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Abstracts

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Nomads without Pastures?

Globalization, Regionalization, and Livelihood Security of Nomads and Former Nomads in Northern Khams

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Abstract: *This paper presents some preliminary findings dealing with the change of pastoralists' life in the eastern Tibetan region of Yus hru'u (yushu). The development of its population and livestock numbers point out that many of the region's pastoralist inhabitants can no longer depend on animal husbandry. Major official policies imply transformations or even the breakup of Tibetan nomadic systems, yet it is shown that Tibetan pastoralists are both willing and able to develop their own coping strategies. With a number of examples of how the (former) nomad society in Yus hru'u deals with changes evoked by a globalized economy, we hint at the scope of economic activities and opportunities it is willing to adopt and adjust to.*

Introduction

All over the world, societies traditionally dominated by pastoral activities have increasingly become subject to far-reaching transformations and partial disintegration, including the complete or near total breakup of nomadic systems.¹ During the second half of the twentieth century, the living space of Tibetans² has

¹ Jörg Gertel, "Globalisierung, Entankerung und Mobilität: Analytische Perspektiven einer gegenwartsbezogenen geographischen Nomadismusforschung," in *Nomadismus aus der Perspektive der Begrifflichkeit*, ed. Stefan Leder and Bernhard Streck, 57-88 (Halle: OWZ, 2002). See Caroline Humphrey and David Sneath, *The End of Nomadism? Society, State and the Environment in Inner Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Fred Scholz, "Nomadismus ist tot. Mobile Tierhaltung als zeitgemäße Nutzungsform der kargen Weiden des Altweltlichen Trockengürtels," *Geographische Rundschau* 51, no. 5 (1999): 248-55; and Fred Scholz, "Nomadismus. Ende einer traditionsreichen Kulturweise," in *Der belebte Planet*, ed. Margot Böse and Helmut Keupp, Sonderheft der Berliner Geowissenschaftlichen Abhandlungen (Berlin: FU Berlin, 2002), 88-98.

² The term "Tibetan" here refers to the cultural sphere on the Tibetan Plateau (*chol kha gsum*, *gangs can yul*, *qingzang gaoyuan*) where ethnic Tibetans reside, and to the respective people speaking Tibetan

undergone not just one breakup but several such transformations,³ which in part has led to a revival of traditional systems of pastoral activities.⁴

Besides the shifting policies in China, many other factors influence the livelihoods of Tibetan nomads. The integration of the pastoral areas into the Chinese market and of the Chinese market into the world market, a growing population in an ecologically difficult environment, and the risks of a transformed society have induced part of Tibetan nomad society to change its scope of economic activities. At the same time, other communities uphold traditional ways of managing their economy. Until now, Tibetan herders adapting to contemporary life have been predominantly perceived as suffering from changes brought about by the Chinese government, while hardly any attention has been given to the changes actively generated by the Tibetan pastoralists themselves:

So will there be any pastoralists left on the plateau in fifty years time? “They are already going,” says Tashi Tsering. “Families that can afford it move to Gyêgu or Nangqên, they do some kind of business and some of them are well off.”⁵

While the kind of changes mentioned first are determined by the institutional, political, and legal framework set up by the socialist government’s policies, the latter result from the use of networks evolving in a modernizing society. These networks increasingly link the urban centers to the pastoral areas. They are generated by knowledge, initiative, economic and cultural adaptability, and entrepreneurship.

In this paper, we will try to outline the scope of activities “nomadic” Tibetans in Yus hru’u have performed during the last decade. To focus on the kind of networks they use or build up, how they interconnect with their own society and

dialects. It does not refer to political or administrative divisions, either of the Tibetan government-in-exile (“Greater Tibet”) or of the PRC (“Tibet Autonomous Region, TAR”).

³ Andreas Gruschke, “Nomaden ohne Weide? Über die Wandlungen der Gesellschaft in den Steppen des tibetischen Hochlandes,” *Eurasisches Magazin*, nos. 05-06 (May 30, 2006), <http://www.eurasischesmagazin.de/artikel/?artikelID=20060510&marker=gruschke> (accessed May 30, 2006); Angela Manderscheid, *Lebens- und Wirtschaftsformen von Nomaden im Osten des tibetischen Hochlandes*, Abhandlungen Anthropogeographie 61 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1999), xii, 161-79; Daniel Miller, “Herds on the Move: Winds of Change among Pastoralists in the Himalayas and on the Tibetan Plateau,” Discussion paper series no. MNR 95/2 (Kathmandu: ICIMOD, 1995), 2, 7.

⁴ See Angela Manderscheid, “Life and Economic Patterns of Nomads on the Eastern Tibet Plateau: Brog Pa and Sa Ma Brog in Dzam-thang,” in *Development, Society, and Environment in Tibet*, ed. G. E. Clarke, PIATS 1995, vol. 5 (Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1998), 59-67; Manderscheid, “Decline and Re-emergence of Nomadism: Tibetan Pastoralists Revive a Nomadic Way of Life and Production,” *GeoJournal* 53 (2001): 173-4, [http://www.cwru.edu/affil/tibet/booksAndPapers/Decline & Re-emergence of Nomadism.htm](http://www.cwru.edu/affil/tibet/booksAndPapers/Decline%20&%20Re-emergence%20of%20Nomadism.htm); Angela Manderscheid, “Revival of a Nomadic Lifestyle: A Survival Strategy For Dzam Thang’s Pastoralists,” in *Amdo Tibetans in Transition: Society and Culture in the Post-Mao Era*, ed. Toni Huber, PIATS 2000, vol. 5 (Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 271-89, [http://www.cwru.edu/affil/tibet/booksAndPapers/Revival of a Nomadic Lifestyle.html](http://www.cwru.edu/affil/tibet/booksAndPapers/Revival%20of%20a%20Nomadic%20Lifestyle.html); and Gruschke, “Nomaden ohne Weide?”

⁵ China Development Brief, “Changing Fates on the Plateau,” *China Development Brief* (January 1, 2003), <http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/144>. These remarks of the founder and director of The Jinpa Project, a local NGO in Yus hru’u (*yushu*), correspond to empirical evidence we gathered during several field trips between autumn 2004 and winter 2006/2007 in the same region.

their neighbors or even far-away societies, is to identify their “scope of actions” and “regions of activities.” This networking within the framework of regional, supra-regional and global interdependence defines the prospects of (nomadic) sustenance within self-defined scopes of action, or “regions.” This “regionalization” is their response to being exposed to globalization.⁶

Research Region, Time, and Methods

We will exemplify this adaptability of Tibetan nomads, their developing of coping strategies for a sustainable livelihood, by case studies and field observations performed in northern Khams, in a region that extends to the far south of present-day Qinghai Province. In its center lies the town of Skye rgu mdo (*yushu*), nowadays known as Yus hru’u, a county town and administrative seat of the Yus hru’u Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP). It is a region of the Tibetan Plateau where a population of nomads has always totally outnumbered, and even today still outnumbers, any local sedentary population (Table 1). In Yus hru’u, different processes of modern “re-configuration” are now gradually following the recent “re-nomadization.”⁷ To secure their livelihoods, pastoralists in Yus hru’u take on new economic activities, accentuate traditional activities in different ways, or react to outside influences.

The data presented here were collected during a research project within the framework of the Collaborative Research Centre “Difference and Integration,” conducted by the Universities of Halle-Wittenberg and Leipzig (Germany), promoted and financed by the German Research Foundation.⁸ Data were collected during three major field trips in 2005 (three months from May through August and six weeks in October/November) and 2006/2007 (three months May through August). Major research methods included participant observation, non-formal, semi-structured, and biographical as well as standardized household interviews. Their evaluation is further backed by data gained in a household survey in winter 2006/2007 (two months from December 2006 through February 2007), realized in close cooperation with a local Tibetan-run NGO in the study area, Snowland Service Group (*gtsang stod zhabs ’degs tshogs, jiangyuan fazhan cujinhui*).⁹ To a certain degree, the present findings are still preliminary since the assessment of the rich data is still ongoing.

⁶ Benno Werlen, “Alltägliche Regionalisierungen unter räumlich-zeitlich entankerten Lebensbedingungen,” *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung*, nos. 9/10 (2000): 611-22.

⁷ Gruschke, “Nomaden ohne Weide?”

⁸ “Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft” (DFG), <http://www.dfg.de/en/>. The focus of the Collaborative Research Centre (SFB 586) is the interaction between nomadic and settled forms of life in the civilizations of the Old World; see http://www.nomadsed.de/en_index.html.

⁹ See <http://www.snowlandsgroup.org>. We are very much obliged to the NGO’s director Rin chen zla ba who enabled the legal backing for the survey, and his staff at the Yus hru’u office who gave us all the necessary support. The survey was realized in close cooperation between the author of this paper and Snowland Service Group staff members. We sincerely thank all the staff and the interviewers who participated in the survey.

Table 1: Population of Yus hru'u TAP in 2005

Household Type	Number of Households	Number of People	Proportion
Pastoralist	47,522	202,787	68.3%
Peasant	23,288	48,921	16.5%
Non-rural	n/a	45,296	15.2%
Total Population	70,810	297,004	100.0%
Non-registered	approximately	50-60,000	+ 17-18%

Sources: Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 2005*¹⁰ and local informants.

The semi-structured interviews we carried out comprise a broad spectrum of different household types and single protagonists in their various roles and positions in society, economy, and administration: male and female pastoralists, semi-nomads, farmers, traders, caterpillar fungus (*dbyar rtswa dgun 'bu*, *Dongchongxiacao*, *Cordyceps sinensis*) collectors and brokers, businesspeople and laborers, teachers and students, officials and employees, locals and non-registered persons (“floating population”), of the Tibetan, Hui, Han, Salar, and Bai nationalities constantly or temporarily residing in Yus hru'u, among others. Although the sites of the interviews included all of the six counties of Yus hru'u TAP (in forty-one out of forty-six rural townships [*zhen*] and rural communities [*xiang*])¹¹ as well as a number of interviews and field observations in other Tibetan areas,¹² the representations here are mainly based on Yus hru'u, Rdza stod (*zaduo*) and Nang chen (*nangqian*) Counties. This is where we made the majority of the 296 structured household interviews (98.6 percent), structured short-interviews with (212) and without (141) questionnaires in small Tibetan, Han Chinese, and Hui Muslim enterprises and shops (employing up to 120 employees), and twenty-nine biographical interviews.

Two experienced interpreters and ten interviewers originating from Yus hru'u TAP, all of them trilingual Tibetans, carried out the interviews in Tibetan – except for a few cases when interviewees were fluent in Chinese or English.¹³ They were prepared for their work in a five-day training course in Yus hru'u. Official data

¹⁰ Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Statistics Bureau (*Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou tongjiju*), *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 2005* (*Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Tongjiju Nianjian 2005*, Yushu: Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Tongjiju, 2006)

¹¹ Due to the rural character of the entire prefecture, the communities are further classified as *xiang* ([rural] communities) and *zhen* (towns) – with the latter's administrative centers revealing a more “urban” character.

¹² Former field trips of the author of this paper included all Tibetan regions in eastern Tibet – since the start of the research notably the prefectures of Mgo log (*guoluo*), Mtsho nub (*haixi*), Mtsho byang (*haibei*), and Mtsho lho (*hainan*) in Qinghai; Nag chu (*naqu*), and Chab mdo (*qamdo*) districts in the TAR; and Dkar mdzes (*ganzi*) and Rnga ba (*aba xian*) Prefectures in Sichuan.

¹³ This applies only to some biographical interviews that were led by the author. Approximately 10 percent of the household interviews and all other interviews were directly supervised.

and information were obtained from local and prefectural officials in both Yushu'u and the provincial capital of Qinghai, Xining. While interview partners for non-formal and semi-structured interviews were partly chosen at random,¹⁴ interviewees for biographical information were selected in such a way that different social groups and positions could be adequately depicted. The household survey was mainly carried out in five villages in different natural and socioeconomic settings: 1. Gyiza (Rdza stod County, distance to county seat sixty kilometers, 4200 meters above sea level, entirely pastoralist); 2. Yarcer (Nang chen, twenty-one kilometers, 3690 meters, semi-nomadic); 3. Peltsa (Nang chen, thirty kilometers, 4080 meters, pastoralist and salt mining); 4. Shang Baitang (Yushu, twenty-five kilometers, 3830-3920 meters, pastoralist), and 5. Skye rgu mdo Jiaji Lu Resettlement Village No. 1 (Yushu, three kilometers from downtown, 3800 meters; formerly pastoralists of Shang Laxiu community, resettled to Skye rgu mdo). Peltsa was subject to a 50 percent sample; while in the other four villages all resident households (with the exception of one denier) were interviewed. To complete the picture drawn from all the interviews, we also used Western and Chinese sources, notably statistical data, although, to date, specific references related to Yushu'u TAP are scarce.¹⁵

Politically Evoked Socioeconomic Transformations in Tibetan Nomad Areas

In post-1949 China, the so-called “Democratic Reforms” of 1958-59 (which actually meant hasty collectivization), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) which was to politicize every aspect of daily life including the economy, deprived the nomads of their responsibilities and the free disposition of their animals and pastures. All animals were pooled into collective ownership and management.

In the 1980s, the “Reforms and the Opening Up” (*gaige kaifang*) of China brought the dissolution of the commune system and the establishment of the Household Responsibility System. Commune livestock was – on the level of the work teams (*xiaodui*) – divided evenly among the people, government officials being excluded. In many Tibetan pastoral areas, this revived features of nomadism

¹⁴ This was not the case in situations where certain persons proved to be more knowledgeable about the matter inquired, than were others in the respective group.

¹⁵ Marc Foggin, “Biodiversity Protection and the Search for Sustainability in Tibetan Plateau Grasslands (Qinghai, China)” (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2000); J. Marc Foggin, *Building New Partnerships for Conservation and Sustainable Development in the Tibetan Plateau Region: Recent Experiences in the Yangtze River Headwaters* (Plateau Perspectives, Qinghai Office), http://www.plateauperspectives.org/downloads/Building_partnerships.pdf; Michele Nori, *Hoofs on the Roof: Pastoral Livelihood on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau: The Case of Chengduo County, Yushu Prefecture* (ASIA: 2004), http://www.cwru.edu/affil/tibet/booksAndPapers/Hoofs_on_the_Roof.pdf; Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Gaikuang Bianxiezu, *Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Gaikuang* (Xining: Qinghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1985); Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Statistics Bureau (*Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou tongjiju*), *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 1950-1999* (*Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Tongjiju Nianjian 1950-1999* [Yushu: Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Tongjiju, 2000]); Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 2005*.

identical to the era before collectivization.¹⁶ The start of the “Great Development of the West” (*xibu da kaifa*) campaign,¹⁷ launched in 2000 and dealing with the necessity to accelerate economic development in China’s poor western regions, led to the improvement of the region’s infrastructure.¹⁸ At the same time, government policies once again started to interfere greatly in the organization of pastoralist life, especially during the *Sipeitao Jianshe* agenda between 1996 and 2004. This so-called “Comprehensive Set of Four Constructions [in the Grassland Areas]” focused on the

1. construction of fixed settlements (*jianshe dingju dian*) on winter pastures
2. construction of fenced areas (*jianshe weilan*)
3. construction of schools and health stations (*jianshe xuexiao weisheng zhan*)
4. contracting pasture to families (*bao caoyuan dao hu*).

Concurrently, after the start of the more general “Restore Cropland to Forest” (*tuigeng huanlin*) policy in 1999 in response to dramatic floods that were blamed on upstream deforestation, China designed a “Restore Pastures to Grass” (*tuimu huancao*) variant for pastoral regions to ease the pressure of over-grazing.¹⁹ Announced in November 2002, this project is likely to alter the livelihoods of the pastoralists most significantly over time, especially since it was accompanied by a number of “Poverty Alleviation through Migration” (*yimin fupin*) schemes, which were to manage limited or total resettlement of nomads from certain regions into the county towns.²⁰

¹⁶ Manderscheid, “Revival of a Nomadic Lifestyle.”

¹⁷ The Chinese government’s Great Development of the West is an ambitious effort to steer state investment, outside expertise, foreign loans, and private capital into the western regions. In 2000, it directed \$45.5 billion to develop the west (Mehmet Ögütçü and Markus Taube, “Getting China’s Regions Moving,” *OECD Observer*, June 2002, http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/710/Getting_Chinas_regions_moving.html).

¹⁸ While some stress the problematic aspects of the Great Development of the West program, others do as well perceive the shifting of China’s national goals from economic growth at all costs to growth that also emphasizes egalitarian wealth, along with social goals like public health and education.

¹⁹ See Foggin, *Building New Partnerships*, 2, 9; and Emily Yeh, “Green Governmentality and Pastoralism in Western China: ‘Converting Pastures to Grasslands,’” *Nomadic Peoples* 9, nos. 1-2 (2005): 9-29. This policy reclassifies existing pastures into new types of zones, in which grazing is to be permanently banned, to cease for a period of several years, or to be seasonally stopped.

²⁰ For the administrative structure implementing poverty alleviation and development in China see Foggin, *Biodiversity Protection*, 83-84. Reports on the resettlement programs generally stress that they are compulsory for the families concerned. While we have heard about cases in Mgo log, where nomads had to follow magisterial directives to move out from of their pastureland, this was ordinarily not the case in those Yus hru’u resettled households where we conducted interviews in 2006/2007. The majority of the respondents professed to having accepted, voluntarily, a government offer that primarily addressed poor nomads. It is the systemic corruption, also on local Tibetan cadre level, which often obliterates the limited success of the resettlement schemes that are meant to make pastures under stress recover.

Main Features of the North Khams Region: Yus hru'u

The research area is the Yus hru'u Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP), one of six autonomous prefectures of Qinghai Province (Figure 1). Yus hru'u TAP belongs to one of the poorer and least developed provinces in China, lagging behind in both productivity and income. Within Qinghai, the Yus hru'u TAP is considered one of the least developed and poorest areas. In 2004, approximately 95 percent of the Yus hru'u TAP's annual budget (533 million yuan) was financed through subsidies from the provincial or national government.²¹



Figure 1: The location of Yus hru'u within the Tibetan Plateau

Yus hru'u TAP covers an area of approximately two-hundred-thousand square kilometers, more than a quarter of Qinghai Province.²² It therefore is slightly smaller than Great Britain, while its population of 297,000 inhabitants only compares to a medium-sized European city. The prefecture includes the territory of the sources of the Yellow River (*rma chu, ma qu*) in the north, the upper reaches of the Zhi Qu (*'bri chu*) and Mekong (*rdza chu*) in the west and south, and the areas that border the neighboring Tibet Autonomous Region (*xizang*) in the south and Sichuan Province in the east.

²¹ According to Qinghai Province Statistics Bureau, *Qinghai Statistical Yearbook 2005* (Beijing: Zhongguo Tongji Chubanshe, 2005), 185, the prefecture's financial expenditure in 2004 amounted to 532.81 million RMB, facing 26.29 million RMB of local revenue (of which 75.4 percent were local fiscal revenue). Within one year, Yus hru'u's financial expenditure rose by almost one-third (29 percent) to 683.83 million RMB (Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 2005*, 46/184). The rate of the Chinese currency can be calculated at one hundred yuan for ten euro (or approximately seventy-eight yuan for ten US dollars). This was the average for most of the time of our field research (September 2004 to January 2007).

²² Surface data for the Yus hru'u TAP vary greatly: Survey of the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Yushu Compilation Group (Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Gaikuang Bianxiezu), *A Survey of the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Yushu (Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Gaikuang)* 2, notes 197,000 square kilometers; Qinghai Province Statistics Bureau, *Qinghai Statistical Yearbook 2005*, 46, 197,953 square kilometers; Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 2005*, 59, 210,300 square kilometers.

The prefecture consists of six counties – Chu dmar leb (*qumalai*), 'Bri stod (*zhiduo*), Rdza stod, Khri 'du (*chengduo*), Yus hru'u, and Nang chen – comprising thirty-six rural communities plus ten rural townships, with the prefectural capital Skye rgu mdo located in Yus hru'u County. Thirty-one of those communities, or 178 villages out of 255, are regarded as pastoralist.²³ The counties differ considerably in size, with 'Bri stod covering more than eighty-thousand square kilometers and Nang chen only about 12,700 square kilometers. Three of the counties are completely pastoralist, while the other three feature agriculture on a small scale: in 2004, the cultivated land in the prefecture made up less than one per mile of its entire land area (yet still 2.78 percent of the cultivated land in Qinghai Province).²⁴

The largest part of the region is characterized by a rolling highland steppe well known from the north Tibetan Byang thang (*qiangtang*). This steppe is interrupted by a deeply dissected mountainous terrain around the two major rivers Mekong and Yangtze (*'bri chu, zhi qu*) and their tributaries. With permafrost soil and marshes especially in the western and northern sections, alpine meadows stretch almost everywhere in the prefecture. They are suited for mobile animal husbandry. The terrain gradually rises from the southeast, where it never falls below 3510 meters above sea level, to the northwest, the average altitude being 4,200 meters to 4,500 meters. The climate of Yus hru'u is one of extremes: average annual temperatures lie between -4.3°C (Qingshuihe) and 5.2°C (Nang chen). In winter, temperatures can drop as low as -43°C (1975, Qingshuihe) while in summer, temperatures can rise to +28°C (Yus hru'u, Nang chen) during the day. The precipitation decreases from southeast to northwest, with Nang chen and Rdza stod Counties receiving 550-635 millimeters annually, while 'Bri stod and Chu dmar leb average only 380-500 millimeters.²⁵ Not only are the weather conditions unpredictable, but the climate variability also is especially high.

Winter pastures and winter houses in Yus hru'u can be found on altitudes of up to 4,800 meters. Above this level, in more favorable locations also at lower altitudes, extends the nomads' summer area of activity. There they set up their tents and use the adjacent meadows up to an altitude of five-thousand meters as pastures. Arable field cultivation is only possible in the zone below four-thousand meters. Today, the highest fields in Yus hru'u are situated not higher than 3900 meters above sea level.²⁶ A limited population of farmers and semi-nomads have fields and permanent

²³ Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 1950-1999*, 41; Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 2005*, 49.

²⁴ Calculated according to data in Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 1950-1999*, 51 and Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 2005*, 59; Qinghai Province Statistics Bureau, *Qinghai Statistical Yearbook 2005*, 213.

²⁵ Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 1950-1999*, 50; Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 2005*, 58.

²⁶ Abandoned fields on hillside terraces near the eastern county seats (Yus hru'u, Nang chen, and Khri 'du) and near pastoral community centers such as Nang chen's Juela Xiang demonstrate that agriculture has been, at times, more extensive than today. Especially after the "Democratic Reforms" in 1958, some fields were reclaimed in areas not suited for farming. Statistics (Yushu Statistics Bureau,

houses there. On the whole, animal husbandry is the prevailing sector of production, while less than one-fifth of Yus hru'u's population is involved in field cultivation (Table 1), the extent of which varies regionally.

Decreasing Livelihoods of Yus hru'u Pastoralists

During the last fifty years, Yus hru'u has seen considerable fluctuations in both population and livestock numbers (Table 2). The rural human population has more than doubled,²⁷ and furthermore there is a consensus that problems of environmental degradation are increasing.²⁸ As exact scientific measurements suggest, the Tibetan

Yushu Statistical Yearbook 1950-1999, 84-85) show that even the entirely pastoralist counties in Yus hru'u's western part ('Bri stod, Rdza stod, and Chu dmar leb) had a number of fields. They were ultimately given up after the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1978.

²⁷ There is no strict family planning policy in Tibetan pastoral areas; thus, population growth is not slowing down. In China Tibetans are, together with Muslim groups, among the nationalities with the highest birth and population growth rates.

²⁸ Dennis Sheehy, "The Rangelands, Land Degradation and Black Beach: A Review of Research Reports and Discussions," in *The Living Plateau: Changing Lives of Herders in Qinghai*, ed. Nico van WAGENINGEN and Sa Wenjun (Kathmandu: ICIMOD, 2001), 5; Du Mingyuan, et al., "Mutual Influence between Human Activities and Climate Change in the Tibetan Plateau during Recent Years," *Global and Planetary Change* 41, nos. 3-4 (2004): 241-49; Wolfgang Holzner and Monika Kriechbaum, "Man's Impact on the Vegetation and Landscape in the Inner Himalaya and Tibet," in *Sediments of Time: Environment and Society in Chinese History*, ed. Mark Elvin and Liu Ts'ui-jung (New York & Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 53-106; Wolfgang Holzner and Monika Kriechbaum, "Pastures in South and Central Tibet (China). II. Probable Causes of Pasture Degradation," *Die Bodenkultur* 52, 1 (2001): 37-44; Wolfgang Holzner et al., "Integrated Ecological Studies of Pasture Problems in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, P.R. China," in *Yak Production in Central Asian Highlands*, ed. Han Jianlin et al. (Nairobi: ILRI, 2002), <http://www.ilri.org/InfoServ/Webpub/Fulldocs/Yakpro/SessionA3.htm>. For details on climatic and ecological changes see Jürgen Böhner, *Säkulare Klimaschwankungen und rezente Klimatrends Zentral- und Hochasiens*, Göttinger Geographische Abhandlungen 101 (Göttingen: Goltze Verlag, 1996); Jürgen Böhner, "Der klimatisch determinierte raum/zeitliche Wandel naturräumlicher Ressourcen Zentral- und Hochasiens," in *Alpenwelt-Gebirgswelten*, ed. Werner Gameraith, et al. (Heidelberg: DGfG, 2004), 157; Françoise Gasse and Edward Derbyshire, eds., "Environmental Changes in the Tibetan Plateau and Surrounding Areas," special issue, *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology* 120, nos. 1-2 (February 1996): 2; Julia Klein et al., "Climatic and Grazing Controls on Vegetative aboveground Biomass: Implications for the Rangelands on the North-eastern Tibetan Plateau," in *Yak Production in Central Asian Highlands*, ed. Han Jianlin et al. (Nairobi: ILRI, 2002), <http://www.ilri.org/InfoServ/Webpub/Fulldocs/Yakpro/SessionA1.htm>; Michael Klinge and Frank Lehmkühl, "Untersuchungen zur holozänen Bodenentwicklung und Geomorphodynamik in Tibet," *Berliner Geographische Arbeiten*, no. 100 (2005): 81-91; Frank Lehmkühl, "Desertifikation im Becken von Zoige (Ruoergai Plateau), Osttibet," *Berliner Geographische Arbeiten*, no. 79 (1993): 241-54; Frank Lehmkühl et al., "Late Quaternary Environmental Changes and Human Occupation of the Tibetan Plateau," in *Man and Environment*, no. 24 (1999): 137-48; Georg Miede, "Recent Climatic Changes in Subhumid to Arid Regions of High Asia (Karakorum, Kunlun, Himalaya, Tibet) as Indicated by Vegetation Features," in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Karakorum and Kunlun Mountains*, ed. Zheng Du et al. (Beijing: China Meteorological Press, 1994), 333-46; G. Miede, "On the Connexion between Vegetation Dynamics and Climatic Changes in High Asia," in "Environmental Changes in the Tibetan Plateau and Surrounding Areas," ed. Françoise Gasse and Edward Derbyshire, special issue, *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology* 120, nos. 1-2 (February 1996): 22-23; G. Miede and Sabine Miede, "Environmental Changes in the Pastures of Tibet Autonomous Region," in *Environmental Changes in High Asia*, ed. G. Miede and Zhang Yili (Marburg: Marburger Geograph. Ges., 2000), 298-306; Wu Ning, *Ecological Situation of High Frigid Rangeland and Its Sustainability* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1997). For the effects and increase of snow disasters see Nori, *Hoofs on the Roof*, 12-13. For a discussion of the controversial carrying capacity of the grassland see Long Ruijun, "Alpine Rangeland Ecosystems and

Plateau undergoes, and has for some time past, a process of warming and drying, and the increase of wind speed and pressure greatly affects the rate of evaporation. As in neighboring Mgo log, nomads blame drought and increases in the size of rodent population (especially of the plateau pika, *Ochotona curzoniae*) for increasing the extent and severity of degraded rangeland.²⁹ With the high stocking rate and the growing pika population, the grassland resource is less able to recover from drought pressure, though not all sources agree on the negative influence of the pika.³⁰

Table 2: Development of Population and Livestock in Yus hru’u

Year	Total Population (TP)	Non-rural Population	Livestock (in millions)		
			Yaks	Sheep	Total
1950	123,110	14.44%	0.832	0.974	1.844
1959	168,005	7.74%	0.379	0.645	1.032
1969	123,071	6.99%	1.171	2.781	3.977
1979	178,935	10.5%	1.656	3.848	5.574
1989	224,071	12.4%	1.578	2.301	3.963
1999	252,696	13.89%	0.895	1.742	2.689
2004	283,144	15.56%	0.868	1.949	2.853
2005	297,004	15.2%	0.908	1.950	2.859

Sources: *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 1950-1999*, 66-109; *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 2005*, 64-88; *Qinghai Statistical Yearbook 2005*, 68, 223.³¹

their Management in the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau,” in *The Yak*, ed. Gerald Wiener, Han Jianlin, and Long Ruijin, 2nd ed., 359-88 (Bangkok: FAO Regional Office Asia and Pacific, 2003/2006), <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/ad347e/ad347e00.htm>. In our field study, almost two-thirds (62.8 percent) of the 296 households surveyed considered pasture degradation as a major constraint. Furthermore, our major field trips led us to most of the communities in Yus hru’u’s six counties, and we conducted informal and expert interviews with many pastoralists, local specialists, and officials. The majority of them were concerned about pasture degradation and desertification.

²⁹ Susan Costello, “The Flow of Wealth in Golog Pastoralist Society: Towards an Assessment of Local Financial Resources for Economic Development,” in *Tibetan Modernities: Notes from the Field on Cultural and Social Change*, ed. Robert Barnett and Ronald Schwartz, PIATS 2003, vol. 11 (Leiden, Brill, 2008); Sheehy, “Rangelands,” 5.

³⁰ See Foggin, *Biodiversity Protection*, and A. T. Smith and M. Foggin, “The Plateau Pika Is a Keystone Species for Biodiversity on the Tibetan Plateau,” in *Conserving China’s Biodiversity 2*, ed. Peter Johan Schei, Wang Sung, and Xie Yan (Beijing: China Environmental Science Press, 1996), 211-21, <http://www.chinabiodiversity.com/shwdyx/technical-report-e/x-8e.htm>.

³¹ Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 1950-1999*; Qinghai Province Statistics Bureau, *Qinghai Statistical Yearbook 2005*. The last digits of the livestock numbers are rounded. The total livestock number includes horses, which traditionally played a great role in Yus hru’u, and goats. Due to the well-known problems of official statistics (see “Government Statistics on Livestock Populations Fraught with Problems,” in Costello, “Flow of Wealth”), especially during the highly ideologized periods of Communist China, these numbers need to be read with caution. Nevertheless, they allow – in combination with historical and natural data – interesting interpretations about times of political disturbances, secularization, economical policies, and natural disasters. The numbers for 2004 were adopted and generated from the Qinghai Province Statistics Bureau’s data. Numbers for 1999 differ

Even though issues of natural disasters, grassland carrying capacity,³² and the impact of climatic and ecological changes³³ cannot be discussed here, the development of the population-to-livestock ratio in Yus hru'u TAP elucidates the diminishing livelihood basis of the pastoralists. In order to consider the livelihood situation, we compute the so-called sheep unit³⁴ (SU) per person, a measure that helps both to calculate the livestock density in a given pasture and to understand the subsistence level of the pastoralists. According to Miller, a person would need at least twenty-five sheep or five yaks to meet her basic needs:

Poor are usually defined as persons with an average per capita annual income of less than RMB 700. In terms of animal numbers, about twenty-five Sheep Units per person is the generally accepted break-off point for poverty in Tibetan nomad areas. Families with less than twenty-five Sheep Units would not be able to meet their basic needs.³⁵

Although we have to admit that calculating a poverty line, especially in non-monetary terms, is a very problematic undertaking, the situation in the field made it quite obvious that the stocking units many households had at their disposal have already reached a (low) level decisive for their ability to maintain (or not) a pastoralist livelihood. Andrew Fischer introduces the concept of “subsistence capacity” which appears adequate to express “the ability of a household to produce a surplus above the subsistence needs required reproducing itself economically.”³⁶ Our argument at this point is that, as far as a “purely” pastoralist economy (that is, one solely relying on livestock) is concerned, the change of the household's stocking situation in Yus hru'u clearly shows trends that elucidate an endangered

slightly (between 2.75 and 0.16 percent) in Gerald Wiener et al., ed., *The Yak*, 2nd ed. (Bangkok: FAO, 2003/06), 265, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/ad347e/ad347e00.htm>.

³² For a discussion of the grassland carrying capacity, see Long Ruijun, “Alpine Rangeland Ecosystems and their Management in the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau,” in *The Yak*, ed. Wiener et al., 2nd ed. (Bangkok: FAO, 2003/06), 359-88, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/ad347e/ad347e00.htm> (accessed online).

³³ As for climatic and ecological changes, see Wu Ning, *Ecological Situation*; Mieke, *Environmental Changes*, 298-306; and for the effects and increase of snow disasters, see Nori, “Hoofs on the Roof,” 12-13.

³⁴ The sheep unit (SU) is a reference unit to make different livestock on the pastureland and of the people's livelihoods comparable. The basis for the SU is one adult female sheep. Calculated on the assumption that one SU requires four kilograms of hay per day, other animals are usually converted as follows: one yak = five SU; one horse = six SU (Daniel Miller, “Poverty among Tibetan Nomads in Western China: Profiles of Poverty and Strategies for Poverty Reduction,” paper prepared for the Tibet Development Symposium, Brandeis University, May 4-6, 2001, <http://www.cwru.edu/affil/tibet/booksAndPapers/papers/miller2.htm>; Yan Zhaoli et al., “A Review of Rangeland Privatisation and Its Implications in the Tibetan Plateau,” *Nomadic Peoples* 9, nos. 1-2 [2005]: 37) or seven SU (Melvyn C. Goldstein, “Nomads of Golok: A Report,” 1996, <http://www.cwru.edu/affil/tibet/booksAndPapers/RDP-Final Final Mission ReportEU.htm>). Humphrey and Sneath, *End of Nomadism*, 42 and 309 n. 2, use the so-called sheep stocking unit, SSU, as a standard for calculating stocking rates. Used by local specialists in Mongolia, it corresponds to the SU used in this paper. The area of rangeland used for one SU depends on the natural conditions of the region, and therefore varies greatly.

³⁵ Miller, “Poverty among Tibetan Nomads.”

³⁶ Andrew M. Fischer, “Subsistence and Rural Livelihood Strategies in Tibet under Rapid Economic and Social Transition,” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, no. 4 (December 2008), <http://www.thlib.org?tid=T5569>.

subsistence capacity. For this purpose, the definition of an “absolute poverty line” may not be crucial, but it definitely helps to demonstrate the development of Yus hru’u pastoralists’ subsistence capacity.

In 1950, the average rural household in the Yus hru’u TAP owned seventeen animals or 48.75 SU (horses and goats not counted) per individual. Even if the total population (including the non-rural) is considered, the rate still amounted to 41.7 SU per person.

Table 3: Development of Livestock Distribution in Yus hru’u

Year	Rural Population	Yaks per person		Sheep per person		SU per person	
		TP	RP	TP	RP	TP	RP
1950	105,333	6.76	7.90	7.91	9.25	41.71	48.75
1989	196,286	7.04	8.04	10.27	11.72	45.47	51.92
1999	217,596	3.54	4.11	6.89	8.01	24.59	28.56
2005	257,859	3.01	3.52	6.57	7.57	21.62	25.17

Calculated from data in Yushu Statistical Yearbook 1950-1999 and Yushu Statistical Yearbook 2005.

TP = on the basis of the total population. RP = on the basis of the rural population.

Following the disbanding of the people’s communes and the beginning of a certain “re-nomadization,” the large livestock numbers continued to exist for a time,³⁷ while certainly there were and still are considerable fluctuations due to natural conditions (for example, snow disasters and drought). The year 1989 appears to be a good average year in this period. It represents a situation in which an average rural individual in Yus hru’u owned almost fifty-two SU and thus a livestock number that was twice as high as the poverty level mentioned above. It was a level slightly higher than in the 1950s, even though there were two serious snow disasters in Yus hru’u during the 1980s.³⁸ Ten years later, the numerical value of SU/person had already decreased to 28.56 and has since plummeted to such an extent that today, even on average all the rural inhabitants of Yus hru’u TAP (25.17 SU/person) live just slightly above “the generally accepted break-off point for poverty in Tibetan nomad areas.”

Still, the grassland of Yus hru’u is stressed much more than before: in 1950, there were on the whole 5.135 million SU, in 2005 already 6.49 million SU for the entire Yus hru’u TAP. That means that the grassland had to produce 25 percent more hay, although the basis of the (remaining) pastoralists’ sustenance was reduced by almost 50 percent – a vicious cycle closely connected to modern Tibetan pastoralism:

³⁷ It is likely that the statistics of the collective era exaggerated the numbers for political reasons. The livestock statistics were probably most accurate at the time when the animals were distributed among the families in the early 1980s.

³⁸ According to Nori, “Hoofs on the Roof,” 13, almost 10 percent of Yus hru’u’s total herd (1.32 million head) were lost in winter of 1981-82, while the loss of 990,000 head in the winter of 1984-85 represented 17 percent of the (remaining) total herd.

The natural decrease of the carrying capacity in consequence of climatic desiccation does not regulate the herd size any more where sedentarism and supplementation of feed are offered. On the contrary, naturally shrinking pastures face rapidly increasing herds of people who increase in number and welfare.³⁹

Here is not the place to discuss the multitude of reasons for those changes, but it has to be noted that most herders in Yus hru'u with medium-sized or larger herds are complaining about the shortage of grassland.⁴⁰ The situation described shows clearly however, why a growing number of (former) nomads have left their native land to look for new fields of economic activities and for other viable livelihoods. Still, out-migration for unskilled labor is only slight.

Yus hru'u's infrastructure, which is essential for the change of activities and development of new livelihoods within the rural areas, is still in the course of being further developed. By 1999, there were 2,562 kilometers of roads in Yus hru'u Prefecture,⁴¹ but since then the major investment in road infrastructure has increased tremendously. Meanwhile, paved roads connect all the county seats of the TAP. Before this development, the community centers (rural community) were reached via earth and mud tracks mostly in poor condition. Until a few years ago, some of them were accessible on horseback and with pack animals only. During the last three years, all community townships were connected to a network of improved gravel roads and therefore have now better access to markets and public institutions.

Changing Features of Tibetan Nomadism

At first glance, people in Yus hru'u towns and communities give the impression of leading a modern kind of life in a traditional society. This society does not seem to be overly occupied with pastoralist daily routines. However, who is nomad and who is not seems to be less obvious as it used to be, or at least seemed to be. An indicator that this ambiguity is widespread consists of the fact that in academic discussions on pastoralism, the term "mobile pastoralism" is nowadays often preferred to the terms "nomadism" or "nomadic pastoralism." Rather than following conventional definitions of nomads (as Manderscheid,⁴² for instance, does) or introducing the scientific discussion on the definition of "nomads" led in the West, we will restrict our considerations to those people who designate themselves as *'brog pa* – the term for "nomad" the Tibetans themselves use.

³⁹ Mieke, "Environmental Changes," 306.

⁴⁰ In our field study, 70 percent (203 of 296) of households interviewed considered the shortage of grassland a major problem of the region. Furthermore, the same apprehension was expressed during many informal and expert interviews, as mentioned above (see note 29). Of 172 households still owning livestock, 71.5 percent said that getting more pastureland would be among the most successful strategies to secure their livelihood (multiple answers were possible).

⁴¹ Yushu Statistics Bureau, *Yushu Statistical Yearbook 1950-1999*, 204.

⁴² See Manderscheid, "Decline and Re-emergence," 273-4.

The *'brog pa*'s self-image, as Goldstein and Beall⁴³ have noted, is primarily built on being pastoralists in marked contrast to the people practicing farming. Their self-conception does not correspond to our western notion in which moving herds or living in tents “belongs” to their concept of being nomads – the term that is generally used as the English translation of *'brog pa*. Yet, animal husbandry has to be the main determinant of their production activities and mobility, and thus determines what they understand as a way of life. This way of life is actually practiced, and it does not merely function as a value orientation.⁴⁴ In addition to raising livestock, many other activities, such as trading, hunting, gathering and farming may also be practiced without definitely changing the pastoralists' self-image as *'brog pa*, so that our target group in Yus hru'u can still be considered quite a substantial one.

The figure given for the non-rural population in Yus hru'u prefectural statistics is 45,000 people, that is, some 15.2 percent (2005) of the total population.⁴⁵ As this reflects the part of the population employed by the state,⁴⁶ the major economic activities of Yus hru'u Tibetans seem to be pastoralism and farming. However, even the state-employed people come largely from nomad families or households with a (former) pastoralist background. They work in different occupations – ranging from administration, police, public health and welfare, postal services and telecommunications, to transport and other public services. Similar to their pastoralist compatriots, in the course of their lives they may also enter other fields of economic activities, especially trading enterprises. This creates a typical rural Khams pa network – a set of connections that often makes the regional administrations and countryside deeply interwoven with urban business ventures and even foreign companies. As the agents in this commercial field cannot be clearly referred to as mainly originating from a certain social group in Yus hru'u, especially not belonging to a traditional section of traders in Yus hru'u Tibetan society, we may comprehend this as a prototypical example of regionalization in the sense of “making of regions” or “ranges of activities.” Since during our fieldwork we could observe *'brog pas* being clearly part of this framework of

⁴³ Melvyn C. Goldstein and Cynthia M. Beall, *Nomads of Western Tibet* (Hong Kong: Odyssey Productions, 1990), 64.

⁴⁴ Philip C. Salzman and John G. Galaty, “Nomads in a Changing World: Issues and Problems,” in *Nomads in a Changing World*, ed. Philip Salzman and John Galaty (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1990), 3-21, according to Manderscheid, “Decline and Re-emergence.”

⁴⁵ With good reason, Thomas Rawski and Wei Xiao, “Roundtable on Chinese Economic Statistics Introduction,” *China Economic Review* 12, no. 4 (2001): 299-300, hint at the problem of declining accuracy and veracity in recent Chinese statistics. This is particularly conspicuous for economic data and the related measurement of socio-economic variables. However, statistical data in this paper are almost exclusively used to demonstrate trends, particularly of the growth of population and livestock, over a period of almost six decades. Even if caution needs to be exerted with regard to individual figures, the overall development of those figures is still meaningful.

⁴⁶ In Tibetan areas, the rate of state-employed people is twice as high as in China in general, and can amount to between 17 percent and 28 percent in the TAR (1990) (Andreas Gruschke, “Arbeitslosigkeit und Unterbeschäftigung in Tibet. Politische Druckmittel oder Folgen sozialen Wandels?,” *Internationales Asienforum* 34, nos. 3-4 [2003]: 316-17).

regional, supra-regional, and global interdependence, it is within this field of activities that we find them developing their (new) prospects of sustenance.

Due to their social and administrative networks, as well as due to their acquired knowledge basis in management and financial matters, it often proves to be easier for (former) *'brog pas* related or employed in government positions to enter the field of private entrepreneurship. This is true even if they do not have a formal education, as will be seen in our first case study from Rdza stod County.

From Nomad to Government Employee, and on to Small-Scale Entrepreneur

The Rdza stod county seat is located in Bya phug thang (*qapugtang*) town which, during the last decade, has developed from a small and calm administrative seat of an entirely pastoralist environment to a comparatively bustling commercial town linked to distant cities within and outside the province – be it by bus to Xining (1,100 kilometers) or by trade, education, or other affairs to central and eastern China.

As Bya phug thang, or as it is mostly just called Rdza stod, was a small site for the local government in the beginning, it could seemingly offer only few new employment opportunities to nomads. A number of biographical interviews in different parts of Yus hru'u TAP however revealed how people from pastoralist families had gotten into the state-employment system. The story of Darbo, which we will cite now in excerpts, may serve as a typical example of a career we have met with several times in both informal and formal interviews.

Case Study 1: Darbo

I grew up in Angsai community; this area is a nomad area. When I [lived]⁴⁷ in the nomad area...I herded animals. In our family, we had very many yaks and sheep. Nevertheless, there were some small difficulties in our life [that is, living conditions], as during that time transportation and many other circumstances [were difficult, such as] grain [cereals], vegetables, it was not easy to transport [up there]. ...Now, we have a completed tar road, all the way to our door. ...

There, [until] about seventeen years [old], I was always in the nomad area, I spent my time there... then I moved to...Zadoi to learn how to drive a car. At that time, there was [already] a [truck] driver unit in Zadoi [*Zadoi qichedui*] where I became a mechanic. While I was a mechanic, I learned how to drive. ...I learned for three years, then I started to [work as a] driver. ...Then I was transferred to the Meat Food Product Group of Zadoi County. ... There, I drove a truck for two years...then they needed somebody at...Zadoi County Public Security Office to drive a car, they wanted somebody steady [that is, an experienced person]. They said, "If you like to come, then just come." I told them I'd like to work for the Public Security,

⁴⁷ Text in square brackets indicates words not pronounced literally but supplied by the author to make the context more transparent or to give further explanations. The author was also the interviewer and met the respondent several times.

that's okay. Then I moved to the Public Security, so I did work, without interruption, as a driver for the Public Security. ...[Some years later] I got sick, they did not find out what kind of illness it was, I was sick for four years. During that time, I never came home to Zadoi County; I always got medical treatment.

In...2000 I came [back] to Zadoi...The change in those four years was very good...just like this construction building, on this aspect it is developing very well. My illness was a little bit better, so I felt like I [could go back to work]. So at the Public Security Office they arranged for me to go to the traffic police. [They said,] "You don't need to drive anymore, you [can] be a traffic policeman." ...I told to my leaders, "My health condition is [still] not too good, so could you give me a job in a somewhat more relaxed working atmosphere?" They said that there [is] the Forest Police Department (*senlin gong'an ju*)...As for now, we have to develop the national nature protection zone, this "Three Riverheads [Area]." [So to work] in this field, I was very much interested...so I was transferred to the Forest Police Department. Then I thought about this construction [of a small hotel], and to open a large restaurant. ...So I just had this building erected...This is my own investment...there is nobody else I rely on. I found my own way to get a loan, [and then] had it built; after that I will return the money, and think about how I will go on with my construction step by step.

I did not go to school; I really regret that...At that time...it would not have been expensive. Now it is too late. I can't study any more. I came by myself to the Zadoi [truck] driver unit to learn how to drive [a car]. One year I studied Tibetan by myself, another year, I studied Chinese by myself. What I did not know [or could not understand], I asked other people. Now I speak Chinese, but not very correctly...I learned it by myself. Being thirty-eight years old now, I think I want to learn how to use a computer....If I can manage to learn that, it will be very good.

During the interview, Darbo describes his social background very clearly: as an adolescent, just about the time when people's communes were disbanded and the animals redistributed to the nomad families, he decided to look for work in town. He found a job as a driver and thus became state-employed. His job career led from very different units to the public security, where he finally was engaged in the Forest Police Department – a government body related to nature conservancy and the tasks of park rangers. Still in public service, he used his administrative knowledge from the public sector (land rent, management, and so forth) as well as communal and social networks (permission, help with financing) to start his private business – building and running a hotel and a restaurant. Although talking about his business, it became clear in several meetings that Darbo's wife was also included in managerial activities. It is doubtful whether this would be the case in many other commercial activities of (former) pastoralists due to a "patriarchal propensity" of the Yus hru'u society.

During field research, we met many more examples of entrepreneurs originating from former nomad families, although the more successful among them had passed through a formal education. Like in the case just mentioned, their relationship with

the public sector has helped much to speed up success:⁴⁸ Yingga, son of a former Yus hru'u County government official, successfully managed the former government guesthouse at Yus hru'u Hotel. He finally leased it from the government. Starting off with a private hotel, he not only expanded his business by building the tallest and most modern hotel structure in the prefecture, but he also became the leading private entrepreneur in Skye rgu mdo, employing more than 150 local people. Another uncommon career starting from a nomad family in far western Rdza stod is that of Bsod nams thob rgyal, who started his formal education in Rdza stod and Skye rgu mdo. He later studied architecture in Xining and graduated in Xi'an. He has now become one of the most influential architects in the entire east Tibetan region, known under his Chinese alias *Ma Yonggui*, and thus is self-employed. Nowadays he is hired by government agencies, lamas, and private contractors alike to design administrative buildings, monastic edifices, hotels, and tourist resorts.

It is obvious though, that some examples like that cannot be taken as a general trend in a society just changing, but this is also true for other societies. The examples mentioned are meant to illustrate that Tibetan personalities of (former) nomad households have appeared in fields of work where even many western scientists would very likely not expect them to have started a job career – that is to say that major prerequisites for economic development in Yus hru'u are given:

... financial and human resources – that is, one needs the wealth to fund a new enterprise, the institutional opportunity to invest that wealth as productive capital (such as a market), and one needs someone who can manage that enterprise successfully.⁴⁹

However, these cases cited can hardly be seen as a result of the modern disintegration of the “nomad” society. At the same time, these careers were only possible through the regional development during the last few years. They are the positive peak of a scope of a few new employment opportunities not involving any pastoral livelihood. This fact is of even greater importance since these Tibetan entrepreneurs take care that the employment opportunities they create can be seized by local Tibetans – mostly women of the younger generation, many of whom have a pastoralist background and thus are examples of “nomads without pastures.”⁵⁰

At the same time, many families still dealing with livestock enlarged their range of economic activities, or rather accentuated these in a different way to make use

⁴⁸ It is quite common in Tibetan areas that government employees and their relatives predominate in local private business (see also Costello, “Flow of Wealth”).

⁴⁹ Costello, “Flow of Wealth.”

⁵⁰ A small survey in Yushu Hotel revealed that a considerable number of the employees come from nomad families, the majority of them from Yus hru'u and Nang chen Counties. To date, the data could not yet be evaluated in detail, yet it has become obvious that women have a considerable share in all occupation sectors of the hotel. Although most of their jobs are offered in the services sector (room and restaurant service, for instance), a number of women are employed in the middle hierarchy of the hotel management. The gender dimension of new employment possibilities in Skye rgu mdo's “urban” environment needs further examination.

of new sources of income or they engaged in side businesses. The underlying motives are double sided, making use of new opportunities on the one hand and having been forced to do so to secure their livelihood on the other hand. As far as herd management is concerned, there is a tendency to stick to traditional ways as long as state regulations do not interfere too much with the pastoral life. The transformation of herds for better market integration (meat, wool, milk products), as the official policy would like to have it, seems not to work very efficiently in Yus hru'u. Whether market integration could or should be considered as a "social good" cannot be discussed at this point. Given the fact that China's integration into the world market has affected the pastoralists' economy in Yus hru'u for some time past already, it led them to contrive coping strategies that, among others, also aimed at market integration. In the end, they use this for extending their subsistence capacity, to use Fischer's term.⁵¹

Although for a period, pastoralist households with livestock earned their cash income from the sale of livestock products, their volume of sales rather decreased during the last decade. Though the harsh environment which limits the productivity of livestock and problems of infrastructure (traffic distances make marketing difficult) seem to be the reasons, a closer look at these assumptions proves them to be wrong. In most areas of Yus hru'u TAP, many nomad households have better and easier access to cash income than by marketing animal husbandry products because they collect caterpillar fungus. Thus, the situation in Yus hru'u parallels the development Costello diagnoses for Mgo log:

Profitability is further limited by the consumption needs – for meat and dairy products – of the household. Most pastoral families try to avoid selling livestock and rely instead as much as possible on sales of yartsa, dug from the grassland and used in both traditional Chinese and Tibetan medicine, to finance market purchases of grain and other necessities. It is the development of the local market for livestock products and, more recently, of the market for traditional medicinal products such as yartsa that have given local people significant cash income enabling both historically high levels of consumption, including spending on religious activities, and the increase in livestock numbers.⁵²

A Niche Economy Provides the Basis for Investment Capital

Of course, access to new livelihoods and opportunities to improve one's living conditions need some preconditions. Resources, be it natural resources, expertise,

⁵¹ Fischer (in this issue) also makes clear that Tibetans in the TAR (notably nomads in western Tibet) also successfully aimed at their market integration (Fischer, "Subsistence and Rural Livelihood Strategies").

⁵² Costello, "Flow of Wealth." Similar developments in the TAR are reported by Winkler and Fischer in this issue (Daniel Winkler, "The Mushrooming Fungi Market in Tibet Exemplified by *Cordyceps sinensis* and *Tricholoma matsutake*," in "In the Shadow of the Leaping Dragon: Demography, Development, and the Environment in Tibetan Areas," ed. Ken Bauer, Geoff Childs, Andrew Fischer, and Daniel Winkler, special issue, *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, no. 4 [December, 2008], <http://www.thlib.org/?tid=T5571>; Fischer, "Subsistence and Rural Livelihood Strategies").

and/or business ideas and so forth, are necessary. As we have seen in the examples mentioned above, existing networks and experience in certain fields related to an enterprise can be more than helpful, or are even preconditioned. Yet, financial funds are an irreplaceable precondition. This notion is not new; it is, however, quite a novelty with regard to Tibetan nomads who, within a short period, should own money that can be invested at large. Nevertheless, this definitely is the case among quite a number of pastoralists in most counties of Yushu TAP. How that money is earned leads us back to caterpillar fungus mentioned above. It

is a fungus parasitizing the larvae of a moth of the genus *Thitarodes* (*Hepialus*), which lives in alpine grasslands of the Tibetan Plateau...but the market is driven by Chinese consumers, who know it as *chongcao* (*dongchong xiacao*), a highly valued tonic in Traditional Chinese Medicine.⁵³

When the economic liberalization began in the 1980s, the price of caterpillar fungus began to rise. Only gradually at first, but due to the growing demand in Inner China, Southeast Asia and Japan, the prices of this commodity rose significantly over the last years (Table 4).

Table 4: Trend of caterpillar fungus (*dbyar rtswa dgun 'bu*) prices in Yushu, 1988-2007

Month and Year	Price per jin (1 jin = 0.5 kg)	
	Yuan	US \$ equivalent
February 1988	> 470	~ 120
May 1988	~ 700	~ 180
June 2002	5,000	~ 580
May 2005	~ 20,000	~ 3,080
August 2005	~ 23,000	~ 3,540
April 2006	~ 30,000	~ 3,840
July 2006	~ 25,000	~ 3,200
January 2007	~ 28,000	~ 3,610

Sources: Cairen, caterpillar fungus traders, and other local informants.

Note: Due to variations in quality, prices vary greatly: the price range in July 2006 was ¥18,000-25,000 for ordinary and up to ¥38,000 for best quality. The US dollar equivalent for each period is calculated according to the exchange rate at the time.

⁵³ Daniel Winkler, "Yartsa Gunbu – Cordyceps sinensis. Economy, Ecology and Ethno-Mycology of a Fungus Endemic to the Tibetan Plateau," in *Wildlife and Plants in Traditional and Modern Tibet*, ed. A. Boesi and F. Cardi, Memorie della Società Italiana di Scienze Naturali e del Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Milano vol. 33, no. 1 (2005), 69.

This development has led to the fact that today digging, collecting and trading caterpillar fungus is the most important resource and source of cash income for the majority of pastoral Tibetan households in Yushu hru'u.⁵⁴

According to an official website,⁵⁵ Qinghai Province yields some twenty to fifty tons of caterpillar fungus per year, which currently bring an annual turnover of between one and 2.5 billion yuan to the nomads' households in regions where caterpillar fungus can be found. Most of these regions are situated in the Tibetan prefectures of Mgo log and Yushu hru'u (Figure 2). Interestingly, in official provincial and prefectural statistical yearbooks, caterpillar fungus is not even mentioned.⁵⁶ The fact is that the local cash income from caterpillar fungus in the two major caterpillar fungus-producing prefectures, Mgo log and Yushu hru'u, is almost five times higher than the official annual budget of the entire Yushu hru'u TAP, subsidies from Beijing and Xining included. Due to the alleged poverty and political sensitivity of nomad areas in the Tibetan Highland, pastoralists in Qinghai – unlike other primary producers in China – are not taxed in the majority of cases.



Figure 2: Map of caterpillar fungus-yielding communities in Yushu hru'u.

⁵⁴ These findings are consistent with the research results of Winkler in this issue (Winkler, “Mushrooming Fungi Market”).

⁵⁵ http://www.qhei.gov.cn/qhly/gyc/mgyc/t20060420_203261.shtml (accessed August, 2007). Official assessment of caterpillar fungus yields in the TAR and estimates of its turnover in neighboring regions correspond to this figure (see Winkler, “Mushrooming Fungi Market” in this issue).

⁵⁶ It is likely that the figure listed in the website mentioned above is calculated from the caterpillar fungus processed and packed in Xining City and the prefectural seats of the province. We therefore have to assume that the actual output of caterpillar fungus for the province is much higher, since meanwhile the middlemen of caterpillar fungus trade (Tibetans and Muslims coming to Yushu hru'u after the end of the caterpillar fungus digging season) are in direct contact with wholesalers (so-called *da laoban*, “Big Bosses”) in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and other places.

For those in Yus hru'u who have access to this resource,⁵⁷ a good opportunity to accumulate capital for urgently needed investment is thus opened:

Since moving wealth out of pastoral production and into other sectors seems key to greater development in this region...local Tibetans must invest wealth in other sectors in order to develop the local economy significantly to their benefit. Sectors with potential for development include transportation, the processing of both livestock products and raw materials used in traditional Tibetan medicine, tourism, and small scale service enterprises including retail shops, barbershops, and restaurants. Whether local Tibetans can develop these sectors, or whether other Tibetans or Chinese will succeed first, depends initially on the availability of capital to invest.⁵⁸

During the last decade, the urban environment of Yus hru'u's Skye rgu mdo town has surely seen some economical development and now offers good trade and employment opportunities. However, although Skye rgu mdo town is an old important trade center, not many of the pastoralists invested their caterpillar fungus income in miscellaneous trade or other local business. Most of the traders in Yus hru'u are either from old merchant families, or are Tibetan traders from other regions (Rnga ba, Zung chu [*songpan*], Chab mdo), Han Chinese, or Hui Muslims. It is in any case doubtful that the huge number of shops opened during the last few years really can subsist in the end.

The fieldwork in Yus hru'u's Rdza stod County – and some other regions – has revealed so far that most nomad families use the money earned mainly for consumption. Their consumerism is seemingly more determined by male aspiration patterns than by female ones, as can be seen from the purchase of goods like TV sets, motorbikes, cars, and fancy modern clothing worn by men rather than by women.⁵⁹ While the nomads who stay in the countryside tend to restrict themselves to a consumer role, those who start an enterprise instead move to town. There they tend to invest their money in highly lucrative, but at the same time highly risky, ventures – for example, trading in dogs (Tibetan mastiffs). Yet, most of the pastoralists who stay in town still earn their living by digging and/or trading caterpillar fungus.

Traditional strategies like reinvesting in livestock or jewelry are rather followed by richer families with enough cattle. While many observers might tend to see this in the light of a state policy asking for the reduction of livestock numbers due to ecological reasons, it also reveals a general attitude of many Yus hru'u nomads: accustomed to the caterpillar fungus price continuously rising, nobody can imagine

⁵⁷ The number of caterpillar fungus pieces an individual can find each season varies greatly by individual and natural conditions of the pastureland. Children are often said to be especially good at finding caterpillar fungus. Interviewees in Sulu Xiang and other parts of Rdza stod County noted that twenty to fifty pieces a day per individual is rather normal in Sulu, while in Mgo log Costello ("Flow of Wealth") was told of averages between six-hundred and one-thousand pieces in a season.

⁵⁸ Costello, "Flow of Wealth."

⁵⁹ See Winkler, "Mushrooming Fungi Market" in this issue.

that this could end one day. Many in-depth interviews and discussions in all parts of Yus hru'u emphasized this view.

Therefore, they only feel a need for action in the safeguarding of their caterpillar fungus resource. Not surprisingly, numerous conflicts have unsettled the area during the last years as more and more outsiders⁶⁰ started pouring in. A major conflict about caterpillar fungus digging, which lasted for almost a decade, was settled only in 2006 in southern Rdza stod's Sulu Xiang.⁶¹ The major outcome of this settlement was that outsiders are no longer permitted access to pastureland during the caterpillar fungus season. The local population succeeded in protecting this grassland resource against people from outside their counties.⁶² While most Yus hru'u pastoralists have thus succeeded in managing their resource, some, like the majority of the nomads in caterpillar fungus-poor Chu dmar leb County, have in turn lost access to this presently most important income-generating resource.

Besides consumption, only some families invest money in small businesses, for example, for cars to be used for taxi services, trucks for transportation services, and shops, restaurants, or small hotels or guesthouses. With men rather preoccupied in the mobile sectors and female responsibilities conferred to the latter, the petty trading and services business, this reflects the habitual gender division of labor in rural, or "traditional," Tibetan households. The income gained from these businesses, however, can hardly compare to good caterpillar fungus profits. This is why people, once they plan some bigger investment, are often keen on speculating with caterpillar fungus first. They buy the fungus in July or August, when due to the large supply at the end of the caterpillar fungus digging season the price is somewhat lower, and resell it in late spring, when supply is low, but demand and prices are at their highest. Another new source of "getting rich" is sought in a similar way: raising Tibetan mastiffs (*seng khyi, zang ao*), a dog recently in high demand with wealthy Chinese and foreigners. The dogs are traded to Inner China, but the breeding and trade bears high risks, since dog diseases like distemper may easily destroy, overnight, all investment, leaving the household with huge debts rather than a large profit.

Upward Mobility through Education and Initiative

In the meantime, a certain level of formal education has started to offer job opportunities for the younger generation, although skilled jobs are rare and hard to get. While the families might still live in the pastureland or the smaller county towns of Yus hru'u, their educated children sometimes find employment in small hotels and various other businesses in the region, for example, supermarkets or internet cafés. In Skye rgu mdo, a three-story department store was built and opened in 2006, offering space for the shops of approximately two-hundred traders. While

⁶⁰ These include Tibetans from Chab mdo, Sde dge (*dege*), Rnga ba, and other parts of Khams and A mdo (*anduo*), and Hui Muslims from Qinghai and Gansu.

⁶¹ This conflict in Rdza stod County's Sulu Xiang will be dealt with in a future publication.

⁶² Costello, "Flow of Wealth," reported similar procedures in Mgo log.

most of its Tibetan booths and shops are family-run, Chinese owners sometimes employ young Tibetans in order to communicate with their local Tibetan customers.

There even are a number of young Tibetans, both from farming and pastoralist households, who have a confident command of the English language. They have found occasional employment as interpreters, especially for international NGOs, in international development projects (Médecins Sans Frontières, Asia, EU, GTZ), and even during the fieldwork for this project. Salaries in this sector have already risen to a level that makes it difficult for academic research to compete.⁶³ Out-migration and mobility is their best option for finding upscale employment. While these jobs are well sought after, the jobs first mentioned offer comparatively low salaries only, generally not exceeding the payment earned for hard work done on construction sites. The female proportion of respective employees gravitates towards 100 percent. Most interestingly, well-educated young women – who are far from being a minority among the youth in Yus hru'u now – are seemingly less employed in the well-paid interpreter sector than their coeval males. In this case, employers are often foreigners and not just “tradition-oriented” Tibetans.

For skilled jobs, more vocational training is necessary. Local NGOs are especially active in this field.⁶⁴ While the wages earned may be compared to low salaries in Chinese cities, they can certainly not compete with the earnings made by digging caterpillar fungus. The latter often allows people to get into business even without having had any formal education, although speaking some basic Chinese seems to be an important prerequisite. The second case study is such an example.

Case Study 2: Bsod nams dge legs (38 Years Old) – from Nomad to Self-made Businessman

When I was young, I stayed in the [people's] commune. During that time, I think I was around four years old. Later on, the yaks were distributed among the families. Then I took care of the yaks and sheep. When I was about sixteen or seventeen years old, I went to Chab mdo, and then from Chab mdo to Lhasa. Like this, I always traveled around there. Since then I never went back to my home village. (...) Chinese I learned by myself. Like this, really...[poor]...

When I was eighteen years old, I started to do business, doing business for two years. During that time, I didn't have much funds, only about one-thousand or two-thousand yuan. Then in summer, I went to collect caterpillar fungus and do business...Then in 1998, I visited my *sprul sku*, and then went to Lhasa and to India...

In 1998 I went to India and the next year I came back. Then I traveled to many places, sometimes to Lhasa, sometimes to Chengdu, sometimes to Xining. I had

⁶³ In the case of our project, a number of Yus hru'u-born interpreters were not willing to work for a salary that was twice as high as the salary of a middle school teacher.

⁶⁴ In Skye rgu mdo, there are at least three local NGOs occasionally offering vocational training or advanced education: Snowland Service Group, The Jinpa Project, and Kunpen Vocational Training Center.

to travel to many different places, haha. Then I did business with caterpillar fungus and corals, *gzi*, amber, and cars.

Q: *Are there many people from your place moving here?*

Yes, very many, especially from the pastoral areas, very many. Some of them do business, some of them drive cars, some of them are doing service jobs or are [construction] workers. Business is somewhat better in Yushu, the region is a little bit bigger, and the houses are cheaper to buy.

The native place of Bsod nams dge legs is actually situated within a pastoralist area of Chab mdo district in the neighboring TAR – just across the provincial border and near Yus hru’u County’s Xiaosumang community. Because he is married to a nomad woman of Xiaosumang and the transportation facilities from there to Yus hru’u are better, he focused his business life on Yus hru’u rather than on Chab mdo. However, he considers himself a local businessman rather than one from the TAR, in contrast to many other traders from different parts of eastern Tibet. His business network is concentrated in Yus hru’u, although like any Tibetan merchant, he is rather mobile and multilocal, and as such is a typical nomad. He felt that the extent and range of the business he is doing is more limited by financial funds than by administrative hurdles or other factors. He expressed the sentiment that trading belongs to the very tradition of Tibetan nomads, and as such is not a big change from his original life.

Fieldwork in Yus hru’u has demonstrated that this opting for “doing business” is widespread, but rather bound to households having moved to town already. In the rural context, 8 percent of the households surveyed were engaged in some kind of business, while 11 percent admitted this ambition by considering it to be the most successful strategy to secure their livelihood.

Definitely, the importance of Skye rgu mdo, or Yus hru’u town, as a political, cultural, economic and administrative center of a predominantly pastoralist region, makes it an interesting place for examining the factual prospects of securing jobs, food, and resources. It has become the focus for the consumption wishes of the rural population as well as a pivot for those pastoralists who, by education or on their own initiative, shape a “scope of actions” or new “regions of economic activities” for themselves.

Fragmentation of Yus hru’u’s Pastoralist Society and Its Social Context

Traditionally Tibetan *'brog pas* were accustomed to their livestock being their major basis of livelihood and their most important and reliable source of income. The will to keep up pastoralism is therefore widespread among Yus hru’u nomads, yet its factual potential is delimited in the scope of spatial and social schemes and their stage of transition. Due to the reasons mentioned above, this basis of their livelihood has been heavily undermined. In many areas of Yus hru’u, the major delimiting factor for nomadic life has to be considered the lack of pastures. This

lack is repeatedly attributed to the current policy of contracting land to individual households, but the natural conditions of the grassland resources all over the Tibet-Qinghai Plateau obviously set limits as well. Changing price schemes for pastoralist products add to this. What Costello has pointed out in the case of Mgo log is also true for Yus hru'u: consumption needs have increased due to the growth of the human population, but incomes based on livestock product sales have dropped. Most price changes are linked to the greater Chinese market or to the world market. Wool prices, for instance, have dropped dramatically, since the coarse Tibetan wool produced in most nomad areas cannot compete with the higher quality and cheaper Australian wool.⁶⁵

The current situation depicts the pastoralist society in Yus hru'u as being fragmented.⁶⁶ A set of major groups can be defined according to whether the households' livelihood is mainly based on

1. pastoral activities
2. collecting caterpillar fungus
3. trade and private entrepreneurship
4. employment and wage labor
5. support by the state, by NGOs or the like.

While the first three groups sometimes or even often have the potential to yield incomes high enough to support an entire household, the remaining two can ordinarily not subsist from that revenue alone. They have to combine it to some other source of income. The scope of opportunities the caterpillar fungus income can create is hard to assess since one can notice that the development of the caterpillar fungus's price and trading hampers the initiative of quite a few nomadic households. A common notion regarding all Tibetan nomad areas is "the apparent preference for leisure rather than the accumulation of cash."⁶⁷ This makes many pastoralist Tibetans stay in their home areas with their livestock, or rather with their pastureland – especially since access to the latter maintains access to what is currently the most important resource of Tibetan pastoralists: caterpillar fungus.

Asked about their economic situation, many pastoralists in Sulu, Bya phug thang, and Skye rgu mdo expressed that they feel no need for other economic

⁶⁵ John W. Longworth and Colin G. Brown, *Agribusiness Reforms in China: The Case of Wool* (Wallingford, UK: CAB International in association with ACIAR, 1995); Costello, "Flow of Wealth." See also Fischer, "Subsistence and Rural Livelihood Strategies" in this issue.

⁶⁶ This can be considered a major result of our research in Yus hru'u and will be subsequently published by Andreas Gruschke, "Ressourcennutzung und nomadische Lebenssicherung in Osttibet – Die Region Yushu (Qinghai, VR China)" (PhD diss., forthcoming) and Andreas Gruschke, Ingo Breuer, and Jörg Gertel, "Osttibet: Regionalisierung und Urbanisierung im Nomadenraum," in *Internationales Asienforum* (forthcoming).

⁶⁷ See Costello, "Flow of Wealth." Although this view is often alleged to Chinese prejudices, we were repeatedly told such judgments by Tibetans as well, be they peasants, officials, or intellectuals. This notion was most distinctly expressed by some Tibetan entrepreneurs in Skye rgu mdo who found themselves conflicted between wishing to employ Tibetans for work in Yus hru'u and Labu hotels, for instance (interviews on December 12, 2006, and January 10, 19, and 20, 2007), and being unsatisfied with the work performance of many of them.

initiatives since the price of caterpillar fungus is rising year after year. In some cases in Sulu, it was obvious that even the care for the animals was neglected. The influence of the cash income from caterpillar fungus on public life during the digging season is extremely palpable: Approximately 80 percent of shops, restaurants, and so forth in Rdza stod County are closed in the caterpillar fungus season; arrangement of transportation is more difficult and expensive. Local cadres of the county and community governments and the few employers in Yus hru'u (for example, hotel owners) complain that it is difficult to keep the local pastoralists employed at work since they focus on the one to two month period of the caterpillar fungus season. To attract them to wage labor does not meet their interest.⁶⁸ Therefore, strategies for promoting economic development outside the animal husbandry sector are undermined, or at least declined.

Household interviews undertaken in several counties⁶⁹ were to identify the problems of the pastoralists' livelihood that result from modern transformation processes. While some nomads use the new opportunities of a globalized economy, there are many changes taking place bound to increase the households' vulnerability:

- As it has elsewhere, the shift from subsistence to a monetary economy augmented the need for cash income. The declining number of animals per household increases this need since subsistence is often no longer possible. This was the case for the large majority of the households in our case studies.
- Illness and the cost of health care are of relevance for a considerable number of the households interviewed. A problem that has been aggravated since the communes were disbanded and, among others, the financial burdens of health care thus slipped back to individual households.
- Households mainly or exclusively consisting of very old and/or sick family members and/or only infants lack urgently needed labor force. This was a negligible problem during the collective period. A new dilemma arises in small families by the enrolment of children in school since the labor force is thus further reduced.
- The resulting very low rate of out-migration for labor has further rationales in a variety of factors also: lack of language skills and education reduces job opportunities outside the pastoralist sector, as does the nonexistent knowledge about the life in distant cities, the lack of social networks reaching such places, and so forth.

In general, there is little expectation for individuals from pastoralist households to engage in wage labor. Out-migration in search of unskilled labor is generally not an option for those without income.

⁶⁸ See similar findings of Fischer in this issue (Fischer, "Subsistence and Rural Livelihood Strategies").

⁶⁹ During the fieldwork in summer 2006 and January 2007, we conducted 296 household interviews in the counties of Rdza stod, Nang chen, Yus hru'u, and Chu dmar leb. Due to the limited time, the rich data of these household interviews have not yet been processed.

Transregional Interaction of Yus hru'u Nomads

On the contrary, migrants out of the pastoral area are more often than not those who have enough funds at their disposal: government employees⁷⁰ and their (pastoralist) relatives, traders, and well-off nomad families frequently have a second house or home in the county seat, the prefectural capital Skye rgu mdo or in Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province. The current pattern of interaction between nomads and sedentary population in Yus hru'u thus differs significantly from some other pastoralist regions where the marginalized nomads tend to seek job opportunities outside their traditional action radius – as construction workers in metropolitan areas of Egypt and Morocco, for example.⁷¹ In Yus hru'u, it is virtually only the wealthier households whose range of activities reaches beyond the prefecture's border. Furthermore, entire households tend to move to town, different from the above-mentioned Muslim areas where women stay in the countryside while the men temporarily migrate to urban areas. We should not overlook, though, that the current developments in Yus hru'u tend to exacerbate the habitually uneven gender division of labor. Such consequences are already spotted by young Tibetans, notably female high school students, but unfortunately this is hardly an academic issue yet.⁷²

The new patterns of interaction between nomads and sedentary population in Yus hru'u may thus be seen as an intensified exchange relationship based on trade and employment, with little migration out and more migration into the region:

- Those who have good and very good income possibilities – in which marketing of animal husbandry products hardly belongs any more – do trade with special commodities (such as caterpillar fungus and dogs) out of the region, others into the region (especially jewelry and costly consumer goods). Those with medium income possibilities trade articles of daily use, caterpillar fungus in smaller scale, devotional and daily consumer goods into the region.
- For low-paid and hard physical work (construction work) or work needing a certain skill (house construction), workforce is often brought from outside (Hui, Han). On a local basis, such heavy labor is only accepted by very poor households that can neither live off their animals nor have access to caterpillar fungus. They look for this kind of work in rural communities, county towns, or Skye rgu mdo. However, they have to face the problem that in most cases they cannot compete with the more experienced workforce brought in from outside. Even Yus hru'u peasants often credit their fellow nomads less than they credit Chinese workers.

⁷⁰ In most Tibetan areas, the government is one of the largest sources of income for local residents (Costello, "Flow of Wealth"; Gruschke, "Arbeitslosigkeit").

⁷¹ See, for example, case studies of Ingo Breuer, Jörg Gertel, and Constanze Heinig, referred to on the webpage http://www.nomadsed.de/en_bibliographie.html.

⁷² See, for instance, the work and objectives of the very active NGO The Shem Women's Group (<http://www.shemgroup.org>).

Conclusion

Higher incomes generated in quite a few pastoralist counties of Yus hru'u TAP influence lifestyles and pastoralist activities in a variety of ways. They are predisposed to deepen the exchange relationship and interdependency between (mostly pastoralist) rural areas and towns and cities both within and outside of the region. Such interdependencies can be detected in different kinds of linkages and forms of interaction.

With the importance of livestock products decreased, caterpillar fungus creates the major cash income of many Yus hru'u pastoralists. In addition, it is the trade in caterpillar fungus and other high-risk but profitable commodities (like Tibetan mastiffs) which brings them in contact with the Chinese and even international markets. As access to and participation in markets has become easier, and the variety of purchased goods has increased, consumption levels have increased enormously during the last decade. This growth leads to booming trade particularly in the prefectural capital, Skye rgu mdo, and the county seats. The higher demand and expenditure for consumer goods, jewelry, and so forth leads to further enhanced trade activities connecting the rural areas and towns to cities outside the prefecture.

The development of the towns of Yus hru'u TAP offers new job opportunities with newly opened businesses (both Chinese and Tibetan shops). The state of affairs of the pastoralist economy in Yus hru'u would actually make such jobs needed, if there was not caterpillar fungus-related income compensating for the low livelihood level of many nomadic households. However, due to the low wages offered by businesses, such opportunities are rarely taken by individuals from pastoralist households (who revert to caterpillar fungus activities whenever possible). Their unwillingness to engage in wage labor leads to the consequence that fewer people than expected are available to the local labor market. This phenomenon entails some (temporally limited) in-migration.⁷³ Thus, not only are professionals called in to Yus hru'u from outside, but so too are workers for unskilled labor – mostly Muslims from A mdo, some Tibetans from agricultural areas, and Han Chinese. Meanwhile, wage labor jobs that formerly were only filled by Chinese or Tibetans from agricultural areas, such as jobs in restaurants or shops, are now occasionally accepted by local pastoralists, particularly young Tibetan women, and recently their number seems to be growing slightly.

As was communicated in a number of biographical and expert interviews, pastoralist households with sufficient access to good caterpillar fungus resources sometimes show a reduced commitment to herds. The resulting decrease of animals in the herds possibly alleviates stress on pastureland, but the social and economical consequences in the end are hard to assess. With smaller herds, the households' need for cash income certainly increases further, especially since even impoverished Tibetan pastoralists' do not change their dietary preferences (especially their preference for meat and butter). As a consequence, the demand for food nomads

⁷³ See Fischer in this issue (Fischer, "Subsistence and Rural Livelihood Strategies").

traditionally produce and consume is again on the rise, resulting in a further increase regarding the costs of living for all locals. The danger of pauperization of those who have fewer resources is watered down by both state and NGO poverty alleviation programs which are mainly designed outside Yus hru'u.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the ensuing dependency on help from outside offers little perspective for improving their livelihood by themselves.

On the other hand, the improving infrastructure, the growth of monetary exchange and therefore of trade, as well as new employment and work relations entail a stronger mutual pervasion of "nomadic" and "sedentary" spheres than before, both on a regional and transregional level. The (changing) significance of nomadism in Tibetan areas is not only perceived by outsiders, but by the pastoralists in Yus hru'u TAP themselves. More (former) nomads are nowadays occupied or employed outside pastoralist activities than the statistics lead us to believe. This is not only because it seems impossible for most nomad households to exist on animal husbandry alone, but also due to their willingness to follow other occupations rather than marketing their animals. They have realized that they should be involved in structuring the conditions under which "nomadic" activities are increasingly abandoned or continue to exist, and should not leave this to others.

⁷⁴ Many projects of the Minzheng Ting and various other government bodies are designed for poverty alleviation, while foreign and local NGOs, sometimes even monasteries or individual *bla mas* also try to create schemes for further development. The limited success of, and sometimes even damage done by, state development programs is mainly due to the corruption of officials.

Glossary

Note: these glossary entries are organized in Tibetan alphabetical order. All entries list the following information in this order: THL Extended Wylie transliteration of the term, THL Phonetic rendering of the term, the English translation, the Sanskrit equivalent, the Chinese equivalent, other equivalents such as Mongolian or Latin, associated dates, and the type of term.

Ka					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>dkar mdzes</i>	Kandzé		Chi. <i>Ganzi</i>		Place
<i>skye rgu mdo</i>	Kyegundo		Chi. <i>Yushu</i>		Place
Kha					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>kham</i>	Kham				Place
<i>kham pa</i>	Khampa				Ethnicity
<i>khri 'du</i>	Trindu		Chi. <i>Chengduo</i> (<i>Chindu</i>)		Place
Ga					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>gangs can yul</i>	Gangchen Yül	Tibetan Plateau	Chi. <i>Qingzang</i> <i>Gaoyuan</i>		Place
<i>mgo log</i>	Golok		Chi. <i>Guoluo</i> (<i>Golog</i>)		Place
Nga					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>rnga ba</i>	Ngawa		Chi. <i>Aba Xian</i>		Place
Cha					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>chab mdo</i>	Chamdo		Chi. <i>Qamdo</i>		Place
<i>chu dmar leb</i>	Chumarlep		Chi. <i>Qumalai</i> (<i>Qumarleb</i>)		Place
<i>chol kha gsum</i>	Chölkha Sum		Chi. <i>Tibet-Qinghai</i> <i>Plateau</i>		Place
Da					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>sde dge</i>	Degé		Chi. <i>Dege</i>		Place
Na					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>nag chu</i>	Nakchu		Chi. <i>Naqu</i>		Place
<i>nang chen</i>	Nangchen		Chi. <i>Nangqian</i> (<i>Nangqén</i>)		Place
Pa					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>sprul sku</i>	trülku				Term

Ba					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>bya phug thang</i>	Japuktang		Chi. <i>Qapugtang (Sahuteng)</i>		Place
<i>byang thang</i>	Jangtang		Chi. <i>Qiangtang</i>		Place
<i>bla ma</i>	lama				Term
<i>dbyar rtswa dgun 'bu</i>	Yartsa Gūnbu	caterpillar fungus	Chi. <i>dongchong xiacao</i> Lat. <i>Cordyceps sinensis</i>		Scientific Name
<i>'bri chu</i>	Drichu	Yangtze	Chi. <i>Zhi Qu</i>		River
<i>'bri stod</i>	Dritö		Chi. <i>Zhiduo (Zhidoi)</i>		Place
<i>'brog pa</i>	drokpa				Term
Ma					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>rma chu</i>	Machu	Yellow River	Chi. <i>Ma Qu, Huang He</i>		River
Tsa					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>gsang stod zhabs 'degs tshogs</i>	Tsangtö Zhapdek Tsok	Snowland Service Group	Chi. <i>Jiangyuan Fazhan Cujinhui</i>		Organization
Tsha					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>mtsho nub</i>	Tsonup		Chi. <i>Haixi</i>		Place
<i>mtsho byang</i>	Tsojang		Chi. <i>Haibei</i>		Place
<i>mtsho lho</i>	Tsolho		Chi. <i>Hainan</i>		Place
Dza					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>rdza chu</i>	Dzachu	Mekong			River
<i>rdza stod</i>	Dzatö		Chi. <i>Zaduo (Zadoi)</i>		Place
Za					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>zung chu</i>	Zungchu		Chi. <i>Songpan</i>		Place
<i>gzi</i>	zi				Term
Ya					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>yus hru 'u</i>	Yüshu		Chi. <i>Yushu</i>		Place
Ra					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>rin chen zla ba</i>	Rinchen Dawa				Person
Sa					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>seng khyi</i>		Tibetan mastiff	Chi. <i>Zang ao</i>		Term
<i>bsod nams dge legs</i>	Sönam Gelek				Person

<i>bsod nams thob rgyal</i>	Sónam Topgyel				Person
A					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Other	Dates	Type
<i>a mdo</i>	Amdo		Chi. <i>Anduo</i>		Place
Latin					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Latin	Dates	Type
			<i>Hepialus</i>		Scientific Name
			<i>Ochotona curzoniae</i>		Scientific Name
			<i>Thitarodes</i>		Scientific Name
Chinese					
Wylie	Phonetics	English	Chinese	Dates	Type
		contracting pasture to families	<i>bao caoyuan dao hu</i>		Term
			<i>Chendu</i>		Place
		Reforms and Opening Up	<i>gaige kaifang</i>		Term
			<i>Gansu</i>		Place
			<i>Guangzhou</i>		Place
			<i>Gyiza</i>		Place
		construction of fixed settlements	<i>jianshe dingju dian</i>		Term
		construction of fenced areas	<i>jianshe weilan</i>		Term
		construction of schools and health stations	<i>jianshe xuexiao weisheng zhan</i>		Term
		0.5 kg	<i>jin</i>		Term
			<i>Juela Xiang</i>		Place
			<i>Ma Yonggui</i>		Person
		Ministry of Civil Affairs	<i>Minzheng Ting</i>		Organization
			<i>Peltsa</i>		Place
			<i>Qinghai</i>		Place
			<i>Qingshuihe</i>		Place
		Forest Police Department	<i>Senlin Gong'an Ju</i>		Organization
			<i>Shang Baitang</i>		Place
			<i>Shenzhen</i>		Place
			<i>Sichuan</i>		Place
			<i>Sipeitao Jianshe</i>		Term
			<i>Sulu</i>		Place
			<i>Sulu Xiang</i>		Place
		Restore Cropland to Forest	<i>tuigeng huanlin</i>		Term

		Restore Pastures to Grass	<i>tuimu huancao</i>		Term
		rural community	<i>xiang</i>		Term
		work team	<i>xiaodui</i>		Term
			<i>Xiaosumang</i>		Place
		Great Development of the West	<i>Xibu Da Kaifa</i>		Term
			<i>Xining</i>		Place
		Tibet Autonomous Region	<i>Xizang</i>		Place
			<i>Yarcer</i>		Place
		Poverty Alleviation through Migration	<i>yimin fupin</i>		Term
		<i>Yushu Survey</i>	<i>Yushu Gaikuang</i>		Text
		Yushu Survey Group	<i>Yushu Gaikuang Bianxiezhu</i>		Author
		<i>Yushu Statistical Yearbook 2005</i>	<i>Yushu Tongji Nianjian 2005</i>		Text
		Yushu Statistics Bureau	<i>Yushu Tongjiju</i>		Author
		<i>A Survey of the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Yushu</i>	<i>Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Gaikuang</i>		Text
		Survey of the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Yushu Compilation Group	<i>Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Gaikuang Bianxiezhu</i>		Author
		Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Statistics Bureau	<i>Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Tongjiju</i>		Author
		<i>Yushu Statistical Yearbook 1950-1999</i>	<i>Yushu Zangzu Zizhizhou Tongjiju Nianjian 1950-1999</i>		Text
		a [truck] driver unit in Zadoi	<i>Zadoi qichedui</i>		Term
		rural township	<i>zhen</i>		Term

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