Changing Livelihood and Economy of Tibetan Herders

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Certificate of Authorship

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Name: Baima Cuo Pema Tso
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Abstract and Summary

The thesis is a case study of the changing Tibetan herders’ (Drokpa) community of Da. The village community is adjacent to the town of Nagchu, the largest town at a high altitude (4,500m) on the Tibetan Plateau. The town is within the main rail and road transport network and is an administrative centre. As a consequence of its location, Nagchu is growing as an economic centre. The herding community of Da has significantly increased its involvement with, and dependence on, this centre of economic and administrative activity. As a consequence of its proximity to Nagchu, the thesis argues that the transformation from a subsistence-orientated economy to a wider market-driven economy has had major influence on change for the Drokpa of Da. The study provides an analysis of the interface of an indigenous peoples who survive in a very challenging environment, but who are now increasingly engaged with an outside and potentially alien world. The key questions are; can such a community survive and, if so, how?

The thesis investigates the major factors that have influenced lifestyles and livelihoods of Da in recent times, following a brief introduction in terms of the history of the Drokpa. The impact of this transformation is most evident in land access, stock holdings, land scarcity, increased opportunities for earning off-farm incomes and population outflow from the village. The objectives of this social anthropological study mainly focused on the period from 1960 to 2010, investigating the impact of social transformation on household structures and economics, particularly the effect of major changes in state administrative and economic policy that have affected recent transformations. The research employed two key strategies: (1) a qualitative case study enquiry of major family and livelihood issues and (2) a quantitative analysis of household economies. Data were collected from interviews, published reports, archives and other relevant documents. Although this research is a discrete case study within the highland Tibetan plateau, the ‘meaning’ expressed as ‘generative narrative’ can be explored in wider social and economic contexts. The complexity of the interaction with external changes, along with developing attitudes among the Da community, posed considerable challenges and these are addressed.
The thesis provides a narrative on the recent history, development and retained practices among the Drokpa through recent periods of some turmoil. Initially the period prior to the 1950s considers how the Drokpa developed within the context of wider historical events. Over time a Tibetan identity emerged. This process was influenced by foreign influences and rulers, but from them a unique Tibetan socio-political system developed. Tibet became a theocratic state, albeit with a secular cabinet. Monasteries played a central role, not only as religious centres of learning but also with regard to the management of land. Buddhism melded with the local Bon religion to form the unique Tibetan Buddhism (Karmey, Samten, 1972). The Bon elements define an individual’s and communities’ relationship to their environment, and their identity and sense of place. The overarching Lamaistic Buddhism provides a spiritual superstructure of belief and practice. Some consider the Tibetan political organisation as ‘feudal.’ This was not the same as in Europe as, within that framework, the Drokpa retained some autonomy in the general directions of life and independence of movement. Their ties to central authority were based upon religious duty and respect, and the convenience of ties to secular authorities that brought benefits such as law, conflict resolution and management of access to pasture and land. Their primary allegiance was to the household, the local community and, to a lesser extent, the historical tribal systems. The economy of the Drokpa is best described as subsistence-orientated with an historically associated trade in salt and surplus agricultural products.

The 1950s introduced an essentially alien culture that the Drokpa had had only limited exposure to previously. Change was imposed from above. During this period, considerable sociological research was done which helps to understand conditions as change was imposed. ‘Socialism in the Chinese context’ became the direction for the Drokpa. Concepts implicit in this policy such a ‘war’ between a disenfranchised and exploited rural poor and an exploitative elite did not, in the main, reflect reality. Religion that had been the foundation of Tibetan life was suppressed, though the interwoven nature of religious beliefs with daily life could not be readily removed.

The period of collectivisation and the Cultural Revolution was draconian, and severely affected people’s lives. Social structures were changed and production became collective
on a larger scale and in different ways to traditional practice. This research shows however, that there were local accommodations. It would appear that there was little local collusion in the new systems – more pragmatic accommodation. The tacit knowledge of the Drokpa was still important for groups to live and survive on the Tibetan Plateau, and could not be replaced by alternative views. Underlying community practices, values and beliefs went into abeyance rather than being lost.

The post-1980 period, following the reforms led by Deng Xiaoping, brought about almost immediate change. Former practices and social organisation were reinstated, albeit in changed forms. The Drokpa showed a capacity to adapt economically and socially to the new, wider, and more open markets. Some have shown considerable capability to adapt to and obtain significant benefits from the new Chinese economy.

Currently in Da, some households are clearly more successful than others, and this does seem to relate to inherent skills which individual households have, in order to optimise the benefits from their limited resources. The Drokpa of Da has shown that they can adequately survive as an economic and social entity. Often they have made community decisions that influence the way all households survive. They showed a rapid ability to respond to market forces through the focussing of production, diversification and use of increased opportunities to invest resources and improve household incomes. What is of significance is that they still invest a significant proportion of available resources into social and cultural activities. Wealth is defined not simply in material terms but by values associated with the well-being that comes from identity and belonging. This does not seem to be primarily a return to, and clinging on to the past, but an understanding that social cohesion, community identity and shared decision-making provides economic advantage. It brings the capacity that comes from economies of scale, shared resource used for common ends, and considerable diversification. Many of the current Drokpa show an entrepreneurial flair that takes and uses the opportunities the market offers.

The latter is considered in detail as a case study of adaptation. World Bank data shows that from the 1980s, non-agricultural products as a percentage of GDP in China increased rapidly, with surges in the mid-1980s, and then a sustained and rapid upward trend post-2000. In the same period, the amount of land used for agricultural production increased,
although the rise of other industries meant that agriculture declined as a percentage of GDP, as wealth was accumulated more rapidly in other sectors of the economy. The rural poor in China comprised 80% of the population, more among Tibetans, and this led to considerable social instabilities. The ability of the Drokpa to adapt to these considerable changes provides some lessons.

This thesis shows how the Drokpa have adapted to and coped with change and argues that far from clinging to the past, the Drokpa have the capacity to evolve and change to meet the demands of their world as it has become wider and more complicated. It is argued that this capacity is embedded within the tacit knowledge of the Drokpa, built upon learning to live in a harsh environment. This knowledge is not simply concerned with capabilities for economic success, for example trade and management of marginal pastureland, but an innate understanding that lies behind the statement of one interviewee – “The Drokpa know how to survive.” This knowledge is concerned with how to survive as a culture, alongside using the skills and knowledge that may have economic value within changing circumstances.

The view that the Drokpa’s motivation and practices are a conservative return to the familiar, perhaps wrongly remembered as a ‘golden age’, is challenged. It is argued that for the Drokpa recent processes have been more about knowing how to survive and to have the capacity to adapt, innovate and evolve successfully. Counter-intuitively, this capacity for adaptation comes from their commitment to, at first sight, traditional patterns of belief and social custom, albeit in evolved forms. This evolution since 1980 was not simply reactive, but often a conscious community and household decision to balance community cohesion with the potentially fragmenting effects of a rapidly developing market economy. The term, ‘conscious’, is grounded in tacit knowledge and what may be called intuition. This intuition is defined as ‘abstractionist’ rather than ‘associative’ cognition, that is an immediate grasp of the wider perspective rather than a logical per se constructed argument. It is argued that the Drokpa seem to have the capacity to retain and sustain their cultural identity that underpins economic success and survival. How individuals as social actors make their decisions and the motivation behind these decisions has to be understood in the context of economic and, cultural constraints, and social political influence. In the case of
the Drokpa, it seems that decisions are made primarily at the household level, and extended families appear to be the more viable economic units. Within that framework, individuals resolve what they will do to support the household. Only a small number have left the village in recent times.

This thesis challenges the assumption that such communities are ill-fitted to survive within a global economy. On the contrary, as shown by the Da community, they have the capacity to not only survive but also to thrive, retaining their core values. Those core values came through the period of collectivisation and the Cultural Revolution. This capacity is grounded in their tacit understanding that sustaining group cohesion and identity is essential to not simply maintaining a culture that draws on the past but, and more significantly, offering economic advantage within a market-and cash-orientated economy. Within such societies there is a tacit understanding as to how marginal land such as the high plateau can be managed, not only to meet local survival needs, but also to bring to market goods and services of value to the wider economy. The considerable skills developed by cultures such as the Drokpa in utilising the limited resources of marginal lands can provide the basis for the adaptation to a wider economy based upon cash, mass-production and global markets.

Policy makers need not assume that local cultures and economies will be overwhelmed by all and any forces for change. These communities have innate understandings that are of value and that should not be undervalued. The capacity of the Drokpa to adapt has important lessons for policy towards these potentially marginalised societies. They can and do adapt if sufficient acknowledgment is given to the social context within which they function. They have the potential to make important economic and cultural contributions to the wider society.

This research does not aim to create theory, but to offer rational ‘conjectures’ that can be used by other researchers and decision-makers and then tested as to their practical use. Such conjectures move thinking forward, even though they may only have interim utility, depending upon future research or experience.
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To my supervisor Professor David Kemp
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1 Preface

A research project should have of necessity, structure, rigour and objectivity. It is also a personal and intellectual journey on the part of the researcher. This preface outlines the context for the writing, and the thesis offers the reader a narrative of that journey. In this way it is hoped that the reader will become a co-reader, involved in the challenges of the journey and understanding the route taken, intellectually and in the field. As a companion on the journey, the reader will hopefully understand the findings that form the conclusion. This is a narrative journey through ‘complexity’ (Davies, 1995) in which the author aims to formulate the data available into a useful form, so that a better understanding can exist. The meaning in terms of what the researcher sees may become the meaning the reader sees in his or her context.

Researchers rarely come fresh to the field. They bring their own previous experience and knowledge. Some will be useful, much will need challenging and, in some cases, rejecting as baggage from the past. My personal journey began in childhood. This thesis offers an ethnographic account over time of herders (Drokpa) in the village of Da, their household economy and their social organisation. The village is close to Nagchu town1 where I grew up. I received my primary school education there, and I spent my school holidays in the village. I enjoyed life ‘as a child’, playing with the sheep and goats, watching adults milking yaks, and riding horses. All these childhood memories were enriched and enlivened by the sound of my late grandmother’s Buddhist chanting. I thought that I knew the place and the people well. I came to realise, however, that I saw life as a child, emotionally and subjectively. I perceived the people, my people, as being very spiritually orientated and non-materialistic unlike many others. This underlying perception remained when I carried out fieldwork in the village and completed my Master’s thesis in Norway.

1 ‘Town’ is translation of a Chinese term 镇. It refers to political divisions of China, includes an urban core and having some villages on its borders (cun 村).
When I began this PhD in Australia, I had the opportunity to see how Australian farmers manage their farms, and how they responded to wider external markets. Perhaps Australian farmers do not believe in mountain deities as we do, and do not associate Naga with water sources, though the Australian indigenous people had and have in some ways, similar beliefs. This new experience led me to realise that I had understood so little about the livelihood and life of local herders back home. In particular, I came to see that I had missed considering how they cope with external influences, for example social, political and economic pressures, upon everyday life. This recognition and realisation initiated a reflective journey as this research progressed. It generated intense critical awareness, heightened perception and offered a capacity to investigate those internal and external factors and the motivations that lay behind how the Drokpa adapted to change.

The choice of a particular focus and community grew from my childhood memories and from my ethnic identity. This allowed me access to the people and the culture and, to some extent, acceptance on the part of the people I was researching. It enabled the management of political sensitivities. As will be seen, a feature of the research is emotional engagement, and this differentiates the research from much research elsewhere. These advantages required balancing by academic objectivity. Even so, research into a Tibetan community by an indigenous Tibetan who has roots in the area will hopefully offer unique insights. The activities of the Drokpa have a strong symbolic content and meaning, ritually adding power to the experience. This led me to the realisation that the local people have their unique and idiosyncratic internal logic, an internal strategy to cope with their external environment. It became obvious that the research must use a few different lines of investigation if true understanding were to be possible as to how herders cope with new circumstances, borrow new symbolic forms, and infuse the symbols as vehicles with their own meanings (Cohen, 1985). Although Tibetan herders’ livelihood and local economy since the 1980s has been more or less oriented to external market forces, people have remained committed to their culture, and so the group has retained its normal ‘physiognomy’ (Durkheim, 2008). The research examines and investigates these phenomena.
Kuhn (1962) argued that true innovation in ideas came from a personal leap of imagination and intuition, and that these often come from full engagement with the observed; hence his interest in aesthetics. It is in the insider/outsider nature of this researcher that perhaps this emotional and personal component will enable, if not a paradigm shift, at least a new and fresh perspective which I hope to bring to this study.

My primary audience are those anthropologists and sociologists interested in pastoral societies and those non-anthropological development specialists who work with them. I hope that this thesis will offer anthropological insight, and provide empirical data at a local level that aids an understanding of herder household economy in the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China.
The Tibetan Plateau is the highest landmass inhabited by man, a vast area occupying at least one-third of China and which includes many of the highest mountains on earth. The Plateau was probably first exploited by seasonal migrations of hunters who lived off the wild animals, and who over time adapted to living at altitude as the last ice age declined. The Plateau was widely settled by 1500 years ago by many groups of herders with domesticated livestock. By that time identifiable communities had developed that could be considered as ‘Tibetan’ in modern day terms. By then Buddhism had been melded with the previous Bon beliefs.

Over centuries, the local culture developed, influenced by the isolation of many small communities, as well as by internal factors. Other factors included a series of external, political, religious, administrative and economic factors that, to some extent, affected the nomadic herder households through their contacts with the wider community. Through those years, herders (Drokpa) developed skills at surviving in isolation, on marginal lands and within a harsh climate, but their ability to adapt to the radical changes in China since 1950 has received limited attention. Previously, the Drokpa did have local autonomy and probably significant independence, due in part to a low population and isolation.

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) was formed in 1949, and while changes in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) were initially limited, by 1960 an era of large collectives began, followed by the Cultural Revolution. Then came another complete change to the open market policies that were progressively implemented in China from 1979. This thesis investigates the ways in which the Drokpa have organised their households and lives, responded to changes in their sources of income, ways in which they have adapted to these radical events since 1950, and their ability to survive within a radically changing world. Are the Drokpa able to adapt or are they overwhelmed by events? During the course of this study a respondent said “The Drokpa know how to survive” - and this provided a key statement which was then examined through this thesis.
2.1 Tibetan and pastoral societies

Pastoralism is practiced by 100–200 million people throughout the world, from South America to the Central Asian steppes and from Europe to sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2003; Davies & Hatfield, 2007) and has been practised by man from long before agriculture and settled communities developed. Some 40% of the world’s land surface (excluding Antarctica and Greenland) is used for grazing animals. Tibetan pastoralists\(^2\) are among these groups with linkages to similar societies within Central Asia.

The social transformations of pastoral societies in response to the considerable social and economic changes during the 20th Century have been the subject of considerable discussion in the literature. However, only limited material is available on Tibetan communities due in part to the difficulties of working on the Tibetan Plateau. These discussions can be grouped in terms of two principal interpretations. The first emphasises the adaptations at a micro-level to macro-level interventions by states and the increasingly global market; for instance, in their study of Inner Asia (Russian, China and Mongolia), Humphrey and Sneath wrote:

Yet we also find that in other areas the grassland flourishes and pastoralism seems to be compatible with a modernised and even urbanised lifestyle…In China, some are able to use market opportunities to their advantage, while others are only subject to market vagaries and depend largely on subsistence production…some common themes are that there is sharply increasing economic differentiation among rural populations in all parts of the region…there has been a globalisation of consumption cultures throughout Inner Asia associated with new trade networks and the spread of video and satellite TV to the cities…the small herding group of one or a few families in changing combinations remains fundamental, as it has been throughout the century…kinship plays an important role in both networks and institutions’ (Humphrey and Sneath, 1999:3-15).

This research implies a middle way for the pastoralist when responding to State pressures and the impact of the wider market, and has identified two further key issues:

First, from an environmental perspective, that transhumance herding systems have long-term ecological benefits with less cost to the environment than that of sedentarisation, while the flexibility and mobility of some herding system is not necessarily in conflict with

\(^2\) Precise data on the total population of Tibetan pastoralists could not found. It is reported that 80% of the total Tibetan population are pastoralists and farmers (PGT, 2009) i.e. those who live on the Plateau and those living in the valleys. It is unclear if ‘the total Tibetan population’ refers only to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) or includes Tibetans in Gansu, Qinghai and Yunnan.
modern markets with a growing range of consumer goods (Douglas & Baron, 1979; Douglas, 1987).

Second, at an institutional level, local leadership, as opposed to centralised government, may play an important role, as a ‘natural way to organise affairs’. This approach respects and values the local knowledge of pastoral people (Humphrey and Sneath, 1999:293–296). Their research presents a common view of pastoral societies under considerable influences for change, for instance, in China, India, and Africa (Delgado, Rosegrant, Steinfeld, Ehui & Courbois, 1999:45–48; Bauer, 2007; Ginat and Khazanov, 1998).

The second interpretation perceives pastoralists as isolated and backwards in their thinking and understanding of the wider world, an obstacle to economic development, urbanisation and modernisation. This perception is most common within states in the world where political elites, typically residing in cities, deal with pastoral people, such as Mongolia (Martin, 2008) China, and countries in Africa. However, these over simplified views are not supported by most of the studies mentioned above (Davies and Hatfield, 2007; Humphrey & Sneath, 1999; Sneath, 1999, 2000, 2002; Miller, 1998, 1999, 2000; Helm, 1968). As argued by Davies and Hatfield (2007) “... the state of knowledge regarding this sector (mobile pastoralism) of the economy is inadequate” (Davies and Hatfield, 2007, p. 92).

There remains, however, an underlying view, both on the part of many researchers and in political policy, that pastoralism represents either passivity and/or resistance to economic and social change. This is often confused by differing views as to what ‘progress’ means in the 21st Century.

Martin’s work (2008) with regard to Mongolia demonstrates a different point of view. Martin describes how pastoral people are neither passive nor lacking in initiative when faced with change. Mongolian pastoralists seek to improve their living conditions by adapting to social transformation with flexibility and opportunism – while maintaining traditional ways of life and community cohesion. “Yet, they do try to adapt to the new realities, building on their most defining characteristic: their flexibility” (Martin, 2008:86). The concept of ‘flexibility’ is key here, and will be considered in this thesis in relation to the Drokpa.
Growing attention has been paid to Tibetan pastoral societies in the context of social and economic transformation (Goldstein and Bell, 1989, 1991, 1994, 2003, 2008; Miller, 1998, 1999; Pirie, 2005; Schaller, 2000; Yeh, 2004, 2003a, 2003b; Fischer, 2002, 2006; Banks, 2003a, 2003b; Shiyong, 2007, 2009; Ma, 1996, 1997; Bauer, 2005; Clarke, 1986, 1987, 1989; Wu and Richard, 1999; Sautman, 2006; Ho, 2000; Xiao, 1994a, 1994b; Yu, 2004). Within these studies, the two main interpretations described above are evident. Goldstein’s work provides much valuable information from his field site (Phala). He argues that the ‘re-emergence’ of past practices in Tibetan areas today is a result of state policy post-Mao – hence local leadership and autonomy does apply. He presents the field in its historical time-line. He observes that herders ‘revitalised’ their traditional culture, and have gone ‘back’ to their traditional way of life as a response to recent social transformations (Goldstein et al., 1989, 1994, 2003). His argument is similar to that of Potter and Potter (1990) from southern China. However, the argument for ‘revival’ or ‘re-emergence’ has been challenged by other scholars such as Helen Siu (1989). Siu suggests that while things such as rituals look the same in general, in reality much has changed. Rituals have reappeared in slightly different ways in that, some things have been dropped, and other aspects are now exaggerated. Siu’s view helps us to understand to what extent kinship organisation, for example wedding ceremonies, might look the same as in the past, but in reality the purpose may have changed. These changes could be cosmetic or substantial, but are difficult to examine in detail, as details of past practices e.g. pre-1900, have not been recorded. However, this ‘return’ to the past was a recognition of that which was of value, framed by a culture that evolved by pragmatic evolution and adaptation to new circumstance. The principle behind any ‘restored’ ceremonies probably remains the same – a wedding is a wedding. Yunxiang (1996:238) describes in his book *The Flow of Gifts*, how, after the reform period, villagers in Xiajia in China “…consistently adopted new patterns of gift giving”, rather than simply repeating past practice – the

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3 For western researchers, field research in the TAR has only become possible since the mid-1980s (Goldstein and Bell, 1989:619).

4 Phala is at 4,850–5,450 m, on the northern plateau of the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People’s Republic of China.
principal goal may be similar (building relationships), but the content of gifts and methods changed. The details of gift giving are examined in this thesis.

Fischer (2002, 2005, 2006) provides insightful arguments concerning poverty in rural Tibetan society in response to Government policy. He considers pastoralism as a whole, and how the State plays a dominant role in economic design. He points to rural labour transitions in Tibet, and how it has affected household income and expenditure, economic poverty and so forth. Shiyong (2007, 2009) presents similar ideas as Fischer, namely that local Tibetans are out of the ‘club’ even when considering the central State implementation of economic policy within the TAR, particularly over the three decades since 1979 to the present day when the economic model employed across China was dramatically implemented. The findings of both writers are based largely on annual census data (especially Fischer’s works), and with some field observation. Their argument is credible from a macro level perspective. For instance, unskilled locals find it hard to compete with skilled migrants in the job market and they are unable to participate as effectively in many economic opportunities. However, their work lacks on-the-ground analysis, for example of the basic economic unit – the household. Consequently, their work is limited in that there is insufficient consideration and understanding of the individual herder and farmer as social actor in their everyday life and in their local community. Using a theatrical metaphor, the actor may behave in different ways on stage and off stage. For example, local people may apply their own strategy to management of their economic life day-to-day, culturally and economically, while appearing to have accepted a complete integration with a larger economy. Continuing the metaphor, individuals may behave differently when performing with the cast than when in their life off stage. Indeed, locals as a community and as individuals, have not passively acceded to the penetration of an extractive market economy into their everyday lives (Scott, 1985, 2009, 1976). Local people continue to adapt to a complexity made up of beliefs, kin bonds, practical skills and knowledge (Goldstein, presentation, Oslo University, Nov 3rd 2009). Thus, we cannot conclude that locals are marginalised and are passive under external political or economic or other influences.
The other view that needs to be considered is the perception of pastoral people as being backward. This assumes that pastoral people do not have a ‘proper’ understanding of their environment and therefore manage their resource irrationally. Such a view has emerged from pastoralist research in Gansu, Qinghai, Mongolia, and Nagchu of the TAR (Liu, Shuzhen et al., 1999; Wei et al., 2003; Lianping et al., 2004; Li et al., 2004). Some of this work has been widely cited. For instance, as Shuzhen et al. suggest:

Land degradation is caused by many factors in Nagchu and social economic factors are one of the driving factors. For instance, rapid population growth requires greater production, and as a result this leads to greater exploitation that may lead the resource to diminish rapidly which in turn may cause land degradation (p.87)…there is no scientific management and conservation methods and rational regulation to manage pastureland·…(herders) herd livestock in a disordered way, and are only concerned about using the resource, but do not conserve the land (p.89)…(herders) consider livestock number as a mark of wealth status and, this leads them to increase stocking rate without consideration of carrying capacity (p.89)…it is therefore important to change (their) traditional ideas which stress stocking rates but care less for managing the land (p.123) (Liu, Shuzhen et al., 1999). Another example,

(Herders) still practice some irrational land management, it is because (they) have lived under a feudal serfdom system over a long period (p49)…the disordered management is the direct cause of the speeding up of competition between humans and livestock for land sources (p.49)…comparing rangeland management in the west and other pastoral regions in China, the animal husbandry management in Nagchu is at very lowest level in terms of applying preliminary management (p.52)” (Xinghu et al., 2003).

These views do however, need to be tempered with a deeper understanding, as argued by Miller and Sheehy that “Nomads cannot be understood without an awareness of their long pastoral history and their interactions with others” (Miller, 2007; Miller and Sheehy, 2008:107), as well supported by other researchers (Baima Cuo⁵, 2005; Davies,Hatfield, and Gao, 2007; Nan, 2002; Qingzhu et al., 2005; Ning, 1998).

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⁵ Pematso in Tibetan
2.2 Nagchu

Nagchu is the most prominent town on the Tibetan plateau, approximately 340kms north of Lhasa. It has been important for many years as a staging post on one of the major traditional routes across the plateau, between Lhasa and the rest of China. This role has expanded greatly since the main road and railway network now pass through the town. It is a key administrative centre and, in consequence, has been the base for research that has included the local herder communities. Herders (Drokpa), who have lived in this area for centuries (Aldenderfer et al., 2004; Shi, 1992), previously followed either a transhumance or semi-nomadic lifestyle. They now live in a permanent location and have limited ability to exploit the grazing lands.

The environment on the Tibetan plateau is very challenging. Temperatures vary over the year from very low to a comparatively short period of more temperate weather. Precipitation is low and the area is subject to strong winds. Soil fertility is low and pastureland is in the main poor. The village of Da is adjacent to Nagchu. Da had been one of the bases used by a few herder households for a long time.

There have been several monographs published on Nagchu in recent times that cover the period from around 1950 with some information on earlier times, until 2000. (Nyida Tséwang et al., n.d.; Gelek et al., 2008; The Research Team for the Survey of Tibetan History [TRTSHTE], 1987; and Wande Khar, 1996). The work of Nyida Tséwang et al. detail Nagchu’s history pre–1960, particularly the early history of each of the tribes in the Nagchu region. Gelek and his colleagues provide detailed ethnographic records of the Amdo county of Nagchu, pre–1960, basing their work on Nyida Tséwang et al.’s earlier publications. TRTSHTE collected detailed empirical data on Tibetan economic life in the 1950s. Recent research done by Wande Khar provides additional empirical information on the changing economic life among the Drokpa in Amdo. These publications will be considered in more detail in later chapters. However, while these publications provide

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6 Amdo is a small county within the Nagchu prefecture of the TAR. The name of the county is the same as that of the Amdo area. However, the latter stretches from the Yellow River to the Yangtze River while culturally and ethnically it is a Tibetan area.
much useful empirical data on local communities, they do not extend to any detailed analyses of households, nor considered discussions on the pastoral society, its practices and its adaptation to change.

### 2.3 Thesis structure

This thesis examines the livelihood, household organisation and economics of the Drokpa through the perspective of recent eras, each of which caused them to experience considerable and differing change imposed from outside the herder communities. As such it reflects Harris’s structure (2001) that is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 9. In each period, the available data on household/family organisation and the key economic factors are presented and discussed in relation to the major theme of how the Drokpa have adapted. The general structure for this thesis is:

1. **Preface**: the context for this work written by an indigenous Tibetan with a Drokpa heritage.
2. **Introduction**: this offers a background to this study, key anthropological views as to how herders adapt to, and manage, the herder’s environment, the location, research design and methodology.
3. **Field site: location and context**: this provides the background information on the people and their environment investigated in this thesis. It includes the geographic location of the field sites, the ecological condition of this particular locality, and the social and cultural context of the people.
4. **The Drokpa Tent**: the household as the core unit of social, cultural and economic life for families and organisation within Drokpa communities.
5. **The pre-open market I – the period of subsistence**: background information on the history of the Drokpa and the field site prior to 1950, and then 1950–1960.
6. **The pre-open market II – the socialist collectivisation transformation of Tibetan pastoral society**: the period of large collectives and the Cultural Revolution between 1960 and 1980, when households were marginalised.
7. **The open market I - household economy**: household economics since 1980.
8. **The open market II - changing economic, political circumstances and social relationships**: household structures and effects on household economics since 1980.
9. *We know how to survive?:* an analysis of the ability of the Drokpa to adapt to changing circumstances.

### 2.4 Research design and methodology

The research reported in this thesis is based on a single case study, of the Drokpa in the village of Da near Nagchu on the Tibetan Plateau, PRC. This site was chosen because of the familiarity of the researcher with the region, the village and the people. This minimised barriers to communication and minimised any bias in data collection. The main situation in which there was some uncertainty was in relation to the discussion of sexual relationships among people or even among animals between any males and the female researcher. This was overcome through discussions held by the researcher with females among the Drokpa. Approval to conduct this research was given by the village Leader and by the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences of TAR, China.

Over the course of four years (2006–2010), field trips were made to the study village to participate and interview people. The field trips were for a duration of 12 months in total. During the process of collecting data, I used anthropological fieldwork techniques including participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews, household census and the collection of genealogies and other statistical data, and visual recording techniques such as photography and mapping (Leach, 1982; Epstein, 1967). Data were recorded in field books and codes used to identify households. The real names of the interviewees do not appear in this thesis. A lot of this thesis was drafted while on field work in Tibet. The kin relationship diagrams were done by hand in collaboration with my niece, Künsang, and then subsequently scanned for the thesis. Unfortunately that has meant a poorer quality than desired.

The research employed two strategies:

1. A quantitative analysis of households, and
2. A qualitative enquiry into various aspects of families and households.

The household surveys produced a large quantity of financial information, particularly about income and expenditure. The way, in which this was assessed, are presented in Chapter seven in which detailed case studies are presented showing the income and expenditure and identifying the items consumed. This was as much data as the households
could provide. The case study was then used to develop a simulated example of a typical middle ranking family drawing upon all my data. The ethical need to avoid specific personal data is important. The data has a context and does allow comparisons of the income and expenditure with that of other families. Similarly I showed how income has increased over time. As barter is still used as well as cash, it is difficult to measure income except in terms of relativity to others. It was not considered realistic to try and value bartered goods and services, as often they were not exchanged for saleable items. These considerations apply to many societies around the world e.g. bride prices and cattle in Africa. Therefore, measurement should be by the relative ability to consume and the life chances additional income brings. All these effects have been demonstrated in the data presented.

Ethnography is by nature qualitative not quantitative. When evaluating the changes in revenue and expenditure, and the way they influence change, respondents at times seem to be imprecise when providing data to the researcher. This is understandable as the search for quantitative data does not match the way they think and feel. The researcher embedded in the culture can record what she observes not just count the things that can be counted. Being able to access the tacit knowledge of people of my own culture, I can provide an expression and articulation of what is for them intuitive. The test is when, in general and open conversation that includes my initial thoughts, the respondents respond to my thoughts and articulations affirmatively. These oral transactions are a manner to increase verification and therefore, reliability and validity.

The best ethnographic data is obtained when respondents are allowed to talk in their own terms and raise the issues they consider to be most important. However in this case it is important to consider the context. While the problem of leading questions needs to be considered for many conversations, when it comes to some topics such as the commercial activities of herders, more specific questions are needed as the data is more specific. This is a point for future work to try and resolve this methodology further but a point that in retrospect cannot be changed in the thesis. On the specific topic of livestock sales, the data obtained came directly from the questions raised by respondents themselves in their own terms when we had conversations about land and yaks. The researcher did not necessarily initiate these questions.
In addition other data were collected from interviews, through field work, published reports, archives and other relevant documents. A considerable amount of material was obtained from various sources in China.

The research approach used was strictly cyclical theorising, and this continued on many aspects of this study until an understanding emerged. This process was as follows:

1. Collect and analyse previously available academic data and information
2. Reflect and form initial hypotheses
3. Collect new data and analyse alongside previous data
4. Adjust and reform hypotheses and decide on new lines of enquiry
5. Test hypotheses against new data

In this research it was important to find ways of dealing with the complexity of the material collected. In dealing with complexity, it became clear that Popper’s work was significant and relevant (1981, 1943). Potential findings were to be expressed as rational conjectures. Although some elements of my research will be positivist in nature, this approach could not of itself be sufficient. Therefore, a more post-modern approach was needed. Lyotard (1984) suggested a new form of knowledge based upon paralogies and verified by performativity. I found this a useful framework for my thinking. One was not looking for triangulation as with a strictly positivist model, but for parallel strands or themes that, when considered together, aided reflection and might lead to meaning overall. Such thinking provided a structure for this thesis. It was important though, not to apply this approach too literally and rigorously, as that could limit the information gained. Some flexibility was allowed in interpretations (Miles and Huberman, 1994:16).

There is an additional element to this study arising from how Tibetans imbue life with spiritual meaning. As Lama Anagarika Govinda (1966) said “The wonders of a journey consists far more of such intangible experiences and unexpected situations than factual things and events of material reality”. While this is not a strictly academic view of the research process, when working with Tibetans it does influence the way people behave, which needs to be understood, and creates additional issues when interpreting the data obtained. It was important to resolve the symbolic significance of observations made, and to dig for the tacit knowledge implicit in statements (Ryle, 1949). Particular attention was
paid to identifying the beliefs and tacit knowledge that underpinned recorded actions and decisions.

The final test of my findings remains that of Lyotard (1997). This test of findings or conjectures was whether they had performativity, that is had the capacity to generate new thinking and fresh perceptions and perspectives. Throughout the thesis I have used the term ‘naturalistic generative narratives’. Before explaining the meaning and use which I have made of this phrase, it is important to describe the manner in which I arrived at its use. As said above, my research has many of the characteristics of a case study. Taking the view that any case will not be simply complicated but also complex, the starting point will be this challenge. Waldrop in his book Complexity: the emerging science at the edge of order and chaos (1994) says in his introduction – “This is a book about the science of complexity - a subject that’s still so new and so wide-ranging that nobody knows quite how to define it … complexity research is trying to grapple with questions that defy all conventional categories.” He goes on to cite examples of relevance to anthropology. Wider reading suggested that reconsidering the case study approach offered a way to grapple with such questions. The work of Stake (1992, 1982) provided insights into the purpose of case study narrative and the style of writing that engages the reader as co-reader. However, the work of Yin provided a methodological discipline (2009). Amongst other recommendations, Yin guides the researcher to be eclectic in the disciplines he utilises – including organisational theory. For example, Ackroyd (1992) stresses the need to use ‘imaginings’ as a stimulus to new thinking. Having decided on a case study approach, I returned to the respondent’s statement. ‘Drokpa know how to survive.’ Knowing of necessity implies learning - whether experiential or formal. Schon develops this central idea both in his book (1963) and in his article (1979). To learn is to imagine, often using metaphor, analogy and stories trawled from past experience. This is then tested against current circumstances. My qualitative data seemed to suggest that this was the way Drokpa both generated their learning and retained it as tacit knowledge. Therefore, we return to the use of the term ‘naturalistic generative narrative’. It has been used by many in various forms, but is a key concept as used by Stake. By naturalistic is meant a ‘narrative’ that grows from the emic understandings of the researcher as an insider.
‘Generative’ means that the imaginings stimulate new learning, at first in the people themselves and then in the researcher. ‘Narrative’ is exactly what it says, namely a ‘story’ that expresses truth verified by the people in the case, that is respondent verification, and then by the researcher by matching it against other evidence. This triangulation asks the question as to whether the truth as seen by in this case Drokpa, matches their decision making and their actions.

As a generative narrative, findings are proposed as conjectures. They generate meaning and further thinking - and conform to Popper’s tests for new knowledge. The Lyotard test is whether they have ‘performativity’ - that is ‘do they aid understanding and a grasp of meaning?’ Furthermore, do they justify the claim that ‘Drokpa know how to survive!’ and if so, how and why.

Financial data on the household economy were collected by interviewing key informants from every household in the village. This was regardless of gender, but subject to how much information the informant could provide about his or her household. Informants did fail sometimes to provide precise numbers on consumption and expenditure, and hence data was not always precise, though it was considered that it indicated the right order of effects.

A significant part of this thesis deals with the household economy of the Drokpa. Generally, the definition of ‘economy’ used in this thesis has two connected but different meanings. Originally the meaning referred to the way a household organised production and consumption in order to survive. This came to have a wider meaning that included the social organisation that lay behind these transactions, and the belief and value systems that motivated decisions and priorities. Gregory and Altman suggest the definition of economy and described economy in their book as referring to social relationship based activities: production, consumption, and the circulation between the two (Gregory & Altman, 1984). The concept of ‘economy’ which I address in my thesis is adopted in part from Gregory’s definition: human as social being, activitives always interact with one another, thereby establishing a social relationship, forming a web. This layered definition is central to this thesis.
3 Da: The Field Site – Location and Context

3.1 Location and Geography

3.1.1 The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)

The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) is in the south-west of The People’s Republic of China (PRC). It covers the southern sections of the Tibetan plateau (Map 1), a region that has an average altitude of 4,900m above sea level; the highest inhabited region on earth. It lies between longitude 78–99° E and latitude 26–36° N. The TAR is surrounded in the south-east by the countries of Burma, Bhutan, Nepal and India. This geo-political location has resulted in diverse cultural influences and trade interactions, particularly around the edges and in larger settlements. Paradoxically, the harsh climate and remoteness has limited the spread of those influences to many other regions of the TAR. Tibetan communities occur across the whole plateau, with a common written language and similar cultural identity and sense of belonging.

The TAR is surrounded to the east and north by the Chinese provinces or regions of Xinjiang, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan. There are active trade and business links between some of these people: for example herders in the TAR commonly trade for dried fruits from Xinjiang, butter from Qinghai and Sichuan, and tea from Sichuan and Yunnan. The TAR is one of the 35 provincial-level divisions in the PRC, but covers approximately one-eighth of the total PRC political territory (“China in Brief,” n.d., 2011) and this size, through perception alone, means it looms large in central Asia. The TAR has a population of 2,841,500, of which 90% are of indigenous, Tibetan ethnic origin (The Census Bureau of Tibet Autonomous Region & The Census Survey Team in Tibet of National Census Bureau, 2008). Approximately the same number of Tibetans live beyond the plateau and elsewhere in China outside the TAR. Tibetans are one of the eighth largest minority groups in the PRC. In general, Tibetans who live on the plateau have a unique language, culture and history that is distinct from other minority ethnic cultures of the PRC as a whole. Tibetans

7 TAR has two special administrative regions, four direct-controlled municipalities, five autonomous regions and 23 provinces.
8 The other seven are Yi, Tujia, Uygur, Miao, Manchu, Mongols and Hui.
in the last millennium have had significant contacts with other major Buddhist groups such as the Mongolians in northern China. There were political interactions, and similarities in both culture and livestock practices between these groups.

Map 1 The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in the People’s Republic of China (PRC)

The TAR has more autonomy than may apply in ordinary Provinces, particularly towards minority groups, as it is an autonomous region. National policies aim to foster ethnic minorities of which 55 are commonly recognised within the PRC (Ma, 2008; Mackerras, 2009). Similar rules apply in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) and others. As such, the Government of the TAR has some responsibility to foster Tibetan economics and culture. However, as some 90% of the Chinese population of 1.3 billion are Han, their influences are pervasive throughout the whole of the PRC, and there are differences between different groups, and divergences in their understandings of each other (Gladney, 2004; 1998, 1991). Han culture has evolved in close connection with an economy based on growing crops in densely populated communities, rather than managing livestock across vast extensive areas. In the TAR, family groups in the past only got together once or twice
a year for festivals and few people lived in a town, in contrast to the Han. Tibetans are, however, better adapted to living comfortably at high altitudes. The common language in China is Mandarin, based on the dialect of the national capital, Beijing. This has subtle influences on cultural values and practices throughout the country as occurs, for example with other dominant languages such as English, Russian or Spanish (Ralph, 1989). While China has achieved very high literacy rates, often better than some western countries, in Tibet some 45% of the population is still illiterate. The per capita regional product in Tibet is among the lowest in China, being about 60% of the national average. The TAR is the least urbanised region in China, and is included with other poor areas in the Western Development Strategies of the PRC.

Lhasa is the capital city of the TAR, located off the Plateau, but in a high valley. Lhasa literally means ‘Holy Place’. The city attracts locals and non-locals among whom are Buddhists, tourists and business people. The city has well-known Buddhist monasteries and other sites; Jokhang, Drépung, Ganden, and the Potala Palace, as well many other monasteries and religious holy sites. Herders from Nagchu, the field site, visit Lhasa for both religious pilgrimage, and for trade. They purchase goods from Lhasa as gifts for their relatives back home in Nagchu. When Drokpa of Da visit Lhasa, they do most of their shopping in Trom zik gang and Bar kor. These places are the main market areas, as well as two of the most popular tourist spots in Lhasa. Trom zik gang is a popular wholesale market for herders and farmers where they can find affordable goods.

3.1.2 Nagchu Prefecture

The TAR is divided into six prefectures, and Nagchu Prefecture is one of them (Map 2). The prefecture ranges in altitude from 3,500 to 4,500 m above sea level. It lies between longitude 83° 55–95° 5’ E and latitude 29° 55’–36° 30’ N. The Prefecture is surrounded to the east and south by the prefectures of Ngari, Shyikatsé and Lhasa, and to the west by the prefecture of Nyingtri. Nagchu people share a similar dialect to people from Ngari. For trade, herders from Nagchu have traditionally used salt in dealing with farmers in Shyikatsé in order to purchase grain. The population of the prefecture is estimated to be 414,600 (Region et al., 2008), of which 85% (Wei, 2008) are Tibetan herders. The majority of the population, are ethnic Tibetan nomads and pastoralists and are widely distributed,
reflecting a past when high population density was rare and large gatherings usually only linked to seasonal festivals and events.

Map 2 Nagchu Prefecture in the TAR of PRC

Nagchu town is about 340km north of Lhasa in the TAR (Map 3). An asphalt road runs between Lhasa city and Nagchu town, which is also on the Tibetan railway system and on its telecommunications corridor. The town lies at longitude 92° 06’E and latitude 31° 28’N. The town was first mentioned in Tibetan texts in 1751 by The Tibetan historian, Dokharpa Shyabdrung Tsering Wanggyal. Evidently there were people permanently residing in the area at that time. It is likely that the Shyabten monastery built nearby in 1774 (Lozang Tubten., Wangchuk Chödrak and Tenpa Sherab, 1993) resulted in an increased number of permanent residents. The town was and is an important centre for traders, nomads and pilgrims moving between the central and northern regions of Tibet. Even so, the town remained comparatively small until very recently, reflecting the lack of reasonable roads to other locations. A trip to Lhasa could take a few months on horseback. Tsewang
(n.d.) noted that in early 1903 there were only around 50 households within Nagchu town, and most of their dwellings were yak tents. Later, the monastery built a few concrete houses nearby, and some business people built permanent houses there, as did some other more local households. Yak tents, however, remained the most common form of housing. This mixture of housing is found elsewhere, for example in Mongolia, and seems to reflect cultural imperatives as much as economic factors. The literature on the interaction between the town and the outside world is very limited. The first archaeological information on Nagchu was provided by Russian Tibetologist, George, N. Roerich, (Roerich, 1996) in 1925–1928. He remarked upon the archaeological sites he saw, noting mounds of stone over burial sites and other residential vestiges similar to others in Northern Tibet. The population of the town had increased to only 100 people by 1950 (Tsewang & An, 2002). The town expanded rapidly after 1950 as roads developed, and the permanent population had reached 10,000 by 2000 and is still growing. The administrative headquarters of Nagchu prefecture are located in Nagchu town, and the town has become a significant market place for its hinterland, with an associated infrastructure. The town received necessary public investment from the state in terms of roads, hospitals and schools, and these were accessible for, and of benefit to, herders. There are vegetable markets, butchers’ shops, supermarkets, and a post office. There are hotels and restaurants, and the town has now become a tourist centre for travellers wanting to experience the authentic Tibetan pastoral life of the north. The town is a place where herders may find employment, from driving trucks to singing in night clubs. The growth of the town demonstrates how herders are increasingly involved in the rapidly developing market economy of the PRC, though not all trading is cash based. The urbanisation of the town has created a market for the herder, for instance the market has increased and created a significant demand for yogurt and other pastoral products, which has become an important source of cash income for herders in the vicinity. The village of Da is one among many.

3.1.3 The research village: Da

The village of Da is located close to the northern part of Nagchu town, and over a track from the town it is within one hour on foot or twenty minutes by car. In 1950, the village had only one household (No.1) with a stockholding of 40 yaks, 60 sheep and one horse,
reflecting the then isolation and low population densities of people and livestock. Some Da households (Nos. 15 and 16) had resided close to the Shyabten monastery before they moved to the present site, providing some evidence that it was the town that drew migration to the area. The housing at that time was the traditional black (yak wool) tent, the movable shelter of the nomad. Although semi-settled, the ‘permanent’ base in Da was where they spent the winters, and the herders moved their livestock in relation to the availability of seasonal green grass, going to higher altitudes for summer grazing. By 2008, Da had 211 residents, in twenty-one households. All the households now had permanent houses, constructed with cement and adobe bricks, and animals were herded close to the village. Da people buy or sell sheep from, or to herders from other neighbouring counties, and sell yogurt to herders who now reside in the suburbs of Nagchu town. They sell yogurt and yak dung to the town people for cash, and purchase most of their daily consumption goods from the town. Da people may travel to Lhasa once a year for pilgrimage purposes and such travels have become more frequent for those herders who are wealthy, or who have relatives living in Lhasa.
3.2 Ecology and Economics

Central to understanding the context in which the people of Da live and survive, is the harsh climatic and physical environment. The climate of the high plateau is severely dry for nine months of the year, predominately through the colder months. The average annual precipitation ranges from 150 mm to 695 mm, most of which falls in summer. This season is also the time when temperatures enable vegetative growth. The limited precipitation is due to the rain shadow effect of the Himalayan mountain range, which limits moisture coming off the Indian Ocean from reaching the plateau. The Southwest Indian monsoon exerts some influence on eastern Tibet but does not reach the north. Western passes receive only
small amounts of fresh snow each year and remain traversable all year. Low temperatures are prevalent throughout these western regions (Liu, Shuzhen et al., 1999; Yan, et al., 2005:660).

The average annual temperature at Nagchu is $-1.5^\circ \text{C}$ and temperatures typically range from a high of $24^\circ \text{C}$ to a low of $-41^\circ \text{C}$. The vegetation is alpine grassland which includes some small shrubs. Typically this semi-shrub vegetation increases when the grassland is over-grazed. The plateau is well above the tree line, which allows strong winds to sweep unchecked across vast expanses of the plain. Northern Tibet has a continental climate and is subject to high temperatures in the summer and intense cold in the winter.

Nagchu is at 4500m on the Tibetan Plateau with a climate characterised by a short, mild summer season, when temperatures are suitable for plant growth (Figure 19). Plant growth is severely restricted when average daily temperatures are less than $5^\circ \text{C}$. At Nagchu this occurs when the average daily minimum temperature is above $0^\circ \text{C}$. The effective growing season for grasslands is limited to the four months between June and September, inclusive (similar to much of northern and western China). As the optimum average daily temperature for grassland growth is around $20^\circ \text{C}$, this means that plant growth is still restricted throughout the summer by low temperatures. The warmest month, July, only has an average daily temperature of $9^\circ \text{C}$. Frosts can occur even during the summer. There are only 90 frost-free days per year on average. Snowfalls can occur in any month of the year. From October through to May temperatures are too low for grassland growth, and this increases the energy required by animals to keep warm. Air temperatures in mid-winter have been recorded as low as $-40^\circ \text{C}$. If animals are not well fed they die of cold in the winter months. In winter the soil freezes from November onwards, and the top 2m of soil does not thaw fully until May.

Precipitation in Nagchu averages 400mm per year, and most of this falls as rain over the summer months, coinciding with suitable temperatures for plant growth. In summer the rain in June to September is often characterised by thunderstorms and hail, typical of the Tibetan Plateau. The region is better described as semi-arid, as potential evaporation

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9 Source: TMBTAR (1983, 1985)
rates average 1800mm per year, greatly exceeding precipitation rates, which means that throughout the winter, the soils are relatively dry. The high evaporation rates are a result of 2,900 hours of sunshine and high winds in some seasons. Daily wind run is greatest from December through to May, reflected in the peak evaporation rate in May (Figure 2\textsuperscript{10}). There are from 2 to 18 sandstorms each year (with an average of 7), and most of these occur from December through to May. There appears to be an increasing incidence of sandstorms as a result of over-grazing, leaving bare soil.

The environment of the plateau is a major determinant of important aspects of how people live and how their community practices. Over many centuries, local Tibetan herders have developed techniques and organisational skills that have enabled them to utilise the

difficult environment, and cope with the extreme climatic conditions of the high plateau. Herders on the northern high plateau of the TAR have evolved a semi-nomadic lifestyle over centuries. Livelihoods were based upon their livestock herds, mainly yaks, sheep, goats and horses, utilising the natural grassland. In parts of the plateau, crops have been grown e.g. barely, for human food, with the limited residues being fed to livestock. This resulted in the development of a permanent ‘winter’ base in areas where people grew crops while livestock were away grazing summer pastures, and to which they returned for the winter. In more recent times the crops grown in the valleys have been used to feed people and livestock on the plateau and this trade has become an important aspect of the pastoral economy in some parts of the TAR.

Pastoralism is still the dominant economic activity in Da, together with some supplementary activities. As Neidhardt et al. (1996:43) point out, livestock farming is especially fundamental in places like Da, where there are fewer possibilities to accumulate surplus or capital to deal with the extreme pressures of the harsh climate. This exemplifies the concept of a ‘livestock bank’ as one repository of wealth, which is very common in pastoral societies around the world (Jarvis, 1986). Among the Drokpa, yaks arguably are used in this way but, as will be discussed later in the thesis, sheep and goats may not be. The people of Da raise yaks (Bos grunniens), sheep (Ovis Ovis aries), goats (Capra hircus), horses (Equus ferus caballus) and yak-cattle (Bos taurus) hybrids. For generations these animals have provided basic subsistence for the daily life of the Drokpa. They are an important capital investment. Since post-collectivisation, dairy products are sold to consumers in Nagchu town. This trade provides herders with a cash income. This gives them more frequent access to grain, clothes and other consumables. The implications of these changes and interactions will be dealt with later in this thesis.

In a mixed economy of cash and barter, it is difficult to compare the relative wealth of broadly similar communities. It is in the main easier to compare expenditure and consumption. Such consumption measures the increase in life choices and opportunities. Comparison with similar communities within the region suggests that within a general increase in economic well-being, the Drokpa of Da find themselves at the median within a wide spread. Variations within Da, however, remain wide, although the modal position is
positive. This favourable situation is multi-factorial. In part it is due to Da’s proximity to the market, allowing for trade in such commodities as caterpillar fungus and yoghurt, and trucks. The key outcome is that these activities create a cash income, with the greater flexibility in consumption that this allows.

From general observation, and judging from the views of the people themselves, income overall has increased in recent years. Although there is variation between years, it would appear that life chances have increased considerably, and that these have tended to be exponential. Compared with similar communities within the region, a typical household in Da has done well, and there is an air of confidence, now and for the future. Per capita income has increased, although this is highly dependent upon the household to which an individual belongs. We can make a crude comparison with other such rural communities by using official data. This data should be used with caution as it may have a propaganda agenda. According to the “Report on Tibet Economic and Social Development”, rural income has increased on average at 10% year on year from 1978 to 2008. This implies that their ability to consume has increased, but this does not take into account price inflation. As ‘aspirations escalate’, confidence and impressions of well-being may lag behind, although this does not seem to be the case in terms of the people of Da. Engel’s Coefficient was between 53.18% and 69.5% in the early 1980s for rural communities, and rose to 56.0% by 2008. Consumer goods such as televisions and cell phones have become popular among rural people. The provision of electricity has boosted economic activity and opportunity. 20% of rural households have purchased tractors or trucks. Motorcycles have become fashionable among pastoralists in Nagchu. It is of interest that in rural communities, people change their motorcycle more frequently than urban individuals change their cell phones. (The China Tibetology Central, 2009).

3.3 The herders of Da

So far, we have considered the geographical location and its ecology and economics. I now introduce the people studied in this thesis. The herders who live in Da are called Drokpa (Brog pa) in local Tibetan. They are called Drokpa in local Tibetan terminology. We start from the meaning of the term Drokpa (Brog pa), as it helps to understand the
people’s relationship with their socio-economic life. Drokpa is the general Tibetan term for ‘herders’ or ‘nomad’. It is not clear when the term Drokpa first appeared in Tibetan literature. The herding system of Tibetan Drokpa is mentioned indirectly in historical data in the 6th to 9th Centuries AD, and especially since the 11th Century (Goldstein et al., 1991). Sahlins (1976) emphasises that the terms Nomads or Farmers or Tribes cannot be simply understood as characterising single groups. The terms may be used as overall descriptors, and one way of characterising certain aspects across groups, but should not be used to hide differences between groups within the same category or unit of analysis. Differences within a group may be more significant than similarities across groups. The use of the term, ‘Drokpa’ differentiates them from two other groups such as the Shying pa (agricultural farmers) and Rong pa (village people). The word Shying refers to fields, ground, soil, arable land, and cultivation (Sarat 1902), and Shying pa can be translated as ‘farmers’ in English. The geographical location of these farmers is the lowlands. They cultivate land, as well as pigs, oxen, cows, donkeys and mules, The word Rong can be interpreted literally as low valleys (Sarat, 1902). The term Rong pa indicates people who live in low valley areas. They often move around with their herds for trading purposes.

The name ‘Drokpa’ associates these herders with solitude, wilderness and uncultivated land. These were further described by informants as a group of people who live in places where there are no crops and no trees, and who manage to survive in a harsh cold climate, herding yaks, sheep, goats and horses according to seasonal variations in the availability of pastures. As will be discussed later in this thesis, such a description does not fit current circumstances, but arguably reflects an attitude and group definition of what they regard as important characteristics and which they value. Drokpa has become contracted into one word, and contains many cultural aspects that collectively define the group. In conversation with informants, it becomes clear that ‘Drokpa’ intimates a group of people who have a close link with their natural biophysical environment (Bloch, 1983:130). The implication is that ‘Drokpa’ indicates a process of adaptation and capability. This research will investigate how that adaptation and capability to changing circumstances is progressing and what it means for the group’s identity.
The term ‘Drokpa’, as argued, contains cultural and symbolic connotations. Both culture and economic activities differentiate Drokpa from other groups such as the agricultural villagers (Shying pa) and valley people (Rong pa). There is no simple relationship between the natural environment and the social adaptations of people to their bio–physical world, only a complex interaction. People act in line with the way they see their world (Sahlins, 1976; Harris, 1989). Culture in this sense plays a significant part, not only in building relationships between individual herders and groups, but also in the way they relate to their bio–physical environment. Despite a period of rapid change over time and space, domestic livestock such as yaks, sheep, goats and horses are still fundamental for subsistence. The dairy products from yaks, sheep and goats remain essential sources of protein. Livestock serve as a measure of value, and provide metaphors for their social world in the way Evans–Pritchard describes for the cattle of the Nuer (Evans–Pritchard, 1940a, 1940b). Drokpa use these shared metaphors to build capacity to share and express meaning within their society (Cohen, 1985).

The attributes and characteristics of such cultures are expressed through language and social discourse, rituals, customs and dress but, in turn, these social attributes also become the vehicle for the generational transmission of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). These cultural activities become embedded in their ‘consciousness.’ They become the way they see themselves, their communities and the world around them. Their ‘identity’ as Drokpa, is given meaning and location within their ecological environment and their economic and community activities.

The ‘Drokpa’ so defined in this thesis, are understood from characteristics described above as well as by language, costumes and religious beliefs.

Territorially, the Drokpa are scattered across different localities in Nagchu. Such different localities present slight variations of dialect of the Tibetan spoken by the Drokpa in Nagchu prefecture. In the main this is a northern dialect called Jang ké, close to the other dialects of central Tibet. The dialect which identifies Drokpa is a badge of their geographical location. Chang is translated as north and Ké as ‘voice’, ‘sound’ and also ‘language’ (Goldstein & Thondup, 1986). It is the underlying unity of the Tibetan languages which provides the Drokpa with a clear ethnic identity as Tibetan. Herders in my
fieldwork location considered me as a member of their community when I communicated with them in their dialect. “You speak fluent Nagchu dialect, you are our sister” said one informant. Language can be considered as underpinning social solidarity and the sense of social group belonging. Men are generally able to read and write in the Tibetan language. Female illiteracy is however, high. Most of the herders in the village are able to communicate in simple Chinese with Han Chinese or the Chinese Muslim traders who reside in Nagchu town.

The Drokpa costume is a full-length wrap-around sheepskin coat with shawl collar and long sleeves. This dress serves to differentiate them from others. ‘Most nomad men seldom wear trousers; women never wear undergarments except for a jacket–shirt’ (Ekvall, 1968). Their costume has gone through various changes. The sheepskin coat made from synthetic materials has replaced the genuine sheepskin coat; these synthetic sheepskin coats are now popular among herdiers. It is common for Drokpa men to wear smocks and pants, but not very common for women to wear such casual dress, that is separate top and pants, as men do. Jewellery is a particular statement of cultural identity, social status and wealth. They wear golden earrings, rings, and other silver jewellery, especially during festivals.

Tibetan Buddhism is the dominant spiritual belief system for the Drokpa. Its introduction to Tibet dates back to the 33rd King of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo, who was born in 617 CE. Buddhism was officially declared to be the religion of Tibet in the year 792 by the 37th King of Tibet, Trisong Detsen. It has been the dominant religious practice ever since, even though there were periods of decline and revival. Tibetan Buddhist schools of belief are the most widespread in Tibet, and Gé Lukpa is one of the several Tibetan Buddhist traditions (Geoffrey, 1993; Powers, 1995). The local people from Da all belong to the Gé Lukpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. In most areas of Tibet, particularly among Drokpa, local gods are related to the environment, and people communicate with gods via spirit–mediums (Karmay, 1996; Huber, 1999).

This belief system impacts significantly on Drokpa daily life, their management of resources, and decisions about economic behaviour. This belief system involves the elimination of the self and all earthly desires. This is the highest goal and leads to ‘contentment’ and the end of the cycle of reincarnation. The belief in the cycle and
continuum of previous lives, the present life, and the next life has considerable influence on their daily life. The cause and effects of events are inter–linked within the circle of life. Most significantly, the influence of monasteries, as centres of learning, shape to a considerable extent, the way Drokpa interpret events and how they act in their ‘world’. Within the complexity of social life there are, of course, other major influences such as political directives, secular influences from outside, kinship considerations, and the over–riding need to survive. However, at the heart of Drokpa life are the significant religious festivals such as New Year and The Horse Race Festival, and the shrines to local deities in every home.

Today, Drokpa in the main neither live in tents nor shift herds seasonally. Permanent houses have replaced yak tents. They still maintain herds, but move only from a permanent home area on short migrations to surrounding areas. The condition of pasture land has now commonly considered to have undergone dramatic changes in terms of the quantity and quality of grass (Shu, 1999:112–27). Dress has changed from sheep hide material to artificially made materials. Casual dress, including western dress, is commonly accepted by young Drokpa. Social organisational forms have changed, reflecting economic and political system changes. These changes have two significant aspects: the family formation has shifted from the extended family to nuclear family structures, and social group formations have evolved in response to current household economics. Strong remnants of the traditional cultural heritage, however, remain.

The Drokpa on the plateau have been and still are, facing a series of changes that are influencing their present lifestyle and their livelihoods. In those processes of change, they are still influenced by their traditions and cultural practices. The aims and objectives of this thesis are broadly to better understand these communities and investigate their adaptation, and the capabilities they exhibit to deal with the processes of social change which they face. The village of Da at Nagchu typifies most of the challenges that Drokpa are facing, and hence was chosen for study.

3.4 Conclusion

The character of the economic life of Drokpa has been changed from a subsistence–oriented economy to a cash–based economy over the period of study, 1950–2010. This has
been within an environment that is harsh, and where the options for providing food, fibre and fuel for household needs can be a daily challenge. State policy and the globalisation of markets and technology have impacted upon Drokpa life through Da’s proximity to Nagchu, imposing further pressures for change. As with many such societies where the majority come from a different culture, it would be easy to expect to see the indigenous culture overwhelmed and subsumed. The Drokpa, however – as will be demonstrated in this thesis – have evolved ways of adapting to change, and have a capacity to balance their cultural identity with external pressures. These are the transformational issues I will be investigating in subsequent chapters.
4 The Domestic Unit: *The Drokpa tent*

The Drokpa in Da are structured on a unit that is a core family, a household or tent. An understanding of this structure is critical for understanding the ways in which Drokpa live, and how they have responded to the significant social and economic changes since 1950.

‘Family’ is a term to identify “kin and affines who live together in the same dwelling, share a common hearth, and jointly participates in production and consumption” (Pine, 1996:223). This concept is developed further as it applies to a family in Da. Typically, a family is an extended family based on an older couple, their daughter and son, son-in-law and daughter-in-law and the couple’s grandchildren. The family (or, traditionally, ‘tent’) in local terms refers to khyim tsang or nang, meaning ‘inside’. It emphasises members’ common purpose for production, consumption and exchange. More specifically, a family in a settlement such as permanent housing in Da is a joint patrilocal or matrilocal uni, with common livestock, access to common land, a concrete house with a common kitchen and the common shrine of Tibetan Buddhist deities. One such family may extend over several households or houses (and/or tents in the past) (Pine, 1996). The centrality of the household as the main unit of pastoral economy is considered throughout this thesis. It is not only a unit for economics activities but also for the social-cultural context that is essential to an understanding of the changing lifestyles and livelihoods of Tibetan herders.

4.1 House

During their nomadic period people lived in a tent, but now these are only used by those who travel to summer grazing lands some distance from their main base. The notion of a ‘tent’ is still very strong however, and is often used to describe how people are grouped. Since the Drokpa have settled in one location as is now more common, they have permanent houses built of mud-brick with, typically, a single bedroom, a shrine room and a store room. The sleeping area is the main living space within the house, used for living, cooking and dining, as well as for receiving guests. Within the living room, a pair of Tibetan style tall cabinets is placed in the southern part of the room. On the opposite side is a pair of wooden beds and carpets made of wool or man-made fibre, laid on top of the
mattresses. Quilts and blankets are placed at the inner edge of the beds, so that the remaining space on the beds can be used for sitting and sleeping. An iron stove is located near the door on the western side of the room, and other kitchen equipment is placed close to the stove. One bed is on the east side of the room, that is in the inner-most area of the room. This is a place of significance and status, and where the head of the household or respected guests sit. There are tables in front of each bed, used to hold cups and bowls.

The house has a large south-facing window, which allows any sunlight to warm the house. Even so, the iron stove is needed to warm the main living space throughout the year. In cold weather, the iron stove is an especially popular source of heat. Yak and sheep dung are used for fuel and the stove is lit for at least six hours a day throughout the year.

The local government provided an electricity supply in 2007, and since that time most households have acquired TVs, VCR players, landline telephones, fridges, freezers, and washing machines. These items are purchased from the markets in Nagchu town; in some cases such goods, as well as furniture, are gifts from relatives who work in the town (Chapter 8). They may also be a result of bride-wealth payments (Chapter 4). Most of the households separate their living space from their ‘shrine spaces’, unless there is insufficient space as is often the case in poor households. The store room is where they keep their food, for example packs of highland barely, rice or flour. Livestock products such as yak hides and yak wool are also kept here.

The house is within an enclosure of 200 square metres with a surrounding wall. The wall is usually at least a metre high to restrict roaming livestock. Within the wall, grasses are planted and harvested for fodder during June to October, and livestock are kept there for protection from the cold winds during May to November.

4.2 Division of Labour

There is division of labour within each family (Chapter 7). This division refers to the pattern of tasks over a day or week, and that certain tasks are allocated to specific members of the household. This division falls into two categories. Time is set aside for pastoral work, and then for work that brings in supplementary income. Herders are occupied with pastoral activities throughout the year (Table 1). In winter and autumn, various pastoral activities occupy herders’ time from 6:00 AM to 19:00 PM and from 19:00
PM to 21:00 PM. In spring and summer, the working timetable could be from 3:00 AM to 10:00 AM, 11:00 AM - 18:00 PM, 18:00 PM to 3:00 AM. For supplementary income, a common activity is for herders to travel to the Nagchu town to sell yogurt. This is a daily activity which takes places between 11:00 AM, when the first session of pastoral activity ends, and the second session at 18:00pm, when farm work starts again. Herders have more flexibility in terms of time now than they did before - a product of more effective market responsive production management and transport technology typically motorcycles whereas in the past they walked or used horses or yaks. Examples include their concentration now on yak production rather than on mixed herds including sheep. There is a much greater market demand for yogurt made from yak milk than for sheep milk yogurt. Travelling to the town by motorcycle saves a considerable amount of time. This time allocation generally applies to herders between the ages of 20 and 50. Old herders spend most of their time at home, helping with domestic work. Children of school age are in school from 7.00 AM to 6.00 PM. They help their seniors with pastoral and domestic work after school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Yaks</th>
<th>Adult men (16–60)</th>
<th>Ault women (16–70)</th>
<th>Children (under 16)</th>
<th>Old people (above 70)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:00am</td>
<td>Milking</td>
<td>Preparing for herding</td>
<td>Milking and collecting yak dung and preparing breakfast</td>
<td>Sleeping</td>
<td>Sleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00am – 19:00pm</td>
<td>Grazing</td>
<td>Herding and going to sell yogurt</td>
<td>Processing dairy products and doing housework. Going to sell yogurt</td>
<td>Going to school</td>
<td>Resting and doing some housework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:00pm</td>
<td>Milking</td>
<td>Helping to tie up, and feeding animals</td>
<td>Milking</td>
<td>Helping parents to tie up yaks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:00pm</td>
<td>Feeding with fodder</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feeding animals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:00pm – 7:00am</td>
<td>Tied up from Sep. – Oct.; in sheds from Nov.–</td>
<td>Enjo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Preparing dinner</td>
<td>Eating dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Yaks</td>
<td>Adult men</td>
<td>Ault women</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Old people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 am</td>
<td>Milking</td>
<td>Preparing for herding</td>
<td>Milking and collecting yak dung and then preparing breakfast</td>
<td>Sleeping</td>
<td>Sleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 am - 10:00 am</td>
<td>Grazing</td>
<td>Herding</td>
<td>Processing dairy products and doing housework</td>
<td>Going to school</td>
<td>Resting and doing some housework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Milking</td>
<td>Help for tying up</td>
<td>Milking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 am - 18:00 pm</td>
<td>Graze</td>
<td>Herding; Going to sell yogurt</td>
<td>Processing dairy products and doing housework Going to sellyogurt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:00 pm</td>
<td>Milking</td>
<td>Helping tie up animals</td>
<td>Milking</td>
<td>Helping parents tie up yaks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:00 pm - 3:00 am</td>
<td>Tied up</td>
<td>Eating dinner</td>
<td>Preparing dinner. Eating dinner.</td>
<td>Eating dinner</td>
<td>Eating dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 am - 9:30 am</td>
<td>Young animals: graze from 4:30am half hour later than the other animals, and milking at 9:30pm half hour before the other animals return</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Time allocation and labour division of households, Da, 2007

Each family has its recognised head of household. The household head is represented by a senior man in most cases. The head makes decision over various aspects of household economics and other domestic issues. Other adult members of the household, including women, have equal rights to voice their ideas and suggestions and take part in decision-making. A respectful son will normally become the household head when his father is too old to make decisions. Where the household head does not have son(s), his son-in-law will become the household head, provided he is respectful of and respected by, other family members. In this case, the daughter (the wife of the son-in-law) has an equal right to make decisions with her husband. Beyond each individual household, the household head is the one who represents his household when participating in village meetings (Chapter 7). This function is normally dominated by males.
4.3 Households in Da

There are 19 households in Da itself, while two other households (considered part of Da) reside within Nagchu town. The 19 households in Da were used for the information presented in this thesis. The two households in the town are numbered in this thesis, but are not included for detailed analysis. This is because these two households do not have any livestock, and their daily activities are not directly involved with the other households in Da.

All these households originated from six principal households that were residents in the Da area from the early 1950s. Interviews with the people in the research village identified that the herdsmen of these households are predominately descendants of two small section nomadic communities or local descent group (ru ba). These were formally attached to two different aristocratic families: Kündéling (households No.16 & No.19) and Doring (No.1 & No.11) (Chapter 5). Map 4 shows how six households were early migrants to Da, No.1 moved from the Doring community section to Da around 1950. Nos.16 and 19 moved from the Kündéling community territory to Da around 1958. Two other households, No.6 from Doring and No.13 from Amdo, moved to Da in 1959. Four new households were divided from their principal households during the 1960s ‘class struggle’ period (Chapter 6). No.15 divided from No.19, No.5 divided from No.17, No.8 from No.6 and a new household No.11 moved to Da. The remaining households have spread in different periods, for example when a new household was established.

4.4 Family Structure

The principal households in Da can be subdivided into three types according to post-marital residence. One type consists of a married couple residing virilocally with or near the husband’s parents. The second is a married couple residing uxorilocally with or near the wife’s parents (also uxorilocal). The third type is a married couple residing neolocally, neither with or near the husband’s parents, or with or near the wife’s parents. Map 5 shows the location of each household in Da. Those households in green are the six principal households from which other households have spread and to which they are linked.
For instance, the Map shows No.15 separated from No.19. No.2 separated from No.16. Figures 3 to 10 provide further detail as to residential type.11

Households of a virilocal type can be divided into six groups. One group is No.1 and No.3. The head of the household at No.3 is the son of the head of the household at No.1. In other words, the wife of the head of the household at No.3 resides near to her husband’s parents at No.1.

![Figure 3 Kinship of No.1 & No.3](image)

The second group is the household heads of No.20 and No.21 who are the sons of the head of the household at No.4. The wives of the head of the household at No.20 and No.21 reside nearby with their husbands’ parents who live in No.4.

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11 Notes for the kinship figures: The person marked in black is the interviewee, though more than one person was interviewed in some families. The circle represents a woman or a girl, a triangle represents a man or a boy. A circle or a triangle, which have a household number within them, means that this person is from that household. The dotted lines indicate household membership. A circle and a triangle which have a diagonal mark, means that this person has passed away. The line linking two persons indicates that they are married. The curved line linkage between two person means they are not married formally, but had sexual contact. A line linking two persons on top means that they are siblings. A line linking two persons vertically means the persons below is the child of the person above. Members included within a dotted line means that those members are in the same family. The total population numbers may be different from what is indicated by the figures. This is due to fieldwork being done in different years, and some members may have passed away.

My special thanks to my niece, Künzang, who helped me to sketch the kinship figures of each household.
The third group is the head of the household at No.7 and No.8 who are the sons of the late head of the household at No.6. The wives of the head of the household at No.7 and No.8 reside near their husbands’ late father and their husbands’ mother who lives at No.6.

The fourth group is the head of the household at Nos. 4, 9 & 10 who are the sons of the late head of the household at No.13. Nos. 4, 9 & 10 reside nearby with the husbands’ parents (No.13).
The fifth group is the households at Nos. 5, 17 & 18. The head of the household at No. 18 is the son of the head of household at No.17. The married couple resides nearby with the husband’s parents. No.5 resides nearby with No.17 because the head of household at No.5 is the brother of the wife of the household head of No.17. In this sense, No.5 resides near to the husband’s parents.

The sixth group is No.15 and No.19. The head of household at No.15 is the son of the late head of household (a woman) at of No.19. The couple at No.15 resides nearby with the husband’s parents.
Households of the uxorilocal type consist of one group. The wife of the head of household at No.2, is the daughter of the late the head of household at No.16. In other words, the married couple at No.2 resides near the wife’s parents.

No.14 is the only household of a Neolocal type from Da. The couple moved from another village to reside in Da. Their parents reside far away in another village.
These household structures today reflect how the economic life of each household is organised depending upon the number of livestock, labourers and other activities pursued. An important issue is the limited labour force. Children go to school until the age of 18, while older generations do less work than they used to. This leaves the number of adults in between the young and old as the main labour force. With current economic developments in China, this labour often seeks work in town, or away from the district, further lessening the available pool of help for household tasks. As discussed later in this thesis the changes since 1950 in social, political and economic conditions have continued to change these family structures.

Above all lies the context of the economic aspects of households (Chapter 7), the changing economic and political circumstances, and their impact upon social relationships (Chapter 8). Even so, economic and social aspects of households are grounded in their historical experience to which we now turn.

The centrality of the household as the central unit of a pastoral economy will become clear throughout the thesis. It will be not only a unit for the economic activities but also for the social–cultural context that allows an interpretation of the changing economy of Tibetan herders.
Map 4 the early residences in Da

The number in square column represents household number

The arrowhead represents to which direction each household’s door is facing

The green colour in each square column represents the principal household.

The heavy dotted lines show households separated from the principal households with a green column, and light lines showing subdivided households.

No.11 & No.12 moved to Nagchu town which is why these two households live off the map.

Map 5 Household and residence type in Da, 2007

The number in square column represents household number

The arrowhead represents to which direction each household’s door is facing

The green colour in each square column represents the principal household.

The heavy dotted lines show households separated from the principal households with a green column, and light lines showing subdivided households.

No.11 & No.12 moved to Nagchu town which is why these two households live off the map.
A house

A house with a surrounding wall

Furniture

kitchen equipment

Photo 1 Houses
5 The Pre-open Market I: The Period of Subsistence-oriented Economy

The field site in its brief historical context

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave a brief outline of what precedes the current situation on the Tibetan Plateau in the region of Nagchu. The purpose of this chapter is to look back at the live of herders prior to 1960, and to argue that the current lives of herders incorporate changes which took place in these earlier eras. For the purposes of identifying its historical details, the time period will be divided into two phases: (1) prior to the 1950s; (2) 1950s to 1960s’.

Changes that have occurred can be grouped under the headings of the environment, social organisation and household economics. Tibetan herders have sustained their livelihoods in the Tibetan Plateau and neighbouring valleys for at least 2,000 years. During that time they have learnt how to exploit the resources of that region to feed, clothe and house themselves. As we have described in Chapter 3, this long period of adaptation has generated a way of life that has developed a rich culture that has become a core part of their existence. Beyond the family unit, complex social structures have developed to meet community and governance needs. Tibetans have been ruled by feudal landlords, theocracies, warlords, and emperors, and from the mid-20th Century, the PRC. The Chinese Revolution in 1949 resulted in massive change, particularly after 1959, in the Tibetan region, and a considerable influx of people from beyond Tibet’s traditional territory; this process continues today. Some scholars consider Tibetan society prior to 1950 to have been feudal. As will be discussed later, this may be an inappropriate description. The paying of taxes does not of itself constitute classical feudalism, nor define feudal allegiances, nor were herders necessarily the property of an overlord. The nature of a mainly nomadic population meant links to powerful establishments were at best tenuous, and that land could not be ‘owned’ in the manner of European feudalism with its consequent tight authority over the people who lived within a demesne. Consequently,
although there were social hierarchies, they were not the formalised and strictly enforced structures associated with European feudalism (Brenner, 1987; Brown, 1974).

More recent changes have been dramatic as they have challenged many aspects of Tibetan life and have been alien to the understanding of many, particularly those in remote village communities. One of the major changes was the incorporation of everyone in Tibet and the rest of China, into collectives from the 1950s and then, after 1978, into an (initially) hybrid socialist type market economy. This more recent phase will be considered in a subsequent chapter. To aid understanding about Tibetan societies today, it is first necessary to consider where they have come from. This chapter aims to review what is understood about Tibetan herder societies prior to 1960. An objective is to identify those aspects of these societies that were strongly developed and which are still important today, as well as other aspects that have been discarded or transformed.

For the purpose of this thesis, this chapter will focus in more detail on two aspects. First is the economy and the economic activities of herders. The Tibetan nomadic economic situation prior to the 1960s can be defined as a subsistence-oriented economy that was to a large extent, self-sufficient and self-contained. As will be seen, this did not mean that there was no trade based on barter with others. Herders could trade pastoral products such as wool and butter for barely and others products. Their life was mainly supported by the pasture and livestock resources they had at their disposal, but certain commodities were not available to them. Initially these were food stuffs that could not be grown on the high plateau. The factors militating against arable and horticultural crops are clear - extreme climate and low soil fertility. However, another compounding factor was low precipitation and access to water. Professor Tony Allan’s concept of ‘virtual water’ (Allan, 2010) is a valuable way of considering the way that worldwide trade goods often contain a hidden value. Where there is a lack of water, an economy can use what they do have to purchase goods from countries that have water, for example using oil to purchase agricultural products in the Middle East (Allan, 2010). Prior to 1950, the Drokpa could trade goods such as dairy products and salt for goods that require high quantities of water. For example, a kilogram of wheat requires 1300 litres of water. The Drokpa economy had
aspects of trade that enabled the herder to barter for staples they did not have such as barely.

The two basic trade items of pastoral products and salt enabled the Drokpa to either subsist in their environment or to move into trade with a wider economy. The salt-based trade was not exclusively the only example of breaking out from this isolated self-dependence, but was a useful and self-contained method of interaction with the external world through trade.

The second aspect I consider here is social organisation within a historical continuum, and in particular within the field location of this research prior to the 1960s. We will consider the case of merchants or taxation in terms of the household, tribal groups, and a central state, aristocratic families, and monasteries. In the later period this may also involve cases of local higher status people who gained individual ownership of capital goods rather than them being in collective ownership (see last section of this chapter).

I start with some general history of the area (prior to the 1950s) before moving to an account of a traditional way of life (in the 1950s) that had remained unchanged for hundreds of years. This survey is based upon documentary but secondary evidence, illuminated by primary evidence from the memories of my own informants. In the subsequent chapter I will show how this changed under the period of collectivisation from the 1960s onwards.

5.2 Perspectives

There are two essential perspectives behind an understanding of this chapter

5.2.1 An historical perspective as essential to understanding

To understand the present we need to understand the past. Any theory about social change considers history as a vital entry into understanding all matters have a provenance. The era of anthropologists excluding history – are long gone. Evans-Pritchard’s (1966) article re-established historical provenance at the centre of anthropological research after 50 years of exclusion, while in the USA, anthropologists such as Service and Sahlins (1976) were also working to bring history back into anthropology. This exclusion was a result of the manner in which researchers following Boas and Malinowski, for example the functionalists, cultural relativists and Levi–Strauss had tried to establish anthropology as a
modern discipline which was different from history. They insisted that anthropological studies should be ‘synchronic’ (Levi-Strauss, 1968), avoiding the dangers of 19th Century evolutionism and Marxism, which had been strongly influenced by evolutionism as espoused by Morgan. Evans-Pritchard however, argued that the researcher can break free from regarding history as the recording of inevitabilities, and to see it as one contribution to a people’s understanding of themselves and their cultural identity. Today it is imperative that ethnographers situate their accounts firmly within an appropriate historical continuum. Using history, an ethnographer can go beyond a synchronic account of the people and their livelihoods, not to paint a picture of an ‘ideal’ culture, or on in which progress is always for the better, but to locate the present in ‘what is going on’ over time. History is the process of interpreting change. It is a continuum of change that documents the precursors to current social and economic customs.

Historical reflection and interpretation, in parallel with other disciplines, complements the building of a wider perspective. I make this case by exploring how peoples adapt and manage their physical and economic resources over time, and how this has formed an, albeit ‘evolving’, socio-economic system. To do this I explore social organisational forms that influence power relationships within a particular community. In turn, I will argue that these relationships are embedded in symbolic representations that are both the vehicle of accepted socio-economic behaviours and crucial motivators. As will be seen, they act to give a community coherence, continuity and resilience when faced with forces for change. These parameters are the foundations upon which individuals base their choices. Pre-collectivisation, Tibetan societies had all these influences which are carried forward to today.

Halbwachs made an interesting suggestion that memory of the past was a collective social activity: human social institutions construct shared memories through which members of the groups or institutions gain a sense of belonging and identity (Halbwachs, 1992:38; Connerton, 1989; Fentress and Wickham, 1992; Ricoeur, 2004; Winter, 2000:69–92; Barth, 1993).
5.2.2 Taxation and Land

For the purpose of this thesis, it is necessary to have a general picture of how a pastoral economy was organised within Drokpa society. This will aid our understanding in the following sections as to how the use of pastureland and livestock might be organised for the taxation of households units, tribal groups and local central administration which will be described below within an historical continuum.

Before the 17th Century, it is reasonable to assume that the Drokpa lived a generally mobile herding way of life to access land resources for grazing. It is possible that gradually a group of people started to become more restricted in terms of the resources available to them for grazing by largely social pressures i.e. first in terms of where they could go to find grazing, and then subsequently when others may have used that land, which could then have reduced the amount of grass available per animal. Thus, pasture boundaries may have gradually appeared between groups. Such boundaries may have been defined by such natural features as mountain ridges and river courses (Carrasco, 1959:75). This would not have involved ownership, but access to common land within agreed divisions. For example, hill farming in Wales underwent this historical process (Bowen, 2009). In this case, sheep were free to roam but became ‘hefted’, that is they learned to stay in one area. The herders, or in this case shepherds, knew which areas they could use as part of a shared resource. When Drokpa groups gradually became subject to landlords, aristocratic families, and monasteries, taxes would be paid to local landlords who, in return, provided some protection and may have organised other matters such as the adjudication of local disputes. The term ‘landlord’ should be used with circumspection. It means, in this context, not so much ownership, as exerting influence and authority over an area of land.

The social organisation of Nagchu was, to some degree, as Samuel argues:

“The Tibetan region in pre-modern times consisted of a variety of small and medium-sized polities, along with stateless areas, and was characterised by a low degree of political centralisation” (2005, p.196).

After the 17th Century, Drokpa groups of Nagchu became loosely attached to a political central state. Although Dawa Norbu (1997) mentions tribute-collecting missions among the Jang tang Drokpa, these did not necessarily mean significant political control. As Scott
notes, most of those ‘stateless’ groups on the edge of states had limited economic relationships with the states. It’s not easy to determine exactly how these relationships worked – they probably changed from time to time and place to place. State authorities always have a tendency to overstate their degree of actual control (personal communication, Samuel, June 2010).

In any case, we will see from subsequent sections that taxation was one manifestation of the political relationship between Drokpa groups and other political authorities. For instance, there were cases where the tribal groups of Nagchu paid taxes to Kashak (the Tibetan Cabinet Government). Another expression of this political relationship was that herders of some groups came to be considered as commoners in relation to aristocratic families and monasteries, and these latter power holders were awarded certain region of the pastureland of Nagchu. I will discuss these two manifestations of political authority in terms of the following:

5.2.2.1 Taxation

In this discussion on taxation and the relationship of Drokpa groups with political authorities, I will present a possible and outline continuum for the early period, together with the later period. As Scott pointed out, the art of governance is often to achieve a taxation level where people feel they get an adequate return in terms of local services (2009:125).

Taxation caused change over time. Tax levies had probably started as early as the 7th Century when local tribal groups were annexed within the Tibetan Kingdom. Cheng (1992) provides some evidence that this was based on livestock numbers in northern regions during the Tibetan Kingdom (7-11th Century). He notes this in his article “The Economic System during Thu bhö12 period”, though he does not provide a detailed picture of the economic system during this period.

When Thu bhö annexed the tribes of the North, pasture was still shared in common by tribes,. However, the Thu bhö Court had authority over the land. We also found several detailed records for taxation purposes of livestock numbers in terms of categories of ages

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12 The Tibetan Empire
and number of livestock hides in Tün hong texts. This can confirm that Thu bhö Court collected taxes from nomad tribes of the north.

When the Mongols ruled Tibet from 1260 to 1368 (Petech, 1980; Childs, 2008) pastoral households may possibly have paid taxes to local landlords, who were then taxed by the Mongol overlords. A centralised administration was established in the 17th Century when Ngakwang Lozang Gyatso (1617-1682), the Fifth Dalai Lama (and arguably the most important in historical terms), ruled much of the Tibetan region. During this time, his officers collected taxes based upon a population census (Shakabpa, 1967: 112-113). The third follows in the 18th Century.

Since the 18th Century (1753), taxation has been within two broad categories: *Kang dro*, feet walking and *Lak dön*, hands delivering. *Kang dro* taxation applied to units of land area, head of livestock, and per capita taxes on individuals. *Lak dön* applied to material goods and cash. Huber (1999a:201) notes that the Tibetan taxation system at this time was primarily related to productive units such as land area under grazing. In most cases, Tibetan pastoralists paid taxes according to the number of livestock they had, not the area of land used - the latter would have been difficult to estimate within a common grazing system. This was the case in Nagchu. To ensure appropriate taxation, the Tibetan authorities carried out a livestock census every three years. Monasteries and landed aristocracy also imposed taxes based on a census, usually done every six years (Nyida Tsé Wang 1985; Gelek, et al. 2002).

The taxation relationship between these tribal groups and the Kashak (1642) was exercised differently during different time periods. This relationship, however, never implied strong, regulated or over-arching political control. It seems that significant taxation *per se* to the central government was first evident in the 1750s (Nyida Tsé Wang, 2000). Taxation rates were determined by local tribes, monasteries and those aristocrats with estates and national authority. The taxes were levied on livestock by the state, monasteries/aristocracy and by the tribes. The use of the term ‘taxation’ can be taken to mean economic transactions that were used to fund activities beyond the means of tribal

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13 Data are scare on how much tax was in-kind as hides, cheese, grain etc, and how much in gold or cash.
14 Please see Chapter Four for the comments on this literature.
groups and, as such, brought about coherence between tribal groupings as occurs in Nagchu today. Though what benefits tribal groups obtained from those to whom they paid taxes is not clear.

Intrinsic to the growth of central government is the growth of taxation. This might be in kind or in cash. Understood in economic terms, and as has been said above, taxation is the taking of some control over production by those who have the power or authority to do so. It is a levy on production that may simply be to enable the powerful to accumulate wealth, to support the ruling group or (less likely), be used for the good of the wider community. In Tibet it is not always clear whether this was an enforced tithe or a freely entered into social contract as in earlier periods, especially when the taxing authorities included the Kashak as well as monasteries.

5.2.2.2 Pastureland rights

A continuing aspect of land rights for herders in the Tibetan region has been that it is more an access right than an asset that can be bought or sold. Various over-lords were probably regarded as owning land, but that possibly had some imprecision about it, due to low populations and the vast nature of the Tibetan Plateau. It is unclear how much or if, land was fought over versus being re-allocated at times among family groups, landlords or monasteries within that regarded as part of the territory of a local king or other leader. It is, however, reasonable to assume that individual households had traditional usage rights over pastureland, though it is not clear how those rights were originally decided. Households migrated in and out of villages/regions, as there was traditionally a transhumance existence (Ekvall, 1968, 1964), suggesting that user rights had some flexibility about them, and largely reflected incumbency i.e. if other villagers acknowledged your right to live somewhere, which could occur through marriage or other social arrangements, then grazing rights automatically followed. When herders had access to land, they either shared land in common within a tribal territory, or grazed within several tribes’ boundaries. The Research Team for the Survey of Tibetan History survey described one such case where the community of Wa ba from Nagchu did not have their own exclusive pasture territory, but shared a large area with five other tribes (TRTSHTHE, 1987:80). Sharing of land in this way probably reflects the tenuous nature of user rights, and that
traditional Tibetan herders did not assign value to the land, only their right to use it, and hopefully before others did. Whoever then ‘owned’ the land could presumably decide which herders could use it (TRTSHTE, 1987:114). On a larger scale, all land in Tibet belonged to the state, a condition that still exists. Richardson wrote:

“In theory all land in Tibet belonged to the state from which the noble landowners and great monasteries held large estates. In return the nobles paid revenues to the state, largely in produce of various kinds and also by service it being their duty to act as officials of the government…generally, once a great family was established on a property it acquired a hereditary right to them…the monasteries, which owned even larger estates than the nobility, made their return by prayers and rites for the welfare of the state.” (1984:15)

But this is merely the broad context of land rights. In practice it is likely that rules and access would depend upon circumstance that varied from region to region. In the case of the pastoral society in Nagchu, there were connections between tribal groups and aristocratic families, monasteries and the Kashak. These structures do suggest there was a feudal aspect to pre-1950s Tibetan society Goldstein (1989) in his important book A History of Modern Tibet Volume 2 the Calm before the Storm: 1951 – 1955, remarked that in Tibet “The feudal, manorial estate-based socioeconomic system that was extensive in Tibet was precisely the type of hereditarily oppressive elite system”, and he further wrote: “…during the period of this history, traditional Tibetan society with its lords and manorial estates continued to function unchanged” (2009:541). The term ‘feudal’ can have various meanings. Maybe, in this thesis, Bloch’s concept as enunciated in his book Feudal Society, best defines the type of feudalism that applied in Tibet: “Feudalism is not so much from a legal and military point of view but from a sociological one” Bloch argued that feudalism is a type of society that was not limited solely to the nobility. He recognised that there was a hierarchical relationship between lords and vassals, although vassals are usually an inappropriate term borrowed from European feudalism. Few nomads would have regarded themselves as ‘vassals’ as they were not bought and sold with the land. Their subjugation was mostly about paying taxes and levies to the over–lord and in being drafted at times to fight in times of war. Bloch saw the vassal/lord relationship as similar to the relationship
between lords and peasants. According to Bloch, other elements of society can be seen in feudal terms; all the aspects of life were centred on “lordship”, so we might speak usefully of a feudal state or “feudal tribal-state”, or we might not (Bloch, 1960).

Many Western scholars have questioned whether it is appropriate to describe Tibet prior to the 1960s as ‘feudal’. The term derives from a specifically European political structure, and its usefulness has been increasingly questioned, even in the European context (e.g. Brown, 1974; Dirlik, 1974, 1985). Its application to non–European societies has always been problematic, even for pre-modern agricultural societies organised on an estate basis, and it does not apply at all well to the Drokpa regions in pre-modern times.

Samuel gives some additional arguments for this (1993, p.117-118). Further to this perspective is the sense of individualism and independence that must have developed over centuries among the Drokpa and which is still there today. That is not in keeping with a completely subjugated society. As they say ‘Drokpa know how to survive.’ In general terms they have what Scott (2009) calls – “the art of not being governed”.

The system of governance that developed over centuries will now be considered from the perspective of the origin of these peoples and their interactions with their ecosystems from which they developed a unique pastoral economic system and the social and political institutions that influenced land use and economics.

5.3 Drokpa of Nagchu: prior to the 1950s

5.3.1 History of social organisation

The life of the Drokpa had evolved over centuries around an annual pastoral herding system, which required adaptation to low density foraging (Qi et al., 2008; van Driem, 2001), low primary productivity, and high instability (Aldenderfer, 1988). The harsh plateau environment and low human populations imposed a self-sufficient subsistence economy that then influenced the ways in which society was organised.

Human cultural understanding of animals, plants and landscape, as an interdependent whole, seems also to have continuously evolved within this ‘social niche’ (Barth, 1960:24). This often animistic understanding was as a process of adaptation to the environment - the concept being one of inter and mutual dependence. For instance, the year round pastoral herding system is a way to adapt to low density foraging (Qi et al., 2008; van Driem, 2001),
low primary productivity, and high instability (Aldenderfer, 1988), namely the conditions of
the plateau environment.

The exact period of the beginning of Tibetan nomadic pastoralism is uncertain, but it is
reasonable to assume it developed from the pastoral societies across central and northern
Asia once ice had melted on the Plateau after the last ice ages - maybe 5,000 or fewer
years ago (Liu & Peng, 1989; Zhang, 1989; Aldenderfer, 1999; Lobsang, 1992; Aldenderfer
Pastoral knowledge and techniques for survival have been carried within the continuum of
belief systems, language and social institutions and the rituals that developed. When the
transition occurred from hunting (user) to domestication (keeper) is not at all clear\textsuperscript{15}. This
transition could arguably have resulted in some cultural changes when semi-permanent
bases would have then been possible e.g. during winter, instead of continually chasing wild
animals for food. This change could then have been associated with more ordered human
societies, started from the basic household unit, tribal groups, and the first ‘kingdoms’
may appear around 2–2,500bp.

5.3.1.1 Family

Tibetan society developed from various family and tribal groups working together to
manage the region where they lived, and any issues that arose within it. Several families
form a community group, which in turn forms a major group (Drakpa, 1985:115).

Throughout earlier periods, the system of livestock ownership and their management
had evolved, together with individual families living in tents (Carrasco, 1959:73; Gelek, et
al., 2002:125). Decision-making on the use and allocation of resources was at the tent
level. Considering the harsh environment and the mainly poor pasture land, a nomadic way
of life in small units was almost inevitable, and this demanded small economic units. Small
family units operate mainly independently, while still having cultural links to a wider tribe.

\textsuperscript{15} Paleontological evidence indicates that there was a period when the plateau was not inhabitable due to ice.
There may not have been a hunter / gatherer period on the plateau as the earliest groups may have come
from Central Asia with domesticated yaks. Central Asia was, and still is, greatly influenced by pastoral
societies. The cultivation of crops e.g. barely, was at best a very minor activity. There are close similarities
between Tibetan, Mongol & Turkic pastoral peoples (Personal communication, David Kemp, Geoffrey Samuel,
June 2010).
Within these units, the domestic livestock were the basis of life, and represented value and wealth; consequently they gained symbolic and cultural significance. For instance, yaks to Tibetan herders are essential to survival, and the term in Tibetan has as same meaning as ‘wealth’ (nor). Such patterns are very similar in other nomadic pastoral societies in Bhutan and Mongolia (Sneath, 2000), South Persia (Barth, 1961), Nuer in South Sudan (Events–Pritchard, 1940a, 1940b, 1951a, 1951b, 1956, 1962, 1976), the Maasai in Kenya, Fulani in west Africa, Somali in the Horn of Africa, Chukchi of the Sub–Arctic and Saami in Norway (Dahl & Hjor, 1976).

5.3.1.2 Tribal Groups

Tibetan society and particularly the Drokpa, gradually developed from separate groups which settled across the whole of the northern region16 (Map 6). There were four main areas across the northern plateau and nearby valleys, and within each of those the people were identified as belonging to a particular group/community i.e. they considered they had closer linkages within groups within each subregion than between the four main regions. Over the centuries within each subregion of Tibet, local linkages developed, which helped form a ‘tribal group’. These tribes then at times joined together for protection, and social activities, gradually building the Drokpa culture. At other times a central administration exercised power over some or all the ‘tribal’ groups, creating another layer of cultural development, which may not have always have co–existed comfortably with the ‘bottom–up’ developments.

Among the early identifiable human communities on the northern Tibetan plateau mentioned in historical texts, was the ancient Zhang–zhung 17 kingdom, called yang tong in Chinese historical texts. The Zhang–zhung appears to have been the dominant group from 500BC to 625AD. They have been described as a small–scale coalition of territorially–

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16 These groups refer to the four main groups I discuss further specifically with reard to the Nagchu region, See below and the map in this chapter.
17 Zhang–zhung is known as the roots of the ancient culture of Western and North–western Tibet (including part of today’s Nagchu). Zhang–zhung was developed in the region before Buddhism was introduced into Tibet. The Zhang–zhung culture is associated with the ancient Bön religions practice which, in turn, has influenced the philosophies and practices of Tibetan Buddhism (Karmey, 1979).
based lineages\textsuperscript{18}, variously as a Kingdom (Petech, 1997:230) or as a confederation state (Beckwith, 1987:14). Tibetan historical texts described the Zhang–zhung kingdom as originating from a group of people who held traditional Tibetan native beliefs, including the Bon religion that predates Buddhism’s and was common across the Tibetan plateau (Allen, 2000). Geoffrey Samuel’s book \textit{Civilised Shamans} (1993) provides an in-depth and very perceptive account of the nature and evolution of religion in Tibetan societies from the 9\textsuperscript{th} Century up to the intervention by the Chinese in 1950. He argues persuasively that religion in these societies developed as a dynamic amalgam of strands of Indian Buddhism and the indigenous spirit-cults of Tibet – referred to elsewhere under the umbrella term, Bon. He stresses the diversity of Tibetan societies, demonstrating that central Tibet, the Dalai Lama’s government in Lhasa and the great monastic institutions around Lhasa formed only a part of the context within which Tibetan Buddhism matured. He explores the relationship between Tibet’s social and political institutions and the emergence of new modes of consciousness that characterise Tibetan Buddhist spirituality. He identifies the linkage between two orientations of this religion – 1) religion as clerical (primarily monastic) and 2) as shamanic (associated with Tantric Yoga). He sees the development as rooted in the pursuit of enlightenment by a minority of people – lamas, monks and yogin – and the desire for shamanic services in a quest for health, long life and prosperity. Shamanic traditions of achieving altered states of consciousness have been incorporated into Tantric Buddhism, which aims to communicate with Tantric deities through Yoga. He contends that this incorporation forms the basis for much of the Tibetan Lama’s role in society, and that their subtle scholarship reflects the many ways in which they have reconciled the shamanic and clerical orientations. Samuels would argue that viewing Tibetan Buddhism in this way leads us to appreciating it as one of the great spiritual and psychological achievements of humanity. In this current study of the Drokpa of Da, we see the social impact of this development and maturing on everyday life. As Samuels argues, the consciousness and religious life of the Drokpa are at the shamanic end of a dimension between the orientations. The links to the clerical are, however, robust, embedded in the links with

\textsuperscript{18}However, it is not saying that nomadic tribes ever maintained a strong lineage ideology in contract to east African and Middle Eastern tribes. These lineage and descent may not link directly to where tribes were a century or two ago.
monasteries and the respect given to monks and Lamas. Religion lies at the heart of the Drokpa sense of identity.

During its peak period, the Zhang–zhung territory covered much of the western and northern parts of today’s TAR, and it included the territory east, south–west and west of today’s Nagchu (Nyida Tséwang et al., n.d.). Tibetans in Nagchu today consider themselves to be descendants of the ancient Zhang zhung kingdom (Nyida Tséwang et al., n.d.; Gelek et al., 2002). Zhang–zhung power declined around the 7th Century, but prior to that, the sum pa19 kingdom had taken over the eastern parts of Zhang–zhung’s territory in the 6th Century. Its territory then covered the midlands and the eastern part of today’s Nagchu. The Zhang–zhung kingdom remained an influential and dominant power in other parts of the region until it was conquered by Songtsen Gampo, who founded the first acknowledged Tibetan Empire (Thu bhö 吐蕃) in 644AD (Shakabpa, 1967, Nyida Tséwang et al., n.d.; ibid.:12–13).

5.3.1.3 Centralised administration

Centralised administrative structures are ones which emerged where there was a hierarchy based on landlords and monasteries, and then, at a higher level, Tibetan and Chinese rulers.

The first Tibetan Kingdom began in 644 when Songtsen Gampo managed to exert power over many groups and amalgamated them into what is now thought of as Tibet.

The Tibetan Kingdom established a new administration called Sum pé ru on the former Sum pé areas. It included almost all the region of today’s Nagchu. In a later historical period, the people of this area formed four groups as described below. These four groups had relative independence; they were loosely attached to the Tibetan Kingdom and to each other. It would be wrong to consider this Kingdom as highly organised with a strong administrative structure, as was the case in China. This was because most of the people were nomads who were not open to strong control, or who could move elsewhere if control became oppressive, rather as Scott describes for the people of Zomia. This had similarities to the empire established at a later date by Genghis Khan in Mongolia. With oath laws that

19 Sum–pa were a tribal people living in North–eastern Tibet. The Sumpa are the same people known to the Chinese as the Supi 蘇毗.
grew from custom, and a straightforward judicial system to solve conflicts, plus a communication system and an infrastructure for trade, this empire was based primarily upon voluntary loyalty to the Khan, in many ways a social contract between rulers and ruled.

This first Tibetan Kingdom collapsed in 842AD, and it is not clear what then happened across the region, as records are scant. Literature mentions that the Khyung po clan, who were the La chö (religion master) of Zhang bö gyel rap ma (zhang bö kingdom) of the Tibetan Empire, maintained their power around the eastern part of today’s Nagchu (Nyida Tséwang et al., n.d.; Gelek et al., 2002:14).

Chinese influences over Tibet have varied over the centuries, but the start of more regular political engagement is attributed to the 7th Century, when Songtsen Gampo became King of Tibet and by the 9th Century relationships had been formalised through a series of treaties (Goldstein, 1997).

The next major change was in the 13th Century when the Mongolian armies of Genghis Khan conquered China. In 1207, Tibet submitted to the Mongols (Goldstein, 1997) and Manchu administrators have exercised varying control over Tibet ever since.

The people of Nagchu had extensive contact with Mongol power, as Nagchu is on one of the routes to Lhasa, and many descendants of Mongolian people have resided in the region. This developed from when the Mongolian military travelled through Nagchu for the first time in 1240AD, on their way to Ra dreng, a monastery and community, close to Lhasa. Kublai Khan established a Mongol garrison in the Northern territory of Tibet in 1281. The Khyung po clan, mentioned earlier, established good relationships with the Yuan Court (the dynasty established by the Mongolians), and they strengthened and expanded their local political power. In a later period (unknown), the King of Hor clan came to power usurping the Kyung po clan 20. This clan established ‘hor tso so gu’ (the ‘thirty nine tribes of hor

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20 Hor refers to Mongo or Mongolian in local term, the founder of the Hor King clan was a Mongolian who came to this area around the 14th Century. This lineage was most probably a Mongo aristocracy that had a blood relationship with the Yuan royal family.
clan’), and the Hor king’s power continued. The Hor clan had influential political power locally, and kept close political contact with the Yuan Court and then the Qing Court²¹.

The general evidence supports the idea that four major groups (Map 6) were identifiable between 842AD and 1911 in today’s Nagchu region.

Group A: ‘Thirty-Nine Groups of Hor’ is the local term for the group A. The group A is referred to as the Hor community, which is based on descendants of a Mongolian royal family²².

Map 6 Four major groups between 842AD and 1911

The lineage is uncertain as the first King of Hor was recorded by the mid-14ᵗʰ Century, and then later 39 groups were formed during the late 17ᵗʰ Century and the early 18ᵗʰ Century. Of these 39 ‘tribes’ it is unclear which came to the northern Tibetan region. When the Yuan Dynasty was formed by the descendants of Genghis Khan, the Hor group moved into the northern Tibetan region around 1714 (Zhapdrung Tséring Wanggyel, 1733) to secure allegiances and territory for the Yuan Court. This is called the ‘Period of Yellow

²¹ People of Hor clan are also called people of rgya because of the close political contact with the Qing Court over nearly 160 years. Rgya means Chinese in local term; however, it might be better to understand the term in its historical context. Qing was Manchu, and promoted Manchu supremacy. The period is important to Tibet because Qing promoted Tibetan Yellow Hat Lamaism.

²² Hor is often referred to as people, who lived in the northern part of the Tibetan Empire. The term has much influence with historical relationship between the Mongolian empire and the Tibetan Kingdom (Chen & Wang, 1998).
Mongolia of Hor’. Later, annexation by the Chinese during the Ming and Qing dynasties was called the ‘Period of gya (Han Chinese) ruling time of Hor’ (Nyida Tséwang et al., n.d.). In 1642, local authorities became responsible for the administration of Tibet, a third phase called the ‘Period of Tibetan Government Ruling Time’ when the 5th Dalai Lama established himself as the highest spiritual and political authority in the region. This continued to the 21st generation (1912) until the Kashak (Tibet cabinet) Government took over local administration in 1916. The territory of the Hor today includes the four counties23 of Nagchu.

Group B: Nak tsang was annexed by the central government in the 17th Century, during the 5th Dalai Lama’s period. However, there is no reference as to whether the Nak tsang had any direct taxation obligation to the central government prior to about 1680AD (Nyida Tséwang et al., 2000). Nak tsang groups had developed into eighteen sub-groups by the time the central government carried out a census primarily for taxation purposes in 1856. The territory of Nak tsang includes four counties making up today’s western parts of the Nagchu region.

Group C: The Jang gyü were loosely attached to the central government until Jang gyü administration was formed by the central government in 1942. The Jang gyü lasted until 1959 when the PRC introduced a new political system in this region. The tribe currently covers two24 counties.

Group D: Damzhung. This group is now no longer part of Nagchu prefecture and, therefore, is not covered in detail25.

After 1911, three major power holders had authority over these groups in today’s Nagchu:

The introduction of Buddhism to Tibet in the 7th–8th Centuries AD (discussed later) meant that over time, monasteries were exerting a substantial influence over Tibetan society as well as that exercised by local and Chinese rulers. By the early 20th Century, there were clearly three major power holders who had influence over the Tibetan region, including today’s Nagchu. These were:

23 These four counties are teng shen, sbr chen, ari ru and lha ri.
24 These two counties are Nagchu and Amdo.
25 It lies between longitude 90° 45′ –91° 31, and latitude 29° 31′ –31° 04′.
1. Influential monasteries

2. Kashak (the Tibetan Cabinet Government)

3. The representative in Tibet of the Manchu Qing Court.

The Kashak government set up the Hor gyü system in 1916, and this ended the influence of the Hor clan. The Hor gyü system ended in 1942. In the same year, in order to strengthen control of today’s Nagchu, the Dé pa zhung government established the position of Jang gyü (Governor of the Northern Territory of Tibet). From 1942 to 1959, the Kashak divided the former area of the Hor clan into six different county administrations, and in addition established another 12 counties in the northern areas, (Nyida Tséwang et al., n.d.; Gelek et al., 2002). These tribal organisations of the northern territory appear to have been based on the kind of lineage kinship structures detailed below, and the groups seem to have been based on local politics, rather than responding to the dictates of remote rulers (Scott, 2009; ibid.:27–30). The pastoral, social and political organisation of Nagchu was similar to that of other Tibetan nomadic groups (Dawa Norbu, 1974). A general characteristic of Tibetan nomadic group is as Samuel concludes:

“It seems that while some nomadic groups paid regular taxes (or made regular offerings) to a particular monastic estate, and perhaps submitted disputes to that estate for adjudication, all Tibetan pastoralists retained a high degree of autonomy.” (Samuel, 1993:117–118; Ekvall, 1966)

The governor of the northern territory of Tibet was known as Jang chi in the local language. He had the official right to collect taxes, and act as an intermediary between counties. This included law enforcement and defence, the transmission of government decrees, and so forth.

The interface between the Kashak and each county was maintained via the headman of the county, and the administrator of the region acted as an intermediary when it was needed. This meant that the county headmen could appeal directly to the Government in Lhasa for help when needed, and then if the ruler in Lhasa agreed, the regional Governor would work with the locals to solve any problems (Gelek et al., 2002).
All counties (Jang chi) fell under the upper (regional) civil administration (Jang chi), but administration was not strongly uniform, as some of the groups were part of monasteries, aristocracies, or a representative of the Manchu Qing Court’s assets.

The above changes in governance mean that regions like Nagchu have experienced a variety of systems over the past millennium. These systems have varied from a high degree of local authority to being subject to rule from afar; with the need to then plead cases in Lhasa or some other regional centre, which would cause significant delays in resolving problems. This need for immediacy of decision-making is an important factor when understanding the need for loose associations. The relative remoteness of the region probably meant that local autonomy was the more common practice prior to the 1950s. The available evidence suggests that when there were strong rulers in Tibet and/or China, local authorities made accommodation with them and sought to continue their lifestyle without external interference.

This history of administrative systems and allegiances to various entities meant that in 1950 Nagchu County (dzong) had a loose authority over 49 tribes (shok kha): 27 of these 49 tribes were tax payers to the Tibetan Cabinet Government, 15 of them had taxation obligations to aristocratic families, and two of the 49 tribes were answerable to influential monasteries (Tibetan Buddhist Priests)26. In Nagchu, obligations were based upon tribal affiliation and kinship which then defined which overlord they paid taxes to while, to a large extent, at the same time people maintained their autonomous segmentary tribal society.

The tribal social organisations, lineage kinship structures and oral traditions were developed by Drokpa over time in response to the increasing complexity in the ways Tibetan society was developing. The Drokpa in early historical times were isolated tribal societies. This may fit within the label of ‘Zomia’, that Scott (2009) uses deliberately to point to the commonalities between Zomia peoples. In other words, people such as the pastoralists are often in effect beyond the reach of any state. (1) “How far were the Drokpa in effect outside the realm of centralised control and state structures?” and perhaps also (2) “What can this tell us about Drokpa attitudes, their culture and ways of behaving? Samuel tried to answer (1) to some degree in Civilized Shamans (1993:131–136; 92–96, and 316,

26 Data is limited to indicate whether or not the other five tribes paid tax or to whom they paid tax.
The answer is, ‘yes’, they were, to some extent, but not entirely, and it varied from one region to another. Some may choose to remain in remote areas as a zone of refuge from hierarchies, taxes and forced labour. However, as populations increased within Tibet and surrounding areas, these discrete local units could no longer ignore others and became increasingly involved with elements of states, for instance during the Thu bhö period the linkage between the central government and nomadic pastoralists grew. Tax levies formed the essential link between household and state. The state, landlords and monasteries had vested interests in bringing these groups into their areas of influence so that taxes could be levied, reinforcing the major link between household and state. However, whether or not it was always successful is another story. Certainly, there was not a smooth increase in the degree of incorporation in the state from the Thu bhö period through to modern times. As Samuel wrote, this was due to the difficulties of movement and communication: “…difficulties of communication within each of those (major provinces of Tibet) regions, along with the lack of any effective centralised state through most of Tibetan history” (Samuel, 1993:92–96).

5.3.2 Economic history

Throughout much of its human history, Tibet has been characterised as comprising scattered households and communities that derived sustenance from pastoral and agricultural farm systems. To some extent the pastoralists on the Plateau developed lifestyles that were different to the agriculturists situated in the warmer valleys. These households and communities were linked in clan and other relationships into county and larger regional groupings, ruled by ‘feudal’ lords, including kings, monasteries or Chinese authorities. The economic activity and wealth of Tibetans was primarily driven by their pastoral and agricultural activities (Pennant, 1798; Wolfgang, 2006; Huber, 1999a:200; Di Cosmo, 1994) which generated some surpluses which were then used for trade and for building linkages. Until more recent times, trade was characterised more by barter than by cash (Carrasco, 1959). The legacy of these non-cash transactions and bartering still plays an important part in Tibetan life as will be discussed here.

During the Thu bhö Empire period, after 644 AD, trade between Tibet and neighbouring regions such as China, Nepal and India (Chab-spel, 1996:100–101) was evident. For
instance, Penant (1798) described Tibetan traders importing silk cloth, porcelain and silver from China, and exporting medicinal herbs, stag antlers, musk and gold to China. Penant also mentioned that Tibetans exchanged horses from the north-east for Chinese tea (Penant, 1798:798; Bertsch, 2006). Trade with India and Nepal was dominated by the exchange of salt and wool for grain and rice. Live sheep and goats were imported to Tibet from these regions, but were of less importance (ibid: 1798). Other consumer goods included tobacco (presumably after 1500 when Europeans spread South American tobacco around the world) and Tibetan Kha tak (Tibetan white scarves) (ibid: 1789; Wolfgang, 2006).

In the history of trade, the salt–based and wool trade played important roles since early historical times right up to the 1980s, when open and very active markets were introduced in China (Chapters Six and Seven). The salt–based trade appears to have been important for hundreds of years. Salt is a necessity of life, and Tibetans have harvested salt for personal use and trade for a long time. This was possibly the main non–pastoral activity pursued by the Drokpa and an initial impetus for trade. Herders mined rock salt from salt lakes, and then transported it on yak caravans to farming areas, where they exchanged salt for grain and other trade items (Li, 1994; An, 1982). This salt–based trade connected Tibet further with its neighbours. The Path of the Mani, an ancient high-road between Nepal and Tibet, was well-known as one important salt–based trade route between Tibet, India and Nepal (Willis, 1999) that involved high caste Thakuri and Chhetri Hindu (Ross, 1983). In Nepal, the Thakali people traded Tibetan salt and wool for Nepalese rice. And the Thame, who lived in the same area, relied greatly on Tibetan salt as an exchange commodity for other consumption goods.

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27 The tea trade might have started from AD960–1280 (Gabrisch, 1990).
28 Gansu, Qinghai and probably Nagchu of today.
29 Salt became a significant traded product, and was exported from Nagchu to Bhutan, Nepal and India. Available material shows that Nagchu exported 40 thousands kilogram of salt annually by the early 1950s (Nyida Tséwang et al., 1985; Gelek et al., 2002:106).
30 The Path of the Mani is an ancient high-road between Nepal and Tibet.
31 The Thakali live along the Kali Gandaki river. Their territory comprises the southern Panchgoan region and the northern Baragoan area.
32 http://www.yetizone.com/the_thakalis.htm
33 Thame is located on the salt trading route that existed between Tibet, Nepal and India.
In the 19th Century, the sheep wool trade became important for the Tibetan economy. As Millward (1989) described in his work, *The Chinese Border Wool Trade of 1880–1937*:

“It awaited the advent of a foreign market to prime the engines of commerce that brought wool down from the pastures of Tibet, Qinghai, Xinjiang and Mongolia. Russia first purchased wool from the Altai region of Xinjiang and from Outer Mongolia in the early 19th century, but it was not until the late 1870s and 1880s that sizeable amounts of wool began to pass through China from Inner Asia to the ports from which it was exported: Tianjin primarily, but also the Yangzi River ports from Chongqing down. Once started, the trade grew rapidly, increasing from 4,500 piculs34 exported in 1880 to 43,000 in 1885 to over 135,000 in 1891.” And, he quoted from Ekvall’s book *Field on the Hoof. Nexus of Tibetan Nomadic Pastoralism*: “In central Tibet and Qinghai, nomads also dealt from their camps with travelling Hui merchants, trading their wool and other goods for tea, cloth, silks, cooking pots, and so on (Ekvall, 1968:55–58).

The developed wool trade had an increasing impact on pastoral and trade activities (Millward, 1989). This was readily accommodated within the flexibility that the Drokpas already had in managing their livestock systems. Livestock remained a core activity but with increasing attention being paid to what surpluses could be produced for trade to supplement incomes. Salt and wool were the main commodities traded by the Drokpas, though there were minor items such as skin and hair.

In Nagchu, the pastoral economy was primarily subsistence-oriented, with surpluses of wool, livestock products and salt that were traded for barely and tea and to meet basic domestic needs. This was still a very traditional form of trade and a supplementary activity, which only started to change with the development of the market economy from the 19th Century onwards. The Drokpas learned the skills of trade and obtained benefits, but even the wool trade only brought important benefits to a minority. There is no evidence of any rapid socio-economic change caused by the wool trade as occurred in Australia or Europe, but there was more a gradual change that increased in importance as individuals and groups gradually increased the quantity of goods available for trade. This increased their

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34 A unit of weight used in some parts of Asia; approximately equal to 133 pounds (the load a grown man can carry).

interactions with traders, neighbours and other groups in the region. Implicit in the trade was constraint and flexibility. The environment on the high plateau severely constrained economic activities to those based on livestock, but then alternative species of livestock such as yaks, sheep, goats and cattle used to satisfy household and trade needs, which gives households some flexibility in the products they produced. Interviews with households as part of this research did however suggest that prior to 1950, some limited their trade as they did not wish to become too dependent upon that for their livelihood. This is significant and should be noted. Wealthier households always engaged more in trade and, as a result, had more luxury goods. For instance, pastoral dairy products from Nagchu were purchased by middle-men, who then supplied them to markets in India and mainland China, for example to Sichuan. In turn, commercial goods such as textiles, cooking pots, and sweets were imported from these regions into Nagchu. Archive data records\(^35\) indicate that in the 1950s there were 83 shops in Nagchu, 81 owned by Tibetans, and two by Muslims. The data documented in detail 53 shops among the 83. Of these, 31 were involved in the import/export trade. The key export was dairy products from Nagchu and the main imports are as described above. 22 of these shops traded in a wide range of commodities.\(^36\)

The Drokpa’s way of life had however remained identifiably similar to what it had been for hundreds of years. Changes brought about by increased trade were gradual. Most of the economy remained largely subsistence-oriented, and trading was always supplementary, although a growing activity.

So far, I have given a general picture of social organisation and the economics history of the Drokpa prior to the 1950s to help readers to understand the following sections in their historical context.

\(^{35}\)Record date is in 1956.

\(^{36}\)I have drawn on unpublished sources for the data, but I gained access to these sources on the understanding that I would not cite them directly.
5.4 Drokpa of Nagchu: the 1950s

5.4.1 Household economy

The group of tent-households was always the basic economic unit of production and consumption among the Drokpa. Food and clothing were produced, processed and consumed at the tent level. These units used their surplus production to trade for household commodities and special items such as jewellery and gifts. During the economic phase leading up to the 1960s, individual tents, as discussed above, bartered salt and wool for highland barely and brick tea. Although rice and flour were available, herders only purchased these items in rare circumstances, suggesting that they did not wish to become dependent on trade. It follows that such luxury goods were more available to wealthy herdsmen because they could produce greater surpluses, or surpluses that included goods that had the most value in the market. The literature (Richardson, 1984:15) and field interview data show that cash-based economies were not strong, at least, not at a micro economic level.

5.4.2 Households

The household is a basic economic production and consumption unit, which includes human reproduction37 (Richard et al., 1989, 1991; Goody and Tambiah, 1974). The household can be best understood from two aspects; first is the physical component and second it is the associated economic activities.

Physically, a household encompassed those who lived within a tent made of Tibetan yak wool. Socially, it was the group of family members who lived in that tent, or sometimes a cluster of tents. The majority of economic and social activities at the micro level took place within the tent, reflecting the harsh conditions that often occurred outside the tent.

The traditional herder’s tent is made of yak hair and is black in colour. Yak tents are well adapted to the climate of the Tibetan plateau, protecting people and sometimes newborn animals from the cold wind, snow in winter and strong sun in summer. The Yak tent has two pillars and one pole. The pillar is called Ka wa in Tibetan. On the top of each pillar hangs the spine of a wild yak, and the spine of a Tibetan wild donkey. The pillar

37 Definition of household is discussed in Chapter three.
closest to the entrance is the female pillar. Close to this female pillar is the cooking area. Another pillar is called the male pillar, where men hang their Tibetan hunting gun and sword. The spine bones on each pillar face each other. This is believed to protect against lightning. The direction of the tent entrance is normally eastward, allowing exposure to the morning sun and protection from the prevailing winds.

Photo 2 A Drkpa black tent made of yak wool at the beginning of the 20th Century.

Note: the ropes and tie points to hold the tent against severe winds.

Source: htppen.wikipedia.org/wikiNomadic

The division of social roles was vividly symbolised by the use of the left and right sides of the tent entrance. On the right hand side of the tent entrance, a shrine faces west and east, and there is a food store for barely and a place for yak saddles. Males enter from the right hand side of the entrance and sit on the northern side. This was an ‘honourable’ seating area for a Lama, nuns and visitors. Females enter from the left, and have their seating area to the south of the entrance. Domestic processing tools for milk and barely are kept on the left.

The cooking area or hearth has a symbolic meaning within the tent. The area is made of compressed mud, and it is believed that the hearth had its cooking area spirit (Lu in Tibetan). Reverence to the spirit was expressed through ritual prohibitions. For instance, it was prohibited to spit on the hearth, or to walk across the area. People believed that
such behaviour would pollute the spirit, and that this would bring about illness among the family members.

Within the tent a family shared economic activities cooperatively, and the outcomes of these activities. One family generally included three generations, a couple, their parents and their children, Though at times there could be four generations, a couple, their grandparents, their parents and their offspring. The way families were described suggested that once a couple had children, they assumed more importance within the family. This extended family pattern and polyandrous households can be seen as an adaptation to the labour needs of a pastoral economic system.

Within the household economic units, there was a dominant residential type where tent/households resided close to their close kin (Carrasco, 1959:74; Gelek et al., 2002:246–48). This indicates that one family unit, as described earlier, may join with some kin relations to share meagre resources or to achieve some economies of scale e.g. in managing livestock. The kin-based group provided a supporting network for pastoral economic activities. For instance, there were 101 households in the pu chu area of Amdo County, and these households resided at 51 different sites i.e. effectively two households per tent site. Each household group had ties with kin in 18 different sites among the 51 sites (these ties were predominately patrilineal). Three households had ties with kin who resided in four different sites among the 51 sites, and four households had ties with kin who resided in three other different locations among the 51. These 42 households resided so that they could be based on kin segments. This pattern of residence covered 65% of the households. The other 35% were other residential types, which were not tied to kin relationship (Gelek et al., 2002:248). They could have been recent migrants to the area, though that is not clear. If they were migrants, then that suggests a long tradition of mobility between groups.

Such networks had a significant social economic function for various pastoral purposes (Gelek et al., 2002). Such kin-based residential types can also be found from field data at Da:

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38These kin are related to male and female progeny.
We, (household No.15, No.16 and No.19), used to reside near each other, we could support each other for herding, and milking. It was particularly important for us to have such a supporting network when we needed to migrate from summer pasture to winter pasture’, said by the headman of No.19.

Herding was the dominant pastoral practice, with herders trying to find the best areas of grass for their livestock every day in competition with other herders. This was managed through small, local groups based around the household structure. This meant that the flocks of more than one household were often grouped together each day when grazing. Tibetan nomadic pastoralists developed their mobile herding systems with collective/common land use. The herding system evolved into different forms - settlement, semi-settlement and seasonal migrations. The Drokpa found in some regions that all year settlement in yak tents was possible, without the need to migrate to other places typically in milder environments. This became the norm in areas of low population density which had and access to good pasture at a range of altitudes. The Drokpa practicing semi-settlement located in one place, but migrated for a few months at a time when there was a shortage of grass, going to higher altitudes in summer or lower sheltered areas for winter. These groups spent increasing amounts of time at their permanent base. Drokpa who practiced seasonal migration did not have a permanent settlement area as described above, but migrated from one area to another, seeking quantity and quality grassland through the seasons. Migration paths were often similar from year to year.

5.4.3 Community Groups

Small community groups (the Ru ba) have traditionally been formed from several tent-dwelling groups. It is a small community - a subset of a larger related group. For instance, the people in Da originated from different tribal formations\(^\text{39}\) of tent-dwelling pastoralists who used to migrate between summer and winter pastures in the 1950s (Chapter Four).

Several such tent-dwelling communities formed kin segments. These kin segments formed the institution known as ‘small tribe section’ (Ru ba), where each individual family was related to others by kin and became a small-scale mutual aid kin group. This lineage kinship structure reinforced cooperation when it came to migrating from summer pasture to

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\(^{39}\) Tribe: refers to society’s organised basis of kinship and corporate descent group (Helm, 1968).
winter pasture. Ekvall (1939, 1968, 1961) referred to the kin segment as Ru kor or ‘tent circle’. In this, ru can be translated into the Chinese or Mongolian term for ‘banner’\(^{40}\), while kor indicates a circle. Roughly speaking, several such Ru kor, or kin segments, form a Ru ba. There could be several different such kin groups within a Ru ba. The same kin group lived alongside one another, and herded their livestock collectively. Herding was a collaborative activity. It can be considered as the first element of a socio-political structure in Tibetan nomadic society and is related to pasture territory. A kin segment (Ru kor) collectively used pasture with another/other kin segment(s), which were under the jurisdiction of a ‘Ru ba’.

In many cases, a Ru ba had its pasture boundaries\(^{41}\) and land access rights extended to all the members of the Ru ba (Clarke, 1989:398). ‘Rights’ only exist if others acknowledge them. In this case, land use reflects ‘first users’ and as governance structures developed, the central state seemed to decide who could use an area of land. To illustrate:

“The pasture boundary of today’s Khor mang was firstly chosen by several households five generation ago. They wrote a statement letter (to say that they have the right to use the land), and put their fingerprint on the letter, submitted to the Dalai Lama. They received (Dalai Lama’s) recognition for the land boundary. It is how we have the land boundary at the beginning, however, a chief of this tribal group occupied a piece of good pasture, around 25 square kilometre, and other herders were not allowed to access to this land.” (TRTSHTE, 1987:1)

Herders lived in communities where resources were shared and tasks were delegated – so creating discrete skill-sets and roles. Concepts of ownership were probably collective. If this was so, as it is in similar settings, land use rights were collective and shared among members within a tribe. Each community would mark tribal pasture boundaries and these might be sustained over many generations. Change in these boundaries, would usually only happen through conquest or extreme environmental change. As wider links between tribes

\(^{40}\) Banner in Mongolia now defines a county level of organisation.

\(^{41}\) It is unclear how boundaries of the ru pa were defined in early times. It might be that those who decided to stick together while other kin went elsewhere, defined the ru pa gradually. It then became a traditional practice, as over time people found that they survived better when in larger groups e.g. for defence, sharing the workload, guarding the livestock, despite the extra animals, meaning that they would utilise grassland faster and probably have to move their animals more frequently.
evolved, forming the concept of an over-arching state, it seems that pasture land per se began being held by the central administration around the 1750s (although this is not certain). The use of the term ‘state’ should be taken to mean relationships that grouped tribes. Even so, territorial boundaries of some tribal sections received recognition letters from the central government. Data recorded that the Khor mang community had one such authorised letter (TRTSHTE, 1987). This implies authority exercised or at least accepted by the Kashak. In some cases, the Kashak granted pasture land, and/or tribes who lived there, to some monasteries and aristocratic families. In such cases, the tribes under such monasteries and aristocratic families had privileged rights to graze a certain area of land. My research survey data illustrates that No. 17 at Da had the right of pastureland use through recognition by local government prior to 1960.

My father was chief of a Hong community before the 1950s. I recall we had relative larger pasture areas than other herders within our community territory. My father and my senior brother received the right to use the pastureland through the recognition of local governors of Nagchu district at that time42.

Ru ba was the basic social institution of Tibetan nomads in relationship to their pasture territory. A ru ba is the central pastoral production unit. Members shared periodic rituals, exchanged labour sources for herding and milking and other pastoral works. In many cases, the Ru pa had its pasture boundaries and land access rights extended to all the members of Ru pa43 (Clarke 1989:398). The chief of a Ru pa may occupy a piece of rich pasture and may have his livestock on the land. Other herders were not allowed access to this land. An ethnographer in 1960 documented: ‘The chief of Khor mang Ru ba occupied a good pasture, and had his livestock on the land throughout a year, and where other herders were not allowed to access the land’ (TRTSHTE, 1987:1). Field research showed that when the father of the current headman of No.17 was the chief of Do ring Ru ba in the 1950s, this family had exclusive right to a wide range of pasture within Do ring Ru ba territory.

42 It is unclear how the area of land was allocated
43 It might be that land was allocated uniformly to all, though the leader may get more of it in some cases (Gelek et al., 1992).
Ru pa had its common property apart from common pastureland. Other property arose from three sources: fines raised as punishment, payment from new migrants, and payment from members. Those who moved to other Ru pa or moved within the Ru pa for the purpose of marriage, provided dowries in the form of livestock which were paid to the unit of the household.

The Ru pa had tax obligations to three possible political institutions: aristocratic families, the Kashak, or influential monasteries. This obligation attached a Ru pa to one of these tax levying institutions and were the main ways these groups were linked. For instance, Ru ba, which were taxpayers to the Kashak, were named ‘household of official’ (Zhong dé: Zhong literally means official, Dé means household or households). A Ru pa may have obligations to more than one institution. For instance, a Ru pa in the Pel gön community had to pay taxes both to the Kashak and to a local monastery (Gelek et al., 2002:163).

5.4.4 Household Assets

The household economy of the Drokpa in the 1950s remained much the same as they had been in historical times. Household economies were still primarily subsistence-oriented, with some surpluses of wool, other livestock products and salt. To understand this, it is necessary to understand household assets, and then household consumption and household income.

Household assets were mainly composed of livestock. Data on livestock numbers prior to 1960 are limited, but some is available for three households (small, medium and large in terms of livestock numbers), from Khor mang, a tribal group in Nagchu in 1950 (farm B) and 1957 (farms A and C) (TRTSHTE, 1987). The animals present at these times arguably reflect earlier conditions, as it takes many years to breed sufficient animals to change the nature of the livestock enterprise. These data (Figure 11) show that Tibetan sheep were the major component of livestock in these three cases. The herd/flock sizes in each case varied considerably. The number of yaks and horses would reflect those needed for transport and perhaps milk, rather than other livestock products, whereas sheep formed the more commercial components. Figure 11 suggests that the larger livestock enterprise (Farm C) had moved to a more commercial basis of existence, as the number of animals

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44 Khor mang is located forty kilometres to the north–east of Nagchu.
greatly exceeds what the household would need. It is likely that the larger farm was also the more profitable when returns are expressed on a per capita basis. They were either employing herdiers, or may just have had a larger family to help, which meant their animals were probably reaching and utilising more and better areas of grassland. The smaller farms may not have had the resources to do that.

Figure 11 Household livestock assets for three households (small, medium & large) at Nagchu in 1957.

The limited information on the livestock kept by herdiers in the 1950s was compared with the recollections of an elderly herder interviewed 50 years later as part of this research. A very similar description was given (Figure 12). Sheep had been the dominant species of livestock on farms, and the numbers for small, medium and large herd/flock owners were similar. On a biomass basis, one yak is approximately the live weight of five sheep. These data roughly indicate that half the biomass was in sheep and half in yaks, which means their impact on the grassland would be approximately equal. The informant commented that the extremely poor herdiers had no livestock; they survived as labourers or as beggars. This suggests that the small farm (Figure 11) may have been an exception, as fifty years later the recollections of what constituted a small farm entailed more livestock and was similar to the medium farm of 1957. Similar increases are noted for what constitutes a medium sized farm (Figure 12). Alternatively there could have been a gradual increase in average herd/flock size over the last fifty years, if the financial return per animal has declined (in real terms) and/or herdiers now desire a higher income from
livestock and hence have more, meaning that the definition of small and medium livestock numbers has changed.

Figure 12 Recollections from an old herder of livestock numbers of households with small, medium or large herds/flocks

5.4.5 Household consumption

Consumption was mainly of livestock products, and this remains the case today. Table 2 shows consumption items which are produced from pastoral resources such as mutton, yak meat, cheese, yogurt and butter. Table 3 indicates consumption items which are not from pastoral resources e.g. highland barely and brick tea were the most common items for all three households, but need to be obtained from other regions. Taxation was a cost for all households. Flour and rice were consumption items for households with a large herd (Farm C).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mutton</td>
<td>6 sheep</td>
<td>2 sheep</td>
<td>35 sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yak meat</td>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheese</td>
<td>100kg</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>400kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yogurt(^{47})</td>
<td>150kg</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butter</td>
<td>0.005kg*</td>
<td>30 da yang</td>
<td>90kg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Household consumption of livestock products in Nagchu for three households in 1957.

\(^{45}\) Estimates based on views of an elderly herder interviewed 50 years later.

\(^{46}\) See ‘virtual water’ above.

\(^{47}\) No data on yoghurt from B & C even thought these two households owned yaks and sheep.
Table 3 Consumption items which are not derived from pastoral resources of three households in Nagchu in 1950 and in 1957


Interviews with elderly herders provided more detail on how livestock products were used by the Drokpa (Chart 1). The sheep, goats and yaks provided food (milk, meat and cheese), fibre (yak wool for sheds and some clothing, dung – used to plaster sheds, sheep hides and wool for clothing) and fuel (dung). One informant said that it had been rare for herders to purchase food items and clothing materials with Tibetan currency. This self-sufficiency can be seen as a protection/uncertainty against outside influences, or merely an acknowledgement of the levels of living style. As will be discussed later, as the Drokpa engaged increasingly in the market economy over time, they purchased more goods.

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Note: * indicates the data seems not correct; indicates no data was recorded. (Source: TRTSHTE, 1987:14–19).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>A (1957)</th>
<th>B (1950)</th>
<th>C (1957)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kg</td>
<td>kg</td>
<td>kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highland barley</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brick tea</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 pieces</td>
<td>? (70 da yang)</td>
<td>168 pieces ( 92 da yang)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taxation</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 times Kandri 0.012kg butter</td>
<td>0.006kg butter 3 times Kandri</td>
<td>4 brick tea 3 cheese cakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rent yaks from others</td>
<td></td>
<td>butter 0.05kg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gif</td>
<td></td>
<td>butter 0.0005 kg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>175kg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100kg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>payment for labour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>453.6 da yang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ritual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3450 da yang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48 Feet walking per year
Among the non-pastoral consumption items, highland barely was the most important staple grain food. Barely was obtained as a result of salt-based trade. Herders exchanged salt and their livestock products with farmers for barley. Table 4 shows the exchange rate, and exchange items. Other items such as brick tea, sweets types were purchased with local currency (Table 4), though the latter was not common for most herders. The salt-based trade provided the means to obtain the main food sources used for household consumption.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exchange items</th>
<th>Exchange Rate</th>
<th>Exchange items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BARTERING (unit: kg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barely</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>One Yak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wool (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Butter (0.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Salt (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONEY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tam ka</td>
<td>(10 Tam ka)</td>
<td>Oil (125kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Tibetan</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>sugar, dried grape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>currency)</td>
<td></td>
<td>dried fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>other sweet and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>brick tea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Value of traded consumption items. The money is in Tibetan currency in 1957.

Source: (TRTSHTE, 1987:16–19)

**Salt trade**

The micro-economic exchanges, which linked small groups of Drokpa and farmers through salt-based trade, appear to have been important in linking pastoral and
agricultural activities across the region. Information from another informant shows how households collaborated in groups specifically for salt harvesting and trade, and how people imbued such economic activities with cultural and symbolic meaning:

Only men participated in the ‘Salt-based Trade’. There are two explanations for this. The first is that the gender of the lake where the salt came from was considered to be female. It was said that she would be jealous if a lady accompanied the men fetching salt from her region. The result might be that a salt “team” could not fetch any salt, or that these ‘salt traders’ would not find any salt in this lake the next time they came. According to their belief in a feminine salt lake, the team flirted with her by singing songs before fetching salt from the lake. The second explanation is that women are born greedy. I was told that once a woman went to a salt lake with the men; she loaded up too much salt; not only in her sacks, but also in her pockets, shoes, and scarf. Because of this incident, the salt lake moved far away.

A salt team would travel some distance to a saline lake by trekking to harvest salt. A yak herd transported the food and many salt sacks. The size of the herd was usually between twenty to sixty yaks (‘akhesa’ or ‘bullock’). A large work team might consist of three hundred yaks with nine men. When joining the salt trade, Drokpa worked for themselves, or were employed by other Drokpa who had a shortage of labourers. The employee would get a few sacks of salt as payment. The team would make their trip once a year, usually between February and March in the Tibetan Calendar (around March to April by the Western Calendar). By this time a salt lake would have evaporated, making it easy to harvest the salt from the lake. The senior man of household No.16 participated in such salt trip many times. His work team went to a small salt lake that was located in Amdo County (the current administration term). It took the work team approximately one month to get there. Each participant was responsible for herding 30 yaks every day. A few of them would ride ahead to the lake by horse, arriving when the rest of the team was halfway there. The riders brought all the sacks with them. The purpose of doing so was to heap salt onto the side of the lake before their team reached the lake. Before loading the salt in each sack, they conducted a ritual for the lake. The ritual was as follows: They would place the salt in a pile, and put butter on top of the pile. The butter was a symbol of ‘dzo mo’, the female progeny of an ox and a female yak. Surrounding the butter, there were usually some butterballs. The Drokpa believed that there was a water ox in the lake, and the symbolic ‘dzo mo’ was sacrificed to please this water ox. They all wore their traditional hats, tied up with herding string, and circled the ritual salt hill three times. While doing this they sang: “Bless our yak (‘akhesa) and us, to be healthy on the way home; Bless us and our ’akhesa, so that we will return home safely with our salt…” After the ritual, they started loading salt; two sacks on each yak, with a total of thirty yaks. A strong yak was able to carry two sacks total weighing 100 kg, and a small yak could carry 50 kg. When completing their work the Drokpa would share a special meal, made of butter, flour, salt and sugar, to re-energise them after their hard work. The Drokpa would often sing this folk song when loading salt into the sack:
“Please press the bottom of your salt sack three times,
So that the salt does not dissolve easily in water, when we cross the rivers.
Please press the middle of your salt sack three times,
So that the salt will not rock back and forth because of the loose rope on the yak’s back.
Please press the top of your salt sack three times, So that the salt does not dissolve easily in water, when it is raining.

The shoulder of a strong man is like a burning cypress, the weak man only sighs and sighs.
Please load as much salt into the sack as you can, if you work alone.
Please load the salt into the employer’s sack, according to how much food he provides you, if you work for your employer.
The best man would not appear in the salt trade.
(For example: a scholar or Lama who thinks, and researches the world from their reading room)
The worst man would not appear in the salt trade.
(For example: the beggar who is interested in his begging bag and stick)
Only the man who is in-between, and their yaks come to a salt lake.”

Shortly after arriving back home from harvesting the salt, the Drokpa from Nagchu would then travel for a two month period in a yak caravan to the agricultural areas in Southern Tibet, visiting the Chushur Dzong and Tölung Dêchen Dzong (Counties). Barter was the dominant means of exchange during the salt-based trade, but Tibetan currency was used partially to purchase some commodities such as cooking oil from farmers. Although barter was the main transaction mechanism, money enabled greater flexibility, especially when barter did not have exact equivalents in trade. It enabled trade to occur when market needs did not match, and when the scale of the trade did not match – a yak cannot be divided to exchange it for small quantities! Approximately 10 Tibetan Tang ga⁴⁹ could purchase 125kg oil. There, they exchanged salt and wool, dried fat and livestock

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⁴⁹ The Tang ga was the currency of Tibet until 1941.
skins for barely, for beans and for coloured Nam bu\textsuperscript{50} (the wool was woven into the Nam bu), which the Drokpa would use to decorate their boots. The normal rates of exchange were 100kg salt for 150kg barely, 0.5kg wool for 0.3kg barely, and 0.5kg butter for 1kg barely. The exchange rates could be higher if a Drokpa visited more remote agricultural area. The salt trade became such an important activity that products like highland barely, wheat and dried radish were no longer regarded as luxuries, but had become necessities. This was significant because it was a factor in the Drokpa becoming less self-sufficient. Barely is used to make Tsam-pa the staple food of the herders. That connection would support the view that trading to acquire barely is an old practice. While salt was bartered, its value did change with locality and over time. However it was in many ways an alternative currency that later on was probably replaced more by barely (Table 6). Cash (Tam ka) was not popular among the herders until recent years, and was used mainly to obtain imported consumption items such as sweetmeats and brick tea.

The taxes were the most relevant cost to household economies in relation to individual households and their higher administrative representatives in the 1950s. To illustrate, in 1950, Lobsang from the Khor mang community supplied 12kg butter, and three times seven days \textit{i.e.} total of 21 days corvée labour. The Si chö family supplied 30 Tibetan Tang ga in taxation based upon a headcount, three packages of yak dung (37.5kg), and three times six days corvée labour (TRTSHTE, 1987:15).

Tax was calculated in two units: Ta go and Mar kang. One Ta go accounted for six yaks, 36 sheep or 72 goats. 30 Ta go were counted as one Mar kang (TRTSHTE, 1987:32–5). These were collected through a county officer from tribal chiefs. These taxes were levied as units of butter, fodder, yak dung, livestock, money, and corvée labour, transport and other types of consumer goods (Gelek et al., 2002:143). Another form of tax was collected through ‘livestock rent’. This was paid directly in dairy products \textit{e.g.} butter, or in wool. For instance, the state might lent three yaks to herders and then the herders were supposed to pay 3.5 kg of butter as interest annually (TRTSHTE, 1987:32–5). This system is confirmed by the field data from Da; No.16 had some 60 yaks in the 1950s; ten of these

\textsuperscript{50} Clothing and rugs are made from wool. It is spun from yak or sheep hair and very tightly woven in narrow strips.
were productive yak on a loan from a monastery (Kündéling) as ‘livestock rent’. No.16 had to pay one and half kilos of butter as tax in return. The tax was called ‘Chi med’ in local terms. The period for payment of the tax was inherited from one generation to the next, and it did not include rented yaks. Tax paid to a monastery was often considered a religious act, perhaps best considered a semi-voluntary tithe. Hence, attitudes to its payment differed from other forms of taxation.

As described so far, the most important consumption items were from livestock products either produced directly from pastoral activities or obtained indirectly from non-pastoral resources. This confirms the nature of the subsistence-oriented economies of the Drokpa during this period. It can be further confirmed from the following section on household incomes. Although gradual, the increase in trade did create a merchant class by the 1950s as a component of the community, i.e. traders, and including those herders with larger numbers of animals.

5.4.6 Household Income

Household income was derived from two main sources from pastoral resources and from a range of supplementary activities. The first came mainly from wool and butter pre-1950 (Table 5). This was significant because wool was a major trade good and indicates a significant engagement with that trade. The literature confirms that wool was the major farm product which the Drokpa supplied to the market. Buyers were government purchasers and wealthy private merchants and traders. Over time, as elsewhere, a specialised merchant/trader role emerged. Similarly, the Kashak authorities seemed to have a role in this trade (Keyu, 1923). Nagchu prefecture was the main producer of wool, producing on average 12,500 kg of wool per year. While the average sheep produced 2 kg wool per head per year, low quality sheep often only produced 1 kg per sheep or less (Gelek et al., 2002). Hides were purchased by middle-men traders and exported, with this entrepreneurial class growing over time.

51 Prof. David Kemp and his team in Gansu’ project’s data on sheep, particularly the Gansu Alpine wool sheep which would relate to the Tibetan animals, indicates that the 'native' animals often only produced 2kg wool/hd/yr. Then when Merino sheep were introduced, approximately 30 years ago, the wool yield increased to 3.5 kg/hd/yr and was much better quality, attracting a higher price. Wool yields have, however, returned closer to 2kg/hd/yr, probably due to poor breeding practices and declining pasture condition.
Table 5: Output from pastoral resources of three households (small, medium & large) at Nagchu in 1957.

The other source of supplementary income was derived in kind from a limited range of other activities (Table 6). This paid ‘income’ could be in sheep and yak or derived from the exchange of salt for barely. For instance, the small household (A) had two supplementary income sources, derived from providing labouring services for ritual events, paid for by one yak by the employer and services for working as labourers, paid for with six sheep by the employer. The medium and larger households (B and C) obtained supplementary income paid in barely from the salt–based trade. Individuals within a tent worked within the household to produce the goods and services they needed and/or sought employment from others to add to household incomes. Herders were employed as pastoral labourers in three different ways in the Khor mang tribe:

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sheep wool</td>
<td>22.5kg(^52)</td>
<td>0.208kg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yak wool</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butter</td>
<td>0.064kg</td>
<td>0.3kg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sheep hide</td>
<td>60 pieces</td>
<td>730</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheese</td>
<td>590 chi (?)</td>
<td>0.15kg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fodder (cutting grass for others)</td>
<td>20 da yang(^53)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yak (rent for transportation)</td>
<td>Paid in barley 0.001kg(^54)</td>
<td>barley 0.042kg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yak dung</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>barley 0.03kg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

52 These items indicate what each household cost.
53 The authors used various and different units to indicate items value, such as da yang and ying yuan in two different cash values, or sometimes calculated in kg or using a local calculation system. I quoted how they mentioned in the data to avoid further confusion.
54 The very low amounts of some of these goods does not make sense. However, I calculated how the data was mentioned e.g. 0.001 kg barely is one ke (1 克).
55 One member of household A is a monk. He provided ritual services.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payment for working as labourer</th>
<th>6 sheep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gift from households in the same community</td>
<td>0.04kg butter; Several sheep hides 3000kg fodder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Household supplementary income for three households (small, medium & large) at Nagchu in 1950 and 1957.


1. Long-term (effectively permanent) labourers, who participated in all kinds of pastoral works, such as herding, milking, butchering, and the processing of dairy products;
2. Short-term labourers, that is those who undertook herding when needed; and
3. Seasonal labourers, hired for tasks such as butchering in November.

Long-term labourers received one ewe or one costume as an annual payment, and were given food and accommodation by the employer. Short-term labourers might receive one ewe or more subject to the situation - that is, according to those who fed and accommodated them. Seasonal labourers received payment in butter, cheese and barely flour, and sometimes clothing (TRTSHTE, 1987:37–8). A survey done in 1958 considered that the extent and degree of ‘exploitation’ was high for all labouring classes. A documented case story was as follows: “Household Q had an income of $1,220 (RMB8,300) from dairy products and salt-based trade at the time of the survey. Q had ten labourers. Each labourer produced $122(RMB830) value– assuming the employer did nothing, though they obviously had a management role. If we take away the payment for each labourer (equivalent to $34(RMB230), the labourers were exploited to the extent of $88(RMB600) by their employee” (ibid.37). That simplistic claim, however, left no income at all for the employer, nor any ability to cover the costs of yaks etc. used to produce dairy products and to harvest and sell salt, nor did it consider if the labourers had any alternative sources of income (i.e. the opportunity costs of their labour). Being able to obtain some employment, albeit at a low wage, could however also have been important in maintaining

56 The ewe might go to the household where the labourer came from.
households and communities in remote regions. A better and more thorough economic analysis (beyond the scope of this thesis) would be needed to adequately determine any ‘exploitation’ of labourers. The analysis done by TRTSHE is in line with the ideology of the time that ‘workers’ are the sole means of production, and hence any output is only attributed to their activities.

It is interesting to note that the largest household (C) with a large herd received ‘gifts’ from other households that became a significant income source. The gifts were related to the social status of the head of household C; Norbu was the chief of the Khor mang community pre-1957. Community members provided ‘gifts’ to their chief during festivals or for various other purposes, ‘Giving gifts’ to a chief or a large herd holder marked an obligation and was a symbol of allegiance and community cohesion. It was a free gift, a tribute, and not an involuntary ‘tax’. Presumably, Norbu, as a chief, do other things to help other households although this is not clear.

By the mid-20th Century, households wanted a wider range of goods than they had had in earlier periods. Want had become Need. Households still utilised their own livestock products and may have supplemented their own produce through barter with neighbours. These products were primarily meat, milk, yogurt and butter. Other goods that were not produced locally were acquired through merchants and traders, and these increasingly required cash. The extent that households acquired these other goods depended upon how much of their own produce they were able to barter or sell. For small households, the priority was often to consume what they produced, whereas households with large diverse herds could consume goods obtained from external markets. As for as possible, they used cash to obtain available items such as brick tea, sugar, and dried grapes from the small market in Nagchu town. Brick tea was supplied from Amdo and Yunnan, sugar, sweetmeats and dried grapes from India, and dried fruit from China.

5.5 Conclusion

This brief historical overview of some of the general trends that influenced herder livelihoods and affected administrative structures in Nagchu, suggests that the herder economy developed in ways that have similarities with many other pastoral societies (Humphrey and Sneath, 1996, 1999, Sneath 1999; 2000, 2002). In Nagchu, the
administrative structures developed from tribal groups prior to the 1950s, and then into a centralised administration in the 1950s. It was always based on relatively discrete local units, linked to the territory or descent, but with a centre which was stronger in ritual than in secular administration (Salzman, 1996:527–528). Herder society does however remain largely self-sufficient and independent, with modest means. Wealth was increasingly accumulated however, and controlled by the aristocracy and religious establishment. In addition, a middle group of traders and merchants also developed. For instance, there were only seven merchants in Nagchu during the 1940s, but this number had increased to 40 by the 1950s (Gelek et al., 2002:104). The Drokpa were able to generate some surplus wealth through livestock production and trade, and this provided the resources upon which lords, monasteries and kingdoms could exist. Those involved in primary production however remained relatively poor.

As the market/trading economy evolved and grew, it would seem that it became dominated by some powerful entrepreneurs. This tended to centralise wealth or proto-capital in certain groups based in Lhasa or major regional centres such as Nagchu and Shiyikatsé. Records suggest that these groups were predominantly monasteries, private landowners and the central administration. They had the necessary economic scale and influence, and subsequently control of the market. Influential monasteries accumulated sufficient capital to operate trading business on a large scale. The Shyabten monastery in Nagchu, for instance, had the capacity to trade with Lhasa and neighbouring Nepal and India, as well as within the province. Dzogchen monastery supplied most of the brick-tea business in Nagchu. A business representative of the Dzongchen monastery said that the monastery traded almost 50% in Nagchu, selling mainly to local Drokpa. The rest of their imported goods were traded with other areas within Tibet (Gelek et al., 2002:106). Other significant trade goods were: grain, food processing tools such as cooking pots, textiles and luxury recreational goods such as snuff and sweet-meats. As this trading economy grew,

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57 Data is limited on estimates of how much tax went to each group from the Drokpa in 1940. This creates difficulties when it comes to estimating their relative importance.
58 The central state may levy taxes on traders and merchants.
59 One of the six monasteries of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism was located in eastern Tibet, Sichuan, and the PRC.
goods from the outside world became increasingly important. Of foreign-made items available in the Nagchu market in the 1950s, as much as 95% are said to have been from the United Kingdom and the United States of America (ibid.: 2002:106).

It has yet to be shown, but this economic and political evolution, although being initially of benefit to the Drokpa may have eventually become a disadvantage. Herders *per se* were less in a position to accumulate wealth⁶⁰ and, therefore, lacked the power and control that came with wealth. Wealthier herdsman could join the growing bourgeoisie, but others could not. In other growing economies, those with increasing wealth would, out of self-interest, protect their holdings and block aspiring others from joining the ‘club.’ The extent that this occurred in Nagchu is not clear.

It is, therefore, important to consider the micro rather than macro economy as the main influence on the livelihoods of the Drokpa, and the relationship or transactions between them; the production and exchange of goods and services within and between households, and then between households and the markets and the wider economy (Netting & Wilk, 1984:9; Bohannon & Bohannon, 1968).

In economic and political terms, Tibetan society evolved in similar ways to many other societies. From a disparate hunter/gatherer society, which originally was probably at lower altitudes in Central Asia, it became a society of nomadic pastoralists that established itself on the Tibetan Plateau. In more fertile areas such as valleys, settled arable farming developed. Small social units cohered into tribal units and, in turn, central authorities developed as part of religious developments, particularly after 1642 when the 5th Dalai Lama assumed power over all Tibetan internal affairs and, in particular, monasteries, whose influence was often stronger than the Kashak in Lhasa. The secular was then in the main dominated by the religious. The society developed as a feudal system where landownership or better access rights began to be held by the religious or aristocratic elite. Even so, while this could be seen as feudal, the Drokpa retained considerable autonomy and were probably not as constrained as was the case in Europe, with more freedom to move between centres.

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⁶⁰ Although jewellery or furs were important wealth items, however, it was not very common that every herder had jewellery or furs pre 1950s, this is confirmed by senior herd (age 70⁶⁰) during my field survey.
The elite taxed production or required labour to satisfy their needs. It is not clear if the tax on production was on surpluses or also took some of the production that would have been necessary for people to be adequately fed - records of starvation and of death rates in isolated communities are scant. Alongside this societal development, trade became important. The aristocratic and later government elites involved themselves in trade, and alongside taxation, this accumulated wealth in the hands of the powerful rather than in the local community. A class of middleman traders also grew and accumulated wealth, independent of the state. Eventually, this created a limited market goods economy that meant later developments (post-1980) were not entirely alien to Drokpa society.

As such, this demonstrates a society capable of slow but steady economic and political development. This evolution responded to increases in production (due to good seasons and/or improvements in livestock and farm practices), at times influenced by trading with other countries.

This thesis, however, tests the hypothesis that such analysis is insufficient to explain in full the events following 1960. Economic and political change can transform society, but the change is complex. As with the Industrial Revolution in Britain, society was to change considerably as also happened earlier at the time of the agricultural enclosures when common grazing land was taken over by larger landlords who could afford to fence areas. In Tibet, social customs and the inherent cultural meanings people place on their everyday lives, may adapt or alter the change that might appear or intend to be all embracing. The next chapter considers the social and economic circumstances within which households operated through the radical changes of large collective farms, through to the modern market economy - both changes that had elements in previous history but that go well beyond any previous experience the Drokpa had.
The Socialist Communal Transformation of Tibetan Pastoral Society

‘It was a very hard time for us. We had to work most of our time with the mutual aid group. We conducted all works communally, milking, herding, processing dairy products and mining stone, and killing Pica, removed them from the fields. In addition, we had ‘class’ session meeting almost every evening. The food we received from the mutual aid group was just enough to survive’ (Field note, Sept 2007)

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we considered how over many centuries the Drokpa developed a lifestyle, economic system, and social, community organisation based upon their pastoral activities across the Tibetan plateau and neighbouring valleys. Throughout those years, the pattern of living changed to meet changing circumstance. Households and tribal groups gradually increased in terms of allegiances and, in some cases, subjugation to local landlords, monasteries and overarching rulers. As has and will be seen, there was a tension between the independence of the nomad and pressures to generate wider state and national cohesion.

Drokpa society pre-1960 had four crucial characteristics:

First: Individual tents owned their livestock. Where they had livestock that was ‘owned’ by others, they still considered the user right to animals to be theirs, and paid a ‘rent’ for their use.

Second: Pastureland might in theory be owned by the state, aristocrats or monasteries at the macro level, but at the local level, in practice the land was under the de facto control of tribal formation organisations which considered that their accountability was primarily to the local kinship groups of which they were composed. The Drokpa would have seen the pasture land as ‘theirs’, albeit with some constraints on its use, even if it was not regarded as an asset they could freely buy or sell.
Third: the allegiance to, or in some cases subjugation by, local landlords, monasteries and overarching rulers was more defined by considerations of taxation and corvée rights for protection than it conformed to “ownership” in the modern sense.

Fourth: Religious beliefs (Bon religion or Buddhism - or a meld of the two) significantly influenced daily activities, creating a unique Tibetan identity that was religious in nature and used to explain the world in which they lived (Mills, 2003; Tuttle, 2004). For instance, people in Tibet believed in Karma, and therefore may be willing to accept ‘political’ loyalties, allegiances to monasteries and overarching rulers at this time.

This chapter and the following two will focus on a period when Drokpa society underwent a dramatic and radical change in a short period of time (Goldstein, 1989, 1986, 1994; Barnett & Akiner, 1994; Miller, 1999; Henin, 1969; Humphrey & Sneath, 1999; Rinzin, 2007; Makley, 2007). Change is of central importance when recording and interpreting history. Some change may be seen as radical. While other might be considered to be more gradual or evolutionary. It is only when we can consider change over a long time scale, that we can distinguish between an event that can be seen as leading to a radical change, and an event that can, at a later time, be interpreted as a time-limited anomaly.

In this chapter we consider the period when the PRC intervened in terms of radical ways in the economic and social structures across all of China and particularly in the TAR. New changes had been introduced prior to 1960, but not on the scale that then occurred. Although examples of radical intervention on the part of Governments are not unique in human history, the events in Tibet have a uniqueness - as all instances of change will do. Context is crucial. Theory must be applied to aid but not overwhelm our interpretation of events on the ground. The possible uniqueness of this change process in Tibet is in part its context, and in part that change was imposed in such a short timescale.

The socialist transformation introduced a social, economic, political and ideological system that was not simply different to previous Tibetan society, but which challenged values and beliefs developed over millennia. In Tibetan history, the introduction of Buddhism was a major change (Srinivas et al., 1998; Charlsley, 1998; Makley, 2007) but it
took place over a much longer period. Buddhism had over many centuries melded with the indigenous Bon religion and contributed to developing a unique Tibetan culture and society. During the 19th and early 20th Century local systems of governance did deteriorate to some degree, resulting in increased autonomy within Tibet and continuing isolation from many of the major events occurring in the rest of the world. Tibet had experienced major changes in governance previously as the fortunes of local and Chinese rulers waxed and waned, but arguably none of those earlier changes resulted in as great an impact on the lives of ordinary Tibetans as the events after the Chinese revolution of 1949. With the revolution in China in 1949 and over the next decade, Tibet was involved in the dramatic changes that occurred across China. These social, economic, political and cultural changes were in large part the enactment of the thoughts of Mao Tsetung, which were designed to change the culture and thinking of all groups in China. They constituted a major change of ideology. The move towards Chinese ‘socialism’ had as its centre an intent to change ‘old’ society into a new socialist society. It did not intend to be evolutionary but revolutionary. Maoism placed the rural peasantry and herders at the centre, destroying the ‘landowning’ ruling and deemed oppressing class (local landlords, monasteries and overarching rulers) (Dreyer, 1976; Tapp, 1995; Feuchtwang, 1998; Goldstein, 1997; Gladney, 1994, 1998 & 2004; Fjeld, 2005). The socialist collectivisation period in Tibet was a relatively short period of rapid change from 1960 until around 1980. It affected even the Drokpa who lived in remote regions, whereas in the past impacts from the wider world on them had probably been minimal or gradual. Yet, during this period, we can see not simple change but rapid evolution. By this I mean that not only did Drokpa life change due to external circumstances, but it also evolved in particular ways to meet this change in situation. A theme in this dissertation is that events that brought about radical ‘on the surface’ change, may not be seen in the longer term as ‘all-changing’ as was thought to be the case at the time. As will be argued, from a wider historical perspective, resilience and sustainability is to be found within the tacit knowledge of nomadic peoples. As will be also argued, this is not to say that this tacit knowledge did not evolve. It will be argued that this internal and tacit capacity to evolve provides a capability to change in ways that
meant that the Drokpa culture ‘knew how to survive’ and indeed flourish. This evolution occurred within Tibet, connected to the radical revolution within the PRC. In the latter end of the 20th Century, Deng Xiaoping introduced the household responsibility system in China that is still being progressively implemented and will be discussed in later chapters. Change is always complex, and made more complex by the radical changes brought in by Deng Xiaoping (Chapter 7 and 8). Tibet was affected by the outwash of change within the PRC.

Socialist collectivisation will be discussed in terms of its general background, and it will then be considered in three phases. The discussion will be combined with a case study of a single community, Nagchu, where many of the relevant elements are present that have affected the life of Tibetans living on the high plateau. This allows broader issues to be both illustrated from real examples, and examined at a micro level.

6.2 Background

Socialist collectivisation in China was rooted in Maoist socialism. Its roots were in Marxism and, to some extent, Leninism, but its dynamic growth and particular form was uniquely Maoist. It is useful, therefore, to consider these Marxist roots and their implications for the current discussion.

First we should consider how Marx interpreted ‘means of production.’ For Marx, the labourer was identified throughout history as the one that owned the ‘means of production’ to meet his/her own needs. With the development of mercantile activity and the ability of individuals to accumulate their own wealth separate from the earlier feudal structures, the ownership of the means of production changed to the owners of wealth/capital i.e. capitalists. The trend to accumulate wealth in the hands of a few was seen to have the effect of disenfranchising and disempowering individual citizens. This dichotomy, it was argued, would inevitably lead to revolution due to dissatisfaction. Socialist theory sought to create a ‘synthesis’ by removing barriers that had developed, removing class structures, whatever their basis, and putting ‘labourers’ in charge of all production. The means of production are then owned collectively, not by individuals, and the citizen, the thinking went, will come to see compliance with the will of society as in their best interests, even
while subsuming individual motives to those of the State. For Marx, exploitation takes place when surplus labour exists. For instance, a person is exploited if they input more labour than it is necessary to produce the goods they need (food, fibre, fuel, shelter, etc.).

Secondly, we should consider the concept of a proletariat. Marx defines the proletariat as those who are divorced from producing goods for their own consumption. They existed simply as a source of labour. In a capitalist system, those with power based on capital manipulate the labourer, retaining the value of surplus production created by the ‘working class’ for their own use. This concept of the proletariat was adapted by Mao into a Chinese context. With Mao, the peasantry partly replaces the proletariat, but the thinking remains similar. Marx and Engel saw the conditions of 19th Century Europe as a prerequisite for a revolution that would lead to the socialist state. With Mao, the industrial proletariat was supplemented by the rural poor and peasantry. He saw the inevitability of history driven by a ‘war’ between the peasant class and the land owning class - and this, inter alia, was the context for the ‘cultural revolution.’

The third aspect to consider is the materialism of Marx. This was intended to replace the metaphysics of Hegel with a ‘scientific’ and economic model of the inevitable progress towards a socialist state. That progress seemed a possible outcome at the time Marx was writing, though subsequent events showed that it was not inevitable because of the complexities of society (Bloch, 2004). Maoism followed Lenin’s reinterpretation of Marx on the notions of revolution and imperialism, but applied the general theory to the Chinese situation, though some would consider that Mao created such a radical ‘Chinese’ ideology as to represent a significant break from the basic ideas of Marx.

The fourth aspect to consider is that of ‘class struggle.’ Mao emphasised that the rural workforce was revolutionary, unlike Marx who considered them reactionary (Mao, 1964, 1988), and this developed further into ideas of the revolutionary struggle of the vast majority of poor people against the exploiting class and their state structures, and his analysis of colonialism and the ‘Third World’. Maoism emphasised the idea of permanent revolution based on a dialectic conceptualisation which played its role in the organisational

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61 The term ‘proletariat’ refers to the Chinese word wu chan jie ji in the thesis.
structures established during collectivisation, and subsequently led to the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76. Hence the ‘progress towards socialism’ was not seen as inevitable, and only needing a gentle nudge, but required ‘re-education’ of the populace in order to achieve the desired society. Embedded in both Western and Chinese thinking is that nothing can exist without its opposite, so that rather than destroying the opposite class, struggle was ongoing even within classes and within the individual (Mao’s thoughts; see Schram, 1969). Maoism sought to destroy the landowning class and developed a version of Lenin’s ideas of the dictatorship of the proletariat to make the workers and peasantry a power holding class, albeit under firm control of central authority and the ‘party.’ The socialist collective was seen as a necessity in implementing these ideas.

Maoist socialism was based on concepts considered to lead to a ‘social synthesis’. Three fundamental ideas were introduced: first that production should be based on collective means; second that exploitation of the people was to be avoided, and third that class hierarchies were to be removed.

These ideologies from the 1950s in the Tibetan region transformed many aspects of Tibetan pastoral society (as discussed in Chapter 5). Tibet before 1960 was a rural society rather than an industrial one and had been influenced by the Mongol and Chinese during the Ming (1368–1644), Yuan (1271–1368) and Manchu Qing (1644–1911) eras. The ‘socialist’ doctrine was launched on the Tibetan plateau when the Communist Party of China (CPC) established China’s political power at a local level in Tibet. The CPC justified their role as liberating Tibetan people from a feudal system (Editorial Board for the History of Liberation Tibet, 2008) and this was for ‘…the economic development of Tibetan society into socialist society’ (Jianli, 1995; Wang & Baim, 1986).

This socialist transformation was implemented over 60 years. Goldstein (1997) divides the socialist transformation period of Tibet into two phases: the first phase related to ‘early collectivisation’ began around 1950 and lasted until the onset of the Cultural Revolution in China in 1966. The second phase dates from the era of the Cultural Revolution, 1966 to 1976 (Goldstein, 1999:95–96, 1989:623). For the purpose of this chapter, we will complement the work of Goldstein and his colleagues, and consider the collectivisation period of 1960–1980. There is now a third phase of radical economic
transformation that reflects the recent radical changes in the PRC since the open-door reform policies of 1978 (Chapters 7 and 8).

In general, there are scarce data on collectivisation in Tibet, the period of collectivisation and its effects on Tibetan herder lifestyles and livelihoods. Material in this chapter will therefore be drawn from a limited range of resources and from the field work done as part of this project.

6.3 Socialist commune

6.3.1 Prior to socialist commune

The People’s Republic of China was established in 1949, and the Seventeen Point Agreement was sealed in Beijing on 23rd May 1951. This was an agreement between the secular and religious Tibetan authorities and the People’s Republic of China. Often cited by the Chinese, the Dalai Lama sent the following telegram on the 24th October 1951.

The Tibet Local Government as well the ecclesiastic and secular people unanimously support the agreement and under the leadership of Chairman Mao and Central People’s Government will actively support the People’s Liberation Army in Tibet to consolidate national defence, drive out imperialist influences from Tibet and safeguard the unification of the territory and the sovereignty of the Motherland.

It is not the role of this researcher to make a political judgement. The aim here is to primarily report on how the Drokpa dealt with the circumstances facing them on the ground within the new political context after 1960.

The “Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet” (PCART) was established in 1955, which led to the formation of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1965, which has remained in place to date. The China Communist Committee of Nagchu (Heihe) (CCCN) was established on 28th January 1953. It named officially the Nagchu prefecture (Na qu di qu) in 1960, authorised by the State Council of PRC. This became one of the prefectural divisions of the TAR of the PRC. Nagchu Dzong changed its name in 1959 into Nachu (Nagchu) Xian in the Chinese language, which still means ‘Nagchu

The geographic boundaries of Nagchu County still remain the same as they were during the early part of the 20th Century. When the PRC launched the socialist programme in Nagchu prefecture between 1956 and 1962 (Editorial Committee of the History of the Communist Party of Nagchu District of the PRC [HCPNDP], 1991), the CPC instituted significant changes drawn from Marxist–Leninist theory, as adapted by Mao, to restructure the existing pastoral social system.

Tibet missed the period of the 1950s when there was a huge emphasis on productivity in the Great Leap Forward of 1958–59 and the development of socialist rural reform elsewhere in China. Rather, Tibet was instead launched immediately into the more liberal period throughout the early 1960s, a period that came between the ‘Great Leap Forward’, with the recognition that changes in policies were needed, and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). From my field interviews and other sources (Zhen, 2009) it is evident that the socialist transformation period had two phases. The first phase was the formation of mutual-aid teams (hu zhu zu) soon after livestock were redistributed among the poor herders. The second phase was to then organise the mutual-aid teams into People’s Communes (ren ming gong she). It means, unlike the rest of China by that time, there was no earlier collective period (he zuo she) in Tibet. It took around 10 years to implement the People’s Communalisation, mostly done from 1965 onwards. The People’s Communes in Tibet were built on small units entitled Production Brigades (sheng chan dui) which had its own land and livestock. The Production Brigade was of a similar size to the previous mutual-aid teams (hu zhu zu), comprising around 20 families. The People’s Commune was often based on several Production Brigades in pastoral areas.

A general picture of the period prior to commune formation is provided by the Research Team of the Survey of Tibetan History (TRTSHTE), which was carried out in the 1950s. These data were collected by researchers with a vested interest in identifying a class of exploitative landowners. It was a project with an ideological bias, basically the Stalin

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63 There are very few publications on how the socialist transformation was implemented among pastoral communities.
schema of nationalities (Tapp, 2002). Never the less, the basic information collected is valuable for understanding this period, and remains a significant resource.

- Ethnographic surveys in the PRC

When the PRC was established in 1949, the state addressed the challenge of how to deal with issues of ethnicity within the new state political framework. Ethnic categories were constructed by the newly established state (Blum, 2002). The state organised research teams, from 1953 to 1956, whose task was to identify and then catalogue the wide range of ethnic minorities in PRC and provide background data that was used when implementing the changes from 1956 onwards. The data collected provides considerable information on Tibetans at a critical stage in their modern history. Tibetans, like other ethnic groups such as Yi and Miao (Tapp, 2002), were used to illustrate the cultural evolutionary stage of ‘slavery’ before 1949 (Blum, 2002:1292), and often classified as being in a ‘feudal’ or ‘primitive’ social stage. Based upon this initial work, further ethnographical surveys were organised by The State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People’s Republic of China (SEACPRC). The field work done in Tibet was eventually published in the late 1970s as *The General Introduction concerning the Ethnic Autonomous Regions of the PRC* and *The Series of the Ethnic Social History Surveys of China*. Some of these were known as the ‘minority nationality social history (She hui Li shi) survey’. Tapp made the following observations on the motives behind this survey (Tapp, 2002:66, Tapp et al., 2008; Wang–Mingming, 2002):

‘… Guldin deals with the various stages of this project…in terms of the general historical development of ethnology and anthropology in China, pointing out the pride Chinese ethnologists have take in their participation in a project they saw as eminently ‘scientific’ (Guldin, 1994:107). Lin Yaohua’s description of these ethnological projects as contributions to Marxist-Leninist nationality theory bears out this self-perception by Chinese participants as being engaged in a scientific project of the investigation and classification which would further the well-being and material progress of the country through democratic reforms carried out on the basis of the understandings gained through the research…. Gladney describes the project as a Stalinist one…’

The Marxist view of social evolution provided the theoretical framework for the Chinese Government’s ethnographic surveys. Liu recalled in his article that “…when the new PRC was established, some ethnic regions still remained at a pre-capitalist stage and ethnographers considered that the survey had high value as a cultural vestige of human
social evolution history” (Liu Zhong, 1999). Under this theoretical approach, those carrying out the survey collected much field data with the intention of showing how ethnic societies demonstrated evidence of ‘cultural relics’ in their economic system, their customs, languages, and the structure of their social organisation. In addition other basic data on the lives of Tibetans were collected.

The early section of Chapter 4 relied largely on data gathered by the 1950s project, the Research Team for Social and History of Tibet Ethnic (RTSHTE) who did the field surveys. As Guldin (1994) pointed out, however, these researchers were trying to fit their data into a serf system that they presumed formed the basis of social life in Tibet. This resulted in some bias and errors, though the information they collected provides a valuable insight into Tibetan economic life at that time.

The surveys had an objective to identify where the PRC reform policies should be implemented in Tibet (Liu Zhong, 2009). The surveys had three periods. The first was in 1956. The RTSHTE had six team members. Three conducted surveys on Tibetan social history and three on Tibetan art; the Tibetologist Prof. Youyi Li, was the team leader. They spent two months in Lhasa carrying out a literature survey while they had a local Tibetan woman teach them the Tibetan language. The team then divided into three groups so that surveys could be carried out in three different areas. Their fieldwork began with interviews with those considered to be key informants. These tended to be high status individuals who were considered to be supportive of the survey teams and they often had high social, political and/or economic status, as has been the case in similar surveys elsewhere in China. This suggests that interviewees were selected on account of the underlying agenda rather than selected by any random or systematically multi-stratified and faceted methods (Moser & Kalton, 1979). While this selection group of interviewees

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64 It mentioned the survey team came to Nagchu on Oct 1952, and completed their work in Dec 1952, see more detail in Editorial Committee for HCPNDP, 1991:10.
65 Prof. Li Youyi was one of the early ethnographers who conducted anthropological field survey in Tibet from 1944 to 1947. Prof. Li obtained his Masters degree in sociology at Yanjing University (now Peking University) in 1935 and was an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at Yunnan University from 1936 (Lhagba Phugtsogs, 2003:3).
may have introduced some bias in the data, much data on economic structures were collected that provided a relatively realistic picture. They also held group interviews.

The second phase was a one year field survey, 1958 to 1959. The purpose of the survey remained the same as with the previous research. It provided field material for publication, as a series, on Tibetan ethnicity within the PRC. For this second phase of the field work, the RTSHTE had a new team with members from the Central Nationalities Institute (CNI, Zhong yang min zu yan jiu suo). People from the CNI were teachers and students who studied the Tibetan language and this possibly meant that they were able to obtain better quality data than in the first survey. The team was divided into three groups: one conducted fieldwork in Shyikatsé (southwest PRC – TAR), the second surveyed Nagchu (Northern TAR), and the third group, Eastern Three Areas of TAR. The research team returned to Lhasa in February 1959 and then moved to Chengdu to analyse the field data.

The third phase of field surveys began in October 1959 and lasted until 1960. This period of surveys coincided with the active implementation of PRC reform programmes in the TAR. The ethnographers were able to archive data for research purposes, including title deeds of land, tally books, religious texts and other documents. They documented economic life in detail and the social and political organisation of local communities within their field sites. In late 1960, the research team gathered in Lhasa; some remained in Tibet for further field surveys and some returned to Beijing to organise the field data.

Publication of much of this work took some time as the research team became dispersed within Tibet and other parts of China after completing their field work. Communication within China was also restricted for physical and political reasons. This would have affected how much of the data obtained was then used in designing and implementing reform policies in the TAR. It is possible that the impact on some policies may have been small, as publications did not start to appear until 1964 and in 1966 the Cultural Revolution overtook other national Chinese policies.

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66 Today’s Minzu University of China (MUS).
67 Chengdu is the capital city of Sichuan Province, in the southwest of the PRC.
From 1964 to 1987, the SEACPRC\textsuperscript{68} collaborated with scholars from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and academics from CNI, which resulted in publication of the *History of Tibet* (1964) and *Ethnography of Tibet* (1964) and between 1982 and 1987 *The Part–works of Tibetan Social History Survey* (10 volumes) written and edited by the series editing teams for the Tibetan Social History Survey.

Liu Zhong (1999) suggested that this work had two objectives. First, it provided much field data on the presumed ‘serf’ system and ‘serf’ society, and second it provided reference data for the government to use when implementing their reform policy in Tibet. Some have questioned the reliability of the data as the surveys had underlying political rather than purely academic intents (China Anthropology in 1950s of the 20th Century, 2008).

The extent to which the Chinese Government used the data collected through these surveys for designing and implementing policy is uncertain, particularly as publication was slow. Policies may then have been developed more on opinions than data, and on ideas developed for the whole of the PRC. Basic data on household and community structures, literacy, economic life and other activities of Tibetans would have been important for planning social change and any infrastructure development. Such basic data sets are needed irrespective of political agendas and policy changes, and most officials would have wanted to make sure such data was reliable. The surveys noted here extended through the very different periods of collectivisation. Any bias in the data collected is more likely to apply to cultural data on beliefs and practices, and to estimates of primary production, as officials who were often removed from actual districts may not have had intimate knowledge of the situation and thence reported what they thought was the case.

There are some common findings in relation to land and livestock that applied throughout the pastoral societies in the TAR prior to socialist collectivisation (The Research Team for the Survey of Tibetan History, 1987). Those findings are summarised here along with more specific aspects that applied to the region around Nagchu and to the village of Da.

\textsuperscript{68} The State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the Peoples Republic of China.
The Research Team for the Survey of Tibetan History (TRTSHTE) found that the government and ruling classes had the titled rights over certain pastureland, and then presumably they could decide which herder households could reside in what territory. While this may have been legally correct, the common and traditional access rights exercised by herders seems not to have been mentioned. The surveys showed that there appeared to be no cases where pasture land was sold or purchased as part of any commercial transaction. There were however, cases where Kashak (the traditional governing council of Tibet) had awarded rights to collect production and taxation to particular groups, such as monasteries and the aristocracy, and this was part of the way rulers obtained and maintained support from these various groups. Higher rulers could take away ownership of land when they wanted to. These allocations of land included the herders (i.e. they were regarded as part of the property) who lived there and who then were required to pay taxes to their new overlords. These payments in some cases were in addition to taxes paid to the Kashak. For instance, some part of the common land accessed by the Wa ba belonged to a ruling group, the Takdrak Larang. The ownership was bestowed on them by the Kashak relatively recently, in 1943. Such cases are confirmed by this researcher’s data from Da. The pasture territory in Da today used to belong to the ruling class called Kündéling. It was evident that there were considerable differences in ownership, rights and control of capital through the complex layers of Tibetan society.

Following the above survey, three classes were identified within the pastoralist, ‘herder’ society: ‘Landlords’, ‘Petty Landlords’ and ‘Exploited Herders’ (The Research Team for Survey of Tibetan History, 1987:32–7). The exploitation in these classes had two aspects: 1) exploitation through taxation; 2) exploitation through forced use of surplus labour in the interests of the state or landowner. The socialist authorities clearly identified these structures and rights as exploitative, and promoted a different strategy, whereby they aimed to remove class as a problem and reverse power from previous rulers and overlords to the proletariat and herdners. Subsequently, a class war was started between the exploited herdners and landowners - described literally as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ classes.

69 It is unclear how much of the whole Nagchu region was allocated to overlord and how much was just households / tents who only paid taxes to the Kashag.
At the core of these research surveys and the agenda they served was the transformation of the system of production which, on the Tibetan Plateau, was pastoral livestock production (Guldin, 1995). The changing production systems started with the establishment of socialist collectives. The abolition of the feudal social class, replacing private property ownership, mainly by higher classes, with collective ownership and the establishment of a classless collective society were seen as the way forward.

### 6.3.2 Socialist communalisation

In Tibet, communalisation started later than elsewhere in China with the re-ordering of the means of production being implemented through the early 1960s, and continued until the 1980s. Da in Nagchu is used here as a case study of the changes that were instituted at this time and what they meant for the local herder community. In doing this, my interpretation uses the concept of events as potentially ‘critical incidents’ within more general processes of social, cultural, and political and economic change.

The move to a communal economy was done in three steps from 1956 onwards:

1. the redistribution of capital\(^\text{70}\) from wealthy land-owners and herders to poor herders - in effect capital was then under state control;

2. the ‘education’ of herders in ‘class consciousness’ through political campaigns - to create a ‘class-less’, collective society;

3. the establishment of communal social structures alongside the ‘education’ programmes - to create a standard system for production.

### 6.3.3 Redistribution of capital

The redistribution of capital, a basic tenet of the Chinese Revolution in 1949, was based on the idea that changing the economic base from unequally shared capital into equally shared capital would lead to beneficial social change, and specifically that the peasants, in this case ‘poor herders’, part of the exploited class, would then take control of the state. ‘Control’ has a particular meaning within socialist rhetoric. Shared ownership of capital

\(^{70}\)Capital means livestock, and selected individual property here. Land was formed into collective farms.
did not mean freedom to use it for individual or personal ends. Individual labour had to be seen as being for the development of the socialist state.

My field data illustrates how the redistribution of capital was implemented. Survey data obtained for the case study village of Da recorded that there were six households\textsuperscript{71} living in the village at the time of collectivisation (1960) (in contrast to the 22 now present). These six households were Numbers 1, 11, 13, 16, 17 and 19. Da was within the land owned by Kun de ling and hence no household/tent had formal title to any land, only traditional user rights. By 1963 there were 57 herders in Da who resided in seven households (Map 7). The additional household came from one of those present in the 1950s. These households were composed of 28 males and 27 females (Table 7), and they owned a total of 386 yaks, 1,560 sheep and goats, and 30 horses (Table 8). These seven households were placed into three categories according to the social classification (see subsequent section on social classification). No.17 owned the most livestock in each of the categories compared with the other six households, and No.16 had more sheep/goats and horses in particular compared with the other five households. Livestock, the main source of capital, were redistributed by the Communist Party’s Work Teams in different villages in 1966\textsuperscript{72} (\textsuperscript{?}). All the livestock in Da were confiscated by the Work Team, and were then redistributed among poorer herdsmen in the village. For instance, in Da, one productive yak was allocated to every four members of an individual tent\textsuperscript{73}. This redistribution expected that the poor herdsmen would benefit from the redistribution of social wealth, as they would have a material stake in the new social order\textsuperscript{74}.

\textsuperscript{71} The members of households Nos. 16 and 19 were commoners of an aristocratic family kun de ling. Households Nos. 1 and 11 were commoners of another aristocratic family Doring, while those members of Nos.1 and 17 came from the Qinghai Tibetan region.

\textsuperscript{72} The date is uncertain.

\textsuperscript{73} It was unclear to the researcher why some yaks were kept by the households, and the reason behind this.

\textsuperscript{74} There is no precise data to confirm how redistribution occurred and then how the collectivisation followed after the redistribution. However, presumably the ‘richer’ households lost all their animals, and all households then had equal numbers of animals. Each household/tent still had their own flock/herd until the herds/flocks were combined to form a collective which they were all managed as one unit.
There was a social stratification among these seven households that was identified in the field surveys, and then used by the Government when collectivisation was implemented. Each household was classified into one of three socialist classes.

No.17 was categorised as ‘Herd Lord’ (Drok dak in Tibetan and *mu zhu* in Chinese) in local terminology, the reason being that they had a greater number of livestock compared with the others, and that the head of the household/then had been head of several tribal sections prior to collectivisation. They also they had two long-term labourers and four seasonal labourers i.e. were one of the two largest households. The latter was seen as crucial, and as ‘capitalist’, because the household head was an employer and presumed exploiter of labour. To hire labourers was considered to be the typical relationship between two opposite classes: the relationship between the exploiter and the exploited; between the capitalist and the proletariat /peasantry. This class was viewed as a “class enemy”. The
other largest household, No. 13, was also in the category of ‘Herd Lord’ as they owned more livestock than the other herders (200 sheep, 500 yaks, 16 horses) and had privileged/priority rights to access good pasture. The family employed labourers for pastoral work and had political status as chief of the tribe.

The members of household No. 16 were placed in the ‘Wealthy’ and ‘Middle Wealthy Herder’ category as they owned 500 sheep and 60 yaks. They had more livestock than any others except for No.17. However, as the family did not hire any labourers for pastoral works nor held any administrative status prior to the socialist transformation period, they were classified as being among the ‘Reliable Classes’.

The rest of the households in Da were classified as the exploited classes. They owned less livestock than the other two households, hired no labourers and had no political power before collectivisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livestock owned at households by the time of collectivization, Da</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Herd Lord (No.17)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wealthy Herders (No.16)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor Herders (No.1,2,6,13 &amp; 19)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 Livestock owned at households by the time of collectivisation, Da.

### 6.3.4 Class consciousness

After the redistribution of property programme, the political campaign known as The Cultural Revolution spread into the nomadic areas of Tibet in 1966 (Tsering Shakya, 1999). Current Chinese thinking regards this period as to some extent an aberration, counterproductive and on which did not help the country to develop. It focused upon social change as revolution rather than evolution. This movement saw cultural change as a ‘struggle’ between the forces and representatives of capitalism and the under–classes. It

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75 Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China, 1981.

defined intellectuals, professionals and ‘under-developed’ cultures as the class enemy. The ‘Enemy Class’ and the ‘Good Class’ were identified amongst individual households and individuals within a household. As such, it was simplistic and highly disruptive of communal life, and resulted in a kind of fragmentation that is now seen as risking the breakdown of the state. This movement in many ways reversed the previous focus on redistribution of production, replacing this with perceived class struggle, a struggle within which economic well-being came a very poor second (Editorial Committee for HCPNDP, 1991:190). In the case of Da, four new households were divided from their principal households during the 1960s period of class struggle. No.15 divided from No.19. No.5 divided from No.17, No.8 from No.6 and a new household No.11 moved to Da.

During the period of class struggle, those who had had the status of ‘Herd Lord’ ‘Wealthy Lord’ (now Nos. 16 &17) were labeled an ‘Enemy Class’ (Table 9), exploiters of poor herders with limitations then on their rights. This term was also applied to a religious practitioner, a Buddhist monk from Household No. 19. Religious practitioners were seen as the representatives of the ‘old ideology.’ The category of the ‘Wealthy’ and ‘Middle Wealthy Herder’ (No.16) was placed between the lords and the exploited proletarian class, but members were “educated” to become a member of the underclass Herders in this Reliable Classes category. They were considered as members of the exploited classes after receiving class education.

The households in Da with the status of ‘serf’, were now classified as having the highest social status, and were considered to be the masters in the new socialist country. They titled themselves ‘the red bone’ class. ‘Red’ referred to the main colour of the national flag, and the ‘Red Bone’ group was considered the backbone of the newly socialist country. They were the most favoured group, the glorified class and some of them became members of work teams for local government. For instance, the headman of No. 6, a poor herder of low birth, was appointed as a reliable member of the local Party’s Work Team in the 1960s, and soon after that he was nominated to be the leader of several villages. His social status was transformed from that of an ordinary poor herder into one of the ‘glorified and respectable’ class. He then had decision-making powers in ‘class
struggle’ sessions, and in communal economic activities. His new social role meant he was supposed to overthrow the ‘Enemy Class’ through class struggle sessions. However, while class struggle sessions were often very harsh in many cases throughout the country, he treated the ‘Enemy Class’ in Da delicately. For instance, livestock as communal capital were only allowed to be looked after by the good class, but in the case of Da, the headman of No. 6 arranged for the Buddhist monk to herd the communal sheep.

This newly established social order assisted poor herdsmen in welding themselves into a coherent power holding community. As Potter and Potter (1990) discussed with regard to peasants in Guangdong: “They became an active participator in the class struggle against the ‘enemy classes’. The idea was that only through revolutionary practice the peasants could truly emancipate themselves from the values and ideas of the old society, and learn to think of themselves as potent social actors.” (Potter & Potter, 1990:57).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy Herders</td>
<td>No.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Herders</td>
<td>Nos.1, 2 &amp;16, 6&amp;8, 11, 13, 19&amp;15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 Social classification of households in Da when collectivisation was implemented in 1960

The class struggle was undertaken among not only social classes, but also between individuals. A case story from Da demonstrates how the class struggle in the 1960s penetrated even the boundaries of kin relationships. The kin relationships were harshly penetrated and threatened by the ideologies of the socialist class struggle. Cultural values and bonds which maintained social cohesion were broken down and fractured. Barriers between perceived good and bad classes gained symbolic power. One informant recalled:

‘I remember L (No.15) and his wife and his children lived with his mother and his mother’s brother before the class struggle and it was common for a pastoral family to have three generations living together under the same roof. However, L and his own family established their own house and stayed separately with L’s mother and L’s mother’s brother (the monk), because the monk was labelled of enemy class origin. More sadly, L’s wife repudiated the monk when a class struggle session was undergone’.

Cohen suggests that cultural boundaries have complex dimensions (Cohen, 1985:58). Role players may reverse the norms of behaviours which generally label them within an
accepted boundary. L or his wife inverted the previous norm, that they should respect their seniors in kin relationships, and should respect the monk because of their previous common religious faith. However, these reversals of norms can be seen as compliance, in the face of force during the ‘class struggle’ in order to maintain their personal safety. Compliance with the dominant and powerful ideology of the time is often a survival strategy.

The education programmes, and to a much greater extent, the Cultural Revolution were intended to eliminate the old social consciousness, and create a new atheistic social consciousness. This was known as ‘Smashing the Four Olds’ (old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits). Long established cultures like that of the Drokpa have many aspects of life that are based on long-established beliefs and customs. For instance, Tibetan herders read their landscape in terms of a spiritual context where spirits are embodied in mountains and in water pots (Huber, 1999b). However, these old ideas were not appreciated, valued or understood by the new ideology. The ‘power of the proletariat’ overrode all else. A statement written soon after this period (Red Flag Bridge: 1976) illustrates this: “We have to destroy those old beliefs. Small groups of people spread rumours saying that if there is no rain, there is no good grass. It is absolutely against the power of the proletariat (wu chan jie jü)…We have to be the masters of Nature”. The challenge to old beliefs resulted in herders being forced to mine stone from sacred mountains and other mountains for construction purposes and to break through common attitudes. Archive documents record: “To build houses, our members have exploited enough stone to build 130 houses so far; furthermore, we have kept enough stone to build wells” (Lho ma Bridge, Jan 15th 1975). “We have to smash old beliefs,” was a very resonant statement of Maoist thought.

This statement illustrates how at times the power of the working classes, farmers and herders was seen to be superior to any other beliefs, even if the logic that grass would grow without rain would not normally survive even a superficial scrutiny. This shows the ‘voluntarism’ typical of Maoist thought. What happened during the Cultural Revolution and at other times was that logical and evidence-based rational analysis was forgotten. The ‘old’ idea that plants would need water, warm temperatures and nutrients to grow and feed yaks, sheep and goats could be challenged as “old” and if a local cadre believed that the
grass would grow in support of the New China, then policies would be put in place with that assumption. To challenge that would be to challenge the prevailing political views. A consequence would be poor management of the alpine meadows of the Tibetan Plateau.

Some members from the commune (gong she) said in dissent: “We must not exploit sacred mountains; otherwise, our livestock will be punished with diseases by the sacred mountain spirits”. This was challenged by commentaries such as “They must reflect what they are saying; learn properly what proletarian socialist society is” (Red Flag Bridge, 29th April, 1976).

The above reflects an ideological dogma that, as with most dogma, pays little regard to the realities of daily life or any evidence that might question the dictates of those in power. The socialist state was meant to be the reification of a reformed proletarian consciousness, but as the history of socialism has shown, the state took centralised power, enforcing its will through strong measures. Lenin had sought to justify this route. Much as Marx rejected Hegel’s metaphysics, Lenin still retained the view that development following a set route was pre-ordained. We see here the link between Mao and Lenin, in that the ‘revolution’ had to be driven through by force - almost ignoring the cost in social disruption and suffering, which is widely acknowledged in China as having been considerable during the Cultural Revolution. During Mao’s leadership there was clearly a policy to promote the leader above the Government in the same way as applied to Emperors in previous periods, and with that came a dependency to rely on the Leader for many decisions. This paralleled what occurred in the USSR under Stalin prior to the revolution in China. In Mao’s case he saw his role as both teacher and leader. Mao sought and retained that role. With the death of Mao and the rise of Deng Xiaoping and his successors there has been a change to Executive Government similar to the Cabinet Government, that applies in many western countries. The cultivation of personality has been considerably reduced since Mao. Power has also been delegated more to local Authorities who are held to account for the success or failure of local policies. As discussed elsewhere (Waldron and Brown, 2011) policies are now broadly defined by the national Government, but there is then flexibility in the ways these policies are implemented down through the six layers of Government in China.
6.3.5 Communal Economy

In the early 1970s and alongside the political campaigns throughout the PRC, a new socialist society was premised on the establishment of a collective and communal economy. Most people across China lived in rural areas and an agrarian focus was seen as the initial basis of the revolution. This was implemented in the following ways: common ownership of the means of production and farm work being done collectively. In the case of the pastoral society in Nagchu, the creation of a commune meant the re-organisation of pastoral production along communal lines. This line brought transformation as follows: First was the changing of the means of production of ‘capital’ from individual households to the collective unit. Second was that economic activity was done collectively by the commune. Third was that pastoral products were distributed and consumed by the collective, with ‘required surpluses’ going to the state.

The changing of ‘capital’ from individual tent-households to the collective unit meant that the household economy in the pre-socialist period had been based upon the private ownership of livestock and landlord or community-based ownership of land. The access to land had previously reflected on-going standing tribal divisions. With the revolution, since the 1960s, former ‘Ru ba/Tsho ba’ encampments were divided and integrated into a new political structure, the ‘dzug/zu’. Following this line, livestock was managed communally (dzug/zu), and the majority shared in common. Each individual household was allowed to keep a minimum number of productive yaks (drê) for their own use – particularly for household milk and fibre. Land was considered to belong to all the people i.e. the state organisation the collective (Ho, 2000; Yeh, 2004).

Economic activities were conducted collectively at the level of the commune. Pastureland was shared commonly among members in a village. The boundaries of former tribes were retained as the pastoral territory of villages. When it was needed, pasture could be shared between villages with no fee. The management methods with regard to land

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76 I have drawn on various unpublished sources for the following sections, but since I only gained access to these sources on the understanding that I would not cite them directly, I have only referred to published date.
77 ‘Commune’ and ‘collective’ were different policies and were implemented at different times in most of China. Zheng (2009).
were to fence off some parts of rich pasture by using stone and dried brick material so that this would increase stocking rate through an improvement in the capacity of pasture land. This was intended to be a rapid process and to increase productivity. This method was implemented throughout Nagchu. The field survey shows (Map 8) that herders hewed out the stones from Mountain 1 to fence pasture area B, and the stone from Mountain 2 and 3 to fence area A, while area C was enclosed by dried brick material.

Similar work occurred at other villages in Nagchu. To illustrate:

“Our commune has 877 people, shares 54,000mu\(^79\) (3600ha), pasture though only one third of the pasture has a good capacity to support livestock. We had 23,098 head of livestock in 1960, now we have 40,853 in 1975. The livestock numbers has increased by 77%. We have built 69 channels for pasture irrigation. This achievement changed traditional management, and we have moved on the first step on the development of the socialist pastoral system…our next five year’s agenda is to increase livestock numbers by 26% each year by 1980” (Red Flag Communal 14\(^{th}\) Jan, 1976).

“We started to fence pasture in November 2005 by using turf or stone. 8,776m of fences were completed by April 2006. Our entire project will aim to fence 10,000mu (670ha) of pasture. Around 10,000-50,000 packs of fertiliser were spread on the pasture. Around 10,000 pika (small rodent that eats grass) holes were blocked manually. 29 big sheds were built, 66 small sheds for lamb. In addition, we dig two wells for animal drinking water.” (Red Flag Bridge, 29\(^{th}\) April, 1976)

“We have built 809 channels, 80 wells, planted grass for fodder 30,000mu, (2,000ha) killed caterpillar and pika covering an area of 30,500mu” (Nagchu: County1980).

\(^{78}\) No specific data exists on how big an area of land this applied to, and how it related to all the land that a commune had access to. It might be holding paddocks near the village.

\(^{79}\) The mu is the common measure of area in China. One hectare = 15 mu.
No precise data records the impact of these developments on pasture quality and conditions, nor whether production matched animal demand. However, available statistical data (Figure 13) shows that sheep’s wool is the dominant product and was 20 times that of yak wool. There was a big initial rise in all products between 1960 and 1965, probably reflecting the changes that occurred at that time in farm organisation and better methods for collecting products. Prior to 1960, there may have been as many products from these animals, but it was not purchased and hence suggests like low production levels. From 1965 onwards during the period of collectivisation, the level of production was similar to what it had been before or it declined. This suggests that the collectivisation period did not improve the production of livestock products. From the early 1970s, there was an increase in all products. This rise from the early 1970s could reflect some adaptation to collectivisation, better collection methods, greater demands from the Government and/or people working in different ways.

Figure 13 Farm products purchased by commercial departments in Nagchu, 1958–1978
(The Census Bureau of Nagchu Region. 2005:339)

80 All production was low in the late-1960s. The reason for this is unknown. It might have been due to poor seasons or reduced purchasing by Departments.
General farm work was organised collectively at the communal workshop level and in each different labour divisions. Members herded sheep on the lower quality pasture growing on sandy soils, and they kept the better pasture for yaks. Male herders participated in herding, salt-based trade for the commune, and mining stone, while female herders tended livestock, did the milking, processed dairy products, collected yak dung for heating purposes, and ground barely to make flour. Herding jobs were divided into three types. Herding sheep required up to four labourers depending upon the time of year: for instance, one for male sheep, one for pregnant female sheep, one for the other female sheep; one for organising lambs. Herding goats needed one labourer who herded both male and female goats together. Herding yaks required two labourers: one for herding male yaks and non-productive female yaks, one for herding calves which were around one and two years old. Communal members did the milking and processed dairy products according to a particular division of labour. One woman would milk around 15 female yaks, process the milk into butter and cheese, and then store all the products within the common store room. This division of labour shows that practices relied on having larger households with each member having one main task.

The salt-based trade has a long history as described in the previous chapter. It was an important economic activity that generated exchange between the Drokpa and farmers in the valleys. Unlike Goldstein’s (1989) description of Phala, the salt-based trade continued as an economic activity during the communal period at Nagchu. It was initially based upon barter, and continued during the communal period. Herders mined rock salt from seasonally dry salt lakes during the late winter, and then transported the salt together with dairy products to markets in agricultural areas where they could be exchanged for necessities such as grain. The headman of No. 16 at Da illustrated how the salt-based trade was managed during the communal period:

“I went for salt-based trade during the communal period. I remember that we had six men from our commune. Each one was responsible for 25 yaks during our trip to trade the salt we had collected and other products. We would normally wake up at 5am every day, and

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81 Flour was obtained from salt-trading.
82 There might be a third labourer to herd the pregnant yaks, although informants mentioned only two labourers.
journey by foot. We would stop somewhere at 11am and let our yaks rest, graze and drink water. We walked 15 kilometres to 20 kilometres every day. The entire journey would take us two months: from our village to harvest salt at the lake, then back to our village and then the journey to the farmers for trade. We normally went to farm villages close to Lhasa city, for instance, Tö lung dé chen dzong County. We bartered our salt, wool, dried animal fat, and live animals (sometimes) for their barely, black beans, and woollen fabric. These trading practices remained the same during the communal period. The main difference was that all goods were now owned by the commune. The commune then decided how to distribute the products obtained from our trade among communal members.”

Another communal record details the amount of grain bartered in their salt–based trade:

“Our commune (production brigade) has six brigade teams (zu); all the teams exchanged lots of salt and other goods for grain with farmers this year. The amount of grain was in total 7,710 kg: team one: 1,500kg; team two: 1,700kg; team three: 1,000kg; team four: 900kg; team five: 1,425kg; team six: 1,185 kg. We have not distributed grain to our members yet.” (Lho ma Bridge, January 15th 1975, Archive)

Products from pastoral work and from the salt–based trade were then distributed in three ways: 1) to individual households; 2) kept as collective property; 3) sold to the state, in the form of the upper administration or production brigade (dui)83. The following comment shows how a commune distributed their products in the second and thirdways.

“To implement Chairman Mao’s high command: provides profit to the state first, to the commune second, and then to the individual last. Our commune has successfully completed our task between 1971 and 1973. We sold the following dairy products to the state: 4,609 kg butter, 12,000kg wool, 12,000 kilo meat. We kept the rest of our dairy products for communal use.” (Sang de (?) Bridge: 6th October 1974).

When products were distributed to individual members, they were allocated on the basis of work points. Work points were calculated at three levels: the first was named ‘capable labourer’; the second was ‘middle capable labourer’; the last ‘incapable labourer’. Each level meant different ‘work points’. The ‘capable labourer’ were those aged 19–45. They received 10 points for eight hours work each day. The ‘middle capable labourer’ were those aged 45–55, who would receive a maximum of 8 points, subject to work performance. The ‘incapable labourer’ received no points. Unlike the Chan, Madsen and Unger’s (1984) description of Chen Village84, the work points for every member in Da was simply recorded

83 It is unclear whether the state paid in goods or in cash or not at all, but probably a combination of all three.
84 Chen village is located in Guangdong, on the southern coast of PRC.
by local cadres every day, and the records would then be announced during the communal meeting. An informant recalled:

“A rough calculation of the work point and related income distribution at communal level was as follows: if the total income for the communal workshop was ¥1,392 annually, from this sum they subtracted around 30% for public spending, which is roughly ¥418. This would leave ¥974. If the total number of manual workers in the workshop was 50 people, and if the average ‘work point’ of each was 2,100 per year, then the total ‘work points’ would be 105,000. The payment would then be ¥19.48 for each member for that year. This valuation was suited to ‘capable labour’ and ‘mid-capable labour’. Families that lacked ‘capable’ or ‘mid-capable’ labour were allowed to credit ‘work points’ from the workshop each year, and the points were supposed to be paid back in the following year.”

Production was essentially collective, and likewise consumption took place through the direct distribution of the products within a communal unit on the basis of their work points. Members received a portion of consumption items for private usage, and might receive some other additional items. For instance, at Da, a household received two sheep for winter meat consumption during December. If the commune had surplus dairy products, that was distributed to each individual at the end of the year. Members were allowed to purchase 8 kg of flour monthly, or a small amount of butter, yogurt, rice and vegetables. However, this needed permission from the commune. These items were only purchased on a fixed quota basis via work points, and a quota per person per year. Households would eat at their own place in their permanent houses or collectively at the communal workshop.

There are scarce data on the results of the collective economy in the pastoral society of Nagchu. However, some information on the economic aspects of herder life during this period is reported in the book History of the Communist Party of Nagchu District of the PRC, published in 1991, edited by the Editorial Committee for HCPNDP. It described: “…we have been funded to introduce a good species of sheep from Qinghai to Nagchu, in the hope that this project will lead to the production of good quality wool. February, 1956” (1991:44); “The interbreeding of wool producing sheep which we introduced from Xingjian to Nagchu has been proved successful, April 1962” (1991:127). The above comments

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85 It is not clear how people, including children, who did not earn work points were allocated food. There might be differential in the allocation of food produced by the commune vs. food obtained by trade, further research need to confirm this.

86 This might refer to cheese, butter and dried yoghurt.

87 I purchased this book from a second-hand book shop. See bibliography.
suggest that improving the quantity and quality of wool production from sheep was seen as an on-going and important way of improving the livelihoods of herders. Yak improvement was not mentioned as often.

The collective economy aimed to build a collective production system which would lead pastoral society into a higher stage of human society, the socialist state. When this ideal was achieved, it was believed that the ‘socialist pastoral men’ would cooperate with one another selflessly within the system. A new and alternative ‘scientific’ culture would emerge (Evans, 1990:17). However, the complexity of property rights seems not to have been as simple as socialist doctrine anticipated. The communal economy did not achieve the ‘nirvana’ where everyone lived selflessly, with equally shared resources and in which private property disappeared. Economic self-interest remained powerful motivations within individual work in the communal unit as illustrated by several cases.

“I am herding communal livestock, but my mind is driven by economic self-interest. I do not pay much attention to whether or not our communal livestock are good enough when I go herding. Instead, I spent time collecting yak dung for my own use. I know my behaviour is a typical example of selfishness, and such behaviour is driven by economic self-interest. It is not the way the proletariat (wu chan jie ji) should be” (Red Flag Brigade in 1976).

In another example of this is as follows:

“A small group of people from our brigade tried to destroy our socialist society. Their selfish thinking was influenced by some of the bad class such as wealthy herders in our community. These people were trying to replace socialism with capitalism. For instance, they secretly kept communal property for private use, they slaughtered communal livestock in secrecy for their own consumption, they worked more dedicatedly for their own economic self-interest than working for the collective interest ; they have shown more interest when there are economic benefits for themselves” (Red Flag Bridge, 29th April, 1976). Or, in another indicative citation;

“Kelzang, the team leader, is not taking full responsibility for his communal members. He went to run his private business without participating in communal works. We must criticise his way for economic self-interest” (Liberation Bridge, 1975). And again –

“Members collected yak dung from the field. It is our common property. We use it collectively, or we sell it for our communal economy. We should sell the yak dung to our counter partners in the town; however, some of our members did not take yak dung directly

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88 These data might be recorded during forced confessions at self-criticism sessions. If so, they may not be taken as historical sources about whether people were actually being ‘selfish’, but they probably indicate the activities that occurred.
to our counter partners. They sold the yak dung to whoever provided a higher price than our counter partners” (Red Flag Bridge, 1976).

The commune system ended late in 1979, and the de-communal period started. This resulted from the major economic reform in China at that time. Chinese leaders further concluded that the economic strategy of the state had made little progress in improving the living standards of people from 1950 to 1980\(^8\) (RE). The Chinese leadership concluded that focusing solely upon the ‘class struggle’ had become counterproductive. But as the economy improved, what has been called the ‘escalation of aspirations’ began to destabilise society – particularly through the movement of rural poor to the cities and centres of industrial production (RE). The PRC had changed to a policy of what is now called ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’, which retains a central Government one-party state, but enables individual citizens to then take responsibility for their own economic activities.

The above has outlined how the life of the Drokpa had changed from one centred on households and small groups of families forming a local community, to one where the ‘village’ became a ‘commune’ and the household/tent was then expected to be subservient to the activities of the commune. Individuals no longer worked to improve the livelihood of their family, but for ‘the better good of the society’. The Drokpa are a pastoral society whose wealth was clearly recognised in the livestock which they, in the main, had previously owned. That wealth was redistributed amongst all to be managed communally, and individual households were left with few personal possessions. In addition, their ability to make their own decisions and the lifestyle and beliefs they had were subject to communal decisions that had not previously applied. The ramifications of the political views that dominated this period were considerable, and affected all parts of their lives. As occurred across China, there was undoubtedly considerable stress induced in many individuals, and clear evidence that the dominating political views were not accepted by all. People did try to foster their own self interest, which often came down to very basic issues such as collecting dung for fuel for personal use as noted above. When China again radically changed policies from 1979 onwards, there was no desire to continue with a

\(^8\) The Economic Reform of China launched in the 1980s.
collective structure. The individual kin group again became the focus for households and
collective structure. The individual kin group again became the focus for households and
villages and decision making at that level was done in different ways.

**Reflective considerations:**

When we consider the above account, the reader may too often be frustrated by the
apparent lack of answers to key questions and the lack of human reaction to these events.
The dry accounts miss the essence of how people felt about these events.

Subsequent field evidence can add this missing perspective - “What was it like to live
through this period?” We need to dig below the surface. Such understanding is of necessity
part impressionistic and part intuitive.

That being said, the people of Da who remember the communal period or have been told
about it, see that time as one of traumatic change that devalued key elements of their
identity and community well-being. In the main, traditional authorities were seen as
benevolent, and could not be questioned. Hierarchy was previously sustained through a
consensus that had developed slowly over time, and not been suddenly imposed. Even
though tent and local communities had long worked together in a kinship-dominated and
socialist household model where individuals worked for the same household aims, the model
of collectivisation on a larger scale on which was arbitrarily imposed was not only alien but
sought to change the way the Drokpa had been living for centuries. As discussed in
subsequent chapters, we will see that the once dogmatic, forceful, and at times, brutal
control, lifted to some extent, and people reinstating ways of life that had lain dormant for
decades. As will form a continuing theme in this thesis, it is very true that - “Drokpa know
how to survive!” The tacit knowledge of how to survive in a harsh environment surrounded
by mort dominant peoples and controls, brings a resilience based upon well developed and
well understood ways of sustaining social, individual and emotional well-being.

**6.4 Post ‘socialist communalisation’**

In late 1979, de-communalisation began as a result of the Eleventh Party Plenum in 1978,
and changes in economic reform policies followed. As result of this, the first Tibetan Work
Forum was held in Beijing in March 1980, and Hu Yaobang paid a fact-finding visit to the TAR in May of that year.

In the TAR, the new policy freed rural farmers and herders from all taxes for five years, and this policy was later extended to the present. The relief from taxation reflected the poor economic conditions many herders were in. This reform implemented a “household responsibility system” both in agriculture and in the pastoral sectors. Farmers and herders were able to retain and sell production which was surplus to immediate household needs from their individual land or livestock. Ways of life soon reflected the past rather than the period of collectivisation. However, reflections of the past did not mean a ‘revival’ of all the old things. It is not, as suggested by Potter and Potter (1990), that everything was a revival of what happened before 1949. Helen Siu (1989) criticised the Potter’s view that nothing really had changed. She argued that while aspectssuch as rituals looked the same, actually all sorts of things had changed - rituals came back in slightly different ways, some things were dropped, others exaggerated. The same with kinship organisation - it might look the same, but actually it might be different. However, this ‘return’ to the past formed a recognition of that which was seen as having value, enabling a stability within which people felt they could work and survive, framed by a culture that had evolved in a pragmatic way and had the ability to adapt to new circumstances. This reform had considerable impact on pastoral society, and this impact provides the focus for the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

De-communalisation means that formerly communal livestock were distributed to each household. This distribution reflected the principles of equality espoused during the communal era, rather than the earlier hierarchy. To illustrate, every member of all households in Da received five yaks and seven sheep equivalent (as two goats were considered equals to one sheep and the number of sheep and goats varied between households) (Fig 14). Equity was achieved by distributing the same number per person. Every member received the same share. Equality was achieved by ignoring such categories

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90 The Second Tibet Work Forum was held in 1984; the Third in 1994; The Fourth in 2001.
91 http://www.youth.cn 2009-03-26
as ‘capable labourers or incapable labourers’, infants and seniors or members of ‘bad classes’ or ‘good classes’. In addition to the redistribution of livestock, every household kept their small number of personal animals from the communal era.

Figure 14 The redistribution of livestock during de-communalisation at Da, based on household size rather than old hierarchy 1980

Usage of pastureland was reallocated to small groups of several kin segments, known as Dzug (zu). Members had exclusive user rights over the land, but this did not include the right to commercialise land. Across China, land is still considered to be owned by the ‘people’ i.e. the state or collective.

The government redressed the grievances arising from classifying people as part of ‘bad classes’. For instance, in 1979, Household No.17, previously of the ‘bad class’ at Da as they had been previously the ‘herd lord’, regained their membership of the community, the right to join member’s meetings and were reimbursed by the government for some of their property confiscated by the government during the period of collectivisation. The religious role of respondent No.19 was recognised and later on, in 1987, he was invited to return to the monastery. This reflected national policies on ethnic minorities.

6.5 Conclusion

The introduction of the Marxist–Leninist and Maoist ideology of social systems into Tibetan pastoral communities was done within a very short time, and imposed from above, even though the ideology implied that it would naturally develop once the exploited classes were given power. The result, though, of the process of socialist transformation in the 1960s and the 1970s, was considerable turmoil across China and among the Drokpa, and
by the late 1970s the policy was generally acknowledged as not achieving the benefits originally promoted, and in fact causing much hardship. The socialist doctrine of the time interpreted human social organisation through an overwhelming emphasis on production and economic imperatives, and this invalidated important aspects of pre-socialist society, namely the Tibetan pastoral society’s values, beliefs and ways of living (see Bloch, 1983:68). Capital and its use and allocation within society was seen in very simplistic terms.

It could be argued that the communal period should have been readily accepted by the Drokpa as it had some similarities to the ways in which herder households functioned, albeit on a larger scale. Households contributed labour to a range of common tasks and resources were pooled. However, the differences meant that this was not accepted. These differences arose from the overwhelming emphasis on production, and redefining cultural values to the exclusion of almost everything else, rather than building on what was already in place.

Although not fully applicable to the situation in Da, the thinking of Bourdieu (1986) aids useful reflection. In his view there are five kinds of capital. These are economic capital, three kinds of cultural capital, (embodied, objectified and institutionalised) and social capital. Embodied in cultural capital are behavioural practices which people acknowledge and respect. If they don’t respect behaviour then it does not have any capital value. Objectified cultural capital includes such artefacts as like Buddhist books and Tang ga\textsuperscript{92}, which Tibetans revere. Bourdieu suggests that we can appropriate these either materially e.g. in the form of economic capital or symbolically i.e. in the form of cultural capital, while social relationships form social capital. He argues that the latter is often at the root of political power. Bourdieu argues that economic, cultural and social capital are inextricably linked, and hence one cannot simply analyse each form of capital separately. The communalisation period, while there was a considerable focus on economic capital, also sought to redefine what cultural capital was, and to break down the previous structures of social capital. However, given the revision that occurred after 1979, it is clear that cultural

\textsuperscript{92} Tang ga is Tibetan silk painting with embroidery, depicting Buddhist deities.
and social capital was somewhat resilient to the pressures of the collectivisation period, and could not be redefined in completely different ways.

Pastoral economic activities on the Tibetan Plateau take place within a context of cultural concepts and values, and of rights and duties defined by social relationships. These relationships are based upon principles derived from kinship and marriage, ritual and religion, politics and administration. The ideology imposed during collectivisation considered that cultural and social values belonging to the ideological superstructure, were determined by the ‘economic base’ of production. Natural resources such as pastureland, skilled labour, and man-made tools and cultural learning which evolved over time can be considered as the ‘real’, readily defined capital. Religious beliefs and values in the Tibetan context had developed in such a way as to have a major influence on cultural learning or ‘intellectual’ capital. They provide social motivation and cohesion rather than modes of production per se. The theories underlying collectivisation and its implementation in Tibet failed to develop any linkages with the way Drokpa society had developed, and instead sought to replace culture and social capital with completely different structures. The relationship between base culture/ways of living and social superstructure is howeverever, complex. To create insights within this complexity, there will be a discussion in Chapter 6 of how economic decision-making is affected both by the constitution of material forces of production, and by different kinds of rights and obligations, as well as culturally derived values that motivate the allocation of time and resources to alternative uses.
7 The Open-market I: Household Economy

7.1 Introduction

The Drokpa’s livelihoods and lifestyles changed radically throughout the 1960s, in the main through the process of politically-driven collectivisation. This process was discussed in Chapter 6, which detailed the re-ordering of the social systems and the means of production into larger units than had traditionally applied prior to this period. However, after 1979, this process was completely reversed (Goldstein and Beall, 1989). Chapters Six and Seven consider the period after 1979 with cover the introduction of the economic reforms instituted by the PRC at that time, reforms that allowed greater entrepreneurialism and a more flexible social organisation.

This chapter deals with a period of reforms that saw a decline in the subsistence-oriented economy for the herders, and the beginning of an integration with, and adaptation to, a much larger and more integrated market economy. This economy is variously called in China the ‘self responsibility’, or ‘market development’ phase, and reflects the official PRC policy. Managing this change was done by the central Government who promoted entrepreneurialism and the accumulation of private capital – ‘Socialism with Chinese characteristics’. The incongruence of these ‘economically oriented policies’ created tensions (Fischer, 2002), but as will be discussed later, has changed the balance between the rights of the state and the rights of the individual. As a consequence, although the individual household/tent or family remained as the basic unit of the pastoral economy, herders became more dependent upon external economic factors than they had been, either during the period of almost entirely subsistence-oriented economy, or later during the period of communalisation.

During this new cash/market economic period, economic activities in the Tibetan pastoral communities have been maintained and developed through networks based upon kinship, residence and religious ties. This resonates with Polanyi’s (1945) argument that all economies are embedded in social relationships and institutions. This also supports the interpretation that the Tibetan pastoral community life as driven by a mixture of internal
cultural and social beliefs, alongside the constraints of the environment within which they live. They respond to externally imposed factors such as communalisation or the replacement of communalisation by a socialist market economy, as long it fits within their social and ecological perceptions, values and beliefs. The villagers’ economic activities are understood by them as the exchange and consumption of goods and services used by the ‘household’ or tent group as the main economic unit. Implicit in their economic thinking is how to allocate their scarce resources of land, labour and capital in ways that satisfy not only basic needs, but also their desire for social rituals involving food, fuel, medicinal herbs, housing/shelter and infrastructure as governed by cultural imperatives and their physical environment. In this chapter, we will discuss what happened to households and other social structures during the cash/market economic period.

7.2 Household / Tent

A brief overview of the ‘household’ during the pre-cash economy period is provided in Chapter 5 (during the subsistence-orientated economic period). The everyday activities of a household or tent group had a division in terms of social role within the tent. The economic activities of households covered a group of family members who lived in that tent or sometimes a cluster of tents. During the communal period, it was these aspects of social and economic functions of a household which were changed, and which took on a somewhat larger and more structured communal sense (Chapter 6)\(^\text{93}\).

\(^{93}\) Notes for the kinship figures: The person marked in black is the interviewee though more than one person was interviewed in some families. The circle represents a woman or a girl, a triangle represents a man or a boy. A circle or a triangle, which has a household number within it, means this person is from that household. The dotted lines indicate household membership. A circle and a triangle, which have a diagonal mark, means that this person has passed away. The line linking two persons means that they are married. The curved line linking two person means they are not married formally, but have had sexual contact. A line linking two person on top means they are siblings. A line linking two persons vertically means the persons below is the
‘Household’ is as a unit of social organisation that governs activities such as human reproduction, socialisation, economic production and consumption (Goody, 1974; Wilk et al. 1984). It refers to links between members by birth, marriage or adoption, regardless of whether or not the members share production and consumption (Tuttle, 1964:4; Carter, 1984:45). This links well with Pine’s view that households “…in terms of shared consumption, production and rites of intimacy, often extends over several households” (1996:226). In local terms, a household is referred to as Ba, meaning ‘tent’, reflecting traditional structures where several families may live separately from each other, either in tents or houses, but are related closely to other similar units through kinship ties and function collectively. Several such kinship-related households would make up a lineage or sub-lineage or ‘kin segment’, who may cooperate for economic or ritual tasks (Chapter 8). For instance, “…when we say ‘they are one Ba, it can refer to several households of this Ba. These households do not necessarily share the same task of production or consumption, but are tied by kinship, marriage or adoption” says L. of No.15, “…in the case of a newly married couple in Da, if they stay separate from their parents and establish their own household, in local terms, people refer to this as a ‘new tent’, and refer to their parent’s tent as the ‘old tent’. It means that several such households can be categorised within the same Ba”. For the purpose of this thesis, I use the term ‘kin segment’ (kin group) to refer to such households.

A typical patriarchal household/tent, is illustrated by household No.15 in Da (Figure 15). No. 15 has seven members within the family. There are six members who can be described as sharing common livestock, common land, sharing consumption and working towards a common production purpose. One member is considered as a member of the household because of the marriage relationship. However, his participation in No.15 is partial. He neither performs pastoral work as frequently as other members, nor does he have a share of land and livestock in Da. He contributes his time in terms of his job in town for which he receives a reasonable wage. In theory, his contribution is one-third of a unit child of the person above. Members who are included within a dotted lines means that those members are in the same family. The total number of population may be different from what the figures show. This, is due to fieldwork done in different years, in that some members may have passed away.
with regard to livestock and land management, and two-thirds in terms of earning off-farm income. However, he sometimes spends his wage on things for the household. When we see No.15 from family Ba’s perspective, it exemplifies a residential pattern of households. No. 19 is the ‘old tent, No.15 is the ‘new tent’. These two households live separately, but are close-knit, and members are tied by birth, marriage and adoption. Members of these two households do not necessarily share production and consumption all the time. Chart 2 shows that from a family perspective, in No.15, Ego, his wife and his offspring work together closely, sharing common resources through shared production for common consumption. This is shown in the chart by blue shading. However, the participation of Ego’s son-in-law (dashed column) in No. 15 is partially considered to relate to consumption and production of pastoral work. In relation to the kin segment dimension (Chart 3), No.15 indicates that Ego’s household is tied to No. 19 by birth, as the underlined blue shading shows. Members of these two households do not live together, however, but they cooperate at times for herding purposes or ritual tasks.
Two aspects which define the household are its structure and system (Carter, 1984:47). Carter’s term ‘household structure’ refers to its composition and size. The ‘household system’ comprises rules and strategies. Netting (1984:13) observed that in many societies, the household size is generally determined by its wealth, though equally it could be that size depends upon their wealth (the drivers of household income will be examined later).

If we look at the households in Da, the data shows that the very wealthy tend to be larger and the very poor smaller (Figure 19). For instance, No. 2 (Figure 16) has 11 household members, and the gross annual household income was RMB 26,200 (US$3,853) in 2007. However, No. 4 has 9 members, and their gross annual income in the same year was only RMB 31,480 (US$4,629) suggesting that a simple relationships between household size and wealth as suggested by Netting, is unlikely. More likely, the composition of households and use of their labour influences the opportunities for work outside the household, and for the types of goods produced and the income received by the household. Figure 18 indicates that the allocation of labourers for each household is different. No. 2 has 11 members, and it is a household incorporating three generations. Nine members share common production tasks. Two members of the household are involved in the economic activity of the household, only social activities. Five among the 9 are aged from 35 to 65 years, and 4 are aged from 4 to 9. In relation to the allocation of labourers who are aged 35 to 65, two labourers are actively engaged in non-pastoral income opportunities. This household owns vehicles, with one member driving the truck and another driving a

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94 Although net income is often a better measure of financial performance i.e. how much cash (surplus) is left at the end of the year, it was difficult to collect sufficient reliable data as no households kept accounts, and the accuracy of the data varied from one informant to another. The data is, however, considered adequate for relative comparisons among and between households and major items of costs and income have been identified.
tractor. Both provide cash income. It is presumed that most of the cash income would be made available to the household, although they may retain a small amount of cash for themselves. The other three labourers engage in pastoral production activities as part of the household.

In contrast, No. 4 has nine members (Figure 17). It is a household with predominately two generations. All nine members work at common household tasks. Two among the nine are aged between 52 and 58, and seven are aged between three and 24. In relation to the allocation of labourers, the senior male labourer (the headman) undertakes non-pastoral activities, but only during the winter. His non-pastoral work is to purchase livestock from one trader, and then travel to distant villages for reselling i.e. he engages in trade. The senior female (the wife of the headman) is the only one who works constantly on pastoral activities. The rest of the labourers spend more time in town seeking work. However there is a risk that they might waste time with no paid work in Nagchu town, as competition for jobs is high from local farmers or outsiders.

Household strategies for non-pastoral income activities provide an important indication of the difference between these two households in relation to differences in production output. No. 2 has five labourers, who provide income sources for the household. Three among the five are male labourers, the other two are female. Two of the males do non-pastoral income-generating work, working for people in Nagchu town or for herders in other areas; one male drives his own truck, and the other drives his own tractor. Both activities provided good cash income, RMB 60,000 (US$8,823) from the truck and RMB 2,000 (US$294 from the tractor in 2007). In addition, No.2 has a small business during the Horse Race Festival selling clothes, food and furniture purchased from the town. This

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95 The children were born when the parents were relatively old in the case No.4.
provided them with another RMB 60,000 (US$8,823) in cash. The total cash income was RMB 122,000 (US$ 17,941) in 2007 for this household. On the other hand, No.4 provided no information as to how much cash income they earned by reselling livestock in 2007, but RMB 2,998 (US$441) was earned from non-pastoral work mining stone. Presumably, the net income in 2007 of the household is sufficient to justify the extra work involved in mining stone.

The household system is important for each household as this governs a grad deal of what they do. The rules and practices followed derive from their culture (Carter, 1984:47–76). For instance, when the headman of No.2 and the wife of the headman of No.4 were asked “Will you still be Drokpa in five or ten years time?” the informants from both households responded confidently: “Yes, we will still be here, because we know the skills and techniques required to survive as a Drokpa and to improve our livelihood”. This indicates that people hope to remain doing what they are familiar with i.e. remain within
their ‘comfort zone’. However, when asked, “Will your children still be Drokpa in five or ten years time”, informants responded: “We are not sure where our young children might be. They might still be Drokpa like us, or they might move to live in a town if they can find jobs, because they are now at school and getting an education”. Their response to this question was uncertain, but reflects there are no strict (household) rules governing the occupation people have. It reflects their uncertainty in relation to external surroundings and changing conditions, such as, the impact of education and the growth of urban economies. However, this does not reflect an attitude that once those young herders have left school, at whatever age, then their place in life is set or cannot be readily changed.

The household system does have strategies (Carter, 1984) which can then influence household economic activities. Gender has an important influence on the household system. The senior male is the headman of each household. He is the one who handles the money and makes the bigger payments. This is common among most households in Da. They decide economic strategies for their households or advise other members of the household. For instance, L from No.15, a 68 years old male, who saved the cash income which came from selling the caterpillar fungus that his daughter and granddaughter went to collect in 2007. He kept some other cash in a locked wooden box, and he kept the key with him. He made a big payment to build a Buddhist Stupa in 2009 in Da, which cost him $US5,000. Other family members such as his wife and daughter have some pocket money, which they spent on purchasing food on a daily basis from town. They do not have direct decision powers over making big payments. Such an authority relationship applies similarly in other households.

7.3 Household Labour and Assets

7.3.1 Labourers

Labourers are the household members and any paid non-household employees who do the physical work on the ‘farm’ which contributes to the household income.

Labourers are embedded in the pastoral world in all its aspects. It is through this embedding of labour that the pastoral system creates material such as food and clothing, as well as cultural events that express ‘meaning’ in terms of community cohesion. Labourers
in households are allocated various pastoral work and/or non–pastoral work (Maclachlan, 1983). Studies of households have identified the importance of household economics on how labour is organised (Carter, 1984; Maclachlan, 1983). As we have shown earlier in this chapter, the allocation of household labour can result in differences in production outcomes between households.

Household labourers can be divided into two groups according to the kind of work they do, notably indoor or outdoor work. Indoor work is that done in and around the tent/house and includes pastoral–related work such as milking, preparation of dairy product, skins etc., and housework. Outdoor work includes other pastoral work such as herding and non–pastoral work for cash. In the case of Da households, where labourers do pastoral and non–pastoral work, this has resulted in higher incomes than in other households. For instance, No. 2 and No. 17 have the highest gross income among all households. These two households had sufficient numbers of labourers to allow an allocation for cash income and for pastoral production. No. 2 had two labourers involved in non–pastoral work, and the other three labourers worked on pastoral production. The data shows No.17 had one labourer working for non–pastoral cash income on a regular basis. The rest were engaged in pastoral work. In contrast, No.3 and No.13 had the lowest gross income in relation to other households in 2007. No.3 only had one labourer engaged in to non–pastoral work; the rest were engaged in pastoral work. No.13 employed no non–pastoral labourers.

[Photo 4 Non-paid labourer]
Within the households in Da, paid labourers came in two categories. There are households that employ labourers, some from other villages, and there are households who provide the labourers employed by the wealthier households. For instance, AJ from No.14 herded yaks for No.14 and No.15. In return, No.15 gave AJ some cash, or food or cloth. AJ helped No.15 with the butchering in winter time, and was paid for his work. In 2008, No.15 hired a male labourer from another county (Pelgön) for herding. No.15 needed to pay the labourer RMB 2,993 (US$441) in cash as one year’s salary, plus covering all his costs for food and accommodation. A similar case is No.17, who hired a male labourer called PT in 2008 from another distant county (Shentsa). There was a cash payment equivalent to RMB 2,196 (US$32) and the employing family provided free food and accommodation plus No.17 covered the phone bill for the labourer’s private cell-phone. However, PT says that he only wanted to work for No.17 for one year, and then he would return to his own village. He regretted not being able to go to school, as if he had, he thought he would not have been a herder. The availability of such long-term labourers seems to be limited. Informants believe it is due to improvement in the herders’ living standards such that no herders want to work for low pay. By talking of ‘improvement’, herders compare their present circumstances with those experienced during the pre-cash economy period.

Non-paid labourers in households in Da, labour are part of the family and, as such, it is considered their duty to work for the benefit of their family and kinship. In this way individual herders socialise his or her role within the kin segment, and there is no question of whether or not this is something he or she wishes to do (Lee, 1979). These rules are considered important for the viability of the household system. Even when labourers leave the household to work elsewhere they may still be called upon to help at times. The nineteen households in Da can be categorised into seven kin segments (details are provided in Chapter 8). It is common for a labourer in household A to work as a duty for household B within the same kin segment. For instance, Kin Segment 1 includes No. 16

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96 These pay rates are relatively low. In Inner Mongolia labourers paid to look after flocks and herds get two to four times the payments of these labourers (Personal communication, Prof. David Kemp, February 2011)

97 No statistical data is available on the average herder incomes each year since 1950. Otherwise, it would provide a better comparison.
and No. 2. The headman of No.16, Ego’s youngest daughter and Ego’s grandchildren live in No.2, and Ego’s oldest daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren live in No.16. These two households share the same labourers for herding and other pastoral tasks. Kin Segment 5 (see Chart 2) includes No.19 and No.15. The headman of No.15 (Ego) lives with his youngest daughter and his grandchildren, and his second daughter and son-in-law, and grandchildren in No.19. P from No.19 herds yaks for both No.15 and No.19. When household A needs to build a house, such non-paid labourers can be provided across the kin segment boundary. Ten households in Da built their houses by receiving and providing such non-paid labourers. Much of the anthropological literature shows that such non-paid labour exchange, particularly between affinally related households, is reciprocated by beer or feasts or promises of other kinds of support in the future (Chapter 8). Exchange labour is a basic feature of the peasant economy, and an important aspect of what Marxists call the ‘relations of production’.

Labour flow within the Da community has two patterns, driven primarily by economic factors. One is labour outflow from Da (Figure 20), and the other is labour inflow from other villages to Da (Figure 21). Labour outflow from Da supplies supplementary income for its households. The supplementary income evident in Da is as follows:

First is investment in trucks and tractors which are used to generate cash income from transportation as well as being used for the transportation of their own products. These are favoured by wealthy households such as No.2 and No.17, who often financed these vehicles by borrowing money from within the kin segment. This strategy means that they retain labourers for when needed, without having to pay for them from the sale of farm produce. Second is income from the collection of caterpillar fungus from where medicinal herbs grow. These are then sold to a trader. Only three households in Da have access to the fungus. This is because it only grows in

Photo 5 Caterpillar fungus at market
particular soil and vegetation types, and access to these lands depends upon kin relationships. The high demand for the caterpillar fungus means that this has become one of the major sources of cash income for herders who live in these areas. Some herders from other areas have given up livestock production and only collect, organise and sell the caterpillar fungus, now employing other staff in their businesses. Herders from other areas are strictly prohibited by local herdsman from accessing this herb. More detail is provided in Chapter 8 with regard to how herdsman from Da travel to access the herbs.

Third is income from work in town, which varies from general labouring to singing in night clubs. Labour inflow refers to labourers come from other herding areas outside Da (Figure 21). There are two types of labour demand. One is households hiring long-term labourers for herding purposes. Two households, No.15 and No.17, employ long-term labourers for herding. The reasons are both lack of male labourers in their own households, and a shortage of non-paid labourers from their relatives who could help. The second is when households build new houses or rebuild old houses, when they hire Tibetan farmers or Chinese workers to build them. They pay these employees in cash as well as provide them with food. Demand for this labourers is restricted to those households who are able to afford cash payment. For those households who cannot afford to hire such workers, they receive support from other households to build new houses (for more detail, in Chapter 8).
The economy of Da is based primarily on pastoralism (Nyida Tséwang, 1985; Gelek et al., 2002), and pastureland is very important for the livelihood of the Drokpa. According to Malinowski, land tenure (ownership or an access right) is ‘…a relation of human beings, individuals and groups, to the soil they cultivate and use’ (Malinowski, 1935:376). For the Drokpa, pastureland tenure is where they herd domestic livestock and cultivate land for pastoral production i.e. those activities that sustain the community. Pastureland tenure relates herders to each other as households, kin segments, and as groups (Chapter 8). Rights over pastureland have historically been as important as rights over domestic livestock though the first is an access, non-monetary right, and the second now is a right with a monetary value.

Since the introduction of the responsibility system across China from 1979, in Tibet from early 1990s, land has been progressively allocated to individual households with a ‘user right’. The land is not an asset that can be bought or sold or used as collateral for finance. In theory this defines rights, but in practice in the extensive grasslands of Tibet it is not a simple matter to define who actually has access to what land. This can create some inequalities and limits opportunities for herders to improve livelihoods.

Map 9 Fenced Pasture Territory of Da.

Note: this suggests that the whole area was commonly grazed before the allocation of land to individual households.
A
Herd area for
Veal and Yearling

B
Herd area for
Female yaks which
produce milk and
which delivered
yearling in previous
year. These female yaks will
be kept here one year
throughout.

C
for collecting fodder in
August. Herders do not
keep animals grass in
this area in order to
keep grass grow
However, some of
yearlings and steers
being kept here for one
month, after collecting
fodder

D
Herd area for
Female yaks which cannot produce
milk, and male yaks from Dec – March
next year (in Tibetan calendar)
“Ownership”\textsuperscript{98} of pastureland in Da has undergone two main phases of change during the period of the cash economy since 1979. The first phase was the access to land which was still owned on a communal basis. That means that herders in Da shared some common land within the territory of Da. During the period of sharing common land, as in other pastoral societies (Sanford 1983; McCabe 1990; Fratkin et al., 1994), each household in Da herded their livestock within the village area. The boundaries were divided between ‘zu’ (almost the same as the pre–1950 Ru ba). In the case of Da, their common pastureland territory was approximately 666 ha (10,000 \textit{mu}\textsuperscript{99} when allocated after 1979). By 2007, the territory had been reduced to approximately 518 ha (7,800 \textit{mu}) when Nagchu town expanded to occupy the frontier pasture of Da, with the likelihood of further reductions. The area available to each of the 21 households is now only 25ha (370 \textit{mu}) which is very limiting in terms of satisfying household needs, given the marginal nature of the climate. Herders enclosed some areas with fencing (Map 9) and additional areas had delineated boundaries. The total land area available is relatively small for a village the size of Da. Previously, the village had access to considerably more land and the fewer families meant that each had far more to use.

The management of this common land today can be understood through the relationships between land per se, and the livestock that use the land. Land management can be divided into fenced (Map 9) and non-fenced areas, and herders graze their livestock in these two areas according to the winter and summer seasons. This management system continues with small-scale seasonal herding movements, although their lifestyles have become based more on settlement in recent years. Previously, summer grazing lands were at higher altitudes, but now they are close to the village.

Yak, sheep and goats were the livestock used on the pastureland in Da prior to 2005. Yaks are now the only livestock after all the sheep and goats were sold off in 2005. This move towards a monoculture has benefits but also risks. For example, the management of land remained quite similar before and after 2005, even thought the livestock composition

\textsuperscript{98} All land owned by the state or collective (\textit{tu di gong you zhì}) (Ho, 2000; Yeh, 2004)

\textsuperscript{99} 1 \textit{mu} = 0.06ha
had changed. Over time, the Drokpa have evolved a livestock management system to enable their animals to survive. This maximises the number of animals they can maintain, though it severely limits the productivity of their livestock. If the effective number of animals per ha remains the same (based on animal liveweight) then there may not be benefits from changing the livestock type.

When the Da had yaks, sheep and goats, from November to January, they herded yak on the southern (warmer) side of the mountains, and on their way they passed through a total of 18 different areas. Herders took the livestock out to graze early in the morning, and herded groups in a similar area while keeping a distance between each herd. They stopped when they found a good pasture, located near a river. They would herd their yaks to drink water around 5 or 6 pm in the river, when it was time is to go home. From February to April, they divided the yak herd into two groups. One group was made up of

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100 It was unclear what years this applied to.
pregnant female yaks (dri) and young calves which were kept within enclosed pasturelands from 6am to 8pm, since there was little grass in the surrounding areas. The other herd consists of the remainder of the yaks. They were kept on the winter pasturelands close to the village for three months. During these three months, they herded the yaks and sheep to pastures where the pasture belonged to another group of herders. Herders from Da had to pay the group 0.05RMB per yak per day for grazing rights. The herds of yaks were male yaks and non-lactating female yaks. From May to October they let the castrated yaks graze on the south side of the mountains. The herders checked on them occasionally, but did not herd the yaks back home until July. In order to obtain more milk from the yaks, they herded the dri and calves separately. All the calves grazed in a fenced pastureland. The Drokpa spent more time and energy on the dri during this period. Women had to wake up at 1 am to milk them, and then the herders herded the female yaks to a nearby-unfenced pasture. Around 3 am the herders returned to get some sleep. They had to wake again at 6 am to herd the yaks back so they could be milked again. After milking, they let the yaks graze nearby. Between 11 am and noon, the herd was milked yet again. The herders then took the herd to a place some distance away at 1 pm, and returned to the settlement at 8 pm when the women milked the herd one final time. The Drokpa therefore milked their yaks 4 times a day during this period. This high frequency of milking may result in a small increase in total milk production, but does reduce the amount of time animals are grazing, which in turn would reduce potential milk production.

January to February was the period when sheep and goats nursed their newborns. Drokpa kept and herded the sheep and goats in one group, and their lambs/kids in another. Animals are under severe stress through winter due to very little forage being available. If lambs/kids suckled all day this would increase the stress on their mothers. They let the lambs/kids drink milk at 5 am, then herded all the sheep/goats together to pastureland from 7–10 am. Drokpa then fed the lambs/kids and some weak sheep/goats with fodder between 10–11 am. After this, the lambs/kids were kept in a shed when the rest of the herd were taken to mountain areas until 5 pm. Afterwards the lambs/kids grazed with the herd and they were all brought back around 8 pm. The lamb/kids and weak sheep/goats
were fed with fodder again, and then the lamb/kids were placed in a shed\(^{101}\). Fodder sources are typically of low quality such that livestock still lost weight through the winter.

From end of *February to April*, the Drokpa herded the male sheep/goats with the yaks to a winter pasture. They herded the females and their lambs/kids to nearby pastures. Herders had to bring fodder to feed the lambs/kids twice a day, at noon and 5 pm. They returned home around 7 pm, and kept the females and lambs/kids separate.

From *April to the middle of May*, Drokpa milked sheep and goats three times a day, from 4 am to 7 pm. They herded females on the mountainside until noon after milking them at 4 am. They milked them again at noon, and then let them graze with the lambs/kids until 7 pm. They kept the females and lambs/kids separate after milking them at 7 pm, so that they could obtain more milk at 4 am the next day.

From the *middle of May to the middle of June*, the milking period became shorter. They milked them at 6 am, and then the herd grazed in the mountains until 6 pm. They kept the females and lamb/kids separate after milking at 6 pm.

From the *middle of June* till lambing in *January the following year*, the ewes weren’t able to produce any more milk. The Drokpa herded all the sheep together from 8 am to 8 pm on the southern part of the mountainside. The nanny could produce milk until September.

The management of animals illustrates how their survival is cared for, rather than being managed to optimise productivity, and consequently household incomes. The Drokpa manage as users/keepers, rather than producers (Neidhardt et al., 1996). The access of lambs, kids and calves to their mothers is very restricted from birth, in part to reduce stress on their mothers and also to maximise the amount of surplus milk the Drokpa can obtain for their use and for sale. This also means that the growth of the young animals is restricted to well below their potential. The resultant size at maturity is then less than that of well fed animals. Smaller females then have less capacity to produce milk and young in the next generation. Animal liveweights at maturity are declining over time.

\(^{101}\) Traditional sheds are basic and only ameliorate some of the effects of cold temperatures and winds. A recent trend is to build ‘warm’ sheds that have a plastic or glass roof on the southern slope and are better sealed to trap warm air. These sheds reduce the animal’s weight loss through winter and, in effect, substitute for fodder (Personal Communication, Prof. David Kemp, February, 2011).
When the Da community switched to using only yaks from 2005, herders adjusted how they used the fenced areas, but they retained a similar pattern of grazing those non-fenced areas to what was customary prior to 2005. A total of four areas are enclosed by fences in Da (Map 9). Veal and yearlings graze in area A, area B is for female yaks which had calves in the previous year, and produce milk this year. Area C is used for harvesting fodder, but yearlings and steers might graze here for one month after fodder has been harvested. Area C is used to keep female yaks which cannot produce milk and male yaks from December to March next year.

The second phase of access to land came when the land privatisation policy began officially in 2002 in Tibet. Privatising land is said to solve the common problem of ‘The Tragedy of Common’ (Garrett, 1968) which often results in individual households increasing the number of their animals on common pastureland. It results in increasing pressure on land, and subsequently land degradation (Longworth, 1990; Wang, 1995). The solution implemented by Governments and some communities over the centuries, has been to adopt some form of restricted access and to place individual areas under individual control on the assumption that land management will then improve (Behnke, 1994; Banks, 2003). However for land management to ‘improve’, the resulting parcels of land need to be adequate for sustainable production by the individual land manager. The Privatising Land Policy in the PRC places pastureland into household units with an access right, but not any ownership rights or the ability to use the land as an asset. This policy derives from the principle that all land is owned by the ‘people’. The policy allows individual household to have control over land rental and over land management, but there is no right to market the land. Access rights are valid for up to 50 years in Da and inheritable (Banks et al., 2003). Although market forces do operate for other goods including livestock, the land market only allows renting the land, typically to a neighbours and this is done on an annual basis. It is believed that the privately-held land policy will enable herders to manage the land better over the medium term, and better adjust the stocking rate for the forage available (land capacity). When land is rented, there is, however, then no incentive to manage the land sustainably, unless the herder renting the land has some assurance of longer-term access and a rent that encourages better management.
The policy of Land Privatisation has been implemented slowly in Da, and it was still under discussion in 2008 among the heads of each household. No. 17 and No. 16 were the first two households who proposed individual household allocation of Da pastureland in 2005. Other households followed up the proposal in 2007, and agreed on the individual household privatisation of common land. Herders believed that household land-owning would manage the land more effectively than communal land-owning. However, a common consensus could not be achieved, and it led to the headman of each householdholding several meetings. As a result of each meeting, in general, around ten households proposed to divide the entire common land into two areas. One area was for veal and yearlings, and another area was for rest of the yaks. Then the herders subdivided these two areas into household units. Other households preferred dividing the common land into household units without dividing the two areas. The discussion was still going on in 2008 during my second field trip. Due to the disagreement between households, someone from Da reported ‘under the table’ to the superintendent (leader of Xiang) that the chief of Da did not want to privatise the common land, and instead called for endless discussions. The superintendent came to visit Da, and stated that: “It is up to you whether you want to ‘privatise’ the common land to individual households, or want to keep the land as common. However, all members must achieve a common consensus if people of Da prefer privatising the land”. This shows how while the policy is centrally determined, its implementation at a local level is decided by local groups. I have been told in a telephone discussion with an informant that the land was finally privatised in 2009. To manage the land sustainably under common grazing would have required a consensus among the herders to limit the number of grazing animals. Such a consensus was obviously not possible. It is not likely though that this issue will be resolved in Da in the foreseeable future. The continual expansion of the town of Nagchu, the conflicts with neighbouring herders, and the flux in household members who move into or out of the village, all mean that boundaries established today may not be appropriate for the future. Further policy development will be needed to find mechanisms to resolve these issues.
The land privatisation reaffirmed the household as the main production unit. The long-term ecological and sociocultural impact of privatising pastureland in pastoral society is not well understood (Salzman, 1996) although subject to much discussion in the literature (Williams, 2002; Wu and Richard, 1999) and there is evidence of much confusion in these discussions between the policy of privatisation per se and of the additional problems of more people and livestock trying to survive on decreasing resources. There were several reasons why Da people wanted to privatise their common land.

Land scarcity is the direct cause behind the changing pattern of land use in Da. Land scarcity results from two factors: one is the pressure of population growth, and the second is competition for land caused by an inflow of population from other areas that have settled in the town.

The pressure of population growth has affected pastoralists everywhere (Salzman, Galaty et al., 1981; Galaty et al., 1990). In the case of Da, there are some indications to support this argument.

The human population has been growing over recent decades in Da and its neighbouring villages (Figures. 22, 23). This means more people demand more output from pastureland in order to satisfy their needs. Henin’s (1969) study on a pastoral population in Sudan demonstrated that nomadic pastoral society had a lower fertility than that of settled farmers. However, the population in Dyson–Hudson’s study rose when the nomadic pastoralists settled in a village (1980:31). This may partially explain partially why the population in Da has risen over recent decades. Also, improved health services in Tibet can be seen as a major driver of population growth. The consequences of land scarcity in Da can be illustrated by a case story of how inflow population from other areas compete for pastureland with the Drokpa from Da. In 2008, an informant from No.17 suffered badly from a head injury and was sent from Nagchu to a hospital in Lhasa. His head was hit by stones during a violent conflict between people from Da and herders who migrated from other villages to an area close to Da pasture territory. The event occurred on 9\textsuperscript{th} September 2008. Two herders from Da were on duty looking after their fenced pasture areas A and C (Map 9). These pasture areas are located on the border between Nagchu town and Da.
They found 17 goats which did not belong to Da grazing on the land. They moved those goats to the village, and waited for the owner of the goats to pick them up and pay the grazing fee to the people’s committee of Da. However, when the owner came, he refused to pay the grazing fee, which was about RMB 14 (US$2.00). Instead, he came with other supporters to fight with the people of Da. As a result the informant was injured during the fight.

The Drokpa of Da have reduced animal numbers in the last three decades by the equivalent of 50 sheep from the total number of households a 13% reduction in sheep equivalence livestock numbers. This is probably a response to declining resources including grassland degradation, but may not be enough to enable the recovery of the grassland resources. Over the 18 years from 1982 to 2000, after allowing for differences in body size, there is roughly the same numbers of sheep equivalents over this period (Figure 24).

Two useful indicators show how livestock are responding to the condition of the pasture land. Yak body size is reported to be smaller now than it was 50 years ago, and yak milk production per animal has decreased over the last 50 years. However the perceptions recorded in 2007 of changes in body size and milk production vary among the Drokpa. Data collected from the field survey shows that 53% of the informants from the 19 households considered that yak body size is smaller now than in the past. 37% think there is no difference in yak body size, and only 10% think the yak body size is bigger now than 50 years ago. 53% of the total number of informants think that the production of milk is the same as 50 years ago. However, they added that this might be due to their use of more fodder than in the past in order to obtain more milk for sale, which probably reflects a declining amount of animal growth and milk being produced from grasslands. 31% of people think that milk production has been reduced, and, only 16% think that yaks produce more milk now than in the past. People, who think that yaks produce more milk now than in the past are mostly young Drokpa, aged between 20 and 35 years. Their interpretation may indicate their experience being limited to the last 20 years. 50 years ago there were fewer households in the village than today. Some older members may base their comments on the places where they used to live which could have been harsher environments, and the cause
of them moving to Da. Over the last 50 years, the management of animals has probably changed, which may mean that the herders who are better livestock managers have been able to sustain their livestock better.

Population growth, grassland degradation and too many animals are affecting the Drokpa, but in this thesis they are simply considered as influencing factors. To analyse requires different methods as shown in Kemp & Michalk (2011). That work showed there are viable mechanisms to reduce animal numbers and maintain household incomes within the constraints of China today.

Da has four fenced pasture areas. Areas A and B are located on the border between Da territory and Nagchu town (Map 9), where conflicts over pastureland have become more common over the years. Areas A and B have been occupied gradually by herders who have migrated from other counties to the suburbs of Nagchu town, further reducing the available land for the herders of Da. These migrant herders have often come from areas where medicinal herbs grow. These herbs are increasingly sought after in the market, and provide herders with good cash income. When these herders have enough cash in hand, they become inflow migrants. They settle in parts of Nagchu town. Being close to Nagchu, Da has been over-harvested for the few herbs that may have been there, and the amount currently available is minimal.

The scarcity of land in Da is mentioned in one claim letter with regard to the conflict by Da people’s committee to its area office.

“All households in Da have sold their horses, sheep and goats, and now keep only yaks. As previously mentioned, the major reason was due to the lack of land and hence pasture scarcity over recent years. The pastureland near Nagchu is now either occupied or grazed by herders who reside in Nagchu town, causing further land scarcity for Da.” (22nd September 2008).

It is not clear if the local authorities have any intention of regulating the use of Da land by migrant herders. Underlying this conflict are the issues that land is owned by the people i.e. the state, and it is not considered as part of an individual’s assets, and traditionally

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102 The fencing is a significant change that is occurring on the Tibetan Plateau. It is being done to better manage grasslands, but other studies show it does ‘signal’ that the nomadic life of herders is no longer, for instance Tibetan nomads in Amdo (Horlemann, 2002; Yeh, 2003; Pirie, 2005), and in Central Tibetan nomads (Bauer, 2008).
herders often took their livestock to graze wherever they considered they could. Traditional land management was also based on access rights (by a community) rather than ownership where land could be sold, but in the past there were fewer people and resources competing for that land. When usage rights are not adequately identified e.g. with secure fencing, and enforced by recognition and policing, then the perception is that common land is available and this results in exploitation.

Figure 22 Growth of Human Population and Household in Da

Figure 23 Growth of Human Population and Household in Surrounding Villages of Da
Livestock variations from 1982 to 2000 at Da and its three neighbouring villages

### 7.3.2 Livestock Economy

Livestock are the main household asset along with any buildings, as land cannot be bought or sold. Herders attach economic, social and cultural value to being able to access land for grazing and other activities, but because they cannot buy or sell land. It is often used communally at a village level (as each household’s land has not been individually fenced). Consequently, they don’t put an economic value on land, whereas they do put such a economic value on yaks, sheep, goats and their products. Livestock plays an important economic role in pastoral societies through their culture expression. Evans-Pritchard (1940) in his book *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, gives an account of the Nuer people in Africa, where cattle were almost as important as people. Everyone knew the ancestries and histories of their cattle and their histories, and they were exchanged between households at weddings and funerals so you could trace social relationships through the cattle. Evans-Pritchard’s comments on the economic value of livestock apply similar in Da, although not necessarily to the same degree as in the case of the Nuer. Yaks are an important part of the dowry at weddings (Chapter 8) but are not exchanged in as many ways as apply to the Nuer.
The economy of Da is based primarily on pastoralism (Nyida Tséwang, 1985; Gelek et al., 2002), and livestock have been by far the most dominant pastoral income source. Domestic livestock are the major dietary resource for the Drokpa. The Drokpa utilise four species of livestock: yaks, sheep, goats and horses, though in Da they now only use yaks. They provide a direct resource for survival for the household economy of the Drokpa. Figure 24 shows that yaks, sheep, goats and horses were the main livestock between 1982 and 2000 for herders at Da and its three neighbouring villages. The total sheep equivalent can be estimated based on a sheep weighing 40kg, a yak 160kg (4 times a sheep), a goat being 32kg (0.8 times a sheep) and a horse 240kg (6 times a sheep) and then the proportion of the total animals that were yaks. This shows the total sheep equivalent averaging around 14,160 sheep equivalents (relatively constant) but the proportion of yaks increasing from 55% to 65% i.e. a steady change towards yaks and a small reduction in the other animals. This indicates a slow change to yaks (arguably because of the value of dairy products, discussed later) that was then made complete in 2005. Although there are limited data, survey data could indicate that sheep and goats were an important income sources historically for the Da people, providing cashmere, sheep wool, sheep hide and sheep milk. However, the composition of livestock has changed in the case of Da. Herders were keeping sheep, goats and horses when I visited the fields during 2000 and 2003, but they were only keeping yaks when doing the field survey in 2007, and this continues to the present day.

Changes in livestock composition in Da has two obvious driving factors, land and labour, both of which have increased in scarcity. Land scarcity can be clearly illustrated from the following field story:

“Every household kept sheep, goats and horses before 2005. We graze sheep, goats and yaks on common land before we enclosed the good part of our land by wire fences in the 1980s. We set up our common rule as to how to graze sheep in the fenced pasture and in the unfenced pasture area. Under the common rule, every household could graze their herd for a few hours in the fenced area, and then graze then outside the enclosed area.”

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103 There is a more detailed discussion in the following sections on the amount of income from livestock products vs. other income for each household.
Da has had no sheep since 2005. Land and pasture scarcity had been becoming increasingly obvious at Da, and they decided jointly not to keep sheep when a headmen’s meeting was held in 2002. Individual households started selling their sheep from 1999 onwards, because sheep require more labour (e.g. for shearing) and more time than keeping yaks and because there was a shortage of pasture. No.17 and No.5 were the first two households that started selling their sheep in 1999. They sold 150 sheep for RMB 22,459 (US$330). After the headman’s meeting, these two households sold all their sheep in 2002. In 2004, No.1 and No.2 No.16 sold sheep; No.4 exchanged his 20 sheep for a tractor. No.6 and No.8 kept their sheep in another village which their wives were from. And, in 2005, No.9 and No.14 sold all their sheep to the same buyer. While No.15 and No.19 also sold their sheep. The other household had no sheep anyway.

However, while an economic analysis may show sheep could be more profitable than yaks with regard to wool, particularly if they used better wool producing sheep, and sheep meat was profitable (David Kemp, July 2007, personal communication), the village decided to keep only yaks. This decision was not only influenced by the scarcity of land and labour, but also because yaks do not crop the the ground as closely as sheep, and this might help grass recovery. In addition, herders were no longer able to manage a diversified herd, which requires complex labour sharing for pastoral tasks (Dahl and Hjor, 1976). These two factors were illustrated by the responses from the 19 households in Da to the question “Why did you sell your sheep, and only keep yaks? Did you feel it helps grass to recover by only keeping yaks?” Forty-four percent of the 19 household responded that lack of grass was the direct reason for selling sheep, 35% considered a shortage of labour was the reason, and 21% believed that it would help grass recover by only keeping yaks. These numbers show that the first two groups (79%) were responding more to short-term considerations and only the third group (21%) were thinking more medium-term, responses reflective of poor societies with limited resources.
The herders’ previous strategies for keeping a mix of animal species and trying to increase herd numbers was aimed at optimising household income in a variable grassland and financial environment (Dahl and Hjort, 1976; Neidhardt et al., 1996). The change in strategy to only keeping yaks does suggest that the economic position of many households has become more difficult and/or now has an increased risk. Every household has increased their yak numbers after selling their sheep and goats (Figure 26). However, if this means there is no decline in the total liveweight of animals, then grassland resources will continue to decline unless they do less grazing and buy more fodder. Yoghurt is the chief source of income and that justifies a focus on yaks, but milk production is far more sensitive to variations in feed supply, and sales have to compete with dairy products from the warmer and more productive valleys of the region. The switch to yaks can be justified at present, but this may not be the case in the future. The present field investigation indicates two aspects of how herders try to reduce the risk of losing household assets. One indication is that herders have increased the number of yaks after selling sheep because they can then have more of what they consider as their prime source of income. (Orskov & Viglizzo, 1994; Baker 2004), and the other is that herders have dispersed some of their assets into other types of household property (as discussed below).

7.3.3 Additional income sources

To improve household incomes, herders have changed not only to yaks, but have also sought to acquire additional assets that can be used to earn income e.g. trucks and tractors to cart items for other herders, for traders, or for construction and other materials.
in the town, motorcycles to travel to where work is, and to manage their livestock more efficiently. A motorcycle now replaces a horse. The households that have acquired these vehicles are shown in Table 10. The households with vehicles are typically those with a greater household income rather than higher income per person, for instance, Nos. 2, 3, 5, 14, 15 and 17. This allows herders to travel between Da and Nagchu daily in order to to sell yoghurt for cash. As machinery is relatively new to the herders it is likely they initially they had limited understanding of the maintenance requirements, but that is being resolved by the presence of mechanics in town. Trucks, tractors and motorcycles don’t simply replace livestock as a source of income.

7.3.4 Ornaments and cash saving

Jewellery is a common and traditional investment form for herders in Da. As in many other societies, jewellery represents a compact form of wealth that can be continually kept on ones person and readily used if needed, though it is used more as a demonstration of wealth, than as a cash reserve. The field survey showed that every household had jewellery as household property. Figure 25 illustrates how many ornaments in cash unit each household had. Field data showed there are two means whereby herders obtain ornaments. 35% of ornaments were inherited from close kin, and the other 65% were purchased for cash. When the present researcher asked the reason why herders keep ornaments, the answers were the same from every household; the ornaments were a symbol of wealth and social status (Chitsok Goné) for the holders, and the ornaments symbolised a part of Tibetan identity. So the cultural aspect of ornaments doesn’t suggest that this is a form of investment, at least not in a simple economic sense. But ornaments as a symbol of wealth have other functions - for example as a source of insurance, since one can sell jewellery in difficult times. This supports the view that jewellery would only be sold in times of more extreme financial hardship. However the amount of jewellery and ornaments being held could be declining in response to the services now available in the cash economy.

Cash is now commonly used among herders, and this has changed their earlier preference for ornaments. When asked “Do you prefer keeping cash or ornaments as some part of your property, and if so, why?”, 23 informants responded to this questions from
several households (five females and 18 males, aged from 20 to 70 year of age). 62% of the informants answered that they preferred keeping cash to ornaments, and the remaining 38% (one female and eight males) of herders preferred ornaments to cash. This indicated a 2:1 ratio (approximately) in favour of cash, but when this topic was discussed further, only 50% of herders think that it is now more stable and safe to have cash in a bank rather than to have ornaments, and only 41% of the informants believed that they can earn some interest by keeping their cash in a bank. This illustrates how herders’ idea about value has changed since the 1979 reforms. Since cash has become important in pastoral households, the standard of wealth is changing (Wilk, 1989; Maher 1981). Traditionally, the perceived wealth of a family was assessed in terms of livestock and ornaments/jewellery in that both carried symbolic and identity meanings. In this process of change, however, there is a move to a more market way of thinking. Wealth is now held in a form that is convertible in the market. Cash is instantly convertible and can be a source of income through interest on savings. It can also be used more easily to invest in new commercial activities, whether through purchased technology or goods for sale. Livestock can be converted into cash if needed, but once sold, people’s food resources need to come from elsewhere, and the price/value of livestock is not as stable as cash. Livestock sales often coincide with times of the year when herders need to reduce the number of animals that have to be fed and because many herders want to sell at this time, this reduces market prices. The change may affect cultural and social cohesion activities, since machinery and cash are not used to sustain traditional values, identity and meaning.

104 It is not clear whether or not herders really keep cash in banks and how much they keep in this way. However, it is clear that they are aware of keeping cash in a bank earns interest.
Figure 25 Ornaments calculated into cash unit of each household in Da, 2007

Figure 26 Changing of yak number before and after selling sheep in Da

Table 10 Vehicles owned by each household in Da 2007–2008

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Photo 8 Household assets

Land

Truck

Cash

Building a house, non-paid labourers

Yaks
7.4 Household consumption

Cash is now the dominant means for trade by households in Da and is widely used for household purchases for consumption, rather than barter – though some barter still exists. Cash is used to meet household and livestock needs. Purchases for the household include pastoral products and food items from other sources. Other costs include transportation, education, health, and social events or rituals. The cost for livestock covers fodder and veterinary services. The following sections will consider expenditure in each area and how that has changed.

7.4.1 Cost for human beings

7.4.1.1 Pastoral food items

Data from household No. 15 in late autumn / early winter is used to illustrate the items typically consumed during a normal day by people in Da.

All of the families drink butter tea and eat Tsampa for breakfast. The senior headman of No. 15 also had a cup of fresh milk from their own livestock yesterday or maybe this morning. Steamed bread and fried bread are also available for them. The youngest daughter brought the bread from Nagchu town, purchased when she went to sell yak dung in town. The senior headman’s wife gave cookies, biscuits and candy to their grandchild before the child went to school. Family members drank butter tea and black tea constantly during the day, consumed bread as a snack before lunch at 2pm. Lunch was fried Chinese cabbage with yak meat, fried green pepper with yak meat, and rice. When two guests came to visit the senior headman during lunch time, the senior headman’s wife shared lunch and offered butter tea. Yogurt is often consumed before the evening meal at 9pm. Dinner was noodles in soup with yak meat and Chinese cabbage. All family members and their hired labour eat together and drink black tea. They went to bed around 10:30pm (Field note 6th November, 2007).

Food can be divided into those items the households provide themselves, and those they purchased from the village/town. Pastoral food items consumed by households are the main animal products butter, yak meat, cheese, mutton and milk. Most of these are produced by the household (although no longer mutton), but in addition they purchase additional quantities of butter and some other items (Table 11). Herders no longer consume their own home-made butter, preferring to process milk into yogurt for cash income, part of which they use to purchase cheaper butter at markets. Cash expenditure on yak meat is the second major item. This allows herders to access meat during periods of meat shortage from their own stock. This is normally during the spring and summer seasons,
when herders keep their yaks on pasture until they gain sufficient body weight. Herders slaughter yaks for meat in December and January, which is then stored as temperatures remain below freezing until summer. From December until June every year, animals lose weight during the harsh winter and hence retaining animals for household consumption during that period not only involves the cost of fodder to keep them alive, but also reduces the amount of meat obtained. Then in summer, while animals regain weight, herders purchase meat at the markets. Cash spent on cheese is relatively little compared with butter and yak meat. This is because households process some milk for cheese for their own consumption. Fresh milk is drunk by the household when available, but none is purchased. Cash spent on mutton is not a large proportion of the total expenditure of Da. A few households in the village kept sheep for consumption in other villages. Those households are linked with the other villages by kin relationships (Chapter 8).

By analysing the expenditure on pastoral food items, it becomes obvious that herders spend more cash on various food items now than in their past, especially meat and butter. When the researcher asked the informants “Do you purchase meat? If yes, do you purchase more meat using cash than in the past? Why is that?”, the data showed that 83% of the total households in Da think that they purchase more meat by cash for consumption now than in the past, while only 17% of the households think they purchase less meat now than in the past. 78% of the households explained that this was because of the changes in the livestock kept. They needed to purchase more meat when yaks became the single dominant stock after all the sheep were sold. With butter and cheese, when informants were asked “Do you purchase more butter and cheese now, less or the same as before?”, 89% of the households said that they purchase more butter and cheese by cash now than the past, while only 11% of households say that they buy less. Why do most households spend cash on butter and cheese? The answer is that 75% of the households say that they need to buy butter and cheese from the markets as they process most of their milk into yogurt for which they receive a higher cash income than if they made it into cheese or cheese.

105 All sheep were sold or consumed after a few years.
butter. 25% of the households had an additional reason, which was that there were now more family members.

The economy is in a process of change from a subsistence model where the herders had a largely self-sufficient economy, to a more cash and market-oriented economy. The Drokpa have become more entrepreneurial, finding ways to vary production to match market demands and finding other sources of revenue through providing services such as cartage on their trucks. In the past, trading activities were an adjunct, whereas now they have become central. In part this change is in the context of society as a whole becoming market-oriented, and in part because the Drokpa have found new methods of adapting to environmental issues such as land shortages and pasture degradation. Their society has become more flexible. This in itself is due to many reasons, but they include education, improved communications and transport, urbanisation, and an influx of new people to the area.

7.4.1.2 Non-pastoral food items

The other costs for food includes payment for non-pastoral food items such as green vegetables, highland barely powder, rice, flour, cooking oil, brick tea and white sugar. Table 12 shows that herders spend more cash on purchasing green vegetables, which are now more readily available, compared with all the other non-pastoral food items. This is an interesting and important change for Da, as it means that their diet is now probably better, particularly throughout the winter, than in the past. Purchasing green vegetable shows how the pattern of food consumption has changed.

Photo 9 Vegetable market in Nagchu town
for Da people who have settled close to the town. The second largest food item purchased is barely powder\textsuperscript{106}, used for making barely flour (Tsampa) and other staples. They also spend cash on purchasing rice, wheat flour and cooking oil, and now spend less on other items such as brick tea and white sugar. Herders did not need to spend much on purchasing salt\textsuperscript{107} (Table 12).

Combining the data for the cost of all food items, it shows that pastoral food items are still the most popular among Da people. For instance, they spend more cash on purchasing butter and yak meat. However, non-pastoral food items are also popular, for example green vegetables, rice and flour. This shows the herders’ purchasing power now allows a diet change to one of higher protein dairy products, a more varied and balanced diet, and one that is potentially healthier than what they traditionally consumed (Chapter 5).

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<th>Yak meat</th>
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<th>Butter</th>
<th>Cheese</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Average per person</th>
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Table 11 Expenditure for pastoral food items by each household, Da, 2007\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{106} Some major items here such as brick tea, barley flour would always have had to be traded for, even in the pre-cash economic period.

\textsuperscript{107} No.2 still harvests some of their own salt and trades with other households in Da.

\textsuperscript{108} This is both the actual cash purchases made, and an estimate of consumption of their own animals.
Note: Yak meat purchased: 22RMB/kg; Mutton: 18RMB/kg; Butter: 24RMB/kg; Cheese: 30RMB/kg. M refers to monogamous marriage style, and P refers to polyandry and Polygamous marriage.

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<th>Vegetable</th>
<th>Barley Flour</th>
<th>Wheat Flour</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Cooking Oil</th>
<th>Brick tea</th>
<th>Salt</th>
<th>White Sugar</th>
<th>Sweet for New Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Average for per person</th>
<th>Total</th>
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Table 12 Input for food items from non-pastoral sources for each household.

Note: M refers to monogamous marriage style, and P refers to polyandry and polygamous marriage.

**7.4.1.3 Education, Health and Others Items**

Within a more open, much larger market economy with more services available, households now spend more money on other items than was the case in the past. These include education and training, healthcare services, mobility to do other things, and
communication. The greatest household expenditure is on education (Table 13). This data should be understood in its context. All school-aged children from Da now have nine years of compulsory education. Tuition and accommodation are free, and the school provides free food for those children who are boarding. The data shows that all households give pocket money to their children to buy treats during the day, sadly often ‘junk’ food; this can amount to 3–7 RMB per day. The higher education costs are for those households who have children educated in junior high schools, vocational training schools or in universities. In such cases, the households spend cash on tuition fees and living expenses for their children. The second highest cost is for health care. These are medical costs not covered by their medical insurance\(^ {109} \). The third cost is related to the collecting of medicinal herbs, especially caterpillar fungus, from which they derive additional income. This cost does not apply for every household in Da, since only those fortunate households who can travel to areas where the caterpillar fungus is, and where they have close kin and are able to harvest this valuable commodity. The fourth cost is for transportation. This is mainly for petrol for regular trips to town, for motorcycles (owned by most households), tractors and trucks.

Additional expenditure is on household items. Unlike other expenditures mentioned previously which are, to some extent, adding to traditional uses of family resources (education, health, transport, agricultural activities) these are electrical items which they could not have previously used, that have became popular among herders since the late 1980s (Table 14). 17% of this expenditure by the 19 households was for radios and televisions, 14% for cell phones, 13% for landline telephones, blenders for making butter tea, and CD players, 9% for refrigerators, used in most cases to keep meat and butter, and 4% was for washing machines, although interestingly they are used to stir milk and process the milk into butter.

\(^ {109} \) The central government manages Medical Insurance for Rural People. This policy covers 70% to 80% of medical costs for rural patients. When rural citizens join the insurance scheme, it requires that each beneficiary pays RMB 10 per year, and the government supplements this with RMB 99 for the beneficiary annually. 
(\url{http://tibet.cctv.com/20090427/106009.shtml}).
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<th>Household</th>
<th>Collecting herbs</th>
<th>Medicines</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
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Table 13 Other expenditure of individual Households in Da, 2007

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Table 14 Electrical items purchased by households in Da, 2007
7.4.1.4 Costs associated with social functions

The Drokpa in Da spend significant amounts of cash for rituals and social events such as the Tibetan New Year and The Horse Race. The Tibetan New Year occurs in winter, around February of each year, and is a traditional event celebrating the coming New Year. It provides an opportunity for households to celebrate and to gather together. These festivities strengthen solidarity between households and between kin segments. The Horse Race is in late summer, around August every year, a time when all the horses are in good condition and the weather is pleasant. It has a similar social function to the New Year festivities, enabling people to gather and build solidarity and group identity. In both events, food sharing is a key element. Food sharing is an important ritual during Tibetan New Year, and it lasts about two weeks. During these days, every household will be invited by other households from its kin segment, and then will in turn, be invited by other households in the village. Table 15 summarises household expenditure for these two festivals, and how all households spend more cash on the Tibetan New Year. The Drokpa spend a significant proportion of their available cash on sustaining cultural cohesion and identity. The importance of social solidarity to the people of Da can be clearly demonstrated in Figure 27, which shows that cash consumption for Tibetan New Year is the second highest compared with all other categories. These social events involve 12% of total household income, and 18% of total household expenditure.

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Cash expenditure for livestock includes fodder and the cost of veterinary services. All households purchase various supplementary fodder items such as stale vegetables, highland barely, wild grass/hay, and seeds for planting fodder crops (Table 16). The expenditure on dried or old vegetables was the highest. Households collect the old vegetables after a market when they travel to the town, buying at low prices. The use of highland barely powder for supplementary fodder is the second highest category of expenditure, ahead of wild bush grass/hay, which has to be purchased for cash. Barely for fodder is of lower quality and price than barely for human consumption. This type of fodder is only affordable for households who have sufficient cash. Cost for seeds is low. Every household plants fodder in their yard and this is used to feed stock when there is a shortage of grass, although the amount grown is relatively small. This shortage becomes significant during
winter and autumn. The cost of salt is low. It is the raw salt that is transported from salt lakes by household No. 2\textsuperscript{110}. Every household purchases the salt at less than 7 RMB per kg. The last item is lower quality rice that humans would not eat. It is still expensive for poor households, and only a few households are able to purchase the rice for livestock fodder. The attitudes of households to purchasing fodder reflects a simple response to cost. It also indicates their response to how expenditure on fodder could result in greater levels of animal production and income.

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Table 16 Individual household expenses (RMB) for livestock fodder, Da 2007.

\textsuperscript{110} This one household has maintained the tradition of salt trading.
Photo 10 Consumption items for the herders in Nagchu
Photo 11 Modern items for herders of Da.
7.5 Household Income

Household cash income is derived from two main sources: one is pastoral production, and the other is non-pastoral products and activities/services as outlined earlier. Pastoral production includes those dairy items which are processed directly by herders, and which they sell. Cash has now replaced barter as a means of transacting business. The transition from a bartering to a cash economy has come about historically in most societies, because it is more efficient than barter, but some barter still exists where a herder/farmer thinks they can do a better deal in this way. For instance, G from No.15 bartered several packs of yak dung and, several kilos of wool for a few packs of fodder, and highland barely with farmers. Those farmers travelled from Shyikatsé and brought highland barely and fodder to Nagchu town, to barter with local herders. Non-pastoral products refer to non-livestock sources, even though they may derive from the land e.g. medicinal herbs. Such non-livestock resources in this context are items which have a market demand that herders can access and meet. The provision of specialised skills or labour brings additional cash revenue.

7.5.1 Income from livestock

Yak products generate a major part of the household’s cash income. These include yogurt, milk, butter, cheese, meat, dung, hides and wool (hair). Among these, milk products are the major source of income, as applies in pastoral societies in Afghanistan and Somalia. Milk products have grown in importance for the rural economy as transportation systems have improved (Nori et al., 2006; Halbach and Ahmad, 2005; Davies and Hatfield, 2007, p.97). Figure 28 show that yogurt made from yak milk provides the largest cash income. Herders in Da used to process milk into butter for home consumption. The potential for significant, high cash income from yogurt has however, led the herders to process almost all the available milk into yogurt. This indicates how herders aim to

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111 It is 3,500 kms from Lhasa to Zhigatse.
112 It was observed during field research year, 2008.
maximise income per kg of milk produced. For instance, 0.9 kg yoghurt, 0.08kg butter or 0.06kg cheese can be made from a kg of milk. Yogurt is the more profitable product (Figure 28) though that does not mean that they use all their milk for yogurt. They do leave some milk to make cheese and butter for home consumption. This is particularly evident in wealthy households such as No’s, 15 and 17.

![Figure 28 Per kg of milk produced dairy products, and how much products come from one kg of milk](image)

Raw yak milk is the second most important source of income from yaks. Other products from yaks such as meat, dung, hide and wool are secondary yet important by-products in Da. This is similar to the situation in other areas where sheep skins provide by-product income for herders in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (Halbach and Ahmad, 2005). In the case of Da, yak meat is the third most significant cash generator. Field data showed that herders in Da mainly use meat for their own consumption, and they may even purchase yak meat from the market. Herders do however sell yak meat when they need cash for current uses. Cheese provides a small amount of cash income compared with the other livestock products, reflecting the lower income per kg of milk. Herders seek no cash income from butter as returns are low; they only make some for their own use, and do consider it viable to purchase butter. Herders had sold all their sheep by 2005, whereas in the past they derived significant income from wool and sheep meat (Chapter 5). Yak dung is used as fertiliser and for domestic fuel, and can be sold for cash income. Yak dung can be sold in three different types. First is yak dung dried naturally in the mountain areas. The amount available for sale depends upon the season. Prices vary with season; from RMB
8 per pack during the summer on non-rainy days or in winter on non-snowy days, to RMB 10 during winter on snowy days, to RMB 12 during summer rainy days. The price drops to only RMB 5–6 when sold through middlemen/traders, who run a wholesale business. The second type of yak dung is that collected when it was fresh, and shaped and dried by hand. This type of yak dung does not burn as well as the first type, because it is processed wet, and stuck together with sand and pebbles. This can be sold for between RMB 6–7 at market, or RMB 5–6 if sold to traders. The third type is dung left and dried in the livestock sheds. This can be sold for from RMB 8 to RMB 12 during snowy and rainy days. It is also priced at RMB 5–6 to the middlemen. These prices suggest that quality is not an issue for traders, but rather prices are driven by climatic events.

Yogurt made from yak milk is the dominant cash generator. Before discussing the actual process of yak raising, yogurt making and marketing in further detail, I shall discuss the importance of the yak. Yaks are viewed as the key livestock for the Drokpa who live at high altitudes in Tibet. Yaks initially ran wild across the region and subsequently were domesticated by early settlers. The use of Yaks has a long tradition based on their ability to survive in the harsh environment of the Tibetan Plateau and the Himalaya, and their ability to enable herders to survive there, providing basic needs. The literature mentions that Yaks were an important totem for the four (or six) ancient clans in Tibetan early history (Dérong, Tséring Döndrup, 2001:397). These clans existed in southern Tibet dating back as early as 6,000 years ago BP (Sönam Gyeltson, 1985:13). The yak pastoral economy expanded to other parts of the Tibetan plateau when these clans migrated and expanded their territory (Dérong, Tséring Döndrup, 2001).

Yaks provide the Drokpa with many aspects of sustenance. Milk and meat are food sources for herders; wool (hair) is used to make the traditional warm tent which protects herders from cold weather and strong sunlight. In previous centuries Yak hides had a particular use with rerad to making armour during the Thu bhō Empire period (around 644 AD). Yak hide and wool were also used to make bags and ropes until recent times. The Yak, in Tibetan entitled nor, has the same meaning as treasure or wealth. The Drokpa have developed much local knowledge about Yaks and their management. Herders, for instance,
have different names for the yak, and the naming system is based on differences in gender, hair colour and the age of the yak. They count the growth marks on the yak horns to tell its age. A few yaks are named after their owners if the owner decides to free their captive animals (Beimatsho, 2003). The close association between herders and yaks mean they are more than simply a means of providing food, fuel and shelter, though that is obviously important. Yaks have special significance as is evident in the animals specially identified within herds that are left to live out their life without any plans to use them for food or to sell them - at most they are milked. The close association and reverence for Yaks arguably influenced the decision to sell all the sheep by 2005.

Yak yogurt production is closely linked to milking practices. Herders milk three times a day in summer (May – October), 12 midnight, 2pm and 7pm and twice a day during the winter season (November – April), 8am and 8pm. Milk is largely turned into yogurt for sale when the milk is fresh. The procedure for making yogurt is still traditional: herders warm up fresh milk to boiling temperature, but not higher (since this sterilises the milk). Then they let the milk cool down until it reaches a suitable temperature (measured by hand), add a small amount of sour cheese juice (to provide the starter culture - which has a big effect on the quality of the yoghurt) then wrap it up with cloths to keep it warm, allowing it to ferment for 8 hours. Yoghurt has always been traded in some form, but with the growth of towns and improved transport systems, it is now more widely distributed for increased sales. Yogurt exchange can be traced back to the start of the post-communalisation period in the early 1980s and 1990s. At that time, herders exchanged yogurt with town people for rice flour and barely on a volume basis. One bowl of yogurt could be exchanged for one bowl of rice. More active marketing of yoghurt started in 1995, and the market price has steadily increased since then; 0.5 kg (the standard size) of yogurt could be sold in 1995 for 1.5 RMB, but by 2002 that was worth 5 RMB, reaching 12 RMB by 2009. The use of cash and the development of markets has increased during these years. This probably indicates that the expansion of Nagchu town has created more consumers who have sufficient cash and a refrigerator to store dairy products. Demand has outstripped supply, leading to an increase in price. However, this poses an opportunity cost between the milk for sale and the milk
needed to feed calves. As Dahl and Hjor (1976) highlight, herders are generally faced with a trade-off between maintaining stock levels and product needed for home consumption, and the need to produce cash product (Dyson-Hudson, 1980:32). This is a significant management skill the herders have had to develop.

Dairy income has an important influence on household income with, in general, a rise in total income as more resources are devoted to increasing dairy income (Figure 29). Within Da, the data is skewed by household No. 2, which had approximately equal values of milk and yoghurt. They did not achieve the highest income per yak, but they did have the highest household income. Their truck and tractor were used to take these products to town for sale and then, when in town, they generated additional income from their vehicles and did other things to obtain income. Household No. 17 also had a truck, but their household income per person was only one-third that of No. 2, suggesting that they were not as efficiently organised as No. 2 in terms of earning income. Other households were limited to motorcycles for transport. Several of the households effectively earned all of their income from dairy products.

![Figure 29 Household total income in relation to that from dairy products.](image)

Note: the trend line show the average increase in the amount of dairy income.

Household size varied considerably, and hence total household income is not the best way to see if there are any real differences between households in their ability to earn income. The income generated per person in the household and per yak (Table 17) shows the considerable variation that was found. Income per person varied from RMB 1,368–
5,178 (3.8 times) and per animal from RMB 89–1,080 (12.1 times). These large variations show that all households are not equal. This was not simply a reflection of the number of people in each household as, in general, there was no relationship between those factors (Figure 30). Household No. 2 was an exception to the others as they earned considerable more per person than the others.

Figure 30 Household total income from non-dairy yak products
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Yak Meat (250RMB/Yak; Male Yak:300; Female)</th>
<th>Mutton (50RMB/sheep)</th>
<th>Milk (12RMB/lit)</th>
<th>Cheese (34RMB/kg)</th>
<th>Yogurt (12RMB/kg)</th>
<th>Yak Wool (28RMB/kg)</th>
<th>Dung (12RMB/pack)</th>
<th>Hide (500RMB/male yak; 200RMB/female)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Average per person</th>
<th>Livestock population</th>
<th>Average per animal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>2855</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2595</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 P</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>5696</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5178</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 P</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>8640</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1184</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2848</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3164</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4320</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6857</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 P</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>4590</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9180</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 P</td>
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<td>9000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1870</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3117</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 P</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7200</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1440</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2282</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2852</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 M</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4320</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>860</td>
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<td>1250</td>
<td>6571</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9387</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
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<td>10 P</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4329</td>
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<td>840</td>
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<td>500</td>
<td>5583</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7977</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 M</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3780</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7560</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1489</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7445</td>
<td>56</td>
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<td>14 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>4335</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1577</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1576</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>15 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>2890</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5780</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 P</td>
<td>2250</td>
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<td>600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>3654</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4061</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 M</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>3470</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2041</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 M</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>2490</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4980</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>19 M</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>8210</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1368</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2700</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2380</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7933</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 Income from pastoral product of each household in Da, 2007.

Note: M refers to monogamous marriage style, and P refers to polyandry and polygamous marriage.
The data (Table 17) suggests that there is significant variation between households in the efficiency in terms of earning income from yaks. The data were then further analysed to estimate the number of ‘labourers’ in each household (those who were >10 years of age and not classified as ‘old’) and then the income generated per labourer. The income produced from yaks per labourer shows a strong relationship with the income per yak (Figures 31, 32). The main outlier was for a household with low income per labourer, but a high income per yak. This was household No. 20 that only had 10 yaks. From the lowest to highest households, the income per yak doubled, and the yak income per labourer tripled.
This indicates significant differences in the way yaks are managed, even though they are grazed in common and there are many similarities in the ways they are managed in each household. Within the household economy of the Drokpa there is considerable room for people to develop individual skills to improve their income. This applies at a household level, indicating much useful sharing of information, with less sharing likely between households. Reasons for limited sharing about managing yaks were not identified, but this does reinforce the view that individuality at the household level is important.

7.5.2 Supplemental income

Part-time jobs were a common and important source of income for herders in Da. Only one household (No. 2) had earned cash income from their tractor. There was additional evidence that other households earned cash from tractors opportunistically (households Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 15 and 17) but it was difficult to estimate how much. Tractors in Da are not used in the same way as in the developed world. They are typically small machines whose main use is for transport e.g. towing trailers with people or goods on them. Only two households earnt significant income from their trucks (Table 18). Three households Nos. 6, 15 and 19 harvest the caterpillar fungus, which is an important source of income for them (Chapter 7).

One important income activity is to supply a particular skill for payment. The headman of No.7 learnt the skill of sewing from his senior relatives, and became the only tailor in Da, providing Da herders with Tibetan costumes. Y from No.4 uses his painting skills when someone builds a house and needs Tibetan style painting decoration. He learnt his skill from the Nagchu Vocational Training School after he completed his junior high school education. N from No.15, and S from No.19, work as singers in the Tibetan style in local nightclubs. They developed their singing skills from their aunt who is a singer in Nagchu town. Y from No. 19 worked as a nurse in one of the local hospitals after she completed her medical technical school. Mining stone is an income source when construction companies need stone. Mining was organised by the local Government to support poor households who want to earn some cash income. Although the current data shows such skilled work brings supplementary income to herders, it depends on their ability to obtain
such work. Farm labourers often lack the experience to compete in the job market in larger job markets as in cities; hence it is a supplement to incomes and not a main stream source (Beimatso, 2009; Wang, 2007:131). Even though some have left the village to go and find work in construction and other industries, not many have done that for any extended period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Caterpillar fungus</th>
<th>Truck</th>
<th>Tractor</th>
<th>Other income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 P</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>60000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 P</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4* M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5* M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 P</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 P</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 P</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9* M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 P</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 M</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 P</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 M</td>
<td>26000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66000</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>143400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18 Supplementary income of each household in Da, 2007.

Note: * indicates household had a tractor or truck but no income earnt; M refers to monogamous marriage style, and P refers to polyandry and polygamous marriage.

7.5.3 Factors affecting household income

There was a general decline in income per person with the number of people in the household, with one notable exception in the case of the largest household. This could reflect the proportion of the household which would primarily be providing the labour to generate income i.e. the total number of people less the number of children < 10 years and old people. Income per person in each household was, however, closely dependent upon the average income generated by each labourer (male plus female) in that household.
(Figure 33). That supports the view that the way households are structured does not matter, but the skills of individual households is very important. Income per labourer also correlated with total household income (Figure 34). This was primarily influenced by household No. 2, which generated the highest household off-farm income from the use of their truck and tractor, and from other sources. There are only 2 adult males in this household, which suggests they spend much of their time with the truck and tractor earning extra income. The 3 females then probably tend the yaks and obtain all the dairy products. This household also has 4 children and 2 older people to help. This household had taken the step of seeking ways of earning off-farm income while still remaining within their village. It is notable that there is a huge range in income generated by each labourer or per person between households. This again reflects that there are opportunities to generate income that some households satisfactorily exploit, but others find difficult to do so.

The skill of households in managing their yaks was examined further in terms of the money spent on fodder and income received per yak (Figure 35). These data show no consistent relationship between the money spent on yaks and the income received. On Figure 35, the dashed lines indicate the means for each axis. The top right quadrant shows that four of the households that spent the most money on their yaks earned the highest income. The bottom right-hand quadrant shows that six households spent as much on their yaks as the best group of households, but these six earned the lowest income per yak. Clearly there are big differences in the skills with which yaks are managed. There was also one household with the lowest expense per animal, that achieved a high income per yak, reinforcing the view that household income from yaks is not simply a function of how much you spend on them, but other (unknown) management practices.
Figure 33 Household income per person in each household

Figure 34 Household income per labourer
Figure 35 Relationship between expense per yak and gross income per yak.

Note: The dotted lines indicate the mean expense per yak or the mean gross income per yak.

Regression (decision) trees (Figure 36) were used to investigate the multivariate relationships between total income per household or total income per person in each household and total income from dairy products, total non-dairy yak products, caterpillar fungus income, income from the use of vehicles (trucks and tractors), other off-farm income, income per adult labourer in each household, number of people in each household, number of labourers and marriage style.

The mean income for the 19 households was RMB 48,038 and the first split was household No. 2 which had vehicles that earned RMB 62,000 (this was the most important first effect). Then for the remaining 18 households these split on the basis of income per labourer (< or > RMB 8,609) - those households earning less than RMB 8,609 per labourer then split into those with <3 labourers having an income of RMB 23,500 and those with 3 or more labourers having an average household income of RMB 62,400. The skill of individual labourers is clearly of advantage in using vehicles of doing other things that earn income for each household. None of the other factors tested, significantly influenced total income per household.
Note: the effect of income from vehicles, income per labourer and number of labourers on total income per household. No other factors (see text) had any significant effect.

As total income per household does not take into account the variation in household size, a second analysis was done using income per person in each household (Figure 34). When the factors that significantly influenced income per person were examined (Figure 37, decision tree B) the first three splits in the regression (decision) tree were due to income per adult labourer. Then where the income per labourer was > RMB 10,101 but less than RMB 21,967, which included nearly half of the households (n=8), there was a final split based on the additional other income that those households obtained. None of the other factors examined had a consistent, significant effect on income per person. This further reinforces the view that the individual ability of the main labour force in each household
has a dominant influence on household income. Some Drokpa are more entrepreneurial than others.

**Decision Tree**

![Decision Tree](image)

Figure 37 Decision tree B.

Note: The effect of income per labourer and other income on household income per person. None of the other factors (see text) had a significant effect on income per person.

We have discussed how pastoral activities provides the basic and substantial items for herders in Da, with the growth in a cash economy requiring supplementing income with secondary activities such as the trade in caterpillar fungus. The average income per household comprised 80% from pastoral sources and 20% from other sources. These supplementary income sources have changed over time, and there is now an increasing proportion of income coming from non–livestock activities (Chapters 4, 5 and 6). The largest cost is for non–pastoral food items, which is 31% of total expenditure. This may indicate that the Drokpa now depend upon a cash economy to sustain and maintain their life-style.
Pack yak dungs for sell

Drying caterpillar fungus

Prepare for selling Yogurt on motorcycle

Popular trucks among herders

Photo 12 Income sources
To understand the current economy of Tibetan pastoral society, we need to consider general principles of economics, and how they optimise the use of the resources they have available to them within the constraints of a range of internal and external factors. The internal factors are those that herders have more decision-making power to control. For instance, they can decide the composition of their herds, how many animals they want to sell, the livestock products they will produce, the number of hours they spend on pastoral activities, and so on. With other activities such as harvesting the caterpillar fungus, herders only have limited control on price, but they do have internal decision-making power over how they respond to price changes e.g. how many hours they want to spend on this activity, and how many labourers they want to employ on harvesting.

Economic decision-making however, is typically multi-factorial. There are a series of external factors over which herders do not have much control or do not have decision-making power, that significantly affect what they do, not least of which is the rapid rates of change in all sorts of fields within China. Administrative decisions are a continuing issue. For instance, the reduction in pasture territory in Da when Nagchu town expanded to occupy the parts of the Da pastureland nearest to Nagchu, has significantly reduced the land available for grazing without any compensation. The increasing price of caterpillar fungus has encouraged herders to dig for more fungus since the 1980s, but then the price dropped dramatically in 2008, as did the market price of hides, wool and meat. This made decisions as to which products to focus on, more difficult. Herders are of the opinion that they cannot control these larger market forces or demographic changes. The dynamics of these two factors are an important dimension that needs to be taken into account when seeking to understand the village economy. It can be understood as herders needing to adjust their decision-making in relation to changes in the external market. Herders see themselves as price-takers, more than being in a position to act as price-makers. In many cases, external changes happen first, and then herders change their behaviour (Galvin et al., 2002, Coast, 2002). Three case stories illustrate these situations.

One: herders used to process milk into butter for home consumption during the post-cash economy period before the 1980s, as yogurt did not have a high cash return. After
the 1980s, however higher prices led to greater yogurt production as a source of cash income.

Two: the increase in the price obtainable for animal hides, wool and yoghurt has made cash available for herders, allowing them to buy rather than make such consumables as cloth. Cloth made industrially and with greater economies of scale has made home production uneconomic. Similarly, vegetables can now be purchased at a lower cost and in greater variety than through home production.

Three: changes in market price in turn have changed herder’s decision-making. No.15 expected to sell their fungus in 2007 and purchase a new tractor. However, No.15 had to change this decision because the price dropped dramatically in 2007 when manufacturers started to produce the active ingredient in the fungus in factories.

At the individual household level, external factors are almost the same for all the 19 households in Da. However, internal factors may be different between households. For instance, No. 2 spent RMB 2,400 on butter in 2007. However, No. 16 spent RMB 4,000 buying butter in the same year. Internal factors influence how much money households spend on gifts and rituals, and how often. There are some internal factors that herders do not change even if external factors change. For instance, herders should have bought more Tsampa (barely flour) (an economically rational decision) when the Tsampa price fell. Instead, they tend to purchase Tsampa on a regular basis as they feel that this is when it is ‘tasty’ and as fresh as possible - even though the barely is only harvested once a year and then processed into powder for sale. In this case, they think about trading in the short-term rather than having a longer-term strategy to achieve better outcomes. This attitude is symptomatic of subsistence societies where households have very limited resources and short planning horizons.

The decisions made by herders are only partially business decisions as they are influenced by longer-term practices from a different era, and based on their attitudes and beliefs. For instance, investing money to build a warm animal shed is an economic way to limit animal liveweight loss through the winter, replacing some need for better feeding of those animals, and to have a better output of milk production. However, most herders choose to spend an equivalent cost in herding yaks to utilise winter pasture. The reason
given by No.16 was that yaks would not stand cold weather in the winter pasture if they kept the yaks in sheds. In contrast, in northern China, where it is as cold, or colder than on the Tibetan Plateau, warm sheds have demonstrated clear benefits for livestock production (Kemp and Michalk, 2011). This apparently economically irrational behaviour results from individual preference or cultural customs and practices, and is based on the knowledge of herders about how to manage the survival of animals. In the new developing economic system in China, as happens elsewhere (Garcia, 2009), there is always inertia. People may take time to fully understand the alternative tactics and strategies which they could use to improve their livelihoods, and which would allow them to respond more efficiently to the developing markets. New management skills need to be developed for people to function effectively in modern economic systems. Some Drokpa naturally acquire those skills, but others find it hard.

There are two reasons why people’s behaviour are always linked with their own valuation of events: one is people make mistakes, or the information available may be asymmetrical. For instance, herders know the price of hides in Nagchu, but do not know the price in the broader market e.g. in Lhasas and can then be at the mercy of the traders. Their decisions are limited to a micro-market rather than the whole marketing chain. Markets are far from perfect, i.e. where all buyers and sellers have complete information about all transactions. In remote rural regions, markets have a long way to develop in order for all buyers and sellers being able to make the best possible decisions. While people generally understand the local market, their decision-making is more value-based and motivated by religious, cultural and life-style motivations. An example would be that Tibetans, although meat eaters, are reluctant to sacrifice livestock except when the demand for food is essential, and hence may choose not to sell animals for slaughter under any circumstances. Culture determines these decisions. Spending lots of money on the New Year festivities might appear to be an ‘irrational’ decision, but it builds solidarity between households and within the community in important ways; e.g. being valuable as a strategy against famine, drought and, adverse conditions generally, to encourage a common helping/sharing approach. As mentioned earlier, economics is about how people optimise the allocation of their resources. If the goal of a person is to allocate their resources to
maximise benefits for themselves, then putting resources into New Year is not irrational, and whether they barter or use cash is a very secondary consideration.

Decision making by herders can be influenced through education and training, government policy, the intervention of NGOs and the media. These may reduce information asymmetry. As to the extent to which culture determines individual decisions, there may be little that governments can do to change embedded culture and beliefs. Tibetan herders, like all other human beings, are not simply economic units, but are also motivated by cultural values i.e. practices arising from traditional practice and knowledge which are to some extent ingrained and which may not be conscious decisions rationally argued out. The economic logic of each household’s strategy is influenced by their cultural comfort zone and community interests, rather than rationalised for their self benefit alone (Wilk, 1990; Bloch, 1973). Many societies operate in this way.

7.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed how pastoral activities still provide most of the basic and substantial items for herders to survive in Da, while the growth of the larger cash economy in China has provided opportunities to earn supplementary income with secondary activities such as harvesting caterpillar fungus, providing transport services, or a range of other activities. Yogurt is now a main trading item and other livestock products are traded with the neighbouring town in exchange for cash. The Drokpa depend increasingly on the cash economy to sustain and maintain their life-style than was the case 20 years ago.

In any society, economic activities are about the means of optimising the use of available resources within a series of constraints, including skills, knowledge and cultural practices. In this context, the resource capital available is pasture, labour, livestock and people. The way they interact with the wider market are determined by external and internal factors. Individual herders may appear passive when faced with external factors, but this is clearly not the case, as they have changed behaviour and adapted to changing circumstances. A good example is the use of washing machines to churn milk. This is ‘localisation’ of global products, and putting them to use in novel cultural and social and economic contexts quite unforeseen by the producers and sellers, indeed by the market as
a whole. Once basic subsistence is attained, wealth and capital may be accrued. This increases options in terms of decision-making and choices. The growth of a cash economy aids trade and exchange, and this of itself increases economic activity. A society or individual comes to the point where they can meet their basic needs and then seek to meet their social as well as cultural ‘wants.’ There will always be, however, a conflict between the desires of the individual and external factors.

Even for the Drokpa, wider market drivers and incentives have an impact on their lives. The Drokpa is now more closely linked with the wider world, and are involved in daily transactions for all sorts of goods and services, many of which, centuries ago, they had to provide for themselves or were not available e.g. electrical appliances. Their story is about evolution in human behaviour, adaptation and flexibility. The analyses of the household economy and of costs and returns from yaks, shows that households, and thereby individual herders, vary considerably in their skills when it comes to earning income. Their education, health and material goods are probably better than in the past during the post-cash economy period, while they still carry on with a clearly herder-influenced lifestyle from which they derive their character. This keeps coming back to what they retain and what they discard as they adapt. The field data suggests that in Da, people can and do make choices based on cultural motivations. These choices grow from traditional cultures based upon skills, knowledge and traditional practices that have enabled them to survive, and are influenced by, and derived from, the ‘fields’ of kinship and marriage, ritual and religion (human nature relationships in this belief system). However, this balance may not be sustained. There is already evidence that greater communication has caused what Foster Dulles, US Secretary of State in the 1950s called the “escalation of aspirations.” Such inventions as the transistor radio and the increased people’s awareness of a different and more affluent world - causes them to began to ask ‘If them, why not me?’ The young in particular may want the accoutrements of the modern world and this want can become an emotional need. They may not remain satisfied with the values of their parents, and may trade-off material advantage against cultural identity. Rational self-interest may be the bedrock of successful wealth creation as Adam Smith (1976) argued in his book ‘Wealth of Nations.’ His work has had great influence on later thinkers, including Marx, who deny the
often black and white interpretation of Smith’s writing. He probably intended a more reasoned view. As one of the group of 18\textsuperscript{th} Century thinkers known as the Scottish Enlightenment, he brought about a more clinical approach. He proposed that competition lay at the root of all human activity. He suggested that anarchy could be avoided if people showed ‘enlightened self-interest’, using reason to look at the longer term gain from the accommodation of social mores and rules. This tension between self-interest and the longer term well-being of society has relevance to Da. Will the younger generation in Da be as enlightened when faced with their escalating aspirations? We cannot avoid the inevitable conflict of interest between the individual and the community. Political policy and subsequent administrative measures may force painful compromises or collusion by individuals or constituents, and perhaps minority communities. This dilemma is addressed further in the next chapter.
8 The Open-market II: Social Relationships During Changing Economic Conditions

8.1 Introduction

Economic activities are not simply matters of financial exchange. They take place within a context of lifestyles, cultural concepts and values, influenced by, and influencing, these mores. Rights and duties defined by social relationships evolve, adapting to changes in circumstances. These relationships have principles and shared structures derived from kinship and marriage, ritual and religion, politics and social administration (Makley, 2007; Dalton, 1968, 1969; Firth, 1946; Adelman and Morris, 1965; Myrdal, 1957; Malinowski, 1922, 1935; Tax, 1963). For instance, Makley’s work in Lobrang\(^{113}\) demonstrates religion revival in the post-Mao China. An earlier chapter discussed how people within the case-study locality spend significant proportions of time and available cash income to prepare for the Tibetan New Year (Gates, 1996).

The Tibetan New Year is a regular event of major cultural significance that is structured to reinforce rights and duties between kin members and their neighbours. The Tibetan New Year provides a ritualised and communal occasion, when every member visits the houses of others in a particular order. Sharing food and information on these occasions sustains community cohesion and identity and, as has been shown, brings economic advantages. Although these economic benefits are deferred, the Drokpa tacitly acknowledge longer-term advantages. Such celebrations are also enjoyable, an occasion for fun. They embody ‘belonging’, which can be the more important reasons for participation, while paying attention to the longer-standing social relationships.

Social relationships take place within social institutions. These social institutions symbolise the manner in which people play their diverse social roles and sustain traditional meaning and therefore, purpose. Although such purposes are centrally cultural, and tend to

\(^{113}\) Lobrang locates in Xiahe County in Gansu Province of PRC. Lobrang monastery is one of the six great monasteries of the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism.
maintain the status quo, they can evolve as people interact and respond to changing external influences.

Identifying the stages and occasions on which people interact with each other, is crucial to understanding the broader power and economic relationships that apply within social groups. These social relationships can transform within the context, metamorphosing into new symbolic forms, whilst maintaining their essential longer-term structures. Continuity and the underlying essence of that which defines identity and belonging, remain in such cases. The Drokpa retain the emotional security and comfort that comes from the familiar and the traditional, not through unthinking and ‘soft’ inertia, but through purposeful engagement that nurtures communal well-being. Any changes though, need to be resilient and acceptable to the community, in order for the community to survive.

Over six decades since the early 1950s, the political and social institutions in Tibetan pastoral societies have been subject to a series of major changes imposed from above. These changes did not necessarily align with previous practice. As discussed in Chapter 5, pastoral groups initially worked together in tribes to provide for most of their needs, though they then paid tribute, taxes and goods in various forms, including gifts, to feudal and monastic overlords. These payments were often seen as being of mutual benefit to each participant e.g. for providing spiritual benefits, administrative systems, and defence. Within each nomadic community, work was done typically without payment for basic and social needs and little influenced by Government control (cf. Leach, 1954:252). Institutional decision-making power over land management shifted from a kind of tribe-like formation to more centralised political institutions known under the socialist polity as ‘di qu’. However, social organisation at the micro level remained much the same (Potter, 1990). The nature of the pastoral household, the nexus of kin neighbourhoods and beliefs reflected in ritualised ceremony, still form the basic element and roots of the social organisation of today’s pastoral society. It is true that the period of collectivisation and of the Cultural Revolution, aimed to impose centralised administrative control over both economic and social activities, replacing the looser arrangements that preceded this change.

In China since 1979 however, all communities have moved to more open market systems which has wider implications for social organisation. Individual communities have
retained local governance, subject to policies derived from the many central and other layers of Government, and households have tended to revert to more traditional ways of working and of relationships. These functions have been revived in subtly different ways, and different parts were/have been strengthened or lost (Siu, 1989). An individual herder is bound to his household/tent. This connects to kin neighbourhoods through mutual support and interdependence. Ritualised belief in the ‘Pilgrimage Mountains’ connects herd and locally and across regional territories (Huber 1999a:178; Blondeau & Steinkellner, 1996; Blondeau, 1998; Buffetrille & Hildegard, 1994, 2002; Gutschow, Michaels & Ramble, 2003; Aziz, 1974:30).

To understand the overall picture of how economic activities take place through continuing social institutions, we need to look into the basic unit of this social system: the individuals and their social relationships. How does the individual make choices with regard to different scales and across differently conceptualised boundaries? What motivates their decisions? These questions will provide a focus for the sections that follow.

8.2 Forms of collaboration in social organisation

The typical household has now become both producer and consumer within the wider economy. At the level of the household, herd still produce a majority of their basic needs, such as dairy products (yoghurt, cheese) milk, meat, yak wool and hides. They aim to have sufficient livestock to maintain household needs for food, fibre and fuel, and a surplus for sale in the market. Prior to the post–cash economy period, a household needed to be largely self-reliant. However, their patterns of production and consumption have changed with the growth of the larger market economy within which they now often aim for greater surplus production, while reducing their pastoral activities so that they can earn additional income by providing labour, skills and services e.g. transport, in the neighbouring towns, or by becoming migratory workers. This brings advantages, but there is a trade-off in terms of a loss of self-reliance and greater risks requiring greater flexibility in adapting to a rapidly changing market.

The Drokpa now want to increase the cash they have to purchase commodities that in the past would have ranged from being necessities to being luxury items. Their needs have changed. As in all societies, luxury items, at first just economic ‘wants’, come to be
perceived as ‘needs’; while concepts of wealth, poverty and needs are relative. Currently, herders produce a restricted range of products for sale to provide the cash for other goods or services. The variety of consumables has and is increasing, and this suggests that the Drokpa are now seeking more off-farm income to satisfy their needs. Most of their purchases are in the form of grain, vegetables, cloth and some leisure goods. As their consumption patterns develop, there is a tendency to rely more and more on what the market provides, and less on traditional self-sufficiency. There is a risk that ‘the tail begins to wag the dog’ in that market pressures and the change/rise in expectations begin to influence community life and values. There is a move away from household production to activities and the use of time that are cash producing such as yogurt production, caterpillar fungus trading and wages from labour outside the household.

Field data from household No.19 at Da illustrates that consumption items are obtained firstly through the use of cash, then received as gifts from friends and kin. Table 20 show the different types of clothes No. 19 have, such as traditional Tibetan costumes, shirts, boots, aprons, kerchiefs for women’s dresses, Tibetan style hats and leisure clothes. Each member has several sets of clothes for leisure wear, and one or two special sets for festivals. Analysis shows how way each item is obtained. The data indicate that 4% of clothes are made to order by local dress makers and 15% are self-made. 38% are received as gifts from friends and relatives, and 43% are purchased for cash. Table 19 shows that No.19 has 23 different items of household goods, such as a wooden cask for making butter-tea, and now electric equipment for stirring butter-tea. This data reveals that No.19 obtained 43% of their furniture and domestic equipment through cash purchases and 53% as gifts from friends and relatives. This sharing within the community transfers resources but, significantly as it is reciprocal, also has a powerful bonding function. It would seem this change in proportions is progressive – see below. It is likely to be a significant factor in the maintenance of communal integrity – a change that may not be positive in the longer term, as movement of households away from the village can make it difficult to sustain these exchanges. Ideally, data is needed over time to discern how or if these trends will change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Purchased by cash</th>
<th>Gift received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Items obtained in the past</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan style wooden cabinet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan carpet</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China bowl</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooden bowl</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver bowl</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooden cask for milking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooden cask for making butter tea</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer wheel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Items obtained recently</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooden bed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic cask for milking</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical stirrer for butter tea</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure cooker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stove (burn yak dung for heating)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fridge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing machine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCR</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landline phone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermos bottle</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quilt (factory made)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telescope (for herding purpose)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19 Household items obtained by cash or gift, No.19, Da in 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Homemade</th>
<th>Made by local dress maker</th>
<th>Purchased by cash</th>
<th>Gifts received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan costumes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan shirt</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan boots</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan hats</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan aprons</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure dress</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerchief’ (women’s dresses)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20 Clothes obtained by cash, or received as gifts or in other ways, No.19, Da, 2007
Cash and gifts both play an important exchange roles within the village and in the household economy, the former mainly as exchange within the external market, and the latter between households and within kin groups. Gifts are usually cultural artefacts, although they can now be consumer goods from the wider market. The ‘gifting’ is not just the economic sharing or interchange of goods, but has a social function and purpose. Even though cash transactions in a fully monetised economy have no value other than as a mechanism for exchange between consumer and producer, it would seem that where someone gives ‘cash’ as a gift to another, it is given a symbolic meaning and has significance in terms of community cohesion.

Cash income for a household is governed by their capacity to produce a surplus over and above basic need and their ability to produce goods for which there is a market demand. However, even these capacities may be limited by culturally derived rights, duties and values that govern the allocation of time and other resources. Household decisions will usually first respond to community expectations before considering commercial gain. Motivation is cultural rather than commercial within the context of the ‘village’.

Gifts on the other hand, are not simply goodwill gestures. They act to tie one family to another. Gift exchange is governed by rules of sharing. The purpose of sharing is to establish interactions between one herder and another, between one household and another. This exchange circle enables a household to participate in wider collaboration based upon kin–neighbourhood relationships. Malinowski (1922:177–94) discussed eight types of relationship between transactors among the Trobriand Islanders. These eight forms of personal relationships were matrilineal kinship; marriage ties; relationships—in–law; clanship; the relationship of personal friendship; fellow–citizenship in a village community; relationship between chiefs and commoners, and relationship between any two tribesmen (Gregory and Altman, 1984:205). Such collaborations in Da can be observed, and are practiced in the following relationships: 1) marriage ties, 2) reciprocity of kin segments relationships and 3) kin ties with its extended social relationship (e.g. keeping sheep in another village; labour exchanges undertaken between different households) 4) extended social network or personal friendship (e.g. social network of yogurt selling of No.19). Such social collaborations are still central, extensive and apparently actively maintained within
the case study community. In the following, I consider the linking of some these forms of exchange with types of relationship.

**8.2.1 Marriage ties**

In this section, we will consider marriage as a generality, and then marriage patterns and family formations in Da. This will aid our understanding of how pastorally-related economic collaboration involves marriage ties. Marriage is undertaken for the purpose of legitimate reproduction, care of children and their socialisation (Barth, 1973; Evans–Pritchard, 1951a, 1951b; Chan, 1984). It makes possible the establishment of a new family or a new component of an existing extended family formation.

Marriage in Da can be arranged by a senior family member on the male or female side. This is an ‘arranged marriage’ that serves the needs of both families. Marriage can also result from the direct proposal by a man to a woman; this we may call an ‘unarranged or personal preference’ marriage (see more discussion following this section about the proportion of marriages according to each system). In the case of an ‘arranged marriage’, a man and women may not even meet each other before the marriage. Discussion and negotiation in relation to the marriage is carried out between their senior family members. In the ‘unarranged marriage’, a man and women know each other and typically have sexual contact before marriage. This is culturally accepted. For instance there is the Khyi dung tradition of Drokpa. ‘Khyi dung’ literally means ‘hitting the dog’. This refers to the male admirer knowing how to get a dog (a Tibetan Mastiff) to stop barking, the dog being tied up in front of the tent where the admired girl sleeps. Once the dog stops barking, the male admirer can then enter the girl’s tent and spend a night with her. This tradition may start with boys at age 17 to 18 and girls at age 16 to 17. A case story illustrates Khyi dung by one of informants inDa:

“I was sleeping in the sheep shed with the other girls, we were looking after lambs. I had fallen asleep, but was woken up by someone. It was a boy whom I had never met before, and several other boys were there. I was scared, but other girls were calm and seemed to know these boys were coming.”
Khyi dung provides a chance for young people to meet each other and their relationship may develop into marriage. If a boy and a girl want to live together as a couple, they will let their parents know of their preference for marriage. A boy will normally tell his father which girl he wants to marry, while a girl will let her mother know her thoughts. A marriage proposal will be made if both families agree. Field data indicates that Khyi dung also happens among married people and this prima facie adultery is not considered an offence against a marriage. In this context, men are more likely to instigate Khyi dung. Generally, parents agree with their children’s choice of spouse, as long as the marriage taboo between members of the same Ru is strictly followed.

A bride price (Goody, 1973) needs to be agreed and provided by the groom’s family to the parents of the bride. It is called nu rin in local terminology, derived from the word nu or nipple. In this context, nu indicates mother’s milk and rin as price or value. The term may be translated literally as ‘price of bride’s mother’s milk’. The value of the bride price is influenced by the family’s wealth, but at the minimum the family must provide one female yak (drī). This is symbolically associated with payment for raising the bride by her mother’s milk. Depending upon what the bride’s family is able to provide, the dowry is used to help establish the new household. This is illustrated by the following account:

“I brought around ten sheep, three yaks and jewellery with me to my marriage and we resided with my husband’s mother and his other siblings. I have no right to ask my mother-in-law for my husband’s share when my husband and I decided not to live with his family. But I have the right to take my property (dowry) with me.”

The dowry balances the economic status of the wife with that of her husband, especially when on marriage, the wife lives with her husband’s family. When the man joins his wife’s family, the same applies. The size of the property, for example livestock, jewellery and other property, indicates the social status of the bride and/or groom. For instance, a wife or a husband’s decision-making authority within the household depends upon the marriage payment in a marriage. For instance, Phu (the husband) from No. 15 has lived with his wife, Tséring, for many years. However, he does not hold much decision-making power in the

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114 Free love before marriage is common in traditional societies and also in modern societies such as the U.S.A. and Australia today.
Tséring and her family consult her father concerning important decisions rather than asking her husband. The head of household of No.15 spoke of his son-in-law:

“Phu brought nothing when he came to live with Tséring. He came just like a beggar. His little son is naughty; it is because Phu was born as a beggar.

Tséring’s parents often describe Phu as a low status person, because he brought little wealth when he came to live with Tséring.

The marriage has considerations of wealth and social status, and affinal links define this status, strengthening authority and social influence. One wealthy and high social status Drokpa family used to provide 100 dri, the productive yaks, as part of the bride price. In some cases, for the Drokpa, there seems to be a significant but not necessary link between wealth and status. For instance, even when an individual lost social status and/or wealth post-1959, they seemed to have retained cultural respect in the eyes of others – often associated with their family’s social status. Two ‘commoner’ women from the village married their husbands who were both born into a high social status family. These two women spoke proudly when they mentioned how their husbands’ families had high social status. This may reflect what Fjeld found in central Tibet how the social categories of pre-communist persist and are relevant in daily life (Fjeld, 2005). Marriage, therefore, defines status. Status seems to have underlying links to what could be called ‘class’, although extreme care is needed when applying this term. Again the flexibility of the Drokpa culture allowed accommodation to political policy, while retaining the resilience and cohesion that was tacitly embedded in tradition. For instance, during the period of collectivisation an individual from the ‘Good Class’ would not marry someone from the ‘Enemy Class’ (Chapter 6). Now that the political pressures have lessened (Chapter 7), the more traditional forms have ‘re-emerged’.

A case story from household No.19 in Da shows how the bride’s family demonstrates their wealth as a middle class business family and how the groom’s (Q) family demonstrates the groom’s (P) social status as an urban working class man.

P is the elder son from No.19. He left Da when he was small boy and was brought up by his aunt in Nagchu town. He had the opportunity to go for four years military service and then got a job as a driver for a local institution. This is a well paid job (RMB 3,500p.a.)
considering he has no other educational qualification. More importantly, it is a permanent job. He works and lives among urban working class people. He met Q in Lhasa when P went on a business trip. They became engaged and decided to marry, having received permission from both families.

The wedding ceremony was held in Nagchu town. The groom’s family rented one of the ‘fancy’ party halls in the town and they invited around 300 guests from all the Da families. The groom’s family arranged around 20 cars, which have replaced horses for this task. The first car drives the couple from their residence place to the ceremonial hall. The other cars drive the relatives from the groom and bride’s families and they follow the couple’s car. The cars are driven slowly and are accompanied by Tibetan music. People on the street stand and watched the cars go by. The more luxurious the car is, the more it signifies wealth and social status. This was, in many ways, a standard wedding among urban working class people. The bride’s family travelled all the way from Lhasa to attend the ceremony, and invited some wealthy business people to the ceremony. For both sides, those invited are an expression of not only their social status but also their social milieu and network.

One of the central rituals within the ceremony is the presentation of gifts to the couple on their wedding day. The bride’s family presented RMB 100,000 to the bride and a gold necklace (cash value RMB 10,000) to the groom as marriage payment from the bride’s family. The groom’s family announced this marriage payment to all the guests. The groom’s family did not present cash or other goods, but covered all the costs of the wedding. The bride’s family and bride understand that the marriage payment from the groom’s family is a sign and proof that the groom has a stable job with good pay. Of itself, this aids the confidence of both sides when a couple of different social status and security are to be married. It may be considered that such a ceremony represents and embeds social cohesion and ensures that the marriage has a firm and secure financial foundation.

A case story from No. 21 in Da illustrates how a marriage occurs in a contemporary pastoral community: Nyima, the head of household of No. 21 met Dawa, his wife for the first time, when he went to winter pasture. He spent nights with Dawa during Khyi dung visits. After returning to Da from winter pasture, Nyima told his father that he wanted to marry Dawa. Nyima’s father and Nyima’s uncle travelled to visit Dawa’s family to propose
the marriage. The marriage proposal was accepted by Dawa’s parents. In this case, Nyima’s family did not provide nu rin for Dawa’s family. The reason is said to be that this marriage was not an arranged marriage, and currently it is not as common to pay the nu-rin as it was before. Nyima and Dawa decided to establish their household in Da and stay separately with Nyima’s principal household. They received a marriage payment from both families. This becomes a straightforward way of financially setting up a new household. Table 21 shows the amount of marriage payment the bride and the groom received from their principal families.

On the wedding day, the groom’s uncle and the bride’s biological brother went to pick up the bride. They started their trip at 12.00pm and travelled to the bride’s village by motorcycle, again change from the traditional use of horses. The bride’s family was celebrating on that day and relatives were gathering. The groom’s uncle and the bride’s biological brother stayed overnight at the bride’s family house. The bride left her family from her village with the groom’s uncle and the bride’s biological brother at 10.00am the next day, arriving at the groom’s village at 12:30pm. The groom was waiting in his new house. The wedding ceremony was organised in Da by the groom’s family, and guests were invited from every household in Da as well as relatives of the bride and groom from Nagchu. The guests from Da gave gifts such as brick tea and clothes, thermos flasks and kettles with Kha tak\textsuperscript{115}. Relatives from Nagchu gave gifts in cash, the amount varying from RMB 100 to RMB 300. No.21 received around RMB 2,000 in cash on the wedding day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One necklace</th>
<th>One Tibetan costume made of lamb hides</th>
<th>Seven yaks</th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Furniture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bride</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>61,000</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>4,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note:</td>
<td></td>
<td>These numbers are an approximate calculation of the cash value (Chinese RMB). As to the cash price of livestock, one female yak is about RMB 2,000, a male yak is about RMB 3,000. There were seven yaks for the bride and seven for the groom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 Marriage payment of the bride and the groom, No.21 Da, 2007

\textsuperscript{115} Kha tak is made of silk. It is a traditional ceremonial scarf used in Tibet and Mongolia. It symbolises purity, goodwill, auspiciousness and compassion.
8.2.2 The form of marriage

There are three forms of marriage in Da.

- Monogamous - one woman and one man
- Polyandrous - one woman is married to two or more men and
- Polygynous - two women are married to one man

Monogamy is the legal marriage form recognised in China. However, outside the legal expectations of the government, other forms exist, even though monogamy (now) predominates in Da. Of 19 households in Da, monogamy is practiced in 12 households (63%). Polyandrous marriage, in which one woman is married to two or more men, is the second most common form in the village and it is practiced among 6 families (32%). Polygyny is practised by one family in the village (5%). The characteristics of polyandrous and polygynous marriage are diverse, but fall into the following types:

Two biological brothers share a common wife. There are cases of this fraternal polyandry\(^\text{116}\). For example: No.2 and No. 16 (Figures 38 and 39).

‘Ego’ (the interviewee) shares a common wife with his biological brother’s son. For instance, No. 6 (Figure 40).

‘Ego’ (the interviewee) shares a common wife with his biological sister’s son. For instance, No. 10 . (Figure 41).

‘Ego’ (the interviewee) has two wives who wives are mother and daughter biologically. The daughter’s biological father is not Ego. No. 8. (Figure 42).

\(^{116}\) There are studies on Tibetan polyandry (Levine, 1988; Goldstein and Beall, 1981, Fjeld, 2008). In Da as noted here, there are examples of monogamy, polyandry and polygamy. In this thesis I have simply noted in which households each occurs and the circumstances that led to these marriage formations.
Figure 38 Genealogy of Household 2

Figure 39 Genealogy of Household 16

Figure 40 Genealogy of Household 6
It is probable that these flexible forms bring economic as well as familial benefits. When Drokpa say they “know how to survive,” there is almost certainly a tacit understanding that a pragmatic approach brings benefits, as long it is accepted by the community and therefore, regulated by the limits of that acceptance. These arrangements arguably evolved in past eras when community size was small, and the chances of finding a partner for all eligible individuals were limited. There was also a strong desire to retain as many community members as possible. The relationships are more complex than typically apply in western countries.
There are two types of family formation: the nuclear and extended families. The nuclear family consists of a husband or husbands (polyandrous formation) and a wife or wives (polygynous formation) and their children. The extended family may include both monogamous and polyandrous types and usually includes three generations within a household. Data shows that nine households are nuclear families (47%) and ten households (53%) are extended families.

It is socially acceptable for a man and a woman to live together and raise a family, even if they have not gone through a wedding ceremony. However, affinal obligations still need to be met. TséRing’s case can illustrate this situation. Phu came as a farm labourer to help TséRing and they lived together for some years. Phu had gradually obtained ‘husband’ status. His status was confirmed after he had his first son with TséRing. This meant Phu has obligations as a labourer to TséRing’s parents, who represent an independent household.

No social difference is made between legitimate and illegitimate children. They have the same status within a family and have public acceptance, even if the parents do not live together as a couple. This cultural acceptance accommodates the possible outcomes of people’s positive attitude towards the Khyi dung tradition. People use a specific local term nel truk to indicate illegitimate children, but it is purely descriptive and not pejorative. Again we find that although relationships are diverse, various and pragmatic, they are regulated within a system of social obligations. The lack of discrimination is seen as bringing social benefits in terms of community cohesion and solidarity. This suggests that the focus is more on the children (no blame, so that they have a better chance within the community) rather than on what the parents do.

Case studies from other parts of Nagchu show public acceptance of children born outside wedlock (Gelek, Liu, Zhang and An, 2002). ‘Illegitimate’ is, in some sense, a

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117 A nuclear family used here is an anthropological term. It refers mainly to a couple and their children.
118 In the west, marriage and legitimacy developed solely to define property rights. It has nothing to do with the concept of marriage as may apply today. Property rights issues are one reason a lot of couples do not get married. However, legitimacy in Drokpa society has more to do with recognition and acceptance by family, kin and the community.
119 Nel has two meanings. One refers to a child born of an unknown father. The other refers to a child born whose parents had biological connections (Dungkar, 2002:1208). Truk means a child.
misnomer and western term, because the child is ‘legitimised’ by complete community acceptance.

There are exceptions. Locals regard a girl as ‘impure’ when she has a child outside marriage when she lived in the town. It is interesting that when they conducted the survey back in the 1950s (Chapter 6), Chinese ethnographers described such public acceptance of illegitimacy in Tibetan pastoral society as a remnant of pre-class society (TRTSHTE, 1987:13). This is clearly a misreading of the situation, in part due to the misapplication of external and decontextualised mores. Those old ‘socialist’ views seem to reflect an old-fashioned Confucian Puritanism more than anything else. The full acceptance of children born outside wedlock in the Drokpa society ensures that they are fully supported and socialised, made to feel that they fully ‘belong’ and consequently they are equally well placed to thrive and make a community contribution. Regarding a girl having a child outside wedlock in the town as being ‘impure’, may in part reflect contamination by different mores, but is as likely to be because such a child will not have the support of the pastoral community.

Same sex ‘marriage’ is not found, but stories about a Drokpa man who exhibited homosexual behaviour were mentioned to me. This man resides in another village some distance away. There is insufficient evidence to verify the accuracy of the story. Even so, it would seem that the Drokpa did not have a strong negative prejudice towards homosexual behaviour. They show sympathy for the individual because they think it was due to some kind of mental illness\(^\text{120}\). This slight diversion has significance. The Drokpa culture does not have many strict taboos, an exception being sexual relations between members of the same ru. An important characteristic of the cultural mores is the positive promotion of social obligations and solidarity, markedly over and above prohibitions. Although ‘love your neighbour’ is a key part of Christian philosophy, too often it has been overwhelmed by a focus on ‘sin’ and ‘guilt’ in that religion – with damaging results. Drokpa tacitly show this more sophisticated understanding – or at least a more pragmatic and relativist approach. However, ‘bad karma’ is an area addressed later.

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\(^{120}\) This statement presents views from a few informants I interviewed. More data needs to be tested for general views on same sex relationships.
Divorce is not common in the case study village. This is not because it is viewed negatively or that it is difficult to obtain. Again we have the focus on the positive and pragmatic rather than on prohibition. The focus is upon the negotiated and equitable division of property. There are two approaches. One reflects local customs and the other relates to State regulation and administration.

The local approach is of long standing. Essentially, negotiations concerning the division of previously jointly held property is between the couple themselves. There is no general rule, and each case is considered in context. Circumstance will determine whether the children will live with the mother or father, and it is not unknown to split siblings (Gelek, Liu, Zhang and An, 2002).

Divorce cases can be dealt with in the Nagchu Local Court administered by the State, but only when reconciliation cannot be achieved, even after involvement of the couple’s relatives. An example is provided by Tséring₁²₁, a female herder from No.19. Her partner from her second marriage left her and their children for months and then appeared suddenly to propose divorce. His reason was a rather simple one that he could no longer afford ‘overloaded’ work demands. Tséring had to file a petition to the local court. Together, they had 34 yaks, 75 sheep, 18 goats and three horses. Tséring had 23 yaks and three horses as her share when they got married, and her partner brought his property of 4 yaks and 16 sheep. Tséring was awarded custody of her children as her partner declared that he did not want to take any of his children with him. The court decided on 3 yaks, 13 sheep and 1 horse for the man. Tséring obtained the rest of the livestock of 31 yaks, 17 goats, 3 horses and other property.

There are marriage restrictions under two headings: 1) Prohibition of incestuous marriage within the same Ru (details in the next section). Ego must not have sexual contact or marriage with any members of Ego’s paternal or maternal lineage. A punishment would occur if Ego broke the prohibition. For instance, taboos are reinforced by beliefs that a child would have a black body if a man and a woman from the same Ru had sexual contact or got married. Another saying is that such children would be born with a tail, have a disability, or die prematurely. These taboo beliefs, of course may have some relationship.

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₁²₁ This is the same Tsering who was not properly married, and whose third husband was despised.
to the biological risks that incest incurs. Similar case stories are documented by other researchers (Gelek, Liu, Zhang and An, 2002). Even more powerful is that such a child would be culturally isolated. No one would stand close to such a child because it is believed that they would become ill immediately.

The other marriage restriction is more difficult to understand. A marriage with a member of a blacksmith’s family is prohibited. The belief is that the parties involved would be polluted and this would bring ‘pollution’ upon the family. An explanation given by a local informant is that a blacksmith produces objects such as hammers and knives and these are tools to kill other living beings. They therefore accumulate negative karma. The Drokpa believe that to form such a marriage would be a voluntary act that would witness ‘bad’ karma and dharma on their part. They would be associating themselves with an occupation that was a negation of ‘good’ karma. The idea of purity and pollution and the consequent explanation are similar to that of Sherpas (Ortner, 1973). However, this is mostly found in Tibetan societies - and as blacksmiths are common, for instance Jest on Dolpo (1998), Aziz on Dingri (1978), Dollfus on Ladakh (1989:33–47) etc., - the karma argument would appear to be secondary; it is the ideological justification for a very widespread form of social stratification.

The occupation/role of the blacksmith is very well known in the old anthropological literature. Blacksmiths are feared, despised or marked out in some way by rituals and taboos. This might be because, as Lue De Heusch (1985) said, blacksmiths are ‘agents of transformation of metals’ and this contrasts strongly with fertility and the reproduction of children through women. As Mauss himself said, blacksmiths are often sorcerers and shamans, as they are associated with fire. They are despised throughout Africa and yet they are often the peacemakers in war.

What we are beginning to see is what we will call for the present ‘detached pragmatism.’ For example, exogamous marriage to another ethnic group is not preferable but acceptable. As the field survey showed, people did not indulge in any negative gossip when a girl from the village married a Chinese man. He runs a small noodle restaurant in the town and the couple live in the town visiting the village occasionally.
8.2.3 Economic aspects of marriage

So far we have presented a general picture of marriage styles and family formation and other relevant information in relation to marriage ties. Now we turn to viewing marriage from a different perspective, by analysing the economic implications of marriage styles and family formation. Some households with polyandrous and polygynous relationships appeared to have higher gross incomes than those households with monogamous formations. Tables 17 and 18 shows this in terms of total household income and income per person for each of the broad groups of marriage styles. The analysis shows average income per person is RMB 7,886 in polyandrous and polygynous relationships and RMB 6,407 with regard to monogamous relationships. However, this correlation only suggests a possible causal relationship that polyandrous and polygynous households are better off than the other in relation to the household economy. It may be that monogamous households were poorer from the start, or influenced by extreme cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monogamous households</th>
<th>Unit: RMB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monogamous household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>No.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>No.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>No.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>No.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>No.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polyandrous &amp; Polygynous Households</th>
<th>Total household income</th>
<th>Total household population</th>
<th>Income per person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No.2</td>
<td>178960</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Household income is influenced by the number of people within a household. The effect of this and of marriage style was then examined on relation to income per person (Figure 43). This shows a scatter of points with marriage types clearly overlapping i.e. no effect. There was a general trend for income per person to decline as household size increased. The main exception was for household No. 2, which earned a higher income per person for the reasons discussed in the previous chapter.

Figure 43 The relationship between number of people per household, marriage style and income per person in Da.

Note: Fitted line shows the trend for monogamous households.

Any effect of marriage style on household economics would probably depend upon the efficiency with which the available labourers are used, as discussed in the previous chapter. A larger survey may show differences. Traditionally, polyandry and polygyny in Tibetan agricultural villages tends to be explained as a way to keep family resources together, important for wealthier households, but maybe not for others. It could be assumed that the economies of scale that accrue from more resources might result in higher income per capita, although that only seems to apply to one household. Monogamous relationships may
be a response to poorer economic circumstances, which in turn might limit growth in household numbers. Household size appears to be a greater determinant of income per person than marriage style. On average, income per person was halved as the household size increased from 2–3 to 10 or so people.

8.2.4 Household size

Households with an extended family formation show higher gross income per household than those households with a nuclear family formation (Table 25), although this doesn’t mean a lower income per person (Figure 33). When we compare their assets, households with extended families have higher yak numbers (Table 26) and more labour available (Figure 34) to earn income, and more trucks, tractors and motorcycles than nuclear families. This suggests there is an economy of scale that benefits extended families. The size of the family allows for greater division of labour in terms of differentiated skills and roles, and a pooled wealth holding that allows for greater investment in technology that is then shared. In terms of the differential expenditure of nuclear and extended families, Figure 44 shows that extended families spent more cash on each unit of expenditure than nuclear families. In terms of dairy products, the extended families spent less than the nuclear families. This is because extended families have more yaks per household 97.1 compared to 60.3 yaks held by nuclear families. With the larger herd it is more possible to meet household needs and to create a surplus to sell in the market. These broad effects would interact with the differences in skills and efficiencies among labourers, as discussed in the previous chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total gross income</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Gross income per person</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear family</td>
<td>276940</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended family</td>
<td>624582</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14871</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23 Gross income per person of two family formations, Da, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nuclear Family</th>
<th>Yaks</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Surplus labour</th>
<th>Trucks</th>
<th>Tractors</th>
<th>Motorcycles</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 No.3</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>No.8</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 24 Assets of nuclear family and extended family, Da, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Extend Family</th>
<th>Yaks</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Trucks</th>
<th>Tractors</th>
<th>Motorcycles</th>
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<td>No.6</td>
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<td>No.7</td>
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</tr>
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<td>No.14</td>
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Figure 44 Expenditure and family formation, Da, 2007.
These observations indicate that labour outflow and other assets are important factors in determining gross household income. In turn, this higher gross income enables households to spend more on household consumption, especially technology. This technology enables greater cash income from the wider market, as well as greater home efficiency and productivity. Thus, while the household may benefit and more people can then access the resources etc., they desire, the allocation of those resources per person may actually be less than for nuclear families. The efficiency per person (e.g. the total value of product per person or the total expense per person or the net benefit per person) may not relate to overall household productivity.

There is an obvious effect of scale (household size) which has implications for how the Drokpa survive. Historically, it is possible that the larger household groups fared better through difficult times than did small families. As a consequence, the Drokpa have retained practices that sustain extended families and maintain more people within households than would apply to, for example, urban families.

This seems to establish, at least as an interim hypothesis, that there is a causal relationship between marriage and family formations and economic well-being. This hypothesis should however remain interim because it may not take full account of the cultural differences between families, such as the cultural capital of knowledge and skills accumulated over time and shared collegially within the family. Such knowledge may not be applied equally among all the Drokpa households.

In the next section, we examine the role of kinship related networks in economic well-being.

8.2.5 Reciprocity of kin segment relationships

Reciprocity is a major factor to consider in order to understand pastoral economies. Reciprocity, as used here, refers to exchange relationship among individuals, groups and communities (Sahlins, 1972). The exchange happens at the same or similar levels in society, as well as from the poor to the rich. Although cash now substitutes in some areas for reciprocal sharing in kind, the key factors would appear to be the same, re-emerging after the 1980s. The field data suggests that reciprocity includes labour sharing, decision-
making and food sharing. These processes do not simply involve an exchange of resources, but reinforce kinship bonds and cultural integrity, and could be important in sustaining extended families. This view concurs with the findings of others, namely the importance of relationships within kinship and between kin segments (Mauss, 1954; Polanyi, 1945; Marx, 1867; Leach, 1945; Barth, 1973; Bloch, 1973). In the following sections, I will apply this hypothesis to Da, and its kinship ties. I will then attempt to examine the relationship between kinship and economic well-being.

8.2.5.1 An overview of kinship in Da

The households incorporating marriage ties present three post-marital residential types (Chapter 4), and these are based upon kinship relationships. The residence type is important because it carries with it ‘access rights’ to pastureland. The wife will obtain the right to access pastureland for the animals which are part of her dowry if she resides with her husband’s father’s family, and the same applies to the case of matrilocal households. However, the wife or the husband will no longer have permission to access the pastureland which they used to have in their former village before marriage, if they move to another village. Generally, people move out of their village in such cases, although kin relationships remain strong.

All these residence types tie each household to others through their kinship relationships. In Tibetan this is known as Rü. Rû literally means ‘bone’, and rû gyü means ‘lineage of bone.’ Rû refers to the kinship that each member, male and female, inherits. The rû name comes from one’s father, but everyone also needs to know the rû name of their mother (the mother’s father’s Rû). Descent is mainly traced patrilineally (father’s father’s father’s and onwards) but it can also be done matrilineally (mother’s father’s father’s and so on). The rû system can usually trace common ancestors through more than 100 generations on the male side, but not more than six generations on the female side. Metaphorically, the six female generations refer to the arm’s six joints, counting from the first joint of the finger to the last bone of the arm. This metaphor carries some symbolic meaning. Symbolically, the Rû is transformed into blood when it passes through the maternal lineage (Levine 1988:37). This seems linked to prohibitions of incest and sexual activity within the same rû.
There are nine different rù types among all the households in Da. These rù names are passed from each head of household’s patrilineal line, and senior males represent the head of their households. Table 27 shows the different rù names of the six principal households. The headmen of No.1 and No. 2 are two biological brothers, and these two households share the rù name of Sa (?). Household Head of No.3 is the son of No.1, and so inherited the rù name Sa (?). The Household Head of No.13 inherited his father’s rù name of A khyung mo (?), the Head of household’s other three brothers split from No.13 and established their own households as Nos.4, 9 and 10. They all share the same rù name. Besides these six principle households, No.14 had migrated from another village during the communalisation period. No.11 subdivided from No.14, and they share the same rù name of Geng po (?). No.12 is the other household that had moved from another village. An informant said that A rik is the No.12’s rù name122. When we compare Figure 48 and Table 27, one might wonder why No.5 has a separate rù name even though it divided from No.17. It is because the head of household of No.5 is the brother-in-law of the head of household of No.17, and, therefore, the head of household of No.5 has a different rù name.

Although the current field data recorded nine different rù names, it does not cover all cases. For instance, No.19123 is a household where a man (Phu) and a woman (Tséring) live together and raise their family, even though they have not undertaken legal registration of their marriage. Tséring mentioned to me the Rus name of her late husband, not the rù name of her ex-partner or her current partner. In this case, she had her children by three different men, and these children inherited three different rù names from their biological fathers, even though they live under the same roof. Another case is No.15. I was told that the head of household of No.5 shares the same rù name as his sister and, therefore, I thought they were biological siblings. However, another information source made me realise that they share the same rù from their mother’s side, but different rù names from their father’s side. An accurate statement of a rù name may be affected by personal circumstances. For example a mother may not want to tell the rù name of her child born

122 No.11 and No.12 moved out Da. It is unclear whether or not the ru names recorded here might be correct. 
123 I place No.19 together with No.15, showing that No.19 inherited a same rù name from the head of household of No.15.
out of wedlock, or in some cases, a woman may not know who the father of her child is. However, these are rare exceptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sa</th>
<th>No.1</th>
<th>No.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sìng khang (?)</td>
<td>No.19</td>
<td>No.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a khyung mo (?)</td>
<td>No.13</td>
<td>No.9; No.10; No.4; No.20; No.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go jê (?)</td>
<td>No.17</td>
<td>No.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gê mo</td>
<td>No.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a mé</td>
<td>No.6</td>
<td>No.7; No.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geng po</td>
<td>No.14</td>
<td>No.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chang rik (?)</td>
<td>No.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a rîk</td>
<td>No.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25 Rû names of households in Da based on patrilineal relationships.

Note: this shows the primary household for each rû and then those households attached to that lineage.

Local informants could not tell me how rû names originated. Some rû names might be named after a place where they used to live, or where they came from. For instance, the head of household of No.17 explained the origin of his rû name to me. His rû name literally represents ‘auspiciousness’, and he believes this rû originates from the Karm region in Sichuan (to the north-east of the study village and geographically on the eastern side of the Tibetan Plateau in the central PRC). People of this rû are known to be good at business. The association of a rû name with a place has been found by other researchers. For instance, Namgyel from another county (Amdo) in Nagchu, explained that his rû name is named after a place Mayo Khamuk Pendza, where his ancestors used to live (Gelek, Liu, Zhang & An, 2002:205).

The rû name of a household is associated with post-marital residential type. The rû name of Ego’s father is considered as the representative Rû name of Ego’s family, whether patrilocal, or neolocal. The rû name of Ego’s daughter’s husband will be the representative of a household when matrilocal applies, but this can be applicable only when the son-in-law obtains decision-making status in the family.

The relationship of a rû lineage segment reflects the distance between each house’s location in Da. Households close to each other provide more support for each other than when the location is further away. It is not surprising to find that kin relationships on a day-to-day basis are limited by proximity; the further away, the weaker the link. Such
support systems involve both daily economic activities and social interactions. In this context, it is possible to say that a kin segment arises from physical proximity allowing bonding and social/economic interactions, while recruitment to it is governed primarily by wider kin relationships.

**Kin segment 1:** The head of household of No. 16 was the father of the interviewee. He was the head of household of No. 16 at the time of the field survey in 2007. He passed away in 2008. He has two daughters. One daughter was the interviewee of No. 16, and the other is the wife of the interviewee of No. 2. The house of No. 2 was built close to No. 16 when one of the daughters got married. The close relationship of these two households is marked by the gé mo rû name from the paternal line, as well as sa rû from the maternal line.

![Kin segment one: No. 16 and No. 2](image)

**Figure 45 Kin segment one**

**Kin Segment 2:** Households No. 4, No. 9 and No. 10 are derived from No. 13. The head of household of No. 13 is the interviewee in No. 13, and his biological brothers are the interviewees in No. 9 and No. 10. The wife of the interviewee of No. 4 is the biological sister of the head of household of No. 13. Houses of these subdivided households are built adjacent to, and around, the house of No. 13. The kin ties are through the a khyung mo (rû).
Kin Segment 3: Nos. 7 and No. 8 have subdivided from No.6. The head of household of No.6 is the interviewee of No.16, and his two biological brothers are the interviewees of No.7 and No.8. No.7 and No.8 are located close to each side of the house of No.6. The kin ties are through the a mé rũ from the paternal line of the headmen of each household.
**Kin Segment 4:** No.5 and No.18 are divided from No.17. The head of household of No.17 is the interviewee of No.17, and his son is the interviewees of No. 18. The interviewee of No. 5 is the biological brother of the wife of No.17’s head of household. These houses are built close to each other. These kin ties between No.18 and No.17 are through go jé (?) rǔ from the paternal line, and between No.5 and No.17 through the chang rik rǔ from the head of household’s wife’s side.

![Kin segment four: No.17, No.5 and No.18](image)

**Figure 48 Kin segment four**

**Kin Segment 5:** No.15 is divided from No.19. The head of household is the wife of the interviewee of No.19; her father is the head of household and interviewee of No.19. Although their houses are next door to each other. shing khang (?) rǔ is the rǔ name for the head of household of No.15 and for the head of household’s daughter in No.19.

![Kin segment five: No.19 and No.15](image)

**Figure 49 Kin segment five**
**Kin Segment 6:** No.3 is divided from No.1. The head of household is the interviewee of No.1, and his son is the interviewee of No.3. They share sa rū from the paternal line. However, the location of these two houses is a fair distance apart. This may indicate that kin ties are weak, and that there is disunity between these households.

![Image of Kin Segment 6](image1.png)

**Kin Segment 7:** No.20 and No.21 are divided from No.4. The head of household is the interviewee of No.4, and his two sons are the husbands of the interviewees of No.20 and No.21. The kin ties are through the a khyung mo (?) rū from the paternal line. No.21 built their house close to No.4. However, the other household No.20 is located some distance from No.4.

![Image of Kin Segment 7](image2.png)
When relationships within the same kin group break down leading to disunity, the emotional stress in the situation is lessened by putting some distance between the families. This gives the community some resilience. Events that may well have torn a close-packed community apart are minimised without threatening the productivity and cohesion of the community as a whole. When mapped, this territory can be seen clearly. The distance between houses and their kin segments show clearly how pragmatic decision-making copes with the normal dissensions of life. For instance, Map 10 shows the location of No. 20 from Kin Segment 7 and the distance between No.20 and No.4. This is due to disunity. The wife of head of household No.20 was distrusted by her mother-in-law from No. 4, so No.20 decided to move away from No.4, and built their own small house further south although remaining part of the village. In Kin Segment 6, No.3 is divided by space from No.1, not like other households that built houses close to each other. No.3 resides some distance from No.1. The story behind this situation runs as follows: the wife of head of household No.3 could not get along with her mother-in-law (No1.), and their relationship became unpleasant and acrimonious. So houses were placed between them (see Bohannons, 1968; Turner, 1957).

![Kin segment diagram]

Figure 52 Households in Kin segment category, Da, 2007

Note: the green colour in 6 square columns represents 6 principal households in Da. The pink colour in two columns represent sub-principal households from which two household are divided.
Map 10 Kin segment and location of each household in Da, 2007.

- Seven kin segments are indicated by underlying circles; over striking arrow shows where the household, within a close kin segment, is divided. A sticking arrow shows clearly the distance between houses and its kin segment. A rectangle in a dark colour shows the principal household of each kin segment.
- Many of these relationships only suggest two or at most three generations, but this should not be taken to mean that kin relationship tend to loosen after two to three generations.

### 8.2.5.2 Economic aspects of kinship ties

In the previous section, we concluded that surplus labour (or labour outflow) and other assets are two significant factors in respect of household gross income and household expenditure. When we test this statement in terms of kinship ties, there seem to be two general principles as to why some households have more outflow than others, and why some households are able to have more assets than others. These two principles are:

- labour sharing between close kin
- decision-making within a kin segment on household assets made by one household which may influence the other household.

Figure 51 and Table 28 show differences in labour outflow and differences in household supplementary income sources among these seven kin segments. Kin segment 4 (Nos. 5, 17 and 18) has the lowest labour outflow and the lowest household assets. They have only one
labourer involved in non-pastoral activities. This labourer is the son of the head of household in No. 17, and he drives their truck. For the pastoral herding work, No. 17 shares labourers with No. 5 and No. 18. When they need to herd yaks on winter pastures\textsuperscript{124}, No. 18 shares the labourer from No. 17; this labourer is hired by No. 17. As to the decision-making influence among households in Kin segment 4, No. 17 and No. 5 made a joint decision to sell their sheep in 1999. These two households were the first two households to exchange sheep for cash in Da. Kin segment 5 (Nos. 15 and 19) has the highest labour outflow and household assets. No. 15 has four labourers and No. 19 has three labourers earning cash outside of pastoral economics. This labour outflow involves two activities: one is to collect caterpillar fungus with three labourers from No. 15 and two labourers from No. 19, and the other is to be a singer in a night club in Nagchu town. One labourer from each household is involved in the second activity. Their case shows these two households make similar decisions on when and how to organise their travel to collect fungus, and decisions on allocating labourers to generate cash income. Similarly, sharing labourers within a Kin segment is a common practice among the rest of the households. For example, No. 2 and No. 16 from Kin segment 1 share the same labourers for herding when they travel to winter pasture, and likewise, the son of head of household from No. 4 herds yaks in winter pasture together with Nos. 4, 20 and 21; these households are in Kin segment 7. Food sharing and frequent visits are commonly practiced among households from the same Kin segment. This shows unity between kin, with associated information exchanges and the generation of decision-making consensus. Taking Morgan’s metaphorical image of an organisation as a ‘brain’ (Morgan, 2006) provides a useful analogy. This matrix working brings undoubted economic advantages, not least the capacity to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances. According to Morgan, these types of organisation also tend to be more innovative and entrepreneurial. This seems to be the case in Da.

The reciprocity in sharing labourers extends across the boundary of Kin segments. When families construct their households/tents and build their livestock shelters, it is common that a household of one Kin segment shares its labourer(s) with the other

\textsuperscript{124} Male labourers are the dominant participants who travel together to a better pasture from February or March to April or June. They herd yaks for up to three months. The rest of household members remain sedentary for a full year.
households of different Kin segments. This aggregated resource offers economic advantages because tasks with greater resource requirements can be done and completed more quickly. Figure 54 shows that a total of seven families from different kin segments received free labour support when they constructed their houses. For instance, when No.10 of kin segment 2 constructed their house in 2007, 12 labourers from other households of all seven kin segments helped No.10 to build the house. Instead of paying the cost of the labourers, food sharing was the common way and No.10 recompensed labour support from other households. Figure 54 does not provide information about No.14, as No.14 does not have kin segment ties in Da. Even so, No.14 received labourer sharing from other households of different kin segments in Da when No.14 built their house in 2003. A total of 20 labourers participated in the house construction, and it took three days for them to complete the task. Data shows that 90% of households from each kin segment built their livestock shelters by receiving labourer sharing. Among the other 10%, 5% is that of No.2 of kin segment 2 who hired four Tibetan farmers to build their shelter – however, it cost them RMB 3,000. The other 5% is that of No.15 of kin segment 5 who received aid–support from their kin who lived and worked in Nagchu town. No.15 is the only household in Da who built a big greenhouse which is used as a glasshouse for growing vegetables in summer, and it is used as a warm shed to keep livestock in winter. This greenhouse or warm shed has a much bigger space than an ordinary warm shed. Furthermore, it is built with thick concrete walls and uses glass as its roof so that it can better trap heat inside the building. This is an example of technology transfer from other districts.

![Labourer outflow and kin segments, Da, 2007](image)

Figure 53 Labourer outflow and kin segments, Da, 2007
Table 26 Supplementary income sources and kin segments, Da, 2007.

Note: the number refers to labour outflow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kin segment</th>
<th>Stone mining</th>
<th>Caterpillar fungus</th>
<th>Truck &amp; tractor</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Kin segment 4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Kin segment 6</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin segment 7</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin segment 2</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin segment 5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 54 Labourer sharing for constructing houses between Kin segments, Da, 2007

Note1: The columns with blue are households which built their household by getting support from other households.

Note 2: There is no formal accounting system, just an assumption that over time reciprocity will apply. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve a better analysis to show all the tasks for which labour is shared, and to estimate the relative importance of each task e.g. 5% of house cost, etc.

8.2.5.3 Kin segments as one group

The kin segments form a Ru kor (Da), as described in Chapter 2 which are refered to as Zu in Chinese (组). In the context of ru kor (or lineage, Zu), all kin segments in Da form one group, a united pastoral community. This community has their specific logic and rational thinking. Their experiences function as, what Geertz called (1966), a ‘model’ of reality. This model enables herders to unite themselves as a group in which they share common meaning and understanding of their resources and behaviours. In this context, the
model enables locals to share a common meaning, sense of purpose and identity that they express through their economic activities, and which increase the social well-being of the community as a whole. One typical example described in Chapter 7 can illustrate this and is taken from the case story of how these kin segments united to protect their common pasture.

“...on 9th September 2008, two of our fellows from Da were on duty looking after our fenced pasture area. This pasture area is located on the border between Nagchu town and our village. Our two fellows found 17 goats which did not belong to Da grazing on the land. They moved those goats to the village, and waited for the owner of the goats to pick them up and pay the grazing fee to the people’s committee of Da. However, when the owner came, he refused to pay the grazing fee, which was about US$2.00. Instead, he came with six men and four women to have a fight with the people of Da. They threw stones at us, and we had to fight back...” (A report was written by Da committee on 22nd September 2008)

Another example is the zu Committee Meeting (ZCM). Participants of the ZCM are male representatives of each household. Females also take part in the meeting, but only when the male representatives are not able to attend the ZCM for some reason. The ZCM has two functions and purposes. One is to announce and implement policies of the state for various purposes. The other is for discussion and sharing thoughts at a grass root level, mainly concerning their pastoral economics. The organiser of the ZCM is the head of zu (zu zhang 组长 in Chinese term). The head of zu is normally selected by the male representatives of each household. This selection process seems to reflect the practice as to how the ru ba selected their head pre-1950s. This is yet another example of how the Drokpa first accommodated imposed structures and then, when the opportunity arose, melded them into their traditional practice. Pirie pointed similar case from Amdo of north-eastern part of Tibetan plateau (Pirie, 2005:96).

How participants discuss and share their ideas during ZCM can be illustrated from following field note made on 28th October, 2007.

The head of Da called every household to send their participant to join the ZCM today. The meeting was supposed to be held at 12:00pm; however, it began at 12:39 when all participants had gathered. Then, the head of Da explained the aim of the ZCM for today. It is about land distribution to individual households, and the principles are supposed to be followed. The following recordings are the discussions of some of the key speakers.
The Head of Da: “We should achieve a common consensus about how to distribute our common land to every household during today’s meeting. Based on this consensus, we will then be able to report our solution to the senior administrator tomorrow. The key disagreement among us is that everyone wants to have the land close to Nagchu town, because that part of land will be valuable in terms of renting, and there will be good cash income for that land. I hope we will have a good solution from today’s meeting.”

The migrant: “Our family has been living on the land close to town for many years. It is obvious that we invested lots of our future and used our labourers to construct our house and fences. Therefore, I feel it is quite reasonable for our family to keep residing on that part of the land. Otherwise, it would be very tough for us if we had to move to another pasture area.

The male representative from No.16 stated: “Our discussion would fall through if we keep saying ‘I want that bit of land’. I think the better way is to let every household have land in three different areas.”

The male representative from No.17 said: “The key point is that every household will fence in their part of land when the land is distributed to them. If household A resides and occupies a piece of land which had been distributed to household B, then, how are they going to solve the problem?”

Migrant: “Does it tend to mean my family has to move out of the current area, and resettle somewhere else?”

The head of Da: “It might be the ideal way if we drew lots for the land.”

Photo 13 Drokpa girls at the Annual Horse Race
Such meetings had been held several times, but no progress was achieved until 2009 (Chapter 7).

In terms of sharing a common meaning and expression through their economic activities, an example is the food items that households of these kin segments purchase during the Annual Tibetan New Year and the Annual Horse Race. Data shows that all households prepared the same pastoral food items, such as dried meat, boiled meat, cheese, cheese cake, and yogurt. Similarly, Figure 55 shows that these households purchased similar items of non-pastoral food such as fried cake, soft drinks, cookies, and fresh fruit, and readymade food such as pork, chicken and to-fu. Through sharing similar food items, they share a common understanding about food and the cultural meaning such as the preparation of ‘luxury’ or ‘not every-day’ or ‘much appreciated’ food for special occasions. Every household provides pastoral food items when members from other households visit their household. What food items should be prepared and provided during the festivals is part of their common understanding. Every household now purchases non-pastoral food items from the market for cash. These accepted customs have re-emerged recently in Da, becoming new content for their traditional model. In both cases, there are two indicators: one is the cultural expression of hospitality, and the other is the economic status associated with material holding, the ability to provide pastoral food, and purchasing power for non-pastoral food items. Among all food items, they did not buy moray, shrimp and crabs which are popular consumption items for Chinese, although these items are becoming accepted by city Tibetans. For Da people, they share a common understanding of food prohibitions as to these alien food items; they say that this is due to their religious beliefs. However, this selective choice-making may indicate a difference between rural Tibetan pastoralists and urban Tibetans. It is possible that the Drokpa of Da see food items as setting a boundary between the two (Kuper, 1992). Although rural and urban Tibetans share the same religious beliefs (a meld of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon Religion), and they are a group of people within a same belief boundaries, people who live in urban areas, especially those who have more frequent interaction with outsiders, now accept the eating of sea food. The herders, however, reject these attitudes toward seafood as contaminating their traditional way of life. This may be conservatism and a desire to
maintain the status quo, but may equally well be a defensive measure to protect their unique identity.

8.2.6 Kin ties with their extended social relationship

8.2.6.1 Kin ties with other villages

Kin segments in Da extend their kin relationship to other ru kor (Zu)\textsuperscript{125}. These kin relationships with other villages highlight a support network for the pastureland and for livestock. Map 11 shows the location of Da and its three neighbouring villages; each kin segment from Da has its extended kin network with these three villages. For instance, field data shows how a household in Da has kin relatives with six households from village A and with 35 households from village C, and that most households in Da have kin ties with 47 households from village B. From the available field data, this extended kin network between Da and other villages involves land sharing and looking after livestock. When Da people started reducing sheep numbers between 1999 and 2004, and the Da committee made the consensual decision that all households should get rid of their sheep from Da pastures in 2005. There were several households who applied for dispensation in the matter of sheep keeping. For instance, some households asked their kin in village B to keep their sheep in village B, some households sold their sheep to relatives from village B, and some kept their

\textsuperscript{125} Several ru-kor formed a ru-wa pre-1950s. This, can be understood as several Ru-skors which formed Cun in the Chinese term (村). For herders, the Cun has its political position. It provides a kind of same locality identity for herders who recognise themselves as being from the same group, and they share obligations and rights together with regard to sharing pastureland (to some extent), and prevent outsiders from grazing on their pastureland.
sheep in distant villages which their headmen’s wives came from. This again is evidence of the Drokpa’s capacity to accommodate radical change through a transition period and/or using a wider support network to manage the change. Table 29 shows that households of each kin segment applied different ways with regard to keeping sheep. The field data illustrates that households receiving most kin network support are those whose headmen’s wives are from distant villages, and households received kin network support through those who had kin ties in village B. In such a case, kin relatives in village B supported their kin from Da by keeping their sheep in village B or bought sheep from their kin in Da. However, such a support network may be challenged by other herders who do not have kin ties with Da. For example, No.17 asked their kin relatives in village B to keep their sheep but this supporting network was questioned by other herders from village B, and No.17 had to sell all their sheep in 2003. The wider community seems to share commitment to the checks and balances that regulate transactions, in order to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number. Competitive feelings exist, but do not predominate. These relationships show that there is some flexibility in the use of grazing lands.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kin segment 6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin segment 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Map 11 Da and its neighbouring villages, 2007
Table 27 Different approaches for keeping sheep of households in each kin segment in Da, 2007

| A: Other approach            |
| B: Keep sheep in village B   |
| C: Sell sheep to herders who are from other counties |
| D: Sell sheep to herders who are from village B |
| E: Keep sheep in distance villages where headmen’s wives have kin ties |
| F: No sheep                 |

8.2.6.2 Kin ties with the town

Kin ties in Da extend to neighbouring Nagchu. Such kin ties link households from Da with opportunities to earn income, or obtain cash resources. This can be a strategy for diversifying their economic activity as happens in other pastoral societies (Benedict, 1942; Barrett et al., 2001, Little et al., 2001a). Table 30 shows every household in Da has its kin who reside in Nagchu. When we place these households into kin segment categories, Figure 56 shows the number difference of each kin segment in Da regarding relatives who reside in Nagchu. Among all the kin segments, Kin Segment 5 has the highest number of relatives from the town. Figure 57 illustrates in further detail that the kin segment 5 has the highest cash income from wage jobs per labourer and highest cash income from resources such as caterpillar fungus. The two households of Kin Segment 5 obtain their wage jobs with support from the daughter (Q) of head of household of No.15. The daughter (Q) is also the biological sister of the headwoman of No.19. The daughter (Q) helped two teenage girls from these households to perform at a night club. Being part-time singers, these two girls can earn RMB 1,600 monthly for each household. For access rights to caterpillar fungus, No.15 and No.19 are the fortunate households in Da, because of the lineage on the Household Head’s wife’s side. The wife came from a far away, where the very profitable caterpillar fungus grows, and most of her biological kin reside in that county. This kin relationship allows No.19 and No.15 to travel to that county and harvest the caterpillar fungus every year.

Unlike No.15 and No.19 from Kin Segment 5, other households did not seem to have much benefit in terms of cash income, even though they have biological kin outside Da some of whom may reside in the town. Such a population outflow from every household can mean that there are fewer people to look after the livestock, hence the current focuson
yaks and there no bing no sheep or goats. This could reflect a scarcity of land, restricting the opportunities to earn income from livestock. However, it seems that while this may be part of their motive, the greater opportunities to obtain more income in town, as well as the greater social interaction that follows, could be the stronger motive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Number</th>
<th>The number of relatives in town</th>
<th>The relationship with the head of household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Head of household’s daughters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Head of household’s daughters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Head of household’s sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Head of household’s brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Head of household’s sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Head of household’s sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Head of household’s daughters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s sister’s four daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Head of household’s biological sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s sister from father’s side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Head of household’s wife’s younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s biological younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Head of household’s wife’s younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s biological younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Head of household’s biological younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s wife’s mother’s sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Head of household’s wife’s sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s mother’s brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Head of household’s oldest daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s second daughter’s son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s wife’s sister’s two sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s wife’s younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Kin Ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Head of household’s wife’s younger sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s wife’s sister’s son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Head of household’s four daughters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Head of household’s four sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Head of household’s oldest daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s younger sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s mother’s sister’s two sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s mother’s younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s mother’s sister’s younger sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s mother’s sister’s son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s mother’s sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Head of household’s father’s brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s wife’s younger sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Head of household’s father’s brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of household’s wife’s mother’s sister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28 Kin ties (relatives) who live in Nagchu town, of each household, Da, 20
229

Figure 56 Number of relatives (kin ties) in Naqchu town of each Kin segments, Da, 2007

Figure 57 Wage jobs and cash resources through the Kin network, Da, 2007.

Note: the numbers on the vertical axis are cash value in RMB.

Marriage and education are the two main reasons for the population outflow from Da to the town mentioned by the informants. 54% of the total population outflow is head of household’s daughters, or sisters or grand–daughters (Table 31) indicating that education of females is regarded as equally important as that of males. 15% of the population outflow is the head of household’s brothers or uncles. 31% of kin ties outside of Da relate to the lineage of head of household’s wife. This is not population outflow from Da, but inward migration from other counties to Da. Table 32 illustrates how sections of the population moved out from Da, and reside in the town. 30% of the population obtained their jobs in the town (permanent or non–permanent) through education, 18% moved out of Da through opportunities for part–time jobs, 16% moved to the town when they married someone who lived in the town, and 12% sustain their life in the town through running small businesses.
24% are kin ties, referring to headmen wives’ lineage kin, who migrated from other counties to reside in Nagchu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kin Segment</th>
<th>Head of household’s daughters, or sisters, or grand-daughters</th>
<th>Head of household’s brothers or uncles</th>
<th>Head of household’s wife’s kin lineage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kin Segment 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin Segment 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin Segment 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin Segment 4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin Segment 5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin Segment 6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin Segment 7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29 Kin moved out from each household categorised into Kin segments, Da

Table 30 Way in which kin moved out from their household in Da to town.

Note: the households are categorised within kin segment, 2007

8.2.7 Extended social network

Extended social networks refer to two types of social relationship. One is the exchange of labour between different households; the other is the extended social network of personal relationships, often among relatives. Kin in the town help their relatives in Da to extend their social network across the boundary of Da for the purpose of selling yak dung,
yogurt or other services. For instance, one of the kin for No.15 is the oldest daughter of the head of household. In 2001, she put No.15 in contact with some consumers in town who wanted to purchase yak dung for heating. This contact enabled No.15 to sell large amounts of yak dung at one time. This is more rewarding than selling small amounts of yak dung every day, and then mostly by chance. Links such as this enable economies of scale. Another relative of No.15 in Nagchuintroduced several consumers from Nagchu to No.15 in 2008. This enabled No.15 to earn around RMB600 within a month. Another case is yogurt selling. Yogurt sellers normally stand on the side streets in the town, and wait for buyers. This approach to selling yogurt may take time for sellers who have to compete with other sellers. However, in the case of No.19, a female relative from Nagchu, who is a local government employee, introduced six yogurt buyers from her workplace to No.19. This network enables No.19 to sell yogurt on a regular basis with a reasonable cash income as a result.

There are other financial benefits from these relationships. For example, No.15 built the first greenhouse (warm shed for livestock in winter) in Da in 1998. This benefited from the daughter of the head of household of No.15. The daughter had a friend who was organising a project with regard to greenhouses. The daughter proposed to her friend that she should set up the project in Da, and subsequently No.15 gained a free-built warm shed (Government programmes have been encouraging their wider use across China) No.15 used the warm shed for two purposes: first to keep livestock during winter so that animal would not lose too much weight due to the low temperatures; the second purpose was to grow green vegetables in summer time. Both these uses were very positive for their household economy. Avoiding loss of animal body weight means that the animals produce more and better milk and better quality meat. This subsequently had a positive cash impact on the income of the household. Growing vegetables themselves meant that No.15 could save cash previously used to purchase vegetables from the market. Such extended networks apply to other household such as No.17. The head of household has four daughters who live in Nagchu. Data from 2001 shows that this kin network supports extended networking relationships for No.17. This enabled No.17 to operate a truck business between Da, Nagchu and other counties. The above shows that economic activities and consequent
benefits grow exponentially when and where strong kinship networks exist, and are utilised proactively. This illustrates the linkage between economic gain and the community activities and values reinforced by cultural activities.

This relationship between economic success and community cohesion and continuity is significant. Such networks are not necessarily based upon kin ties. Friendship and social contacts are other important factors in building business networks such as in the case of the marketing and sale of yogurt (Chart 4). For instance, Tséring from No.15 is well known in Da because she has a well developed network for yogurt sales. Her story tells how friendship helped her to build a broad network in Nagchu, which enabled her to have stable, sustainable options for the sale of yogurt. Community cohesion provides many benefits but, above all, resilience and sustainability. These counter other instabilities in a market driven economy.

“My consumers can be divided into two groups. One group is those who have jobs and have a relatively stable income. The other group is those who migrated from other counties and settled in Nagchu. At the beginning, I had no network to sell my yogurt. I started to sell my yogurt as any other herders do, travelling to Nagchu town and standing in side streets waiting for customers. In this way, I came to know A. He is a medical doctor with the local hospital. We became good friends, and he introduced six other colleagues from his work unit. Later on, I came to know B, who is a health doctor. She put me into contact with ten of her colleagues. By chance, I become friends with C, who is a meteorologist and he introduced me to ten of his colleagues. D is also my friend who works as officer; I came to know ten of his colleagues through him. I bring yogurt to their places whenever they want to purchase yogurt from me. I have built up a network with a second group in recent years. They are migrants who used to be herders or semi-herders where they came from. They benefitted dramatically in terms of cash income in recent years because their places have rich herb resources, and it has a high market price. These people purchase my yogurt regularly, and I know around one hundred consumers from this network.”
The manner in which she has developed the business and the way in which she can articulate the key business processes is an example of sophisticated entrepreneurialism (Stoner & Freeman, 1992). The Drokpa have always engaged in various forms of trade e.g. salt and livestock products over the centuries, but this example shows how some are adapting effectively to the changing economic conditions that now apply in China, that go well beyond the local households and villages. One is then driven to ask how such thinking could have arisen amongst the Drokpa and through individuals who have had no formal education in business. Of course much of their expertise will have come through experiential learning, but this could not have happened unless they had the drive to be entrepreneurial, and had developed a conceptual framework through which to plan a strategy. It could be surmised that the seeds of entrepreneurialism could exist within the tacit knowledge of the Drokpa. There is evidence in this research that ‘Drokpa’ are entrepreneurial. They have the following characteristics:

- They have a drive not simply for survival, but also for development
• They recognise that economic and social networks create opportunities for better production, and greater efficiency and effectiveness
• Previously a non-technological society, they have developed an understanding of the practical utility of new technologies and technology transfer
• Whilst holding on to that which is of proven worth, they also have the capacity to adapt, evolve and be innovative
• Within their culture, they have innate understanding of market processes and requirements, and such concepts as economies of scale and opportunity costs
• Their thinking is reflective, with an intuitive capacity to discriminate between that which works and that which needs to adapt or change.

If this is the case, the Drokpa are well placed to both prosper within the emerging commercial world and to sustain their unique identity. This theme is further investigated in the next section.

8.3 Kin and its cosmos

Continuing the theme of complimentarity, we now consider the spiritual beliefs of the Drokpa. As will be seen, these beliefs bring meaning to their lives and influence their activities. As will be seen from the interviewees’ own words, these beliefs have a discourse and grammar of their own.

“To have wealth, one needs hereditary sö nam, and acquire it by working hard” informants said, “Someone who has sö nam means someone who has a life of good material wealth, has lots of livestock, and has good health. If someone has a sö nam life now, it is blessed from one’s past life. Sö nam needs to be accumulated from one’s compassionate thoughts and kind deeds to others, and the thoughts and the deeds need to follow from one’s sincere beliefs.”

This statement encapsulates the manner in which the Drokpa bridge the gap between one discourse and another. They influence each other and, to some extent, offer evidence of an interdependence of cultural beliefs and economic well-being as perceived by the Drokpa.

The environment has often been noted as having a major influence on pastoral societies, and this would arguably be the case for the Drokpa, given the long history of dependence upon livestock for their survival and livelihood. Livestock are dependent upon the local
environment for sustenance, and without that linkage, people would not have been able to live on the Tibetan Plateau. These associations have been long-recognised in studies of African pastoral societies (Evans-Pritchard, 1940a; Dyson-Hudson, 1980:25). Protective deities who symbolise the high plateau environment have been part of Tibetan pastoral society, probably from the very early days of human settlement. These deities have been used to interpret the environment and how it should be managed, as well as providing a context for the life of the Drokpa. To outsiders, the relationships between the Drokpa and deities may seem only spiritual and mystical. However, in practice, these relationships often become part of daily life and provide meaning for their existence. Deities function, confirmed by field data, by sustaining a sense of place (Casey, 1993) as well as a sense of identity. As the link between the spiritual and the mundane, they create a sense of order and purpose, and feelings of providential security. Belief becomes a vehicle for meaning about society and the physical world. Almost uniquely in Tibetan Buddhism, it produces feelings of permanence in a world of impermanence. This is but one of the paradoxes of Tibetan Buddhism.

All households in Da expend material wealth on the expression and community enactment of religious beliefs. Wealth-related notions are integral to these beliefs. Tibetan Buddhism, probably as a result of its incorporating elements from the earlier Bon religion, has enshrined older earth-and sky-based deities with their ritual practices. There are many deities; they can be usefully grouped into three categories, even though the deities overlap in function. A common aspect of the belief in these deities is that they can provide protection against bad deities and the harshness of their environment if treated correctly:

**Puk lha, yül lha and general deities such as Penden Lhamo.** Puk lha deities are specifically favoured by kin segments. Different kin segments have their own Puk lha deity. It is normally inherited from the paternal line, but not in an absolute sense. Field survey shows that a groom will enshrine
his bride’s puk lha if the groom marries into and resides with the bride’s family: for example: No.13 of kin segment 2 and No.17 of kin segment 4. If a couple establishes their own new household, they will favour the husband’s puk lha as in the case of No.20 and No.21 of Kin segment 7. Field studies showed that most of the kin segments in Da enshrined puk lha from paternal lines. By ‘enshrined’ we mean physical shrines at the centre of a household that are the focus of reverence and daily rituals.

**Yül lha and Penden Lhamo are the protective deities.** The local protective deity or ‘deity of the local territory’ is Yül lha in local terminology, and the monastery deities are various such as Penden Lhamo. As to the local protective deity, Karmey, Samten (1996) defines the term yül as a connotation of local territory in the sense of a defined locality, while lha refers to deity. Karmey, Samten (1996, 1994) mentioned that the Yül lha deity can be originally related to the territory of an early clan society. This provides evidence that a local deity can be identified with the political territory from which a kin segment originated. Anthropologists have shown, in Amazonian Pira–Pirana, Watchi, Balinese and Zanzibaris case studies, how the notion of local deity is associated with where a human group comes from, and is linked with myth as to how the deity has come into being (Lovell, 1998). Such myths contain meanings which may determine purpose in everyday life.

**The monastery deity, Penden Lhamo,** is the major protector deity in Tibetan Buddhism, and a special protector of Tibetan culture, of Lhasa, of each household, and the only female among the powerful group of the Eight Dharma Protectors. She is particularly favoured by the Gé lukpa School as she is the special protector of the Dalai Lama (Tucci, 1988; Bellezza, 2005; Rene De, 1956).

For the Drokpa, the other main deity that is widely acknowledged is the local deity, yül lha, which can protect family members from illness protect the members from bad luck, and keep herders’ livestock prospering as well as saving them from being lost. To receive this protection, the household needs to propitiate these protective deities based on ‘doubtless’ faith, and by offering material goods through ritual practices.

In the case of Da, five different local (yul lha) deities are recorded (Table 33), Nam ra (A), Damchen Dorjé Lekpa(B), Nam ding (C), and Dorjé Chukmo (D), and Naklha Dzambha (?) (E). Among the five local deities, Damchen Dorjé Lekpa (B) is the most common deity
for all households from the seven kin segments in Da. This local deity is worshipped by local rural people around the Nagchu county area. The other three local deities found in Da probably indicate that these families originated from other areas. For instance, No.16 propitiate Nam ra (A) deity. This deity is known as the local deity of the bar ta tribe, and it means the lineage of No.16 most probably originated from this (bar ta) group; this deity is also propitiated by No.2 as it is subdivided from No.16. No.13 propitiate Nam ding (C). This deity is known as a local deity from the Nam ding area and, therefore, the lineage of No.13 originated from that area. Nos.4, 9 and 10 also propitiate Dorjé Chukmo (D) as three subdivided household from No.13. In Kin Segment 2, No.9 propitiate one the local deity known as a local deity for the Amdo tribal formation. This is because the head of household’s wife came from this area before she married the head of household’s of No. 9. The Naklha Dzambha (?) (E) is propitiated by No.15, and this deity is a local deity of the Bi ru area where the head of household’s wife came from.

These five different local deities link each kin segment with its residential place, or with its original residential place. In addition, there are some households in Da that are associated with monastery deities. This type of linking happens when a family had connections with monasteries. For instance, Nos. 15, 16 and 19 were commoners attached to the Kündéling monastery, and this is why these households propitiate the protection of Dar mar from that monastery. No.6 propititates a deity of the Taklung monastery. This indicates that in kin lineage of No 6 might be commoner status of the monastery and that they might originally come from the Lhündrup area.

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126 The Kündél Ling was one of the four ‘royal monasteries’ (Tengye Ling, Kündél Ling, Tsemchog Ling and Tsomon Ling) in Lhasa which were associated by the government of Tibet with regents during a Dalai Lama’s minority from 1757 until 1895 (Karsten, n.d.). The Kunde ling monastery was received as gift from the Tibetan government at that time, and owned pastureland and herders in Nagchu. The herders were tax payers to the monastery, had free access to the land owned by the monastery. It is unclear when the monastery received the gift, and no literature I have come across so far shows how big the range of land in Nagchu that the monastery received was, and how many households and livestock in Nagchu were under its estate.

127 This monastery is located in Lhündrup, (Ling zhou xian), to the far north of the main centre of Lhasa. A story of this deity depicted that a boy of a wealthy family liked hunting; he hunted a wild antelope one day. However, this injured antelope took his amulet and ran away. He ran after the antelope to get his amulet. Sadly, he lost his life on the long journey. People believed a demon possessed his consciousness, and he became a spirit, appearing in human form sometimes. Avoiding harm to people, a Buddhist lama from the monastery made the spirit take an oath by displaying a name, lha gé nyen, and the spirit raised the status as a protective deity for the monastery and commoners of the monastery.
The open belief system between households, between kin segments and deities from other districts can be illustrated by the common deity, Penden Lhamo. All households give pre-eminence to this deity.

Households believe that they receive protection and are blessed in various ways by these deities in life. Religious rituals are the mechanism within which people acknowledge the deities for utilitarian and non-utilitarian purposes (Bell, 1997). In such ritual activities, material goods have a role as the ‘medium’ between believers’ faith (the offers) and their cosmos (the protectors). Material goods offered to deities have their symbolic meanings, and particular goods are selected for different ritual purposes. Figure 58 show that the expenditure of each kin segment in Da’s total gross income offered for religious ritual purposes. The items offered are in goods or in cash.

Among the groups, the Kin Segments 6, 7 and 3 spend relatively less on a household religious observance than the others. This shows two features of the kin segment. One is knowledge concerning ritual practices, and the other is available wealth. A kin segment tends to spend more material wealth if the members, especially the senior members, have better transmission of ritual knowledge, as well as wealth abilities, such as in Kin Segments 1, 5, 4 and 2. Kin segments spend less material wealth if their members are less knowledgeable or are not strong in economic power such as Kin Segments 6, 7 and 3.

There does seem to be a relationship between wealth and propitiatory practices. The deity (Penden Lhamo) is believed to support well-being, and therefore there is a duty to show allegiance to propitiate this deity. To do so confirms the individual’s and community’s position and role within the cosmos, and this is marked by ritualised gifts to the deity. However, these rituals are not divorced from life, but rather lie at the heart of community gatherings, festivals and celebrations. The investment of the community in these events is not only a measure of respect for the deity, but also, and more significantly, acts out the reciprocity between humanity and the cosmology of deities, and reciprocity within the community. Although classical Buddhist beliefs underpin religious life, traditional Tibetan Buddhism religion is embedded in the realities of life.
Figure 58 Expenditure for ritual practise per Kin segment related to total income per kin segment, Da. Note: calculated as percent of total kin payments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kin segment</th>
<th>Household Number</th>
<th>Same deity from same tribe</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No.16</td>
<td>Damchen Dorjé Lekpa (A)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Household Head) (A)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Household Head’s wife)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.2</td>
<td>? (Household Head)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>? (Household Head’s wife)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No. 13</td>
<td>B (Household Head)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a chi chö kyî dröl ma (B)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Household Head’s wife)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This deity can be translated into ‘protective deity of grandmother’ literality. The deity is the grandmother of funder of ka gyû sect of Tibetan Buddhism. This information shows the kin segment had connection with this sect in the past.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 4</td>
<td>B (Household Head)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B (Household Head’s wife)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
1. No.16 (Household Head): The Household Head cannot recall what the puk lha might be, as he came to Da with his late father when he was a child.
2. No. 13 (Household Head): The Household Head married into and live with his wife. It is an uxorilocal marriage. So, the puk lha from maternal line.
3. No. 4 (Household Head): This deity can be translated into ‘protective deity of grandmother’ literality. The deity is the grandmother of funder of ka gyû sect of Tibetan Buddhism. This information shows the kin segment had connection with this sect in the past.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>(Household Head)</th>
<th>(Household Head’s wife)</th>
<th>The Household Head’s wife moved from an-do county to Da after her marriage.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>The Household Head’s wife moved from an-do county to Da after her marriage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>B (Household Head)</td>
<td>B (Household Head’s wife)</td>
<td>The Household Head’s wife moved from an-do county to Da after her marriage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No.6 Taklung (C) (Household Head)</td>
<td>C (Household Head’s wife)</td>
<td>The Household Head’s wife moved to Da from other village after her marriage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>C (Household Head)</td>
<td>C (Household Head’s wife)</td>
<td>The Household Head’s wife moved to Da from other village after her marriage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>C (Household Head)</td>
<td>C (Household Head’s wife)</td>
<td>The Household Head’s wife moved to Da from other village after her marriage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>No.17 C (Household Head)</td>
<td>C (Household Head’s wife)</td>
<td>The Household Head married into and live with his wife. It is an uxorilocal marriage. So, the puk lha from maternal line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nam ding (C) (Household Head’s wife)</td>
<td></td>
<td>This ‘deity’ is more like ‘spirit’ in English term. This is a protective spirit and is favoured by Mongolian. This information shows this kin segment was originated from Mongolian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No.19 ?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Puk lha unknown by the Household Head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>(Household Head)</td>
<td>(Household Head’s wife)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Household Head is biological brother of the Household Head of No. 2; he cannot recall what the puk lha might be, as he came to Da early age with his late father.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Household Head’s wife moved to Da from other village after her marriage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31 Kin segments and Puk lha
8.4 Changing attitudes towards material wealth

So far we have discussed how herders arrived at the point where they could meet their basic material needs and then, with surplus products gained by diversification sold for cash through wider markets, were able to meet their social as well as their cultural ‘wants.’ In both ‘needs’ and ‘wants’ there is a mechanical solidarity (Durkheim) in Drokpa society. This ‘solidarity’ is reified through social organisations such as the household unit, kin segments and a unity across a community such as Da. Such functional and practical solidarity is expressed through their economic activity. In the period of subsistence-oriented economics, local expressions of their culture through such features as costume, living arrangements and festivals, and symbolically embedded cultural norms regulate their lives more intensively than economic activity per se. However, this functional solidarity faced challenges in the period of post-collectivisation. The pastoral economy has now become more dependent on external factors, as the Drokpa seek to widen their economic activities. This has changed pressures on the internal expression of cultural identity and cohesion, and externally on the social organisation and regulation through kin segments and other patterns of social cohesion. A key issue with potential for the fragmentation of the community are the pressure of self-interest, driven by easier access to a more flexible society vs. retaining group solidarity. Drokpa are now faced with what has been called an “escalation of aspirations”, a process increased by wider communications and knowledge of the wider world.

To discuss this paradox and dilemma, I will focus on the current herders’ attitudes towards material wealth and well-being with the following questions:

- In what ways have herders’ attitudes towards wealth changed?

- To what extent and in what ways have these changes in attitude led to a change in the way they see the symbolic expression of wealth?

- In the apparent circumstance where some herders become materially wealthier than others, what is the impact upon general and cultural concepts of wealth?

- To what extent is the greater division between the wealthy and the not so wealthy leading to cultural fragmentation?
To what extent does there remain a shared understanding of what is meant by a ‘good life’?

Major household assets such as livestock, available labour and cultural ornaments were and are considered by herders as being important symbols of material wealth. This is similar among other pastoral societies such as the Mongols (Sneath, 2000). Other understandings of material wealth have changed (Wan De Khar, 1996). For instance, Lozang, a 70 year old key informant, explains that one household would be considered wealthy in material terms if it had the following components: First, sons, guns and horses. These items seem to represent strong confidence in self-protection. They act as ‘signs’ of security, and in turn have ‘symbolic’ value. Second, the household should have enough stored food such as highland barely. This was a sign of the ability to survive and cope with leaner times. Third, household members should have Tibetan costumes made with lamb hides that are the costlier and more traditional option. Other informants (aged 22, 35 and 45) had additional views. Cash is now as important as livestock as a symbol of material wealth. Other indications include: real estate, for instance, those wealthy household may have a house in Nagchu and even in Lhasa; and to be successful in business can be understood as an ability to earn cash and an ability to divert this cash capital into other assets such as houses, trucks and tractors. A case story reported by a journalist, Fei (2009) from Amdo in Nagchu province illustrates how wealthy herders convert their cash surplus into other assets:

“Amdo is located 5,200 metres above sea level in Northern Nagchu. JueJue lives in this area. When we visited him, he showed us his new house with great enthusiasm. He told us that the stone materials had been purchased in Lhasa, and had cost him $26,351 (RMB 180,000). He said that his family had only 80 sheep and 30 yaks before the 1980s. “My life has really benefited from the open market policy since the 1980s. For example, I sold most of my livestock, and bought a truck to start my first business. I saved cash from my first business, and then used the money to start my truck business in 2003. The Tibet railway passes our town. Recognising the potential, I seized this business opportunity. I invested some of my cash capital in 28 houses for the rental market, and also opened a tea house and a restaurant”.

“I used my capital in two ways that I feel meaningful. The first is to look after my parents. Considering the harsh weather here, I rented out our pastureland a few years ago, and bought a house for my parents in Lhasa. The house cost me $36,599 (RMB 250,000). The
second is to provide good education for my children. I have two children in junior high school.\textsuperscript{128}

Herders’ attitudes towards the symbolisation of wealth are also reflected in how they interpret the items acquired by wealthier herders. Such consumption items are often categorised into three items—food, dress and housing.

Food items, especially dairy products and yogurt in particular, and meat, are consumption food items which are characteristic of wealthy herders. Rice and flour are also considered as wealthy herders’ food items; the rice and flour were imported from India pre-1950s and were not common food items for most herders. However, these food items are now popular and common to most herders. Having green vegetables is mentioned as a signifier of a wealthy herder’s food; green vegetables were scare in the past.

Cultural dress has also differentiated poor from wealthy herders especially the Tibetan costume made with real lamb hides. The other is jewellery. Tibetan herders used to make clothing for themselves. It is now very common for herders to purchase ready-made costumes at market. The costume with real lamb hides costs much more than the other costume made with artificial lamb hides e.g. the first may cost RMB 1,600, while the latter might be only RMB 160. Having sufficient cash to purchase the more expensive option becomes a signifier of wealth. There is a move however, to opt for artificial hides and to adopt more western style casual dress.\textsuperscript{129} Wealthy herders purchase casual dress of high quality that is more expensive than generally available clothing. Herders use the Chinese term, \textit{gao dang} (高档), to mean high quality.

Housing was traditionally a tent, and very few lived in houses. Some more settled pastoralists did have permanent houses, usually at their winter base. The internal furnishings of tents and houses have always differentiated wealthy from poorer herders. Now living in settled communities means that most herders have a permanent house. Wealthy herders now build larger houses using good quality materials.

\footnote{128}This is good example of entrepreneurialism but had led the individual to leave his community and his interests in order to focus on his own interests and those of his immediate family. There is no evidence of investment in community activities. Even so, it is a good example of the way things may go in the future.

\footnote{129}Similar case stories are found Amdo County of Nagchu (Ben dé khar, 1992). More men than women adopt western style clothing.
Why are some herders wealthier than others? All the informants give the same answers. They give two reasons. The first reason is that one has been blessed with ‘sö nam’ (luck, gifted, fortunate); the second reason is hard work and effort i.e. working effectively. Both factors are important. As shown in earlier chapters, households vary in income, which appears to reflect differences in the ability of individuals to maximise returns. It should be noted that ‘good luck’ is not random but considered to be a product of good kharma. There is a story that can illustrate the equal importance of these two factors.

A man became a good friend of sö nam. The man thought, now that I am a friend of sö nam now, I will be blessed by sö nam, and there will be no need to work hard. One day, sö nam was waiting for this man in a farm area where there was lots of grain and crops. However, the man did not come. Another day, sö nam was waiting for the man near a salt lake where other herders were digging salt, but the man did not come. Again, sö nam left a valuable piece of jewellery on the road where the man was walking. Sö nam expected his friend would pick it up, so that he could sell the jewellery at a good price. However, the man closed his eyes when he was walking along, and did not see the jewellery.

This folk story tells one that sö nam is hereditary, but that one still needs to work hard, have initiative and make an effort.

Herders accumulate wealth through sö nam and hard work. We now consider the motivation behind wealth acquisition. How does wealth acquisition relate to their expectations for the future of their children, and how does such wealth relate to their view of the ‘Good Life’ in terms of material needs and cultural moral ‘wants’? These are questions as to their ‘value’. Value does not come from reason, but rather from social conventions. Herders want things not simply because of their utility, but also because the absolute power of collective representations convinces them that things are good. Field data shows that 64% of the informants expect that their children would accumulate wealth from wage jobs and that ‘education’ is mentioned as the major and most important way to obtain wage jobs. However, only 36% of the informants expect their children would have material satisfaction in their lives. The field data does not show cultural moral ‘wants’ such as sö nam. This might be because informants find it hard to define what is meant by a ‘good life’ for their children’s future, but they are more certain of the material ‘needs’ of their children. The field survey shows what ‘good life’ means for informants. 83% of the herders think that ‘good life’ means to be wealthy materially, or to be satisfactorily served as to material needs, but only 17% of the herders think the ‘good life’ means to have
spiritual beliefs and to practice those beliefs. These responses possibly reflect a priority in their thinking, driven by the ever-present need for survival, and do not mean that those who put material wealth first do not then also have spiritual beliefs that influence their daily lives. The field work found that wealthy households in Da such as No.2 and No.15 spend more material wealth on their spiritual belief (cultural moral needs) than the others. For instance, Phu from No.2 and Kelzang from No.15 made a long kowtow\textsuperscript{130} between December 2009 and January 2010. It was a 45 day long journey, all the way from Da to Lhasa. No.2 spent RMB 2,730 and No.15 spent RMB 2,930 on spiritual items.

All the informants were confident that they would still be herders in ten years time. This was attributed to ‘Drokpa know how to survive’ (79% of respondents) and ‘being Drokpa is how we have been living for generations’ (21% of respondents). This shows a significant difference between the inertia of conservatism and a positive recognition that the Drokpa way of life has the resilience and characteristics to maintain the ‘good life’. As a consequence of accepting this position, they have continued the attitudes developed within the community over generations, albeit modified to varying degrees, arguably because this provides comfort to their daily lives.

8.5 Conclusion

The analyses presented here with regard to household, kin and other relationships, all support the view that individual Drokpa households/families are the primary unit around which other activities are focused. The household organises the workflow, obtains and manages income from livestock and other activities, and interacts with other groups at that level. Subsidiary households are linked, but their organisation shows some independence from the parental household. Differences exist also in marriage styles and in religious observances. These trends all support the view that the household developed as an organisational structure to sustain livelihood and practices, but also to sustain communities through flexibility. The extended household does appear to be the more viable economic unit, which probably also applied in previous eras. New households possibly want to achieve the scale of an extended household for these reasons. Households often interact at

\textsuperscript{130} The long kowtow in Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims is that every three steps, a full-body prostration is made for the entire length of the journey.
that level, providing labour for large projects e.g. house-building or small projects e.g. collaborative-herding activities.

The kin segments have retained a similar function to the ru kor lineages (Chapter 4), an important political unit in rural areas pre-1950. The basic political administration unit of the current political administration, Dzug (zu), has been adopted by the herders and consists of several such kin lineages. This would reflect earlier groupings into nomadic communities. Members of the Dzug (zu) cooperate in tending their common land. It has similar functions to the former ru ba prior to the 1950s, in respect of sharing a common territory and its related economic activities.

Interaction with urban areas and wider markets has brought many changes, most of which are beneficial. The Drokpa have built upon their culture of reciprocity and collaboration, and this has led to entrepreneurial networking and business generation. The most successful households in this area are those with larger numbers, since this allows greater role differentiation and labour outflow, and more extended networks. Technology transfer is a further benefit that develops from such networks.

Pastoral economic activities have a strong moral aspect. The people see their economic lives as integral to their spiritual lives. Their actions (karma) conform to metaphysical beliefs that confirm their connection with their cosmos. In this context, material goods cannot be calculated solely by reference to the market value system, but should primarily be seen as a resource used to reinforce religious and cultural identity and coherence (Appadurai, 1981). This characteristic needs to be understood through symbolic and metaphorical practices (Scott, 1976; Wilk, 1996:131; Tapp, 2000a:77).

The Drokpa of Da do engage with change mechanisms introduced by both government and market forces – to their own advantage. They have embedded the capacity to adapt, evolve and innovate into their culture. However, they do not allow this to overwhelm or dilute their culture, values and beliefs, tacitly recognising that it is these that both sustain their unique identity and that it this culture that is their foundation for success in a very rapidly changing world (Galvin, 2009).
9 Conclusion and Findings: “We know how to survive?”

What do the Drokpa mean when they say “We know how to survive?” This is the key question raised and then addressed through this research. It lies behind the discussion so far. The main findings from the research are:

1. The Drokpa of Da have successfully adapted those cultural values, customs and beliefs that they have retained from the past, in order to meet the needs of a changing economic and social environment.

2. The tacit knowledge so adapted and applied gives the Drokpa the capabilities to not only survive, but to thrive. Key components of this appear to be:
   a) a heritage of rapid adaptation to change when required,
   b) a willingness to innovate or use past practices in innovative ways,
   c) the recognition that social cohesion needs to be sustained as it offers sustainable benefits and
   d) an ability to view change with equanimity - so drawing on inherited beliefs and values in ways that give decision-making emotional and spiritual intelligence (Goleman, 1998).

3. Tacit knowledge gives the Drokpa cultural capacity within the terms of an analysis of the factors required for rural and marginal communities to succeed. This capacity appears to be crucial to our understanding of the Drokpa’s claim to knowledge with regard to how to survive.

I expand on these main findings from three perspectives: the economics of individual survival, the community aspects of survivals, and the associated cultural practices. This reflects the structure proposed by Harris covered below. These are not discrete aspects. They can be seen as interdependent paralogies, working in synergy together. They are viewed within an historical continuum, a timeline of the kind of intuitive/tacit adaptations to changing circumstances that have evolved. The use of the term ‘evolve’ is covered below. As will be discussed, this is not to suggest some form of social Darwinism but is more in line with an understanding of evolution as discussed below. The series of adaptations considered are here labelled ‘evolution’ to highlight their grounded continuity,
their directionality and that they are always returning to fundamental commitments to rooted feelings of identity and belonging. The Drokpa retain a capacity for community learning through tacit forms of knowledge (Polanyi, 1998a, 1998b; Geertz, 1992; Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Ekvall, 1974), a kind of knowledge exemplified through both group and individual decision-making of the type we have considered in this thesis, and community interactions growing from their core beliefs and values. Over many centuries prior to the 1960s, the Drokpa followed a subsistence-oriented economy. In the context of this economic practice belief system values, and social and political institutions evolved. Related to the nature of pastoral economies, this traditional way of life showed complex interactions within a group, between groups, and within wider political groups. Although varying, this mixture of tight and loose attachments had an underlying cohesion that related to pragmatic ways of surviving (Stahlin, 1960, 1976) and coping with the harsh climatic and ecological environment. Drokpa culture and beliefs are deeply rooted in how they have lived and the ways in which they have learned how to survive (Chapter 5). As a result, they do not seem overly anxious about a loss of detail in traditional ways of life, but rather see change as a natural dynamic linked to survival. This shows a capacity to evolve in a measured way.

The subsistence-oriented economy of the Drokpa which had remained largely unaltered despite the medieval introduction of the monastic administrative system and later some involvement in trade, was transformed to one of ‘socialist collectivisation’ throughout the 1960s and the 1970s. The collectivisation period, while there was a considerable focus on productivity, also sought to redefine what cultural capital was, and to break down the previous social structure entirely (Chapter 6).

But traditional cultural and social capital proved somewhat resilient to the pressures of the collectivisation period. Rather than ‘evolving’ during this period, traditional ways of life seem to have been quarantined, gone into abeyance, accommodating change only when necessary, and ‘re-emerging’ later. My field data suggest that most people in Da accommodated the change somehow. As has been seen in previous chapters, on the surface, people were compliant, while when looking at the detail, underlying and traditional patterns of life continued. After 1980, perceived and remembered ‘injustices’ and moves that
conflicted with traditional values were reversed. For instance, deities continued their function for the Drokpa by sustaining and fostering a sense of place as well as a sense of identity, through their worship (see Casey, 1993; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). Traditional culture, therefore, could not be redefined in completely different ways - new imposed patterns of existence existed in parallel with it. This gave Drokpa culture in Da an inner resilience during the collectivisation period that allowed its “re-emergence”, albeit in subtly changed detail, after 1980, and subsequent further adaptations to meet the changing economic climate. Traditional customs and values again flourished, and were framed by a culture that had evolved by adaptation to new economic and political circumstances (Chapter 7) as we can see, for example, in the celebration of the Tibetan New Year. This is a traditional social ritual which reinforces community solidarity, the form of which has adapted to new circumstances by including many new examples of contents, such as food items and dress, but is still clearly identifiable in terms of the rationale for the ritual. They retained much from their people’s heritage, but this developed and adapted to be congruent with the new economic and social climate (Chapter 8). To some extent, the ‘re-emergence’ of traditional customs and life ways can be related to the comparatively short period under collectivisation. Some people who were alive prior to the 1950s were still living in the 1980s. Due to the peripheral context of Da, many cultural practices and associated artefacts survived the ‘cultural revolution’ in ways not always replicated elsewhere in China. The context in Da, however, is not unique, and similarities can be found throughout China (Siu, 1989).

The retention of values from the past was, and is, a communal decision based upon the belief that social cohesion would provide practical benefits in the move to a larger cash and market orientated economy. We can see this for instance in the way social networks are used across the boundary of Da for the purpose of selling yak dung and yogurt, or for other transactions and purposes (Chapter 8). Although this decision-making was articulated by individuals and in household and community meetings, the process itself was founded on a form of tacit knowledge, and therefore not initially always obvious to the researcher.

There has clearly been therefore, a process of continual ‘evolution’ without any possibility of this being reduced to the simplistic deterministic laws of an inevitable history.
“Knowing how” is not a simple capacity. It has a complexity made up of beliefs, familial bonds, collegial thinking, practical skills and knowledge. The community behaves as a ‘brain’ - receiving information, processing information, making decisions, implementing and, above all, evaluating the results of action. Though stable, the culture is also evolving and learning - and so adapting. The feedback between members and from the realities of life is the life blood and pumping heart of evolved survival.

9.1 Social Evolution

As this research progressed, considerable time was spent considering whether I was simply recording change, or whether the term ‘evolution’ was a more useful way of thinking about the sequence of events. The thinking of Charles Darwin has been often described as one of the greatest paradigm shifts in human thinking. Evolution can be considered here closer to the Darwinian view than the corrupted social Darwinism that is often applied. The core process in evolution is the changes in species that enable adaptation to changed circumstances. This has more parallels with the ways communities evolve than for individual members of that community. As is argued here, many of the adaptations made by the Drokpa are at a community level.

Change and evolution are not synonymous, although they are significantly related. Change per se can be a random or a non-purposive event. Evolution, however, is a process that over time leads to the more useful characteristics becoming dominant in surviving species, else they go extinct. Along the way, both less and more favourable adaptations occur, but over time the more ‘fit’ adaptations tend to dominate in surviving species. Arguably for the Drokpa, the period of collectivisation was not a successful adaptation to the modern world as it was not sustained later on when the community had a choice. On the other hand, aspects of traditional culture did survive in the community and adapt to the circumstances encountered. Popper (1972) has some interesting thoughts on the evolution of knowledge in Objective Knowledge: an evolutionary approach. He argues that knowledge itself is evolutionary and has directionality in the pursuit of truth in line with Dawkin’s argument.

Darwin was concerned with biological evolution and it is important not to push the analogy to social ‘evolution’ too closely. For a time, it came to be thought that societies
and cultures could evolve in the same way - being seen as organic ‘mechanisms.’ However, many began to consider that the thinking could not be transferred in this way because, unlike biological organisms, social organisms had consciousness and thought. Adaptation came through learning. More recently, Dawkins (1989:192) has argued that ‘memes’ i.e. a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation, are part of the evolutionary process, with parallels to the ways societies change/evolve. Biological evolution occurs through random changes, and only the species that changed in ways such that the fittest species survived, were successful. Darwin did not use the term ‘survival of the fittest’ until the fifth edition of the *Origin of Species*, a term that originated with Herbert Spencer (1898–1899). The term, however, fell out of favour as its use was being perverted. ‘Natural selection’ better encapsulates the thinking behind evolutionary processes. Currently, a term in more common use is Synthetic Evolution, being a melding of Darwin with the thinking of Mendel, i.e. managed change similar to plant and animal breeding.

Within anthropology, social evolution was rejected by many as a useful concept as the biological analogies did not help to understand a range of circumstances. In addition, the argument that the way ‘social evolution’ fostered change was an inevitable drive to progress, did not stand up to close scrutiny. Whether or not evolution was considered progressive depended upon the subjective views of the observer. Steward (1973) argues that cultural evolution is either unilinear or multilinear. Although the argument is complex, he questions the attempts to arrive at a unified theory of the evolution of societies that is a unilinear evolution. He suggests that unilinear evolution provides theory across contexts. For example, universal evolution as proposed by Leslie White Steward (Beardsley, 1976) argues for multilinear evolution within a single ecological niche. Within biological evolution there are likely many different strands that species follow, of which only one may survive and it is not possible at the outset to determine which strand is going to dominate. He saw primary and decisive factors within a given culture as technology and economics, and secondary yet still significant factors such as political systems, ideologies and religious beliefs and practices.

More recently, several authors have attempted to bring social evolution back into the anthropological debate. Sahlins argued for the power of cultures to shape people’s
perceptions and the decisions they make. In Evolution and Culture (1960) he raised the profile of social evolution and neo-evolution. He divided the evolution of societies into ‘general’ and ‘specific.’ With ‘general’ evolution, he argued that societies had a tendency to increase in complexity, organisation and adaptability to the environment - or to die out when they did not adapt. Different societies interact and influence each other, but evolve in context ‘specific’ ways. In criticising the concept of ‘economically rational man’, he highlighted unique powers to motivate people that are not simply derived from biology, nor equally developed across all societies. He argued that economic systems adapt to particular circumstances in culturally specific ways. In Culture and Practical Reason (1976), he considered the relationship between history and anthropology, and the way different cultures understand and make history. History becomes a narrative, often expressed as saga and myth, that helps a people to express, see meaning within, and understand the ways they have evolved as a culture and as a society. This fits with an intrinsic human motivation to seek not only survival but a ‘better’ life that includes elements of emotional well-being. The Drokpa seem to have evolved in a unilinear manner that may be applicable to other contexts but referring back to Steward, the specificity of the context also suggests that their cultural evolution is also multilinear, that is, evolving in different directions.

While the evidence presented in this thesis argues that the Drokpa do evolve as a society and do adapt to change, that interpretation needs to consider any likely biases in interpretation. Harris (2001) provides a different perspective for classifying social practices and structures. He argues that anthropology needs a ‘theory’ to aid understanding. Labelled as being neomaterialist, his proposals attracted much debate. Harris developed a three layer structure, under the title Cultural Materialism, to aid thinking and analysis and, to some degree, to highlight how practices function.

- Superstructures have overarching impacts across all those within a culture and may not be physically located. They cover the shared cognitive and ideological patterns and behaviours in a society, including religion, science, art and rituals
- Structures apply broadly to a culture and have some identifiable boundaries. They cover the domestic economy and the wider political economy.
Infrastructures apply to the fundamental aspects for survival; physical, biological and intellectual e.g. modes of production and of reproduction.

Harris distinguished between *etic* and *emic* perspectives in interpreting any data obtained relative to these structures or other values. Etic conveys the researcher’s points of view and emic the views of those observed, and it can be challenging to resolve differences between these views. He placed priority on the former, and considered the epistemological problems posed by considering the emic (Harris, 1976).

By focusing on the etic, he promotes his view that anthropology is a science, and is primarily empirical. He found the emic much less certain. This thesis however, has used evidence from the observed, subject to interpretation by the researcher. The emphasis at times has been to provide details on the views of the observed with a careful interpretation by the researcher in terms of what is known from other studies. That strategy was considered the better way forward. However there is the caveat that the views expressed are likely to be challenged by further research. The ‘structural’ model proposed by Harris does help interpretation and while not explicit, has influenced the range of things considered in this thesis. However this structure was not used in detail as it is not clear that it provides greater insight into societies; rather, it is more a way of classifying behaviours. Anthropology has yet to develop a robust theory like evolution in biology that does consistently apply to any investigation of society.

Headland and others (Thomas & Marvin, 1990) argue that although they do not fully agree with all the views of Pike who originated the term etic and emic, or Harris, they did find elements of both useful in attempting to understand and see meaning in anthropological observations. In Lyotard’s terms they had ‘performativity’, and were generative of further thinking. From the perspective of Pike, a linguist, it is people’s language that is important. By language we do not only mean words, but the word-games and discourse/communication that include signals and symbols that are often expressed non-verbally. It is not the purpose of this thesis to argue for any one view, except to say that the above was useful in my search for meaning. There is evidence that, even though highly problematic, ‘evolution’ as defined above is a useful way of perceiving change. Similarly, my role as a Tibetan insider, gave me the access to understanding the tacit
knowledge within which much of Harris’s ‘superstructure’ is delineated. I argue that this is essential.

The wedding ceremony is a useful example. Some of the material content has changed; for instance, 70 years ago, 100 productive yaks were the dowry (a gift from the bride’s parents to her) for a chief’s daughter. Now RMB 100,000 (approximately US$15,000) in cash is the dowry for a bride from a middle class business family. Horses were the traditional mode of transportation when the bride’s family sent their daughter to the groom’s village. Now, cars and motorbikes are used. However, the form of the ceremony still retains its traditional symbolic meaning, which is to constitute and inform the community and participants of the establishment of a new affinal relationship. The wedding ceremony is still a ‘stage’ upon which the groom and the bride can demonstrate each of their kin group’s wealth and social status. A costly ceremony exhibits social status and the social benefits of the wealth of the marrying families. The amount of marriage payments still testifies that the groom’s family should regard the bride with respect and status within the groom’s family. The expression and appearance of the marriage ceremony implies propriety and importance.

The amount of dowry is discussed and negotiated between senior representatives of each family, the ritual ceremony is arranged by seniors, all members from the village are invited, and the villagers participate in the wedding ceremony. This is unlike the kind of economic individualism which Yan Yunxiang (2003a) describes among the younger generation across China. For the Drokpa today the kind of materialism which Yan defines as ‘individualism’ (pure economic individualism without any of the political connotations of individualism common in the West) evident among young Han Chinese people as they enter the consumer economy, does appear to contrast sharply with how the young Drokpa today still care about the past and the community.

Change can happen dramatically in contemporary pastoral societies (Tapper, 1979, 1997; Sneath, 2000, 2002; Ginat and Khazanov, 1998). It can be reflected in changing symbolic expression: the outsider often observes the changed manifestations, but neglects the meaning with which they are imbued through their symbolic sense. For example, one can say that such a wedding is a ‘loss of tradition’ on the one hand or such a wedding is a
‘product of great modernisation’ on the other. Both views are overly subjective. They miss how herders maintain the symbolic meaning of such rituals while adapting the physical expressions through which they are manifested. They imbue the contents with fresh significance in the light of their own traditional forms through which they express symbolic meanings. The core contents of the marriage ceremony still remain, even if the process changes. In research such as this, it is essential to recognise that the culture may be ineffable and initially somewhat opaque. One needs a long-term immersion in the culture to understand it properly.

Above all, the Drokpa way of life and their view of life is that they are sustainable and conservative, while on the other hand open to change and adaptation. This is not however, a cerebral society where practices are argued out by philosophers and documented by law-makers. The intellectual capital embedded in the community is not articulated, but tacit. The information obtained point to these tacit understandings and forms of knowledge. Decision-making is by communal tested by the collegial acceptance based upon what is decided is sensible – it fitted the people’s inner understanding of their world. The Drokpa construct their land and social organisation symbolically, imbuing the forms of their culture with symbolic significance. They then reference their cultural activities to their locality and ethnic identity (Cohen, 1985:118). The key additional characteristic is that nothing is taken as inevitable, immutable or fixed. This has given the Drokpa a unique capacity to accommodate change without being overwhelmed by it. The ability to change is an organic and a systemic capacity. By organic we mean that the community of Da, for instance, works as an organism where social evolution in general terms occurs. Ideas and experience are shared, and are included within the intellectual capital of the knowledge. They are linked to communal decision making and become a part of community learning and tacit knowledge. In this they become embedded systemically in the social fabric of the community.

9.2 Change in the Drokpa community

A benefit that comes from the community acting as a ‘brain’ at the centre of an organism is highlighted by Wilkes, Tan and Mandula (2010) in their article ‘The myth of community and sustainable grassland management in China.’ They argue that simply
devolving grassland management to the level of the household does not bring the benefits intended. Even when decisions were taken collectively, other economic incentives were needed. The Drokpa of Da, in some ways differing from the case studies in this cited research, seem to make decisions that benefit the whole community and not just one household. A climate of commonwealth and equity is sustained, even when relative levels of wealth appear. Wilkes et al. identify a further factor that seems to relate to the Drokpa of Da. In the move to a market economy, communities needed to build a more mixed economy by developing a range of diverse off-farm cash-creating activities. The ability to survive is expressed as adaptability, rather than having the specific knowledge that improves their ability to prosper. This is arguably seen in the ways they manage livestock so that the animals survive, rather than in knowing the optimal practices to maximise production for the developing markets in China - as argued by Kemp & Michalk (2011) for traditional pastoralists in similar circumstances. Rather, they consider a practice’s function. Adaptability then means that they are open to learning and to resolving how to adapt traditional practices to new circumstances. However, they may not have the exact knowledge required so that mistakes will be made, but they learn from that and move on. This has the implication that local policies need some emphasis on education to maximise the skills base of the Drokpa in adapting to the new economy, and to minimise the problems that may occur. Although experiential learning is important, education by the state has given the Drokpa access to not only numeracy and literacy, but also vocational skills and knowledge relevant and applicable to their own context.

This capacity is clearest when we consider the post-1980s period. The Drokpa have proved very adaptable in the move to a market-orientated economy, taking full advantage of the opportunities to be entrepreneurial. Some have done this better than others. Considerable appraisal of the past, however, shows that these capabilities were always there, for example in the salt trade, but now have a context within which they can develop further. Based upon strong communal networks and still stronger solidarity, previous social structures imposed during the collectivisation period, proved only to have been quiescent. This solidarity and cohesion gives the Drokpa flexibility, economies of scale and above all the capacity to change rapidly in response to changing market requirements. Most Drokpa
have rapidly changed their methods of production to meet the growing market demands and opportunities, for example specialising in dairy products from yaks. Within a cash/market economy, they realised that wealth could be accumulated in a highly transferable and convertible form. This wealth could be invested in new technology such as tractors, trucks and washing machines to churn butter. It could be invested in health and veterinary services, training and education. These would not just improve their quality of life, but also increase life opportunities. Aspirations change and expand. Social mobility increases and this provides the opportunity to move outside the family, moving perhaps as economic migrants but also for life choices. The herder could become a doctor or an engineer, working in a wider community, something which would not have been as possible in previous years. These aspirations were enhanced by the strength of the community that retained its cohesion but, at the same time, allowed greater division of labour and therefore specialisations both within the economic community, such as engaging in haulage or working as mechanics and traders, but also beyond the Drokpa community based in the urban centres or further afield.

Despite these opportunities and changes, the Drokpa still spend a large proportion of their cash surplus on social community functions. This is significant. It is also reflects a continuity in attitudes and practices, since it reinforces the familiar and, in so doing, maintains social cohesion, cultural and personal identity and feelings of well-being and belonging. These are characteristics of strong cultures elsewhere. It could also, however, resonate with their tacit understanding that community cohesion gives them resilience, and offers the strength in numbers that widens their economic options.

Wealth can only be understood in context. In the past, wealth was defined in material terms such as the number of livestock (as a bank) the size of households, the number and furnishing of tents, or jewellery. These definitions of wealth were convertible into each other, and since there was limited trade (much of it by barter) then the need for cash was limited. But today, cash has become the means of converting different forms of wealth, and so it has become more important. Salt or yaks were the ‘cash’ of the past. The Drokpa are currently in transition to a stage where there is growing acceptance of cash as the means of exchange, though they still like to also retain their ‘wealth’ in other forms such
as jewellery. The latter may be similar to the general Chinese desire to have gold instead of cash, particularly when economic conditions decline. Thus the Drokpa have converted large amounts of the cash they accrued into forms that have social meaning and benefits. These benefits were calculated not so much in terms of consumable goods, although these were purchased, but in terms of their capacity to enrich and underpin social events and rituals. The very flexible patterns of marriage allowed money to be converted into bridewealth and dowry payments that carried symbolic meaning rather than consumables that had no intrinsic meaning. Cash was also used to change production methods and to enable different and diversified ways of making a living. In these ways, cash is used to enhance the Drokpa way of life and to sustain it. For the wealthier herdsmen, wealth earned by using what the market could offer more effectively maintained status, and this wealth could filter down to others through offering labouring work for cash wages or the use of services such as haulage provided by others. The very common role of cash is exemplified by the giving of cash as a gift.

In the West, and certainly during the later parts of the ‘age of enlightenment’, the concept of ‘enlightened self-interest’ was argued as being the driver of economic and political development in societies. David Hume (2000) however, asserts four theses that suggest a different perspective on human motivation (“Hume’s Moral Philosophy,” n.d., 2010).

1) Reason alone cannot be a motive to the will, but rather is the ‘slave of the passions’.

2) Moral distinctions are not derived from reason.

3) Moral distinctions are derived from moral sentiments: feelings of approval (esteem, praise) and disapproval (blame) felt by spectators who contemplate a character trait or action.

4) While some virtues and vices are natural, others, including justice, are artificial.

Hume’s theses don’t support the view of ‘enlightened self-interest’ in any simple ‘rational’ way. They suggest that man is influenced by many cultural and related factors. This view matches the circumstances of the Drokpa. They do behave in a rational way when operating within markets, but many of the things they do in their daily lives are strongly influenced by their moral perspective, culture and traditions. It would be
economically rational to not have any religious beliefs for instance, yet it is still a significant part of their lives. Any material self-interest is then viewed through the lens of their beliefs. Balancing economic rationality with other beliefs is focused on actions that maintain community and an individual sense of identity. Implicit in this is the realisation that aggressive competition is not, in the longer term in the self-interest of the individual.

This was the pragmatic philosophical theory of ‘utilitarianism’ developed by Mill (1963, 2003). Mill argued that ‘the good’ at the core of a civilised culture and value system was greater than simple material well-being. Central was the concept of liberty. Developing Bentham’s argument, he argued in both publications that in the search for ‘the greatest good of the greatest number’ or happiness principle, judgement of what is good should be qualitative rather than simply material gain. For example, he considered whether poetry was a greater good than ‘pushpin’ a table game. This may seem a diversion, and yet I do feel that such ideas help illuminate the circumstance in Da. The Drokpa, as part of their tacit knowledge, find the motivation to sustain commitment to core beliefs and values, and this in turn motivates decisions that avoid the scramble for crude material gain. In their case, within the tacit knowledge of the community, is an unconscious and intrinsic awareness that the interests of the individual are protected and met by community cohesion, and the embedded values reified through custom and ritual. The resilience and success of the Drokpa would suggest that this inner strength is better suited to counter the ‘slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’. They imported symbolic forms, for example in apparel, across their boundaries. They infuse their own cultural meaning within the symbolic (Cohen, 1985:37).

The research reported here has shown that the Drokpa, in the face of major political and social change, have shown the capacity to survive economically, culturally and, in this case study of a discrete and cohesive community in Da, with social integrity. Although only one community was studied, this community has characteristics that arguably fit with other contexts and, in so doing, provide principles of understanding to aid reflection and interpretation in other settings. Da is exposed to more external pressures due its proximity to Nagchu than many other communities across the Tibetan Plateau. It is reasonable,
therefore, to assume that those other communities would maintain the core of their traditional practices as is evident in Da.

This finding may provide a shift in paradigms (cf Kuhn). For many, the assumption may still be that traditional societies are somehow ‘primitive’ and unsuited for life in the 21st Century. It is assumed that these cultures will be overwhelmed, subsumed and eventually lost. Some regard them as offering nothing to so-called modern thinking and practices. This thesis suggests that in the case the Drokpa of Da, this is far from the case. The Drokpa are used to limited resources, tough times and limited cash – all of which means that they can probably survive in new conditions while they learn how to adapt. The core skills needed to adapt have always been there. These involve knowing how to live in a harsh environment, how to work within a community, how to trade, how to be frugal, having a desire to improve their livelihoods, wanting to maintain community integrity, and wanting a better life for their children.

The Drokpa of Da invest in their cultural integrity and cohesion, not as a harking back to the past, but as a considered, albeit tacit, recognition that this cohesion brings practical advantages for surviving in the very different circumstances of today. They have shown the capacity to adapt cultural practices in ways that keep what is of value from the past, while also engaging with the present wider world. Maintaining large, linked social communities offers the ability to specialise and share labour. They offer the ability to pool resources. One of these resources is customary forms of, often implicit, learning and knowledge, that can be applied to new challenges, as the capacity to be entrepreneurial. Above all, is the recognition that ‘well-being’ is not just a matter of material gain, but of emotional and social security, and requires a strong sense of identity and belonging. The example of ‘Drokpa knowing how to survive’ points to a tacit yet very powerful ability and willingness to adapt, rejecting the prevalent tendency to succumb to the ‘slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.’ They try to balance the concern for material gain with the benefits of emotional and cultural identity and belonging. This is perhaps because they have an innate cultural capacity to allow the paradigms that govern their lives to develop and, at times such as the Cultural Revolution to protect what is of value – although it remained in abeyance at that time. The question remains whether this balance can be sustained.
The conceptualisation and methodology selected for this study implies that findings should be engaging and generative. To support this intent, the thesis concludes with the above findings presented at the start of this chapter. The above findings are ‘conjectures’, grounded in evidence, though liable to refutation with further study. They have an interim utility and a ‘verisimilitude’ (Popper, 1976). However, their ‘performativity’ is based upon their capacity to generate fresh ways of reflecting on research observations. Implications from this study are outlined below.

9.3 Where to for the Drokpa?

Predicting the future is always problematic and must be done with caution. However, there are some scenarios that are possible, derived from this study and experience elsewhere (Humphrey and Sneath, 1999, Sneath 1999, 2000, 2002; Williams 1996; Ingold, 1980).

Some herders have the obvious ability to accumulate wealth more readily than others and such those households survive better. It would then be logical for them to acquire more land e.g. by renting it from other Drokpa or dominating the use of common land. A consequence could be the consolidation of land and livestock resources within fewer households. A greater imbalance in wealth could result in some households being totally dependent upon others. This could result in a smaller number of households being involved in community decision making, and some decline in community cohesion. Policies need to be in place to retain collective decision making.

The incentive to accumulate wealth could result in poor decision making, and a denial of the collective experiences accumulated over many generations in terms of how to survive. An example could be the extension of cropping onto landscapes which are not suitable. This could arise as herders acquire larger tractors and other machinery, and seek to further increase their income. Individual households could increase the number of livestock beyond sustainable levels. Ingold noted, as did other researchers, that “…pastoralists have traditionally sold to realise a target income, defined by domestic needs, as against the capitalist who adjusts their production according to market prices” (Ingold 1980: 231–2; Sneath, 2000). Some herders are now focusing increasingly on production, with a view to maximising returns from markets. How will a changing of the economic system impact upon
their communal value systems which were, and still are, deeply influenced by Buddhist teaching that influences the ways animals are managed ways that may not agree with maximising economic returns?

The impact of an increasing cash economy to date does not appear to have changed many of the Drokpa’s core practices. Cash has become part of gift giving, though there is still a dominance of physical gifts given. Labourers working away from Da give cash rather than goods to their households. Social cohesion does depend upon the exchange of gifts, but if cash becomes the sole ‘gift’, then the meaning behind the gift could be lost, and the point of exchanges is lost. Gift exchanges are mostly undertaken at special festivals that are important in maintaining social linkages, which suggests traditional practices will remain important.

Happiness is an elusive concept, but it would appear to be relative to perceptions of others within the immediate community (Graham, 2010). A greater difference between households could result in increasing tension within the community. This could be offset by those who obtain less income from their livestock, earning more from work in the town.

A decline in the use of local resources on the part of the poorer herders e.g. by renting their land and/or livestock to others, could see more of them obtain income by working in the town and/or leaving Da to earn income elsewhere. This could result in a decline in the number of households in Da. This may not be a major local problem as fifty years ago, Da was a much smaller village (and maybe it has grown beyond a sustainable size). However, it could lessen the ability of the Drokpa in Da to deal effectively with the town of Nagchu. The general problem of limited land for the Drokpa of Da could result in a general decline in productivity and income and increasing conflicts with the town. The remaining herders may then need to consider migrating to other areas if possible, if they wish to retain a pastoral life style.

The Drokpa see education of their children as the mechanism to improve their livelihood, though not all think that the benefits will apply to all. This indicates some acceptance that traditional ways of living are going to continue to change, that ways out of their current pastoral existence need to be found, and that the traditional pastoral existence may not be as important as other family and community values. This will influence the definition of
what it means to be Drokpa. It may become a definition of those who come from a pastoral culture, rather than one who practices that life-style.

The concept of a village among the Drokpa is partially conceptual, as shown by the two households that reside in Nagchu, but still consider themselves part of Da. Those connections are obviously important for their identities. Maintaining these connections is probably based on having a recognisable settlement at Da. If the population of Da declines, it could prove difficult to maintain those connections and, with that, the identity of households. Alienation from their roots does pose problems for the well-being of groups. In the information obtained, it was not possible to discern if the identity of the Drokpa was simply being part of the Drokpa and/or due to being part of Da.

Within the wider context, on the evidence of this thesis is that the Drokpa may not become victims of political and economic change beyond their control. Paradoxically, they may, in reality, exemplify a way of coping with the future since, as we have seen, in the past they have shown a marked capacity to deal with, and accommodate, changes within their traditional practices and beliefs – often imposed on them by external authorities. Their ability to change could indicate that many aspects of their practices and behaviours are not sacrosanct, but can be changed and adapted to new circumstances. Those practices and behaviours that have survived through the periods of collectivisation and the Cultural Revolution, are the ones that could be less likely to change in the future, whereas the ways they obtain income have shown flexibility through some turmoil and have changed. Nevertheless, there does not seem to be any desire to return to earlier practices. Rather than rejecting the economic changes that have occurred since 1979, the Drokpa have embraced them.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of this research is the interaction of two very different cultures to which the Drokpa have responded. There is the dominant Chinese culture which, after a series of radical changes, has now embraced open market systems, and while retaining some traditional beliefs that do influence behaviour, those tend to be subservient to their economic activity. In contrast, the Drokpa still see their traditional spiritual and other beliefs and practices as more or equally dominant to their economic activities. The dramatic changes that have occurred in China over the last 60 years have
provided a melting pot from which a vibrant society remains, and wherein can be seen the important things that sustain a culture such as that of the Drokpa.

The future, however, has still to be written.
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## 11 Glossary and Notes

**Spelling of Tibetan terms and names**

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Rendering of Terms:

The written forms of Tibetan words in the text uses phonetic transcription. These words are converted to the Whylie (1959) system of Romanization in glossarys and notes. Both the Tibetan Phonetics and Whylie refer to THL’s online translation converter.

For Tibetan Phonetics Converter:

For Whylie system

Chinese terms are romanized according to pin–yin systems.

Currency:
- 1US$ = 6.8RMB (25th July 2010)
- 1 Rupee = 7 silver tangka (1940)
- 1 RMB = 20 Sang in year 1959 (CASS et al. 1999)

To estimate the relative impact of livestock types:
- One adult sheep equivalent has an average weight of 30kg typical of the region, compared to the standard of 50kg in Australia
- One yak can vary from 100–200kg in weight, This means that 1 yak (cow) is equivalent to 5–10 Tibetan sheep. Lower weights were assumed as it is known that animal weights have declined in recent years.

These values are general estimates and include young animals that are near breeding age.
Notes:

1. BC. BP means before present.

2. Brigade: A production brigade (sheng–chan–dui) was a farm production unit after the Great Leap Forward in China. It continued during the commune period in PRC from the 1960s to 1984. The production brigade is composed of production teams, and the teams are composed of several households.

3. CCCN: The China Communist Committee of Nagchu

4. PCART: Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet

5. Thu bhö is a name for ‘Tibetan’ in Chinese historical texts. Thu bhö is written Tubo or Tufan in Chinese.

6. Tibetan Plateau: The Tibetan plateau is also known as the Qinghai–Tibetan Plateau (青藏高原 Qingzang gaoyuan in Chinese term). It is located in central Asia, across the ‘provinces’ of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan and Xinjiang. Many Tibetans live in these other provinces.

7. Tibet: the term ‘Tibet’ used in this thesis applies to the broad territory in an ethnographic sense, while the term ‘Tibetan’ denote people who shares a common identity as ‘belonging’ to the group of people called ‘Tibetan’. One might say such a group must share a high degree of similar linguistic and culture pattern and, past experiences of history (Huber, 1999). Often, it is difficult to define what is a pattern of culture. I use the term ‘Tibetan’ loosely, in an unlocked and changeable context, and with acceptance to of the discussion made by Toni Huber (1999a), Samuel (1993) and others.

8. TAR is the short term for The Tibet Autonomous Region. TAR is located in northern Tibet of the PRC. Elevations reach an average of 4,572 metres (15,000 ft). It is regarded as an autonomous administrational level. It was initially established on 9th February 1955. The Preparatory Committee of Tibetan Autonomous Region (xi zang zi zhi qu chou bei wei yuan hui), was formally recognized by the National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China in 25th August 1965.

9. Subsistence: as a working definition the term could refer to the provision of food, fibre, fuel and shelter i.e. basic ‘necessities’ of life with a minimal surplus that is used for
trade. The next ‘stage’ would be ‘production’, where families produce larger surpluses from which they derive additional things that are arguably not real ‘necessities’.

10. Shyabten: a monastery locates in Nagchu

11. Sang: unit of money
12 Appendices

12.1 Administrative structure of PRC

Source: http://www.china.org.cn/english/congress/227035.htm
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_regions_of_the_People%27s_Republic_of_China
12.2 The location of winter pasture for Da