessible after 1949, e.g., see Rowell's (1982) account of his experience with fifteen American explorers.

⁴ <https://bit.ly/2XbxznB> (accessed 27 May 2020).

Rock claimed in a *National Geographic Magazine* article that the unexplored area of the upper Yellow River and A myes rma chen Mountain remained undisturbed by major human-induced activities:

Here, in remote, almost inaccessible valleys, I found countless wild animals still unafraid of man, peaceful as in Eden ... Here, in July, was ice, and flowers bloomed in the snow (Rock 1930a:131).

Herds of antelope appeared, too (Rock 1930a:154).

The whole region between the Yellow River and A mye rma chen is one great zoological garden. Wherever I looked I saw wild animals grazing contentedly. There were various deer, wapiti, and many other animals unknown to me (Rock 1930a:172).

Studies of Rock and his explorations in Tibetan areas of China (Sutton 1974; Aris 1992; Wagner 1991; 1992; Yoshinaga et al. 1880; Mueggler 2011; Goodman 2006) tend to mention his A myes rma chen Mountain expedition briefly but neglect the exploration of Rgyud par Mountain and Yellow River gorges. Rock claimed the Yellow River's gorges were "absolutely terra incognita" (Sutton 1974:136). No similar published accounts document following Rock's trail in the less explored Yellow River gorges and Rgyud par Mountain. These lesser-known area names were located in the catalogs of Rock's botanical work that lists the plants with their original locations (Bangs and Peters 1928; Rehder and Wilson 1928; Rehder and Kobuski 1932, 1933).

Rock is well-known for his botanical and geographic explorations, ethnographic and linguistic studies of the Yunnan Naxi, and Tibetans in contemporary Muli (Smi li) Tibetan Autonomous County, Sichuan Province. His investigations of the A myes rma chen Mountain, monasteries, Yellow River gorges, and Rgyud par Mountain in *AMCR* are also valuable. *AMCR* documented botanical specimens, geographical features, and histories in A mdo that record important information before regional chaos in 1958 and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). *AMCR*'s eighty-two captioned photographs that were taken in 1926 have great historical value. Rock stated that a second part of the book - *Am-nye Ma-Chhen Classic* - would be published by Johannes Schubert (1896-1976), a work I did not locate. The only available publication related to Rock and Schubert that I found was their correspondence from 1935-1961 in *Briefwechsel JF Rock-J. Schubert 1935-1961* in German.

Rock's published writings¹ on Tibetan areas include studies that focus on his explorations in Muli Tibetan Autonomous County, the A myes rma chen and Mi nyag gangs dkar (Gongga) mountains, Co ni Monastery, The bo (Diebu) County, and descriptions of religious rituals, customs, livelihoods, and rivers.

AMCR merits a new edition that addresses variant spellings and formatting inconsistencies and updates the Tibetan and Chinese glossaries and tabulation of botanical names. Additional detailed information is available in Rock's unpublished correspondence and photograph captions. Some studies (Sutton 1974; Aris 1992) have synthesized and published selections of Rock's key findings and selected photographs, but much valuable information on his interactions with and comments on everyday encounters remains unpublished.

Local Tibetan communities and tribes are likely to have limited historical information other than oral histories passed on by their elders, tribal histories written retroactively in the post-Cultural Revolution period, biographies of reincarnated *bla ma*, and rewritten records of monasteries. Consequently, *AMCR* and Rock's unpublished archives of manuscripts, photographs and captions, correspondences, and films offer important information. The photographs are particularly meaningful.

¹ Rock 1925a, 1925b, 1929a, 1929b, 1929c, 1929d, 1929e, 1930a, 1930b, 1931, 1933, 1935, 1926, 1956, and 1959.

Place names in *AMCR* present challenges. For example, Rock mentioned a mountain named *Sha ri yang ra* in Tibetan and Changshitou Shan 'Long Rocky Range' in Chinese. Unfortunately, I was unable to find this name in published local history records.¹ The locals I consulted were also unfamiliar with the name "*Sha ri yang ra*."² However, locals used *Rma ta la'i rdo sgang ring mo*, bearing the same meaning of 'Long Rocky Range' in the Chinese name when referring to Changshitou Shan in 2020. This range is located in today's Rma stod County in Mgo log.

Rock's versions of Tibetan place names differ from the 2020 versions. Certain names Rock provided were misspelled, and others may have been spelled differently at the time of Rock's visit. For example, *Me tshang* is a tribal name that Rock probably misspelled. A contemporary Wylie version is *Dme tshang* (Pad ma tshe ring 2004:54). Located between 'Ba' and Mang ra counties, *Rgyud par* is a mountain name that Rock provided but spelled differently elsewhere, e.g., *Ju par* (Rock 1930a) and *Dju-par* (Rock 1956). The name for this same mountain is rendered as *Kye phur* and *Kye phur rdza rgan* in a local Tibetan history source (Ye shes bzang po 2001), *Kye pur by* Nangchukja (2015), and as *Dschupar* (Futterer 1903; Przhevalskii 1884). In 2020, *Ju pur* more accurately resembled the colloquial pronunciation of the mountain name in local Tibetan.

In terms of Rock's personality, Sutton (1974) stated that Rock often met high officials and *bla ma* and was reluctant to associate with commoners. He preferred to eat alone. Rock was racially biased, despising the Chinese. He was "absolutely convinced of the white man's superiority" and displayed an archetypical European colonialist mentality (Sutton 1974:115). Rock's perception of the Tibetans at the time was evident in a *National Geographic Magazine* article (Rock 1930a:131):

Time turns back a thousand years when one talks to the superstitious and vexatiously inquisitive, suspicious folk who inhabit this lonely nook of the world.

"The earth is flat," they say. "In its middle stands a big mountain. The sun sets by going behind this."

A miserable land it is, of poverty and incredible filth; a land cut off from all the modern world; a region which, for uncounted centuries, has had its own forms of government, of religion and social customs; yet a region which knows no railway, no motor car, no radio, or aught of all that science and invention have given the world since Marco Polo's day.

Nevertheless, Rock's many abilities and achievements should not be overlooked. In addition to botanist, ethnographer, explorer, geographer, and photographer, Rock was proficient in German, French, Greek, Italian, Chinese, and Arabic. He sympathized with the Naxi and offered help generously. Gwen (1983) wrote:

He [Rock] felt greater kinship and more sympathy for [the Naxi] than for the Chinese. Years later as his collecting declined, he worked on manuscripts recording the history of the Naxi people and, eventually, produced an impressive dictionary of Naxi pictography script... Few know that he gave generously of his medicines and his skill in treating simple illnesses to the people of the villages and farms. He was scrupulous about paying for whatever was acquired from them.

Later he [Rock] wrote, ... "I want to die among those beautiful mountains [in Lijiang] rather than in a bleak hospital bed all alone."

¹ Bkra shis rgya mtsho and Thugs mchog rdo rje 1991; A bu dkar lo et al. 2000; Tshogs drug rang grol 2002; Pad ma tshe ring 2004; and Bkra shis don grub 2016.

² Based on Rock's descriptions and map, two possible locations of the range are <https://bit.ly/2MyNwhF> and <https://bit.ly/3f1AS78> (accessed 6 June 2020).

In conclusion, the *AMCR* gives a broad sweep of historical, political, botanical, geographical, and ethnographical information in parts of the A mdo Tibetan region in the early twentieth century. With high-quality photographs, the *AMCR* is a rare, informative monograph on the less known areas of A mdo in much of the twentieth century. This work is of great value for Tibetologists and local Tibetans. Published nearly a century ago, many references to places are ambiguous, inaccurate, or no longer relevant. This vital work deserves republication in an updated form to be of increased relevance in contemporary times.

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TIBETAN TERMS

'ba' འབའ།

'jam dbyangs bzhad pa འཇམ་དབྱངས་བཟའ་པ།

a lags la kha tshang ཨ་ལགས་ལཱ་ཁ་ཚང།

a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

Amnye Ma-Chhen, a myes rma chen ཨ་མྱེས་མ་ཚེན།

a myes 'brug dgu ཨ་མྱེས་འབྲུག་དགུ།

a myes brag dkar ཨ་མྱེས་བྲག་དཀར།

a myes khyung mgon ཨ་མྱེས་ཀྱུང་མགོན།

a myes rma chen ཨ་མྱེས་མ་ཚེན།

a pa a blo ཨ་པ་ཨ་བློ།

a rig dge bshes ཨ་རིག་དགེ་བཤེས།

a tshogs ཨ་ཚོགས།

bka' 'gyur བཀ་འ་ལྷུར།

bla brang བླ་བར།

bla ma བླ་མ།

blo bsang tshe dbang བློ་བཟང་ཚེ་དབང།

brag dkar བྲག་དཀར།

bsang chu བསང་ཆུ།

bsang khog བསང་ཁོག།

bstan 'gyur བསྐྱེད་འགྲུར།

co ne ཅོ་ནེ།

dpe tshang མེ་ཚང།

gartse, mgar rtse མགར་རུ་ཅེ།
 gnyan po g.yu rtse གཉན་པོ་གཡུ་རུ་ཅེ།
 go srib གོ་སྤིབ།
 gtsang གཙང་།
 gtsang paN+Di ta གཙང་པ་དྲི་ཏ།
 gtsod གཙོད།
 hor ཧོར།
 ju pur རུ་ཕུར།
 khang gsar ཁང་གསར།
 khri ka ཁྲི་ཀ།
 klu chu ལུ་ཅུ།
 klu tshang ལུ་ཅང་།
 klu'i chab brag ལུ་འི་ཅམ་བྲག།
 Kumbum, sku 'bum ལུ་བུམ།
 kye phur རྟེ་ཕུར།
 kye phur rdza rgan རྟེ་ཕུར་རྩ་རྒྱལ།
 lha sa ལྷ་ས།
 mang ra མང་ར།
 mang ra'i mdo མང་རའི་མདོ།
 mang ra'i bye ma མང་རའི་བྱེ་མ།
 mdo la ri bo མདོ་ལ་རི་བོ།
 mdzo མདོ།
 mgo log མགོ་ལོག།
 mgon po don grub མགོན་པོ་དོན་གྲུབ།
 mi nyag gangs dkar མི་ཉག་གངས་དཀར།
 mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།
 ra rgya ར་རྒྱ།
 reb gong རེབ་གོང་།
 rgan rgya རྒྱལ་རྒྱ།

rgya bza' རྒྱ་བཟའ།
 rgyud par རྒྱུད་པར།
 ri mang རི་མང་།
 rma lho ར་ལྷོ།
 rma rgyal spom ra ར་རྒྱལ་སྤོམ་ར།
 rma stod ར་སྟོད།
 rma ta la'i rdo sgang ring mo ར་ཏ་ལའི་རྡོ་སྒང་རིང་མོ།
 rong bo རོང་བོ།
 rta bo dme tshang ར་བོ་དམེ་ཅང་།
 rtse chu རུ་ཅུ།
 rtse khog རུ་ཅུ་ཁོག།
 seng ge gshong སེང་གེ་གཤོང་།
 sgrol ma སྒྲོལ་མ།
 sha chu'i yim khar ཤ་ཅུ་འི་ཡིམ་ཀར།
 sha ri yang ra ཤ་རི་ཡང་ར།
 shing bza' paN+Di ta ཤིང་བཟའ་པ་དྲི་ཏ།
 shing bza' rin po che ཤིང་བཟའ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།
 sku 'bum ལུ་བུམ།
 smi li སྤྱི་ལི།
 smu dge thang སྤུ་དགེ་ཅང་།
 snying lcags rgyal སྤྱིང་ལཱ་གས་རྒྱལ།
 sog po a rig སོག་པོ་ཨ་རིག།
 thang ka ཅང་ཀ།
 the bo ཅེ་བོ།
 tsong kha pa ཅོང་ཀ་པ།
 Wuja, o'u rgya ཨ་འུ་རྒྱ།
 ya rdzi ཡ་རྩི།
 zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།

CHINESE TERMS

Animaqing 安尼玛卿

Baishiya 白石崖

Bajiaocheng 八角城

Beijing 北京

Changshitou Shan 长石头山

Chengdu 成都

Diebu 迭部

Ganjia 甘加

Gansu 甘肃

Gongga 贡嘎

Guide 贵德

Guinan 贵南

Guoluo 果洛

Henan 河南蒙古自治县

Hezuo 合作

Huang Weizhong 黄位中

Huang Zhengqing 黄正青

Huangnan 黄南

Jubu 居布

Kang Furong 康敷容

Kunlun 昆仑

Kunming 昆明

Labuleng 拉不楞

Lijiang 丽江

Lintan 临潭

Linxia 临夏

Ma Bufang 马步芳

Ma Qi 马麒

Ming 明 Dynasty

Muli 木里

Naxi 纳西

Nianbo yuze 年宝玉则

Niangjijia 娘吉加

Ninghai 宁海

Ningxia 宁夏

Qilian 祁连

Qin Shi Huang 秦始皇

Qing 清 Dynasty

Qinghai 青海

Sangke 桑科

Shaqie 沙切

Shizang 石藏

Sichuan 四川

Song 宋 Dynasty

Ta'er 塔尔

Tang 唐 Dynasty

Tao 洮

Taoyang 洮阳

Taozhou 洮州

Tongde 同德

T'u-yü-hun [Tuyuhun] 吐谷浑

Wutun 吾屯

Xiahe 夏河

xian 县

Xikang 西康

Xining 西宁

Xinjiang 新疆

Xiqing 西倾

Xunhua Salar [Sala] Autonomous County,

Xunhua sala zizhixian 循化撒拉自治县

Yunnan 云南

Zeku 泽库

Zequ 泽曲

Zhangye 张掖

Zhega'er 哲尔

Zhege 哲戈

Zhuoni 卓尼

PHOTO ESSAY: TIBETAN WOMEN'S ORNAMENTS IN RGYAB LUNG (JIALONG) VILLAGE,
RTA NAG MA (HEIMAHE) TOWNSHIP, MTSHO SNGON (QINGHAI) PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Sgrol ma yag སྒྲོལ་མ་ཡག་ (Zhuomayou 卓玛优)*

ABSTRACT

I describe the generational uses, attitudes toward, and division of ornaments, particularly coral necklaces, by a Tibetan herding family in Rgyab lung (Jialong) Village, Rta nag ma (Heimahe) Township Town, Gser chen (Gonghe) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China.

KEYWORDS

Tibetan coral necklaces, Tibetan property division, Tibetan herding family, Tibetan ornaments

INTRODUCTION

In 1995, one of my paternal cousins helped Mother give birth to me in our winter pasture adobe house. Mother once said, confusing me, that Gu de skyid was my mother. When I asked for an explanation, Mother said she helped when I was born and added that when I was a very young child, I called Gu de skyid "Mother."¹

In about 2004, my parents paid one of my cousins to take them in his pick-up truck to the county town to purchase candies, beverages, biscuits, and new clothing for the coming Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year'. At dusk, after a long day of herding in the mountains, my brother ('Brug lha rgyal, 1993) and I tied the yaks in the yak enclosure, drove our sheep² back into the sheep enclosure, and then climbed to the top of the yak enclosure to watch for car lights. We were excitedly awaiting the return of our parents. Meanwhile, our sister was cooking. Several cars passed before a car finally turned toward our house. We jumped down from the wall and ran to our house's door and then to the car.

We took the boxes and plastic bags full of what our parents had bought from the car to our house. I took the light ones while my brother, father, and mother carried the heavy ones. After we finished, the cousin said his family members were waiting for him, and he had to leave. My father thanked him and gave him some cash.

My sister poured tea in bowls for my parents first and then us. Next, she put a plate of beef on a table that we sat around. It was near the stove. She handed bowls of noodles to each of us. As we sat around the table, I grew even more eager to see what my parents had bought and had no interest in eating.

Father asked me to open a white plastic bag, so I opened it and discovered a sheepskin robe with an ornamental *me cha* 'lighter' for my brother, a pair of silver earrings and a sheepskin robe for my sister, and a pair of shoes and a plush fabric robe for me.

Father told us to put on our new clothes. My sister and brother were delighted with their new clothes and ornaments. Sister also had coral necklaces and mother's *glo gzar* and *bzho bzung* for the

*Sgrol ma yag (Zhuomayou). 2021. Photo Essay: Tibetan Women's Ornaments in Rgyab Lung (Jialong) Village, Rta nag ma (Heimahe) Township, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:108-130.

¹ Later, Gu de skyid became a nun. In 2020, she lived with her mother (b. 1936).

³² My family stopped raising sheep in 2008, because we did not have enough people to herd both sheep and yaks. My oldest sister had married and moved to live with her husband, and my brother and I were in school.

upcoming Lo sar celebrations. I liked my new shoes and robe, but I felt it was unfair that my siblings had ornaments while I did not.

When Lo sar Eve came, Sister and Brother wore their ornaments, which looked nice, so I bravely asked Mother why I had none. Mother replied, "Children should be like children. They don't wear ornaments like adults."

I yearned to grow up more quickly.

In this paper, I focus on a Tibetan herding family's generational division and use of ornaments, particularly coral necklaces, in Rgyab lung (Jialong) Village, Rta nag ma (Heimahe) Township Town, Gser chen (Gonghe) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China. Rta nag ma Township consists of four pastoral communities: Rgyab lung (Jialong), Bum pa (Wenba), Brag mchog (Zhihuqu), and Ra 'khyog (Ranhuqu). I describe personal adornments in my family and the local community (mostly my relatives). I give information about the people mentioned in this text, a glossary of non-English terms relating to adornments, and accounts from my maternal grandmother and mother.

At an average elevation of 3,200 meters above sea level, Rta nag ma Township has a land area of 1,157 square kilometers and a population of 4,860 (2017), of whom ninety percent, according to official statistics, are Tibetan.¹ Agriculture is practiced only in Ra 'khyog, where locals cultivate barley, wheat, beans, and canola. Nearly all township families raise yaks, sheep, horses, a few cows, and a few goats.

Rta nag ma Township offices are located in the township seat of Heimahe, which, in 2020, consisted of two main roads lined with several stores. Most other buildings were tourist hotels, owing to the proximity of Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake). The five-grade Rta nag ma Boarding Primary School with some 400 students from Rgyab lung, Bum pa, and Brag mchog communities is also located here. Rta nag ma Boarding Primary School offers classes taught in the Chinese language and classes in the Tibetan language. Consequently, Han residents of Ra 'khyog Village generally send their children to the County Town for schooling.

I am from Rgyab lung Village that had about 1,197 (335 households) in 2020.²

¹ Data from, <https://bit.ly/3ke8PVb> (accessed 26 July 2020).

² Data obtained from the village leader in 2020.

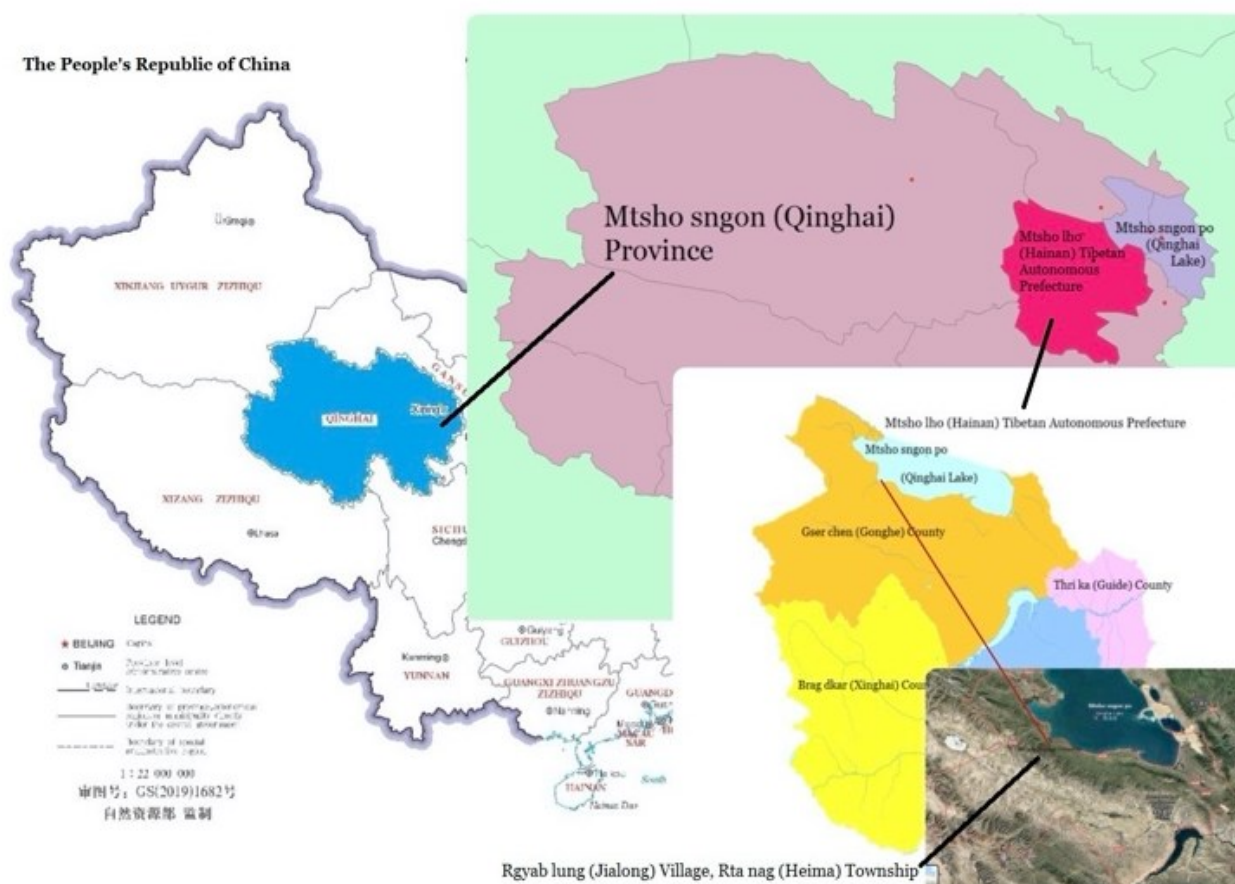
FIG 1. Location of Rgyab lung Village.¹

FIG 2. People in the text.

Name	Dates	Relationship to Sgrol ma yag
Bo mo thar	?	maternal great-grandfather
'Brug lha rgyal	b. 1993	brother
Bsod nams bde skyid	b. 1997	paternal cousin
Gnam skyid yag	b. 1944	maternal grandmother
Klu mo tshe ring	b. 1988	sister
Mkha' mo yag	b. 1987	maternal aunt
Mtsho mo	b. 1966	maternal aunt
Rdo kho	1941-2008	maternal grandfather
Sgro b+ha		maternal great-grandmother
Sgrol ma mtsho	b. 1968	mother










¹ This map is a compilation of images: <https://bit.ly/3jHC4PVm>; Mtsho sngon Province (Lincun, derived from: File:Map of Province in China 630000 青海省.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0 July 2020), Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture <https://bit.ly/2Blyd9U>, and Gser chen County <https://bit.ly/39jA4sB> (all accessed 25 July 2020). All but the map of China are edited.

Sgrol ma yag	b. 1995	self
Snying dkar rgyal	?	maternal great-grandfather
Tshe ring lhun 'grub	b. 1981	brother-in-law
Tshe ring rnam lha	b. 1999	paternal cousin

ORNAMENTS

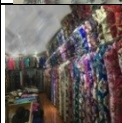
FIG 3 presents images and descriptions of ornaments I refer to in this paper. I include photographs (presented in larger size later) to make it easier to visualize the ornaments, which are challenging to describe in English.

FIG 3. Images and descriptions of ornaments featured in the text.

	The <i>bzho bzung</i> 'milk hook' is made of silver or copper and attached to a robe's front. According to locals, there are two sizes. The larger one is a decoration made of silver, and the smaller one is for holding a milk bucket when milking and is commonly made of copper.
	This <i>dmar gdan</i> has three red and black cloth strips on which twenty or so silver bowls are attached to the bride's back as hair decorations. They may extend from the neck to the feet. Local women wear this during weddings. Women who offer tea to deities before the bride entered the house wear <i>dmar gdan</i> .
	The <i>dnkul</i> 'dzab is a silver ring or a cone-shaped silver thimble-shaped decoration placed between coral beads to prevent abrasion and decorate the coral necklaces. Locally, blood-red colored coral is most prized. <i>Byur rnying</i> 'old coral' is considered the best coral and is most expensive, while <i>byu ru so ma</i> 'new coral' is comparatively inexpensive.
	<i>Dung</i> are silver, shell-shaped ornaments attached to a <i>dmar gdan</i> that women wear on the back of their robes.
	My mother wears this <i>shing ma mo'i mig</i> 'eye of the wooden ewe', a yellowish-brown carnelian with coral necklaces and prayer beads as a decoration. She maintains that coral with cracks or an appearance that suggests it was "eaten by insects" are more valuable than other coral because only real coral has cracks.
	Locally, there are two types of <i>glo gzar</i> : (1) The <i>tshes ris jan</i> is a silver, crescent moon above a sun decorated with coral that hangs from the sash at the right or left hip. (2) The <i>char mgo ma</i> is a silver bow above a square decorated with coral and turquoise. Many local women no longer wear the large, heavy <i>glo gzar</i> . Instead, the less intricate, lighter ones are preferred.
	<i>Ja la</i> are red cloth fringe underneath <i>tsheg bstar</i> (FIG 25) and <i>dmar gdan</i> .
	<i>Rna lung</i> 'earrings'. Round flat gold earrings were popular locally for many years, but today, most local women prefer to wear new-style earrings, as shown in this photograph.
	Only a few local women wear coral <i>skag bcings</i> 'belt' made of cloth and leather decorated with silver, coral, and turquoise. Instead, most wear silver <i>skag bcings</i> , as shown in this photograph.



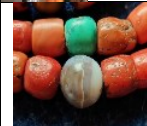
Tsheg bstar are panels a woman wears above her waist on her back. Locals generally think the larger a coral bead, the better. However, for making *tsheg bstar*, small beads are considered best.



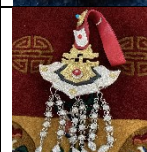
Skying khab 'brocade'.



Kha btags are cloth strips representing purity and good fortune given to guests, religious personages, and others to show respect.



Local men and women wear *mchong* 'carnelian' (bottom center) in necklaces.



Decorative *me cha* 'lighters' are adornments worn by local men. Few local women wear *me cha*.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

The five accounts below are from my maternal grandmother, who comments on a Muslim who stayed for several days (~1960) in her home, secretly selling otter pelts and coral to locals, and describes ornaments during her daughter's engagement (~1970); my mother, who gives details on her ornaments both before and after her marriage; my sister's experience with ornaments before and after her marriage; and my own experience with a necklace of coral beads from my mother's and maternal grandmother's necklaces and local coral ownership practices.

ACCOUNT ONE: My maternal grandmother commented on a Muslim merchant who stayed with her family and ornaments she received from her family before her marriage:

When I moved to your grandfather's home, my parents gave me a few small coral necklaces, a sliver *tsheg bstar*, a *dmar gdan*, and several robes. During the engagement, my parents asked my husband's family for three coral necklaces, but they just brought two.

In about 1960, your grandfather and I bought three coral necklaces from a Muslim merchant, who spent several days in our home while secretly selling otter pelts and coral to locals. He gave a lot of fruit to my children, so they liked him. He asked if we would like to exchange one yak for some big coral necklaces before he left. I was excited about this, but my father-in-law disagreed.

ACCOUNT TWO: My maternal grandmother describes ornaments during her daughter's engagement:

In about 1970, my husband and I asked for four big coral necklaces for Sgrol ma mtsho. After one month, the groom's family brought two sheepskin robes, coral necklaces, silver earrings, and so on. Father-in-law asked his elder cousins to come and check if what they had brought was acceptable. I and some of our neighbor women were disappointed with the coral necklaces because we had requested four, but they had brought only three. In the end, the older men ignored our objections and were satisfied with what they had brought for my daughter, and also agreed on an auspicious day for my daughter's wedding.

ACCOUNT THREE: My mother describes her ornaments before and after her marriage:

Before I married, my elder sister (Mtsho mo) and I didn't have our own coral necklaces, so we wore our mother's when necessary. However, we had our own *tsheg bstar*. The coral was mother's, and the silver ornaments were ours. Mother bought the silver from a Muslim merchant during a local festival. We wore *tsheg bstar* and *ja la* that Mother made before Lo sar. I didn't see the coral necklaces, other ornaments, and robes my husband's side brought until my wedding day. I was never asked if I was satisfied. After I married, I had my own coral necklaces, coral *tsheg bstar*, and other ornaments. My mother gave me some of her coral necklaces, a sheepskin robe, and a woolen hat when I moved to my husband's home.

ACCOUNT FOUR: I (Sgrol ma yag) describe my sister's experience with ornaments before and after her marriage.

When my sister, Klu mo tshe ring, was eighteen, she married and moved into her husband's home. On the day of engagement, the groom's side brought four boxes of Huzhu¹ liquor and thirteen large bolts of cloth, each of a different color. Cloth materials included wool, synthetic fabrics, and *skying khab* 'brocade'. Besides, 2,013 RMB was offered as part of the marriage proposal for my sister. My parents, paternal grandfather, and several elder cousins came and asked those who had come to provide three big coral necklaces, other ornaments, and several robes after *skyid sdug bcol ba*.²

A month later, the groom's father communicated that they would bring what had been requested in two days. The groom's father and one of his cousins brought all that was required, except for the coral necklaces. Instead, they brought three old coral necklaces that belonged to the groom's mother.

When our cousins and neighbors came to inspect Sister's new robes and ornaments, the women focused on the coral necklaces, *tsheg bstar*, *skag bcings*, and *glo gzar*. Mother and the other women expressed disapproval. Grandfather sarcastically said it was a shame that the daughter-in-law had taken all the mother-in-law's coral necklaces, which meant they now needed to honor their promise.

The groom's father apologized to my parents, grandfather, and elder cousins and promised to purchase new coral necklaces before the wedding. After several discussions, they agreed upon an auspicious date. However, no new coral necklaces were purchased.

A few days before Sister's departure, Mother gave her one of her coral necklaces, two *dngul 'dzab*, and one of her *shing ma mo'i mig* that had been given to her by her mother. At this time, Klu mo tshe ring had nine coral necklaces that our parents had bought from a Muslim businessman during a local festival in about the year 2000 for 5,000 RMB in total. She thus had ten coral necklaces and two turquoise and carnelian necklaces. After the marriage, the groom's family gave my sister and her husband furniture, tents, and livestock, signifying that they were a new, independent family. This ended the issue of new coral necklaces because it would have been a significant financial burden on the newly married couple to purchase such necklaces.

ACCOUNT FIVE: One night before school, my mother commented on giving me a necklace with coral beads from her and my maternal grandmother's necklaces:

It's good that you have one string of coral, even if you never marry. I'm getting older, so it's okay if I wear fewer coral necklaces. I gave your sister some necklaces when she was married. I don't know if your

¹ Huzhu Tu (Mongghul, Monguor) Autonomous County, located in Haidong City, Mtsho sngon Province, is famous for barley liquor production.

² A time during the engagement process when the bride's family entrusts their daughter to the groom's family. The bride's parents acknowledge their daughter's shortcomings and then ask the groom's side to promise not to physically or emotionally abuse her.

brother's future wife would like to wear coral necklaces. If she doesn't, then the other ornaments like *dmar gdan* and *glo gzar* might be yours. Young women look nice when they wear coral necklaces, and coral also has the power to protect you from disease.

Afterward, I wore my necklace as I would an amulet until I went to live in a large city, joined a gym, and participated in group activities such as parties. In the city, people noticed my coral necklace and asked questions, some of which made me uncomfortable, for example, about my ethnicity, birthplace, religious beliefs, political matters, and so on. I stopped wearing it to avoid this, other than when I went to parties and other group activities where I knew there would be no awkward questions.

I never asked my parents, especially my mother, if this coral necklace belonged to our family or me. During the 2019 winter holiday, I forgot to wear my necklace when I went home. Mother noticed and asked what I had done with it. I explained that I had forgotten to wear it but that it was safe in my dormitory.

Mother said, "It's good for your well-being, but it's yours. It's up to you to do whatever you choose with it."

Most local women control the coral necklaces of their families. In my family, my mother makes the decisions about the division of coral necklaces. For example, the night that Mother gave me a coral necklace, she made the decision herself. She did not ask Father. In contrast, Mother often deferred to Father. For example, one of our neighbor's daughters met my sister in the mountains while they were herding and invited her to join them and some other young people at an overnight gathering to be held in her home. She explained that her parents would not be there. Sister asked Mother to talk to Father and request permission for her to attend the gathering. Eventually, permission was granted, and Sister joyfully joined them.

TRANSFER OF ORNAMENTS

There are no fixed rules about giving ornaments to children. This is especially true for mothers. I have two examples of this. First, when children leave their parents to marry, they are no longer part of their parents' family. Parents give livestock, clothes, and ornaments as gifts to the child who is marrying and leaving home. They also ask the groom or bride's family to buy clothing and ornaments for their children, such as sheepskin robes, woolen robes, and coral necklaces. Clothing and ornaments signal a family's social status. If a child's future family is poor, they request less. For instance, when one of my paternal cousins married in 2019, her family requested few clothes and ornaments for her, knowing her husband's family did not have much livestock or other property.

Second, mothers with unmarried daughters are usually older and inclined to wear fewer ornaments themselves. Consequently, they may give some of their ornaments to their daughters. For example, my paternal cousin, Bsod nams bde skyid, who married in 2019, has two siblings who are also married. Their mother has given all her ornaments to the three of them. However, though my mother plans to give her ornaments to my brother and me, she currently remains fond of ornaments and continues to wear them.

CONCLUSION

Grandmother told me that in about 2003 she spent approximately 5,000 RMB on coral necklaces for one of her daughters before she married. In 2019, one of my uncles paid around 12,000 RMB for three coral necklaces for his son's bride. Mother and my family's neighbor women agree that, while genuine

coral is valuable, fashionable, and protects from illness, there are few occasions to wear coral. Locally, both women and men only participate in two big festivals - Lo sar and the fifth lunisolar month's fifteenth day. Women often cannot attend because they are busy or rules limit festival participation, e.g., it is taboo to participate in many social events after a relative's death for specified lengths of time.

Local women think just one or two coral necklaces are fine and that imitation coral necklaces are better because they are stylish, attractive, and cheap. These ongoing changes indicate that social value and practices regarding coral are increasingly fluid, especially with widespread access to social media that impacts what is considered trendy and the availability of low-priced, imitation products that closely resemble authentic coral.

PHOTOGRAPHS

FIGS 4 & 5. (L) *Glo gzar char mgo ma* (2020, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma yag). (R) *Glo gzar tshes ris jan* (2020, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma yag).



FIGS 6 & 7. (L) New style *glo gzar* (2019, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma yag). (R) Bsod nams bde skyid wears a *dmar gdan* on her wedding day (2019, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma yag).



FIGS 8 & 9. (L) A Chinese metalsmith made this *rna lung* before my mother married (2020, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma yag). (R) *Ja la* (2020, Rkang tsha County, Bsod nams bde skyid).



FIGS 10 & 11. (L) I wear my coral necklace (2017, Xi'an City, 'Jams dbyangs skyabs). (R) Mkha' mo yag wears her coral necklaces and gold earrings during Lo sar (2020, at her home in Rgyab lung Village, Mkha' mo yag).



FIG 12. My mother made this coral *skag bcings* for me before Children's Day (1 June), when I was in primary school (2020, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma mtsho).



FIGS 13 & 14. (L) I wear my mother's *dmar gdan*. When my grandmother saw this photograph, she commented, "It isn't very attractive because you have short hair and no braids" (2019, at my home in Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma mtsho). (R) When Mother married, my paternal grandmother gave her this *dmar gdan* (made by a Chinese metalsmith) (2019, Sgrol ma yag's home, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma yag). Most local mothers give their *dmar gdan* to a special child, for example, the oldest son's wife, the youngest son's wife, or a daughter who marries and stays at home with her parents. My father's older sister said that her parents gave this *dmar gdan* to my father for my mother, because he is the youngest child, who stayed with my paternal grandparents - his parents.



FIG 15. Klu mo tshe ring wears coral necklaces and her mother's *bzho bzung* and *glo gzar* (~2003, unidentified photo studio in Rta nag ma Township, unknown photographer).



FIG 16. Imitation-coral ornaments for sale before Lo sar (2018, Gser chen County Town, Sgrol ma yag).



FIGS 17 & 18. (L) Klu mo tshe ring during a local festival on the fifteenth day of the fifth month. She *khrid pa* 'eloped'¹ the night of the fourteenth day of the fifth month. Consequently, her braids featured one blue and one white *kha btags*, signifying that she had eloped (~2006, unknown photo studio in Rta nag ma Township Town, unknown photographer). (R) Sgrol ma mstho wears an imitation coral necklace during Lo sar (2020, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma yag).



¹ Locally when a daughter elopes and goes to her groom's home, the groom's family asks three women to make braids for the bride. Elder men representing the groom apologize to the bride's family the next morning when they escort her back to her parents' home.

FIGS 19 & 20. (L) *Dung* (2019, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma yag). (R) Klu mo tshe ring wears a coral *skag bcings* her husband made. The ornaments are hers. She also wears a *dmar gdan* because it is the day of her husband's cousin's wedding. She offered tea to deities¹ that day (2017, at her home in Rgyab lung Village, Tshe ring lhun 'grub).



¹ *Ja mchod* 'tea offered to deities'. Locally, when a new bride moves to home, the family chooses a female cousin or a son's wives to offer tea to deities. The woman should be, in the family's estimation, a "good woman," for example, she respects her parents-in-law and her husband, gets along well with neighbors, and so on. It is hoped the new bride will also be a good woman.

FIGS 21 & 22. (L) Above the turquoise, the yellow bead is the *shing ma mo'i mig* that my mother gave my sister (2020, Rgyab lung Village, Tshe ring lhun 'grub). (R) *Dngul 'dzab* 'thimble-shaped silver ornament' (2020, Rgyab lung Village, Tshe ring lhun 'grub).



FIGS 23 & 24. (L) Coral *rna lung* I bought for 300 RMB from a Tibetan merchant in Gser chen County Town. He told me the coral was from Nepal (2020, Xi'an City, Sgrol ma yag). (R) My coral necklace (2020, Xi'an City, Sgrol ma yag).



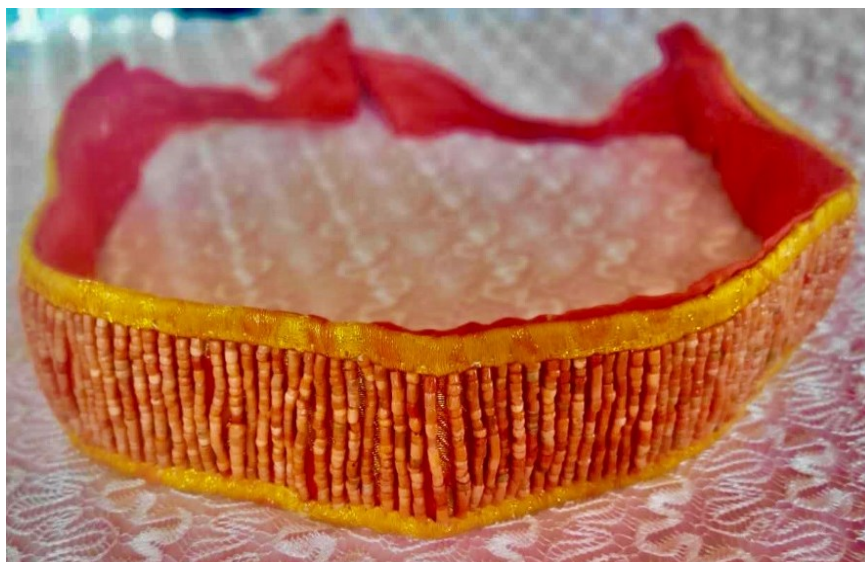
FIG 25. *Tsheg bstar* were once worn in my home area. My mother also dressed this way during weddings and festivals. Fashion changes and women (including my mother and sister) no longer wear *tsheg bstar*. Mother said she quit wearing *tsheg bstar* in about 2009, after a horse race festival, because a *bla ma* advised women who wore *tsheg bstar* to stop because it was a bad sign for humans to wear ornaments that resembled a demon's coral wings. Mother then used the coral from the *tsheg bstar* to make coral *skag bcings* (2020, image created by Sgrol ma yag).



FIGS 26 & 27. (R) Tshe ring rnam lha wore his *skying khab* 'brocade' robe during his paternal cousin's (Bsod nams bde skyid) wedding. Bsod nams bde skyid wears her *dmar gdan*, *skag bcings*, *glo gzar*, and coral necklaces. Hanging from her right side is a decorative *rgyab dar* 'different colors of sashes with an Endless Knot decoration in the center and hung from the back' (2019, Bsod nams bde skyid's home in Rgyab lung Village, unknown photographer). (L) Bsod nams bde skyid (left) wears her new *glo gzar* and *skag bcings* as she stands with her husband after moving to his home. Many local women wear new-style *glo gzar* and *skag bcings* (2019, Rkang tsha County, unknown photographer).



FIGS 28 & 29. (L) Mother's imitation coral necklace. Mother and neighbor women comment that many locals no longer wear robes and ornaments as in the past, except during festivals and Lo sar celebrations. They add that excessive amounts of cash were once spent on coral and other ornaments but today, imitation coral necklaces are cheap and beautiful. Consequently, there is no need to worry about losing them or if they are stolen because they are cheap. Most imitation coral beads are spherical (2020, Xi'an City, Sgrol ma yag). (R) Mother's coral *skag bcings*. Many young women - myself included - avoid wearing coral *skag bcings* because it is old-fashioned. However, Mother thinks coral *skag bcings* are beautiful. She has changed the shape of this particular *skag bcings* several times (2020, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma mtsho).



FIGS 30 & 31. (L) Bsod nams bde skyid wears her mother's coral *skag bcings* during Lo sar (2020, Rkang tsha County Town, unknown photographer). (R) *Me cha*. A few years ago, my parents bought this for my brother for Lo sar, but gave it to me later, because it was too small for a man. My parents bought a bigger one for my brother. I wore it during Lo sar until I decided it was a man's ornament (2020, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma yag).



FIGS 32 & 33. (L) Mother's silver *skag bcings* that she purchased in Gser chen County Town for about 900 RMB in 2018. She wears it during Lo sar and on pilgrimage because it is light and simple (2020, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma yag). (R) Mother's silver ring. My mother said this was from one of her brothers. She took it with clothes and ornaments that her family gave her when she moved to my father's home. A turquoise bead was in the center. After she lost it, she replaced it with a coral bead. She enjoyed wearing it during local horse races and the days of Lo sar (2020, Rgyab lung Village, Sgrol ma yag).

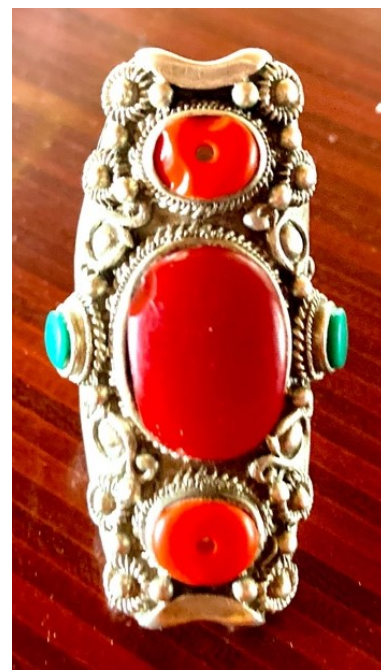


FIG 34. *Skying khab* 'brocade' for sale in the county town (2018, Gser chen County Town, Sgrol ma yag).

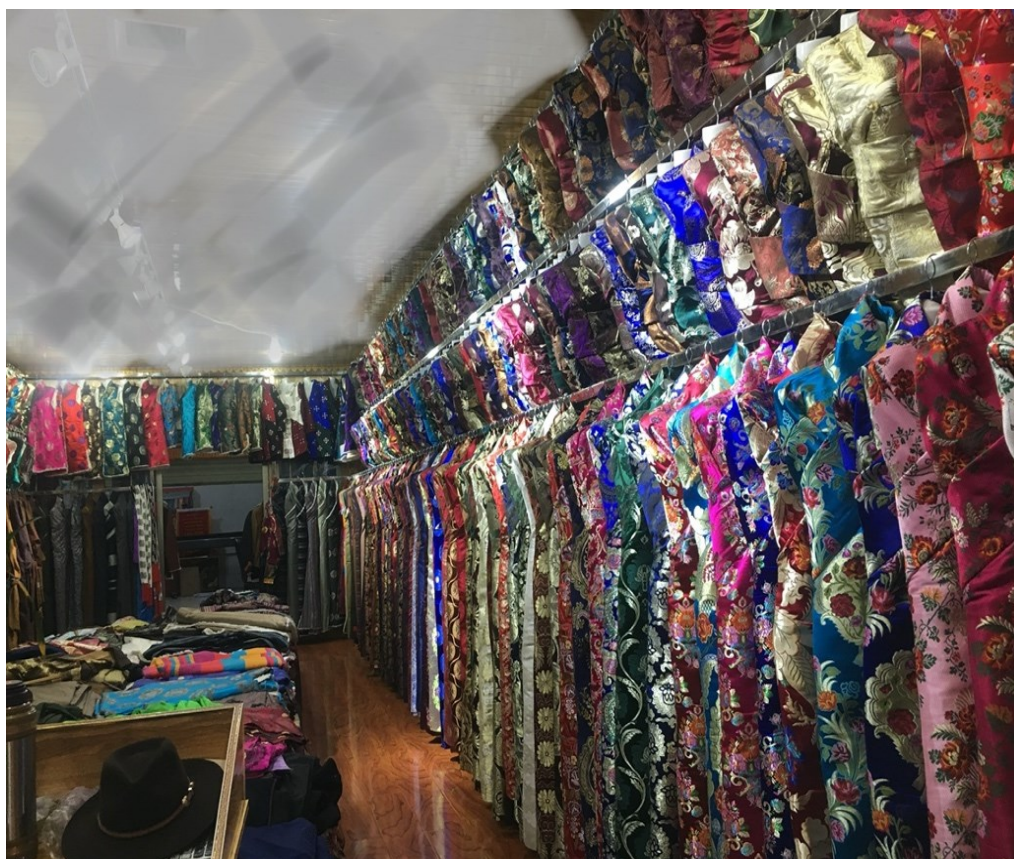


FIG 35. One or two *tsheg bstar* may be worn. *Tsheg bstar* often consist of lines of coral and turquoise (not affixed in this photograph) of varying number - framed in cloth. A silver *tsheg bstar* panel consists of small round flat silver discs framed in cloth. Local women wore *tsheg bstar* during Lo sar, at weddings, and on the fifth month's fifteenth day. Bsod nams bde skyid's mother made the *tsheg bstar* in the photograph, which features cloth fringes and small metal bells. It was made when Bsod nams bde skyid was a child and featured *bsgrig gdan* on the edges. A plastic flower is at the bottom center.



TIBETAN TERMS

'brug lha rgyal འབྲུག་ལྷ་རྒྱལ།
 'jams dbyangs skyabs འཇམ་དཔལ་སྐྱེ་བས།
 bo mo thar བོ་མོ་ཐར།
 brag mchog བྲག་མཆོག།
 bsgrig gdan བསྐྱིག་གདན།
 bsod nams bde skyid བསོད་ནམས་བདེ་སྦྱིད།
 bum pa བུམ་པ།
 bzho bzung བཞོ་བཟུང་།
 dmar gdan དམར་གདན།
 dngul 'dzab དངུལ་འཛམ།
 dung དུང།
 glo gzar གློ་གཟར།
 gnam skyid yag གནམ་སྦྱིད་ཡག།
 gser chen གསེར་ཆེན།
 ja la ཇལ།
 ja mchod ཇམ་ཆོད།
 kha btags ཁ་བཏགས།
 khrid pa ཁྲིད་པ།
 klu mo tshe ring ལུ་མོ་ཚེ་རིང་།
 lo sar ལོ་སར།
 char mgo ma ཆར་མགོ་མ།
 mchong མཆོང་།
 mchod kha མཆོད་ཀལ།

me cha མེ་ཆ།
 mkha' mo yag མཁའ་མོ་ཡག།
 mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།
 mtsho mo མཚོ་མོ།
 mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།
 ra 'khyog ར་འཁྱོག།
 rdo kho རྩོ་ཁོ།
 rgyab dar རྒྱུ་དར།
 rgyab lung རྒྱུ་ལུང་།
 rkang tsha རྟའ་ཚ།
 rna lung རྩ་ལུང་།
 rta nag རྟ་ནག།
 sgro b+ha སྐྱོ་བ།
 sgrol ma mtsho སྐྱོལ་མ་མཆོ།
 sgrol ma yag སྐྱོལ་མ་ཡག།
 shing ma mo'i mig ཤིང་མ་མོའི་མིག།
 skyid sdug bcol ba སྦྱིད་སྡུག་བཅོལ་བ།
 skying khab སྦྱིང་ཁམ།
 snying dkar rgyal སྦྱིང་དཀར་རྒྱལ།
 tshe ring lhun 'grub ཚེ་རིང་ལྷན་འབྲུབ།
 tshe ring rnam lha ཚེ་རིང་རྣམ་ལྷ།
 tsheg bstar ཚེག་བསྐར།
 tshes ris jan ཚེས་རིས་ཅན།

CHINESE TERMS

Gangcha 刚察
 Gonghe 共和
 Haidong 海东
 Hainan 海南
 Han 汉
 Heimahe 黑马河
 Huzhu 互助

Jialong 加隆
 Qinghai 青海
 Ranquhu 然去乎
 Tu 土
 Wenba 文巴
 Xi'an 西安
 Zhihuqu 直乎去

PERSPECTIVES

THE CHIG BDAG ORGANIZATION OF RKANG TSHA HERDING COMMUNITY, MTSHO SHAR (HAIDONG) CITY, MTSHO SNGON (QINGHAI) PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Blo bzang ལྷོ་བཟང་། (Luozang 洛藏)*

ABSTRACT

Rkang tsha (Gangcha) Village is located in Rkang tsha Tibetan Township, Ya rdzi Za lar (Xunhua Salar) Autonomous County, Mtsho shar (Haidong) City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. In 2019, this pastoral community consisted of 317 households and 1,559 residents and was managed by the Rga po and Tshogs 'dus community groups overseeing pastureland, livestock, seasonal migration, and assigning religious activities through non-government organizations such as the *tshod 'dzin rga po* and *chig bdag*. Rkang tsha Monastery, village leadership, "Tiger Day," religious activities (Zlog chen and Dbyar ston), and preparing *tshams zhu* for high *bla ma* and leaders are also described.

KEYWORDS

Mtsho sngon (Qinghai), Rkang tsha Village, Rkang tsha Monastery, *tshod 'dzin rga po*, *chig bdag*, Tibetan pastureland management, seasonal migration, local Tibetan organization

INTRODUCTION

I grew up as a herder in Rkang tsha (Gangcha) Village situated in Rkang tsha Tibetan Township, Ya rdzi (Xunhua) Za lar (Salar, Sala) Autonomous County, Mtsho shar (Haidong) City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. I never questioned how my community supervised our pasturelands and seasonal movements because it all seemed so normal. Later, some of my new Tibetan friends were surprised when I said that my home community did not divide grassland among households. Their home pasturelands had been divided and fenced into herding communities in Mtsho sngon (Qinghai), Kan su'u (Gansu), and Si khron (Sichuan) provinces.

There were different views on this practice. Some said, "It's not good to divide. Division harms the environment, ecology,¹ and human relationships." Others countered with, "You'll never be rich if you don't divide the grassland among individuals."

When I explained how my community manages our shared grassland and seasonal events, my friends reflected that they once had a common grassland and similar pastureland management systems. However, such systems are now disappearing. That left me wondering why our grassland was not divided among individuals and what system is used to manage the grassland? Also, who are the managers, and more fundamentally, why does my home community continue herding today? As I set out to answer these questions, I discovered that the *chig bdag* organization (hereafter: CB) was critical in assisting how my home community manages herding issues.

This paper examines CB in terms of its establishment, management, and obligations. I also introduce Rkang tsha Village, Rkang tsha Monastery, and Rkang tsha Village leadership, which are integral to CB. Besides, I draw on interviews with residents, monks, and middle-aged men who are

*Blo bzang (Luozang). 2020. The Chig bdag Organization of Rkang tsha Herding Community, Mtsho shar (Haidong) City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:132-160.

¹ Livestock are unable to move across large areas because of grassland division among individuals, creating problems for production, ecological system challenges, a limited ability to respond to natural disasters, and ecological risks as a result of livestock repeatedly trampling and overgrazing small areas (Li 2019:1).

leaders and have participated in CB. Finally, I also provide relevant images of Rkang tsha Village, CB, and religious activities.

FIG 1. CB location.

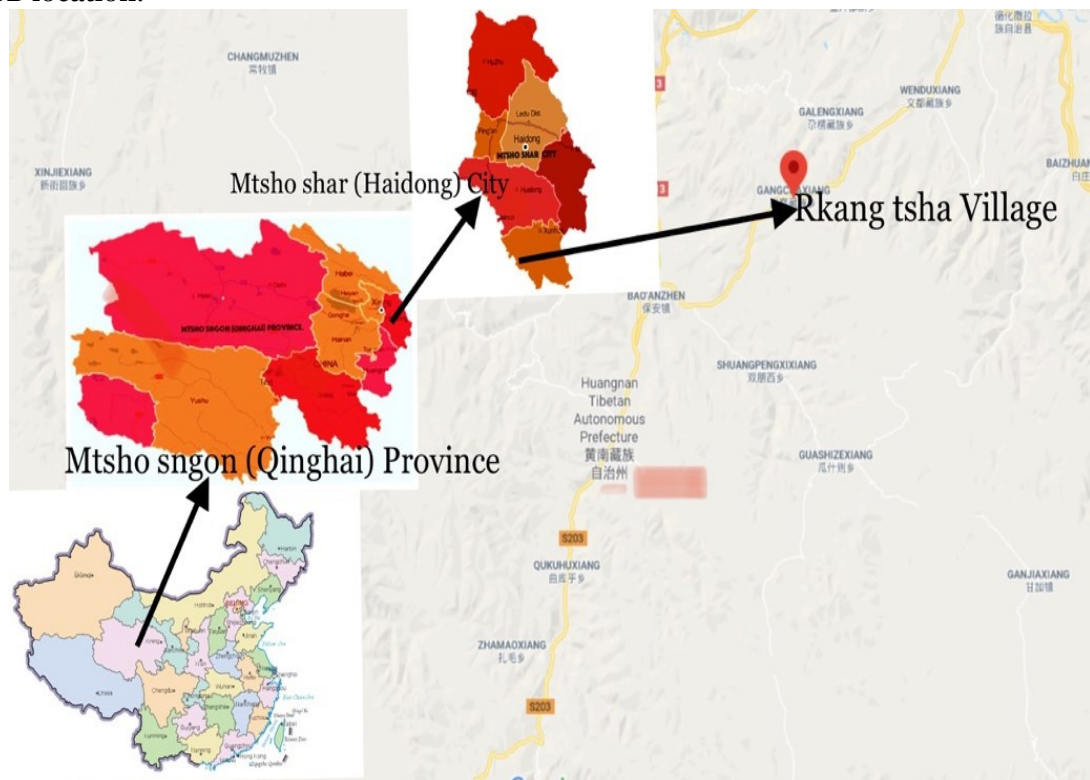


FIG 2. Map of Ya rdzi Za lar (Xunhua Salar) Autonomous County.¹



¹ An edited version of <https://bit.ly/3fZlIZE> (accessed 11 May 2020).

RKANG TSHA VILLAGE

Rkang tsha Village (latitude 35.699471, longitude 102.230797)¹ is thirty-five kilometers from Ya rdzi County Town and has 317 households² and 1,559³ residents. The average altitude is 3,200 meters.⁴ The village's area and grassland account for 344,000 *mu* (22,945 hectares/56,657 acres).⁵ Agropastoral communities of Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture are west of the village. Southeast of the village is the herding community of Rgan gya, Rgan gya (Ganjia) Township, Bsang chu (Xiahe) County, Kan lho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Kan su'u (Gansu) Province.

Consisting of three villages - Kha so, Zog pa, and Rkang tsha - Rkang tsha Township is the only herding community in Mtsho shar City. Neighbor villages refer to Rkang tsha Village as "Gser kha'i rkang tsha." About three centuries ago, the village's original herding families migrated from Gnya' skya ro rkang tsha in contemporary Khri kha rkang tsha, Khri kha (Guide) County to Gser kha Valley to avoid conflict with the Rkang tsha Tribe. The families lived in Gser kha Valley for two generations before moving yet again.

After a group member killed a Tho rgya's villager in Reb gong County, they migrated to Gcan tsha thang in Gcan tsha (Jianzha) County, where they stayed for some twenty years until they negotiated with Tho rgya Village and agreed to give Gser kha Valley to Tho rgya Village as compensation for killing their community member. Though some families settled in Gcan tsha County, most families migrated to Gser kha'i nyag ga, east of the Gser kha Valley - the site of Rkang tsha Township in 2020.

For a time, this herding community had little pasture. Ka ring Community offered grassland, and Bla ma lha gzhis⁶ and his followers joined Rkang tsha Community and shared his extensive grassland. Later, the fourth Gser kha incarnation *bla ma* bought a large piece of land from Bis mdo (Wendu) Community for Rkang tsha Village. The village's pasture was then divided into seasonal pastures.⁷

Spong bo thar, Ar lcags, Khag dkar, and Rog po tribal members live in Rkang tsha Village. In the past, the head *dpon po* 'chiefs' were from the Khag dkar Tribe. Though other tribes had their own chiefs, they obeyed the Khag dkar Tribe *dpon po*. However, the death of Dpon po blo bzang and his two sons in 1958 ended this model of tribal leadership.

Nevertheless, tribal affiliation continues to be important, particularly during weddings, funerals, and religious rituals. For example, if a family holds a wedding, members of the same tribe come and help prepare and present gifts to the family.

Rkang tsha Gongshe 'Commune' was established in 1959, and Rkang tsha Village was divided into five *tus*⁸ ('*du*' 'brigade'). Each brigade currently has thirty to sixty households. For instance, Brigade Five has around thirty-three households, and Brigade Four has around sixty households. Each

¹ See <https://bit.ly/2Clfdsv> (accessed July 10, 2020).

² I obtained this 2019 count from my family's *sde ba'i ming tho* 'name list of all community members'. My family uses this list to offer bread, tea leaves, and a bottle of oil to every community family during the *chos* 'religious' ritual.

³ On 22 October 2019, a government officer reported this population count during a ceremony in Rkang tsha Village commemorating the Seventieth Anniversary of the founding of modern China.

⁴ See <https://bit.ly/2Ob4J1m> (accessed 23 November 2019).

⁵ On 22 October 2019, a government officer reported this land area during a ceremony in Rkang tsha Village commemorating the Seventieth Anniversary of the founding of modern China.

⁶ Bla ma lha gzhis was a reincarnation *bla ma* with his own land and resident followers.

⁷ This oral history is commonly shared in Rkang tsha Village.

⁸ Before 1958, the community was divided into Rgyan phyogs One, Rgyan phyogs Two, Rgyan phyogs Three, and Rgyan phyogs Four.

brigade has a leader (*tus sgren*g or *ru gtso* (*dui zhang*) 'brigade leader'), who announces village leaders' decisions to brigade members.

Rkang tsha villagers herd yaks, sheep, horses, a few goats, and a few yak-cow hybrids. They seasonally move from pasture to pasture and, during this time, they live in tents.

In the past, herders used yak-skins to make shoes, bags, and ropes; yak-hair to make tents, bags, and ropes; sheepskin to make robes and pants; sheep stomachs to fetch water and as butter containers; and wool to make raincoats, carpets, and hats. However, at the end of the twentieth century, herders began using plastic containers and bags and purchased shoes, clothes, hats, and robes from markets rather than making such items themselves. By 2019, very few people knew how to make clothes, bags, robes, shoes, and hats from yak-skins, sheepskins, yak hair, and wool.

When moving historically, pastoralists used yak-hair bags and sheepskin bags to store wheat grain, wheat flour, barley, roasted barley flour, butter, dried cheese, dried meat, *thang ka*,¹ scriptures, deity images, clothing, bowls, spoons, pots, and teapots. Black yak-hair tents, tent poles, and bags were loaded on male yaks at that time.

Today, Rkang tsha Village pastoralists use motorcycles, hand tractors, and cars for transportation during seasonal movement. They live in canvas tents and *phyar sbus* (the four corners of the tent are fabric - not canvas - while the remainder of the tent consists of yak-hair fabric) in summer, autumn, and spring. Certain families use their black yak-hair tents to make *phyar sbus*, and a few families actively use black yak-hair tents in summer. However, in winter, they live in brick houses in the winter pasture. Some black yak-hair tents that are put in storage during this period decompose.

Summer and autumn are optimum times for pastoralists to produce milk, butter, cheese, and yogurt and buy and sell livestock. Historically, herders traded meat, dried cheese, yak hair, sheep wool, and leather for grain, fruit, cooking oil, and salt with neighboring farming communities and merchants who came to Rkang tsha Village. From the 1990s, this began changing. By 2019, goods were rarely exchanged. Instead, some Rkang tsha villagers operated shops in the Township Town and sold butter, yogurt, milk, and bread to Salar, Hui, and Han Chinese. Although Rkang tsha pastoralists maintain a largely pastoral lifestyle, their lives continue to be dramatically impacted by the modern, market-centered world.

¹ A Tibetan religious image with a silk cover that is painted, appliqued, embroidered, or printed and traditionally kept unframed and rolled up.

FIG 3. Brigade Four, Rkang tsha Community in a summer pasture (2016, 'Jigs med dpal ldan).



FIG 4. Brigade Two, Rkang tsha Village camps around the Township Town in their autumn pasture. The brick buildings are township government offices, the township primary school, a health clinic, a bank, a grain supply center, and a veterinary station (1998, Dge 'dun rgya mtsho).



RKANG TSHA MONASTERY

Rkang tsha dgon dg'a ldan chos 'phel gling 'Rkang tsha Monastery' is fifteen kilometers from Rkang tsha Township Town. The first Gser kha reincarnation *bla ma*, Gser kha bsod nams rgya mtsho (1690-1780),¹ founded the monastery in 1745² upon returning from thirty years of study in Central Tibet. Established as a *sgrub grwa* 'practice/meditation center' for meditation, chanting, and religious rituals, monks study and practice the Rnying ma and Dge lugs traditions.

The fifth Bse incarnation *bla ma*, Bse tshang blo bzang dpal ldan (b. 1938), and the fifth Gser kha incarnation *bla ma*, are the highest Dge lugs section teachers in Rkang tsha Monastery.

The fourth Ka ring sgom sprul incarnation *bla ma*, Bstan 'dzin 'jigs med ye shes rnam rgyal (1940~2017), was the most respected Rnying ma section teacher in Rkang tsha Monastery.

The sixth Lha gzhis reincarnation *bla ma*, Bstan 'dzin lung rtogs rgya mtsho (b. 1979), is the *skar ma'i bla ma*³ 'funeral *bla ma*' of Rkang tsha Village.

According to Nian and Bai (1993:85), some sixty monks were in the monastery from the early twentieth century until it was closed in 1958. The monastery was reopened in 1962, closed again during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and opened once more in 1980, at which time there were only five monks. A khu bstan 'dzin was the *bla ma*, Nor bu rgya mtsho was the *dge bskos* 'discipline enforcer', 'Jigs med bstan pa was the *dbu mdzad* 'first speaker at chanting rituals', and Dge 'dun rgya mtsho was the *chab ril* 'assistant to the *dge bskos*'. Gser kha bstan pa rgya mtsho (1921-2001) was the Buddhism teacher at Bis mdo Monastery⁴ and later was invited to his home monastery (Rkang tsha Monastery) to teach Buddhism in 1980. He became the fifth Gser kha incarnation (Blo bzang 'jam dbyangs thub bstan rgya mtsho (b. 1979) *bla ma's yongs 'dzin* 'reincarnation *bla ma's* teacher'.

In 2019, fifty-three monks studied Buddhism in Rkang tsha Monastery. The fifth reincarnation Gser kha *bla ma*, Blo bzang 'jma dbyangs thub bstan rgya mtsho, managed the monastery with the *tshogs 'dus* 'group of five monks' - a *bla ma*, a *dge skos*, a *dbu mdzad*, and two older monks ('Jigs med rgya mtsho and 'Jigs med sbyin pa). The *tshogs 'dus* assist the fifth Gser kha reincarnation *bla ma* in arranging religious activities and rituals. They are also responsible for building temples and stupas and overseeing monastery rules, such as ensuring all monks attend their classes, participate in chanting rituals, and abide by their vows.⁵

¹ See 'Jigs med rgya mtsho et al. (2019:70, 105).

² See 'Jigs med rgya mtsho et al. (2019:94).

³ A *skar ma'i bla ma* 'funeral *bla ma*' comes to a home to conduct funeral rituals for the deceased before a corpse is taken to the sky burial ground. The *skar ma'i bla ma* lives in a monastery, studies Buddhism, and is expected to be an accomplished Buddhist practitioner. Rkang tsha Village's *skar ma'i bla ma* was the Lha gzhis reincarnation. When the fifth Lha gzhis passed away, the village asked the fourth Gser kha reincarnation *bla ma* to be the *skar ma'i bla ma* until the sixth Lha gzhis was identified. In 2019, the sixth incarnation was Rkang tsha Village's *skar ma'i bla ma* who is also the *khri ba* 'abbot' of Bis mdo Monastery, where he spends most of his time.

⁴ Bis mdo dgon chen bkra shis chos 'khor gling 'Bis mdo Monastery' is located five kilometers southwest of Bis mdo Township Town, Ya rdzi County. The monastery (Sa skya Sect) was founded by Bla ma bka' zhi ba shes rab rgyal mtshan in 1282. In 1733, the monastery followed the Dge lugs Sect. In 2013, ten reincarnation *bla ma* and 300 monks were resident, making it the largest Dge lugs monastery in Ya rdzi County (<https://www.qhtibetan.com>, accessed 2 August 2020).

⁵ A *dge tshul* 'novice-monk aged three to nineteen' is expected to abide by thirty-six vows while a *dge slong* takes 253 vows at the age of twenty. All the vows are based on four main vows - no killing, stealing, lying, and sexual misconduct. If a monk breaks any of these vows, he is considered a layman.

FIG 5. Dga' ldan chos 'phel gling - Rkang tsha Monastery (2018, 'Jigs med dpal ldan).



RKANG TSHA VILLAGE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

ACCOUNT ONE: DKON MCHOG NYI MA (B. 1943)¹

When I was young, Kha so'i nor bu was our *dpon po* 'chief'. His son, Blo bzang, inherited his father's authority, and the other tribe leaders respected and obeyed him as they had his father. Dpon po blo bzang was killed with his two sons in 1958, ending hereditary tribal leadership. Now we have new leaders such as the *hru'u ci*² 'Party secretary', *sde dpon*³ 'village leader', and *dui zhang* 'brigade leader' in our community, which we didn't have when I was a child.

Today, Rkang tsha Village has three authoritative leaders and two groups. They are the fifth Gser kha incarnation *bla ma*, the village leader; Party secretary; *rga po*⁴ 'big men'; and *tshogs 'dus*.

¹ Interviewed 20 October 2019.

² *Hru'u ci* is derived from the Chinese 'shuji'. The equivalent Tibetan term is *drung chen*. He represents the local township government office, is in charge of village activities, and announces government policies to the village.

³ The *sde dpon* is a leadership position created in about 1996. He is responsible for general events, the grassland, and livestock issues.

⁴ Locals maintain traditional local rules based on social customs and religious beliefs. These rules are managed by several elder men who oversee rules in herding communities. These elders are called '*rgan po*' (Chos rgyal nam mkha'i nor bu 1983:121). *Rgan po* and *rga po* have the same meaning. *Rgan po* is Literary Tibetan while *rga po* is the oral form of the same.

The fifth Gser kha reincarnation *bla ma* was born in Chu kha ma (Qishama) Township, Rma chu (Maqu) County, Kan su'u Province. In 1992, he was identified as the incarnation of the fourth Gser kha *bla ma*, 'Jigs med bska l bzang rgya mtsho (1901-1957), by two high *bla ma*, Bse tshang bla bzang dpal ldan and G.yer gshong rin po che. Afterward, Rkang tsha Village, including the leaders, respected him as a holy person.

Villagers select the village leader, who is in charge of general events, the grassland, and village livestock issues. The local government chooses the Party secretary, who investigates and is in charge of village activities and announces government policies to the village. In 2010, for instance, the local government chose Mgur lo (b. 1971) as Party secretary, while villagers chose Lhun 'grub (b. 1974) to be the village leader through an election.

The *rga po* consists of thirteen men, including the village leader, Party secretary, and *khe ci* (*kuaiji*) 'accountant'. Each of the five brigades selects two men to represent their brigade. The *rga po* is the most effective leadership group in Rkang tsha Village, observing, discussing, and addressing community problems. For example, in 2012-2014, the number of livestock increased, resulting in a lack of forage for livestock. Herders demanded that the *rga po* solve this problem. Consequently, in 2012, the *rga po* observed the entire community's grassland and livestock situation and discussed options for two years. They first suggested controlling the number of livestock and dividing grassland among individuals. Discussions led to a decision to limit the number of livestock. The *rga po* then established the *tshod 'dzin rga po* 'big-men controlling livestock number' consisting of thirty villagers with six men from each of the five brigades with the organization taking orders from the *rga po*.

Several steps were taken to limit livestock numbers. First, each community member was allowed to have fifty sheep, including lambs; or thirteen yaks, not including calves; or nine horses, not including foals.¹ More than this number per community member was not allowed. Second, if a herder had extra livestock, the *tshod 'dzin rga po* fined them 5,000 RMB. The entire community was informed of these conditions at the outset and given three months to conform with these rules.

On the first day of the tenth month in 2014, all *tshod 'dzin rga po* members and *rga po* went to every family to count the livestock and asked the family head to swear that their family did not have more than the number allowed. For example, this group came to my home and counted our livestock, yaks, and sheep. My family had eight people at that time, so we were allowed 400 sheep or 104 yaks. Since my family had 193 sheep and fifty-seven yaks, we had violated the rules and were fined 5,000 RMB.

Each year, the *tshod 'dzin rga po* visit each family, check the number of livestock, and request that the pastoralists swear that they do not have extra livestock. For example, in 2019, my brother, Bsod nams tshe ring (b. 1993), swore, "'Di'i (*nor dang lug*) han chud ki cig yod na sgar ga 'I swear to the monastery, we don't have extra livestock'.

Rkang tsha Village Party secretary, Mgur lo,² recounted:

¹ Sheep are used as a measurement unit. For instance, one yak counts as four sheep, and one horse counts as six sheep. If a member wants to have sheep, they may have only fifty. If a member wants to herd yaks, they may have thirteen. If a member wants horses, they may have nine.

² Mgur lo (b. 1971) was the Party secretary of Rkang tsha Village from 2010 to 2012, and was a *rga po* member from 2013 to 2016.

ACCOUNT TWO: MGUR LO

Since 2012, we started discussing grassland and livestock issues. I was Party secretary at that time. The village leader, Rga po, and I had many meetings about the problems of grassland and livestock. Eventually, we gathered with all of the community members in Na bzhug during the Gdugs dkar tshe bcu ritual¹ and reported grassland and livestock issues. We pointed out that the number of livestock in our community was increasing, and there was inadequate grass for the livestock, which impacted livestock quality and dairy production. There was also conflict with neighboring pastoral communities such as Rgan gya, The bo, Zho phong, Glang rgya, Zog pa, and Bse chang over grassland and livestock grazing.

During our meetings, the usual options were discussed. Some villagers suggested dividing grassland among individuals. Others suggested that we should control the number of livestock. Many disagreed with the grassland division because some areas don't have much grass, some don't have water, and living at the borders of our area often involves quarrels with neighbors. For example, we are at the border of Kan su'u and Mtsho sngon provinces and at the boundary of Rma lho Prefecture and Mtsho shar City. Conflict with bordering communities is common. For instance, conflict with Rgan gya in 2004 led to conflict and several deaths. No family would agree to have grassland in poor land nor at the borders. Most community members thus agreed to control the number of livestock. We then organized *tshod 'dzin rga po* and worked on how to do this. Village leaders also participated and worked with the *tshod 'dzin rga po* organization and, in the 2014, we fully accomplished limiting the number of livestock in our village.

CB

CB 'manager of seasonal events' is a historical organization in Rkang tsha Village that stopped functioning for about two decades after 1958. In 1981, CB received government permission to reconstitute itself, reorganized, and officially was called Rtswa sa do dam u yon lhan khang (Caoyuan xingzheng weiyuan hui). Locally, however, it was referred to as CB. As a local, I refer to it as CB in this paper.

¹ Gdugs dkar tshe bcu is an annual religious ritual for laymen with each family sending a participant, except for families without adult males.

Fig 6. Rkang tsha Village CB members with Bse tshang blo bzang dpal ldan at Rkang tsha Monastery (1991, Klu 'bum rgyal).



ESTABLISHING CB

After the restoration of Rkang tsha Monastery in 1980, local monks and village elders reorganized CB according to the traditional system. They selected fifteen men who had participated in CB before 1958 and for years, these community elders worked with younger locals.

Later, CB membership selection changed. Members are now selected from the five brigades, with three members chosen from each brigade. According to community rules, each household must be part of CB on a rotating basis. The exceptions are *a ye'i khyim tshang* 'families without adult males', and a family with only a sixty-year-old (or older) adult male. These families are not fined for non-participation.

The fifteen CB members are thus from fifteen households representing the five brigades. There is no precedent for female participation in CB.

In 2019, Rkang tsha Village had seventeen CB organizations that rotate to work on an annual basis. The sixteenth day of the fourth lunisolar month is an auspicious day to establish CB with new membership.

Every year, during Bzhi ba'i smyung gnas 'fasting period during the fourth month'¹ - the monastery leaders establish CB leadership for the coming year utilizing traditional practices. I

¹ In Rkang tsha Village, Bzhi ba'i smyung gnas is observed for three days from the fourteenth to the sixteenth days of fourth month at Rkang tsha Monastery. On the first day, breakfast is only tea. *Gung tshigs* 'lunch' is food without meat, salt, spices, garlic, onions, green onions, pepper, or radish. In the evening there is *rung ja* 'tea only' (no food). On the second day, there is no eating no drinking of any beverages, and no talking until

interviewed 'Jigs med dpal ldan (b. 1967), who has been the leader of Rkang tsha Monastery since the year 2000:

ACCOUNT THREE: 'JIGS MED DPAL LDAN¹

The sixteenth day of the fourth month marks the end of Bzhi ba'i smyung gnas 'fast in the fourth month'. All community members gather in our monastery to celebrate the end of the fast.

Early that day, the *tshogs 'dus* gathered in the *mgon khang* 'protector deities' temple' to discuss establishing a new CB for the year and a leader. Our village has seventeen CB organizations, and we listed them from number one to seventeen. Each CB organization takes its turn to work with our village. This year it is CB Organization Two's turn. We examined CB Two members, chose five capable veteran members, listed their names, and gave the list to A lags. He divined and chose three names. We wrote each of the three names on three pieces of paper, folded them, put them into three small *rtsam pa* pills, and placed them in a wooden bowl. We chanted scriptures and prayed to Buddha and the deities. Next, A lags gently shook the wooden bowl several times, chose a *rtsam pa* pill, gave it to *dge bskos*, and said that this was the CB leader for 2019. Thus, Tshe brtan rgyal was selected. He is in his forties.

The *smyung gnas* celebration is held in our monastery. A lags, monks, and male and female practitioners were in the '*du khang* 'congregation chanting hall' while other villagers were in the *chos ra* 'chanting courtyard'. In 2019, the Ar lcags Tribe² was the *smyung gnas* sponsor and manager. Ar lcags tribal men and women busily served *mar nyog* 'wheat flour cooked with butter', '*bras sil* 'rice and wild yams with melted butter and sugar', milk tea, fried bread, a small ball of butter, and yogurt to all attendees.

After we determined CB membership and its leader in the *mgon khang*, the *dge bskos* went to the chanting courtyard with the *chab ril*, where a celebration was being held. The *dge bskos* held a list of the CB members and stood on the courtyard's highest platform. The *chab ril* held red *phyag mdud* 'long cloth pieces with a knot in the center' and stood by the *dge bskos*, who announced which CB organization would take responsibility for the community this year. He called CB members' names one by one and asked them to come and accept their duties. He then handed each of them a *phyag mdud* that they wore around their neck, representing authority and protection from the deities in their obligatory work. In conclusion, the *dge bskos* designated Tshe brtan rgyal as the CB leader and gave him a red *phyag mdud* and a yellow *dgu mdud* '*kha btags* with nine knots' taken from the *mgon khang*.

After the monastery established the CB organization that day, there was another day determined by local custom for CB to begin work.

THE TIGER DAY³

Lnga ba stag gi tshes mgo, 'the first day of the fifth month is the Tiger Day' is commonly heard in Rkang tsha Village. This is considered a powerful, auspicious day and is respected by others. On that day, all CB members gathered in the monastery, offered incense to the deities, and asked A lags and the *dge bskos* for advice. *Dge bskos* took them into the *mgon khang* and prayed to the protector deities for the CB members' safety, health, and success in their duties. Afterward, they discussed principles and rules for CB members, known as *nang chig*. For instance, what attitude and regulations should

sunrise of the next day. Practitioners are local monks and Rkang tsha Community members (male and female). On the third day, a celebration at the monastery marks the end of the fast.

¹ 'Jigs med dpal ldan is a leader and *bla ma* in Rkang tsha Monastery. Recorded on 28 November 2019.

² In turn, the four tribes sponsor and manage the *smyung gnas* on an annual basis.

³ The tiger is a zodiac sign symbolic of strength and power, and generally inspires fear and respect. Every year, month, and day has a zodiac sign.

they have to help their work be more united, e.g., what punishment should be given if a CB member did not participate in activities or was not on time? Regarding this, I had a conversation with Lcags thar 'bum, a five-time CB participant, who provided the following account:

ACCOUNT FOUR: LCAGS THAR 'BUM¹

I was a CB member in 1983. It was the first time I joined the CB. Our members gathered in the monastery on the first day of the fifth month, met the *dge bskos*, and visited the protector deities' temple. Next, we had a meeting for *nang chig*. Our leader, 'Jigs med brtson 'grus, held the meeting. We determined three principles to guide our work. We swore to be loyal to our community, do everything fairly, and cooperate and undertake activities together. We also devised two rules. First, if a member did not participate in meetings and activities such as patrolling seasonal pastures, the punishment was fifteen RMB² per day. Second, not patrolling the borders would incur a fifty RMB fine.³ Patrolling borders between our community and herding communities such as Rgan gya, The bo, Zho phong, Gling rgyal, and Bse chang was dangerous. As a result, there was regular conflict and, in the worst situations, fighting and killing.

They chose me to be the bookkeeper on that day because I was the only member who could write. My special duties were to record our crucial decisions and announcements, list our income and expenditures, and note our agreement principles and rules in a notebook.

Next, we decided to meet again on the fifteenth day of the fifth month to discuss the division of seasonal pastures and seasonal migration. The meeting ended, and we rode our horses back to our homes.

THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE FIFTH MONTH

The fifteenth day of the fifth month's meeting is known as *ru rgyas* 'seasonal migration conference'. Rkang tsha pastoralists are very concerned about this meeting because CB announces when herders will move to the summer pasture from the spring pasture, camp locations in the summer pasture, and what rules apply. Lcags thar 'bum shared his experiences:

ACCOUNT FIVE: LCAGS THAR 'BUM

On the fifteenth day of the fifth month, we all gathered in the tent of our leader, 'Jigs med brtson 'grus, in Ban sked klad in the spring pasture. When I arrived, some members were already there. Others were absent, so we waited until everyone arrived. The family offered us milk, tea, bread, and *rtsam pa* for breakfast. Then, we began our meeting with the division of the summer pasture into five sections - Dbyar lhas, 'Brug mo kha, Phyi ro, Bkra shis lung dkar, and Mkhar lung klad. Secondly, we numbered each of the summer pastures from one to five, wrote each number on a piece of paper, and folded each paper. Our leader held the papers and asked a representative from each brigade to choose one for their brigade. On behalf of Brigade Four, I chose number four - 'Brug mo kha. Consequently, our summer pasture was 'Brug mo kha for that year. Brigade One chose Phyi ro, Brigade Two chose Bkra shis lung dkar, Brigade Three chose Dbyar lhas, and Brigade Five chose Mkhar lung klad.

The family then prepared lunch, and we discussed the time to move from the spring pasture to the summer pasture. We inquired about the grass in the spring pasture. It was nearly finished, and many herders found it hard to graze livestock, so we all agreed to move to the summer pastures as soon as possible. We decided that the community would move to the summer pasture on the eighteenth day of the

¹ Lcags thar 'bum (b. 1954) is a pastoralist in Rkang tsha Village (recorded 27 April 2019).

² This was in the 1980s. In 2019, it was one hundred RMB per day.

³ In 2019, it was 200 RMB per day.

fifth month, with each family required to move within three days. If they didn't move on time, we would fine them. Next, we made rules for seasonal migration and grazing.

RULES

CB establishes rules for seasonal events and may fine rule breakers. There are several types of rules - *ru chig* 'migration rules', *rtswa chig* 'grazing rules', and *phyi chig* 'rules for outsiders/neighbors herding communities'. Lcags thar 'bum shares his experiences of making rules and fines and compares the 1980s with 2019:

ACCOUNT SIX: LCAGS THAR 'BUM

We made rules based on the previous CB organization's practices. There were two types of *ru chig*. First, the entire community had to move to the summer pasture with their livestock within three days of the migration date. If pastoralists did not move on time, the first late day's fine was five RMB, the second late day's penalty was ten RMB, and the third late day's fine was twenty RMB. The fine was a *sha bzan* 'six-year-old male sheep' worth around seventy RMB from the fourth late day in the 1980s. By 2019 these fines had increased some tenfold: the first late day's fine was fifty RMB, the second late day's fine was one hundred RMB, and the third late day's penalty was 200 RMB. From the fourth late day, the fine was a *sha bzan* that was now worth about 1,800 RMB.

Each household must stay in their own brigade's summer pasture. They are not allowed to camp elsewhere. If a family does not move into their assigned brigade pasture, they are fined one *sha bzan*. For instance, my brother is a Brigade Two member. He did not camp in their summer pasture, Mkhar lung klad. Instead, he camped in Brigade Three's summer pasture, Dbyar lhas, so we took a *sha bzan* from him.

In terms of grazing rules, each seasonal pasture has a border. We protect the seasonal pastures at the borders. Our herders must graze their livestock in the summer pastures during summertime. In spring, livestock must graze in the spring pasture, and in autumn, livestock must be grazed in the autumn pasture. Community members who graze their livestock in violation of these rules are fined. For instance, when we caught herders grazing livestock in other seasonal pastures when the community was camping in the summer pasture, we fined the herders 0.5 RMB per sheep, one RMB for a yak, and three RMB per horse. If the sheep number was more than fifty, the fine was fifty RMB. Today, the penalty is two RMB per sheep (or 200 RMB for more than fifty sheep), four RMB per adult yak, two RMB for a yak calf, and eight RMB for a horse.

Third, rules for outsiders apply to neighbor communities. If neighbors graze livestock on our grassland, we fine them a sheep for a *lug khyu* 'flock of sheep' (generally numbering 150-200), and collect cash-fines for yaks and horses. We negotiate fines with neighboring communities. For example, if Rgan gya Community¹ herded their livestock in our grassland, we take a sheep from a *lug khyu*, and collect one RMB per yak, one RMB for a calf, and one RMB for a horse. Except for Rgan gya and The bo, other neighboring communities such as Glign rgyal and Zog pa are fined differently, e.g., four RMB per sheep, six RMB per yak, and twelve RMB per horse. They fine us the same if we graze livestock on their grassland.

¹ In 1983, PaN chen rin po che visited his home and directed the local government and local elders to solve the grassland dispute between Rkang tsha and Rgan gya communities (FIG 9). PaN chen rin po che set fines for both sides if they crossed their borders. The tenth PaN chen rin po che's full name was Blo bzang lhun grub chos kyi rgyal mtshan. He was born on the third day of first month in 1938. His father, Gur mgon tshe brtan, and mother, Bsod nams sgrol ma, were farmers in Ma ru Village, Bis mdo Town. After he was identified, he moved to Gtsang bkra shis lhun po Monastery, which is the PaN chen's monastery in Gzhis kha rtse (Rikaze) City, where he studied Buddhism and Tibetan (PaN chen sku phreng bcu ba blo bzang lhun grub chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 2011:1-2).

FIG 7. A family moves to summer pasture from spring pasture (2014, 'Jigs med dpal ldan).



FIG 8. Yaks moving to summer pasture (2014, 'Jigs med dpal ldan).



FIG 9. Celebrating after PaN chen rin po che solved a grassland dispute between Rkang tsha and Rgan gya communities with local people and local government. PaN chen rin po ordered thirteen stone piles erected at the border of Rkang tsha and Rgan gya communities and set fines for both communities if they crossed the border. In 1983, the celebration was held in PaN chen rin po che's home, Bis mdo dpon tshang, in Mar ru Village, Bis mdo Township. (My Buddhism teacher, 'Jigs med rgya mtsho, allowed me to copy this picture in 2019).



FINES

In terms of fine collection, I compare the experiences of the 1980s to today. In the 1980s, CB commonly collected fines in the form of goods such as butter (one kilo was worth twenty RMB while in 2019 it was ninety RMB per kilo¹), dried cheese (one kilo was six RMB, but was forty RMB in 2019) and sheep wool (one kilo was four RMB, but in 2019, it was forty RMB). Breaking CB rules is common and is not considered odd nor bad. Dkon mchog nyi ma (b. 1943) described his experiences of paying fines to CB in the 1980s:

ACCOUNT SEVEN: DKON MCHOG NYI MA

My family has broken CB rules many times. For example, one summer, I was grazing my sheep in the autumn pasture. CB members came and said, "*Khyod chig la thogs yis bsdad yod gi*" 'You broke our grazing

¹ Prices for butter, cheese, and sheep wool are provided on the basis of conversations with Dgon mchog nyi ma (b. 1943), Bkra shis don 'grub (b. 1968), and Lcags thar 'bum (b. 1954) in October 2019.

rules'," and they drove my sheep into the summer pasture. The next day, they came to my home and asked me to pay fifty RMB. We didn't use much cash at that time, so we gave them a *lag ga* 'two-year-old sheep', instead of cash.

Sometimes, some people refused to pay the fines and argued with CB, who then asked village leaders to help. If the situation worsened, monastery leaders were asked to assist. Village or monastery leaders were generally able to convince people to obey the CB. Such arguments have a punishment called '*khon chig* 'fine for argument'. The fine is a sheep.

At another time, we were living in an autumn pasture when all of my family's yaks returned to the summer pasture by themselves. The CB kept them at the summer and autumn pastures border and asked me to pay thirty RMB as a fine. Later, we gave them ten bowls of dried cheese instead of the cash.

Today, community members, especially young people, send funds via WeChat to pay CB fines. No one gives CB butter and cheese, but sheep are still given. Fines help pay for the organization's expenditures, e.g., food and gasoline (in the past, horses were used, but today all CB members use motorcycles and cars), and religious activity expenses, e.g., Gdugs dkar zlog chen,¹ Dbyar ston,² and '*tshams zhu*³ for high *bla ma*.

FIG 10. The CB camp at the border of the summer and autumn pastures (13 July 2018, Blo bzang).



¹ Explained later.

² Explained later.

³ '*Tshams zhu* refers to Lo sar gifts for *bla ma*.

FIG 11. At the CB camp, several yaks trespassed in the autumn pasture. CB members wait for their owners to pay the fines (14 July 2018, Blo bzang).



FIG 12. CB members gather in an autumn pasture and check if neighboring communities' livestock are in their pastures (6 August 2017, Bsod nams tshe ring).



RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES AND CB OBLIGATIONS

CB takes responsibility for religious activities - Zlog chen, and Dbyar ston¹ - and preparing '*tshams zhu* for *bla ma*.

ZLOG CHEN

Zlog chen is a short form for Gdugs dkar zlog chen, a ten-day annual religious ritual held in Rkang tsha Village. Gdugs dkar 'white umbrella' is a female bodhisattva and has this name because she holds a white umbrella. *Zlog* 'defeating evils' and *chen* 'big' combined suggest 'big ritual of Gdugs dkar defeating evils'. *Zlog chen* is commonly held in fabric tents in mid-summer in the summer pasture or early autumn in the autumn pasture. The time and location are determined by CB and monastery leaders. CB's obligations are preparing for the ritual and serving monks during the ritual.

CB members pitch a big white fabric tent (*tshogs ras* 'assembly/meeting tent') for the monks. Seven monks chant scriptures. Three monks assist and make *gtor ma*.² The monks chant, eat, and sleep in the tent. Tents are also pitched for a kitchen, a storage space, and for the CB members to eat and sleep in.

In the *tshogs ras*, CB members make beds for the monks and prepare tables and other items for the rituals. They also prepare the meals from mutton, beef, *rtsam pa*, dried cheese, butter, bread, yogurt, milk, wild yams, and wheat flour. Today, they prepare a more extensive range of food, including potatoes, green peppers, radishes, bananas, apples, oranges, and grapes. The CB members borrow two or three big pots, several teapots, spoons, bowls, and metal stoves from local families. They prepare three meals per day for ten days, offer food to participants, and offer incense to the deities.

Every afternoon during the ritual, hundreds of locals (primarily elders, women, and children) come to the ritual site and sit in front of the monks' tent, waiting to obtain holy water³ from the monks, which they use to wet their heads, faces, hands, and upper bodies.

In the 1980s, there were no private shops. However, since the early twenty-first century, there have been several private shops in Rkang tsha Village. In addition, there are tent shops near the ritual site where locals buy clothes, fruits, drinks, candies, peanuts, melon seeds, and biscuits. Rkang tsha pastoralists historically used little cash. Instead, they exchanged dried cheese, sheepskins, and yak skins for commodities. This situation changed to cash transactions in the early twenty-first century.

After seven days, the Gtor rgyag 'discard the *gtor ma*' rite is held that signifies defeating/expelling evil from the area. On that day, community members (mostly men) come to participate. When monks finish chanting scriptures in the tent, CB members carry the *gtor ma* some distance away. All participants follow the CB members in a line.

Three CB members carry three copper bowls at the head of the line containing holy water, yogurt, and liquor, which they fling into the sky. Other CB members following behind carry the *gtor ma*. Next come the monks, chanting, beating drums, clanging cymbals, and blowing conch shells. In the past, other men holding guns, rifles, pistols, and slingshots followed the monks. As they approached their destination, they fired the guns into the sky amid much yelling. However, since around 2006, locals stopped using guns. Instead, they set off fireworks.

¹ Explained later.

² *Gtor ma* are made from *rtsam pa* and butter, and sometimes are colored red and black, which symbolize evil.

³ Monks add a little milk to a container of water, place the container in a high place where they are chanting, and chant water deity scriptures inviting water deities to enter the water in the container. The water is then considered holy and is thought capable of refreshing supplicants, and curing illness and defeating evils in the bodies of supplicants, who typically sip a little of the holy water.

At the destination, monks threw all of the *gtor ma* into a small wooden hut and set it on fire. When the Zlog chen *bla ma* 'ritual's officiator' threw three balls of red-colored *rtsam pa* on the ground one by one, the guns were fired, and those with slingshots slung stones at the *rtsam pa* balls and wildly yelled. After burning the *gtor ma*, they would all return to the tent, wash their hands, burn juniper, and fumigate themselves to ensure evils did not infect them. After the *gtor rgyag* rite, community members returned home while monks and CB members remained at the tents to hold the *sbyin bsreg* ritual.

FIG 13. Zlog chen *gtor ma* (2018, 'Jigs med dpal ldan).



Sbyin bsreg (*sbyin* 'almsgiving', *bsreg* 'burning') offers food to odor eaters, hungry ghosts, and demi-gods via burning offerings during a three-day ritual. CB members continue serving the monks. For three days, monks chant scriptures and eat and sleep in the same tent. At the end of *sbyin bsreg*, monks make a flat, square soil platform near the tent. They color it white with wheat flour and use red soil to decorate it with religious symbols such as vajras and Dharma-wheels.

On one side of the soil platform, twelve ingredients are placed for ritual burning: rice, barley, peas, wheat, melted butter, *ku sha* 'poa cynosuroides', *yam shing* 'wood', *til* 'black sesamum', *ram pa* 'quitch grass', *zho zan* 'roasted barley flour mixed with yogurt', *yungs dkar* 'white mustard seed', and *so ba* 'coarse, thick-shelled barley'. On the other side, monks sit cross-legged, chanting scriptures.

Near the soil platform, the ritual's officiator sits on a high throne. The offerings are burned with dried yak dung and wood on the soil platform. The *sbyin bsreg bla ma* tosses offerings into the fire before him. Again, community members gather and sit until *tshogs bsags mar khu* 'melted butter' is poured on the fire. The ritual ends after 'o *thug* 'rice cooked with milk' is served and eaten. Community members then return home.

The day after the *sbyin bsreg* ritual, the monks return to the monastery. CB members fold the tents, return borrowed items, and calculate the ritual's expenditures. In the 1980s, total expenses were around 3,000 RMB¹ plus four or five sheep. In 2019, the expenditure was around 25,000 RMB² and three sheep.

DBYAR STON

Dbyar ston 'summer feast', is held annually on the first day of the eighth month. It marks the end of the monks' six weeks of summer residence religious in Rkang tsha Monastery.³ CB sponsors the feast. The day before *dbyar ston*, all monks prepare for the feast. They carry the *tshogs ras* to Mgar rgan (an autumn pasture, where the Rkang tsha Monastery annually held the feast, about half a kilometer from the monastery), pitch it, and make adobe stoves by the tent. Then, the young monks go to the valley to fetch water from a stream. CB members prepare the food that includes mutton, sausages, bread, noodles, rice, wild yams, green peppers, potatoes, radishes, milk, yogurt, dried cheese, butter, and fruit (apples, pears, watermelons, grapes, raisins), candy, peanuts, and sunflower seeds. The *go gnyer* 'monastery cook' and young monks cook for the feast.

On the feast day, monks line up and walk to the tent from the monastery. When they approach the tent, the CB leader offers a *kha btags* to the *gnas bstan pa* 'Dbyar gnas officiator', welcoming the monks to the feast. When the monks finish chanting and praying in the tent, the young monks and CB members offer monks *rgya thug* (pieces of beef and pork, radishes, green onions, and vermicelli in meat soup), steamed and baked bread, and milk tea for breakfast. 'Bras sil, bread, milk tea, snacks, candy, and fruit are served for lunch. Mutton, blood sausages, *rtsam pa* sausages, wheat flour sausages, bean flour sausages, and noodles in meat soup are served for *gung tshigs*.

After eating, the monks gather around the tent, wrestle, skip rope, hold jumping and running competitions, and *brtag re* (several, or at least two people, verbally tease each other), while CB members sing Tibetan folksongs. They enjoy themselves until late in the afternoon. Later, some monks fold the tent, tie it and its poles, and carry it back to the monastery. Other monks return the carpets, big pots, and other cooking utensils to the monastery, and clean where they cooked and

¹ Information provided by Lcags thar 'bum (b. 1943) based on his experiences.

² Information provided by Bkra shis don 'grub (b. 1968).

³ Dbyar gnas is a Dge lugs ritual, particularly practiced in Dge lugs monasteries. It was initiated by Rje tsong kha ba (1357-1419) in 1402 at Gnam rtsed lding (Bkra shis tshe ring 2008:333-347). Originally, *dbyar gnas* lasted all summer (the sixth, seventh, and eighth lunar months). Later, it was held from the fifteenth day of the sixth month to the first day of the eighth month. During *dbyar gnas*, monks stay in the monastery, study, and meditate. They are not allowed to go far from the monastery, nor have picnics and other activities on the grassland, wash their cassocks and other items in the streams, nor swim in streams. Such activity might kill countless creatures and harm plants (Tshe tan zhabs drung rje btsun 'jigs med rig pa'i blo gros, 2007:24-45). At three PM, monks eat *gung tshigs* 'monks' afternoon meal'. Afterward, they are only allowed to drink milk tea and have yogurt and fruit. Other foods are not allowed until the next morning (six years of personal experiences).

pitched the tent. The remaining food is divided among individuals, including CB members. Finally, the monks return to the monastery, and CB members return to their homes.

In the 1980s, expenditure for the feast was a sheep and around 300 RMB. In 2019, it was 2,000 RMB and a sheep.

FIG 14. Rkang tsha Monastery monks coming for Dbyar ston (1990s, Dge 'dun rgya mtsho).



FIG 15. Rkang tsha Monastery monks chant in a *tshogs ras* at Dbyar ston (1990s, 'Jigs med thabs mkhas).



'TSHAMS ZHU

CB's third annual obligation is to prepare *'tshams zhu* for high *bla ma* and leaders. Every year during Lo sar, Rkang tsha Community offers *'tshams zhu* to high *bla ma* such as the tenth PaN chen rin po che, Bse tshang blo bzang dpal ldan (b. 1938),¹ A lags Rta mgrin (~b. 1942-2017),² A lags gser kha (b. 1979), and A lags lha gzhis (b. 1979). Therefore, before Lo sar, CB prepares *lug sha sha khog* 'sheep carcass minus the head, internal organs, and hooves' for the high *bla ma*, and presents them to the village leader and Party secretary. The leaders add *kha btags*, silk, tea bricks, and yogurt, which are offered to *bla ma*. For instance, in 1982, Rkang tsha Village leader, Zon thar rgyal (b. 1949), and the local monastery leader, Dge 'dun rgya mtsho (1923-2016), traveled to Beijing to offer *'tshams zhu* to the PaN chen rin po che. Zon thar rgyal describes his experience:

ACCOUNT EIGHT: ZON THAR RGYAL

Several days after the first day of Lo sar, our village and monastery ordered A khu rgya mtsho (Dge 'dun rgya mtsho) and me to take *'tshams zhu* to Rin po che in Beijing. We took a *lug sha sha khog* (prepared by CB), butter (~twenty-five kilos), dried yogurt (~fifteen kilos), *kha btags*, and long silk as *'tshams zhu*. Before we set off, we reported to Dpon tshang,³ who phoned Beijing to notify of our visit. We went with other leaders from Bis mdo Township. Then, we took a train to Beijing from Zi ling (Xining). When we reached a train station in Beijing, Mchod rten (~1935~2000s) met us and took us to the Xizang banshi chu 'Tibet Office' where we stayed in a hotel. The next morning, we met and offered *'tshams zhu* to PaN chen rin po che. He said that we would have dinner together in his apartment that evening, and then he left for a meeting.

Rin po che offered a bowl of yogurt to the monks and a cup of liquor to the laymen at dinner. We chatted with Rin po che about our community's situation and asked him what *rim gro* 'religious rituals' we should perform. Later, he told his cousin, Mchod rten, to take us to Buddhist temples and monasteries in Beijing.

Over the next few days, Mchod rten escorted us to Dga' ldan byin chags gling (Yonghegong),⁴ and Lha khang ser bo 'The West Yellow Temple' (Beijing Huangsi),⁵ and other Buddhist sites. After several days, we returned home. I represented our village seven times in taking *'tshams zhu* to Rin po che in Beijing before he passed away in 1989.

¹ Bse tshang blo bzang dpal ldan is a scholar and respected reincarnation *bla ma*. Born in The bo Village, Reb gong County, he was identified as the sixth reincarnation of the Bse *bla ma* after the death of the fifth incarnation, Blo bzang bkra shis 'phrin las rgya mtsho (1890-1937). Bse tshang blo bzang dpal ldan has lived in his former incarnation's monasteries, Gter lung and Gtsos (Hezuo), in Gtsos City, Kan lho. After the Cultural Revolution he taught in the Tibetan Buddhism College in Beijing, and Gtsos Nationality Normal University in Kan su'u. He has published six books related to Buddhist teaching, Buddhist philosophy, poetry, and Tibetan history (Klu tshang rdo rje rin chen 2001:1-7).

² A lags rta mgrin was the fourth incarnation of Ka ring sgom sprul and a mantra practitioner and teacher of the Rnying ma Sect in Rkang tsha and Ka ring monasteries. His full name was Bstan 'dzin 'jigs med ye shed rnam rgyal.

³ Dpon tshang refers to PaN chen rin po che's family in Mar ru Village.

⁴ "The Yonghegong "Palace of Harmony" is the largest Tibetan-style monastery in Beijing. Built as a palace for the Yongzheng emperor, the complex was rededicated in 1744 by his son the Qianlong emperor as a monastery for Mongolian, Tibetan, and Chinese practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism" (<https://bit.ly/33jTYCN>, accessed 4 August 2020).

⁵ "The Shunzhi emperor (1644-1661) established the precedent of constructing elaborate residences for visiting Tibetan prelates. In 1652, he ordered the construction of Huangsi temple ... in Beijing for the visit of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-82)" (<https://bit.ly/3fr8hri>, accessed 4 August 2020).

FIG 16. A group representing Rkang tsha and Bis mdo communities visited PaN chen rin po che in Beijing, and offered him 'tshams zhu. Mchod rten escorted this group to Buddhist sites such as Dga' ldan byin chags gling (Yonghegong), Pe cin mchod rten dkar po (Baita si, Miaoying si 'White Stupa' Temple), and Ston pa'i tshems gdung mchod rten (Foya sheli ta, where a tooth relic of the Buddha is kept) in Lingguang Temple. This photograph was taken by Mchod rten at Huangsi Temple Beijing in 1982.



FIG 17 (numbered below). Dge' dun rgya mtsho (1923-2016, #2) was a Rkang tsha Monastery leader, 'Dan ma tshul khriims (#3) was a Bis mdo Monastery leader, Sha bo don 'grub (PaN chen's cousin, #4) was a Gshong yul Villager, Zon thar rgyal (#10) was a Rkang tsha Village leader, and Sangs rgyas skyabs (#11) was a Zog pa Village leader. The unidentified others were from Bis mdo Community.



CONCLUSION

Rkang tsha Village limits the number of livestock and moves seasonally to maintain pasture quality. Village leaders establish organizations such as the *tshod 'dzin rga po* and CB to manage the village. The *tshod 'dzin rga po* limits each community member to fifty sheep, thirteen yaks, or nine horses. To enforce this, they visit each family once a year to monitor livestock numbers. If the livestock exceeds what is allowed, the family is fined 5,000 RMB.

Since the local monastery re-established the CB organization in 1983, the organization has worked with the community, managing seasonal migration, protecting seasonal pastures, and sponsoring local religious rituals.

They also establish principles and rules for themselves. For example, when the community moved to the summer pasture from the spring pasture, they set migration rules, grazing rules, and *phyi chig*. Herders breaking these rules are fined cash, sheep, and dried cheese. They also take responsibility for the ten-day Zlog chen religious ritual, including camping on the grassland with several tents and serving the monks conducting the ritual.

CB prepares *lug sha sha khog* and other food for Dbyar ston, a summer feast marking the end of *dbyar gans*. They also prepare *lug sha sha khog* for each high reincarnation *bla ma* during the Lo sar period. Community leaders offer *'tshams zhu* and ask the reincarnation *bla ma* to specify the community's ritual that year. Overall, CB plays a crucial management role for Rkang tsha Herding Community.

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TIBETAN TERMS

'bras sil འབྲས་སིལ།
'brug mo kha འབྲུག་མོ་ཁ།
'dan ma tshul khrims འདན་མ་ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས།
'dam ma tshul khrims
'di'i (nor dang lug) han chud ki cig yod na sgar
ga འདི་འི་རྟོན་དང་ལུག་ཏུ་ཚུད་ཀྱི་ཅིག་ཡོད་ན་སྐར་ག
'jam dbyangs thub bstan rgya mtsho འཇམ་དབྱངས་ཐུབ་བསྐྱེད་སྤངས་
ཐུབ་བསྐྱེད་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
'jigs med brtson 'grus འཇིགས་མེད་བརྟེན་འགུས།
'jigs med bskal bzang rgya mtsho འཇིགས་མེད་བསྐྱེད་སྤངས་
བཟང་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
'jigs med bstan pa འཇིགས་མེད་བསྐྱེད་པ།
'jigs med dpal ldan འཇིགས་མེད་དཔལ་ལྷན།
'jigs med rgya mtsho འཇིགས་མེད་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
'jigs med sbyin pa འཇིགས་མེད་སྤྱིན་པ།
'jigs med thabs mkhas འཇིགས་མེད་ཐབས་མཁས།
'khon chig འཁོན་ཆིག་
'tshams zhu འཚམས་ལྷུ།
a khu bstan 'dzin ཨ་ཁུ་བསྐྱེད་འདིན།
a khu rgya mtsho ཨ་ཁུ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
a lags ཨ་ལགས།
a lags gser kha ཨ་ལགས་གསེར་ཁ།
a lags lha gzhis ཨ་ལགས་ལྷ་བཞིས།
a lags rta mgrin ཨ་ལགས་རྟ་མགྲིན།
a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

a ye'i khyim tshang ཨ་ཡེ་འི་ཁྱིམ་ཚང།
ar lcags ཨར་ལུགས།
ban sked klad བན་སྒྲེད་ལྷན།
bis mdo བིས་མདོ།
bis mdo dgon chen bkra shis chos 'khor gling
བིས་མདོ་དགོན་ཆེན་བརྒྱ་ཤིས་ཆོས་འཁོར་གླིང།
bka' zhi ba shes rab rgyal mtshan བཀའ་ཞི་བཤེས་རབ་
རྒྱལ་མཚན།
bkra shis don 'grub བརྒྱ་ཤིས་དོན་འགྲུབ།
bkra shis lung dkar བརྒྱ་ཤིས་ལུང་དཀར།
bkra shis tshe ring བརྒྱ་ཤིས་ཚེ་རིང།
bla ma བླ་མ།
bla ma lha gzhis བླ་མ་ལྷ་གཞིས།
blo bzang བློ་བཟང།
blo bzang 'jam dbyangs thub bstan rgya mtsho
བློ་བཟང་འཇམ་དབྱངས་ཐུབ་བསྐྱེད་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
blo bzang bkra shis 'phrin las rgya mtsho
བློ་བཟང་བརྒྱ་ཤིས་འཕྲིན་ལས་རྒྱལ་མཚོ།
blo bzang lhun grub chos kyi rgyal mtshan
བློ་བཟང་ལུན་གྲུབ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་མཚན།
bod spyi bshad བོད་སྤྱི་བཤད།
brtag re བརྟག་རེ།
bsang chu བསང་ཆུ།
bse bla ma བསེ་བླ་མ།
bse tshang བསེ་ཚང།

bse tshang blo bzang dpal ldan བསེ་ཚང་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་
 ལྷན།
 bsod nams sgrol ma བསོད་ནམས་སྒྲོལ་མ།
 bsod nams tshe ring བསོད་ནམས་ཚེ་རིང་།
 bstan 'dzin 'jigs med ye shes rnam rgyal བསྟན་
 འཛིན་འཇིགས་མེད་ཡེ་ཤེས་རྣམ་རྒྱལ།
 bstan 'dzin lung rtogs rgya mtsho བསྟན་འཛིན་ལུང་
 རྟོགས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 bzhi ba'i smyung gnas བཞི་བའི་སྦྱང་གནས།
 chab ril ཆབ་རིལ།
 chig bdag ཆིག་བདག།
 chos ra ཆོས་ར།
 chos rgyal nam mkha'i nor bu ཆོས་རྒྱལ་ནམ་མཁའི་རོར་བུ།
 chu kha ma ཟུ་ཁ་མ།
 Dalai Lama, tA la'i bla ma ཧུ་ལའི་བླ་མ།
 dbu mdzad དབུ་མཛད།
 dbyar gnas དབྱར་གནས།
 dbyar lhas དབྱར་ལྷས།
 dbyar ston དབྱར་སྟོན།
 dga' ldan byin chags gling དགའ་ལྷན་བྱིན་ཆགས་གླིང་།
 dga' ldan chos 'phel gling དགའ་ལྷན་ཆོས་འཕེལ་གླིང་།
 dge 'dun rgya mtsho དགེ་འདུན་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 dge bskos དགེ་བསྐྱོས།
 dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས།
 dge slong དགེ་སྦྱང་།
 dge tshul དགེ་ཚུལ།
 dgu mdud དགུ་མདུད།
 dkon mchog nyi ma དཀོན་མཆོག་ཉི་མ།
 dpon po དཔོན་པོ།
 dpon po blo bzang དཔོན་པོ་བློ་བཟང་།
 dpon tshang དཔོན་ཚང་།
 drung chen རྩུང་ཆེན།
 g.yer gshong rin po che གཡེར་གཤོང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།
 gcan tsha གཙན་ཚ།
 gcan tsha thang གཙན་ཚ་ཐང་།
 gdugs dkar tshe bcu གདུགས་དཀར་ཚེ་བཅུ།

gdugs dkar zlog chen གདུགས་དཀར་ལྗོག་ཆེན།
 gling rgyal གླིང་རྒྱལ།
 gnam rtse lding གནམ་རྩེད་ལྷིང་།
 gnas bstan pa གནས་བསྟན་པ།
 gnya' skya ro rkang tsha གཉལ་སྐྱུ་རོ་རྟམ་ཚ།
 go gnyer གོ་གཉེར།
 gser kha གསེར་ཁ།
 gser kha bla ma གསེར་ཁ་བླ་མ།
 gser kha bsod nams rgya mtsho གསེར་ཁ་བསོད་ནམས་
 རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 gser kha bstan pa rgya mtsho གསེར་ཁ་བསྟན་པ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 gser kha'i nyag ga གསེར་ཁའི་ཉལ་ག།
 gser kha'i rkang tsha གསེར་ཁའི་རྟམ་ཚ།
 gshong yul གཤོང་ཡུལ།
 gter lung གཏེར་ལུང་།
 gtor ma གཏོར་མ།
 gtor rgyag གཏོར་རྒྱག།
 gtsang bkra shis lhun po གཙང་བརྒ་ཤེས་ལུན་པོ།
 gtsos གཙོས།
 gung tshigs གུང་ཆོགས།
 gur mgon tshe brtan གུར་མགོན་ཚེ་བརྟན།
 gzhis kha rtse གཙམ་ཁ་རྩེ།
 hru'u ci ལྷུ་འུ་ཅི།
 ka ring ཀ་རིང་།
 ka ring sgom sprul ཀ་རིང་སྒོམ་སྤྲུལ།
 kan lho ཀན་ལྷོ།
 kan su'u ཀན་སུ་འུ།
 kha btags ཁ་བཏགས།
 kha so ཁ་སོ།
 kha so'i nor bu ཁ་སོའི་རོར་བུ།
 khag dkar ཁག་དཀར།
 khe ci ཁེ་ཅི།
 khri ba ཁྲི་བ།
 khri kha ཁྲི་ཁ།
 khri kha rkang tsha ཁྲི་ཁ་རྟམ་ཚ།

sha bzan ཤ་བཅན།
 si khron སི་ཁྲོན།
 skar ma'i bla ma སྐར་མའི་བླ་མ།
 smyung gnas སྤྱུང་གནས།
 so ba སོ་བ།
 spong bo thar སྤོང་བོ་ཐར།
 ston pa'i tshems gdung mchod rten
 སྟོན་པའི་ཚེས་མཁུང་མཆོད་རྟེན།
 thang ka ཐང་ཀ།
 the bo ཐེ་བོ།
 tho rgya ཐོ་རྒྱ།
 tshe brtan rgyal ཚེ་བརྟན་རྒྱལ།
 tshe tan zhabs drung rje btsun 'jigs med rig pa'i
 blo gros ཚེ་རྟན་ཞབས་རྟུང་རྗེ་བཙུན་འཇིགས་མེད་རིག་པའི་བློ་གྲོས།
 tshod 'dzin rga po ཚོད་འཛིན་རྒ་པོ།
 tshogs 'dus ཚོགས་འདུས།
 tshogs bsags mar khu ཚོགས་བསགས་མར་ཁུ།

CHINESE TERMS

Baita si 白塔寺
 Beijing 北京
 Caoyuan Xingzheng Weiyuan Hui 草原行政委员会
 dui 队
 dui zhang 队长
 Foya sheli ta 佛牙舍利塔
 Gangcha 岗察
 Ganjia 甘加
 Gannan 甘南
 Gansu 甘肃
 gongshe 公社
 Guide 贵德
 Haidong 海东
 Han 汉
 Hezuo 合作
 Huangnan 黄南
 Huangsi 黄寺
 Hui 回
 Jianzha 尖扎

tshogs ras ཚོགས་རས།
 til ཐིལ།
 tus ཐུས།
 tus sgrenng ཐུས་སྒྲེང་།
 ya rdzi ཡ་རུའི།
 yam shing ཡམ་ཤིང་།
 yongs 'dzin ཡོངས་འཛིན།
 yungs dkar ཡུངས་དཀར།
 zho phung ཞོ་ཕུང་།
 zho zan ཞོ་བཅན།
 zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།
 zlog chen རྫོག་ཆེན།
 zlog chen bla ma རྫོག་ཆེན་བླ་མ།
 zlog chen gtor ma རྫོག་ཆེན་གཏོར་མ།
 zog pa རོག་པ།
 zon thar rgyal རོན་ཐར་རྒྱལ།

kuaiji 会计
 Maqu 玛曲
 Miaoying si 妙应寺
 Qianlong 乾隆
 Qinghai 青海
 Qishama 齐啥玛
 RMB 人民币
 Salar, Sala 撒拉
 Shuji 书记
 Shunzhi 顺治
 Sichuan 四川
 WeChat, Weixin 微信
 Wendu 文都
 Xiahe 夏河
 Xining 西宁
 Xizang banshi chu 西藏办事处
 Xunhua 循化
 Yonghegong 雍和宫
 Yongzheng 雍正

TIBETAN CAMEL PACKING IN CHU RING (QURANG) COMMUNITY, GSER CHEN (GONGHE)
COUNTY, MTSHO LHO (HAINAN) TIBETAN AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE,
MTSHO SNGON (QINGHAI) PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Skal bzang tshe brtan སྐལ་བཟང་ཚེ་བརྟན། (Gazangcaidan 尕藏才旦)*

ABSTRACT

Tibetans in Chu ring (Qurang) Community, Gser chen (Gonghe) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China packed camels into the late 1980s. The local cultural significance of camels; local camel accounts; details of camel packing; a film transcript in English of loading and unloading a camel; an appendix of camel terms based on gender, color, and castrated or uncastrated; a map; and twelve photographs are presented.

KEYWORDS

Mtsho lho (Hainan) Prefecture, Tibetan camel herding, Tibetan camel packing, Tibetan camel terms

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, I was in an oral English class of thirty-four university students who were from Dbus gtsang (Weizang), A mdo (Anduo), and Khams (Kangba). We were all Tibetans, except for one Monguor (Tu) classmate from Reb gong (Tongren). Everyone gave a short presentation about the culture of their home community.

Kun 'grub tshe ring from Reb gong, described *thang ka* painting and its popularity in his home area.¹ Skal bzang dar rgyas from Dbus gtsang explained how his community bordered Nepal and how locals traded and traveled freely among China-Nepal border communities.² Rin chen rdo rje from Mtsho lho (Hainan) in A mdo described and illustrated making *rtsam pa* that included offering a chunk to our foreign English teacher and a finger-sized sampling to each of the rest of us.³ I made a presentation about horses, yaks, sheep, donkeys, and camels in my home community.

My classmates and I thought our presentations were quite ordinary, but they provided our foreign teacher with a better understanding of us and Tibetan culture. Subsequently, the foreign teacher encouraged me to write about camels. Though we had an opportunity to publish our cultural anecdotes in *Highlands*, I did not because, at that time, my English was limited.

However, two years later, in 2017, I decided to write about my childhood experiences with camels (Skal bzang tshe brtan 2017). After watching a yak-packing film,⁴ I wanted to write more about local camel culture. My interest was further encouraged after searching Youtube on 19 October 2019 and finding no Tibetan camel-packing videos.

* Skal bzang tshe brtan (Gazangcaidan). 2021. Tibetan Camel Packing in Chu ring (Qurang) Community, Gser chen (Gonghe) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:161-194.

¹ In 2015, Kun 'grub tshe ring published *Thang ka* in *Highlands*, an informal publication featuring student essays written in English, Chinese, and Tibetan.

² Skal bzang dar rgyas participated in an intercollegiate English examination for all-China in 2014, which included oral and written exams, and was awarded third place. In 2020, he worked at a bank in Lha sa.

³ After graduation, he worked as a temporary teacher in a nationalities primary school. In 2020, he was a father and an entrepreneur.

⁴ <https://bit.ly/2KKf2bU> (accessed 21 August 2019).

This article presents views and accounts related to camels from local people in Chu ring (Qurang) Hamlet. I describe packing and unpacking processes in a documentary film and provide an English version of the film's spoken content. Finally, I present camel terms for camel gear, color, age, gender, and castrated and uncastrated.

MAPS.

FIG 1. A map of China, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai), Gser chen (Gonghe), and Chu ring.¹



¹ China <https://bit.ly/3jHC4PVm> (accessed 25 July 2020); Mtsho sngon Province <https://bit.ly/2OUdfSB> (accessed 23 July 2020); Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture <https://bit.ly/2Blyd9U> (accessed 23 July 2020); and an edited version of Gser chen County <https://bit.ly/39jA4sB> (accessed 23 July 2020).

FIG 2. Gser chen County (inside the pink outline).¹



¹ <https://bit.ly/2yJLk2U>, accessed 24 April 2020.

FIG 3. Locations in the text.¹

FIG 4. People in the text.

Name	Birth Year	Description
A b+hu yag	1928	Snying thar rgyal's paternal uncle
Phag mo sgrol ma	~1987	sister of Rang grol
Rang grol	1972	author's paternal uncle
Rdo rje	2015	nephew of Rang grol
Ri b+ho	1943	author's maternal grandmother
Skal bzang tshe brtan	1995	author
Skar ma 'tsho	1971	wife of Rang grol
Snying thar rgyal	1962	author's father
Tshu dbang pa thur	~1970	Tshul khriims' employer, who owned about 900 sheep and six camels. He and his wife spent most of their time in their Tshwa ka (Chaka) Township Town apartment, caring for their children who attended school in the town.
Tshul khriims	~1980	author's maternal uncle

¹ <https://bit.ly/2yHHNlK>, accessed 24 April 2020.

FIG 5. Locations in the text.

Name	Location
Chu ring	Chu ring 'Long-Flowing River' Hamlet, Thang dkar ma (Tanggemu) Town, Gser chen County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province. A river flows through the center of Chu ring Hamlet.
Mtsho sngon po (Kokonor, Qinghai Lake)	Located about one hundred kilometers west of the provincial capital, Zi ling (Xining), at an elevation of ~3,000 meters.
Rang grol's brick, white-tiled house	About five kilometers from Ru chen gsum pa (Sandadui) 'Third Major Division'.
Ru chen gsum pa	Ru chen gsum pa is west of Thang dkar ma Town, northwest of Mtsho lho Prefecture. Previous to 2003, Ru chen gsum pa was a prison camp. Prisoners worked in the fields and greenhouses, cultivating crops and vegetables. After 2003, all the prisoners were transferred to Zi ling.
Summer pasture	In summer, Chu ring Hamlet residents who own livestock and have fenced pastures herd northwest of Mtsho sngon po, between Cang shes Town and Rta nag ma Township Town. However, most elders stay at their homes in winter pastures. Each household stays one to two months, depending on the number of their livestock and their fenced pasture size. Moving between the winter and summer pastures takes two days on foot, or by horse or motorcycle with livestock, and three to five hours by car when not following the livestock and horse riders. At the end of the first day of moving livestock, the family pitches a tent while the livestock graze and rest. They reach the summer pasture the next day.
Tshwa kha	Tshwa kha Township, Wulan County, Mtsho nub (Haixi) Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province.
Winter pasture	This semi-arid location once had a small saline lake and is considered a good place for camels.

LOCAL CAMEL ACCOUNTS

ACCOUNT ONE: MOTHER HAS BLANKETS MADE

In 2001, when I was six years old, my family had a camel that I rode to herd cattle and sheep. Light, warm blankets were made from the camel hair. My parents believe camel hair makes the warmest, lightest blankets. Mother told me:

Our family had six camels. Each adult camel produced about half a sack of hair annually. In the fourth month, I pulled hair from the camels and used sheep-wool shears to cut hair from their legs. *Thung ji* 'neck hair' is cut with shears in the second month, but it's not suitable for making blankets. Instead, it is

used for horse hobbles and calf neck-ties. Six camels produced four sacks of camel hair in about two years. Some camels lost hair by rubbing against thorn bushes, and some just shed their hair.

One summer morning, I got up very early, around four AM, ate some bread, and had some tea that I had boiled the night before, and poured in a thermos before I had gone to bed. After that, I put four sacks of camel hair on a horse and tied you to my back. I then filled two empty plastic Sprite bottles with cow's milk for you to have on the journey and set off with 150 RMB in cash. I didn't ride the horse because I feared it would throw us off and injure you.

I walked with you on my back, led the horse with sacks on its back, and continuously chanted mantras that I had learned from my mother. We reached Thang dkar ma Town at around nine AM, where I asked a relative I happened to meet to look after the horse, which he took to a nearby unfenced pasture and tethered to a bush. We soon boarded a bus. It took about three hours to reach the prefecture town - Chab cha (Qiabuqia). After getting off, I found a restaurant where I ordered noodles and gave you some milk. The bus fee was ten RMB, and the bowl of noodles was seven RMB. Next, I went to a store where blankets were made from various animal hair. I paid sixteen RMB to a Chinese woman in her forties to have two blankets made.

Next, I went shopping for new clothes at Mi rigs tshong ra 'Nationality Mall' and bought a dark blue jacket, a pair of dark blue pants, a pair of canvas shoes for myself, and red and green trim to decorate the hem of my satin summer robe. For you, I paid thirty RMB for a cute light-blue jean suit, two pairs of blue socks, and a black cap that featured an image of a white, clever-looking rabbit. Finally, we left and reached Thang dkar ma Town with the two new camel-hair blankets and the new clothes.

I could not find my relative, so I asked a shop-owner where my horse was. He told me the horse was tied and grazing east of town, which was part of my maternal tribe's territory. I carried you, the blankets, and the new clothes to where the horse was tied. I was tired, so I rested for a short time before briskly untying the horse, putting the horse's red and black mat on its back, and adding the blankets and new clothes. We then started for home and arrived at dusk. I didn't want to cook, so I ate a chunk of *rtsam pa*, gave you a bottle of milk, and went to bed.

ACCOUNT TWO: A SALT-PACKING ROUTE AND A SALT-LAKE SONG

My community members call people who live on the east side of the Rma chu (Yellow River) "Rma chu'i phar kha'i mi 'people of the other side of the Yellow River'." Meanwhile, people who live on the east side of the Yellow River use the same term to refer to those of us who live on the west side.

Rma chu'i phar kha'i mi used camels for various purposes, such as transporting salt from Wo dbye tshwa mtsho dkar mo,¹ visiting their relatives living far away, and pursuing bandits, and crossing the Yellow River. Brug byams said each tribe had well-established routes to the salt lake on salt collection trips and traded salt in such areas as Stong skor (Huangyuan) and Khri ka (Guide). If other tribespeople deviated from an established route, conflict ensued that sometimes grew into bloody tribal fighting.

In 2020, salt collection continues, but excavators now load salt into big trucks that transport the salt to cities.²

¹ 'Wo dbye' is a local term, and might be Mongolian. Tshwa mtsho dkar mo 'White Salt Lake'. Many locals believe this Tshwa mtsho dkar mo refers to the famous salt lake in Tshwa kha Township. Other locals suggest Tshwa mtsho dkar mo was in Chu ring Community territory. However, it is obvious there once was a salt pond in the center of Chu ring Community, because of white salty earth there. (My family lives near the dried white pond and fetches salty water from a well with a long rope and a bucket.)

² Father once spotted a pile of salt on the highway while he was driving home and asked me and two of my uncles to take ten sacks and go bag the salt. When we reached the spilled salt, some had already been taken. Still, we filled eight sacks.

Wo dbye gzhung is located in Chu ring Community, where a river flows from Wo dbye tshwa mtsho dkar mo 'Wo dbye Basin/Area'. Those who lived in this area entreated the salt deities to bestow an ample supply of salt. Therefore, locals of my father's generation and older elders often invoke the salt lake's name, along with mountain deity names.

Father learned incense offering chants from his paternal uncle, A b+hu yag. I recorded Father's incense offering chant on my iPhone and typed each line into my iPhone's *Notes* in Tibetan while listening to the recording. When I need to offer incense, I consult this text. The names of the deities Father chants while making incense offerings are listed below:

- Gnam skyong gong ma rgyal mo¹
- Srung ma dpal ldan lha mo²
- A myes rma chen³
- A myes brag dkar (a mountain deity in Khri ka)
- A myes yul lha (a deity who is the incarnation of Jam dbyangs nag po 'Black Manjughosa')⁴
- Rdza rgan⁵
- Mtsho sngon khri shor rgyal mo⁶
- Mtsho snying ma hwa de wa (Heart of Mtsho sngon po)
- Blon po gser chen (a mountain deity in the southeast of Mtsho sngon po)
- A myes b+wa yan (a mountain deity in the south of Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture)
- Wo dbye tshwa mtsho dkar mo (a salt lake)
- Kun dga' mtsho mo (a lake in Kun dga' Community)⁷

ACCOUNT THREE: HOW THE CAMEL EMBODIES THE TWELVE ZODIAC ANIMALS

Several authors have provided descriptions of how the camel embodies the twelve zodiac signs. These descriptions have areas of overlap and some differences. Snying lcags rgyal (2016:59) writes:

Gsang sgrog said that a camel represents the twelve animals of a year because its neck resembles that of a dragon, eyes those of a bird, nostrils those of a mouse, mouth that of a rabbit, tail that of a pig, hips

¹ Gnam skyong gong ma rgyal mo 'Heaven Guarding Empress'.

² For more, see <https://bit.ly/2SPU26R>, accessed 19 June 2020.

³ Snying thar rgyal explains, "A myes rma chen is the only deity who became a Bodhisattva."

⁴ For more, see <https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=T716>, accessed 12 June 2020.

⁵ A mountain deity situated in Brag dkar Community territory, which is adjacent to Chu ring Community. Currently, there are about fifteen communities, including pastoral Tibetans, farming Tibetans, and Chinese who all venerate Rdza rgan. Only males ascend the mountain top. Women are prohibited.

⁶ Mtsho sngon khri shor rgyal mo, *mtsho sngon* 'blue lake', *khri shor* 'inundated thousands', *rgyal mo* 'queen', or the 'queenly blue lake' that inundated thousands of communities. Father related this story:

Long ago, where Mtsho sngon po is today, many communities lived together harmoniously. They all drank water from a well located at the center of the area. Whoever fetched water from the well was expected to cover it with a lid when they finished. Unfortunately, one day a foolish man unintentionally forgot to put the lid back. Consequently, water gushed out, inundating an untold number of communities.

⁷ On 28 March 2020, I heard from Father that before 2018, locals annually released fish in Kun dga' mtsho mo, during the fourth lunar month. This practice was prohibited by the local government in 2018. Another well-known account involves Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho (1683-1706) fleeing political turmoil in central Tibet. While in the vicinity of Chu ring Hamlet and Kun dga' mtsho mo, he thrust the end of his walking stick in the ground and rested. In the east of Chu ring Hamlet where Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho thrust the end of his walking stick, there a solitary tree stands among prickly *dug tsher*. In 2015, some seven pilgrims from central Tibet, worshipped and circumambulated the tree.

those of an ox, nose that of a horse, the part of its head from the chin to the forehead resembles a tiger's, its face that of a monkey, feet those of a dog, and its body resembles a snake's. Other locals provide variations, e.g., some say the camel's neck resembles a snake.

Wenchangjia and Stuart (2014:110) provide a slightly different attribution of features:

...the camel represented the twelve animals of the zodiac. A story says the camel was given its teeth by the tiger, mouth by the rabbit, neck by the dragon, eyes by the snake, mane by the horse, stomach by the sheep, body hair by the monkey, hind legs by the rooster, alertness by the dog, tail by the pig, ears by the mouse, and hooves by the bull.

Father provided yet another version of a camel's twelve zodiac animal features, the description of which he attributed to a relative (Dbang kho, b. 1937):

The camel's body has twelve zodiac animal features - tiger's lower lip, rabbit's upper lip, dragon's neck, snake's head, horse's teeth, sheep's wool, monkey's face, rooster's eyes, dog's back feet, pig's tail, mouse's ears, and ox's hooves.

Father mentioned that *tshi lkong* 'scruff of hair on a camel's head between the ears', especially from an uncastrated camel, can repel *the'u rang* 'a type of hungry ghost with evil intentions, though those who worship him as a deity benefit by accumulating great wealth'.¹

FILMING

In August 2016, I talked to Father about making a film showing how local Tibetans pack and unload camels. He agreed to help. We considered two possibilities. My maternal uncle, Tshul khirms, herded about 850 sheep for a Tshwa kha Mongolian family that owned six camels. Uncle Tshul khirms herded in an area six hours by motorcycle or four hours by car from my family's summer pasture, southwest of Mtsho sngon po. Uncle communicated with his Mongol employer in the Qinghai Chinese dialect and understood some basic Mongolian from spending a lot of time with Mongol herders.

A second possibility, which we eventually chose, was to contact my paternal uncle, Rang grol. He owned four camels that were, at that time, in his winter pasture, which was a three-hour drive by car from my family's summer pasture. The video was eventually made in the winter of 2018 because Uncle Rang grol was often not at home.

The film begins on the grassland where Rdo rje and I are about to drive four camels to Rang grol's home, where the camel packing and unpacking took place. The film was made to illustrate packing and unpacking camels with participants asked to pack and unpack a camel. No instructions were given to the participants about what to say.

I used an iPhone 6s until the battery died. I then switched to an OPPO A37. The video quality conspicuously dropped. Links to the video are <https://bit.ly/2ZfjhjK> (accessed 21 August 2019) and <https://bit.ly/2ZcKtDK> (accessed 21 August 2019).

¹ Goldstein (2001:501) offers 'a type of hungry ghost'. Pad ma thub brtan (b. 1977), my paternal uncle and a tantric practitioner, offers an account of *the'u rang* in Appendix One.

Setting

Chu ring Hamlet is informally called Ru chen gsum pa, as mentioned in the location table.

FILMING

On 7 February 2017, Father asked my paternal uncle, Rang grol, for permission to film his camels on an auspicious day. Uncle Rang grol agreed, so 10 February 2017 was chosen as the filming date. On the morning of that day, I woke up and pulled back the bedroom curtain, hoping to see sunny weather good for filming. Unfortunately, it was foggy. After breakfast, I rode out on a motorcycle to drive our sheep from their pen to our fenced pasture. After closing the pasture gate, I returned home. Father was still sleeping. Mother said he had gone to bed in the early dawn after feeding our three horses in preparation for a horserace. I didn't dare wake Father. In about five minutes, Father moved his legs a little. As he turned to one side, I called, "A pha! A pha!"

He slowly opened his eyes and asked what I wanted. I then suggested that we go to film camel packing.

After lunch, Father and I prepared several *sgyes* 'woolen bags', one tent to wrap around the humps to create a *ca sri* 'a frame placed between the camel humps', two *mgo sdom* 'one-meter-long ropes for tying around the two humps', and *sha tho* 'hump supporters'.¹ Two *go tho* 'plastic buckets' were also added. We put all these items in the back of Father's van. I hoped Mother would come with us, but she had to tend our livestock.

When Father and I reached Uncle Rang grol's home, he was waiting and ushered us into his home enthusiastically. His wife, Skar ma 'tsho, offered milk tea in bowls decorated with the *bkra shis rtags brgyad* 'Eight Auspicious Symbols',² a plate of fried bread, and a platter of cooked mutton. I lacked the patience to sip milk tea and whispered to Father that I wanted to see the camels.

Uncle Rang grol said that the camels were grazing in a fenced pasture and called his nephew, Rdo rje, a five-year-old boy with big, mischievous eyes, a sharp nose, and a tanned oval face, to take me there. It took us fifteen minutes to walk to the fenced pasture.

On the way, I asked Rdo rje, "Are camels afraid of other animals?"

"Camels are afraid of lions, wolves, and tigers," Rdo rje answered.

"Why are camels afraid of lions? Aren't camels bigger than lions?" I inquired.

"Because lions are the king of animals," Rdo rje replied.

"Why are camels unafraid of people?" I asked.

"Camels have big teeth, and their bites are extremely painful," he stated.

"Do all camels attack people?" I asked.

"Not all. Only *rnga gseb* 'uncastrated camels' attack people, and only in winter," Rdo rje responded.

"Okay. Are you afraid of camels?" I inquired.

"I'm not afraid because I can shout, throw stones at them, and drive them away," Rdo rje replied confidently.

When we reached the fenced pasture, we stepped through the barb wire fence. I saw one *rnga rgan ma* 'old female camel', one *rnga gseb*, and two *rnga thor ma* 'two-year-old female camels'

¹ *Sha to* traditionally referred to poles to stabilize the humps and *ca sri*. However, we did not have *sha to*, so we used *ka ra* 'tent poles'.

² Beer (1999:171) identifies the *Bkra shis rtags brgyad* 'Eight Auspicious Symbols' as a parasol, a pair of golden fishes, a treasure vase, a lotus, a white right-spiraling conch shell, an endless knot, a banner of victory, and a golden wheel.

leisurely grazing. When the camels saw us approaching, they lazily raised their heads atop long necks that reminded me of giraffes. Rdo rje, and I began driving them to Uncle's home. I was excited to see camels and eager to complete filming, so I drove the camels fast. They ran slowly at times, not speeding up like horses. It took ten minutes to drive the camels to Uncle Rang grol's home.

Halfway there, Rdo rje ran ahead because he said he didn't want to miss a cartoon program on the Mtsho sngon Tibetan A mdo Channel at six PM. Rdo rje said it was in Tibetan and about the Monkey King's pilgrimage to the West.

PACKING THE CAMEL

When I returned, Father and Uncle Rang grol were ready to film. Skar ma 'tsho and Phag mo sgrol ma had filled eight *sgyes* with sheep dung pellets to resemble the grain, highland barley, flour, and so forth that a family typically transported to another pasture. A decade earlier, Mother had made *sgyes* from wool dyed with indigo. Uncle Rang grol swiftly put a rope around the *rnga rgan ma's* neck, made the camel sit, and fastened its two front feet together with the lead rope. Father wrapped a canvas tent around the camel's body to replace the *ca sri*.¹

Father wrapped the canvas tent around the humps three times and tied the hump supporter with a rope. Next, he tied a *glo* 'fifteen-meter-long rope' at the back of the camel to secure the packed items. Skar ma 'tsho put an *e bug* 'blanket between the humps'. Finally, Father and Uncle Rang grol loaded the woolen bags and tied two plastic containers onto the camel's back. Father and Uncle Rang grol finished packing the camel in about ten minutes. Father then held the reins and spoke to the camel, encouraging it to stand.

UNLOADING THE CAMEL

Father led the camel about fifty meters from the packing area and unloaded it. Uncle Rang grol emptied the bags. Father took the halter from the camel's head and thanked the camel: "*A! G.yang la bo, rtswa kha song nga rtswa zo, chu kha song nga chu thungs*. 'Benevolent camel! My benevolent camel! Go graze and drink fresh water'."

At that moment, we heard camels nosily mating. Father and Uncle Rang grol laughed, but I did not. I focused on filming. After a minute, I realized that it was the camel mating period. I thought camels mated, standing like horses. Instead, they sit.

POST-FILMING: FATHER'S ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

ONE

When I was a child, I periodically heard elders explain why camels looked into the distance while they were drinking water:

Long ago, a wise saint, Srid pa rgan po,² gave each animal what they needed, but Srid pa rgan po carelessly gave antlers to deer instead of camels. The deer never returned the antlers to the camels, so when camels drink water, they occasionally look into the distance hoping the deer will return their antlers.

¹ Father suggests this term may be from Mongolian, but I maintain it is derived from the Chinese *jiashi* 'drive'.

² Locals in my community believe Srid pa rgan po was the distributor of everything – soil, stones, humans, animals, and so on. (*Srid pa* 'existence', *rgan po* 'elder' 'creator yields power of creating everything' 'creator of

When Srid pa rgan po was distributing these animal features, he gave camels small testicles. The bull camels were so enraged they threw the small testicles away, but the testicles stuck between their legs at their rear.

Two

In summer, camels eat grass near riverbanks, require less water, and defecate watery feces. In winter, camels need less grass, and they defecate *cho'u rig* 'oval-shaped pellets'.

THREE

One chilly winter morning in 1976, I told A rta, the community leader, who was in charge of hundreds of camels, that I wanted to tame a *hog bzhi* 'four-year-old' camel. A rta gave me a white *hog bzhi* to tame and an *a tha* 'castrated camel' as a reward. Frankly, I was initially not interested in taming a camel, but the camel I had received as a reward was helpful in fetching water and transporting belongings to the winter pasture. I was pleased with the reward and delighted to take the two camels to my campsite on the autumn pasture. I periodically gazed at the attractive white *hog bzhi* while heading back home.

One evening when I reached my campsite, my cousin persuaded me, and I agreed to tame the white *hog bzhi*. Cousin and I hobbled the white *hog bzhi*'s front feet, but it could still easily move his back feet so that it moved forward. We then hobbled the back feet.

The next morning, I found white *hog bzhi* splendidly decorated with frost. Unable to easily move his feet, he had fallen, sat, and in trying to get up, had repeatedly hit his head against the ground, fracturing his neck. Not knowing what to do, I returned to report to my family members, none of whom had a solution.

The following morning, I saw the white *hog bzhi* on the ground with his feet in the air. I thought he had died, but when I approached, I found that he was still alive. His fractured neck was continually bending, even when he tried to eat, making him resemble a giant snake with feet.

A month later, when my family moved to the winter pasture with the *a tha*, I worried about the white *hog bzhi*.

My family stayed on the winter pasture for almost two months before returning to where the white *hog bzhi* had been. I discovered that not only was the white *hog bzhi* stuck to frozen Kun dga' Lake with his four feet in the air, he was still alive! After I freed him, he walked away, unevenly with his neck bent down. I was sure he had eaten and drunk nothing during that period. Depressed, I consulted Uncle Tha re who, I had been told, had once treated a camel with a neck fracture. Uncle stuck two poles in the earth, tied a rope to the upper parts of the poles, and leaned the white *hog bzhi*'s head on the rope. The camel could then stretch his head. He slowly ate bundles of grass in the back of a truck with a wide, long, unenclosed bed. In the beginning, eating was difficult, but several days later, he ate effortlessly. Four to five months later, the white *hog bzhi* had recuperated so entirely that it seemed he had never been injured.

Afterward, I packed our heavy necessities on the white *hog bzhi* to transport to different pastures. I still marvel at how strong and amiable that white *hog bzhi* was.

Two years later, I rode the *a tha* to return the white *hog bzhi* to A rta, as he had stipulated. I was eager to have another camel-taming experience and receive another reward.

existence'.) Ri b+ho said, "Srid pa rgan po created everything on Earth, and is that powerful." Certain locals believe that Srid pa rgan po was a wise old man who assembled his various experiences into oral adages.

FOUR

When I was a child, my parents put me on camelback when we moved pastures. I vividly recall munching bread while sitting on a camel frame as we moved. In the 1970s, when I was an energetic teenager, there were over ninety camels in our community. The camels gathered around a small salty pond in my home community that dried up in the 1980s.

Winter was a frightening time because *rnga gseb* attacked people on foot and those riding horses. I often hid behind *kho tse* 'desert thorn bushes' when I saw *rnga gseb* while I was herding our livestock. In winter, a *rnga gseb* often gathered female camels in a circle, raised its dirty tail that touched its testicles, and dabbed its tail in urine while urinating. *Rnga gseb* tails were dark and dirty.

FILM TRANSCRIPT

CHARACTERS

Phag mo sgrol ma (b. ~1987) is Rang grol's sister. She is a herder and skilled at tailoring. She brought ropes and other items for Snying thar rgyal and Rang grol.

Rang grol (b. 1972) is Snying thar rgyal's paternal cousin and a herder. He assisted Snying thar rgyal in packing and unpacking the camel and initiating conversation during the filming.

Rdo rje (b. 2005) is Phag mo sgrol ma's son and a student in Thang dkar ma bca' sdod slob chung 'Thang dkar ma Boarding Primary School'. Rdo rje went to the pasture with Skal bzang tshe brtan, and helped drive the camels back to Rang grol's home.

Skar ma 'tsho (b. 1975) is Rang grol's wife.

Snying thar rgyal (b. 1962) is Skal bzang tshe brtan's father and a herder. He demonstrated how to pack and unpack a camel.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ext. exterior

Int. interior

COLLECTING CAMELS

EXT. PASTURE INTO VIEW - AFTERNOON

A cloudy day. Can't see far. Four camels on the grassland. Rdo rje tries to collect them. Camels slowly step through the pasture gate.

Skal bzang tshe brtan

(In a suggestive tone)

Don't go near the camels.

Rdo rje

(Naively)

I'd like to go near.

Rdo rje goes ahead and tries to drive the camels from Rang grol's fenced pasture into another fenced pasture, and Skal bzang tshe brtan drives the four camels at the back while shooting the film.

EXT. ON THE NARROW LANE BETWEEN TWO FENCED PASTURES LEADING TO RANG GROL'S HOME

Skal bzang tshe brtan stomps his feet, urging the camels to run faster. The camels start running slowly.

EXT. CAMELS ARE RUNNING DOWN A SMALL HILL. TRACKING SHOT

About a kilometer from Rang grol's house, Skal bzang tshe brtan and Rdo rje run after the camels. Dust rises after the camels as their flaccid humps wave in the air.

EXT. APPROXIMATELY ONE HUNDRED METERS FROM RANG GROL'S HOUSE.

Camels come to a turn and go straight to the front of Rang grol's house.

PACKING

EXT. INTO FRAME IN FRONT OF THE SHEEP PEN NEAR RANG GROL'S HOUSE. THE FOCUS IS THE CAMEL'S BACK.

Eight bags filled with sheep dung pellets are near a camel. Snying thar rgyal is ready to pack the camel. Rang grol assists. The camel stands. Snying thar rgyal ties a rope around the camel's body. Snying thar rgyal commands the camel to sit. Rang grol holds the camel curb ring.

Snying thar rgyal
(In a commanding tone)

The camel should sit.

Rang grol
(Loudly)

Tshigs tshigs tshigs.

Rang grol uses the lead rope to tie the camel's front legs with two hobbles. A lamb bleats. The camera shifts slowly to the front of the sitting camel. Snying thar rgyal kneels to tighten the hobbles.

Snying thar rgyal
(Panting heavily)

Let's fold the tent.

The camera lens switches at the back of the camel. Snying thar rgyal and Rang grol fold the *ca sri*. Phag mo sgrol ma brings two metal tent poles to use as a support frame for the humps.

INT. THE WHITE TILE HOUSE

Skar ma 'tsho is in the house and puzzled about what she should bring.

EXT. NEAR THE SHEEP PEN

Snying thar rgyal
(In an instructive tone)

This is a tent.

(Turning to Phag mo sgrol ma)

Bring a mat.

INT. THE WHITE TILE HOUSE

Skar ma 'tsho
(Asks indistinctly)

There is this, is it okay?

EXT. NEAR THE SHEEP PEN

Snying thar rgyal
(Still busy folding the tent)

Any mat is okay.

Rang grol holds one side of the tent and turns to where Skar ma 'tsho is in the house.

Rang grol
(Shouting)

Bring a mat!

INT. THE STOREROOM

Skar ma 'tsho
(Hollering from the house)

Need ropes?

EXT. NEARBY THE SHEEP PEN

Rang grol
(In a decisive tone)

No, no, no, no need.

INT. AT THE STOREROOM

Skar ma 'tsho
(Asks loudly again)

No need for ropes, right?

EXT. NEAR THE SHEEP PEN

Rang grol and Snying thar rgyal
(Responding chorus)

What? Oh, no need for ropes.

INT. AT THE STOREROOM

Skar ma 'tsho
(Answers readily)

Okay!

Snying thar rgyal and Rang grol finish folding the tent. Snying thar rgyal stands for a while, looking into the distance. Lambs bleat indistinctly.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE CAMEL

Snying thar rgyal puts a mat on the camel's back. Rang grol grips the tent. Five meters away, Skar ma 'tsho and Phag mo sgrol ma stand together. There are three other camels, a car, a van, a lamb, a horse, a three-wheel vehicle, and several electric poles in the background.

Skar ma 'tsho
(Trying to amuse the baby Phag mo sgrol ma is carrying)

Ho, ho, ho!

Rang grol
(Said while circling the tent around the camel's humps)

It may snow today so let's gather our stuff fast. We ought to reach our winter pasture. What is this? How does this rope go? It doesn't seem like this.

Snying thar rgyal

This way. Do it like this.

(Continues talking)

Circle once. It is a camel *ca sri*. We used *ca sri*. We now use a tent as *ca sri* and two tent poles as hump supporters for convenience. Then we can start our journey.

(Told Rang grol)

Pull the rope down.

Rang grol
(No idea what's going on)

Uh-huh!

Snying thar rgyal
(Impatiently)

This, this is *glo*.

Rang grol

I got it.

Snying thar rgyal

Tie the two posts together.

Rang grol

Oh! I see.

Snying thar rgyal rests his arms on the camel's back and attempts to tie the two posts with a rope.

Snying thar rgyal
(Panting heavily and saying)

We need another rope.

Rang grol
(Turning to Phag mo sgrol ma)

Bring another rope.

Phag mo sgrol ma
(Turns to Skar ma 'tsho)

Rope! Rope! Rope!

EXT. IN FRONT OF RANG GROL'S HOUSE

Skar ma 'tsho is photographing other camels and then runs to find a rope.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE CAMEL

Snying thar rgyal
(In a demonstrative tone)

Glo should go through here.

Skar ma 'tsho returns with a worn-out rope and hands the rope to Snying thar rgyal.

Snying thar rgyal
We should have a solid rope. Otherwise, when the bags are tied on the camel's back, they will fall off.
(Trying to shake the back posts)

Is it unbreakable?

Rang grol
Yeah, I guess so.

Snying thar rgyal
(In an instructive tone)
Afterward, when you guys pack camels, floppy-humped camels don't need adjustment. Humps that lean back are stable. If camel humps lean to the right, put more items on the left, and vice versa.

Rang grol
(Seemingly amazed by Snying thar rgyal's camel knowledge)
Oh! Okay!

Snying thar rgyal
Bring an *e bug*.

Rang grol
(Turns to Skar ma 'tsho)
We need an *e bug*.

Snying thar rgyal

(Puts a hand on each hump)

I'm going to the winter pasture from the winter house, pack goods on the camel, and ride a horse to lead the camel. That's much faster than leading packed yaks. It's different from the old ways of driving yaks. Driving sheep takes five or six hours. However, leading camels takes only two hours. Pretty fast!

Phag mo sgrol ma

(Sudden interruption)

If you don't ride a horse, you could ride a camel!

Snying thar rgyal

It's okay for me to ride a camel, but I won't ride a camel today.

(Thinks for a bit and continues)

Camels are called *bye thang gi gru gzings* 'vehicles of the desert'. If bikes, motorcycles, and cars didn't exist, camels would be the most reliable transportation. In the old days, camels provided convenient transportation. One camel can haul one family's belongings.

(While Snying thar rgyal was talking, Rang grol brought an *e bug*. Snying thar rgyal took the *e bug* and continued)

This is an *e bug*. This is a camel's *e bug*.

Rang grol

(Puzzling)

E bug? What language is it?

Snying thar rgyal

(Tying the *e bug* between humps)

The original term is probably Mongolian. Camel gear all have Mongolian names.

(Turned to Phag mo sgrol ma and asked)

Need another rope?

Phag mo sgrol ma

(Replying and leaving to find a rope)

Rope!

Snying thar rgyal

(Holding a long rope in his hands, he explains)

The ropes should be equal in length. Today, we'll use *thur 'gel* 'a method of tying light goods on camelback' instead of *sog 'gel* 'a method of tying heavy goods on camelback' packing. For today's light goods on camelback, it's better to use *thur 'gel*. For heavy goods, it is better to use *sog 'gel*. Ropes should be placed like this.

Skar ma 'tsho

(Brought a rough rope complaining)

This rope is a little black. Why is it different from the ones you two use?

Rang grol and Snying thar rgyal fasten the *ca sri* and begin putting the bags on the camel.

Rang grol

(In a puzzled tune)

Can I tie the rope to the bag from its bottom?

Snying thar rgyal

(Without hesitation)

Should go through here.

Snying thar rgyal and Rang grol are busy tying the bags. Phag mo sgrol ma carries her baby in a green sash tied to her back. A lamb bleats.

Snying thar rgyal

Put the bag down a bit.

Rang grol

Should the *glo* be taken out?

Snying thar rgyal

(Holding the rope's end and grabbing another bag)

No, it's unnecessary to remove it.

Rang grol

Should I put another on the camel?

Snying thar rgyal

Uh-huh!

A lamb that bleats frequently seems to be looking for its mother.

Rang grol

How does this rope go?

Snying thar rgyal

Just here.

(Quiet for a while, and then says humorously)

Bags are made from wool, and wool is dyed with indigo.

Phag mo sgrol ma brings a rope to Rang grol

Phag mo sgrol ma

Here you are!

Snying thar rgyal

(Looking at Rang grol)

Put it anywhere you want.

Rang grol

Tie where?

Snying thar rgyal

Anywhere, as long as it is stable.

Phag mo sgrol ma
(in an astonished tone)

Oh! Four plus four... Wow! Eight bags.

Snying thar rgyal is about to set out and ties the buckets to the *sha to*. Sheep bleat randomly. A camel approaches the sitting camel. The sitting camel is uncomfortable and moves.

Snying thar rgyal
(Comforts the camel by saying)

Ho! Ho!

The camel is silent. Two camels look at the sitting camel. A dog barks furiously.

Snying thar rgyal
(Turning to Rang grol)

Is there anything to tie the bucket?

Rang grol picks a rope from the ground and brings it to Snying thar rgyal. A camel passes by the sitting camel.

Snying thar rgyal
(In a suggestive tone)

This bucket can be tied to the hump supporters. Buckets and other small items can be tied to the hump supporters. Tie the bucket somewhere here. Ride the camel if you like. I mean it. Just sit between the two humps on the goods.

Rang grol
(Refusing, saying)

I can lead the camel, and you can sit on it.

Snying thar rgyal
(Annoyed)

Let's untie the hobbles.

Rang grol

Is there anything to put on the back of the camel to make the load heavier?

Snying thar rgyal
(Untying the hobbles and explaining, ready to leave)

There are buckets. Buckets are for fetching water and storing milk. There are blankets at the center. Food and forage are in bags, and I'll head to the campsite. Ho, ho, ho.

Snying thar rgyal leads the camel by the nose rope. The camel gets up effortlessly. Snying thar rgyal adjusts the goods on the camel.

Snying thar rgyal

(Holding the nose rope in his left hand and waving at Rang grol with his right hand)

I'm leaving. Goodbye.

Rang grol

Okay, okay.

UNLOADING

EXT. APPROXIMATELY ONE HUNDRED METERS FROM RANG GROL'S HOUSE, GRASSLAND

Indistinct sounds. A dog barks in the distance.

Snying thar rgyal

(Commanding the camel to sit)

Tshigs, tshigs...tshigs

The camel is reluctant to sit. Snying thar rgyal insists. The camel sits carefully. Not far away, two camels make distinctive sounds while mating. Two horses are grazing nearby. Snying thar rgyal ties the lead rope to the camel's legs as hobbles.

Snying thar rgyal

This is a water bucket. This is also a water bucket for fetching water. It's necessary to fetch water. It's a bit far from the water source.

A dog barks sporadically. A cell phone rings indistinctly. The sitting camel chews its cud.

Snying thar rgyal

(Untying the bags and explaining)

This is a *gtor thug* 'a rope around items on the camel that also stabilizes the *ca sri*'. Without it, the items may fall off. Camels can easily go up and down slopes. Camels have two humps, so there's no need for a *gnyel*¹ and a *gong thag* 'chest strap'. That's an advantage of camels. Unloading is very easy. Just take off everything randomly. A camel rope is usually ten meters long. *E bug* should be tied by *glo bdag*. This is an *e bug*, and these poles are hump supporters. This is a headband. This rope is *glo*. You can remove it by pulling it. The tent is *ca sri*. Everything on the camel's back is a necessity at a campsite.

(Continuing)

These are quilts and mats. Now let's pitch the tent, and then we are settled.

Rang grol laughs and opens the bag. He is ready to pour out the sheep pellets.

¹ Items on horseback and yakback are tied with a rope that goes under the tail.

Snying thar rgyal
(Turns to Rang grol)

We can do that later.

Snying thar rgyal goes to the camel and unties the hobbles improvised from the lead rope.

Snying thar rgyal
(Speaking to the camel, while untying the halter from the camel's head)
Benevolent camel! My benevolent camel!

Rang grol
(Reminding Snying thar rgyal of the traditional speech to show appreciation for animals' help)
Go eat grass and drink fresh water.

Snying thar rgyal
Go eat grass and drink fresh water. Ho! Ho!
(Patting the camel and saying)
Ho! Ho! Cho! Cho! (urging the camel to go faster, graze, and relax)

The camel slowly leaves.

Snying thar rgyal
Let's pitch the tent.

CONCLUSION

In about 2006, Father wanted to buy a Honda motorcycle for 1,500 RMB. To me, the camel that Father sold to a Muslim man was much more precious than the motorcycle. I had ridden it while herding and used it to transport heavy goods from the summer to the winter pasture. For example, in 2002, Father and Mother packed a black yak-hair tent, a triangular tent made from black goat-hair and white canvas, water buckets, two sacks of wheat flour, one sack of highland barley, and other necessities on camelback. I had also ridden the camel to see, at that time in my limited travels, "distant" places.

Once, when I napped while herding sheep, I woke up to find the flock of sheep had vanished. Immediately, I untied the camel's hobbles and ordered the camel to sit while I mounted it and then commanded it to stand. I stood on the camel's back between the humps, holding the lead rope, and pulled. The camel obeyed and stood. While the camel raised me high in the air, I was able to see the missing sheep grazing on Uncle Rta kho's pasture.

In 2009, we had loaned our five camels to a paternal relative, Rta b+he. Later we sold the five camels to a Chinese man who lived near Ri bo nyi zla 'Sun-Moon Mountain'. He said that he could sell camel hair and make more money from travelers who wanted to have photographs sitting on a camel. We sold them to this man because we didn't like the idea of the camels being slaughtered.

Uncle Rang grol said, after the filming:

I'm the only person who still keeps a few camels in this community. The future is difficult to predict. I have a car, a tractor, and two motorcycles. I may sell these camels sooner or later. My mother lives in the city. When my father was here, he cared for the camels. He knew everything about camels. It is now my

responsibility to care for the camels. I have convenient transportation, so I don't know how to utilize the camels. During the winter, my family members take turns driving the camels to the water source twice a week and then back to the fenced pasture. We don't need to pay much attention to them. In summer, we move to our summer pasture near Mtsho sngon po. Nobody has time then to tend the camels. We often leave the camels in the care of a neighbor, hoping to find a buyer who can pay what they are worth, but I haven't found such a buyer.

I suggested that camels might be useful in tourism if he took them to Mtsho sngon po and charged tourists to sit on them for photographs. A second suggestion was to lease the camels to a tent hotel or local business people, who would use them to earn money from tourists. I didn't recommend selling his camels because I feel that something rarely seen is somehow a treasure.

In April 2020, I was writing this conclusion and wanted twelve photographs to illustrate how a camel embodied the twelve zodiac animals. I phoned Uncle Rang grol, who informed me he had sold the camels for 7,000 RMB each to a Muslim man. When I asked why, he explained, "It is burdensome to care for camels, and they have no value in our daily life."

APPENDIX ONE: *THE'U RANG* by Pad ma thub brtan

Various *the'u rang* include *gnam the'u* 'sky *the'u rang*'; *bar the'u*, 'medium *the'u rang*', *bar the'u* 'not too big, small, tall, nor short *the'u rang*'; *sa the'u* 'earth *the'u rang*', and so on. Locals often refer to unfamiliar deities as *the'u rang*; however, this is incorrect. Some say *the'u rang* are *chos skyong* 'dharma protectors', but I think *the'u rang* are *gor bdag* 'wealth-acquiring hungry ghosts'. I will now give an example of one-legged *the'u rang*.

Once, a well-known monk greatly respected his *sngas mgo bla ma* 'pillow *bla ma*'.¹ After the monk foresaw his imminent death, he sent an oral message to his *bla ma*, asking him to return to the monastery.

The *bla ma* was giving teachings in a rural village and wanted to return quickly. Meanwhile, when the monk shared his hope of seeing his pillow *bla ma* before his death, a fellow monk said caustically, "You are nothing to the *bla ma*. He doesn't care much about you. You should commit suicide for having such strong hope and for urging the *bla ma* to return. If you can't wait for him, you will die miserably."

The monk thought further explanations were useless and controlled his anger. He was attempting profound religious achievement to show his steadfast dedication to his pillow *bla ma*. Still, now it seemed meaningless to continue diligently learning the doctrines, so he forcefully threw his stool on the ground and stopped practicing the *bla ma*'s teaching. His hatred toward his pillow *bla ma* was intense.

The *bla ma* couldn't return immediately as his disciple wished. The renowned disciple died. On the same day of the monk's death, the monk's beloved donkey died suddenly. After witnessing the renowned monk's and his donkey's deaths, the other monk noticed something was wrong and went outside the monastery to look for the *bla ma*. Fortunately, the *bla ma* bumped into the monk just as he reached the monastery.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" asked the *bla ma*.

"The renowned monk is deceased," answered the monk.

"Well, now there is serious trouble," replied the *bla ma*.

¹ Klu thar rgyal et al. (2020:93) suggests a pillow *bla ma* helps guide the deceased's soul to the next life. Pad ma thub brtan told me that a pillow *bla ma* should be compassionate, righteous, and important to one person or to a specific person's family. At the death of a devotee's death, the pillow *bla ma* sits by the corpse to pray and guide the deceased's soul after death. An exceptional pillow *bla ma* can help the deceased's soul easily reincarnate as a human. There is a common saying: *Sngas mgo bla ma hra dgo, nangs ja'i gtul ma che dgo* 'A person's pillow *bla ma* should be spectacular, morning *rtsam pa* should be big'.

When the *bla ma* entered the renowned monk's residence, he saw the deceased monk with wide-open eyes and an elongated tongue.

The *bla ma* went out and yelled three times. During the final shout, the deceased monk looked back at the pillow *bla ma* from among clouds in the sky while moving into the *the'u rang* realm. The *bla ma* realized it was too late. The deceased monk had become a ghost.

Afterward, when butter lamps were lit in the monasteries, disastrous fires followed. Whenever a person had good intentions, they soon turned into bad intentions. These evil occurrences were related to the deceased monk's malicious wish that he had made at his death - that it was meaningless to follow the doctrines. Even one evil desire in a renowned practitioner's life can trigger dire consequences in living beings. The deceased monk's soul was stuck in Bar do 'an intermediate state between death and reincarnation'. The monk's ghost manifestation maliciously used burning butter lamps to burn monasteries and turn good deeds into bad.

Construction began on a new temple at the monastery where the deceased monk had died. The monastery's disciplinary instructor told a carpenter to cut wood in different shapes. A short time later, the instructor returned and ordered the wood cut in other shapes. This happened so often that the temple couldn't be completed due to the instructor's conflicting orders.

The carpenter eventually realized the instructor who returned and gave conflicting instructions must be an evil ghost in disguise. Otherwise, according to the first instructor's instruction, the temple would have been completed.

One day, after the first instructor's departure, the second instructor came. This time, when the second instructor was about to give contradictory instructions, the carpenter swung his ax and cut off one of the false instructor's legs. Afterward, only the real instructor gave instructions to the carpenter. Without further complications, the carpenter soon finished the temple construction.

When the carpenter reported this account to the *bla ma*, the *bla ma* announced that all the unpleasant incidents had been caused by his disciple who had become a *the'u rang*. The *bla ma* added that the *the'u rang* had now become good and would no longer harm people.

Afterward, those who did not venerate this *the'u rang* used the term *the'u rang rkang gcig* 'one-legged hungry ghost'. Those who did venerate this *the'u rang*, used the term *chos skyong* 'dharma protector'.

APPENDIX TWO: TERMS FOR CAMELS AND CAMEL GEAR

Terms associated with camels follow in this order: Local Tibetan (LT) Wylie, LT script, Literary Tibetan (LIT) Wylie, LIT script, and a description. If LT and LIT are the same, the term is not repeated. Father; Mother; and Mother's uncle, Brug byams, provided the list of local terms. Additionally, we discussed the terms in a WeChat group with my maternal relatives. In the summer of 2018, Brug byams visited my tent, and I recorded his and Mother's conversation about terms and camel-related topics. I also consulted (for Literary Tibetan terms) *Dung dkar tshig mdzod* and the Monlam Dictionary iPhone app.

GENERAL CAMEL TERMS

bsha' rgyu བཤམ་རྒྱུ། (LT) ཡལ་རུ་མ། bsha' gri བཤམ་གྱི། (LIT) ཡལ་རྒྱ། | a sharp knife used to castrate camels
ca sri ཅ་སྤྱི། (LT) ཅམ་སྤ། | frame
cho'u rig ཇོ་འཁྱུ་རིག་ (LT) ཇེ་འཁྱུ་རྩ། | pellets of camel feces

cog rdor ཅག་རྩོད། (LT) tɕoɣ dor | thor cog ཅོར་ཅོག། (LIT) tʰor tɕoɣ | a small amount of hair jutting from the top of a camel's head

e bug ཞེ་བྱ། (LT) ewəx | a blanket placed between the humps

glo thug གློ་ཐུག། (LT) alo-tʰəx | glo thag གློ་ཐག། (LIT) ʷlo taɣ | a rope tied at the back of the camel after packing to fasten the packed items to prevent them from falling off

glog gdar གློག་གདར། (LT) aloɣ adær | glog dar གློག་དར། (LIT) aloɣ tær | a strip of cloth tied and hung from the head or front leg hair that prevents a camel from becoming dizzy. After a camel is castrated, this strip of cloth may decrease dizziness and pain.

go tho གོ་ཐོ། (LT) | guo-tʰo | chu snod རྩ་སྟོད། (LIT) tɕʰə rɲol | plastic water container

ha mar tho'u le (LT) ཧ་མར་ཐོ་ལེ། xamər tʰu le | the middle part of the nose when a camel's nose is pierced

ka ra ཀ་ར། kʰa-ra | wood pole inside a tent

khams 'dogs ཁམས་འདོགས། (LT) kʰamdoɣ | Castration by crushing testicles with two wooden poles. The affected area heals in the sun and wind.

lag tshar ལག་ཅར། (LT) laɣ tsʰær | cluster of hair on a camel's front legs that does not grow on a camel's back legs

nog gzhog log འོག་གཞོག་ལོག། (LT) noɣ zoɣloɣ | both camel humps fall in the same direction

nog lang འོག་ལང། noɣ laŋ | erect camel humps

nog so lo'u འོག་སོ་ལོ་ལུ། (LT) noɣ sʰo lu | camel humps slumped in different directions

rnga 'dogs རྩ་འདོགས། (LT) arŋa ndoɣ | A type of castration in which a thin rope is tightly tied around the top of the scrotum. Several months later, the scrotum detaches. Sometimes, the castrator cuts the scrotum and removes the testicles.

rnga khu'u རྩ་ཁུ་ལུ། (LT) rŋa-kʰu | rnga khul རྩ་ཁུ། (LIT) rŋa kʰəl | camel hair

rnga lce རྩ་ལེ། (LT) arŋa xtɕe | rnga lci རྩ་ལི། (LIT) arŋa xtɕə | liquid camel feces

rtag tshar རྩ་ཅག་ཅར། (LT) xtəɣ-tser | hair that grows near a camel's ears

rus gur རུས་གུར། (LT) ɹi-kər | ras gur རས་གུར། re kər | white canvas tent

sgye སྒྱེ། (LT) rdzi | wool bags containing grain and food

sha tho ཤ་ཐོ། (LT) xʰa-tʰo | hump supporter

sna ljibs སྤྲེལ་སྒྲིབ། (LT) anæ-rdzəp | sna lcubs སྤྲེལ་བྱུང་སྒྲིབ། (LIT) rna htɕəv | nose pads

sna stong སྤྲེལ་སྟོང། (LT) anæ-ʂtoŋ | nose fletching

sna thur སྤྲེལ་ཐུར། (LT) anæ-tʰər | nose peg

thung ji ཐུང་ཇི། (LT) tʰoŋ-dzə | camel's chest hair

tshi lkong ཅི་ལྟོང། (LT) tsʰə-ʂkoŋ | a scruff of hair on a camel's head between the ears. A string of this hair may be hung in a tent to repel evil spirits.

MALE CAMELS

a tha ཨ་ཐ། (LT) at^ha | castrated camel. Castration time for a four-year-old camel is in the ninth lunisolar month. Elders recommend castrating camels in the coldest month. Locals believe the colder the weather, the better for castration.

a tha dkar ldan ཨ་ཐ་དཀར་ལྷན། (LT) at^ha xkær-dæn | castrated white-camel

a tha dmar yag ཨ་ཐ་དམར་ཡག། (LT) at^ha amær-jæk | castrated crimson-camel

a tha reg ring ཨ་ཐ་རེག་རིང། (LT) at^ha ræk-ræng | castrated brown-camel

dkar ldan དཀར་ལྷན། (LT) xkær-dæn | white-camel

dmar yag དམར་ཡག། (LT) amær-jæk | crimson-camel

gcig ga གཅིག་ག། (LT) xtsiy-ga | five-year-old

nog lang རྩ་ལང། nok lan | camel humps stand erect

nog nya རྩ་ལྷ། nok-na | nog nyal རྩ་ལྷ། nok nel | has floppy humps

nyis langs ཉིས་ལངས། (LT) ni-vlan | three-year-old

pho bzhi ཕོ་བཞི། (LIT) p^ho vzə | castration year, or four-year-old. The age of four is considered the best time for castration.

reg ring རེག་རིང། (LT) ræk-ræng | brown-camel

rnga gseb རྩ་གསེབ། (LT) rŋa-ksɛp | uncastrated

rnga rgan རྩ་རྩམ། rŋa-rŋen | five-year-old and older

rnga rgye'u རྩ་རྩེ་ལུ། (LT) rŋa-rdzi | hog bzhi རྩ་བཞི། (LT) hoɤ-zə | pho

rnga rte'u རྩ་རྩེ་ལུ། (LT) rŋa-rti | rŋge'u རྩ་རྩེ་ལུ། (LIT) rŋi ə | one-year-old

rnga thor རྩ་ཐོར། rŋa-t^hor | two-year-old

FEMALE CAMELS

bzhi mo བཞི་མོ། vzə-mo | four-year-old

dkar ldan ma དཀར་ལྷན་མ། (LT) xkær-dæn-ma | white-colored

dmar yag ma དམར་ཡག་མ། (LT) amær-jæk-ma | crimson-colored

gcig ga གཅིག་ག། (LT) xtsiy-ga | five-year-old

mo rnga མོ་རྩ། mo-rŋa | female camel

nag lang ma རྩ་ལང་མ། (LT) nok-lan-ma | has erect humps

nag nya ma རྩ་ལྷ་མ། (LT) nok-na-ma | has floppy humps

reg ring ma རེག་རིང་མ། (LT) ræk-ræng-ma | brown-colored

rnga rgan ma རྩ་རྩམ་མ། rŋa-rŋen-ma | five-year-old and older

rnga rgyas ma རྩུས་མ། (LT) rŋa-rdzi-ma | three-year-old
 rnga rte'u རྩེ་ལུ། rŋa-rti | one-year-old calf
 rnga thor ma རྩོམ་མ། rŋa-t^hor-ma | two-year-old

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PHOTOGRAPHS

FIG 6. Rdo rje and I on our way to collect camels from the fenced pasture behind Uncle Rang grol's home (10 February 2017, Skal bzang tshe brtan).



FIG 7. One bull and three female camels headed to Uncle Rang grol's home (10 February 2017, Skal bzang tshe brtan).



FIG 8. Camels near Uncle Rang grol's home (10 February 2017, Skal bzang tshe brtan).



FIG 9. Uncle Rang grol checks to see if the *rnga rgan ma* is pregnant (10 February 2017, Skal bzang tshe brtan).



FIG 10. Father took this photograph of wallpaper in the Changshun Business Hotel's reception room in Tshwa ka during a trip with nine friends to view the salt lake (2 March 2017, Snying thar rgyal). This image depicts Chinggis Khan and his ministers sculpted from salt at Tshwa ka. During Father's visit, they each presented three *gter khug* 'mixture of barley, juniper, and highland barley flour in a small bag' to a local person responsible for throwing the *gter khug* into the lake. They observed the local man go to the middle of the lake and throw the *gter khug* into the salt lake, which is believed to fulfill wishes. Father thought that the *gter khug* were for nagas, so he made gaining-wealth wishes.



FIG 11. Father and Uncle Rang grol chat about tribal issues, the weather, livestock, preparation for Losar 'Tibetan New Year', and WIFI. The device on the table uses a SIM card to receive internet transmissions and share with mobile phones (10 February 2017, Rang grol's adobe house, Skal bzang tshe brtan).



FIG 12. Sunrise. The large tent is for entertaining guests and is also where Father, Mother, Brother, and I sleep. The small tent is for storing various items (18 August 2017, summer pasture, Skal bzang tshe brtan).



FIG 13. An altar and a *dar lcog* 'prayer flag' pole with colorful prayer flags. We have an altar on every pasture where we stay. In March 2020, Father asked a metalsmith in Chab cha to make a portable metal altar, so we would no longer need to build an altar (19 August 2017, summer pasture, Skal bzang tshe brtan).



FIG 14. People enjoy summer in the Mtsho sngon po area, as do livestock. To the left of the resting horse is a horse blanket (19 August 2017, summer pasture, Skal bzang tshe brtan).



FIG 15. A night view of my family's winter house in Ru chen gsum pa (19 December 2015, Ru chen gsum pa, a Korean friend known as Don 'grub).¹



TIBETAN TERMS

'brug byams འབྲུག་བླ་མ་པོ་

'jam dbyangs nag po འཇམ་དབྱངས་ནག་པོ་

a b+hu yag ཨ་བླ་ཡག་

a g.yang la bo, rtswa kha song nga rtswa zo, chu

kha song nga chu thungs ཨ་གཡང་ལ་བོ་རྩ་ཁ་སྐང་ང་

རྩ་བོ་རྩ་ཁ་སྐང་ང་རྩ་བྱངས་

a mdo ཨ་མདོ་

a myes b+wa yan ཨ་མེས་བ་ཡ་ཤ་

a myes brag dkar ཨ་མེས་བྲག་དཀར་

a myes rma chen ཨ་མེས་རྩ་ཆེན་

a myes yul lha ཨ་མེས་ཡུལ་ལྷ་

a pha ཨ་ཕ་

a rta ཨ་རྟ་

bar do བར་དོ་

bar the'u བར་ཐེ་འུ་

bkra shis rtags brgyad བར་ཤིས་རྟགས་བརྒྱད་

bla ma བླ་མ་

blo bzang 'phrin las བློ་བཟང་འཕྲིན་ལས་

¹ See Skäl bzang tshe brtan (2017:375-379) for seven additional photos illustrating local camels and camel gear (<https://bit.ly/2LuL64U>, accessed 21 August 2019).

blon po gser chen ལྷོན་པོ་གསེར་ཆེན།
 brag dkar བྲག་དཀར།
 bye thang gi gru gzings བྱེ་ཐང་གི་གུ་གཟིངས།
 cang shes ཅང་ཤེས།
 chab cha ཆབ་ཇ།
 chos skyong ཆོས་སྐྱོང་།
 chu ring རྩུ་རིང་།
 dar lcog དར་ལྷོག་།
 dbang kho དབང་ཁོ།
 dbus gtsang དབུས་གཙང་།
 don 'grub རོན་འགྲུབ།
 dug tsher དུག་ཚེར།
 dung dkar tshig mdzod རུང་དཀར་ཚིག་མཛོད།
 dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo རུང་དཀར་ཚིག་མཛོད་
 ཆེན་མོ།
 glo ལྷོ།
 glo bdag ལྷོ་བདག་།
 gnam skyong gong ma rgyal mo གནམ་སྐྱོང་གོང་མ་རྒྱལ་མོ།
 gnam the'u གནམ་ཐེའུ།
 gnyel གཉེལ།
 gong thag གོང་ཐག་།
 gor bdag གོར་བདག་།
 gsang sgrog གསང་སྒོག་།
 gser chen གསེར་ཆེན།
 gter khug གཏེར་ཁུག་།
 gtor thug གཏོར་ཐུག་།
 ho ཧོ།
 khams ཁམས།
 khri ka ཁྲི་ཀ།
 kho tse ཁོ་ཙེ།

klu thar rgyal ལྷུ་ཐར་རྒྱལ།
 kun 'grub tshe ring ཀུན་འགྲུབ་ཚེ་རིང་།
 kun dga' ཀུན་དགལ།
 kun dga' mtsho mo ཀུན་དགལ་མཚོ་མོ།
 lha sa ལྷ་ས།
 lo sar ལོ་སར།
 mgo sdom མགོ་སྐྱོད།
 mi rigs tshong ra མི་རིགས་ཚོང་ར།
 mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།
 mtsho nub མཚོ་ལུབ།
 mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།
 mtsho sngon khri shor rgyal mo མཚོ་སྒོན་ཁྲི་ཤོར་རྒྱལ་མོ།
 mtsho sngon po མཚོ་སྒོན་པོ།
 mtsho snying ma hwa de wa མཚོ་སྙིང་མ་འཛུ་དེ་ཡ།
 pad ma thub brtan པད་མ་ཐུབ་བརྟན།
 phag mo sgrol ma ཕག་མོ་སྒྲོལ་མ།
 rang grol རང་གྲོལ།
 rdo rje རོ་རྩེ།
 rdza rgan རྩ་རྒན།
 reb gong རེབ་གོང་།
 ri b+ho རི་བོ་ཧོ།
 ri bo nyi zla རི་བོ་ལྷི་ལྷ།
 rma chu རྩ་ཆུ།
 rma chu'i phar kha'i mi རྩ་ཆུ་འི་ཕར་ཁ་འི་མི།
 rin chen rdo rje རིན་ཆེན་རོ་རྩེ།
 rnga gseb རྩ་གསེབ།
 rnga rgan རྩ་རྒན།
 rnga thor ma རྩ་ཐོར་མ།
 rta b+he རྩ་བོ་ཧོ།
 rta kho རྩ་ཁོ།

rta nag ma རྟ་ནག་མ།
 rtsam pa རྩ་མ་པ།
 ru chen gsum pa རུ་ཆེན་གསུམ་པ།
 sa the'u ས་ཐེ་འུ།
 sgyes སྟེ།
 skal bzang dar rgyas སྐལ་བཟང་དར་རྒྱས།
 skal bzang tshe brtan སྐལ་བཟང་ཚེ་བརྟན།
 skar ma 'tsho སྐར་མ་འཚོ།
 sngas mgo bla ma སྤང་མགོ་བླ་མ།
 sngas mgo bla ma hra dgo, nangs ja'i gtul ma
 che dgo སྤང་མགོ་བླ་མ་ཏ་དགོ། ཅངས་ཇའི་གཏུལ་མ་ཆེ་དགོ།
 snying lcags rgyal སྟིང་ལྷགས་རྒྱལ།
 snying thar rgyal སྟིང་ཐར་རྒྱལ།
 sog 'gel སོག་འགེལ།
 srid pa rgan po སྦིང་པ་རྒན་པོ།
 srung ma dpal ldan lha mo སྦུང་མ་དཔལ་ལྷན་ལྷ་མོ།
 stong skor སྟོང་སྐོར།

CHINESE TERMS

Anduo 安多
 Chaka 茶卡
 Changshun 昌顺
 Gazangcaidan 尕藏才旦
 Gonghe 共和
 Guide 贵德
 Hainan 海南
 Haixi 海西
 Huangyuan 湟源
 jiashi 驾驶

tha re ཐ་རེ།
 thang dkar ma ཐང་དཀར་མ།
 thang dkar ma bca' sdod slob chung ཐང་དཀར་མ་བཟའ་སྟོད་སྐོབ་ཆུང་།
 བཟའ་སྟོད་སྐོབ་ཆུང་།
 thang ka ཐང་ཀ།
 the'u rang ཐེ་འུ་རང་།
 the'u rang rkang gcig ཐེ་འུ་རང་རྒྱང་གཅིག་།
 thur 'gel ཐུར་འགེལ།
 tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho ཐངས་དབྱངས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 tshigs ཐིགས།
 tshu dbang pa thur ཐུ་དབང་པ་ཐུར།
 tshul khirms ཐུལ་ཁིམས།
 tshwa kha ཐུའ་ཀ།
 wo dbye gzhung བོ་དབྱེ་གཙུང་།
 wo dbye tshwa mtsho dkar mo བོ་དབྱེ་ཐུའ་མཚོ་དཀར་མོ།
 zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།

Kangba 康巴
 Qiabuqia 恰卜恰
 Qinghai 青海
 Qurang 曲让
 Sandadui 三大队
 Tanggemu 塘格木
 Wulan 乌兰
 Weizang 卫藏
 Wenchangjia 文昌加
 Xining 西宁

MY UNCLE'S PASSING: A TIBETAN FUNERAL IN RIG SMON (DAOTANGHE) TOWN,
GSER CHEN (GONGHE) COUNTY, MTSHO LHO (HAINAN) TIBETAN AUTONOMOUS
PREFECTURE, MTSHO SNGON (QINGHAI) PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Sangs rgyas tshe ring སངས་རྒྱལ་ཙེ་རིན། (Sangjiecairang 桑杰才让)*

ABSTRACT

I interviewed Dbang lugs (1937-2019), a herdsman in Rig smon (Daotanghe) Town, Gser chen (Gonghe) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China, at his home in February 2019. When he passed away at home on 12 May 2019, I returned to participate in the funeral activities. These included monks visiting and conducting rituals, and locals chanting *ma Ni* and performing *smjung gnas* 'fasting ritual' done for the deceased with the numbers reported to the deceased's family on the village WeChat group after the funeral.

KEYWORDS

Mtsho sngon (Qinghai), Tibetan funeral, ritual practice, Tibetan gift-giving, A mdo Tibetans

INTRODUCTION

On the afternoon of 12 May 2019, Father (Bsod nams rgya mtsho, b. 1969) phoned while I was eating lunch with a classmate. Father was silent for a moment and then said, "Son, do you have time to come home? Uncle passed away this morning. I'm on my way to D+hIHtsha Monastery¹ to invite some monks to come and chant. We are preparing for the funeral rituals. I hope you make time to visit Aunt (Klu mo rgyal, b. 1945). She's very sad and needs our comfort and support."

"Okay! I'll use my cell phone and buy a ticket online," I replied without hesitation.

"Uncle" refers to Dbang lugs (1936-2019), my paternal grandfather's brother. Locally, people do not say the name of a deceased community member and are especially sensitive to this in their relatives' presence. If someone inadvertently says a dead person's name, they immediately follow with *oM ma Ni pad+me hUM*.²

I bought a train ticket and reached West Station in Xi'an City at two PM, where I rested for about ten minutes until the passengers stood and prepared to board the train. Two attendants stood near the ticket entrance. Machines automatically checked each passenger's ticket and opened the turnstiles. I went to the Number Three carriage and found seat 105, my ticket number. I guessed I was the only Tibetan on the train. Most passengers were soon occupied with their cell phones, which reminded me that I had recorded some elders' accounts of their lives in my home community during the winter holiday from January to February 2019. I checked and found Uncle's story on my cell phone. I took my earphones from my left jacket pocket, attached them to the phone, and began listening:

Haha! What are you going to do with my stories? I don't have any personal stories worth sharing.

*Sangs rgyas tshe ring (Sangjiecairang). 2021. My Uncle's Passing: A Tibetan Funeral in Rig smon (Daotanghe) Town, Gser chen (Gonghe) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:195-207.

¹ Founded by Zhwa dmar paN+Di ta dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho (1852-1912) in 1903, D+hIH tsha Monastery is located northwest of Ba yan (Bayan) Town, Dpa' lung (Hualong) County (Nian and Bai 1993: 53-54). See Smith (2017:171) for a photo.

² A mantra devoted to Avalokiteśvara, the Buddhist deity of compassion par excellence.

My name is Dbang lugs. I'm eighty-three years old, and I'm a herdsman. I was adopted by one of my relatives when I was twelve. My parents had eight sons and a daughter, while my adoptive parents were childless. They were very kind to me. Some of my peers had to herd livestock for wealthy families because they had several siblings and a few livestock. I also herded my new family's livestock every day, but fortunately, I didn't have to work for others. At that time, the Skyid nyin lung tsho ba Inga 'five nomad tribes'¹ were southeast of the Mtsho sngon bo (Qinghai hu; Qinghai Lake) area. Before 1956, these eight villages were part of Skyid nyin lung tsho ba Inga, except for Sog ru. Chu rnga (Qushina) Village was in Ar sti (Niandi) Township Town, Chab cha (Qiabuqia) Town. Chu rnga belonged to Skyid nyin lung tsho ba Inga until 1956. Currently, Skyid nyin lung tsho ba Inga residents annually venerate Blon po gser chen (mountain deity) on the fifteenth day of the sixth lunisolar month.

When I was eighteen (1954), I joined a team of ten people who went to another area to work for the government. Except for two, all the other government workers were from villages in Rig smon Township Town (now Rig smon Town). My community (Ldong dngos) had given me two horses and two pack yaks. Other members said their home communities had also provided their yaks and horses. We reached our destination, collected logs, and moved them by yaks from a forest near the Hang chu² (Huangqing). At that time, I didn't know where I was, but I heard "Hang chu." I later understood that the river was in Dar mtsho (Xinghai) County.

After working there for several days, we met a group of more than 400 people headed to Lha sa (Lasa). We followed them two days later. Unfortunately, we met soldiers and there was conflict. Some people escaped, but most died. We, the survivors, returned to our homeland, although not to our homes. All my home community families were living together in Rig smon Township Town. We didn't go home because the government would have ordered us to work in the fields, make new fields in the winter grassland, and make sod walls for fields. Instead, we went to my home community's summer pasture, where no one lived. We stayed there for almost two years, slaughtering stray yaks for food.

This eventually came to an end when soldiers surrounded us one morning. A month later, we were taken to the Gter len kha (Delingha) County vicinity, where there were more than 2,000 Tibetan and Chinese prisoners. We moved stones and soil to build a big reservoir. I worked there for almost three years and eventually returned home.

My adoptive father and the local township town leader were good friends. Many times, my adoptive father said, "My son was just an eighteen-year-old herdsman and didn't know he was doing anything illegal."

The leader wrote several letters before I was able to return. I never imagined that I could return home. Fortunately, I did, and now I have a lovely family. I spent the rest of my life herding sheep.

When I was twenty-seven, I married Klu mo rgyal (b. 1945). She was ill several times and couldn't give birth, so we adopted Thse ring skyid (b. 1972) from one of my older brothers (Bsod btha). When she was seventeen, she married 'Jigs byed mkhar (b. 1971). They have three children.

My son-in-law went to do business one summer and never returned. Some people said he married a woman in Mgo log (Guoluo Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture). Some said he was murdered. We don't know where he is or if he is alive.

Seven years later, Tshe ring skyid married a second time. These days she takes care of my wife and me. My grandson, Tshe byams rgyal, went to live in his wife's home in 'Khyam ru (Gahaitan) Village. My granddaughter, 'Brug mo mtsho (b. 1993), is married and lives in her husband's home in G.yon ru (Yuanzhe) Village. My youngest grandson, 'Brug 'bum tshe ring (b. 1996), is already twenty-three, and it's

¹ Later, Skyid nyin lung tsho ba Inga became Rig smon (Daotanghe) Town, Cang shes (Jiangxigou) Township Town, Spre'u nag (Shinaihai) Township Town, Rta nag ma (Heimahe) Township Town, and Mtsho shar lug rgyud rwa ba (Hudong yangchang). Rig smon Township Town had eight villages - Ldong dngos (Dongwei), Phag skor (Heike), Sog ru (Menggu), Dpon skor (Huangke), G.yon ru (Yuanzhe), Rgya ye (Jiayi), Pha yag (Hayihai), and 'Kham ru (Gahaitan).

² A Yellow River tributary.

time for him to marry. I hope he doesn't marry someone in Group One or Group Two of this community because these two groups are descendants of eight brothers. Group Three of our village was part of Phag skor Village until there were conflicts between the groups in Phag skor Village.

Well, to tell the truth, it's time for me to die.

["Are you afraid of death? I fear my death," 'Brug 'bum tshe ring inquired.]

No, I've never been afraid of death because everybody must die, not just me. But I worry you won't know how to conduct funeral rituals after I pass away. Monks do some rituals, but relatives must, for example, cut the deceased person's hair, wash the corpse, carry the corpse, and so on. Well, it doesn't matter to me. I don't need to care after I die, but I'm sure other people will say something bad about my relatives, for example, they can't do things properly with their relative's corpse. I heard my nephew, Tshe dbang rgyal (b. 1972), is good with funeral rituals.

As I listened, I tried hard to control my tears.

I reached Zi ling (Xining) City at seven-thirty PM. Public buses had already stopped running, so I got into a taxi with two other passengers going to Gser chen (Gonghe) County. Two hours later, we reached Rig smon Township. I paid thirty RMB to the driver, and the others continued to Gser chen County.

I walked for five minutes to Rig smon (Daotanghe) Town, where Father was waiting. He had arrived a half-hour earlier and had bought many fruits, vegetables, and tea bricks. Father said:

This morning Grandfather and his nephew (Rdo chung b. 1963) met the local *bla ma* (A lags khri ba). 'Brug 'bum tshe ring and 'Brug mo mtsho's husband (Rdo rje rgyal, b. 1989) went to invite four monks from G.yon ru dgon pa¹ (Yuanzhesi). The monks arrived and are now chanting scripture for the deceased. Seven monks will come to the deceased person's home from D+hiH tsha Monastery tomorrow morning. Twenty village members are turning *ma Ni*² wheels in our village's *ma Ni khang*.³ Others are cooking, chanting *ma Ni*, and spinning hand *ma Ni* wheels accompanying the deceased. I suggest you take a nap. We will soon go to Uncle's home, and perhaps you may need to chant *ma Ni* or turn a *ma Ni* wheel the whole night.

Forty minutes later, we reached my home, and then we went to Uncle's home. First, I gave 200 RMB to Brug 'bum tshe ring. Then I met Aunt, who was weeping. Her grief upset me, and I said nothing. After calming down, I said, "Please don't be sad. Everybody will eventually die. Don't you remember what Uncle said about death? I think he was glad to have died without suffering."

"Yes, I remember that he often said, 'Human life is as colorful as a rainbow, and human death is as unstable as a rainbow.' Still, it is tough to face reality. We spent more than fifty years together and relied on each other. He was a good partner," reflected Klu mo rgyal.

"Don't be sad! Don't cry! You will not forget your husband. Your sadness will be gone after a while," said Bsod nams rgyal (b. 1939), one of the oldest elders in my home community.

Uncle's home has a living room, a shrine room, and a kitchen. Seven monks were chanting scripture in the shrine room. Several young people were doing the monks' bidding. Some young men and women sat around a small metal stove in the middle of the living room. Some elders sat on a sofa. Everyone was chanting *ma Ni* together. An adobe stove was in the left section of the sleeping room. An adobe bed in the north of the room accounted for one-third of the room. Smoke from an adobe stove passed through a connection to the adobe bed, warming it, and left via a metal chimney going

¹ Founded by Bla ma nor bu in 1831, the monastery is located in G.yon ru (Yuanzhe) Village, Rig smon Town, Gser chen County (Nian and Bai 1993: 213-214). See Smith (2017:108) for a photo.

² *ma Ni* refers to *oM ma Ni pad+me hUM*, a six-syllable mantra devoted to Avalokiteśvara, the Buddhist deity of compassion.

³ A small temple where locals chant scripture together.

directly from the stove to the roof. When the adobe bed did not need to be heated during summer, the stove was not lit. A white curtain enclosed the corpse on the adobe bed. A scripture volume and a lit butter lamp were near the deceased's head. Uncle Tshe dbang rgyal, 'Brug 'bum tshe ring, and Tshe byams rgyal sat nearest the deceased. Other cousins and nephews in the room were chanting *ma Ni*.

According to local custom, relatives sit near the corpse and chant scriptures. If they feel tired and need a nap, they take turns sitting near the corpse. Locals think evil will possess a corpse left alone. Locals believe the deceased's soul can smell *tsha gsur*,¹ which is why it burns for forty-nine days² in the deceased's home.

VISITS, FOOD, AND CHANTING

Villagers visit the bereaved family soon after learning of a death and bring butter, a tea brick, or both as a token of consolation. Some who do not have time to go home may buy margarine and add around thirty to one hundred RMB. Relatives often bring a sheep's stomach of butter and might add 200-500 RMB.

Bsod nams rgya mstho sat at the shrine room door and recorded the gifts in an old notebook. The name of the father of the household presenting the gift was registered, as well as the gift. Gifts were stacked on the floor of the shrine room. Two clan members went to meet Klu mo rgyal and then to the living room to chant. Elders sat to the left on the living room floor. Some younger adult women squatted or knelt on the porch. Everyone was served black tea, bread, *rtsam pa*, and hot rice with butter, baby yams, and sugar.

One of the deceased's younger brothers had married a woman from Dme sngags Village in Mtsho shar lug rgyud rwa ba. His two sons were seated on a carpet on the adobe bed in the living room and served rice with baby yams and sugar, and milk tea. When they asked how the deceased had died, a male elder explained. Next, they went with some younger men to the *ma Ni khang*, spun the *ma Ni* wheel, and gave 100 RMB to each monk before the monks drove back to G.yon ru Monastery.

Villagers chanted *Bzang spyod*,³ *Sgrol ma*,⁴ and *ma Ni* all night. The next morning, another group of seven monks came from D+hIH tsha Monastery and conducted '*Jigs byed kyi dbang*.⁵ They first made four red *gtor ma*⁶ decorated with butter, four butter lamps, four bowls of barley to support three incense sticks each, four bowls each supporting a lily magnolia, and filled eleven bowls with water.

The text *Thun drug bla ma'i rnam 'byor dang 'jigs byed dpa' bo gcig pa bzugs so* has two parts (1) *Skyabs 'gro* 'Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels' and (2) '*Jigs byed dpa' gcig pa*.⁷ The monks chanted *Skyabs 'gro* once. Later, while the seven monks chanted '*Jigs byed dpa' gcig pa* together once, they made offerings four times. Each offering used the same items, but the offering times and the number of bowls of water varied. For example, the first offering was a bowl of water, lily magnolias,

¹ Locally made of *rtsam pa* 'roasted barley flour' mixed with a little butter, it is offered to the deceased for forty-nine days after a death.

² During this time, the deceased is reborn.

³ A short form for *Bzang bo spyod pa'i smon lam 'Aspiration to Good Action'*, a scripture describing the positive actions of many Bodhisattva committed to acting for all beings' benefit (Sangs rgyas bkra shis 2019:23).

⁴ Reciting the mantra related to the feminine bodhisattva, *Sgrol ma 'Tara'*, 'Savior', 'Liberator', who is associated with longevity and compassion (Coma-Santanusana 2020:54).

⁵ An empowerment ritual involving the protective deity, Yamantaka, that the deceased's soul is without fear.

⁶ It is made by mixing *rstam pa*, water, and butter together, creating various images and shapes for ritual use.

⁷ Text related to Yamantaka "a violent aspect of the Bodhisattva Manjushri, who assumes this form to vanquish Yama, the god of death" <https://bit.ly/33AtOKg>, accessed 19 September 2020.

incense, a butter lamp, a bowl of water, and a red *gtor ma*. The second and third offerings were three bowls of water, lily magnolias, incense, a butter lamp, and a red *gtor ma*.

The fourth offering was a red *gtor ma*, a butter lamp, incense, lily magnolias, and three bowls of water. After the seven monks had chanted '*Jigs byed dpa' gcig pa*' six times, there were no additional offerings. They chanted '*Jigs byed dpa' gcig pa*' a total of forty-nine times.

The first offering: (l-r) a bowl of water, lily magnolias, incense, a butter lamp, a bowl of water, and a red *gtor ma*.¹



The second offering: three bowls of water, lily magnolias, incense, a butter lamp, and a red *gtor ma*.



The third offering: three bowls of water, lily magnolias, incense, a butter lamp, and a red *gtor ma*.



The fourth offering: a red *gtor ma*, a butter lamp, incense, lily magnolias, and three bowls of water.



During *Khrus chog*, a purification ritual, monks chanted and lit three butter lamps and placed fragrant smelling substances in a vase with water. Earlier, a Buddha image and scriptures had been placed on a table. Next to these, a small mirror in a plate was positioned so that it reflected these objects. Water was poured over the mirror. Uncle's relatives used this now sacred water to wash his corpse and, at the same time, touched his head three times with three butter lamps.

During *Smon lam*,² the monks prayed that Uncle would have a good next life and that his soul would not be afraid.

The Sngas mgo bla ma³ was A lags khri ba, who did not visit Uncle's home. Instead, he chanted in 'Khyam ru dgon'.⁴ Uncle's family gave him 2,000 RMB and a saddle. Klu mo rgyal mentioned that the saddle was the item Uncle most valued.

¹ Grags pa rgya mtsho made the illustrations for this article.

² Scripture is chanted to help the deceased have a favorable next life and to not be afraid.

³ A *bla ma* who helps guide the deceased's soul to the next life.

⁴ Founded by Blo bzang thub bstan 'jigs med rgya mtsho in 1861, 'Khyam ru dgon bkra shis dge 'phel gling is located in Chu rnga Village, Ar sti Township, Chab cha Town (Nian and Bai 1993:211-212). See Smith (2017:111) for a photo.

MOVING THE CORPSE

Thirty-six hours after Uncle's death, Tshe dbang rgyal, Zla ba, and Uncle's grandsons used a towel moistened with *shug chu* 'juniper water' to wipe the corpse gently and tied a good quality *thug khra*¹ around the neck to prevent blood from coming out from the mouth and nose and also to prevent sounds from the mouth and nose while moving the corpse. Next, they wrapped the corpse from head to toe in white cloth but did not cover the top of the head. According to locals, the deceased's soul emerges from the center of the head. A few barley seeds and small tufts of white sheep wool were put in Uncle's palms, and then the palms were fastened together in an attitude of prayer. The legs were tied to the torso with a cloth rope. Uncle then seemed to be squatting with his palms together, praying.

After the monks finished chanting *Khrus chog*, Tshe dbang rgyal and Zla ba put the corpse in a white cloth bag. Tshe dbang rgyal carried the bag and put it on Tshe byams rgyal's lap in the car. Uncle Lcags byams rgyal quickly placed three *tsha tsha*² and a broken sickle where the corpse had been. Uncle Lcags byams rgyal said this was a local custom that he could not explain.

As female relatives lamented, Tshe ring skyid fainted in the yard. Her daughter, 'Brug mo mtsho, and my mother (G.yang rgyal mtsho, b. 1973) carried her into the house. Everyone chanted, dispelling the night's quiet. People could not see each other clearly under the moonlight. Everyone was very sad. It was a hard time. We felt sad when we saw Uncle's photos, his Ge sar³ books, and his old radio.

Thirty-nine men (counting the corpse) went to the crematory in Chab cha Town. After cremation, thirty-eight men returned to the village, demonstrating the rule that an odd number (counting the corpse) should leave and an even number should return.

People preferred to participate in an elder's funeral rather than other funerals in my home community. For example, when an eighty-year-old elder passes away, the death is referred to as *tshe yi 'phen pa rdzogs*.⁴

Children care for aged parents, and if children die before their parents, the parents think they are unlucky, as do other locals. Ideally, parents pass away before their children. Young people usually do not join the funeral of children and adults who have died from illness or accidents because it is considered harmful for young people.

Until about 2005, sky burial was locally practiced⁵ for those who did not die from illness or accidents outside their homes.

Nine cars lined up to drive to the crematory in Chab cha Town. Attention is paid to the zodiac animals. For example, Uncle's zodiac animal was a tiger, so Dpal ldan rgyal and Lha rgyal did not accompany the corpse because their zodiac animal was a monkey, which conflicts with the tiger.

¹ A rope or cord made of black and white wool.

² Small bas-relief images of Buddhas and other sacred entities stamped on clay that sometimes has been mixed with a deceased person's cremation ashes.

³ "Gesar is a folk hero of Eastern Tibet and predominantly known through literature and live performance. He is believed to have lived around the 10th century" (<https://bit.ly/32YNoja>, accessed 6 September 2020).

⁴ A person passed away who was very old.

⁵ Each local community had a local charnel ground where bodies were fed to vultures. However, in 2020, the crematory in Chab cha Town was increasingly used.

Table 1. The Tibetan Astrological Cycle.

Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
English	Tiger	Hare	Dragon	Snake	Horse	Sheep	Monkey	Rooster	Dog	Pig	Rat	Cow
Tibetan	stag	yos	'brug	sbrul	rta	lug	sprel	bya	khyi	phag	byi ba	glang
Chinese	hu	tu	long	she	ma	yang	hou	ji	gou	zhu	shu	niu

Locals believe the following pairs conflict: tiger-monkey, hare-rooster, dragon-dog, snake-pig, horse-rat, and sheep-cow. Five animals are between each of these pairs. Locals find this convenient to determine the animals in conflict. Great care is given to those with conflicting animal years when moving a corpse and at weddings.

Everyone in the cars chanted *ma Ni* together all the way to the crematorium, where they arrived about fifty minutes later. Tshe dbang rgyal carried the corpse to a large room. Other escorts chanted *ma Ni* loudly as they walked into the cremation room. Seven monks went to the temple in front of the cremation room, chanting *Smon lam*. Tshe dbang rgyal, 'Brug 'bum tshe ring, and Tshe byams rgyal placed the corpse on a large metal table in front of the cremation stove, ensuring the corpse was on its left side (a female corpse is placed on its right side). The escorts stayed near the cremation oven, loudly chanting *ma Ni* together. Shortly afterward, the official cremation worker (a Tibetan) pushed the big metal drawer into the oven and pressed the button to begin the cremation.

All the females and some males stayed at Uncle's home, chanting until the escorts returned. We waited for about two hours. The Tibetan worker commented, "Some corpses take longer than others to cremate."

After the cremation, a Chinese worker wearing a white mask and thick white gloves smashed and pulverized the incinerated bones with a stone in front of the cremation oven and put the powder in a white cloth bag that was placed in a plastic bag. In my home community, only a stranger crushes the deceased's bones. We paid 100 RMB for this service. Before leaving, we burned all of the Uncle's clothes in a designated area for burning near the crematory yard.

When we returned to Uncle's home, some men heated white stones and black stones in two different yak-dung fires. The escorts first used "black water"¹ to wash their hands above the heated black stones. Milk mixed with water was used to wash their hands above the heated white rocks. All the escorts washed their hands, but the monks did not because they had not touched the corpse while they had chanted at the crematory.

Uncle's family prepared *skar thug*² for the escorts and other villagers and gave each escort ten RMB and a tea brick before they left. Except for relatives, most returned to their homes to chant and performed *smiyung gnas*³ 'ritual fasting' for the deceased.

The next morning, Bsod nams rgya mtsho and 'Brug 'bum tshe ring took some of Uncle's bone ash and scattered it in sacred places such as mountains. Other bone ash was mixed with mud to make *tsha tsha*. Meanwhile, Uncle's family members chanted and did *smiyung gnas*. Male relatives offered a small amount of money to monks in local monasteries and gave candy to students at local government primary schools.

For the next forty-nine days, the male relatives would not shave or cut their hair, while the female relatives would not wash their hair. For that same period, all of Uncle's relatives offered *tsha gsur* in their homes.

¹ Ordinary water.

² A soup made of butter, rice, cheese, raisins, jujubes, sugar, wheat flour, salt, and milk.

³ A time of fasting and intense prayer.

The deceased's male relatives braided a white wool string in their hair until Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year', while young relatives generally did not wear a hat nor style or dye their hair. Also, the deceased's family members would not wear new clothes and not participate in Lnga ba'i sngon¹ or Drug pa'i lab tse,² nor in social activities such as singing and dancing for a year.

One month after the funeral, villagers reported the number of *ma Ni* and *smyung gnas* done for Uncle during that period in the Village WeChat group.

Table 2. Visitor names, village, cash donation, gifts, number of *ma Ni*, and the number of reported *smyung gnas*.

#	Name	Village	RMB	Gift	<i>ma Ni</i>	<i>Smyung gnas</i>
1	Bsod nams rgyal	LD ³	200	a tea brick	10,000	8
2	Lha chen rgyal	LD	300	margarine	20,000	16
3	Mgon po don 'grub	LD	200		20,000	3
4	Lha 'brug rgyal	LD	100	a tea brick	100,000	3
5	Klu byams rgyal	LD	200	a tea brick	10,000	
6	Btsun thar rgyal	LD	100	margarine	200,000	
7	Rig bzang	LD	150		100,000	
8	Khro le	LD	100	margarine	300,000	
9	Mchog'bum rgyal	LD	100	margarine	10,000	
10	Phun tshogs	LD	200	a tea brick	30,000	8
11	Dpal ldan rgyal	LD	300	a tea brick	200,000	8
12	Bsod nams rgya mtsho	LD	500	butter (5kg)	150,000	
13	Tshe dbang rgyal	LD	500	butter (25kg)	2,000,000	16
14	Sangs rgyas tshe ring	LD	200	a tea brick	3,000	
15	Klu byams tshe ring	LD	100	a tea brick	10,000	3
16	Mgo b+he	LD	50	margarine	100,000	1
17	Nor bu	LD	50	a tea brick	10,000	3
18	Klu rgyal byams	LD	100	a tea brick	10,000	1
19	Ban de rgyal	LD	100	margarine	100,000	
20	Zla ba	LD	200	a tea brick	10,000	
21	Dpal mkhar rgyal	LD	100	margarine	1,000	
22	G.yang skyabs rgyal	LD	100	a tea brick	1,0000	
23	Chos b+ho	LD	100	a tea brick	300,000	3

¹ Ritual of offering incense to Blon po gser chen Mountain Deity on the fifteenth day of the fifth month.

² Local annual festival for mountain deities on the fifteenth day of the sixth month.

³ LD = Ldong dngos.

24	Lha chen tshe ring	LD	100	a tea brick	1,000	
25	Rdo ril	LD	100	a tea brick	10,000	
26	Chos grags	LD	50	a tea brick	60,000	4
27	Bden pa	LD	50	a tea brick	40,000	
28	Ri b+ho	LD	100	margarine	7,000	
29	Gser lo	LD	50	a tea brick	100,000	3
30	Rdo rje tshe ring	LD	50	margarine	10,000	
31	Sangs rgyas don 'grub	LD	100	margarine	7,000	
32	'Jigs byed tshe brtan	LD	50	margarine	3,000	
33	'Brug rtse	LD	200	butter (10kg)	1,000	
34	Dbang phyug 'bum	LD	100	butter (5kg)	3,000	
35	Lha rgyal	LD	50	butter (1.5kg)	1,000	
36	Shes rab	LD	100	a tea brick	4,000	
37	Klu kho	LD	300	a tea brick	5,000	1
38	Rdo rje don 'grub	LD	100	margarine	50,000	3
39	Btsun thar rgyal (che)	LD	50	butter (2kg)	3,000	
40	Rdo rje rgyal	LD	200	margarine	100,000	8
41	Dpa' b+ha	LD	50	a tea brick	3,000	
42	Tshe ring bkra shis	LD	50	margarine	20,000	3
43	Rig lo	LD	100	a tea brick	5,000	
44	Sangs rgyas 'bum	LD	100	margarine	4,000	
45	'Phags pa rgyal	LD	300	a tea brick	10,000	
46	Bkra shis	LD	100	margarine	7,000	
47	Tshe ring thar	LD	50	margarine	5000	
48	Mgon po	LD	200	a tea brick	20,000	
49	He pun	LD	100	margarine	1,000	
50	Sangs rgyas skyabs	'Khyam ru	100	a tea brick	1,000	
51	Ye shes	'Khyam ru	200	butter (5kg)	10,000	
52	Stag lha rgyal	LD	300	butter (10kg)	1,000	16
53	Rdo rgyal	Gyon ru	500	butter (30kg)	2,000	8
54	Tshe byams rgyal	'Khyam ru	1,000	margarine	3,000	8
55	Tshe dbang	LD	50	butter (1kg)	35,000	
56	Lcags byams rgyal	LD	500	margarine	200,000	3

CONCLUSION

An elder told me:

A yak-hair bag filled with soil was attached to one side of a gentle yak. The corpse in the white cloth bag was fastened to the other side. The yak pack frame was placed on the yak in a reversed position, which was considered inauspicious at any other time. Once they reached Gnas sa,¹ a small knife was used to carefully cut the cloth rope around the corpse and *thug khra* around the neck. It was considered very inauspicious if the corpse was accidentally cut in the process. The deceased's head was covered with grass, and a sheepskin robe was put on the body. Such close relatives as sons and brothers stayed with the corpse while other escorts returned home. Those with the corpse removed the sheepskin robe the next morning but did not remove the grass on the head. They moved some distance away, observing the corpse and waiting for vultures. The first vulture to come and begin feeding on the corpse was the *bla bya*. Each person has a *bla bya*.

He also told me that those who died from poison, disease, and prolonged illness during which they took a lot of medicine were buried in unmarked graves in Gnas as. Other corpses were disposed of as described above. Sky burial in Gnas sa continued until about 2008. Afterward, corpses were taken to the crematory in Chab cha Town.

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TIBETAN TERMS

'brug འབྲུག	'jigs byed kyi dbang འཇིགས་བྱེད་ཀྱི་དབང་།
'brug 'bum tshe ring འབྲུག་འབུམ་ཚེ་རིང་།	'jigs byed mkhar འཇིགས་བྱེད་མཁར་།
'brug mo mtsho འབྲུག་མོ་མཚོ།	'jigs byed tshe brtan འཇིགས་བྱེད་ཚེ་བརྟན་།
'brug rtse འབྲུག་རྩེ།	'khyam ru འབྲུམ་རུ།
'jigs byed dpa' gcig pa འཇིགས་བྱེད་དཔ་འགཅིག་པ།	

¹ A place about ten kilometers from my home where my home community members offered corpses to vultures.

'khyam ru dgon bkra shis dge 'phel འཁྱམ་རུ་དགོན་
 བཀྲ་ཤིས་དགེ་འཕེལ།
 'khyam ru dgon pa འཁྱམ་རུ་དགོན་པ།
 'phags pa rgyal འཕགས་པ་རྒྱལ།
 a lags khri ba ཨ་ལགས་ཁྲི་བ།
 a mdo ཨ་མདོ།
 ar sti ཨ་ར་སྟི།
 ba yan བ་ཡན།
 bal gyi tha gu བལ་གྱི་ཐ་གུ།
 ban de rgyal བན་དེ་རྒྱལ།
 bden pa བདེན་པ།
 bkra shis བཀྲ་ཤིས།
 bla bya བླ་མ།
 bla ma བླ་མ།
 bla ma nor bu བླ་མ་ནོར་བུ།
 blo bzang thub bstan 'jigs med rgya mtsho བློ་
 བཟང་ཐུབ་བསྟན་འཛིན་མེད་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 blon po gser chen བློན་པོ་གསེར་ཆེན།
 bsod nams rgya mtsho བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 bsod nams rgyal བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱལ།
 btsun thar rgyal བཙུན་ཐར་རྒྱལ།
 btsun thar rgyal (che) བཙུན་ཐར་རྒྱལ། ཆེ
 bya བྱ།
 byi ba བྱི་བ།
 bzang bo spyod pa'i smon lam བཟང་པོ་སྟོད་པའི་སྟོན་
 ལམ།
 bzang spyod བཟང་སྟོད།
 cang shes ཅང་ཤེས།
 chab cha ཆབ་ཇ།
 chos b+ho ཆོས་པོ།

chos grags ཆོས་གྲགས།
 chu rnga ཅུ་རྒ།
 d+hIH tsha ཅིཾ ཆ
 dar mtsho དར་མཚོ།
 dbang lugs དབང་ལུགས།
 dbang phyug 'bum དབང་ཕྱུག་འབུམ།
 dme sngags དམེ་སྟགས།
 dpa' b+ha དཔ་འ་པ།
 dpa' lung དཔ་འ་ལུང།
 dpal ldan rgyal དཔལ་ལྷན་རྒྱལ།
 dpal mkhar rgyal དཔལ་མཁར་རྒྱལ།
 dpon skor དཔོན་སྐོར།
 drug pa'i lab tse ལྷུག་པའི་ལའ་ཙེ།
 g.yang rgyal mtsho གཡང་རྒྱལ་མཚོ།
 g.yang skyabs rgyal གཡང་སྐུབས་རྒྱལ།
 g.yon ru གཡོན་རུ།
 g.yon ru dgon pa གཡོན་རུ་དགོན་པ།
 ge sar གེ་སར།
 glang གླང།
 gnas sa གནས་ས།
 grags pa rgya mtsho གྲགས་པ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 gser chen གསེར་ཆེན།
 gser lo གསེར་ལོ།
 gter len kha གཏེར་ལེན་མ།
 gtor ma གཏོར་མ།
 hang chu ཧང་ཅུ།
 he pun ཧེ་པུན།
 khro le ཁྲོ་ལེ།
 khrus chog ཁྲུས་ཆོག།
 khyi ཁྱི།

klu byams rgyal ལུ་བྱམས་རྒྱལ།
 klu byams tshe ring ལུ་བྱམས་ཚེ་རིང་།
 klu kho ལུ་ཁོ།
 klu mo rgyal ལུ་མོ་རྒྱལ།
 klu rgyal byams ལུ་རྒྱལ་བྱམས།
 lcags byams rgyal ལྷགས་བྱམས་རྒྱལ།
 ldong dngos ལྷོང་དངོས།
 lha 'brug rgyal ལྷ་འབྲུག་རྒྱལ།
 lha chen rgyal ལྷ་ཆེན་རྒྱལ།
 lha chen tshe ring ལྷ་ཆེན་ཚེ་རིང་།
 lha rgyal ལྷ་རྒྱལ།
 lha sa ལྷ་ས།
 lnga ba'i sngon ལྷ་བའི་སྒོན།
 lo sar ལོ་སར།
 lug ལུག།
 ma Ni མ་ཏི།
 ma Ni khang མ་ཏི་ཁང།
 mchog 'bum rgyal མཆོག་འབུམ་རྒྱལ།
 mgo b+he མགོ་བེ།
 mgo log མགོ་ལོག།
 mgon po མགོན་པོ།
 mgon po don 'grub མགོན་པོ་དོན་འགྲུབ།
 mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།
 mtsho shar lug rgyud rwa ba མཚོ་ཤར་ལུག་རྒྱུད་རྒྱུ་བ།
 mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།
 mtsho sngon po མཚོ་སྒོན་པོ།
 nor bu རོར་བུ།
 oM ma Ni pad+me hUM ཨོཾ་མ་ཏི་པ་དྲེ་ཧཱུྃ།
 pha yag ཕ་ཡག།
 phag ཕག།

phag skor ཕག་སྐོར།
 phun tshogs ཕུན་ཚོགས།
 rdo chung རོ་ཅུང་།
 rdo rgyal རོ་རྒྱལ།
 rdo ril རོ་རིལ།
 rdo rje don 'grub རོ་རེ་དོན་འགྲུབ།
 rdo rje rgyal རོ་རེ་རྒྱལ།
 rdo rje tshe ring རོ་རེ་ཚེ་རིང་།
 rgya ye རྒྱལ་ཡེ།
 ri b+ho རི་བོ།
 rig bzang རིག་བཟང་།
 rig lo རིག་ལོ།
 rig smon རིག་སྐོན།
 rmog ru རྟོག་རུ།
 rta རྟ།
 rta nag ma རྟ་ནག་མ།
 rtsam pa རུས་པ།
 sangs rgyas 'bum སངས་རྒྱས་འབུམ།
 sangs rgyas bkra shis སངས་རྒྱས་བཀྲ་ཤིས།
 sangs rgyas don 'grub སངས་རྒྱས་དོན་འགྲུབ།
 sangs rgyas skyabs སངས་རྒྱས་སྐྱམས།
 sangs rgyas tshe ring སངས་རྒྱས་ཚེ་རིང་།
 sbrul སྐྱུལ།
 sgrol ma སྐྱོལ་མ།
 shes rab ཤེས་རབ།
 shug chu ཤུག་ཅུ།
 skar thug སྐར་ཐུག།
 skyabs 'gro སྐྱམས་འགོ།
 skyid nyin lung tsho ba lnga སྐྱིད་ཉིན་ལུང་ཚོ་བ་ལ།
 smyung gnas སྐྱུང་གནས།

sngas mgo bla ma སྒ་ས་མགོ་བོ་མ།
 sog ru སོག་རུ།
 spre'u nag སྤེའུ་ནག
 sprel སྤྲེལ།
 stag སྟག།
 stag lha rgyal སྟག་ལྷ་རྒྱལ།
 stong skor སྟོང་སྐོར།
 tshe ring skyid ཚེ་རིང་སྦྱིད།
 thug khra ཐུག་ཁྲ།
 tsha gsur ཚ་གསུར།
 tsha tsha ཚ་ཚ།
 tshe byams rgyal ཚེ་བྱམས་རྒྱལ།
 tshe dbang ཚེ་དབང་།

CHINESE TERMS

Bayan 巴燕
 Daotanghe 倒淌河
 Delingha 德令哈
 Dongwei 东卫
 Gahaitan 尕斯滩
 Gonghe 共和
 Guoluo 果洛
 Hainan 海南
 Hayihai 哈乙亥
 Heike 黑科
 Heimahe 黑马河
 Hualong 化隆
 Huangke 黄科
 Huangqing 黄青
 Huangyuan 湟源
 Hudong yang chang 湖东羊场

tshe dbang rgyal ཚེ་དབང་རྒྱལ།
 tshe ring bkra shis ཚེ་རིང་བཀྲ་ཤིས།
 tshe ring thar ཚེ་རིང་ཐར།
 tshe yi 'phen pa rdzogs ཚེ་ཡི་འཕེན་པ་རྫོགས།
 thun drug bla ma'i rnam 'byor dang 'jigs byed
 dpa' bo gcig pa bzhugs so ཐུན་དུག་བླ་མ་འི་རྣམ་འབྱོར་
 དང་འཕེན་པ་བྱེད་དཔལ་འཕོ་གཅིག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།
 ye shes ཡེ་ཤེས།
 yos ཡོས།
 zhwa dmar paN+Di ta dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya
 mtsho ཞུ་དམར་པ་ཤྲི་ཏ་དག་འདུན་བཞུན་འཛིན་བྱ་མཚོ།
 zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།
 zla ba ཟླ་བ།

Jiangxigou 江西沟
 Jiayi 甲乙
 Menggu 蒙古
 Niandi 廿地
 Qiabuqia 恰卜恰
 Qianbulusi 千卜录寺
 Qinghai 青海
 Qinghai hu 青海湖
 Qushenna 曲什纳
 Sangjiecairang 桑杰才让
 Shinaihai 石乃亥
 Xinghai 兴海
 Xining 西宁
 Yuanzhe 元者
 Yuanzhesi 元者寺

ORNAMENTS, WOMEN, AND LIFE

TIBETAN MOTHERS OF THREE GENERATIONS: A HUNDRED-YEAR-OLD NECKLACE

Tshe dbang rdo rje ཅེ་དབང་ར་རྟེ་ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

Qinghai Normal University 青海师范大学

'Brug mo skyid འབྲུག་མོ་སྐལ་ལྷོ་ (Zhoumaoji 周毛吉)

Marxism College, Qinghai Normal University

青海师范大学马克思主义学院*

ABSTRACT

Accounts of a hundred-year-old necklace (~1920) illustrate a Tibetan family's life changes and issues, especially mother-daughter transmissions, in Khri ka (Guide) County, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. The accounts were collected by visiting, observing, and interviewing family members from 2010 to 2020. The necklace that is the centerpiece of this paper was passed to the reincarnations of mothers: Bla chen (1918-2004), who received the necklace from his mother, Mtsho mo (1883-1948), gave it to his elder brother, Snying byams (~1911-1976), to pass to the reincarnation of their mother, G.yang mtsho (~1958-2013; Snying byams' daughter). G.yang mtsho gave the necklace to her second daughter, 'Brug mo (b. 1988), believed to be G.yang mtsho's mother's reincarnation. 'Brug mo gave the necklace to her second daughter, Lha mo (b. 2019), believed to be the reincarnation of 'Brug mo's mother, G.yang mtsho. The paper is organized chronologically, tracking the necklace's history through Bla chen, Snying byams, G.yang mtsho, 'Brug mo, and Lha mo.

KEYWORDS

Tibetan mothers, Tibetan necklace, reincarnation, Tibetan lives (China), Tibetan family heirlooms

LOCATION: MAPS

FIG 1. Mtsho sngon Province, PR China (Wang 2014:1).



*Tshe dbang rdo rje (Caixiangduojie) and 'Brug mo skyid (Zhoumaoji). 2021. Tibetan Mothers of Three Generations: A Hundred-Year-Old Necklace. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:209-222.

FIG 2. Khri ka (Guide) County, Mtsho sngon Province (Xie 1995:1).

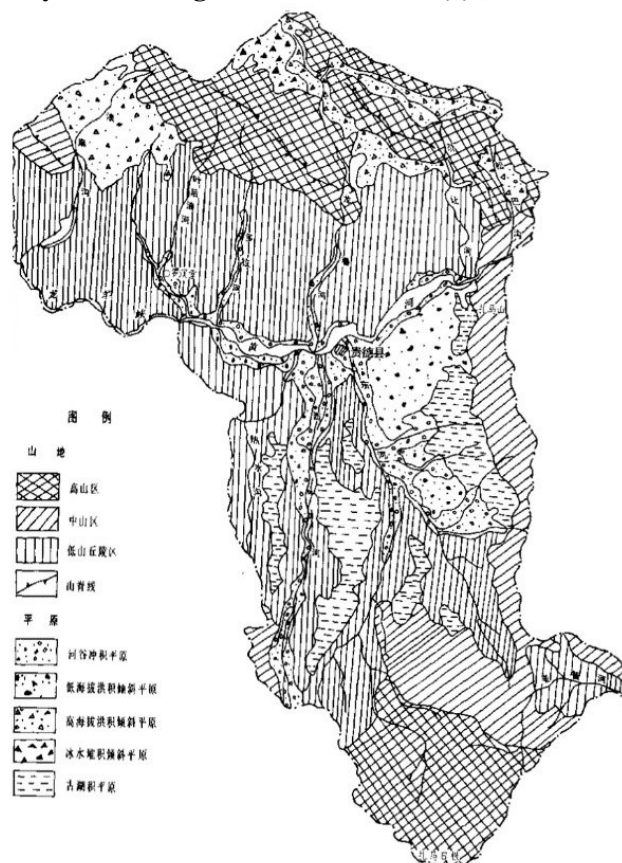


FIG 3. Chab cha Town, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.¹



¹ <https://bit.ly/3ghbImy>, accessed 4 December 2020.

FIG 4. People in the paper.

Name	Description
'Brug mo 'Female Dragon' (b. 1988)	G.yang mtsho's youngest daughter
Bla chen 'Master' (1918-2004)	'Brug mo's mother's father's younger brother; younger brother of Snying byams
G.yang mtsho 'Lake of Prosperity' (~1958-2013).	Mother of 'Brug mo and four other children; the third daughter of Snying byams
Jo ri 'Holy Mountain' (~1941-1999)	'Brug mo's father; eldest son of the last landlord, Mthun sgril rgyal, of Mo yag Village
Lha mo 'Goddess' (b. 2019)	'Brug mo's second daughter
Mthun sgril rgyal 'Victory of Unity' (~1911-1997)	'Brug mo's father's father; father of Jo ri
Mtshan grags 'Glory' (1668 ¹ -?)	'Brug mo's mother's father's younger brother's first reincarnation
Mtsho mo 'Ocean' (~1883-1948)	'Brug mo's mother's father's mother; mother of Snying byams, Bla chen, and three other children
Snying byams 'Kindness' (~1911-1976) ²	'Brug mo's mother's father; older brother of Bla chen; father of G.yang mtsho and four other children

INTRODUCTION

In December of 2011, G.yang mtsho, a Tibetan mother of three sons and two daughters, was kneading a dough ball with calloused hands in her smoky kitchen. Her one-year-old grandson was strapped to her back with a red sash. With a deeply wrinkled dark face, she said with a warm smile, "This [necklace] was given to me by my dear father. It has been passed down for three generations. It means a lot to me!"

The necklace has 108 white ivory beads with a tiny blue bag in the center that contains an attractive white pearl. According to G.yang mtsho's children, the necklace has been passed down in the family for at least four generations. It is part of the life narratives of their maternal great-uncle (Bla chen), their maternal grandfather (Snying byams), their mother (G.yang mtsho), G.yang mtsho's youngest daughter ('Brug mo), and 'Brug mo's second daughter (Lha mo).

Intrigued, we recorded accounts of the necklace, most of which were told by G.yang mtsho and her five children. 'Brug mo confided:

I often wear the necklace around my neck to nourish my skin. Occasionally, I wear it around my left wrist when praying and chanting. I have passed this [necklace] to my second daughter, Lha mo, my mother's reincarnation.

¹ Pu (1993:166).

² According to villagers, Snying byams died in the last year of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the same year his younger brother, Bla chen, returned home from prison.

BLA CHEN

Bla chen, recognized as the fourth reincarnation of Bla ma mtshan grags,¹ was born in 1918 in Dgon pa (Gongba) 'Temple' Village. His mother, Mtsho mo, gave him the necklace when he was seven years old when he went to Grwa tshang (Zhacang) 'Monk Family' Monastery.² Later, he was taken to 'Bras spungs (Zhebang) 'Rice Heap' Monastery.³

One cold morning in 1925, as thick snow fell, Mtsho mo was cooking breakfast when seven-year-old Bla chen said, "Mother, cook more. There'll be some guests."

"Oh, really!" replied Mtsho mo, who did as asked and prepared more food.

Bla chen urged his fourteen-year-old brother, Snying byams, to get up and clean the room. As soon as Snying byams finished cleaning, a frigid wind blew open the old squeaky wooden door. Three monks were dismounting in the yard.

The oldest monk gently walked to Bla chen, respectfully offered him a red cassock, and said, "My dear *bla ma*, it's time to return!"

Bla chen playfully put on the cassock and replied, "Yes, I know. Let's leave after breakfast."

His mother and brother had been regularly amazed by his foresight and humbly offered breakfast to the monk guests.

After breakfast, as Bla chen hugged his mother farewell, she took off her necklace and put it around his neck. Next, he hugged Snying byams and whispered, "Brother, be happy. We won't be able to see each other for a while, but we'll be together for a long time when it's time to return this necklace!"

Every day, Bla chen used the necklace as prayer beads for study and Buddhist practice.⁴ After some two decades, he was well-known in A mdo for his wisdom, compassion, and contributions to locals. He had many devotees; for example, in the autumn of 1938, a middle-aged Chinese merchant came to see Bla chen with his wife, who could not walk normally. The merchant reported that none of the many doctors they had consulted could diagnose or cure her illness. Bla chen kindly taught the couple a few Buddhist practices such as prostrations and mantra recitations. In less than a month, the merchant's wife had recovered. The merchant and his wife thanked Bla chen and offered many gifts, which Bla chen returned when the merchant and his wife were leaving. However, after they knelt on the floor and implored Bla chen to accept their gifts, he agreed and gave them to local villagers after the couple had left. Among the gifts, there was a white pearl that Bla chen tied to his mother's necklace.

Bla chen kept the necklace with the white pearl until his mother's death in 1948, the year before the founding of the People's Republic of China. According to local elders, Bla chen used the necklace to chant, pray, and divine during the seven days of his mother's funeral. Shortly after the funeral, he gave the necklace to Snying byams, saying that their mother would be reborn as Snying byams' daughter in about ten years at the start of a famine.

¹ According to villagers and Pu (1993:166-167), Mtshan grags and Bla chen were both born in Dgon pa Village. Mtshan grags was born in 1668 and Bla chen was born in 1918. They both were well-known spiritual advisors and teacher of *bla ma* in A mdo areas.

² Located in the upper north part of Dgon pa Village, it was the religious center of both Mo yag and Dgon pa villages in Khri ka County. Built in the 1420s, it was destroyed in 1867, rebuilt and expanded in the 1870s, destroyed again during the Cultural Revolution, and rebuilt in 1981 (Pu 1993:166-167).

³ The monastery was built by the Dge lugs Sect in 1416 at the foot of Mount Dge 'phel dbu rtse 'Virtue Increasing Peak' near Lha sa City. It was a political center with over 10,000 monks at its peak and one of the three great Dge lugs monasteries in Tibetan areas of China. 'Bras spungs resembles a huge pile of rice from a distance (Niu 2010:155-158).

⁴ Prayer beads are used to, e.g., count the number of prayers made and number of books read.

Bla chen's prediction came true. In 1958 at the beginning of the Great Leap Forward,¹ Snying byams had a daughter. In the following year, a big famine began. Hunger and starvation continued until the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

During this chaotic period, Grwa tshang Monastery was destroyed. Bla chen was imprisoned, criticized, forced to herd livestock, and urged to marry. He endured all criticisms and punishments, never scolded or fought back against others, and never abused the livestock he herded. Also, he did not break his monastic vows. In the words of a local, "He was the only local monk who upheld the Five Precepts² and remained unmarried in our village after the ten difficult years of the Cultural Revolution."

SNYING BYAMS

In 1948, Bla chen had given the necklace to Snying byams, whose wife, a decade later, delivered their fifth child, a daughter, G.yang mtsho. Although life was difficult, family members were delighted with the newborn baby, for they believed she was Mtsho mo reborn.

Snying byams wore the necklace under his upper clothing until the day of his death. When Snying byams played with baby G.yang mtsho or chanted with her sleeping in his arms, she smiled and giggled when Snying byams showed her the necklace.

In 1976, Bla chen was released from prison and returned home, delighting his family members, especially Snying byams and G.yang mtsho. Though G.yang mtsho had never met Bla chen, she behaved as though she knew him very well. G.yang mtsho's siblings commented that G.yang mtsho ran to Bla chen and kissed him the first time she saw him.

G.yang mtsho's siblings envied her for being favored by Bla chen and Snying byams, but they were also very good to her because they understood she was Bla chen and Snying byams' mother in her previous life.

On the day G.yang mtsho turned eighteen, the two brothers, Snying byams and Bla chen, went outside and sat cross-legged under the sun near the courtyard gate and chanted as usual. As G.yang mtsho walked by on her way to water the cows and donkeys, Snying byams spoke to her. Placing two wooden buckets of water on the ground, she bent forward. Snying byams joyfully announced, "My dear, you are now an adult, and I'm delighted to return your necklace!"

G.yang mtsho was overjoyed. She kissed her father's forehead, held the necklace in both hands, jumped around her father like a happy lamb, put the necklace around her neck and under her shirt, picked up the buckets, and continued with her chores.

Not long after watering the livestock, G.yang mtsho heard Bla chen calling her and other family members. Snying byams had passed away while sitting cross-legged, like an icon.

G.YANG MTSHO

After G.yang mtsho's mother passed away the following year, Bla chen took care of her. He taught G.yang mtsho to read and write Tibetan and chant many Buddhist mantras. In 1981, Grwa tshang

¹ Dayuejin 'The Great Leap Forward' was a movement of the extreme "left" line carried out by the Chinese Communist Party from 1958 to 1960 (Cheng 2013, Deng 2008, Zhu 2010). In 1959, the Three-Year Big Famine began, which resulted in the deaths of millions of people (Cao 2008, Li 2016).

² No killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and no intoxicants were essential for rebirth in human realms (Dawazhuoma 2014).

Monastery was rebuilt, and Bla chen was asked to care for the temple and work for the local government since he was highly literate and respected.

On a windy day in the spring of 1981, villagers and local government leaders came to G.yang mtsho's home to invite Bla chen to Grwa tshang Monastery. As Bla chen climbed into a green government jeep to leave, G.yang mtsho ran to him in tears and offered him the necklace. Bla chen gently stroked her head, saying, "Keep it. It'll bring you happiness," putting the necklace back around her neck, and whispered, "Give this to your mother. She'll rejoin you in the Year of the Dragon!"

Though G.yang mtsho didn't quite understand this, she was glad to learn she would be able to see her mother again.

During Dgun nyi rdog 'the Winter Solstice', G.yang mtsho gave birth to a child fathered by her lover, who lived twenty kilometers away in Ba lu (Wali) 'Rhododendron' Village. He visited her irregularly due to his family chores, poor road conditions, and lack of convenient transportation.

A month later, during the Lunar New Year, G.yang mtsho was tricked and taken to be Jo ri's¹ wife in Mo yag (Maoyihai) 'Beauty' Village,² far from her home and where she spent most of the rest of her life. In Mo yag Village, she gave birth to four more children. The youngest child, 'Brug mo, was born in the Dragon Year (1988), and G.yang mtsho then understood what her uncle had said years earlier.

According to 'Brug mo's elder sister, G.yang mtsho dreamed of her mother hugging her the night 'Brug mo was born. 'Brug mo's birth brought great joy to her parents, especially to G.yang mtsho, who believed 'Brug mo was her mother in her previous life.

In 1999, Jo ri passed away after a day of working in their wheat fields. G.yang mtsho explained that she had weeded the *tshod grwa*³ near the home while Jo ri sprayed wheat with paraquat⁴ near the Yellow River banks, about two kilometers from their home. As soon as Jo ri got home in the late evening, he was so hungry that he ate chunks of dried bread without changing his clothes or washing his hands. He passed away that night.

After Jo ri's death, G.yang mtsho's life became very difficult. Her three married children struggled over and eventually divided the family land, livestock, and money. G.yang mtsho refused to allow her elder sons to take 'Brug mo to their homes to care for their children. Most of the year, her elder sons and their wives left their homes for migrant work in Zi ling (Xining) and other urban areas. G.yang mtsho then looked after their children and did the herding, plowing, planting, irrigating, and harvesting work by herself and with 'Brug mo's help after school.

G.yang mtsho became ill from overwork, developed gastric cancer, lost half of her weight, and passed away in 2013. However, G.yang mtsho had been very happy in those years. 'Brug mo said:

We didn't have enough food and money, but we were happy. Mother often sang, danced, and chanted mantras, especially after supper when we both were on the *he rdzas* 'adobe bed platform'.

One sunny Sunday in 2007, I didn't have to go to school, so I helped herd our sheep in the mountains. Mother had a cold, and she had to irrigate the fields. As I was herding the sheep back home in the late afternoon, I got to where Mo yag Stream⁵ crossed the middle of our village and noticed a man following me. Sensing danger, I crept through the flock and started running. The man chased me. He was

¹ Jo ri was the eldest son of the last landlord (Mthun sgril rgyal) in Mo yag Village.

² Mo yag Village had seven families. The first landlord was Jo ri's paternal great-great-grandfather.

³ Enclosed by abode walls and often attached to or near the family yard, it was divided into small plots for vegetables, fruit trees, and flax.

⁴ A highly poisonous chemical used for grass and weed control.

⁵ The Tibetan name of the stream is Mo yag gram pa (Mo yag 'beauty' is also the village's name; *gram pa* 'stream'). The stream's water is from Glang klad (Langlei) 'Bull Skull' Valley and from Mgo rdo (Guoduo) 'Baldhead' Valley.

much faster than me. I knew he would soon catch me, so I rushed to the nearest home and into their household gate. Wrongly assuming the gate was unlocked, I bounced back and fell to the ground with a bleeding nose. I wiped away the blood with my dusty sleeves and crawled into a ditch underneath the family's orchard wall.

I didn't dare come out until I heard someone unlock the courtyard gate. It was sunset when I finally crept outside. The courtyard gate was open, and I heard the sounds of cooking. Feeling safe now and also hungry, I ran home. It was dark when I arrived. Mother was waiting. Weeping with joy that I'd made it back safely, Mother embraced me and said, "Dear, I was so worried about you! What happened?"

After I told her my story, she said, "I'm so sorry. I shouldn't let you herd sheep. There are many bad men like that ready to take advantage of older girls."

"It's OK. I'll be more careful next time. Let's go get our sheep."

"You're right! But let's have supper first. Maybe the sheep will come home by themselves."

After supper, we went outside, but we didn't find any sheep. I felt guilty for not taking better care of the sheep. When we got back inside our house, and on the *he sdzas*, Mother noticed I was not happy, so she made me laugh by singing and dancing. I was soon laughing because of her funny dance steps and songs. She sang, "I'll pray... pray with the most precious ivory necklace from my *bla ma*... wish all the lost sheep will be safe!"

The next day at dawn, trembling with fear, I woke up from a nightmare of that man chasing me. Mother was lying on her back, holding the necklace, and chanting. I knew that she couldn't sleep because of the lost sheep. I got up, put the basket patched with sheepskin on my back, and went out to fetch firewood for cooking. When I opened the gate, I saw all my family sheep lying on the threshing ground. I ran back and shouted enthusiastically, "Mother! The sheep are here! Your chanting is truly effective!"

Mother got out of bed, came outside, and together we counted the sheep. None were missing. We happily went back into the house and started cooking breakfast.

After breakfast, Mother put bread in my school bag for lunch. I kissed her forehead and said goodbye but, as soon as I had stepped out of the kitchen, I secretly put half of the bread near the kitchen window for Mother. We lacked flour, which often happened before harvest. Then I ran to school, which was about five kilometers away. When I walked, it took about an hour to get there.

I reached the school at about seven AM. No other students were in my classroom. I sat on my wobbly wooden stool with a cracked leg on the left side of the third row, put my bag in the desk, and started doing my homework. After a few minutes, other students began arriving and also worked on their homework. A half-hour later, I finished my homework and started reviewing for the first class.

Two boys whose parents worked in the local government office noticed I had finished the homework and dashed over to grab and copy it. One boy picked it up first, but before he reached his seat in the first row, the second boy snatched it from him and rushed to his seat, which was two rows behind me. The first boy furiously threw his ink bottle at the other boy, but it struck my face. Blood gushed from my nose and mouth.

Everyone in the classroom was astonished and soundlessly and fearfully gazed at me. In great pain, I wailed and fainted. When I regained consciousness, I was on a small cot in the township clinic near our school. A doctor was stitching my upper lip. I felt a lot of pain and wanted to get up, but my head, arms, and legs were strapped to the bed. My class teacher was tightly holding and comforting me.

After ten painful stitches, the doctor cleaned my face with cotton swabs soaked in alcohol and gave me an intravenous injection. Afterward, I felt better and walked home.

At dusk, Mother came home with the sheep. I ran to her and tearfully began telling her my story. She held my face in her hands, carefully examined my stitched upper lip, and hugged me tightly. She lamented, "Oh, *bla ma* [Bla chen]! What should I do? I asked 'Brug mo to live with me and attend school rather than caring for her brothers' children. Now, her beautiful face has been ruined at school!"

"Mother, it's not your fault! I wanted to be with you, and I'm delighted to be with you," I said.

She kissed my forehead and wiped away her tears. In the following weeks, she borrowed cash from neighbors to treat my wound in the county clinic. During this time, I also took the Gaokao 'National Level College Entrance Exam'.¹

After about two months, my lip had healed, and I also received a university admission letter, pleasing both Mother and me.

'BRUG MO

In 2006, 'Brug mo's relatives suggested that she marry after learning of her mother's poor health and difficult life. "Look at you! Weak and poor! Give 'Brug mo to a family and get a dowry for a better life."

G.yang mtsho was determined and declared, "I'll support her to attend school even if I have to sell everything, including my house!"

Luckily, 'Brug mo's high school English teacher visited her after she was injured. After registering her family's poverty, he said he would find someone to help her if she passed the college entrance exam.

In August 2007, G.yang mtsho sold all her sheep to meet 'Brug mo's school expenses. The next day, 'Brug mo's English teacher visited with his friend, Meimei,² from Tianjin. Meimei was astonished at the family's poverty and promised to pay 'Brug mo's college tuition for four years. With Meimei's help, 'Brug mo opened a bank account, and Meimei transferred the first-year tuition funds. After a few days, one of 'Brug mo's brothers noticed 'Brug mo's bank card and forcefully took it.

With G.yang mtsho's help, 'Brug mo retrieved the bank card, entered university, completed her BA study, and in July 2012 was awarded a high school English teaching certificate. In August, the next month, 'Brug mo passed the Tegang 'Special Post' examination for teachers³ and became an English teacher at 'Bras thang (Damitan) 'Rice Place' Town⁴ Primary School. During the winter holiday in 2013, 'Brug mo married, bought a pair of silver bracelets for her mother and brought her to live in Zi ling City.

G.yang mtsho's health dramatically improved after consulting doctors, taking medicine, and eating regularly. In March 2013, after two months of a comfortable life, her youngest son asked her to return to Mo yag Village to care for his second child. G.yang mtsho returned to live in her old, chilly house with her one-year-old grandson, doing endless family chores by herself.

The long distance between 'Brug mo's school and G.yang mtsho allowed her to visit only during holidays. During Qingming 'the Tomb-sweeping Festival' in April 2013, 'Brug mo visited G.yang mtsho and found her in poor health again. Concerned, 'Brug mo urged her to visit a hospital. G.yang mtsho refused with, "No need to waste money! Your youngest brother has already bought many precious Tibetan medicines!"

¹ Passing this examination at the end of the third year of senior high school is required for college/university admission. It began in 1952, was stopped during the Cultural Revolution, and restarted in 1977. The exam includes the subjects of Chinese, English, mathematics, arts (a combination of politics, history, and geography), and science (a combination of physics, chemistry and biology) tests (Wu 2007, Zhang 2017).

² Meimei studied at Tianjin International School. Her father was a businessman.

³ This program began in 2006 with the implementation of Chinese government policy targeting the lack of qualified teachers in rural areas. It aimed to reduce the gap between rural and urban education by creating special posts for teachers to meet the needs of compulsory education (Yi 2006).

⁴ At one time, rice was cultivated in this area where there was a relatively warm climate and abundant water from the Yellow River.

A month later, during the Wuyi 'Labor Day' holiday,¹ 'Brug mo again visited G.yang mtsho. Finding her health had deteriorated even further, she persuaded her to visit 'Qinghai Province People's Hospital'² where she was diagnosed with gastric cancer. After a month of hospitalization, G.yang mtsho insisted on returning to the village with, "I don't want to stay here... too many patients, too many deaths, and it's too expensive. I don't want to die here. I still have a home with my family deity and ancestors' souls in the village. I need to offer butter lamps and pray to them!"

In the early morning of the first day of October in the same year, 'Brug mo dreamed of her mother saying she was leaving. 'Brug mo woke up and anxiously phoned G.yang mtsho to find she was too weak to speak clearly. 'Brug mo and her husband rushed to the bus station with their one-month-old baby and reached the village in the late afternoon where, at the family home gate, they heard her eldest brother's chanting and drumming.

Inside the dilapidated house, they found G.yang mtsho lying on the adobe bed, surrounded by 'Brug mo's siblings. The eldest brother was chanting the *Mantra of Sgrol ma*³ while rhythmically ringing a vajra bell in his right hand and shaking a leather *Da ru* 'hand-drum' in his left hand. The other three elder brothers and the disabled stepbrother⁴ were smoking cigarettes made with tobacco wrapped in newspaper strips. The elder sister was washing 'brug *dkar* 'dragon-decorated' bowls. The three sisters-in-law were making *aka baozi* 'monk dumplings'.

'Brug mo huddled on the bed, holding her baby, and kissed G.yang mtsho's forehead. G.yang mtsho had lost much weight. She opened her eyes, looked at 'Brug mo and the baby, smiled, and gestured for 'Brug mo to sit by her.

After supper and the departure of 'Brug mo's siblings, G.yang mtsho asked 'Brug mo to remove the pillow⁵ beneath her head and take the necklace from around her neck. While holding G.yang mtsho in her arms, 'Brug mo carefully took the pillow and necklace and placed them on G.yang mtsho's chest. G.yang mtsho put the necklace around 'Brug mo's neck, pressed the pillow to 'Brug mo's chest, and whispered, "I'm so happy to have you. Keep these [pillow and necklace]. They're my life!"

'Brug mo nodded and kissed G.yang mtsho's hands with tears rolling down her cheeks. To make 'Brug mo happy, G.yang mtsho told a story of the necklace and then asked 'Brug mo to rest with her husband and baby in a bedroom adjacent to the *mchod khang* 'shrine room'.

Early the following day, G.yang mtsho passed away on the adobe bed but not before whispering to her eldest son, "I wish to be reborn in 'Brug mo's family."

After the funeral rituals that concluded seven days later, 'Brug mo's siblings argued over the family property, especially the land. They also forcefully took their mother's pillow from 'Brug mo, who had not checked its contents. 'Brug mo then left the village.

A few months later, during the Lunar New Year of 2014, 'Brug mo visited her siblings. Her elder sister secretly told her that a rusty metal pendant,⁶ eight one-*yuan* silver Yuan Datou 'Big Head

¹ A short form for Wuyi laodongjie 'May First Labor' Day', a national holiday in China. In 2013, it began on 28 April and ended on 2 May at 'Brug mo's school.

² According to locals, Qinghaisheng renmin yiyuan is one of the best hospitals in Mtsho sngon. See <https://baike.baidu.com/item/青海省人民医院/10712005?fr=aladdin> (accessed 21 October 2020) for more on this hospital.

³ The short name for one of the most popular Buddhist chants - "The Twenty-one Tara Mantra" - in Mo yag Village. According to locals and Huang (2015:31), it is often chanted for health and longevity.

⁴ His mother was Jo ri's first wife. His legs were paralyzed in childhood. G.yang mtsho (Jo ri's second wife) cared for him.

⁵ It was patched and probably had never been washed. According to Gyang mtsho's children, she kept her silver bracelets and coins in the pillow.

⁶ Most locals refer to it as *lo 'khor bcu gnyis* 'the twelve zodiac animals' because the front side features a mandala inside the zodiac cycle - rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and

of Yuan Shikai¹ coins, and a pair of silver bracelets were in their mother's pillow. Their eldest brother took them. 'Brug mo's elder sister also said that their eldest brother had given her a silver coin. She encouraged 'Brug mo to ask their eldest brother for coins. 'Brug mo thanked her elder sister and said, "No need. The coins should stay in our parents' home to bring better fortune."

On the last day of her visit, her elder brothers asked if their mother had given her an ivory-necklace. She said that she had and added, "I'll give it to the reincarnation of our mother!"

LHA MO

'Brug mo said, "Before Lha mo was born, I dreamed of Mother telling me that she was coming to stay with me."

One of 'Brug mo's nieces, living in Chab cha² (Qiabuqia) Town, said, "I dreamed of Grandmother just before Lha mo was born. She told me to visit her in Aunt 'Brug mo's home."

'Brug mo's eldest brother said Lha mo had their mother's birthmark - a brown thumb-size spot on her right leg.

On Lha mo's one-year birthday (16 November 2020), 'Brug mo put the necklace around Lha mo's neck and said, "Today you are a year old. This gift is for you. I hope you cherish it. It'll bring you good luck!"

Lha mo grabbed the necklace tightly with both hands, kissed it, smiled, giggled, and started biting it. She was believed to be the reincarnation of 'Brug mo's mother, G.yang mtsho.

pig. Other locals refer to it as *me long* 'mirror' because the reverse side is a mirror featuring *Aom*, the first letter of the Six Syllable Mantra.

¹ Imprinted with the head of Yuan Shikai (1859-1916), above which are six Chinese characters - *Zhonghua minguo sannian* 'the third year of the Republic of China' - in an arc. According to Xiong (2015:17-18), such coins were made in 1914, with each weighing 26.6 grams and valued at around 700 RMB in 2011.

² *Chab* 'water' and *cha* 'two' or 'pair'. A local villager suggested Chab cha means "Double River."

FIG 5. The ivory necklace (2017, Tshe dbang rdo rje).



FIG 6. The blue bag contains a white pearl (2017, Tshe dbang rdo rje).



FIG 7. The *lo 'khor bcu gnyis (me long)* from G.yang mtsho's pillow (2017, Tshe dbang rdo rje).



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TIBETAN TERMS

'bras spungs བསྐྱེད་སྤྱོད་

ba lu བ་ལུ་

'bras thang བསྐྱེད་ཐང་

bla chen བླ་ཆེན་

'brug dkar འབྲུག་དཀར་

bla ma བླ་མ་

'brug mo འབྲུག་མོ་

chab cha ཆམ་ཆམ་

'brug mo skyid འབྲུག་མོ་སྐྱིད་

Da ru ད་རུ་

a mdo ཨ་མདོ་

dge 'phel dbu rtse དགེ་ཤེས་དབུ་རུ་

oM ཨོཾ་

dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས་

MY PRECIOUS 100-YEAR-OLD TIBETAN TURQUOISE BEAD: A GIFT FROM MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

Mgon thar skyid མགོན་ཐར་སྐལ་ (Gongtaijie 贡太杰)*

ABSTRACT

I describe a turquoise bead purchased in about 1920 from a Muslim peddler and given to me in 1983 by my great-grandmother (Bde mtsho, 1904-1986) on the occasion of my third birthday. I also describe similar jewelry and their value to local herders in Yag mo (Yehemao) Village, Rkang tsha (Gangcha) County, Mtsho byang (Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China.

KEYWORDS

Tibetan hair-cutting ritual, Tibetan turquoise, Tibetan ornaments, protective amulets

MY LIFE, MY TURQUOISE

In 1981, I was born in a black yak-hair tent in Yag mo (Yehemao) Village, Rkang tsha (Gangcha) County, Mtsho byang Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. My maternal great-grandmother (Bde mtsho, 1904-1986) and my father (Dpal bzang, 1944-1992), who was a doctor, assisted my mother ('Ja' bho, b. 1944) at my birth.

I have two sisters (Lha kho, b. 1969, Klu mo tshe ring, b. 1977) and one brother ('Jigs gril rdo rje, b. 1972).

In 2006 when I was twenty-five-years old, Mother told me that my maternal great-grandmother had given me a turquoise bead during the Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year' period, the day that my third birthday was celebrated. *Ne'u ston* 'hair-cutting rituals for children' are held in my home community when a child observes their third Lo sar. Only a single braid was left when my hair was cut the first time. The turquoise bead was threaded onto a string and braided into my hair. My great-grandmother wished me an auspicious future of a long life, good health, and happiness with this gift.

FIG 1. In 1984, my great-grandmother gave me this turquoise bead.



*Mgon thar skyid (Gongtaijie). 2021. My Precious 100-year-old Tibetan Turquoise Bead: A Gift from my Great-Grandmother. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:223-226.

Mother and Lha kho said the turquoise bead was probably bought from a Muslim peddler more than one hundred years ago. Mother kept this turquoise for me until I married in 2010.

I am the only child in my family that married someone far from my home. My three siblings each brought a spouse to live in our home.

Mother gave me the turquoise bead as a symbol of the excellent relationship between my family and me. I greatly value this turquoise. It reminds me of who I am, where I am from, and our traditions and values. For these reasons, I have never considered selling it and never will. Not only is it an ornament, it also gives me spiritual support, protects me, and brings me good luck. I treasure it and keep it carefully.

Now I have a son (Kun dga' nor bu, b. 2012) who is my only child. If I have a daughter, I will give it to her at some point, or maybe I will give it to my future daughter-in-law, or perhaps to my son.

In 2018, I was shopping in Chab cha (Qiabuqia) Township for Tibetan-style jewelry and Tibetan robes. When I entered one shop, a shopkeeper noticed my turquoise, approached me, and asked how long I had had it and if I was willing to sell it. While replying that the turquoise was very important to me, I chose not to divulge its history.

Beads are usually considered ornaments for women - decorations for women, enhancing their beauty. Necklaces also can be seen as important symbols of value and a family's wealth. If a woman has many beads, her family is considered rich and of high social status. Two to three decades ago, the more necklaces you wore, the richer you were considered to be.

Nowadays, those ideas have changed due to rapid social changes and because more people have attended official schools. Many people think the simpler, the better, so wearing just one or two necklaces is considered appropriate. If a woman wears too many beads, some may ridicule her.

Many years ago, the materials for necklaces included authentic gems. There were few artificial or fake ones. Nowadays, many beads are made of synthetic materials that even, in some cases, may be detrimental to the health of the wearer. Nevertheless, some try to sell these as authentic for high prices.

Beads have also changed over the years. They were originally made by hand or by using simple machines. The shape of the beads was typically round or triangular. But in recent years, technology has been employed to create various shapes and styles.

In my home in Rkang tsha, mothers pass their beads to their daughters as dowries or traditional family gifts to their daughters-in-law. If there are several daughters, which is the case in my family (there are three), the necklaces are usually divided among them all. My oldest sister has more jewelry and ornaments in my family because she was the first to marry, and somehow the older one has more.

In a family, the wife has genuine ownership of the necklaces. In my home area, the local custom is that women usually wear necklaces and are the jewelry keepers.

My aunt has many valuable necklaces of *gzi* 'agate', and other beads. When my oldest sister was about six-years-old, she would go to my paternal aunt's home to play. Later, when my sister said she liked my aunt's beads, my aunt immediately let her choose one. My aunt's husband and other family members did not care if she gave a bead to others. Years later, we identified the piece she had chosen as a *gzi*, a costly ornament. My aunt had the power and authority at that time to do whatever she wanted with her ornaments and necklaces. She could exchange them with others or give them to others as she liked.

There are many beliefs that a necklace is a "condensed" valuable object, functioning as insurance in case misfortune befalls the owner or even a whole family. My mother said there is a saying that if there is one valuable necklace in the village or valley, it can protect all the villagers or even the people in the valley.

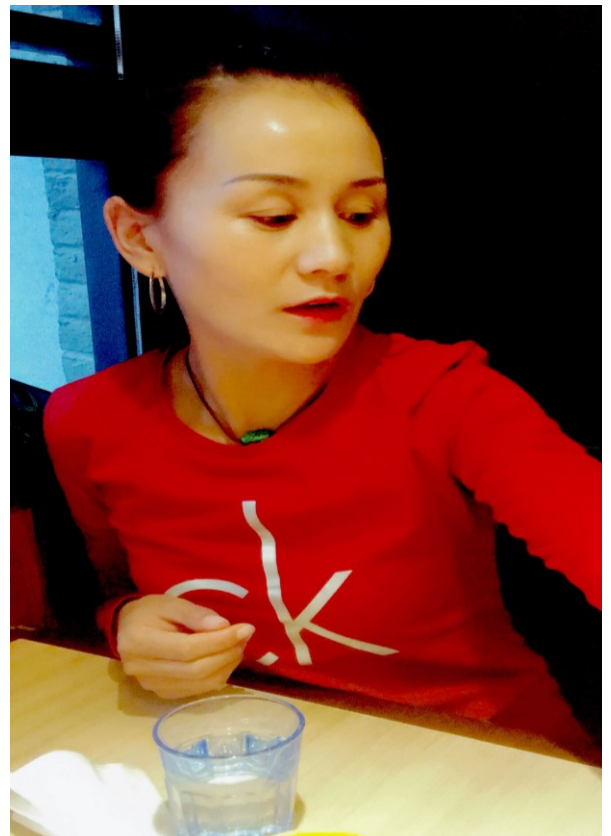
My oldest sister experienced this protection. In about 2003, she suffered from various illnesses, went to several hospitals, and had about five operations. She believes a *gzi* can draw poison. When she had her operations, the *gzi* lost brightness, and the white stripes became black because, my sister explained, of the surgical anesthetic. After the surgeries, when she had recovered, the *gzi* returned to its original black and white stripes and regained its brightness. My sister believed that the *gzi* protects her like an amulet.

I find it challenging to distinguish imitation beads from genuine ones. Even though they cannot explain to me very clearly, my mother and my oldest sister maintain that they can identify genuine beads based on holding and touching them (the authentic beads are heavier), biting (real beads are hard as stone), bright and authentic colors, and a special brightness in direct sunshine.

Apart from their quality and the materials, another difference between new and old necklaces is their value. Old beads are generally regarded as more valuable because the materials used are typically real, the workmanship is considered superior, and the old beads symbolize one's identity and cultural values. Today, anyone can purchase inexpensive imitation beads and necklaces, which is why they have lost their special meaning.

In summary, the old beads are more important because they have exceptional meanings that cannot be purchased for an ethnic group, a community, a family, between mothers and daughters, and special meanings between generations. An old necklace is a symbol of tradition and family bonds. Passing it from generation to generation communicates a precious relationship in that family and in that community. My bead is also special and precious, bringing me luck and happiness. In my heart, this turquoise is priceless.

FIGS 2 & 3. (L) I wear my turquoise at a Tibetan gathering and (R) at my home in Zi ling (Xining) City (2016, 2017; Pad ma gyal).



TIBETAN TERMS

'ja' bho འཇམ་ལྷོ།

'jigs gril rdo rje འཇིགས་གྲིལ་རྡོ་རྗེ།

bde mtsho བདེ་མཚོ།

chab cha ཆབ་ཇ།

dpal bzang དཔལ་བཟང་།

gzi གཟི།

klu mo tshe ring ལྷ་མོ་ཚེ་རིང་།

kun dga' nor bu ཀུན་དགའ་ནོར་བུ།

lha kho ལྷ་ཁོ།

mgon thar skyid མགོན་ཐར་སྐྱིད།

ne'u ston རེ་འུ་སྟོན།

mtsho byang མཚོ་བྱང་།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།

pad ma gyal པད་མ་རྒྱལ།

rkang tsha རྟང་ཇ།

yag mo ཡག་མོ།

zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།

CHINESE TERMS

Gangcha 刚察

Gongtaijie 贡太杰

Haibei 海北

Qiabuqia 恰卜恰

Qinghai 青海

Xining 西宁

Yehamao 冶合茂

LHA SGRON (B. 1946): A TIBETAN ELDER REFLECTS ON ORNAMENTS AND LIFE

Rdo rje dpal 'byor རྡོ་རྗེ་དཔལ་བློ་བྲོ་ (Duoji huanjiao 多吉环角)*

ABSTRACT

My paternal grandmother, Lha sgron (b. 1946), was a herder for most of her life. A dedicated Buddhist, she became a nun in 2012. In the summer of 2020, I interviewed her in Bon skor (Wangshenke) Community, Bya mdo (Shagou) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. Bon skor is an agro-pastoral Tibetan community in A mdo, located about 190 kilometers (three hours by bus) from Zi ling (Xining) City, the capital of Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province.

KEYWORDS

Amdo Tibetan women, Plateau women biography, Mang ra (Guinan)

LHA SGRON

I was born in Bon skor in 1946. It is a herding area. We moved seasonally between our summer and winter pastures with our livestock, black yak-hair tents, and other belongings. My family had sheep, goats, cows, horses, and camels, but there were no yaks in my community. We loaded the black tent and our other belongings on several camels. Camels were our most important pack animals.

I belonged to the Dpon tshang 'leader's family' Tribe. My uncle was our community leader who had inherited leadership after his father's death and rarely stayed at home. His leadership duties meant he needed to go to the county town and other places.

I called my uncle's wife "mother" from the time I could talk. She delivered a baby before I was born, who, unfortunately, passed away when she was a toddler. She had no more children. She was very kind, loved me like her own child, and raised me. So, I had two mothers. We lived in one family and had a wonderful, happy life.

My father's chanting was valued, so he often chanted in other homes. We were respected since my uncle was the local leader. We had no shortage of food and clothing.

My family had many valuable adornments, such as necklaces and ornaments with coral, turquoise, and silver. I don't like the fake coral and silver that I see now.

Social chaos in 1958 dramatically changed my family's condition. We had poor food, housing, and clothing. My father was imprisoned and died there. My uncle was also imprisoned. He was allowed to return home after a few months. However, he became ill and passed away soon afterward when he was thirty-seven.

In 1960, my uncle's wife returned to her parents' home in Stong skor Community near our community. On the way, she encountered people who were mistreating the local political and religious leaders, as well as people who had been wealthy in other tribes. Since she was a leader's wife, she was detained, beaten, and killed. All of her necklaces, bracelets, and hair ornaments were confiscated.

When I was little, I had many ornaments, including necklaces given by both of my mothers. I got some coral from the middle of the *smar gdan* 'hair ornament' of my uncle's wife (whom I call mother) and some coral and turquoise from my biological mother's necklace. I lost most of my turquoise when I played with other children as we chased and pulled each other.

*Rdo rje dpal 'byor (Duoji huanjiao). 2021. Lha sgron (b. 1946): A Tibetan Elder Reflects on Ornaments and Life. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:227-230.

At that time, every woman wore her ornaments every day, including little girls. Women attach great importance to their adornments. I also wore my necklace almost every day, and I treasured it since it was a gift from my two beloved mothers.

I married when I was nineteen. When I left my home, I left my silver adornments, but I did take the coral necklaces that my two mothers gave me. My husband's family bought additional coral and silver ornaments from Muslim merchants for me.

I have five daughters and two sons. All my daughters left home at around seventeen or eighteen to live with their husbands, whose families bought adornments and clothes for them. I didn't give them ornaments. We were not responsible for purchasing adornments for them.

After my older son married, I stopped wearing ornaments. I gave my necklace to my son's wife, as she was now the housewife of our family. I also gave most of the family responsibility to my son and daughter-in-law.

I never planned to sell the coral necklace given to me by my two mothers. I regard it as a family heritage. When I was young, I liked wearing necklaces and ornaments. I thought precious adornments were important and necessary. I was excited to wear a Tibetan robe and put on a necklace, bracelet, and hair ornaments. When I met others, they would typically say, "You are so beautiful! Your necklace is wonderful!" which delighted me.

As I got older, my interest in wearing ornaments gradually faded, and my ideas about adornments also changed. I now have little interest. Ornaments are meaningless. Everything is impermanent. I encountered a lot during my life journey. I tragically lost beloved family members. The period of chaos transformed and destroyed my happy life.

I have spent most of my life rearing children and herding. Even though life was very tough, I never gave up because of my children and family. I had to make a living and raise all my children.

After my sons married, I no longer had much family responsibility, so I focused on religious chanting, circumambulation of holy sites, and prostration. Tibetan Buddhism is the most important thing for me. I considered becoming a nun and, after my family members agreed, I became a nun at Tho le Monastery¹ in 2012.

Every day, I pray to Buddha, chant scriptures, and meditate, which helps me eliminate hatred, desire, and other negative things in my mind. Buddhism is not only good for your present life and the afterlife. It also helps you accumulate merit and diminishes your past sins.

When I recall the difficulties I have experienced, I have no desire for rich material life. When I see beautiful women wearing fancy clothes and adornments, I have no feeling of admiration. They are impermanent and meaningless. Buddhism is the most important thing for me.

¹ Mtho las Monastery (Mtho las dgon nam rgyal phun tshogs chos rdzong gling) was originally located in the Mtho las area near the Yellow River, in the northwest of Mang ra County, thirty-nine kilometers from the County Town. Founded by Dge 'dun bstan pa dar rgyas in 1916, it was a branch monastery of La mo bde chen Monastery. In 1984, the monastery was relocated to the northwest of the contemporary Mang ra Township due to the construction of Longyang Gorge. Currently, the monastery has thirty-four monks and one incarnation *bla ma* (Nian and Bai 1993:201). Mtsho sngon zhing chen srid gzhung dra ba reports Mtho las practices the Dge lugs tradition and that it was founded in 1878. A photo of the monastery is available at <https://bit.ly/2K3hpch> (accessed 12 January 2021).

Lha sgron (2021, Zi ling (Xining), Rdo rje dpal 'byor).



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TIBETAN TERMS

bla ma བླ་མ།

bon skor བོན་སྐོར།

bya mdo བྱ་མདོ།

dge 'dun bstan pa dar rgyas དགེ་འདུན་བསྐྱེད་པ་དར་རྒྱས།

dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས།

dpon tshang དཔོན་ཅང་།

la mo bde chen ལ་མོ་བདེ་ཆེན།

lha sgron ལྷ་སྒྲོན།

mang ra མང་ར།

mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒྲོན།

mtho las མཐོ་ལས།

mtho las dgon rnam rgyal phun tshogs chos rdzong gling མཐོ་ལས་དགོན་རྒྱལ་ཕུན་ཚོགས་ཆོས་རྫོང་གླིང་།

rdo rje dpal 'byor རྡོ་རྗེ་དཔལ་འབྱོར།

smar gdan སྐར་གདན།

snying lcags rgyal སྟིང་ལཱ་གས་རྒྱལ།

stong skor སྟོང་སྐོར།

zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།

CHINESE TERMS

Duojihuanjiao 多吉环角

Guinan 贵南

Hainan 海南

Longyang 龙羊

Qinghai 青海

Shagou 沙沟

Wangshenke 汪什科

Xining 西宁

TSHE RING MTSHO'S (b. 1920) FLIGHT FROM MGO LOG (GUOLUO) IN THE 1930S

Pad ma don grub བད་མ་དོན་གུབ། (Wanmadongzhi 完么东智) Minzu University of China*

ABSTRACT

Tshe ring mtsho (b. 1920) was thirteen years old in what is today's Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province when she was forced to flee because of an invasion by a Muslim warlord. After walking nearly one thousand kilometers, Tshe ring mtsho eventually reached Zho 'ong (Shuangpeng) Village, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon, married, and had a son.

KEYWORDS

Golok women lives, Ma family, Mgo log, Tibetan women's lives, Qinghai history

INTRODUCTION

Tshe ring mtsho was born in the modern-day Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China in 1920.¹ Ma Qi (1869-1931) and Ma Lin² (1873-1945), members of a prominent Muslim Ma family in northwest China, exercised violent control over the inhabitants. They destroyed numerous Buddhist monasteries and carried out seven genocidal expeditions into the Mgo log region, killing thousands of Tibetans (Uradyn:2002).

I, Pad ma don grub (1994), from Zho 'ong (Shuangpeng) Village Reb gong (Tongren) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China, interviewed Tshe ring mtsho in the summer holidays of 2015 and 2017 in Zho 'ong Village. I did not record the conversation, nor did I take photos and notes because I did not want to upset Tshe ring mtsho. Once I was back home, I immediately wrote out what she had told me.

Tshe ring mtsho was reluctant to mention people who had passed away the first time we spoke, but she told me more after visiting her three times in 2017.

The sky was clear, there was a gentle breeze, and birds were chirping in trees one summer afternoon in 2017. Tshe ring mtsho was ninety-seven. I walked through the small village where she lived. A little boy took twenty RMB from her, his great-grandmother, and raced off to school. Suddenly, Tshe ring mtsho shouted, "Give me that money, or I'll tell your father! He'll punish you!"

I had last seen her in 2015. She had noticeably aged and now walked with a cane, was bent at the waist, used one hand to thump her waist from time to time, and had a persistent cough. She had more wrinkles and more white hair, which was short and resembled a layer of frost. Her large eyes were deeply sunken.

She did not want her nine-year-old great-grandson to be punished. Tshe ring mtsho had intended to give him two RMB of pocket money but had mistakenly given him twenty RMB. After

*Pad ma don grub (Wanmadongzhi). 2021. Tshe ring mtsho's (b. 1920) Flight from Mgo log (Guoluo) in the 1930s. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:231-235.

¹ Traditional Tibetans are aware of the zodiac year of their birth. She was born in the Year of the Monkey in 1920.

² Ma Qi and Ma Lin were brothers and sent troops to suppress Tibetans in Mgo log where they established a garrison in the 1921-1935 period (Danzhu Angben 2003:496).

explaining to the boy why she wanted him to return the twenty RMB, he ignored her and ran off. Tshe ring mtsho sat on her house doorstep, her prayer beads in her right hand, and chanted *oM ma Ni pad+me hUM*.³

When I got near her, she slowly approached me, thinking that I was her great-grandson. I cautiously greeted, "How have you been?"

"I'm fine. Who are you?" she gently inquired.

"I'm Sgrol ma's son," I answered.

She gasped, "Oh! Sgrol ma?"

"Yes! Do you remember you lived in the tent next to my mother's many years ago? "

She then recognized me. I had visited her two years earlier after my mother had often mentioned that Tshe ring mtsho had many stories. My impression was that she was a very strong, brave woman.

"Why did you come to see me? Did your mother tell you to come?" Tshe ring mtsho asked.

"No, but she told me about you. Today, I came to see how you were doing and also to hear your stories," I said.

Tshe ring mtsho said, "What can an old woman who has never been to school tell you? I can't even properly organize my thoughts these days."

"Please just tell whatever you remember about the past," I encouraged.

She invited me to her large house in a courtyard with a pear tree in the middle of a garden. Tshe ring mtsho enjoyed raising zinnias, lilacs, red peonies, and roses, which were in bright, colorful bloom. The wood house featured window frames and architraves artistically carved into the shapes of the Eight Auspicious Symbols.⁴ I helped her bring two chairs to the sunny balcony, where we sat.

"If you really want me to tell my story, you'll probably want to know where I was born, about my childhood, and the suffering we experienced. But, frankly speaking, I don't want to talk about such things."

"Why?" I asked.

"Many people have passed away. I will be sad to mention their names."

I felt uncomfortable encouraging her to talk about the past, but she continued:

My name is Tshe ring mtsho. I am from Mgo log, in the mountain range of noble A myes rma chen,⁵ whose snow-capped peak I could see on a clear day. I was born in A skyong gong ma.⁶ More than seventy years have passed since I fled my native hometown. I am an old woman now.

It was a wonderful time of life in A skyong gong ma 'Joyous Grassland' that was as rich and beautiful as a heavenly palace and full of people, wealth, and brilliant wildflower blossoms. My parents herded, and we lived a prosperous life. All tribal families shared a grassland for herding for a few short months before the families moved to other pastures. The tents were far from each other, and it was not easy to communicate with each other.

I had two brothers and a younger sister. My mother told me that I was born in the Year of the Monkey. My older brother was seven years older than me, and my elder brother was five years older. When my parents went up the mountains to herd, my brothers stayed at home to care for my sister, who was two

³ The six-syllable mantra of Avalokiteśvara.

⁴ "The eight auspicious Buddhist symbols (Tib. bkra shis rtags bgyad) consist of: a parasol, a pair of golden fishes, a treasure vase, a lotus, a white right-spiraling conch shell, an endless knot, a banner of victory, and a golden wheel. Originally these formed a grouping of early Indian symbols of royalty which were presented at such ceremonies as the investiture or coronation of a king" (Beer 1999:171).

⁵ A much-visited pilgrim site that many A mdo Tibetans refer to as the soul mountain of snowy Tibet.

⁶ Today's A skyong gong ma (Shang gongma) Township, Dga' bde (Gande) County, Mgo log Prefecture.

years younger than me, and me. Because she was the youngest child, my family loved her very much. Our family lived very happily.

Unfortunately, when she began to walk and talk, she became ill, and her condition worsened. We could only consult *bla ma* and *sngags pa* 'lay tantric practitioners' for medical treatment. My father took her on horseback to find a Tantric practitioner who knew medicine. He gave them some Tibetan medicine, they returned home, and my sister began to improve.

Very soon, from what I heard, more than 7,000 people were killed in one day in the whole region. That day was the most painful experience of my life. I saw corpses of old people and children everywhere. Many of the monasteries were destroyed, along with Buddhist scriptures and Buddha images. The situation got worse, with many women and children detained. Young, beautiful women were raped, and older men were violently beaten and insulted. More taxes were levied. This situation caused many to flee without any food. Many died from hunger and cold as they escaped.

It was a dark day in the spring of The Year of the Sheep (1933). The mountains were still covered with snow, and the grass had pushed up from the earth. The glaciers were melting. One night, Ma Lin sent his troops to search A skyong gong ma brutally. He arrested all the men in our tribe and beat and interrogated them to learn more about those opposing him. Women were shut in a cowshed.

My mother cleverly hid us under a pile of dry yak dung in a place where the yaks were kept. They searched our tent for a long time, looking for our coral necklaces, gold and silver rings, and other ornaments, but they did not find us. To prevent them from searching, my mother presented herself, and the soldiers left with her. Late in the morning, she was released and had suffered because she lacked spirit, and bruises covered her face.

From what my mother said, the soldiers had killed many women because they had opposed the enemy. It was like a dark dream. We began our escape. On the way, when we made a fire and tried to heat water, we heard the sounds of gunfire before the water boiled. Soldiers were chasing people, so we could not eat anything hot during the day and only heat water at night. We scrimped and saved food because we could not carry much with us.

We lived like wild animals. While escaping, some people hid beneath a glacier to escape from soldiers who shot at the glacier. Some were injured, and some died. After the hateful soldiers had left, I repeatedly shouted for my mother, brothers, and sister, but they did not respond, so I fled with an older woman who was ill.

After almost four months of flight, we were out of Mgo log, and the soldiers stopped pursuing us. We did not have enough food. We followed a very long mountain range for many days and then came to a vast grassland. It was as beautiful as our previous hometown. Various wild animals lived there. Fortunately, we were able to dig *gro ma*¹ 'wild yams' for something to eat.

When I reached Zho 'ong Village, I was thirteen-years-old and immediately began to work for others. When I was eighteen, I married a kind man in Zho 'ong Village, where about 150 families lived, nestled in the mountains. Our home was in the middle of the village with two courtyards. One courtyard had a garden where we grew flowers. From the roof of the house, we could see mountains and forests.

There were several rooms in the house yard. My husband and I shared a bedroom and ate in the adjacent kitchen. The stove there kept us warm, especially during winter. The house also had a big guest room. The rooms were connected and had doors out to the courtyard. We kept livestock in a big room in one courtyard.

We cultivated wheat, broad beans, barley, oats, and potatoes, which grew very well. People didn't know how to grow much else. No one left the village to work outside. Our breakfast was *rtsam pa* with milk tea. Lunch and supper were noodles. Sometimes, we also ate mutton and beef.

¹ *Potentilla anserina* L., 'wild yams'.

My husband herded sheep, and my son helped me cook and tend the fields. We had over one hundred sheep and a few milk yaks. We were among the most prosperous village families. We lived a happy life.

In 1949, when my son was just six-years-old, my husband became seriously ill and lay in bed for a few months, hardly eating at all. There were no doctors or hospitals. Death was a constant worry. My husband died and, a few years later, my mother-in-law also passed away. My life was then incredibly difficult.

Several village men wanted to marry me, Some people advised me to remarry, but I did not. I was not yet thirty, and I could have remarried, but for the sake of my son and my true love for my dead husband, I refused. As a result, I was teased and insulted in the village, but my son gave me the courage to get through the hard times. I put all my hopes in him.

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TIBETAN TERMS

a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

a myes rma chen ཨ་མེས་རྣ་ཆེན།

a skyong gong ma ཨ་སྐྱོང་གོང་མ།

Avalokiteśvara, spyan ras gzigs སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས།

bkra shis rtags brgyad བརྒྱ་པོའི་རྟགས་བརྒྱད།

bla ma བླ་མ།

dga' bde དགའ་བདེ།

gro ma གྲོ་མ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།

oM ma Ni pad+me hUM ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པདྨེ་ཧཱུྃ།

Pad ma don grub པད་མ་དོན་གྲུབ།

reb gong རེབ་གོང།

rma lho རྣ་ལྷོ།

rtsam pa རྩ་མ་པ།

sgrol ma སྐྱོལ་མ།

sngags pa སྐྱགས་པ།

tshe ring mtsho ཆེ་རིང་མཚོ།

zho 'ong ཞོ་འོང།

CHINESE TERMS

Avalokiteśvara, Guan shiyin pusa 观世音菩萨

Gande 甘德

Guoluo 果洛

Huangnan 黄南

Ma Bufang 马步芳

Ma Lin 马麟

Ma Qi 马麒

Minzu 民族

Qinghai 青海

RMB 人民币

Shang gongma 上贡麻

Shuangpeng 双朋

Tongren 同仁

Wanmadongzhi 完么东智

TRAVEL

A MDO TIBETAN HERDERS TRAVEL TO THAILAND, SINGAPORE, AND MALAYSIA FOR TWELVE DAYS (2016)

Rdo rje dpal 'byor རྡོ་རྗེ་དཔལ་བློ་བཟླ་ (Duoji huanjiao 多吉环角)*

ABSTRACT

Nineteen Tibetans from Bon skor (Wangshenke) Community, Bya mdo (Shagou) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and four Chinese from Ping'an County, Haidong City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China traveled to Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia encountering new culinary experiences, customs, religious sites and activities, tourist resorts, and cultural differences.

KEYWORDS

A mdo Tibetan travel, Southeast Asian travel, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Tibetan international travel

INTRODUCTION

In early January 2016, I was at home, having just left my university in Beijing, where I had drifted aimlessly for one semester. I had majored in Air Service, destined to be a flight attendant after graduation. Every day, I was required to learn how to make-up, dress well, and engage in various physical exercises to maintain an attractive figure. I also had etiquette courses. English sessions related to airplane broadcasting were provided, but students rarely focused. Most were from wealthy families and had no worries about money. They were simply immersed in a comfort zone with no particular purpose in life. In a big hall, a teacher lectured to hundreds of students sitting in steep rows. Only a few concentrated while others slept, chatted, or busied themselves with their cellphones. This was our boring, tedious, and meaningless routine. It was not what I wanted, so I dropped out of school with my family's approval.

After a few days at home, my father said, "Good news! We're going to travel to Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore!"

One of Father's Chinese friends had told him about an opportunity to travel abroad. He then informed some local people, who agreed to go. While other travel destination options, such as Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, were available, the decision was made to go to Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore because we could visit three countries relatively inexpensively.

Hardly able to believe this, I was exhilarated! It was my first time traveling abroad.

Though Father had never attended a formal school, he had taught himself written Tibetan and is fluent in the Qinghai Chinese dialect. He has been, and in some cases, still is a herdsman, farmer, driver, businessman, and community leader. Father loves our family and often takes us to travel and on pilgrimage, but we had never been abroad.

Twenty-three people (sixteen men, seven women) were on the twelve-day journey, including my parents and me. We were all from Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. I was nineteen and the youngest. Except for four Chinese from Ping'an County, Haidong City, the rest of us were Tibetans from Bon skor (Wangshenke) Community, Bya mdo (Shagou) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. The average tour member was about fifty years

* Rdo rje dpal 'byor (Duoji huanjiao). 2021. A mdo Tibetan Herders Travel to Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia for Twelve Days (2016). *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:237-250.

old, illiterate in Chinese (except for the Chinese), and a herder or farmer. It was a thrill for all of us to travel abroad.

Younger people are eager to travel, but their family's economic conditions restrict them, so any opportunity that arose usually went to their parents and grandparents.

A travel agency was in charge of all trip arrangements, including passports, visas, hotels, meals, and flight tickets. Each person was required to pay 6,200RMB.

We were instructed to pack summer and winter clothes, given the weather difference between Southeast Asian countries and Mtsho sngon. My parents also packed *rtsam pa* 'barley flour with butter and cheese', cooked mutton, and fried bread to be on the safe side.

STARTING OFF

Our expedition began one chilly morning when we left our community for Zi ling (Xining, the capital city of Mtsho sngon Province) as a group in several cars.

That afternoon, all the tour members assembled in the travel agency office. A staff member stepped out to welcome us when we reached the office threshold and offered us each a cup of water. Our Chinese companions had already arrived. Most of the Tibetan travelers wore Tibetan robes. A few minutes later, a young Chinese woman appeared with a document under her left arm, introduced herself as our tour guide, recited detailed regulations, and described the trip. She spoke only Mandarin, which was an issue for the Tibetan elders who understood no Chinese and had had almost no interaction with Chinese people.

Consequently, I was asked to translate to Tibetan, though most group members were not listening. The room brimmed with chatting. When we were required to fill out forms in Chinese, I assisted our Tibetan members.

A coach soon arrived. We loaded our luggage and set off for Caojiabao Airport, which we reached two hours before our flight took off. I helped the tour guide take all the flight tickets from the ticket-dispensing machine and check in our luggage. Earlier, she had given specific instructions on what was prohibited when checking in and what could not be in carry-on items. The only problem that emerged was overweight luggage for two travelers whose families had packed a lot of food - homemade bread, cooked meat, barley flour, and so forth - in case the elders would be unaccustomed to the food in foreign countries.

Next, everyone passed through the security check. The inspectors told us to remove our shoes and socks. Certain security personnel had a cold attitude and slowed our process, maybe because we were wearing Tibetan robes. A man aggressively ordered us to take our items swiftly from containers that passed through the scanners. All of the group got through except for Rgya mtsho, a middle-aged man.

"Open your bag!" ordered a young male inspector, who dug out a bottle of shampoo, a tube of hair oil, and a little knife and informed one of our members that they were prohibited items.

"Don't worry, the knife is for eating meat," boomed Rgya mtsho, who speaks loudly by nature and is gifted at making jokes. "Why can't I take them with me? I need them," said Rgya mtsho in Qinghai Chinese dialect, but he had to discard them.

We next headed toward the boarding gate, and I escorted some elders to the toilet. Later, as I sat with my mother in a waiting room, an elderly woman sitting beside me confided nervously, "I've never been on a plane. I'm a bit afraid."

"Don't worry, it will be fun," I comforted.

There were no vacant seats in the waiting room. All the men were standing and chatting and even laughing.

We soon started to line up at the boarding gate, and before long, the plane took off. One and a half hours later, we reached Xi'an at dusk. We gathered at the baggage claim zone, where our tour guide waved a flag. Everyone took their luggage to a coach that was waiting for us at the terminal gate. We boarded and went to a hotel where two people shared a double room. I shared a room with the tour guide.

Father proclaimed enthusiastically, "Shaanxi noodles are famous, so let's eat out!"

We then went to a Shaanxi noodle restaurant near the hotel and ate noodles (*youpomian*). Mother complained, "It's better to eat barley flour and bread. These noodles are so spicy they'll make me sick."

The next morning, we embarked on an early flight to Thailand. This time no one had trouble during the security check. I saw the elders enjoying the views outside the plane windows, including the woman worried about flying.

"Nowadays, everything is so convenient. People born in this century are so lucky! We are traveling from one country to another, Unbelievable!" said an old man fingering a string of prayer beads.

Throughout the flight, the time and distance we had flown were regularly announced. After five hours, a flight attendant informed us that the plane was descending in preparation for landing. I peered out the plane window and saw the landscape of verdant trees and lawns, as well as the sparkling golden temples of Bangkok. "Why are there such huge differences between this country and mine? We are geographically very near, so why are the climates so different?" I puzzled.

I had come from a place where it was winter and snowing, and everything was ashy, but here, in Bangkok, it was summer, and everywhere was green.

BANGKOK ARRIVAL

As we landed safe and sound, the flight attendant reported it was around forty degrees Celsius outside.

People from all over the world were at the airport. It seemed as though we had come to another planet. We were astonished to see Muslim women covered from head to toe in long black dresses and black veils. They were peering out from eye holes in complete veils. They were different from Muslim women in China, which does not have such strict clothing rules.

We changed RMB to Baht at the airport. One RMB was five Baht. Everybody was thrilled to use foreign money for the first time. The weather was hot and humid. I was sweating and found it hard to breathe.

Later, a Thai woman, in her thirties with long dark hair and big eyes with double eyelids, approached us and warmly announced, "Welcome to Thailand!" in Mandarin before leading us to a big blue tourist bus with a black driver.

I was astonished that the driver's seat was on the right instead of the bus' left side. When we boarded, the driver smiled at us. When some of our tour members said, "Hello!" the only English they knew, he smiled and nodded in greeting.

The air-conditioned bus was cool and comfortable. On the way to our hotel, our Thai tour guide taught us a Thai greeting, "*Sah wah dee kha*," to which we all repeated, "*Sah wah dee kha*" excitedly, including the men and women in their sixties.

We saw people wearing light clothes, shorts, T-shirts, skirts, and sandals. We had been told to wear thin clothes, but most of us wore long-sleeved shirts and pants, which were too hot in Bangkok. Tibetan elders are unaccustomed to wearing shorts in public.

We reached a hotel located in a big compound with a fountain, lawn, and trees and were immediately offered a buffet supper at the hotel restaurant. I thought there would be Thai food, but there were only Chinese dishes. After dinner, we all went shopping near the hotel. All writing was in Thai, which I thought resembled the Arabic on Muslim restaurant signs in China. We communicated with shopkeepers through gestures. We met our fellow Tibetans in a clothing shop where we bought T-shirts and shorts. The clothes were very colorful with various patterns, including elephants, the national symbol of Thailand. We wanted to talk with the local people, but language was a barrier.

Later that evening, everyone was asked to tip five Baht for the hotel attendant who would clean the room after we left the next day.

In the morning, as I was leaving the room, I met a young female hotel attendant in the corridor, who greeted, "*Sah wah dee kha*," while joining her palms in front of her chest and lowering her head.

I said, "*Sah wah dee kha*," shyly, without bowing.

On the third day, we visited the Royal Throne Hall Museum, with magnificent architecture. We were all fascinated by the Museum's stunning grounds with its green lawns and vibrant flowers, so we busily took selfies and group photos.

The building's interior and exterior designs were both splendid. The Thai monarchy's history was featured in paintings, images, and artistic work in gold and silver. Sculpted images and illustrations were on every wall and ceiling. Soldiers stood in every corner of the courtyard. Royal places in Thailand have a strict dress code requiring women to wear skirts instead of shorts when visiting.

Though particular designated places were luxurious, some parts of the city appeared old, run-down, and chaotic.

Transportation in Bangkok included buses, taxis, motorcycles, and tuk-tuk 'auto-rickshaws'. Most coaches in Thailand were double-deckers with colorful rainbow-like paintings and decorations.

Every several kilometers on the streets were Portraits of both the King and Queen of Thailand. "The King of Thailand is a good man because he has had only one wife. Most Thai men have more than one wife," our tour guide informed us.

There are thousands of Buddhist Temples in Thailand. Thai men are expected to join monastic life at least once in their life, to show gratitude to their parents. I was shocked that many men could be temporary monks, which differs from Tibetan Buddhist monks.

We dined at a buffet restaurant on the eightieth floor of the Baiyoke Tower, the tallest building in Bangkok, where we could view all of Bangkok. An older woman with acrophobia was scared of standing by the window while others enthusiastically took photos while enjoying the majestic views. Everyone was happy with the abundant food choices in that restaurant, including Chinese dishes, Japanese sushi, and various seafood. Tibetans in my home community don't eat seafood, but Rgyal mtsho held a plate with a big crab and said, "Let's spoil ourselves and not miss this golden chance."

Some elders looked at him disappointedly. Local Tibetans think that eating seafood is more sinful than eating mutton or yak meat.

A woman PRtAimed, "There was diced fruit near my seat a moment ago. I liked it, but it's not here now. Weird!"

Finally, we found it on the other side and realized that the seats were revolving.

"How ridiculous!" she said.

It was dark when we finished eating. The luminous cityscape, the orange glow of lamps, and vehicle lights made the streets sparkle. Streets were straight and winding, stretching in every direction among the tall buildings enveloped in smog in this crowded, noisy, modern metropolis.

On the fourth day, we visited the Grand Palace at Bangkok's heart, along with a multitude of other tourists. The distinctive design of the palace, temples, and stupas impressed with a dazzling golden brightness. We were required to remove our shoes before entering a temple housing a large

Buddha image. Many visitors knelt with their palms joined in worshipping the Buddha image. We did the same.

In the afternoon, we boarded a ship for a river cruise, along with a lot of Chinese tourists. Soon we were offered a meal. Spaghetti, pizza, and Chinese dishes were laid out on tables in the center of the ship, and people pushed and squeezed around them. Thai singers performed Chinese songs instead of Thai songs, perhaps because the majority of tourists were Chinese. Later, they chose singers from the audience, including a young fellow Tibetan who loves singing. He performed a Tibetan folk song. We enjoyed the beautiful scenery and sunset as the ship glided down the river.

When the river cruise ended, we boarded a bus to an auditorium to watch transgender performers dressed in gowns with adornments such as hairpins with white feathers and sparkling golden necklaces. They danced in line with different props, such as fans and pieces of cloth. They resembled female demons in the TV show *Journey to the West* who dance to seduce Monk Tangseng while he is searching for Buddhist scriptures to bring back to China.

In the end, a muscular woman came into the audience, pulled a man to the stage, and made him sit on a chair. Other women tied him up, wrapped a strip of cloth around his eyes, slapped his face, and otherwise toyed with him.

Later, when the woman came into the audience again, I was so scared that I jumped out of my seat and ran away in fear she would grab me. I had enjoyed the first part of the show. Still, the last part of the show terrified me, so when visitors took photos with the trans performers after the show outside the auditorium, I was afraid to approach and take pictures with them, even though I wanted to.

On the fifth day, we boarded a bus for Pattaya. Halfway there, we visited a park where visitors were entertained by interacting with tigers, monkeys, and pigs. A fun event was pigs running a race. Each pig was numbered, and when a man whistled, they began running.

A young man and woman in uniforms performed with the crocodiles. The woman tugged a crocodile's tail. Occasionally, it seemed irritated, opened its mouth, and bellowed. When it opened its mouth, the man put an upright stick between its palate and tongue for a while, removed it, and then put his head inside, which was frightening.

Later on, we went to a restaurant to eat roasted crocodile meat, soup, and dishes that the Chinese tourists eagerly enjoyed. Most Tibetans refused to eat the crocodile meat, although a few younger ones tried a little. When those who didn't asked, "How's the flavor?" Bsod nams rgyal replied, "It's tasty!"

A Chinese man assured them, "It's good for your health. You'll never find such good meat again!"

Eventually, a few more Tibetans were persuaded by the Chinese man to eat it. I also tried a bit. It was as white as bread and had a strong, fishy flavor.

When we emerged from the park, we were bewildered to see our framed photos on a desk. They had been taken as we had entered the park, but we hadn't noticed. A photographer with a camera on a strap around his neck explained that we could either pay and take the photos or not pay and leave them. Elders said, "It's not good to leave the photos there," so we paid and took all of our photos.

What a fun way to make money!

At dusk, we reached Pattaya, a prosperous coastal city famous for its beautiful beaches. We hung around Pattaya at night, boarding a medium-sized boat to a restaurant on the sea a few minutes from the seashore. We had supper there while transgender women wearing elaborate multicolored gowns danced on the stage in the restaurant's center. It was hard to guess that they were trans from their appearance. I curiously wondered why there were so many trans people in Thailand and why they wanted to change their gender.

Afterward, these performers came into the audience. A Chinese man embraced a trans woman and danced excitedly. Our table was near the stage where I was sitting with my mother, father, and some young Tibetan fellows. Two women came and urged the Tibetan men to dance with them. I was embarrassed and blushed, as such behavior is shameful among relatives. Hence, we left for another room and then returned to the seashore and strolled along a bustling pedestrian walkway. Bars and restaurants emitted vibrant, colorful lights. Loud, varied music exploded into the street. Many people were hanging around. Every doorway of every bar featured women wearing sexy clothes, waiting to welcome guests. It was very cheerful! As we walked along, we saw a man with a ghost mask standing on the road in front of us. He was very tall, had a white face with blood on his forehead, gray hair, and long black clothing. He stood on metal stilts that were about three meters tall. I was terrified and couldn't even gaze at him. However, others shook hands and posed for photos with him. It was all so different and exciting that we hung around until late in the night.

On the sixth day, we boarded a speedboat to a small island. In the middle of the sea, my fellow Tibetans and I tossed small colorful bags of grain we had prepared while at home for our family's wealth and prosperity. As we threw them into the sea, we all yelled, "*Lha rgyal lo!* Victory to the deities!"

As the boat sloshed back and forth, there was a lot of noise, and a woman shrieked, "Yul lha! Yul lha!" invoking the name of one of our local deities.

The island's impressive landscape resembled a picture featuring emerald woodland, a crystal-clear sea, and a cloudless blue sky. People on the beach were lying under umbrellas, while others were swimming and surfing. I suddenly imagined people having fun on a sea where piranhas attacked and ate them. This made me afraid to step into the sea as the waves lapped the beach. But eventually, I walked into the sea up to my waist. It was thrilling! I wanted to spend more time there, but our time was limited.

A little later, our tour guide led us to a concrete platform where people were parasailing. Elders were warned not to go there, but one older man insisted, "I don't want to miss this chance to parasail. I have no health issues."

Many parachutes in the sky were being towed behind a motorboat. Later, tour members who wanted to participate put on life jackets lined up, and one by one, excitedly flew up with their parachutes attached. After going around the platform three times, they landed, except for one of our group members, a middle-aged man, who fell into the sea after being airborne for only a few seconds. The boat pulling the parachute was far from him, though he was near the concrete platform where we stood. We could see his head in the distance. Luckily, two lifeguards quickly went out in another speedboat to rescue him. He smiled as he approached us and commented, "I thought I would see Gshin rje chos rgyal¹ today!"

On the seventh day, we headed to the Elephant Theater. How delightful elephants are! Many elephants strolled around the venue in an orderly line, following a mahout holding a sharp metal hook. Later, some adorable baby elephants came. A performance included the elephants standing in a line kicking a soccer ball into a net one by one. I was astonished by their human-like moves. Another impressive show was the mahout putting a paintbrush in an elephant's trunk that then painted flowers, which earned claps and shouts from the audience.

When the show ended, the elephants were allowed to move freely in the enclosure. Visitors gave them bananas. The elephants stuck out their trunks to take them and put them into their mouths. When we gave them money, they bowed their head and even knelt in thanks. Two elephants joined their trunks, making a seat for people and providing a perfect photo opportunity, which excited them.

¹ God of Death.

Earlier, I had read about elephant abuse online. Some were beaten to behave in certain ways. Some were slaughtered to make products from their ivory and skin. When I saw the metal hooks carried by the mahouts, I remembered that behind this impressive show was brutality - no wonder these majestic and powerful animals behaved so well, which depressed me. Many visitors were enjoying the show without knowing the suffering behind it.

Next, we mounted steps to a platform where you could sit in a carriage on the back of an elephant. "This is not good. Riding an elephant reduces your fortune. Elephants are revered animals," cautioned some Tibetan elders. Nevertheless, a few young Tibetan men ignored this and enjoyed sitting in the carriage.

That evening, when we were on the bus, our tour guide announced, "We will see a trans sex show!" in Chinese.

I was bewildered and shocked. I had no idea what kind of show it would be, but I thought it must be inappropriate to watch with relatives. There was no reaction from my fellow Tibetan travelers. Clearly, they did not understand. I explained to our Chinese tour guide the taboos among relatives, and she also thought it was improper. Finally, she arranged for all of us Tibetan women to visit an art gallery near the theater that featured creative drawings while the men and two Chinese women watched the show. Later, as we were waiting for our fellow tour members, the two Chinese women returned. One, who was very red in the face, announced with embarrassment, "It's crazy!"

The Tibetan women had no idea what she had said. After I explained, Glu mo, a middle-aged woman, said, "It must be a disgraceful show."

The others giggled.

SINGAPORE

On the eighth day, we flew to Singapore. As we exited the airport, a sudden storm caught us in a downpour, but we enjoyed it because the rain brought cooler weather.

Eventually, a new tour guide came with a bus to pick us up. On the bus, she briefly introduced Singapore: "The Garden City is another name for Singapore. It rains nearly every day during the monsoon, which is from November to January."

We just happened to be there during that time - January.

The rain stopped after a few minutes. As we looked through the bus windows, we beheld extremely clean and tidy surroundings. We saw no trash on the streets. Lawns and trees on both sides of the road were orderly, and after the rain, they were glossy and green. We visited a place near the sea that featured modern buildings of distinctive designs.

On the ninth day, we visited a duty-free shop that sold rings, earrings, bracelets, and necklaces with various gemstones. Most of my fellow travelers didn't like them because they were very small compared to Tibetan adornments featuring coral and turquoise that are much larger.

Singapore is a small country, so we only spent one day visiting tourist sites. There were undoubtedly other sites to see and explore. Singapore was an attractive, orderly country, and I hope to visit again.

MALAYSIA

In the afternoon of the ninth day, we proceeded to Malaysia by bus, which took four hours. On the way, we saw many cars going in both directions. Our tour guide explained that motorists commuted between Malaysia and Singapore for work or business though they were in two separate countries.

When we arrived, we were taken near a harbor to see the famous Straits of Malacca, between the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia, an important shipping channel for many countries. At the port, there were many multicolored shipping containers and cargo ships. I was excited to see the Straits of Malacca because I had learned about it in a high school geography class, though I recalled nothing except its name. I posted a video of the bustling harbor with my location - The Straits of Malacca - on WeChat and soon got many likes. My former classmates commented, "Wow! The Straits of Malacca!" "I'm looking forward to going there."

On the tenth day, as we took an elevator down in our hotel, someone unintentionally pressed the emergency button, which set off a constantly ringing alarm. The elevator stopped moving, dumbfounding us all. After a few seconds, the bell stopped ringing, and we heard a man's voice through a speaker in the elevator, asking, "Do you need help?"

"No, thanks! We just pressed the wrong button," I said, and the elevator soon resumed operation.

Everyone then asked, "What did you just say? If you were not here, we would be in trouble."

Feeling a little happy, I thought, "English is useful!"

Malaysia is well-known for its white coffee, so we visited some shops selling flavored coffee, chocolate, and cookies. The salesman offered us small cups of various coffee to taste. Some were bitter, and some were sweet. An old man sipped one cup and said, "This is terrible! It tastes burnt!"

Most of our group members bought a few packs of coffee and chocolate, even though they didn't like them very much, as gifts for family members and friends.

Our bus soon stopped in Kuala Lumpur so we could photograph the very modern, majestic Petronas Twin Towers, where Petronas, Malaysia's national petroleum company, is headquartered.

In the afternoon, we took a cable car to a mountaintop with an elevation of 1,800 meters, where there were many tall buildings, hotels, and entertainment venues. It was much cooler than in the lowland. Visitors filled the hotel lobby. I thought it would be hard to find a hotel room, but that hotel building had thousands of rooms, to my surprise. After our rooms were arranged, we were told of a big casino nearby. Most of the men were excited to hear this and went to observe people gambling. I also wanted to visit, but I didn't because the women disapproved, saying, "It's not an ideal place to go."

In my home community, gambling has been a bad influence. Some men gamble obsessively, bringing massive financial losses to their families.

On the eleventh day, at noon, we headed to the airport. Around six that afternoon, we flew back to China. Five hours later, we were back in Xi'an, where the weather was icy-cold. We again donned our warm Tibetan robes before being taken to a hotel for the night.

RETURNING HOME

The next day, everyone was eager to return home. After a quick breakfast at the hotel, we boarded a bus to the airport and took a ninety-minute flight to Xining. On the plane, our group leaned back in their seats. Some slept. Exhaustion from our journey lined their faces. When we reached the airport, our relatives were waiting, holding white *kha btags*¹ in welcome. "Let's go eat our local noodles and meat," some tour members said.

Throughout the journey, food was a problem for most of our Tibetan members. We, especially the elders, were used to mutton and yak meat, which were unavailable in the places we visited. There

¹ A white strip of cloth made of silk or wool.

must be great cuisines in those countries, but the travel agency arranged for us to eat at touristy restaurants that mainly provided food that was not memorable.

There are huge differences between my home area and the countries I visited. Thailand is a nation of friendly people and abundant natural resources, including marine environments. The utilization of local resources included training elephants and crocodiles to perform to attract visitors. In contrast, most people in my home area depend on herding and farming. Locals lack the economic means and know-how to use local resources effectively. Travel to modern, urbanized countries gives new ideas for a better future we want to help create.

My father enjoyed the journey. He appreciates unique architecture and designs and especially appreciated the Thai temples. He also thinks travel helps him relax and feel free from life's many stresses. However, my mother didn't enjoy the journey very much. She doesn't like noisy, crowded urban areas. Instead, she likes quiet places, and often goes to monasteries to chant, circumambulate, and prostrate.

A few days after the journey, when we looked through our photos, she said, "I don't see much difference between these countries and ours. They are both full of tall buildings and cars. I felt exhausted when I traveled around the city. I should go on pilgrimage and prostrate."

This discovery journey helped me realize the significance of studying other people's culture and life, which offers insight into the world and helps eliminate ignorance and misconceptions. I discovered how little I knew about the world and how useful English is in connecting with cultures and people beyond my local world.

PHOTOGRAPHS

FIG 1. Tibetan travelers at the Xi'an Xianyang International Airport in Shaanxi Province (January 2016, Rdo rje dpal 'byor).



FIG 2. Tibetan travelers at a cafeteria in Bangkok (2016, Rdo rje dpal 'byor).



FIG 3. The Grand Palace in Bangkok, Thailand (2016, Rdo rje dpal 'byor).



FIG 4. Yul lha thar on a White Orchid river cruise in Bangkok, Thailand (2016, Rdo rje dpal 'byor).



FIG 5. The Grand Palace (Bangkok, 2016, Rdo rje dpal 'byor).



FIG 6. Tibetan travelers on a speedboat in the Gulf of Thailand (2016, Rdo rje dpal 'byor).



FIG 7. Chinese tour guide, Luan Xiaozhu (left), Bsod nams rgyal (center), and Rdo rje dpal 'byor (right) (Pattaya, 2016, unknown photographer).



FIG 8. Btsun pa rgyal parasailing in Pattaya, Thailand (2016, Rdo rje dpal 'byor).



TIBETAN TERMS

a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

bon skor བོན་སྐོར།

bsod nams rgyal བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱལ།

bya mdo བྱ་མདོ།

btsun pa rgyal བཅུན་པ་རྒྱལ།

gshin rje chos rgyal གཤིན་རྗེ་ཆོས་རྒྱལ།

gter གཏེར།

kha btags ཁ་བཏགས།

klu mo ལུ་མོ།

lha rgyal lo ལྷ་རྒྱལ་ལོ།

mang ra མང་ར།

mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།

rdo rje dpal 'byor རྡོ་རྗེ་དཔལ་འབྱོར།

rgya mtsho རྒྱལ་མཚོ།

rtsam pa རུམ་པ།

yul lha ཡུལ་ལྷ།

yul lha thar ཡུལ་ལྷ་ཐར།

zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།

CHINESE TERMS

Caojiabao 曹家堡

Duojiahuanjiao 多吉环角

Guinan 贵南

Hainan 海南

Haidong 海东

Luan Xiaozhu 栾小竹

Ping'an 平安

Qinghai 青海

Shagou 沙沟

Shaanxi 陕西

Tangseng 唐僧

Wangshenke 汪什科

Xi'an 西安

Xianyang 咸阳

Xining 西宁

youpomian 油泼面

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

MñEWZAMBƏMṣṭəT: A DPA' RIS (HUARUI) TIBETAN FOLKTALE

Song Zhanfeng 宋占峰 (Rdo rje ར་རྩེ), Institute of Linguistics, Shanghai Normal University;

Song Zhanhui 宋占慧 (Lha mtsho skyid ལ་མཚོ་སྒྱུད་),

School of History and Culture, Northwest Minzu University;

and Jiuxijie 久西杰 ('Jigs byed skyabs འཇིགས་བྱེད་སྐུ་བསྟན་པ།), Institute of Linguistics,
Shanghai Normal University*

ABSTRACT

A story told by 'Brug rgyal (Zhoujia, b. 1986) from Gzhug rub (Xianfeng) Village, 'Brug gu (Zhugu) Township, 'Ju lag (Menyuan) Hui and Tu Autonomous County, Mtsho byang (Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province illustrates the rich oral culture of the Dpa' ris (Huarui) area in Gansu and Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) provinces, PR China. Dpa' ris (Huarui) area residents are experiencing a language shift from Tibetan to the local Chinese dialect. Telling local stories, singing local songs, and reciting wedding invocations are neglected. Apps such as WeChat, Kuaishou, and Douyin further minimize the use of Dpa' ris Tibetan.

KEYWORDS

Dpa' ris (Huarui), Gansu, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai), Tibetan folklore, Tibetan folktales

INTRODUCTION

The Dpa' ris (Huarui) Area refers to Lung mdo (Ledu) County, Hor rdzong (Huzhu) Tu Autonomous County, Rta thang (Datong) Hui and Tu Autonomous County, and 'Ju lag (Menyuan) Hui Autonomous County, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province; and in Gansu Province, the eastern part of Sunan Yugur (Yugu) Autonomous County, certain areas of Rgod gtsang (Wuwei) City, Dgo lung (Gulang) County, Dpa' ris (Tianzhu) Tibetan Autonomous County, and 'Brong lung (Yongdeng) County. In a narrow sense, Dpa' ris only refers to Dpa' ris County.

Although the Dpa' ris Area was divided into several administrative areas, some residents in these places consider themselves Dpa' ris pa.¹ A distinctive characteristic is a preference for the color white, which is reflected in the term Dpa' ris ṣkarbo (Dpa' ris dkar po).²

Dpa' ris Tibetan belongs to the A mdo nomad dialect (Hua and Ma 1992, Hermans 1952).

The story we present was narrated by 'Brug rgyal (Zhoujia, b. 1986), a native speaker of Dpa' ris Tibetan. A lifelong herdsman and resident of Gzhug rub (Xianfeng) Village, 'Brug gu (Zhugu) Township, 'Ju lag County, Mtsho byang (Haibei) Tibetan Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province, he has never attended school.

We used Elan³ and FLE⁴ when working with this story.

Perhaps this modest contribution will generate interest in traditional Dpa' ris stories, leading to more preservation efforts.

* Song Zhanfeng (Rdo rje), Song Zhanhui (Lha mtsho skyid), and Jiuxijie ('Jigs byed skyabs). MñewzambəṣṭəT: A Dpa' ris (Huarui) Tibetan Folktales. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:252-274.

¹ Dpa' ris pa refers to indigenous Dpa' ris Tibetan speakers who share the same traditional customs.

² Skarbo 'white'.

³ ELAN (EUDICO Linguistic Annotator) is an annotation tool for audio and video recordings (<https://archive.mpi.nl/tla/elan>, accessed 26 November 2020).

⁴ A software tool to manage linguistic and cultural data.

PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

Below, we briefly summarize studies of Dpa' ris Tibetan:

- Prejevalsky (1875) recorded 178 vocabulary items from the Mchod rten thang (Tiantang) Monastery¹ vicinity to areas near Chu bzang (Quezang) Monastery.² Some of these locales are along the 'Ju lag (Daitong) River.
- Hermanns Matthias (1952) described Dpa' ris Tibetan phonology and grammar and suggested Dpa' ris pa ancestors immigrated from near Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake) and settled in the northern and southern mountains of the 'Ju lag River during an invasion by a Mongolian army in the mid-seventeenth century.
- Hua Kan and Ma Angqian (1992) highlighted the complex and highly regular initial consonant system that preserved most consonant finals sharing similarities to nomad dialects.
- Ma Angqian (1994) discussed details of phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar, especially evidentialities.
- 'Gu tshang padma rdorje (2006) noted phonetic features and used Chinese characters and Chinese Pinyin to record certain Tibetan lexical items rather than IPA.
- Bessho and Ebihara (2007) described location, ethnic distribution, and Dpa' ris Tibetan phonetics.
- Zhang (2009) provided examples of Tianzhu Tibetan³ phonetic phenomena.
- Wang (2012) commented that Dpa' ris Tibetan affricates were notable among Tibetan dialects.
- Rig 'dzin dbang mo (2012) presented locations in the Dpa' ris Area including Chu cha (Zhucha), Dor zhi (Songlin), Stag lung (Shongshan), and Bkra shis phyug lung (Zhuaxixiulong) townships in Dpa' ris County; Sum mdo (Songduo), Bwa za (Bazha), and Rgya tig (Jiading) townships in Huzhu County; 'Brug gu and Sems nyid (Xianmi) townships in 'Ju lag County; Sum ba (Shuobei) and Byang dpa' (Xianghua) townships in Rta thang (Datong) County; and Mati and Qifeng townships in Sunan County.
- Ebihara and Bessho (2013) briefly discussed the Dpa' ris geographical location, language usage, education, phonology, vocabulary, *snang* at the end of a sentence, auxiliary verbs, and the ablative *-ngə*, focusing on the Bwa za dialect in Mtsho shar (Haidong) City, Mtsho sngon Province. The authors also mentioned the similarities between certain features and Kham Tibetan, such as the correspondence of *-lejən/-lere* in Dpa' ris Tibetan and *-leji~/-/lere* in Kham; and the correspondence of the Dpa' ris Tibetan *-in* and *-dr~* in Kham. *snang* is primarily used in Dpa' ris Tibetan, the Co ne (Zhuoni) dialect, and Kham Tibetan.
- Shao Mingyuan (2018) described similarities between the Mdung nag (Dongna) dialect of A mdo Tibetan and Dpa' ris Tibetan. People in Mdung nag consider themselves Dong nag pa rather than Dpa' ris pa.
- The Tibetan Editing Office in Dpa' ris Tibetan Autonomous County organized local scholars to document local songs in Literary Tibetan (2018).

¹ A Dge lugs monastery located in Tiantang Township. The full name is Dpa' ris mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling (Dpa' ris bod rang skyong rdzong bod skad yig bya ba'i las shag 2016:141-144). See Smith (2017:215-216) for photos of the monastery.

² A Dge lugs monastery located in Nanmenxia Township, Huzhu County. The full name is Chu bzang dgon dga' ldan mi 'gyur gling (Dpa' ris bod rang skyong rdzong bod skad yig bya ba'i las shag 2016:415-416). See Smith (2017:206) for photos of the monastery.

³ "Tianzhu Tibetan" signifies Dpa' ris Tibetan in his book.

STORY METADATA AND VALUES

It is increasingly difficult to find fluent speakers of Dpa' ris Tibetan. Our consultant, 'Brug rgyal, lives with his parents, who communicate in Dpa' ris Tibetan. 'Brug rgyal recites long scriptures he has memorized, but he cannot write in any language.

While we were doing the segmentations and the annotations in Elan, we included each of 'Brug rgyal's utterances, including slips of the tongue, hesitations, and repetitions.

The narration data in this paper features four lines. The first line is IPA, the second line is annotations with reference to the Leipzig Glossing Rules, the third line gives Tibetan script for each word, and the fourth line is the English translation.

This story is about Mn̄ewzambəmṣṭəṭ,¹ who was taken to Hell by mistake. Yama Dharmapala showed her several tortures in Hell and eventually returned her to the human world because of the good things she had done. 'Brug rgyal said he was unsure what "Mn̄ewzambəmṣṭəṭ" meant, but that his paternal grandmother had often told this story.

In earlier times, children were told such folktales for entertainment and as moral instruction. This story has four scenes. The first features quarrels with parents, a sin that results in the tongue being cut off and discarded on the ground. The second scene illustrates glaring at parents, a sin punished by having the eyeballs dug out and tossed on the ground. The third is about stealing. The hands of thieves are nailed and discarded² on the ground. The final scene is about wasting food, resulting in a big head and a narrow throat.

The story that is the centerpiece of this article features a woman who never chanted *ma Ni*³ nor did any religious rites. Once she was taken to Yama Dharmapala, she was immediately thrown into Hell without being listened to. Unlike the woman, a white-haired old man chanting *ma Ni* came to Yama Dharmapala. He reported how many *ma Ni* he had chanted, the number of religious rites he had done, the number of stones he had carved with *ma Ni* and Buddha figures, how many figures of Buddha he had carved on bones, how many delusions he had abandoned, how many wind horses he had flown, and how many stones he had picked up while near valleys. Yama sent the old man to a Buddha-field. The different fates of the young woman and the old man show that those who do good deeds are unlikely to go to Hell after death. Meanwhile, those who are greedy, black-hearted, and selfish are punished.

¹ Mn̄ewzambəmṣṭəṭ (Me bza' 'bum skyid) is the protagonist's name in IPA. In the Gling Ge sar epic, she is King Ge sar's second wife (the first being 'Bug mo).

² The story does not specify if the hands were cut off from the body.

³ *ma Ni* refers to *oM ma Ni pad+me hUM*, a mantra devoted to Avalokiteśvara, the Buddhist deity of compassion.

Mn̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət

1. fīna fīnamaje -zək -ya shaɕha -zək -na -ta mn̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət ze
ancient.times past.times -INDEF -DAT place -INDEF -LOC -TOP PSN call
གནའ་གནའ་མཁའ་ཞིག་ལ་ས་ཆ་ཞིག་ན་ད་མེ་བཟའ་འབྲུག་གླིང་ཟེར་
-le ndərək womo mn̥ə -zək jot -tere.
-CVB like.this girl person -INDEF SUB -FAC
ལོ་འདི་འདྲའི་སྐུ་མོ་ཞིག་ཡོད་དེ་རེད།
Long, long ago, there was a girl called Mn̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət in a place.
2. ta womo mn̥ə ndə xhətaŋ ɕhi -la xhətaŋ fiɡa -lere.
then girl person DEM ADV religious.rite -DAT ADV prefer -FAC
ད་སྐུ་མོ་ཞིག་འདི་ཤིན་ཏུ་ཚས་ལ་ཤིན་ཏུ་དགའ་བ་རེད།
The girl liked religious rites very much.
3. mane -lə xhətaŋ ndon -to -lere.
ma Ni -FOC ADV recite -PROG -FAC
མ་ཤི་ལ་འད་ཤིན་ཏུ་འདོན་དོ་བ་རེད།
(She) also liked chanting *ma Ni* very much.
4. mn̥ə -lə xhətaŋ mn̥ə t̥sokɣo -zək jən -nere.
person -FOC ADV person good -INDEF COP:EGO -FAC:EGO
མོ་ལ་འད་ཤིན་ཏུ་མོ་ཤིན་ཏུ་¹ཞིག་ཡིན་ནེ་རེད།
(She) was also a very good person.
5. ta n̥əntsək -zək -ya te h̥ənrze ɕhirt̥əo -ngə mn̥əlam -zək mn̥i
then one.day -INDEF -DAT then Yama Dharmapala -ERG dream -INDEF dream
ད་ཉིན་ཞིག་ཞིག་ལ་དེ་གཤིན་ཇེ་ཚས་རྒྱལ་གིས་མི་ལམ་ཞིག་མིས་
-lere.
-FAC
བ་རེད།
Then, one day Yama Dharmapala had a dream.
6. mn̥əlam -zək mn̥i -le tate t̥swingot̥əan -ta limkhan ʂtamgot̥əan
dream -INDEF dream -CVB then mule-head.soldier -CC soldier horse-head.soldier
མི་ལམ་ཞིག་མིས་བོ་དེ་དེ་རྩེ་མགོ་ཕན་དང་ལས་མཁན་རྩ་མགོ་ཕན་
fīn̥əʂka te h̥ənrze -ngə ndə -na vi t̥əhə ɣə -lere.
DU:ABS then Yama -GEN DEM -LOC invite:PFV bring:PFV come:PFV -FAC
གཤིས་ཀྱི་དེ་གཤིན་ཇེ་གི་འདི་ན་ཐོས་ཁྱེད་ཐོས་བ་རེད།
After the dream, he (Yama) called the mule-head soldier and the horse-head soldier to his side.
7. vi t̥əhə ɣə -le te limkhwan ndə fīn̥əʂka ze -lere.
invite:PFV bring:PFV come:PFV -CVB then soldier DEM DU:DAT say -FAC
ཐོས་ཁྱེད་ཐོས་བོ་དེ་ལས་མཁན་འདི་གཤིས་ཀྱིས་ཟེར་བ་རེད།

¹ Tibetan script with an octothorpe indicates borrowed words or words that cannot be correctly spelled in Literary Tibetan.

After inviting the soldiers to his side, he (Yama) said to both of them,

8. ta mdaŋroŋ khi mn̩əlam -zək mn̩i tu-kə ta xhə hshon ʂtɛ met
then yesterday 3SG:ERG dream -INDEF dream when-LOC then die live grow SUB

ད མདུང་རིང་ ཁོས་ མི་ལམ་ ཞིག་ མིས་ ཏུས་གི་ ད འི་ གསོན་ རྩེས་ མེད་
lakə womo mn̩ə -zək jən -no

ADV girl person -INDEF COP:EGO -AUX

ལ་ཁད་ བུ་མོ་ མི་ ཞིག་ ཡིན་ #ཏུས་

He had a dream yesterday. He dreamed that someone was going to die, it was a girl,

9. womo mn̩ə fidi mn̩əŋ -ŋa mn̩ewzambəmʂtɛt ze -lere.

girl person 3SG:GEN name -DAT PSN call -FAC

བུ་མོ་ མི་ དེའི་ མིང་ ར་ མེ་བཟའ་འབྲུག་གྱིད་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།

That girl was called Mn̩ewzambəmʂtɛt.

10. ta t̬ho shoŋ -ŋa fidi rnamei shoŋ -ya ndzət -ta t̬her
then 2SG:ABS go:IPM -CVB 3SG:GEN soul go:IPM -CVB pull:IPFV -CVB take

ད ཁྱོད་ མོང་ ར་ དེའི་ རྣམ་ཤེས་ མོང་ འ་ འབྲུད་ ད ཁྱེར་
xhok.

come:IMP

ཞོག།

"You go and bring me her soul.

11. nt̬həthat -t̬hat ndə khəʈɕialia te ʂtsep -jot ze -lere.

death -AUX DEM already(CHI) then get.to -AUX say -FAC

འཆི་བད་ ཚད་ འདི་ རེ་ཤིག་ དེ་ རྩེ་བས་ ཡོད་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།

It is time for her (Mn̩ewzambəmʂtɛt) to die." (He) said like this.

12. tər̩kəta ʂtamgotɕan -ta t̬ʂwimgotɕan vət -t̬ʂaŋ² -lere.

then horse-head.soldier -CC mule-head.soldier go -AUX -FAC

#དིར་གི་ད་ ཏ་མགོ་ཅན་ དང་ རྩེ་མགོ་ཅན་ བུད་ མོང་ བེ་རེད།

Then the horse-head soldier and the mule-head soldier went (to bring Mn̩ewzambəmʂtɛt).

13. vət -ta yə -le tər̩kə mn̩ewzambəmʂtɛt -kə rnamei t̬ʂət t̬hə
go -CVB come:PFV -CVB then PSN -GEN soul pull:PFV bring:PFV

བུད་ ད་ འོངས་ བེ་ #དིར་གི་ མེ་བཟའ་འབྲུག་གྱིད་ གི་ རྣམ་ཤེས་ བུད་ ཁྱེར་
yə -lere.

come:PFV -FAC

འོངས་ བེ་རེད།

They went and brought the soul of Mn̩ewzambəmʂtɛt back.

¹ This local Chinese term is 已经 *yijing* in Modern Standard Chinese.

² The final consonant -t and the initial -sh of -shaŋ comprise -t̬shaŋ because of the merging of two syllables. Consequently, -t̬shaŋ should be *dsong*. However, I used *song* because *dsong* is not Literary Tibetan.

14. tʂət tɕhə ɣə -le hɕənɾze -ngə ndə -na ɣə tɔ-kə te
 pull:PFV bring:PFV come:PFV -CVB Yama -GEN DEM -LOC come:PFV when-LOC then
 ཅུད་ བྱིན་ རྩམ་ བེ་ གཤིན་ཇེ་ བི་ འདི་ ན་ རྩམ་ ཅུས་གི་ དེ་
 hɕənɾze -ngə ɕək ʂti tɔ fidi ze -lere.
 Yama -ERG one look:PFV when 3SG:ERG tell -FAC
 གཤིན་ཇེ་ བིས་ བློག་ བུ་ དེས་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།
 After bringing the soul back to Yama's side, Yama looked and said,
15. -aja, shacha ndə -na ta mɲewzambəmʂtɕət ze -le ndərək mɲə fiɲi jot.
 -INTERJ place DEM -LOC then PSN call -CVB like.this person two SUB
 ཨ་ཡ་ ས་ཆ་ འདི་ ན་ ད་ མེ་བཟའ་འབུམ་མྱེད་ ཟེར་ བེ་ འདི་འདྲའི་ མི་ གཉིས་ ཡོད་
 "Oh, there were two (girls) named Mɲewzambəmʂtɕət in this place.
 16. ta tɕhe fiɲəʂki tʂət -te mɕhək -shoŋ -zək ze -lere.
 then 2SG:ABS DU:ERG pull:PFV -CVB make.mistake -AUX -INFER tell -FAC
 ད་ བྱིན་ གཉིས་ཀས་ ཅུད་ དེ་ འཕྲུགས་ མོང་ བློག་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།
 You two got the wrong Mɲewzambəmʂtɕət." (He) said like this.
17. te tɕək mɲewzambəmʂtɕət ɕhi ɕwet -to -nɔ mɲewzambəmʂtɕət
 then INDEF PSN religious.rite do:IPFV -PROG -NMLZ PSN
 དེ་ ཅིག་ མེ་བཟའ་འབུམ་མྱེད་ ཆོས་ བྱིན་ དོ་ མྱི་ མེ་བཟའ་འབུམ་མྱེད་
 ndə tʂət tɕhə ɣə -lere.
 DEM pull:PFV bring:PFV come:PFV -FAC
 འདི་ ཅུད་ བྱིན་ རྩམ་ རྩམ་ བེ་རེད།
 Mɲewzambəmʂtɕət who was practicing religion (the wrong one) was brought.
18. tʂət tɕhə ɣə -le te hɕənɾze -ngə ze -lere.
 pull:PFV bring:PFV come:PFV -CVB then Yama -ERG tell -FAC
 ཅུད་ བྱིན་ རྩམ་ བེ་ དེ་ གཤིན་ཇེ་ བིས་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།
 After taking her back, Yama said,
19. ta tɕhi tʂət tɕhə ɣə -na tate tʂət tɕhə ɣə
 then 2SG:ERG pull:PFV bring:PFV come:PFV -CVB then pull:PFV bring:PFV come:PFV
 ད་ བྱིན་ ཅུད་ བྱིན་ རྩམ་ ན་ ད་དེ་ ཅུད་ བྱིན་ རྩམ་
 -lere.
 -FAC
 བེ་རེད།
 "Since you two have brought this one, so let it be."

20. tərəkəte m̥n̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət fidi h̥ənr̥ze -ngə ŋə ək ʃti to h̥ənr̥ze
 then PSN 3SG:ERG Yama -GEN face:DAT one look:PFV when Yama
 དེ་མི་ལོ་ མེ་བཟའ་འབྲུག་གླིང་ དེས་ གཤིན་པའི་ བོ་ རྩ་ལ་ ཞིག་ བརྟམ་ རུས་ གཤིན་པའི་
 womo ŋə ək ʃti to h̥ənr̥ze m̥ə- ʃt̥ək -lere, h̥ənr̥ze -ta,
 girl:GEN face:DAT one look:PFV when Yama NEG- fear -FAC Yama -TOP
 ལུ་མེ་ལོ་ རྩ་ལ་ ཞིག་ བརྟམ་ རུས་ གཤིན་པའི་ མི་ ལྷག་ བེ་ཤོད། གཤིན་པའི་ ཏ་
 (afterthoughts) tərəkəte ze -lere.

then say -FAC

དེ་མི་ལོ་ ཟེར་ བེ་ཤོད།

Then M̥n̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət looked at Yama's face and Yama also looked at M̥n̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət's face. M̥n̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət didn't feel scared while she was looking at Yama's face. And then Yama said,

21. ta t̥ʂət t̥hə yə -na -la ɕhok -khə.
 then pull:PFV bring:PFV come:PFV -CVB -CVB OK -PROG

ད རུད་ ཟེར་ རོངས་ ཅ་ ལ་ ཚོག་ ལུ

"It's OK that you brought this one.

22. ta t̥he f̥n̥əʃki ndə m̥n̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət ndə f̥n̥əlvəjə -la ək t̥her ze
 then 2SG:ABS DU:ERG DEM PSN DEM hell -DAT one take:IMP tell
 ད ཟེར་ གཞིས་ཀྱས་ འདི་ མེ་བཟའ་འབྲུག་གླིང་ འདི་ དཔུལ་བའི་ལུས་ ལ་ ཞིག་ ཟེར་ ཟེར་
 -lere.

-FAC

མེ་ཤོད།

You two take this M̥n̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət to Hell one time."

23. tərəkəta t̥ʂət t̥hə yə -le ~ t̥ʂət t̥hə yə -le
 then pull:PFV bring:PFV come:PFV -CVB pull:PFV bring:PFV come:PFV -CVB
 #དེ་མི་ལོ་ རུད་ ཟེར་ རོངས་ བོ་ རུད་ ཟེར་ རོངས་ བོ་
 ndərki f̥n̥əlvəjə -la ndə ək ʃti to-kə ta m̥n̥ə -zək -kə
 like.this Hell -DAT DEM one look:PFV when-LOC then person -INDEF -GEN
 འདི་ལྟར་གིས་ དཔུལ་བའི་ལུས་ ལ་ འདི་ ཞིག་ བརྟམ་ རུས་གི་ ཏ མི་ ཞིག་ བོ་
 h̥eə thaŋ -ŋa t̥ʂət -te ʃt̥əər -jot -tere.
 tongue ground -DAT pull:PFV -CVB discard:PFV -AUX -FAC

ལྷེ་ བར་ ཏ་ རུད་ དེ་ བརྟམ་ ཡོད་ དེ་ཤོད།

Then they pulled M̥n̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət to Hell, and someone's tongue was lying on the ground.

24. tərəkəta ze -lere, ta m̥n̥ə ndə ʃhək ma- n̥an -nere ze -le.
 then say -FAC then person DEM what NEG- ok -FAC:EGO tell -CVB

#དེ་མི་ལོ་ ཟེར་ བེ་ཤོད། ཏ མི་ འདི་ ལུ་ཞིག་ མ་ ཉན་ བེ་ཤོད། ཟེར་ བོ་

Then (M̥n̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət) said, "What's wrong with this person?"

25. m̥n̥ewzambəm̥st̥ət -kə ək t̥ʃi to-kə te limkhan -ngə ze -le j̥ən.
 PSN -ERG one ask:PFV when-LOC then soldier -ERG tell -CVB COP:EGO
 མེ་བཟའ་འབྲུག་གླིང་ གིས་ ཞིག་ དྲིས་ རུས་གི་ དེ་ ལས་མཁན་ གིས་ ཟེར་ བོ་ ཡིན་

As Mn̄ewzambəm̄st̄ə̄t asked, one of the soldiers answered,

26. ndə -ta ndək̄st̄en -na jot tu-kə at̄ə am̄ə nk̄hon -ne m̄n̄ə ndə
 DEM -TOP world -LOC SUB when-LOC dad mom:DAT curse -CVB person DEM
 འདི་ ན་ འཇིག་རྟེན་ ན་ ཡོད་ རུས་གི་ ཡ་པ་ ཡ་མ་པ་ འཁོན་ རེ་ མི་ འདི་
 yarna ta f̄n̄alvəj̄ə -la yə tu-kə te t̄shəm̄f̄idək̄ -kə ndərək̄
 all:ABS then hell -DAT come:PFV when-LOC then judge -ERG like.this
 #འར་ན་ ན་ དུས་ལ་བཞི་ཡུལ་ ལ་ རོངས་ རུས་གི་ རེ་ ཁྱིམ་སྡིགས་ གིས་ འདི་འདྲའི་
 pt̄eat -tere ze -lere.
 judge:PFV -FAC tell -FAC

བཅད་ དེ་རེད། ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།

"This person quarreled with his/her father and mother while he/she was alive, so the judge of Hell judged like this when he/she came to Hell." (He) said like this.

27. tər̄k̄əta jan̄ khaji -la shon̄ -e ɛək̄ ʂti tu-kə m̄n̄ə -zək̄ -kə
 then again half -DAT go -CVB one look:PFV when-LOC person -INDEF -GEN
 #དིར་གི་དྲ་ ཡང་ #ཁ་ཡས་ ལ་ སོང་ རེ་ ཞིག་ བརྟས་ རུས་གི་ མི་ ཞིག་ གི་
 m̄n̄əkr̄do than̄ -ŋa t̄ʂwat -te ʂt̄ə̄r jot -tere.
 eyeball ground -DAT dig:PFV -CVB discard:PFV SUB -FAC

མིག་འོ་ ཐང་ ང་ བྲད་ རེ་ བརྟུར་ ཡོད་ དེ་རེད།

And then (they¹) went to another side and saw a person's eyeballs had been dug out and discarded on the ground.

28. ta f̄ide shəzək̄ ma- n̄an -nere, ʂti tu-kə ze -lere.
 then DEM:ABS what NEG- ok -FAC:EGO look:PFV when-LOC tell -FAC

ད་ དེ་ ལུ་ཞིག་ མ་ ཉན་ རེ་རེད། བརྟས་ རུས་གི་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།

"What happened to this one?" (Mn̄ewzambəm̄st̄ə̄t) asked when she saw (the eyeballs).

29. ta ndə ndək̄st̄en -na jot tu at̄ə am̄ə m̄n̄ək̄f̄iz̄ər -ngə ʂti
 then DEM world -LOC SUB when dad mom:DAT glower -ERG look:PFV
 ན་ འདི་ འཇིག་རྟེན་ ན་ ཡོད་ རུས་ ཡ་པ་ ཡ་མ་པ་ མིག་གཟུར་ གིས་ བརྟས་
 -tu-kə te f̄n̄alvəj̄ə -la yə tu-kə t̄shəm̄f̄idək̄ -kə pt̄ewat
 -NMLZ-ERG then hell -DAT come:PFV when-LOC judge -ERG judge:PFV
 རུས་གི་ རེ་ དུས་ལ་བཞི་ཡུལ་ ལ་ རོངས་ རུས་གི་ ཁྱིམ་སྡིགས་ གིས་ བཅད་
 -tere ze -lere.
 -FAC tell -FAC

དེ་རེད། ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།

This person had glared at his father and mother while he/she was alive, so the judge judged him/her like this when he/she came to Hell.

¹ "They" refers to Mn̄ewzambəm̄st̄ə̄t and the two soldiers.

30. tərəkəta jan tək -ya shon -ya ək ʃti tu-kə mnə -zək -kə
 then again INDEF -DAT go -CVB one look:PFV when-LOC person -INDEF -GEN
 #དེ་གི་ད་ ཡང་ ཅིག་ འ་ མོང་ འ་ ཞིག་ བཟུལ་ རུས་གི་ མི་ ཞིག་ གི་
 lakɣwa shon -e mɔzɛrma -ngə ndep -pe ʃtɛər jot -tere.

hand go:PFV -CVB nail -ERG drive:PFV -CVB discard:PFV SUB -FAC

ལག་པ་ མོང་ དེ་ འཛེར་མ་ གིས་ འདེབས་ བེ་ བཟུར་ ཡོད་ དེ་རེད།

Two hands of a man had been nailed and discarded when they got to another place.

31. ze -le ta vi -le ndə shək ma- nən -nere ze -le, te mnə
 tell -CVB then invite:PFV -CVB DEM what NEG- ok -FAC:EGO tell -CVB then person
 ཟེར་ བེ་ ད་ བོས་ བེ་ འདི་ ལུ་ཞིག་ མ་ ཉན་ རེ་རེད། ཟེར་ བེ་ དེ་ མི་
 limkhwan -ngə ze -le.

soldier -ERG tell -FAC

ལས་མཁན་ གིས་ ཟེར་ ལེགས་

(Mnɛwzambəmʃtɛət) called the soldier and said to him, "What's wrong with this person?"

32. fide -ta ndəkʃten -na jot tu-kə ʃkɔ ɛwi -tu-kə te
 DEM:ABS -TOP world -LOC SUB when-LOC steal:PFV do:PFV -NMLZ-ERG then
 དེ་ ད་ འཛིག་རྟེན་ བ་ ཡོད་ རུས་གི་ འཁུས་ བྱས་ རུས་གི་ དེ་
 fɪnəlvəjɔ -la yə tu-kə tʃhəmɦɪdək -kə ptɛwat -tere ze -lere.

hell -DAT come:PFV when-LOC judge -ERG judge:PFV -FAC tell -FAC

དུས་ལ་བཞི་ཡུལ་ ལ་ འོངས་ རུས་གི་ ཁྱིམ་སྡིགས་ གིས་ བཅད་ དེ་རེད། ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།

This person had stolen while he was alive, so the judge judged him/her like this when he/she came to Hell.

33. ta jan khaji -zək -ya yə -le ək ʃti tu-kə mnə mgo
 then again half -INDEF -DAT come:PFV -CVB one look:PFV when-LOC person head
 ད་ ཡང་ #ཁ་ཡས་ ཞིག་ འ་ འོངས་ བེ་ ཞིག་ བཟུལ་ རུས་གི་ མི་ མགོ་
 xhətaŋ ɕhe -nə, yəkya ɕhətʃək xhətaŋ ɕhon -e ndərək mnə hara

ADV big -NMLZ throat how.about ADV young/small -CVB like.this person thither

ཤིན་ཏུ་ ཆེ་ #མི་ དུས་ལ་པ་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཤིན་ཏུ་ རྒྱང་ དེ་ འདི་འདྲའི་ མི་ བར་ལ་

jot -tere.

SUB -FAC

ཡོད་ དེ་རེད།

And then, again, (they¹) got to another side and saw a person with a big head and a thin (small) throat.

34. jətak -kə ʃtɛya wlaŋ jot -tere.

hungry. ghost -GEN reincarnation take/promise/sing:PFV SUB -FAC

ཡི་དྭགས་ གི་ རྩེས་པ་ ལྷངས་ ཡོད་ དེ་རེད།

It was reborn as a hungry ghost.

¹ "They" refers to Mnɛwzambəmʃtɛət and the two soldiers.

35. ta ndə ɣarna shək ma- nən -nere zer to, ndə ɣarna -ta ndəkstən
then DEM all:ABS what NEG- ok -FAC:EGO tell when DEM all:ABS -TOP world

ད འདི་ #འར་ན་ ལུ་ཞིག་ མ་ ཉན་ རེ་རེད། ཟེར་ རུས་ འདི་ #འར་ན་ ད འཇིག་རྟེན་
-na jot tu-kə zamə filajok ewi -tu-kə te ndəkstən -na

-LOC SUB when-LOC food:DAT waste do:PFV -NMLZ-ERG then world -LOC

ན་ ཡོད་ རུས་གི་ ཟ་མ་ལ་ #བསྐྱུག་གཡོག་ རུས་གི་ དེ་ འཇིག་རྟེན་ ན་
vət fnəlvəju -la ɣə tu-kə ta ndərkə tʃhəm ptəat -tere ze
go:PFV hell -DAT come:PFV when-LOC then like.this law judge:PFV -FAC tell

བྱད་ དཔྱུས་བའི་ཡུལ་ ལ་ རོངས་ རུས་གི་ ད འདི་ལྟར་གི་ ཁྲིམས་ བཅད་ དེ་རེད། ཟེར་
-le.

-CVB

ལེ་

"What's wrong with this¹?" (Mn̄ewzambəmst̄əət) asked. (The two soldiers) said, "This person became like this because he/she had wasted food while he/she was alive, so the judge judged him/her like this when he/she came to hell." (The two soldiers) said like this.

36. ta fn̄arvə ɣə tu tʃhəm hshot -to -lɔ ndə ɣarna jɪkwa ək
then hell:DAT come:PFV when law kill:IPFV -PROG -NMLZ DEM all:ABS CHI one

ད དཔྱུས་བར་ རོངས་ རུས་ ཁྲིམས་ གསོད་ དོ་ #ལུས་ འདི་ #འར་ན་ 一挂² ཞིག་

ʃti -le te jaŋ mn̄ewzambəmst̄əət jaŋ h̄ənrze -ngə ndə -na ptəat
look:PFV -CVB then again PSN again Yama -GEN DEM -LOC lead

བལྟས་ ལེ་ དེ་ ཡང་ མེ་བཟའ་འབྲུག་སྒྱུད་ ཡང་ གཤིན་ཇེ་ གི་ འདི་ ན་ འབྱིད་
təhə ɣə -lere.

bring:PFV come:PFV -FAC

ཁྱེར་ རོངས་ ལེ་རེད།

After showing (Mn̄ewzambəmst̄əət) all the tortures, Mn̄ewzambəmst̄əət was again brought to Yama.

37. ptəat təhə ɣə tu-kə mn̄ewzambəmst̄əət -kə ndərki ək ʃti
lead bring:PFV come:PFV when-LOC PSN -ERG like.this one look:PFV

འབྱིད་ ཁྱེར་ རོངས་ རུས་གི་ མེ་བཟའ་འབྲུག་སྒྱུད་ གིས་ འདི་ལྟར་གིས་ ཞིག་ བལྟས་
tu-kə, h̄ənrze -ngə ŋə ək ʃti -zək, h̄ənrze xhətaŋ ndək -lere.

when-LOC Yama -GEN face:DAT one look:PFV -INFER Yama ADV horrific -FAC

རུས་གི་ གཤིན་ཇེ་ གི་ རོངས་ ཞིག་ བལྟས་ ཞིག་ གཤིན་ཇེ་ འཇིག་རྟེན་ ལེ་རེད།

After bringing Mn̄ewzambəmst̄əət there, Yama was looking at her while Mn̄ewzambəmst̄əət looked at Yama. Yama was very scary.

¹ "This" refers to the person with a big head and a thin (small) throat.

² This local Chinese term is 全部 *quanbu* in Modern Standard Chinese.

38. tərəkəte hɛənɾze -ngə ndə -na ɣə -le ɛwak hshəm ntshə -le te
 then Yama -GEN DEM -LOC come:PFV -CVB hand three present:PFV -CVB then
 དྲུག་གི་འཕྲུལ་གྱི་གཞིན་པ་གསུམ་པོ་ལྟར་ བཞུགས་ བཞུགས་ འཕྲུལ་ བཞུགས་ བཞུགས་
 khinə wdat -təot -tere.

side:DAT sit:PFV -AUX -FAC

ཁ་ལས་ན་ བཞུགས་ #ཕྱི་ དེ་ལྟར་།

Then she came to Yama and sat beside Yama after she made three kowtows.

39. ta tɛutɛu -ɣa wdat tu-kə ra:ŋ womo mnə -zək ra:ŋ hɛənɾze -ngə
 then little -DAT sit:PFV when-LOC ADV girl person -INDEF ADV Yama -GEN
 ད་ ཅུས་ཅུས་ འ་ བཞུགས་ འཕྲུལ་གྱི་ #རང་ ལུ་མོ་ མི་ ཞིག་ #རང་ གཞིན་པ་ བཞུགས་
 ndə -na ptəot tɛhə ɣə -lere.

DEM -LOC lead bring:PFV come:PFV -FAC

འདི་ ན་ བཞུགས་ ཞུར་ འཕྲུལ་ བཞུགས་ བཞུགས་

After sitting for a while, a woman was brought to Yama's side.

40. tʂəɬ tɛhə ɣə -le ra:ŋ tərəkə hɛənɾze -ngə te womo mnə
 pull:PFV bring:PFV come:PFV -CVB ADV then Yama -ERG then girl person
 ལུ་ ཞུར་ ཞུར་ འཕྲུལ་ བཞུགས་ #རང་ #དྲུག་གི་ གཞིན་པ་ བཞུགས་ ད་ ལུ་མོ་ མི་
 fide ndzə -to -lere.

DEM:ABS ask:IPFV -PROG -FAC

དེ་ འདི་ ན་ བཞུགས་

After pulling to (Yama's) side, Yama was asking the woman,

41. ta tɛhe ndəkʂten -na jot tu ɕhi ɕhəɬʂək -zək ɛwi -le,
 then 2SG:ABS world -LOC SUB when religious.rite how.about -INDEF do:PFV -CVB
 ད་ ཞུར་ འཕྲུལ་གྱི་ ན་ ཡོད་ འཕྲུལ་ མོས་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཞིག་ ལུས་ བཞུགས་
 mane ɕhəɬʂək -kə ndon -ne ze tu-kə, ta womo mnə ndə

ma Ni how.about -GEN recite -CVB tell when-LOC then girl person DEM

མ་ཏི་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ བཞུགས་ འདོན་ ན་ ཞུར་ འཕྲུལ་གྱི་ ད་ ལུ་མོ་ མི་ འདི་

xhətaŋ xhətaŋ fɪnɤlva ɕhe -lere.

ADV ADV sin big -FAC

མི་ན་ཏུ་ མི་ན་ཏུ་ དམུམ་པ་ མེ་ བཞུགས་

"How many religious rites did you do and how many *ma Ni* did you chant when you were alive?"
 This woman was very sinful.

42. ta ze -lere, , ta ŋəshu shacha ndə -na fɪlɤhɪzəŋ len -nɔ
 then tell -FAC then 1PL:INCL:GEN place DEM -LOC song get/sing:IPFV -NMLZ
 ད་ ཞུར་ བཞུགས་ ད་ ར་ཚོ་ ས་མ་ འདི་ ན་ ལྷ་དབྱངས་ བཞུགས་ མེ་
 xwe -zək jot -ta mane ndon -nɔ xwe -zək met ze -lere.

example -INDEF SUB -CVB ma Ni recite -NMLZ example -INDEF SUB tell -FAC

དཔེ་ ཞིག་ ཡོད་ ད་ མ་ཏི་ འདོན་ མེ་ དཔེ་ ཞིག་ མེད་ ཞུར་ བཞུགས་

Then (the woman) said, "We have the custom of singing in our place, but we don't have the custom of chanting *ma Ni*." (She) said like this.

43. tərkaṭe hɛənɾze -ngə meloŋ pteak tɕhə -yə ɛək ʃti tu-kə te womo
 then Yama -ERG mirror raise bring:PFV -CVB one look:PFV when-LOC then girl
 དིར་གི་དེ་ གཤིན་མེད་ བུ་མོ་ མེ་མོང་ བུ་མོ་ བུ་མོ་ བུ་མོ་ བུ་མོ་ བུ་མོ་
 mnə ndə ndəkʂten -na jot tu ɕhi ɲilok -ya ɛwet mə-
 person DEM world -LOC SUB when religious.rite sensible -DAT do:IPFV NEG-
 མི་ འདི་ འཇིག་རྟེན་ ན་ ཡོད་ བུ་ མོ་ མོ་ གནས་ལུགས་ འ་ བྱེད་ མི་
 -to -lere, shem -ma xhətaŋ ʃnaŋ nak -lere.
 -PROG -FAC heart -LOC ADV heart blacken -FAC
 དོ་ བེ་རེད། མེས་ མ་ ཤིན་ཏུ་ སྤྱིང་ ནག་ བེ་རེད།
 Then, after Yama held a mirror and looked in it, and this woman really hadn't done any religious
 rites at all. She was black-hearted.
44. tərkaṭe hɛənɾze -ngə ze -lere, -aŋ, ta ndə shoŋ -ŋa rnamei ndzət -ta
 then Yama -ERG tell -FAC -INTERJ then DEM go -CVB soul pull:IPFV -CVB
 དིར་གི་དེ་ གཤིན་མེད་ བུ་མོ་ མེ་རེད། #ཡང་ ད་ འདི་ མོང་ འ་ རྣམ་ཤེས་ འབྱུང་ ད་
 tɕhere shoŋ -ya ɲalvəjɔ -la mphon -ŋa thoŋ ze -lə.
 take:CVB:REA go -CVB hell -DAT throw:IMP -CVB do:IMP tell -FAC
 བྱེད་མེ་ མོང་ འ་ དམུལ་བའི་ཡུལ་ འ་ འཕོངས་ འ་ མོངས་ མེ་ བེགས་
 Then Yama said, "Oh! Then, take her soul and throw it in Hell."
45. tərkaṭa tɕhəmgotean -ngə ra:ŋ hehakthak nakɣwo -zək yə -le, ʃke
 then dog-head.soldier -GEN ADV iron.chain black -INDEF come:PFV -CVB neck
 #དིར་གི་ད་ བྱི་མགོ་ཅན་ བུ་མོ་ #རང་ ལུགས་ཐག་ རྣམ་པོ་ བུ་མོ་ འོངས་ བེ་ སྤྱི་
 mphon tʂət tɕhə -shoŋ -lere.
 throw:PFV pull:PFV bring:PFV -AUX -FAC
 འཕོངས་ བྱེད་ བྱེད་ མོང་ མོང་ བེ་རེད།
 Then the dog-head soldier came with a black iron chain and tied it around (the woman's) neck
 and pulled her away.
46. tʂət tɕhə ndzo tu-kə ta womnə fidi hɛənɾze -la fiŋɔɔ ndon
 pull:PFV bring:PFV go when-LOC then girl 3SG:ERG Yama -DAT beg recite
 བྱེད་ བྱེད་ འཕོ་ བུ་མོ་ ད་ #བུ་མོ་མྱུ་ དེས་ གཤིན་མེད་ འ་ རྣོག་ཨ་ འདོན་
 -to -lere.
 -PROG -FAC
 དོ་ བེ་རེད།
 As it was being pulled, the woman begged Yama for mercy and said,
47. ta ŋə lakɣwo mgo -na hshernak -kə ngeja -zək jot.
 then 1SG:GEN hand:GEN head -LOC pure.gold -GEN ring -INDEF SUB
 ད་ འདི་ ལག་པའི་ མགོ་ ན་ གསེར་ནག་ བུ་མོ་ #འགོ་ཡ་ བུ་མོ་ ཡོད་
 "I have a ring of pure gold on my finger.

48. ta tɛhe mo fɪnˌalvəjɔ -la mphon ma- htan -ta
 then 2SG:ABS 3SG:ABS hell -DAT throw:PFV NEG- proceed:IPFV -CVB
 དྲི རྒྱུལ་བའི་ཡུལ་ ལ་ འཕོངས་ མ་ གཏང་ དྲི
 nj ndə tɛhɔ zwən -ja ze -lere.
 1SG:ERG DEM 2SG:DAT give:IPFV -MP tell -FAC
 ངས་ འདི་ རྒྱུལ་ལ་ སྒྱིན་ ཡ་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།
 You please don't throw (me) in Hell and I will give you (the ring)."
49. tərkatə nan -na ma- nan -na fɪnˌalvəjɔ -la mphon -tan -lere.
 then listen:PFV -CVB NEG- listen:PFV -CVB hell -DAT throw:PFV -AUX -FAC
 དྲིར་གཞི་དེ་ ཉན་ ན་ མ་ ཉན་ ན་ དྲིལ་བའི་ཡུལ་ ལ་ འཕོངས་ བཏང་ བེ་རེད།
 Then (Yama) threw (the woman) into Hell without listening to her.
50. ta jan tɛk -ya wdat jot to-kə ra:ŋ amnɛ khayamgoɣa -zək
 then again INDEF -DAT sit:PFV SUB when-LOC ADV grandfather hoary-haired -INDEF
 དྲི ཡང་ ཅིག་ ལ་ བསྐྱད་ ཡོད་ དུས་གི་ #རང་ ཨ་མུ་ #ཁ་དྲུག་མགོ་དྲུག་ ཞིག་
 hɛnrze -ngə ndə -na mane ndon zor vət -ta ɣə -lere.
 Yama -GEN DEM -LOC ma Ni recite ADV go -CVB come:PFV -FAC
 གཞིན་མེ་ གི་ འདི་ ན་ མ་ཅི་ འདོན་ ཞོར་ བྱད་ དྲི འོངས་ བེ་རེད།
 Then while (they¹) were sitting there a hoary-haired old man came to Yama's side chanting *ma Ni*.
51. ɣə -le hɛnrze -ngə ndə -na ɣə -le, ɛwak hshəm ntshɔ
 come:PFV -CVB Yama -GEN DEM -LOC come:PFV -CVB hand three present:PFV
 འོངས་ བེ་ གཞིན་མེ་ གི་ འདི་ ན་ འོངས་ བེ་ བྱལ་ གསུམ་ འཆལ་
 -lere.
 -FAC
 བེ་རེད།
 (The old man) gave three kowtows after he had come to Yama's side.
52. ɛwak hshəm ntshɔ -le te jan hɛnrze -ngə ndzə -to -lere.
 hand three present:PFV -CVB then again Yama -ERG ask:IPFV -PROG -FAC
 བྱལ་ གསུམ་ འཆལ་ བེ་ དེ་ ཡང་ གཞིན་མེ་ གིས་ འདི་ དྲི བེ་རེད།
 Yama asked after the old man had given three kowtows.
53. ta tɛhe ndəkʂten -na jot to-kə mane ɕhətʂək -zək ndon -ne,
 then 2SG:ABS world -LOC SUB when-LOC ma Ni how.about -INDEF recite -CVB
 དྲི རྒྱུལ་ འཇིག་རྟེན་ ན་ ཡོད་ དུས་གི་ མ་ཅི་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཞིག་ འདོན་ བེ་
 ɕhi ɕhətʂək -zək ɕwi -le ze -le.
 religious.rite how.about -INDEF do:IMP -CVB say -CVB
 ཚོས་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཞིག་ སྤྱི་ བེ་ ཟེར་ བེ་
 "How many *ma Ni* did you chant and how many religious rites did you do when you were alive?"
 asked Yama.

¹ "They" refers to Mn̄ewzambəmʂtɛt, Yama, and the two soldiers.

54. *tərəkəta amnə fidi ndərkə ze -lere, ta khi ndəkʂten -na jot*
 then grandfather 3SG:ERG like.this tell -FAC then 3SG:ERG world -LOC SUB
 #དེ་ལོ་ན་ མ་མཁུ་ དེས་ འདི་ལྟར་གི་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད། ད་ ཁོས་ འཇིག་རྟེན་ ན་ ཡོད
tu-kə mane ɕhətʂək -zək ndon -ne, ɕhi ɕhətʂək -zək ɕwi
 when-LOC ma Ni how.about -INDEF recite -CVB religious.rite how.about -INDEF do:IMP
 དུས་གི་ མ་ཉི་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཞིག་ འདོན་ བེ་ ཚོས་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཞིག་ གྱུས་
-le,
-CVB
ལེ་
 Then the old man answered that he had chanted how many *ma Ni*, how many religious rites he had done,
55. *mane rdoʂki ɕhətʂək -zək -kə ɕhətʂək -zək ʂki -le,*
ma Ni stone.figure how.about -INDEF -GEN how.about -INDEF carve:PFV -CVB
མ་ཉི་ རོ་སྒྲ་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཞིག་ གི་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཞིག་ བརྒྱས་ ལེ་
 how many *ma Ni* stone figures of Buddha he had carved,
56. *tərəkəta rəpshə thok -ya mane ɕhətʂək -zək jan khi ɕwi -le,*
 then bone:GEN on -DAT ma Ni how.about -INDEF again 3SG:ERG do:PFV -CVB
 #དེ་ལོ་ན་ རུས་པའི་ རོག་ ལ་ མ་ཉི་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཞིག་ ཡང་ ཁོས་ གྱུས་ ལེ་
 how many figures of Buddha had been carved on bones,
57. *tərəkəta wshamba ɕhətʂək -zək mphon -e filanʂta ɕhətʂək -zək*
 then thought how.about -INDEF throw:PFV -CVB wind.horse how.about -INDEF
 #དེ་ལོ་ན་ བསམ་པ་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཞིག་ འཕོངས་ རེ་ རྒྱུད་ ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཞིག་
pteak -ye, lam -ngə rdo ɕhətʂək -zək ntho -le,
 raise -CVB road -GEN stone how.about -INDEF pick:PFV -CVB
བརྒྱུགས་ གེ་ ལམ་ གི་ རྩ་ #ཇི་འདྲའི་ ཞིག་ #འཐུས་ ལེ་
 And how many delusions had been abandoned, how many wind horses¹ had been raised (flown),
 how many stones on the ways had been picked up.
58. *tate ndə zɿkwa hɕənɾɕe -la ɕək ɕwat -tere.*
 after.that DEM CHI Yama -DAT one tell -FAC
 ད་དེ་ འདི་ 一挂 གཤམ་རྩེ་ ལ་ ཞིག་ བཤད་ དེ་རེད།
 (The old man) told Yama all these things.

¹ *hlan* 'wind' and *ʂta* 'horse' indicate "wind horse," which is a square of paper or cloth featuring a printed horse and other symbols. People fly *hlanʂta* in the wind to have better fortune.

59. tərəkəta jaŋ hɛənɾze ɕhɪrtɕə -ngə meloŋ ndərki wlaŋ
 then again Yama Dharmapala -ERG mirror like.this kake/promise/sing:PFV
 #དིར་གི་དྲ་ ཡང་ གཤམ་མེད་ ཚུལ་ གིས་ མེ་མོང་ འདི་ལྷ་ར་གིས་ བྲངས་
 tɕhere ɕək ʃti tu-kə , te amnɛ ndə -ta ndzəkʃten -na
 take:PFV:CVB one look:PFV when-LOC then grandfather DEM -TOP world -LOC
 རྩེར་རེ་ ཞིག་ བལྟས་ དུས་གི་ དེ་ ཡ་ཕྱེས་ འདི་ ད་ འཇིག་རྟེན་ ན་
 jot to ɕhi mdenpa ɕwi -lere.
 SUB when religious.rite ADV do:PFV -FAC
 ཡོད་ དུས་ ཚུལ་ བདེན་པ་ བྱས་ བེ་རེད།
 And then, as Yama held the mirror and looked in it, (he found that) this old man really had done many religious rites.
60. mnə -lə mnə tʃokyo -zək jən -nere.
 person -FOC person well -INDEF COP:EGO -FAC:EGO
 མི་ ལ་འད་ མི་ རྒྱ་ལོ་ ཞིག་ ཡིན་ རེ་རེད།
 He was also a very good man.
61. tərəkəta ze -lə, -aŋ, ta tɕho rnamei takɣwɛaŋ -ŋa shoŋ ze -lere.
 then tell -FAC -INTERJ then 3SG:GEN soul pure.land -DAT go tell -FAC
 #དིར་གི་དྲ་ ཟེར་ བེགས་ #ཡང་ ད་ རྩེད་ཀྱི་ རྩམ་ཤེས་ དག་པའི་ཞིང་ ང་ མོང་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།
 Then (Yama) said, "Oh, then your soul can go to the sacred realm."
62. tərəkəta amnɛ fidi ʃŋən -ngə lam ʃkaro -zək jot -te te
 then grandfather 3SG:ERG front -GEN road white -INDEF SUB -CVB then
 #དིར་གི་དྲ་ ཡ་ཕྱེས་ དེས་ ལྷུན་ གི་ ལམ་ དག་པ་ལོ་ ཞིག་ ཡོད་ དེ་ དེ་
 amnɛ ndə lam ʃkaro ɕwɔk -ye rnamei takɣwɛaŋ -ŋa vət -shaŋ -lere.
 grandfather DEM road white paint:PFV -CVB soul pure.land -DAT go -AUX -FAC
 ཡ་ཕྱེས་ འདི་ ལམ་ དག་པ་ལོ་ ལྷུགས་ གི་ རྩམ་ཤེས་ དག་པའི་ཞིང་ ང་ ལུད་ མོང་ བེ་རེད།
 Then the old man went along the road which was painted white and went to the sacred realm.
63. tərəkəta te mnɛwzambəmʃtɕət -ta fide hɛənɾze -ngə ze -lere.
 then then PSN -DAT DEM:ABS Yama -ERG tell -FAC
 #དིར་གི་དྲ་ དེ་ མེ་བཟའ་འབུམ་མྱིད་ ང་ དེ་ གཤམ་མེད་ གིས་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།
 Then Yama said to Mnɛwzambəmʃtɕət,
 64. ta tɕho tɕho ntɕhə -ʃhat xan ma- lon -zək.
 then 2SG:ABS 3SG:GEN die:IPFV -NMLZ CHI NEG- get.to -INFER
 ད་ རྩེད་ རྩེད་ཀྱི་ འཆི་ ཚད་ རྩེ་ མ་ བོན་ ཞིག་
 "It is not yet the time for your death."
65. ta tɕho jwan ndzəkʃten -na shoŋ ze -lere.
 then 2SG:ABS CHI world -DAT go tell -FAC
 ད་ རྩེད་ ལྷན་ འཇིག་རྟེན་ ན་ མོང་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།
 You go back to man's world."

66. tərəkəta ʃtamgotean -ta tʃwimgotean -ta ʃtəə -khə ɛwək
 then horse-head.soldier -CC mule-head.soldier -DAT send:IPFV -PROG cause:PFV
 #དེ་གི་དྲ་མགོ་ཅན་ དང་ རྩེ་མགོ་ཅན་ ད་ སྤྱེ་ ལུ་ བཅུག་
 -lere.
 -FAC
 བེ་རེད།
 Then the horse-head soldier and the mule-head soldier were ordered to escort
 (Mn̄ewzambəmʃtəət).
67. ʃtəu -le lamʃket -ta yə -le te fide tʃwimgotean -ngə
 send:PFV -CVB halfway -LOC come:PFV -CVB then DEM:ABS mule-head.soldier -ERG
 #བསྐྱལ་ བེ་ ལམ་ཤེད་ ད་ རོངས་ བེ་ དེ་ དེ་ རྩེ་མགོ་ཅན་ གིས་
 fide mn̄ewzambəmʃtəət -ta tʃi -lere, ta tcho ndəkʃten -na jot
 DEM:ABS PSN -LOC ask:PFV -FAC then 2SG:ABS world -LOC SUB
 དེ་ མེ་བཟའ་ལུ་མ་སྤྱོད་ ད་ རིས་ བེ་རེད། ད་ ལྷོད་ འཇིག་རྟེན་ ན་ ཡོད་
 to shəzək -ya tʃwi ʃteak, xhətaŋ ʃteak ze -lere.
 when what -DAT very(CHI) fear ADV fear say -FAC
 དུས་ ལུ་ཞིག་ ལ་ རྒྱུ་ སྤྱི་ལུ་ སྤྱི་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།
 Halfway there, the mule-head soldier asked Mn̄ewzambəmʃtəət, "What are you most afraid of in
 the world?"
68. tərəkəte mn̄ewzambəmʃtəət -ngə ta mo ndəkʃten -na jot to-kə wzolva
 then PSN -ERG then 3SG:ABS world -LOC SUB when-LOC frog
 དེ་གི་དེ་ མེ་བཟའ་ལུ་མ་སྤྱོད་ གིས་ ད་ མ་ འཇིག་རྟེན་ ན་ ཡོད་ དུས་གི་ སྤྱལ་བ་
 tʃwi ʃteak ze -lere, wzolva xhətaŋ ʃteak ze -lere.
 very(CHI) fear tell -FAC frog ADV fear tell -FAC
 རྒྱུ་ སྤྱི་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད། སྤྱལ་བ་ སྤྱི་ལུ་ སྤྱི་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།
 Then Mn̄ewzambəmʃtəət said that she was most afraid of frogs in the world, frogs scared her the
 most.
69. tərəkəta ^ tərəkəte tʃwimgotean -ngə ze -lere, ta tcho teraŋ shoŋ -ta
 then pause then mule-head.soldier -ERG tell -FAC then 2SG:ABS today go -CVB
 #དེ་གི་དྲ་ དེ་གི་དེ་ རྩེ་མགོ་ཅན་ གིས་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད། ད་ ལྷོད་ དེ་རིང་ མོང་ ད་
 tcho fɪnətʃhəm naŋ -ŋa ta wzolva -zək jot.
 3SG:GEN quilt inside -DAT then frog -INDEF SUB
 ལྷོད་ཀྱི་ གཞིན་ཆེས་ ནང་ ལ་ ད་ སྤྱལ་བ་ ཞིག་ ཡོད་
 Then the mule-head soldier said, "There is a frog in your quilt if you go (home) today.

70. ta t̥ho ma- ʃteak -ya fɪnətshəm nan -ŋa ndʊ -la shoŋ -ta te
 then 2SG:ABS NEG- fear -CVB quilt inside -DAT get.into -CVB go -CVB then
 ད མྱོད་ མ་ ལྷལ་ ལ་ གཞིན་ཆེན་ རྒྱ་ ང་ འཇུ་ ལ་ སྒྱུ་ ད་ དེ་
 tʃak -khə ze -lere.

ok -PROG tell -FAC

དག་ ལུ་ ཟེར་ བེ་རེད།

You please don't be afraid and just crawl into your quilt."

71. tərkaʔe ʃteʊ -tan -ŋa te tʃwimgotean -ta ʃtamgotean vət -ʃhan
 then send:PFV -AUX -CVB then mule-head.soldier -CC horse-head.soldier go -AUX
 དིར་གཞི་དེ་ #བསྐྱུ་ བཏང་ ང་ དེ་ རྒྱུ་མགོ་ཅན་ ད་ ཏ་མགོ་ཅན་ བྱང་ སྒྱུ་
 -nere.

-FAC:EGO

ཅེ་རེད།

Then, after seeing (M̥newzambəmʃtəʔ) off, the mule-head soldier and the horse-head soldier left.

72. tərkaʔa m̥newzambəmʃtəʔ ʃteak zor nan -ŋa yə -le ɕək ʃti
 then PSN fear ADV inside -DAT come:PFV -CVB one look:PFV
 #དིར་གཞི་དེ་ མེ་བཟའ་འབྲུག་ལྷིད་ ལྷལ་ ཞོར་ རྒྱ་ ང་ འོངས་ ལེ་ ཞིག་ བཞུས་
 to-kə, te fɪnətshəm nan -na mdenpa wzɔlva ɕhe -zək jot -tere.
 when-LOC then quilt inside -LOC ADV frog big -INDEF SUB -FAC

དུས་གི་ དེ་ གཞིན་ཆེན་ རྒྱ་ རྒྱ་ བདེན་པ་ ལྷལ་བ་ ཆེ་ ཞིག་ ཡོད་ དེ་རེད།

And after M̥newzambəmʃtəʔ returned home, being very afraid, she looked in the quilt, and there really was a big frog in the quilt.

73. tərkaʔa fide ma- ʃteak -ya, fidi fɪnətshəm nan -ŋa ndʊ -shoŋ -lere.
 then DEM:ABS NEG- fear -CVB 3SG:ERG quilt inside -DAT get into -AUX -FAC
 #དིར་གཞི་དེ་ མ་ ལྷལ་ ལ་ དེས་ གཞིན་ཆེན་ རྒྱ་ ང་ འཇུ་ སྒྱུ་ བེ་རེད།
 And then, she didn't feel scared and crawled into the quilt.

74. fɪnətshəm nan -ŋa ndʊ -shoŋ -e te m̥newzambəmʃtəʔ teŋwo rofjan
 quilt inside -DAT get.into -AUX -CVB then PSN wail music
 གཞིན་ཆེན་ རྒྱ་ ང་ འཇུ་ སྒྱུ་ བེ་ དེ་ དེ་ མེ་བཟའ་འབྲུག་ལྷིད་ ཅོང་བ་ རོལ་དབྱངས་
 teak -htsak -lere.

ring.out -AUX -FAC

གྲགས་ གཙག་ བེ་རེད།

After crawling into the quilt, M̥newzambəmʃtəʔ heard some funeral music.

75. teak -htsak -ye mǝrkə jara shat to-kə ɛək ʃti to-kə,
ring.out -AUX -CVB 3SG:REFL:ABS upwards wake when-LOC one look:PFV when-LOC
མཁམ་ གཅན་གྱི་ མོ་རང་ ཡར་ར་ སང་ འུ་གི་ ཞིག་ བརྟམ་ འུ་གི་
mǝrkə xhə -shoŋ -e jɔ -ngə mɲɔ ɕhi ɕwet
3SG:REFL:ABS die:PFV -AUX -CVB home -GEN people:ERG religious.rite do:IPFV
མོ་རང་ ཞི་ སང་ ར་ ཡུ་གི་ ཞིས་ ཚས་ ཟེད་
-to -lere.
-PROG -FAC

དོ་ བེ་རེད།

When she woke up and looked around, she saw that she was dead and her family was doing religious rites for her.

76. ɕhi ɕwet -to -lɔ -ngə ta zɿkwa tɛɔ jəkrək pɬɔ
religious.rite do:IPFV -PROG -NMLZ -ERG then CHI CHI sutras.chanter look.for:PFV
ཚས་ ཟེད་ དོ་ #ལུས་ ཞི་ ན་ འ་གཱ་ རྒྱ་ ཡིག་རིགས་ བཅའ་
yə -le khaji -la wdat -taŋ -ye, te mɲewzambəmʂtɛt -kə fɪnaʂkat
come:PFV -CVB half -DAT sit:PFV -AUX -CVB then PSN -GEN story
འོངས་ བེ་ #ཁ་ཡས་ ལ་ བརྟམ་ བཏང་ ཞི་ ར་ བེ་བཟའ་འབྲུམ་གྱིད་ ཞི་ གནའ་སྒྲོད་
ndə ndzək -taŋ -lere.
DEM succeed -AUX -FAC

འདི་ འགྲིགས་ བཏང་ བེ་རེད།

Because it was a religious rite, they all (her family) had invited a sutra chanter and had sat beside (Mɲewzambəmʂtɛt). Then, the story called Mɲewzambəmʂtɛt is complete.

77. te fɪnaʂkat ʈhar -thɔ.
then story finish:PFV -SEN
དེ་ གནའ་སྒྲོད་ ཚར་ བཤ་
Then the story is finished.

ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person	COP	copula
2	second person	CVB	converb
3	third person	DAT	dative
ABL	ablative	DEF	definite
ABS	absolute	DEM	demonstrative
ADV	adverb	DU	duality
AUX	auxiliary	EGO	egophoric
CC	coordinating conjunction	ERG	ergative
CHI	Chinese	PRT	PRTusive

FAC	factual	PFV	perfective
FOC	focus	PL	plurality
GEN	genitive	PROG	progressive
IMP	imperative	PSN	person name
INDEF	indefinite	Q	question particle/marker
INTERJ	interjection	REDUP	reduplicative
IPFV	imperfective	REFL	reflexive
LOC	locative	SEN	sensorial
MIR	mirative	SG	singular
MP	modal particle	SUB	substantive verb
NEG	negative	TOP	topic
NMLZ	nominalization		

M̄n̄EWZAMBƏM̄ʂt̄əT RETOLD

Long ago, there was a very good person named M̄n̄ewzambəṃʂt̄əṭ. She was very fond of religious rites and chanting *ma Ni*. One day, after Yama Dharmapala had a dream, he summoned a mule-head soldier and a horse-head soldier and told them that he had dreamed of a girl who was going to die. He told the soldiers to go and bring him her soul. It was time for M̄n̄ewzambəṃʂt̄əṭ to die.

The two soldiers left and brought back the soul of M̄n̄ewzambəṃʂt̄əṭ. Yama looked and said that there were two girls named M̄n̄ewzambəṃʂt̄əṭ and the soldiers had brought the wrong one. Actually, the soldiers had brought the soul of the girl who often practiced religion.

Yama said, "Well, since you two have brought this one, let it be."

M̄n̄ewzambəṃʂt̄əṭ and Yama looked at each other. The girl was not frightened. Yama said, "It's OK that you brought this one. You two take her to Hell."

The two soldiers took M̄n̄ewzambəṃʂt̄əṭ to Hell and showed her four tortures. First, she saw someone's tongue lying on the ground. The second was a person's eyeballs that had been gouged out and discarded on the ground. The third torture was a man's hands that had been nailed and discarded. The fourth torture was a person reborn as a hungry ghost with a big head and a very narrow throat. These people received these punishments because they had done bad things while they were alive.

After showing her these tortures, the soldiers brought M̄n̄ewzambəṃʂt̄əṭ to Yama. Yama and M̄n̄ewzambəṃʂt̄əṭ looked at each other. This time, M̄n̄ewzambəṃʂt̄əṭ thought Yama was very scary because she thought he might throw her in Hell, so she kowtowed three times to Yama and sat beside him.

After sitting for a while, a woman was brought to Yama, who asked her how many religious rites she had done and how many *ma Ni* she had chanted while alive.

This very sinful woman told Yama that singing was a custom in her place, but they didn't have the custom of chanting *ma Ni*.

Yama held a mirror, looked into it, and knew she was black-hearted and had done no religious rites. Yama told one of the soldiers to take her soul and throw it into Hell.

The dog-head soldier came with a black iron chain, tied it around her neck, and pulled. The woman begged Yama not to throw her in Hell and said she would give him her pure-gold finger-ring. Yama threw her into Hell without listening.

While sitting there, a hoary-haired old man chanting *ma Ni* came to Yama and kowtowed three times. Yama asked how many *ma Ni* he had chanted and how many religious rites he had done when he was living.

The old man replied with the number of *ma Ni* he had chanted, the number of religious rites he had done, the number of *ma Ni* figures of Buddha he had carved on stones and bones, the number of delusions he had abandoned, the number of wind horses he had flown, and the number of stones he had picked up and placed on boundary markers when he was crossing mountains from one valley to another.

Yama gazed into his mirror and found that the old man had really done many religious activities. He was a very good man, so Yama let the old man go to the sacred realm.

Yama told Mn̄ewzambəm̄st̄ət to return to the human world and ordered the horse-head and mule-head soldiers ordered to escort her. Halfway there, the mule-head soldier asked Mn̄ewzambəm̄st̄ət what she was most afraid of. Mn̄ewzambəm̄st̄ət said that frogs scared her the most.

The mule-head soldier said, "Today, you will find a frog in your quilt when you get home. Just crawl into your quilt. Don't be afraid."

After seeing Mn̄ewzambəm̄st̄ət off, the mule-head and horse-head soldiers left.

Once Mn̄ewzambəm̄st̄ət returned home, she really found a big frog in her quilt. Unafraid, she crawled into the quilt and then heard funeral music. She looked around and realized that she was dead. Her family was doing religious rites for her. They had invited a sutra chanter and were all sitting by Mn̄ewzambəm̄st̄ət.

This story known as Mn̄ewzambəm̄st̄ət is finished.

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TIBETAN TERMS

'brong lung འབྲོང་ལུང་། County

'brug gu འབྲུག་གུ་ Township

'brug rgyal འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་། a person's name

'jigs byed skyabs འཇིགས་བྱེད་སྐྱབས་།

'ju lag འབྲུ་ལག་ County

'ju lag chu bo འབྲུ་ལག་ཆུ་བོ་ River

bkra shis phyug lung བརྟ་ཤིས་ཕྱུག་ལུང་། Township

b+wa za བ་བ་ཇ་། Township

byang dpa' བྱང་དཔ་། Township

chu bzang ཆུ་བཟང་། chu bzang dgon dga' ldan mi

'gyur gling ཆུ་བཟང་དགོན་དགའ་ལྡན་མི་འབྲུར་གླིང་།

Monastery

chu cha ཆུ་ཇ་། Township

co ne ཅོ་ནེ་ County

dag pa'i zhing དག་པའི་ཞིང་།, a Buddha field

dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས་།, a school of Tibetan Buddhism

dgo lung དགོ་ལུང་། County

dor zhi དོར་ཞི་ Township

dpa' ris དཔ་འ་རིས་། (broadly) Area, (narrowly)

County

dpa' ris dkar po དཔ་འ་རིས་དཀར་པོ་།, a term

indigenous Tibetans use for themselves in

Dpa' ris

dpa' ris mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas

gling དཔ་འ་རིས་མཚོ་དྲེན་ཐང་བརྟ་ཤིས་དར་རྒྱས་གླིང་།

Monastery

dpa' ris pa དཔ་འ་རིས་པ་།, a term for indigenous

Tibetans in Dpa' ris

d+song ཨོང་།

gshin rje གཤིན་རྗེ་། Yama Dharmapala

gzhug rub གཞུག་རུབ་། Village

hor rdzong ཧོར་རྫོང་། County

khams ཁམས་། Area

lha mtsho skyid ལྷ་མཚོ་སྐྱིད་།

ma Ni མ་ཉི།, a mantra

mchod rten thang མཚོ་དྲེན་ཐང་། Monastery

mdung nag མདུང་ནག་། Area

mdung nag pa མདུང་ནག་པ་།, a term indigenous

Tibetans in Mdung nag call themselves

mgo log མགོ་ལོག་ Prefecture

mtsho byang མཚོ་བྱང་། Prefecture

mtsho shar མཚོ་ཤར་། City

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན་། Province

oM ma Ni pad+me hUM ཨོཾ་མ་ཉི་པདྨེ་ཧཱུྃ།, a mantra

rdo rje རོ་རྗེ།, a person's name

rgod gtsang རོད་གཙང་། City

rgya tig རྒྱ་ཏིག་ Township

rma chu རྩ་ཆུ་ County

rta thang རྩ་ཐང་། County

sems nyid སེམས་ཉིད་། Township

song སོང་།

stag lung སྟག་ལུང་། Township

sum mdo སུམ་མདོ་། Township

sum pa སུམ་པ་། Township

CHINESE TERMS

Bazha 巴扎 Township	Quezang 却藏 Monastery
Daitong 大通 River	Shanghai 上海 City
Datong 大通 County	Song Zhanfeng 宋占峰 a person's name
Dongna 东纳 Tribe	Song Zhanhui 宋占慧 a person's name
Douyin 抖音 App	Shongshan 松山 Township
Gansu 甘肃 Province	Shuobei 朔北 Township
Gulang 古浪 County	Songduo 松多 Township
Guoluo 果洛 Prefecture	Songlin 松林 Township
Haibei 海北 Prefecture	Sunan 肃南 County
Haidong 海东 City	Tiantang 天堂 Township
Huarui 华锐 Area	Tianzhu 天祝 County
Huangcheng 皇城 Township	Tu 土, Monguor, Mongghul, Mangghuer, an ethnic group in China
Hui 回, an Islamic ethnic group in China	Weixin 微信 App
Huzhu 互助 County	Wuwei 武威 City
Jiading 加定 Township	Xianfeng 先锋 Village
Jiuxijie 久西杰, a person's name	Xianghua 向化 Township
Kuaishou 快手 App	Xianmi 仙米 Township
Maqu 玛曲 County	<i>yijing</i> 已经
Mati 马蹄 Township	Yongdeng 永登 County
Mnewzambəmstæt, a woman's name	Zhoujia 周加 a person's name
Menyuan 门源 County	Zhuaxixiulong 抓喜秀龙 Township
Nanmenxia 南门峡 Township	Zhucha 朱岔 Village
Qifeng 祁丰 Township	Zhugu 珠固 Township
Qinghai 青海 Province	Zhuoni 卓尼 County
<i>quanbu</i> 全部	

TWO MANGGHUER (TU, MONGUOR, MONGGHUL) WEDDING SONGS (2008) FROM MINHE COUNTY, QINGHAI PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Wen Xiangcheng 文祥呈*

ABSTRACT

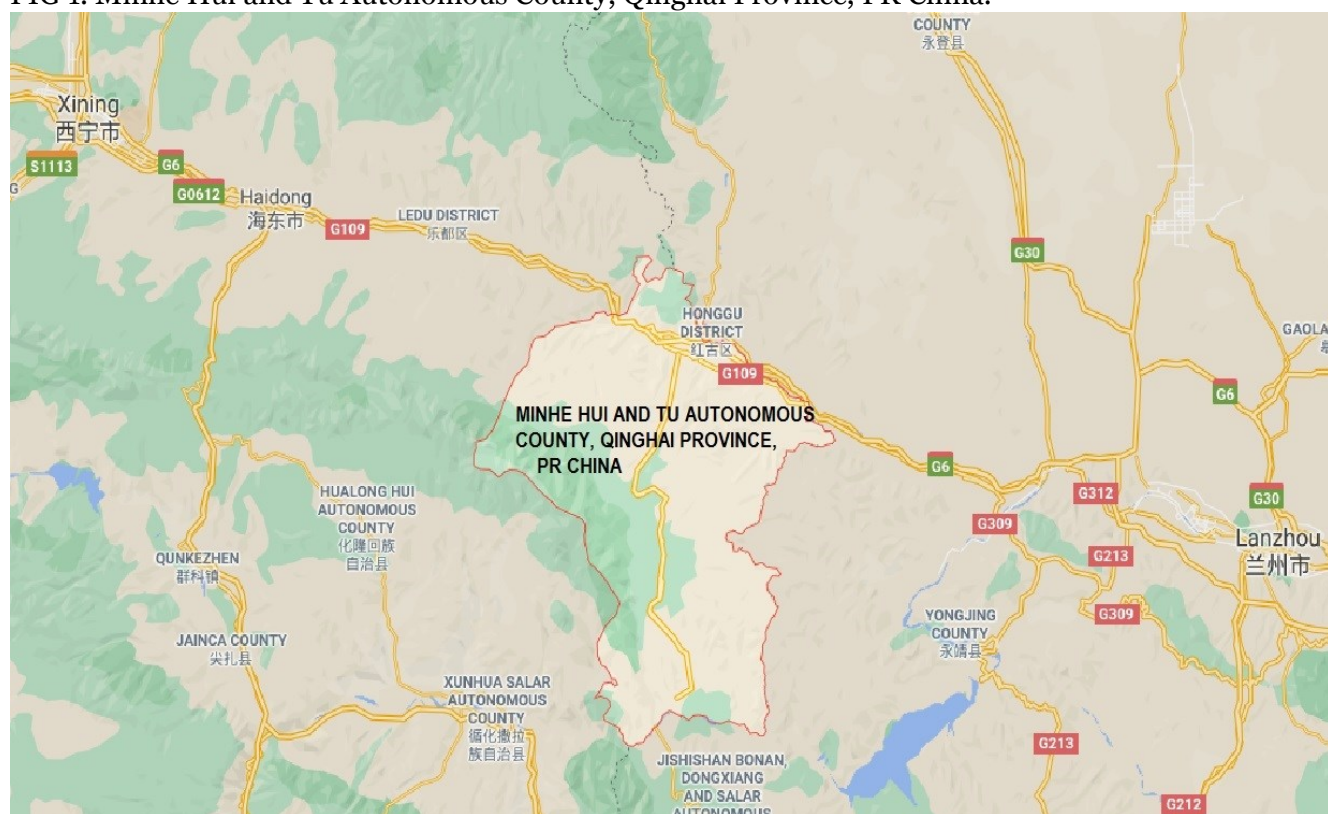
This paper presents two Mangghuer (Monguor, Tu) wedding songs from Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous County, Qinghai Province, PR China. "Highland Barley Liquor" (ten lines) is sung in a mix of Mangghuer and the local Chinese dialect. "Gatehouse" (six seven-line stanzas) is sung in the local Chinese dialect. "Highland Barley Liquor" is glossed and is presented as performed in English translation and Modern Standard Chinese (MSC). "Gatehouse" is glossed and presented in English translation, local Chinese as performed, and in MSC. Collection, singers, and performance context details are given. This is the first work featuring Mangghuer wedding song lyrics as sung is glossed, translated into English and, in the case of Mangghuer lyrics, translated into English and Chinese.

KEYWORDS

China minority weddings, China wedding songs, Mangghuer (Tu, Monguor), Qinghai folk culture, Minhe County weddings, Mongolian wedding songs

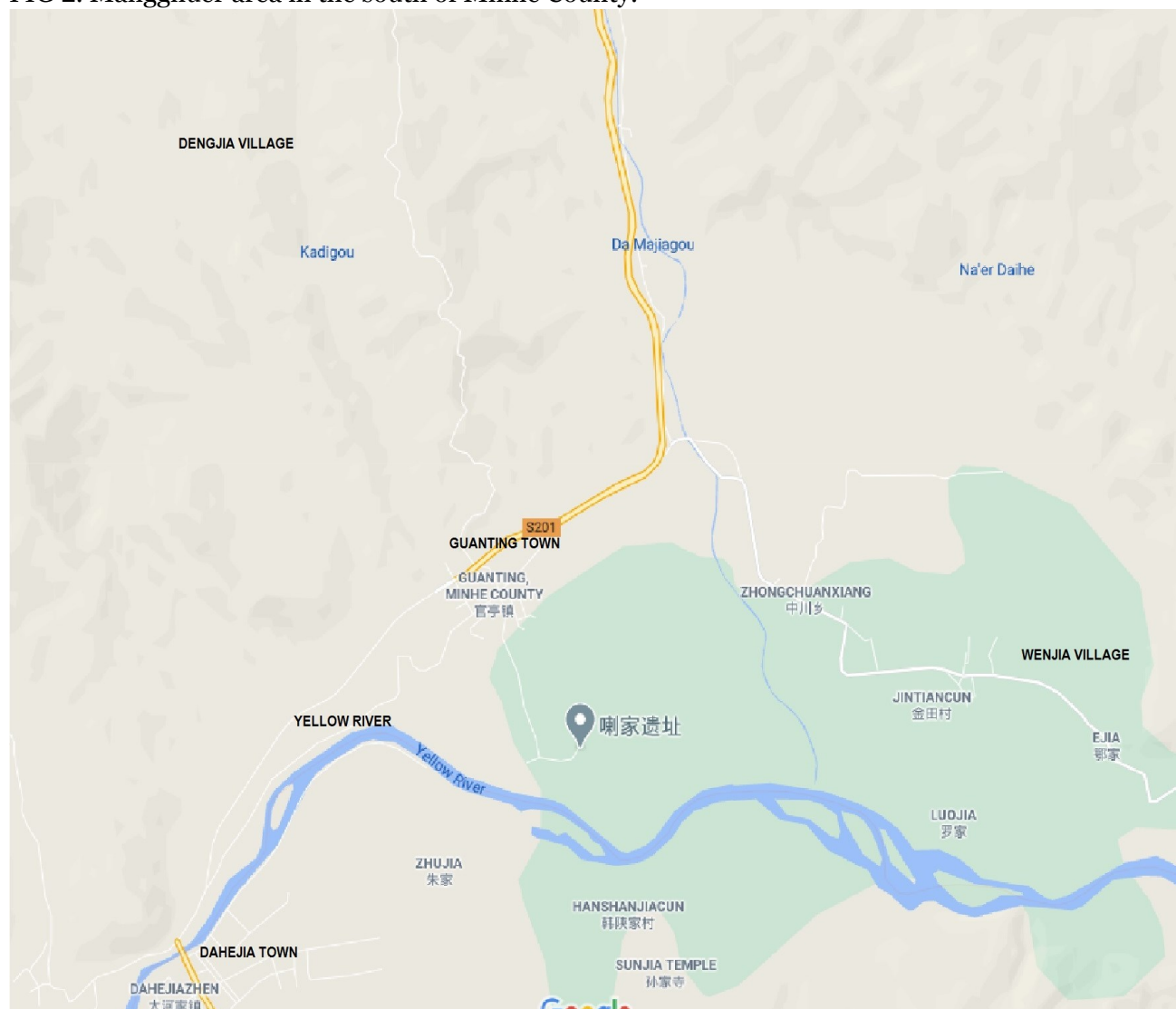
INTRODUCTION

FIG 1. Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous County, Qinghai Province, PR China.¹



* Wen Xiangcheng. 2021. Two Mangghuer (Tu, Monguor, Mongghul) Wedding Songs (2008) from Minhe County, Qinghai Province, PR China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:275-295.

¹ An edited version of <https://tinyurl.com/f3b4cedn>, accessed 20 March 2021.

FIG 2. Mangghuer area in the south of Minhe County.¹

It was a Saturday morning in June 2008 when my friend, Mr. Deng Yulong (b. 1986), phoned and asked, "How's your Mangghuer folk music collecting going? My uncle returned home yesterday. He is famous for his songs in my home village area. What if we visit him this weekend?"

I was collecting folk songs and looking for Mangghuer singers in my home area. It was, at times, quite frustrating because most younger villagers had left home to earn money in urban areas. So, eagerly accepting Mr. Deng's invitation, I jumped out of bed, prepared my sound recorder and camera, and rushed to the Guanting Senior Middle School where he teaches.

About twenty minutes later, I was sitting behind Mr. Deng on a motorcycle, heading to Dengjia Village, located in the mountains north of the Yellow River. Around noon, about thirty minutes later, we reached Mr. Deng's home. At this time, local Mangghuer had started building houses with armored concrete. However, Mr. Deng's village houses featured traditional timber and cob wall construction, with traditional wood-carved decorations. The narrow tracks leading to and from the mountain villages made transporting modern building materials virtually impossible.

After arriving, we found that Mr. Deng's uncle was visiting his wife's parents in Xing'er Tibetan Autonomous Township. His son told us he wouldn't be back that night. Few people were in the village. That day, most adults were doing voluntary labor in the village monastery, Ziger. Mr. Deng told me

¹ An edited version of <https://tinyurl.com/p3svpu3c>, accessed 20 March 2021.

that Ziger was Tibetan for "monastery," and he didn't know the monastery's real name.¹ Later, Mr. Deng suggested we find someone at the monastery construction site to sing, but I didn't want to disturb them.

I was aware of Yindong Ghuer 'Silver Cave Valley' near Mr. Deng's village from reading *Wuyan de Niujiaohao 'The Wailing Bullhorn'* (published in 1989) written in Chinese by the Mangghuer writer, Bao Yizhi (b. 1951).² The first published literary treatment I had read focused on places and people in my home area. Yindong Ghuer was one of the locations featured in this work. I asked Mr. Deng to take me there. Elders say that it is the only place that produced coal in the Sanchuan³ Mangghuer area.⁴ According to the description in *Wuyan de Niujiaohao*, there must have been virgin forests in this area at some point in the past. However, bushes, flowers, and grass were all I saw. Such a green, lush area is rare these days in my home area. Anyway, I thought it was an ideal setting for Bao's stories.

It was twilight as we rode back to Guanting Town. Passing through Renjia Village, we saw a woman sweeping a yard in front of a small shop. No other buildings were near. After several hours of walking in Yindong Ghuer we were thirsty, so we stopped to buy drinks.

"How about having some cups of hot water?" asked the shop owner after we bought two bottles of Pepsi, "These commercial drinks can't quench your thirst. I have a solar cooker here in the yard, so I have plenty of hot water."

Ms. Zhu Lanxiang (b. 1946) was talkative. I told her the purpose of our trip and asked if she could sing Mangghuer folk songs. She laughed, "Of course! Everybody can sing Mangghuer songs! We can't sing any modern songs. We sing only the old songs."

Though she was a bit shy, she agreed to sing. It was dark and hot inside her shop, so we moved to the yard where there two or three plastic stools and one wooden chair. Ms. Zhu and I spent several minutes discussing who should sit in the chair. Ms. Zhu insisted I sit in the chair because I was a guest, while I insisted that she take the chair because she was much older than me and she would sing. She finally consented. Mr. Deng and I sat on the stools.

As soon as she started singing, I realized that she was an excellent singer. Her melodious singing flew into the valley in front of her small shop. She sang two wedding songs (including "Highland Barley Liquor,"⁵ below) and a lullaby (not presented here). Traditionally, during Mangghuer weddings in the Sanchuan Mangghuer Area, two men from the groom's home come to the bride's home at night to take her to the groom's home. Women from the bride's village sing this song to the bridetakers while offering them liquor.

¹ Ziger may be from *sgar* 'small (usually village) monastery' derived from *dmag sgar* 'camp', 'military camp'. (I thank Skal bzang nor bu for this information.)

² For more on Bao, see Stuart and Hu (1991, 1990). For a story from this collection translated from Chinese to English, see Bao (1991).

³ Sanchuan 'Three Plains' is an unofficial term used by locals for where Mangghuer live north of the Yellow River. "Sanchuan" does not appear on lists of administrative divisions. The original meaning of *chuan* is "river" in Chinese, and also refers to alluvial plains and relatively flat, low-lying places between mountains.

⁴ Before the 1980s, most Mangghuer did not use coal for cooking or heating because coal was expensive and difficult to transport from a mountain area such as Yindong Ghuer. In the 1980s, locals began using metal stoves for heating and cooking. At this time, the Mangghuer who purchased coal generally did so from the Guanting Town market for winter use, particularly during the Spring Festival period. Firewood and livestock dung were common winter fuels. In the summer, locals burned straw when cooking and boiling water. Around the year 2000, gas was introduced as a fuel in Sanchuan. Wen Yingxian was the first Wenjia Village resident to cook with bottled gas, which he purchased in nearby Danhejia Town (located in Jishishan Bao'an, Dongxiang, and Salar (Sala) Autonomous County, Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province). Since 2010, Mangghuer families increasingly used gas as cooking fuel because it was faster and more convenient than using straw. In 2020, bottled gas could easily be purchased from Guanting Town or calling a delivery service and having it brought to the home. Wen Jinde (b. 1949) told me that very few people in the vicinity of his village (Wenjia) fetched coal from Yindong Ghuer when he was a child.

⁵ <https://bit.ly/3qZoGte>, accessed 30 January 2021.

After I finished recording, I asked if I could take her picture. She agreed and removed her scarf, explaining, "We mountain women wear scarves, which are not stylish today on the Guanting streets. Let me take it off, or people will laugh when they see my picture."

A week later, I had her photograph developed and asked Mr. Deng to give it to her the next time he went home.

FIG 3. Yindong Ghuer (2008, Wen Xiangcheng).



About two weeks later, my elder brother (Wen Yingxian, b. 1974) and I invited our paternal cousin, Wen Xuezhong (b. 1978), to my brother's home in Wenjia Village. My Brother and Wen Xuezhong drank some liquor and began singing Mangghuer wedding songs (see "Gatehouse,"¹ below).

During weddings held by my paternal clan members, Wen Yingxian and Wen Xuezhong are singing partners because of their similar voices and age. Mangghuer often spend a week or more to practice singing and rehearsing before the wedding day. However, my brother and cousins had sung together many times, so they started singing after a few cups of liquor without rehearsing.

LOCATION

Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous County is located in Qinghai Province, PR China. The county population of 387,041 includes Han (172,269), Hui (156,546), Tu (43,585), and Tibetan (13,752), living in eight towns and fourteen townships (including Xing'er Tibetan Autonomous Township).²

¹ <https://bit.ly/2NQGJDR>, accessed 30 January 2021.

² <https://tinyurl.com/y3te7l5l>, accessed 29 January 2021.

The Mangghuer language shares typical morphosyntactic characteristics of Mongolic languages, however, phonologically, it strongly resembles Sinitic but has a stress system rather than a tone system (Slater 2003:2).

This paper presents two songs, "Highland Barley Liquor"¹ (ten lines) and "Gatehouse" (six seven-lined stanzas). "Highland Barley Liquor" is performed only by women (at weddings) and sung in a mix of Mangghuer and the local Chinese dialect. This song details how the singer made liquor from highland barley and now offers it in a porcelain cup to the bridgetakers. "Highland Barley Liquor" is glossed and translated into English and Modern Standard Chinese (MSC).

"Gatehouse" is performed only by men (at weddings) in the local Chinese dialect. This song is sung by two men from the groom's clan when liquor is offered to important guests, such as the matchmaker and the groom's and bride's maternal uncles seated together at the most important banquet table. The first five stanzas of the song describe an ideal Mangghuer family - wealthy and with three sons and one daughter.² Only wealthy Mangghuer families have imposing gatehouses. The family mentioned in this song has three sons and one daughter, and all are successful - a blessing to the new family. However, this song's immediate, practical purpose is to offer liquor to main guests, so the last stanza is the most important part of the song, with these key guests described as Eight-Treasure elders 'celestial beings'. When this last stanza is sung, young men from the groom's clan approach the guests and offer liquor.

This song is glossed and presented in English translation, local Chinese as performed, and an MSC version.³

In 2020, both men and women were singing the two songs just described.

While this paper is not the first work on Mangghuer songs (e.g., see Wang and Stuart 1995a, 1995b; Wang et al. 1995; Ma 1990; Hu and Stuart 1992; Zhu and Stuart 1996; Zhu, Qi, and Stuart 1997; Qi et al. 1999), it is the only work I am familiar with that features sung wedding lyrics that are glossed and translated into English and, in the case of Mangghuer lyrics, that are glossed and translated into Chinese and English.

SONG ONE: HIGHLAND BARLEY LIQUOR

1

boghuoling-ni andige boghuoling-her

低处的 鸡蛋 低一些

low-GEN egg low-COMP

Low egg is a bit low.⁴

¹ Local Mangghuer refer to this song as Boghuolingni Andige 'Low Egg' or Moghuolingni Andige 'Round Egg'. However, it must be noted that locals often refer to a song using its first line or a few words from the first line, which may not convey the meaning of the song. Zhu Lanxiang sang using *boghuoling* 'low'. However, I heard *moghuolingni andige* by other singers. *Moghuoling* 'round' is heard in Mangghuer in mountain areas. *Boghuoling* is very similar in pronunciation to *moghuoling*. This song was commonly heard in mountain areas during weddings in about the year 2000, and later was also heard in plain areas and both *boghuoling* and *moghuoling* were used by the singers, although Mangghuer in plain areas do not use the term *moghuoling* 'round' in daily communication.

² A Mangghuer family with at least two sons and one daughter is considered a model family.

³ The orthography for Mangghuer in this paper is based on the Chinese Pinyin system following Slater (2003). I write terms sung in the local Chinese dialect in a modified Chinese Pinyin system and also in MSC Pinyin. I thank Dr. Keith Slater for his assistance in glossing the songs in this paper.

⁴ Regarding "*Boghuolingni andige boghuoling'her*," I have not observed alcohol production among the Mangghuer. However, elders I consulted explained that egg was added to liquor when it was produced locally decades ago. This is likely related to protein in egg white precipitating suspended solids, clarifying the liquor.

2

qingkuo	qing-ni	duruasi	china-gu	ge
青稞	清的	酒	煮	做
highland barley	clear-GEN	liquor	boil-IMPERF	do

Boil highland barley to make clear liquor.

3

amukhang-ni	kuerniege	panluo-gu	ge
小米的	酒曲	搅拌进去	做
millet-GEN	yeast	stir-IMPERF	do

Stir yeast made from millet into the boiled highland barley.

4

shouqingla-gu	luzi-du	dala-gu	ge
燃烧很旺的	炉子里	酿造	做
blazing-IMPERF	stove-DAT	brew-IMPERF	do

Brew liquor on the blazing stove.

5

shazi	sha-ni	jiuger-du	jielie-gu	ge
沙子	黄色的	酒缸里	接	做
sand	yellow-GEN	liquor jar-DAT	collect-IMPERF	do

Collect liquor in the sand-yellow jar.

6

dala-sang-ni	kuguo	duruasi	muni	warzhighe-ni	zhongzhuer-du
酿造的	蓝色	酒	我的	陶瓷的	酒盅里
brew-PERF-NOMLZR	clear	liquor	my	porcelain-GEN	liquor cup-DAT

Brewed clear liquor in my porcelain cup.

7

cuguan	gaga	yo
娶馆	哥哥	哟
bridgetaker	older-brother	PRT

Older-Brother bridgetakers,

8

muni	qingkuo	qing-ni	dala-sang-ni	yizhong-ni	miaoke	ya
我的	青稞	清的	酿造的	一盅	品尝	呀
my	highland barley	clear-GEN	brew-PERF-NOMLZR	one cup-ACC	taste	PRT

Please taste one cup of liquor that I brewed from highland barley.

9

cuguan	gaga-ni
娶馆	哥哥
bridgetaker	older-brother

Older-Brother bridgetakers,

10

ni	yibei-ni	durausi-ni	qi	wu	yo
这	一杯的	酒	你	喝	哟
this	one cup-GEN	liquor-ACC	you	drink	PRT

Drink this cup of liquor.

MANGGHUER

¹Boghuolingni andige boghuoling'her.

²Qingkuo qingni duruasi chinagu ge.

³Amukhangni kuerniege panluogu ge.

⁴Shouqinglagu luzidu dalagu ge.

⁵Shazi shani jiugerdur jieliege ge.

⁶Dalasangni kuguo duruasi muni warzhigheni zhongzhuerdu.

⁷Cuguan gaga yo,

⁸Muni qingkuo qingni dalasangni yizhongni miaoke ya.

⁹Cuguan gagani,

¹⁰Ni yibeini durausini qi wu yo.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

¹Low egg is a bit low.

²Boil highland barley to make clear liquor.

³Stir yeast made from millet into the boiled highland barley.

⁴Brew liquor on the blazing stove.

⁵Collect liquor in the sand-yellow jar.

⁶Brewed clear liquor in my porcelain cup.

⁷Older-Brother bridgetakers,

⁸Please taste one cup of liquor that I brewed from highland barley.

⁹Older-Brother bridgetakers,

¹⁰Drink this cup of liquor.

MSC CHINESE TRANSLATION

¹Di chu de ji dan zai di yi dian.

²Ba feng shou de qing ke zhu shu niang jiu.

³Ba xiao mi zuo de jiu qu jiao ban jin qu.

⁴Zai xiong xiong ran shao de huo lu shang niang zao mei jiu.

⁵Niang hao de mei jiu jie dao sha huang se de jiu gang li.

⁶Qing qing de mei jiu dao jin wo tao ci de jiu zhong li.

⁷Qu guan ge ge,

⁸Qing ni pin chang yi zhong wo qin shou niang zao de mei jiu.

⁹Qu guan ge ge,

¹⁰Qing ni he xia zhe yi zhong mei jiu.

¹低处的鸡蛋再低一点。

²把丰收的青稞煮熟了酿酒。

³把小米做的酒曲搅拌进去。

⁴在熊熊燃烧的火炉上酿造美酒。

⁵酿好的美酒接到沙黄色的酒缸里。

⁶清清的美酒倒进我陶瓷的酒盅里。

⁷娶馆哥哥，

⁸请你品尝一盅我亲手酿造的美酒。

⁹娶馆哥哥，

¹⁰请你喝下这一盅美酒。

FIG 4. Wen Yingxian (L) and Wen Xuezhong (R) play a drinking game at the Wen ancestral graveyard (2009, Wen Xiangcheng).



SONG TWO: GATEHOUSE

1

menlou'er xiu-di gao
 门楼儿 修的 高
 gatehouse build-ASSOC high

Gatehouse built high.

2

menlou'er xiu-di gao ya
 门楼儿 修的 高 呀
 gatehouse build-ASSOC high PRT

Gatehouse built high.

3

si gezi tixuan zhe gua zai liang bian ya
 四 格子 提悬 着 挂 在 两 边 呀
 four corner overhanging thus hang at two side PRT

The four corners of the gatehouse are upturned on two sides.

4

dangzhong li gua shadeng ya
 当中 里 挂 纱灯 呀
 exactly in the center in hang up gauze lantern PRT

A gauze lantern is hung exactly in the center under the roof.

5

zuo-di shi you hu-di ren ya ai hai yo
 坐的 是 有 福的 人 呀 哎咳哟
 sit-ASSOC is has good fortune-GEN person PRT PRT

A man with good fortune lives in the house.

6

dangzhong li gua shadeng ya
 当中 里 挂 纱灯 呀
 exactly in the center in hang up gauze lantern PRT

A gauze lantern is hung exactly in the center under the roof.

7

zuo-di shi you hu-di ren ya ai hai yo
 坐的 是 有 福的 人 呀 哎咳哟
 sit-ASSOC is has good fortune-GEN person PRT PRT

A man with good fortune lives in the house.

8

dixing ma sange ren ai
 弟兄 嘛 三个 人 哎
 brothers PRT three person PRT

There are three brothers.

9

dixing ma sange ren ai
 弟兄 嘛 三个 人 哎
 brothers PRT three person PRT

There are three brothers.

10

da ya gege zuo-di shi hezhou cheng yo
 大 呀 哥哥 坐的 是 河州 城 哟
 big PRT elder brother sit-ASSOC is Hezhou City PRT

The eldest brother is the first leader of Hezhou City.¹

11

shou zhang shang xuehua'er yin ya
 手 掌 上 雪花儿 银 呀
 hand hold on snow silver PRT

He holds snow-white silver in his hands.

12

jie-di shi wenwu-di guan ya ai hai yo
 接的 是 文武的 官 呀 哎咳哟
 greet-ASSOC is civil and military-GEN officer PRT PRT

Greets civil officials and military officers.

13

shou zhang shang xuehua'er yin ya
 手 掌 上 雪花儿 银 呀
 hand hold on snow silver PRT

He holds snow-white silver in his hands.

14

jie-di shi wenwu-di guan ya ai hai yo
 接的 是 文武的 官 呀 哎咳哟
 greet-ASSOC is civil and military-GEN officer PRT PRT

Greets civil officials and military officers.

¹ In 2020, Hezhou City was known as Linxia City, Gansu Province.

15

er	gege	zhuangnongren	ai
二	哥哥	庄农人	哎
second	elder brother	farmer	PRT

The second elder brother is a farmer.

16

er	gege	zhuangnongren	ai
二	哥哥	庄农人	哎
second	elder brother	farmer	PRT

The second elder brother is a farmer.

17

xin	xiang	niannian	yao	chu	yi tang	men	ya
心	想	年年	要	出	一趟	门	呀
heart	think	every year	want	go out	one trip	door	PRT

What he wants is to leave once a year to earn money.

18

zou-liao	ge	zhuma	cheng	ya
走了	个	zhuma	城	呀
walk-PERF	once	Zhuma	City	PRT

He went to Zhuma City.

19

jin	yin-ha	na	dou	lier	liang	ya	ai hai yo
金	银下	拿	斗	俩儿	量	呀	哎咳哟
gold	silver-OBJ	take	<i>dou</i> ¹	with	measure	PRT	PRT

Earned so much gold and silver that he had to measure them by the *dou*.

20

zou-liao	ge	zhuma	cheng	ya
走了	个	zhuma	城	呀
walk-PERF	once	Zhuma	City	PRT

He went to Zhuma City.

21

jin	yin-ha	na	dou	lier	liang	ya	ai hai yo
金	银下	拿	斗	俩儿	量	呀	哎咳哟
gold	silver-OBJ	take	<i>dou</i>	with	measure	PRT	PRT

Earned so much gold and silver that he had to measure them by the *dou*.

¹ See <https://tinyurl.com/y3tukub9> (accessed 29 January 2021) for an example of a *dou* 'grain measure', which is similar to what is mentioned here.

22

san gege nianji qing ye
 三 哥哥 年纪 轻 呀
 third elder brother age young PRT

The third elder brother is young.

23

san gege nianji qing ye
 三 哥哥 年纪 轻 呀
 third elder brother age young PRT

The third elder brother is young.

24

song dao ge xuetang zhe ba ya shu-ha nian ya
 送 到 个 学堂 着 把 呀 书下 念 呀
 send arrive SG:INDEF school thus take PRT book-OBJ read PRT

He was sent to a school to study.

25

zou-liao ge beijing cheng ya
 走了 个 北京 城 呀
 walk-PERF once Beijing City PRT

He went to Beijing City to take the imperial examination.

26

zhuangyuan shi tou yi ming ya ai hai yo
 状元 是 头 一 名 呀 哎咳哟
 zhuangyuan¹ is top one place PRT PRT

Got first place and became a *zhuangyuan*.

27

zou-liao ge beijing cheng ya
 走了 个 北京 城 呀
 walk-PERF once Beijing City PRT

He went to Beijing City to take the imperial examination.

28

zhuangyuan shi tou yi ming ya ai hai yo
 状元 是 头 一 名 呀 哎咳哟
 zhuangyuan is top one place PRT PRT

Got first place and became a *zhuangyuan*.

¹ The scholar who received the highest score on highest level of the imperial examination (Hucker 1985:187).

29

yi ni ma ta xianliang ye
 一 女 嘛 她 贤良 耶
 one girl PRT she virtuous and kind PRT
 A virtuous and kind girl.

30

yi ni ma ta xianliang ye
 一 女 嘛 她 贤良 耶
 one girl PRT she virtuous and kind PRT
 A virtuous and kind girl.

31

wansuiye xuan ta zuo-liao zhenggong ya
 万岁爷 选 她 做了 正宫 呀
 emperor choose her become-PERF empress PRT
 The emperor chose her as his empress.

32

zuo-di shi jinlong dian ya
 坐的 是 金龙 殿 呀
 sit-ASSOC is Golden Dragon Palace PRT
 She sits in the Golden Dragon Palace.

33

tianxia'er-ha bao taiping ya ai hai yo
 天下儿下 保 太平 呀 哎咳哟
 the world-OBJ protect peace PRT PRT
 Keeps the world in peace.

34

zuo-di shi jinlong dian ya
 坐的 是 金龙 殿 呀
 sit-ASSOC is Golden Dragon Palace PRT
 She sits in the Golden Dragon Palace.

35

tianxia'er-ha bao taiping ya ai hai yo
 天下儿下 保 太平 呀 哎咳哟
 the world-OBJ protect peace PRT PRT
 Keeps the world in peace.

36

shou xi-li pu hongzhan ya
 首 席里 铺 红毡 呀
 first banquet table-DAT lay red felt PRT
 Place red felt under the most honorable banquet table.

37

shou xi-li pu hongzhan ya
 首 席里 铺 红毡 呀
 first banquet table-DAT lay red felt PRT

Place red felt under the most honorable banquet table.

38

man xi-li zuo-di shi babao laohan ya
 满 席里 坐的 是 八宝 老汉 呀
 all banquet table-DAT sit-ASSOC are Eight Treasures¹ old man PRT

All guests sitting around the banquet tables are Eight-Treasure elders.

39

babao laohan ya
 八宝 老汉 呀
 Eight Treasures old man PRT

Eight-Treasure elders.

40

jinyin-ha dui cheng ge shan ya ai hai yo
 金银下 堆 成 个 山 呀 哎咳哟
 gold and silver-OBJ pile become SG:INDEF hill PRT PRT

Bring so much gold and silver and pile them up into a hill.

41

babao laohan ya
 八宝 老汉 呀
 Eight Treasures old man PRT

Eight-Treasure elders.

42

jinyin-ha dui cheng ge shan ya ai hai yo
 金银下 堆 成 个 山 呀 哎咳哟
 gold and silver-OBJ pile become SG:INDEF hill PRT PRT

Bring so much gold and silver and pile them up into a hill.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

1

¹Gatehouse built high.

²Gatehouse built high.

³The four corners of the gatehouse are upturned on two sides.

⁴A gauze lantern is hung exactly in the center under the roof.

⁵A man with good fortune lives in the house.

⁶A gauze lantern is hung exactly in the center under the roof.

⁷A man with good fortune lives in the house.

¹ For examples of the Eight Treasures, see <https://tinyurl.com/y54b6tlo> (accessed 29 January 2021).

2

⁸There are three brothers.

⁹There are three brothers.

¹⁰The eldest brother is the first leader of Hezhou City.

¹¹He holds snow-white silver in his hands.

¹²Greets civil officials and military officers.

¹³He holds snow-white silver in his hands.

¹⁴Greets civil officials and military officers.

3

¹⁵The second elder brother is a farmer.

¹⁶The second elder brother is a farmer.

¹⁷What he wants is to leave once a year to earn money.

¹⁸He went to Zhuma City.

¹⁹Earned so much gold and silver that he had to measure them by the *dou*.

²⁰He went to Zhuma City.

²¹Earned so much gold and silver that he had to measure them by the *dou*.

4

²²The third elder brother is young.

²³The third elder brother is young.

²⁴He was sent to a school to study.

²⁵He went to Beijing City to take the imperial examination.

²⁶Got first place and became a *zhuangyuan*.

²⁷He went to Beijing City to take the imperial examination.

²⁸Got first place and became a *zhuangyuan*.

5

²⁹A virtuous and kind girl.

³⁰A virtuous and kind girl.

³¹The emperor chose her as his empress.

³²She sits in the Golden Dragon Palace.

³³Keeps the world in peace.

³⁴She sits in the Golden Dragon Palace.

³⁵Keeps the world in peace.

6

³⁶Place red felt under the most honorable banquet table.

³⁷Place red felt under the most honorable banquet table.

³⁸All guests sitting around the banquet tables are Eight-Treasure elders.

³⁹Eight-Treasure elders.

⁴⁰Bring so much gold and silver and pile them up into a hill.

⁴¹Eight-Treasure elders.

⁴²Bring so much gold and silver and pile them up into a hill.

LYRICS AS PERFORMED

1

- ¹Men lou er xiu di gao,
²Men lou er xiu di gao ya.
³Si ge zi ti xuan zhe gua zai liang bian ya.
⁴Dang zhong li gua sha deng ya,
⁵Zuo di shi you hu di ren ya ai hai yo.
⁶Dang zhong li gua sha deng ya,
⁷Zuo di shi you hu di ren ya ai hai yo.

2

- ⁸Di xing ma san ge ren ai,
⁹Di xing ma san ge ren ai.
¹⁰Da ya ge ge zuo di shi he zhou cheng yo.
¹¹Shou zhang shang xue hua er yin ya,
¹²Jie di shi wen wu di guan ya ai hai yo.
¹³Shou zhang shang xue hua er yin ya,
¹⁴Jie di shi wen wu di guan ya ai hai yo.

3

- ¹⁵Er ge ge zhuang nong ren ai,
¹⁶Er ge ge zhuang nong ren ai.
¹⁷Xin xiang nian nian yao chu yi tang men ya.
¹⁸Zou liao ge zhu ma cheng ya,
¹⁹Jin yin ha na dou lier liang ya ai hai yo.
²⁰Zou liao ge zhu ma cheng ya,
²¹Jin yin ha na dou lier liang ya ai hai yo.

4

- ²²San ge ge nian ji qing ye,
²³San ge ge nian ji qing ye.
²⁴Song dao ge xue tang zhe ba ya shu ha nian ya.
²⁵Zou liao ge bei jing cheng ya,
²⁶Zhuang yuan shi tou yi ming ya ai hai yo.
²⁷Zou liao ge bei jing cheng ya,
²⁸Zhuang yuan shi tou yi ming ya ai hai yo.

5

- ²⁹Yi ni ma ta xian liang ye,
³⁰Yi ni ma ta xian liang ye,
³¹Wan sui ye xuan ta zuo liao zheng gong ya.
³²Zuo di shi jin long dian ya,
³³Tian xia er ha bao tai ping ya ai hai yo.
³⁴Zuo di shi jin long dian ya,
³⁵Tian xia er ha bao tai ping ya ai hai yo.

6

³⁶Shou xi li pu hong zhan ya,³⁷Shou xi li pu hong zhan ya.³⁸Man xi li zuo di shi ba bao lao han ya.³⁹Ba bao lao han ya,⁴⁰Jin yin ha dui cheng ge shan ya ai hai yo.⁴¹Ba bao lao han ya,⁴²Jin yin ha dui cheng ge shan ya ai hai yo.

LYRICS AS PERFORMED

1

¹ 门楼儿修的高,² 门楼儿修的高呀。³ 四格子提悬着挂在两边呀。⁴ 当中里挂纱灯呀,⁵ 坐的是有福的人呀哎咳哟。⁶ 当中里挂纱灯呀,⁷ 坐的是有福的人呀哎咳哟。

2

⁸ 弟兄嘛三个人哎,⁹ 弟兄嘛三个人哎。¹⁰ 大呀哥哥坐的是河州城哟。¹¹ 手掌上雪花儿银呀,¹² 接的是文武的官呀哎咳哟。¹³ 手掌上雪花儿银呀,¹⁴ 接的是文武的官呀哎咳哟。

3

¹⁵ 二哥哥庄农人哎,¹⁶ 二哥哥庄农人哎。¹⁷ 心想年年要出一趟门呀。¹⁸ 走了个 zhuma 城呀,¹⁹ 金银哈拿斗俩儿量呀哎咳哟。²⁰ 走了个 zhuma 城呀,²¹ 金银哈拿斗俩儿量呀哎咳哟。

4

²² 三哥哥年纪轻耶,²³ 三哥哥年纪轻耶。²⁴ 送到个学堂着把呀书哈念呀。²⁵ 走了个北京城呀,²⁶ 状元是头一名呀哎咳哟。²⁷ 走了个北京城呀,²⁸ 状元是头一名呀哎咳哟。

5

- 29 一女嘛她贤良耶,
 30 一女嘛她贤良耶。
 31 万岁爷选她做了正宫呀。
 32 坐的是金龙殿呀,
 33 天下儿哈保太平呀哎咳哟。
 34 坐的是金龙殿呀,
 35 天下儿哈保太平呀哎咳哟。

6

- 36 首席里铺红毡呀,
 37 首席里铺红毡呀。
 38 满席里坐的是八宝老汉呀。
 39 八宝老汉呀,
 40 金银哈堆成个山呀哎咳哟。
 41 八宝老汉呀,
 42 金银哈堆成个山呀哎咳哟。

LYRICS IN MSC PINYIN

1

- ¹Men lou er xiu de gao,
²Men lou er xiu de gao.
³Si jiao gao xuan gua zai liang bian.
⁴Zheng zhong jian gua zhe yi zhan sha deng,
⁵Fang zi li zhu de shi yi wei you fu qi de ren.
⁶Zheng zhong jian gua zhe yi zhan sha deng,
⁷Fang zi li zhu de shi yi wei you fu qi de ren.

2

- ⁸Di xiong san ge ren,
⁹Di xiong san ge ren.
¹⁰Da ge zai he zhou cheng zuo guan.
¹¹Shou shang peng zhe xue hua yin,
¹²Ying jie wen wu guan yuan.
¹³Shou shang peng zhe xue hua yin,
¹⁴Ying jie wen wu guan yuan.

3

- ¹⁵Er ge shi ge nong min,
¹⁶Er ge shi ge nong min.
¹⁷Ta xin xiang mei nian dou chu men zhuan qian.
¹⁸Ta qu le yi tang zhu ma cheng,
¹⁹Zhuan qu de jin yin duo dao yong dou sheng lai liang.
²⁰Ta qu le yi tang zhu ma cheng,
²¹Zhuan qu de jin yin duo dao yong dou sheng lai liang.

4

²²San ge nian ji hen qing,²³San ge nian ji hen qing.²⁴Ta bei song dao xue tang qu du shu.²⁵Qu bei jing can jia ke ju kao shi,²⁶Ta kao qu le zhuang yuan.²⁷Qu bei jing can jia ke ju kao shi,²⁸Ta kao qu le zhuang yuan.

5

²⁹Hai you yi ge xian hui shan liang de nü er,³⁰Hai you yi ge xian hui shan liang de nü er.³¹Huang di xuan ta zuo le zheng gong niang niang.³²Ta zuo zai jin long dian,³³Wei tian xia bai xing bao tai ping.³⁴Ta zuo zai jin long dian,³⁵Wei tian xia bai xing bao tai ping.

6

³⁶Shou xi zhuo zi di xia pu zhe hong zhan,³⁷Shou xi zhuo zi di xia pu zhe hong zhan.³⁸Suo you xi shang zuo zhe de dou shi ba bao lao han.³⁹Ba bao lao han men,⁴⁰Dai lai de jin yin cai bao dui cheng le shan.⁴¹Ba bao lao han men,⁴²Dai lai de jin yin cai bao dui cheng le shan.

LYRICS IN MSC CHARACTERS

1

¹ 门楼儿修的高,² 门楼儿修的高。³ 四角高悬挂在两边。⁴ 正中间挂着一盏纱灯,⁵ 房子里住的是一位有福气的人。⁶ 正中间挂着一盏纱灯,⁷ 房子里住的是一位有福气的人。

2

⁸ 弟兄三个人,⁹ 弟兄三个人。¹⁰ 大哥在河州城做官。¹¹ 手上捧着雪花银,¹² 迎接文武官员。¹³ 手上捧着雪花银,¹⁴ 迎接文武官员。

3

- ¹⁵ 二哥是个农民,
¹⁶ 二哥是个农民。
¹⁷ 他心想每年都出门赚钱。
¹⁸ 他去了一趟 zhuma 城,
¹⁹ 赚取的金银多到用斗升来量。
²⁰ 他去了一趟 zhuma 城,
²¹ 赚取的金银多到用斗升来量。

4

- ²² 三哥年纪很轻,
²³ 三哥年纪很轻。
²⁴ 他被送到学堂去读书。
²⁵ 去北京参加科举考试,
²⁶ 他考取了状元。
²⁷ 去北京参加科举考试,
²⁸ 他考取了状元。

5

- ²⁹ 还有一个贤惠善良的女儿,
³⁰ 还有一个贤惠善良的女儿。
³¹ 皇帝选她做了正宫娘娘。
³² 她坐在金龙殿,
³³ 为天下百姓保太平。
³⁴ 她坐在金龙殿,
³⁵ 为天下百姓保太平。

6

- ³⁶ 首席桌子底下铺着红毡,
³⁷ 首席桌子底下铺着红毡。
³⁸ 所有席上坐着的都是八宝老汉。
³⁹ 八宝老汉们,
⁴⁰ 带来的金银财宝堆成了山。
⁴¹ 八宝老汉们,
⁴² 带来的金银财宝堆成了山。

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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

<i>babao</i> 八宝	Jishishan 积石山	Tu 土
Bao Yizhi 鲍义志	<i>laohan</i> 老汉	Wen Jinde 文进德
Bao'an 保安	Linxia 临夏	Wen Xiangcheng 文祥呈
Beijing 北京	<i>luzi</i> 炉子	Wen Xuezhong 文学忠
Dahejia 大河家	<i>menlou</i> 门楼	Wen Yingxian 文英先
Deng Yulong 邓玉龙	Minhe 民和	Wenjia 文家
Dengjia 邓家	Qinghai 青海	<i>Wuyan de Niujiaohao</i> 呜咽的牛角号
dmag sgar ཌམ་ག་སྒར་	Renjia 任家	Xing'er 杏儿
Dongxiang 东乡	Salar, Sala 撒拉	<i>xuetang</i> 学堂
Gansu 甘肃	Sanchuan 三川	Yindong 银洞
Guanting 官亭	<i>shadeng</i> 纱灯	<i>zhenggong</i> 正宫
Haidong 海东	<i>shazi</i> 沙子	Zhu Lanxiang 朱兰香
Han 汉	<i>shouxi</i> 首席	<i>zhuangyuan</i> 状元
Hezhou 河州	skal bzang nor bu སྐལ་བཟང་ནོར་བུ་	Ziger, sgar མེ་རྒྱལ་
Hui 回	回	
<i>jidan</i> 鸡蛋	<i>taiping</i> 太平	

SEVEN NAMUYI TIBETAN SIBLINGS: WECHAT GROUP CONVERSATION

Li Jianfu 李建富 (Dawa Tenzin, Zla ba bstan 'dzin ལྷ་བ་བསྟན་འཛིན།)*

ABSTRACT

WeChat provides a forum for seven Namuyi Tibetans to discuss and often resolve issues quickly in their mother tongue. This paper describes a discussion that took place on 19 April 2019 between 21:08-22:00 hours. The siblings discussed where Jibu's daughter, Guifeng (b. 2007), should attend junior middle school. The seven siblings' educational background is described, and their conversations in na⁵³ mzi⁵³ kha¹¹ tho¹¹ (Namuyi Khatho) are given and transcribed, along with a free English translation.

KEYWORDS

family education discussions, Namuyi Tibetans, WeChat, Tibetan minority languages, Namuyi Khatho, Sichuan minorities

INTRODUCTION

The eastern border of the Tibetan Plateau is home to 5,000-10,000 Namuyi (na⁵³ mzi⁵³) Tibetans (Sun 1983, Gutao and Wang 2012) who speak Namuyi Khatho (na⁵⁴ mzi⁵⁴ kha²¹ tho²¹), which is classified as Qiangic (Sun 1983, Jacquest and Michaud 2011) in Muli Tibetan Autonomous County, Xichang City, Mianning County, and Jiulong County of Sichuan Province, PR China.¹

A WeChat group with seven members (myself and my six siblings) was created and named "Seven Siblings":

FIG 1. Seven siblings.

Name	Sex	Birth Date	Education
Li Xiaolong	M	1965	PS ²
Li Bajin	M	1974	PS
Li Chunxiu	F	1977	PS
Li Jiujin	M	1979	PS
Li Jianfu	M	1981	university
Li Jibu	M	1984	PS
Li Sanjin	F	1986	PS

Only Li Jianfu of the siblings has a good command of written Chinese. While all siblings received some primary school education, most did not graduate. Only Chinese and mathematics were taught in the village primary school at the time the siblings attended. Xiaolong attended middle school for one year but dropped out due to a lack of interest. He occasionally uses written Chinese because he is the Dashui Village leader and must fill out forms and write villagers' names in Chinese. Bajin and Chunxiu did not have a chance to go to primary school because our parents wanted them to work at home. Later, when Bajin was eighteen and Chunxiu was fifteen, our parents realized the importance

* Li Jianfu (Dawa Tenzin, Zla ba bstan 'dzin). 2021. Seven Namuyi Tibetan Siblings: WeChat Group Conversation. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:296-303.

¹ For more on the Namuyi, see Libu Lakhi et al. (2007, 2009, 2013).

² PS = primary school.

of knowing basic mathematics and written Chinese and sent them to Dashui Village Primary School. However, they both decided to drop out after Grade Two because they were embarrassed when their classmates and teachers laughed at them for being "old."

Jiujin had a strong interest in learning and made good scores on exams until the fifth grade when his mathematics teacher scolded him for being naughty in class. "Afterward, I totally lost interest in learning, and I slept in class," Jiujin says.

Jianfu, Jibu, and Sanjin both finished primary school.

...

WeChat group members use (oral) Namuyi, though Jianfu, Jibu, and Sanjin converse at times in written Chinese. They discuss issues involving the siblings, including updating each other on their current location and activities. At times, input is sought on topics such as what action to take or which hospital to visit during an illness and matters related to children's education.

The example I present here concerns Jibu's daughter, Li Guifeng (b. 2007), who would graduate from primary school in June 2019. On the night of 19 April 2019, Jibu started a conversation by forwarding a screenshot of a text message sent by a teacher from Chuanzhong Middle School responsible for recruiting students who make high scores from primary schools. At this time, Xiaolong and Bajin were at their own homes having dinner in Dashui Village, Chunxiu was in Pixian County near Chengdu working in a meat processing factory, Jiujin was completing a gate for a new house his family had started building, I was in Chengdu, Jibu was at home in Xingsheng Town, and Sanjin was at her home taking care of her daughter in Yulong Town.

The conversations below focus on the junior middle school that Guifeng should attend. Two points should be made regarding the talks. First, the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) transcriptions are directly transcribed from the Namuyi voice message records kept in the WeChat group conversation loop. The few times Chinese characters are used, they are not transcribed in IPA. Second, conversations are arranged chronologically. Certain entries are short utterances, and others are more than one sentence. Each pair of IPA transcriptions and their English translation represents a complete voice message.

Voice messages are from 9:08-10:00PM.

[1] Jibu: (Jibu's screenshot of a written message sent by Teacher Yang from Chuanzhong Middle School.)

李贵芬家长你好！麻烦你们帮川中问一下边这几个学生的电话，问到后请用短信发给我：陈紫婧、李贵芬、孙文泉、杨佳茹、李雨晨、郑丽佳、吴思颖、肖佳英。

Hi, Li Guifeng's parents! May I ask you to assist Chuanzhong Middle School by providing the phone numbers of the following students? Chen Zijin, Li Guifeng, Sun Wenquan, Yang Jiaru, Li Yuchen, Zhen Lijia, Wu Siyi, Xiao Jiaying. Please send them to me.

[2] Xiaolong:

啥意思

What does this mean?

[3] Jibu:

o²¹mo²¹ tɕ^hwæ⁵⁴tɕo⁵⁴ tɕ^hwæ⁵⁴tɕo⁵⁴ ɛwo²¹eo²¹ tɕo⁵⁴ si⁵⁴ pæ²¹ ɲo⁵⁴ kwe²¹fa³³ tɕo⁵⁴ dzy²¹ ji²¹ lo²¹.
Oh, it's about Chuanzhong Middle School coming to recruit my daughter, Guifeng.

[4] Xiaolong:

kwe²¹fa³³ tɕo⁵⁴ su⁵⁴ tɕ⁵⁴ o³³da³⁴ po²¹mi²¹ da³³ ɲu²¹ su²¹ dje³⁴?

Does that mean they are asking Guifeng to register in that school?

[5] Jibu:

a²¹ nⁱ²¹ o³³da³⁴ t^hə²¹tə²¹ k^hi³⁴ t^hi⁵⁴ki⁵⁴ t^ɛ⁵⁴ t^hi²¹t^hə²¹-mu⁵⁴ ɛwo²¹ɛo²¹ t^ɕso⁵⁴ da²¹ ku⁵¹ so³³; t^hi³³-hi²¹ o³³da³⁴ t^hə⁵⁴t^ɕso³³ o³³ t^ɕso⁵⁴ dzy²³ lo³³; v^ə³³q^ə³⁴ go⁵⁴-ly³⁴ ma⁵⁴ s^ə⁵⁴ nⁱ³³-ly³⁴ o³³ t^ɕso⁵⁴ dzy²¹ ro³³ ji²¹ lo²¹.

Em, for the students with high scores, schools usually come and recruit them in advance, right? Chuanzhong Middle School wants to recruit her, and I heard that two other schools - I don't know their exact names - also came to her school recruiting students.

[6] Xiaolong:

go⁵⁴-ly³⁴ k^hi³³ t^ɛ⁵⁴ go⁵⁴-ly³⁴ mi²¹ po²¹ ma³³-ya³⁴ ji²¹ a²¹?

Can't we just send her to whichever school is best?

[7] Jiu Jin:

哦

OK.

[8] Bajin:

o³⁴, t^həw^ə⁵⁴t^ɕso⁵⁴ o³³ t^ɕso⁵⁴ dzy²¹ t^ɛ⁵⁴ t^həw^ə⁵⁴t^ɕso⁵⁴ mi²¹ la²¹t^ɛ²¹ mje³³. n^a³³ t^ɛ⁵⁴ t^ɕsu⁵⁴mi²¹t^ɕso³³ lo²¹t^ɕa²¹ r^ə³⁴ t^hə²¹ ma³³ p^ha⁵⁴ l^ɛ²¹ t^ɛ⁵⁴ n^a⁵⁴-hi²¹ so³³-ja²¹-su⁵⁴ t^ɛ⁵⁴. t^həw^ə⁵⁴t^ɕso⁵⁴ t^ɛ⁵⁴ t^ɕsu⁵⁴mi²¹t^ɕso³³ to²¹ma²¹ndza²¹-su⁵⁴ dja³³ l^ɛ²¹. t^həw^ə⁵⁴t^ɕso⁵⁴-mi²¹ t^hə²¹ mje³³ t^ɛ⁵⁴ la³⁴-mi⁵⁴-po²¹ nju²¹ mje²¹ t^ɛ⁵⁴ r^ə⁵⁴ a²¹ t^ɕso⁵⁴ mu³³.

OK, if Chuanzhong Middle School has come to recruit her, then let her register there. My three children could not even go to Liangshan Prefecture Nationalities Middle School. Chuanzhong Middle School is considered better than Liangshan Prefecture Nationalities Middle School. Let her register there and see if she is recruited.

[9] Jibu:

还不晓得去哪里读

I still don't know where I should send her.

[10] Jibu:

go⁵⁴ r^ə⁵⁴ a²¹-t^ɕso⁵⁴ nju²¹ ti²¹-ga²¹ dzo³³ ku²³ l^ɛ³³? su⁵⁴ ji⁵⁴t^ɛo³³ o³³ t^ɕso⁵⁴ dzy²¹-ro³³ lo³³. t^həw^ə⁵⁴t^ɕso⁵⁴ n^a³³ v^ə³³q^ə³⁴ ti²¹-ly³³ o³³ t^ɕso⁵⁴ dzy²¹ nⁱ³³-ly³³ t^ɕso⁵⁴ dzy²¹-ro³³ lo³³. t^ɛ³³ v^ə³³q^ə⁵⁴ t^hi⁵⁴-ly⁵⁴ go⁵⁴-ly³³ ma⁵⁴-s^ə⁵⁴. v^ə³³q^ə⁵⁴ t^hi⁵⁴-ly⁵⁴ go⁵⁴-ly³³ ma⁵⁴-s^ə⁵⁴ ɛo²¹ɛo²¹ go⁵⁴-ly³³ p^hə³³ k^hi³³ ma⁵⁴-s^ə⁵⁴ nju²¹-su²¹ lo²¹. nu³³ o⁵⁴ so²¹ bj^ɛ²¹ t^hy⁵⁴ ka³³ su⁵⁴ ji⁵⁴t^ɛo³³ o³³ t^ɕso⁵⁴ dzy²¹-su⁵⁴-ro³³ l^ɛ²¹.

What do you mean by "if she is recruited?" They already have come to recruit. Chuanzhong and another school - two schools - have already come to recruit her. But I know nothing about the other one. I mean, I don't know anything about the other one, so I don't know which one is better. Otherwise, people have already come there to recruit her if she is willing to study there.

[11] Bajin:

t^həw^ə⁵⁴t^ɕso⁵⁴ p^hə³³ ti²¹ ji²¹ mi²¹ dja³³ l^ɛ²². t^həw^ə⁵⁴t^ɕso⁵⁴ p^hə³³ k^hi³³ dja³³ l^ɛ²². o³³ t^ɕso⁵⁴ dzy²¹ t^ɛ⁵⁴ la²¹ k^ho³³ɕ^ə²¹ ku³⁴ s^ə³³ nju²¹ nu⁵⁴ l^ɛ³⁴. k^ho³³ɕ^ə²³ ka³³ ma³³ ta²¹to²¹-su⁵⁴ ma³³-nu⁵⁴ ku²³ s^ə³³. nⁱ²¹mu²¹nⁱ³³ n^a⁵¹ kwe⁵¹fa²¹ la²¹ te²¹ja²¹ t^ɛwi⁵⁴ɛo²¹ t^ɕso⁵⁴ ɛy³⁴ a³³ o³³ k^ho⁵⁴ l^ɛ⁵⁴ ma³³-r^ə³³ da³⁴ kwe²¹fa³³ t^ɛ⁵⁴ k^hi³⁴ ka³³ t^hə²¹t^ɛə²¹ k^hi³⁴-ro³³ ka³³ t^hi³³-hi²¹ o³³da³³ to³³ l^ɛ³³ la²¹ bj^ɛ³⁴-su³³ ma³³-di³³ t^ɛ³³.

Chuanzhong is best. Chuanzhong is better. Even when they come to recruit, students are usually still given exams. And they don't take those who don't pass the exams. Before my son, Guifa, was recruited by Deyang Military School and didn't pass the exam, or maybe Guifeng's scores are already good enough to reach the required level, so she won't be given more exams.

[12] Jibu:

a²¹mi³³ ta²¹mu³³ o³³ tso⁵⁴ dzy²¹ t^hi⁵⁴ki⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ k^ho³³ʂə²¹ ma³³-hu⁵⁴-mu⁵⁴ pi²¹ni²³ ka³³ o⁵⁴ po²¹mi²¹ bje²³-su⁵⁴ k^ho³³ʂə²¹ ma³³-hu⁵⁴-su⁵⁴.

Now, students recruited like this just go directly for registration; no need to take more exams.

[13] Sanjin:

先问问别人，和另外一个学校对比。

First, ask for advice from others; and compare it with the other school.

[14] Jibu:

ɛi²¹ teo²¹ʂə³⁴ ɲa⁵⁴ ɦa³³ t^hi⁵⁴ ɲu²¹-su²¹ dja³³. vɛ³³qæ⁵⁴ ɛo²¹ɛo²¹-t^hi³³-ly³⁴ go⁵⁴-ly³⁴ dja³³-su⁵⁴ ʂə²¹ sə³³ɲi³⁴ twe²¹pi⁵⁴ lɛ⁵⁴ go⁵⁴-ly³³ k^hi³³-su⁵⁴ mi²¹do³³ lɛ³³ go⁵⁴-ly³³ so²³ ɲu²²-su²¹ lo²¹.

Yes, I'm also thinking that way. Let her study in the better one after figuring out the other school and comparing them.

[15] Bajin:

kwe²¹fa⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ t^hi⁵⁴-ɦi²¹ pæ⁵⁴ ɣo⁵⁴ tɛə⁵²mi²¹ tʂæ²³ji²¹ lɛ²¹ a²¹mi³³? tʂ^hwæ⁵⁴tso⁵⁴ ɦa³³ k^hi³³ nda³⁴ ro²¹ lo³³ ɲa³³ ly²¹ tɛ⁵⁴.

What's Guifeng's score ranking in her class now? I think Chuanzhong is already very good.

[16] Jibu:

t^hi⁵⁴-ɦi²¹ pæ⁵⁴ ɣo⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ ti²¹ ji²¹ mi²¹ tʂæ²¹ so³³ ti²¹ ji²¹ mi²¹ tʂæ²¹. ɛiɲ⁵⁴ʂe²¹ ɛa⁵⁴ t^hi⁵⁴-ly⁵⁴ ɤo⁵⁴ mu⁵⁴ta⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ ti²¹-ga²¹ tɛ²¹ ti²¹ ɔ:²¹ mi²¹ tʂæ²¹ ti²¹-ga²¹ tɛ²¹ ti²¹ sæ²¹ mi²¹ tʂæ²¹-su⁵⁴ lo⁵⁴ t^hi⁵⁴-teo²¹ tɛ^hə⁵⁴mo²¹ k^ho⁵⁴ʂə²¹-su⁵⁴ ʂaɲ²³ ɛo²¹tɛ^hə³³. t^hi⁵⁴-ɦi²¹ t^hi⁵⁴ ji²¹ pæ⁵⁴ ɣo⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ ji²¹tʂə²¹-mu⁵⁴ ti²¹ ji²¹ mi²¹ tɛ^ha²³ tɛə²¹ tɛə²¹-su²¹ dja³³ lɛ²¹. jo²¹pu²¹jo²¹ ti²¹-rə²¹ rə²³ da²¹ ti²¹ ɔ:²¹ mi²¹ tɛ^ha²¹ rə³³.

According to the total scores of last semester's exams, she is first in her class. And Chinese is second, and mathematics is third among all the Xingsheng Town students. She is first in her class most of the time, except a few times, she is second.

[17] Xiaolong:

tʂ^hwæ⁵⁴tso⁵⁴ k^hi³³ tɛ⁵⁴ tʂ^hwæ⁵⁴tso⁵⁴ mi²¹ tɛ^ha ʂə⁵⁴-ro³³. ɲa⁵⁴ lɛ³³ ti²¹-ga²¹ ɦa³³ ma³³-sə⁵⁴ go⁵⁴-ly³³ k^hi³³ ɦa³³ ɲa³³ ma³³-sə⁵⁴ xo³³. ta²¹mu³³ ɦa³³ mi²¹do³³ ɦa³³ ma³³-ndzo²¹.

If Chuanzhong is better, let her go there. For me, I don't know anything about which one is better. I also have never asked anything about such an issue.

[18] Chunxiu:

k^hi³³ nda⁵⁴ lɛ²¹ tɛ⁵⁴ kwe²¹fa⁵⁴ p^hæ³³ su⁵⁴ ɦa³³ o³³ tso⁵⁴ dzy²¹ su⁵⁴ tɛ³³. go⁵⁴-ly³³ k^hi³³-su⁵⁴ go⁵⁴-ly³³ tɛ^ha²¹ mje⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴. ɲo⁵⁴ ɦa³³ ti²¹-ga²¹ ɦa³³ ma⁵⁴-sə⁵⁴ lɛ²¹.

Guifa is excellent, so schools even come to recruit her in advance. Let her go to the one that you all think is good. I also don't know anything about this matter.

[19] Bajin:

kʰi³⁴ xo²¹ tɛ³³ su⁵⁴ tɕʰa²¹ nda³³ xo²¹ tɛ³³ ɕa⁵⁴-ly³³ qo²¹lo³³ ɣo⁵⁴ ti²¹ ʔ:²¹ sɛ³³ mi²¹ tɕʰa²¹ su³³. tʰi⁵⁴ la²¹da³³ nɿ⁵⁴-ku²¹ da²¹ jo²³-su⁵⁴ dja³³ lɛ³³ ɕa⁵⁴ tʰi⁵⁴-ly⁵⁴ qo²¹lo³³ ɣo⁵⁴ ɦa³³.

Great, really great, that she makes second or third even within one township. There are only two students who make higher scores among all the township students.

[20] Jibu:

ɛi²¹, do⁵⁴bzɕ²¹-su⁵⁴ tɕʰwɛ⁵⁴tɕo⁵⁴ tʰi⁵⁴-ly⁵⁴ bjɛ³⁴ sɔ³³ ɤa³³-ro²¹ pa³³ o³³. tɕʰwɛ⁵⁴tɕo⁵⁴ tʰi⁵⁴-ly⁵⁴ qʰa²¹gu²¹ ʂa²¹ ɦa³³ kʰi³³ ji²¹ rɛ²¹.

Yes, I probably should let her go to Chuanzhong. Everyone says Chuanzhong is good.

[21] Bajin:

tɕʰwɛ⁵⁴tɕo⁵⁴ tɕoŋ²¹tjɛ⁵⁴pɛ⁵⁴ lo²¹ rɛ³³ ʂa²³ ka³³ o³³ a⁵⁴ko⁵⁴ nda³³ kʰi³³ nda³³-su⁵⁴ dja³³.

It's already really great once she enters a *zhongdian ban*¹ class of Chuanzhong.

[22] Sanjin:

tɕʰwɛ⁵⁴tɕo⁵⁴ tʰi⁵⁴-ly⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ o⁵⁴ndzɔ⁵⁴ go⁵⁴-rɔ⁵⁴ka⁵⁴ go⁵⁴-ti²¹-ku²¹ du³³ ku²¹ ɕɛ²¹? ɲa³³ tɛ⁵⁴ faŋ⁵⁴ɕa²¹ ɲa³³ li³³ŋo²¹pɛ³³-ro²¹ lo³³

In which direction or place from Xichang is Chuanzhong located? I forget the direction of that school.

[23] Bajin:

o²¹tjo²¹ tɕʰwɛ⁵⁴ɛiŋ⁵⁴ rɔ⁵⁴ka⁵⁴ dja³³ ka³³ tɕʰwɛ⁵⁴tɕo⁵⁴ ŋu²¹-su²¹ dja³³ lɛ²¹ tɕʰwɛ⁵⁴ɛiŋ⁵⁴ jo²¹jo³³-su⁵⁴ dja³³ ka³³.

It is in the direction of Chuanxing with Chuanxing Town, so it is called Chuangzhong.

[24] Jiujiu:

a³³bo⁵⁴ tɛ³³ fa⁵⁴fa⁵⁴ pʰɛ³³ a⁵⁴ko⁵⁴-ro²¹ ɛiŋ⁵⁴ɕɛ²¹ ɕa⁵⁴ ɣo⁵⁴ ɦa³³ ti²¹ ʔ:²¹ mi²¹ ti²¹ sɛ³³ mi²¹ rɛ³³-tɕɛ²¹-su³³. ɕo²¹ɕo²¹ tɛ²¹ ta²¹ko³³ ma⁵⁴-ʂa⁵⁴-mu⁵⁴ ɲa⁵⁴ ɦa³³ go⁵⁴-ly³³ kʰi³³-ma³³-kʰi³³-su⁵⁴ ma⁵⁴-sɔ⁵⁴. tɕo⁵⁴mi²¹tɕoŋ³³ mi²¹dzu²¹ ku²¹ rɔ³³ ɤu⁵⁴ta²¹ tɛ³³ ɲa³³ tɛ⁵⁴ tɕo⁵⁴mi²¹tɕoŋ³³ sɔ³³ a⁵⁴ko⁵⁴-su⁵⁴ tɕa³³ mjɛ³³

Wow! Guifeng is really amazing to score second or third among all Xingsheng Township students. Concerning the schools, as our eldest brother has said, I also don't know which school is good and which school is bad. It seems that the Prefecture Nationalities Middle School is famous and I think it is really great.

[25] Jiujiu:

a³³vu³⁴ pʰe²¹ni²¹xwa²¹ tɛ²¹ la²¹ tɕo⁵⁴mi²¹tɕoŋ³³ li³³ ɤɛ⁵⁴ɕɔ⁵⁴ ja²¹ŋɔ³³ tɛ⁵⁴ la²¹ tɕʰwɛ⁵⁴tɕo⁵⁴ li³³ ɤɛ⁵⁴ɕɔ⁵⁴ mu⁵⁴ o³³mbɛ⁵⁴ so³³ ɦa³³ ji³³ɕo⁵⁴ ti²¹kʰa³³. a²¹mi³³ su⁵⁴ tɕʰwɛ⁵⁴tɕo⁵⁴ o³³ tɕo⁵⁴ dzy²¹ tɛ⁵⁴ o³³ tɕʰwɛ⁵⁴tɕo⁵⁴ tɕʰa²¹ ɣo³³ da²¹rɔ³³-ro²¹ jɛ³³.

A while ago, Awu Penihua² was aiming at the Prefecture Nationalities Middle School, and Jibu was aiming at Chuanzhong. I think if Chuanzhong has come to recruit her, it is reasonable for her to go to Chuanzhong now.

¹ A *zhongdian ban* class consists of gifted students who make high scores on middle school entrance exams. Some schools directly collect such students in their last year of primary school without taking exams.

² Awu Penihua is Jibu's wife's father.

[25] Bajin:

tʂo⁵⁴mi²¹tʂoŋ³³ tʂhwa⁵⁴tʂo⁵⁴ ji²¹kʰu³³ dja³³ sə³³ ŋu²¹

The Prefecture Nationalities Middle School is not as good as Chuanzhong.

[26] Jibu:

tʂo⁵⁴mi²¹tʂoŋ³³ tɛ⁵⁴ pu²¹tsu²¹ n̩i³³ka³³ dzo³³ ku²³ ji²¹ lɛ³³ pu²¹tsu²¹ o²¹mo²¹ tʂhwa⁵⁴tʂo⁵⁴ bi²¹ji³³ ma³³-dzo²¹ ji²¹ lo²¹ tɛao²¹ɛwe²¹ tʂə²¹nja²¹ tɛ²¹.

People say there are subsidy opportunities in the Prefecture Nationalities Middle School, but the teaching quality is not as good as Chuanzhong.

[27] Xiaolong:

o²¹mo²¹ su⁵⁴ o³³ so²¹ ndzo²¹ tʰi⁵⁴ki⁵⁴ da⁵⁴ mi²¹do³³ mje⁵⁴. ŋo⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ ta²¹su⁵¹ fia³³ ma⁵⁴-sə⁵⁴. ŋo⁵⁴ ko²¹mi⁵⁴ fia³³ n̩i²¹mu²¹n̩i³³ ʂə²¹mi²¹tʂoŋ⁵⁴ so²¹ rə²¹. tʰɛ⁵⁴ ndzə²¹ tʰi³³ lo²¹-mu²¹ po²¹mi²¹ tʰɛ⁵⁴ ndzə²¹ tʰi³³ lo²¹-so²¹ ka³³ go⁵⁴-ly³³ kʰi²³ fia³³ ma⁵⁴-sə⁵⁴ ŋa³³ tɛ³³.

Ask those who studied there. I don't know about these things at all. My daughter, Guomin, studied at Xichang Nationalities Middle School. She registered for that school and studied there independently, but I don't know very much.

[28] Jibu:

o²¹ do⁵⁴bzə²¹-su⁵⁴ tʂhwa⁵⁴tʂo⁵⁴ so²¹ bjɛ²¹ da²¹rə³³ pa³³ o³³. tɛ³³ su⁵⁴ ʂa²¹-su²¹ ma³³-ti²¹ga²¹ sə²¹ lo³³. ti²¹ki²¹ tɛ²¹ jan²¹kwa³³ kʰi³³-ro²¹ sə³³ ji²¹ o²¹. ti²¹ki²¹ tɛ⁵⁴ ji²¹tʂoŋ⁵⁴ kʰi³³-ro²¹ sə³³ ji²¹ o²¹. ti²¹ki²¹ tɛ⁵⁴ tʂo⁵⁴mi²¹tʂoŋ³³ kʰi³³-ro²¹ sə³³ ji²¹ o²¹ mu³³ ka³³ ma⁵⁴-sə⁵⁴-ro²¹ sə³³.

She should possibly go to Chuanzhong, but people say different things. Some say Yangguang Middle School is good. Some say Number One Middle School is good. Some say the Prefecture Nationalities Middle School is good. I'm just not sure.

[29] Jiujin:

qʰa⁵⁴ kʰi³³ qʰa⁵⁴ kʰi³³ fia³³ go³³zə⁵⁴ ti²¹pʰə³³ ɛo²¹ɛo²¹ kʰi³³ ʂə⁵⁴ʂə⁵⁴-ly³³ rə⁵⁴-so⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ go³³zə⁵⁴ tʂhɛ²¹tɛə²¹ a⁵⁴ko⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ o³³ kʰi³³-su³³ rə⁵⁴ lɛ²¹.

It doesn't matter which school is good or bad. It's good as long as the child can get into a medium-quality school with a medium score.

[30] Jianfu:

ŋa³³ tɛ⁵⁴ nu³³ mbə⁵⁴ tɛə²¹tɛə²¹ ka³³ na²¹ pə⁵⁴ rə⁵⁴ka⁵⁴ ɛo²¹ɛa²¹ tʰi⁵⁴ki⁵⁴ fia³³ li³³ ma⁵⁴-ʂu²¹ɛə²¹ yə⁵⁴zə⁵⁴-mu⁵⁴.

Personally, I don't know very much about the schools around our home area because I have been outside most of the time.

[31] Jianfu:

kwe²¹fa⁵⁴ tʂhɛŋ²¹tɛə²¹ kʰi³³ nda³³ lɛ²¹ tɛ³³. su⁵⁴ o³³ tʂo⁵⁴ dzy²¹-su⁵⁴ o³³ su⁵⁴ kʰi³⁴ sə³³ o³³ tʂo⁵⁴-su⁵⁴ dja³³ lɛ²¹. o²¹ljo²¹ tɛu⁵⁴jɛ³³fe²¹ sə³³ ʂa²¹kʰo²¹-su⁵⁴ rə⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ ʂə²¹tɛə⁵⁴ dzo³⁴ sə³³ rə³³ lɛ²¹. a²¹za⁵⁴za⁵⁴-mu⁵⁴ no⁵⁴ və³³qə⁵⁴ tʰi⁵⁴ki⁵⁴ na⁵⁴ go⁵⁴ go⁵⁴ dja³³-su⁵⁴ pi²¹tɛo²³ sə³³n̩i³³ hu⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ tʰi³³ rə⁵⁴ lɛ²¹. tʂhwa⁵⁴tʂo⁵⁴ ŋu²¹ su²¹ tɛ²¹ o²¹ljo²¹ tʂhwa⁵⁴ɛiŋ⁵⁴ tʂo⁵⁴ɛwe²¹ ŋu²¹-su²¹ dja³⁴ pa³³. tʂhwa⁵⁴ɛiŋ⁵⁴ tʂo⁵⁴ɛwe²¹ dja³⁴ ŋu²³ ɛy³³ tɛ³³ o²¹tjo²¹ n̩i²¹mu³³n̩i³³ ŋa³³ tʰa²¹rə²¹ so²¹ ro³³ ʂə²¹mi²¹tʂo⁵⁴ tʰi²¹ga²³ ʂə⁵⁴ʂə⁵⁴ ti²¹-ku²¹ du³³ ku²³ a³³ o²¹tjo²¹ tʂhwa⁵⁴ɛiŋ⁵⁴ rə⁵⁴ka⁵⁴. tʂhwa⁵⁴ɛiŋ⁵⁴ tʂo⁵⁴ɛwe²¹ tɛ³³ va⁵⁴ la²¹kʰi³³ na⁵⁴na⁵⁴ o⁵⁴ so²¹ ka³³ tɛao²¹ɛwe²¹ tʂə²¹nja²¹ kʰi³³ nda⁵⁴ ŋu²¹ ku³³ a³³ n̩i²¹mu³³n̩i³³ ka³³ ŋa³³ o³³ tʰə²¹rə²¹ so²¹ tʰa³³ ka³³. o⁵⁴ ʂə²¹mi²¹tʂo³³

to²¹ma²¹ndza²¹-su⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ kʰeŋ⁵⁴ti²¹-ro³³ tæ²¹ʂə²¹ tʂo⁵⁴mi²¹tʂo³³ na³³ ʂə²¹mi²¹tʂo³³ teao²¹ɛwe²¹ tʂə²¹nja²¹ tʰi⁵⁴ki⁵⁴ ma⁵⁴-sə⁵⁴-ro²¹. no⁵⁴ o³³ lja⁵⁴o⁵⁴tɛ⁵⁴ mje⁵⁴ a²¹za⁵⁴za⁶⁵-mu⁵⁴.

Guifeng's score is obviously great because schools have come to recruit her in advance. Schools come to recruit only if a score is really high. The schools only start in September, so there is still time. You can send her after taking enough time to compare the schools. Chuanzhong refers to Chuanxing Middle School, right? If it is Chuangxing Middle School, it is near where I studied in Xichang Nationalities Middle School in the direction of Chuanxing. There were only Han Chinese students studying in Chuanxing Middle School, and it was famous for having excellent teaching quality since the time I was studying near that school. It is clear that Chuanzhong is better than Xichang Nationalities Middle School, but I am not sure about the teaching quality difference between the Prefecture Nationalities Middle School and Chuanzhong. You can ask around and slowly figure it out.

[32] Jianfu:

mi²¹tʂo³³ tɛ⁵⁴ tʂo⁵⁴mi²¹tʂo³³ tɛ³³ ʂə²¹mi²¹tʂo³³ to²¹ma²¹ndza²¹. ʂə²¹ tɛ⁵⁴ su⁵⁴ ʂə²¹ dja³³ so⁵⁴. tʂo⁵⁴ tɛ⁵⁴ tʂo³³-hi²¹-mu⁵⁴ pæ³³-su⁵⁴ dja³⁴ ka³³ taŋ⁵⁴tsʰə²¹ tɛ⁵⁴ tʂo⁵⁴mi²¹tʂo³³ kʰi³³-su⁵⁴ lo⁵⁴ tewi²¹tiŋ²¹-mu⁵⁴ ka³³. tʂo⁵⁴mi²¹tʂo³³ na⁵⁴ ʂə²¹mi²¹tʂo³³ tɛ⁵⁴ ʂao⁵⁴su⁵⁴ mi²¹tsʰu²¹ do⁵⁴bzə²¹-su⁵⁴ ka³³ tʂao²¹ku²¹ ko²¹ko²¹ faŋ³³mje²¹ ti²¹-pʰæ²³pʰæ³³ o³³ mbæ⁵⁴ kʰæ⁵⁴ tʰi⁵⁴ki⁵⁴. tæ²¹ʂə²¹ teao²¹ɛwe²¹ tʂə²¹nja²¹ tɛ⁵⁴ tʂo⁵⁴mi²¹tʂo³³ pʰæ³³ kʰo⁵⁴zə⁵⁴ kʰo⁵⁴zə⁵⁴-mu⁵⁴ kʰi³³ kʰæ⁵⁴-su⁵⁴ kʰŋ⁵⁴ti²¹-mu³³ ʂə²¹mi²¹tʂo³³ to²¹ma²¹ndza²¹ mu²¹.

Regarding nationality middle schools, the prefecture-level nationality middle school is better than the city-level nationality middle school. The city government manages the city-level middle school. The prefecture government manages the prefecture-level middle school, so the prefecture-level middle school is more prestigious. Both schools have mostly minority students, and there may be some opportunities for preferential school fees or scores when they take university entrance exams later. But the teaching quality in the Prefecture Nationalities Middle School is surely better than Xichang Nationalities Middle School.

[33] Jiujin:

dja³³ŋu²¹ dja³³ŋu²¹. nu³³ ma⁵⁴ jy⁵⁴ sə³³ dje³³?

Yes, yes. You are still not sleeping?

[34] Jianfu:

ɛy⁵⁴ɛə²¹ ŋu²¹ ha³³ mbæ⁵⁴-ro²¹. ɛy⁵⁴ɛə²¹ ŋu²¹ ha³³ mbæ⁵⁴-ro²¹.

About to sleep. About to sleep.

[35] Bajin:

pu²¹tsu²¹ ta²¹-su⁵⁴ da²¹ ma²¹ qʰo⁵⁴pa²¹ ma³³-hu⁵⁴ o²¹. tʂə²¹tʂə²¹ kʰi³⁴-ro³³ bje³³ sə³³ŋi³³ ka³³ rə³³.

We should not only pursue subsidy opportunities. We should send her to schools where the teaching quality is decent.

...

It was after ten PM, so the conversation was discontinued, but it could have been continued at any later time.

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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Cheng Zijing 陈紫婧, a person's name	Lizhou 礼州, a place name
Chengdu 成都, place name	Muli 木里, a place name
Chuanxing 川兴, place name	Pixian 郫县, a place name
Chuanzhong 川中, place name	Shi Minzhong 市民中 Xichang Nationalities Middle School
Dashui 大水, place name	Sun Wenquan 孙文泉, a person's name
Guomin 国敏, person name	Wu Siying 吴思颖, a person's name
Li Bajin 李八斤, a person's name	Xiao Jiaying 肖佳英, a person's name
Li Chunxiu 李春秀, a person's name	Xichang 西昌, a place name
Li Guifeng 李贵芬, a person's name	Xichang Nationalities Middle School, Shiminzhong 市民中
Li Jianfu 李建富, Dawa Tenzin, Zla ba bstan 'dzin ལྷུ་བ་བཟུན་འཛིན། a person's name	Xingsheng 兴盛, a place name
Li Jibu 李吉布, a person's name	Yang 杨, a person's name
Li Jiujin 李九斤, a person's name	Yang Jiaru 杨佳茹, a person's name
Li Sanjin 李三斤, a person's name	Yangguang 阳光 Yangguang Middle School
Li Xiaolong 李晓龙, a person's name	Yulong 裕隆, a place name
Li Yuchen 李雨晨, a person's name	Zheng Lijia 郑丽佳, a person's name
Liangshan Prefecture Nationalities Middle School, Zhouminzhong 州民中	

CONTRIBUTORS

'Brug 'bum rgyal (b. 2001), Chos tsha Village
 'Brug 'bum skyid (b. 2001), Smar khams Village
 'Jigs byed 'tsho (b. 2002), Sha rgya Village
 Bde skyid (b. 2004), Ru sngun zhol ma Village
 Bde skyid sgrol ma (b. 2003), Brag dkar Village
 Bka' 'gyur sgrol ma (b. 2001), Brag dkar Village
 Bkra shis bzang bo (b. 2001), Ru sngun zhol ma Village
 Bla ma tshe ring (b. 2005), Rta ra Village
 Bsod nams rdo rje (b. 2001), Sha rgya Village
 Bsod nams rgyal (b. 2001), Jo ser Village
 Btsun mo yag (b. 2000), Glo rgya Village
 Btsun mo yag (b. 2003), Rta ra Village
 Chos mtsho (b. 2001), Sha rgya Village
 Dka' thub tshe ring (b. 2001), Smar khams Village
 Dngos grub sgrol ma (b. 2001), Sha rgya Village
 Don yod don grub (b. 2003), Rta ra Village
 Don yod rdo rje (b. 2003), Rta ra Village
 G.yang skyid sgrol ma (b. 2000), Brag dkar Village
 Gangs dkar lha mo (b. 2005), Chos tsha Village
 Gdugs dkar tshe ring (b. 2005), Ru sngun zhol ma Village
 Gnam lha thar (b. 2002), Rdo ra Village
 Gnam lha thar (b. 2003), Brag dkar Village
 Gnam mthso sgrol ma (b. 2003), Smar khams Village
 Gnam mtsho skyid (b. 2001), Ru sngun zhol ma Village
 Gnam mtsho yag (b. 2002), Rdo ra Village
 Gnam thar gyal (b. 2002), Ru sngun zhol ma Village
 Gu ru rdo rje (b. 2002), Jo ser Village
 Klu mo 'tsho (b. 2000), Glo rgya Village
 Klu mo 'tsho (b. 2001), Glo rgya Village
 Klu mo (b. 2003), Brag dkar Village
 Klu rgyal tshe ring (b. 2001), Sha rgya Village
 Kun bzang skyid (b. 2001), Rdo ra Village
 Kun thar rgyal (b. 2002), Rdo ra Village
 Kun thar yag (b. 1999), Tsha nag Village
 Lcags 'bum rgyal (b. 2000), Brag dkar Village
 Lcags 'tsho sgrol ma (b. 2000), Smar khams Village
 Lcags mo tshe ring (b. 2003), Chos tsha Village
 Lha mgon rgyal (b. 2000), Rta ra Village
 Lha mo sgrol dkar (b. 2004), Jo ser Village
 Mgon po rdo rje (b. 2003), Smar khams Village
 Mgon skyabs (b. 2003), Chos tsha Village
 Mkha' 'gro tshe ring (b. 2003), Sha rgya Village
 Mkha' rgyal thar (b. 2003), Brag dkar Village
 Phag mo g.yang sgron (b. 2000), Glo rgya Village
 Phag mo lhun grub (b. 2003), Sha rgya Village
 Phyug mtsho skyid (b. 2004) Ru sngun zhol ma Village

Rdo rje dngos grub (b. 2004), Rdo ra Village
 Rdo rje don grub (b. 2000), Smar khams Village
 Rdo rje rgyal (b. 2003), Jo ser Village
 Rdo rje skyid (b. 2003), Brag dkar Village
 Rig 'dzin tshe ring (b. 2004), Glo rgya Village
 Rin chen 'tsho (b. 2001), Tsha nag Village
 Rin chen lha mo (b. 2001), Rta ra Village
 Rin chen rdo rje (b. 2001), Ru sngun zhol ma Village
 Rin chen skyid (b. 2002), Ru sngun zhol ma Village
 Rin chen thar ba (b. 2002), Rta ra Village
 Rta mgrin rdo rje (b. 2001), Brag dkar Village
 Seng rdor (b. 2002), Rdo ra Village
 Sgrol ma rgyal (b. 2003), Chos tsha Village
 Snying dpal tshe ring (b. 2002), Brag dkar Village
 Spyi 'du tshe ring (b. 2003), Tsha nag Village,
 Tshe mdo skyid (b. 2003), Rdo ra Village
 Tshe ring rgya mtsho (b. 2002), Glo rgya Village
 Tshe ring sgrol ma (b. 2000), Jo ser Village
 Tshe thar skyid (b. 2003), Rta ra Village

ABBREVIATIONS

MCSNMS Mang ra County Second Nationalities Middle School
 MTNBS Mgo mang Town Nationalities Boarding School

DMANGS GLU

Dmangs glu are sung without instrumental accompaniment and are suitable for all audiences on happy occasions. *Dmangs glu* often praise mountains, rivers, forests, and environments that nurture people and compliment *bla ma*, parents, and well-known and kindhearted people.

Dmangs glu were sung by 'Brug 'bum skyid, Rta mgrin rdo rje, Rdo rje don grub, Chos dbyings rgya mtsho, Rin chen lha mo, Btsun mo yag, Don yod rdo rje, Kun thar rgyal, Gu ru rdo rje, Richen skyid, and Bka' 'gyur sgrol ma. They were recorded in August and September of 2016 in their villages and schools - MCSNMS and MTNBS.

Of the 120 students I interviewed, only these eleven children sang folksongs. Folksongs are not taught in schools. The *dmangs glu* presented here were learned by participating in cultural activities and imitating singers and family members. *Dmangs glu* are sung during Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year', weddings, and other festivals.

Elders enjoyed hearing children sing these songs. At school and while herding livestock, other children were the audience.

DMANGS GLU ONE: WHEN I LEFT HOME THIS MORNING NGA DA NANGS YUL NAS YONG DUS SU

¹ nga da nangs yul nas yong dus su	¹ ང་ད་ནངས་ཡུལ་ནས་ཡོད་དུས་སྟེ།	¹ When I left home this morning
² nga rta'ang med la sga'ang med	² ང་རྟ་འང་མེད་ལ་སྐྱའང་མེད།	² I had neither horse nor saddle
³ rta rgyug pa'i khrom la thon dang na	³ རྟ་རྒྱལ་པའི་ཁྲོམ་ལ་ཐོན་དང་ན།	³ When I reached the horse race gathering
⁴ nga rta'ang yod la sga'ang yod	⁴ ང་རྟ་འང་ཡོད་ལ་སྐྱའང་ཡོད།	⁴ I had both horse and saddle
⁵ nga da nangs yul nas yong dus su	⁵ ང་ད་ནངས་ཡུལ་ནས་ཡོད་དུས་སྟེ།	⁵ When I left home this morning
⁶ nga glu yang med la shags kyang med	⁶ ང་གླུ་ཡང་མེད་ལ་ཤགས་ཀྱང་མེད།	⁶ I had neither folksongs nor antiphonal songs
⁷ glu len sa'i khrom la thon dang na	⁷ གླུ་ལེན་སའི་ཁྲོམ་ལ་ཐོན་དང་ན།	⁷ When I reached the folksong gathering
⁸ nga glu yang yod la shags kyang yod	⁸ ང་གླུ་ཡང་ཡོད་ལ་ཤགས་ཀྱང་ཡོད།	⁸ I had both folksongs and antiphonal songs

('Brug 'bum skyid, Smar khams Village and Rta mgrin rdo rje, Brag dkar Village. Recorded MCSNMS, September 2016. Both sang the same song.)

DMANGS GLU TWO: UPPER, MIDDLE AND LOWER STOD SMAD BAR GSUM

¹ stod gan na shwa ba gnyis 'gro zhig	¹ སྟོད་གན་ན་ཤ་བ་གཉིས་འགྲོ་ཞིག	¹ Two deer in the upper place
² rwa ring thung med la yag re ltos	² རྩ་རིང་ཐུང་མེད་ལ་ཡག་རེ་རྟོས།	² See how beautiful they are with antlers of the same length
³ bar gan na wa mo gnyis 'gro zhig	³ བར་གན་ན་ཡ་མོ་གཉིས་འགྲོ་ཞིག	³ There are two foxes in the middle place
⁴ gre ring thung med la yag re ltos	⁴ གེ་རིང་ཐུང་མེད་ལ་ཡག་རེ་རྟོས།	⁴ See how beautiful they are with fur of the same length
⁵ smad gan na glu ba gnyis 'gro zhig	⁵ སྐད་གན་ན་གླུ་བ་གཉིས་འགྲོ་ཞིག	⁵ Two singers in the lower place
⁶ skad sbom phra med la yag re ltos	⁶ སྐད་སྐྱོམ་པ་མེད་ལ་ཡག་རེ་རྟོས།	⁶ See how beautiful are their voices of equal quality

(Rdo rje don grub, Smar khams Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

DMANGS GLU THREE: SEEKING REFUGE SKYABS 'GRO

¹ chos kyi mgo ma skyabs 'gro red	¹ ཆོས་ཀྱི་མགོ་མ་སྐྱབས་འགྲོ་རེད།	¹ Scripture recitation begins with taking refuge in the Three Jewels ¹
² chos skyabs 'gro ma bton 'don srol med	² ཆོས་སྐྱབས་འགྲོ་མ་བཏོན་འདོན་སྒྲུབ་མེད།	² There is no custom of not taking refuge before scripture recitation
³ zas kyi mgo ma mchod kha red	³ ཟས་ཀྱི་མགོ་མ་མཚོད་ལ་རེད།	³ Meals start with an offering to the Three Jewels
⁴ zas mchod kha ma 'phangs za srol med	⁴ ཟས་མཚོད་ལ་མ་འཕངས་ཟ་སྒྲུབ་མེད།	⁴ There is no custom of eating without an offering to the Three Jewels

(Rdo rje don grub and Chos dbyings rgya mtsho together, Smar khams Village. Recorded in the latter's home, August 2016.)

¹ The Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

DMANGS GLU FOUR: THE EIGHTEEN LEVELS OF HEAVENS DGUNG A SNGON BANG RIM BCO BRGYAD YOD

¹ dgung a sngon bang rim bco	¹ དགུང་ཨ་སྒོན་པང་རིམ་བཙོ་བརྒྱུད་ཡོད།	¹ The heavens have eighteen levels
brgyad yod		
² bang rim re na 'brug re yod	² བང་རིམ་རེ་ན་འབྲུག་རེ་ཡོད།	² At every level, there is a dragon
³ 'brug de ring mi grags nam re	³ འབྲུག་དེ་རིང་མི་གྲགས་ནམ་རེ་གྲགས།	³ If the dragon does not roar today, then when?
grags		
⁴ gral khrom pa rim pa bco brgyad	⁴ གྲལ་ཁྲོམ་པ་རིམ་པ་བཙོ་བརྒྱུད་ཡོད།	⁴ The festive gathering has eighteen rows
yod		
⁵ rim pa re na shags re yod	⁵ རིམ་པ་རེ་ན་ཤགས་རེ་ཡོད།	⁵ In every row, there is a song
⁶ shags de ring mi len nam re len	⁶ ཤགས་དེ་རིང་མི་ལེན་ནམ་རེ་ལེན།	⁶ If the songs are not sung today, then when?

(Rin chen lha mo, Rta ra Village and Btsun mo yag, Glo rgya Village. Recorded in their homes, August 2016).

DMANGS GLU FIVE: THE LUCK OF TIBETANS BSOD NAMS BOD LA YOD

¹ rta 'do ba'i pha sa 'brog na yod	¹ རྟ་འདོ་བའི་པ་ས་འབྲོག་ན་ཡོད།	¹ Horses come from the pastures
² sga lhu bzhi'i pha sa rong na yod	² སྐ་ལྷ་བཞིའི་པ་ས་རོང་ན་ཡོད།	² Saddles come from farming areas
³ rta zhon pa'i bsod nams bod la	³ རྟ་ཞོན་པའི་བསོད་ནམས་བོད་ལ་ཡོད།	³ Tibetans have the luck to ride horses
yod		
⁴ 'bri thul ma'i pha sa 'brog na yod	⁴ འབྲི་ཐུལ་མའི་པ་ས་འབྲོག་ན་ཡོད།	⁴ Female yaks come from the pastures
⁵ shing gson dkar bzho ze'u rong na	⁵ ཤིང་གསོན་དཀར་བཞོ་བེ་འུ་རེ་རོང་ན་ཡོད།	⁵ Wooden milk pails come from farming areas
yod		
⁶ 'bri bzho ba'i bsod nams bod la	⁶ འབྲི་བཞོ་བའི་བསོད་ནམས་བོད་ལ་ཡོད།	⁶ Tibetans have the luck to milk female yaks
yod		

(Don yod rdo rje, from Rta ra Village and Kun thar rgyal, from Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MTNBS, September 2016.)

DMANGS GLU SIX: I WILL SING A SONG NGAS GLU ZHIG LEN

¹ khyim 'di lha khyim gur khyim red	¹ ཁྱིམ་འདི་ལྷ་ཁྱིམ་གར་ཁྱིམ་རེད།	¹ This home is the abode of deities.
² ngas gur khyim 'dra ba'i glu zhig len	² ངས་གར་ཁྱིམ་འདྲ་བའི་གླུ་ཞིག་ལེན།	² I will sing a heavenly song.
³ chang 'di bdud rtsi bsil ma red	³ ཆང་འདི་བདད་ཅི་བསིལ་མ་རེད།	³ This liquor is made of ambrosia.
⁴ ngas bdud rtsi 'dra ba'i glu zhig len	⁴ ངས་བདད་ཅི་འདྲ་བའི་གླུ་ཞིག་ལེན།	⁴ I will sing an ambrosial song.
⁵ mi 'di lha mi dpa' mi red	⁵ མི་འདི་ལྷ་མི་དཔའ་མི་རེད།	⁵ This man is a divine hero.
⁶ ngas dpa' mi 'dra ba'i glu zhig len	⁶ ངས་དཔའ་མི་འདྲ་བའི་གླུ་ཞིག་ལེན།	⁶ I will sing a song like a hero.

(Gu ru rdo rje, Jo ser Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

DMANGS GLU SEVEN: I LIKE TO SING SONGS NGA GLU LEN RGYUR DGA'

¹ nga'i thod pa gor mo phyag la dga'	¹ ངའི་ཐོད་པ་གོ་མོ་ཕྱག་ལ་དགའ།	¹ My round forehead likes prostrations
² ngas phyag gsum 'tshal la glu zhig len	² ངས་ཕྱག་གསུམ་འཆལ་ལ་གླུ་ཞིག་ལེན།	² I will sing while doing three prostrations
³ nga'i mdzub mo lnga bo mchod la dga'	³ ངའི་མཚུབ་མོ་ལྷ་བོ་མཆོད་ལ་དགའ།	³ My five fingers like making offerings
⁴ ngas mchod gsum 'phen na glu zhig len	⁴ ངས་མཆོད་གསུམ་འཕེན་ན་གླུ་ཞིག་ལེན།	⁴ I will sing while making offerings
⁵ nga'i mid pa phra mo glu la dga'	⁵ ངའི་མིད་པ་ཕ་མོ་གླུ་ལ་དགའ།	⁵ My throat likes songs
⁶ ngas mid pa bsal le glu zhig len	⁶ ངས་མིད་པ་བསལ་ལེ་གླུ་ཞིག་ལེན།	⁶ I will sing while clearing my voice.

(Richen skyid, Ru sngun zhol ma Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016).

DMANGS GLU EIGHT: THE IMPORTANT POSITION IN THE FAMILY KHYIM GOR RA GOR MO'I YAR RGYUD NA

¹ khyim gor ra gor mo'i yar rgyud na	¹ ཁྱིམ་གོར་ར་གོར་མོའི་ཡར་རྒྱུད་ན།	¹ In the upper position of the house
² 'dzum mul le yod pa a pha red	² འཇུམ་མུལ་ལེ་ཡོད་པ་ཨ་པ་རེད།	² The one who smiles is the father
³ zas zhim po yod na gan na byin	³ ཟས་ཞིམ་པོ་ཡོད་ན་གན་ན་བྱིན།	³ If you have good food, please offer it to him
⁴ lo gcig gi thog nas gnyor ni red	⁴ ལོ་གཅིག་གི་ཐོག་ནས་གཏོར་ནི་རེད།	⁴ Because he cared for you since you were born
⁵ khyim gor ra gor mo'i thab rtsa na	⁵ ཁྱིམ་གོར་ར་གོར་མོའི་ཐབ་རྩ་ན།	⁵ Near the stove in the house
⁶ 'dzum dmul le yod pa a ma red	⁶ འཇུམ་དམུལ་ལེ་ཡོད་པ་ཨ་མ་རེད།	⁶ The one who smiles is the mother
⁷ gos yag pa yod na gan na skon	⁷ གོས་ཡག་པ་ཡོད་ན་གན་ན་སྟོན།	⁷ If you have good clothes, please share them with her
⁸ chung lo gcig steng nas gsos ni red	⁸ ཆུང་ལོ་གཅིག་སྟེང་ནས་གསོས་ནི་རེད།	⁸ Because she raised you when you were young
⁹ khyim gor ra gor mo'i ka rtsa na	⁹ ཁྱིམ་གོར་ར་གོར་མོའི་ཀ་རྩ་ན།	⁹ Near the pillar of the house
¹⁰ mig bgrad de yod pa phu bo red	¹⁰ མིག་བབ་དེ་ཡོད་པ་ཕུ་བོ་རེད།	¹⁰ The one who smiles is the brother
¹¹ tshig 'jam po yod na gan na shod	¹¹ ཚིག་འཇམ་པོ་ཡོད་ན་གན་ན་ཤོད།	¹¹ Please speak kindly to him
¹² chung lo gcig steng nas khur ni red	¹² ཆུང་ལོ་གཅིག་སྟེང་ནས་ཁུར་ནི་རེད།	¹² Because he cared for you since you were born

(Bka' 'gyur sgrol ma, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERBS

Proverbs are heard during weddings, negotiations, orations, and daily speech. Elders are fond of using proverbs in their speech as proverbs are quintessential in their discourse. I collected these proverbs during my interviews. The respondents learned these proverbs at home and school.

PROVERB ONE

grogs stong yod na nyung stangs, dgra gcig yod na mang stangs

གྲོགས་སྟོང་ཡོད་ན་ལྷུང་སྟངས། དང་གཅིག་ཡོད་ན་མང་སྟངས།

A thousand friends are too few, one enemy is too many.

(Bkra shis bzang bo, Ru sngun zhol ma Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

PROVERB TWO

go ba med pa'i glang rgan la, rgyal bo'i bka' las dbyug pa btsan

གོ་བ་མེད་པའི་གླང་རྒྱལ་ལ། རྒྱལ་བོའི་བཀའ་ལས་དབྱུག་པ་བཅོན།

A stick is more useful for a stubborn ox than the king's order.

(Bkra shis bzang bo, Ru sngun zhol ma Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

PROVERB THREE

sha tsha ba'i tshig la snyan mo med, nad drag pa'i sman la zhim po med

ཤ་ཚ་བའི་ཚིག་ལ་སྙན་མོ་མེད། ནད་དྲག་པའི་སྐྱུ་ལ་ཞིམ་པོ་མེད།

Good advice is not pleasant to the ears; good medicine is not tasty.

(Bde skyid sgrol ma, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FOUR

mgo lag pas skyor dang rgyag ni med, kha kha rog sdod dang kha mchu med

མགོ་ལག་པས་སྐྱོར་དང་རྒྱག་ནི་མེད། ཁ་ཁ་རོག་སྒོད་དང་ཁ་མཚུ་མེད།

Nobody beats you when you cover your head with your hand; no quarrel will arise if you say nothing.

(Btsun mo yag, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FIVE

gzhan don bsgrubs na rang don zhor nas 'grub

གཞན་དོན་བསྐྱུར་ན་རང་དོན་ཞོར་ནས་འགྲུབ།

Helping others is helping yourself.

(Btsun mo yag, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB SIX

rtswa yar skyes kyi rdzong mthug sa, chu mar 'bab kyi gting zab sa

རྩ་ཡར་སྟེན་གྱི་རྫོང་མཐུག་ས། རྩ་མར་འབབ་གྱི་གཏིང་ཟབ་ས།

The place where luxuriant grass grows; the place where deep water flows.

(Bsod nams rdo rje, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB SEVEN

'gro 'dod na rta pho chas kyis gsos, mkhas 'dod na rig pa'i gnas la sbyongs

འགོ་འདྲོད་ན་རྟོ་ཆས་ཀྱིས་གསོས། མཁས་འདྲོད་ན་རིག་པའི་གནས་ལ་སྟོངས།

Feed your horse if you want to go far; study hard if you want to be knowledgeable.

('Brug 'bum rgyal, Chos tsha Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB EIGHT

snga dro 'dug mang na phyi dro 'dar mi chad

སྔ་དྲོ་འདུག་མང་ན་ཕྱི་དྲོ་འདུར་མི་ཆད།

You need to work more in the afternoon if you rest too much in the morning.

(Rdo rje rgyal, Jo ser Village, Mgo mang Town, Mang ra County. Recorded in his home, June 2016.)

PROVERB NINE

khyim la dgos pa rin chen bza' dpon, mi la dgos pa rin chen yon tan

ཁྱིམ་ལ་དགོས་པ་རིན་ཆེན་བཟའ་དཔོན། མི་ལ་དགོས་པ་རིན་ཆེན་ཡོན་ཏན།

The treasure a family needs is a leader (father); the jewel a human needs is knowledge.

(Rdo rje dngos grub, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB TEN

a ma'i bu la yon tan yod na, dga' ldan khri la bdag po med

ཨ་མའི་བུ་ལ་ཡོན་ཏན་ཡོད་ན། དགའ་ལྷན་ཁྱིམ་ལ་བདག་པོ་མེད།

If a mother's child is knowledgeable, there are no certain owners for the Dga' ldan¹ throne. (If you have knowledge and skill, nobody takes your position.)

(Don yod don grub, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB ELEVEN

lha sku chung dka', yi ge che dka'

ལྷ་སྐུ་ཅུང་དཀའ། ཡི་གེ་ཆེ་དཀའ།

Difficult to make small statues; difficult to write letters of huge size.

(Don yod don grub, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

¹ Dga' ldan is a Dge lugs monastery located in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

PROVERB TWELVE

ba nu ma can la bzho rgyu yod, tshig rtsa ba can la nyan rgyu yod

བ་ནུ་མ་ཅན་ལ་བཞོན་ཀྱི་ཡོད། ཚིག་རྩ་བ་ཅན་ལ་ཉན་ཀྱི་ཡོད།

A big uddered cow is good to milk; a profound sentence is good to listen to.

(Don yod don grub, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB THIRTEEN

'grul ba khyim gyi rgyan, rma bya nags kyi rgyan

འགྲུལ་བ་ཁྱིམ་གྱི་རྒྱན། རྩ་བ་ལྷན་གྱི་རྒྱན།

A guest adorns a home; a peacock adorns a forest.

(Don yod don grub, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FOURTEEN

rgya mtsho rtsib nas bskyur te, ko gyong mchu mas sbang ba

རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཅི་བ་ནས་བསྐྱར་རྟེ། ཀོ་གྲོང་མཚུ་མས་སྤང་བ།

Dry leather is moistened with saliva, even if you are by the sea.

(Dngos grub sgrol ma, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FIFTEEN

kha nas tshig shor, lag nas rdo shor

ཁ་ནས་ཚིག་ཤོར། ལག་ནས་རྡོ་ཤོར།

Words escape from the mouth; stones escape from the hand.

(Gnam mtsho skyid, Ru sngun zhol ma Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB SIXTEEN

'brong gyen la rgyug na rwa rtse 'dzin ni, stag thur la rgyug na thong ga 'dzin ni

འབྲོང་གྲེན་ལ་རྒྱུག་ན་རུ་ཅེ་འཛིན་ནི། སྐྱུ་ཐུར་ལ་རྒྱུག་ན་ཐོང་ག་འཛིན་ནི།

One who can hold the tip of a wild yak's horn as it runs uphill, and hold a tiger's chest as it runs downhill. (Very powerful and heroic.)

(Kun bzang skyid, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB SEVENTEEN

khyi mo shes nas zug, khyi phrug ma shes zug

ཁྱི་མོ་ཤེས་ནས་རྩུག། ཁྱི་ཕུག་མ་ཤེས་རྩུག།

A female dog barks for a reason, its puppies bark for no reason.

(G.yang skyid sgrol ma, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB EIGHTEEN

mi khog mis mi lon, rdo khog chus mi lon

མི་ཁོག་མིས་མི་ལོན། རྟོ་ཁོག་ཆུས་མི་ལོན།

A person can't go inside another person; water can't go inside stones. (People cannot read each other's ideas).

(Gu ru rdo rje, Jo ser Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

PROVERB NINETEEN

pha rgod po sha zan la, bu kha ta skyag zan skyes

ཕ་རྒྱུད་པོ་ལ་ཟན་ལ། བུ་ལ་ཏ་སྐྱུག་ཟན་སྐྱེས།

A meat-eating vulture father; a shit-eating crow son.

(Gu ru rdo rje, Jo ser Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

PROVERB TWENTY

pho rab tshig thog, 'phar ba rjes thog

ཕོ་རབ་ཚིག་ཐོག་ འཕར་བ་རྗེས་ཐོག་

A good man keeps his word; jackals follow their own tracks.

(Gnam lha thar, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB TWENTY-ONE

sbrang ma thig le can la stag mi zer, 'bu nag rwa co can la 'brong mi zer

ལྟོང་མ་གྱིས་ལོ་ཅན་ལ་སྟག་མི་བྱེད། ལྟུ་ནག་རྩ་ཅོ་ཅན་ལ་ལྟོང་མི་བྱེད།

A bee with stripes cannot be a tiger; a beetle with horns cannot be a wild yak.

(Gnam lha thar, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB TWENTY-TWO

kha nas bshad na lha bzhengs, lag la bzhag na snab lug

ཁ་ནས་བཤད་ན་སྟོབ་ཆེངས། ལག་ལ་བཞག་ན་སྟོབ་ལྷག

One boasts that he can build a Buddha statue, but when you put the work in his hands, he can do nothing but show a runny nose. (Saying is easier than doing.)

(Klu mo 'tsho. Recorded at her home in Glo rgya Village, June 2016.)

PROVERB TWENTY-THREE

khyed stag la mchong rtsal bco brgyad yod na, nga wa la 'dzul khung beu dgu yod

ཁྱེད་ལྟག་ལ་མཆོང་རྩ་ལ་བཅོ་བརྒྱད་ཡོད་ན། ང་ལ་ལ་འཇུག་ཁྱེད་བཅུ་དགུ་ཡོད།

If you, a tiger, have eighteen different jumping skills; I, the fox, have nineteen holes to go inside. (I have my skills; you have your skills.)

(Klu rgyal tshe ring, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.

PROVERB TWENTY-FOUR

kha mkhas na mkhas pa min, khog mkhas na mkhas pa yin

ཁ་མཁས་ན་མཁས་པ་མིན། ཁོག་མཁས་ན་མཁས་པ་ཡིན།

You lack knowledge if you can only talk a lot; you are intelligent if you know a lot inside your heart.
(One with knowledge in their mouth is not really knowledgeable; one with knowledge in the heart is.)
(Klu rgyal tshe ring, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB TWENTY-FIVE

shing skyon med rgya rdzong nags na med, mi skyon med 'dzam po gling na med

ཤིང་སྟོན་མེད་རྒྱ་རྫོང་ནགས་ན་མེད། མི་སྟོན་མེད་འཛམ་པ་གླིང་ན་མེད།

There are no trees without knots in the forest; there are no perfect people in the world.
(Lcags 'bum rgyal, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB TWENTY-SIX

pha bzang gi bu, g.yag bzang gi ko

ཕ་བཟང་གི་བུ། གཡལ་བཟང་གི་ཀོ།

Son of a good father; leather of a good yak.
(Lcags 'bum rgyal, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB TWENTY-SEVEN

sngon sdug gzhug skyid

སྟོན་སྡུག་གཞུག་སྟིད།

Face difficulties early, relax later.
(Jigs byed 'tsho, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB TWENTY-EIGHT

mda' mo bzhin du drang dgos, ka rdo bzhin du brtan dgos

མདའ་མོ་བཞིན་དྲུང་དགོས། ཀ་ར་བཞིན་དྲུང་དགོས།

Be as straight as an arrow, stable as the base of a stone-pillar.
(Jigs byed 'tsho, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB TWENTY-NINE

zha nye 'big gis ko mi phug, bka' log tshig gis mi mi thub

ཇ་ཉེ་འབྲིག་གིས་ཀོ་མི་ཕུག། བཀ་ལོག་ཏུ་གིས་མི་མི་ཏུ།

A lead awl can't drill leather; words without proof can't convince people.
(Mkha rgyal thar, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB THIRTY

drin chen pha ma'i drin lan bsam ma shes bar du mi shes
sbrang dkar rtsam pa'i ro bcud zas ma tshar bar du mi shes

དྲིན་ཆེན་པ་མའི་དྲིན་ལན་བསམ་མ་ཤེས་བར་དུ་མི་ཤེས། སྤང་དཀར་རྩ་པའི་རོ་བུད་ཟས་མ་ཚར་བར་དུ་མི་ཤེས།

You won't appreciate your parents' loving-kindness until you grow up; you won't appreciate the taste of *rtsam pa* until you run out of food.

(Mkha rgyal thar, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB THIRTY-ONE

gangs dkar sems na rta med na, phu rung nang la srab mi 'dzin

གངས་དཀར་སེམས་ན་རྟ་མེད་ན། ཕུ་རུང་ནང་ལ་སྤེལ་མི་འཛིན།

If I don't have a horse in mind, I won't prepare a bridle. (Very sure about something; no need for a bridle if there is no horse.)

(Kun thar rgyal, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB THIRTY-TWO

bos na ming can, bgos na skal can

བོས་ན་མིང་ཅན། བཅོས་ན་སྐལ་ཅན།

If someone calls, there is a good name; if someone divides, there is a good share. (A person with a good reputation and important position).

(Kun thar rgyal, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB THIRTY-THREE

glang chen smyon pa rig na lam mi gzhol, shAkya thub pa rig na mgo mi sgur

གླང་ཆེན་སྟོན་པ་རིག་པ་ལམ་མི་གཞོ། ཤཀ་ཐུབ་པ་རིག་པ་མགོ་མི་སྐྱར།

One who won't give way to a charging elephant won't nod his head to the Buddha. (Very stubborn and arrogant.)

(Kun thar rgyal, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB THIRTY-FOUR

rnga mong ske ring yang gnam gyi skar ma mi zin

རྩ་མོང་སྐེ་རིང་ལང་གནས་གྱི་སྐར་མ་མི་ཟིན།

A camel can't reach the stars, though its neck is long.

(Gnam lha thar, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB THIRTY-FIVE

bton kha byang, bris lag byang

བརྟན་ཁ་བྱང་། བྲིས་ལག་བྱང་།

Reading trains the mouth; writing trains the hand (read and write more).

(Phag mo lhun grub, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB THIRTY-SIX

ring bo chag sla, dkar po snog sla

རིང་བོ་ཆག་སྒྲ། དཀར་པོ་སྒོག་སྒྲ།

Long things easily break; white things easily get dirty.

(Phag mo lhun grub, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB THIRTY-SEVEN

kha bshad chu yi lbu ba, lag len gser gyi thigs pa

ཀ་བཤད་ཅུ་ཡི་ལུ་བ། ལག་ལེན་གསེར་གྱི་ཐིགས་པ།

Spoken words are froth; action is golden drops. (Action is more valuable than talking.)

(Phag mo g.yang sgron, Glo rgya Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

PROVERB THIRTY-EIGHT

mi la ngo tsha med na khyi, khyi la rnga ma med na 'dre

མི་ལ་ངོ་མཚན་མེད་ན་གྱི། གྱི་ལ་རྒྱ་མ་མེད་ན་འདྲེ།

People without shame are dogs; dogs without tails are devils.

(Bla ma tshe ring, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MTNBS, September 2016.)

PROVERB THIRTY-NINE

Itog mi dgos bro kha rum na yod, skrag mi dgos a pha rtsib na yod

ཇོ་ཏོག་མི་དགོས་བོ་ཁ་རུ་མ་ན་ཡོད། སྐྱལ་མི་དགོས་ཨ་པ་རུ་མ་ན་ཡོད།

Don't fear hunger when food is in your robe pouch; fear nothing when Father is near.

(Bla ma tshe ring, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MTNBS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FORTY

rgyobs zer na a pha'i mgo, rgyug zer na gshin rje'i 'phrang

རྒྱལ་བའི་མེད་ན་ཨ་པའི་མགོ། རྒྱུག་བའི་མེད་ན་གཤིན་རྗེའི་འཕྲང།

He would beat his father's head if ordered; he would run to Hell if ordered. (Very obedient and loyal.)

(Bla ma tshe ring, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MTNBS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FORTY-ONE

mdzub mo lnga bo spun yin, lag pa'i phyi nang sha yin

མཚུབ་མོ་ལྷ་བོ་སྒྲུན་ཡིན། ལག་པའི་ཁྱི་ནང་ཤ་ཡིན།

The five fingers are brothers; the hands' two sides are flesh. (Very close, intimate, and united.)

(Lha mo sgrol dkar, Jo ser Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

PROVERB FORTY-TWO

spyang kis sha za, rkun mas mna' za

སྤྱང་ཀིས་ཤ་ཟ་རུ་རུ་མས་མན་མ་ཟ་

Wolves eat meat; thieves swallow oaths.

(Lha mo sgrol dkar, Jo ser Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

PROVERB FORTY-THREE

pho lo bco lngar bud nab lo phar ma 'dri, bro mar ma slong

ཕོ་ལོ་བཅོ་ལྷན་བུད་ན་བུ་ལོ་ཕར་མ་དྲི་བློ་མར་མ་སྤོང་

When you turn fifteen, don't ask for advice from your father and food from your mother. (You need to be independent.)

(Mgon skyabs, Chos tsha Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FORTY-FOUR

skad cha mang na nyog 'gro, skud pa ring na chad 'gro

སྐད་ཅམ་ན་ཉེ་ལོ་སྤྱད་པ་རིང་ན་ཆད་ལོ་

Much talking confuses; long threads break.

(Rin chen skyid, Ru sngun zhol ma Village, Mgo mang Town. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

PROVERB FORTY-FIVE

chu ma yong gong gi rag, dgra ma yong gong gi dogs

ཆུ་མ་ཡོང་གོང་གི་རག་དང་འདྲམ་མ་ཡོང་གོང་གི་དོགས་

Build bulwarks before floods come; build defenses before enemies attack.

(Rin chen thar ba, Rta ra Village, recorded at MTNBS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FORTY-SIX

bu re ba can la re bzhag, gos ri mo can la rgyang lta

བུ་རེ་བ་ཅན་ལ་རེ་བཞག་གོས་རིམ་ཅན་ལ་རྒྱང་ལྷོ་

Trust the boy who is hopeful; appreciate the colorful garment from afar.

(Rdo rje skyid, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FORTY-SEVEN

mkhas pa 'phyug na 'dom gang, blun po 'phyug na sor gang

མཁས་པ་འཕྱུག་ན་འདོམ་གང་སྤྱོད་པ་འཕྱུག་ན་སོར་གང་

When an expert makes a mistake, it is usually from one armspan away; when a fool makes a mistake, it is usually from the width of a finger away.

(Rdo rje skyid, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FORTY-EIGHT

brgya bshad tshig gi rtsa ba, stong srub 'o ma'i mar lo

བརྒྱ་བཤད་ཆིག་གི་རུ་བ། སྟོང་སྒུབ་འོ་མའི་མར་ལོ།

Summary of a hundred words; butter of milk churned a thousand times. (All in all.)

(Rdo rje skyid, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FORTY-NINE

bos na a, bcol nay a

བོས་ན་ཨ། བཅོལ་ན་ཡ།

Say *ah* when someone calls you; say *yes* when asked for help.

(Sgrol ma rgyal, Chos tsha Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FIFTY

snga dro rta pho chos kyis gsos na, phyi dro drin lan rmig pas 'jal ba

སྤྱི་བྱ་རྟ་ཕོ་ཆོས་ཀྱིས་གསོས་ན། ཕྱི་བྱ་བྱ་ལ་ལྷན་པས་འཇལ་བ།

A horse fed in the morning kicks in the afternoon in return.

(Sgrol ma rgyal, Chos tsha Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FIFTY-ONE

byu ru dmar mo tog tshang gi yin, rma bya sngon mo sgro tshang gi yin

བྱ་རུ་དམར་མོ་དྲོག་ཆང་གི་ཡིན། རྩ་བྱ་སྤྲོན་མོ་སྤྲོ་ཆང་གི་ཡིན།

I am from the family ornamented with red coral; the family adorned with blue peacock feathers.

(Sonam gyal, Jo ser Village. Recorded in his home, September 2016.)

[Note: During the Qing Dynasty, officials might have worn hats decorated with coral or peacock feather decorations indicating their rank.]

PROVERB FIFTY-TWO

rang skyon rang gis shes na sangs rgyas zer

རང་སྤྱོད་རང་གིས་ཤེས་ན་སངས་རྒྱས་ཟེར།

One who knows his shortcomings is a Buddha.

(Sang rdo, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FIFTY-THREE

mi skyon bshad dgos, shing skyon gzhog dgos

མི་སྤྱོད་བཤད་དགོས། ཤིང་སྤྱོད་གཞོག་དགོས།

People must be told their faults; gnarls must be removed from trees.

(Sang rdo, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FIFTY-FOUR

khyed tshang gi sgo kha nas bud de go kha ru btsog don

ཁྱེད་ཚང་གི་སྒོ་ཀ་ནས་བུད་དེ་གོ་ཀ་རུ་བཙོག་དོན།

The reason I entered your doorway and sit near your stove is... (truly speaking...)

(Snying dpal tshe ring, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FIFTY-FIVE

sems pa dkar bo dung, gzhung rgyud drang mo mda'

སེམས་པ་དཀར་བོ་དུང་། གཞུང་རྒྱུད་ངང་མོ་མདའ།

The kind heart resembles a white conch; the straight heart resembles an arrow.

(Snying dpal tshe ring, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FIFTY-SIX

grogs pos dgod bzhin bslu, khram pas ngu bzhin bslu

གྲོགས་པོས་དགོད་བཞིན་བསྐྱུ། ཁྲམ་པས་ངུ་བཞིན་བསྐྱུ།

Friends cheat you while smiling; swindlers cheat you while weeping.

(Tshe thar skyid, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

PROVERB FIFTY-SEVEN

thang nag gi mdud pa grol dgos, dkar nag gi dbye ba 'byed dgos

ཐང་ནག་གི་མདུད་པ་གྲོལ་དགོས། དཀར་ནག་གི་དབྱེ་བ་འབྱེད་དགོས།

Need to know directions to different places; need to distinguish between black and white. (Need to know geography, and distinguish right from wrong.)

(Tshe ring rgyal mtsho, Glo rgya Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

PROVERB FIFTY-EIGHT

rta gom pa can la lcag gcig, mi go ba can la tshig gcig

རྟ་གོམ་པ་ཙན་ལ་ལྷག་གཅིག་མི་གོ་བ་ཙན་ལ་ཆོག་གཅིག་

A good horse only needs a lash; an intelligent person only needs one word.

(Tshe ring rgyal mtsho, Glo rgya Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

PROVERB FIFTY-NINE

mi la yon tan dgos, sning la lo ma dgos

མི་ལ་ཡོན་ཏན་དགོས། སྤང་ལ་ལོ་མ་དགོས།

A person needs knowledge; a tree needs leaves.

(Tshe ring sgrol ma, Jo ser Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

(Tshe ring rgyal mtsho, Glo rgya Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

PROVERB SIXTY

mi shes na gzhan la dris, mi rig na sgang la bud

མི་ཤེས་ན་གཞན་ལ་དྲིས། མི་རིག་ན་སྐང་ལ་བུད།

Ask others if you don't understand; climb mountains if you can't see.

(Tshe ring rgyal mtsho, Glo rgya Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

PROVERB SIXTY-ONE

rta shor na 'dzin thabs yod, tshig shor na 'dzin thabs med

རྟ་ཤོར་ན་འཛིན་ཐབས་ཡོད། ཚིག་ཤོར་ན་འཛིན་ཐབས་མེད།

You can get a horse back after untying it; words blurted from your mouth cannot be unspoken.

(Tshe ring sgrol ma, Jo ser Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

PROVERB SIXTY-TWO

mi kha ma blangs na mi rjes mi chod

མི་ཁ་མ་བླངས་ན་མི་རྟེས་མི་ཚོད།

You can't catch up with others when you do not listen to advice.

(Tshe ring sgrol ma, Jo ser Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

RIDDLES རེད།

Children play riddle games, taking turns. One child asks a riddle and the others need to provide an answer. If a child answers correctly, they get a *ru* 'imaginary household', the more correct answers, the more households they have. If they cannot answer, they must give a *ru* to the one who asked.

RIDDLE ONE

lgang li phyi ljang ljang nang dmar dmar can (chu kub bam nub sil)

ལྷང་ལི་ཕྱི་ལྷང་ལྷང་ནང་དམར་དམར་ཅན། རྩ་ཀླབ་བམ་རྩལ་སིལ།

A ball that is green on the outside and red inside. (Watermelon.)

(Gnam thar rgyal, Ru sngun zhol ma Village. Recorded in the former's home, August 2016.)

RIDDLE TWO

mig yas med pa'i chu 'thung ma (thon bu)

མིག་ཡས་མེད་པའི་ཚུ་འཐུང་མ། རྩོན་བུ།

A one-eyed creature that drinks water. (Ladle.)

(Gdugs dkar tshe ring, Ru sngun zhol ma Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

RIDDLE THREE

'gram yas med pa'i rtsa zan ma (zo ra)

འགྲམ་ཡས་མེད་པའི་རྩ་མཚན་མ། རྩོན་པ།

A one-jawed creature that eats grass. (Sickle.)

(Phyug mtsho skyid, Ru sngun zhol ma Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

RIDDLE FOUR

lcags gi ra ma sngo rul ma

lhung la yod kyang lhung rgyu med (zwa nang gi lde mig)

ལྷགས་གི་ར་མ་སྒོ་རིལ་མ། ལྷུང་ལ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་ལྷུང་རྒྱུ་མེད། ཟླ་ནང་གི་ལྷེ་མིག་

A metal goat that nearly drops out but never falls out. (A key in a lock.)

(Dka' thub tshe ring told the same riddle in his home in Smar khams Village, August 2016.)

RIDDLE FIVE

g.yag brgya thag pa gcig gis btags (phreng ba)

གཡག་བརྒྱ་ཐག་པ་གཅིག་གིས་བརྟགས། བྲེང་བ།

One hundred yaks tied to a tether. (Prayer beads.)

(Lcags 'tsho sgrol ma, Smar khams Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

RIDDLE SIX

thang dkar dkar, lug nag nag, lug rdzi glu ba (dpe cha klog pa)

ཐང་དཀར་དཀར། ལུག་ནག་ནག། ལུག་རྩི་གུ་བ། དཔེ་ཆ་ལྷོག་པ།

On the white pasture, the sheep are black; the herdsman sings. (Reading books.)

(Kun thar yag, Tsha nag Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

RIDDLE SEVEN

sug bzhi yod kyang 'gro mi shes (cog tse)

སུག་བཞི་ཡོད་ཀྱང་འགྲོ་མི་ཤེས། ཅོག་ཅེ།

Has four legs but can't move. (Desk.)

(Rin chen 'tsho, Tsha nag Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

RIDDLE EIGHT

khang dmar nang gi glang dmar (lce)

ཁང་དམར་ནང་གི་གླང་དམར། ལྷེ།

The red bull in the red house? (Tongue.)

(Phag mo g.yang sgron, Glo rgya Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

RIDDLE NINE

a khu tshang gi khal shul na, g.yag rgan nag po zhig lhag nas bsdad yod (thab ka)

ཨ་ཁུ་ཚང་གི་ཁལ་ཤུལ་ན། གཡག་རྒན་ནག་པོ་ཞིག་ལྷག་ནས་བསྐད་ཡོད། ཐབ་ཀ།

After Uncle's family moves away, a black yak remains behind. (A stove.)

(Rig 'dzin tshe ring, Glo rgya Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

RIDDLE TEN

rdo thog shing skyes (lag skor)

རོ་ཐོག་ཤིང་སྒྲིལ། ལག་སྒོར།

A short tree growing on a stone. (Hand mill.)

(Riddles ten and eleven were both told by Bsod nams rgyal, Jo ser Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

RIDDLE ELEVEN

rwa yod kyang brdung mi shes, rkub yod kyang btsog mi shes, (phye ma leb)

རལ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་བརྟུང་མི་ཤེས། རུལ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་བཙོག་མི་ཤེས། ཕྱེ་མ་ལེབ།

Has horns but can't gore people; has a bottom but can't sit. (Butterfly.)

(Gu ru rdo rje, Jo ser Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

RIDDLE TWELVE

'bri gcig thag pa mang bos btags (sbra)

འབྲི་གཅིག་ཐག་པ་མང་བོས་བཏགས། སྤྲ།

A female yak tied by many ropes. (Tent.)

(Bsod nams rgyal, Jo ser Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

RIDDLE THIRTEEN

'brong rgod po lcags kyi sna thug can, sna thu gu 'then na je mgyogs red ('phrul rta)

འབྲོང་རྟོག་པོ་ལཱ་གསུམ་གྱི་སྒྲ་ཐུག་ཅན། སྒྲ་ཐུག་འཛིན་ན་རྗེ་མཁྱེན་པ་རེད། འཕྲུལ་རྟ།

A wild yak with an iron nose ring; the more you twist its ear, the faster it runs. (Motorcycle.)

(Mkha' 'gro tshe ring, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

RIDDLE FOURTEEN

tshang ma'i rgyu ma khog na yod, nged spun gnyis kyi rgyu ma phyi na yod (lham thug)

ཆང་མའི་རྒྱུ་མ་ཁོག་ན་ཡོད། རེད་སྤུན་གཉིས་ཀྱི་རྒྱུ་མ་ཕྱི་ན་ཡོད། ལྷ་མ་ཐུག།

Others' intestines are inside; my brother's and mine are outside. (Shoelaces.)

(Mkha' 'gro tshe ring, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

RIDDLE FIFTEEN

dmar bo byu ru'i thod pa can, dkar bo dung gi khog pa can

sngon po g.yu yi ral ba can, ltas ngan tsi gu'i rnga ma can (la phug)

དམར་བོ་བྱུ་རུའི་ཐོད་པ་ཅན། དཀར་བོ་དུང་གི་ཁོག་པ་ཅན།

སྔོན་པོ་གཡུ་ཡི་རལ་བ་ཅན། ལྷ་ས་དན་ཅི་གུའི་རྩ་མ་ཅན། ལ་ཕུག།

It has a red forehead like coral, white gut like a conch, blue braids like turquoise, and a tail like a mischievous mouse. (Radish.)

(Phag mo lhun grub, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

RIDDLE SIXTEEN

lung mdo'i a ye kher 'dug ma (ja dem)

ལུང་མདོའི་ཨ་ཡེ་ཀེར་འདུག་མ། ཇ་དེམ།

An old woman living alone at the end of a valley. (Kettle.)

(Lha mgo rgyal, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

RIDDLE SEVENTEEN

'gro mi shes ma mo sug bzhi ma (cog tse)

འགོ་མི་ཤེས་མ་མོ་སུག་བཞི་མ། ཅོག་ཅེ།

A sheep with four legs but can't walk. (Desk.)

(Rin chen thar ba, Rta ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

RIDDLE EIGHTEEN

bzung na spar mo gang, btang na khang ba gang (mar me)

བཟུང་ན་སྤར་མོ་གང་། བཏང་ན་ཁང་བ་གང་། མར་མེ།

Hold it, and it fills your hand; let it go, and it fills the room. (Butter lamp.)

(Gnam mtsho yag, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

RIDDLE NINETEEN

mdzo mo ngur nas pha gar bud thal, sna thug chad nas tshur kar thon thal ('ur cha 'phangs pa)

མདོ་མོ་ངུར་ནས་པ་གེར་བུད་ཐལ། སྤ་ཐུག་ཇམ་ནས་ཐུར་ཀར་ཐོན་ཐལ། ལུར་ཆ་འཕངས་པ།

The *mdzo mo*¹ left snorting; the nose-ring rope returned. (Threw a stone with a slingshot.)

(Lcags mo tshe ring, Chos tsha Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

¹ A *mdzo mo* is the female offspring of a yak and a cow

RIDDLE TWENTY

gor gor nang gi ril ril bo
 mi lnga yong nas bkyags nas bud thal
 sum cu dmag gis bsad nas bud thal
 phra mo nyag ga brgyud nas bud thal
 bde ba can la 'phur nas bud thal
 (rtsam pa brdzis nas zas pa)

གོར་གོར་ནང་གི་རིལ་རིལ་བོ།

མི་ལྷ་ཡོང་ནས་བཀྲ་གས་ནས་བུད་ཐལ།

སུམ་ཅུ་དམག་གིས་བསང་ནས་བུད་ཐལ།

ཕ་མོ་ཉལ་ག་བརྒྱུད་ནས་བུད་ཐལ།

བདེ་བ་ཅན་ལ་འཕྱར་ནས་བུད་ཐལ། རྩམ་པ་བརྗེས་ནས་ཟས་པ།

A ball-shaped thing in a round one, five people came and lifted it. Thirty¹ soldiers killed it, then went along a narrow mountain pass. And finally flew to the blissful land. (Making and eating *rtsam pa*.) (Klu mo, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

RIDDLE TWENTY-One

ri rab rgyal bo'i gangs gseng du
 dung gi bu mo spun bzhi yod
 phyogs skyong rgyal bo'i bka' drin la
 bdud rtsi bsil ma'i char zhig babs ('o ma bzho ba)

རི་རབ་རྒྱལ་བོའི་གངས་གསེང་དུ།

དུང་གི་བུ་མོ་སྤུན་བཞི་ཡོད།

ཕྱོགས་སྟོང་རྒྱལ་བོའི་བཀ་དྲིན་ལ།

བདུད་རྩི་བསིལ་མའི་ཆར་ཞིག་བབས། འོ་མ་བཞོ་བ།

There are four conch sisters on Mount Meru, thanks to the grace of the king guarding the directions, the rain of amrita descends. (Milking a cow.)

(Kun thar rgyal, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

¹ "Thirty" alludes to teeth.

NARRATIVES

In Mgo mang, children often sleep with their grandparents or with their parents if they have no grandparents.

In the past, with no or few radios and other audio entertainment devices, the grandparents and parents told stories to children. In my case, the stories resumed in my dreams after I fell asleep.

In earlier times, relatives returned to their natal homes in agricultural areas to help harvest. If a house could not accommodate all the people, the children might have slept outside on beds under eaves and shared stories they had heard from their parents, grandparents, and others in their homeplaces. The stories might have had different details, and the children might have argued that their own stories were true and real. Moreover, when the children gathered during the New Year holidays while visiting their grandparents, cousins typically slept together and told stories.

I present the narratives that I recorded from respondents in the study area.

NARRATIVE One: AN OLD COUPLE WITH COWS

An old couple had twelve cows. The old man slaughtered them one by one. They ate them until only one cow left.

One day, before the old woman went to fetch water, she asked her husband not to kill their last cow because they needed its milk. Before the old woman left to fetch water, her husband stuck a needle into the water container made of animal gut. When the old woman was ready to return home, she noticed that the container was leaking, so she filled the small holes with strands of her hair.

Meanwhile, her husband slaughtered the cow, removed the cow's teeth, threw the udder into the ash, and ate all the meat before his wife returned home.

When the woman returned and realized that her husband had slaughtered the cow, she cried and took the udder into a cave. When she put the udder on a stone, milk flowed out from the teats. She lived there until one day, she worried that her husband might be dying from starvation. When she got near her home, she saw her husband putting ash on a cow horn on a table, muttering, "This is your breakfast, my dear wife."

Taking pity, she put a bucket of yogurt at the door and left. Her husband followed her, tracking her footprints in the snow, and found her in the cave where the old woman treated him with plenty of dairy products.

Later, when she went to collect yak dung, her husband boiled the udder and ate it. Realizing what he had done she was very upset and fled to a distant place where she noticed a tent. She entered the tent and found bowls filled with rice. She ate some, and then a rabbit, tiger, wolf, and fox returned from hunting. The tiger swallowed the old woman instantly.

The rabbit said, "Uncle, she could have been our cook if you had not eaten her."

The tiger said, "I didn't chew, I just swallowed her," and vomited the old woman from out of his stomach.

The old woman then cooked for the animals. However, after some time, her husband again found her. She offered him much meat and dug a hole nearby. She told him to hide inside and not to make a sound. When the animals returned, the tiger leader divided the meat they had got while hunting and then asked, "Who didn't get his share?"

The old man answered without thinking, "I didn't."

The tiger stretched his claws into the hole where the old man was hiding, pulled him out, and devoured him.

(Mgon po rdo rje, Smar khams Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE TWO: MOTHER RABBIT AND MOTHER BEAR

A bear mother and a rabbit mother were neighbors. Each lived with a child.

One day, Mother Rabbit and Mother Bear went to dig wild yams in the mountains. Mother Rabbit dug wild yams diligently and put them in her bag. Mother Bear didn't. Instead, she ate them one by one after she dug them up. In the late afternoon, she saw Mother Rabbit's bag was full while hers was empty. Mother Bear then killed Mother Rabbit and brought her bag of wild yams and her carcass back home.

Baby Rabbit approached Mother Bear and asked, "Aunt Bear, where is my mother?"

"She's coming home with yams as big as a horse," lied Mother Bear.

So Baby Rabbit went home and waited hopefully until the next day, but Mother Rabbit still had not returned. He then decided to consult Uncle Crow, who told him Mother Bear had killed his mother.

Baby Rabbit then secretly went near the bears' home and overheard Mother Bear saying, "This is Mother Rabbit's head, and this is Mother Rabbit's leg."

Baby Rabbit returned home and cried.

Before Mother Bear went to dig wild yams the next day, she said to her son, "Don't play with Baby Rabbit if he asks you to play with spears and knives," and her son agreed.

After Mother Bear was gone, Baby Rabbit went to Baby Bear and invited him to play with spears and knives. Baby Bears replied, "Mother said I couldn't play any games with spears and knives today."

Baby Rabbit then suggested, "Let's play with the millstone."

After Baby Bear agreed, Baby Rabbit turned the millstone by pulling the pole attached to the millstone at the front while Baby Bear pushed the pole from behind. Baby Rabbit suddenly pulled the pole very strongly and hopped away. Meanwhile, the pole hit and killed Baby Bear.

(Tshe mdo skyid, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

NARRATIVE THREE: DEITY MAKER KUN DGA' AND CARPENTER KUN DGA'

Long ago, two men were named Kun dga'. One was a deity-maker, and the other was a carpenter.

Deity-maker Kun dga' envied Carpenter Kun dga'.

One day, Deity-maker Kun dga' made up a letter and took it to the king. The letter said the King of Heaven ordered Carpenter Kun dga' to come to Heaven by stacking wood in front of a cliff, setting it on fire, and riding a smoke horse to Heaven. When Carpenter Kun dga' learned this, he dug a hole near the cliff where he would soon be burned and stored water and food for a week.

The next day, when everybody was beating drums loudly while the fire burned fiercely, he hid in the hole near where the fire was. Later, a man reported he had seen Carpenter Kun dga' riding a smoke horse to Heaven.

Carpenter Kun dga' hid in the hole for more than half a week. One day he also wrote a letter, went to the king, and said, "I have returned from my visit to Heaven. The deities asked me to send Deity-maker Kun dga' to Heaven."

People then stacked wood in front of the cliff and burned Deity-maker Kun dga' atop the fire. Unable to ride the smoke to Heaven, he died.

(Mkha' 'gro tshe ring, Sha rgya Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

NARRATIVE FOUR: A LIAR

One day a monk visited a liar and asked him to lie. The liar wept while holding the monk and said, "How can I lie since one of my family members died yesterday? Please come to my home and chant tomorrow."

"Sure, your request is reasonable," the monk agreed.

The next day, the monk brought some other monks to Liar's home and saw him sitting in the sunshine, sipping tea. The monk asked, "Why are you happy sitting in the sun since one of your family members has passed away?"

Liar responded, "You asked me to tell a lie, which is what I did."

The monk had nothing to say and left.

(Brug 'bum skyid, Smar khams Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE FIVE: AN OLD COUPLE ABANDONED THEIR CHILDREN

A couple with two children were so poor that they had only five sheep and two goats. For each meal, they had a half-bowl of milk and a handful of *rtsam pa*. Time passed, and they were starving. The couple then discussed abandoning their children in the forest.

A few days later, the husband took his children to the forest and told them to play until a bell hung from a tree rang. He said he would then come.

The wind made the bell ring, but the children's father never came to take them home, even though they waited for several days. Realizing that their parents had abandoned them, they searched for ways to survive. Luckily, they found a childless rich man and lived with him until he passed away.

After abandoning their children, the parents divided the property. They argued as they were dividing the property and finally separated, becoming beggars after their property was gone.

One day, the husband met the two children, who were now in their twenties. They did not acknowledge their father and gave him nothing. After some days, an old woman beggar came and told them she was their mother. The children eventually took care of their parents, even though they had abandoned them, and then they led a happy life together.

(Bde skyid (b. 2004), Ru sngun zhol ma Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE SIX: POTATO AND PAPER

A young woman went to live with her husband in his home. Her marriage and life were not what she expected, so she wanted to ask her mother for permission to return home. She wanted to send a letter, but she was illiterate, so she sent a potato to her mother through a man going to her village.

Her clever, illiterate mother understood and sent a blank piece of paper in reply. The girl returned after she received the paper.¹

(Gnam mthso sgrol ma, Smar khams Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

¹ "Potato" in A mdo Tibetan dialect is *yong ma*, pronounced the same as "come." "Paper" in Tibetan is pronounced *shog gu*, which is similar to "come."

NARRATIVE SEVEN: RABBIT AND WOLF

Long ago, Rabbit and Wolf were neighbors. Rabbit borrowed a sickle from Wolf when she had to cut grass.

When Rabbit began to borrow the sickle from Wolf more frequently, Wolf wondered why. "What are you doing with the grass you cut?" Wolf asked.

"I'm using it for my bedding," answered Rabbit.

Wolf asked, "Do you make a new bed every day?"

Rabbit replied, "It's very wet under my bed, so I have to renew it frequently."

Wolf did not believe this. One day, after Rabbit borrowed the sickle, he went to Rabbit's home and found a lamb there. He killed it and ate everything, except for the legs and the head.

Rabbit returned that evening. Realizing what Wolf had done, she said the next day, "Uncle Wolf, please come to my home for dinner. I'll boil some meat for you since someone killed my lamb."

Before Wolf reached Rabbit's home, she dug a deep hole near the stove, covered it with a white rug, and made a fire. She then put a black rug next to the white one. When Wolf arrived, she said if he was kind, he should sit on the white rug, and if he was evil, he should sit on the black one. Wolf said, "I want to sit on the white rug because I am kindhearted."

Attempting to sit on the white rug, Wolf plunged into the hole. Distraught, he then begged Rabbit for help. Rabbit said, "Let me put on my robe first, then I'll help you."

Feeling the heat of the fire, Wolf pleaded, "Please help me! I'm in pain!"

Rabbit said, "Let me tie my sash, and then I'll help you."

Wolf moved left and right as the fire continued to burn him. He begged again, "I beg you. Please help me! I can't bear it any longer."

Rabbit replied, "I'll put on my shoes and then help you. You killed my lamb, so please stay there," Rabbit said.

(Klu mo 'tsho, Glo rgya Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE EIGHT: THE KING AND NINE PRINCESSES

Long ago, a king had nine daughters who each had a husband. The king liked his sons-in-law except for the youngest daughter's husband.

One day he ordered his sons-in-law to catch a garuda, the king of birds, and said the one who caught the garuda would gain half the king's territory. He also gave fine horses, gold bows and arrows, and provisions to the sons-in-law he liked. To the son-in-law he did not like, he offered only a donkey, a wooden bow and arrow, an empty *rtsam pa* bag, and a teapot.

The next day, the sons-in-law set off. After traveling far away, they came to a large frozen river and decided to stay there that night before setting off again the next morning. The eight older men rode horses and had a dog that understood human language. This dog secretly spied on the son-in-law with a donkey and wooden weapons. It listened as the prince said to the donkey, "The eight men should scatter *rtsam pa* and dry cheese on the ice since they have a lot of *rtsam pa* and cheese. The ice is slippery, but they can then walk on the ice barefoot after washing their feet. They'll be able to reach the other side easily."

After the dog reported this to its masters, the men said they had a lot of food, so the next day, the eight men scattered *rtsam pa* and cheese on the ice and walked on the ice after washing their feet. The youngest husband crossed the river with his donkey while collecting the *rtsam pa* and cheese the other eight men had scattered.

The eight men met a passerby who told the eight men that they would reach a place without stones and then a place without water. The eight men worried about how they would cook without using stones for a hearth and sent their dog to spy on the youngest man to hear what his plan was for

the next day. The man and rabbit¹ guessed the dog was listening and said, "The eight men have many knees, so they could cook their meal with their knees, using them as hearthstones."

After the dog reported this to its masters, the eight men used their knees as hearthstones. Later, when they reached the place with no stones, their knees hurt so much that they couldn't cook, but the youngest man cooked with stones he had carried on his donkey.

The eight men sent the dog to eavesdrop again on the youngest man. The dog heard, "The eight men don't need to worry about water because they have eight horses. If they drink horse urine, they won't feel thirsty. Unfortunately, we only have a donkey, so we'll have to bring some blocks of ice."

The dog reported this to its masters, who thought that's what they should do.

The following day, they reached the place without water and planned to drink horse urine. However, the horses produced no urine because they had not drunk any water. Finally, they reached a place with eagles, thought they were garudas, hunted some, and then tiredly but happily returned home.

The youngest man thought hunting garudas was not easy and asked a local man who explained that the garudas were not there but in some mountain caves.

The man did as instructed, reached the caves, caught a garuda, and returned to the king's palace.

After the older eight men returned, they proudly showed the eagles and said they were garudas. The king only saw eagles but noticed that the youngest princess's husband had indeed caught a garuda. The king kept his promise and gave half of his territory to his youngest daughter and her husband, who splendidly spent the rest of their lives.

(Gnam mtsho yag, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

NARRATIVE NINE: CLEVER

There was a king called Dran gsal 'Clever' and a poor man who was very intelligent, so everyone also called him Dran gsal.

One day, the king heard this and was very jealous. He said to Poor Clever, "If you are clever, steal my turquoise necklace without my knowledge within three days. If you do that, I'll give you half of my property and territory. But, if you can't, it means you aren't clever and should not be called Clever, so you must die."

The king assigned horse riders around the compound and put another group of men around the palace. Meanwhile, women guarded inside the compound and offered food and drinks to both groups of guards.

The first night, Poor Clever did not go to the palace, and he also did not go on the second night. Everyone then concluded that Poor Clever had fled. On the third night, when everyone was exhausted, having kept careful guard the previous nights, Poor Clever came disguised as a beautiful woman. He had put drugs into the tea, liquor, and food that he offered the soldiers. After the horsemen outside the compound were unconscious, Dran gsal dragged them up on the compound walls.

He also offered the women drinks and food and, after they were unconscious, he tied their braids together.

Finally, he put stones into the sleeves of the palace soldiers' Tibetan robes when they were also unconscious, having consumed the drugged food and drinks.

Poor Clever easily went inside the palace, put an animal stomach near the sleeping king's head, and took his turquoise necklace. Once he had it, he mounted his horse and shouted, "Clever came and stole the turquoise necklace!"

¹ This rabbit is not mentioned earlier.

The king woke up from the shouting and bellowed, "My head! It's gone!"

Meanwhile, the women outside screamed, "My hair is burning!" while jerking each other because of their tied braids.

The soldiers with stones in their sleeves swatted at the fire, beating the women's heads with the stones.

Each horse rider thought he was on his own horse and lashed the horses, eager to chase Clever, but could only ride the wall.

The next day, Poor Clever came to the palace and said, "Dear king, you should give me half of your property and territory because I stole your turquoise necklace."

The enraged king reneged on his promise. Clever then threw the turquoise necklace to the ground, after which the king vomited blood and died because the turquoise was connected to his soul, protecting him like an amulet.

(Brug 'bum skyid, Smar khams Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE TEN: DIVINATION

A wife who lived in Tibet ate good food when her husband was absent and served only bread, *rtsam pa*, and tea to her husband.

One day, the husband pretended to go to a distant place but instead hid in their compound and watched his wife. He saw her boiling meat for lunch, eating it, and hiding the leftover meat in a wooden bucket.

Late in the evening, when he pretended to return from his journey, his wife provided only bread and tea as before. When he asked if there was other food to eat, she said there was not.

After having bread and tea, he said he wanted to divine and asked his wife to bring some black and white pebbles. Holding the pebbles, he gestured like a diviner and threw the pebbles one by one into the wooden bucket where his wife had hidden the meat. He then said the pebbles indicated that there was something else to eat. His wife gave him the remaining meat, which he enjoyed eating.

The next day, the wife thought, "Maybe I should put the food into a wooden chest and lock it so that he won't find it!"

She made dumplings after her husband left to drive the livestock to the mountains. However, her husband had returned secretly, and as the day before, hid and watched her. After eating several dumplings, she put the remaining ones into the chest and locked it. Having watched all this, the husband went to the mountains to herd his livestock.

In the evening, when the husband returned home with the livestock, his wife offered him a bowl of *rtsam pa*. He told his wife to bring the pebbles again, threw the pebbles at the chest to divine, and said that the pebbles indicated that they had something to eat.

The wife was now convinced that her husband had divination skills and, thinking he could learn all her secrets, she shared all their food with him.

The wife told locals Lhun 'grub' that her husband was a good diviner. The husband continued to pretend that he could divine. He went to the fields, found a nest of birds, counted the nestlings, and noted how many were males and how many were females. He next told the villagers that he knew how many male and female birds were in the nest. The villagers counted after he reported this and then trusted him.

After dinner one evening, the husband walked down a village path and saw two thieves running away. He caught them and told them to stand up when he said sit down and sit down when he said stand up, otherwise he would report them to the villagers.

The next day, the family who had been robbed asked him to divine and identify the thieves. The village leader called all the young men to the village meeting hall. After they arrived, the diviner

said, "Stand up! The young men sat down. He then said, "Sit down! And the two men stood up. He then told everyone they were the thieves. Since that time, the villagers and his wife completely believed in him.

(Mkha' rgyal thar, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

NARRATIVE ELEVEN: ROBBING

A thief named Don grub became a wealthy man after stealing others' property for many years.

One day, Don grub met a man named Zla ba, who understood his history of thieving. Zla ba invited Don grub to his home the next day. Though Zla ba did not want him to come, a Tibetan proverb came to his mind: *Grul ba khyim gyi rgyan, rma bya nags kyi rgyan* 'Guests are a family's ornaments, peacocks ornament a forest'.

The next day, Zla ba's mother was winnowing grain from the chaff when Don grub came.

Don grub asked, "What is your mother doing?"

Zla ba knew Don grub was curious and said, "She is counting my family's many coins."

Zla ba approached his mother, took the only gold coin the family had, gave it to Don grub as a gift, and invited Don grub to come to visit again so they could give him another coin.

Don grub thought in surprise, "I can get a gold coin once, so how many can I get if I come here often?"

After the guest left, Zla ba's mother scolded, "What should we do now that you have given away our only gold coin?"

Zla ba replied confidently, "Rather than losing a sheep, maybe we can get a horse."

That night, Don grub dug a hole in the room's wall where he thought the mother put the coins after counting them during the daytime. He planned to steal the many coins that he imagined were there. Zla ba was waiting inside the room, caught Don grub by the neck as he was crawling inside, and yelled, "Mother, come with a lamp! I caught the thief!"

When they identified the thief as Don grub, who had been their guest, Zla ba said, "I gave you a coin when you came as a guest. Now you are stealing. I'll report this to our village leader."

Don grub begged Zla ba to release him and not tell the leader. Don grub also agreed to give one hundred coins to the man and his mother.

In this way, Zla ba and his mother became rich.

(Tshe ring rgya mtsho, Glo rgya Village, and Mkha' 'gro tshe ring, Sha rgya Village. Recorded in their homes, August 2016. Both told the same story.)

NARRATIVE TWELVE: PARENTS ABANDON THEIR DAUGHTERS

One day the poor parents of two daughters said, "If we abandon our children, each of us can enjoy two loaves of bread and two cups of milk every day. We will lead a happy, carefree life."

The next day, the father took his two daughters to a forest and told them to play until he waved his hands and then they would all go home together.

He put a cloth on a tree branch far from his daughters and left. The daughters played for a long time, but their father didn't wave his hands. The younger daughter asked her sister, "Why hasn't father waved his hands?"

The older sister replied, "Father will wave his hands after he finishes cutting some wood."

When they finally noticed the cloth on the tree branch moving, they thought their father was waving his hand, so they walked toward the tree only to sadly realize that their father had abandoned them.¹

¹ The following paragraph seems unrelated. It might be from another story or, perhaps, a possible, later episode from this story. It is included here because it is what Spyi 'du tshe ring said.

The elder daughter touched the ground, and edible beans appeared on the surface of the earth. She touched the ground again, and many loaves of bread appeared. They ate until they were full. When she next touched the ground, a house appeared. They entered the house and saw many animals living there. The daughters and the animals became friends and led a wonderful life together. (Spyi 'dul tshe ring, Tsha nag Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE THIRTEEN: AN OBEDIENT DAUGHTER BECOMES THE QUEEN

One day a father with three daughters asked his eldest daughter for food. She said, "If you pick a flower for me, I'll give you food."

He went to his middle daughter, who also asked him to pick a flower before giving him some food. He finally asked his youngest daughter, who gave him food without asking him to do anything.

Next, he went to the mountains to pick a flower for his youngest daughter, but he cut a snake's head in the process. The snake's mother came to him and said, "You cut my son's head, so you must give one of your daughters in marriage to my son."

The father went to his elder daughter with the flower and asked her to marry the snake. She refused, saying, "Why don't you marry me to a man instead of a snake?"

He then approached his middle daughter, who refused, repeating what the eldest daughter had said.

When he asked his youngest daughter, she agreed and went to the snake's home.

One day, a bee flew to the eldest daughter and asked, "Who wants to be the king's queen? If you do, follow me."

In response, the eldest daughter killed the bee with her broom.

The next day, another bee flew to his middle daughter and said, "Please follow me if you want to be the queen."

The middle daughter killed the bee with a rolling pin.

The next day, another bee went to the youngest daughter and said, "If you want to be the queen, please follow me."

She followed the bee to the palace, where the king was waiting for her.

The next day, she became the queen and had a happy life.

(Bka' 'gyur sgrol ma, Brag dkar Village. Recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

NARRATIVE FOURTEEN: THE POOR BOY

An old mother and her son lived together. The son hunted birds for a living. One day, he shot a bird that suddenly disappeared. While searching for the bird, he found a pair of excellent quality shoes, though they needed repair. The shoe repairman was very surprised when he saw the shoes because he said, they belonged to the princess who had disappeared some days ago. The repairman told him to take the shoes to the king, who would reward him.

The son did as he was advised. When the king asked him where he had found the shoes, the boy told him everything that had happened. The king then sent a trustworthy servant to go with him to search for the princess.

The next day, they searched for the princess where the boy had found the shoes and discovered a cave. Looking inside, they spied a young woman. They asked her if she was the princess. She said she was. When the two men asked her to go to the palace with them, she explained that she could not go until her shackles were removed. She added that the shackles could only be removed when they killed a fish on a demon's shoulders.

The boy soon found the demon and killed the fish, rescuing the princess. The king's servant took the princess home but abandoned the boy inside the cave by destroying the wooden ladder that led outside. With no way to escape the cave, the boy stayed for a long time. During this time, he found many keys - keys made of gold, silver, copper, and iron. Using the gold key, he opened a gold room where he found a dragon bound in chains. With an ax, he broke the chains, rescuing the dragon, which flew out of the cave with the boy to the dragon's home.

The dragon said, "When my parents ask what you want as a reward for rescuing me, say that you need a dragon horn and gold chopsticks."

When he met the dragon's parents, he asked for a dragon horn and gold chopsticks. The dragon's parents said that they could not give him those things, but they could give him a drum and, when he beat it three times, he could get whatever he requested. He then took the drum and headed back to his own home.

On the way, he became exhausted, so he beat the drum three times, and a horse appeared, which he rode toward his home. When it got dark, he looked for a place to sleep. He approached a house and asked for permission to spend the night there. The master of the house asked if he needed food. He replied that he only needed a place to sleep. The master of the home then saw when he beat the drum, food appeared. After eating, the boy went to bed, and the greedy home master decided to kill the boy and take the drum.

The next day, the man hid under a bridge, waiting for the boy he planned to kill. But when the man attacked, the startled horse reared and killed the man. The horse vanished into the sky after the man was dead.

The boy walked on to his home. When he arrived, he beat his drum three times and asked for clothes and food for his mother, who was very happy with these gifts. The boy then asked his mother to attend the princess' wedding the next day.

The next day, at the wedding, the princess was to marry the servant who, the king believed, had saved the princess.

When the princess saw the boy, she told the king that the boy was her real savior. Having now learned that the servant had cheated him, the king ordered him buried under a hundred soil layers with a tower built on top.

The king then asked the boy to be his son-in-law. The boy thus married the princess and led a very happy life with his mother.

(Lha mo sgrol dkar, Jo ser Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE FIFTEEN: THE GOAT-TAIL MOUSE

Long ago, a couple who often quarreled herded goats. One day, they decided to separate and divide the goats. They agreed that they would drive the goats to a river where one of the couple would stand on one side of the river and the other on the opposite side. After the goats had their fill of water, those that went to the man would belong to him, and those that went to the woman would be hers.

After the goats had drunk the water, they all headed towards the man. The woman screamed, "Oh my!" and grabbed the last goat's tail, which broke off in her hand. That was all she got.

Later, she ate *rtsam pa* mixed with blood from the tail. Afterward, when she was getting ready to boil the tail and eat it, the goat tail became a small boy who pleaded with her not to kill him. He said that he could help her if she didn't kill him. Afterward, the tiny boy stole property from others and was called Goat-tail Mouse because mice are thieves.

Sometime later, the king's minister reported that property in the treasury was steadily diminishing. The king declared, "I know who is stealing from me," and ordered his subordinate to summon Goat-tail Mouse.

When Goat-tail Mouse arrived, the king said, "If you can steal the *mdzo*¹ in my yard, I will give you half of my property. If you cannot, you must promise to stop stealing."

That night Goat-tail Mouse asked two of his thief-friends to help, promising to give them all the meat of the *mdzo* except for the head and legs. After they successfully stole the king's *mdzo*, Goat-tail Mouse went to the king, showed him the *mdzo*'s head and legs, and asked for his reward. The king refused and said, "If you can steal my drinking cup, I will acknowledge that you are a good thief."

Goat-tail Mouse made a hole in the palace roof, lowered a bamboo pole with a hook attached, and pulled up the drinking cup. He went to the king, showed him the drinking cup, and again asked for his reward.

The king again refused but added, "If you can steal my trousers, I will reward you."

Goat-tail Mouse later secretly went to the palace, put a piece of wet yak dung on the king's trousers, and told everyone that the king had defecated in his pants. Embarrassed, the king thought everyone would believe this, so he threw the trousers away. Goat-tail Mouse then took the pair of trousers to the king and asked for his reward for the third time.

The king yet again refused but said, "If you can steal my turquoise, I will give you the reward."

The king tied a lion and tiger at the palace gate to guard the turquoise and put mounted guards around the palace compound.

Goat-tail Mouse disguised himself as a beautiful lady and went around offering liquor to the soldiers. Once they were drunk, he put the soldiers from the first floor onto the second floor and put the horse saddles on the walls. Next, he put the soldiers from the second floor in the saddles. Unexpectedly, after drugging them, the lion and tiger became friendly towards him. He unleashed them, replacing them with two big pots. Goat-tail Mouse then put a stone in one of a male servant's sleeves. After successfully stealing the king's turquoise from a drawer in the king's bedroom, he put a needle where the turquoise had been.

He next went outside and yelled, "The king's turquoise has been stolen!"

The king stretched out his arms, groping about for the turquoise with his hands while shouting, "Where is my turquoise?"

The needle pricked him, so he asked his servants to make a fire. A female servant burned her hair because she was so nervous as she tried to make a fire. The king ordered another servant to put out the fire. The servant flapped one of his sleeves to extinguish the fire and accidentally killed the female servant because of the stone in one of his sleeves.

On the second floor, the soldier heard the king yelling, thought he was on the first floor, and, when he stepped outside, he fell from the building. The soldiers on the wall thought they were riding horses, lashed the wall, and tried to go, but their "horse" did not move. The king angrily went out to see why the lion and the tiger were not attacking and found only two pots in their place.

The next day, Goat-tail Mouse came, and the king finally gave him half of his property as promised in the beginning. From then on, Goat-tail Mouse stopped stealing.

(Rdo rje don grub, Smar khams Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

¹ A *mdzo* is the male offspring of a yak and a cow.

NARRATIVE SIXTEEN: A MAN BECOMES RICH

A poor man had nothing to put in his belly long ago, so he went to his brother's home to borrow some barley. He wanted to grow barley to make a living and promised to return the barley in autumn after harvest. His sister-in-law was a very bad woman who did not want to help him, so she boiled some barley and gave it to him.

After returning home, he planted the barley and waited for it to sprout, but a huge tree with fruit grew. Everyone admired this tree and its fruit. One day, he found that the tree had been uprooted and stolen. He followed the thief's footprints to a cave and found a demon and her child living there. He overheard the child asking his mother to tell stories. She told him to stir the fire first.

After the boy stirred the fire, he went to his mother, who told him there was a magic stone in their house, and gold would pour out of it if they turned the stone. She emphasized that they needed to take care of the stone.

Once the man heard all this, he stole the stone and became very rich. One day, his brother visited and asked how he had become so rich. The poor man told everything, so the greedy brother went to the cave. This time, the demon sensed someone was there and asked her son to put out the fire. The brother suddenly stumbled, which the demons heard. The demons thus caught him. (Gang dkar lha mo, Chos tsha Village. Recorded at MTNBS, September 2016.)

NARRATIVE SEVENTEEN: THE GREEDY MAN AND THE LIAR

A greedy man and a liar were friends. One day, Liar put the only gold coin that he and his mother had in donkey dung. He said to his mother, "When Greedy comes, please take out this gold coin from the dung."

Greedy soon came, and Liar's mother took the gold coin from the dung. Greedy was surprised and asked why a gold coin was in the dung. Liar said, "Our donkey defecates gold if we treat him well and give him a lot of good grass and water."

Greedy then asked if he could borrow the donkey and promised to take good care of it. Greedy treated the donkey very well for almost a week, but nothing happened, so he went to Liar's home, but Liar was not there. Enraged, he killed Liar's mother.

When Liar returned, he found his mother was dead and learned who had killed her. He next placed his mother's corpse in a village lane sitting against a rock. He put beans in front of the corpse and shouted, "Come buy beans! Come buy beans!"

A man came, and seeing that his mother was dead, he reminded Liar that his mother was dead. When the man touched the corpse, it fell over. Liar then shouted, "You killed my mother!" and demanded a large amount of money as compensation.

When Liar got home, Greedy soon noticed that he now had a lot of money. Greedy asked, "How did you get this money?"

Liar said, "After you killed my mother, I sold her corpse in the village lane to a man. So I'm rich now."

Greedy also wanted to be rich and asked Liar to kill his mother. After Liar killed Greedy's mother, Greedy took her corpse to a village lane to sell. Everyone scolded and beat him and told him that nobody wanted to buy a corpse.

Greedy was so angry that he set Liar's house on fire.

Liar put some ash in a bag and went to a foolish man's home to secretly exchange his bag of ash for the man's bag of money.

When Liar came home with the bag of money, Greedy asked, "How did you get this money?"

Liar answered, "After you burned my house, I sold the ash."

Greedy believed this and asked Liar to burn down his house. Later, when Greedy was trying to sell the ash, everyone told him that nobody buys ash and beat him.

Greedy then went to Liar and asked, "Why do you lie to me?" and tied Liar to a tree on a small island in the middle of a lake. He said that he would throw him into the lake the next day after returning from a relative's wedding.

After Greedy left, Liar saw a one-eyed monk riding a donkey, driving some goats. He said to the monk, "Are you blind in one eye?"

"Yes," the monk replied.

Liar said, "I was blind until I hung from this tree, and then my eyes were cured."

The monk believed this, untied Liar, and asked Liar to hang him from the tree.

The next day, Greedy came and threw the monk into the lake.

Greedy saw Liar driving a herd of goats a week later and asked, "Why are you here?"

Liar answered, "I got these goats from the lake. You didn't throw me in the exact center of the lake, so I only have a few goats. If you had thrown me in the center, I would have more."

Greedy believed this and told Liar to throw him in the center of the lake.

Liar then threw Greedy into the center of the lake and happily walked away.

(Kun bzang skyid, Rdo ra Village. Recorded at MTNBS, September 2016.)

NARRATIVE EIGHTEEN: UNCLE STON PA ASKS FOR HIS GOLD

Uncle Ston pa needed to go somewhere and asked his neighbor to take care of a bag of gold while he was gone.

After Uncle Ston pa returned from his journey, he asked his neighbor to return his gold. The neighbor gave him a bag of sand. Uncle Ston pa opened it and asked, "How did my gold become sand?"

The neighbor answered, "You are unlucky, so your gold became sand."

Uncle Ston pa said nothing, understanding his neighbor had cheated him. Uncle Ston pa then waited a long time until his neighbor got ready to go to a distant place and entrusted his three children to Uncle Ston pa.

While the neighbor was away, Uncle Ston pa brought three monkeys from the mountains, trained them, and gave them the children's names.

When the neighbor returned, Uncle Ston pa called the three children. The three monkeys presented themselves, so he gave them to his neighbor. The frightened neighbor asked, "How did my children become monkeys?"

Uncle Ston pa answered, "You are very unlucky, so your children became monkeys."

The neighbor then asked Uncle Ston pa how the monkeys could change back into his children. Uncle Ston pa said there was no way.

The neighbor was distraught, confessed that he had stolen Uncle Ston pa's gold, and returned the gold.

Uncle Ston pa then returned the children he had hidden.

(Chos mtsho, Sha rgya Village, recorded at MCSNMS, September 2016.)

NARRATIVE NINETEEN: A SHEEP GOES ON PILGRIMAGE TO LHASA

Wanting to make a pilgrimage to Lha sa, Sheep prepared and started. She walked and walked until one day, Wolf saw her and asked, "Hello! Dear Sister, where are you going?"

"I am going to Lhasa to worship," Sheep answered fearfully.

Wolf said menacingly, "I can eat you now."

"Uncle Wolf, please don't eat me! I have dreamed a thousand times of going to Lhasa to worship," begged Sheep.

"I see. You really want to go to Lhasa. OK, I won't eat you today, but please remember when you return home on this road that I will be waiting for you, and then I will eat you."

Sheep agreed and continued her journey. She was despondent as she thought about her bleak future. After a half month, she reached Lha sa, visited many temples, and saw many Buddhist images. She was delighted, worshipped the deities, and prayed for her next life, wanting to become more compassionate.

However, when she recalled that Wolf was waiting for her, she felt sad. After finishing her worship, she started her long return trip home, walking and crying sadly. On the way, she met a smart rabbit, who asked, "A ma 'Mother' Sheep, why are you crying so sadly?"

"Wolf is waiting to eat me as I return home," Sheep said.

Rabbit said, "Don't be sad. I'll think of a way to defeat him."

"You can't, but thank you for your kind heart. Wolf will eat me," Sheep said.

"I'll use grass to make something that looks like a gun. I'll carry it on my back and frighten him," Rabbit said.

They discussed everything and traveled together. When they neared Wolf's cave, Rabbit hopped up a nearby mountain.

Sheep walked to the cave. Wolf jumped out, declaring, "Now, I will eat you!"

Rabbit shouted, "Mother Sheep, what is that next to you?"

Sheep asked, "Who are you?"

"I'm a soldier of the king. I have a gun, and I am hunting for a big animal. What is that next to you?" Rabbit demanded.

Wolf fearfully whispered to Sheep, "Please tell the soldier I'm your bag."

Rabbit said, "I can't see it clearly because I'm so far from you. Take a tree branch and hit it. Then I'll know what it is."

Sheep picked up a tree branch.

"Please hit me lightly," Wolf said.

Sheep hit the wolf lightly.

Rabbit said, "I can't hear any knocking sound. I'm still not sure what it is."

Wolf whispered, "Hit me hard."

Sheep hit Wolf's head with the branch as hard as she could and killed him.

Sheep thanked the smart rabbit, and together they walked and happily sang their way to Sheep's home.

(Rin chen rdo rje, Ru sngun zhol ma Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE TWENTY: THE LION AND RABBIT

Lion and Rabbit lived in a big forest. Lion was lazy, proud, and arrogant. Rabbit disliked him, came up with a great idea, and said to Lion, "Dear King, although I obey and serve you, someone stronger than you but with the same appearance has come. He told me, 'If someone can challenge me, come now. Otherwise, you should be my servant.'"

Lion arrogantly and proudly said, "Where is he right now? I must challenge him."

Rabbit took the lion to a deep well, pointed to the well, and said, "Look in the well!"

Lion saw his reflection and thought it was his enemy. He bared his fangs at the strong animal in the well. The other one also showed his angry teeth. Then he roared angrily, and the sound echoed back.

Lion could not control his anger and jumped into the well.

Rabbit's intrigue had worked, and Lion went to his final rest in the well.

If you are wise, it is not a problem if you are weak.

The smart rabbit killed the strong king of animals.

(Tsun mo yag, Glo rgya Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE TWENTY-ONE: JUNIPER LEAVES AND WOOL

A herdsman secretly herded his sheep onto his neighbor's fenced pasture, where there was plenty of grass and water. When he saw his neighbor coming, he quickly drove his sheep out and herded them outside the fence.

When the neighbor noticed wool on the juniper tree branches in his pasture, he asked, "Did you graze your sheep on my pasture?"

The man quickly answered, "No, I didn't."

The neighbor asked, "Where did the wool come from if you didn't herd your sheep in my pasture?"

The man replied, "People used wool to mark those trees as sacred."

"OK. Maybe that's true, but where did the sheep dung come from? Did the trees defecate sheep pellets?"

The man had nothing to say, his silence saying everything.

(Dka' thub tshe ring (b. 2001), Smar khams Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE TWENTY-TWO: STEALING A GOAT

When a man saw his neighbor stealing one of his goats, he asked, "What are you doing? Are you stealing?" as the neighbor was lifting the goat over the wall of his sheep pen.

The neighbor answered, "Why can't I weigh your goat?" as he set the goat down.

The goat owner had nothing to say and walked away.

('Brug 'bum skyid, Smar khams Village. Recorded in her home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE TWENTY-THREE: ROAD, CAR, GRASS AND SHEEP

A herdsman was driving his sheep along a road when a car crashed into the flock, killing several sheep.

The driver got out of the car and said, "Why did you drive your sheep on the road? Is there grass on the road?"

The herdsman replied, "Why did you drive your car into my sheep? Is there a road on my sheep?"

The driver had nothing to say and paid compensation.

(Phag mo g.yang sgron, Glo rgya Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE TWENTY-FOUR: A HERDER HAS NOODLES

Once in a Tibetan place, a farmer had a herder friend and invited him to his home. The farmer asked his wife to cook noodles for dinner, knowing that his friend did not know how to eat noodles.

After the noodles were ready, the herder thought it was shameful to say that he didn't know how to eat noodles, so he secretly observed how the farmer was eating. Knowing his friend was watching him, the farmer blew on his noodles before putting a long noodle on his tongue.

He noticed the herder imitating him.

The farmer then secretly blew on a long noodle until it was cool, put it around his neck, and sucked it into his mouth.

The herder imitated him but put a hot noodle around his neck, which burned his neck. ('Jigs byed 'tsho (b. 2002), Sha rgya Village. Recorded in her home, September 2016.)

NARRATIVE TWENTY-FIVE: CHINESE FATHER AND TIBETAN DAUGHTER

A Chinese man had a Tibetan daughter. While she was fetching water from a stream, she accidentally broke her wooden pail on a big rock. When she returned home, her father asked her in Qinghai Chinese dialect, "*A me liao* 'What happened?'"

She thought he had spoken Tibetan, so she answered, "Mother didn't break the pail."

Her father asked again, "*Zale* 'What happened?'"

Thinking he had spoken Tibetan, she answered that it hadn't hit the ground (*sa*), but had struck a rock.

Her father then had nothing to say.

(Gnam thar gyal (b. 2002), Ru sngun zhol ma Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

NARRATIVE TWENTY-SIX: A TIBETAN SPEAKS CHINESE

A Tibetan once learned two Chinese words, *shide* 'yes' and *xiexie* 'thanks', when he visited a Chinese city. Afterward, he enjoyed demonstrating his Chinese "proficiency" to his fellow villagers, who knew no Chinese at all.

One day, someone murdered a person near their village. Many Chinese police officers came. Villagers asked him to talk with the policemen because of his ability in the language. When he approached the policemen, they thought he had come to confess his crime and asked, "Are you the murderer?"

He said, "*Shide* 'Yes'."

After the policemen handcuffed him, he responded, "*Xiexie* 'Thanks'."

(Gu ru rdo rje (b. 2002), Jo ser Village. Recorded in his home, August 2016.)

TIBETAN TERMS

'brug 'bum rgyal འབྲུག་འབུམ་རྒྱལ།
 'brug 'bum skyid འབྲུག་འབུམ་སྐྱིད།
 'jigs byed 'tsho འཇིགས་བྱེད་འཚོ།
 a ma ཨ་མ།
 a mdo ཨ་མདོ།
 bde skyid བདེ་སྐྱིད།
 bde skyid sgrol ma བདེ་སྐྱིད་སྐློལ་མ།
 bka' 'gyur sgrol ma བཀའ་འགྱུར་སྐློལ་མ།
 bkra shis bzang bo བཀྲ་ཤིས་བཟང་བོ།
 bla ma tshe ring བླ་མ་ཚེ་རིང་།
 brag dkar བྲག་དཀར།
 bsod nams rdo rje བསོད་ནམས་རྡོ་རྗེ།
 bsod nams rgyal བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱལ།
 btsun mo yag བཙུན་མོ་ཡག་།
 chos dbyings rgya mtsho ཆོས་དབྱིངས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 chos mtsho ཆོས་མཚོ།
 chos tsha ཆོས་ཚ།
 dga' ldan དགའ་ལྷན།
 dge lugs pa དགེ་ལུགས་པ།
 dka' thub tshe ring དཀའ་ཐུབ་ཚེ་རིང་།
 dmangs glu དམངས་གླུ།
 dngos grub sgrol ma དངོས་གྲུབ་སྐློལ་མ།
 don grub དོན་གྲུབ།
 don yod don grub དོན་ཡོད་དོན་གྲུབ།
 don yod rdo rje དོན་ཡོད་རྡོ་རྗེ།
 dran gsal དྲན་གསལ།
 g.yang skyabs rdo rje གཡང་སྐལ་བསྐྱེད་རྡོ་རྗེ།
 g.yang skyid sgrol ma གཡང་སྐྱིད་སྐློལ་མ།
 gangs dkar lha mo གངས་དཀར་ལྷ་མོ།
 gdugs dkar tshe ring གདུགས་དཀར་ཚེ་རིང་།
 glo rgya གློ་རྒྱ།
 gnam lha thar གནམ་ལྷ་ཐར།
 gnam mthso sgrol ma གནམ་མཚོ་སྐློལ་མ།
 gnam mtsho skyid གནམ་མཚོ་སྐྱིད།

gnam mtsho yag གནམ་མཚོ་ཡག
 gnam thar rgyal གནམ་ཐར་རྒྱལ་
 gu ru rdo rje གུ་རུ་རོ་རྗེ།
 jo ser ཇོ་སེར།
 klu mo ལུ་མོ།
 klu mo 'tsho ལུ་མོ་འཚོ།
 klu rgyal tshe ring ལུ་རྒྱལ་ཚེ་རིང་།
 kun bzang skyid ཀུན་བཟང་སྙིད།
 kun dga' ཀུན་དགའ།
 kun thar rgyal ཀུན་ཐར་རྒྱལ་
 kun thar yag ཀུན་ཐར་ཡག
 lcags 'bum rgyal ལཱ་གས་འབུམ་རྒྱལ་
 lcags 'tsho sgrol ma ལཱ་གས་འཚོ་སྦྲུལ་མ།
 lcags mo tshe ring ལཱ་གས་མོ་ཚེ་རིང་།
 lha mgon rgyal ལྷ་མགོན་རྒྱལ་
 lha mo sgrol dkar ལྷ་མོ་སྦྲུལ་དཀར།
 lo sar ལོ་སར།
 mang ra མང་ར།
 mdzo mo མཛོ་མོ།
 mgo mang མགོ་མང་།
 mgon po rdo rje མགོན་པོ་རོ་རྗེ།
 mgon skyabs མགོན་སྐུངས།
 mkha' 'gro tshe ring མཁའ་འགོ་ཚེ་རིང་།
 mkha' rgyal thar མཁའ་རྒྱལ་ཐར།
 mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།
 mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔན།
 phag mo g.yang sgron ཕག་མོ་གཡང་སྔོན།
 phag mo lhun grub ཕག་མོ་ལུན་གུབ།
 phyug mtsho skyid ཕུག་མཚོ་སྙིད།
 rdo ra རོ་ར།
 rdo rje dngos grub རོ་རྗེ་དངོས་གུབ།
 rdo rje don grub རོ་རྗེ་དོན་གུབ།
 rdo rje rgyal རོ་རྗེ་རྒྱལ།
 rdo rje skyid རོ་རྗེ་སྙིད།
 rdung len རུང་ལེན།

rig 'dzin tshe ring རིག་འཛིན་ཆེ་རིང་།
 rin chen 'tsho རིན་ཆེན་འཆོ།
 rin chen lha mo རིན་ཆེན་ལྷ་མོ།
 rin chen rdo rje རིན་ཆེན་རྡོ་རྗེ།
 rin chen skyid རིན་ཆེན་སྦྱིད།
 rin chen thar ba རིན་ཆེན་ཐར་བ།
 rta mgrin rdo rje རྟ་མགིན་རྡོ་རྗེ།
 rta ra རྟ་ར།
 rtsam pa རུས་པ།
 ru sngun zhol ma རུ་སྤུན་ཞོལ་མ།
 ru རུ།
 sa ས།
 seng rdor སེང་རྡོར།
 sgrol ma rgyal སྒྲོལ་མ་རྒྱལ།
 sha rgya ཤ།རྒྱ།
 shog gu ཤོག་གུ།
 smar khams སྐར་ཁམས།
 snying dpal tshe ring སྙིང་དཔལ་ཆེ་རིང་།
 spyi 'du tshe ring སྤྱི་འདུ་ཆེ་རིང་།
 ston pa སྟོན་པ།
 tsha nag ཇ་ནག།
 tshe mdo skyid ཇེ་མདོ་སྦྱིད།
 tshe ring rgyal mtsho ཇེ་རིང་རྒྱུ་མཆོ།
 tshe ring sgrol ma ཇེ་རིང་སྒྲོལ་མ།
 tshe thar skyid ཇེ་ཐར་སྦྱིད།
 yong ma ཡོང་མ།
 zla ba ཟླ་བ།

CHINESE TERMS

a me liao 阿么了

Chanaihai 查乃亥

Dala 达拉

Duola 多拉

Guinan 贵南

Guomaying 过马营

Hainan 海南

Jiaose 角色

Luojia 洛加

Mashigan 麻什干

Qiezha 切扎

Qinghai 青海

Rianxiuma 日安秀麻

Shajia 沙加

shide 是的

xiexie 谢谢

zale 咋了

Zhihai 直亥

HUZHU MONGGHUL LIFE

THE LAST MONGGHUL PLOWMAN IN 2019: HUZHU COUNTY, QINGHAI PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春), Joints Surgery Department,
Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital*

ABSTRACT

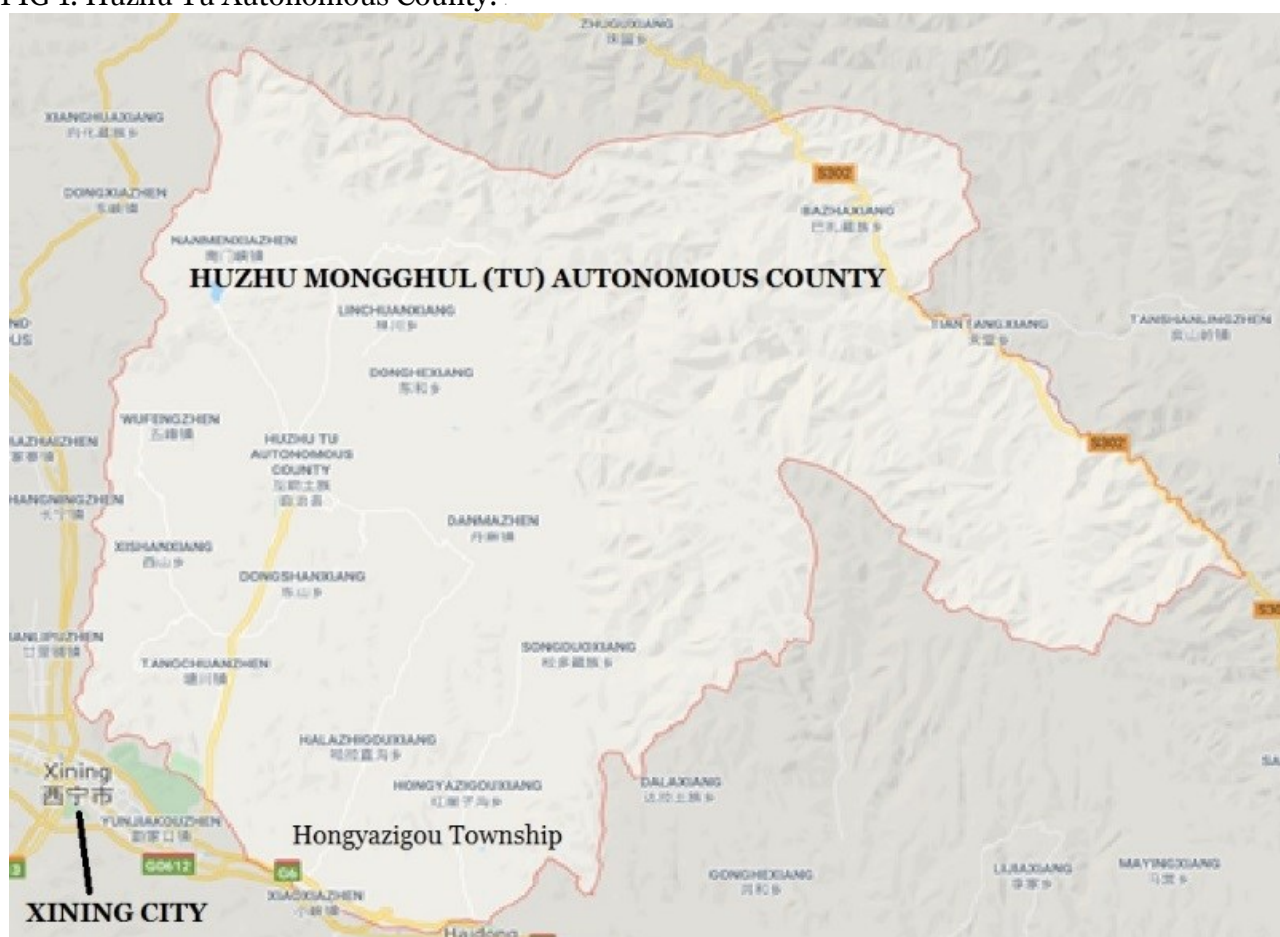
Lajangja Mongghul Village is in a steep mountain region of the northern part of Hongyazigou Township, Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, Haidong Municipality, Qinghai Province, PR China. With twenty-five households and approximately one hundred Mongghul residents, it is one of the most remote Mongghul villages in Huzhu County. The focus of this paper is a village household that, in 2019, used mules to plow. Two maps and three photographs are provided.

KEYWORDS

Tu, Mongghul, Monguor, Qinghai agriculture, fields, Huzhu, Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau

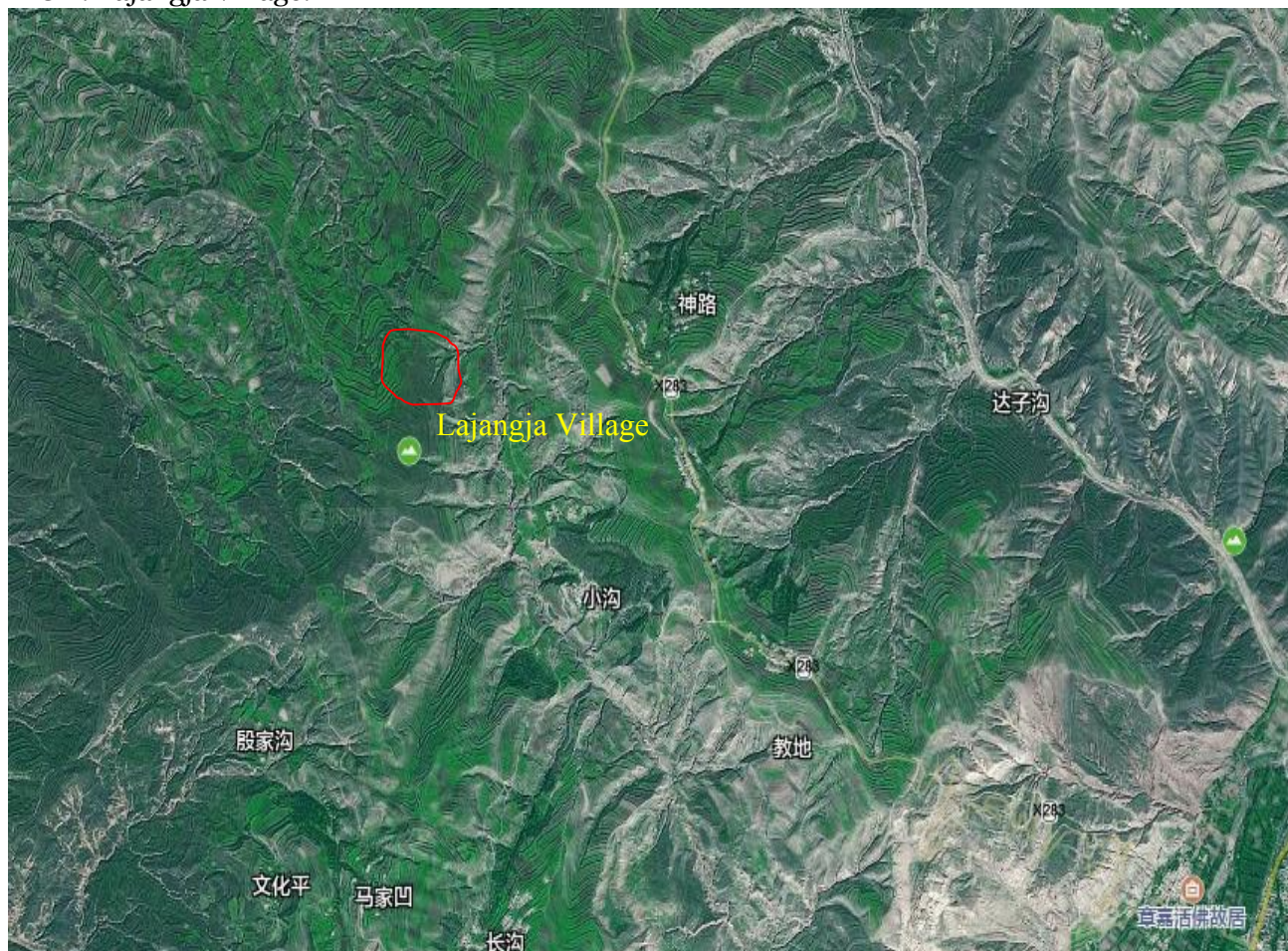
LOCATION

FIG 1. Huzhu Tu Autonomous County.¹



* Limusishiden (Li Dechun). 2021. The Last Mongghul Plowman in 2019: Huzhu County, Qinghai Province, PR China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:345-351.

¹ An edited version of <https://bit.ly/3aJ3QXb>, accessed 9 March 2020.

FIG 2. Lajangja Village.¹

INTRODUCTION

Mongghul² historically used mules, horses, donkeys, and oxen to plow, transport goods and agricultural produce, and thresh crops.³ Livestock were essential in their daily work activities.

After the 1980s, tractors, seeders, harvesters, automobiles, and other machinery were introduced and gradually replaced animals in agricultural work. Additionally, hard-surfaced roads connected villages, running water came to many rural households, and solar-powered street lights illuminated rural village life.

In the spring of 2019, only one Mongghul family plowed fields with a pair of mules in Lajangja Village, Hongyazigou Township, Huzhu County. This article explores why this family still uses livestock in farming.

In 2019, I interviewed Yangbin (b. 1961, male, illiterate) from Lajangja Village. He rarely leaves his village. In 2019, he was the last Mongghul plowing fields with livestock in Mongghul communities. I recorded my interview with him using an audio recorder. Later, as I listened to this material again, I took notes in Mongghul and then wrote this text in English:

My name is Yangbin. I dropped out after one year in our village primary school. That was in the year my father, Qijangrinqan (~1922-1970), died when I was about nine years old. I don't know what illness he had, but he died very suddenly. I then left school and worked at home because my family needed me.

¹ An edited version of <https://bit.ly/39TDkcC>, accessed 9 March 2020.

² Mongghul terms are given in the Mongghul written system (Li 1988:9).

³ See Schram (2006 [1954-1961]) for brief comments on Monguor agriculture in the early twentieth century.

My mother (Gajii, 1923~1996) died from a bad cold.

I have one sibling, an elder sister (Fushinhua, b. ~1946), who attended the same elementary school I did for a short time. Later, she married and moved into her husband's home in Xangri Village, which neighbors our village. My wife (Wumu, b. 1964) is illiterate and is unable to speak Chinese.

I have two sons. The eldest, Hunligha Cairang (b. 1988), had to tend our livestock after he finished primary school. My younger son, Zhaxi Cairang (b. 1991), finished middle school. My sons met their future wives (who are cousins, Tibetan, and from Sangsang (T, Bzangbzang) Township, Angren (T, Ngam ring) County, Rikaza (T, Gzhis ka rtse) City) when they were working in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Hunligha Cairang's wife is Zhualimaxji (b.1986), and Zhaxi Cairang's wife is Zhualimahua (b. 1991). In 2008, the two women came with my sons to Lajangja Village. They were unable to speak Chinese very well, but they learned Mongghul and spoke it fluently. In 2017, after nine years here in the village, they suddenly left and returned to their parents' homes in Tibet. We don't know why they left.

Hunligha Cairang's oldest son is Bughadanzhu (b. 2009), and his daughter is Layahua (b.2010). Zhaxi Cairang's son is Bughaniruu (b. 2011), and his daughter is Sairanghua (b. 2012). All four grandchildren now attend our village primary school.

I have twenty *mu*¹ of farmland. Ten *mu* are planted to grass as a result of the Returning Farmland to Forest policy.

Every morning, I get up early, wash my face, and offer incense in my courtyard. After I escort the grandchildren to school, I take my two mules to a pool of water so they can drink. Next, I take them to graze on the mountain slopes, tie them to a stake in the ground with long ropes, and go home. Every few hours, I return to the mules and move them to a new place to graze. I pick up my grandchildren when school ends and escort them back home.

INTERVIEW

Limusishiden (Li): Where have you been in your life Mr. Yangbin?

Yangbin: I have worked in Maduo County, Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and in Ge'ermu City.

Li: Why do you still plow with mules? Why don't you use a tractor like other people?

Yangbin: Since I was a child, I herded sheep, horses, cattle, and mules. A couple of years ago, I sold all my livestock except for two mules, which I used to plow. The key reason is that I don't want to part with the mules. I am accustomed to tending livestock. It gives me something to do. Otherwise, my life would be less enjoyable. I only use the mules to plow some steep fields. I plow the other fields with a tractor. Some years ago, my sons urged me to sell the two mules, but I refused. Life is more meaningful if a Mongghul family's courtyard has the same livestock that our ancestors had.

Li: Do you only use the mules to plow? Do you use then them to haul things or thresh crops?

Yangbin: These days, they are only used to plow steep fields. We haul things using a tractor and harvest grain in a few hours using a mechanical harvester. Today, no one uses threshing grounds to thresh crops.

Li: How many families live in your village? What are the villagers' lives today?

Yangbin: There are twenty-five households and about one hundred people. About twenty families have locked their front gates and moved to urban areas, mostly Xining, where they work as street and park cleaners; gatekeepers at various work units, companies, parking lots; and restaurant waitresses. They earn more than farmers and rarely return to their homes here. Some come to inspect their home two or three times a year but don't stay even one night. The five households in the village where people live today are older adults who care for children. It is a heavy burden for

¹ One *mu* equals 666.6 square meters, 0.067 hectares, or 0.16 acres.

parents if their children study in Xining, where school fees are high. I predict our village will soon be deserted.

Li: How is your life here in your village? Do you enjoy living here?

Yangbin: Now there are only several old people, a couple of disabled people, and about ten children in our village. It feels empty. Only these people stay in this village and this deep valley. Our home is so remote that peddlers don't come here to sell goods. My wife and I would like to work in Xining to make a living, but our four grandchildren need to study in our village. We must take care of them.

CONCLUSION

Historically, each Mongghul family raised swine, dogs, cats, chickens, sheep, goats, cattle, horses, mules, and donkeys. Surplus livestock were sold, as were eggs, sheep, and goat hair. Cattle, horses, mules, and donkeys were used to plow, transport goods and agricultural produce, and thresh crops. Livestock manure was also collected and used as crop fertilizer.

Pigeons nested under the roofs of homes, symbolizing happiness and auspiciousness. Mongghul fed them and did not disturb or drive them away.

Women got up in the early morning, put the chickens out of the chicken roost, and fed them and the pigeons by sprinkling highland barley or wheat seeds in the courtyard, and fed the pigs and dogs. The men drove the sheep, goats, cattle, horses, mules, and donkeys outside to graze. At dusk, the livestock were driven back home.

The family removed chicken excrement from the courtyard at least twice a day. Animal manure was collected in baskets and poured outside the home on a manure pile. The manure was later taken to fields before plowing and seeding. Horse, donkey, and mule manure was carried outside, dried, and used as fuel.

In 2020, an increasing number of villages were deserted as residents leave to work in urban areas, signaling an end to traditional Mongghul lifeways.

PHOTOGRAPHS

FIG 3. Yangbin and his wife, Wumu (31 March 2019, Jugui).



FIG 4. Yangbin and his wife, Wumu (31 March 2019, Jugui).



FIG 5. Yangbin, Wumu, Limusishiden, and the couple's four grandchildren (31 March 2019, Jugui).



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NON-ENGLISH TERMS¹

'jam dbyangs skyabs འཇམ་དབྱངས་སྐྱམས།

Angren 昂仁, ngam ring རམ་རིང་། County

Bughadanzhu, 'phags pa don grub འཕགས་པ་དོན་གུབ། a person's name

Bughaniruu, 'phags pa nor bu འཕགས་པ་ནོར་བུ། a person's name

Fushinhua, a person's name

Gajii, a person's name

Ge'ermu 格尔木 City

Golok, Guoluo 果洛, mgo log མགོ་ལོག་ Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Haidong 海东 City

Hongyazigou 红崖子沟 Township

Hunligha Cairang, a person's name

Huzhu 互助 County

Limusishiden, klu 'bum tshe brtan ལྷ་འབུམ་ཚེ་བརྟན།, Li Dechun 李得春, a person's names

Lajangja, Xiaogou 小沟 Village

Layahua, a person's name

Maduo 玛多, rma stod མ་སྟོད། County

Mongghul, Monguor, Mangghuer, Tu 土

mu 亩, unit of land measurement; one hectare equals fifteen *mu*

Qijangrinqan, chos skyong rin chen ཚོས་སྐྱོང་རིན་ཆེན། a person's name

Qinghai 青海 Province

Rikaza 日喀则, gzhis ka rtse གཞིས་ཀ་རྩེ། City

Sairanghua, Tshi ring dpal ཚེ་རིང་དཔལ། a person's name

Sangsang 桑桑, bzang bzang བཟང་བཟང། Township

Skal bzang nor bu སྐལ་བཟང་ནོར་བུ།

Tu 土 Monguor, Mongghul, Mangghuer

Wumu, a person's name

Xangri, Shenlu 神路 Village

Xining 西宁 City, the capital of Qinghai Province

Yangbin, g.yang 'bum གཡམ་འབུམ། a person's name

Zhaxi Cairang, bkra shis tshe ring བཀ་ཤིས་ཚེ་རིང། a person's name

Zhualimahua, tra klu mo dpa' རྩ་ལྷོ་མ་དཔལ། a person's name

Zhualimaxji, tra klu mo skyid རྩ་ལྷོ་མ་སྐྱིད། a person's name

¹ I thank Skal bzang nor bu and 'Jam dbyangs skyabs for writing the Tibetan.

"SOUL EMANCIPATION!" WECHAT IN RURAL MONGGHUL (TU) AREAS OF HUZHU COUNTY, QINGHAI PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春), Joints Surgery Department,
Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital*

ABSTRACT

Duguasirang (b. 1976), an illiterate Mongghul man and well-known Mongghul singer from rural Xangri (Shenlu) Mongghul (Tu) Village, Hongyazigou Township, Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, Haidong City, Qinghai Province, PR China and his involvement with WeChat is described. While herding as a child, Duguasirang learned traditional Mongghul folksongs from his uncle. Once an adult, he did construction work in Xining and other places in Qinghai Province. In 2017 at the age of forty, he returned to his village and resumed farming. He has three WeChat groups for which he often sings love songs (in the local Chinese dialect), Mongghul folksongs, and Mongghul drinking songs with his group members. He also broadcasts Mongghul folksongs live and other Mongghul cultural materials with his Mongghul wife. His daily interaction with WeChat demonstrates how this phone app profoundly impacted Mongghul people in 2020. I interviewed and recorded Duguasirang at his home in Xangri Village on 5 October 2019. Two maps and five photographs are given.

KEYWORDS

Huzhu, WeChat life narratives, Monguor biography, oral Tu history, Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau

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LOCATION

FIG 1. Huzhu Tu Autonomous County.¹

¹ An edited version of <https://bit.ly/3aJ3QXb>, accessed 9 March 2020.

FIG 2. Xangri Village.¹

After he finished plowing a narrow field on a slope, Duguasirang² (b. 1976) parked his tractor, got off, and sat puffing on a cigarette while leaning against the slope.

It was the third lunisolar month, and the sunlight weakly shone on this barren, lifeless landscape. Strong gusts of frigid wind made Duguasirang shiver. He pulled a mobile phone from his pocket, took two pictures of the surrounding scene, and sent them to his circle of WeChat friends. A series of replies and "likes" were received. He checked his circle of friends and the content they had posted in their WeChat circles, learning their whereabouts.

He loudly burst into a love song, recorded it using his mobile phone, and sent it to his WeChat friends:

上去了高山望平川，
平川上人们来来往往。
非常想念我的心上人，
繁忙的犁地顾不上她。

Shangqule gaoshan wang pingchuan,
Pingchuanshang renmen lailaiwangwang.
Feichang xiangnian wode xinshangren,
Fanmangde lidi gubushang ta.

Climb up the high mountain and view the plain,
People come and go on the plain.
Yearning for my sweetheart,
But the work of plowing makes me too busy to think of her.

¹ An edited version of <https://bit.ly/2TS7WoW>, accessed 9 March 2020.

² Mongghul terms are given in the Mongghul written system (Li 1988:9).

This love song stanza echoed from nearby hills and gullies, dispelling the stillness. Soon, some of Duguasirang's WeChat friends replied, encouraging him to sing more, so he began another love song. His wife, Qishihua (b. 1977), shouted from some distance away, urging him to put away his phone and resume plowing. He then stood up while sending audio goodbye messages to his net friends.

Duguasirang, illiterate, is from Xangri Village, Hongyazigou Township, Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, Qinghai Province, PR China. He is humorous and gifted at telling jokes. Qishihua is from the same village and is also illiterate. The two fell in love. Eventually, Qishihua moved into his home. He neither paid betrothal gifts to her parents nor held a traditional wedding ceremony. They have two sons. Sunduqishiden (b. 1997) studies at Nanjing Normal University, and Lamusairang (b. 2009) attends Grade Two in Laoyouzhuang Village Primary Boarding School, which is about ten kilometers from Xangri Village. Lamusairang comes home on Fridays and returns to school on Sunday afternoons. A Xangri villager picks up the village's students in his private minibus and takes them to the boarding school for ten RMB (one-way) per passenger. This is convenient for the local students.

Xangri Village is atop high mountains with steep slopes and deep valleys, crisscrossed by ravines, making village access challenging, particularly on rainy and snowy days. Villagers historically used donkeys and mules to transport goods. After 1990, a few villagers began purchasing motorcycles and tractors, which improved access to and from the village. However, it was still tricky to walk on slippery snowy and rainy days until 2016. A narrow concrete road was built that made regular vehicle access to and from the village possible even on rainy and snowy¹ days, significantly improving the villagers' lives.

As the dark sky enveloped the landscape, Qishihua cooked noodles with pork and vegetables for supper. After Duguasirang and Qishihua finished eating, Duguasirang lay on his bed and, at the same time, his cell phone received a bevy of WeChat audio messages. He picked up his cell phone and found a series of voice chat records in the Love Song Group he had established in 2017. He opened voice chat and listened to dialogues between people using net names:

NET NAMES

SAD FISH female

BOOMING FLOWERS&FULLMOON male

HAPPY male

HEAVEN TIBET male [Duguasirang, founder of this love song group]

MAPLE LEAVES male

DREAM LOVER female

CHRYSANTHEMUM female

TRANSCRIPT

SAD FISH: Good evening, everyone!

MAPLE LEAVES: Good evening, everyone!

BOOMING FLOWERS&FULLMOON: All net friends come to chat, please!

DREAM LOVER: Sent a photo of a boy kicking a door violently [beckoning all net friends to come].

HAPPY: Why are you kicking the door?

CHRYSANTHEMUM: Net friend DREAM LOVE wants to enter your home, so open your door and let her in, please!

HAPPY: I'm on duty now. No time to chat.

DREAM LOVER: Dear Older Brother [HAPPY], I know you are busy with your work, but please find time to sing us a love song.

¹ The villagers sweep snow from the road early in the morning when it snows the previous night.

HAPPY: I won't sing a love song. I really cannot find time to sing now.

CHRYSANTHEMUM: Does Aunt DREAM LOVE miss Older Brother HAPPY?

DREAM LOVER: I'm missing all the net older brothers in this chat group.

HAPPY: Great! You're missing us all. Now please sing a love song because only love songs can express one's sincere feelings.

DREAM LOVER: Net Older Brother [HAPPY], I would like to sing a love song, but I sing poorly.

HAPPY: I'm sure you can sing a love song. Please start as soon as possible. Why is HEAVEN TIBET not here tonight to chat with us?

DREAM LOVER: HEAVEN TIBET'S lover may have left, which is why he doesn't want to sing or chat with us. Or maybe he's dead since his lover left this group.

HAPPY: Yes, HEAVEN TIBET may be looking for another lover in another WeChat group by singing love songs. Aunt DREAM LOVER, what do you do?

DREAM LOVER: I clean streets in Xining City. The Love Song Group founder, HEAVEN TIBET, isn't dead because he performed on Kuaishou¹ last night.

HAPPY: HEAVEN TIBET isn't dead. He seriously scolded me last night.

DREAM LOVER: Where do you clean streets? I want to find a job cleaning streets. I don't like my current job because I stay in a basement

with no sunshine every day.

HAPPY: This photo is of a parking lot. I'm working here.

CHRYSANTHEMUM: Dear aunts and older brothers, sing love songs now.

Duguasirang listened to their chat records. Finding no one had sung a love song, he immediately offered:

晒干的土块烧成了土灰，
黄草滩开垦成种地。
和心爱的人一起多幸福，
天黑时也难舍难分。

Shaigande tukuai shaochengliao tuhui,
Huangcaotan kaikencheng zhongdi.
He xinaideren yiqi duoxingfu,
Tianheishi ye nanshenanfen.

Sun-dried earth bricks burned to silver ash,
Yellow-grass uncultivated land is made into fields.
It's so wonderful to live with my lover,
That's why I don't want to leave my lover when night falls.

Duguasirang's Mongghul melody immediately broke the no-love-song-embarrassment of the evening. Quickly, a series of "likes" and emoticons came as feedback. HEAVEN TIBET is the best Mongghul love singer in the group. Duguasirang created this love song group to bring people together to share Mongghul songs.

¹ Video-sharing app.

A group member sent a "Red Packet"¹ to encourage and reward Duguasirang to sing more. Duguasirang received the "Red Packet" and expressed appreciation to the net friend. Before he started to sing again, DREAM LOVER had already begun:

羊肉做成的面条,
菜籽油拌成的大蒜。
只要群主和我们一起,
我们就有事做。

Yangrou zuochengde miantiao,
Caiziyou banchengde dasuan.
Zhiyao qunzhu he women yiqi,
Women jiuyoushi zuo.

Noodles cooked with mutton,
Garlic mixed with heated rapeseed oil.
As long as the group master has come with us,
We all have things to do.

Duguasirang's appearance immediately encouraged many of them to sing love songs. Duguasirang and his wife listened, chatted, and joyfully sang with them until midnight. Qishihua urged Duguasirang to turn off his cell phone and sleep after saying good night to his net friends because they needed to get up early the following day to dig potatoes. Others continued chatting, laughing, joking, and singing.

Duguasirang's uncle, Jiradanzhuu (1929-1994), was a famous Mongghul singer who taught Duguasirang love songs and traditional Mongghul folksongs while herding. Jiradanzhuu learned folksongs from his father, who was also an outstanding Mongghul folksong singer. Duguasirang doesn't know his grandfather's name and birth and death dates because his grandfather died before Duguasirang was born.

Duguasirang never attended school and began herding sheep when he was seven years old with his uncle. Duguasirang has an excellent voice, so his uncle encouraged him to learn songs. Duguasirang didn't want to learn, thinking it was useless. His refusal angered his uncle, who threatened to beat him with his herding whip. Most of the time, however, Jiradanzhuu encouraged him to learn rather than forcing him. Jiradanzhuu said, "Learn folksongs and love songs well. This will be useful in your future."

As time went by, Duguasirang's interest in learning folksongs increased. He not only learned from his uncle and other village elders. Duguasirang benefited from his uncle's encouragement. He sings in Mongghul, Chinese, and Tibetan.

Duguasirang annually attends love song festivals, for example, the Rgulang² Lamasery Monks Mask Dance Festival on the seventh to eighth days of the sixth month, the Danma Love Song Festival on the eleventh to fifteenth days of the sixth month, and the Weiyuan Town Love Song Festival on the

¹ To send gift money on WeChat, users click on a "red envelope" button in the menu, choose an amount, and enter a gift message. Depositing money into each other's WeChat Pay accounts is fast and convenient (<https://tcrn.ch/2PZhRs>, accessed 9 March 2020).

² Rgulang (T, Dgon lung byams pa gling; C, Youningsi) is a Dge lugs Monastery located in Sitan Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County, Qinghai Province. Pu (2013:71-75) reports 396 monks in 1957, while Smith (2013) reports "over 300 monks" (291) and also "340 monks" (293).

second day of the second month. Village-level meetings are also held annually in Huzhu County. Duguasirang actively participates in officially organized love songs and traditional Mongghul folk song competitions during Spring Festival and is often awarded prizes.

Duguasirang and Qishihua had supper early this evening. Next, dressed in Mongghul clothes, they walked to the studio of the Qinghai Huzhu Hua'er Zhibojian 'Love Song Live Broadcast Huzhu [County], Qinghai [Province]', located in a newly built wooden room on the west side of their courtyard, and turned on the lights. Duguasirang sat on a sofa and faced his cell phone, which he put on a supporting holder. He put on his earphones and opened up the live broadcast audio. His short video platform Kuaishou started with a love song:

黑云翻滚，
即将下雨。
有人挑拨离间，
这对情人即将分手。

Heiyun fangun,
Jijiang xiayu.
Youren tiaobolijian,
Zhedui qingren jijiang fenshou.

Black clouds are rolling,
It will rain soon.
Someone has sown discord,
The lovers are about to break up.

As his melodious love song reached his listeners, fans and viewers joined one after another. Some orally praised him, while others sent him a rose emoji.

HEAVEN CLOUDS, a young Mongghul woman, challenged him to compete, and he accepted. Duguasirang's and HEAVEN CLOUDS' real portraits were displayed on viewers' cell phone screens. HEAVEN CLOUDS' head was covered with a pink headscarf. Sometimes, Duguasirang chatted with her joyfully, and at other times they sang antiphonally as viewers praised them by sending various emoticons and comments.

Duguasirang felt tired and thirsty after a period of singing and chatting, so Qishihua replaced him and sang love songs antiphonally with a new net friend. They talked, laughed, joked, and sang until finally, they said goodbye very late in the evening.

At this time, Duguasirang had been intermittently doing live Kuaishou broadcasts for three months. With about 3,000 followers, he does live Kuaishou shows in his leisure time in the evening when people are relatively free. Qishihua assists by singing. Duguasirang is often invited to join other love song WeChat groups, but he mostly refuses. He is a well-known singer, and many fans want to talk with him on WeChat. Only love songs and Mongghul-language folksongs are live broadcast on his Kuaishou platform. He usually starts live broadcasts between eight to eleven PM.

When Duguasirang was sixteen, he followed other young men in his village to look for work in Xining City, Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and Ge'ermu in Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Prefecture, Qinghai Province. While engaged in high-risk tall building construction, a workmate fell from a building and died. Duguasirang was frightened, stopped doing construction work, returned to his village, and resumed agricultural work.

After the year 2000, more and more villagers went to cities for full-time work as street cleaners; sanitation workers at companies, administrative units, parks, and public toilets; security

work at the front gates of companies; and any job with monthly payment. At one time, the village was home to fifty-four households (120 residents). In 2019, only seventeen Xangri Village families (fifty residents) remained. The remaining thirty-seven families lived in cities (most in Xining). They had abandoned their farmland.

In 2018, Duguasirang bought a tractor, a seeder, a harvester, and other agricultural machinery with his construction work earnings. He currently farms 130 *mu*¹ of fields from fellow villagers. Sixty *mu* are rent-free because these fields belong to his clan members who refuse to charge rent. He pays thirty RMB per *mu* for the remaining seventy *mu*. In 2018, Duguasirang earned no profit due to low yields and heavy snow just before harvest. Moreover, extra effort was required to plow land that had been abandoned for years.

In 2019, his hard work paid off. Potatoes, rapeseed, and soybeans grew well. Harvesting at a time to avoid snow also contributed to better yields, resulting in 70,000 RMB in earnings. He looks forward to earning more in the future by farming more fields.

Duguasirang is busy with three *qun* 'WeChat groups' on which he often sings and chats. Tuzuge kaixin wenmingqun 'Mongghul Song Happy Civilization Group' has about 200 participants who mainly sing traditional Mongghul folksongs. Duguasirang rarely sings and talks with others in this group. He started Tuzu wenmingqun 'Mongghul Civilization Group', which has fifty participants. He created a third group, Hua'er shaonianqun 'Love Song Youth Group', that has forty participants. The three groups' participants are Mongghul from Huzhu County, Ledu Region, Haidong Municipality; Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture; and Xining City, which are all in Qinghai Province. There are also participants from Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, Wuwei Municipality, Gansu Province; the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region; and Mongghul from other areas of China and beyond.

Young Mongghul work in various parts of China. Many Huzhu Mongghul have moved to Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Prefecture, Qinghai Province, and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where they now live permanently and rarely visit their homeland. WeChat provides a platform that brings them all together by singing, chatting, and sharing Mongghul culture. All participants in the three groups speak and communicate in Mongghul. However, love songs are sung in the Qinghai Chinese dialect. Furthermore, many Mongghul traditional folksongs are sung in Tibetan.²

Using WeChat has helped Duguasirang learn some simple Chinese characters such as his name, "How are you?" "Goodbye," and so on. Unable to write text messages, he sends voice messages, snapshots, and emoticons.

Duguasirang enjoys sharing with others. WeChat is now part of his life. He also uses WeChat to buy and pay for nearly all of his needs (e.g., WiFi fees and phone bills) and send funds to his older son for his monthly living expenses. Through WeChat, Duguasirang hired ten farmers to weed, seed, and harvest. He told them when and where to work and what tools to bring. WeChat Pay saves a lot of his time.

Duguasirang is also keen to watch videos and play online games when he is free. He also gets information and news via WeChat, which is now an essential part of his life.

Duguasirang and his family regularly make video calls with his older son to ensure he is not homesick.

Increasingly addicted to WeChat, Duguasirang, communicates more often electronically than face to face.

¹ One *mu* = 666.6 square meters, 0.067 hectares, or 0.16 acres.

² For an example, see and hear Huzhu Mongghul women singing a drinking song in Tibetan in 2004 (<https://bit.ly/35CGelL>, accessed 7 May 2020).

Smartphones improve rural life and are transforming how traditional Mongghul love songs and folksongs are performed. Mongghul sang love songs on special occasions, such as when people gathered at the Danma Love Song Festival held informally in conjunction with the time of the Younging Lamasery Mask Dance Festival. On such occasions, people met and sang, expressing their love. Sometimes, they sang love songs while weeding fields and herding sheep in summer. Now with WeChat, people sing love songs whenever they have free time. Furthermore, love songs were once prohibited in a home, but this old norm is now ignored.

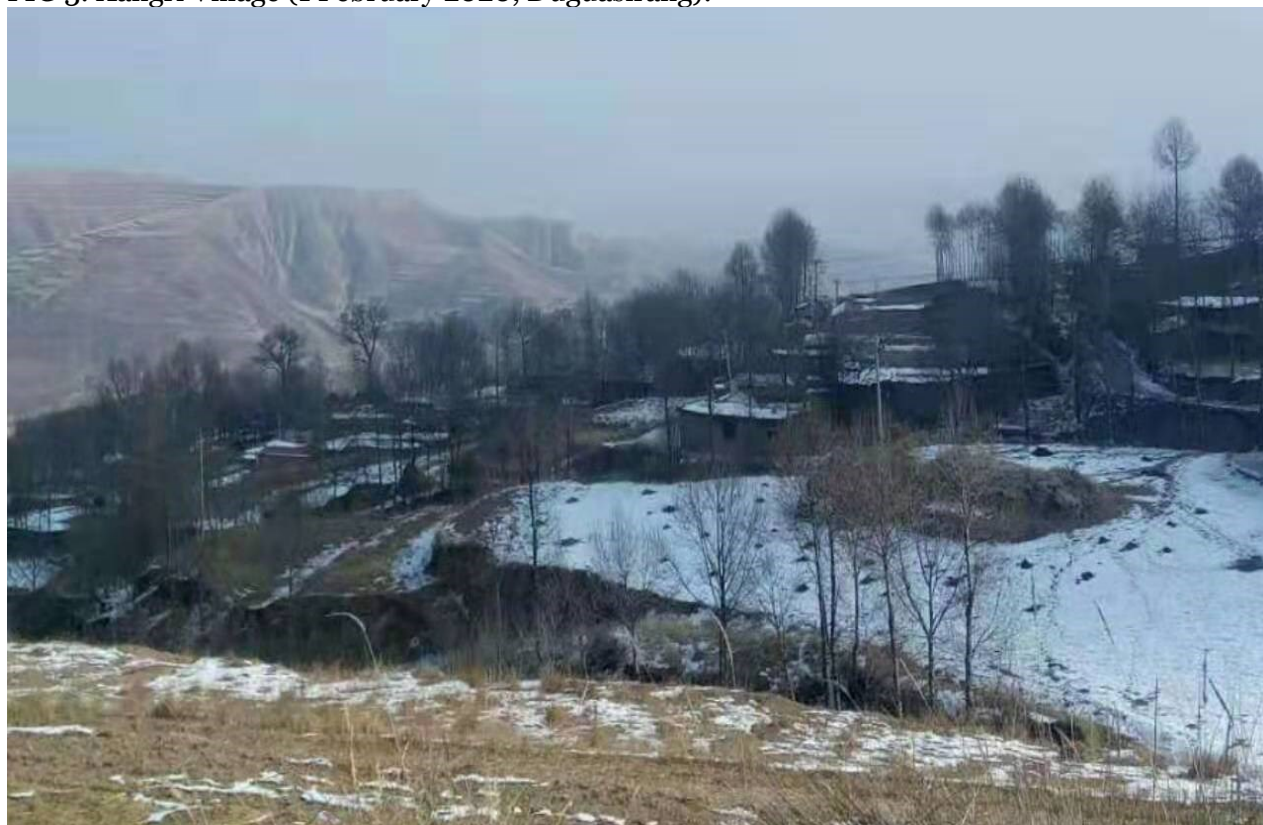
WeChat provides a platform where Mongghul frequently interact, though they increasingly leave their countryside homes and move to cities to work and live.

Why does Duguasirang use WeChat? Why does he sing love songs and Mongghul folksongs? Here is his answer:

I love WeChat! I'm passionate about singing Mongghul praise songs and love songs. Like everyone else, I'm occasionally depressed. Singing makes me forget annoying things. Live broadcast emancipates my soul!

PHOTOGRAPHS

FIG 3. Xangri Village (1 February 2020, Duguasirang).



FIGS 4 & 5. (L) Harvesting potatoes (2019, Duguasirang). (R) Leveling fields. Lamusairang poses as the driver (2019, Duguasirang).



FIG 6. Duguasirang sings love songs in a competition held in Danma Town (10 October 2019, unknown photographer).



FIG 7. Duguasirang (right) with his wife, Qishihua, broadcast live in their family studio (30 December 2019, Sunduuqishiden).



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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

caiziyou banchengde dasuan 菜籽油拌成的大蒜, garlic mixed with heated rapeseed oil

Danma 丹麻, 'dan ma འདམ་མ། Town

dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས། a sect of Tibetan Buddhism

Duguasirang, gdugs dkar tshe ring དགུགས་དཀར་ཚེ་རིང་། a person's name

fanmangde lidi gubushang ta 繁忙的犁地顾不上她 'but the work of plowing makes me too busy to think about her'

feichang xiangnian wode xinshangren 非常想念我的心上人 'yearning for my sweetheart'

Gansu 甘肃 Province

Ge'ermu 格尔木 City

Guoluo 果洛, mgo log མགོ་ལོག་ Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Haidong 海东 City

Haixi 海西 Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Han 汉, an ethnic group in China

he xinaideren yiqi duoxingfu 和心爱的人一起多幸福 'how wonderful to live with my lover'

heiyun fangun 黑云翻滚 'black clouds are rolling'

Hongyazigou 红崖子沟 Township

hua'er shaonianqun 花儿少年群 'love song youth group'

huangcaotan kaikencheng zhongdi 黄草滩开垦成种地 'uncultivated land covered with yellow-grass is cultivated'

Huzhu 互助 County

Jiradanzhuu, a person's name

jijiang xiayu 即将下雨 'it will rain soon'

Kuaishou 快手, short video live broadcast platform

Lamusairang, a person's name

Laoyouzhuang 老幼庄 Village

Ledu 乐都 Region

Limusishiden, klu 'bum tshe brtan ལུ་འབུམ་ཚེ་བརྟན་། Li Dechun 李得春, a person's names

Mongghul, Monguor, Mangghuer, Tuzu 土族

mu 亩, unit of land measurement; 1 hectare equals 15 *mu*

Nanjing 南京 Municipality

pingchuanshang renmen lailaiwangwang 平川上人们来来往往 'people come and go on the plain'

Qinghai 青海 Province

Qinghai Huzhu Hua'er Zhibojian 青海互助花儿直播间 'Huzhu, Qinghai Love Song Live Broadcast'

Qishihua 七十花, a person's name

qun 群, group

Rgulang, dgon lung dgon pa རྒྱལ་ལུང་དགོན་པ།, Youningsi 佑宁寺, a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Huzhu County

shaigande tukuai shaochengliao tuhui 晒干的土块烧成了土灰 'sun-dried earth bricks burned to silver ash'

shangqule gaoshan wang pingchuan 上去了高山望平川 'climb up the high mountain and view the plain'

Sunduuqishiden, a person's name

tianheishi ye nanshenanfen 天黑时也难舍难分 'that's why I don't want to leave my lover when night falls'

Tianzhu 天祝 Tibetan Autonomous County

Tu 土 Monguor, Mongghul, Mangghuer

Tuzu wenmingqun 土族文明群 'Mongghul Civilization Group'

Tuzuge kaixin wenmingqun 土族歌开心文明群 'Mongghul Song Happy Civilization Group'

Weiyuan 威远 Town, the seat of Huzhu County

women jiuyoushi zuo 我们就有事做 'we all have things to do'

Wuwei 武威 Municipality

Xangri, Shenlu 神路 Village

Xining 西宁 City, the capital of Qinghai Province

Xinjiang 新疆 Uyghur Autonomous Region

yangrou zuochengde miantiao 羊肉做成的面条 'noodles cooked with mutton'

youren tiaobolijian 有人挑拨离间 'someone has sown discord'

zhedui qingren jijiang fenshou 这对情人即将分手 'the lovers are about to break up'

zhiyao qunzhu he women yiqi 只要群主和我们一起 'as long as the group master has come with us'

THE LAST MONGGHUL HERDSMAN ON THE KUUSHINZHANG ALPINE PASTURE, HUZHU COUNTY, QINGHAI PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春), Joints Surgery Department, Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital*

ABSTRACT

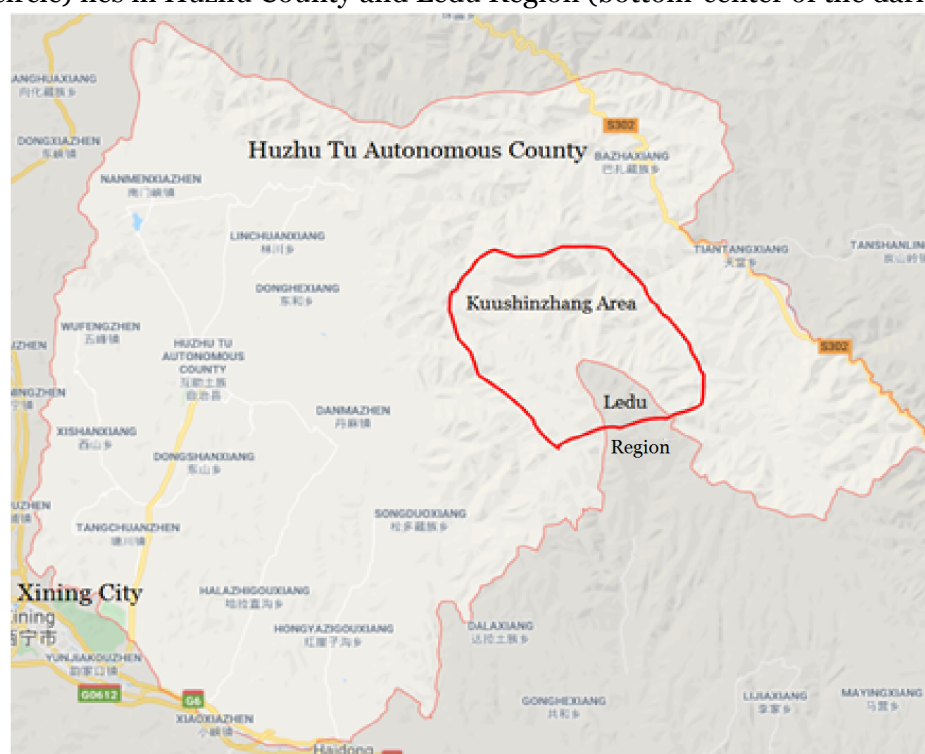
This article introduces a pasture that is significant to Mongghul (Tu) people. In 2019, Galizangzhunbu (b. 1970, male, Tu, illiterate) was the last Mongghul herdsman on the Kuushinzhang pasture in the Huzhu Mongghul area. Galizangzhunbu's personal story and his family background are presented, detailing his practice of pastoralism in 2019. I interviewed Galizangzhunbu at his home in Zhaxi Langwa Village, Hashi Administrative Village, Songduo Township, Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, Haidong Municipality, Qinghai Province, PR China on 6 April 2019. I recorded both interviews and later transcribed the audio material in English. Three maps and five photographs are provided

KEYWORDS

Kuushinzhang, Himalaya yak history, Huzhu, life narratives, Monguor biography, Monguor history, oral Tu history, herding yaks, Qinghai-Tibet Plateau

LOCATION

FIG 1. Huzhu Tu Autonomous County (inside the light-red boundary). The Kuushinzhang¹Area inside the dark-red circle) lies in Huzhu County and Ledu Region (bottom-center of the dark-red circle).²



*Limusishiden (Li Dechun). 2021. The Last Mongghul Herdsman on the Kuushinzhang Alpine Pasture, Huzhu County, Qinghai Province, PR China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:365-377.

¹ Mongghul terms are given in the Mongghul written system (Li 1988:9).

² A revised version of <https://bit.ly/2Vx2muz>, accessed 1 March 2020.

FIG 2. A portion of the Kuushinzhang area.¹

¹ A revised version of <https://bit.ly/2Up1CFL>, accessed 13 March 2020.

FIG 3. Zhaxi Langwa Village¹ (inside the dark-red circle).



INTRODUCTION

Kuushinzhang (T, Ko shin la ka; C, Keshengzhang) is the largest pasture in the Huzhu Mongghul area, where Tibetans and Mongghul have historically herded.² Located in the southeast corner of Huzhu County, Kuushinzhang is eighty kilometers from Xining City. To the north is Bazha Township and Jiading Town; to the west is Wushi Town and Hongyazigou Township, Huzhu County; and to the southeast is Ledu Region. Kuushinzhang has about 10,500 hectares at an altitude of 2,900-4,265 meters above seal level³ and, as important rangeland in the Mongghul area, is well-known locally. For generations, Mongghul pastoralists camped and herded here.⁴ The Su family,⁵ for example, once had many livestock and were prominent in Kuushinzhang. Later, they stopped herding after Zhaxi, a Su

¹ A revised version of <https://bit.ly/3a3YYLC>, accessed 7 April 2020.

² Dunzhi (b. 1930), a Tibetan from Songduo Village, Songduo Township, Huzhu County told Limusishiden on 12 March 2020 that when he was young, his grandfather told him that there were both Tibetan and Mongghul camps herding yaks and sheep in the Kuushinzhang area.

³ <https://bit.ly/2U8N3qW>, accessed 13 March, 2020.

⁴ See Schram (2006 [1954-1961]:250-251) for comments on the Monguor vocabulary for livestock, ability to track lost animals, and abilities as shepherds.

⁵ The Mongghul Su family is from Szanghuali Mongghul Village, Donggou Township, Huzhu County.

family herder, suddenly died on the Kuushinzhang pasture. Certain incarnation lamas, e.g., Tughuan Living Buddha from Rgulang¹ Monastery, also had livestock that were herded here.²

Galizangzhunbu's grandfather was Gunbu (~1926~2006), and his grandmother was Srangzhuma (1920-2001).³ In 1958, the couple was selected to herd yaks and sheep in Kuushinzhang. Consequently, the entire family moved to live and herd in Hashi Brigade, where they pitched two tents and managed the communal rangeland. Five years later, in 1963, two small wooden houses were built, replacing the tents.

It was four hours by horseback between Zhaxi Langwa Village and the Gaxjog area.⁴

Galizangzhunbu's father is Zhaxi (b. 1949). His mother, Diixji (b. 1951), is a Tibetan from Kuushinzhang. A fluent speaker of Tibetan, she was introduced to Zhaxi and married into his camp on the Gaxjog grazing land. The couple spoke Tibetan in their daily life. In 2012, Diixji and Zhaxi found walking on the mountain slopes increasingly challenging due to their advancing age, so they moved to Zhaxi Langwa Village, where they began speaking Mongghul in deference to village residents who speak Mongghul in the village as their first language. Meanwhile, Galizangzhunbu and his wife continued to herd.

Galizangzhunbu's birthplace was a wood house in the Gaxjog pastoral area where the family lived. He speaks both Mongghul and Tibetan. He began herding yaks and sheep at the age of seven and is now the last Mongghul herder on the Kuushinzhang pastureland. The other herders are Tibetans. All other Mongghul herders have stopped herding and have returned to their villages where they farm or moved to cities for non-agricultural work.

The Household Responsibility System was implemented in 1983 in Zhaxi Langwa Village. This resulted in the seventy yaks and one hundred sheep in Galizangzhunbu's camp being evenly distributed among households in Hashi Administrative Village. Owing to Galizangzhunbu's parents' previous experience as herders, they wanted to continue herding, so they bought sixty sheep from the administrative village. These sheep, plus the sheep they had been given in the government-sanctioned distribution, meant that they had about one hundred sheep and thirteen yaks, which were now their private property. The family continued herding on the Gaxjog pasture.

After Galizangzhunbu's parents moved to Zhaxi Langwa to live, Galizangzhunbu became the third generation of his family to herd in Kuushinzhang.

GALIZANGZHUNBU

Galizangzhunbu is the oldest of three sons. The youngest, Zujii (b. 1973, illiterate), married a local Mongghul woman. After they divorced, he worked in Guide County, Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, where he met a local Tibetan woman, whom he married and moved into her home. The middle brother, Warimasishiden (b. 1975, three years of primary school study), also married a local Mongghul woman. They divorced, and he now lives with his son in Zhaxi Langwa Village.

Galizangzhunbu's wife (Yinsuu, b. 1972, illiterate, Mongghul, from Tughuan Village, Wushi Town) moved into his village home when Galizangzhunbu lived with his parents and siblings.

¹ Rgulang (T, Dgon lung byams pa gling; C, Youningsi), a Dge lugs monastery located in Sitan Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County, Qinghai Province. There were 197 monks in 1990 (Nian and Bai 1993:122-126). Pu (2013:71-75) reports 396 monks in 1957. Smith (2013:291) reports over 300 monks.

² Limusishiden's father, Limuzhunmaa (b. 1942), provided this information on 4 October 2019 at his home in Tughuan Village, Danma Town, Huzhu County.

³ She died from a disease of the esophagus.

⁴ A place name in the Kuushinzhang pasture.

Galizangzhunbu herds yaks and sheep while his wife stays at home, tending the family's twelve *mu* of fields.¹ Galizangzhunbu has a daughter and a son. His daughter, Zalaxji (b. 1992), works as a nurse in a Xining City hospital. His son, Qijangcairang (b. 1996), was a university student in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in 2019.

In 2005, Galizangzhunbu's parents planned to divide the seventy-two yaks, 120 sheep, and seventy-two goats among their three sons. Unfortunately, a heavy snowstorm in the winter of 2005 killed fifty-one yaks and half of the sheep and goats. Each son thus received only seven yaks, twenty sheep, and twelve goats. Zujii and Warimasishiden sold their livestock immediately.

Galizangzhunbu continued to herd his livestock allocation after his parents moved to live permanently in Zhaxi Langwa Village. In 2019, Galizangzhunbu had sixty yaks and a total of sixty sheep and goats.

From 2000, Galizangzhunbu and his wife collected caterpillar fungus on their pasture from the mid-third to early fifth months. Price fluctuations meant that the couple earned 10,000-50,000 RMB per year.

In summer, Galizangzhunbu's checked his yaks every other day, herding them close to his camp if they moved far away. He did not milk the yaks, so the calves grew quickly and were larger than the offspring of yaks that were regularly milked.

In 2015, the yaks stayed on the pasture, but he drove the sheep to his village in winter, where they stayed until mid-spring. He then went by motorcycle to check the yaks once a week. Once the sheep were back on the Gaxjog pasture, he stayed there. If an urgent matter demanded his attention, he returned to his village home after first asking a neighbor to tend his livestock in his absence.

GALIZANGZHUNBU ACQUIRED SACRED SHEEP

In 2010, Galizangzhunbu's sheep numbered about 160. He sold 140 and bought yaks with the cash. The remaining twenty sheep were designated as "free sheep" by an incarnation lama from Songduo Township, meaning these sheep should never be slaughtered or sold.

A religiously devout, wealthy man from south China donated 90,000 RMB for one hundred sheep. The lama paid a Tibetan shepherd in Gaxjog to graze these one hundred sheep (including the sheep Galizangzhunbu had donated) until they died naturally.

Later, the Tibetan shepherd sold some of the sheep, ignoring the lama's instructions. Locals criticized the shepherd for violating Buddhist rules.

Later, the Tibetan herdsman did not want to herd the remaining twenty sacred sheep and said to Galizangzhunbu, "You are honest. I believe you won't kill or sell these sacred sheep. I'll give them to you. Please herd them on your pasture."

"Trust me! I won't sell them," Galizangzhunbu replied, and the Tibetan herdsman set a date for him to come and get the sheep.

On the designated day, Galizangzhunbu went to drive the sheep back to his pasture, but the Tibetan herdsman now said, "Can you give me one free sheep every year after you drive the scared sheep to your pasture? I will now have no sheep on my pasture."

Galizangzhunbu agreed, and the man told him to come some days later to get the sheep.

When he returned several days later, the Tibetan herder said, "I'll have no income after you drive the twenty sheep to your pasture. Can you give me 200 RMB for each of the scared sheep?"

Galizangzhunbu agreed and took the twenty sacred sheep to his pasture.

¹One *mu* = 666.6 square meters, 0.067 hectares, or 0.16 acres.

Later he returned to the camp with 4,000 RMB. However, the herder took only 3,200 RMB, probably because he felt guilty at selling the scared sheep.

The sacred sheep in Galizangzhunbu's pasture were all old ewes that no longer gave birth. He wanted someone to feed them, but no one agreed because they did not give birth, and they could not be sold. Eventually, Galizangzhunbu drove them back to his village home where, to his surprise, the ewes began giving birth once they were fed well. When villagers noticed this, they were willing to tend the old sacred ewes.

Yinsuu first refused to give the sheep away, but some days later, she complained that she was so busy with farm work that she could not continue tending the sheep. Galizangzhunbu suggested she sell all the young sheep, and if no one would take them, drive the old sacred sheep away from the village and leave them. Yinsuu agreed. Galizangzhunbu next contacted a livestock dealer, who came to his home to buy the young sheep. While bargaining, Yinsuu changed her mind, did not sell them, and did not abandon the sacred ewes. Instead, she continued caring for them.

Galizangzhunbu earns about 3,000 RMB a year from selling yak hair. He also sells three to four yaks annually. Before the year 2000, a yak sold for about 2,500 RMB. However, prices increased, and in 2019, he earned about 20,000 RMB from selling four adult yaks.

Heavy snow fell early in the winter of 2018 before Galizangzhunbu had transported fodder from Zhaxi Langwa Village to the pasture. With snow blocking the road, he drove all his yaks and sheep to the village, saving them from starvation on the grassland where many livestock died. As much as three meters of snow covered the ground.

CONCLUSION

After the year 2000, rural Mongghul areas were dramatically affected by families increasingly migrating to urban areas to find salaried work with small businesses, street and toilet cleaners, gate guards, and supermarket cashiers. Urban life was seen as comparatively more comfortable with better work conditions than village life that depended on agriculture yields that were considered uncertain because of drought and hailstorms. After years of saving money, the city migrants generally buy urban apartments and do not return to live in their village homes.

An example of a small community that follows this pattern is Pudiu,¹ a village located in Songduo Township at the bottom of a narrow valley surrounded by high mountains. Fifteen kilometers separates Zhaxi Langwa and Pudiu, which was once home to twenty-five households and one hundred residents (all Mongghul). When the author visited in the summer of 2019, twenty-two families had locked the front gates of their home compounds and worked outside of Huzhu County. Many had bought apartments in cities. Of the three families still living in the village in 2019, two had purchased an apartment in Ping'an Town, Ping'an Region, Haidong Municipality, Qinghai Province, and planned to move there the coming winter. This would leave only one family living in Pudiu Village.

Galizangzhunbu plans to continue tending his yaks and sheep. He told me, "I will continue to herd my livestock here in Kuushinzhang. I am older than most migrant laborers, so it would be hard for me to find a city job. Furthermore, I'm accustomed to living here in Kuushinzhang and herding yaks and sheep."

¹ 'Cupped hands'.

APPENDIX: YAK TERMS

FIG 4. Yak terms based on age, sex, and hybridity.

Age Years	Male	Female	Yak-Cow Hybrid
general	<i>hiinog</i>	<i>shdesinii</i>	<i>musi</i>
1	<i>buruu</i>		
2	<i>ghoori nesini hiinog</i>	<i>ghoori nesini shdesinii</i>	<i>ghoori nesini musi</i>
3	<i>ghuran nesini hiinog</i>	<i>ghuran nesini shdesinii</i>	<i>ghuran nesini musi</i>
4	<i>deeran nesini hiinog</i>	<i>deeran nesini shdesinii</i>	<i>deeran nesini musi</i>
5	<i>tawun nesini hiinog</i>	<i>tawun nesini shdesinii</i>	<i>tawun nesini musi</i>
6	<i>jirighun nesini hiinog</i>	<i>jirighun nesini shdesinii</i>	<i>jirighun nesini musi</i>
7	<i>duluun nesini hiinog</i>	<i>duluun nesini shdesinii</i>	<i>duluun nesini musi</i>
8	<i>niiman nesini hiinog</i>	<i>niiman nesini shdesinii</i>	<i>niiman nesini musi</i>
9	<i>shzin nesini hiinog</i>	<i>shzin nesini shdesinii</i>	<i>shzin nesini musi</i>
10	<i>haran nesini hiinog</i>	<i>haran nesini shdesinii</i>	<i>haran nesini musi</i>

Yak terms based on color, gender, and horned/polled

- *hara*, black, general
- *qighaan*, white, general
- *jarima*, gold, general
- *alog*, colorful, general
- *hara tuguang*, black, polled
- *qighaan ghuran nesini tuguang*, three-year-old white, polled
- *kugua deeran nesidii yarishdii hiinog*, four-year-old grey, male yak, horned
- *kiilera jarimadiingi shdesinii*, female yak, gold belly hair
- *alog ghuran nesidii hiinog*, three-year-old, mixed color, male yak
- *qighaan alog shdesinii*, female yak, white mixed with other colors
- *hara tawun nesidii jamari alog hiinog*, five-year-old male yak, black, gold mixed with other colors

Yak terms based on castrated and uncastrated

- *kunguandighasan hiinog*: castrated male yak
- *yii kungaundighasan hiinog*: uncastrated male yak

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PHOTOGRAPHS

FIG 5. Galizangzhunbu at his Zhaxi Langwa home (6 April 2019, Jugui).



FIG 6. Galizangzhunbu at his Zhaxi Langwa home (6 April 2019, Jugui).



FIG 7. Galizangzhunbu in Kuushinzhang (24 December 2019, Zalaxji).



FIGS 8 & 9. (L) Galizangzhunbu's yaks, enclosure wall, and living quarters in Kuushinzhang (4 October 2015, Zalaxji). (R) Galizangzhunbu's yaks graze on mountain slopes in Kuushinzhang (7 July 2015, Zalaxji).



NON-ENGLISH TERMS

alog, colorful

alog ghuran nesidii hiinog, three-year-old, mixed color, male yak

Bazha 巴扎 Township

buruu, calf

Danma 丹麻, 'dan ma འདྲ་མ། Town

deeran nesini hiinog, four-year-old male yak

deeran nesini musi, four-year-old yak-cow hybrid

deeran nesini shdesinii, four-year-old female yak

Diixji, bde skyid བདེ་སྒྱིད། a person's name

Donggou 东沟 Township

duluun nesini hiinog, seven-year-old male yak

duluun nesini musi, seven-year-old yak-cow hybrid

duluun nesini shedesinii, seven-year-old female yak

Dunzhi, don grub རོན་གུབ། a person's name

Galizangzhunbu, skal bzang sbyin pa གཤམ་བཟང་སྒྱིན་པ། a person's name

Gaxjog, a place name

ghoori nesini hiinog, two-year-old male yak

ghoori nesini musi, two-year-old yak-cow hybrid

ghoori nesini shdesinii, two-year-old female yak

ghuran nesini hiinog, three-year-old male yak

ghuran nesini shdesinii, three-year-old female yak

Guide 贵德 County

Gunbu, mgon po གུན་པོ། a person's name

hara, black

Haidong 海东 Municipality

Hainan 海南 Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

hara tawun nesidii jamari alog hiinog, five-year-old male yak, black, gold mixed with other colors

hara tuguang, black, polled yak

haran nesini hiinog, ten-year-old male yak

haran nesini musi, ten-year-old yak-cow hybrid

haran nesini shdesinii, ten-year-old female yak

Hashi 哈什 Administrative Village

hiinog, male yak

Hongyazigou 红崖子沟 Township

Huzhu 互助 County

jarima, gold

Jiading 加定 Town

jirighun nesini hiinog, six-year-old male yak

jirighun nesini musi, six-year-old yak-cow hybrid

jirighun nesini shdesinii, six-year-old female yak

Jugui, a person's name

kiilera jarimadiingi shdesinii, female yak, gold belly hair

kugua deeran nesidii yarishdii hiinog, four-year-old male yak, grey, horned

kunguandighasan hiinog, castrated male yak

Kuushinzhang, ko shin la ka ཁོ་ཤིན་ལ་ཀ།, Keshengzhang 科胜掌, a pasture name

Ledu 乐都 Region

Limusishiden, klu 'bum tshe brtan ལྷུ་འབུམ་ཙམ་བརྟན། Li Dechun 李得春, a person's names

Mongghul, Monguor, Mangghuer, Tuzu 土族

mu 亩, unit of land measurement; 1 hectare equals 15 *mu*

musi, yak-cow hybrid

niiman nesini hiinog, eight-year-old male yak

niiman nesini musi, eight-year-old yak-cow hybrid

niiman nesini shdesinii, eight-year-old female yak

Ningxia 宁夏 Hui 回 Autonomous Region

Ping'an 平安 Town; Region

Pudiu, Putou 普头 a village's name

qighaan, white

qighaan alog shdesinii, female yak, white mixed with other colors

qighaan ghuran nesini tuguang, three-year-old white, polled yak

Qijangcairang, a person's name

Qinghai 青海 Province

Rgulung, Youningsi 佑宁寺, dgon lung dgon pa དགོན་ལུང་དགོན་པ།, a large Tibetan Buddhist monastery in
Huzhu County

shdesinii, female yak

shzin nesini hiinog, nine-year-old male yak

shzin nesini musi, nine-year-old yak-cow hybrid

shzin nesini shdesinii, nine-year-old female yak

Songduo 松多, sum mdo རྒྱུ་མདོ། Township

Srangzhuma, tshe ring sgrol ma ཚེ་རིང་སྒྲོལ་མ། a person's name

Su 苏, a surname

Szanghuali (Nianxian 年先) Village

tawun nesini hiinog, five-year-old male yak

tawun nesini musi, five-year-old yak-cow hybrid

tawun nesini shdesinii, five-year-old female yak

Tu 土 Monguor, Mongghul, Mangghuer

Tughuan, Tuguan 土官 Village

Warimasishiden, a person's name

Wushi 五十 Town

Xining 西宁 City, the capital of Qinghai Province

yii kungaundighasan hiinog, uncastrated male yak

Yinsuu, a person's name

Zalaxji, a person's name

Zhaxi, bkra shis བརྒྱ་ཤིས།, a person's name

Zhaxi Langwa (Zhaxilongwa 扎西龙哇, bkra shis lung ba བརྒྱ་ཤིས་ལུང་བ།) Village

Zujii, a person's name

WUSHISAN: MONGGHUL (TU) EARRINGS AND TOBACCO PIPES IN HUZHU COUNTY, QINGHAI PROVINCE, PR CHINA

Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春), Joints Surgery Department,
Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital*

ABSTRACT

This article introduces Wushisan (b. 1948), a Tu (Mongghul, Monguor) resident of Dangyan Village, Naja Administrative Village, Weiyuan Town, Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, Haidong Municipality, Qinghai Province, PR China. In 2020, he continued to wear an earring, bracelet, and finger ring. Wushisan's life experiences and his family background vividly characterize traditional Mongghul men. On 7 June 2020, I interviewed Wushisan at his home, recorded both interviews, transcribed the audio material in Mongghul, translated it into English, and wrote it in English.

KEYWORDS

Mongghul earring, tobacco bag, tobacco pipe, Huzhu Tu County, Tu life narratives, Monguor (Mongghul) biography, Monguor (Mongghul, Tu) history, Qinghai-Tibet Plateau

LOCATION

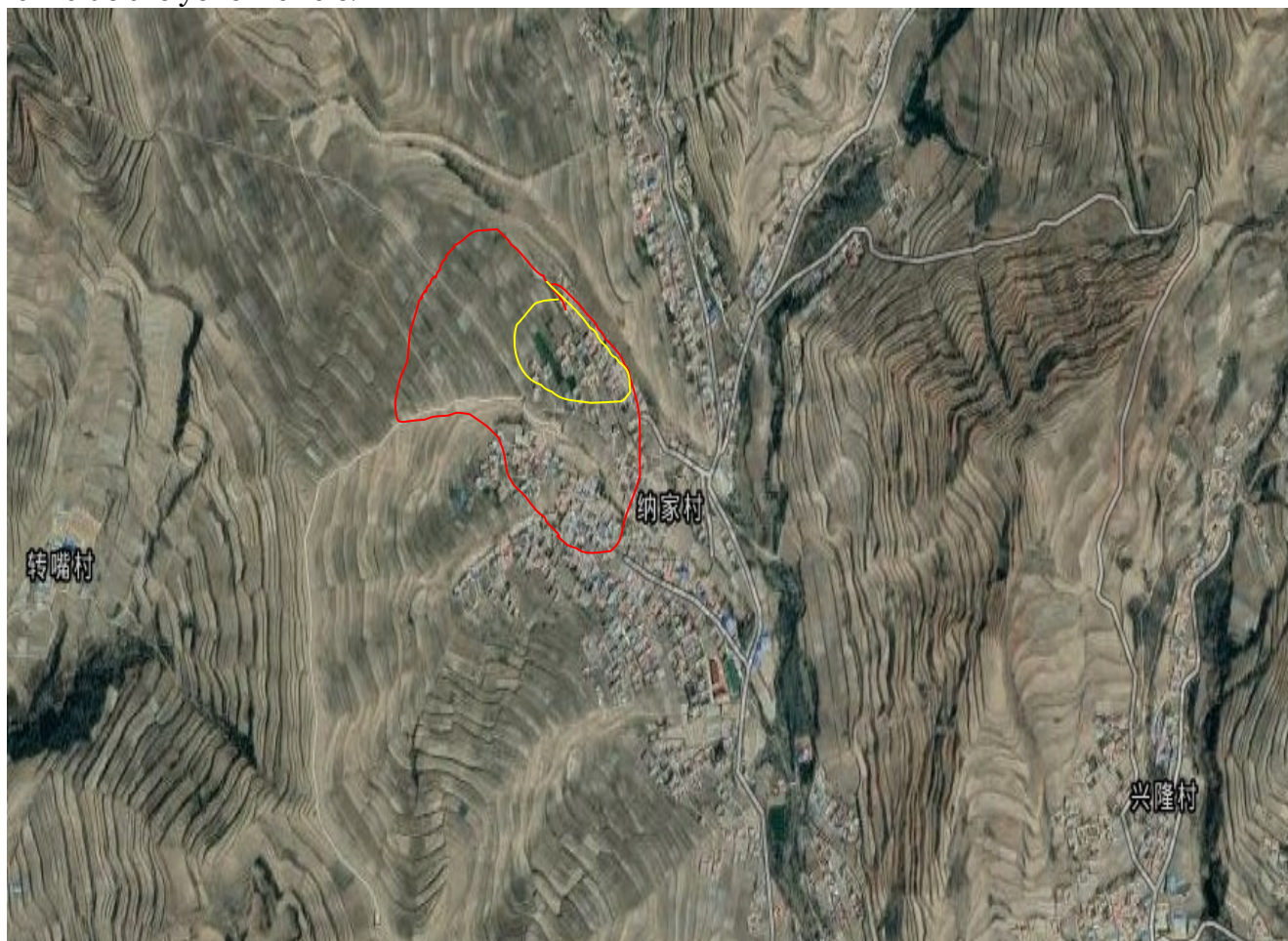
MAP 1. Huzhu Tu Autonomous County.¹



* Limusishiden (Li Dechun). 2020, Wushisan: Mongghul (Tu) Earrings and Tobacco Pipes in Huzhu County, Qinghai Province, PR China. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:378-392.

¹ An edited version of <https://bit.ly/3aJ3QXb>, accessed 6 June 2020.

MAP 2. Dangyan Village.¹ The red circle indicates Naja Administrative Village. Dangyan Hamlet is inside the yellow circle.



INTRODUCTION

Traditionally the first-born Mongghul² son had both his ears pierced for *qigi nukula* 'earrings' to protect against disease and ensure a long life. Mongghul men also smoked periodically throughout the day using an excellent *huangsa* 'pipe', which was considered an essential ornament for a man.

Wushisan's village of Dangyan is five kilometers from Weiyuan, the seat of Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, Haidong Municipality, Qinghai Province, PR China. This article explores why Wushisan continues to smoke a pipe and wear an earring.

I interviewed Wushisan in Dangyan Village and recorded our conversations using an audio recorder. He rarely leaves his village. To the best of my knowledge, in 2020, he was the last Mongghul man in Huzhu Mongghul communities, still smoking tobacco with a pipe and wearing a silver earring, bracelet, and finger ring. I transcribed the audio material first in Mongghul and then translated it into English. Here is the edited translation:

My name is Wushisan. I'm from Dangyan (Dongyua), which has about ninety households and 270 residents. Dangyan is a hamlet in Naja (Najia) Administrative Village. Naja is an all-Mongghul administrative village where some 400 households (~1,200 residents) reside.

¹ An edited version of <http://www.bigemap.net/city-17951.html>, accessed 6 June 2020.

² Mongghul terms are given in the Mongghul written system (Li 1988:9).

My wife (Tayinsuu, 1944-2010) was illiterate and died from emphysema. Her parents' home was in Naja Village. I have four daughters and three sons. The oldest child, Caihangsuu (b. 1963), is illiterate and moved into her husband's home in Naja Village. The second child, Qiixin (b. 1967), is also illiterate and moved into her husband's home in Duluun Village, Wei yuan Town. The third child, Sanzhinuri, (b. 1969), attended primary school but dropped out from lack of interest. He preferred fishing. The fourth child, Jaguri (b. 1972), has a middle school level education. The fifth child, Xangmu (b. 1974), is illiterate and moved into her husband's home in Durishidii Village, Wei yuan Town. The sixth child, Huanglunbog (b. 1984), is illiterate, has epileptic fits, is unmarried, and lives with me. Sanzhinuri and established their individual home compounds and live separately. The seventh child (Niiga, b. 1988) Jaguri attended middle school, married, and moved into her husband's home in Duluun Village, where my second daughter lives.

Huanglunbog suffered frequent epileptic seizures from the time he was about seven-months-old. The seizures seemed to be brought on by an accident when, around that time on a winter's day, my wife was carrying him on her back to visit her parents' home. As she carefully walked across the frozen river, she slipped, and his head hit the ice. My wife quickly stood, picked him up, and soon reached her parents' home. In the evening, Huanglunbog looked ill, became unconscious, his limbs jerked, and he vomited foam. My wife thought this would pass, and he would be fine days some days later. However, his situation worsened.

A week later, I was called to her parents' home and saw the boy's terrible condition. His regular convulsions made me think his situation was hopeless.

The next day, my wife, son, and I returned home. He continued to have daily convulsions - sometimes several times a day. I consulted my village *purghan*¹ and asked several monks to chant Buddhist scriptures. However, his seizures continued. Finally, we went to a high-ranking hospital in Xining and were given drugs that, we were told, should be taken for life. They worked. His convulsions became much less frequent.

Originally our ancestors were Han Chinese from Laisigang² in Beijing. We don't know why my ancestors came here. Initially, our ancestors settled in Hujiazhuang Village, Wei yuan Town. It is a Chinese village. Later, they moved from Hujiazhuang Village to Farijii (Heizhuang) Village, Wei yuan Town, for some unknown reason. I don't know the specific year, but my ancestors moved again from Farijii to today's Dangyan Village many years later. As far as I know, we have been living in Dangyan Village for 150 years or so. Our customs are completely Mongghul. My grandparents and parents spoke only Mongghul.

My family has twenty-six *mu*³ of farmland. I'm old, so I'm unable to farm by myself. A villager farms twelve *mu* of the twenty-six, and two of my sons use eleven *mu*, though their wives do not treat Huanglunbog and me well. They only visit once a year during the Spring Festival because they dislike disabled Huanglunbog. I grow three *mu* of crops, which is enough for Huanglunbog and me. My daughters regularly visit us.

I have no brothers. I'm the only son in my family. My father and grandfather also had no brothers. Only one son survived in each of the three generations in my family.

My mother gave birth to four sons and five daughters. Only my elder sister, Durijhua, and I survived. Our other siblings all died from smallpox. Durijhua (1944-2005) was illiterate and married into her husband's home in Naja Village.

¹ The *purghan* is a deity represented in the form of a sedan 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 (Limusishdien and Jugui 2010:23).

² Today, it is unclear where this is located in Beijing.

³ One *mu* = 666.6 square meters, 0.067 hectares, or 0.16 acres.

My father was Rnqan (1921-1982). He had one older sister and two younger sisters. I have forgotten my mother's (~1921-~1965) name. Her parents' home was in Garigan Village, Donggou Township, Huzhu County.

My maternal great-grandmother's parents were from Danyan Village, Donggou Township. I know neither my grandparents' names nor their birth and death dates.

My grandparents and parents were extremely afraid of losing me to smallpox as they had the other children. They went to the village temple and asked the *purghan* how to prevent losing their unborn baby. The *purghan* suggested piercing the baby's left earlobe and putting in a silver earring immediately after delivery, which was believed to be the only way to ensure the infant's survival.

After I was born, Mother immediately pierced my earlobe with a thin round silver implement she had prepared without washing my body. This was what our *purghan* had suggested. That implement was from one of Mother's adornments. Two years later, Mother added a coral bead to my earring and black thread tassels at the earring end.

When I was seven- or eight-years-old, village children teased me for being girlish because I wore an earring. I was embarrassed and asked Mother to remove it, but she refused. My parents were worried about my health if I removed it. When I was thirteen-years-old, I really could not stand being called a girl, and after repeatedly begging my parents to remove the earring, they finally agreed.

About two months later, I fell ill one night. I couldn't eat or drink anything. I lay in bed and felt mental fatigue and weakness, which developed into insanity. My parents were very anxious about losing their only son and again consulted the village *purghan*. They learned my illness was because I had removed the earring. I had to put it in again as soon as possible if I recovered, and I had to wear it throughout my life. If I remove it again, I will surely be ill and maybe in danger of dying.

At the age of thirteen, I needed a bigger earring. A silversmith used the small silver earring I had been wearing, added new silver, and made a larger one. I've worn it ever since. I never remove it. I've never suffered any illness, not even a bad cold. It's a miracle.

After I die, I will ask my sons to put my earring inside the small wooden box with my bone ash and bury it in our ancestral graveyard. My earring will pave a smooth road for me to reincarnate as a human in my next life.

Before 1970, all the first Mongghul sons had their earlobes pierced. This requirement was restricted to firstborn sons. Most earrings were silver that sometimes were set with coral, turquoise, or agate. Some had tassels at the end. Piercing earlobes with a tiny silver pin prevented infection because silver was said to have anti-infection properties.

When my grandparents consulted the *purghan* before my birth, the *purghan* suggested my family avoid funerals and visiting women confined after childbirth. If they attended a funeral, the deceased person's ghost might cause the children to be ill. Visiting women during their confinement meant the children might easily contract a disease. Therefore, I visited neither a home where a funeral had been held nor a family during confinement.

Many years later, when my daughters-in-law gave birth in my home, I left to live in a fellow villager's home and returned to my own home a month later.

All Mongghul men used to wear bracelets and finger rings. Some men wore common stone bracelets, but some well-off men wore silver, agate, and ivory bracelets. I'm currently wearing a bracelet I bought from a shop at Labrang Monastery during a pilgrimage several years ago. The bracelet is made of precious *xanglimu* 'rhododendron' wood. Locals get such wood from Huzhu National Forest Park, located in the northeast of Huzhu County. Before this bracelet, I had a silver one.

Rings were made of silver and worn on left ring fingers. Some rings were embedded with coral or turquoise.

Wearing rings, bracelets, necklaces, and earrings protects the wearer from *kiiniu* 'paralysis', for example, facial paralysis and paralysis of the limbs. They also protect against *pudog mudog* 'evils'.

I've worn a ring since I was twenty years old. A ring can also protect a person against rheumatic disease and nasty colds.

REFLECTIONS

When I, Limusishiden, was seven or eight years old, my older brother, Limudanzhuu (b. 1966), and my father's older brother's oldest son, Fangshinbog (b.1966), each wore silver rings in both of their earlobes. They were the first sons in their respective families. My paternal grandmother pierced their earlobes and put in the silver rings. As I noted earlier:

Until about the year 2000, the first-born son had both his ears pierced to receive protection against disease and ensure a long life. Usually, the male infant's paternal grandmother pierced the ears on the twentieth day of the first lunisolar month after rubbing the earlobes to make them numb. She quickly jabbed the lobes with a needle or awl without prior sterilization. Small earrings were then put in the ears (Limusishiden 2015:58).

At the age of nine, my brother and cousin attended primary school and were teased for their "girlish appearance" created by wearing the earrings, so they removed them and never wore them again. I observed fewer and fewer Mongghul boys wearing silver earrings until eventually, this practice was only a memory.

Although Wushisan continued to wear a silver earring in 2020, the practice of piercing earlobes and wearing earrings among Mongghul men and boys has nearly vanished.

Wushisan comments on smoking:

I began to smoke at the age of seventeen and am still smoking today. In 2020, I am the only person in my village who smokes loose tobacco. All the others smoke cigarettes. I am accustomed to smoking a pipe. I don't like cigarettes, regardless of their quality or even if their high prices suggest a superior product. They are too mild to smoke. I smoke tobacco in a pipe.

Locals used to grow tobacco in a small plot inside or outside the family courtyard. I have used more than ten tobacco bags and six pipes in my lifetime. Some of my tobacco bags were sewn by my mother, sister, and daughters. One was a gift from my lover.

Historically, the *shdarigha* 'tobacco bag' was used in conjunction with a *huangsa* 'pipe'. *Shdarigha* were often kept in sashes. Mongghul men smoked off and on throughout the day. Some older women also smoked. Owning an excellently prepared pipe was important. Once two men met, sat together, started chatting, and began smoking, they exchanged pipes and tobacco bags, talked, and carefully examined each other's pipes and bags. They discussed the materials used to make the pipe parts, when and where each piece was made, who had made each part, and who had made the tobacco bag, and when.

One or two strings of coral, agate, Qing Dynasty copper coins, and a hook used to clean the pipe's brass bowl were attached to the mouth of the bag.

A tobacco pipe was twenty to thirty centimeters in length. Pipe bowls were often made of brass. The stem was made from sheep, yak, or goat bone. Precious woods, such as rhododendron and birch, were also used. The mouthpiece was agate or common stone.

There were no matches or lighters in the Mongghul area before 1958. Consequently, pipes were lit with flint and tinder. The men would light the twisted sesame straw that they kept inside their sashes and snuff out the smoldering sesame stalk when they stopped smoking. It was used again after

being lit with flint and tinder. A small iron bowl attached to the mouth of a tobacco bag might also have been used to hold smoldering fuel to light the next bowl of tobacco. This bowl was no longer used once cheap lighters were widely available.

Tobacco was historically grown locally in *suuqang* 'small plots' inside or outside of the courtyard. When someone's tobacco ran out, they bought supplies from shops or vendors, or borrowed from other men.

In 2020, many young Mongghul young men did not smoke at all. Wushisan smokes cigarettes if offered; however, he prefers to smoke his pipe.

Wushisan wears a bracelet on his left wrist and a silver ring on his left ring finger at all times. In 2020, it was unusual for a Mongghul man to wear a bracelet and a finger ring, though it used to be a common cultural practice, as noted by Schram:

Traditionally, many men are fond of wearing a bracelet, but only on one wrist. It is usually a heavy copper ring, silver plated and carved with Chinese designs. Nearly all young people wear a bracelet on each wrist, resembling the single bracelet of a grown man. A man also hangs from his belt or sash a sheath containing a knife and chopsticks. Some of these are beautifully carved and ornamented with coral and turquoise. A man's finger ring is made of two thin, small rings with a broad ring soldered outside them. A piece of coral or turquoise is set in this ring (2006 [1954-1961]:260).

The numerous Mongghul silversmiths in Mongghul areas made it easy to find a silversmith. Silversmiths were kept busy making earrings, bracelets, necklaces, finger rings, plates, pins, bowls, chopsticks, and drinking cups. As Schram notes:

Silversmiths make earrings, bracelets, finger rings, and the plates, cups, and pins that are used for the [women's] headdresses. They also make the sheaths that hold knife and chopsticks. The work done by Monguor silversmiths can always be distinguished from that done by Chinese, but as their work is done for a small population, it is bound to remain on a very small scale ((2006 [1954-1961]:268).

After 1980, as shops and vendors became common, silversmiths gradually vanished in Mongghul areas. The old ones died, and young people did not learn this skill because they could not earn a living as silversmiths. Furthermore, silver items such as cups became less popular, and fewer women wore earrings, necklaces, and finger rings.

Huanglunbog takes drugs daily and is unable to live independently. Father and son live in their traditional house. Wushisan does both farming work and housework. This seventy-two-year-old Mongghul man has a busy, demanding life. However, he appears healthy, is talkative, extremely humorous, and energetic. After his wife passed away, he found an older friend. The two are separated by about thirty kilometers. To make visits more convenient, Wushisan bought a small vehicle, regularly visits her home, and brings her to his own home.

Wushisan's traditional way of life, his two-storied house, his earring, tobacco bag and pipe, bracelet and finger ring, and *manii* 'string of prayer beads', evokes, in my mind, a traditional Mongghul. I admire Wushisan for being "Mongghul" in 2020.

PHOTOGRAPHS

FIG 3. Wushisan in his home compound courtyard. The house is a 150-year-old traditional two-floored wooden building (7 June 2020, Jugui).



FIG 4. A traditional style old wooden ladder connects the first and second floors (7 June 2020, Jugui).



FIG 5. Wushisan wears a silver finger ring and bracelet (7 June 2020, Jugui).



FIG 6. Wushisan keeps his tobacco bag and pipe underneath his pants' belt (7 June 2020, Jugui).



FIG 7. Wushisan wears a silver earring in his left ear (7 June 2020, Jugui).



FIG 8. Wushisan's home and a garden plot located at his home compound's center with peonies in bloom. Historically, all Mongghul cultivated peonies in their gardens (7 June 2020, Jugui).



FIG 9. L-R: Wushisan and Limusishiden (7 June 2020, Jugui).



FIG 10. An unused wooden chest. Such chests were in the center of the main room of a house and filled with wheat flour (7 June 2020, Jugui).



FIG 11. An unused cupboard in Wushisan's home (7 June 2020, Jugui).



FIG 12. The back wall of Wushisan's compound yard abuts a hill where caves have been dug to store potatoes and coal (7 June 2020, Jugui).



FIG 13. In 2020, Wushisan used this tobacco bag (made by a friend in 1999), pipe, and pipe implements (7 June 2020, Jugui). 1 Tobacco bag. 2 A white string to fasten the tobacco bag. 3 A metal scraper to clean the brass bowl. 4 An iron bowl that held smoldering fuel to light the pipe. After lighters became common, such bowls were no longer used. 5 A metal bowl-cleaner. 6 Copper coin for decoration. 7 A copper hook to clean the pipe hole when blocked. 8 The pipe's brass bowl and stem. 9 Silver connector. 10 Agate mouthpiece. 11 Copper connecting chain.



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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Caihangsuu, a person's name

Danyan 丹沿 Village

Dangyan (Dongyuan 东源) Village

Dasilu 大寺路 Village

Donggou 东沟 Township

Duluun (Baiya 白崖) Village

Durijihua, a person's name

Durishidii (Duoshidai 多士代) Village

Fangshinbog, a person's name

Farijii (Heizhuang 黑庄) Village

Garigan (Gagan 尕干) Village

Haidong 海东 Municipality

Huanglunbog, a person's name

huangsa, a tobacco pipe

Hujiazhuang 胡家庄 Village

Huzhu 互助 County

Jaguri, a person's name

Jugui, a person's name

kiiniu, paralysis

Labrang (bla brang ལ་བརྩ་) Monastery

Laisigang, a place name

Limudanzhuu, a person's name

Limusishiden, klu 'bum tshe brtan ལུ་འབུམ་ཙེ་བརྩན། Li Dechun 李得春, a person's names

Mongghul, Monguor, Mangghuer, Tuzu 土族

mu 亩, unit of land measurement; 1 hectare equals 15 *mu*

Naja (Najia 纳家) Administrative Village

Niiga, a person's name

pudog mudog, evils (possibly *pu* pho ཕུ་ཕོ་ 'male' and *mu* mo མུ་མོ་ 'female' - 'male and female evils'; the meaning of *dog* is unclear)

qigi nukula, ears pierced

Qiixin, a person's name

Rnqan, Rin chen རིན་ཆེན། a person's name

Sanzhinuri, Seng 'brug nor bu སེང་འབྲུག་ནོར་བུ། a person's name

shdarigha, a tobacco bag

suuqang, small plots of land, often in a courtyard for growing flowers

Tayinsuu, a person's name

Tu 土, Monguor, Mongghul, Mangghuer

Weiyuan 威远 Town

Wushisan 五十三, a person's name

xanglimu, rhododendron wood

Xangmu, byang mo རྟམ་མོ། a person's name

Xining 西宁 City, the capital of Qinghai Province

LITERATURE

SEVEN YEARS

Gu ru 'phrin las ཀུ་རུ་འཕྲིན་ལག་*

1

I didn't interact with Mother for days. She lay covered with her sheepskin robe on a dry yak skin in the middle of a cabin made of yak dung bricks near my family's tent. A long piece of cloth pinned to a wall hung over the cabin entrance to resist the chilly wind. Every day, I peeked at Mother through a hole in the fabric and could see her pale face in the dim light that flowed in through a square hole in the cabin's wall. She noticed me, gazed at my plump cheeks, and groaned in misery. I couldn't make out what this meant and ran to Grandmother, who was making meat soup in our tent.

A bit later, Grandmother headed to the cabin, holding a bowl full of meat soup. I followed, but then Father shouted, ordering me to stay back. I could see Father's angry face above the adobe stove, where he warmed himself, sitting cross-legged on the right side of the tent. I was afraid to keep looking at Father and put my head down.

Recalling that my two sisters and brother had gone to fetch water from the nearby Yellow River, I yearned to join them but then decided against it when I considered Father's wrathful face. He had once warned me not to fetch water with my siblings, but I had ignored him. He spanked me after we returned home. It was dangerous for a five-year-old boy to bring water from the Yellow River. From that day on, I dared not go without Father's permission.

Older Sister was nine, and Younger Sister was seven. Each carried a wooden bucket full of water on their backs. Brother was six and held a big red metal scoop in his right hand. Water had splashed on my sisters' robes, leaving wet spots that had turned dark. They placed the buckets of water on the tent's upper left side with our family's utensils. Brother rubbed his hands continuously. Understanding his hands were cold, Father told him to sit near the stove and warm them. Brother cried once his hands warmed.

Eventually, Grandmother returned with the bowl half full of meat soup.

Grandmother and I shared her bowl and had two bowls of meat soup. My two sisters sat next to Grandmother and me on the left side of the tent. They whispered and laughed while eating. Brother quietly had soup next to Father. Sometimes, he looked at our sisters, and a smile appeared on his face. I was sure they had had a lot of fun when they were fetching water. I was eager to know all about it.

After our meal, my siblings rushed out of the tent, laughing. I ran after them but fell to the ground at the tent entrance. I cried and lay on the ground until Grandmother came, picked me up, and kissed me. I kept crying and kicked her belly. She took off my sheep-skin robe and leather boots. I was naked and, as I shivered, she put me on her back, inside her sheep-skin robe. I saw the worry on her oily, wrinkled face, so I stopped crying.

Meanwhile, Father rode a sharp-horned black yak and drove our family's yaks back from a nearby high mountain. My sisters and brother then helped Father tether our family's yaks in the yak enclosure near our family's tent.

Later, Father entered the tent without my brother and sisters, who often played near the yak enclosure after tethering the yaks. Father took me from Grandmother's back and asked her to take care of Mother. He then put me into his sheep-skin robe pouch. It was warm inside his robe. I touched his chest, studied his big nose, and smiled. He smiled in return.

By now, it was getting dark in the tent. Father lit a butter lamp in front of Buddhist images on our family shrine, in the upper part of the right side of the tent, and prayed to the Three Jewels. I listened to every word.

*Gu ru 'phrin las. 2021. Seven Years. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:394-401.

On the left side of the tent, my sisters and brother were telling folktales and deciphering riddles to see who was the smartest. I wanted to join them and asked Father to help me put on my yak-leather boots and tie my sheep-skin robe with a red sash. I sat next to Brother, listened to their stories, and sometimes dozed. Father chanted scriptures while holding prayer beads in his left hand and spinning a prayer wheel in his right hand on the tent's right side.

Suddenly, we heard a baby cry. My brother and sisters stopped telling stories and rushed to the cabin.

It was a quiet night. Stars glistened around a big moon in a blue-black sky. I went outside and saw a gigantic yak near the cabin under the bright moonlight. I was afraid to walk near the cabin, but my eagerness to see the baby won out. My brother and sisters were huddled at the cabin door, reluctant to enter. A butter lamp flickered near Mother's folded sheep-skin robe pillow. Mother was kneeling, covered with her sheep-skin in bed, and hunched over as she nursed an infant that lay on its back on a piece of dried sheep-skin.

Afterward, Grandmother wrapped the baby in the piece of dried sheep-skin and put her in her robe pouch.

I was thrilled to have another sister and rushed into the tent to report this good news to Father. A big smile decorated Father's face before I added, "It's a girl."

Disappointment registered on Father's face. He said nothing, and I kept quiet.

That night I slept with Father. He didn't fall asleep until midnight. I wondered why he was unhappy to have an adorable daughter, and then I recalled Father's regular prayer, "Please! Three Jewels! Bless and help me. I want another son, not another daughter."

2

I don't know who gave me my first name, but I remember how I got my second name.

One snowy winter morning, as I was walking in our family tent yard, Brother shouted at me to get out of the yard. He was trying to catch birds and lay on the ground several meters from a plastic basin, propped up by a short stick. He held one end of a long yak-hair rope in his right hand. The other end of the rope was tied to the stick. A bird pecked at a bit of dry cheese from under the basin, hopped back, and looked around the basin. Brother was about to jerk the rope as the bird tried to pick up another bit of dry cheese from under the basin. I coughed, and the bird flew away. Brother stood and shoved me. I fell and cried. Brother ignored me and continued his attempts to catch birds.

I rolled on the ground several times, stood up, put two fingers in my mouth, trotted to our tent, and found my parents and one of my cousins sitting in the lower part of the right side of the tent, making a new sheep-skin robe for my older sister. She often helped Father herd yaks during rainy and snowy days. She had done this since she was seven. Sometimes, she herded yaks alone when Father was busy with something else. Older Sister's sheep-skin robe had several holes in the back lower part because her robe would get wet when she herded on rainy and snowy days. Holes had formed from repeated drying. I sat on Mother's lap and continued sobbing. Mother kissed my forehead, put my hands inside her robe, and put my hands on her belly to warm them. It was so comfortable to sit on Mother's lap, and as my hands warmed, I refused to leave when Mother resumed her work on the sheep-skin robe.

Cousin grabbed me and told me to let Mother sew the robe. I ignored him and continued sitting on Mother's lap. Cousin then dragged me away from Mother and beat the back of my left hand with a dry piece of sheep-skin. I ran to Grandmother, who was sitting on the left side of the tent, hugged her, and sobbed loudly. When Cousin tried to beat me again, Grandmother shielded me and scolded him. Holding me on her lap, Grandmother consoled, "Don't cry! I promise I'll ask your father to buy you candy next time he goes to the township town if you stop crying."

I loved candy, so I tried to stop crying, but I couldn't. My hand was very painful. Eventually, I dozed off on Grandmother's lap.

The next day was sunny. My parents and Cousin finished making the sheep-skin robe in the morning. My sisters chopped meat into small pieces on the tent's left side while Grandmother kneaded dough for noodles in a basin. Father liked noodles, so they cooked noodles for lunch. Mother's sheep-skin robe covered our baby sister, who lay on a dried yak skin in the lower side of the tent where Mother slept. Brother gently patted her, trying to lull her to sleep when she cried.

After lunch, Father decided to visit one of his cousins, so I asked him to take me with him. He refused, so I begged. When that didn't work, I rushed to Grandmother, who was sitting near the tent entrance, chanting scriptures. I told her that I wanted to go with Father. Grandmother explained, "You are a child, and children don't visit other families. Locals will think you are a bad boy if you visit other families with your father. Good boys listen to their parents and stay at home."

After I pleaded and mentioned that Cousin had beaten me the day before, Grandmother asked Father to take me with him.

Father mounted a polled black yak with a white spot on its head. I sat behind Father. It took three hours to reach our destination. Father's cousin's neighbor's watchdog was roaming near the neighbor's tent. I kept looking at the dog, afraid it would attack us. Fortunately, the dog trotted behind the neighbor's tent and disappeared.

Father's cousin and his wife came out of their tent when their family's watchdog barked at us. The wife ran over to the dog and grabbed its head to stop its barking. Father's cousin helped me dismount and then led the riding yak to their family's yak enclosure.

Feeling shy, I gripped the lower part of Father's sheep-skin robe as we entered the family's tent. Several yak-skin bags containing barley, rice, and flour were stacked up in the tent center. Buddhist images sat on a small adobe square box in the upper part of the tent's right side. A butter lamp flickered in front of the figures. Father's cousin sat next to Father and me on the tent's right side, near the adobe stove. Cousin's wife offered me a small bowl of milk tea. I shyly dared not take the bowl. Father smacked my right knee and told me to take it. I was afraid Father would hit me again if I didn't take the bowl, so with a red face, I took it with my right hand and placed it on the ground. Father and his cousin drank several bowls of milk tea as Cousin's wife made meat dumplings. I was extremely thirsty and swallowed several times as I watched Father drink his milk tea. I was so timid that I didn't even sip the milk tea in my bowl. I just kept my head down and listened to Father and his cousin chat about this and that.

When Cousin's wife offered dumplings in a metal basin, Father placed the basin in front of me because I was sitting between him and his cousin. With lowered head, I watched steam rise from the warm dumplings, sniffed, and again swallowed. Father's cousin handed me a dumpling when he realized I was too bashful to eat. I wiped the sweat from my forehead, took the dumpling, and rolled it in my filthy hands, turning the dumpling dark. Father's cousin said, "Don't be shy. Eat it!"

Not looking at him, I put the dumpling in my robe pouch and mumbled, "I'm not hungry."

Father and his cousin continued chatting while eating. Finally, three dumplings remained in the basin.

As the sun set behind a high mountain, Father and I left for home. The family gave me the small bowl his wife had offered me milk tea in. A piece of butter was stuck on the bottom of the bowl. I took the bowl, understanding it was a gift for my first visit to the family.

As Father and I passed the neighboring tent, their watchdog ran and jumped on and off our riding yak's back. From his robe pouch, Father pulled out his dog-beater, a short, thick stick with a hole in one end through which a yak-leather rope was threaded. He swung it around his head and hit the dog on the head the next time it jumped on the yak's back.

The neighbor's family's head, a tall, strong man, rushed towards us, holding a long stick. He hit the dog with the stick, and it ran away. Taking a long breath, he asked, "Are you okay? Did the dog bite you?"

Father said, "Don't worry. No one is hurt."

The man picked up a big stone and threw it in the direction of the dog, and said, "Come have tea in my tent."

Father replied, "No, thanks! It's getting dark, and we must return home before it's too dark."

Appreciating his sincere invitation, Father said goodbye.

As we neared our tent, I began crying from the pain in my butt. Surprised, Father asked, "What's wrong with you? Do you miss your mother?"

I didn't reply. I just kept sobbing.

When our watchdog barked, Grandmother came out, lifted me off the back of the yak, and asked, "Why are you crying? Are you hungry?"

I said, "Yes, I'm hungry, and my bottom hurts!"

Grandmother untied my sash, pulled down my underwear, inspected my butt, and exclaimed, "It's bleeding!"

She stared at Father and scolded, "Bad father! You didn't take care of your son!"

Father did not reply as he held my hand while we entered the tent. Asking me to lie down, facing the ground, he took a bunch of wool, burned it, and sprinkled the ash on my wound, which stopped the bleeding.

It was so painful that I couldn't sleep well that night.

The next morning, Cousin came to visit. When Father told him about the dog attack, Cousin advised changing my name. He had heard a story about a boy who often had trouble. His parents had taken the boy to a local *bla ma*, who had changed his name. Afterward, there were no more problems. My parents thought this was convincing, so Father and Cousin decided to visit our local *bla ma* and ask for a new name for me.

At noon, Father and Cousin left on two horses.

Two days later, they returned with a new name for me. From that day, I was called Tshe ring.

...

Several months later, it was time to move from the winter to the summer pasture. Grandmother rode a black horse. I sat behind her. My older sisters and Brother rode yaks, while my parents rode horses and drove our yaks. Youngest Sister was crying inside Mother's robe on her back. Mother and Father were busy with a pack yak dragging a canvas bag on the ground. It had fallen from the load on its back. Mother had no time to nurse the baby.

Our watchdog drooled with a hanging tongue as it followed us. Suddenly, when the dog got near us, our horse kicked the dog and then bolted. I tumbled to the ground where a clump of dry yakdung struck my throat, bruising it and making it swell.

Grandmother didn't sleep well that night because my throat was painful. She thought I would die and blamed herself for not controlling the horse.

...

Another time, one warm summer morning, I rubbed my eyes and dressed. Grandmother was holding her prayer wheel in her left hand and chanting scriptures near the tent entrance. I went out, and, as I peed, I gazed at Mother and my older sisters, who were milking yaks in the yak enclosure.

Older Sister ordered Second Sister to tie a calf after it had nursed its mother for a few minutes. Second Sister pulled the calf from its mother by its neck-rope and twisted its tail with her right hand. The calf jerked and stepped on Second Sister's right foot. Second Sister lost control of the calf, lifted her foot in agony, and turned in circles on her right foot. Tears coursed down her unwashed face as she squinted at Oldest Sister, who stood up, rushed to the calf, pulled it from its mother, tied it, and then kicked it hard in the belly.

Mother ignored Second Sister's sobs and continued milking a white yak while I walked over to Grandmother.

Father had breakfast alone. After Mother and my sisters finished milking, he would drive our yaks to a high grassy mountain far from our tent. Father woke up Brother and asked him to tend Baby Sister, who was sleeping on the tent's left side.

I sat next to Grandmother, who was reciting something. Not knowing why she chanted so often, I asked her. She looked into my eyes and said, "I'm chanting scripture."

I asked, "Why do you often chant scripture?"

Grandmother replied, "Good people chant scripture. Bad people don't."

I embraced Grandmother and said, "Please teach me some scriptures. I want to be a good person like you!"

Grandmother smiled, stroked my head, and began teaching me, but then Baby Sister cried. I ran over to her, to the lower part of the tent's left side, kissed her forehead, and gently patted her tummy until she stopped crying.

After breakfast, Mother put some candy and fried bread in a plastic bag. Handing it to Brother, she sent us off to herd the calves, which we drove to a valley near our tent.

At noon, we ate the candy and bread near a brook. To soften the hard bread, we put it in the stream and then ate it all. The calves grazed near the stream, and some came near us and sniffed when I peed.

There were small pools near the creek, so Brother caught frogs and put them in another pool. I was afraid to catch frogs and was terrified when one leaped over my feet and plopped into a pool. I picked up a piece of dried yak dung and flung it at the frog, which turned over, exposing its white belly.

A boy with long matted, dirty hair joined us and took off his sheep-skin. Clad in long red underwear and a black shirt, he joined Brother in catching frogs. An hour later, while gazing at me, he asked Brother, "Is he your brother?"

Brother said, "Yes, he's my brother."

Tossing his long hair back over his right shoulder, he asked me, "Why is your hair so short? Are you a real man?"

I didn't know what to say, so I said nothing.

Brother pushed that boy declaring, "He's my brother, and he's a real man!"

The boy pushed Brother, who punched the boy in the face and grabbed his messy hair. Crying, the boy hurriedly put his robe under his left arm and raced in the direction of his family's calves.

In the early evening, when we were about to drive the calves home, Brother cautioned, "Don't tell our parents that I punched the boy."

Seeing an opportunity, I stared into Brother's big, round eyes and replied, "I won't tell if you tell me folktales tonight."

He nodded in agreement, and we drove the calves back home.

After dinner, I sat on Father's lap and asked, "Father, do you love me?"

He looked into my eyes, "Of course, I love you."

I said, "I want to have long hair. Don't cut my hair next time it grows long."

Father asked, "Why do you want to have long hair?"

I answered, "I want to be a real man."

Father laughed and sipped milk tea from a dragon-decorated bowl.

After dinner, Brother and I shared Brother's and Father's sheep-skins and slept side by side. I asked Brother to tell me some folktales.

He paused and said, "I'm tired. I'll tell you next time."

I begged him, but he slept, so I told Father that Brother had fought with a boy. Father woke Brother and scolded him, "I told you not to fight with the neighbors' children. You are so disobedient! I'll have to slap you; otherwise, you won't obey me."

Brother pinched the back of my right hand and announced, "He killed a frog today."

Father turned to me, "Bad boy! Why did you do that? Did it eat your food?"
I dared not say anything and pretended I hadn't heard.
I couldn't sleep, worrying Father would beat Brother and me the next morning.

3

It snowed in late October. Water dripped from the upper part of the tent and streamed through on the floor. Mother took a stick with a bent end and hit the tent top where snow accumulated. I ran out and watched snow fly from the tent top as Mother hit it. I couldn't open my eyes wide because the sunshine was bright and the light from the snow hurt my eyes, so I went back inside.

I saw sweat on Mother's forehead. Brother stood next to Mother and said, "You're sweating. Give me the stick. I'll do it."

Mother hit the tent top several more times, handed the stick to Brother, and said, "Be careful. Don't hurt yourself."

Mother poured milk tea from an old kettle into her bowl and Grandmother's bowl. I walked over and sipped Mother's tea. Looking at her, I noticed sweat running down her face. I handed her the bowl and walked over to Brother, who was sweating after throwing the stick on the ground. I tried to pick it up, but it was so heavy that I couldn't lift it above my shoulders. As I tried to lift it over my head, the stick fell from my hands and struck Brother's head. Angry, he kicked my ankle. It was so painful that tears filled my eyes, so I bit his right arm. He kicked me again and punched my nose. I ran to Grandmother with my bleeding nose. She took some yak wool, wiped the blood from my nose, stroked my head, and said, "Don't cry. Good boys don't cry."

Picking up a stick, Mother headed directly towards Brother, who, glaring at me, rushed out of the tent before Mother could catch him. I sobbed for a while. When I stopped, Grandmother said, "You're a good boy. Don't fight your brother, even if he beats you. He's your brother, and he is older than you. You should respect him. It'll disgrace our family and destroy both of your reputations if others see you two fight."

I nodded, agreeing, "Yes. My nose hurts. I'll not fight Brother again."

Brother didn't come home the whole day. Instead, he went to our neighbor's tent. In the early evening, I missed him and went in search of him. He was helping my aunt fetch water. I wanted to play and called him, but he ignored me, so I played with my older sisters.

At sundown, Brother climbed the mountain where Father was herding yaks.

At dinner time, Mother told Father about our fight. Father stared at Brother and said, "I'll beat you to death if you fight your brother again. Today, because you helped me drive the yaks back home, I won't beat you this time."

A few days passed, and the snow melted.

One chilly morning, Mother urged Father to get up with, "Someone has stolen ten yaks."

Father dressed quickly and told Brother to call my aunt's son, who was in his twenties. "Did you see my dog-beater?" he asked Mother, who located it under a mattress.

Ten minutes later, Cousin entered our tent with a rifle slung on his back. Looking at the gun, I asked, "Why is that rifle on your back?"

Cousin replied, "I'm going to kill thieves."

I asked, "Why do you want to kill thieves?"

"Because I'm a real man. You should be a real man like me when you're an adult."

I nodded in agreement.

Cousin stopped talking, took a saddle from the lower part of the tent, and carried it outside. Father took another saddle and followed Cousin. Brother and I also went out and watched Father and cousin saddle two horses and ride eastward.

Two days later, my family's watchdog barked as my family was having lunch. I ran outside and saw Father and Cousin driving thirteen yaks toward our tent. With great excitement, I shouted, "Father and Cousin are back!"

Father and Cousin dismounted, tied their horses near our tent, and came inside. When Brother and I went to drive the yaks into a valley where my family's other yaks were, Brother said, "Three of these yaks are not our family's!"

Not knowing which yaks were my family's, I asked, "Which ones are not ours?"

He pointed to two black polled female yaks and a big, sharp-horned yak. I looked at these three yaks carefully and ran back home.

Father was having milk tea, sitting next to Cousin on the tent's right side as they waited for Mother to cook beef noodles. I sat next to Cousin and said, "Three of those yaks aren't our family's."

Cousin looked at me and said, "I told you I'm a real man. I aimed my rifle at the thieves. They fearfully begged me not to kill them. They said they'd give us three yaks if I didn't shoot them."

As I looked silently at Cousin, he asked, "Do you think I'm a real man?"

"Oh, yes, you're a real man! I want to be a real man like you."

I admiringly looked at Cousin's rifle lying against a yak saddle on the right side of the tent. As I was about to touch the rifle, Grandmother shouted, "Don't touch it!"

I was shocked and cried.

Cousin looked at me and sneered, "Coward! You're not a real man."

That night I was unhappy and had no appetite. I asked Grandmother, "Am I a cowardly boy?"

She said, "You're a good boy and a real man."

I felt a little bit better and announced, "I'm hungry."

Ignoring me, Mother asked Father, "Who are the thieves?"

After a bit, Father said, "My sworn-brother and one of his cousins."

Mother said angrily, "What a bad person!"

Father tried to say something but stopped and heaved a sigh.

I knew Father's sworn-brother, a strong, tall man who had long hair, a beard, and a sharp nose. A few weeks earlier, he had visited Father and given my siblings and me some candy. I liked Father's sworn-brother and called him "Uncle." Grandmother had said, "Uncle is a good man."

I looked at unhappy Father and then sat on Grandmother's lap and asked, "Grandmother, is Uncle a good man? Mother said he's a bad man."

Grandmother said, "Your mother's right. He's a bad man. Never betray anyone. Be a good boy. Good boys are born in Heaven in the next life."

Father remained silent, and other family members didn't say anything.

After a while, we slept.

4

A year passed. I was now seven and started a new journey.

One hot summer day, Brother and I were swimming naked in a brook near our tent. The water came up to our knees. As I lay in the water, my belly scratched a stone. When I saw blood on my stomach, I cried and ran home naked.

Entering the tent, I noticed a visitor, a large-mouthed man with a dark complexion wearing a fabric robe sitting next to Father on the right side of the tent. I later learned he was my tribe's leader, whose brother taught Tibetan in our local primary school.

The leader stopped talking to Father and counseled, "Don't cry. You're a good boy. Good boys never cry."

Although I felt a lot of pain, I stopped crying. I imagined that he would think I was a bad boy if I kept crying.

The leader said, "I said you're a good boy. See, you stopped crying."

I was shy and ashamed that I had cried. I squatted next to Grandmother and said nothing.

Grandmother wiped away the blood with her hands and said, "Don't swim if your brother asks you to swim with him."

I nodded and kept my head down.

In the late evening, the leader left. I asked Grandmother why he had come to visit.

"He came to announce that you and your brother must enroll in school in September."

I remembered one of my older male cousins had escaped from the local primary school when he was ten and had returned home at night. Cousin's father had scolded him and persuaded him to return to school. Cousin was reluctant, saying he didn't want to suffer from hunger. "I don't want to go to school. I don't want to starve," I proclaimed.

Grandmother encouraged, "I heard the school's new headmaster is a kind local man who takes good care of the students."

"I don't want to go to school. I'll miss you and my parents," I continued.

"You won't miss us. Your brother must also go to school," said Grandmother.

I wanted to know why, so Grandmother explained, "Your uncle's son was chosen by lottery to go to school, but your uncle wants his son to be a herder. Your brother will go to school in place of your uncle's son; otherwise, the government will punish your uncle."

A few days later, Father consulted a local *bla ma*, who selected a day for Brother and me to enroll in school.

Two days before the designated day, Father went to the local township town and returned home at noon with two pairs of cloth pants, two jackets, and two pairs of long underwear. One set of underwear was red, and the other was gray. Brother and I squabbled over the gray pair because we thought red underwear was for girls. Eventually, Father persuaded Brother to wear the red pair. Father told us to wash our faces and feet. Using a pair of big scissors, he cut our hair short, above eyebrow level.

That night, I slept with Grandmother, who advised, "Don't forget to recite scriptures every night at school. You'll become smarter if you chant every night."

"Yes. I'll recite scriptures every night," I promised.

We slept.

The next morning, Brother and I got up earlier than usual, dressed, and again washed our faces. After breakfast, Father, Brother, and I offered incense behind my family's tent to bring us good luck.

Brother mounted a white horse, and I sat behind him. Father rode a black horse. Mother mounted a black horse with a white spot on its head. After bidding goodbye to the rest of my family and my aunt and her son, we headed toward the township town.

THE PATRON

Gu ru 'phrin las ཀུ་རུ་འཕྲིན་ལག་*

It was an overcast, windy winter morning in Yellow River Township Town. As you might guess, it was on the icy banks of the Yellow River. The water was clear enough to see stones at the bottom of the river. A dirt road divided the town in half, with a few shops and restaurants on each side. Only one restaurant was open. The proprietress craned her neck from the restaurant door, scanning up and down the road. She was physically strong, and locals imagined she was also emotionally strong. Some called her "Strong Woman," partly because her tall stature, broad shoulders, long face, big eyes, and prominent straight nose made her look like a man when they saw her from a distance.

The street was empty of people and cars. Only a few dogs wandered around. A large, black dog padded to a garbage bin. A red mother dog that limped, not using her right hind leg, led two puppies. They sniffed a bone near the restaurant before lying in a circle around the bone. One puppy gnawed on the bone while the other two dogs seemed to doze.

When the black dog got near, the mother dog bared her fangs and furiously barked. The black dog gazed at the bone with an open mouth revealing sharp teeth, but it did not bark. Two strings of saliva ran down the sides of its mouth and hung from its chin. Suddenly, a whirlwind materialized, swirling the plastic bags, pieces of paper, and saliva strings into the sky.

The woman in her fifties moved back into her restaurant, and sitting at a table next to a stove, began stuffing dumplings with beef mince. She made twenty dumplings every other day. The restaurant owner only offered dumplings that cost one RMB each and complimentary tea to customers. After her husband had passed away from tuberculosis nine years after their marriage, increasingly fewer customers came to the restaurant. Sometimes, there were no customers for the whole day.

Her friends advised her to quit the business, but she refused. She wanted to serve a regular customer who chatted and even spent the whole day in the restaurant. Recently, he had not come. Feeling she had not seen him for months, she paused while stuffing the dumplings, counted on her fingers, put a piece of beef stuck on her right index finger into her mouth, swallowed, and murmured, "Thirty-six days."

She walked outside and looked around. The only living creatures she saw were the dogs. A robust, dust-laden gust of wind struck her and blew her red scarf off her shoulders. She trotted to where it fluttered on the dusty ground, but when she bent over to pick it up, the scarf bounded into the air. After finally grabbing it, she rushed back to her restaurant. With the scarf's cleaner end, she wiped the dust which had settled in her eyes. Standing near a window, she looked outside where a man threw stones at the black dog to make the dogs move away from a building with a white cross hospital symbol painted on the door.

The black dog seized the opportunity to grab the bone in its mouth and started to run away. The mother dog fiercely barked and tried to bite the black dog's tail and snatch the bone, but without success. The mother dog and her puppies ran after the black dog.

About a half-hour later, the man entered the restaurant carrying a plastic bag containing several medicine boxes. The restaurant was in a building that had a guest room, kitchen, and bedrooms. The kitchen and bedrooms were in one part of the house. Two tables were positioned on each side of the main door. Another table was next to the stove in the middle of the guest room. The man sat at the table near the stove and placed the bag on the table. The restaurant owner poured hot tea into a paper cup from a kettle on the stove and offered it to the man with her right hand. The man took the cup and removed his motorcycle helmet. She looked at the man's deep-set eyes and plump

*Gu ru 'phrin las. 2021. The Patron. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:402-405.

face. Realizing it was her deceased husband's brother, she smiled and said, "Oh... I didn't recognize you until you took off your helmet."

The man looked at her, smiled, sipped the tea, and said nothing.

"What brought you to town?" she asked.

"I came to get medicine for my son. He needs more."

"Your son was well a few days ago when I visited your family."

"When people get tuberculosis, they have to follow the doctor's orders and take medicine until they are completely recovered. It takes about a year."

They chatted about this and that until she got up, went to the kitchen, and returned with a plate of steaming dumplings. The pleasant smell of dumplings filled the room. She put the plate on the table and sat opposite the man. They ate the dumplings and enjoyed more conversation.

The man left when it got dark.

...

The woman was an outsider who had come to the town when she was forty-seven and opened the restaurant. She never talked about her parents to locals, who guessed she was an orphan. Three years later, she married a man two years older. After five years of marriage, her husband was diagnosed with spinal tuberculosis and soon couldn't move his legs. He spent his time in bed. After four years of suffering, death finally followed. Some locals criticized his wife for not giving him better care and not giving him medicine on time. Instead, they said, she was focused on her business.

Her brother-in-law thought differently. He said his brother's illness and death were fate.

After her husband's death, she visited her brother-in-law's home, where she would spend several nights at a time to lessen her loneliness. The last time she had visited, she had not spent the night because her brother-in-law was away.

...

Darkness came. Dogs occasionally barked in the distance. A few cars and motorcycles passed noisily in the street. The restaurant owner came outside, tossed garbage near the bin, and glanced around before peeing near the garbage bin. She then went inside and closed the restaurant's door.

In bed that night, she tossed and turned, unable to sleep. She prayed that the man she hadn't seen for thirty-six days would be standing at the door of her restaurant when she opened it the following day.

...

At midnight, a man in his sixties was awakened by his wife's laugh. She slept in an adjoining room. Half-awake and half-asleep, the man yawned, lifted his head, and listened to his wife talking on the phone. He put his blanket over his head, lay back down, and attempted to sleep, but his wife's noise bothered him. He walked to his bedroom door, but he hesitated as he was about to open the door. He was sure his wife had locked her bedroom door and would not open it if he knocked.

He returned to his bed, faced the adjoining wall, and tried to shout, but nothing came from his mouth. He knew it was better to leave her alone. When he had shouted before, he'd got no response, which made him angry. He covered his head with a blanket and murmured, "What a crazy old woman!"

The next day, the man got up around noon, walked into the kitchen, looked around, and noticed a half-full pot of thin noodles with bits of beef. He took a bowl and a pair of chopsticks from a shelf and poured the stuck-together noodles into the bowl. He sat at a table in the living room. His wife's bowl was on the table, with a single noodle stuck to the side of the bowl remaining inside. He again heard his wife on the phone in her bedroom. He ate half of the noodles in his bowl, left the bowl on the table, went into his bedroom, looked into a mirror on the wall, and combed his short black hair. He shrugged into his leather jacket and left home.

Two young men were having lunch in the dumpling restaurant. One looked at the proprietress and whispered, "What an unhappy woman! I've never seen her smile."

The other young man popped a steaming dumpling into his mouth, glanced at her gloomy face, and nodded in agreement.

The woman added water more into the kettle on the stove and didn't hear, or pretended not to hear, what the young man had said.

The man in the leather jacket peeked into the restaurant and stepped back when he saw the two young men but suddenly changed his mind and entered. He sat silently at a table near the door.

As soon as the woman noticed, she smiled and offered the man tea. The man realized the two young men were whispering and snickering when she sat at his table. He wanted to say something to the young men but instead sipped the tea and said nothing.

The woman ignored the young men, happily chatting with the man. The man frequently glanced at the two young men sitting at the table in the other corner near the door.

One of the young men gave the woman thirty RMB, which she put in her apron pocket. She took a glass cup from the table near the stove and poured tea for herself. She then sat again with the man saying, "Don't pay attention to those guys."

"I don't know why locals think I betrayed my wife and am having an affair with you."

"Don't care what others say. They like to spread rumors about everyone, not only us."

"There's nothing wrong with me coming here and talking with you. We enjoy chatting with one another."

"That's right," the woman declared, poured more tea into the man's cup, and asked, "Where have you been? I haven't seen you for days."

"I stayed at home and spent time with my daughter who was on winter holiday. She returned to school yesterday."

"Where does she study?"

"I forgot the name of her university. It's in the capital city."

"You're lucky. You have a daughter and wife. I have no children, and my husband is gone. When a person lives alone..." She stopped and put her head down, not finishing what she had intended to say.

The man paused and said, "Yeah. But sometimes, I want to divorce. My wife's siblings suggested we shouldn't divorce on the grounds they would be shamed if their sister in her fifties was divorced. They also think it would destroy my wife and my daughter's reputations."

The woman looked at his dark, gaunt face and didn't say anything.

"I haven't talked to my wife for a year. We only eat together when our daughter is at home. Every child wants their parents to live together. My daughter will be happy if we stay together. She tells her mother and me about one of her girlfriends who was extroverted and talkative, but became aloof and disengaged socially isolated after her parents divorced."

The proprietress thought he definitely should divorce if he suffered being with his wife. She could spend more time with him once he was divorced. But she also realized it would be hard for him once he divorced with no relatives and few friends in town. Locals had generally been kind to her and had come to her restaurant when her husband was alive. After he died, things changed. There were very few customers, and only her brother-in-law was kind to her. She recalled her childhood. Her parents had divorced when she was six, and then her maternal grandmother had cared for her. Her grandmother's favorite food was beef dumplings. The little girl helped make dumplings, and her grandmother rewarded her by allowing her to play with her friends afterward. She felt she was different and unlucky and admired her friends who had parents that stayed together.

At that time, one of her playmates, a mischievous boy, had long, messy hair that hung over his shoulders. He often breathed through his nose when snot ran into his mouth. At times, he wiped his nose with the back of his right hand and rubbed it on his tattered pants' legs.

He asked the little girl, "Where did your father go?"

"My father went to town," she answered, her face turning red.

"Your father hasn't returned home for days. My father goes to town and buys me candy. It only takes a day. What's wrong with your father?"

The little girl put her head down and played with a white and black stone in her hands. The stones were smooth, round, and small. She held one in each hand.

The next time the boy asked her the same question, she said impatiently, "I told you my father went to town!"

The boy pushed the little girl so hard that she fell and said, "Liar!" and ran to his home.

The little girl jumped up and threw the black stone at the boy. It missed. Tears ran down her cheeks. A playmate wiped her tears away with her hand and consoled her. The little girl stopped crying, held the white stone in her right hand, and slowly walked home.

Not knowing what to say, the proprietress offered no suggestions.

They talked till dusk when the man got ready to leave. She urged him to chat more. Although he wanted to, he knew locals would gossip the next day if they talked too late into the night. "You know people circulate rumors about others," he said, looking slowly around the restaurant for a few seconds and then walked toward the door.

She said, "You're the only person I feel close to. We understand each other. Time goes by so quickly when I'm with you."

The man looked at her, smiled, gripped. Turning the doorknob, he stepped outside. Following him, she stood by the door and said, "I'll open the restaurant early tomorrow morning. I always welcome you. You are my only regular customer."

The man smiled broadly, nodded, said goodbye, and strode in the direction of his home.

When she could no longer see him, she went inside.

The proprietress usually was unable to fall asleep until midnight, but this night was different.

Two hours later, as it began snowing, dogs howled in the distance. The wind blew against the windows, making them tremble, but none of this disturbed her. She was deeply asleep and smiling, snuggled under a blanket.

The next day was sunny.

The black dog and the mother dog were peacefully leading the puppies along the street in the evening, amicably walking together. The proprietress stopped looking at the dogs and gazed in the direction of her only regular customer's home.

AN ABANDONED HOUSE

Gu ru 'phrin las ཀུ་རུ་འཕྱིན་ལས་ཀྱི་མཆོག་*

Pad lo, a businessman and a member of the Tent Tribe, hired construction workers from outside the local area to build an adobe house with a living room, a small storeroom, and a shrine room for his family.

Pad lo's only child - his eighteen-year-old daughter, Pad mtsho - slept in the storage room where the family's sheepskin robes were packed in bags and piled along one side of the room. Pots, pans, and other kitchen items were placed on the other side of the room. Pad mtso's bed was near the door.

Pad lo himself slept in the shrine room where Buddhist images were arranged on a wooden table. Butter lamps were aligned in a row in front of the images while leather bags of rice, flour, and barley were against one room wall. Locked wooden boxes on the other side contained Pad mtsho's and Pad ma's jewelry and some cash. Pad lo's bed was near the door.

Pad lo's sixty-three-year-old mother, Pad ma, slept on a wooden bed in the living room where the family cooked and ate.

While most neighboring tribes lived in adobe houses, all fifty households of the Tent Tribe lived in tents, except for Pad lo's family. Other tribal members admired Pad lo's new house and longed to live in such a place. After Pad lo's family moved in, the number of young men pursuing Pad mtsho doubled, making other local young women even more jealous considering Pad mtsho's exceptional beauty.

Five years later, Pad mtsho would abandon her family's house to live alone in a tent.

Pad lo often traveled to other tribes, buying and selling yaks, returning home only two or three times a year for short stays. When his mother had a high fever and almost died, it was one of Pad ma's relatives who took her to a clinic. Locals, especially those who had never ventured beyond the tribe's territory, criticized Pad ma for being a dishonest husband, unfilial son, and irresponsible father.

Once, when Pad lo had been absent for weeks, his wife could no longer bear the local criticisms she heard of her husband, so she left, leaving her daughter with her mother-in-law.

One winter morning, two years earlier, Pad ma had slipped and fallen on the frozen ground, twisting and permanently injuring her right knee. Afterward, she had used a walking stick to move about. Each time pain gripped her knee, she chastised herself, reasoning that the pain was retribution for leaving her first husband, a decision she now intensely regretted. He had tolerated her bad temper and had been kind to her. Though her second husband was handsome, he aimlessly wandered here and there with his fellows, ignoring his family members. Unable to accept her second husband's irresponsible attitude, she again divorced.

Each time neighbor women chatted with Pad ma about her daughter-in-law's departure, Pad ma would say, "Her departure is understandable and reasonable."

Pad mtsho herded the family's yaks and did most of the family chores.

Pad ma hoped her son would remarry, although she was not very sure about this. She thought he might divorce the woman he married, as she had divorced her first and second husbands. She was also concerned about her granddaughter Pad mtsho being unmarried.

Several young men knocked on Pad mtsho's window one night and attempted to open the house's main entrance door. Furious, Pad mtsho rushed out of the house with her slingshot and quickly, picking up some stones, shot at her retreating suitors. From that night on, there were few night visitors.

*Gu ru 'phrin las. 2021. An Abandoned House. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:406-409.

One morning, Pad ma advised Pad mtsho, "Be gentle. No one will marry a violent woman."

Pad mtsho replied, "I don't care. I prefer being single to marrying an irresponsible man."

"You know my knee gets worse and worse. I can't help much with family chores, and your father is often not at home, so you should marry," Pad ma continued.

Pad mtsho inquired, "Who should I marry?"

"A good man."

"How do I know he's a good man?"

"He's kind to you."

"I don't want to marry a good man if I don't love him."

"A smart woman marries a good man or a man who loves her. You can have a handsome boyfriend who doesn't love you. Don't marry a man you love but who doesn't love you."

"Do you think you are a smart woman?"

Pad ma had nothing to say.

...

Two years later, one of Pad mtsho's friends married and had a son a year later. One day, Pad mtsho met her now-married friend while they were herding yaks high on a mountain. They chatted about marriage and gossiped about unmarried women who were in their late twenties and even thirties. They talked till it was time to drive the yaks back home.

Time passed, and Pad mtsho told her grandmother she had decided to marry her current boyfriend. Her grandmother was curious, "Are you sure? Is he a good man?"

"I'm sure. We started the relationship six months ago. He's kind to me and has never been angry with me."

"You know a couple recently divorced after a decade of marriage and three children. The husband had an affair for three years. Be careful. Don't marry the wrong man."

"I'm not like you."

Pad ma ignored this, knowing a serious squabble would ensue if she responded.

After a long absence, Pad lo returned home at the wheel of a white four-door car. Locals came to have a look at the car. Some flattered, "When you drive this car, you are so handsome!"

Pad lo was called "Frog-eyes" by locals because of his big, bulging eyes. He was short, fat, and limped due to a bullet lodged in his right leg during a conflict with a neighboring tribe some years earlier. After the visitors finished inspecting the car, they all entered the house, except for one man who planned to have a house built for his family the following year. He circled Pad lo's house, carefully inspecting its construction details, and then he noticed something wrapped in black cloth lying near the outside of the house. He picked it up and was shocked to discover a dead premmie baby with a bit of hair on its head, wrapped in blood-stained cloth.

News quickly spread through the tribe of a dead infant discarded at the back of Pad lo's family's house.

Pad mtsho and her boyfriend had agreed to discuss a date for their wedding the next day. Pad mtsho got up early, washed her face, gazed into the mirror, and removed a hair from her right cheek. Looking at her round double-lidded eyes, high straight nose, and long face, she was proud of her beauty. She put on a new red shirt and fabric robe and consulted the mirror again.

A few minutes later, she mounted a black yak with a single white spot on its head, smiled, and drove the family's yaks into a valley.

She waited for her boyfriend the whole day.

He never came.

...

Pad ma learned the identity of the dead infant's mother and asked Pad mtsho, "Shall we tell others the truth about the mother of the dead infant?"

"There's no reason to hurt another young woman."

"If you don't tell the truth, no one will marry you. We should tell others you are not the dead infant's mother," explained Pad ma

"I already lost my lover. Who am I supposed to marry? I don't want the engaged young woman to lose her lover. She loves him."

Pad ma stared at her granddaughter and regretted having questioned her decision to marry her boyfriend. I've destroyed her life and marriage. Now it's too late, she thought.

Pad ma was sure she couldn't persuade Pad mtsho and prayed for the day when locals would discover the truth.

A month passed.

One night, Pad lo scolded his daughter, "How shameful!"

When Pad mtsho saw her father's angry face, she dared not argue and kept her head down.

Noticing tears streaming down her granddaughter's cheeks, Pad ma felt compelled to intervene and declared, "She's innocent. Trust your mother and your daughter instead of others who will say whatever they like to say! They distort the truth and hurt others. You will only torture yourself if you trust others' every word."

Pad lo's only response was to stop eating supper, get up, and limp to his bedroom. Pad ma and her granddaughter also lost interest in eating and left half of their rice noodles with beef in their metal bowls and went to bed. Pad ma sat on her bed for a while, thinking before going to sleep.

The next day was rainy and chilly. As Pad mtsho was milking the family's yaks, she noticed her father was climbing a wooden ladder that construction workers had left. She imagined the roof was leaking again. Suddenly, she saw her father slip off the ladder and hit the ground with a loud plop. As she shouted for her grandmother, her wooden bucket turned over on the muddy ground. Milk splashed, leaving a ragged white circle on the ground.

The two women were terrified when white foam bubbled from Pad lo's mouth. Distressed and at a loss, they watched Pad lo for a few minutes until he opened his eyes. Unable to speak, Pad ma grabbed her son's left arm while Pad mtsho held her father's right arm. Together they pulled Pad lo into the house, his legs dragging, leaving a trail behind them. After they got him into his bed, Pad ma put a Buddha image near his head and patted his head with a volume of scripture.

Several hours later, Pad lo could speak a little. He reassured them he was fine and there was no need to go to the local clinic.

A few days later, Pad lo unexpectedly passed away.

After her son's death, Pad ma occasionally refused to eat supper. When Pad mtsho asked why, Pad ma explained that she was not hungry. As more days passed, Pad ma's eyes became sunken, her cheekbones were prominent, and the wrinkles on her forehead deepened. Though Pad mtsho urged her grandmother to eat, she ate very little.

Winter came.

One snowy morning, Pad mtsho got up early as usual and drove the family's yaks to a mountain. When Pad ma put on her robe and went out to pee, she tripped on the doorsill, fell, and her head hit a stone. She was unconscious as blood trickled from her head wound, turning the stone bright red.

When Pad mtsho returned home for breakfast, she saw her grandmother sprawled on the ground. Tall and robust, Pad mtsho carried Pad ma into the house and put her in bed. As she used her sleeve to wipe dried blood from the left side of her head, she gazed at her grandmother's pale face and hugged her. Pad ma grunted in pain and said her left ribs were very painful.

The next day, one of Pad ma's cousins, a gambler, visited and suggested Pad ma stay at home because the road to the clinic was terrible, and she would be in agony all the way given her bruised ribs. Adding that even broken ribs were not necessarily a severe issue, he announced that he would drive Pad lo's car to the clinic and bring a doctor back.

Pad ma and her granddaughter waited. It got dark.

Nobody came.

The following day, Pad ma's health had further deteriorated. Her lips were dry, and her face was pale. She lay on one side in her bed for the whole day, covered by her sheepskin robe. Her granddaughter cooked beef soup in the morning. When she offered Pad ma a bowl, Pad ma's hands shook, so Pad mtsho held the bowl. After a few sips, Pad ma lay back down and put her head on a pillow of folded sheepskin that Pad mtsho had worn when she was five years old. Sweat appeared on her wrinkled forehead, and she could not speak.

Three days passed. No doctors came, nor did the cousin return. The grandmother's situation worsened, and then she died.

Pad mtsho now lived alone in the house. Locals continued to gossip about her. A woman sympathized and regretted that she had destroyed Pad mtsho's reputation to save herself, but she dared not acknowledge the truth.

Pad mtsho explained to a night visitor that she didn't want locals to hurt another woman, so she had not told the truth to the man who was the dead infant's father. The man listened sympathetically and suggested that her father and grandmother's deaths were related to the house.

Some months later, Pad mtsho lived alone in a small tent pitched next to her gambler cousin's family tent. The Tent Tribe's tents were scattered at the bottom of a high mountain. The house was located at the border of the Tent Tribe's territory, far from the tents. The house's windows and door lock were broken. The wind banged the squeaking door as it swung back and forth on rusty, unoiled hinges.

TIBETAN TERMS

gu ru 'phrin las གུ་རུ་འཕྲིན་ལ་སེལ་

pad lo པད་ལོ།

pad ma པད་མ།

pad mtsho པད་མཚོ།

A NEW FAMILY

Gu ru 'phrin las ཀུ་རུ་འཕྲིན་ལས་ཀྱི་ལྷན་ཁག་*

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY

'Dzoms pe, a candidate for the local, next "greatest woman" award	Ngag dbang, Lha mo's cousin
'Phags pa, the local community leader	Pad kho (1), Lha mo's ex-husband
Bkra lha, a candidate for the next "greatest woman" award	Pad kho (2), Pad ma's son; Lha mo's lover
Bkra shis, Chos sgron's husband	Pad ma, the father of Lha mo's lover, Pad kho (2); the uncle of Pad ma (1) (Lha mo's first husband)
Chos sgron, Bkra shis's wife	Thar ba, Lha mo's second husband
Lha 'dzoms, 'Phags pa's daughter	Thub bstan, Zla ba's teacher
Lha mo, Bkra shis' daughter	Zla ba, Lha mo and Pad ma's son
Lha mo 'tsho, the third greatest woman	

Lha mo wiped a square transistor radio encased in dark plastic with her black scarf and nestled the radio in the old folded robe she used as a pillow. She clicked the radio on as usual at nine PM, making sure the volume was as low as possible to prevent her father, Bkra shis, from scolding her. Radio sounds disturbed his sleep.

No one asked Lha mo why she listened to the radio every night.

Lha mo's mother, Chos sgron, and Lha mo slept on the left side of the family's one-room house. Bkra shis slept on the right side of the same room. The room had one room crammed with the family's belongings. There was no place for beds, so they slept on the floor.

At three AM, Chos sgron got up in the room's utter darkness to go outside to relieve herself. She was surprised and a little afraid by a red light flashing from Lha mo's pillow. She crept to where Lha mo slept, realized it was the radio light, and switched the radio off. Clad only in a suit of long black underwear and a stained white shirt, she walked outside without her robe. Two minutes later, she entered the room, gently closed the wooden door, walked to the right side of the room, and snuggled into Bkra shis' bed.

The next morning, Chos sgron got up at six and was ready to wake Lha mo but found she was not in the room. Usually, when Chos sgron roused Lha mo, she would yawn, reply "OK," and continue to doze until her father woke her. Chos sgron put on her robe and went outside, where she found Lha mo collecting yak dung in the family's yak enclosure. Chos sgron slung a yak dung basket on her back and joined Lha mo. While Lha mo wore tattered gloves, Chos sgron picked up dung chunks with her bare hands.

Meanwhile, Bkra shis thrust a small bunch of shrub branches in the metal stove that sat in the center of the room. He then added dried yak dung and lit the branches with a match. Some minutes later, water began boiling in a soot-blackened kettle above the fire, which also heated a pot of leftover beef noodles on the stove.

When the noodles bubbled, Bkra shis called Chos sgron and Lha mo, who stopped adding frozen and fresh yak dung to the yak enclosure wall. They placed their baskets near the enclosure entrance and helped each other brush dust from their robes.

Bkra shis poured lukewarm water in a red plastic basin where Chos sgron and Lha mo washed their hands. Lha mo unwrapped her black scarf, looked into a mirror on the wall near the room door.

*Gu ru 'phrin las. 2021. A New Family. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:410-414.

She wiped the dust from her nose, squeezing it for a while, upset that her nose was more prominent than she thought it should be. She then sat next to her mother on the left side of the room, ready for breakfast.

After breakfast, Lha mo washed the dishes in a basin and swept the room. She picked up a twenty-five-liter plastic water container and headed to the river that ran thirty meters from the house. She filled the container using a plastic scoop. Placing the container on a boulder, she steadied it with her left hand, crouched down, positioned it against her back, pulled a red sash through the container's handle, and trudged toward the house with it on her back. As she walked, water from the bucket wet her robe. She ignored it as usual.

Chos sgron noticed Lha mo's robe was wet but hesitated to ask her to change into another robe. Lha mo had refused to change her robe enough times for Chos sgron to conclude making this suggestion was useless. But, to her surprise, this time, Lha mo put on another robe without being reminded, then mounted a polled black yak and drove her family's hundred yaks to a nearby mountain.

Bkra shis sat on the right side of the house, near the stove, holding a cigarette between his index and middle fingers. His fingers were yellowed from frequently holding cigarette butts. Igniting a long, thin stick in the stove, he lit the cigarette and puffed.

Chos sgron, sitting next to Bkra shis, coughed. Bkra shis looked at her and laughed. After she lightly hit his shoulder, he inhaled deeply and blew the smoke over her face, making her cough again, lower her head, and wipe away tears.

Bkra shis again laughed.

Moving to the left side of the room, Chos sgron said, "I wonder why Lha mo has lately become so responsible. She gets up early, fetches water, and does family chores without being asked."

"She is mature and old enough to understand what her burden is. She should marry."

"She's only seventeen."

"My mother married when she was sixteen."

Chos sgron had married when she was seventeen, so she didn't know what to say.

Elsewhere, on top of the mountain, Lha mo and Pad kho sat watching as their families' yaks grazed below. Lha mo leaned her head against Pad kho's shoulder and gazed at mountain ranges far in the distance. Trees covered the middle parts of most mountains that were all topped by snowy peaks amid blue sky and rambling flocks of clouds. Lha mo rarely blinked. Maybe she was enjoying the beautiful scenery or contemplating.

A breeze blew a lock of her hair, blocking her view. She brushed it away and asked, "What is a good girl?"

Lha mo often asked Pad kho such questions. This time, he had to think for a while. He recalled a time he had gone to town and walked near the local government compound. Noticing a crowd in a courtyard, he had joined them. The local leader, clad in a black suit and wearing dark sunglasses, was surrounded by people. Lha mo 'tsho, a tall woman with high cheekbones, had just been designated the third greatest woman in the community, an honor that was given just once in a decade. The leader told Lha mo 'tsho to stand next to him while he handed her a large certificate. She dared not look at the onlookers, and her face reddened when they applauded. Finally, the leader pointed to a black mare tied to a stake nearby and said to Lha mo 'tsho, "It's yours!"

Everyone clapped again.

Pad kho answered, "A girl who listens to her parents, like Lha mo 'tsho, is a good girl. She earned the greatest woman award in our community."

In the early evening, Pad kho's father, Pad ma, visited Bkra shis. Pad ma wore a Tibetan robe, high-heeled leather boots that almost reached his knees, and a bike helmet. Bkra shis and Chos sgron warmly greeted him as he got off his motorcycle. Once they came inside the one-room house, he sat on the floor crossed-legged on the right side of the room, next to Bkra shis.

Chos sgron offered Pad ma a bowl of milk tea, which he sipped while chatting with Bkra shis. Meanwhile, Chos sgron mixed dough in a basin, cut a chunk of meat into small pieces on a cutting board, and made dumplings, all the while listening to Bkra shis and Padma's conversation.

As the sun descended behind a spectacular, high mountain, Pad ma took out a strip of white silk presented to show respect and black cloth folded in four layers from his robe pouch. He offered them respectfully to Bkra shis, who accepted them, signifying that he accepted Pad kho's proposal to marry Lha mo. Pad ma then stood and said he was ready to leave. Bkra shis urged him to stay the night, but he declined.

Bkra shis and Chos sgron escorted Pad ma to his motorcycle, which he mounted, started, and roared into the distance, heading home.

As Chos sgron and Lha mo were tying their family's yaks in the yak enclosure, Chos sgron said, "Your father accepted Pad ma's proposal that you and Pad kho marry."

Lha mo was happy to hear the name, Pad kho, and ignored the rest of what her mother said. She concentrated on restraining a wild calf.

That night, Lha mo ate two dumplings and felt full. Usually, she ate ten to fifteen. Her favorite food was dumplings.

As usual, she turned on the radio and listened to the local broadcast. A man spoke in a pleasing, clear voice, "Lha mo 'tsho was recognized as the greatest woman in our Thang dkar Community. She never attended school, herded yaks from the age of six, never disobeyed her parents, and agreed to whatever decision her parents made. Her parents and neighbors considered her to be extremely filial. Her parents arranged her marriage, as did other parents for their children in the community. Her female friends knew that she was eager to marry her lover, but she obeyed her parents."

Having heard the same account countless times, Lha mo turned down the radio and stared at the ceiling.

Later that night, Lha mo rolled over in bed and imagined her marriage. She heard her father snoring and her family's watchdog barking in the distance.

The next day, Lha mo herded her family's yaks on the mountain, where her lover, Pad kho, often herded his family's yaks. But this day, Pad kho did not come. Lha mo missed him and was upset, but then imagined they would eventually marry and live the rest of their lives happily together.

In the evening, when Lha mo entered her family's house after finishing tying the yaks, she was surprised to see Pad kho sitting with her father on the right side of the room. Pad ma had no idea why Pad kho had come to her home.

Later, when she went out to pee with her mother, she learned that Pad kho was her fiancé. Lha mo couldn't believe her ears and asked, "What did you say? He's going to marry me?"

Her mother answered, "Yes. Both sets of parents have agreed."

"You told me Pad ma's son, Pad kho, would marry me yesterday."

"Yesterday, I just said you would marry Pad kho. You didn't let me finish. You ran after a calf. Anyway, Pad ma's nephew will marry you, not Pad ma's son."

Lha mo silently sighed.

The next day, Lha mo and Pad ma's son, Pad kho, sat where they usually rested. Lha mo put her head against Pad kho's chest, listening to his heart beating as he watched a slow-moving herd of clouds.

Once Lha mo informed him about her marriage, they said nothing for some minutes. Then Lha mo closed her eyes and asked, "What is a good wife?"

Pad kho pondered for some time, not responding immediately as he usually did. He then sadly said, "A good wife is loyal to her husband and never betrays him"

When it was time to drive the yaks home, Pad kho stared at Lha mo's triple-lidded eyes, high straight nose, and rosy cheeks. He wanted to embrace her, but he restrained himself, thinking, "She's already engaged to my cousin. It's immoral if I hug her. She will think I am a bad man."

He stood, mounted his riding yak, and rode away.

Lha mo stood and walked to where her riding yak was tied. Her tall, slim body caught Pad kho's final attention. He thought, "She's the most beautiful girl I've ever seen. Why can't we love each other? Why will she marry my cousin and not me? Should we run away to another tribe? No! What terrible ideas! I will not destroy the relationship between our families."

Nine years later, Lha mo's seven-year-old son, Zla ba, was a primary school grade two student. Though he didn't do well in school, most students admired him because he had a great mother. Locals believed she would earn the honor of being recognized as the greatest woman in their community the following year, something that happened only once in a decade. The chosen woman was a model for all women to follow.

Lha mo and her husband, Pad kho, slept in a new adobe house that adjoined her family's old house.

One night, Pad kho went to sleep early. At nine PM every night, Lha mo turned on the radio and listened to the local broadcast for thirty minutes. Again, the night's broadcast described how Lha mo 'tsho became the third greatest woman in Thang dkar Community, a story that was often broadcast.

Pad kho's maternal uncle, 'Phags pa, was surrounded by local men at a meeting. "We should choose three candidates for the next great woman. In two months, the local government will send some people here and select one as the greatest woman."

Local men discussed this in small groups. Most chose Lha mo as a candidate, but the leader disagreed. He argued, "Once I heard Lha mo secretly met her lover, Pad ma's son, Pad kho, on the day after she was engaged, so she's ineligible to be a candidate."

Bkra shis disputed, "They herded yaks on the same mountain that day. She didn't plan for that to happen. Don't lie! Your daughter, Lha 'dzoms, doesn't qualify. She's not sincere. I heard she has several lovers."

It was the first time someone had opposed 'Phags pa. His face flushed as he stood up, stomped toward Bkra shis while fumbling in his robe pouch. Others knew they would fight and restrained 'Phags pa. The two men then angrily shouted at each other.

Locals all agreed to choose Bkra lha and 'Dzoms pe as candidates but disagreed for hours over whether to choose Lha 'dzoms or Lha mo as the third candidate, eventually deciding on Lha mo.

The next day, late in the evening as it was snowing, Bkra shis' family's watchdog began barking furiously. Bkra shis went out as a horse rider neared his family's yak enclosure. When the rider waved, Bkra shis walked over to 'Phags pa.

After a half-hour, Chos sgron, with great concern, saw someone lying near the entrance of the yak enclosure. She rushed over. Blood was flowing from Bkra shis' head, his face was pale, and he could not speak. Chos sgron wept while using her apron to staunch the bleeding. Sitting on the muddy ground, she held Bkra shis' bloody head in her lap and gazed into her husband's eyes as his life drained away.

A few days later, Chos sgron persuaded Lha mo, "Divorce Pad kho. Treat him as our enemy. His maternal uncle killed your father."

Lha mo knew Pad kho loved her and would provide life-long companionship. He had spent most of their nine years of marriage with her at home. He had participated in local horse races only three times, and had been only twice to the local township town to pick up their son from the primary school, and had taken their son to the local school only three times. Locals called him "grandpa"

because he spent most of his time at home like an old man. He never beat her and bought shirts and scarves for her each time he went to town.

Lha mo protested, "He didn't kill my father, and he's my son's father. Why should I treat him as my enemy?"

Chos sgron, squinting at Lha mo, demanded, "Listen! Divorce Pad kho. If you don't, it's a big shame for our family. If you don't listen and quarrel with me, locals will think you are not filial. You will not become the next greatest woman."

Announcing that she didn't want to be a great woman, Lha mo picked up her radio, smashed it on the floor, and shouted, "I don't want to be who you want me to be!"

The next day, Lha mo asked her cousin, Ngag dbang, to take her to the township town. As they got on Ngag dbang's motorcycle, he turned and cautioned Lha mo before he started the engine, "Don't be angry with your mother. Obey her. Don't entertain silly ideas. Stay with her. Your home is where your mother lives."

After a few seconds, Lha mo lied, "I'm not going to leave my family. I only want to visit my son."

...

Sitting on a patch of grass in front of the school's dining room Zla ba held a small metal bowl of rice and chunks of potatoes and beef. He started to eat, but when he saw his mother walking towards him, he ran to her, leaving a trail of potatoes, rice, and meat.

Lha mo went with Zla ba to his Tibetan teacher, Thub bstan, and asked for permission to take Zla ba to lunch in a nearby restaurant. "We'll return as soon as possible," she assured.

After that, no one knew Lha mo and Zla ba's whereabouts.

Pad kho married a woman from another tribe and eventually moved to her home. Locals said his wife and his mother were locked in endless quarrels.

Some years later, Lha mo and Zla ba returned to their tribe with a tall, bearded, bald man - Lhamo's husband. Lha mo was unable to pronounce his name, so she called him Thar ba.

Thar ba was kind to Lha mo and treated Zla ba as his own son. Locals couldn't understand Thar ba's language. Sometimes, Lha mo and Thar ba had challenges communicating, but both felt loved when they were together. Each time Thar ba went to town, he bought things for Zla ba that he thought he would enjoy. Zla ba was happy and loved Thar ba.

They established a new family in Thang dkar Community.

TIBETAN TERMS

'dzoms pe འཛོམས་པེ།

'phags pa འཕགས་པ།

bkra lha བརྒྱ་ལྷ།

bkra shis བརྒྱ་ཤིས།

chos sgron ཆོས་སྒྲོན།

lha 'dzoms ལྷ་འཛོམས།

lha mo ལྷ་མོ།

lha mo 'tsho ལྷ་མོ་འཚོ།

ngag dbang འག་དབང་།

pad kho པད་ཁོ།

pad ma པད་མ།

thang dkar ཐང་དཀར།

thar ba ཐར་བ།

thub bstan ཐུབ་བསྐྱེད།

zla ba ཟླ་བ།

SEARCHING POCKETS

Blo bzang ལོ་བཟང་། (Luo Zhang 洛藏)*

Blo bzang lies in his unclean bed, looking at WeChat moments on his broken-screen phone. He sees Rab brtan's photos of traveling to Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake) with his fiancé, driving a blue BMW, and eating in an opulent Western-style restaurant. They are enjoying steaks, spaghetti, and red-wine in two transparent long-stemmed goblets perched on a white cloth-covered table.

"Wow, cool," said Blo bzang.

He lies on his back, staring at the white ceiling.

He walked down a street, entered The China Profit Lottery Shop, bought a lottery, and won the lottery.

"I won the lottery and got one million RMB," he tells his father over the phone.

He flies First Class from Xi'an City to Zi ling (Xining). At the Zi ling Airport exit, family members and friends greet him with *kha btags*. Soon long, golden-colored silk scarves circle his neck.

He builds a Tibetan-style wooden house in his home village and purchases a Haihu District apartment in Zi ling City.

He shares his photos on Weibo, WeChat Moments, and videos on Kwai and Tik Tok with his girlfriend, G.yang sgron mtsho, a singer and movie actress famous in Tibetan areas. She has fascinated him for a long time. Now she is his. He prepares a gold necklace and an iPhone11 Pro Max for her as Valentine's gifts.

He lies on a luxurious sofa in the living room, waiting for her to arrive when "Bang! Bang! Bang!" sounds at the door.

He jumps up and rushes to open the door.

"It's time to pay your rent. It's 300 RMB this month," the landlord says.

He searches all of his pockets twice, finds nothing, and promises, "I'll pay you tomorrow."

TIBETAN TERMS

blo bzang ལོ་བཟང་།

g.yang sgron mtsho གཡང་སྒྲོན་མཚོ།

kha btags ཁ་བཏགས།

mtsho sngon po མཚོ་སྒྲོན་པོ།

rab brtan རབ་བརྟན།

zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།

CHINESE TERMS

Haihu 海湖

Kwai, Kuaishou 快手

Qinghai 青海

Xi'an 西安

Xining 西宁

WeChat, Weibo 微信

*Blo bzang (Luo Zhang). 2021. Searching Pockets. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:415.

SNACK

Blo bzang ལོ་བཟང་། (Luo zang 洛藏)*

At just after ten PM, I was watching a news item on TV about improved urban life in Shanghai when, suddenly, I heard loud knocking on my door. I opened it. "Heartless! You will be reborn in Hell!" declared my thirty-five-year-old neighbor, Gangs skyid, a single mother, and her son, who she pulled into my shop with her left hand.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Look at the poison you sold my son!" she PRTaimed, tossing some spicy snacks at me. "How many times have I begged you not to sell this stuff to him?"

"I need to do business," I responded.

After I lost my right leg in a mining accident in Yul shul, I returned home and opened a store after recovering. My shop is next to our township primary school's main gate, just opposite the government office buildings. On school days, I sell snacks, drinks, and cigarettes.

"Today, folks only think about money," she said.

I had something to say but didn't. I knew she had heart disease. I also knew her husband, Sdom po, had substantial gambling debts. His gambling mates had come to his home and taken everything except his wife, two children, and some old, battered furniture. Sdom po then vanished. For three years, they had searched but found not a trace. A diviner declared that her husband's spirit had been reborn as a fish in the Yellow River. Gang skyid and her son then bought and freed fish into the Yellow River at Sha bo 'gag, once a year.

Time passed, and a local leader determined that she and her children should move into a new house about a kilometer from the township town in a new settlement community with some other families.

After a year, she lost her eleven-year-old daughter, Tshe ring sgrol ma, to gastric cancer. Her uncle, Gsang bdag, rented a room and opened a tailoring shop for her, where she made and sold Tibetan robes and overcoats.

When I tried to apologize, she jerked her son's hand and started to leave, then she turned back to me and said, "Killer!" before stepping into the darkness.

TIBETAN TERMS

blo bzang ལོ་བཟང་།
gangs skyid གངས་སྐྱིད།
gsang bdag གསང་བདག་
sdom po སྡོམ་པོ།

sha bo 'gag ཤ་བོ་འགག་
tshe ring sgrol ma ཚེ་རིང་སྒྲོལ་མ།
yul shul ཡུལ་ཤུལ་

CHINESE TERM

Shanghai 上海

*Blo bzang (Luo zang). 2021. Snack. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:416.

BOOK REVIEWS

REVIEW: *THE SECRET TALE OF TESUR HOUSE* BY BRAG GDONG BKRA S GLING DBANG RDOR

བླ་གཏོང་བཀྲ་སྒྲིང་དབང་རྡོ་རྗེ།

Reviewed by Pad+ma rig 'dzin པད་མ་རིག་འཛིན་*



Brag gdong bkras gling dbang rdor བླ་གཏོང་བཀྲ་སྒྲིང་དབང་རྡོ་རྗེ། 2011. *Bkras zur tshang gi gsang ba'i gtam rgyud* བཀྲ་སྒྲིང་ཆང་གི་གསང་བའི་གཏམ་རྒྱུད། [*The Secret Tale of Bkras zur House*]. Lha sa ལྷ་ས།: Bod ljong mi dmang dpe bskrun khang བོད་ལྗོངས་མི་དམངས་དཔེ་སྐྱུ་ཁང་། [Tibet People's Publishing House]. 297 pp. ISBN 978-7-223-010064-1 (Paperback 22RMB).



Wangdor Tailling [Brag gdong bkras gling dbang rdor བླ་གཏོང་བཀྲ་སྒྲིང་དབང་རྡོ་རྗེ།]. 1998. *The Secret Tale of Tesur House* [*Bkras zur tshang gi gsang ba'i gtam rgyud* བཀྲ་སྒྲིང་ཆང་གི་གསང་བའི་གཏམ་རྒྱུད།]. Beijing 北京: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe 中国藏学出版社 [China Tibetology Publishing House]. 351 pp. ISBN 7-80057361-3. (Paperback, 2.99USD).¹



Wangduo 旺多 (Suolang Wangqing 索朗旺清 [Bsod nams dbang chen བསོད་ནམས་དབང་ཆེན།, translator). 1998. *Zhaisufu miwen* 斋苏府秘闻 [*The Secret Tale of Tesur House*]. Beijing 北京: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe 中国藏学出版社 [China Tibetology Publishing House]. 216 pp. ISBN 7-80057-362-1 (paperback 12RMB).

The Tibetan and English versions of *The Secret Tale of Bkras zur House* introduce Brag gdong bkras gling dbang rdor. Born in 1934 in the noble Brag gdong bkras gling family in the Rgal rtse (Jiangze) area, he began traditional schooling in Lha sa.² In 1946, he attended St. Joseph's College in Darjeeling, India. In early 1953, he returned to Tibet as a teacher and officer in the Rgyal rtse and Gzhis ka rtse (Rika ze) areas.

In 1977, he worked at the Tibet Education Bureau in Lha sa. Eight years later, with the growing tourism industry in Tibet, he joined the Tibet Tourism Bureau and made business trips to the USA, Canada, Nepal, Bolivia, and Hong Kong. From 1986 to 1987, he worked for China Tibet Qomolangma [Jo mo gling ma] Travelways in Hongkong.³

After retirement in 1992, he began work on literary creations and translations, including *Hamlet*⁴ and *Romeo and Juliet*⁵ from English to Tibetan, *Tibet: The Land and the People*⁶ from

*Pad+ma rig 'dzin. 2020. Review: *The Secret Tale of Tesur House* by Brag gdong bkras gling dbang rdor *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:418-425.

¹ Amazon price (<https://amzn.to/3gsgIUT>, accessed 4 August 2020).

² See Cao and Yan (2009) for more on the author's childhood in Tibet, return to China from India, writings, and health.

³ <https://bit.ly/3itYYJ6>, accessed 12 August 2020.

⁴ William Shakespeare and Bkras gling dbang rdor. 2002. *Ham lekri*. Lha sa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang.

⁵ William Shakespeare and Bkras gling dbang rdor. 2003. *Ro me'o dang ju likri*. Lha sa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang.

⁶ Tildy Chodag and Bkras gling dbang rdor. 1988. *Tibet, the Land and the People*. Beijing: New World Press. <https://tinyurl.com/yybcedka> (accessed 14 January 2021).

Chinese to English, and *The Drama Songs of Tshangs dbyang rgya mtsho*¹ from Tibetan to English. He authored *A Tour Guide's Diary* in English and *The Secret Tale of Tesur House* in Tibetan and English.

According to the writer's acknowledgment in the Tibetan and English versions, the Tibetan version of *The Secret Tale of Tesur House* was originally written in 1993 and began to be serially published in *Tibetan Literature and Art* a year later. In 2003, the Tibetan version was broadcast by the Tibetan Department, China National Radio (CNR). The novel was translated into Chinese by Bsod nams dbang chen and, in 1996, was published in *Tibetan Literature*. The novel won the 1997 Rlung rta Cup, 1999 Tibetan New Times, 2001 Jo mo glang ma, and 2005 Gangs rgyan rtags ma awards. In 1995, the author completed an English version. A German version (*Das Geheimnis des Hauses Tesur*) was published in 2001, and the author mentions that he had received requests to translate *The Secret Tale of Tesur House* into Korean and Japanese.

The Secret Tale of Tesur House primarily uses the first person point of view, supplemented by the occasional use of the third person (Lcags rdor rgyal 2019:322). 'Brug rgyas, the main narrator, was born in a poor family and lived on farmland rented from the aristocratic Bkras rab pa family. Rent was paid by a family member annually by working for the landlord during harvest time.

The story begins with 'Brug rgyas on his way to Lha sa as a mule driver. Among several corpses he found at the Rdza ra postal station, 'Brug rgyas notices an injured man, who he puts on one of his mules and continues to the Srin lag postal station. Once they arrive, a woman whose family runs the postal station attempts to smother the injured man. When she sees 'Brug rgyas approaching, she runs at him, holding a knife in her right hand. 'Brug rgyas aims at the woman's right hand with his gun but accidentally shoots and kills her.

The story examines the narrator from his childhood to his business career to answer mysterious questions surrounding the conflict between the woman at the Srin lag postal station and the injured man.

Elder Master, the injured man, was the narrator's childhood friend and the landlord's son, who lived in Lha sa City. His noble parents opposed his wish to marry a beautiful commoner who served his family. Instead, they arranged marriage to a noblewoman. A disagreement ensued, culminating in Elder Master running away on the night of his wedding and selling his valuables to procure a horse with a plan of going to India to sell wool collected from Tibetan areas and importing goods from India.

Later, on a wool-collection trip, Elder Master stopped at the Rdza ra postal station that also functioned as an inn. Three people attacked him, and though rendered unconscious, he survived. This was the situation when 'Brug rgyas encountered Elder Master, whom he then took to the next postal station. Because of the woman's death, the two travelers were put in Sna skar rtse Prison. Later, they learned that the dead woman's husband was involved in the Rdza ra event and killed.

Meanwhile, Elder Master received medical treatment in a prison official's home. After recovering, he was sent back to prison. Later, the prisoners were released, thanks to negotiations between Sna dkar rtse authorities and Elder Master's father.

Elder Master next searched for the woman he wanted to marry. Expelled from his father's estate, he found her living in the mountains near Lha sa City with an old nun. Elder Master's family gave a small amount of property to the new couple to fulfill the young lovers' desire to marry, which allowed Elder Master to develop his wool business. Over time, he sent wool to India and imported matches, soap, rice, oil, fruit, and candy to Lha sa City, where his wife, A cag mtsho rgyal, ran a small shop.

¹ Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho and Bkras gling dbang rdor. 2009. *Love Songs of Tsangyang Gyatso*. Varanasi: Pilgrims Publ.

In the novel's second part, the daughter of the woman 'Brug rgyas accidentally killed at the Srin lag postal station became homeless. While on the way to India, 'Brug rgyas noticed her living on Sna dkar rtse County Town's streets. Feeling guilty, he took her to Elder Master's home, where the couple decided to adopt her and named her Pad+ma.

After enrolling her in a private school, some noble parents learned of a blacksmith in Pad+ma's background, which relegated her to a low social class. Consequently, she had to leave the private school for nobles. Elder Master then decided to enroll Pad+ma in a British boarding school for girls in India. Later, while staying in a classmate's home in England, Pad+ma learned about the family's sheep wool company, whose wool mainly was from Tibet but imported from India. With Pad+ma's help, Elder Master signed a contract with the English family. This new business relationship was instrumental in Elder Master's family becoming wealthier and becoming known as the Bkras zur House, which monopolized sheep wool in Tibet.

The Bkras zur Family plans to build their wool company in Lha sa City and improve Tibetans' economy and life conditions. However, their proposal was rejected by the Tibet government. Later, Elder Master commented to Pad+ma:

At the beginning of this century cars and hydraulic electricity were said to have been introduced but soon were forbidden or stopped out of carelessness. As I remember the Bengali hairstyle and football even were forbidden (English version:301).

Conservative officials interpreted modernity as the beginning of a period of degeneration, so they opposed new things and challenges that might destroy their old life patterns. Continuing their comfort was the priority. Moreover, officials did not construct roads, bridges, and companies to improve people's daily lives. Elder Master explained to Pad+ma:

The yearly round duty of the government offices is merely settling the balance of account between the yearly income and expenditure, and most of the time of the officials is spent on festivals and entertainment (English version:300).

'Brug rgyas and Pad+ma grew closer over the years and eventually loved each other passionately. However, on their wedding night, Pad+ma's uncle had just been released from prison for stealing. Seeking revenge for his relatives killed at the Rdza ra and Srin lag postal stations by Elder Master and 'Brug rgyas, he killed Elder Master. This threw A cag mtsho rgyal into such agony that she killed herself the same night. The next night, the killer tried to kill 'Brug rgyas with a knife, but accidentally killed Pad+ma before 'Brug rgyas shot and killed him.

'Brug rgyas, the narrator, fled from Bkras zur House and lived as a monk in a mountain cave while writing this story and then committed suicide in the Skyid chu [Lha sa River] leaving only Elder Master's little son, and 'Brug rgyas' sister and her husband.

As the author notes, death begins and ends the novel, as does escape, forming a mandala of samsara. As CaiBei notes, "It's like making a Buddhist mandala, which is drawn carefully and completely by monks, who then slowly wipe the picturesque mandala away with their hands." CaiBei adds, "Artists, perhaps, appreciate only the process of creating art, like this novel, the author puts all his characters on the stage for a while until, in the end, they all vanish into death" (2009:73).

In this novel, the mandala of life mirrors Tibetan society in the 1940s, especially the Lha sa high class' life, including various rituals, beliefs, morals, customs, ways of dressing, food, and relationships and conflicts between social classes. Humor, symbols, the historical background of places, and detailed descriptions of characters add to the novel's value.

As Cabezón notes, "Not only does ritual fill Tibetan space, but it also pervades Tibetan time" (2009:introduction, 3). This novel is embedded with numerous rituals, including the narrator's wedding. On the wedding night, attendants escort the bride and bridegroom to their bed in the nuptial chamber, undress them completely, and offer a *gro so phye mar* 'wooden vessel of flour used in New Year ceremonies and weddings' and liquor to the new couple to sprinkle to encourage auspiciousness. Additionally, barley grains roughly placed to resemble a swastika¹ have been placed under the couple's sheet for later inspection. If the barley is scattered, it signals the couple had sexual intercourse, pleasing the family. After the killings on the same night, death rituals are also held in Bkras zur House.

Featured customary practices include the narrator's mother offering tea, liquor, a white silk scarf, and prayers for the safety of 'Brug rgyas as he leaves home for Lha sa. Auspicious dates are also important, e.g., when Pad+ma was expelled from the private school in Lha sa and sent to India for further education, a propitious date was selected, and offerings were made of a white silk scarf and *gro 'bras* 'a bowl or plate of rice with wild yams, ghee, and sugar'.

Symbols and signs include doors decorated with swastikas and drawings of scorpions² in Ra lung. In prison, the narrator noticed marks on walls made by prisoners to count dates and the passage of time. For example, the narrator drew a pig on a wall to represent the Year of the Pig and scratched eleven marks plus two additional marks to represent the month and date. Similarly, before Pad+ma attended the private school, Pad+ma and A cag mtsho rgyal drew the shapes of goods and used marks to count how many things they sold and the amount of money they earned.

Two maps and descriptions of customs and rituals enhance the story's authenticity, making "the story artfully and culturally special and complete" (Bse chang sha bo tshe brtan 2019:169). Lcags rdor rgyal adds that "the two maps ... purposely include all possible spaces in the whole narrative... clarifying the narration and showing the importance of space in the novel" (2019:349).

An article written by the author states that he illustrated all the corrupt activities of the Tibetan noble class listed in the novel, as his editor suggested.³ The novel's portrayal of the Tibetan aristocratic class' dark elements and its dysfunction employs a series of events to expose corruption, conflicts between leaders, and general government dysfunction. The government, for example, seems unaware of assassinations and robberies at postal stations. When the narrator and Elder Master were imprisoned in Sna dkar County, local officials hid evidence of the Rdza ra event. Fortunately, the family Elder Master stayed with recovering from his injuries, secretly informed his father of his predicament. Holding an important position in Lha sa City, he could extricate 'Brug rgyas and his son from prison.

After Elder Master grew wealthy through dealings with the UK's wool company, the narrator encouraged him to start a company in Tibet. However, the government rejected Elder Master's application on the grounds that introducing machines was unacceptable because it would harm Buddha's noble dharma in Tibetan areas.

A song spread among Tibetans circumambulating the Jo khang Temple and at bars in Lha sa City:

Terab [Bkras rab] sacrificed five thousand,
And went into a deep slumber,
Samphel [Bsam' phel] sacrificed ten thousand,
And took him by surprise (English version:287).

¹ Symbolizing the footprints or feet of the Buddha in the Buddhist tradition.

² See Beer (2003) for multiple, complex meanings associated with the scorpion. Also see <https://bit.ly/2ZxmsGq> (accessed 12 September 2020).

³ <https://bit.ly/2UDbb5B>, accessed 10 January 2020.

These lines describe the conflict between Bkras rab, Elder Master's father, and Bsam's phel, competing for a government position. The latter was aware of 5,000 silver coins Bkras rab had given the Regent. Bsam 'phel then secretly gave 10,000 silver coins to ensure that he was appointed to this coveted position and hired beggars and itinerant singers to sing and spread rumors that the new minister was none other than Lord Bkras rab, which reassured him and explains Bkras rab's surprise when he was not appointed.

Despite the exposure of the Tibetan high class' shortcomings, positive social aspects are also provided. Without restriction on crossing the Tibet border on business, Pad+ma and Elder Master went to India on business and for better education, respectively. Descriptions of mule drivers passing over the border imply robust cross-border movement of businessmen and travelers.

A strict social hierarchy did not prevent those born in the bottom social class from moving up if they became educated or otherwise developed their abilities. For example, Pad+ma's classmates discriminated against her because of her low social class background. However, after graduating from a school in India, noble young Tibetan men wrote her love letters.

Furthermore, not all high-class nobles were cruel and selfish. Elder Master, a young nobleman representative of the high-class, is depicted positively as a man full of sympathy for others. He believed in equality; married a commoner; made friends with commoners, including slaves; adopted an orphan, Pad+ma, who was from a very low social position according to Lha sa standards; and was concerned about the Tibetan nation and its future, not only about his career.

Caibei writes that an outstanding theme is how aristocracy and slavery melded to be the modern Tibetan intellectual figure at the end of the novel (2009:73), providing a good model for young Tibetans to use their ability to develop and make progress. Virtanen (2016:500) comments that "What is special is that they [the main four characters] are depicted as deciding to form one family and to cooperate and help each other on equal terms."

In terms of language, the Tibetan version features various colloquial terms and phrases used in the Lha sa dialect that I found challenging, including, among others, such terms as *skya* (Literary Tibetan (LT): *gyang*¹) 'wall' and *sing stong* (LT: *sna tha*) 'snuff'. Fodder is of two types. *Thor rtswa* 'dawn fodder' is given to animals at dawn, and *'job rtswa* 'milking fodder' is given to female yaks and cows when they are being milked. Other phrases I was unfamiliar with include *khyi' dogs sar pel pel dang me mda' 'gel sar ang gses*, a parable from a Tibetan folktale suggesting 'to set things opposite to [one's] hosts' arrangement as in a Tibetan folktale."²

The author also borrowed English terms like "good morning," "pocket," "jeans," "railway," and "beer" with footnoted explanations. While "piano" is *rno sbreng* in Tibetan, the author or his editor employs the Chinese term *gangqin* and gave the English "piano" (Tibetan version:195).

While I applaud the Chinese and English language versions, they do not represent the diversity and characteristics of colloquial language expressed so well in the Tibetan version. As a native of Amdo, I was stumped by certain colloquial terms used in the Chinese and English versions that offered explanations of colloquial terms, such as the folktale mentioned above, that is given in full in the English version. It reminded me of what I had heard, with some slight differences, in my childhood. Ritual descriptions, conversations, proverbs, and local terms in the Chinese and English versions lack some of the colloquial Tibetan version's rich flavors.

¹ Literary Tibetan.

² A folktale provided as a footnote in the English version (92) describes a thief boasting of his skill at stealing. When he tells a rich man that he can rob him the latter says it is impossible, so they make a bet. At night, the thief quietly ties a calf where the rich man usually ties his dog and hangs a stick where the rich man usually hangs his gun. During the robbery, the rich man tries to let loose his dog, but finds it is a calf. He then runs for his gun, but discovers it is a stick, so the robbery is successful and the rich man loses the wager.

Humorous moments include Elder Master's younger brother replacing Elder Master after the latter escapes from his home on his wedding night. The next morning, the barley grains forming a swastika under the bedsheet are scattered, and the couple then lives together.

Another humorous moment is during the time 'Brug rgyas and Pad+ma are in love, the latter hands a love letter to the narrator. Illiterate,¹ 'Brug rgyas, repeatedly gazes at the piece of paper while at home. His mother is amazed by her son's ability and asks him to read it to her. He then chants memorized daily religious recitations while moving a finger from line to line of the letter. Comparing this humorous description in the Tibetan, Chinese, and English language versions, readers can better appreciate the translation challenges.

The English and Chinese versions of this work offer many cultural notes. For example, traditional hats, shoes, and clothing are explained. Names for animals and people are also translated in pages at the end of the book. Religious ceremonies mentioned in the story are also clarified at the end of the English version. Such notes may help cultural outsiders. However, as for A mdo readers, like me, unfamiliar with Lha sa colloquial terms and daily customs, I suggest reading the Tibetan, Chinese, and English language versions.

While this story provides historical comments on Tibetan society in the 1940s, certain aspects seem to contradict actual contemporary mainstream Tibetan life. For example, the orphan, Pad+ma, was later adopted by Elder Master (her father's killer), eventually married 'Brug rgyas (Pad+ma's mother's killer), and was easily persuaded that her parents were evil killers and robbers in Sna dkar rtse. Bse chang sha bo tshe brtan (2013:173) commented that this description is unconvincing. Orthofer also comments critically:

A few events are very casually and quickly handled – in particular the transformation of Pema, who is able to leave her trauma behind her without much of a second thought (never mind [sic] the psychological issues surrounding her falling in love with the man who is responsible for mom's death ...).²

Why did the author create such a plot? First, the author emphasizes Pad+ma's justiciable nature that might have been strengthened by religious context. When 'Brug rgyas accidentally shot and killed Pad+ma's mother, he was not worried about being judged but about being a killer. Second, the author may want readers to experience the unpredictable. He mentioned that he modeled some of the novel's content after watching several Indian movies.³

Lama Jabb (2005) argues that oral and traditional literary forms powerfully influence modern Tibetan-language literature, which is evident in the novel under review. Unit five of the first part is titled 'Sending a Sheep', with "sheep" signaling a wealthy traveler who is easily robbed.⁴ The author has further commented on this, describing how, in his childhood, he heard stories of innkeepers conspiring to rob rich travelers ("sheep") (see footnote 11).

This novel attracts Tibetan readers; for example, some of my A mdo friends have read and recommended it, and during my several readings in three languages, I laughed and forgot the time.

¹ Later, the narrator learned reading and writing in Tibetan with Pad+ma's help.

² <https://bit.ly/3clGgBS>, accessed 4 August 2020.

³ <https://bit.ly/3iNBaAv>, accessed 25 August 2020.

⁴ Myang tsha dkar rgyan sent a coded message via a beggar to her son Mi la ras pa (1028/40–1111/23), the great Tibetan yo gi. See Rus pa'i rgyan (2004:43–45) for more.

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TIBETAN TERMS

'job rtswa འཛོལ་རྩུ།

a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

bkras rab བཀྱས་རབ།

bsam 'phel བསམ་འཕེལ།

bse chang sha bo tshe brtan བསེ་ཆང་ཤ་བོ་ཚེ་བརྟན།

bsod nams dbang chen བསོད་ནམས་དབང་ཆེན།

gangs rgyan rtags ma གངས་རྒྱན་རྟགས་མ།

gro 'bras གྲོ་འབྲས།

gro so phye mar གྲོ་སོ་ཕྱེ་མར།

gyang གྱང་།

gzhis ka rtse གཞིས་ཀ་རུཙེ།

jo khang ཇོ་ཁང་།

jo mo gling ma ཇོ་མོ་གླིང་མ།

khyi 'dogs sar pel pel me mda' 'gel sar ang gses ཁྱི་འདོགས་སར་ཤེལ་ཤེལ་མེ་མདའ་ཀེལ་སར་ཀེལ་སར་ཨང་གསེས།

lcags rdor rgyal ལུགས་རྡོར་རྒྱལ།

lha sa ལྷ་ས།

myang tsha dkar rgyan མྱང་ཚ་དཀར་རྒྱན།

mi la ras pa མེ་ལ་རས་པ།

pad+ma rig 'dzin པད་མ་རིག་འཛིན།

rgyal rtse རྒྱལ་རུཙེ།

rlung rta རླུང་རྟ།

rno sbreng རྩོལ་སྤྲོང་།

tshe dbal ཚེ་དཔལ།

sing stong སིང་སྟོང་།

skya སྐྱ།

skyid chu སྐྱིད་ཚུ།

sna dkar སྤྲ་དཀར།

sna tha སྤྲ་ཐ།

thor rtswa ཐོར་རྩུ།

tshangs dbyang rgya mtsho ཚངས་དབྱངས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།

CHINESE TERMS

Caipei 才贝

gangqin 钢琴

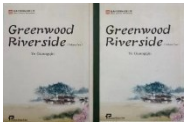
Jiangze 江孜

REVIEW: QING MU CHUAN 'GREENWOOD RIVERSIDE' BY YE GUANGQIN

Reviewed by Wu Jing 吴晶 and Ma Xiuhua 马秀华,
Shaanxi Normal University 陕西师范大学*¹



Ye Guangqin 叶广岑. 2007. *Qing mu chuan* 青木川 [*Greenwood Riverside*]. Xi'an 西安: Taibai wen yi chu ban she 太白文艺出版社 [Shaanxi Taibai Literature & Art Publishing House]. 301pp. ISBN 978-7-80680-467-4 (paperback 28RMB).



Ye Guangqin (Gao Minna, Du Lixia, and Liu Danling, translators). 2012. *Greenwood Riverside*. New York: Prunus Press USA, vols 1&2. 617pp. ISBN 978-1-61612-062-7 (paperback 36USD).

Born in 1948 in Beijing of the Manchu Yehe Nara Clan, related to the Empress Dowager Cixi,² and her parents' thirteenth child,³ Ye Guangqin is a novelist, essayist, and translator with a journalism degree from Renmin University. Now living in Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province, she also studied at Japan's Chiba University.⁴ Much of Ye's fiction is set in Beijing. The historical novels *Qianqing Men Nei 'Inside the Gate of Heavenly Purity'* (1986) and *Zhuangyuan Mei 'The Imperial Matchmaker'* (2012) narrate and romanticize historical events in feudalist Qing Dynasty society. *Cai Sang Zi 'Picking Mulberries'* (2009) and *Quan Jia Fu 'A Family Portrait'* (2015) portray the realities of Manchu modern life in Beijing. Her autobiography, *Mei You Ri Ji De Luo Fu He 'No Diary for the Luo'ao River'* (1998), won her the Fifth Junma Award.⁵

Her novel *Qing Mu Chuan* (translated into English as *Greenwood Riverside*) is set in Shaanxi Province, where Ye spent her twenties and thirties as a factory worker, nurse, and journalist. Initially published in 2007 by the Taibai Literature and Art Publishing House, the novel has attracted considerable commentary. By 22 March 2021, fifty-five papers related to the novel had been published as listed on the Wanfang Database⁶ and twenty-five papers on CNKI (Chinese National Knowledge Internet). These papers deal with comparative study, the TV adaptation, narrative techniques, characterization, and influence on local tourism.

Having recently visited Qing Mu Chuan 'Greenwood Riverside', I read Ye's novel, and, finding no English language reviews, I offer these reflections.

In contrast to Beijing, where many of her novels are set, Shaanxi is a place of bitterness and personal growth for Ye. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Ye was deprived of her office job and banished to western Shaanxi Province. At that time, her ill mother was bedridden and passed

*Wu Jing and Ma Xiuhua. 2021. Review: QING MU CHUAN 'GREENWOOD RIVERSIDE' by Ye Guangqin. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:426-435.

¹ Special thanks to Professor Qi Jiahua and the Management Committee of Qing Mu Chuan Ancient Town including Xiao Yi'en, Zhang Wanshu, Zhang Dingwu, and other members who provided the novel and information, and who are contributing to the preservation and development of this traditional village; and also to Professor Shang Yaning who introduced one of the translators, Gao Minna, and generously provided the two-volume English translation.

² <https://paper-republic.org/works/hou-zhao-lou/>, accessed 7 April 2021.

³ https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/7774950.Guangqin_Ye, accessed 14 April 2021.

⁴ <https://paper-republic.org/pers/ye-guangqin/>, accessed 25 March 2021.

⁵ "...the Junma Award (or Courser Award) [is], a national level award specially designed for outstanding cultural arts programs reflecting the life of ethnic minorities in China in the categories of TV broadcasting, movie-making and literature writing..." (http://en.chinagate.cn/reports/2006-10/10/content_2448941.htm, accessed 7 April 2021).

⁶ An authoritative Chinese academic paper database.

away soon after their separation. Taking consolation in the words of Cong Weixi, "Only after a full round of persecution and mocking shall life and destiny bestow upon you the talent of literature creation" (Li 2014:100, my translation), Ye drew literary inspiration from the sorrows she experienced.

Ye comments on Xi'an, an ancient city with a rich cultural heritage, "Every tile I came across belonged to the ancient dynasties and every step I took here was on the territory of ancient China" (Li 2014:101, my translation). Xi'an's cultural influence has also affected well-known writers such as Jia Pingwa and Chen Zhongshi. Ye's experience of life's ups and downs in Shaanxi provided a rich resource for *Greenwood Riverside* (2007) and *Lao Xian Cheng 'Old Town'* (2010), both of which helped cement her reputation as a novelist.

Qing Mu Chuan 'Greenwood Riverside' was once inhabited by the Qiang ethnic group. Known as Yong Ning Li in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), it was renamed No. 18 West Road Ning Qiang 'Peaceful Qiang' Prefecture in the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912). After the founding of New China in 1949, it became Qing Mu Chuan, named after the greenwood tree by the bridgehead. Reputed to be more than 1,000 years old, the tree's enormous lush green canopy of branches and leaves shaded a large area, and its circumference was claimed to be so wide that six people holding hands were unable to encircle it (Ye 2012:196).

Ye Guangqin's relationship with Qing Mu Chuan traces back to the 1980s when she worked for the *Shaanxi Worker's Daily*. While conducting interviews at a copper mine in Yangping Pass, she heard stories of a Robin-Hood-like local hero, Wei Futang. Intrigued, she visited Qing Mu Chuan in 2002 with her editor, Han Jihong, a trip described in the first chapter of her novel, *Old Town*. A second trip provided more material and led to *Qing Mu Chuan*, a novel mainly about the protagonist, Wei Futang, that unfolds from the perspectives of three narrators - Feng Ming; Feng's daughter, Feng Xiaoyu; and Zhong Yishan, a scholar and Feng's boyfriend.

Feng Ming is a former Communist Party member, a retired government official who spent his youth in Qing Mu Chuan, had a lover who died in battle and was buried there and was in charge of the escort that took Wei Futang to his execution. Motivated by nostalgia and wanting to visit his lover's grave, he travels to Qing Mu Chuan with his daughter and prospective son-in-law.

After Feng Xiaoyu, Feng's daughter, visits the local museum, she becomes curious about a missing woman, Cheng Lixue. Her inquiries provide readers with another thread in the story. Meanwhile, Zhong Yishan, a scholar and Feng's boyfriend, engages in historical research and archeological excavations, presenting history and local stories from a more objective perspective than the local seniors' oral recollections.

These three characters trudge over hills and through rivers to reach Qing Mu Chuan, located in the interior of the Qinling Mountains and straddling Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Gansu provinces.

In 1952, the protagonist, Wei Futang, received a death sentence. In the novel, his life is reviewed in flashbacks. Readers learn that Wei was born into a poor peasant family in 1902 in the final years of the declining Qing Dynasty when bandits and gamblers were in Qing Mu Chuan. Lacking wealth and power, the young Wei changes his fate by marrying a rich family's bedridden daughter, Liu Erquan. Using his father-in-law's resources, he enters the cooking oil business, accumulates power, and kills the Regional Civil Corps' head, Wei Wenbing, who bullies locals.

In the following years, Wei flees to Guangyuan, Sichuan Province, where he meets and follows the notorious bandit, Wang Sanchun, who appoints Wei as the Iron Blood Battalion leader. Under Wang's order, a member of the Battalion kills a peasant woman. Though Wei and Wang part ways soon after collusion in banditry, Wei is eventually charged with the peasant woman's death, leading to the death penalty.

After returning to Qing Mu Chuan from Guangyuan, Wei Futang finds that his wife, Liu Erquan, has died. Inheriting a large fortune, he gains power and becomes the commander-in-chief of the local military force in response to the Nationalist government's encouragement of local self-

governance. From the mid-1930s to 1952, Wei has five concubines and fathers two sons and one daughter. He organizes an army of farmers who, while plowing their own fields, are ready to serve him whenever he summons them. Wielding political and economic power, "Emperor Wei" (of this small town) establishes a regional management system. He helps fellow villagers acquire wealth by selling and trading opium to the outside world while prohibiting locals from using opium.

A legend, Wei Futang is depicted as both an outlaw villain in the chaotic world outside Qing Mu Chuan in the Republic of China period and, at the same time, a moral humanitarian bringing benefits to the locals and substantially contributing to his hometown by funding the construction of buildings and renovating the local streets and bridges. He was also respected for his devotion to education, exemplified by an inscription on his tombstone written by his daughter:

My father started Futang Middle School,¹ recruited a preeminent principal and many well-known teachers, and enrolled children to cultivate their talents. His dedication and belief in the importance of education have inspired generations. For two decades, my father devoted himself to developing Greenwood Riverside into a unique, cultured and educated community (Ye 2012:614).

The latter part of the story, narrated by Feng Xiaoyu, centers on learning the identity of the mysterious Cheng Lixue, who went missing after she came to Qing Mu Chuan with her husband, Huo Dacheng, a corrupt Guomindang official and the superintendent of education. Ambushed by Wei's band (led by his nephew, Li Shumin, in the hope of getting money), Huo abandons Cheng and flees. Afterward, Cheng Lixue appears periodically in this town but is invisible most of the time. Feng Xiaoyu suspects that Cheng was, in fact, Wei Futang's sixth concubine, Xie Miaozi. However, villagers do not divulge information about this, nor do they explain how Futang Middle School's late head, Xie Jingyi, died. As the novel notes, "Men tend to forget, sometimes deliberately" (Ye 2012:226).

Driven by curiosity, Feng Xiaoyu visits Xie Miaozi and demystifies the case. Liu Fang, Li Shumin's wife, was formerly named Cheng Fang, the younger sister of Cheng Lixue, who, in actuality, is Xie Jingyi. Despondent over her husband abandoning her during the ambush, Cheng Lixue resolves to stay in Greenwood Riverside and begin life anew with a new identity, as Xie Jingyi. With her language abilities, she teaches English at Futang Middle School and later becomes the school leader. Cheng Fang, her younger sister (a Nationalist Party member), comes to Qing Mu Chuan seeking her help. It is here that she meets and marries Li Shumin.

Later, Cheng Fang is killed in a battle between Nationalist and Communist Party soldiers. In 1952, her husband, Li, is captured and sentenced to death with his uncle, Wei Futang.

Wei Futang, trusting and supporting Communist Party governance, handed in his weapons and dismissed his troops, hoping to receive amnesty. However, fate took a different turn. He was accused of six murders and sentenced to death. On the way to his execution, Wei Futang passes by Feng Yu 'Wind and Rain' Bridge that he had sponsored. He is shot dead in the yard of Futang Middle School.

Thirty years later, in 1982, the case of Wei Futang was retried, with the result that he was posthumously rehabilitated and dubbed "Enlightened Gentry" to redefine and affirm his historical significance.

With no chronological approach, the stories and anecdotes are fragmented and strung together by senior villagers' disordered recollections of various personalities at disjointed times. The author uses this technique to present the turmoil and turbulence during this period of Chinese history.

¹ See <https://mi.mbd.baidu.com/r/l4CUi36n7O?f=cp&u=b624e66875fd6ecb> (accessed 17 April 2021) for a photograph. The school is now named Furen Middle School.

Readers are prompted to rethink the meaning of "history." Is it excavated subterranean evidence? Is it remembered and retold by people in the past?

This novel vividly portrays unique personalities. Wei Futang, the main character, moves upward socially, from a grass-root tramp to a sophisticated man of manners. He begins this steep social climb by marrying the wealthy but incapacitated Liu Erquan and cruelly acts to hasten her death, inviting cronies to his home where he treats them to feasts, thereby disturbing his wife, whom he never loved nor touched. After the death of Liu and her father, Wei inherits the family wealth. Vile as he is, he begins to change after meeting Cheng Lixue, an outstanding literate, cultured female intellectual.

Aspiring to a more sophisticated life, Wei builds Futang Middle School and encourages local children to study there. Exceptional students are sent to study at famous universities, including Sichuan University and Chongqing University, on full scholarships.

Wei's change reflects Chinese society's transformation from feudal barbarism to modern civilization characterized by the Republic of China. This era was one of turbulence and transformation where a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society ended, and a series of revolutions led to the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Evidence of modernity periodically appears throughout the novel, such as a Ford automobile, a piano Wei Futang bought, and a priest's phone that startles Wei when he and his followers attack the church. These things open his eyes and mind to modern Western technology, bringing a realization of irreversible trends. He decides to invest in education and to empower the younger generation. For example, when he breaks into the church and tries to rob the priest, he finds the latter uses a phone that "magically" notifies the police to come to apprehend them. Despite the shame and failure from this episode, he remains amazed by this small magic box - a phone.

Female characters are depicted with a touch of mystery. Cheng Lixue is the essential thread throughout the novel. Wei Futang's first glimpse of Cheng Lixue is romantic and mysterious:

When Wei Futang passed the woman he suddenly lifted his head and leaned to one side to look deeply into her eyes. They were soft and calm with no sign of anger, timidity or sadness. The woman's dark hair was set off by the blue sky and white clouds. She was the last vision of beauty Wei Futang would ever see in this lifetime (Ye 2012:186).

However, her real identity as head of the school is not unveiled until the story's end, prolonging the suspense and tantalizing readers.

Two of Wei's concubines are sisters and represent the declining feudal system. As was the case with Liu Erquan, Wei married the two Zhao sisters for material gain and because they were his equal in terms of social status. The elder sister, a Buddhist convert, calls herself "Dragon Lady" of the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, Guan Yin. The younger one is depicted clad in a long black robe, never displaying any facial expressions.

Most of the female characters are not evildoers. Though from different family backgrounds and social statuses, they are depicted as optimistic. Some, Liu Erquan and the Zhao sisters, for example, represent the decline of the 'old' wealth families, while others, like Zhu Meiren and Cheng Lixue, are more rebellious and modern.

The influence of Occidental culture is also evident. Principal Xie Jingyi teaches English. Xie Miaozi, one of Wei's concubines, was a nun named Emily and served in a church before marriage. To some extent, these characters epitomize Wei Futang's longing for advanced Western civilization.

A beautiful artist and opera singer, Zhu Meiren, is memorably portrayed in two pages. Meiren suggests "Beauty," and Wei falls in love with her when she performs traditional Chinese drama in Huayang County, Hanzhong, Shaanxi. Wei saves her from a local rich man who wants to buy her the moment he sees her perform. Meiren, as another of Wei Futang's concubines, accompanies him and

trains as a woman warrior with a pistol in each hand. She also helps establish strict rules for Wei and his troops, clearly distinguishing praise and punishment. "Killing the rich and aiding the poor" and "doing God's work" are guidelines. Any wrongdoing, such as attacking pedestrians, women, seniors, or children, is severely punished while assaulting officials, whether good or bad, is permissible under the prevailing Robin Hood mentality - rob the rich and help the poor. Corrupt officials are killed immediately, and all their property is confiscated. Only one ear is cut off, and only half of their fortune is taken if they are found to be upright and honest. Meiren also institutes fair rules for the distribution of confiscated property. Her strong sense of community and management skills helps Wei Futang establish integrity and justice among his followers and consolidate his position for two decades.

Later, Zhu Meiren is abducted by Wang Sanchun and executed after two years of imprisonment.

Niu Yuqiu¹ comments that the novel's use of suspense, including revealing Wei Futang's destiny and the mysterious identity of Xie Jingyi, is remarkable. Suspense attracts readers, and Ye employs this device masterfully. Peng Xueming² writes:

Ye Guangqin's respect and compassion for ordinary people, historical inquiry, and interpretation of culture give her works stature and depth, as well as better poetic and historical character. Her tolerance and benevolent attitude toward humanity and history also display the literary mind and broad-mindedness of a great writer. It can be said that *Greenwood Riverside* is Ye Guangqin's masterpiece in the depths of time representing her own heart which, despite hidden wounds and pains, beats tenaciously.

The author confides, "History is not man's will. We cannot restrain passing waves, no matter how beautiful they are."³

The English translation of the novel was published in 2012 by Prunus Press USA. Professors Gao Minna, Du Lixia, and Liu Daling, the translators, are members of the Shaanxi Translators Association.⁴ Thanks to the translators and editor, the English version achieves the same effect. For example, early in the story, a paragraph describes Wei Futang's death:

He was shot to death as the oilseed canola flowers and buds were blooming vigorously, spreading their bright, brassy yellow glow with the slight odor of honey over and through the mountains. The bees were buzzing and dancing in the soft, shimmering morning sunshine. It was the time when local farmers were busy dividing the fields and property; a time when they finally stood up and seized liberation; a time when they were filled with elation and exaltation (Ye 2012:450).

Precise, well-written translation offers readers a well-composed image. Spring's fecundity serves as a foil for the death of this legendary man who brought both wealth and notoriety to a small, obscure rural community.

Some minor characters are also vividly portrayed, e.g., the bandit Wang Sanchun's savage cruelty is vividly translated:

...would then cut open the victim's chest and kick him in the back. By doing this, the person's heart would fall out of his chest. Wang Third Spring had acquired this extraordinary skill as a result of having practiced

¹ <http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/bk/2009-07-25/36985.html>, accessed 26 March 2021 (my translation).

² <http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/bk/2009-07-25/36985.html>, accessed 26 March 2021 (my translation).

³ Ibid, accessed 26 March 2021 (my translation).

⁴ Copypedited by the American writer, Jerry Piasecki, whose works include *Harry and Lucy* (2010) and *They're Torturing Teachers in Room 104* (1997).

on numerous victims. The heart kicked out in this way would be sliced raw to go with his alcohol. But if the heart was too fatty, it would be pan-fried (Ye 2012:142).

One issue of contention is the translation of Chinese names. Often the result of a local tradition of naming with references to nature or within the hierarchy and seniority of kinship groups, the Chinese names are literal English translations rather than Pinyin. For example, Wang Sanchun, in the above passage, is rendered "Wang Third Spring," with "spring" indicating season rather than "spring water." Liu Erquan, Wei's wife, the second daughter of her family, translates as "Second Spring" or "Two Springs." "Spring" might also refer to "spring water," suggesting "source of life." However, in the English version, Liu Erquan is translated as "Liu Second Spring," which lacks foreignization¹ and is an excess of domestication translation² and loses the original Chinese cultural flavor. Other examples include Zhu Meiren translated as Beauty Zhu, Lao Wan as Old Wan, and Liu Xiaozhu as Liu Piglet.

These examples indicate failure to render the names of the Chinese characters into English faithfully. Transliteration and annotations added in brackets are recommended in authoritative translations of Chinese classics such as *Hong Lou Meng* 'A Dream of Red Mansions' that uses Pinyin to render names instead of providing only English.

Cultural equivalence is also evident in the English version, to cater to an English readership. For example, an idiom about revenge is translated as, "Revenge is a dish best served cold" (Ye 2012:450). The Chinese version is: "Even ten years is not too late for a gentleman to have his revenge."

In 2014 this novel was also adapted for a forty-four-episode TV series and broadcast as *Yi Dai Xiao Xiong* 'A Hero'. The A-list Chinese cast included Sun Honglei and Chen Shu. As at 24 March 2021, it had been accessed 3.4 million times on Bilibili³. Douban⁴ rated it 7/10. In the TV adaptation, the story develops chronologically, and third-person narration and flashbacks are not included. Certain characters in the novel are also absent. Other changes include presenting Wei Futang as He Futang. The opera singer Zhu Cailing, whose archetype was Zhu Meiren, was given a lot of screen time and is depicted divorcing He Futang and joining the Communist Party. He Futang, instead of being sentenced to death, becomes a school teacher and leads a peaceful life. Wei's personal heroic charisma is stressed less than in the novel, while the theme "hero of the times" is emphasized.

The romance between Wei Futang and Cheng Lixue was a selling point of the TV series. For better or worse, this TV series further popularized Wei Futang, bringing notoriety to the once sleepy ancient town of Qing Mu Chuan, which is now on the National List of Protected Traditional Villages in China. The Qing Mu Chuan Administrative Office of the Ning Qiang County Management Committee manages what has become a tourist attraction. An eight-hour drive from Xi'an City, or a one-hour train from Guangyuan City, plus a twenty-minute ride in a tutu car brings the visitor to the two-street small town surrounded by mountains. Hui Long Chang 'Winding Dragon Street' stretches along Jinxi 'Gold Stream', a name from the time gold was extracted locally and exported beyond the mountains.

¹ "Foreignization ... constructs a certain image of the foreign that is informed by the receiving situation but aims to question it by drawing on materials that are not currently dominant, namely the marginal and the nonstandard, the residual and the emergent" (Venuti 2008:19-20).

² "Domestication is the strategy of making a text closely conform to the culture of the language being translated to, which may involve the loss of information from the source text so as to focus on the target audience. This happens primarily when a certain situation does not exist in the target culture" (<https://bit.ly/3xvTlm9>, accessed 29 April 2021).

³ Based in Shanghai, Bilibili is a Chinese video sharing website.

⁴ "Douban is a hybrid of interest-based social networking platforms [and] has become the preferred online social network for scholars, academics and writers in China" (<https://tinyurl.com/229b847x>, accessed 27 March 2021).

Old buildings with notable architectural features built by Wei Futang and others during the Republic of China stand along both sides of the stone-slab paved Winding Dragon Street. Among these buildings are the Opium House, the bank, a boat-shaped hotel, and other typical southern Shaanxi style wooden-plank buildings. Shops open onto the stone pavement. Courtyards and living rooms are inside. The Wei Family Manor is a must-visit with its architectural style conveying the culture of Wei's times as well as the stories of its former inhabitants.

A token greenwood tree stands silent and proud by the Wei Family manor, witness to the passage of time. Wei Futang's son sits in a room in a building facing the street, ready to autograph copies of *Qing Mu Chuan*.

Another table with copies of this novel stands on the threshold of Zhongde Shu Wu, an antique bookstore, named after its owner, Xu Zhongde, a former Futang Middle School student and one of the first batch of students financially supported by Wei Futang for post-graduate study in Sichuan University in Chengdu. Upon his return, Xu Zhongde became Wei Futang's chief of staff. Xu and other senior elders were oral history sources in *Qing Mu Chuan* who gave Ye Guangqin first-hand accounts for her creations. Xu, an important character, is fictionalized in this novel. The three narrators visit Xu, who tells the stories in which he played a role. Ye describes her interview experience with the real-life Mr. Xu and his family in the novel's epilogue, adding historical authenticity. (This part is omitted in the English version of *Greenwood Riverside*.)

On the hill behind the street, Furen Middle School remains open, providing local children compulsory nine-grade education. Wei Futang's tomb¹ is on the opposite hillside.

Qing Mu Chuan (22 October 2020, Wu Jing).



¹ See <https://me.mbd.baidu.com/r/l4CyldgNJC?f=cp&u=129f9f4ba0ce12cc> (accessed 17 April 2021) for a photograph of the tombstone.

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CHINESE TERMS

Beijing 北京	Furen Middle School, Furen Zhong Xue 辅仁中学
Bilibili 哔哩哔哩	
Cai Sang Zi 采桑子	Futang Middle School, Futang Zhong Xue 辅唐中学
Chen Shu 陈数	
Chen Zhongshi 陈忠实	Gao Minna 高敏娜
Cheng Fang 程芳	Guan Yin 观音
Cheng Lixue 程立雪	Guangyuan 广元
Chengdu 成都	Guomindang 国民党, Guomintang, Kuomintang
Chongqing 重庆	Han Jihong 韩霁虹
Cixi 慈禧	Hanzhong 汉中 City
Cong Weixi 从维熙	He Futang 何辅堂
Douban 豆瓣	Hong Lou Meng 红楼梦
Du Lixia 杜丽霞	Huayang 华阳 County
Feng Ming 冯明	Hui Long Chang 回龙场
Feng Xiaoyu 冯小雨	Huo Dacheng 霍大成
Feng Yu Bridge, Feng Yu Qiao 风雨桥	

Jia Pingwa 贾平凹

Jinxi 金溪

Junma 骏马

Lao Wan 老万

Li Shumin 李树敏

Liu Danling 刘丹翎

Liu Erquan 刘二泉

Liu Xiaozhu 刘小猪

Ma Xiuhua 马秀华

Mei You Ri Ji De Luo Fu He 没有日记的罗敷河

Ming 明 Dynasty

Ning Qiang 宁强

Niu Yuqiu 牛玉秋

Peng Xueming 彭学明

Pinyin 拼音

Qi Jiahua 祁嘉华

Qiang 羌

Qianqing Men Nei 乾清门内

Qing 清 Dynasty

Qing Mu Chuan 青木川

Qing Mu Chuan Ancient Town, Qing mu chuan
gu zhen jing qu guan wei hui 青木川古镇景
区管委会

Qinling 秦岭 Mountains

Quan Jia Fu 全家福

Renmin 人民 University

Shaanxi 陕西 Province

Shaanxi Normal University, Shaanxi shi fan da
xue 陕西师范大学

*Shaanxi Worker's Daily, Shaanxi gong ren
bao* 陕西工人报

Shang Yaning 尚亚宁

Shanghai 上海 City

Sichuan 四川 Province

Sun Honglei 孙红雷

Wang Sanchun 王三春

Wei Futang 魏辅唐 (historical person); 魏富堂
(fictional character)

Wei Wenbing 魏文炳

Wu Jing 吴晶

Xi'an 西安 City

Xiao Yi'en 肖义恩

Xie Jingyi 解静仪

Xie Miaozi 解苗子

Xu Zhongde 徐种德 (historical person); 许忠德
(fictional character)

Yangping 阳平 Pass

Ye Guangqin 叶广芩

Yi Dai Xiao Xiong 一代枭雄

Yong Ning Li 永宁里

Zhang Dingwu 张定武

Zhang Wanshu 张万树

Zhong Yishan 钟一山

Zhongde Shu Wu 种德书屋

Zhu Cailing 朱彩铃

Zhu Meiren 朱美人

Zhuangyuan Mei 状元媒

REVIEW: *HOW FAR IS CHINESE SOCIAL SCIENCE FROM SCIENCE?*

BY QIAO XIAOCHUN

Reviewed by Lugyal Bum (Klu rgyal 'bum ལུགཡལ་བུམ། Lijiaben 李加本)*



Qiao Xiaochun 乔晓春. 2017. *Zhongguo shehuikexue li kexue haiyou duo yuan?* 中国社会科学离科学还有多远 [*How Far is Chinese Social Science from Science?*] Beijing 北京: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大学出版社 [Beijing University Press]. ISBN: 978-7-301-27908-3 (Paperback 55.00RMB).¹

This critical commentary on the academic realities of Chinese social sciences also offers suggestions to improve the field. Professor Qiao Xiaochun's many years of experience in academic circles, both in and outside China, add authority to his timely views on the Chinese social science community. Currently, a professor and Ph.D. supervisor at the Institute of Population Research, Beijing University, Qiao focuses on population-related studies such as demographic analysis techniques, quantitative sociology, sampling surveys, census methods, and aging issues.² His presentations at Beijing University on the peculiar situation of Chinese social sciences use information presented in this book.³

Chapter One of ten chapters begins by asking questions to understand better Chinese social sciences: Why do Chinese social sciences lack the position of *yuanshi* 'academician'? Why are social scientists generally belittled? Why have untrained social scientists become "experts"? Why are social sciences and the humanities combined in the same field? Why is it relatively easy to conduct research and publish in the field of social sciences? Qiao addresses each question within the context of Chinese history and socio-political impacts on contemporary Chinese social science, demonstrating the field's lack of scientific approaches. To address the absence of the *yuanshi* position, Qiao reviews its history, noting that changes in the academic system resulted in this position being the sole province of the natural sciences. Qiao claims that ordinary Chinese believe in only one type of "scientist" - those developing trains, airplanes, and advanced technologies. In contrast, the image of social scientists has deteriorated over the years as the result of some "experts" in social sciences appearing on TV shows and spreading false information.

Chapter Two deals with definitions and examples of science and social science and the characteristics of science to illustrate pseudoscience and non-scientific approaches. This chapter provides clarity and supports the idea that social science is also "science" and may change biased views of the field in bringing more recognition to the scientific aspects of social science.

Chapter Three focuses on the peculiar characteristics of Chinese social science with Qiao using his personal experiences in studying population theories and attending academic conferences in China. Before his master's degree program, Qiao understood population study theories but grew confused in MA courses because of philosophical speculation and a lack of evidence-based concepts.

Professor Qiao shares his experience as one of the few male participants in the "International Forum for the Status of Minority Women" in Beijing. When a minority woman cited the limited number of minority female *ganbu* 'officials' as evidence of the low status of minority women, Qiao disagreed, using the concept of equality versus equity. He was disturbed by the emotional reaction of

* Lugyal Bum (Klu rgyal 'bum, Lijiaben). 2021. Review: *HOW FAR IS CHINESE SOCIAL SCIENCE FROM SCIENCE?* by Qiao Xiaochun. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 60:436-438.

¹ Amazon price = 33USD (<https://amzn.to/3aHgPev>, accessed 20 April 2021).

² See <https://ipr.pku.edu.cn/jsdw/zzjs/233811.htm> (accessed 22 April 2021) for more information about the author.

³ For more on Qiao's presentation at Beijing University, see <https://bit.ly/3eL81oK> (accessed 22 April 2021).

female participants. Another experience was attending an academic conference for the aged, with most participants being older adults. As he describes it, the meeting was not an academic gathering but a meeting of complaints from attendees of having contributed to the country their entire lives but having not gained what they deserved. In response, the director of the China National Committee on Ageing permitted Qiao to organize the next academic conference. Qiao subsequently invited a variety of scholars, pleasing the director with the results. Conferences, Qiao maintains, are often based on the notion that only experienced people are entitled to discuss the issues. Moreover, Qiao emphasizes the lack of literature review and references in academic articles, suggesting that conclusions in Chinese social science are often based on assumptions and not evidence.

Chapter Four explains how the articles mentioned in Chapter Three fail to present actual social problems, which impact government policy, academic development, international communication, and developing premier global universities. Such a faulty academic environment hampers Chinese social science and damages Chinese society via erroneous policies and their implementation. An example of an increasingly unbalanced gender ratio of birth in China since the 1980s is given, with Chinese scholars attributing this to the traditional Chinese view of preference for boys and then implementing policies to address the issue. However, the situation has not improved. Qiao argues that such studies require building a theoretical framework to identify possible causes and collecting relevant data. The One-Child Policy and advanced technology to determine the gender of the fetus were instrumental in an unbalanced sex ratio of newborns. Qiao also discusses the negative impact of non-scientific approaches on students and academic scholars and developing world-class universities.

In Chapter Five, Qiao compares social and natural sciences, giving the differences and similarities of both fields. He examines research challenges and why social science research may be less scientific. He argues that human beings are variable and complex, presenting quandaries that natural science research may not face. Consequently, while social science research results may seem less scientific, this does not mean social science methodology is less scientific.

Qiao elaborates on the relationships between social science and philosophy in Chapter Six, demonstrating the significant role of philosophy in the social sciences. He does this by reviewing the history of science and philosophical deduction in social science research. The highest degree title, the Ph.D., exemplifies philosophy's remarkable position. This chapter provides insights on various levels of study, such as the different objectives of learning in middle school, college, and university graduate programs. Comments on the interdisciplinary field of science and philosophy make it highly readable and noteworthy.

Chapter Seven is a guide on decision-making to avoid research failure focusing on scientific approaches illustrating the importance of such procedural and methodological flaws as irrational logic, limited samples, and erroneous data, which move conclusions in various directions. Qiao points out potential mistakes and suggests how to deal with these issues during research.

Chapter Eight is essential reading for those seeking comparisons between Chinese and American social sciences. Research methodologies, academic systems, and attitudes toward academia are drawn from his experiences in both countries. Qiao comments that overarching comparisons are nonsensical given American social science's "scientific" nature and the "speculative" nature of Chinese social science. He states that it is crucial to improve the current situation of Chinese social science.

In Chapter Nine, Qiao gives diagrams and definitions to explain various research approaches. He also suggests solutions to reinforce the development of the field, including explicitly promoting scientific research methods. Professor Qiao has organized courses on social science research methodologies during the summer holidays for young scholars and graduate students across China in practicing what he preaches.

The final chapter reminds readers that science is imperfect and the importance of recognizing the limitations of social science, given its focus on research subjects as variable as humans and human society.

Concentrated on academic aspects of Chinese social science, Qiao's uses stimulating accounts and experiences to reveal problems in the field. Organization and writing style make this book intriguing and highly readable. Those searching for a better understanding of Chinese social science and its development will benefit from reading this book, which seems particularly relevant in light of Zhou et al.'s (2009) study that notes that Chinese social science has had limited impact at the international level in the last few decades, there is considerable potential due to increased international collaboration and the many Chinese academics involved in social science.

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CHINESE TERMS

ganbu 干部

Lijiaben 李加本

Qiao Xiaochun 乔晓春

yuanshi 院士