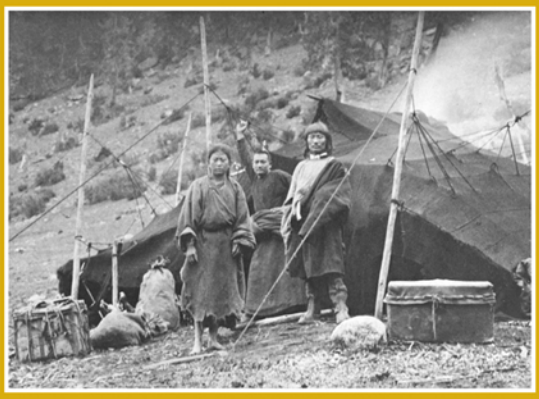
Nomads of Eastern Tibet

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND ECONOMY
OF A PASTORAL ESTATE IN THE KINGDOM OF DEGE



RINZIN THARGYAL

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VOLUME 15

Nomads of Eastern Tibet

Social Organization and Economy of a Pastoral Estate in the Kingdom of Dege

By

Rinzin Thargyal

Edited by

Toni Huber

BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2007

On the cover: The Jö Lama and his parents in front of their yak hair tent, Kham, ca. 1909 (photograph by Albert L. Shelton, courtesy of The Newark Museum).

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISSN: 1568-6183
ISBN: 978 90 04 15813 9

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Publishing a work that has lain fallow for over two decades requires a word of explanation. Professor Per Kværne had earlier encouraged me to publish it, for which I thank him. However, debilitating illnesses thwarted my initiative in doing so. Professor Toni Huber overcame the impasse by taking the overall responsibility of publishing my research. I am profoundly grateful to him for editing and up-dating it where he deemed it necessary. Without his generosity, the book would not have seen the light of day. I also appreciate that he has placed my research in its proper context by writing his Introduction, and also for persuading Brill to publish the book.

Reminiscing on my fieldwork, I would once again like to express my gratitude for the role played by my informants, some of whom have now passed away. Their vivid memories of their erstwhile way of life render them the legitimate authors of this book. I will not forget their candour and integrity, qualities that enhanced their own eloquence in narrating their proud past.

I am grateful for the generous fieldwork grants I received from the Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities and the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Research during the early 1980s. Furthermore, I am deeply indebted to Professor Fredrik Barth, my supervisor in the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo. He offered invaluable guidance and I utilized certain aspects of his theoretical corpus, which I found highly enlightening and applicable to the analysis I have made. My gratitude also goes to Professor Arne Martin Klausen, who acted as my temporary supervisor. My thanks go to the academic staff of the Institute of Social Anthropology for introducing me to the subject, and also to my fellow students for their positive criticism of my fieldwork project and of my thesis when it was in its formative stages.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Pema, whose support for my fieldwork in Nepal was indispensable, while her fluent Nepali made the research sojourn much easier.

Rinzin Thargyal
Oslo,
October 2006

EDITOR'S PREFACE

I have published Rinzin Thargyal's manuscript so that its unique data on pre-modern pastoralism in Dege will become widely available to both scholars and general readers. I also consider the work an interesting cultural artifact in its own right. It reveals the ways in which a native anthropologist—in this case, an exiled one with an acquired intellectual framework very different from that of his own community—presents and analyzes his society of origin within two decades of its demise. I imagine that both of the above points will also render Rinzin's work of considerable interest to current and future Tibetan readers as they reflect upon their own modern history. With this in mind, my editorial policy has been to preserve Rinzin's own presentation and arguments, even though the possibility is always there to update them from the perspective of our current scholarship.

In addition to providing an introductory essay, the extent of my role as editor has entailed the following: Editing the entire text in terms of style, technical consistency, and arrangement of the material; providing the occasional "Editor's note" in the footnotes for clarification, and also to direct readers to literature and debates about certain topics which have appeared since Rinzin undertook his research; standardizing the phonetic equivalents used for Tibetan words, and their Romanization; redrafting Rinzin's original hand-drawn figures and providing several new maps; adding photographs from the relevant historical period and geographical area; and compiling an index of the main text. The finished text was produced in full consultation with Rinzin, although I myself take responsibility for any errors that may remain.

Concerning the Romanization of Tibetan words herein, since there is no standard or widely accepted system for representing Tibetan pronunciation, simple phonetic equivalents for Tibetan words have been used throughout the main body of the text and the notes. Correct written forms of Tibetan proper names, Romanized according to the widely accepted Wylie (1959) system, are given in parentheses following each name as they are listed in the Index, for example, Trampa Dapa (Gram pa mda' pa). Correct Wylie spellings of Tibetan terms and expressions (all in *italics*) are given in parentheses after the first occurrence of such words in the main text, for instance, *lhongten*

(*slong rten*). When writing Wylie, I have opted to use capital "A" to represent the last letter of the Tibetan alphabet. Standard spellings for a few local terms and colloquial expressions in the Khampa dialect of the Dege region are unknown, and these have been left in simple phonetic transcription when they occur.

Finally, I would like to thank Rinzin and Pema Thargyal for their help to complete this project. I am also grateful to Per Kværne for his encouragement and feedback, and to the Kværne family for their hospitality during my visits to Oslo. Thanks also to Ugen Gombo, Melvyn Goldstein, and Nancy Levine for providing additional information. My assistants at the Humboldt University in Berlin, Tina Niermann and Norma Schulz, and my daughter Shanti Daellenbach each helped me in important ways with the preparation of the manuscript. Jarmila Ptackova, Robbie Barnett, and Eveline Yang kindly helped to supply historical photographs used in this volume. I thank Josef Vanis of Prague, and also Valrae Reynolds and William A. Peniston of The Newark Museum, for reproduction permissions and for generously waiving all fees for photograph use. Finally, I am grateful to Alex McKay for his editorial suggestions, and to Albert Hoffstädt and Patricia Radder of Brill Academic Publishers for kindly supporting this book to become part of Brill's Tibetan Studies Library.

Toni Huber
Berlin
April 2007

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF TIBET AND THE FIRST TIBETAN ANTHROPOLOGISTS

This book presents a monograph by Rinzin Thargyal, one of the first Western-trained[1] native Tibetan anthropologists to have produced substantial works of research on Tibetan societies. Rinzin's study of pastoralists from the ancient kingdom of Dege in eastern Tibet represents an original contribution to knowledge about Tibetan societies, and one that is unique and valuable for a number of reasons. Based upon detailed ethno-historical documentation of a Khampa community during the mid-20th century, this monograph offers a wide-ranging and well-grounded analysis of the most crucial and controversial relationship in pre-modern Tibetan societies, that ensuing between a local "lord" or "leader" (*dpon*/*dpon po*) and his "dependents" or "subjects" (*'khor pa*/*'khor 'bangs*). The study also throws important new light upon the possibilities for social mobility which existed for ordinary rural persons in a Tibetan society prior to the Chinese takeover. Because Rinzin's research was undertaken during the early 1980s, it must be appreciated as belonging to a distinct period in the development of a modern anthropology of the Tibetan plateau and must also be viewed in terms of Tibetan contributions to this anthropology. In what follows, I will first place Rinzin's work in its proper context, then discuss its importance for the study of Tibet, and finish by offering a brief biography of Rinzin's own eventful life and the circumstances which lead to his becoming an anthropologist.

In Part One of his seminal work *Civilized Shamans*, Geoffrey Samuel attempted the first comprehensive synthesis of much of the anthropological data on Tibetan-speaking societies which was

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[1] I make this point particularly for the period of the 1970s and early 1980s, when Rinzin Thargyal studied anthropology in Norway. During the period of high Maoism and the Cultural Revolution, anthropology (or "ethnology", *minzuxue*) in China was labeled a "capitalist class discipline" and heavily circumscribed and then banned altogether; Litzinger 1998:225. Anthropology in Communist China only slowly began to regenerate during the early years of the post-Mao reform period, although the discipline as it subsequently developed in China has been significantly different in various respects from that pursued outside of the country, especially compared with the West; see Harrell 2001; Lemoine 1986.

available to scholars up until the 1980s. Among other things, Samuel's survey clearly revealed large gaps in our knowledge about the nature and variety of social groups that have existed across the Tibetan plateau. These lacunae were and still are significant, and they have arisen out of particular historical circumstances.

Up until very recently, and even still today in some cases, the development of a modern anthropology of Tibet has been significantly determined by two related factors. On the one hand, the anthropologist's work has been heavily circumscribed by the difficulty or impossibility of gaining official permission for freely conducting research on the Tibetan plateau. On the other hand, it has also been defined by scholars' creative efforts to understand Tibetan societies in spite of official restrictions. For instance, researchers have often worked in the high altitude Himalaya directly adjacent to political China or with migrant and refugee informants who departed from the plateau. The territorial expansion of China's Communist state from the mid-20th century ensured that the Tibetan plateau region remained officially closed to independent academic researchers for nearly four decades, from 1950 up until the late-1980s. However, during this same period, extensive Chinese state ethnological surveys were undertaken across the region as part of the Minzu Shibie Gongzuo program of national ethnic classification.[2] Along with the limited research done by a handful of western missionary ethnographers and western-trained Republican era Chinese ethnologists in parts of eastern Amdo and Kham prior to 1950, the Minzu Shibie Gongzuo program, for all its defects and colonial intentions, counts among the

[2] Maoist era Chinese ethnology in Tibetan areas was based upon a theoretical legacy extending back via Friedrich Engels to Lewis Henry Morgan, and the practice of Stalinist ethnic classification in the Soviet Union. One of the major outcomes of the Minzu Shibie Gongzuo program was the impressive *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu shehui lishi diaocha* series of ethnographic reports. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the quality of such materials can be highly variable and sometimes unreliable, and that the data must be appreciated very carefully in relation to the political context in which it was collected; Knödel 1995, Wellens 2006. Moreover, ethnic groups derived from it are often arbitrary constructs based upon insufficient data and poor research, not to mention political convenience. For example, the officially designated Luoba/Lhoba nationality (*minzu*) of southern Tibet is merely a composite of members of a range of very different highland populations of the far eastern Himalaya (i.e. the Bokar, Na, Nyising, Sulung, Shimong, Idu Mishimi, and so on). The Minzu Shibie Gongzuo program has been critically revisited by Chinese and Tibetan scholars periodically since the late 1970s, in order to resolve disputed local ethnic classifications in Tibetan areas and elsewhere; see Fei Xiaotong 1981, Harrell 1996, Upton 2000.

very beginnings of what might be considered modern anthropological fieldwork on the high Tibetan plateau.

A HISTORY OF WORKING AT A DISTANCE

With the Tibetan plateau and its inhabitants politically inaccessible for much of the 20th century, other forms of anthropological investigation were pursued among Tibetan populations. During the 1950s, a few academically trained European and American anthropologists visited Himalayan highland areas where local communities incorporated significant numbers of both permanent and temporary migrants from neighbouring Tibetan areas. In some cases, such communities also included a small, initial wave of Tibetan refugees who had departed already in the wake of the Chinese occupation in 1950.

Notable amongst this early research was that conducted with Tibetans in the Sikkim Himalaya by Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark (1908-1980), and by the Austrian scholar René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1923-1959), both of whom were based in Kalimpong throughout the first half of the 1950s. While Nebesky-Wojkowitz primarily researched the cult of Tibetan protective deities, Prince Peter focused mainly upon polyandry, aristocratic genealogy, and the collection of Tibetan material culture. The growing Tibetan community in Kalimpong also attracted Alexander Macdonald (b.1933), a French-based British scholar, who studied bards and collected popular Tibetan oral literature there from 1958 to 1960.

Highland Nepal, which opened to foreigners at the beginning of the 1950s, was also visited by scholars of the same generation. British-based Austrian anthropologist, Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (1909-1995), prepared the first ethnographic monograph on the Sherpas of the Khumbu on the basis of his fieldwork among them during 1953 and 1957. British scholar David Snellgrove[3] (b. 1920) systematically gathered field data on Tibetan Buddhism and Bön religion during extensive travels across the Tibetanized highlands of eastern and western Nepal in 1953, 1954 and 1956. Meanwhile,

[3] A scholar of religion and Asian classical languages, David Snellgrove was not formally trained in anthropology, although he used its characteristic research methods, and has often been labeled an "ethnologist" by others; Skorupski 1990:5. He was an early advocate of the study of colloquial and classical Tibetan language as essential for anthropological studies in Tibetan societies; Snellgrove 1966.

throughout the 1950s, American anthropologist Beatrice Miller (1919-1999) interviewed and observed Tibetans in Sikkim, Darjeeling, Calcutta, and other neighbouring parts of India. While the results of the largely descriptive work of all of these scholars represented very valuable and pioneering contributions at the time,[4] ultimately it added relatively little to documenting and understanding the social life of actual communities settled on the high Tibetan plateau itself.

Research possibilities for the study of Tibetan societies changed dramatically with the advent of the Tibetan exile during and after 1959. Approximately 85,000 Tibetan refugees initially fled the Tibetan plateau and subsequently resettled throughout South Asia and to a lesser extent in Switzerland, the United States and elsewhere as well. These refugees were now accessible as potential informants about the Tibetan communities they had recently lived and participated in as full adult members. During the first two decades of the Tibetan exile, a small number of Western anthropologists took the opportunity to seek out and work with Tibetan refugees, engaging in what has been called "ethnography at a distance." This resulted in the first in-depth studies of not only specific Tibetan communities, but also of the Central Tibetan social and political system as a whole. While Tibetan refugee informants mainly recalled life in their own societies just prior to the onset of the far-reaching reforms enacted under Maoism in China, the historical scope of research among them could often be reliably extended further back into the earlier 20th century.

Early field studies among Tibetan refugees include those undertaken by Melvyn Goldstein in South India (fieldwork 1965-1967), by Barbara Aziz in Nepal (fieldwork 1970-1971 and 1975), by Eva Dargyay in India and Switzerland (fieldwork 1973-1979), and by Robert Ekvall (1898-1983) in Switzerland (fieldwork 1965-1966).[5] The common feature of virtually all this early research with refugees was its focus upon agrarian village communities in Central

[4] For the relevant monographs, see Peter, Prince of Greece and Denmark 1963, 1966, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1955, 1956, 1976, Macdonald 1967, 1972, Fürer-Haimendorf, 1964, Snellgrove 1957, 1961, and the unpublished dissertation of Miller 1958 and her article of 1956.

[5] The relevant monographs by these authors include: Goldstein 1968 (unpublished, but now available at: http://www.cwru.edu/affil/tibet/booksAndPapers/Goldstein-Dissertation.pdf, accessed 13.1.2006); Aziz 1978; Dargyay 1982; Ekvall and Downs 1987.

Tibet—and especially those located along the trade routes of the south-western regions of the plateau—and upon the former Lhasa-based Ganden Phodrang state of the Dalai Lamas within which such communities were located. This was no coincidence, since the great majority of Tibetans who fled into exile had previously lived in these same regions relatively close to the Himalayan border, and hence they were numerically dominant as potential informants.

THE FIRST TIBETAN ANTHROPOLOGISTS

By the beginning of the 1980s, a second generation of field studies among Tibetan populations settled outside of the Tibetan plateau region was underway. Uniquely, these studies included research by several talented young Tibetan exile scholars, including Rinzin Thargyal, Ugen Gombo and Paljor Tsarong, who were all working towards higher academic degrees in anthropology at Western universities. Meanwhile, Lobsang Gelek was also engaged in the same type of studies in China. These scholars, to the best of my knowledge, were the first academically trained Tibetan anthropologists.

Ugen Gombo undertook his field research during 1979 and 1980, studying socio-cultural change and adaptation among refugee Tibetans settled in the Kathmandu Valley. He obtained his doctorate in anthropology from the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1985.[6] His research was completed under the supervision of Pedro Carrasco (b. 1921). Although a specialist on the anthropology of Mesoamerica, Carrasco is best known to Tibetanists for his pioneering survey *Land and Polity in Tibet* (1959) which was compiled due to his initial—and ultimately thwarted—interest in undertaking field studies in Tibet during the 1950s. Another exile scholar, Paljor Tsarong, undertook 16 months of fieldwork on Tibetan Buddhist monastic estates in Ladakh in 1982-1983, as part of a project together with Melvyn Goldstein, one of the most prolific and important scholars of the anthropology of Tibetan peoples to date.[7] Paljor Tsarong

[6] See Ugen Gombo 1983, 1985a and 1985b. Ugen Gombo is currently a library resources manager at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

[7] See Paljor Tsarong 1987, Goldstein & Tsarong 1985. After gaining his doctorate, Paljor Tsarong continued to work on research projects together with Melvyn Goldstein. During various periods from 1989 to 1996, he was Senior Research

eventually obtained his doctorate in anthropology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1987, under the formal supervision of Robert Miller (1923-1994). Miller's own dissertation had been on monasticism and cultural change in Inner Mongolia,[8] and he had spent time conducting research among Tibetans in Darjeeling, Sikkim, and throughout India together with his anthropologist wife Beatrice Miller.

During the same period we have just discussed, Lobsang Gelek became the first Tibetan to obtain a doctorate in anthropology within the People's Republic of China. He received his Ph.D. in 1986 from Zhongshan University in Guangzhou, for a dissertation on the historical and cultural links between the ancient Tibetans and the civilizations of neighbouring regions.[9]

Unlike his contemporaries, who trained in specific North American[10] and Chinese academic environments, Rinzin Thargyal came out of a rather different Anglo-European intellectual lineage, to be discussed below. Also, although his fieldwork among Tibetan refugees resettled in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal in 1982-1983 belonged to the same research milieu we have just described, it was unique for several important reasons. For one thing, Rinzin chose to work with informants from Kham in the far eastern part of the Tibetan plateau. Kham is an ecologically, socially and historically complex region with some of the highest population densities on the Tibetan plateau prior to the Chinese occupation. It is also a region for which there were virtually no in-depth studies by anthropologists prior to the 1990s, and due mainly to on-going problems with official access Kham Tibetan societies remain largely unstudied. The only earlier

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Associate and Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland. He is presently an independent scholar and lives in India.

[8] See Miller 1959.

[9] In common with Rinzin Thargyal, Lobsang Gelek (or simply "Gelek") hails from Kham. He also conducted studies on the pastoralists of eastern Tibet, specifically in the region of Golok Sertha not far to the northeast of Rinzin's research area in Dege; see Gelek 1983, 1998, and also Gelek and Hai Miao 1997. Gelek's 1998 publication (c.f. also Levine 1998) gives an ethno-historical reconstruction of pre-modern Sertha pastoral society and is useful for comparison with Rinzin's work on Dege presented in this volume. Due to his collaborations with western scholars, Gelek is one of the best-known Tibetan anthropologists. He is currently a research scholar at the National Center for Tibetan Studies in Beijing.

[10] The University of Washington in Seattle was a significant focus for the early development of the anthropology of Tibet in North America; Robert and Beatrice Miller, Pedro Carrasco, Melvyn Goldstein, and Robert Ekvall all gained their doctorates or produced major works of research within the auspices of its programs.

anthropological work in Kham proper was that conducted by a few Western-trained, pre-Communist era Chinese scholars.

Li An-che undertook a short period of research on the kingdom of Dege during 1943, and Chen Han-seng (1897-2004) made a brief comparative study of agricultural communities of the Yi in Yunnan and the Tibetans in Kham during the mid-1940s.[11] The modern anthropology of Kham Tibetan societies remains virtually non-existent up until today, and that which has very recently begun to appear has been entirely determined by the possibility of official access to the southernmost fringes of the region.[12] Thus, Rinzin's work represents a distinctive and valuable departure from what Geoffrey Samuel rightly summarized as the narrow choice between Lhasa-centric and Sherpa-centric scholarship that dominated the anthropology of Tibetan societies up until the late 1980s.[13] Only after this time did the first Western scholars begin to gain official access for long-term, independent research in certain areas of the Tibetan plateau.[14]

A second unique feature of Rinzin's research is that, rather than working with agriculturalists, he documented the life of a community of pre-modern Khampa pastoralists. Research on pre-modern Tibetan pastoralist communities has long been a significant lacuna in the anthropology of Tibet. Accounts were produced by the German ethnographer Hans Stübel (1885-1961), the American missionary turned anthropologist Robert Ekvall, the Austrian-trained German missionary and ethnologist Matthias Hermanns (1899-1972), and the

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[11] For results of this research, see Li An-che 1947, and also sections of Li An-che 1994 (originally composed during the late 1940s or early 1950s); and Chen Han-seng 1949. See also the work on Tibetan law in eastern Tibet by Li An-che's co-fieldworker Shih-yü Yü Li 1950. For Chinese linguistic studies in Dege during the same period, see Yu Wen 1948.

[12] Claes Corlin 1978, 1980 undertook early reconstructive studies among Tibetan refugees from Gyelthang in the very far south of Kham. There have been recent field studies in Gyelthang on ethnic tourism and Tibetan identity by Åshild Kolås 2005, on ethnobotany and Tibetan medicine by Denise Glover 2006, and on local religious revival and Tibetan Buddhism among the Premi in Muli (southern Sichuan) and neighbouring northwest Yunnan by Koen Wellens 2006.

[13] Samuel 1992:699.

[14] See, for example, the monograph based upon research undertaken during the period 1986-1988 in the southwestern Changthang by Melvyn Goldstein and Cynthia Beall 1990, and the study from the same period by Graham Clarke 1987. During the mid-1980s, unofficial research, or what we might call "tourist visa ethnography" was also commonly practiced, an example of which is the brief study of female hotel workers in Lhasa by Barbara Aziz 1987.

Tibetan lama-scholar Namkhai Norbu (b. 1938).[15] However, these authors all described populations inhabiting the Amdo region of the north-eastern Tibetan plateau. What is more, the Amdo pastoralists presented in these earlier studies had developed their own autonomous social and political systems, or they were more loosely—and often only tenuously—connected in various ways with local or more distant sedentary power centers, such as large monasteries. In other words, they were closer to what have often been described in the literature as stateless and egalitarian types of societies. By contrast, the Khampa pastoralists of Zilphukhog whom Rinzin studied formed a community existing within the context of the extensive and centralized political system of the kingdom of Dege (i.e. sDe dge, often Romanized as Derge). This ancient hereditary kingdom was not only the largest and most important native political unit in Kham prior to the Chinese Communist occupation, it was also one of the major ethnic Tibetan states to have existed on the high plateau during past centuries.

Rinzin's research on Zilphukhog represents a major contribution on the nature of the Dege polity as it manifested itself at the local level. The work reconstructs a fine-grained ethno-historical portrait and analysis of economic life and social and political relations of the kind that has never been possible in the more purely text-based historical research undertaken on the Dege kingdom to date.[16] The level of detail it contains is also far greater than anything we have ever gained from previous studies of such pre-modern Tibetan pastoral communities outside of the Ganden Phodrang state, and this detail is combined with an intellectual inquiry that goes well beyond the largely descriptive

[15] See: Stübel 1939, and Stubel 1958 (note the removal of the umlaut from his name in the English translation of his work); Ekvall 1952, 1954, 1964, 1968; Hermanns 1949; and Nam mkha'i Nor bu 1994, which was translated into English, via Italian, in Namkhai Norbu 1997. Namkhai Norbu's work concerns the region of northern Dzachukha, which, although not far to the north of Dege, is inhabited by groups of the formerly autonomous Golok, who relate themselves to Amnye Machen and thus belong in Amdo proper.

[16] For more recent research on Dege published since Rinzin completed his work (and hence not utilized by him), see the historical studies by Kessler 1983, Kolmas 1988, van der Kuijp 1988, Dege Xianzhi Bianzuan 1995, Hartley 1997, and the linguistic study by Häsler 1999. The recently published narrative of Oliver Coales 2003 also contains significant accounts of Dege and its neighbours in 1916-1917. For background on the Nyarong expansion and its effects on Kham and Dege, see Tashi Tsering 1985. On the neighbouring, mainly pastoralist region of Lingtsang, which was also a dependency of Dege, see the historical study by Tashi Tsering 1992.

literature which one is accustomed to reading in the scholarship on Tibet.

The central focus of Rinzin's work is the most crucial and controversial relationship in pre-modern Tibetan societies, that ensuing between a local "lord" (*dpon*) and his "dependents" (*'khor pa*). Various writers have debated the notion that pre-modern Tibetan societies were characterized by feudalism, and the appropriateness of a vocabulary of feudalism to attempt to describe them has also been contested. On one side of this debate are a range of voices advocating what Rinzin refers to as an "economic reductionist Marxist position." Against this, Rinzin and Melvyn Goldstein have both argued that the concept of feudalism, as it has been applied to Tibetan societies, is far too general and inclusive, and not analytical enough. Goldstein, along with Marc Bloch and others, has drawn a distinction between serfdom and feudalism. He holds that serfdom was a mode of economic production intrinsic to Tibetan societies, and has charged that other anthropologists, such as Barbara Aziz, Eva Dargyay, and Beatrice Miller, have all failed to recognize serfdom in their accounts of the Tibetan social system. While Rinzin does not dispute Goldstein's emphasis on serfdom, in the present book he argues that the application of feudal terminology is cumbersome since Tibet lacked some of the fundamental features of feudalism, as he stated elsewhere:

> The generative factor of feudalism was political decentralization that necessitated the establishment of patron/client relationships as a security mechanism. I agree that vassalage entailed fief, but I maintain that its political-cum-security imperativeness superceded its economic aspect. However, on which side the pendulum tilted depended upon how imperative the need for security was at any given time: if the latter became less indispensable then the economic aspect would be rendered more predominant.[17]

A nuanced analysis of the lord/dependent relationship, and one which is more sensitive to specific historical, social, economic and ecological contexts on the Tibetan plateau, is what Rinzin has sought to demonstrate by way of his detailed case study of a Khampa pastoral estate in the Dege kingdom.

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[17] Rinzin Thargyal 1993:32.

RINZIN THARGYAL'S ODYSSEY

The work published herein was originally presented as a thesis that earned Rinzin Thargyal the degree of Magister Artium in Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo in 1985.[18] In the Norwegian system at the time, the Magister Artium thesis represented a substantial piece of independent research approaching the level and length of an average doctoral dissertation in the social sciences as usually submitted for the Ph.D. in the United States or the Dr. Phil. in Germany. Rinzin was thus one of the first Tibetans ever to gain higher academic qualifications in anthropology either inside or outside of China. I will now briefly outline Rinzin's biography and the circumstances that lead to his becoming one of the first modern Tibetan anthropologists.[19] Rinzin's story is in many ways typical of the odyssey of radical transitions and challenging encounters experienced by newly exiled Tibetans since the 1950s, although in his case his experiences helped to stimulate an intellectual quest to understand the workings of social life.

Rinzin Thargyal was born in 1951 in the agricultural region of Meshe,[20] which was one of 25 traditional "districts" (*rdzong khag*) comprising the kingdom of Dege. During his childhood, his home was about one and a half days journey on foot from Zilphukhog, the pastoral community on which he undertook research for this book, although as a boy he never visited that area. His father's family belonged to the lower ranks of the aristocracy within the Dege kingdom, being one of those with wealth in terms of property but without the higher status enjoyed by older, more prestigious houses. Due to increasing hostilities between Chinese Communist troops of the People's Liberation Army and local Tibetan resistance fighters in Dege, seven year old Rinzin was evacuated from his home in 1958. He was taken on a long journey across southern Tibet and over the Himalaya to safety in Bhutan in the company of his paternal uncle. Their arrival in Bhutan preceded, by about six months, the Lhasa uprising of March 10th 1959 and the Dalai Lama's flight thereafter into exile in India. Rinzin still recalls the constant anxiety among the

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[18] The original thesis title was "A Traditional Estate in Eastern Tibet: Pastoral Nomads of Zil-phu-khog."

[19] The following is based upon an interview with Rinzin Thargyal conducted at his home near Oslo on 03.08.2005.

[20] Written sMad shod or rMe shod in different Tibetan sources.

newly arrived Tibetan refugees in Bhutan about being sent back to Tibet, since the Chinese were requesting this of the Bhutanese authorities at the time. Bhutan was just the first of a series of very different worlds that Rinzin would encounter as a new refugee.

The political turmoil that forced Rinzin to flee his homeland also meant the more or less permanent breakup of his own family. Although his parents remained alive, as a child he grew up completely separated from them. For many years, without knowledge of his parents' fate, his life was really that of an orphan. Rinzin's father, like a great many able-bodied Khampa men, had joined the growing armed Tibetan resistance movement fighting occupying Chinese troops in eastern Tibet at the end of the 1950s. He eventually moved with the retreating resistance groups from Kham into Central Tibet, and later traveled onto Nepal, where he remained as a member of the CIA-backed Khampa resistance force in Mustang until this was disbanded in 1974. For many years, Rinzin did not know of the whereabouts or fate of his father, although they were eventually reunited in Nepal during the 1970s. All the while, Rinzin's mother remained behind at their family home in Meshe, now under Chinese administration. Rinzin did not see her until she was allowed to visit Nepal briefly during 1983 in order to meet her husband once again. Rinzin's father returned to Dege during the late 1980s and passed away there. Sadly, Rinzin's sister had died during the rigors of the Cultural Revolution, but his two brothers survived, and along with his mother they still live in Dege today.

Although born and raised as a child in Tibet, Rinzin's early memories of his life in Meshe remain mostly shrouded by the trauma of his childhood flight into exile. After his departure from Tibet, he was unable even to visualize the face of his own mother. When he returned to Meshe again for the first time in 1988, many people of his generation recalled for him how they had been playmates together as young children, yet Rinzin has virtually no memories at all of the time before he left. Curiously, the Dege Khampa world of Rinzin's homeland that he actually came to know of in great detail was the one that he studied at a distance as an anthropologist while working among fellow refugees many years later in Kathmandu Valley.

While Rinzin's family was greatly disrupted for decades by the Chinese occupation of Tibet, his own life was not without some defining continuities. Perhaps the most important "thread" of this type that he enjoyed when young was one formed around a series of

educational opportunities. These began already while growing up as a child in Kham. As was typical of pre-modern Tibetan communities, Rinzin's village had no school. However, his family had a tradition of educating their sons at home, and his parents employed a private tutor to teach Rinzin to read and write. At seven years of age, he could already read and write Tibetan, although he could not yet understand the meaning of all the texts he was able to recite and copy.

When Rinzin first arrived in India, via Bhutan, he was initially sent to Simla in the foothills of Himachal Pradesh, where he attended a Tibetan exile school for two years. One of his teachers identified him as a candidate for possible schooling in a third country, and in 1963 he was sent to Denmark as one of approximately 80 Tibetan refugee boys and girls to receive an education there. This initiative was orchestrated by Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, and initially sponsored by generous Danish patrons Jan Fenneberg and his wife. As the private sponsorship of such a large group of Tibetan children in Denmark ran into difficulties, new Norwegian sponsors agreed to relocate the male Tibetan students to Norway, while the girls where sent to Sweden. At the end of 1963, following a five month sojourn in Denmark, Rinzin found himself being cared for at a special school which was established in Gjøvik, a town to the north of Oslo, in the company of about 40 other Tibetan boys. At the school, the young refugees were taught a range of general subjects using English medium. Although they also learnt some Norwegian, the boys spoke Tibetan together amongst themselves and were strongly encouraged not to forget their own language and culture.

After three years of continuous study in Norway, Rinzin was relocated back to India once again along with other Tibetan boys who had been selected to continue with further studies in Indian colleges. With sponsorship from Tibetanerhjelpen (Norwegian Tibet Aid), Rinzin was initially enrolled at Saint George's College, an English medium Catholic school in Mussoorie attended mainly by Anglo-Indian students. Rinzin was then allowed to transfer to Cambrian Hall, another Anglo-Indian school in nearby Dehra Dun. There he studied for and passed his G.C.E. "O Level" examinations. At the time of his arrival at Cambrian Hall, there was a well educated Tibetan teacher on the staff, a former secretary of the previous Panchen Lama, and Rinzin was able to continue studying advanced Tibetan language under his guidance. Thus, by 1972, Rinzin had completed his education in the mainstream curriculum of the modern Indian college system, while

also gaining a higher-level training in his own native Tibetan language as well.

Having successfully completed his college education, Rinzin saw little chance of gaining access to higher education in India at the time. Fortunately, he was immediately able to return to Norway in the hope of pursuing university studies there. Rinzin's preparations for admission to the University of Oslo required several years to complete. He took correspondence courses from Cambridge University in order to obtain the required "A Level" passes for university entrance, and also undertook preparatory studies in philosophy for about one year. In 1975/76, Rinzin commenced formal studies towards the Magister Artium degree at the University of Oslo. Although many of the courses he attended were taught in Norwegian, it turned out that most of the textbooks used were written in English, his second language after Tibetan, and due to this he was able to follow and complete the curriculum. For his Magister studies, Rinzin pursued minors in English and psychology, but eventually chose social anthropology as his major.

Anthropology had initially been recommended to Rinzin as a subject of potential interest by Per Kværne, who is Professor of Tibetan Studies at Oslo University and who was involved at the time with assisting the Tibetan refugees in Norway. As it turned out, anthropology held a strong intellectual appeal for Rinzin due to his own life experiences up to that point. Growing up between Tibet, South Asia and Scandinavia had made him acutely aware of social and cultural differences and of his own sense of ethnic identity. University studies in anthropology offered him the chance to reflect upon these issues more deeply and systematically.

Rinzin's tutor in social anthropology at the University of Oslo was Fredrik Barth (b. 1928), Norway's most internationally recognized anthropologist. Barth, who trained at Cambridge with Meyer Fortes (1906-1983), is well known for his theoretical perspective of transactionalism which has influenced the work of quite a number of British, European and Australasian anthropologists over the past few decades. Barth has contributed studies on the negotiation of identity and ethnicity, as well as widely read and discussed ethnographies dealing with topics such as social organization, knowledge and ritual in a range of very different societies from southern Persia to New Guinea. It was Rinzin's good fortune that Barth took a particular

interest in him and his efforts to study anthropology, and this support proved invaluable for the completion of the thesis.

Rinzin found Barth to be an excellent supervisor who challenged his students into engaging in their own analytical thinking by way of strategic silences and brief perspicacious remarks. Although Rinzin independently chose and pursued his own research topic on eastern Tibetan pastoralists, he was certainly influenced by his teacher's interests, particularly Barth's writings on the Pathan of Swat Valley, his *Nomads of South Persia*, and his various essays on models. Those familiar with Barth's transactionalism and its emphasis on social action and negotiation will discern its impact upon Rinzin's focus and arguments in the present book. Rinzin found further inspiration in the anthropology of other British-based transactionalist thinkers, including Ladislav Holy (1933-1997) and Raymond Firth (1901-2002), and also in the writings of Firth's student Edmund Leach (1910-1989), particularly the latter's classic monograph *Political Systems of Highland Burma: a study of Kachin social structure*. Thus, Rinzin's work, written several decades ago now, reflects a distinctive milieu of European anthropological thought which was more current during the 1970s and 1980s, although it has remained one that continues to speak clearly to certain of our interests and debates today.

At about the time Rinzin successfully completed his graduate studies, he unfortunately began suffering from a debilitating illness that has continued to restrict him until today. His scholarly potential suffered as a result, with his actual published output being limited to only a few articles. However, his active contribution at international conferences has always been more significant than his publications suggest.

At the 4th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS) at München in July 1985, Rinzin first discussed the question of how best to identify the pre-modern Tibetan social order in his paper "The Applicability of the Concept of Feudalism to Traditional Tibetan Society." This was an opportune contribution to a well-known debate already taking place between American anthropologists Melvyn Goldstein and Beatrice Miller at the same time.[21] After some follow-up fieldwork at his research site in Nepal, Rinzin presented a paper at the Csoma de Körös Symposium in

[21] See Rinzin Thargyal 1988, Goldstein 1986, 1988, and Miller 1987, 1988.

Hungary during August 1987.[22] Rinzin recalls the 1987 Csoma de Körös Symposium as being particularly significant for the history of modern Tibetan Studies and for his own experience as a scholar. It was the first international academic meeting where exile Tibetan researchers such as himself could meet and freely exchange views with their Tibetan counterparts who worked within political China. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Rinzin's intellectual interests moved towards questions concerning Tibetan identity and its expression in various aspects of the social life of the Tibetan exile community. During 1990 he undertake what was to be his final fieldwork, visiting Dharamsala and Kathmandu, and eventually publishing two interesting short studies related to these topics.[23] In addition, he presented several unpublished conference papers on related issues.[24]

Despite becoming increasingly debilitated by illness, Rinzin has nevertheless continued to serve the Tibetan Studies community in significant ways over the past two decades. Based at the University of Oslo, he has been a long-serving staff member of the Network for University Co-operation Tibet-Norway. The Network has been a pioneering organization in facilitating the academic training of promising Tibetan students at universities outside of China, and many young scholars from the Tibet Autonomous Region have gained university degrees in Norway due to its excellent programs. Alongside his administrative duties, and his support of Tibetan students from Tibet arriving to study in Norway, Rinzin has continued teaching Tibetan language to European students and also English language to Tibetan students. Today Rinzin is one of the senior members of the Tibetan exile community in Norway, and is highly respected by his fellow Tibetans, both for his positive engagement with Tibet issues and his scholarly achievements. He currently lives on the outskirts of Oslo with his wife Pema and their two daughters, Dechen and Sangmo.

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[22] The paper was entitled "Monks, Shabten, and Material Advancement in Jawalakhel".

[23] See Rinzin Thargyal 1993 and 1997.

[24] These papers were "Tibetan Nationalism in the Making" presented at the Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalayas Conference in Zürich during September 1990, and "A Process of De-marginalization: The Bönpos and the Recognition of Their Historical Importance" presented at the 6th Seminar of the IATS at Fargenes during August 1992.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Melvyn Goldstein once observed that "The literature on Tibetan society suffers from chronic religious indigestion.[1] In contrast to the disproportionate attention that has been given to the religious dimension of life in Tibetan societies, I have deliberately chosen to focus my research upon the more mundane or grassroots sector of a Tibetan population. This study is concerned with the way of life of a traditional Tibetan pastoral estate during the early- to mid-20th century. The community that I studied, known as Zilphukhog, was a part of the ancient Tibetan kingdom of Dege located in the Kham region of the eastern Tibetan plateau (see figure 1). Information about social conditions in Zilphukhog prior to the mid-20th century is generally unavailable since there are no surviving written records which concern it.[2] Furthermore, the community itself ceased to exist after 1958 when its inhabitants departed from the area due to the Chinese military occupation of eastern Tibet. Thus, the material upon which the present work is based derives almost entirely from extensive ethnographic interviews conducted with those inhabitants of Zilphukhog who managed to leave Tibet and become resettled as refugees in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal. To study the way of life of a people necessitates a comprehensive approach dealing with diverse aspects of human existence. While I have investigated many different dimensions of local Tibetan life in Zilphukhog in the present work, including topics as wide-ranging as death ceremonies, marriage negotiations, and hunting, ultimately the most stress is placed upon local social organization and economic aspects of community life, and in particular the issue of household viability.

While attempting to build up a detailed and nuanced portrait of life in Zilphukhog, my central concern in this study is to investigate the nature of the dyadic interrelationship between a traditional Tibetan "lord" or "leader" usually designated *pon* (*dpon*) and his "dependents"

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[1] Goldstein 1971a:521.

[2] Editor's note: One brief description of travel through Zilphukhog in 1935 is found in Duncan 1952:186-187, 306.

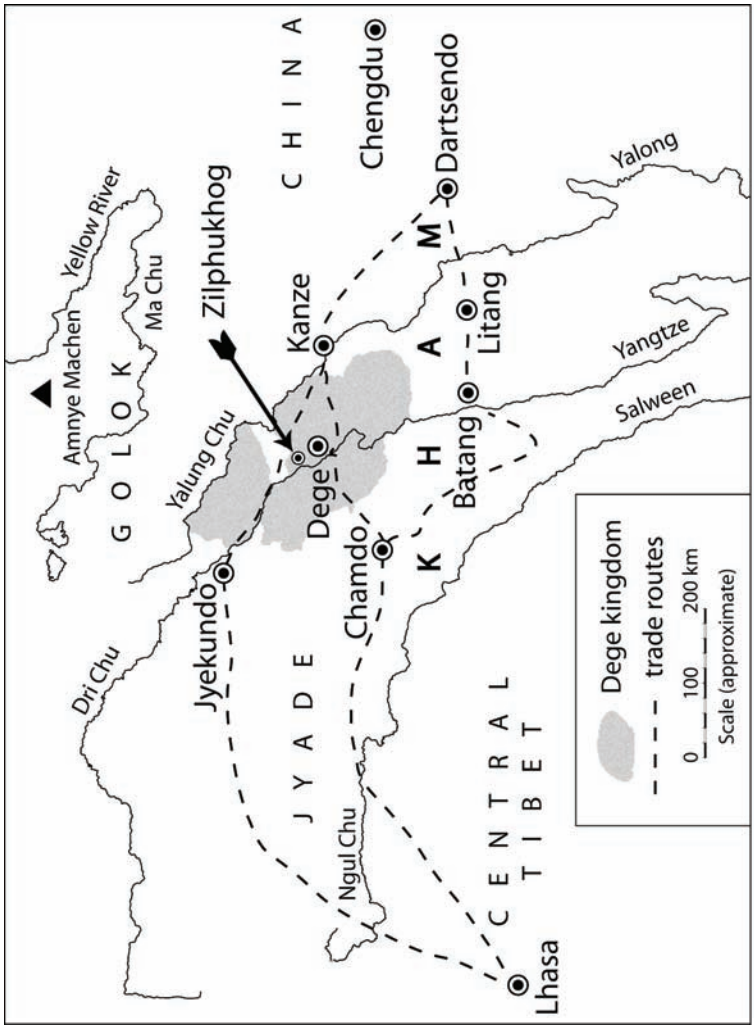

Figure 1. Eastern Tibet.

or *khorpa* (*'khor pa*). During recent times, this relationship has, on the one hand, aroused heated ideological propaganda since it was represented as being at the heart of a system of social inequality in traditional Tibetan societies which Chinese Communists claim to have liberated the people of Tibet from. On the other hand, there has also been scholarly confusion over this topic, as has been alluded to already by Melvyn Goldstein:

> But what little has been written on social structure and stratification in Tibet is contradictory and confused. Some authors emphasized mobility and the open aspect of social relations whereas others talk of a rigid, closed system of institutionalized inequality. All tend to be vague and imprecise and treat the subject only peripherally.[3]

The polar concepts of lord and dependents preclude a symmetrical interrelationship, therefore the task at hand is to see what factors caused the asymmetry and how it was negotiated between the parties. While the structure of this dyadic interrelationship has been called different things by various writers, including feudalism and serfdom, it is problematic to easily pigeon-hole it under one of these more familiar terms when considering my data on Zilphukhog. Therefore, it is essential to get to the core of the social system and scrutinize what constraining and enabling factors led each party to accept their interrelationship and act on the basis of their differential situations.

This work will suggest that the lord (*pon*)/dependent (*khorpa*) relationship was more hierarchical in the Dege kingdom during the 17th-19th centuries than it was during more recent times (see Chapter Three). The central political apparatus of Dege had been efficacious during this earlier period and hence local lords probably did not find much room for expansion and aggrandizement. The state, in all probability, reigned supreme and the lord/dependent relationship was presumably controlled and steered by the state. Although the endowment of estates and dependents to local lords resembled the feudal system of fief and corvée, I shall argue that the political climate at the state level had been devoid of the characteristic features of feudalism. Social and political instability owing to external and internal factors, or incomplete control by the state, were the prime causes of feudalism in medieval Europe and elsewhere. But these

[3] Goldstein 1971:521.

factors appear to have been absent or were inconsequential in Dege during the 17th-19th centuries.

Nevertheless, it is my opinion that a centrifugal process did occur in Dege more recently, especially between about 1850 and 1958. The dwindling power of the house of Dege brought about by a complex of co-wife and fraternal rivalries and intrigues in the house, repeated Chinese ruses, and the general political environment, cast Dege into an almost anarchic situation. This political hiatus offered an unprecedented opportunity for the local nobility to achieve their own individual ends. Hence, a centrifugal process began, although it does not seem to have achieved the status of an established system but rather a transitional phase. This transitional phase was cut short by the all-pervasive power of the Chinese Communist state in 1959.

This centrifugal-transitional period in Dege constituted the political milieu in which my informants and their forefathers coexisted and cooperated. While a reliable pedigree of the last three generations of Yudrug-tsang, the lord of the pastoral estate of Zilphukhog, is available, beyond that it is semi-legendary.[4]

It is important to bear in mind that the changed political milieu in late-19th and early-20th century Dege made almost any dyadic interrelationship "contractual". There is perhaps some risk in using the term contractual, because the notion of legal or official contract was almost non-existent in the local context of Zilphukhog. It is rather the case that an implicit or unconscious contractual element could be discerned in nearly all dyadic interrelationships. My impression is that a sort of minimum tolerance threshold emerged, and going beyond this would undermine the viability of the interrelationship. Each constituent party (whether the *pon* or *khorpa*), in his given opportunity situation, made his own assessment of what he could expect from the other and his expectation of what would reasonably be expected from him. If one party's assessment was incompatible with what one was required to do, then the status quo would be disrupted. Although according to my informants, such incidents did not occur in Zilphukhog, the defection of dependents from other communities to Zilphukhog does seem to have been common knowledge. In other words, a balanced transformation of expectations into corresponding acts or events was imperative. Given that what one was expected and

[4] My eldest informant was born in 1916 and left Zilphukhog in 1958 together with her fellow dependents.

prepared to do under the circumstances conformed to the transformed results in action, the viability of the dyadic relationship could continue in perpetuity.

The next question to ask is who or what was responsible for the inception or emergence of this tolerance threshold? As touched upon earlier, the somewhat volatile nature of the political environment, both within and outside of Dege (discussed in Chapter Ten), apparently rendered everybody vulnerable to its polar impacts, i.e. its constraining and facilitating influence. The contiguity of neighbouring "states" or "tribal" entities, such as Golok or Jyade,[5] and inter-estate encroachment probably made local lords realize the prospect of ultimate failure if they acted heavy-handedly towards their dependents. Such failure would have meant the defection of dependents to one of the contiguous states. This would not only have entailed the loss of precious manpower, but also the lord's prestige as a leader who could lead and attract rather than dispel and alienate his dependents-those who ultimately constituted the very foundation of his status as lord.

The same factors that constrained the lord also had a facilitating impact on the dependents. Neighbouring regions such as Jyade and Golok functioned as potential havens for disgruntled dependents who might have felt that things had gone beyond this minimum tolerance threshold, and that the risk of defection was worth taking. However, defection was neither permitted by the lord nor was it made use of whimsically by the dependents. Defection entailed risks, uncertainty and insecurity, but it was a possible way out that was potentially accessible to everybody, should the necessity arise. A concrete example of this phenomenon is the dramatic defection of three dependents of powerful Khado-tsang to be discussed in Chapter Ten. When the need arose, Yudrug-tsang itself, the lord of Zilphukhog, resorted to the facilitating possibilities of the political environment by seeking refuge in nearby Golok, when it was being subjected to

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[5] Editor's note: In using the little-known name Jyade (rGya sde), Rinzin follows Teichman 1922:4, 48 who describes it as the "Country of the Thirty-nine Tribes, lying in the basin of the Upper Salween, south of the Kokonor border." Changthang and Central Tibetans commonly know it as the territory of the "Thirty-nine Tribes of Hor" (Hor tsho so dgu), which was centered around Bachen during the late 19th- and early 20th century. Rinzin's later reference to the area as being under the "nominal authority of the Chinese Amban" is because it was on the border with Qinghai and hence very loosely under Qing control from 1751 to 1912. However, it came under the partial administration of the Ganden Phodrang in Lhasa who appointed special governors (Hor spyi khyab) there from 1916 to 1942.

encroachment of Sakar-tsang, a neighbouring estate (see Chapter Ten).

However, in Zilphukhog there was no fluid movement of clients transferring their loyalties and allegiances between patrons, as was the case, for instance, among the Swat Pathan, as described by Fredrik Barth (1959). Rather, the dependents' status was hereditary and it precluded their leaving Zilphukhog of their own volition. But the scarcity of manpower which enhanced the dependents' bargaining power vis-à-vis their lord, along with the political environment, made them entities of some weight and magnitude rather than mere cogs in a wheel.

Hence, under the circumstances, had the lord adopted an autocratic or despotic attitude, he would have rocked the very foundation upon which he stood. It is my belief that, realizing his own vulnerability, the lord entertained no other alternatives and opted for a complementary and interdependent relationship. In view of this, a high degree of interdependence prevailed in Zilphukhog between lord and dependents. Under the prevailing circumstances, a policy of reciprocity proved to be the optimal strategy for maximizing the lord's opportunity situation.

Optimizing one's opportunity situation implies the adoption of a preferred mode of social organization to the exclusion of other, less optimal ones. This notion necessarily entails the concept of choice of a particular social system from a choice inventory. It appears that both the parties—lord and dependents—found the system of their adoption optimally viable and none of them wanted to see its cessation. A less optimal or disruptive alternative would have been to adopt a non-reciprocal interrelationship between the two parties, i.e. the lord would have assumed a despotic and imperial attitude towards his dependents. But given the nature of the impinging political environment, despotism and autocracy would have been less viable, and indeed, counter-productive. As in any society, the people in Zilphukhog also seem to have opted for an optimal choice. As Edmund Leach once put it:

> Every individual of a society, each in his own interest, endeavours to exploit the situation as he perceives it and in so doing the collectivity of individuals alters the structure of the society itself. [6]

[6] Leach 1954:8.

It is my belief that the constraining and facilitating properties of the political environment both within and surrounding Dege during the first half of the 20th century had a canalizing impact on the choice of the preferred alternative of social system. Fredrik Barth's conceptualization of choice and opportunity situation is central to my argument here:

> Indeed, once one admits that what we empirically observe is not "customs", but "cases" of human behaviour, it seems to me that we cannot escape the concept of choice in our analysis: our central problem becomes what are the constraints and incentives that canalize choices.[7]

My own assessment throughout this work is that the interdependent relationship between the *pon* and his *khorpa* in Zilphukhog came into being at the expense of neither party; on the contrary, each party made the best use of its opportunity situation. However, if one party's opportunity situation was overstretched and a backlash was potentially in the offing, the lord would do his utmost to avoid such a backlash. The foregoing discussion summarizes the central part of my thesis in the present work, and it is elaborated once again in Chapter Eleven "Social Organization". The reciprocal aspects of the interdependence between the lord and his dependents in Zilphukhog is given substance especially in the data presented in Chapter Three "Labour Service", Chapter Five "Trade and Peripheral Incomes", Chapter Six "Strategic Transhumance" and Chapter Eight "Marriage and Kinship", although the same aspects can be discerned in material set forth in almost every chapter of this study.

INFORMANTS AND RESEARCH PROCESS

The main fieldwork on which this work is based was conducted in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal, between September 1982 and February 1983, along with several briefer visits. My informants were a group of Tibetan refugees who had been living in exile in Nepal for the previous two decades. Their place of origin was Zilphukhog, a pastoral estate belonging to the kingdom of Dege in Kham or eastern Tibet. One may ask why I opted for a description of a traditional Tibetan society which already had slipped or was then slipping away

[7] Barth 1981a:35.

from the hands of recorders of cultures. Due precisely to the fact that the traditional pastoral world of Zilphukhog was entering a permanent state of oblivion I became all the more interested and determined to shed some light on pre-modern Tibetan society while it was still possible to do so with those who experienced it firsthand as active participants. Moreover, the traditional Tibetan way of life, particularly at the grassroots level, has always been obscure and more recently a source of contention on account of political claims and propaganda. Admittedly, reconstructing a lost way of life from information collected among displaced informants entails certain difficult methodological issues. I will therefore give a brief account of how my informants arrived in the situation in which I encountered them in Nepal and the approach I adopted when working with them.

In 1957, the Chinese Communists who had occupied Kham began to "liberate" people in and adjacent to Zilphukhog. This "liberation" consisted, among other things, of confiscating all types of arms and ammunition as well as the landed properties of the well-to-do. In addition to this, traditional leaders, high monks, and wealthy persons began to be persecuted both physically and verbally because of their social status. Along with armed Tibetan resistance to these developments, a mass departure of refugees from the region ensued. My informants' flight from their homes represented the second time in recent history that the house of Yudrug-tsang, the local lords of Zilphukhog, had to flee from their territory. Only a couple of years had passed since they had returned from an exile in nearby Golok. Under the circumstances, the only rational and sensible thing Yudrug-tsang could do was to tell its dependents that it was determined to move towards Lhasa, but that they themselves were free to make their own decisions in the matter. About 10 or so dependent households followed Yudrug-tsang westward, but two of these households returned to Zilphukhog after only several days of flight. The remaining eight or so refugee families pressed on towards Lhasa and then further to Nepal, which they reached after a year's journey from Zilphukhog. They first crossed the frontier between Tibet and Nepal, and then remained on the Nepalese side of the border for several years. They finally relocated to a place called Jawalekhel near the old city of Patan in the Kathmandu Valley (see figures 2-5), when the Swiss Red Cross started a carpet weaving project there to aid Tibetan refugees.

Figure 2. Informant Nagtruk, Kathmandu Valley, 1983.

Figure 3. Informant Sokey, Kathmandu Valley, 1983.

Figure 4. Informant Namgyal, Kathmandu Valley, 1983.

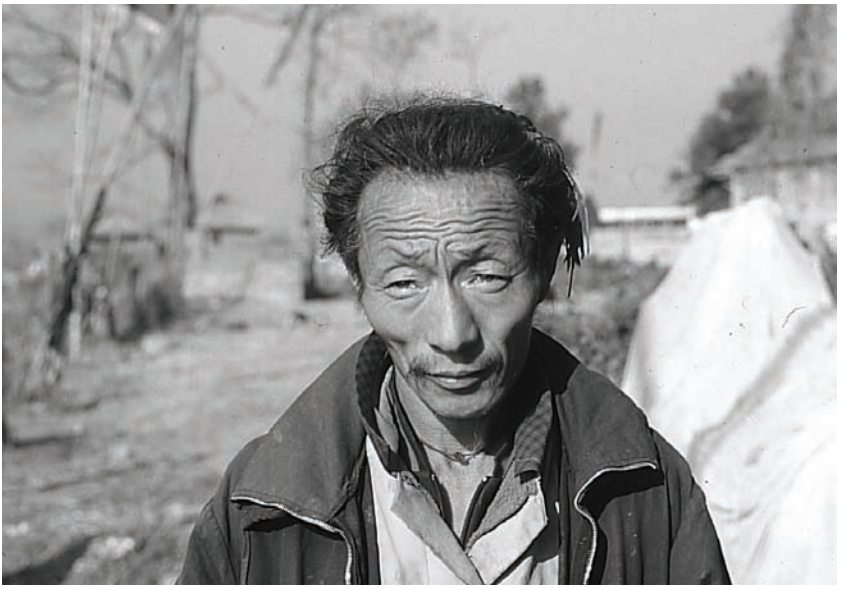

Figure 5. Informant Pulu, Kathmandu Valley, 1983.

When I first got to know them, all of my informants had been weaving carpets at Jawalekhel for 20 years. During my fieldwork, there were altogether about 500 Tibetans who worked at weaving, spinning and dyeing in the Tibetan carpet factory which was managed by Tibetan personnel. The factory had three shareholders: the Swiss Red Cross; the Dalai Lama's administration; and the Tibetan refugees who worked for the factory. People from Zilphukhog or other parts of Kham constituted approximately one third of the work force. Over the previous twenty years, the original eight households from Zilphukhog who had resettled in Jawalekhel had multiplied into a host of neolocal and conjugal families. The remaining carpet factory work force came from a Tibetan nomadic area adjacent to the Nepalese border, thus both Tibetan regional groups in Jawalekhel were pastoral nomads who had been forced by their exile to adopt an entirely different livelihood.
As has been alluded to above, I did not have access to the place of Zilphukhog itself, thus conducting participant observation in situ was impossible. Hence, the way of life I was to reconstruct had to be done, by and large, through oral reports of the life experience of my informants. Melvyn Goldstein correctly spelled out some of the pitfalls of such reconstruction fieldwork:

> One of the most serious reconstruction dangers is the all too easy tendency to extrapolate from the comments of a handful of available informants to the society in general, this being a particular imminent danger in complex societies such as Tibet. A second problem in reconstruction research concerns the validation or determination of the accuracy of informants' statements, especially the differentiation of ideal from actual behaviour patterns.[8]

These drawbacks of reconstruction fieldwork cannot be ignored, although I considered, in line with Goldstein, that they do not preclude the collection of accurate data. My primary informants—six male and four female—represented nine different households from the same community in Tibet. The youngest among them was 54 year of age at the time of my fieldwork, thus all of them had been active adult participants in their community before their departure into exile. The availability of a differentiated group of informants gave me the opportunity for carefully cross-checking and re-cross-checking information. The same informant would be asked the same question

[8] Goldstein 1971b:65.

repeatedly on different occasions and in different forms and guises. Likewise, different informants were asked the same questions. By doing so, I was able to verify conflicting information. For instance, initially none of my informants gave me the impression that anybody in Buddhist Zilphukhog slaughtered domestic animals. I was led to believe that everybody hired professional butchers from outside of the community, but what made me suspicious was that only the well-to-do households had the means to hire them. After asking the same question repeatedly on different occasions, and in different forms, two informants from dependent (*khorpa*) households informed me that professional butchers were in fact hired by several wealthier households but that most dependent households slaughtered their animals themselves. Finally everybody agreed that taking animal lives was a necessary evil that only the rich could avoid. Similarly, the non-survival of *zomo* (*mdzo mo*, female yak-cow cross-breeds) calves remained a mystery for a while as nobody would tell me why they died while the *dri* (*'bri*, female yak) calves survived. Again, after cross-checking and re-cross-checking I learned that most *zomo* calves were starved of their mothers' milk until they died. Without the heterogeneity of the informant group and the homogeneity of their way of life, such cross-checking would have been impracticable.

Another methodological problem was the issue of the representativeness of my informants. It would have been dangerous to rely heavily upon one informant and thus forego the method of cross-checking. For instance, a former dependent who received generous assistance from Yudrug-tsang might impart an ideal picture of the *pon/khorpa* relationship, while another disgruntled former dependent might tell a conflicting story. Hence, my task was not only to cross-check data, but also to gauge every piece of information by checking why a given informant imparted a specific piece of information through scanning and scrutinizing his personal background. To illustrate my point, I suspect that a few dependents considered the reciprocal *pon/khorpa* relationship as a strategic one, i.e. as a form of social relationship generated by political and economic circumstances. But others might have thought that the same relationship derived from philanthropy, that is, the altruism of the lord, etc. depending upon their life experiences.

It was necessary, at the outset, to state carefully to my informants my intentions and position as a social researcher. I explained their unique composition as a group for the purposes of my fieldwork, and

that they were the last vestige of a traditional Tibetan society who could help me to shed some light on a social world that had vanished or was vanishing. I also explicitly told my informants that I was a Tibetan who had to leave Tibet during his childhood, and hence one who was eager to learn about my society of origin before it was too late. I said that I regarded them as my teachers. Thus, my informants realized the authenticity and seriousness of what I was trying to achieve. By and large, my informants still identified with their former way of life. This was, perhaps, understandable because of their poor accommodation, low incomes, language and cultural barriers, and their refugee status in a foreign country. They naturally compared this with their former way of life, with which they associated robustness, spaciousness, abundance, and so forth. This nostalgic feeling might have led them to render an exaggerated picture of their foregone way of life, but my impression is that this did not occur due to cross-checking, and above all because of their sincerity in helping me to form as objective a picture as possible.

During my research, I felt that I enjoyed a distinct advantage being a Tibetan by birth, being able to both speak and write the Tibetan language as my mother tongue, and having a knowledge of traditional Tibetan society gained through books, from my parents, and by way of other knowledgeable Tibetans whom I knew. There are of course potential problems with being a native anthropologist and also with insider accounts. Edmund Leach once pointed out that some Chinese anthropologists wrote their monographs on the basis of their knowledge of their own villages or towns, rather than writing about the actual way of life of those who were the object of research.[9] Being very conscious of this pitfall, I always carefully avoided mixing my data on Zilphukhog with information on other communities or basing my argumentation upon any preconceived ideas of the community.

[9] Leach 1982:125.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GENESIS OF ZILPHUKHOG

In order to understand the state of things in Zilphukhog synchronnically, that is, around the second quarter of the 20th century, it is necessary to investigate the underlying historical processes that generated or were responsible for the emergence of the local form of social organization there. Owing both to a lack of written historical records and my informants' limited knowledge of their own remote history, it is beyond my ability to render an exhaustively documented account of the founding and growth of Zilphukhog. Although the initial parts of the account of the genesis of the community are certainly semi-legendary and vague, the later parts of the story do appear more credible.[1]

THE PLACE

Zilphukhog is a valley through which the river Zil Chu flows southward towards the capital of Dege, Dege Gonchen (see figure 6). Josef Kolmas wrote of the location and altitude of the capital, "The town of Derge lies on the left bank of the Chin-sha River, approximately 98° 30 E. long., and 32° N. lat. It stands at an altitude of some 3,000 metres or 9,850 feet above sea level."[2] Pre-modern journeys between Zilphukhog and Dege Gonchen took about two days on foot. According to Li An-che, the distance between Dege Gonchen and Lhasa was about 2400 li or 30 horse stages.[3] Hence, the distance between Lhasa and Dege Gonchen should be about 1300 km (see figure 1).

The name of both the valley Zilphukhog and its river Zil Chu have the same initial syllable *zil*, which is perhaps indicative of the ecological properties of the valley. The vernacular term *zil* can mean at least

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[1] In the following account, I have used the present tense to describe the physical features of Zilphukhog's territory and the past tense and the pluperfect to describe the cultural aspects of the community, which no longer exist.

[2] Kolmas 1968:22.

[3] Li An-che 1947:280.

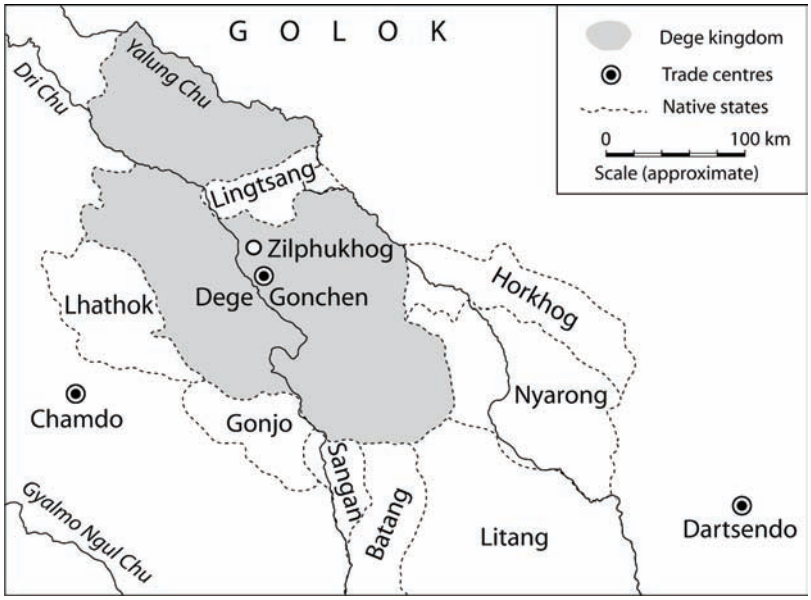

Figure 6. Dege and surrounding regions.

three different things in compound words: *zil chen* means "brilliant" or "splendid"; *zil non* means "suppressive" or "intimidating"; *zil pa* means "dewdrop". I asked my informants whether the first two meanings might be associated with the name of the community since the name of a deity residing on a snowcapped mountain in the region had the same initial syllable, *zil*. They considered the association unlikely as the mountain lay outside the physical system of the valley of Zilphukhog. Thus, perhaps *zil pa* meaning dewdrop, and connotative of the ecological conditions in the valley, is the correct meaning in the local names. The concept immediately conjures up an image of one's getting wet in the abundant summer precipitation, aptly illustrated by a popular Tibetan song:

> Don't shake the willow tree,
> It will make you wet (*zil pa*).
> Shake the apricot tree,
> It will give you apricots.[4]

[4] *Rgya lcang sprug pa ma gnang // zil pa'i bangs rogs yin 'gro // de las kham sdong sprug na // kham bu za rgyu yod red.*

The metonym is germane. On either side of the river Zil Chu there were small river valleys running parallel to each other, the courses of which met at almost perpendicular angles to the Zil Chu whose volume increased as one went southward. The source of the river originated from the northern end of the valley, where the eastern and western mountain ranges met and closed the valley at its head. Thus, Zilphukhog was encircled by mountains leaving a corridor open at its southern end. This particular physical feature had strategic importance to the inhabitants, to be discussed in later chapters. However, the mountain range system surrounding the area did not barricade Zilphukhog altogether from neighbouring communities. The encircling mountains could be traversed over passes in three directions during summer, although some of these routes were rendered impassable by snow in winter (see figure 7).

The third syllable of the name of the community, *khog*, is descriptive of the form of the valley. The word *khog* usually means the interior of something, like the interior of an animate being or carcass. *Khog* in the present context referred to the mountain-encircled aspect of the valley, and in this sense it is a common element in eastern Tibetan place names, such as Sharkhog, Dzakhog or Denkhog. The term *phu* simply refers to the upper part of a valley system in relation to the lower (*mda'*) parts.

EARLY HISTORY

Concerning the inception of Zilphukhog as a community, one can only conjecture whether there existed documents on how Yudrug-tsang, the lord of Zilphukhog, acquired the hereditary titles of first Hoda and then later Poncha. Even if documents on such matters had existed they would have been confiscated by the Chinese state at the time of their occupation of the area.[5] Moreover, a number of earlier writers on eastern Tibet, including William Rockhill and Eric Teichman, either visited or traveled through Dege and made note on the kingdom, although none of them wrote anything about Zilphukhog. In view of

[5] The ex-leader of Zilphukhog lost all his documents (both legal and historical) and other possessions to the Chinese on his flight into exile during 1959. As far as I know, no other writer on Tibet has ever mentioned the name Zilphukhog.

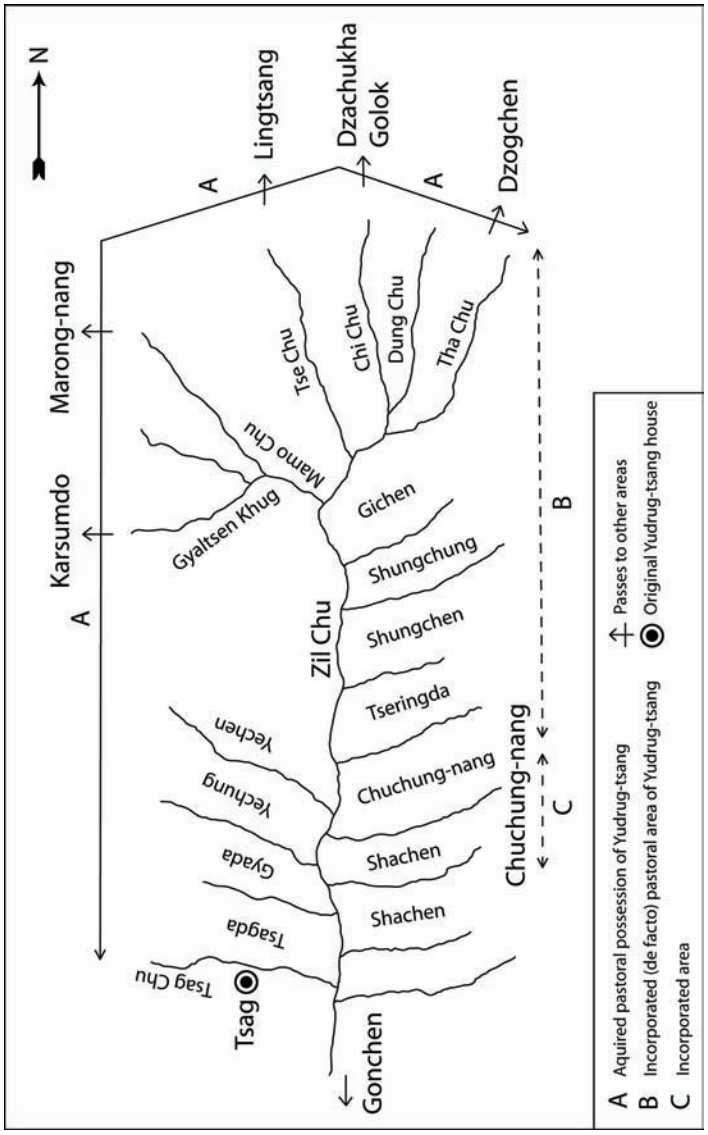

Figure 7. Sketch map of Zilphukhog.

this, what follows is of necessity based solely upon my informants' knowledge of their remote past.

The history of Zilphukhog stretches as far back in time as the first remembered ancestor of Yudrug-tsang, who apparently lived seven generations ago. It is unknown whether Yudrug-tsang were the first family to settle in Zilphukhog nor is it known if Kalsang Tsewang, the putative apical ancestor of Yudrug-tsang, was the founder of Yudrug-tsang. One can only speculate whether the actual founder was an anonymous ancestor or whether a number of generations lapsed between him and Kalsang Tsewang. My intuition is that the latter assumption is more probable and logical as a settler who starts a new life from scratch can hardly become a well-established and celebrated ancestor overnight. What is more certain is that the spacious and fertile valley of Zilphukhog began to draw in settlers from various parts of Dege and elsewhere at about the time Yudrug-tsang moved to Zilphukhog. Supposedly, two commoner brothers emigrated from Samey (perhaps Sa smad, "Lower Region"?) to Zilphukhog and a neighbouring community called Moyang-nang respectively. The brother who opted for the latter place founded and established another house in neighbouring Moyang-nang.[6]

The tri-syllabic family name Yudrug-tsang is connotative of, and compatible with its status. The first syllable *yu* (*g.yu*) means "turquoise", the second syllable *drug* means "six", and the third syllable *tsang* (*tshang*) means "family" or "house" (also "nest"). Hence, Yudrug-tsang means "House of Six Turquoises". Chimi Rinzin, the representative of the seventh generation of Yudrug-tsang, explained the house name in the following terms. While building a house in Tsag (see figure 7), where Yudrug-tsang initially settled, the founder of the house came across six turquoises near the site, and thereafter the house has been known as the House of Six Turquoises. Christening the new household with the name Yudrug-tsang might not have been premeditated, but possessing an inheritable house-name in Tibet has been indicative of social achievement, prestige, power and wealth, and the like, to which we shall return in later chapters.

Kalsang Tsewang is remembered by his descendents today, largely because of a happy coincidence that supposedly elevated him to the

[6] Editor's note: The theme of migrating brothers as the source of community origins is a very common component of Tibeto-Burman origin narratives throughout Tibet and the Himalaya, and is perhaps not to be taken too literally here.

position of the royal Norma in Zilphukhog. A Norma was a man entrusted with the duty of looking after herds, estates and other properties belonging to the king. Kalsang Tsewang probably became one of the custodians of the herds of Dege-tsang, the royal house of Dege. The story of the happy coincidence goes like this. The monarch of the day used to go annually to a place called Lhalung-khug in Zilphukhog, in order to picnic. One summer, Kalsang Tsewang was among those who set up the royal hearth for the king's visit. Being known for his outstanding physique, Kalsang Tsewang cast a huge stone near the place of the hearth. His exceptional physique and strength impressed the monarch so much that Tsewang was rewarded with the privilege of becoming the royal Norma in Zilphukhog. This is the story of how Yudrug-tsang, the upstart, initially embarked on a process of climbing the social ladder. Nothing else is known about Kalsang Tsewang. His presumed successor, Kalsang Bum, is thought to have been given the title of Hoda, but nothing else is known about him either. Beyond this, we are unable to say anything more about the first three generations of Yudrug-tsang, and my informants' replies were at times vague or contradictory. Regardless of who in the house acquired the non-noble designation of Hoda, Yudrug-tsang then became one of the 80 or so lesser non-noble leaders in Dege. A recent report states that under the queen of Dege there were 30 hereditary clan leaders and under them some 80 lesser leaders.[7]

The title of Hoda most probably entailed the acquisition of pasture-land near Tsag, some arable land in Marong-nang and a couple of dependent households. Marong-nang was a taxpayer district which is situated in the north-west of Zilphukhog, behind Zil Mountain. Josef Kolmas states that Tenpa Tsering (1678-1739), the most renowned "religious king" or Chögyal of Dege, acquired Marong-nang (i.e. rMa rong) together with other districts.[8] While there is no way of ascertaining the exact amount of land (both pastoral and arable) and the number of dependents Yudrug-tsang initially acquired, Yudrug-tsang embarked upon a process of rapid expansion in both demographic and material terms. The remaining section of this chapter will attempt to substantiate this claim.

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[7] Carrasco 1959:145. Editor's note: For a full review of all the available sources on the administrative structure and ranks in the Dege polity, see now Hartley 1997:18-25.

[8] Kolmas 1968:37.

Dealing with the fourth generation of Yudrug-tsang, we are perhaps on firmer ground. Chodak Gyatso, the representative of the fourth generation, is well remembered for his outstanding contribution to the house of Yudrug-tsang. He was a monk-cum-medical doctor who was the chief medical practitioner at the royal court of Dege. Chodak Gyatso was regarded as an adept and erudite *menpa* (*sman pa,* "doctor"), but one day the king wanted to test his medical expertise. He was ordered to diagnose the urine of a cabinet minister or Nyerpa (also Nyerchen) who had reportedly been indisposed. Instead of the minister's urine, Chodak Gyatso was given some cow's urine to test, and upon examination he detected exactly what type of urine it really was. He then obliquely revealed his discovery of the trick by telling the minister to drink cow's urine in order to cure his sickness. The present incumbent of Yudrug-tsang, Chimi Rinzin, told me that due to this feat of medical erudition the monarch rewarded Chodak Gyatso with the title of Poncha on account of his sound medical knowledge. This, presumably, was the second or third time Yudrug-tsang won the admiration and recognition of Dege-tsang for its special qualities. In the social hierarchy of Dege, the hereditary title of Poncha was an intermediate rank between Hoda and Dukor:

Gyalpo (king)
⇓
Dukor (nobility)
⇓
Poncha (aspirants to nobility)
⇓
Hoda (lesser non-noble leaders)
⇓
Taxpayers/dependents of the nobility

The social category Dukor was a body of about 30 aristocratic families who formed the dominant pool from which cabinet ministers and other high officials were recruited within the Dege kingdom.

POPULATION AND TERRITORIAL INCREASE

Yudrug-tsang gradually acquired more land and dependents, but exact details are not available. Chimi Rinzin recalled that there might have

been about 6 dependent families at the time of Chodak Gyatso and he supplied the following list of family names: (1) Sherab-tsang, (2) Lhothenma-tsang, (3) Dontra-tsang, (4) Sampa Dondrup-tsang, (5) Chushu Nangpa, and (6) Shachen Nangpa. Whether all the listed families had been extant at the time of Chodak Gyatso is a moot question because Lhothenma-tsang and Dontra-tsang had immigrated to Zilphukhog from the west of the river Dri Chu (i.e. the Yangtze River) and nobody knew when they reached their new home. However, all my informants agreed that Sherab-tsang was the oldest dependent family. Nothing decisive could be said about the last two families.

Regardless of the exact number of dependent families that were extant three generations before the current seventh generation, it can safely be said that Yudrug-tsang's dependents almost quadrupled during the passage of the last four generations. In 1958, there were in the vicinity of 30 dependent households in Zilphukhog. This phenomenon is seemingly paradoxical in view of the fact that several writers have proposed that the population of Tibet began to decrease already at an early period. Charles Bell wrote that "The population appears to be decreasing steadily owing to polyandry, to venereal diseases and to the large number of people that live celibate lives."[9] It seems unproblematic to account for the dramatic increase of the dependent population in Zilphukhog. Precisely because of a shortage of manpower, which had become a scarce and highly valued resource, every leader (both cleric and lay) struggled and rivaled to obtain it. Limited labour or manpower was not only fought over and for by rivals throughout Tibet, but both dependents and potential dependents could find themselves in a bargaining position vis-à-vis their lords or *pon* because of the demand for reliable labour. There was perhaps a tendency in the Dege kingdom for immigrants, political refugees from other states, and rootless people to opt for places where, so to speak, the grass was greener. This by definition implies that Zilphukhog was "green" enough to attract people from different places. In what follows, I shall depict how Yudrug-tsang was able to multiply its dependents.

Firstly, a process of mushrooming elementary households took place. The vast majority of dependent marriages were conjugal and neolocal. This phenomenon was known locally as "*metangwa*" (*me*

[9] Bell 1928:29.

tang ba) or "start a fire", which meant establishing an independent household, largely on the initiative of the marriage partners. With the exception of six or seven patrilocal marriages, all other marriages in Zilphukhog seem to have been of this type. Though this monogamous neolocal marriage system had economic and social consequences, its demographic importance is undeniable. Secondly, if all the marriages were patrilocal and polyandrous the dependent population would not have increased. Consequently, Yudrug-tsang appears to have encouraged and supported neolocal marriages. For instance, the lord of Yudrug-tsang, Chimi Rinzin, initiated the marriage ceremony of my informant Sokey by igniting the first household fire. In order for the new household to prosper, a man of repute and wealth was customarily asked to start the initial household fire.

Another obvious and important factor that contributed to the population increase was Yudrug-tsang's policy—in line with that of its peers and superordinates—of offering permanent refuge to people from different places and with different backgrounds. In 1958, there were at least six independent households in Zilphukhog that had been established by people who belonged to this category. They were (1) Lhothenma-tsang, (2) Dontra-tsang, (3) Dusar-tsang, (4) Buchung-tsang, (5) Acha-tsang, and (6) Sokey-tsang. For one reason or another, the male founders of the above families had immigrated into Zilphukhog from other regions. The first four of these families were founded by immigrants or refugees from the area of Chidrog to the west of the Yangtze River. Some of my elder informants could remember that these immigrant settlers retained and used their own Chidrog dialect. People in Chidrog and adjacent areas belonged solely to Dege in more remote times, but later they had to pay taxes to both Lhasa and Dege-tsang. Speculatively, one can think of several reasons which might have compelled the refugees to leave Chidrog: to avoid the double taxation, to flee from reprisals if they had vengeful enemies, or to avoid the law if they had committed crimes. Crossing to either side of the Yangtze River was a precarious undertaking for one's enemies, and even for local authorities themselves, in order to further pursue a defector or criminal. Moreover, according to custom the granter of political asylum or refuge would defend and protect his newly acquired dependents as he would his own people should any one try to reclaim them. Betraying one's new dependents by handing them back to their former lords or enemies not only violated the code

of honour, it would also undermine a leader's prestige and reliability, something no ambitious leader could not afford to do.

In addition to these aforementioned immigrants or refugees who appear to have been predominantly from Chidrog, a number of people from neighbouring areas were matrimonially incorporated into Zilphukhog. For instance, the household "fire" of Gechung-tsang was ignited as the result of the marriage between a son of Gethog-tsang (probably the leader-son of a neighbouring community) and a daughter of Druchung-tsang. The brothers of Buchung-tsang obtained their common wife from neighbouring Marong-nang. Although obtaining bride-grooms extra-communally was rare, Sokey's husband did come from another neighbouring community called Karsumdo.

When one considers the pastoral domain of Yudrug-tsang, it gradually incorporated and annexed the eastern part of the valley (see figure 7). The *de facto*—if not *de jure*—incorporated eastern area of the valley had probably belonged to the Sakyapa religious hierarch whose seat was in far-distant Nyor in the Tsang region of Central Tibet. The Sakyapa sect reached its political apex during the thirteenth century when Sakya Paṇḍita, Kunga Gyaltsen (1181-1251) and his nephew Phagpa Lodrö Gyaltsen (1235-1280) became the religious mentors of the Mongol prince Godan and of Kublai Khan, the first Mongol Emperor of China. Tradition has it that Phagpa, while probably en route to China, bestowed the name of Dege (sDe dge) meaning, "four accomplishments and ten virtues", upon Gatön Sonam Rinchen, who was a lama reckoned by the royal historians as the twenty-fifth religious ruler of Dege. The name Dege was then adopted by the ruling house, and became applied to their territory. Presumably, this was the time when the Sakyapa teachings became the state religion of Dege, although other religious sects were also represented within the Dege polity. However, the direct influence of the religious hierarch gradually became almost negligible due to political reasons and the distance between Nyor and Zilphukhog. As a result, Yudrug-tsang proved shrewd enough to incorporate both the pastoral land and local dependents (e.g. Nagtruk and Tsodon) that had originally belonged to the Sakyapa hierarch. Yudrug-tsang paid only a nominal land fee in kind, in the form of some bricks of tea annually, indirectly to the head monastery of the Sakyapa in Dege. The southern end of Zilphukhog (on the east side of the valley) had probably been the home of several taxpayer families which gradually became more or

less extinct. The area was called Chuchung-nang and it also became a part of Yudrug-tsang's holdings in Zilphukhog.

It is impossible to recover details of the political and economic events that had taken place in Zilphukhog during the first three or so generations, but it can safely be held that these earlier generations had been ambitious, shrewd, and successful in building up an estate. Hence, during the fifth and the most prestigious generation, represented by Yudrug Trapa, there were about 30 dependent households in the valley of Zilphukhog which consisted of parts that had been acquired and incorporated. The valley was large enough to also allow about 15 non-dependent families to graze their herds on somewhat inferior pastures each summer, and this right was granted by Yudrug-tsang for an annual fee of one yak per wealthy family. Moreover, Yudrug-tsang had also acquired an agricultural estate in neighbouring Marong-nang where it served as the district-governor both before and after Yudrug Trapa's leadership of Yudrug-tsang. Yudrug Trapa represented both the climax and anti-climax of the history of Yudrug-tsang. The genealogy of Yudrug-tsang is simply represented in figure 8:

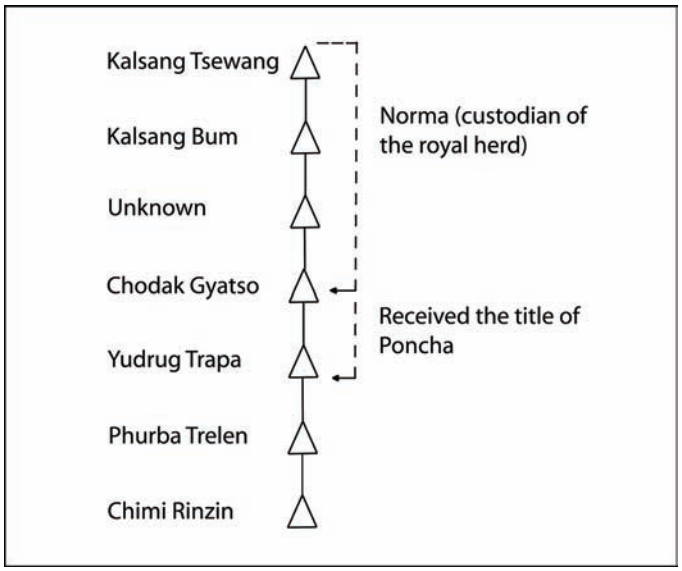

Figure 8. Genealogy of Yudrug-tsang.

Although the initial part of the history of Yudrug-tsang appears to be vague, one could draw the conclusion that Yudrug-tsang achieved almost everything it might have dreamed of. In the course of five generations, a commoner immigrant family achieved the enviable status of Poncha or quasi-nobility (if not authentic nobility). Yudrug-tsang extended and expanded its pastoral domain, and it acquired an agricultural estate. It became a semi-hereditary magistrate or governor of a small agricultural district, and it won the loyalty and manpower of more than 30 families. This not only illustrates the realization of ambition and aspiration, but it also suggests the availability of scope for social mobility within the Dege kingdom.

While we cannot be certain of historical facts about the early generations of Yudrug-tsang, the native models which underlie and characterize the available narratives are themselves worthy of brief reflection. The claims that Yudrug-tsang's rise to prominence was due to such qualities as physical prowess and medical erudition appear to be more legendary than empirical. However, claims of gaining power and prestige in these putative ways would only endorse, legitimize, and enhance the social standing of the incumbent. For example, the common belief in pre-modern eastern Tibet was that physical prowess, size, and the like were associated with luck, merits and charisma. This was believed to be a characteristic of the ancient cosmic era named Sonam Chenpo, or "Abundant luck and merits", when no one had to contend with anybody else. By contrast, the present era is that of Tselo Chupa, or "When people die at the age of ten" and are shorn of their luck and merits, while instead being fraught with cunning schemes, machination, egoistic pursuits, and the like. We should likely read the narrative of the extraordinary physical properties of Kalsang Tsewang, founder of Yudrug-tsang, as having been associated with, and compared to those of the people during the "golden age" of Sonam Chenpo according to local Tibetan Buddhist interpretations of the quality of cosmic time. The implication might have been that his achievement was justified and well deserved by virtue of his innate superior qualities. Similarly, the landmark event in the history of Yudrug-tsang appears to have occurred at the time of Chodak Gyatso, owing to his medical erudition, for which he became a Poncha. In fact, Yudrug-tsang is said to have had an unbroken succession of medical-cum-monk adepts which had been maintained, up until the time I conducted my fieldwork, by the present incumbent, Chimi Rinzin, although he was not active and did not accept fees for

his medical services. Tibetan medicine and medical pursuits cannot be disassociated from the principles or tenets of Buddhism when considering the traditional society. Medical practitioners were seen as altruistic salvagers of human beings and compassionate mitigators of people's suffering due to illnesses.

The native models behind the narratives about Yudrug-tsang are compatible with the principles of Buddhism. It is reasonable to suppose that the native interpretation was based upon normative criteria to the exclusion of more pragmatic causal facts (see Chapter Ten). Public recognition of the lord's normative trappings served to mask his pragmatic pursuits of power and wealth, while exposure of those pragmatic interests would perhaps have reduced the prestige and moral credibility of Yudrug-tsang. It appears that maintenance of a high moral credibility was essential for successful leadership and that it played an important role in the perpetuation and expansion of Yudrug-tsang.

Inadequacy of data precludes drawing conclusions, but it cannot be denied that Yudrug-tsang had been assertive, dynamic, ambitious and successful, whatever means it applied to achieve success. The increment of land and manpower which Yudrug-tsang gained could occur only at the expense of other parties (e.g. the state or the religious hierarch). Apparently there was a tendency for the state to lose control of its domain to its ambitious estates. The situation was symptomatic of a centripetal process at the micro-level (estate) and a centrifugal process at the macro-level (the state). These processes are salient features of feudalism and for the question is whether Dege was a feudal state. The decline of the central power and the recent upsurge of the nobility thrust Dege into a feudal-like state, but the causal factors were peculiarly Tibetan, and will be discussed in Chapters Three and Ten.

The upsurge of the nobility did not mean the acquisition of absolute power and independence. On the contrary, the decline of the state thrust it into a condition where, on the one hand, there was insecurity due to the ineffective central administration and protection—although a standing cabinet did not cease to function until the Chinese occupation—and on the other hand, there was also increased freedom to accumulate power and wealth. When individual estates became more or less like miniature replicas of the state they had to be self-contained in the face of inter-estate rivalry and encroachment. This situation probably entailed that each estate had to struggle to match or

even outwit its rival in terms of manpower, wealth and prestige. This presumably necessitated the local lord to opt for the maximal accumulation of labour as dependents and of land to minimize his vulnerability. Because of these circumstances the lord was restrained in his behaviour and the potential dependent theoretically had the choice of a number of future lords. He would have chosen the lord whose credentials were good, e.g. Yudrug-tsang was considered to have been liberal and humane towards its dependents which is why it is claimed to have attracted many subjects from other areas. What lay behind its humaneness and liberality is a different and interesting question, which I shall confront in Chapter Ten. The gain of the lord was obvious: population increment meant increased manpower (labour power, defense capability if necessary, prestige, power, etc.).

The question of why refugees, immigrants, etc. became Yudrug-tsang's dependents seems to be answerable in the following terms. Some presumably came to Zilphukhog in fear of the law or of reprisals due to feuds, or because they had committed crimes, or due of their eviction from another region for other reasons. However, some might have come to Zilphukhog owing to their poverty, in order to seek their fortune, while others might have come as a result of the extinction of their homes. There are some examples available to illustrate these reasons. The male founder of Gethog-tsang appears to have come from a neighbouring village when his home had disintegrated due to death or some other disasters. Namgyal's mother Tsodon and her siblings sought their fortune elsewhere when their home dissolved at the death of their parents. A very recent defector, Pentra, came to Zilphukhog from Chidrog as his herd had been subjected to repeated raids by a notorious gang which could not be subdued or controlled by the local magistrate. A few local women became dependents through marriage. The tendency was that only problem-ridden people became dependents, and thus they had little to lose. Besides, they would not have resorted to defection or sought refuge until they had exhausted all the other possible alternatives. The concrete benefits and costs of becoming and being a dependent shall be discussed in detail throughout the book, but especially in Chapters Three and Ten.

CHAPTER THREE

LABOUR SERVICE

In order to comprehend the prevalence of corvée labour service and the phenomenon of a dependent being tied to an estate, it is necessary to briefly investigate the structural features of the Dege polity. The pre-modern kingdom[1] of Dege, with its capital at Dege Gonchen (see figures 9 and 10), covered an area of approximately 78,000 square kilometres and maintained an estimated population of around 45,000 people.[2] Its location and extent (see figure 6) were summed up by William Rockhill as follows:

> The kingdom of Derge stretches north of the Dre-chu as far as the country occupied by the Golok, and on the east it touches the Horba states; to the south it is conterminous with Ba, and on the west it confines on Draya and Ch'amdo.[3]

The Dege monarchy and its historians boasted a lineage of some 50 generations, which was claimed to extend back to the Tibetan imperial era in the 7th century. It was believed that the house of Dege could trace its roots back to a famous imperial minister, Gar Tongtsen, who served the renowned 7th century Tibetan emperor Songtsen Gampo. Gar is popularly credited with having secured both Chinese and Nepalese princesses as brides for the emperor.[4]

Josef Kolmas proposed a reconstruction of the Dege monarchy in terms of Tibetan religious movements. He considered that the first six generations had been of the Bön faith (understood by him as the pre-Buddhist native religion) and the succeeding generations adhered to the Buddhist sect of Nyingmapa, which in turn was eclipsed in the region by the Sakyapa sect after the time of Phagpa.[5] It appears that while adhering to the Sakyapa sect when it was at its political height, Dege-tsang embarked upon a process of political and territorial expansion. The choice of this particular sect was fortunate, as it was

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[1] Different writers have applied a range of different terms to Dege, including principality, chieftainship, petty-state, semi-independent state, and so on.
[2] Carrasco 1959:146.
[3] Rockhill 1891:228.
[4] Kolmas 1968:24.
[5] Kolmas 1968:2.

Figure 9. Dege Gonchen, early 20th century.

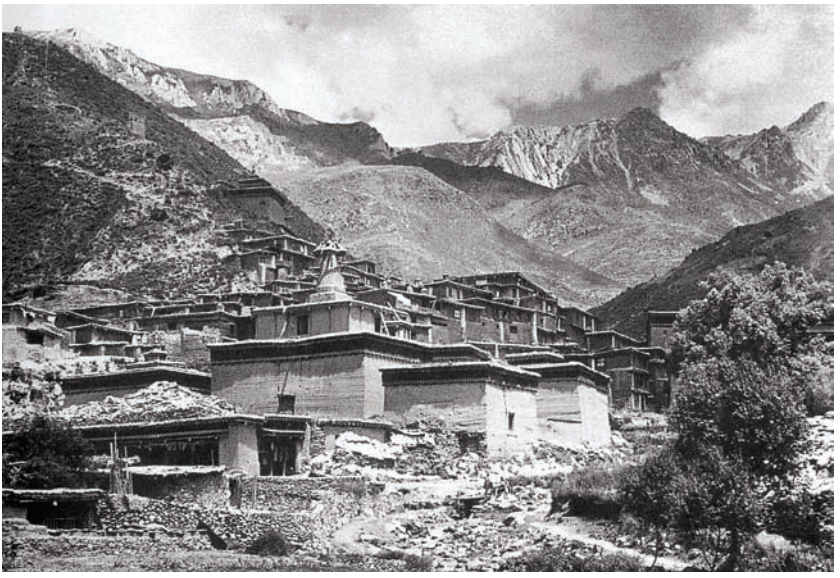

Figure 10. Dege Gonchen, mid-1950s.

not subjected to persecution like the Bön religion and the Nyingmapa sect had been. For instance, when the Gelugpa sect and the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) eclipsed the predominant Kargyüpa sect with the help of the Qoshot Mongols under Gusri Khan (1582-1653), the Khan showed favourable attitudes towards the Sakyapa sect during the reign of Champa Phuntsok (i.e. Byams pa phun tshogs) who represented the thirty-seventh generation of Dege-tsang. Thus, Kolmas states:

> It was also Byams-pa-phun-tshogs who, thanks to the help of Gusri Khan and others, added new and large tracts of land to his family's former holdings, thus augmenting their estates considerably. The author of Sde-dge'i rgyal-rabs gives the following list of territorial acquisitions acquired by Byams-pa-phun-tshogs (mostly localities situated in the neighbourhood of Derge): Rme-shod, Sbe-war, Be-ri, Mkhar-do tshu-ri, Mkhar-do pha-ri, Ku-se sde-rnying, Ku-se sde-gsar, Nyag-gzhis, Sbo-lu, Sga-rje, Dpal-'bar, Dpal-yul, Tsam-mdo, Dbon-stod pha-ri, Ye-na, 'Khor-lo-mdo, Rag-chab, 'Dsom-thog, Lcags-ra, Rab-brtan, Yid-lhung, Lha-ru-dpon, and Hor-po.[6]

In addition to the territorial acquisition by Champa Phuntsok, Tenpa Tsering (1678-1738) of the forty-fourth generation acquired the following tracts of land: "Dge-rtse, Upper (stod) and Lower (smad) Rdza-chu-kha, Khye-'brog, Ka-bzhi, and Rma-rong".[7] According to Li An-che, Bothar (alias Lodrö Thobden), the representative of the thirty-first generation, is credited with having acquired a vast tract of land from the neighbouring principality of Lingtsang in exchange for his sister Dzeden as a bride.[8] One could postulate that Dege-tsang acquired Zilphukhog at the time of Bothar as the principality of Lingtsang was located not far from it to the north.

Although it was not a theocracy, religion seems to have pervaded every aspect of the Dege kingdom. Almost invariably, the first born son became the secular leader of Dege while the second son became the abbot of the state Sakyapa monastery whose sphere of influence was preponderant. However, when the secular brother died prematurely, which occurred for example in the fortieth generation, the religious or monk son assumed both the religious and secular state duties. This was the case with Tenpa Tsering when his only brother,

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[6] Kolmas 1968:33. Editor's note: In this and the following citations from Kolmas, his Romanization of Tibetan words has been converted into the Wylie system.

[7] Kolmas 1968:37.

[8] Li An-che 1947:279.

Figure 11. The king of Dege, Jigme Dorjee Senge (1877-1926), and family, Batang, ca. 1913.

Gompo Tsering, died young. In the case of interregnums caused by early death of the monarch, and when his children also died or had not yet reached majority, then the young widow assumed power. This situation occurred during the forty-second generation when the widowed queen Tsewang Lhamo assumed power upon the death of her husband Kendrup Dega Zangpo (1768-1790). Her assumption of power was disliked as she favoured the Nyingmapa sect at the expense of the Sakyapa.[9]

The political apparatus of the Dege state was never based on a military or purely secular system of government. My belief is that militarizing the state was not necessary for many centuries because of two important reasons. Firstly, Dege had lived earlier under the religious aegis of the Sakyapa pontiffs who became religious mentors of Mongol leaders. Later on, although Gusri Khan was an adherent of the Gelugpa sect, he and possibly his successors were sympathetic and helpful to the house of Dege as evidenced by his conquest of the numerous tracts of land which he added to the kingdom of Dege.

[9] Kolmas 1968:42.

Due apparently to the aforementioned circumstances, the administrative structure of Dege was akin to that of a monastic community. Although Dege did have occasional wars or skirmishes of different magnitude with some of its neighbours (see Chapter Ten), it seems that it did not have a standing army apart from a small royal bodyguard. Below the monarch was an ennobled or aristocratic class of about 30 families who constituted an almost exclusive pool from which ministers and officials were recruited. There were eight cabinet ministers or Nyerpa (sometimes called Nyerchen) and one or two treasurers or Chagzo recruited to government from this social strata. The Nyerpa were of two types: four of them appear to have been external and the remaining four internal Nyerpa. Each external Nyerpa was situated at one cardinal point of the Dege kingdom, defending their respective flanks of the royal territory. There are perhaps echoes here of a polity based upon the organizing principle of the *maṇḍala*. These Nyerpa seem to have been territorial chiefs whose duties were not specifically defined, apart from their role as defenders of the kingdom. They owned large estates with many dependents. The internal Nyerpa and the Chagzo were elected for a term of three years. I call them cabinet ministers. They constituted the upper echelon in the political hierarchy, which consisted of the most seasoned and the shrewdest politicians in the kingdom. These ministers were elected or appointed by the sitting cabinet owing to which nepotism and favouritism could not have been ruled out. The joint duty of the cabinet seems to have been to function as the judicial, executive and legislative organ whose decisions were subject to the final approval of the monarch. For instance, no estate had the legal prerogative to adjudicate any criminal cases. Every criminal case had to be submitted to the cabinet. In addition to their hereditary estates, the cabinet ministers were remunerated with lucrative privileges. For instance, in the first half of the 20th century, during his tenure as a Nyerpa, Khado Chimi Gompo accumulated about 700 head of livestock to drive home when he had completed his Nyerpa tenure in the nomadic province of Dzakhog.

Many of the remaining members of the aristocratic class worked as magistrates for the 25 or so districts comprising the Dege kingdom. Their tenure was three years, and they were also remunerated in one form or another. Below them was a small group of Poncha estates, a middle rank between the hereditary nobility or Dukor and a group of lesser leaders known as Hoda. During the 20th century, Yudrug-tsang

itself was a Poncha estate which probably aspired to become a noble estate. The lesser leaders comprised about 80 or so families who were assigned to various duties, such as serving as local magistrates of small agricultural communities or looking after the royal stable. Those lesser leaders who were given responsible jobs were, perhaps, aspirants to the Poncha status. Below the lesser leaders were taxpayers or *trepa* (*khral pa*) with various degrees of wealth and prestige. The well-to-do taxpayers were subjected to heavier tax and they could afford to employ landless peasants. Next to the taxpayers were the dependents (*khorpa*) who had to perform labour service on their lords' estates. According to all my informants, a dependent would never accept the notion that his status was inferior to that of a taxpayer.

Theoretically, all the land in the kingdom was the property of the monarch. The land was not entirely non-revertible and was distributed among all the people in the country, except the dependents. The distribution of land divided the country into two rough divisions: The nobility, inclusive of the Poncha estates, who were not only endowed with large agricultural and pastoral estates, but who were also given dependents; and the lesser leaders and the taxpayers who were given variously sized pieces of land, but who did not own dependents. The rationale behind this difference was that people who had served the state well and who would keep on doing so were remunerated or rewarded. The endowment of estates was hereditary and the reversion of endowed estates was unheard of, even if some estates had no specific functions to play from time to time. This was of no consequence since it would soon be their turn to serve the state as magistrates, or the state might require them at short notice for unforeseen purposes.

So far, in this and the previous chapter, we have outlined a reasonably clear picture of the status quo in the Dege polity. What conclusions can be drawn regarding the acquisition of estates by ambitious people? The quintessence of this phenomenon was to administer the kingdom in the absence of a monetary system and due to the shortage of manpower. In lieu of salary, the state officials and ministers were endowed with estates on a permanent basis. The scarcity of manpower probably necessitated Dege-tsang to attach dependents to the estates as a defense mechanism against the loss of taxpayer manpower to other places at the expense of the state. Moreover, acquiring land without manpower would have been like having money without food to buy.

We might also ask whether the data on the polity of Dege is amenable to cross-cultural comparison and what such a perspective might tell us. Cross-cultural comparisons have already been made, and Pedro Carrasco has the following to say on Tibet in general:

> In comparison with European feudalism, Tibet offers great similarity in a few fundamental traits such as the importance of labour rent, the granting of land in return for services and the close connection of rights over land with political functions...the Tibetan landed estates as units of production resemble the manor, and as rewards for services are comparable to the fief, while the home lands of an estate correspond to the lord's demesne, and the labour services of the Tibetan peasants to the European corvée.[10]

Chen Han-seng's 1949 study of land tenure in Hor and Dege is awash with the word "feudalism". Writing mainly on Central Tibet, Melvyn Goldstein states, "Tibet was characterized by a form of institutionalized inequality that can be called pervasive serfdom"[11] Neither Carrasco nor Goldstein mention the polity of Dege, but it seems that their implication is pan-Tibetan. So the task at hand is to investigate whether or how compatible the concept of feudalism is with the polity of Dege. Everybody agrees that feudalism is an elusive concept with numerous definitions. For instance, Marxists would give weight to the gulf between the rich and the poor (serfdom), while others emphasize vassalage, fief, enfeoffment, and so on.

In any endeavour to compare the traditional Tibetan social system with other societies, one must focus on the emergence or the genesis of estates in Tibet. What caused their emergence in Dege? Had the Dege state been decentralized or had it been incompletely subjugated? Although a process of decentralization did take place very recently (see Chapter Ten), Dege had most probably been strong and centralized, especially during the 16th and 17th centuries. Kolmas called this period the "golden age" of Dege. When comparing Dege (i.e. Tehke) and Kanze (i.e. Katze), Chen Han-seng reported, "The administrative system in Tehke differs from that in Katze only in one respect, under the rule of a chieftain it is more centralized in Tehke; the absence of a chieftain in Katze has resulted in relative decentralization"[12] Eric Teichman has this to say of Dege:

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[10] Carassco 1972:207.
[11] Goldstein 1971:52.
[12] Chen Han-seng 1949:83.

> It had existed as an autonomous State for a thousand years or more, and the family of the Chief were supposed to be able to trace their ancestry back for forty-seven generations. The administration of the country was carried on, under the superintendence of the Chief, by twenty-five hereditary district officials and the head lamas of the big monasteries.[13]

Teichman wrote this when the kingdom was at its lowest ebb, that is, only about a decade after the fraternal intrigues in the royal house and Zhao Ehrfeng's invasion which will be discussed in Chapter Ten. The point here is that there is a high probability that the emergence of hereditary estates was not a concomitant result of either decentralization or incomplete subjugation. European feudalism came into being precisely because of the former condition triggered by external invasions and internal anarchy or chaos, as exemplified by the Carolingian Empire. In Tibet, endowing estates was a mechanism to rule and administer the country in the absence of a monetary system and in the face of a shortage of manpower. Moreover, due perhaps to the peculiarity of the state apparatus (akin is some ways to that of a monastic community), and the prestigious protection of the Sakyapa pontiffs and the Mongols, the house of Dege proved to be powerful even if it did not have a coercive military force. Thus, it appears that most of the feudalistic characteristics such as enfeoffment, seigneurial immunities, warriorship, chivalry, dyadic personal relationship, homage, and fealty were absent from Dege. The political climate evidently had not been fertile for a centrifugal tendency until very recently, when the monarchy had been rendered much weaker around the turn of the 20th century. However, one may argue, as Pedro Carrasco does, that the endowment of estates is comparable to the fief and labour service of the European corvée. Without dismissing the functional parallels between the two systems, I feel that there probably was no genuine feudal context or milieu in eastern Tibet during the 16th- and 17th centuries.

Scarcity of manpower may not be a feudal feature, but the absence of a monetary system and lack of a good communication system are feudal elements. I suspect—in line with Carrasco—that the prevailing social system had some manorial and prebendal characteristics, but manorial economy and feudalism are not necessarily always coterminous. Stanislav Andreski and other writers have pointed out

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[13] Teichman 1922:24.

that manorial economy can occur under different forms of government. Thus, it coexisted with fairly centralized bureaucratic administrations in Byzantium, in Spanish America, and in Russia during the first half of the 19th century. It now appears that the institutionalized inequality prevalent in Dege had some feudal-like features, but it could hardly be called a feudal society in the sense that Max Weber defined this:

> Genuine feudatory relationships in the full technical sense always exist a) between members of stratum which is hierarchically graded, but stands above the mass of freemen, forming a unit against them; and b) by virtue of the feudatory relationship individuals are related to one another through a free contract, not through patrimonial dependence. Vassalage does not diminish honor, and status of the vassal; on the contrary, it can augment his honour, and commendation is not submission to patriarchal authority, although its forms are borrowed from it.[14]

Furthermore, Weber also had this to say on Oriental land grants:

> Substantively, the numerous Oriental land-grant types that were similar to hereditary leases also had political purposes. However, neither fits the concept of the "fief", as long as they are related to the very specific fealty of the vassal.[15]

In other words, in Dege there were state appointees who were under the supervision of the monarch through the cabinet ministers. So long as the central political apparatus was efficacious and intact everything functioned bureaucratically, but when the centre could no longer maintain this a tendency towards centrifugal process took place in Dege. It is important to bear in mind that this tendency did not entail a crude exploitative dyadic interrelationship, since every dyadic interrelation was exposed to both the facilitating and constraining factors of the political environment outlined briefly in the previous chapter. What follows is a discussion of the nature of labour service in the Dege kingdom, as it manifested itself locally on the pastoral estate of Zilphukhog, along with the discernable costs and benefits of the system for the lord and his dependents.

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[14] Weber 1968:1072.
[15] Weber 1968:1073.

TYPES OF DEPENDENTS

The lord of Zilphukhog, Yudrug-tsang, had at least 30 dependent households which fell into three categories: 15 pastoral households; about nine peasant households; and six monastic households.

I NOMADIC DEPENDENTS

Zilphukhog was the home of the pastoral or nomadic dependents, and it gradually became the permanent residence of Yudrug-tsang. Thus, Yudrug-tsang became coterminous with Zilphukhog. Apart from the seasonal labour service which the nomadic dependents were obliged to perform for Yudrug-tsang in their neighbouring agricultural estate of Marong-nang, they earned an independent pastoral living, supplemented by seasonal trade and other peripheral incomes. They constituted the core dependents of Yudrug-tsang. By the term "core" here, I do not mean to suggest that the nomadic dependents were more loyal and reliable to their leader in the manner F.G. Bailey distinguishes "core" from "following" in his book *Stratagems and Spoils* (1968). Rather, their position had been thrust upon them. Geographical, political and economic factors had rendered them indispensable to Yudrug-tsang in at least three ways. Firstly, the mobile and horse-borne dependents were the main means of defense in times of inter-estate conflicts and robbery. Secondly, although Yudrug-tsang's agricultural estate was in Marong-nang, it was Zilphukhog with both pastoral area and dependents that had been the source of power and prestige for the lord. Finally, living in the same valley contributed towards rapid execution of decisions in times of emergency.

The strategically important position of the nomadic dependents did not, however, necessitate Yudrug-tsang to treat them preferentially. Both the peasant and nomadic dependents were subjected to labour service. Undoubtedly, this labour service is symptomatic of feudalism, but one should investigate how embedded it was, or on what criteria it was based. Both the lord and his dependents took labour service for granted. This mutual acceptance probably did not come about through the manipulative moral and religious-cum-philosophical justification of the status quo expounded by the superordinate, such as how high caste Hindus justify the caste system in India. If that had been the case

things would have fallen apart a long time ago. On the contrary, my feeling is that both the superordinate and the subordinates regarded labour service as an inevitable necessity given the polity of Dege, given the differential situations of the parties, and, above all, given the mutual and voluntary acceptance of the status quo. Being aware of their differential opportunity situations both parties made the best of the circumstances, under the pressure of both the constraining and facilitating factors. The full pastoral labour service regime for nomadic dependents will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, thus only aspects which related to agricultural work will be treated below.

II PEASANT DEPENDENTS

Nine dependent households were peasants who dwelt at the neighbouring agricultural estate of Marong-nang which also fell under Yudrug-tsang's control. All the peasant dependents in this bracket earned their livelihood by tilling the land, and some of them also had domestic animals. Of the nine households four worked as Yudrug-tsang's watchmen or custodians of the four sub-estates of Yudrug-tsang:

—Tashi-tso-tsang looked after the main sub-estate of Gonshig-nang, which had been the residence of Yudrug-tsang several generations before the last lord Chimi Rinzin. This was the family of Chimi Rinzin's aunt.

—Trampa Dapa looked after the Trampa Da sub-estate.

—Dusar-tsang, a new household, took care of Tsondru sub-estate.

—Khamyu-tsang took care of the fourth sub-estate of Keychu Da.

I am unable to say whether the three remaining households took their turn to look after the sub-estates or not. Among the four custodians, Trampa Dapa was Yudrug-tsang's only dependent smith household. It had been given to the lord Chimi Rinzin, together with a piece of land in Marong-nang, during the conflicts and clashes between Yudrug-tsang and the neighbouring noble family of Sakar-tsang to whom Chimi Rinzin's mother had been given as a bride. Sakar-tsang became power hungry and attempted to incorporate or annex Yudrug-tsang when Chimi Rinzin was in his late teens. Sakar-tsang and its powerful friends contrived to divest Chimi Rinzin of his estate by giving him the Trampa Dapa household and some land. Trampa Dapa apparently

supplemented its household income by making knives and agricultural implements for others, but it was not a professional smith family that could live on such skills alone. The remaining three households included Chotso-tsang (I), Chotso-tsang (II), and Acha-tsang. The peasant households were far less mobile and mainly tied to agricultural pursuits.

III MONASTIC DEPENDENTS

The monastic dependents dwelt in the vicinity of Galen Gon, the local Sakyapa monastery, which was situated lower down the valley near the middle course of the river Zil Chu.[16] These dependents were splinter members of the first two categories of dependents. They had departed for lower Zilphukhog due to such things as poverty or family disputes. They earned their living by mining gold in the area for various Chinese or Tibetan merchants. The corvée they had to perform in Zilphukhog did not amount to more than six or seven working days per year per family, and this was undertaken on the land that belonged to the monastic members of Yudrug-tsang in Galen Teng, the area surrounding the monastery. These monastic dependents did not have to go to Marong-nang to work. Although the monastic dependents were under Yudrug-tsang's sway since Yudrug-tsang invariably maintained two resident monks in Galen Gon, they actually constituted a peripheral group of dependents. It appears that the splinter members from Marong-nang or Zilphukhog found non-dependent spouses. It would not have been difficult for these dependents to lose their dependent identity by marrying out or emigrating to other places, however they retained that identity, perhaps for reasons of moral and political protection. Owing to their marginal position, adequate data on the monastic dependents fall outside the main focus of our inquiry.

[16] Editor's note: In 1935, the site was mentioned by Duncan 1952:306 as the Sakyapa establishment of "Galeh" located at 12,500 feet, with approximately 60 persons living in the vicinity.

AUTUMN LABOUR SERVICE

The prerogative of Yudrug-tsang was to oblige each dependent household to send one labourer to Marong-nang twice a year: once in autumn to reap the crops, and once in spring to transport manure. During the harvest time, 40-50 labourers converged together in Marong-nang. In more recent times, two nomadic households were exempted from sending labourers to Marong-nang since they, in turn, acted as Yudrug-tsang's representative in Marong-nang during the childhood of Chimi Rinzin, the heir-apparent, during the 1940s and 1950s. These households were Gechung-tsang and Druchung-tsang, both of whom were cousins of Yudrug-tsang. However, they were nevertheless obliged to provide yaks for transporting manure in spring.

In addition to the dependent labourers, a number of non-dependent labourers strengthened Yudrug-tsang's labour force. Because Zilphukhog is a large valley with good pastures, more than a dozen families from neighbouring Karsumdo to the west grazed their herds in Zilphukhog every winter to protest against local grazing fees imposed in their home region. The owner of the largest migrant Karsumdo herd, who lived in Zilphukhog the entire year, paid a sizable yak annually to Yudrug-tsang in return for grazing there. Others with smaller herds only wintered their animals in Zilphukhog, and they paid the annual land rent in the form of labour during the harvest time. Yudrug-tsang thus commanded 40-50 labourers during the harvest time, and the last Yudrug-tsang incumbent Chimi Rinzin's claim of having possessed 50 dependent households might have been based on this calculation.

Upon arrival in Marong-nang, several labourers, those who knew each other best, would pitch a small tent near the field to be harvested. Yudrug-tsang improvised a common and temporary hearth near the field. The hearth usually consisted of three stones forming a tripod-like structure upon which stood a huge pot for cooking tea. A trusted servant of Yudrug-tsang was responsible for ensuring there were adequate provisions of *tsampa* (*rtsam pa*)—the roasted barley flour which is the staple food of Tibet—and black tea for the labourers. The hearth functioned as the nucleus of the labouring group, around which they sat and ate five meals a day during the harvesting period. As far as my informants could remember, no elaborate ceremonies were performed on the initial day of the harvest, apart from it being an

auspicious chosen day by the astrologer. Sickles and teacups were brought by the labourers themselves and they were very particular about bringing small cups with them as big cups implied greed and immodesty. The labourers received five meals a day for which Yudrug-tsang became famous.

A HARVESTING DAY

At about 6 a.m., all the labourers got up and gathered around the common hearth and had *donja* (*don ja*) or "breakfast". Each labourer produced his or her wooden cup to be first filled with *tsampa* and then with tea several times. However, before tea was poured into the cup half of the *tsampa* was set aside in a goat-skin bag for future consumption. This was not only because *tsampa* was the major food item that would eaten in winter, but also because it was expensive to purchase. The remaining *tsampa* in the cup was eaten either by kneading it into a ball with tea or by licking the wet top layer every time tea made it wet. The latter technique meant a longer process which the labourer often did not find time for. Some complemented this breakfast with a lump of butter, but at their own expense. Each meal lasted for about half an hour.

At about 9 a.m., *donjab* (*don rgyags*), a kind of "post-breakfast", was taken which was almost identical to the previous meal. At around midday, "lunch" known as *drojab* (*dro rgyags*) or *cheka* (*phyed ka*) was served. This being the principal meal of the day, Yudrug-tsang included a lump of butter in the meal of *tsampa* and tea. Around 3 p.m., *chija* (*phyi ja*) or "late tea" was taken. Finally, "supper" or *gonja* (*dgong ja*) was taken at about 6 p.m. This meal might consist of *tsampa* and meat-soup or a meat-soup with small wheat flour balls which was called *thugpa* (*thug pa*) in the vernacular. After *gonja*, the labourers retired to their tents and often played and wrestled with each other as most of them were usually young and energetic. Apart from the meals, two short breaks were allowed before and after the midday meal. I was told that dependents in neighbouring communities or estates were given a certain amount of barley instead of the meals. My informants thought that their lord had been much more generous compared with others elsewhere. Any labourer could bring private foodstuffs with them as a supplement, but this was not essential. On

the contrary, the Yudrug-tsang labourers had saved bags of extra *tsampa* by the time the harvest came to an end.

Men working in rows cut the barley with sickles and placed the bunches of cut grain behind them so that the female labourers could pick them up and tie them into bundles of almost identical size. The sheaves were tied by putting half a dozen stalks amid the bundle, which were then turned by holding the two ends of the stalks so that a twirled knot was formed. The sheaves were gathered into sizeable heaps by women. While this process was in progress, about 30 to 40 pack yaks belonging to Yudrug-tsang and its relatives transported the barley in a relay fashion. In order to avoid wasting time due to waiting or the sporadic intense work of loading and unloading the yaks, the animals were usually divided into three or four groups so that one group was always carrying the barley to its destination while the others were returning from it or being either loaded or unloaded at one of the four sub-estates. The four sub-estates were consecutively harvested. It is also apparent that taxpayers under Yudrug-tsang's district governorship helped Yudrug-tsang during the harvesting time.

Figure 12. Transporting the harvest, Horkhog, mid-1950s.

Near the barley heaps, the yaks were tethered to long yak-hair ropes which were pegged at both the ends. The animals were tied to the ropes at regular intervals so that there was enough space between them for loading the barley. The loading was done by men while women handed the barley sheaves to them, although both the men and women led the yaks and unloaded the barley together at the destination (see figure 12). When stacking the barley upon the roof to dry, it was again the women's job to hand the sheaves to the men who did the stacking. Barley was left in stacks on the roof to dry for several months before threshing.

When the harvest was completed following approximately 15 days' work, Yudrug-tsang gave the labourers a day-long feast in the last field they had harvested. A yak was slaughtered for them and each was given his or her share of the meat in addition to the daily meals mentioned above. As far as my informants could remember no official ceremony was performed, although there was an atmosphere of celebration. It is, perhaps, tempting for my informants to impart a romantic and idealized picture of their traditional way of life; they gave me the impression that the young people looked forward to doing autumn labour service in Marong-nang. It not only gave them the chance to make friends or even become secret lovers, but it also broke the monotonous daily routine of herding animals or attending to domestic chores. Moreover, many young people went to Marong-nang for the first time for the fun of doing something different and, perhaps, challenging. I was told that singing was not an ideal form of amusement among the nomads, but pinching and wrestling were the favourite forms of entertainment for the young labourers. Several girls would mob a man by trying to pull him to the ground. This boisterous atmosphere of the harvesting time culminated on the last day.

SPRING LABOUR

Annual labour service also included transporting manure from the peasant households to the fields in early spring, as well as cutting grass in winter. The yaks for transporting the manure were provided by Yudrug-tsang, and the dependents' task was to load and unload the manure and spread it upon the fields. The manure was a mixture of animal dung and droppings combined with decomposed grass. Yak-hair bags and baskets were used for transporting the manure. The

whole process did not take more than 15 days. Cutting grass for fodder for horses and calves was undertaken on the winter pastures in Zilphukhog and this normally required no more than six days to complete. The resulting twisted grass bundles (*rtswa thor*) were hung on hay-racks or trees to dry. Yudrug-tsang required many hundreds of grass bundles for the winter. Transporting manure did not require many dependents and I presume that Yudrug-tsang sent whichever dependents happened to be available at the time. I am unable to say whether Yudrug-tsang sent different dependents every spring. Apart from actual times of community emergency (death, robbery, etc.) and the labour services just outlined, the nomadic dependents were free to pursue their own livelihood within very wide social parameters.

THRESHING AND WINNOWING

In contrast to their nomadic counterparts, the peasant dependents were subjected to every type of labour service, with the exception of cutting grass in Zilphukhog. In addition to harvesting, the peasant dependents were obliged to plough the fields three times a year, provide manure, and thresh and winnow the barley. The extra work the peasants had to perform was not exactly corvée, in the sense that they were paid in kind for the work. Those households that provided manure for the fields were entitled to pick up the fallen barley ears before anybody else could do so. This special right was known as the "white picking" vis-à-vis the "black picking". The latter entailed the picking up of fallen barley ears after the "white picking" had been done by someone beforehand. So the manure providers were offered special privileges, but the business of picking up the fallen barley ears required many hands and the period of this enterprise was very short. Hence, most of the peasant households could not exploit the "white picking" opportunity maximally because one member of each family had to perform corvée work and it was too expensive and difficult to hire taxpayer peasants for the task. However, there were exceptions. Dusar-tsang, for example, had no difficulty in arranging many non-dependent peasants to undertake the task for them. These people were the taxpayer subjects of a neighbouring state known as Lingtsang who relied upon Dusar-tsang's animal products, such as meat and butter. Finally, the "black picking" could be done by anyone who had the necessary time and human resources.

Ploughing the fields and threshing the barley were nominally paid for in terms of a plot of field assigned annually to each family. There were no particular and permanent plots of land which each peasant household could till on their own. Yudrug-tsang ploughed the field with its draft animals and sowed it with its own seeds in the same way as any other field that belonged to Yudrug-tsang. The only thing the peasant household had to do was to reap the crop. Each such plot of land produced a couple of leather bags (*dowa*) of barley. A *dowa* contained about 50 to 60 kg of barley.[17]

Threshing was performed mostly in early winter, but a portion of the barley was not threshed until early spring. This barley was of superior quality and was set aside to be used as seed. The barley sheaves of seed quality were stacked upon each other in a circular fashion so that the barley ears were in the middle of the stack on the inside, while the straws formed a conical wall outside. When the threshing began, the corn ears were cut off with sickles and spread in a layer 3-4 cm thick over the floor threshing floor. The straw was heaped in a corner to be used later as animal fodder. Four to six men would stand on one side of the floor and the same number of women would stand on the opposite side, and together they would thresh the barley with flails. The flail was made of two sticks, one longer than the other. At the broader end of the thicker stick was a hole through which ran a wooden pin that moved very freely. To the other end of the pin the other longer stick was tied with a leather string so that the flail resembled a compass. When the men hit down on the barley with their flails the women raised theirs in the air so that there was a synchronized succession of rhythmically hitting and lifting the flails (see figure 13), and songs were sung in a relay, poetically describing the flail and grain crop. Here is one such threshing song:

> The flail is made of sandalwood.
> The part which beats is a pure silk thread.
> The flail's joint is a golden ring.
> The pounded stalks are golden stems.
> The barley grain is supremely nutritious.[18]

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[17] Editor's note: *Do bo* or *do po* generally means a "load" for a beast of burden, with no specific weight or volume.

[18] *Dbyug skor tsan dan sdong po // dbyug mda' dar gyi seng ma // pu lu gser gyi A long // rdung phye gser gyi sog ma // nas 'bru rtsi thog gong ma.*

Figure 13. Women (left) and men (right) threshing barley,
Kham, early 20th century.

Threshing was a rhythmic act and one had to be a seasoned thresher in order not to disrupt the consecutive rhythm by lifting and hitting one's flail at the wrong moment.

While some threshed, others winnowed the threshed barley. Winnowing was mainly done by women and it was a wind dependent task. The threshed barley was brought to the winnowing place and winnowing was done in shallow round baskets. The process was able to sort out three different qualities of barley. The superior quality of barley was heavier and round and it fell at the feet of the winnower, while grain of poorer quality was lighter and blew farther from the winnower. The mediocre barley landed between the two above qualities. Only the chaff remained, and this was fed to the horses as a form of hay. The superior quality of barley was reserved as seed stock for the coming year. The intermediate quality of barley was consumed, while the inferior quality was usually set aside for exchanging or bartering purposes. Barley was stored in the main sub-estate, Gonshi-

nang, in huge wooden boxes or large leather bags (*dowa*) in the cellar. I was told that Yudrug-tsang had an annual income of about 400 *dowa* bags of barley. If one *dowa* of barley weighed approximately 60 kg then the annual total was about 24,000 kg. If this calculation is correct, then Yudrug-tsang owned an agricultural estate which had the potential capacity of giving well above the aforementioned amount of barley per annum, because many fields were left fallow every year. Hay and *yungma* (*nyung ma*) or "turnips" were grown in some of the fallow fields, but these crops were of little importance to Yudrug-tsang.

OTHER AGRICULTURAL WORK

Weeding was not done, or performed only minimally, for two apparent reasons. Marong-nang was a very fertile land which required little weeding, and weeders were hard to come by when the vast majority of the dependents were preoccupied with pastoralism. The nomadic dependents could not and would not postpone the exigencies of nature, i.e. when calves, lambs, and kids had to be looked after and milk production occupied most members of the family. To compel them to perform labour service during this critical time of the year would have been an unbecoming act of Yudrug-tsang which would have discredited Yudrug-tsang's prestige and credence. I got the impression from all informants that the peasant dependents did not weed the fields either.

Fields were ploughed three times a year, in spring, in summer, and again immediately following the harvest. Ploughing in spring began on an auspicious day. The most valuable traction animal was the male crossbred *zo* (*mdzo*), which was both stronger and more compliant to handle than other animals. The yak was used as a traction animal in other parts of Tibet, but it was not preferred by Yudrug-tsang. Thus, Yudrug-tsang required a big herd of *zo*. During the time of Yudrug-tsang Trapa, about two generations ago, they possessed about 15 pairs of *zo*, but more recently Yudrug-tsang owned only about 4 or 5 pairs of *zo*. The spring ploughing lasted about 15 days, with four or five pairs of *zo* being used. Two *zo* of roughly equal strength and size were harnessed together and were almost invariably led by a boy or a girl. The traction animals were made compliant by tying a rope to the nose rings of the respective *zo*, such that a boy or girl could quite easily

lead the animals. The man behind the plough, often stripped to the waist in warmer weather, would crack his whip and sing "*Aga yo yo*" (*aga = zo*) which indicated the satisfaction of the ploughman. At other times he would crack his whip and start a sort of monologue in which he swore at and cursed the animals. Every part of the plough was made of wood of different hardness.

Immediately before ploughing, seeds were broadcast over the field by an important servant of Yudrug-tsang, a task that had been most recently monopolized for some years by Konchok Namgyal the personal servant of the last Yudrug-tsang incumbent, Chimi Rinzin. Some propitious words were also murmured, such as "*Lo yag*! *Lo yag*!", meaning something like "May the crops be good! May the crops be good!", while the sower broadcast handfuls of seed from a yak-skin bag which hung around his neck. The ploughing was followed by the breaking of sods by women with long handled wooden hammers. Stones, roots and other unwanted materials were removed and thrown away. While working during spring, the labourers did not receive five meals a day as they did during the harvest time, nor did they get a feast on the final working day. However, the animals were symbolically thanked for their work by smearing their horns with butter fat. It was traditionally believed that oiling the horns would invigorate or energize the animals for the next ploughing season. The forehead of the animal was also smeared with butter. This probably had the symbolic implication of a pledge or wish for a bumper crop. It might also be interpreted that the animal's forehead resembled or functioned as an altar and the butter symbolized votive lamps which could be found on Tibetan family altars.

COSTS AND BENEFITS FOR LORD AND DEPENDENTS

It is evident that dependents were annually subjected to a certain amount of labour, but it is interesting to ask who was the exploiter and who the exploited? Given the political, economic and social situation that prevailed in Tibet in general, and in Kham in particular, differential opportunity situations were almost inevitable for different categories of people, but absolute power of one social category over another, in a crude sense, did not prevail.

What kind of structural features or properties can we discern from the foregoing description of labour service? The striking social distinction between the *pon* (lord) and his *khorpa* (dependents) is that the latter were obliged to perform seasonal corvée service for the former. Moreover, male dependents were restricted from marrying extra-communally, something to be discussed fully in Chapter Eight dealing with marriage. These are characteristic features of social inequality, and the lord was justified to impose such restrictions both normatively and pragmatically. He had *de jure* rights to demand his subjects' labour service by virtue of their being a part of the estate which he had acquired in a 'legal' manner. Pragmatically, dependents were indispensable for the estate's viability. Their indispensability and the scarcity of manpower in general rendered the lord all the more determined to retain and accumulate as many dependents as possible. Robert Ekvall several times observed what he called the "population hunger" in Eastern Tibet, ensuring that in all communities itinerant persons were welcome and found employment and subsistence with relative ease.[19]

Command of manpower did not just mean labour power, it also meant prestige, political power, potential defense capabilities and wealth, without which no lord could maintain self-respect and avoid encroachments by competitors. Their diffuse utility enhanced the dependents' bargaining position with the lord. Their utility seems to have been multiple in the sense that if a dependent was maltreated his execution of other duties or capabilities might have been disastrously affected. In other words, a dependent might not pursue thieves or fight in a battle as wholeheartedly as he should do when the lord needed him for this. Such a person would be waiting for a convenient opportunity to defect. On the other hand, proud was the lord who could boast of an army of loyal dependents who would do anything at the mere suggestion of his wish.

Now one may ask why the dependents did not shake their bondage off when they were in such an apparently favourable situation? My belief is that they were as fully aware of their opportunity situation as their lord was of his. But practical necessity restrained both the parties from overstepping beyond a given threshold. In other words, in a highly constrained and interdependent world, it was not in the interests of the lord to alienate or maltreat his dependents and nor was

[19] See, for example, Ekvall 1968:78.

it advantageous to the dependents to act whimsically. In a hierarchical society like Tibet, differential opportunity situations were inevitable and accepted. Social inequality was based mainly on economic and political criteria hidden, perhaps, behind a moral, normative facade or justifications. One's situation was not unalterable, but one considered it as one's point of departure in life. Although it cannot be completely substantiated, most of Yudrug-tsang's dependents—both endowed and acquired—seem to have been of humble origins. Had they not been of this type, they presumably would not have become dependents.

The cost of dependent status was not only bearing the burden of corvée service and being tied to an estate. It was also mandatory that each dependent household supplied one labourer who had to work for Yudrug-tsang for 30-50 days per annum. Furthermore, male dependents were restricted from marrying out and severing their connections with the lord. Their status was ascribed and hereditary and was almost impossible to cast off legally under the same lord. These features reveal an inequitable interrelationship which Goldstein would call "pervasive serfdom", and which seem applicable here to a certain extent. The crucial question is whether the life condition of the dependents—especially for those who opted voluntarily for that status—deteriorated or improved when they became Yudrug-tsang dependents. My research indicates that their life conditions improved tremendously after my informants became dependents of Yudrug-tsang. A typical example is the case of Lothenma who migrated from the district of Chidrog, and who initially worked as a servant of Yudrug-tsang. After some time he not only established an independent household, but his sons came to rival any established household in the community in terms of wealth and prestige. This was a case of metamorphosis. Acquiring dependent status was not dissimilar to acquiring taxpayer status in principle. Both were inalienably institutionalized statuses which entailed both costs and privileges. The taxpayer was largely free from corvée service, but he was subjected to heavy taxes of different kinds from which the dependent was almost immune. This was one of the reasons why dependents normally considered their lot was not inferior to that of the taxpayer. The dependent was not economically dependent upon his lord after an initial period of dependence had passed.

While it is impossible for me to calculate the exact labour contribution to Yudrug-tsang made by its dependent labourers, it was clearly indispensable. Although dependents of other estates, such as

landless taxpayers, were also available as labourers against some payment—usually in kind, such as pasture, barley, etc.—a permanent and reliable labour force was essential to economic and political survival. Hiring non-dependent labourers was not only subject to fluctuation, but it was also unreliable for the lord in a double sense. The sale of labour power depended on individual economy—labourers hired themselves only when necessary—owing to which the availability of such labourers was uncertain in a double sense. The labour contribution from land lessees—people from other communities who lived in Yudrug-tsang's pastures seasonally—was highly unreliable as the land fee could be paid in kind, such as yak or other kinds of animals, rather than as labour. In addition to the uncertainty of the availability of non-dependent labourers, the extra expenditure Yudrug-tsang might incur would have been very substantial. Consider that 40 labourers worked for 40 days a year, which is equal to 1600 days. If each labourer was paid about three kg of barley per day the annual expenditure would be 4800 kg of barley, which was about 20% of Yudrug-tsang's total annual income of 24,000 kg or 400 *dowa* bags of barley. The extra expenditure would have been significant even if non-dependent labourers were readily available.

The costs of dependent status have already be discussed, but what of the gains? Apart from its famous so-called "*Ja nya tsam nya*" or "five meals a day"[20] for harvest labourers, Yudrug-tsang apparently did not indulge in any conspicuous redistribution of its wealth akin to the potlatch ceremonies of the Northwest Pacific coastal peoples or the Big Man's gift in Melanesia. The gains of the dependents lay in other areas which were developmental and accumulative rather than sporadic sprees. The vast majority of dependents were initially either paupers, itinerants, refugees or immigrants and all from very different backgrounds. All were keen on improving their lives especially in terms of establishing independent households and living in a relatively peaceful atmosphere. The lord could not deny them this opportunity as it was as fundamental and quintessential to the dependents as labour service was to him. In fact, the lord even encouraged rather than hindered viable household establishment in certain ways.

Apart from the labour service we have described, each dependent household had to perform, per annum, some 30-50 days of labour per

[20] *Ja lnga rtsam lnga*, literally "five times tea, five times *tsampa*".

family. Every dependent household was an independent entity in its own right, with its own personal properties, such as herds and tents. A family of four or five able-bodied members was not affected much by such corvée service obligations, especially when its labourer received more than adequate food during the working period. However, families with only two adult members were exempted from the corvée service until they were able to supply a labourer. Shigo told me that when her household was nascent she did not have to perform labour service. Yudrug-tsang always seems to have encouraged and implemented the establishment of some new households, which was also something compatible with the aspirations of the dependents. Lothenma, Sokey, Shigo, and other informants established their households after having worked as servants or herders of Yudrug-tsang and other well-to-do families. In order to establish a household they had to have animals, and these were hard to come by for a servant or a herder. Prior to their marriages they had been able to save some animals which had been given to them in return for their service. However, if their small accumulated herds proved to be non-viable when they married, Yudrug-tsang and friends or relatives took care that they received *she* (*zhi*)—a lease of milch cows—until they became economically viable. Yudrug-tsang even lent its milch cows to its dependents when their herds were stricken by rinderpest and other diseases. The case in point was my informant Nagtruk's father, whose herd was more or less obliterated by rinderpest almost overnight. Yudrug-tsang lent the family a number of *dri* for several years to allow them to recuperate from the disaster. Ani Tsokey, the divorced daughter of Yudrug-tsang, granted her herd of *dri* as *she* to Nagtruk's family owing to which the family survived from extinction and dispersion, which was the inevitable fate of such households under such circumstances.

There were other gains for dependents, such as mobility for economic purposes. For example, Yudrug-tsang dependents moved very freely between Zilphukhog and the neighbouring states of Hor to the east and the Dzogchen area to the north. Most dependents paid an annual visit to Rongpatsa in Hor in order to barter their own barley and peas or earthenware goods which originated from the neighbouring community of Karsumdo. Individuals who were more entrepreneurial, like the mother of my informant Namgyal, went to Dzogchen to buy and sell such rare goods as tea, cloth and precious stones. Visiting neighbouring communities like Karsumdo or Marong-

nang was almost a daily routine at certain times of the year (see Chapter Five). Another positive point was that no inferior pastoral area was allotted to Yudrug-tsang dependents. Both the *pon* and his *khorpa* enjoyed the same pastoral areas throughout the year. However, land lessees from other communities were given inferior pastoral areas. A very crucial advantage for the dependents was their near immunity from Dege state taxes, and given that the interrelationship with their lord was satisfactory, they probably were in a better situation than many of the state taxpayers. So long as dependents, especially males, did not marry extra-communally they enjoyed a good amount of latitude in finding their own marriage partners (see Chapter Eight).

The aforementioned factors probably combined to attract new dependents whose life circumstances were at a low ebb for one reason or another, such as itinerants and refugees. Such negative circumstances necessitated the adoption of dependent status, but the nature or quality of the interdependence with their new lord was determined by the political environment.

As mentioned earlier, the utility of dependents was not limited to their labour power. Their utility was multiple, and they played several indispensable roles for their lord. A lord without dependents was no lord in terms of prestige and power. In the prevailing conditions of increasing encroachment and constraint in early- to mid- 20th century Dege, a lord could find himself utterly vulnerable. For example, the aggressive neighbouring estate of Sakar-tsang displayed a singular inclination to annex Yudrug-tsang when the latter found itself in a sort of interim or power vacuum due to the absence of a male heir. Chapter Ten presents cases of attacks on Yudrug-tsang from the northeast by marauding bandits which also reveal such vulnerability. A household or a community without a minimum manpower was liable to be subjected to encroachment and even bullying.

A community such as Zilphukhog functioned like a family whose well-being depended upon the well-being of every individual unit. This is one of the crucial reasons why Yudrug-tsang and the community as a whole were interested in assisting the poor and nascent households to become self-sufficient. An estate with a large number of dependents not only meant a potential self-defense capacity should the need arise, but the fact of its being a large estate carried much prestige. A large and strong estate reflected a lord as being meritorious, lucky, humane, etc., and thus rich and powerful, which in

turn enhanced his credits in terms of finding a prestigious marriage partner, gaining political influence and enhancing attractiveness to potential dependents. This chain of dependence hinged upon the availability of loyal and economically independent *khorpa* or dependents.

It is my belief that while a visible chasm of status, power and wealth might be discerned between the pon and his *khorpa* at a superficial level, their actual interrelationship and interdependence were too profound to be able to make easy or quick judgments about the social system as a whole, as many other outside observers have tended to do. Pragmatic necessities, as opposed to the normative mores of the social framework, rendered the *pon/khorpa* relationship reciprocal and complementary, and disruption of it was mutually undesirable in the particular political and economic circumstances that prevailed in Kham during the early- to mid- 20th century.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

The nomadic dependents of Zilphukhog were not economically self-sufficient as pastoralists, and to survive they resorted to various peripheral incomes, such as seasonal trade. Nevertheless, they primarily led a life of pastoral nomadism due to which they identified themselves as nomads or *drogpa* (*'brog pa*) and were recognized as such by others. The local mode of pastoral production in Zilphukhog fell into two categories, based upon bovine and ovine animals respectively, and each sub-category will now be dealt with individually, in order of importance. Elsewhere across the Tibetan plateau, one can encounter nomads who depend primarily upon sheep and goats, or those who may even keep substantial numbers of horses as part of their stock holdings. The pastoralists in Zilphukhog lived predominantly from their bovine animals known as yak (male) and *dri* (female), being the domestic breed of *Bos grunniens*. The gender distinction of these domestic animals is important to maintain in our discussions since it is often overlooked by authors writing on Tibet, such that the yak is said to yield milk, which for my informants and other Tibetans is simply a ridiculous error. Such a distinction is not always made everywhere by other pastoralist populations who use *Bos grunniens*. For instance, M. Nazif Shahrani did not find a particular female name equivalent to Tibetan *dri* among the Kirgiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan, and thus he utilizes the term "cow yak" when he refers to the female animal.[1]

YAK

The yak is a domesticated form of the wild *Bos grunniens* or wild yak, which the Tibetans call *drong* (*'brong*) and whose distribution during the 20th century has mostly been reduced to the northern Tibetan plateau or Changthang. Various authors report that the yak can be up to five feet high at the shoulder and that it thrives at altitudes between

[1] Shahrani 1979:101.

3000-5000 m. Yak are given to huddling together, which makes them unsuitable for steep country with narrow trails since they tend to jostle in groups and push each other off pathways leading to possible falls. Unlike the cow, yak are a hairy bovine, and they are uniquely adapted to the high altitudes, thin air and cold of the Tibetan plateau. Moreover, the yak has the reputation of being able to lick up short grass during winter as it uses its protruding snout to uncover dried grass underneath the snow. Generally, yak have coarse long hair on the shoulder and the upper parts of the legs, while their undercoat is fleecy. Most of them are black, though white, brownish, piebald, and even hornless yak were not a rarity. Hornless white yak were especially valued by Tibetans for their natural beauty and apparent tameness, due to which they were often used for riding or transporting babies or fragile earthenware utensils.

For Tibetans the referent yak invariably applied to male animals only. It was not the most expensive animal in Zilphukhog, but it certainly was the best adapted and most versatile. Its working power and products were the main source of shelter, clothing, food, transportation and trade, and it is almost unimaginable that there would have been pastoral nomads in the area without the yak.

Figure 14. Pastoral encampment, Kham, early 20th century.

Yak hair was woven into coarse cloth for making *ba* (*sbra*) or yak-hair tents and rainproof blankets. These blankets were worn in the night, or during journeys, and used for covering goods or drying cheese on, and for making bags of different sizes and purposes. Every winter, in order to meet its needs, each household in Zilphukhog slaughtered from one to four yak depending upon the means of the particular household. The meat was frozen in small dung-lined meat larders outside the tent and it was consumed in a piecemeal fashion throughout the winter. The process of slaughtering the yak is described below.

Some yak were driven to nearby markets in Dzogchen or Rongpatsa to be either slaughtered or sold there, or to be exchanged for other goods, such as Chinese tea. This live animal trade was done in order to avoid having to transport meat to the markets, and besides, the yak could be used additionally to transport nomadic products or earthenware to the same markets. The vast majority of the yak were slaughtered or sold when their usefulness diminished due to increased age. However, there were always certain yak that were not slaughtered or used in their old age. These yak—often white or piebald—were offered to the gods in order to atone for the sins which their owners had committed by slaughtering countless animals, or to ward off ominous disasters. Such yak, known as *tse-yak* (*tshe g.yag*) or "life yak", were free to live and roam about until they died naturally or were killed by predators. The general name for this phenomenon was *tse-thar* (*tshe thar*) which means "free for life".[2] The phenomenon of *tse-thar* also functioned as a marker of the relative wealth of a household. A household that had several *tse-yak* would be considered affluent in terms of its *nor* (*nor*) or "animal wealth". Very few of the dependent households could afford to have even one *tse-yak*. The term *nor*, which signifies "wealth" in general, referred exclusively to the patoralists' yak and *dri*. One can discern at once how central bovine animals (yak and *dri*) had been compared with ovine animals. *Nor* was coterminous with wealth, which in turn was the basis of power, influence, and prestige.

Yak were also the most widely used pack animals in Tibet and yak caravans were a recurring scene across the pre-modern Tibetan plateau. They were used by nomads in Dege for transporting three

[2] Editor's note: On the practice of *tshe thar* among Tibetan pastoralists, see now Holler 2002.

types of goods: The portable material culture of the pastoralists, including tents, utensils, furniture and household properties, as well as carrying a family's small children, calves, lambs, and kids on occasion; pastoral products of all kinds used for barter; and Chinese trade goods, such as tea, silver coins, and ammunition.

Yak were indispensable for seasonal pastoral movement. In contrast to its wild ancestor the *drong*, and the few uncastrated "bull yak" or *chu-yak* (*khyu g.yag*) which pastoralists kept, the castrated yak were tame enough to be used as beasts of burden. Particularly the hornless yak were ideal for transporting children. One can imagine the humourous scene of one or two children standing in a pannier on each side of a hornless yak. If there was one child to be transported, an item of equal weight to the child would be placed in the opposite pannier, so that the saddle did not turn over. The yak would be led by a rope that was tied to its nose-ring. The old and infirm rode such animals as well. The average nomad household tent had to be carried by two yak. Every tent could be dismantled into two parts, each of which was heavy enough to be carried by one yak. Tent poles, pegs, ropes and the like required one yak to carry them. Kitchen utensils, family properties, food, etc. had to be carried by several yak.

In Zilphukhog yak were the only means of transporting goods for trading and bartering. A minimum herd of six or seven yak were needed to transport earthenware and pastoral products to Horkhog to be bartered. On their return the yak carried peas, tea, and other goods. A yak could carry up to 70 kg or more, and it only required minimal attention compared with its bovine cousin, the crossbred zo, which needed to be fed and looked after more regularly.

Households that had a surplus population of yak sometimes transported Chinese goods in return for payment in cash or kind. More well-to-do households could augment their income by transporting Chinese goods between surrounding districts, from Dege Gonchen to Korlodo, or from Marong-nang to Gozi Gon, and perhaps to Dzogchen.

DRI

The *dri* or domesticated female *Bos grunniens* formed the other half of the backbone of the local pastoral economy. Paradoxically, both the yak and *dri* were valued lower in the marketplace compared to their

half-breed cousins the *zo* and *zomo*. However, this apparent contradiction is resolved when the two categories of animals are studied from the perspective of time. The *dri* was the key to pastoral nomadic life longitudinally, since the pastoral economy hinged upon the survival and reproductive capacity of the *dri*. While *zo* and *zomo* had a higher immediate market value—double that of *yak* and *dri*—they were of no real value in the long term. This issue will be discussed again below, but just observe here in passing that, in many respects, *zo* and *zomo* were luxury domestic animals of well-off households. *Dri* are smaller and weaker than yak, and thus they were hardly used as pack animals. *Dri* were kept primarily for the purpose of breeding and they were not slaughtered until they were very old or barren. Exceptionally fertile *dri* were spared from slaughtering, in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the household's capital of *nor*. The predominant pursuit and aim of the pastoral nomads in Zilphukhog was to increase their pastoral capital of *nor* by breeding yak with *dri*.

All *dri* above the age of *so-nyi* (*so gnyis*) or "two-toothed" fell into three fertility categories: *druma* (*drus ma*), *yarma* (*yar ma*) and *drikam* (*'bri skam*). The *druma* were those that had recently calved and their milk production was at its peak. Special attention had to be paid to the calves during the first month of their lives. The *yarma* were those that had calved a year ago and their calves had become yearlings. The *yarma* gave somewhat less milk and their yearlings did not demand much attention. The last of the three categories was called *drikam* or "dry *dri*", which were barren as the name suggests. If such *dri* remained barren for several successive seasons, they were usually slaughtered or sold. Their meat was considered to be very tasty and juicy because these animals were much younger than any other bovine animal that was normally slaughtered. As alluded to already, other bovine animals were, in the main, slaughtered when their utility became limited due to their advanced age.

An exceptionally fecund *dri* could give birth to approximately six-eight calves during its reproductive span. The *dri* became fertile when it reached the age of *so-nyi* or "two-toothed" and it remained fertile for many successive years. The yak also became sexually mature at the same age, but the vast majority of them were castrated before they reached this stage. A few yak were left uncastrated so they would become *chu-yak* or "bull yak" for the purpose of impregnating the *dri*. The average pastoral household did not need to possess an uncastrated

bull yak as only one was required to impregnate 40-60 *dri*. Nor did such households own large enough herds of yak to be able to let one of them go idle since all bull yak were essentially unusable as they were unruly and uncontrollable, somewhat akin to their wild ancestor, the drong. Well-to-do households with large bovine herds possessed several bull yak that could be borrowed by households with smaller herds. However, since most local households herded their animals together, impregnation of *dri* was, in a sense, an indiscriminate act out in the pastures, and thus man had limited control over it. The gestation period for *dri* was nine months and calving took place in late spring. Spring was a transition period between seasons. The late winter and early spring were a time of scarcity in terms of roasted barley flour or *tsampa*, meat, and milk products for man, and of scarcity of grass for animals. Yet late spring was the beginning of a time of abundance, though full pastoral production did not commence before May or even later.

Concerning bovine reproduction, the table below gives the native taxonomy representing successive biological stages of yak and *dri*:

Local name	Years	Local definition
bili	0-1	
yare	2	
shed	3	*yar-sum* (*dbyar gsum*) "three summers"
so-nyi (*so gnyis*)	4	"two-toothed"
so-shi (*so bzhi*)	5	"four-toothed"
so-drug (*so drug*)	6	"six-toothed"
khatsang (*kha tshang*)	7	"full-toothed"
khatsang ne lo chig (*kha tshang nas lo gcig*)	8	"full-toothed plus 1 year"
khatsang ne lo nyi (*kha tshang nas lo gnyis*)	9	"full-toothed plus 2 years"
khatsang ne lo sum (*kha tshang nas lo gsum*)	10	"full-toothed plus 3 years"

It appears that the adult designations yak and *dri* were only applied when calves reached the reproductive age of four. This is indicative of the fact that calves younger than "two-toothed" were usually referred to by the common and sex-neutral names *bili*, *yare*, and *shed* unless their sex had to be identified. However, to identify the sex of a calf of a given age category one added the particles *-po* ("male") or *-mo* ("female") to the given common denomination, for instance *bili-po* or *yare-mo*. Once they attained reproductive age, the calves were treated as full-fledged and significant members of the herd by the pastoralists. When an animal reached the age of seven, its age actually had to be calculated according to the natural growth rings on its horns. One ring meant that the animal had reached the age of eight, and two rings meant that it had reached the age of nine, and so on. A yak or *dri* with nine rings on its horns was a rather old animal.

Milch *dri* were milked at least twice a day in summer, in the morning and evening. Some households were said to have milked them three times a day, but that was not favourably looked upon as it was done at the expense of the calves. As summer gave way to winter, the amount of milk production diminished gradually. The *yarma* would stop giving milk while the *druma* could give only very little milk in late winter. In the calving season, herders and the women in particular had to be vigilant of the place and time of calving. Calves were lost due to predators that usually lurked around the location of calving, which might be a dense forest or a precipitous area, both dangerous places for the helpless infant calf. Immediately before and after milking, calves were let loose, temporarily, to drink their mother's milk. As a rule one of the teats was reserved for the calf, and there might be some residual milk left in the other teats too. How much milk was left for the calf depended very much on the size of one's *dri* herd, as well as one's attitude toward the calves.

To starve *dri* calves is a self-destructive act for a pastoral nomad. Such starvation was in fact the fate of *zomo* calves, as will be described below. *Dri* calves were a long-term investment and if they survived and multiplied, the capital investment in *nor* was a success. Every pastoral nomad, whether poor or rich, was dedicated to increasing his bovine herd. When the winter was long, cold, and meagre, calves were fed hay and even butter-oil if available. Slaughtering *dri* calves contradicted the principles of Tibetan pastoralism. Despite attention paid to calves, pastoral nomads lost a significant percentage of calves annually, due to cold weather, lack of

milk, predatory animals, and other threats. A *dri* whose calf had died sometimes refused to give milk and to induce it to give milk, the stuffed skin of the calf was placed before it or air was blown into the *dri*'s vagina. *Dri* calves were penned and grazed separately so that the calves would not drink their mothers' milk randomly. So far the major bovine resource of the pastoral nomads in Zilphukhog has only been touched upon, and the next section will introduce the crossbreds known as *zo* and *zomo*.

ZO AND ZOMO

The *zo* and *zomo* were respectively male and female crossbreds from *dri* and the common bull. They were larger than yak and *dri*, but they had much shorter and smoother hair. They were, undoubtedly, not high altitude animals and they felt most at home in the intermediate ecological zone between the high and cold and the lower, warmer climatic zones. Robert Ekvall described these hybrids succinctly in relation to yak:

> The hybrids are not only larger, but better build and muscled. Their heads are shorter and less concave than those of the yak and, in relation to their shoulders, which are less humped, their heads are carried higher and more on a line. Their horns are shorter and thicker, and the final backward curve, which is such a distinctive feature of the yak-head silhouette, is much less pronounced. Both male and female are less heavily coated than yak, the belly fringes are noticeably shorter and more scanty, and their tails are less bushy. This without doubt is one reason for their lower resistance to cold.[3]

As mentioned above, both yak and *dri* fetched only half the price of *zo* and *zomo* at the market. If a yak traded for 12 bricks of tea, and a *zo* fetched twice as many tea bricks, the same difference was also true between the price of *dri* and *zomo*.

Besides its being an important pack animal, the *zo* was the "tractor" of farmers in Dege and elsewhere in Tibet. It was the ideal traction animal due to the following abilities: It was physically much stronger than the yak; it was more compliant and amenable to human treatment; and it felt at home in the valley where the climate was

[3] Ekvall 1968:15.

milder. The *zo* was also an outstanding beast of burden, not only due of its superior strength but also its propensity to travel head to tail along narrow trails across precipitous mountains where yak tended to push one another dangerously. Its hoofs were more durable on the rough and stony trails. Although the *zo* was the most expensive bovine animal in Zilphukhog, and in Tibet for that matter, it was neither very prevalent nor was it the ideal pastoral animal for Zilphukhog conditions. Only a few of the pastoral nomadic households possessed *zo* at any given time. Those households that bred *zo* did so with the sole purpose of selling them to farmers in Horkhog, or in other neighbouring area, or in order to use them as traction animal. The only households that had herds of *zo* in Zilphukhog were Yudrug-tsang and its relatives. They utilized them for ploughing Yudrug-tsang's fields in Marong-nang. The remaining households in Zilphukhog possessed no *zo* herds at all.

While the primary reason for the absence of many *zo* herds in the community was that the dependent households did not need traction animals, crossbreeding the zo required the availability of a surplus of *dri* allocated for crossbreeding, and the availability of a common cow-bull for impregnating the *dri*. All this necessitated extra human, animal, and economic resources which were not easily available for the average dependent household. A dependent household with a small herd of *dri* would be very loath to allocate a single *dri* for the purpose of crossbreeding a *zo* at the expense of another yak or a *dri*. Also, covering of the *dri* did not take place automatically and it had to be arranged by men who were skilled in the job. However expensive the *zo* was, crossbreeding it was not looked upon as a pastoral investment from a longitudinal perspective, although *zo* could always be converted into yak and *dri* by selling them to farmers and then buying yak. This was theoretically possible, but the average dependent did not have the means and gumption to actualize this possibility. Arranging or renting a common bull from a neighbouring peasant community involved extra expenditure in terms of manpower and also taking special care of the temporarily rented bull.

Robert Ekvall has reported that in some parts of Tibet cross-breeding the *zo* and *zomo* was looked upon as a manipulation of nature by man that might rouse the wrath of local gods.[4] My informants did not entertain such retributive ideas of crossbreeding.

[4] Ekvall 1968:15.

For them the *zo* was a valuable animal, but the hybrid did not prevail in Zilphukhog owing to the ecological conditions and economic reasons mentioned above. The calf between the yak and common cow was also called *zo* or *tu-zo*, but it was considered inferior to the genuine *zo* due to which this crossbreeding occurred only infer-quently. No further crossbreeding occurred because it would have meant a gradual decline in the overall quality of the crossbred. Although the *zo* was considered to be sterile it was nevertheless gelded. It can be concluded that the *zo* was as important to the Tibetan farmers as oxen are in India, and that they were a luxury for a few affluent pastoral nomadic households in Zilphukhog. Climatically, the hybrids belonged to a different ecological zone, and socially or economically they belonged to the semi-nomadic or *samadrog* (*sa ma 'brog*) populations of Tibet who were basically farmers with relatively large herds of animals as a supplement.

The *zomo*, the female counterpart of the *zo* and the cousin of the *dri*, was the best milk producing animal in Tibet. In parallel with its male counterpart, the *zomo*'s virtue lay in being a superior milch animal rather than its longitudinal importance as a breeder and perpetuator of the pastoral existence. Physically *zomo* resemble *zo*, although they are somewhat smaller and less strong. *Zomo* are fertile and in former Zilphukhog their calves (*tole*) were almost invariably starved to death. The offspring of the *zomo* were thought to be useless as beasts of burden and breeders, and their only usefulness to their owners was their meat. A household that depended on such a breed was considered to be rather poor. A *zomo* itself would give 10-15 kg of butter and several bags of cheese annually, in addition to the curds and milk which were consumed fresh. It was supposed to be able to produce twice as much milk as a *dri* could produce. Even though they were superior milk producers, *zomo* did not predominate in Zilphukhog. This was due to the requirements of hybridization as outlined above, and especially the fact that they were almost worthless as a reproductive resource. Moreover, *zomo* required much more care in contrast to *dri*. Thus, parallel to the status of *zo*, *zomo* were a luxury of the few well-to-do pastoral households, and like *zo*, *zomo* were essentially a low altitude animal. Local age classification of hybrid animals from *dri* and common bulls was very similar to that used for yak and *dri*:

Local name	Years	Local definition
aga	0-1	
ga-so	2	
yar-sum (*dbyar gsum*)	3	"three summers"
so-nyi (*so gnyis*)	4	"two-toothed"
so-shi (*so bzhi*)	5	"four-toothed"
so-drug (*so drug*)	6	"six-toothed"
khatsang (*kha tshang*)	7	"full-toothed"
khatsang ne lo chig (*kha tshang nas lo gcig*)	8	"full-toothed plus 1 year"
khatsang ne lo nyi (*kha tshang nas lo gnyis*)	9	"full-toothed plus 2 years"
khatsang ne lo sum (*kha tshang nas lo gsum*)	10	"full-toothed plus 3 years"

In contrast to *dri*, crossbreeding *zomo* was a short term economic investment that entailed the maximal use of the productive capacity of the animal within its life span. My informants eventually explained that due largely to this policy, and partly because of the putative inferiority of the offspring of the *zomo*, all *tole* or *zomo* calves were starved when very young. My informants hesitated to impart this piece of information to me initially, but they gradually admitted that they sometimes had to resort to what was a sinful act in Buddhist terms in order to survive as they did. Since only few households kept *zomo*, most of them could avoid committing this form of killing.

SHEEP AND GOATS

In Zilphukhog, and in contrast to far western Tibet for example, sheep and goats were outranked by all bovines in local stock holdings. Sheep and goats nevertheless formed an essential components of the local pastoral economy. People in Dege often classified sheep (*lug*)

into three groups: *yul-lug* (*yul lug*), *chang-lug* (*byang lug*), and *drog-lug* (*'brog lug*). Sheep in the second category were those that belonged to pastoral nomads who dwelt on the northern plateau or Changthang (*Byang thang*), while those in the first category belonged to farmers. Sheep in the third category, *drog-lug*, belonged to the pastoral nomads or drogpa in Zilphukhog. As opposed to other parts of Tibet, where sheep were utilized as pack animals for transporting salt, the sheep in Zilphukhog were used for their milk production, meat, skins and wool. Moreover, pastoral nomads in Dege who depended on supplementary trade could not subsist on sheep alone. As will be discussed in the next chapter, bovine pack animals were an imperative necessity for transporting household paraphernalia and, above all, for import of cereals from Horkhog for winter consumption. In contrast to the report by Ekvall that both the mother sheep and her unborn lamb were slaughtered simultaneously to obtain their valuable pelts,[5] my informants told me that this practice would not only have been regarded an heinous act, but it would also have been economically ruinous for it would restrict the growth of sheep flocks. Moreover, very few people in Zilphukhog could afford to own clothing made from sheep-skin or *tsaru* (*tsha ru*).

Lambing took place in mid-spring and sheep husbandry was comparatively more complicated that that of bovine animals. This was because the gestation period of ewes is five-six months, and lambing in any season other than early summer created problems for the pastoral nomads when, for example, the winter was too cold and the pastures were too meagre, and the fact that summer and early autumn were very busy because milk production was in full swing. Thus, in order to determine that ewes always lambed in spring, rams had to be hindered from tupping ewes until autumn, so that lambing only took place in the desired season. During the sexually receptive part of the year, being summer and early autumn, the genitals of the rams and billy goats were covered by a piece of woven material which was tied on to them. The material that covered the ram's genitals was called *thug-keb* (*thug kheb*). In any case, almost all the male lambs were castrated when they were about 5-8 months old, and as adult sheep they were slaughtered in summer when they reached the age of three or four years.

[5] Ekvall 1968:46.

Goats were less important and prevalent in Zilphukhog, and also more troublesome. Goats hardly constituted an essential component of local pastoral nomadic existence, and those households that owned goat herds, such as Dusar-tsang, were either semi-nomadic or the less well-to-do. Goat breeds in eastern Tibet were less well adapted to high altitude ecology. Moreover, kids were a nuisance for a household's members—mainly small children aged between four and six and their grandparents—whose job it was to look after the cheese production which was spread out to dry in the sun. All informants noted that goats, especially kids, had an insatiable desire for cheese. Tupping and kidding were made to occur in parallel with that of sheep, and the gestation period of the doe was also about five to six months. I shall have more to say about the utility of the goat in the section below which deals with pastoral production.

HORSES AND DOGS

Both horses and dogs were non-productive, but quite essential for the pastoral nomads. In the past, only Yudrug-tsang itself maintained horses and mules, but more recently most of the dependent households kept at least one horse. The ownership of a horse was not only a source of pride, it was also the only means of rapid communication and instant pursuit of cattle rustlers and robbers. As Robert Ekvall has reported for eastern Tibet in general, it was almost a necessity for each household to be able to provide one armed rider in times of cattle raids. Moreover, in order to safeguard the security of the community the availability of a group of riders was almost imperative (see Chapter Six).[6] Horses were very expensive and their acquisition by dependent households in Zilphukhog may not only have indicated that they had become increasingly essential, but also that there was increasing prosperity. During the well-known period of repeated political and social turbulence in many parts of eastern Tibet from the 19th- up to the mid-20th century, horses, guns and men became the three indispensable components of any viable community in the region.

Dogs, primarily mastiffs, were also an essential part of pastoral nomadic life in Zilphukhog. There was no household that did not own

[6] Ekvall 1968:40-41.

at least two dogs: a tethered mastiff, and a smaller dog that patrolled the tenthold during the daytime. During the night, both dogs were let loose to patrol. The smaller dog functioned as an outer guard and it would bark in at least two distinctive ways. If it barked regularly and less intensively, it was doing its usual duty of making known to potential thieves that dogs were at their posts. If the dog barked irregularly and more intensively, it was a clear indication that the owner had to pick up his gun or whatever weapon he had at his disposal and run towards the direction where the dog was barking. Neighbours might do the same. The larger mastiff functioned as the inner defender, by which I mean that it did not go far from the owner's tent.

Robert Ekvall (1968) has written that the ownership of dogs had an isolating effect on the pastoral nomads in Tibet, something about which it is difficult to say anything decisive. However, one can certainly give many poignant examples of the value of keeping dogs. Before Dusar-tsang moved to Zilphukhog and assumed the status of a pastoral nomad, it kept seven or eight dogs in Marong-nang. Namgyal, daughter and co-wife of the same family, told me that a large number of dogs were necessary, as her neighbours were not very close to her tent, and that there was only one man—her husband—in the household to protect their herds. Namgyal informed me that during one autumn three or four horse-borne rustlers raided their herds when her husband was away. Her dogs attacked the raiders fiercely, but the rustlers could not be downed from their horses and the result was that her best mastiff was fatally wounded by a sword blow and it died after several days. Several other dogs were wounded in this encounter, though less seriously. Due in part to the dogs, the raiders did not manage to drive away very many bovine animals. Dogs, therefore, were necessary and a good mastiff cost as much as a yak or perhaps even more. The number of dogs a household owned also said something about its economic status, since dogs implied herds to protect and large mastiffs consumed a lot of meat and other foodstuffs.

MEAT PRODUCTION

The main sources of meat were yak, sheep and barren *dri* or *drikam*, although goats and *zomo* were sometimes slaughtered. Slaughtering

bovine animals was done in early winter, while sheep were slaughtered only during summer. Towards the end of autumn or early winter only yak and *drikam* were killed because they had become fat enough after having grazed all summer and much of autumn on lush pastures. Sheep and perhaps some goats were killed in summer because they were easier to fatten and, besides, disposing of several ovines did not jeopardize the survival of pastoral nomadic existence. Well-to-do households such as Yudrug-tsang, Gechung-tsang, and others slaughtered four to five bovines or more for the winter, while poor households could usually afford to slaughter only one bovine. The scale of slaughtering in Zilphukhog appears to have been smaller when compared to that practised in other pastoral areas across Tibet. The vast majority of the dependents slaughtered their animals themselves, but Yudrug-tsang and three other households hired professional slaughterers. Contrary to the Buddhist negation of taking any form of life, pastoral nomads could not abstain from killing animals, although those who had the economic means hired others to perform the act of taking life. Those dependents who had difficulty in providing adequate meat and barley for winter supplemented their income by doing the killing of animals for other households against payment in meat or barley.

Suffocating the animal was the standard form of killing. The animal was first hobbled and then felled down on the ground, then a rope was tied round the mouth very tightly. The whole process took about half an hour, after which the eyes of the animal became bluish, indicating a lack of oxygen. Before the animal was skinned it was balanced on its back using stones or pieces of wood as buttresses. Men usually did the skinning and cutting the limbs apart, while women helped to clean the intestines.

The carcass was divided into eight parts: the two front legs, the two hind legs, right and left ribs, the abdomen and the pelvis. One hind leg or *kangzug* (*rkang gzugs*) traded for about eight *bo* (*'bo*)[7] of barley and one section of the ribs cost about seven *bo* of barley. One front leg cost approximately six *bo* of barley, and the pelvis and the abdomen fetched about 5 *bo* each. A standard load-bag (*dowa*) contained about 10 *bo* of barley, which meant that a yak (legs, head, hide, and tail, but not the viscera) fetched over five *dowa* or loads of barley in Zilphu-

[7] Editor's note: 1 *'bo* = approximately 13 kg in Central Tibet. The *'bo* measure was usually a wooden box.

khog. From each of the eight parts of the carcass, one piece of meat was removed and placed into the animal's stomach sack, which was also half filled with blood, viscera and fat. This and the other parts of the carcass were frozen in a dome-shaped larder crafted from dung that could be opened and closed with a frozen yak-skin flap. No sooner was the meat placed in the larder than it became frozen. Bovines butchered in early winter (approximately the second half of November) were not for immediate consumption. Every effort was made to make the meat last until the Tibetan New Year, which fell between February and March, alternating every third year. Most dependents had depleted the winter meat stock by the spring and became hungry in the months of March and April.

If the butcher had not taken barley in advance of killing an animal, as a rule, he got the head, the legs and some pieces of the viscera. A butcher sometimes had to take barley in advance and received two measures of barley for each animal, the measuring unit for which was known as *dong* (*'dong*).[8] The remaining intestines, blood and meat were mixed together and made into sausages for immediate consumption by the household as well as relatives and neighbours. Those households who did the butchering themselves did not of course have to give away the different parts of the animal which have just been mentioned.

Sheep were killed in the same manner as the bovine animals, that is, by strangulation, but they were almost invariably slaughtered in summer. A hired slaughterer was entitled to the same parts of the sheep as that of the yak, but he received less barley, which he had to take instead if his barley stock was inadequate. A well-to-do family slaughtered eight or more sheep per summer, but the number of animals slaughtered in Zilphukhog was very small compared to the number of animals butchered by other pastoralists elsewhere in Tibet.[9] There was more than one reason why sheep were butchered in summer and not in winter. To begin with, sheep could be fattened more easily; by mid-summer they became fat enough to be slaughtered while the bovines took a longer time to put on weight. Secondly, the sole utility of male sheep was their meat and skins and they were

[8] Editor's note: The weight or volume of the *'dong* is unknown. A local measurement unit called *gdong* was used in the Tsang region of western Tibet; see Wangchen Surkhang 1966:18.

[9] Compare the data given by Ekvall 1968.

useless as pack animals or for any other purposes. Finally, since a sheep could be consumed within a short period of time, the question of conserving the meat did not arise. Killing a yak in summer would entail the problems of storing or conserving the meat when there did not exist any means of freezing it. Consequently, sheep were killed in a piecemeal fashion, according to the need or demand for meat. Goats were also slaughtered when meat was needed, but goats' meat was considered to be inferior to that of sheep. Slaughtering the bovine animals in early winter and the ovine animals in summer was clearly a well-planned economic strategy of pastoral households.

Summer, autumn and winter were the seasons of relative abundance, but spring was the season of scarcity in terms of meat, barley flour, milk products, and also grass and fodder for animals. It is tempting to say that spring was the anathema of pastoral nomads in Zilphukhog. It is perhaps due to this that my informants regularly neglected to even mention the spring when they talked about the different seasons. They would talk of "*yar gun ton sum*" (*dbyar dgun ston gsum*) or "summer, winter, autumn, all three" and simply omit *kyi* (*dpyid*) or "spring". However, they were not completely short of meat in spring either, as *zomo* calves almost invariably died by being intentionally starved, and sometimes *dri* calves also died due to the cold weather. A good percentage of kids and lambs also died. Those households that were really short of meat might tap blood from live animals and consume it with boiled butter-oil, or by allowing it to coagulate into a sort of jelly. My informants also reported that blood was tapped from an animal's neck in order to make it easier for it to put on weight when the summer approached, although the tapped blood of such animals was not consumed.

TANNING AND WEAVING

The hides of bovine animals were initially half dried in the sun and, if they were to be traded, they were then folded into rectangular shapes so that they were easier to transport to Horkhog or elsewhere. However, most hides were treated and tanned only for local use. Households had to produce the large leather storage bags or *dowa*, plus all their own leather ropes, bridles, girdles, cruppers, tackle-reins, whips, and stirrup leathers. The hide was first put into water and then the remaining meat and hair were removed with a sickle or a knife.

This was followed by the application of butter-oil or animal brain to the hide, which was then trodden upon for several days to soften it. Oil was repeatedly applied to the hide during this process. Tanning a hide took about three days, depending upon the skill and strength of the tanner. The well tanned hide looked white when it was cut.

A bovine hide yielded material for about 10 standard leather straps which could be used for loading goods on animals or for persons to carry items on their backs, and for horse bridles. The tanned hide was first cut into 40 or so strips of almost equal length and then four such pieces joined made one leather strap. Sometimes a raw hide was cut into strips and these were passed through an iron hole. In order to get rid of the hair and meat attached to the leather strips, they were pulled by one person through the iron hole and scraped between the iron's surface and a horn pressed into the opening of the hole by a second person. This device could remove both the remaining meat and hair on the leather strips. Yak-skins for boot soles were also tanned, and cut into suitable pieces so that each piece could be tanned individually according to the need.

The tanning method for sheep-skins or goat-skins was primarily the same as that used for bovine hides, although it did not require strength. Only animal brain was applied to sheep-skins, plus a certain amount of sour curd, which made the skin softer and look whiter. The residual meat was taken off by a comb-like wooden instrument and the skin was either trodden upon or tanned by hand. A good tanner could tan one sheep-skin per day. Tanning calf-skins was not much different, except that these skins were first stretched taut by ropes and then the remaining meat on them was scraped off with a sharp-edged stone. Most of the hides produced in Zilphukhog were locally utilized. Many additional sheep- or goat-skins had to be acquired from outside by various means.

Sheep-skins, goat-skins and calf-skins were used for making clothing. Lamb-skins and pelts were also used for making garments known as *tsaru*. But owing to their high cost, *tsaru* were the prerogative of the rich. The average dependent could afford one sheep-skin gown or *paktsag* once every three years or so. The different grades of skin clothes used locally are as follows:

—*Tsaru* (lamb-skin gown): This required 40-50 lamb-skins or 60-70 pelts (bought from Dzachuka) and very few people could afford to own one. A *tsaru* always had an outer lining which was imported from India.

—*Paktsag* (sheep-skin gown): This required eight or nine sheep-skins and ownership of a genuine *paktsag* was quite prestigious. Some *paktsag*, however, were adulterated by the use of a couple of goat-skins in them if sheep-skins were hard to come by. I suspect that many of my informants used such semi-*paktsag*.
—*Kamtsag* (calf-skin gown): These were in much higher demand, and they were cheaper than *paktsag*. Six to seven calf-skins were required to make a *kamtsag*.
—*Ratsag* (goat-skin gown): This was the cheapest skin garment, and being lighter and less warm were mainly used during summer. Seven or eight goat-skins were needed to make a *ratsag*.

Every summer yak and sheep were shorn, and to shear a yak several men were required. The yak was hobbled down on the ground and while one or two men cut the hair with knives or sickles, another man held the yak's head so that it remained still while shearing was in progress. Hence, shearing a yak entailed the cooperation of several men. Shearing sheep was an easier task and it did not demand more than two people. Spinning and weaving were the preoccupation of women and were mainly done in winter and early spring. The woven material of yak-hair was called *re-ra*, which was the sole material used for making *ba* or tents. A household never had enough yak-hair or time to make a *ba* in one year. Weaving *re-ra* for making a *ba* was a long term investment and a process that might take many years. Moreover, no time was specially allocated for weaving and it was done whenever there was spare time available. Slightly finer yak-hair was woven into square blankets that were used as rain-coats and mats for drying cheese. Yak fleece mixed with wool might be used to make felt saddle blankets. Wool was utilized for making woolen yak saddle blankets and also rain coats. Robert Ekvall observed that Tibetan pastoralists used huge circular woolen felt rain coats that could cover both the wearer and his possessions while traveling.[10] It has been reported that these rain coats resembled walking tents when they were worn. Felt making also required the cooperation of several men.

[10] Ekvall 1968:64.

MILK PRODUCTION

Milk production was at its height during June, July and August, after which it gradually dried up almost completely in spring. In summer, milch *dri* and *zomo* were milked twice or even three times a day: in the morning, perhaps at midday and in the evening. Ewes and does were milked twice a day. There was an abundance of milk in summer for most of the dependents. Milk yielded three main items for consumption in summer apart from milk itself: butter, cheese, and curds. Butter was the most important milk product that had a high market value, and cheese was also sold or exchanged for other non-pastoral items. Milk was never churned into butter on the same day as it was milked because it had to be cooled down for churning the next day. Milk was churned in either cylindrical wooden churns or water-tight leather bags. Churning milk was a tough task and it occupied two or more people for much of the day. Making butter in a leather bag was even harder because it had to be rolled up and down for several hours. Sometimes *dri* and *zomo* milk were mixed; the former's butter looked whiter than that of the latter. If a household had a surplus of butter for exchange, it was packed in a goat-skin bag or a stomach sack that could be stored and loaded easily. Rich families had loads of rancid butter, which was an indication of their pastoral nomadic wealth or nor. Less well-to-do families had to consume much of their daily butter production.

The butter-extracted milk or *okang* (*'o khang*) was utilized in two ways. It was half boiled and then some curd was added to it, after which it was poured into an earthenware or wooden vessel that was wrapped in blankets or clothes to keep it warm. The next morning it had almost invariably become curd of the second degree or *shokang* (*zho rkang*), and the butter-extracted milk was boiled in a large saucepan until the water content evaporated and the resulting yellowish cheese was dried on a yak-hair blanket out in the sun. A better quality cheese was made like this initially, but its water content was removed long before it had evaporated. This cheese looked bluish and was therefore literally called "blue cheese" or *chur-nyon* (*phyur sngon*), which was more prestigious and harder to eat. A second and superior type of curd was made by using milk with its butter content, and this curd was called *sho-ngö* (*zho dngos*) or "pure curd". This kind of curd was not an everyday food item for most of the dependants in Zilphukhog. Whey was rarely consumed by people and

was usually given to animals. It must be remembered that not all milk was converted into butter, cheese, and curds. Some milk was set aside for daily consumption. Although most elderly people were addicted to tea, children and adolescents drank milk mixed with boiled water, which was known as "milk-tea" or *o-ja* (*'o ja*).

Pastoral nomads in Zilphukhog lived almost entirely on milk products during summer (they were largely self-sufficient in that season), although milk and other pastoral products could not sustain them throughout the year. This was perhaps due to the limited resources of pastoral production, which is explicitly demonstrated in Chapter Five.

My data on animal husbandry has demonstrated how manipulative and skillful the pastoral nomads were in their choice of the most ecologically adaptable and economically viable animals. Regardless of the size of his herd, a nomadic dependent was always determined to invest his wealth in *dri* and yak. They constituted the existential basis of his pastoral life. The *dri* produced milk (for various milk products) and calves (*bili*) which were essential for pastoral nomadic continuity. The yak's utility consisted of its being a pack animal (for domestic and paid transport), the use of its hair (for shelter, blankets, etc.), and its meat, tail and hide. In addition to its multiple utility, this bovine species is supremely adapted to high altitudes. Because of their indispensability the pastoral nomads were loath to dispose of them until and unless their usefulness had been exhausted through natural attrition, age or injuries. Finally, one can discern a systematic and hierarchical utilization of both the bovine and ovine animals in terms of their usefulness, ecological adaptability, and the costs of their maintenance. However, the pastoral economy of Zilphukhog's nomadic dependents had to be supplemented by non-pastoral means of subsistence, which will now be the subject of Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRADE AND PERIPHERAL INCOMES

TRADE

Various authors have written that every Tibetan is or was a born trader, and nomadic in the figurative sense.[1] Whether this broad generalization is tenable or not, pastoral nomads in Zilphukhog were both mobile pastoralists and traders. Trading or rather obtaining grain from Horkhog and neighbouring Karsumdo was essential during winter, and was the responsibility and prerogative of men. Horkhog consisted of the five small states of Beri, Khangsar, Mazur, Driwo (i.e. Trehor) and Drango, these being ranged respectively from north-west to southeast along the course of the Yalung River[2] immediately to the east of Dege. Traders from Zilphukhog went annually to visit the important village of Rongpatsa, which is located in the west of Horkhog on the China-Lhasa tea trade route, and also well-known for its rich agricultural lands. William Rockhill described the place in the following manner:

> At Ribo commences the garden of this part of Tibet - the fertile valley of Rungbatsa; and villages are as thickly scattered over the country as in Switzerland. Around each grow some fine elms or other trees, and walls or hedges inclose the fields, where peas, barley, and wheat were more than a month in advance of what I had seen in Dérgé.[3]

Not every dependent household in Zilphukhog was able to undertake an annual trading visit to Rongpatsa. The possibility of being able to go to Rongpatsa, or for annual trade expeditions to any destination, was limited to households who owned a minimum herd of at least 6 yak for transportation, and who could spare an able-bodied man to attend to them, and who also possessed the skills required for making successful trade transactions. Trade expeditions required men and

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[1] For examples, see Bell 1928:125, Kawaguchi 1909:456-8, and MacDonald, 1929:124.

[2] Editor's note: The same river is also known to Tibetans in the environs of the former Dege kingdom as the rDza Chu and the Nyag Chu.

[3] Rockhill 1891:236. Editor's note: For photographs of Rongpatsa and the surrounding region taken in 1954, see Vanis, *et al* 1997.

pack animals to be away from home for a month or more at a time. Not all households could fulfill this minimum requirement in terms of both animals and manpower, but in special cases a herd of yak for a trade expedition could at least be borrowed from relatives. For instance, Tsethon and his father did not own a big enough herd of yak, but they could nevertheless go to Rongpatsa by borrowing yak from Tsethon's wealthy uncle who lived in Karsumdo. I am not able to say whether the yak were lent free of charge or the yak owner had a certain amount of share in the trade. Namgyal of Dusar-tsang had a large herd of yak, but her husband, who very good at domestic chores like making cheese and butter, was neither tough enough nor possessed the necessary business acumen to manage to organize a trading expedition to Rongpatsa. Being able to embark on trade expeditions to Rongpatsa was also partly dependent upon the availability of horses, capital, and weapons (guns or swords) for protection. Trading by Zilphukhog households was primarily based upon the exchange of earthenware goods which were produced in and obtained from neighbouring Karsumdo, against peas and barley grown in Rongpatsa.

Ordering earthenware goods in Karsumdo was a lengthy process which demanded both extra care and timing. Every Zilphukhog family had several potters as trade partners in Karsumdo, with whom they had established a permanent relationship. Karsumdo was only about a day's journey on foot from Zilphukhog, and traders first went to Karsumdo in the 7th Tibetan month to place their orders with the traditional potters. The most important among them were Soyu Tsering Tashi, who was the biggest producer, Böpa Samdrup who hailed from Central Tibet ("Bö" or Bod), Gyarong Ado who appears to have come from Gyarong, and Dayul Anye from Dayul. As their names suggest, all of these potters appear to have been immigrants or refugees from other parts of Tibet. Although earthen pots and vessels were ordered from the above potters, the orders were such that any single potter among them was unable to fulfill the demand of each customer. This stimulated a sense of competition among the potters which made the quality of the pottery better and the delivery faster. Earthenware goods were sometimes paid for in advance, with payments of tea, butter, cheese or Chinese silver coins. According to my informants, a load of pottery cost approximately four bricks of tea. After having ordered their pottery goods the traders returned to Zilphukhog, and in the middle of the 8th month they returned to

Karsumdo with their yaks to collect the finished earthenware articles. The fragile earthenware was all packed in loadable wooden cases, which took about 10 days. The traders then returned to Zilphukhog with the goods and stayed there until they departed for Rongpatsa in the 9th Tibetan month. The trade expedition took over a month, and men from different households traveled together, grouping their animals into a small caravan.

When the trade expedition begun in earnest, up to 10 armed and horse-borne men went together behind their laden yak. Traveling armed and in a group was a necessity as bandits from Golok or elsewhere always lurked on the highways. Each man had about 6-12 laden yak and a team of two men was formed for loading and unloading the goods. The journey from Zilphukhog to Rongpatsa with the fully loaded yak required about 10 days, although the same trip could be made in four days on horse-back. The yak needed to rest and graze for most of the day due to which the caravans traveled before dawn broke and camped on grassy areas before midday. This tactic was partly designed to avoid traveling under the scorching sun. The yak drivers also took care to keep the animals in the best condition, especially if some of the yak were to be sold or slaughtered at the market in Rongpatsa, although this was not generally the rule since peas or barley had to be transported back to Zilphukhog using the same animals.

A wealthy family in Rongpatsa known as Shung-tsang or "Central House" was one of the main partners with whom traders from Zilphukhog had established a permanent host/guest relationship. Such a perennial relationship was advantageous for both parties. The Zilphukhog traders had a permanent place to stay upon arrival, and the Rongpatsa host also functioned as their publicity manager. The host made sure that everybody in the village knew about the arrival of the pastoral traders and their goods. Why was the host so eager to assist their nomadic guests? Although not obligatory, the nomadic traders usually gave their hosts varying amounts of butter, meat, cheese, etc. as presents and such gifts were very much appreciated by the farmers. However, the most valuable gain for the Rongpatsa hosts was their monopoly of the yak dung. Since Rongpatsa was a fairly tree-less farming area, fuel was very scarce and yak dung was an excellent form of fuel. Thus, both host and guest could realize their respective self-interests, and their interrelationship was reciprocal and mutually beneficial. If and when the host was unable to help sell all of his

guests' goods, the Zilphukhog traders moved further east to Kanze, the capital of Horkhog, although this was seldom necessary.

Zilphukhog traders primarily exchanged their earthenware goods for peas grown in Rongpatsa, since peas were eaten by both people and horses. An earthenware vessel was exchanged for the amount of peas which it could contain and the result was that a load of earthenware fetched a load of peas. But if earthenware was exchanged with barley, there would not be so many loads of barley to be taken home. My male informants Tsethon, Pulu, Keyga, Aduk and Nagtruk went to Rongpatsa at least five or six times when they were in their twenties and thirties. In order to train novices for the undertaking, young would-be traders were first sent with experienced men to Rongpatsa to learn the system and meet the contacts. Tea and other commodities, such as textiles for making clothes, were also obtained from Rongpatsa in return for butter, hides, musk, and other products from Zilphukhog. However, these secondary transactions were limited as the above items were usually scarce.

In order to buy luxury goods for profit, the more wealthy traders from Zilphukhog ventured further afield carrying various local products. Such distant trade expeditions were rare and expensive, but such possibilities did exist. They went to the town of Dartsendo (or Tachienlu, known today as Kangding in Chinese) in the Chala state, which was located on the ethnic border between Tibetan and Chinese populations over a hundred kilometers southeast of Zilphukhog. Only occasionally did Yudrug-tsang have the means to go as far as Dartsendo, and those who managed to go there or to Lhasa in the west were considered traders. For instance, Nagtruk once went to Dartsendo with hides, deer antlers, horns and musk, in order to obtain tea, clothes, and other items. Pulu, who had 7 yak of his own to do business with, went to Lhasa together with Yudrug-tsang's trade expedition. Yudrug-tsang itself always had an adequate supply of grain due to its own agricultural possessions, and unlike its nomadic dependents it did not have to go to Rongpatsa to buy grain during peacetime. Consequently, when Yudrug-tsang traded it was simply for profit or to convert pastoral nomadic products into foreign goods. Trading in Rongpatsa or any other place in Tibet was the most prestigious way of supplementing the pastoral nomadic economy in Zilphukhog. Conceptually, trading was the epitome of shrewdness, bravery and material advancement, which in turn embodied the aspirations of the community. The other means of supplementing the

pastoral economy were resorted to due to a lack of the necessary resources for trade. These supplementary means were far from being the ideal, nor were they prestigious, although they were undeniable necessities in order to eke out a living.

MINING GOLD

Mining gold in Tibet was something unexpected or perhaps paradoxical when one considers the beliefs and ethos of Tibetans derived from the tenets of Buddhism and Bön or the ancient folk religion. Western travelers in Tibet have often reported that Tibetans left nature untouched for fear of retribution by the guardian spirits of nature. But this can only have been partially true in certain places.[4] Regardless of such assertions, gold was mined by Tibetans in lower Zilphukhog on a small scale, no doubt with the initiative of Chinese or Tibetan gold merchants.[5] Mining gold did not make one rich, even in the long run, but it nevertheless offered an economic niche for those dependents who found no other way of supplementing their pastoral income. In an earlier chapter, it was mentioned that all the monastic dependents around Galen Gon nurtured themselves by mining gold, and they were joined at least by one dependent from Zilphukhog, namely Aduk. Although I lack adequate data on the monastic dependents, Aduk's biography sheds some important light on their mode of subsistence.

Aduk had four sisters and three brothers, most of whom were his juniors. Although the family had a potentially formidable labour force, it was economically hard pressed before the children found jobs. Moreover, the family did not have the minimum basis of animals on which everybody else in the community was usually dependent. Aduk's elder brother Shigyal had left the family, and Aduk, being the eldest remaining son, took responsibility to make an active and

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[4] Editor's note: On mining in Tibet and assertions that it was practiced or banned, see Huber 1991.

[5] Editor's note: I passed the entrance to Zilphukhog on a journey to Dege in 1999, and gold was still being actively mined there. In 1935, Marion Duncan 1952:186 noted of the river Zil Chu that "Gold nuggets ranging in size from a pea to a baseball are found frequently in this valley where gold dust is panned in summer", and on ascending to Zilphukhog he stated that "The day's course is mostly northwest past nomad tents and gold diggers' stone huts. The gold diggings exist in black gravel and slate."

substantial contribution to the household economy. When he was 13 years old, Aduk started to supplement his family income by hiring himself to his paternal aunt in lower Zilphukhog. He mined gold for 11 years until he reached the age of 24. Aduk, together with 22 other local Tibetans, worked at mining from 8 a.m. till 5 p.m. daily, a routine punctuated by a lunch break at 1 p.m. Men dug the earth and women carried it to the sorting area. A hard worker could earn about 16-17 Chinese silver coins per month, which meant that a male labourer received half a silver coin or *tonga* per day, although women earned less.

As additional remuneration for the hard work, every labourer was allowed to dig gold for him- or herself for an hour each evening. A diligent digger could accumulate about one *tola* (=10-12 grams) of gold per month in this way. Moreover, the mud or soil which stuck to the basket which was used for carrying the sand could also be sifted for gold by the labourers when each working day was over.

Aduk earned about 16-17 silver coins a month when he became a seasoned gold digger, but his income was only just enough to buy the daily necessities for his family. And besides, since he had to work hard he consumed a lot of *tsampa* which was not very cheap to buy. When Aduk had to feed nine family members in winter he had to buy about 13 *dowa* of barley each winter. At the time, a *dowa* (ca. 50-60 kg) of barley cost about 16 or 17 silver coins which, in theory, meant that he could not save any money from his monthly wages apart from the gold he saved by being diligent in his spare time.

When Aduk's younger brother Keyga planned to go to Nyor monastery, the seat of the Sakyapa sect in southwestern Tibet, in order to be ordained as an accomplished monk, Aduk and Keyga dug gold on their own from 4 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day for three consecutive years in a place not far from the main gold mine. In the course of those three years, the two brothers had been able to accumulate enough gold to buy two hybrid *zo* and save three *tola* of gold for Keyga's journey to Nyor. Although Tibetans were not inclined to exploit their natural resources, there did not seem to have existed any legal or moral restrictions on digging gold in Zilphukhog at least. Aduk could not recall that anybody had said anything when he and Keyga began to dig gold on their own.

SLAUGHTERING AND CASTRATING

The vast majority of the dependents slaughtered their animals themselves, but in addition a number of dependents had to slaughter animals for their more wealthy fellow dependents and for Yudrug-tsang as well. This created a social and economic relationship, akin to that of patron and client found in the Middle East and elsewhere, but that relationship emerged from economic factors rather than political ones. Pasang-tsang, the household to which Aduk and his brother Keyga belonged, and Jamyang-tsang had to supplement their household economy by working as professional or fee-receiving butchers for their well-to-do neighbours.

Pastoral nomads in Zilphukhog, like their peers elsewhere in the world, could not do without taking the lives of animals for their survival. But this mode of living was diametrically opposed to the philosophical tenets of Buddhism, which negated taking any form of life, stressing that all sentient beings are equally precious or important. However, most Tibetans, whether pastoral or agricultural, monk or laymen, devout Buddhists or not, could not completely abstain from eating meat, with the exception of a tiny number of full-time religious practitioners who sought to detach themselves from the mundane world. Although one could not forego eating meat, one could reduce the degree of sinfulness by avoiding taking animal lives oneself. This could be done by letting other people do the butchering against payment, with the theory that the payment which the slaughterer received should exonerate the owner of the animals from much of the sin. In other words, the owner of the slaughtered animal transferred his sin to the hired slaughterer. This was the logic or explanation that lay behind the fact that rich and pious people did not take animal lives themselves.

To give some illustrative cases, four households have been singled out that were much richer than the other dependents in Zilphukhog, namely Yudrug-tsang the house of the lord, two dependent families who were directly related to Yudrug-tsang through a daughter of that house, and finally Konchok Tashi-tsang which was not a *de jure* Yudrug-tsang dependent because it belonged to another estate owner who ranked high in Dege, but which had been living in Zilphukhog for several generations and was thus the *de facto* dependent household of Yudrug-tsang. These four households never killed any animals themselves since women normatively never slaughtered animals, and

the men could afford to employ others to perform the killing for them. This pious act was viewed not only in terms of present soteriological intentions by the actors, i.e. the wish for a better level of rebirth in the future, but also interpreted as the consequence of past deeds. As the Tibetan maxim goes: "You can see what you did in your past life by looking at what you are now, and what you will become (in the next life) by looking at what you do now

This logic or chain of causation was not only religiously paramount, but its temporal import was pervasive. In other words, a man who had the means to avoid taking animal lives himself was not only pious, but rich and prestigious, which in turn said something about the assumed intrinsic and accumulated moral qualities of the man due to his past positive deeds or merits. To the layman it would have appeared that wealth and religious merits were co-causal factors of the same thing.

Since there were only four Zilphukhog households who could afford to hire slaughterers, those who wished to work as butchers had to compete with each other. Previously, Jamyang-tsang had assumed a virtual monopoly over this profession, but in more recent times Aduk and his younger brother Chunga became his rivals. The two brothers mainly killed yak or other bovine animals, while Jamyang-tsang killed sheep in summer, and sometimes yak in winter. My informant Lhaga, a daughter of Gechung-tsang and the wife of Konchok Tashi-tsang, remembered well how these butchers had come to work at both her natal and marital homes. She told me that the slaughterers almost invariably had taken barley in advance as payment for the butchering. Thus, slaughtering animals had become a sort of delayed obligation for which the payment had already been made and perhaps also consumed. For the slaughtering of a yak, the butcher received two *bo* measures of barley, and for a sheep two *dong* measures of barley. Aduk told me that he had also castrated animals. For each ram or sheep he received a *dong* of barley, while for a yak he got two *dong* of barley. If barley had not been taken in advance as the slaughtering fee, then the butcher was given the head, the legs and some pieces of the viscera of the animal.

It is evident that a sort of interdependent relationship had indeed developed between the above two groups of households in Zilphukhog. But the interdependence was in no way perennial and it was susceptible to discontinuity as soon as the weaker households became more economically viable. It was in the interest of Yudrug-tsang and

the community as a whole to nurture and sustain weaker or younger households, and to render them as strong and full-fledged households, a point that will be made very clear in Chapter Eight.

RENTAL OF MILCH ANIMALS

Dependent households not only had to supplement their household economy by extra-pastoral means, but some of them were also short of the fundamental pastoral resources, and in particular bovine animals. In order to protect themselves from extinction, they had to be rescued by a special mechanism known as *she*.[6] The institution of *she* entailed the rental of milch *dri* or *zomo* to newly established households or for sustaining moribund households whose herds had been decimated by epidemic diseases, such as *hon* (*hon*) or rinderpest and *kha-tsa* (*kha tsha*) or foot-and-mouth disease. Although Yudrug-tsang itself did not directly engage in rescue operations very often, it invariably contrived them in one way or another. In order to substantiate my claim I shall give several examples.

My female informant Shigo lost her parents when she was a small girl, and as an orphan she had to work as a herder for Gechung-tsang and Druchung-tsang. Before establishing her own new household, she had been working for Gechung-tsang and became pregnant to a son of that household. When this son then married another woman from outside of the community, Shigo and a male co-servant were persuaded by Yudrug-tsang and their relatives to establish a new household which had a double purpose. The first purpose was to ensure that the man who had made her pregnant had a smooth married life with his own wife, and secondly to create an addition to the demographic strength of Zilphukhog. This was a welcome phenomenon for Yudrug-tsang as well as for the community. Shigo and her new husband had been able to accumulate seven *dri* and five yak, as well as a tent which was essential in establishing a new household. Nevertheless, their herd was not large enough to be economically self-sufficient even in summer. The problem was solved very skillfully. The lord of Yudrug-tsang, Chimi Rinzin, knew a rich monk in the local monastery of Galen Gon, and he persuaded him to hire his milch

[6] The system of *she* is akin to the *teraz* contracts used among the Basseri of Southern Persia; see Barth 1980:14.

animals to this nascent household for a specified period of time. The result was that Shigo hired about 30 milch *dri* for six years, on the condition that for each *druma* animal she would pay six kg of butter to the owner per year and three kg of butter for each *yarma* animal, i.e. a *dri* which had had a calf the year before. In the case of the death of a hired animal, returning its head and feet satisfied the owner. Some monks and nuns owned herds of animals which had been given to them either when people died, or as payment for reading holy religious texts, or for saying specified prayers for those who died, or which they had acquired through trading with other people.

Assisting Shigo and her husband to become an independent household in this way served the interests of both the parties. Each party was working from its self-interest, but their own self-interests were of such a nature that they were contributing something to the community as a whole. Shigo and her husband rose above servant status and became an independent household through the help of Yudrug-tsang, who simultaneously increased the number of its dependent households by one family. In other words, Yudrug-tsang had the inclination to build a strong community, in terms of manpower and economic strength, which automatically enhanced its prestige and influence vis-à-vis outsiders or other leaders in Dege.

In another case, Tsethon and his family owned very few animals and they were made economically viable by the generosity of his wealthy uncle in Karsumdo. His uncle was so generous that he lent Tsethon a number of yak and *dri* for very low rent. Tsethon could go to Rongpatsa to trade as a result of the yak he then had at his disposal. At one time, Aduk and his family possessed only two yak, three *dri*, 30-40 sheep and about 40 goats, which altogether was not enough to adequately provide for the nine-member family. So the family took *she* from four different individuals, Choki Dorjee, Loden Jagpa, Senge Sangpo, and Sangyal Tenzin (a son of Yudrug-tsang), all of whom were monks who lived in Karsumdo, and from whom they hired six *zomo*, five *zomo*, four *zomo*, and 15 *dri* respectively. As an annual rental, the family had to pay about 11-12 loads of butter to the owners of the milch animals, while all other milk products could be used by Aduk and his family. While the calves from the rented *zomo* were neglected, those from rented *dri* had to survive. Nagtruk, a male informant, told me that at one time his family's herd had been almost decimated by rinderpest and the situation had been so urgent that Yudrug-tsang had to directly intervene to help the family to survive.

Initially, Yudrug-tsang freely lent them several *dri* to sustain the family. Later, when the household was over their most critical stage of need, it was given *she* by a daughter of Yudrug-tsang who had become a nun after having divorced from her husband who lived in the neighbouring state of Lingtsang. In all the above cases, the predominant aim was to nurture and bring up new households economically to independence and rescue collapsing or moribund households from dissolution.

HUNTING, GATHERING AND OTHER WORK

In addition to the aforementioned supplementary means of subsistence, a number of more peripheral economic pursuits were also resorted to. These included hunting wild animals, gathering the *droma* (*gro ma*) tuber, disposal of corpses, and transporting goods of various sorts.

HUNTING

Both Aduk and Nagtruk hunted several species of large game animals. These included both the *nawa* (*gna' ba*) or blue sheep (*Pseudois nayaur*) and the *gowa* (*dgo ba*) or Tibetan gazelle (*Procapra picticaudata*) for their meat, the *lawa* (*gla ba*) or musk deer (*Moschus spp*.) for its musk pods, and sometimes they also killed the stags of various deer species (*Cervus spp*.) for their valuable antlers. Men from well-to-do households occasionally hunted, but they did it more as a form of sport rather than for its economic value.

Aduk hunted for many years. For musk deer, he used to hide snares under the soil over which leaves were scattered underneath the trees or bushes that were frequented by musk deer to rub their tails. Aduk confessed that he must have killed more than one thousand musk deer and gazelles. Nagtruk also killed a lot of gazelles for their meat, although he did not give an approximate figure. Like Aduk and Nagtruk, their fathers had been hunters who had used the old-style matchlock guns while their sons had been able to use modern rifles for hunting. Stag antlers and musk pods were much sought after commodities in major trading centres, such as Dartsendo. Stag antlers were quite rare and thus valuable. Stags were more difficult to hunt,

and there was apparently also local scarcity of these animals. On the whole, game was killed for its meat and for musk.

Although Yudrug-tsang apparently did not prohibit the hunting of game, hunters had to be apprehensive of local deities or *sadak* (*sa bdag*), literally the "owners of the soil", and also of the local monasteries. If a hunter trespassed the natural reserve of a monastery, where game abounded and hunting was forbidden, he would have to be doubly apprehensive of the reprisals of the monastery and the displeasure of the wrathful deities assigned to defend the reserve.[7] One often hears such stories from Tibetans of how efficacious Tibetan belief in these monastic defender deities could be. For example, I was told that one day a non-dependent man stole the riding horse of a religious hierarch in the day-time, but as night wore on the horse began to glitter and finally it began to manifest fiery sparkles from its body. The thief was so frightened that he at once returned the horse to the monastery and promised that he would never do such a thing in the future. This story illustrates the types of ideas people had about cautious not to do anything which might offend the monasteries.

To exemplify people's apprehension of local deities I shall relate what happened to Nagtruk's father when he killed a doe. He shot a doe on top of a hill, but the wounded animal ran down from the hill towards a spring into which drops of it blood fell. This coincidence or occurrence made the hunter feel uneasy and semi-conscious that he had offended somebody. The next day, his son, Nagtruk, had become completely paralyzed and nothing could be done to cure him. However, on the same day three pilgrims suddenly appeared, as if from nowhere, and they were asked if they could cure Nagtruk. They said that Nagtruk's father had aroused the wrath of a local deity whose abode was the spring. Nagtruk's sudden sickness was thus a retributive measure against the offence his father had committed. In order to propitiate and pacify the offended deity, Nagtruk's father was told to burn incense on top of the hill where the doe had been wounded. No sooner had this been done than Nagtruk could walk again, although in the meantime the three pilgrims had vanished. In other words, hunters were free to hunt, but they were restrained from random hunting by their belief in the efficacy of the local deities, which had to be respected and were best left undisturbed.

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[7] Editor's note: On monastic game preserves and their operation in Tibet, see Huber 2004 and 2004a.

Hunting also entailed observing ritual purification. Aduk told me that his father had never allowed women to touch hunting equipment, such as his matchlocks and snares. If women touched or walked over them they would be rendered ineffective since women were considered ritually less pure or polluting. Before the hunting season began, the god of the hunt was propitiated by burning incense. Aduk's father never let women eat musk deer meat until the hunting season was over for they would offend the god of the hunt, who in turn would limit his hunting success, so he buried the carcasses in the snow until the season finished.

GATHERING DROMA

Droma are the tuberous roots of various species of the herb *Potentilla*, and resemble a type of small, wild sweet potato. Digging for them in autumn and late spring was one of the main preoccupations of women in Zilphukhog. During these two seasons, especially in spring, women were less involved with milk production, and they therefore found time for digging *droma*. The *droma* harvest itself could not supplement the household income, but it was indispensable for the New Year celebrations during which a dish called *droma marku* (*gro ma mar khu*) was eaten. This delicacy consisted of *droma* mixed with butter-oil and either *tsampa* or rice if the latter was available. *Droma* was also an excellent gift item to give to friends or relatives. It was dug using a wooden hoe and no household could dig enough *droma*, as one could sell or exchange it for other items. A household of several diggers could harvest more than a *dowa* of dried *droma*, which prior to drying consisted of about six *dowa* of fresh *droma*.

CORPSE DISPOSAL

The person who disposed of corpses in Zilphukhog was a full time professional. The corpse disposer did not belong to any specific caste or class, but he was circumstantially compelled to adopt the professsion. My informants could remember two corpse disposers, of whom the senior was a monk who had come from Marong-nang, and his succeeding junior who was also a monk from the local monastery. The latter was a son of Gechung-tsang and a brother of my informant

Lhaga. As mentioned above, Gechung-tsang was a better-off dependent family and the corpse disposer in no way belonged to a lower class, which did not exist in Zilphukhog. However, his destiny to become a corpse disposer had been determined by an accident which occurred during an incident to be related in detail in Chapter Ten, and in which Yudrug-tsang and Sakar-tsang had a skirmish in the local monastery of Galen Gon. During this incident, the monk was shot in the leg which rendered him lame, and in addition to this he had to renounce his monk-hood because he had begun a relationship with a woman in lower Zilphukhog. Thus, as a crippled layman, it became difficult for him to earn a living in the normal way as he could not trade and had no livestock. The only option left to him was to become a corpse disposer. From that time on, he was not looked upon as an equal by the other dependents, at least not ritually. He was not shunned from entering tents, but people would avoid using his cups and other possessions. Among other things, the corpse disposer was given all of the clothing a dead person wore at the time of death.

TRANSPORTATION

A few wealthier households such as Dusar-tsang had a big enough yak herd that they could use some animals to transport Chinese goods from the capital Dege Gonchen to surrounding districts, such as Goz Gon, Marong-nang, and Dzogchen, against payment. Namgyal of Dusar-tsang was in her twenties when her mother sent her to transport Chinese goods from Marong-nang to Dzogchen. She was unable to load the yak with the heavier goods, and she had to be assisted by the men whom her mother had sent along to help her. Namgyal did not remember exactly what was paid for the transport by each yak, but the payment was extra income for the household.

This chapter has demonstrated how, in order to eke out a living, the pastoral nomads in Zilphukhog needed recourse to non-pastoral and peripheral means of supplementing their household economy. The existence of this non-pastoral component of the community's economy does not lead me to adopt Philip Salzman's position of "multi-purpose nomadism".[8] Rather, I find the case of Zilphukhog more in line with what Neville Dyson-Hudson has said about this issue:

[8] Salzman 1972:60-68.

> There seems to me, therefore, less to be gained by categorising of multi-resource nomadism than by simply approaching the groups we study as populations, doing whatever mixture of things they do with whatever relative frequencies that they do them. We then could—and certainly should—differentiate among them in terms of the extent (and in each case the degree) to which they utilize other than livestock, and the periodicities of this non-pastoral exploitation. Different exploitative patterns are obviously likely to have different social consequences and different prerequisites.[9]

The community of Zilphukhog was not a wealthy one. But it can be concluded that despite the relative scarcity of pastoral nomadic resources, people in Zilphukhog were able to survive, albeit skillfully by exploiting various economic niches. Another characteristic economic feature of life in Zilphukhog was the availability of aid and support, particularly towards newly established households and dependents hit by disasters. Moreover, one did not have to belong to a particular class or caste in order to perform a certain task, and what one did or had to do depended upon circumstances rather than ascription. Thus, one was allowed to act according to one's economic situation. Besides, the community was too small and mutually dependent to establish any caste-like system.

[9] Dyson-Hudson 1972:16-17.

CHAPTER SIX

STRATEGIC TRANSHUMANCE

In the preceding two chapters, pastoral resources, modes of production, and non-pastoral means of eking out a living have been dealt with at some length. The present chapter deals with the temporal, spatial, and strategic arrangements which were essential components of the economy of pastoralism in Zilphukhog. The pattern of annual movement of herds and herders back and forth between a winter tent encampment and summer pastures, with possible intermediate halts in fall and spring pastures, is "nomadism" *sensu stricto*, and this definition will be maintained for the purpose of the present discussion.[1] These features of transhumance were non-random events that had optimal value to their practitioners, and I shall return to this point below. Unlike other pastoral nomadic peoples elsewhere in the world, who can often enjoy access to vast expanses of grazing land, pastoral nomads in Zilphukhog had to confine themselves to their enclosed valley, which included an area between Tsag on the left bank and Chuchung-nang on the right bank of the river Zil Chu (see figures 7 & 15). Although I lack data on the exact land area of Zilphukhog, the following observation might have some relevance to the physical situation there relative to pastoral practices:

> The variations in patterns of movement or migration among nomads is of course very closely allied to their choice of animal and end-product, but is also a direct function of their natural environment. Their flocks have to move, if only because they exhaust the pasture, and must allow it to recover. In some situations (e.g. parts of Central Asia, and Baluchistan) the flocks may move within a very small area, even within a radius of less than 10-15 miles.[2]

Evidently, the limited and fixed pastoral habitat of Zilphukhog ruled out the possibility of exploiting pastoral nomadic space to shun potential abuse of power, which is a familiar phenomenon among pastoral nomads elsewhere. Thus, the geographical limitation of

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[1] Krader 1959:50. Editor's note: For a recent critique of the utility of the expression "nomadism", see Humphrey and Sneath 1999.

[2] Spooner 1972:123.

Zilphukhog necessarily rendered Yudrug-tsang and its dependents co-residents throughout the year. Hence, effective intra-communal manipulation of the spatial distance was unthinkable in Zilphukhog. However, the valley of Zilphukhog was more than adequate for Yudrug-tsang and its dependents. Yudrug-tsang, in fact, even allowed an additional 15 non-dependent families to reside seasonally in Zilphukhog. Most of these semi-nomadic families came from neighbouring Karsumdo, and belonged to a noble family named Khado-tsang, a member of which was a high-ranking minister in the Dege kingdom. The vast majority of these seasonally resident Karsumdo families wintered over in Zilphukhog and returned for summers in their own district. These seasonal, non-dependent semi-nomads did not curtail the pasturage of the Zilphukhog dependents since the visitors were only granted access to marginal pastures.

In contrast to pastoral nomads in arid zones, pastoralists in Zilphukhog did not have to be pre-occupied with the availability of water as the valley had numerous rivers or streams which flowed off of the surrounding hills in a parallel series of side valleys of different sizes (see figures 7 and 15). Some of these valleys led to passes which could be traversed to the neighbouring Dege communities of Marong-nang and Karsumdo or to the state of Lingtsang. Moving to and from autumn, winter and spring pastures entailed herding the grazing animals along either side of the river Zil Chu in a gradual manner. But actually reaching the summer pasture area itself required vertical ascent and descent (see figure 15).

VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL MOVEMENT

Pastoral nomads in Zilphukhog trod the same pastoral areas year in and year out in a cyclical fashion. Although there were four more or less separate seasonal pastoral areas, two characteristic modes of pastoral movement prevailed, the vertical and the horizontal. As mentioned above, ascent to and descent from the summer pasture area involved vertical movement and migration from the autumn pastures through the winter pasture area to the spring pastures was horizontal along either side of the river Zil Chu. After the descent from, and before the ascent to the summer pasture area, the pace of pastoral movement was gradual. The mouth of the Tsag River and Chuchung-nang on either side of the Zil Chu constituted the main autumn pasture

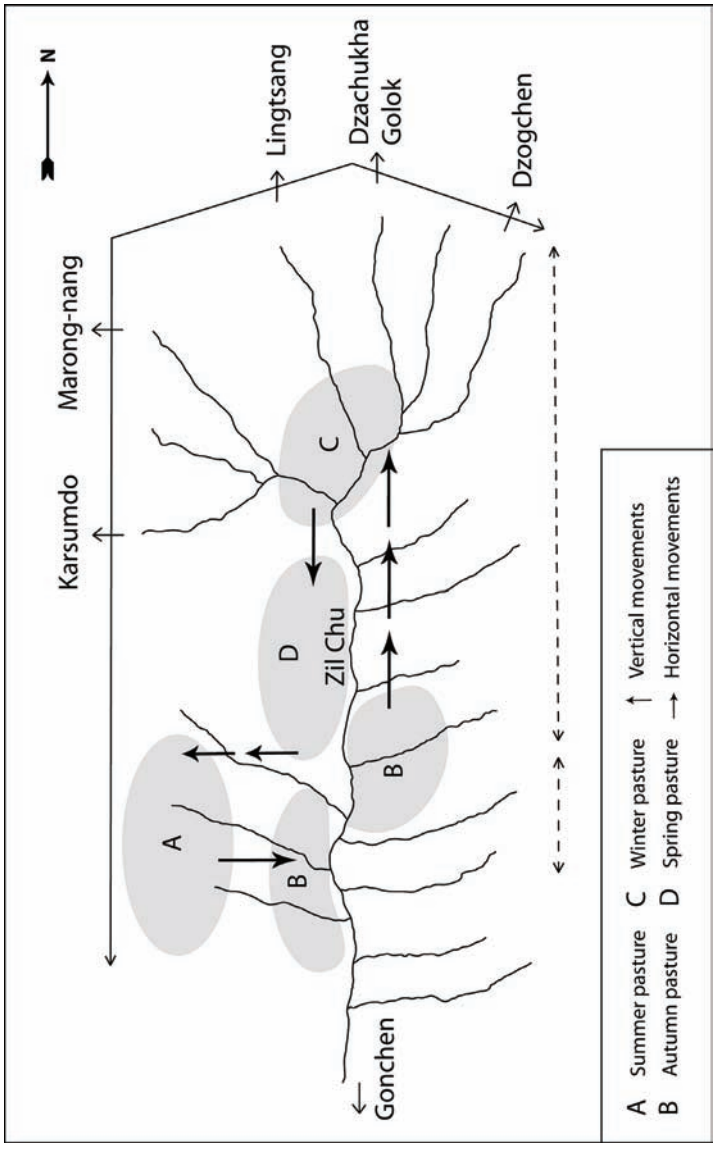

Figure 15. Pasture areas and seasonal movements in Zilphukhog.

area, but the winter pasture area was also frequented at that time in order to prepare for the long winter before the actual move to it took place. Yudrug-tsang and other households cut grass every autumn in the winter pasture area to feed *dri* calves and horses. The movement from autumn to winter pastures seems to have been slow and deliberate in order to exploit the available pastures maximally on the way to the winter pasture area. Winter was spent around or at the mouths of three rivers, the Tse Chu, the Ma Chu, and the Key Chu, and the valleys through which these rivers flowed provided lush pastures. The spring movement was even more slow and pasture conscious. After a hard and long winter, weaker animals had to be taken to the nearby rivers and the better pastures for they were too weak to go there on their own. All the members of a household did not simultaneously leave the winter pasture area together with their animals. Initially, younger members took the animals with them and moved in the direction of the spring pastures carrying small tents for accommodation. A few days later, they were joined by their fellow household members. In spring it was possible and necessary for households to spread apart from each other because of the weak animals and the limited grass available.

Spring was the season when robbers and raiders would not touch animals because they were too meagre to be eaten and too weak to be driven away and, what is more, the horses of the raiders themselves were not in the best shape at that time of the year either. During spring in Zilphukhog, the nomad dependents enjoyed a sense of security from raiders and robbers, although this feeling of security was amply counterbalanced by their anxiety about getting their herds to make it through this season of scarcity. As noted previously, it was even a kind of taboo to mention the name of this most meagre season.

In late spring, when herds and flocks became strong enough, it was time to make the ascent to the summer pasture area from Tangchen or the "large plain" which was the main spring pasture area. Both the ascent to, and the descent from the summer pasture area were abrupt and simultaneously undertaken, that is, the movement did not take more than a day and it was advisable for every household to move on the same day. Already in early summer, the snow-covered northern passes became traversable by potential raiders or robbers whose attempts to plunder the Zilphukhog community—as it was known by experience—could not be ruled out, especially if one or two households were left behind alone during the moves to and from summer

pastures. Moving together was not only strategically advisable, but it was also expedient for Yudrug-tsang for two other reasons. Firstly, it was a convenient way for Yudrug-tsang to have a thorough overview of its dependents, and also it was an effective measure to replenish and exploit the seasonal pastures systematically so that the cyclic pastoral movement was well grounded and advantageous. The summer pasture area was much larger or more extensive and it consisted of the area surrounding and above the source of the Tsag River. Individual encampments were scattered within the radius it was possible to hear a shouted message from any given encampment. Each household had specific tent-sites with local names, and several tent-sites were changed every summer in order to avoid too much mud being produced by rain and animals.

THE CHOICE OF PASTURES

The regime of pastoral nomadic movement outlined in the previous section seems to have been contrived and premeditated, although many dependents came to regard it as a matter of routine and taken-for-granted. The summer pasture area was exploitable only in summer, as it was too cold for animals in winter and much of it was covered with snow during that season. This area was ideal for a summer pastureland as both sides of the mountain ridge could be exploited and they were not steep enough to endanger the lives of animals. Moreover, water was available from the nearby streams which abounded in Zilphukhog.

Strategically, the summer pasture area was ideal since it was located farthest from the northern passes across which raiders and robbers came from Golok (see Chapter Ten), while immediately to the west there were the agricultural communities such as Karsumdo and Marong-nang which were sedentary and peaceful. Further west of these communities, the Yangtze River formed a natural barrier against potential miscreants from places further westwards. However, the northern passes that were open in summer rendered Zilphukhog vulnerable to potential raiders. In order to reduce their vulnerability, the natives relied on the spatial distance between the northern passes and the summer pasture area. The distance between the two places was about a day's journey on horseback, and that was enough to have quite a restraining effect on potential raiders. Firstly, raiders were not

daring enough to march through the entire valley and then climb the mountain on which lay the summer pastures. Raiders usually practiced hit-and-run tactics that entailed crossing and re-crossing a border area, which might not take more than several hours, leaving the owners of animals little time to prepare for a pursuit. If raiders were daring enough to come so far as the summer pastures of Zilphukhog, this would have given ample time for local inhabitants to mobilize a strong group of armed pursuers. If necessary, neighbouring communities would have assisted them in their pursuit of the raiders. Although raiders attacked only in early winter, before the northern passes were shut by snow, people in Zilphukhog nevertheless had to remain vigilant during summer due to which they patrolled the northern passes by turns, and I shall describe this system in the following section. Because of such precautionary measures, during summer the pastoral dependents of Zilphukhog were able to graze their herds and flocks in a scattered and relaxed manner.

In order to make maximal use of the available pasturage in Zilphukhog, the winter pasture area could not have been chosen in any other place than where it was. The grazing of animals on it during others seasons, and especially in summer, would have been almost suicidal both strategically and in terms of pasture management. Raiders had easy access to the winter pasture area during summer, as it was at the foot of the northern passes and hit-and-run raids would have been practicable, as had actually occurred during two previous winters (see Chapter Ten). Additionally, the winter pasture was snow-free whereas many other areas were snow covered and without feed throughout the coldest period of the year. Although there probably were potential winter pasture areas in other places in Zilphukhog, wintering in those areas would have meant curtailing the autumn and spring pasture areas which would have lead to exploiting the pasturage in Zilphukhog unsystematically and uneconomically.

The timing of the vertical ascent to and descent from the summer pasture area was decided by Yudrug-tsang. In contrast to the slow and individual movement practiced at all other periods of annual pastoral migration, the whole group of nomadic dependents moved simultaneously to and from summer pasture on a chosen auspicious day—usually either on a Wednesday or on a Saturday—due to the security reasons discussed above.

PATROLLING

Despite all of the spatial security precautions described above, people in Zilphukhog had an ingrained feeling of insecurity during summer. Therefore, the phenomenon of *sopa* (*so pa*, literally "spy") or patrolling the northern passes was a leading preoccupation in Zilphukhog.[3] On top of the northern mountain called Zatrama there was a cairn (*lha tho*), upon which a ruler-like stick called a *sotho* (*so tho*) or "spy marker" was planted. On it were inscribed some words that none of my informants could decipher. As long as can be recalled, two households had to send one person each to the mountain top every day in turn. Their task was to go to the mountain top and screen the passes and the adjacent areas to see if any stranger was prowling around. If one person caught sight of intruders, they had to remain there and watch the movement of the intruders, while the other person ran home to report the matter. However, none of my informants came across intruders when they were on duty.

In order to ascertain that the *sopa* or "spy" had actually reached the mountain top as they were duty-bound to do, each *sopa* team was to take with them a duplicate *sotho* stick and plant it on the stone pile and bring the other stick home. But not everybody took the matter so seriously, according to what my female informant Sokey told me about her own experiences. She confided in me that when she had been in her teens she once tried to cheat the *sotho* system, but in vain. Instead of going to the mountain top, which took half a day, she and a fellow teenager returned home when they had gone only half the way to the *sotho*. Their naivety in the matter became evident when they only produced a stick which they had found on their way back home. Of course, the *sotho* were specially shaped and codes were written on them.

In addition to the daily *sopa*, about a dozen armed, horse-borne men patrolled the northern passes three times during the summer. As far as my informants could recall, no raiders were encountered on such a patrolling expedition, and patrolling the area gradually became more of a ritual than an urgent security measure. This might have been due to the fact that the Dege/Golok border area of Dzachukha was

[3] Editor's note: On *ri bsher* (literally "hill inspection"), a similar institution of patrolling among pastoralists of southern Golok, see Nam mkha'i Nor bu. 1994:202-203.

being controlled increasingly during the period by Jago-tsang, perhaps the most powerful family in Dege prior to the Chinese occupation of the area in the late 1950s. Whether patrolling or not, every rider had to be available at any time, except during winter. No sooner did the herders shout the news of raids than all the riders set off in pursuit of the culprits. Hence, it was imperative for the people of Zilphukhog to execute urgent actions regardless of whose animals had been driven away. Without unwavering communal solidarity and cooperation all isolated households would have been rendered animal-less not only by raiders or robbers, but also by petty thieves from neighbouring areas.

The point was made above that seasonal pastoral movement were not only dictated by the rhythm of the seasons; they were also determined by the imperatives of defense. I maintain that the latter determinant was equally important, if not more. In summer, any accessible part of Zilphukhog could be used as a grazing area, but those areas that were adjacent to the northern passes had to be avoided as a danger zone. Only the opposite end of Zilphukhog was safe enough for summer grazing. The people of Zilphukhog could have wintered at any spot along either side of the river Zil Chu, but the actual winter pasture area could not have been exploited in any other season than winter, in terms of both security and pasturage.

Whether actual or potential, the fear of being raided from the outside had two effects on the community. The fear of raiders or bandits compelled the whole community to act united and aptly in all situations, and the same phenomenon, perhaps accidentally, made it more convenient for Yudrug-tsang to be able to control its dependents. It was unsafe for any individual household to stray from the main group. Thus the seasonal movements were largely simultaneous acts and the spread of households was confined within a given parameter, according to the time of the year. Having said this, I do not mean to imply that the nomadic households were too dependent upon Yudrug-tsang, and that they were mere cogs in a wheel. In fact the contrary was the case, as can be discerned in most of the chapters.

The present chapter demonstrates how ecological and strategic exigencies became important. Demographic strength appears to have been a crucial factor, for without a minimal population any lone household would have found it unsafe to reside in Zilphukhog. A single household could not have operated the *sopa* system in a safe manner, let alone mount any robust defense. Hence, we have seen how crucial the dependents were in terms of their number, in addition

to their other capabilities. Also, the summer quarter was inaccessible in winter due of snow, and the winter quarter was too vulnerable to raids and robbery in summer. Thus, both nature and man conditioned the inhabitants of Zilphukhog to tread a well-trodden path year in and year out. This entailed a strategic and systematic exploitation of the appropriate pastures and a high degree of interdependence, embodied in the community's dependence upon its demographic strength and unwavering cooperation when moving from one pasture to another. The focus of the next chapter will be to see how the inhabitants of Zilphukhog organized their households, especially in terms of household authority, economy, life-cycle and labour-power, as fundamental units of the community.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOUSEHOLD ORGANIZATION

In the preceding three chapters, I have characterized the mode and means of nomadic pastoral production and the economic and strategic exploitation of the pastures in Zilphukhog. Together they constitute the basis of one of my principle aims in this study, the analysis of household economy or household viability. In the present chapter, I will deal more specifically with the spatial arrangement of the household and who wielded authority within it. My predominant focus will be the nomadic dependent type of household in Zilphukhog. Not only were such households numerically dominant in the region, they also had a preponderant impact on Yudrug-tsang, especially in terms of their mobility and defense capability. Furthermore, only one of my informants had been a peasant dependent and thus I lack detailed information on that type of household. As for the monastic dependent households, there were few of them and most had broken away from either Marong-nang or upper Zilphukhog for various reasons, such as poverty or family disputes. They dwelt in lower Zilphukhog and worked as gold miners and performed no more than five or six days of corvée labour service per family per year for the two resident lamas of Yudrug-tsang at the local monastery of Galen Gon. While both the monastic and peasant dependents were under Yudrug-tsang's sway, neither of the two categories constituted the foundation upon which Yudrug-tsang's power and prestige hinged.

HOUSEHOLD NAMES

Before dealing with the spatial and ritual organization of the household, the implications of the possession or lack of a household name will be emphasized. Having a common and inheritable household name was indicative of antiquity, consistency and continuity. It suggested the antithesis of nonentity and ephemerality. An acquired household name had an element of consistency in the sense that it was constant and unmoving; continuity because the same household name could be perpetuated by successive generations; and antiquity as it had

been acquired in the remote past which suggested the good qualities of the founders of the household. Those households that did not have a common inheritable name were considered insignificant, and thought of as ephemeral and subject to fluctuation. The vernacular term for "household" is *mitsang* (*mi tshang*) or literally "people nest". This taxonomic term is neutral when used in isolation, and does not differentiate what kind of household one is referring to. In order to identify the economic and perhaps demographic aspects of a household, people in Zilphukhog and elsewhere qualify *mitsang* with either the word *chenbo* (*chen po*, "large") or *chungchung* (*chung chung*, "small"), as in *mitsang chenbo* and *mitsang chungchung*. Neither designation directly implies that the household in question is old or new, but it could almost invariably be assumed that a mitsang chenbo was an old and established one.

The social rank and antiquity of a household could be gauged by looking at the qualifying proper name for a household which was added in front of the term mitsang, and due to which the initial syllable *mi* was dropped. Thus, the four households in Zilphukhog that had common inheritable household names where known as Yudrug-tsang, Druchung-tsang, Gechung-tsang, and Dusar-tsang. The underlined syllables were the common household names founded by or derived from ancestors. Chapter Two already mentioned how Yudrug-tsang acquired its household name, and here I shall briefly explain how the other three acquired theirs. Almost all common household names refer to inanimate phenomena, such as the physical location of the household or the profession of the occupants. The common household name Druchung derived from the name of another household called Drutsa-tsang (Gru tsha tshang), or "Cousin-Boat house" (*tsha* = "cousin", *gru* = "boat"), that had once been the only neighbour of Yudrug-tsang in Tsag. A sister of Trapa, the fifth generation incumbent of the house of Yudrug-tsang, was given to Drutsa-tsang as a bride, and when a daughter of the latter family established a new household it was named Druchung-tsang (Gru chung tshang), which means "Small-Boat house". Drutsa-tsang itself might have been a splinter household of an earlier possible Drupa-tsang (Gru pa tshang) or "Boatman house", as many houses whose profession it was to transport people across rivers were called Drupa-tsang.

The household name Gechung-tsang derived from the house of Gethog-tsang or "Above-Cliff house". Gethog-tsang had been an

estate owner many years ago in another area, but it had become almost extinct due to reasons that are unknown. A son of Gethog-tsang migrated to Zilphukhog and he settled there with a daughter of Druchung-tsang, and their house was christened Gechung-tsang or "Small-Cliff house". Both of these common household names were imported from outside the area. The last of the three house-names is more interesting in the sense that it did not derive from an old household, nor did the name refer to any inanimate object or profession. Dusar-tsang means "New-House house", which is nevertheless an impersonal name amenable to perpetuation. Dusar-tsang had been a peasant household, but its large herds of animals elevated it to the status of a pastoral nomadic household within a single generation. The acquisition of its quasi-household name might have had something to do with its economic success in terms of wealth in herds.

The four we have just mentioned represented the wealthiest families in Zilphukhog, and they were the only households that had common household names. As in the case of Yudrug-tsang, a known common household name was usually associated with a relatively lengthy pedigree and that pedigree might be explained by the superior quality of "bone" (*rus*) of the male line, while the female contribution was conceived of as "flesh" (*sha*). According to my informants, if a household had a common name, but lacked its usual concomitants of wealth, influence and power, it did not necessarily lack grace and manner, which were not subject to fluctuation or ephemerality.

The remaining household names in Zilphukhog were temporary improvisations. They were the personal names of the normally male head of the household, placed as usual in front of the term *tsang* (*tshang*), and underlined here in the examples Buchung-tsang, Doso-tsang, and Pentse-tsang. All three example names were the non-hereditable personal names of specific individuals, and they could not be used as qualifiers of another personal name. For instance, Buchung, which is a personal name as well as a household name, could not be used in front of another personal name such as Tashi or Dorjee to indicate which household they belonged to. Hence, Buchung + Tashi or Buchung Tashi would only be understood as being the name of a particular individual and not their household, unless the person themselves was the head of a household. On the other hand, Yudrug, which was the common inheritable household name of the lord in

Zilphukhog, could be used in front of the different personal names of its members, such as Yudrug Trapa.

Lacking a common inheritable household name had several connotations. It usually meant that the household was poor, that it was either newly established by dependents or immigrants and, perhaps, because of these two factors, that the household was also not old enough to acquire a common household name. I would thus maintain that to acquire a common inheritable household name meant having acquired the necessary wealth, prestige, and recognition by others as an established household. A household without a name implied its vulnerability to discontinuity because it was identified with the person in power, and when a household head died the household became known by a different name, that of the successor as new household head. For instance, when Buchung's father had been alive his household had been known as Lothenma-tsang because his father's name had been Lothenma, and it changed to Buchung-tsang upon his father death and Buchung's becoming the head.

THE TENT AS A SOCIAL SPACE

All nomadic households in Zilphukhog, including Yudrug-tsang itself, dwelt in black yak-hair tents throughout the year (see figures 16 and 17). The size of the tents depended upon, and reflected the means of individual families.[1] All tents invariably had two vertical poles, one in the front and the other in the rear of the tent, and together they supported the horizontal ridgepole of the tent. The tents were almost octagonal in shape and the tent ropes that ran from different corners were tied taut to pegs driven into the ground. In order to stretch the tents into the right shape and position, shorter poles supported and raised them amid the ropes. The 18th century French missionary-traveler Régis Évariste Huc (1813-1860) once compared the Tibetan nomad tents to huge black spiders with long and thin legs, which is an apt comparison.[2] Directly above the hearth, not very far from the front pole, was a window-cum-chimney flap that could be shut and opened

[1] None of the tents in Zilphukhog seems to have been as large as those used by the people of Golok, as described by Combe 1926:100. Editor's note: On the black tent in Tibet, see now Manderscheid 2001, and Jones 1996:99-107.

[2] Bell 1928:19.

Figure 16. Nomad tent, Kham, early 20th century.

Figure 17. The Jö Lama and his parents in front
of their yak hair tent, Kham, ca. 1909.

by drawing the flap-rope from either side of the tent. Likewise the entrance could be opened and closed by drawing a bigger flap from either direction. In winter, one insulated the tent by building a circular dung-wall around it that froze to a cement-like hardness in the cold. Dung was also used to make temporary shelves in the tent. In summer, dung-walls were substituted with bushes to stop both wild and domesticated animals from entering the tent.

The spatial arrangement of the interior of the tent manifested the ethos and values of the community. The hearth was the nucleus of the family, and around it they ate and performed the daily chores. It also functioned as a centripetal point of reference from which invisible but recognizable social and ritual borders emanated. The size of the hearth was indicative of the relative affluence of the household. For instance, Gechung-tsang's hearth could accommodate seven to eight pots and pans simultaneously, while that of Shigo, who was a dependent of average wealth, could accommodate only three to four pots and pans at one time. The nomadic hearth was not radically different from that of their peasant counterparts except that it was, perhaps, more oblong and was usually dominated by a huge cheese-pan at its centre. Owen Lattimore has also reported a similarity between the hearth of pastoral nomads and that of their peasant counterparts: "Moreover, the form of the Tibetan nomad tent, taken together with the kind of fireplace used in it, suggests an improvised shelter pitched over exactly the kind of fireplace the settled people used".[3] This might suggest a very close relationship between pastoral nomads and farmers in Tibet. The oblong mudstone hearth was made hollow by numerous circular openings that were fed by the fire that originated from the square opening at the southern end of the hearth. This opening, the front of the hearth, was surrounded by a semicircular ash-pit upon or in which different types of Tibetan bread were baked. Wood was easily available in the region around Zilphukhog and it was the main source of fuel.

As mentioned above, from the hearth there radiated invisible boundaries dividing the tent into two hemispheres, or roughly four sections. The hemisphere on the right side of the hearth and the poles as one entered the tent was the male domain, although not an entirely inviolable one. This was the area where men and boys sat, slept, ate and passed their time. Along the back of the tent the more solid

[3] Lattimore 1940:211-212.

possessions of the family such as leather bags (*dowa*) of barley, clothes, and other items were stored. If a family owned one, a box or trunk sat in the middle portion of the back wall and was used as the family altar, upon which burnt one or two votive oil-lamps, along with other religious paraphernalia placed there by the family, the amount and nature of which depended upon the economic means of the family. Alongside the tent wall on the man's side, horse and yak saddles, felt saddle blankets, felt raincoats and the like were stacked upon each other. On the back tent pole hung rifles, native matchlock guns, swords and knives, and charm-boxes of various sizes. These sacred items and weapons were not to be touched by women for they would reduce their efficacy or effectiveness. The head of the household slept near the back-tent pole and other male members slept in parallel lines in order of seniority. Monks and important guests would be offered the domain of the male household head and their servants slept in the corner near the entrance. The front or southern pole was the prerogative of the women. On it hung the indispensable milk churn, ladles, wooden brushes for washing and scraping the milk churn, and other wooden vessels used for working with milk, curds, cheese, and butter. Beside the pole were a couple of wooden containers for storing drinking water and a stack of wood for fuel.

The left hemisphere as one entered the tent was the domain of the women, where they slept, ate and worked. In the back of the left hemisphere there might be an extension of the row of properties from the right or men's side, but this area was primarily the larder for storing milk and its products. Below this area, to the left side of the tent, the women slept in a similar ordering to that of the men. When eating, men and women sat on their respective sides of the central ash-pit in the same order as I have mentioned for sleeping, with senior members towards the back end of the tent and everyone else below them towards the door in order of seniority and rank. Everybody had his or her own bowl or cup for drinking and eating, and exchanging or sharing bowls and cups was very rare. Children also had to observe the household spatial arrangement by not sitting or eating above grown ups. It should be stressed that the above domestic spatial arrangement was far more prevalent and strictly observed among the more well-to-do families. Poor families were more egalitarian in the sense that they did not bother too much about social divisions in terms of the domestic spatial arrangement.

AUTHORITY AND GENDER

It can already be deduced from the foregoing discussion who exercised authority and demanded respect in the household. Although both parents had immense authority over their children, the father/husband usually had the ultimate say in any major decision. Parental, but especially paternal, authority was foremost concerning planning and arranging marriages for sons and daughters. Generally speaking, all parents were apt to marry their daughters out and bring in a daughter-in-law for their son or sons. This attitude is aptly illustrated by the native saying, *Bomo dang drapa nyi chi mi re*,[4] which literally means, "Daughters and monks are both outsiders." Daughters and monks both had to leave their natal homes, which meant that they were outside the process of perpetuating their natal homes.

Disagreeing with, or ignoring parental decisions on matrimonial matters almost always left one with two choices: either to reluctantly comply with the wishes of one's parents, or to elope with one's lover to a distant place. Namgyal of Dusar-tsang was on the verge of resorting to the latter alternative. She had a taxpayer lover in Marong-nang, where she had lived before she moved to Zilphukhog. The man in question had been her secret lover for several years, but one day she was told by her mother, stepfather, other relatives and friends and even Yudrug-tsang to enter into a polygynous union with her mother and stepfather. She was shocked to hear this and she was determined to elope with her lover to a far away region, but the passage of time and persistent persuasion from all quarters eroded her determination to elope. She finally had to accede to the wishes of her mother, Yudrug-tsang, and her brothers. One of the prime reasons why she did not elope with her lover was that she could not leave her brothers whom she loved and cared for very much. Both her mother and stepfather, and Yudrug-tsang were all evidently interested in the polygynous union, as they believed it would ensure the perpetuation and posterity of a dependent household. I have not found other similar cases in Zilphukhog, although two other marriages were fraternally polyandrous.

More parental authority was asserted among the noble and well-off families as they were interested in establishing advantageous political alliances, and due to which they could not tolerate recalcitrant

[4] *Bu mo dang grwa pa gnyis phyi mi red.*

daughters who brought shame on their parents. This phenomenon is illustrated by the following case history. Yudrug Trapa sent his 28 year old daughter, Jamyang Chodon, to marry into Sakar-tsang against her wishes. However, a year before she was sent off to Sakar-tsang, her lover, whose father Trapa disliked intensely, had fathered her child Chimi Rinzin, the last lord of Yudrug-tsang. Although reluctant, Jamyang Chodon could not do anything except to comply with her father's wishes. Generally, children and adolescents below the ages of 17 or 18 were treated as social minors, and they had to obey whatever they were told to do.

The spatial arrangement of the household which I have outlined above indicates that the sexes were distinguished from each other by separate domains for eating, sitting and sleeping, and women were not supposed to touch the sacred religious paraphernalia or weapons that hung from the rear tent pole. Does this mean that there was an inequitable relationship between men and women? Were women barred from positions of power? By and large, many observers have described the position of women in pre-modern Tibetan life in positive terms.[5] In Zilphukhog women were somewhat handicapped by their inability to embark on long-distance trading expeditions to Rongpatsa or elsewhere and also in being unable to defend themselves in times of raids and encroachment by any outsider since they did not generally use weapons or horses. Religiously, women were hindered from achieving religious merits or accomplishments due to child rearing and domestic work which curtailed women's time and energy for engaging in ritual practice. Anthropologist Barbara Aziz reported that husband/wife relationships became egalitarian after the wife had produced children, and preferably sons whom Tibetans consider very valuable.[6]

In the world of my informants in former Zilphukhog, having children—and most especially male children—was necessary and appreciated, but most husbands and wives ultimately had no one other than themselves to depend upon, and whatever each partner did was equally essential and important. Since most households were conjugal families, there were usually no mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law

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[5] See Rockhill 1891:213, Kawaguchi 1909:475, and Rinchen Lhamo 1926:125. Editor's note: On the status of Tibetan women past and present, see now Gyatso and Havnevik 2005 and the literature cited therein.

[6] Aziz 1978:180.

encroaching on the wife's position in the household. She alone was the mistress of the house. The situation was a little different in an extended family where in-laws might have demanded deference and respect from the *nama* (*mna' ma*) or "bride", as she might be perceived as a rival and threat to their power and influence in the house. Only then was it necessary for the wife to produce preferably male offspring to consolidate her position as the mistress of the house. However, her consolidation of power might coincide with the disposal of her sister-in-law and the natural attrition of her mother-in-law, and so on. To illustrate the egalitarian aspect of neolocal families I was told by my female informant Sokey that she bore her children in her own tent where both she and her husband slept and ate. It was unheard of for the *nama* of Yudrug-tsang and that of the other well-to-do extended families to be allowed to do such a thing. Sokey had to deliver one of her children in an improvised shelter outside the tent and remain there for several days when she was working for Gechung-tsang.

In a sense, the situation for women in Kham was such, that with determination, one could shape one's own destiny to a certain extent. A case in point is that of Namgyal's mother Tsodon, who was an enterprising woman, not only in her own household, but also in the community in general. When her parents died in Zilphukhog, she moved to another community called Rakhog where she worked for a wealthy family. The son of her host family became her lover and their relationship resulted in the birth of two sons and her daughter Namgyal. Tsodon was intelligent and shrewd and was determined to accumulate enough animals to start a pastoral nomadic household. When Namgyal was about 10 years old, Tsodon and her three children were asked to move to Marong-nang to become a peasant dependent household. Tsodon could not get married to her master and lover because his family and relatives would not allow him to do so. But she found a man from Chidrog, a nomadic area west of the Yangtze River, who followed her to Marong-nang. Tsodon planned almost everything that concerned the running and management of their household and domestic economy. Her husband's sole job was to be responsible for making cheese and butter around the household hearth. I was told that one of his toughest tasks was to see that the household fire was burning constantly under the huge cheese pan. Tsodon commissioned other people to buy barley for her from Rongpatsa and then sell it on again to people in Zilphukhog and Marong-nang for a profit. She also

purchased barley in Marong-nang and exchanged it for gold with the gold diggers in lower Zilphukhog, and she then sold this gold for a profit in Dzogchen and elsewhere. Namgyal could remember how she and her mother went to Dzogchen to trade cheese and other items for treacle. Namgyal was also sent on transportation expeditions to neighbouring districts to transport Chinese goods in return for payment in cash or kind. Through these various means of accumulating wealth, Tsodon was able to invest enough wealth in herds to achieve the status of a pastoral nomadic dependent, within her own lifetime. Tsodon died in 1958 on her way to Nepal, and is remember by all for her qualities and determination.

HOUSEHOLD VIABILITY

The concept of "household viability" which has been raised by D.J. Stenning (1962) and others is useful, but the difficulty is that it can range anywhere between the most affluent and the very poor household. Therefore viability in my usage will mean the ability for the average household to maintain and reproduce all that is necessary for perpetuation, including sustenance, capital, personnel of the various necessary categories, labour, and the like. My second problem is that since I did not have access to the original community of my informants, and that measuring and calculating their monthly or annual consumption was something unknown to them, a detailed accounting of the household economy is not possible. What follows then is a more general picture of the economy of the average household to the extent to which I have been able to reconstruct it together with my informants.

Although the vast majority of the dependent households in Zilphukhog were pastoral nomads, most of them could not support themselves through animal husbandry alone. They had too few animals both for milk production in summer and for meat and for conversion of products through trading into cereals for winter. My informants estimated that a viable pastoral household of about five members—being ideally three adults together with two adolescent children—independent of any peripheral incomes such as hunting and digging gold, but dependent on the conversion of pastoral products into cereals for winter consumption, would need to have at least the following herds of animals:

yak	*dri*	*zo*	*zomo*	sheep	goats	horses
30-40	80-90	1-3	9-10	100	40-50	3

This estimate probably reflects the normative or idealized composition of the informants' herds, as it does not show much correspondence with most of the herd units as surveyed from individual households:

House:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
yak	60	30-40	50-60	20	1	5	3	2	0	40
dri	100	60-70	40	25	2	8	3	3	70	60
zomo	0	6-7	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
zo	0	1-2	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
sheep	30	30	200	20	10	0	10	50	90	200
goats	0	9	30	0	20	3	3	60	0	30
horses	l4	10	3	0	1-2	1	1	1-3	0	20

Note: Milch animals taken as *she* are not calculated in the table.

The above table suggests that only four households (A, B, C and J) were pastorally viable in terms of the ideal estimate given by my informants. Although the table was based on only ten households it does suggest that more than 60% of the households might have been pastorally non-viable. The table also suggests that the households had an average yak herd of 25 head and a *dri* herd of 33.3 head which are far below the viable criteria suggested by my informants. This discrepancy can be understood when one investigates what my informants' definition of the poverty line was. Upon cross-checking and repeated questioning my informants told me that to survive, pastorally, the average household had to have at least the following number of animals:

yak	*dri*	*zo*	*zomo*	sheep	goats	horses
8-9	15	0	1-2	1-20	1-20	1-2

These animals constituted the source of milk production, meat, hides, wool and yak-hair for domestic use and conversion into cereals for winter consumption. I am inclined to think that this estimate of the household's herd composition might give a better idea of the average household's economic basis than the previous one. The next question is how the households converted their pastoral goods into non-pastoral consumable goods. According to my informants the average family of 5-6 members consumed approximately the following quantities of food items in winter, as measured in *dowa* and *gyama* (*rgya ma*):[7]

Foodstuff	barley	peas	cheese	butter
Informant estimate of winter consumption	10-11 *dowa*	5-6 *dowa*	4-5 *dowa*	40-50 *gyama*
My estimate of winter consumption	5-7 *dowa*	3-5 *dowa*	2-3 *dowa*	40-50 *gyama*

My intuition is that the average household's winter consumption might have ranged between the two estimates. Barley and peas had to be obtained through bartering earthenware goods made in neighbouring Karsumdo. Barley, which was dearer, was bartered and brought from Karsumdo as this area was known for its good quality barley and the location was convenient for people in Zilphukhog, being only one day's travel on foot. The well-off households bought barley in large quantities and thus avoided taking many trips to Karsumdo, while other households had to make multiple trips whenever they could afford to due to lack of adequate capital. Meat, butter, and hides were exchanged for Karsumdo barley and households with limited herds found it difficult to obtain large quantities of barley at any one time. The high cost of barley and the scarcity of large herds might have forced some households to put themselves in a state of indebtedness to their suppliers in Karsumdo or

[7] Editor's note: 1 *dowa* = approximately 50+ kg; 1 *gyama* = approximately 3 kg.

to some of their well-to-do fellow dependents whose excess barley supply they might have borrowed.

Before I proceed with the labour distribution of my hypothetical average household, I shall deal with the demographic features of Zilphukhog. A viable household economy not only necessitated the essential resources to exploit, but it also demanded a minimal labour force to exploit them. Figure 18, "Household composition of 10 Zilphukhog families", indicates the composition and size of local households. This table suggests that the household size ranged between 4 and 8 members, while the mean or average household size was in the vicinity of 6 members. This figure is comparable to Fredrik Barth's figure of 5.7 members for pastoralist households in southern Persia,[8] and also to M. Nazif Shahrani's 5.5 members for Kirgiz pastoralist households in northern Afghanistan.[9] It does not, however, corroborate Li An-che's average household for Dege, which is 3.97.[10] Among the 10 listed households, households number 3 and 4 contracted plural marriage—in these cases, polyandry—which was compatible with multi-generational co-residence. Household number 5 was the only polygynous union in Zilphukhog. As a precautionary note, I must emphasize that this demographic table is highly approximate for several reasons. Firstly, it was not possible for me to determine exactly how many households were patrilocal and neolocal, as my informants did not remember exactly how a certain number of the dependent households had been established. What is clear is that neolocality almost invariably excluded co-residence with parents, while patrilocality indicated the opposite, that is, it augmented the household labour force. Secondly, it is hard to ascertain exactly how many children were born in each household and how many of them died in their infancy, especially as the death of infants was not publicized or remembered in most cases. Moreover, it is difficult to ascertain how many children and grandparents were able to contribute to the household economy. However, despite these shortcomings, I find the available data useful in my attempt to render an idea of the household composition in Zilphukhog. Given that these provisional data reveal an approximate household population of 6 members, it then might be logical to cautiously assume that the mean household

[8] Barth 1980:12.
[9] Shahrani 1979:139.
[10] Li An-che 1947:290.

Household no. & name	Marriage type	H/W	Unmarried		Unmarried		GP	I	House Members			Out-going		Out-going		Total
			B	Z	S	D			X	Y	P	B	Z	S	D	
1. Druchung-tsang	patrilocal	1/1		1			2	1	3	6	2	1m	2n			9
2. Gechung-tsang	patrilocal	1/1	1q	1q			2		4	6	1	1m				7
3. Konchok Tashi-tsang	polyandrous	2/1					2	1	3	6	2					6
4. Buchung-tsang	polyandrous	2/1			1	1	2		5	7						7
5. Dusar-tsang	polygynous	1/2				2		1	5	6		2m				8
6. Shigo-tsang	neolocal	1/1				1		1	3	4						4
7. Jigmey-tsang	neolocal	1/1			1			1	3	4						4
8. Penjoma-tsang	neolocal	1/1			1	1			4	4						4
9. Pasang-tsang	neolocal	1/1			2	2		2	6	8				1		9
10. Sokey-tsang	neolocal	1/1				1		1	3	4						4
	Total	12/11	1	2	5	8	8	8	39	55	5	4	2	1		62

Key: H/W = husband/wife; B = brother; Z = sister; S = son; D = daughter; GP = grandparents; I = infants; X = adult members; Y = household members including I and GP; P = servants; q = left home in late adulthood; m = monk; n = nama "bride"

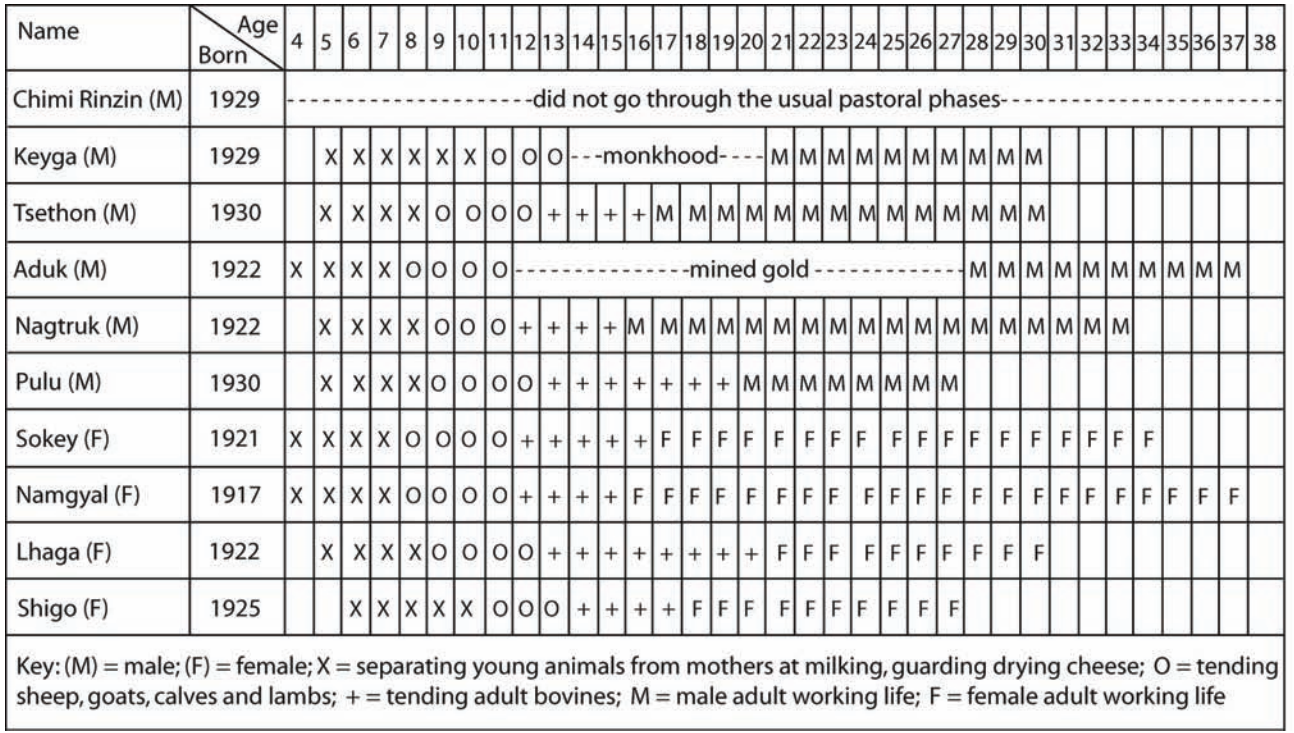
Figure 18. Household composition of 10 Zilphukhog families.

composition might have been a bit larger or smaller than 6, but I shall leave the matter at that.

In order to survive, the average household had to have at least three adults, of whom one had to be a male. This household composition might be compared to what M. Nazif Shahrani calls "small herding units", which are defined as "These herding units demand a minimum labour force of one adult male, an adult female, and at least one child over ten years of age".[11] Whatever his status—father, eldest son, brother, and so on—might have been, the male household head was not only responsible for providing cereals for winter consumption, but he was also the defender of the household. He also had the duty to obtain utility and ornamental items, such as tea, cotton cloth, tassels, and precious stones of different kinds and qualities. The life of men had the connotation of toughness, daring, danger, business acumen, and so forth, all of which characterized the reverse of the monotonous and unexciting aspects of the domestic chores performed by women. Hence, unless they had no choice but to do it, men took it for granted that it was the task of women to perform the daily chores including milking, processing milk products, disposing of dung, and fetching water, while what they did was to take horses and yak to and from pastures in the morning and evening.

The wife or sister or an unmarried daughter was equally essential for the household management, although in a different way. She was the mistress of the household and her indispensability proved obvious especially in summer. During summer she was preoccupied with reaping the fodder fields on foot from dawn to dusk. The daily chores consisted of milking thrice a day, churning milk into butter, making cheese and curds, disposing of dung, being vigilant so that calves, lambs and kids might not be dropped in the forest or be killed, and other tasks. She also had to look after any animals that were too small. Cutting wood and fetching water were also among her duties. In autumn and spring, when the earth was not frozen and when the fields were meager and almost dry, the wife dug for *droma* tubers, besides continuing the now much reduced milk production chores. In winter when the earth was frozen, her spare time was used for spinning wool and yak hair into woolen cloth for the making of gowns and tents.

[11] Shahrani 1979:133.



Name	Age / Born	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38
Chimi Rinzin (M)	1929	----------did not go through the usual pastoral phases----------																																		
Keyga (M)	1929		X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	---monkhood----							M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M								
Tsethon (M)	1930		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	+	+	+	+	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M								
Aduk (M)	1922	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	----------mined gold----------																M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	
Nagtruk (M)	1922		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	+	+	+	+	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M					
Pulu (M)	1930		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M											
Sokey (F)	1921	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	+	+	+	+	+	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F				
Namgyal (F)	1917	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	+	+	+	+	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	
Lhaga (F)	1922		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F								
Shigo (F)	1925			X	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	+	+	+	+	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F											
Key: (M) = male; (F) = female; X = separating young animals from mothers at milking, guarding drying cheese; O = tending sheep, goats, calves and lambs; + = tending adult bovines; M = male adult working life; F = female adult working life																																				

Figure 19. Phases of pastoral working life in Zilphukhog.

A third working adult was necessary to perform the seasonal corvée service. An unmarried daughter or a son could perform this duty. If a household could not produce a labourer of its own, it either had to hire another person for the purpose, or it was exempted from the labour service until it was able to perform the duty, and this was especially the case if it was a nascent household. Just as adults were decisive in terms of the household labour contribution, their children were no less important. As can be seen in figure 19, "Phases of pastoral working life in Zilphukhog", children from the age of five or six were utilized as herders of different animals as they grew up. Assisted by any available grandparents, they were given the task of minding the cheese while it dried on yak-hair blankets so that goats and birds did not eat it. When they were a few years older, children looked after kids and lambs and helped their mothers to separate lambs and calves before and after milking. This phase was followed by the task of herding sheep, goats, and calves. The culmination of children's herding tasks was tending the bovine animals, the yak and *dri*. At this stage, adolescents of both sexes had reached the age of about 18 or 19 years. Most boys left this adolescent task of herding and assumed the status of manhood. They became more conscious of their physical appearance and began to plait their hair and decorate it with colourful tassels. They now took much interest in horses and guns, besides being highly eligible bachelors. However, the same status transformation did not always apply to the girls. In most cases, they had to keep on herding the bovine animals until they got married or were succeeded by their younger siblings.

LABOUR AND REPRODUCTION

> Family development refers to cyclical changes in the size and composition of viable domestic groupings based upon the family. These are changes brought about by birth, marriage, and death of family members. They involve not merely changes in family constitution, but affect, and are affected by, the relation between the family and its means of subsistence, which, as a domestic unit, it manages, exploits and consumes in close co-residence, continuous cooperation, and commensality.[12]

[12] Stenning 1962:62.

I will now investigate the way people in Zilphukhog recognized the close dependence between household labour requirements and the reproductive cycle. A mandatory household composition of three working adults was incompatible with neolocal households in their initial stage. To establish a new household (*metangwa*) almost invariably meant a conjugal family. That is to say, there were only two working adults, man and wife, with, perhaps, their babies. Such households were hardly viable, both in terms of material and human resources, since the former was determined by the system of inheritance and the latter by the practice of neolocality. The aim of any household was to perpetuate. This implied that an out-marrying son was entitled only to what his parents gave him. A son's preponderant obligation was to remain at home and receive a *nama* or "bride" for household perpetuation. As far as my informants could recollect, a son of Pasang-tsang was the only male to marry out and leave the community, probably for economic reasons. Normatively, sons were not supposed to leave their natal home. Those who did so were either *magpa* (*mag pa*) or "grooms" for sonless households, or they were immigrants and refugees, or they refused to share a common wife with their brothers or with their father, if the latter had taken a second wife after the death of his first wife. However, no man in Zilphukhog left the area as the *magpa* of a non-dependent family.

Daughters customarily left their natal home and joined their husbands, but both the quality and quantity of their dowries depended upon the wealth of their parents and the kind of marriage they had contracted. If a daughter complied with the wishes of her parents, and married the man or men of her parents' choice, she invariably received a bigger dowry than her sister who, perhaps, found a husband on her own and started a household with him. Moreover, dowries usually consisted of jewels and ornaments and no out-marrying daughter received an adequate herd to enable a viable livelihood, especially when the marriage contracted was neolocal. Hence, such rescue or survival mechanisms as *she* and lending milch *dri* to nascent and disaster-hit dependents were implemented. Nascent neolocal households asked herders of other households to herd their animals in return for occasional gifts of such things as cotton shirts, inexpensive ornamental stones, and a part of their daily meals. Such shared herding did not create any problem, as the total livestock population of the 10 families sampled in figure 18, for example, was only 250 yaks and 336 *dri*. For instance, my female informants Shigo and

Sokey resorted to the above herding arrangement until their children were big enough to assume the herding task themselves. From time to time, according to need, relatives and neighbours assisted each other when they experienced a shortage of labour force.

Polygynous or polyandrous marriages did not entail a shortage of labour force. A polyandrous union invariably entailed patrilocality, which meant the availability of parents-in-law, junior brothers or sisters who were unmarried, all of whom contributed to the household labour requirements. Since patrilocality was coterminous with the inheritance of the patrimony, a patrilocal marriage was economically viable from the outset. Likewise, polygynous unions did not face any viability problem, as they were marital unions of two (or more) women—for example, mother and daughter as in Namgyal's case—and one man. Matrilocality had the same advantage since the daughter inherited the patrimony. The implications of the above forms of marriage were significant. By the time junior sisters (or brothers) had reached adulthood and joined their husbands, the couple's children might be mature enough to tend to their parents' herds. Thus, the reproductive cycle had to be in tune with the labour demand of the household, unless one was wealthy enough to keep servants or too poor to require any labour force.

Figure 18, "Household composition of 10 Zilphukhog families", above shows that household number 3 contracted a fraternal polyandrous marriage, which implied adequate adult labour force at the outset, since the two co-husbands and their common wife fulfilled the adult labour requirement. But this household was wealthy enough to employ two servants in line with households number 1 and 2. Household number 2 retained a brother and a sister until their household responsibilities were taken over by their nieces and nephews. In other words, the labour need of polygamous households were ensured by the marital union of three working adults, the availability of junior siblings who could help their senior married siblings, and the labour contribution of grandparents, even if they did not employ servants. A stable succession of sibling groups solved the herding labour problem. When all the members of a sibling group had married or left their natal home, a new group took over the herding task. This cycle of biological replenishment, which furnished the required labour force, would continue unless epidemic diseases or sterility affected the demographic balance of the household. On the other hand, household number 7 in figure 18 was a neolocal family

established by two former servants of Gechung-tsang. As mentioned, neolocal or monogamous marriages excluded the co-residence of one's parents and siblings and this curtailed the household work force. The initial labour force consisted of husband and wife and probably their infant children. In view of this, neolocal households were not self-sufficient at the outset in both economic and demographic terms. Neolocal marriages meant more freedom, but more toil and struggle in their efforts to attain self-sufficiency.

Leaving the average household aside for the time being, the sub-average household had to resort to sundry incomes, such as hunting, digging gold and paid slaughtering of animals for other households. The phenomenon of *she*, lending of milch cows, and the like were sustaining mechanisms extended to the poor. The sub-average household had neither the necessary capital for trade nor the means of transport (i.e. yak) to undertake it.

In order for the average household in Zilphukhog to be able to sustain itself, it had to have at least three adult members and preferably about two adolescent children. It seems that the minimum demand for a viable pastoral labour force in Zilphukhog was not very different from that of the nomads of south Persia, on which Fredrik Barth reported "This requires the cooperation of at the very least three persons: male head of the household who performs male tasks around the tent and connected with the migration, a woman to perform female domestic tasks, and a male shepherd."[13] In Zilphukhog, children above the age of five were of great importance to the household management, as we have seen. In other words, men, women and children, in different ways, contributed to the household management and economy, and the absence of one component of the household labour force rendered the household less viable. This phenomenon necessarily entailed that neolocal households were initially non-viable, owing to which they had to be assisted and sustained by employing various mechanisms such as *she* and the like.

[13] Barth 1980:20.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MARRIAGE AND KINSHIP

Tibet has often been noted in social science literature for its diverse forms of marriage. For instance, Barbara Aziz found that six distinguishable varieties of plural marriage were practiced in the Dingri area of southwestern Tibet.[1] Although all the different varieties of marriage were not practiced throughout Tibet with equal frequency, some of them were ubiquitous in Tibet, and this too has been the subject of various assessments by observers. Prince Peter, for example, once estimated that the percentage of polyandry in Kham was about 40% and that in the Tsang region of Central Tibet was as high as 70%.[2] Other writers on Tibet have presented conflicting statements as to whether pastoral nomadic Tibetans were polyandrous or not.[3] Although we do know that some pastoral nomadic groups practiced polyandry, it is not my purpose here to attempt any such assessments on a pan-Tibetan level. My goal is to explore in detail what forms of marriage were practiced in Zilphukhog and then try to explain how or why they were affected and generated by economic and political factors.

Since traditional Tibetan society was based on institutionalized inequality one cannot embark on a profitable discussion of the different varieties of Tibetan marriage without scrutinizing the precise nature of the inequality. The constituents of Zilphukhog society were the house of Yudrug-tsang as lord at the apex and its dependent households ranged below it. Yudrug-tsang appears to have been an aloof entity that sought to protect itself against dilution through hypergamy. Thus, no *nama* or bride had been taken by Yudrug-tsang from a dependent household. However, some dependents were related to Yudrug-tsang, but only through a marriage between a daughter of Yudrug-tsang and a non-dependent family. Some offspring of such marriages established new households with dependents. Even though there were partial variations among the dependents, I retain here the working dichotomy of Yudrug-tsang verses the dependents in my

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[1] Aziz 1978:138.
[2] Peter, Prince of Greece and Denmark 1963.
[3] Rockhill 1891, Combe 1926:73, and Bell 1928:193.

investigation of the forms of marriage in Zilphukhog. The first to be dealt with here is the form of marriage that Yudrug-tsang advocated and the probable reasons why it did so.

MARRIAGE IN THE HOUSE OF YUDRUG-TSANG

THE FIFTH GENERATION

The house of Yudrug-tsang putatively spans a history of seven generations (see Chapter Two). However, we only know the matrimonial histories of the three most recent generations. This begins with Trapa, the fifth incumbent. His wife's identity was well known and his marriage ushered Yudrug-tsang into an aristocratic marriage alliance of some magnitude. Since Yudrug-tsang had no social peer in Zilphukhog, it had to look elsewhere for appropriate brides. But being a member of the upper social echelon did not guarantee it the hand of a bride from an influential noble family. Parents of brides in this bracket were looking for prospective sons-in-law from equal if not superior houses. A house had to be wealthy, powerful, prestigious, and of high rank to obtain a bride from an equally prestigious house. Despite the fact that Trapa had not been a full-fledged aristocrat, he nevertheless won the hand of a daughter of Chudo-tsang from Denkhog (see figure 20). Denkhog was one of the main districts of Dege, being located to the northwest of Zilphukhog, and Chudo-tsang was one of the estate owners there. Chudo-tsang ranked among the 30 Dukor level aristocratic houses in Dege, which was one tier higher than Yudrug-tsang's Poncha status in terms of the official ranking system. Trapa thus married above his rank, which in itself was a prestigious achievement, and he gained three sons and four daughters from the union.

How might we interpret Chudo-tsang opting for a marriage with lower ranked Trapa? It is reasonable to assume that Chudo-tsang had several daughters, all of whom were to be married out. If it had not been easy to marry them out equally well, then Trapa got his bride. But the plausibility of this becomes secondary when one considers the credentials of Trapa and his father Chodak Gyatso, who appears to have acquired the title of Poncha for Yudrug-tsang. Trapa had already become the magistrate or governor of the district of Marong-nang. Moreover, Yudrug-tsang possessed all the distinctive features of a

mediocre aristocratic house, since it had a sizeable agricultural estate in Marong-nang and owned all the pastures and dependents of Zilphukhog. What Yudrug-tsang lacked was the abstract title of Dukor. But the paradox is that Yudrug-tsang is reputed to have been ready to refuse the title even if it was given to it. The rationale behind this attitude was that the acceptance of the title would entail extra service to the state of Dege, while remaining a Poncha estate would be more advantageous. The marriage alliance between the house of Chudo-tsang and Yudrug-tsang cast a wide net over the political and social landscape, primarily to the latter's advantage, such that Yudrug-tsang achieved *de facto* Dukor status. Chudo-tsang was already in the centre of a marital network of magnitude, and Trapa was able to penetrate this network and its political implications. In parallel with royal houses and aristocrats elsewhere, the nobility in Dege married virtually endogamously in order to perpetuate their continuity and ensure political alliances. Such an exclusive marriage system inevitably resulted in marriages between close relatives.

Although my data do not enable me either to confirm or repudiate whether Trapa was the eldest son of his generation, a principle of primogeniture seems to have gained expression among the patrilocal households. If this mode of succession had been operative it derived from none other than its utility and the demographic condition of the household. Normally, a father was succeeded by his son or sons, but this did not happen automatically and planning had to be done for the smooth succession of household heads. For instance, parents who married late could not expect to have many sons, due to which they designated their only son or first son as their heir.

THE SIXTH GENERATION

Like his father Trapa, Phurba Trelen the sixth incumbent married hypergamously, which was indicative of his social standing (see figure 20). His bride came from the house of Dingo-tsang, a noble family in Denkhog. Dingo-tsang was a leading family within the Dege kingdom and some of its sons achieved the status of cabinet minister. However, the marriage came to an abrupt end as a result of tragic events. Phurba Trelen had been serving the Dege state as the leader of the trade department until he was wounded in an ambush while on his way to Dartsendo to trade. He died after some months. His wife and

child also died after about a year due to birth complications. Following this, Yudrug-tsang was left without an heir-apparent. Trapa's two monk-sons had already become avowed celibate lamas who would not renounce their monkhood, but Yudrug-tsang still had the alternative of marrying in a *magpa* son-in-law for one of its four daughters. At the time, only one of Trapa's daughters, Jamyang Chodon, was still unmarried, and she was the last means of perpetuating the house of Yudrug-tsang through a *magpa* marriage.

Before dealing with the dramatic marital history of Jamyang Chodon, I shall outline how her sisters married. Of the seven siblings four were girls, all of whom were supposed to leave their natal home. The four daughters made it necessary for Yudrug-tsang to look for four prospective husbands extra-communally. Marrying one's daughters entailed a dilemma, as all parents hoped to marry their daughters hypergamously while all prospective husbands and their parents looked for brides from houses of higher rank and prestige. However, Yudrug-tsang managed to solve the marital problem rather efficiently (see figure 20). One daughter, Sonam Dolma, was given to Dusar-tsang in Denkhog. Dusar-tsang, as the name suggests, cannot have been a very old household, although it was a well-to-do family without any high social rank. Another daughter, Pema Tso, was given to an ordinary although well-to-do family called Ponchen-tsang, whose house was situated at a place between Denkhog and Marong-nang. Ponchen-tsang was an influential and favourite dependent of the important Pepung Monastery in Dege, which belonged to the Kargyüpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. The third daughter, Tsokey, who was later known as Ani or "Nun" Tsokey was given to a respected house in Lingtsang, a small neighbouring state to the north of Dege. Tsokey was married off to two brothers of the house of Oi-tsang in neighbouring Lingtsang, but this fraternal polyandrous union dissolved as her husbands indulged in extramarital sexual liaisons at the expense of their polyandrous wife. Tsokey was unable to tolerate this and she returned to her natal home. Since it was Tsokey's husbands who neglected her, Trapa, her father was adamant about obtaining his daughter's share from her husbands.

My informants say that there was a general consensus that a neglected spouse—almost invariably the wife—should receive her rightful share from her husband upon dissolution of their union. However, whether she received this or not depended on the position of her natal home and its support. Being renowned for his proclivity to

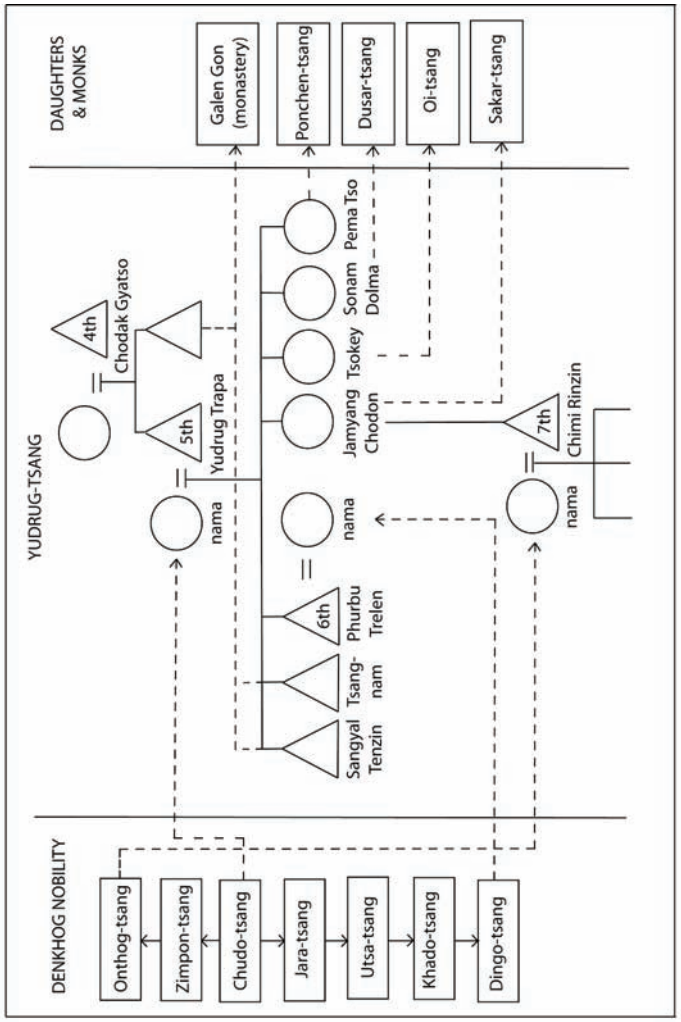

Figure 20. Marriage in the house of Yudrug-tsang.

fight and win, Trapa sued Lhaga, Tsokey's legal husband, but the Lingtsang adjudicator could not settle the problem because he might have appeared biased as he was a Lingtsang dependent. The lawsuit dragged on for several years, primarily for want of a decisive and impartial adjudicator, although Trapa was adamantly determined to see that justice was done to his daughter. Finally, the case was settled to Trapa's satisfaction, by a third party who apparently was a disinterested mediator.

A Chinese general from Xining was asked to arbitrate between Trapa and Lhaga. As my informants tell the story, when Trapa and his antagonist were summoned in front of the arbitrator, Trapa looked in the eye of the Chinese general until the latter looked down, which Trapa interpreted as the symbol or indication of his triumph. Trapa apparently obtained half the family property of Oi-tsang, but he converted it into such things as Chinese silver coins, rifles, and metal kitchen vessels. Tsokey became a nun and she retreated to one of the local hermitages. She was well received and backed by her natal home, but she did not have any active role to play in it and detached herself from the domestic sphere for a religious life.

Her younger sister Jamyang Chodon was about 28 when she got married. It is not illogical to reason that Jamyang Chodon might have been extremely ambitious and considered herself as the heir apparent. Firstly, her brother and the successor of her father had already died, as we have mentioned above. Secondly, her other two brothers had become avowed celibate clerics who would not renounce their monkhood. And finally Trapa, her father, had become so old that he would not live for many more years. In other words, she had an excellent opportunity, and the actualization of this opportunity would have been an unprecedented event in the history of Yudrug-tsang. Jamyang Chodon was apparently determined to make her secret lover her legal husband or *magpa*. This would have entailed a matrilocal marriage in which case the wife usually loomed important. But her lover was the son of Topo Khamyu, a man who was Trapa's arch-rival and enemy. Topo Khamyu had been an ordinary taxpayer in the neighbouring district of Korlodo. However, he became the coordinator and supervisor of his fellow taxpayers in Korlodo at the time when Zhao Ehrfeng, a Chinese general, invaded Dege in 1908. Khamyu seems to have supported the Chinese policy of rearranging the division of Dege's districts, due to which he probably gained power and influence almost immediately. He wanted to incorporate the

district of Marong-nang, which was administered by Yudrug-tsang, into his district of Korlodo. Trapa nearly lost the tenure of his position to Khamyu (see Chapter Ten). Before long, Jamyang Chodon had become pregnant to her lover, Topo Khamyu's son Konchok Trelen. She gave birth to a son, Chimi Rinzin, who became the 7th incumbent of Yudrug-tsang.

Trapa's predicament now was that although he badly needed a capable man to perpetuate the house of Yudrug-tsang, he could not entertain the idea of adopting a son-in-law whose father he hated intensely. Probably to punish his recalcitrant daughter, and partly perhaps because of her now reduced prospect of obtaining a suitable *magpa*, Trapa was both resolute and successful in finding other husbands for Jamyang Chodon. A year after the birth of her only child, Jamyang Chodon was sent off to her new husbands from the house of Sakar-tsang, and entered into a polyandrous marriage with them. Sakar-tsang was a noble house of modest power and prestige, but the marriage was nevertheless a hypergamous one for Yudrug-tsang since Sakar-tsang had a higher social rank. The dramatic fallout of this polyandrous union will be dealt with in Chapter Ten. Trapa's success in being able to send Jamyang Chodon to a noble house might have been due to the fact that her new Sakar-tsang husbands were almost twice the age of his daughter, owing to which no children resulted from this marriage. However, some attempts to conceal the birth of her premarital son were made by staging the birth of the son in a dependent's tent, and then pretending that the child was born to the mother of the dependent household. The child was kept in that tent for about six months. It is uncertain whether this concealment was successful or not. Among other things, this marriage illustrates the exertion of paternal authority upon daughters, in terms of marital decisions.

THE SEVENTH GENERATION

As already indicated, inter-estate marriages were preferred and they were coterminous with political alliances. To emulate his predecessors Trapa and Phurba Trelen, Chimi Rinzin, the seventh and last representative of Yudrug-tsang, secured the hand of another noble family's daughter. At the time, he and most of his dependents were in Golok in self-imposed exile, which might have weakened his marital prospects.

However, the fact that Yudrug-tsang had won the protection of Jago-tsang, a very powerful house in Dege, might have strengthened his possibilities of marrying well at the same time (see Chapter Ten). Chimi Rinzin also obtained his bride from the nobility in Denkhog. The procedure and ceremonies for marriages varied in degree rather than in form. The marriage ceremonies of the wealthy were more pompous and elaborate than those of a less well-to-do, but they were in principle the same. What follows is an outline of Chimi Rinzin's marriage.

Owing to conflicts and armed clashes between Sakar-tsang and Yudrug-tsang to be discussed in Chapter Ten, the latter sought refuge in the independent pastoral region of Golok to the north. Due to other political reasons, Chimi Rinzin's uncle Pentra and his son Tendo had already gone for refuge in Golok. Since Pentra acted as go-between, it was in Golok that all the arrangements for Chimi Rinzin's marriage took place. Yudrug-tsang and its relatives and friends were of the opinion that a daughter of Onthog-tsang would be an appropriate wife for Chimi Rinzin, but Onthog-tsang had to be asked first whether it was willing to give its daughter to Yudrug-tsang. Therefore, Pentra, his son Tendo, and a servant traveled from Golok to Denkhog during the seventh Tibetan month of 1952. The three horse-borne and armed men had a mule with them. Upon their arrival in Denkhog, Pentra asked Onthog-tsang whether it was willing to give the chosen daughter to his nephew. The mule and a certain sum of money were presented to Onthog-tsang as *lhongten* (*slong rten*) or the "request foundation". Onthog-tsang conceded to give their daughter, but only upon the condition that the horoscopes of both the bride and the groom complemented each other. The family astrologer was consulted and the horoscopes of the two proved auspicious, and he decided a date for the marriage. Altogether, the "request" journey to Denkhog and back took about one month.

In the first Tibetan month (February) of 1953, the aforementioned three men plus another man left Golok for Denkhog once again to collect the bride. They were richly attired for this journey. Pentra wore a lamb-skin gown (*tsaru*) with brocade outer lining and otter-skin trim along the edges of the garments. He also wore huge Bhutanese silk trousers, a fox-fur hat and multi-coloured shoes. On his back he carried a rifle, from his shoulder hung a large charm-box, and through his girdle there passed a long sword in an ornamented sheath. The charm-box, which are usually made of silver, contained different

kinds of sacred relics, holy knots tied in silk strips and blessed by lamas, and miniature statues of deities to protect the bearer from being harmed by supernatural beings. Tibetans have unwavering belief in the efficacy of such sacred objects and many Khampa warriors claim to have been saved from being wounded or killed by their *tshon-sung* (*mtshon srung*) or "weapon protector" when they fought with Chinese troops. The charm-box also functioned as an ornament and the quality or expensiveness of it was also a marker of the economic status of its bearer. The handle and sheath of the sword were covered with silver on which patterns of flowers and other symbols were engraved. The scabbard was studded with corals or turquoises at regular intervals. The horse was magnificently geared and caparisoned. The bride and her entourage arrived in Golok in the second Tibetan month. In the attending group were the bride's father and his brother, the bride's female assistant, and a servant in addition to the four men from Yudrug-tsang.

The arrival of the bride was so synchronized that she reached the tent of her future husband at about 10 a.m. Brides were customarily received by their grooms before noon, since afternoon was inauspicious for nuptial events, as it was the latter part of the day that might resemble the latter part of a human life. Dismounting from the horse had special ceremonial significance. The bride dismounted on a tea-box (a square box that would weigh about 50 kg) upon which lay a white felt saddle blanket. Appropriate attendants assisted the bride as she dismounted. It is my belief that the white felt blanket might have symbolized the purity or goodness of the house she was becoming a member of. It might also have indicated the abundance of sheep and wool. The tea-box (imported from China) clearly suggested the bridegroom's economic status. Tea was generally hard to obtain and possessing it in such quantity implied that its owner engaged in long distance trade, which in turn meant possessing the necessary wealth and manpower for such ventures.

No sooner had the bride dismounted, than a man who had been specially selected on the basis of his horoscope being compatible with the bride's then took off the bride's hat. It had to be taken off in a specific manner. The back and front of the bride's head symbolized her natal and her future homes respectively, thus if her hat was taken off either towards the back or the front she was believed to be biased to one home at the expense of the other. To indicate her impartiality the bride's hat was logically taken off sidewise. The rationale behind

this ritual ceremony was that the *yang* (*g.yang*) or "wealth-essence" or "luck" of the bride's natal home should not be taken with her to her new home and the hat ritual was to ensure that she did not take all the *yang* from her old home with her. The bride's natal home asked a monk to perform a special ceremony designed to hinder the bride from taking the household *yang* with her. All well-to-do houses had a wooden box known as the *yangam* (*g.yang sgam*) or "*yang* box", in which precious metals, strips of silk, vases, and so on, were stored. Such houses usually performed an annual religious ceremony called *yang-kyab* (*g.yang skyabs*) or "*yang* protection" to ensure that their wealth-essence remained intact. A house that had embarked on a downward spiral performed a religious ceremony known as *yang-kug* (*g.yang 'gugs*) or "recalling *yang*", which entailed a symbolic recalling of the *yang* into the *yangam*, which was shut when the ceremony was completed. Thus *yang* was of immense ritual importance to the people in Zilphukhog.

Before entering the nuptial tent, the bride was offered curd known as *nasho* (*sna zho*) or "nose-curd", and a small fire was made called *namey* (*sna me*) or "nose-fire" by two suitable persons. Firstly, tea was drunk in a cotton tent, after which only the bride and the groom entered a yak-hair tent in which sat a monk or a lama officiant. In this tent were two seats upon which the young couple sat. On the bridegroom's seat there was a swastika symbol drawn with barley grains and on that of the bride a barley conch. The former symbol suggested good fortune and endurance, although the symbolic meaning of the conch in this context is unclear. The bride was then purified from potential evil influences or elements by the lama who chanted prayers and sprinkled holy water on her. It was usually believed that brides were the repositories of evil elements. Brides themselves were believed innocent of any malevolent designs, but the symbolic need to disassociate them from any vindictive elements suggests that a certain amount of latent antagonism between the house deities of their natal and affianced homes existed. After all, the natal home of the bride was losing a daughter for good, which entailed the loss of her labour and the share she was given, in addition to the sentiments involved in losing a daughter.

Now the *phug-lha* (*phug lha*) or "inner deity" of her affianced home was invoked by the bride, through the lama, to accept her as a bona fide member of the house and to protect her henceforth. This final ritual marked the end of the marriage ceremony, but the consum-

mation of the marriage was apparently not completed until several days later. Consequently, the bride and the groom at once left the tent for their respective parties of friends and family.

The first marriage day was called *tön-chung* (*ston chung*) or "small feast", which was hosted by the bridegroom's family. On this day the eight people who accompanied the bride from Denkhog to Golok were the guests of honour. Each of the eight guests were indiscriminately offered 1/20 portion of a yak and the same portion of a sheep, together with several kilograms of cheese and cheese cakes known as *thög* (*thud*) which were made from a mixture of cheese, *tsampa*, butter and sugar. These food items were to be taken home because the special guests were also then given food to eat in addition. The food for immediate consumption consisted of cooked meat, *droma* (wild sweet potato tubers) eaten with cheese or *tsampa* (roasted barley flour), and cheese cakes and butter tea. The second day was called *tön-dring* (*ston 'bring*) or "middle feast" and the same guests received the same items of presents and food, although on this day each guest was given 1/12 portion of a yak and 1/12 of a sheep and the amount of cheese and cheese cakes increased accordingly. The third and last feast day was called *tön-chen* (*ston chen*) or "grand feast", and it marked the climax of the marriage feasting. On this day, each guest received 1/8 portion[4] of a yak and almost a whole sheep. For instance, the father of the bride received a full hind leg of a yak, the whole carcass of a sheep, 25 portions of cheese cake and a large bag of dried cheese. He was also given a horse, a fox-skin, the skin of a hind (*yu*),[5] bricks of tea, a live yak, silver coins, and other items. Altogether, an array of nine different gift items were given to him, and the other guests received presents according to their rank. On the same day friends and dependents presented their gifts to the newly wedded couple and the presents ranged from a yak to several kilograms of butter. In other words, each household gave presents to the new couple according to its means. This phenomenon was known as *thabso* (*thab gsos*), literally "hearth nourishment", but with the meaning of "nuptial gifts", which evidently meant that the presents were to start the new hearth, that is, to help the couple to establish a new household. The guests

[4] A yak was customary divided into eight more or less equal divisions during butchering in Zilphukhog.

[5] Editor's note: Rinzin only identified *yu* as "a native animal", although it certainly refers to the female deer or hind, *yu mo*.

from the bridal party returned to Denkhog several days after the marriage feast was over.

It was the responsibility of the natal home to provide each daughter with a necklace that was made of corals, *zi* (*gzi*) beads, and other ornaments made of turquoise and amber. A necklace was the right of a bride, unless her parents were very poor. If a mother had several necklaces or a particularly long one she might give one of her necklaces, or half of a long one, to her daughter, but ultimately it was the inalienable property of the wife or mother. Upon a married woman's death, her necklace should be offered to different monasteries or high lamas in return for their prayers for her. Sometimes a necklace was a family heirloom that had been transmitted from mother to daughter, and from daughter to granddaughter, and so on. When she arrived in Golok, Chimi Rinzin's bride brought with her the ornaments and portable presents that had been given to her by her family and friends in Denkhog. A list of the presents was kept by her natal home for future reciprocity.

One year after the marriage the couple paid a visit to the wife's natal home, where they stayed for several months. This visit enabled the wife's parents to check whether their daughter was being treated well or not. The husband almost invariably accompanied his wife on the visit, as sending his wife alone was interpreted as a failure of the marriage or of showing disrespect to his in-laws. Consequently, Chimi Rinzin went to Denkhog together with his wife. When the young couple's sojourn came to an end the wife was given her dowry, which included various gifts, except immovable properties. Normatively she should receive her estimated share of the movable family property. If there were eight members in the family she would or should receive one eighth of the movable family property, but what and how much she actually got depended on the wealth and generosity of her parents or guardians. Chimi Rinzin's wife was given many yak-loads of gifts. This withholding of dowry by the bride's parents until a year had passed is interesting. My informants said that this mechanism was designed to ensure that the dowry was not given to an out marrying daughter until her parents were certain that their daughter's marriage proved to be a success. In other words, if the dowry was given when their daughter married it could not be recovered if the marriage failed. When marriages did not work out, and when the fault lay in the wife, recovering the dowry was almost unheard of. Even if a wife was neglected by her husband(s), as was the case with Tsokey, her natal

home had to be strong and willing to back her. However, the necklace and other ornaments which the bride took with her were inalienable properties of her own that she could keep with her wherever she lived. That is to say, the bridal necklace was given to the bride and not the groom, owing to which her parents did not lose it to anyone other than to their daughter.

MARRIAGE OF DEPENDENTS

While Yudrug-tsang married monogamously and patrilocally, the vast majority of dependent marriages were monogamous and neolocal. The Tibetan neolocal monogamous marriage was called *metangwa* or "to start a fire". This notion, as the concept suggests, meant establishing an independent household from scratch. This form of marriage was antithetical to the *nama* or polyandrous marriage as the latter entailed taking the bride into the paternal home in order to perpetuate the house, in terms of wealth, name, and above all, posterity.

Unlike the "dü-ch'ung" (i.e. *dud chung*) of southwestern Tibet, whom Barbara Aziz described as "people of low rank who work as sharecroppers",[6] and the "Tadu" of Kham about whom Chen Han-seng stated "The employee is called Tadu, meaning side dwellers, that is, not full-fledged members of the community",[7] Zilphukhog dependents who started new households were not looked upon as inferiors, nor was their initial economic status permanent. Those households which started as new "fires" did not belong to any particular social class, though economic and demographic factors determined what form of marriage they practiced. Although economically shaky in their initial stages, neolocal marriages (households) gradually became independent social units of equal value. The initial unstable phase was usually overcome, owing to the availability of different forms of assistance from Yudrug-tsang and others.

Approximately 70% of my informants, and perhaps the same percent-age of all the dependents in Zilphukhog, "started a fire" or independent household. A man and a woman started a new household by pitching up a tent in the neighbourhood of the nomadic encampment. It was started out of love or through persuasion by interested

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[6] Aziz 1978:67.
[7] Chen Han-seng 1940:90.

parties, such as Yudrug-tsang or the couple's parents. My informants Shigo, Sokey, Tsethon, and Nagtruk all "started a fire", although Pulu and Tsethon got married after they had left Zilphukhog. I shall use the marriage histories of two of my informants to show what is meant by "starting a fire" and incorporating non-dependents.

SHIGO AND DARGYE'S MARRIAGE

A case in point is Shigo. An infectious disease rendered Shigo and her brothers orphans during their childhood. Yudrug-tsang gave her to a Lingtsang family called Chure-tsang, which probably lacked labour power. When Shigo reached the age of 13 or 14, Jamyang Chodon, Sakar-tsang's *nama* wife from Yudrug-tsang, took her from her adoptive parents and gave her to an older servant of her marital home. She refused to live with the man, and so escaped to Zilphukhog where she worked for both Gechung-tsang and Drutsa-tsang. While working for Gechung-tsang as a herder, she was made pregnant by a son of the house, which resulted in the birth of a daughter. However, when this son of Gechung-tsang was about to receive his new *nama,* Shigo and her fellow male servant Dargye, were persuaded by Gechung-tsang to go and establish a new household. Altogether they had three *dri*, five yak, three goats, and a mare.

Chimi Rinzin of Yudrug-tsang was asked to kindle the first household fire for Shigo and Dargye, since a man of good social standing would bring luck to the new household. *Thabso* or "nuptial gifts" were given to the wedded couple according to the means and relatedness to the couple of the various givers. Their marriage ceremony was minimal: some incense was burnt and good food was eaten by everybody present at the wedding. Dargye was a son of the family known as Pentse-tsang, which had been established when the co-servants of Drutsa-tsang got married neolocally.

SOKEY AND DOSO'S MARRIAGE

The marital history of Sokey is equally relevant here. She was born premaritally following her mother's sexual relations with one Ugen Rinzin. However, Ugen Rinzin died prematurely. Sokey was adopted by her mother's parents-in-law who gave her a number of animals. At

the age of five or six she started to work for her adoptive parents by tending animals. When she was in her early twenties, she met her husband, Doso. He had been a Khado-tsang dependent and the *magpa* of another dependent household which had two daughters. Because of his estrangement with his sororal wives, who had found lovers during his absences on the long trade expeditions which his master had dispatched him on, Doso drifted to Zilphukhog where his brother Konchok Tashi lived. Before long, Doso and Sokey "started a fire" in Zilphukhog. Doso had about 30-40 head of animals and Sokey had eight or nine, which she had received as a remuneration for her herding job.

Because Doso had been married to dependents of Khado-tsang in neighbouring Karsumdo, and since he himself was a Khado-tsang dependent, his lord wanted him to return to Karsumdo. But neither the couple themselves nor Yudrug-tsang wanted to accede to the demand, even though Khado-tsang was adamant with its claim. A sort of stalemate ensued between the two estates, but a domestic tragedy solved the predicament. A Yudrug-tsang dependent household contracted leprosy, due to which all the female members perished and the only survival was the husband/father, Droteng, who originally had come from Karsumdo. Droteng was literally exchanged with Doso so that neither of the two estates lost any dependent, numerically speaking. Sokey and Doso's first household fire was kindled by Yudrug-tsang, which was indicative of its approval and recognition of the marriage. This particular marriage reflects not only how "fires" were started, but also how Yudrug-tsang retained the number of its dependent population. "Starting a fire" in this case involved minimal ceremony, but the *thabso* or nuptial gifts were invariably given to the wedded couple. The following items were the nuptial gifts that Sokey and her husband received from their relatives and friends:

Konchok Tashi-tsang (Doso's brother):	1 *zomo*
Gechung-tsang (Sokey's relative):	1 yak
Jogpa (Sokey's relative):	1 yak
Pulu (friend):	1 kid
Nagtruk (friend):	1 woolen blanket
Solha (friend):	1 nanny goat + 1 kid
Yudrug-tsang:	some silver coins

Sokey's mother: 1/2 a mare, 1 *dri*, 1 bag of cheese, 1 woolen blanket

The above items of nuptial gift indicate what a wedded dependent couple usually received in Zilphukhog, although in individual cases one could get much more or less than the above gift-items. Sokey's dowry, provided by her adoptive parents, consisted of 10 corals, one piece of amber, and a pair of silver earrings. The amber she bartered for a *zo*. She also received 3 sheep-skin gowns, one woolen gown, a pair of shoes, and a tent.

NEOLOCALITY

The vast majority of dependents in Zilphukhog practiced monogamy and neolocality, many concrete cases can be enumerated.[8] Only monogamy was compatible with neolocality, as other forms of marriage meant either patrilocality or matrilocality. Neolocal monogamy probably came about because of four primary factors, economic, demographic, political, and immigration, which will now be discussed in turn.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

As alluded to earlier, the mere availability of brothers did not lead to the practice of polyandry in poor households, and instead a fission of the household often occurred. A poor dependent couple, Bokey and her husband Sampa Dondup, had two sons and two daughters, of whom one was Tsodon, Namgyal's mother. One of the sons, Lagyag Tsering, married Biyima neolocally. The other son and daughter sought their fortunes elsewhere. The same fate was experienced by Shigo and her siblings. Another outstanding example of this fission of households is the case of Chugema-tsang, which was a nominal dependent of Yudrug-tsang. Chugema and his wife Nangtsoma had

[8] The founders of Gechung-tsang and Druchung-tsang married neolocally. Lothenma, the father of the Buchung brothers, and Pentse established new households after having worked for Yudrug-tsang and Gechung-stang respectively. Tsethon of Gechung-tsang married neolocally with a woman from a place called Lerong-nang. Acha from Golok, and Chotso from an unknown location, as well as Khamyu, Konchok Wangyal, Jigmey from the house of Jose-tsang, and Dontra from Chidrog-nang all established neolocal households. I assume that the vast majority of the unidentified dependent marriages in Zilphukhog were neolocal and monogamous.

five sons, of whom two died in their infancy. The point of interest is that all three surviving brothers married separately. Konchok Tashi, who went on to become one of the wealthiest men in Zilphukhog, started a new household with a woman named Chotsoma. His second brother, Jagpa, went to Karsumdo as a *magpa* of a well-to-do family, and the third brother Doso got remarried to Sokey in Zilphukhog as described above. The extra-communal marriages of the two brothers could be explained by the fact that they were *de jure* dependents of the lord in Karsumdo. My point is that because of the non-viability of their household economies, each member of these sibling groups sought his/her fortune individually.

Another illustrative case of the incompatibility of polyandry in a household that was strained by a meagre household economy is that of Pasang-tsang. Pasang's wife Tashi Chotso gave birth to three sons and four daughters, but receiving a *nama* for their sons was unthinkable. The economic basis of the household was insufficient for a *nama* and her offspring, as it had only two yak, three *dri*, and about 30 sheep and goats, owing to which it had to receive *she*. Typically, the eldest son of Pasang-tsang left for lower Zilphukhog when he met a woman there. In sum, all of these households lacked the necessary economic foundation upon which a plural marriage could be practiced, although many of them did have a formidable potential labour force due to which they could later become highly viable. What seems most important here are the critical domestic phases when a sibling-group either had to remain unmarried or disperse.

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

There was also a demographic aspect that had a debilitating impact on the frequency of polyandrous marriages. Firstly, Yudrug-tsang and a couple of dependent households had two or more sons at a time. Secondly, every established (i.e. viable) household was obliged to furnish one monk to the local monastery, Galen Gon, if it had at least two sons. This monk-tax reduced the frequency of polyandrous marriages, since the initial requirement of establishing a polyandrous union was the survival of three brothers, in addition to economic viability. As an aspect of this monk-tax, it seems that an ad hoc principle of primogeniture prevailed. That is to say, given that an only or first-born son became the heir, the second son's fate was to become

a monk. In effect, the compulsory monk-tax rendered the scarce male population even scarcer.

The strategic effects of neolocal households was of immense importance to Yudrug-tsang. The fact that dependent households multiplied due to non-viability proved to be a convenient mechanism for Yudrug-tsang to augment its overall dependent households. This convenient coincidence suited both parties. Dependents from non-viable households and also immigrants were determined to rid themselves of their non-established status and become established households. The only way they could do so was to receive assistance from Yudrug-tsang and its relatives or friends, and in the form of *she*, lending milch *dri*, and in other ways. Their mutual goal was to render every household viable and self-sufficient, which enhanced the strength and prestige of the community. The status of Yudrug-tsang as a Poncha estate hinged on the availability of loyal and self-sufficient dependents, and the defense and strategic value of dependents have already been discussed.

POLITICAL FACTORS

There was a political aspect to the prevalence of neolocal marriages, which would not have been preponderant had Tibet, in general, not faced a scarcity of manpower. In conformity with its peers, Yudrug-tsang was determined to augment its power and prestige. But to do so it had to advocate and legitimize neolocal marriages, which was coterminous with establishing new households. In addition to being under the sway of a general labour shortage, Yudrug-tsang originally had a couple of dependent households that would not or could not multiply, given that they were inclined to perpetuate their own houses—this was Sherab-tsang and its descendants. I hold that in order to counteract such conditions, Yudrug-tsang and its peers elsewhere throughout the region usually adopted a policy of being a "melting pot" where people of different backgrounds and from different places in Kham could start a new life. This is certainly reflected in the origins of many of the dependents. The reason why Yudrug-tsang attracted such people is of great magnitude, and is dealt with in Chapter Ten.

IMMIGRATION

There was also an immigration factor that partly determined the frequency of polyandry. As mentioned earlier, a number of dependent households were established as a result of monogamous unions between immigrants and natives, and these marriages were necessarily neolocal. As has been alluded to, monogamy and neolocality were symptomatic characteristics of those who started a new "fire" or household. Immigrants or refugees rarely arrived in the form of complete households with herds of animals, and most of them came to Zilphukhog as lone individuals for one reason or another. The vast majority of them worked for Yudrug-tsang or other leading dependent houses to begin with. By working hard they could establish modest, but nevertheless independent households of their own within their own life times, and some of them had become prominent households within two generations.

A case in point is the history of Lhothenma, who arrived in Zilphukhog as a humble immigrant from west of the Yangtze River. He initially worked as a servant of Yudrug-tsang and later he was able to establish a household together with a maid of Yudrug-tsang. He became a prominent manservant-cum-friend of Trapa. What is more, his sons Buchung and Pese not only possessed the best herd of yak in the community, but they also had become affluent enough to receive a common *nama* from Marong-nang. Similarly the household of Pentse-tsang came into being as a result of the union of two servants of Druchung-tsang who were immigrants of some sort. Dontra from Chidrog, Jigme from Jose-tsang, Karma Key from Lerong-nang, Chotsoma from lower Kham, and others were some of the initially humble immigrants that established new households in Zilphukhog, either together with each other or with the established inhabitants. To practice any form of plural marriage meant the continuation and preservation of an already existent household, thus refugees and the less well-to-do did not have much to perpetuate and continue. Nor were they under the constant social pressure of relatives and friends to enter into a plural marriage as was the case with Namgyal discussed above. I suspect some plural marriages—both polyandrous or polygynous—were the results of constant persuasion and social pressure to which one gradually submitted. At this juncture, it should have been substantiated why monogamy was compatible with the conditions of most dependents or the less well-to-do.

POLYGYNY

Of the half dozen or so forms of plural marriage practiced in Tibet, only two variants seem to have appeared in Zilphukhog. Apart from the two polyandrous marriages to be discussed below, only one polygynous union occurred in Zilphukhog. This was the case when Namgyal and her mother Tsodon shared a common husband. Tsodon had first migrated from Zilphukhog to Rakhog in order to work for a man named Boi-ateng. She had three children out of wedlock, a daughter Namgyal and two brothers, all fathered by her employer Boi-ateng. While in Rakhog, Tsodon began a relationship with an immigrant from Chidrog named Gompo, after which the new couple and Tsodon's three children all returned to her original place of Zilphukhog and formed a new household there. Her two sons eventually became monks at the Galen Gon monastery of Yudrug-tsang in lower Zilphukhog. When her daughter Namgyal was in her twenties, she had secret plans to marry a taxpayer from Marong-nang. They remained secret lovers for several years, until one day Namgyal was informed that everybody wished her to enter into a polygynous union with Gompo and her mother as a co-wife. She was outraged by the idea of being her mother's co-wife, and the wife of a man who was twice her age. She planned to elope with her lover to a distant place, but her hopes whittled away under the pressure of, and dissuasion from all quarters of the community. The consequence was a bi-generational polygynous marriage within which the younger wife Namgyal bore a new generation of children.

The case of Tsodon and Namgyal as co-wives is a classic example of overriding concern for the continuity of the house at the expense of the feelings and sentiments of the individuals involved. The idea of mother and daughter as co-wives was not frowned upon, according to my informants, but polygynous marriages were generally viewed as potentially disruptive rather than constructive. There is a Tibetan adage which states, "Co-wives are the cause of lawsuits, and brothers are the hammer to beat the enemies".[9] This proverb is indicative of a preference for polyandry and a bias against polygyny. Co-wives were often attributed with the intrinsic capacity of being internecine. In

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[9] *Chung ma gnyis bsgrigs gyod kyi gshi ma // bu spun gnyis bsgrigs dgra rdung ba'i tho ba.*

fact, one possible factor in the decline of the house of Dege was supposed to have been internecine co-wife rivalry (see Chapter Ten).

The general infrequency of polygynous marriages in Zilphukhog was apparently determined by several causal factors. Firstly, the availability of sons cancelled the necessity of adopting an external *magpa* or "groom" in order to continue the house. Several peers or superordinates of Yudrug-tsang had to adopt *magpa*s since they lacked sons for whom they would receive *nama*s instead. However, dependent households could not and would not entertain the notion of receiving sororal brides for their son or sons, as many of them simply could not afford to receive one *nama*, let alone co-wives who would create economic strain and were considered to generate disharmony as well. Purely from an economic standpoint, the practice of polygynous marriages would have been disastrous for 90% of the dependents in Zilphukhog. This also goes against the putative logic or rationale of the necessity of polyandry, which will be discussed below. Most dependent households were brittle and multiplicative in the sense that they first dissolved and then established new households by way of their dispersed offspring. Furthermore, there was a dearth of *magpa*s. Most dependent households did not have more than two or three sons, of whom one had to become a monk in the local monastery. The availability of *magpa*s from outside was limited, since all male dependents were restricted from moving to other communities by their lord. The most feasible *magpa* of all was the male immigrant, but his eligibility was minimal owing to his refugee or immigrant status, meaning he normally had to start from scratch economically and, as a stranger with an unknown background, would hardly be ushered into the home of a dependent family. Thus, both economic and demographic factors constrained the occurrence of polygyny.

POLYANDRY

There is a general consensus that polyandry was practiced in Tibet, but writers on Tibet have been at variance with one another as to the reasons. Chen Han-seng, a Chinese writer who especially discussed parts of Kham nearby to Zilphukhog, claimed that polyandry was a mechanism to avoid corvée or *wolag* (*'u lag*) by the taxpayer. He wrote that a taxpayer was loath to divide his household into two parts as it would result in two taxable households:

> The basic factor that has brought about polyandry in Sikang and Tibet (combined as Kam) is not land division but the system of corvée. As it has been established under customary law, whereby one household, in return for one portion of ch'ai ti, or granted land, is obliged to give a definite amount of unpaid labor, or corvée, to the chieftain, a division of the household would mean multiplying the amount of corvée.[10]

Chen's line of thinking may appear plausible at first sight, but I am hesitant to endorse it. Notwithstanding that corvée was severe at times in some places in Dege, its causal responsibility for polyandry is debatable. To say that polyandry was a defensive measure against corvée would have been unintelligible in Zilphukhog. There was no precedent that two brothers divided a household equally, and that each had to do the same amount of corvée. Normally, if two or more brothers failed to reside as co-husbands—which was rare—one left the house taking whatever he got with him. This practice conformed to the mono-marital principle: each household recognized only one marriage per generation, in terms of inheritance. The out-marrying son no longer belonged to his natal home, and thus the extent of his corvée service was determined in accordance with his labour capacity. Tibetan patrilocal households resemble stem families in other societies. For instance, Alexander J. Humphreys had this to say about Ireland:

> The Irish farm is normally too small to make further subdivisions economically feasible, and family continuity on the holding demands that the farm pass from the parental to the filial generation intact. In effect, this means that only one son can inherit the homestead, while the other children must leave the family home whether or not they remain in the rural community.[11]

The only dissimilarity is that all the brothers in Tibet could remain in the natal family by practicing polyandry. I am skeptical about whether taxpayers practiced polyandry to avoid corvée. It is suspect to think they divided their immovable properties in half when their sons got married separately. The principle of non-division of immovable properties (fields, house, etc.) prevailed, although a seceding son

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[10] Chen 1949:96. Editor's note: Sikang used in Chinese writings refers to a new province claimed by the Republican government during the 1930s and 1940s which included much of what was known to Tibetans as Kham.

[11] Humphreys 1965:244.

might get some fields. This notion complies with the principle of mono-marital arrangement.[12] The latter principle tempts me to venture that co-wives and co-husbands were, in a way, multiple emanations of the same principal participants, that is, of the official husband and wife. In other words, junior brothers and sisters did not take part in the marriage ceremonies of their elder brothers and sisters officially, and the former's marriage partnerships with the latter were akin to the reinforcement of the same marriage rather than resulting in plural marriages. Moreover, the taxpayer class was divided into at least three categories and each category was subjected to corvée according to its economic status in terms of landed property and animals. A rival interpretation of polyandry in Tibet has been put forward by Prince Peter:

> A difficult and austere economy is perhaps the most proffered as an explanation of polyandry. Circumstances of great need, resulting from an arid and unfertile natural environment, or from social conditions which condemn one section of the population to privations and hardships do seem to exist in correlation with solidly established polyandry. In Ceylon, it is the miserable paddy-growers who are polyandrous because it is said, they cannot afford to divide their property. The same reason is given for the Tibetan polyandry, especially in Lhahul, Lhadak and the province of Tsang in Central Tibet.[13]

Polyandry—most often fraternal—appears to have been primarily an economic arrangement in Tibetan societies.[14] However, my contention is that it was hardly the saviour of poverty stricken dependents from economic disintegration. In my view, it was an economic device contrived to render the already more or less self-contained dependent slightly better off. A group of brothers was an immense potential resource, in terms of their labour power, trading capacity, and so on, but given the absence of a minimum economic basis, contracting a polyandrous union was impractical. Besides, a non-self-sufficient household lacked the necessary inspiration and determination to

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[12] Goldstein 1971:68.

[13] Peter, Prince of Greece and Denmark 1963:566.

[14] Aziz 1978:106. Editor's note: Tibetan polyandry has been subject to much research since Rinzin undertook his studies, and various non-economic factors have now also been raised to attempt to explain it. More recent and widely contrasting points of view on polyandry in Tibetan areas are found in: Beall and Goldstein 1981; Goldstein 1987; Levine 1988; Crook and Crook 1994; Childs 2003; Ben Jiao 2001.

perpetuate the house. In other words, polyandry seems to have been practiced because of one's unwillingness to forego the achieved economic status, rather than because of the strictures of poverty itself. So the association of polyandry only with paucity does not seem to hold well because, in my view, polyandry functioned as a precautionary measure, rather than a remedy for the latter.

Now I shall attempt to show why polyandry was idealized and practiced in Zilphukhog. For one thing, despite its low frequency due to local economic and demographic reasons, polyandry was in fact the ideal form of marriage for my informants. Its virtue was perceived to lay in the retention of the male population to perpetuate the house, to enhance its prestige, accumulate wealth, etc., and the recognition that only men could pursue long-distance trade, and that only they could defend the community and the family when it was under serious external threat. The domination and magnitude of men in Dege can be illustrated by the local saying, "There must be men within and animals without the house." [15] Additionally, there were also religiously defined reasons why men surpassed women. This notion springs from the Buddhist tenet that men are superior in that they are not subject to the impediment of the basic facts of life, including gestation, birth, and child-rearing, that are considered to obstruct women from pursuing the attainment of complete salvation or Nirvana.

Paradoxically, notwithstanding the normative superiority of polyandry in Zilphukhog, the actual occurrence of polyandrous unions was minimal there. Only Buchung-tsang and Konchok Tashi-tsang afforded to receive *nama*s for their sons for fraternal polyandrous unions. In the former case, Lothenma, a migrant into Zilphukhog from Chidrog, married a local woman and both worked as servants for Yudrug-tsang and established a neolocal household. They had two sons, Pese and Buchung, for whom a common *nama* was brought in from Marong-nang for a fraternal polyandrous union to perpetuate the household. Receiving a common *nama* meant the preservation and the augmentation of the already established household. While one co-husband went on trade expeditions, the other looked after the domestic affairs. This necessitated the possession of a minimum yak herd of 6-12 animals, and the necessary capital in butter, tea, meat, etc. Embarking on trade expeditions entailed the availability of a surplus of annual income which could be converted into earthenware goods

[15] *Nang la mi dgos // phyi la zog dgos*.

for bartering with peas and cereals. A non-economic reason affecting the frequency of polyandry was the monk-tax imposed by the local monastery. Furthermore, refugees and immigrants with an initially weak economic and social position were hampered from practicing polyandry.

Another muddled issue in the literature is the question of whether pastoral nomads practiced polyandry or not. For example, William Rockhill wrote:

> Among the nomads, where existence is not dependent on the produce of the soil, where herds of yak and flocks of sheep and goats are ever increasing and supply all their owner's wants, this necessity of preserving the family property undivided can never have existed. Hence we find polyandry unknown among them; monogamy, and perhaps a very few cases of polygamy, is the rule where they are found.[16]

Prince Peter refuted this notion as follows:

> W.W. Rockhill states that, because the Tibetan nomads are not dependent on the providence of the soil, they are not polyandrous, which is incorrect. What the author has overlooked is obviously that the herds of yak and flocks of sheep and goats do not belong to the nomads themselves. They are the properties of the owners who only leave 30% approximately of the yearly produce to the men and women to whom they farm them out. As a consequence, these people are not well off and most of them do appear to practice polyandry as a means to keep their meagre possessions undivided, exactly as the peasants do.[17]

Rockhill gives a picture of abundance and Prince Peter one of scarcity. These two writers appear to have been talking about two different regions in Tibet, but they do not specifically say so. Their problem lies in the generic implication of their assertions, thus overlooking regional variability, and as we know, there is diversity among Tibetan pastoralists. My data do not conform to either of these two rival assertions completely. In line with Prince Peter, we find polyandry practiced among pastoral nomads in Zilphukhog, but only by those who did own their own animals and whose households were established and viable.

In conclusion, the mushrooming of new households in Zilphukhog was the result of the joint force of economic, strategic, demographic

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[16] Rockhill 1891:212.
[17] Peter, Prince of Greece and Denmark 1963:567.

and immigration-driven factors, with the viability of these households ensured by Yudrug-tsang and the community at large. Establishing new households invariably entailed monogamous neolocal marriages that were canalized or affected by the above constraining factors. Polyandry was considered the ideal form of marriage for a variety of pragmatic and cultural reasons, but its frequency was limited due to local demographic and economic factors. Polygyny seems to have been a necessary evil that occurred only occasionally. The self-contained household practiced patrilocality, which was compatible with either monogamy or polyandry. Patrilocal marriages were designed to perpetuate the household while neolocal marriages resulted in the dispersion of the household. Either marriage form was practicable in Zilphukhog, although the latter was numerically dominant.

KINSHIP

The fundamental nature of the Tibetan kinship system appears to remain a contested topic. Rolf Stein (1962) and Prince Peter (1963), among other authors, asserted that the Tibetan kinship system was patrilineal. However, Barbara Aziz (1978) has recently reported that patrilineality was confined only to a powerful, but numerically marginal group, and that most people in her study area of Dingri adopted a bilateral principle. Briefly, I suspect Stein and Prince Peter referred to the ancient kings and the nobility of Tibet. Stein appears to have based his postulate on historical records and annals of ancient kings only. But the peculiarity of most Tibetan annals, historical records and biographies is that they have a tendency to furnish skeletal information on the successions of monarchs and lamas with scanty reference to the nature of society at large. Although Prince Peter interviewed a large number of Tibetans in Kalimpong, India, during 1954, most of his illustrative cases seem to have been based on the kinship system of the nobility. Hence, the powerful but numerically marginal section of society has been given overemphasis by writers such as Stein and Prince Peter, owing to which the practice of patrilineality appeared to have loomed large. This approach overlooks both diversity and the majority of society. Before proceeding, let us ask what kinship is all about? According to Robin Fox:

> The study of kinship is the study of what man does with these basic facts of lifemating, gestation, parenthood, socialization, siblingship etc...He utilizes them in order to survive, and beyond survival, to prosper. At some level he is bound by circumstances to adopt one mode of adaptation rather than another; but he is free to vary this within limits and to his advantage.[18]

In other words, the basic facts of life are given, but they can be utilized to man's advantage, although he is sometimes compelled to accept specific modes of utilization. This approach indicates that the specificity of a given kinship system is largely determined by its utility value under the prevailing circumstances. This line of reasoning is applicable to the kinship system practiced by people in Zilphukhog.

Patrilineality was always associated with the well-to-do and the nobility who had both properties and names to perpetuate. They were established houses with varying length of pedigrees whose disintegration would have meant the dissolution of something that had been built, accumulated, and perpetuated for generations. In order to continue the patrimony a decision had to be made about whether sons or daughters would inherit the properties of the natal home. The responsibility or privilege fell on the male members of the sibling-group. The choice was rational in several respects from a Tibetan point of view: (a) parents would not receive sons-in-law to take over the household property at the expense of their sons; and (b) the genetic inheritance of the father was considered superior to that of the mother who contributed "flesh" (*sha*), while the father contributed the more crucial "bone" (*rus*) which, according to my informants, decided the natural propensities of a man. Although no household seems to have done so in Zilphukhog, a sonless family could adopt a *magpa* son-in-law in order to perpetuate the house. The *magpa* phenomenon was quite common among the nobility throughout Tibet. This form of marriage entailed matrilocality and demonstrates how flexible the Tibetan marriage system was. Patrilocality required the disposal of daughters to their affined homes for several reasons. Firstly, although plural marriage partners were accepted, no household endorsed and recognized plural marriages in one household legally. The non-recognition of marriages other than mono-generational marriage that entailed the coparcenary of the household property, necessitated marriageable daughters to leave their natal home. Secondly, out-

[18] Fox 1967:30.

marrying daughters could establish marital alliances with other wealthy and important families. Thirdly, it was considered that sisters-in-law would find it difficult to co-exist, as each would try to be the mistress of the household. My informants stated that each out-marrying daughter or son received his or her rightful share, but none received more than a fraction of the total household property, although what one did receive depended upon the overall wealth of one's natal home. Theoretically, an out-marrying daughter would receive properties equivalent to one tenth of the patrimony if there were 10 members, but what she actually received were mainly ornaments and moveable household items, rather than landed household property.

Patrilocality was highly compatible with the notion of house. This phenomenon had a trimming impact on matters relating to inheritance and marriage. A house recognized only one "legal" marriage per generation, which Melvyn Goldstein calls "monogenerational marriage".[19] Hence, any out-marrying son/daughter was given what was reasonable according to the wealth of the natal household, effectively as a form of dowry. Its exclusive nature entailed that any kin outside the house (i.e. non-co-resident kin) had neither any right to the household's property, nor to the adoption of its house-name, and nor to its membership. The house was a concentric domestic unit and its membership entailed the prerogative to enjoy its name, and inheritance—depending upon who you were. The phenomenon of dispersing daughters and retaining sons in their natal home is comparable to what Irawati Karve has written about kinship organization in India:

> As regards the behaviour pattern among collaterals the conduct was patterned on two principles. The first was the positive principle of ultimate unity of all the males of one generation. The highest virtue was mutual help and sharing in prosperity and calamity. The second principle was the negative one, for avoiding rivalries.[20]

The virtues of collateral brotherhood or polyandry were, perhaps, to accumulate and defend wealth rather than utilizing it. The retention of sons and the disposal of daughters had economic, political, and strategic importance, which has been discussed in the previous section.

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[19] Goldstein 1971:68.
[20] Karve 1965:62.

Another question is whether the concept of clan is applicable to the kinship system prevalent in Zilphukhog. Although affined, consanguine, and filial relationships were reckoned to a certain extent, the exclusiveness and individuality of the house seems to have made the concept of clanship incompatible. Each house was a domestic group and all other kin belonged to other houses of the same kind. There were no corporate or scattered resident groups claiming to have descended from one apical mythological or totemic ancestor, as we have seen. Robin Fox writes that, "Clans then are groups whose members claim to have descended - on one principle or another - from a common ancestor",[21] which is certainly the opposite of what I have tried to demonstrate about Zilphukhog. Barbara Aziz's observations on the kinship system in Dingri appear to be relevant here: "There is no ancestor cult, no clan land, no moiety marriage, no hereditary leadership and no lineage gatherings; all examples of social behaviour which would manifest itself where patriliny continued as an organizing principle are absent".[22] One exception in the present study is of course the presence of hereditary leadership.

We have seen that the continuity of house-name and household property required the practice of patrilocality, but what happened in the absence of the above two phenomena? When there did not exist a perpetual house-name and property, the retention of fraternal units was not important. Siblings could almost invariably disperse in different directions and establish new households of their own within Zilphukhog. Sometimes this was more convenient for the out-marrying son/daughter as well as his/her natal home, especially when it was under economic pressure, as was the case with Pasang-tsang cited above for example. Pasang-tsang was the biggest and also the poorest household in Zilphukhog. The oldest brother in its sibling group, Shigyal, left for lower Zilphukhog when he met a woman. It was unthinkable for him to remain at home with his wife as it would have entailed extra mouths to feed in the already restrained economic situation. He, therefore, could move out of the household without any problem, taking with him whatever he got. This illustrates how a bona fide dependent son could establish a household of his own without any pressure to do otherwise from his parents. Other neolocal households

[21] Fox 1967:90.
[22] Aziz 1978:122.

were established by marriages between former servants or immigrants or refugees who did not have any household property to inherit.

Patrilocal or matrilocal marriages (polyandrous or polygynous) and neolocal ones (monogamous) depicted two polar sectors of society in terms of wealth and prestige, which in turn determined the inheritance system. Non-established and wealth-less households were, in a way, in an ambiguous state, where the chances of self-perpetuation were uncertain. This notion of self-perpetuation hinged on a chain of causal factors, in which wealth, prestige, and the like necessitated polygamous marriages, which meant fraternal or sororal marital partners. As discussed in detail in Chapter Seven, the magnitude of the house was preponderant; it sorted the rich from the poor and most of all it determined a particular form of marriage and a given system of inheritance. However, although these two polar forms of marriage (patrilocal and neolocal) were institutionalized, there might be reason to believe that neolocal families aspired or even managed to achieve a more self-sufficient status. For instance, although Buchung-tsang did not acquire an inheritable house-name, its household property became established through the practice of a polyandrous marriage. Dusar-tsang acquired a quasi-house-name within a single generation, which is almost akin to the notion of going "from rags to riches" in one lifetime.

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

There was a notable dearth of kinship terminology in use among my informants, especially among those who had been dependents. They could neither designate nor remember who their forefathers had been beyond their father's father (FF) or *anye* (*a myes*), and some could not even remember who their FF had been. This lack of knowledge of their pedigree is explicable. Many were either sons or daughters of immigrants or dependents who belonged to other households which no longer existed, due either to the change of the household name (it changed each time a new household head emerged) or its dissolution. Thus, a remembered pedigree was both difficult to maintain and, above all, it was also non-essential in the absence of anything to perpetuate. On the other hand, the lord Chimi Rinzin remembered, more or less, the complete pedigree of Yudrug-tsang. Such a pedigree was necessary for its forward-looking justifications, that is, Yudrug-

tsang's genealogy is fraught with virtuous and meritorious deeds reputedly performed by its forefathers for Dege-tsang (as outlined in Chapter Two), which justified and enhanced Yudrug-tsang's present position as a lord. As any prestigious genealogy would, this genealogy was associated with a patrimony whose continuity was to be maintained.

Concerning the kinship terminology in use in Zilphukhog, it is as follows:

Father's father	*anye*[23] (*a myes*)
Father's mother	*ashi* (*a zhe*)
Father's brother	*akhu* (*a khu*)
Father's sister	*ane* (*a ne*)
Mother's brother	*ashong* (*a zhang*)
Mother's sister	*ashru* (*a sru*)
Father	*apha* (*a pha*)
Mother	*ama* (*a ma*)
Brother	*sha-ne* (*sha nye*)
Elder brother	*sha-ne che-wa* (*sha nye che ba*)
Younger brother	*sha-ne chung-wa* (*sha nye chung ba*) or *aja*
Elder sister	*ashe* (*a ce*)
Junior sister	*sing-mo* (*sring mo*)
Son	*bu* (*bu*)
Daughter	*bu-mo* (*bu mo*)
Nephew	*tsawo* (*tsha bo*)
Niece	*tsamo* (*tsha mo*)
Wife	*nama* (*mna' ma*)
Husband	*nyi* (*mi*, *myi*)

These kinship designations refer to a descent line within the span of four generations: i.e. from FF to ZS or BS. William Rockhill's assertion that there did not exist any special terms for nephew and niece is incorrect, as has been shown above. And his further assertion that there did not exist any term for cousin is not entirely correct either, because cousin could be identified with a longer term *pei-pun-gi* or *mei-pun-gi pu-gu* or "children of brothers or sisters".[24] It appears that no special terms existed for grandchildren and the same terminology for niece and nephew was used for them.

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[23] This term can also signify a Bön religious adept.

[24] See Rockhill, 1893:679. Editor's note: Presumably Rockhill's Romanization here is for the Tibetan *pha'i spun gyi phru gu* and *ma'i spun gyi phru gu*.

The kinship network was itself actualized largely in times of gift giving, for instance on the occurrence of birth, death, seeking a marriage partner, marriage, or disaster requiring assistance. A marriage partner putatively must be a person who was seven or nine generations removed from the Ego. But to put this in practice was impossible because of the lack of remembered genealogies. When it concerned inheritance, only the household members were eligible for it, and they were known to the outsider by their common house-name. In other words, the wide kinship network was cut into smaller economic and marital units viz. houses.

In summary, the objective of establishing a wholly self-sufficient house was the main preoccupation of every struggling individual dependent household. Hence, the problem of economic self-sufficiency seems to have caused two types of marriage: patrilocal and neolocal. Patrilocality (polyandry) retained the male population in the household: all the marriage partners were coparceners of the patrimony. Neolocality meant the dispersion of sibling-groups, and those who left their natal home inherited very little. It appears that patrilocal marriages (whether polyandrous or monogamous) entailed the perpetuation of the name and wealth of the house. On the other hand, neolocal marriages disqualified the marriage partners as coparceners of their natal home. The latter type of marriage was determined by the non-viability of the household economy, but a neolocal household could become a patrilocal one in due time. This cyclic process continued so long as a minimum economic threshold could be maintained, and failure to do so meant the divisive and fluctuating life of dependents. Both the multiplicative and expanding nature of the dependent household was indispensable for Yudrug-tsang and the community as well. As a conclusion, in the words of Robin Fox, to practice patrilineality was to "prosper" and to practice neolocality was to "adopt a mode of adaptation" under constraining circumstances.[25]

[25] Fox 1967:30.

CHAPTER NINE

BIRTH AND DEATH

BIRTH

My informants unanimously agreed that birth in Zilphukhog was a simple business. They were astonished by the apparent fuss and ado women in their new exile home of Nepal associate with child birth. During much of their pregnancy, women in Zilphukhog performed the normal daily chores, and only weak or under-nourished pregnant women took extra nourishment in the form of milk, *tsampa*, butter, etc. A quotation from an early 20th century Khampa man might give an inkling of the pre-modern Tibetan view of the casualness of birth: "The Tibetan woman is fortunate above others in accomplishing her childbirth easily. She may go to the mountain for wood and bring back a child in her gown".[1] This may be a far-fetched statement, but it does give a rough idea of the manner of and attitudes towards childbirth in pre-modern rural Kham. Despite the fact that birth was welcomed, especially the birth of boys, child delivery was considered to be somewhat defiling, thus efforts were made to separate it to a degree from the domestic space.

Delivery in Zilphukhog usually took place in an improvised hut for the well-to-do women, and under a simple shelter for the less well-off women. Yudrug-tsang, Druchung-tsang, Gechung-tsang, and other households of means usually built a dung-hut for the expectant mother in the winter camp, or pitched a small tent in the summer camp. When Sokey's first child was born while working for Gechung-tsang, she delivered it under a yak wool blanket that was tied to one side of the tent. When she had established an independent household, she delivered her children in the household tent, but she had to cut the umbilical cord herself without her mother's assistance. Delivering children in the household tent entailed two things: that (a) the family had neither the means nor the necessary manpower to segregate the mother when she delivered children, which in turn necessitated her to overlook the pollution element; and (b), because of (a) the mother

[1] Paul Sherap, recorded in Combe 1926:58.

could not afford to rest for many days unless she had grown up children who could take care of the family herds.

A dependent woman's midwife was usually her own mother, and then perhaps only for the first birth, as was the case with Sokey. However, Yudrug-tsang, Gechung-tsang, and other affluent houses had a professional midwife. Such women advised the expectant mother what to do at the delivery, and they cut the umbilical cord and buried the placenta. The baby was rarely washed, but it was cleaned with a piece of soft cloth.

Those women who could afford it remained in bed for about a week to recuperate after delivery. However, they were not allowed to enter the main domestic space of the household tent until five to seven days had passed. On the seventh day, a ritual ceremony was performed by a monk to cleanse or purify the mother and the child from any birth defilement. The ceremony consisted of citing religious formulae and sprinkling *tru-chu* (*khrus chu*) or "cleansing-water" on the mother and the child from a silver vase. Now they became unpolluted members of the family. Some months later, the baby was usually taken to a high lama or a *trulku* (*sprul sku*)—an incarnate lama—to receive a name. Some fresh butter was applied to the crown of the child's head which, apparently, was meant to invigorate it. The lama or *trulku* gave religiously inspired names, such as Chimi ("Immortal"), Sangye ("Buddha"), Tenzin ("Doctrine-Holder"), or Namgyal ("Victorious") and Dolma ("Saviouress"). The average dependent could not afford to purify and name his child in the above manner. Consequently, many dependents never had lama-given names, and were known instead by the nick names they obtained. For instance, these were names like Shigo ("Birdhead"), Keyga ("Happy"), Pulu ("Round like a ball of butter"), which described the physical features or dispositions of the referent persons. Inviting a lama or going to him not only necessitated presenting a gift or donation, it entailed a break in the routine of domestic production, which dependents were often ill-prepared to do.

When a baby was able to eat solid food, it was given a mixture of *tsampa*, milk, and butter thrice daily. A mother might also chew *tsampa* first and then feed it to her child with her index finger. A baby was not weaned until it was approximately 2 or 3 years old. Goat's milk and curds were given to the child, and he was not given meat, nor was he allowed even to look at it. The rationale behind this was to discourage children from becoming "addicted" to meat, as it was

incompatible with the tenets of Buddhism. Although the mother did not use any kind of nappy to dispose of the wastes of the child and keep it dry, a very practical alternative method was employed. She made a triangular or v-shaped felt sleeping bag for her baby. The bag was half-filled with very fine dung-powder on which the child slept or sat. Every time the child soiled the dung-powder, the part that was made wet was taken out and the bag was replenished with fresh dung-powder. Shifting and replenishing the dung-powder aptly ensured that the child did not suffer from sores on its buttock. A well-to-do mother might use soft cloths for the same purpose. The baby's felt sleeping bag could be moved around according to the mother's convenience, as she had to be vigilant lest the baby fall out, get trampled by animals, or be suffocated by the pet animals living around the tent, such as dogs or cats. As the baby grew up, it was given more solid food, and when it was able to crawl or walk it was tethered to a rope so that it might not move beyond a given area, which could be dangerous as the mother might often be preoccupied with her daily domestic chores. During seasonal movements between camps, the baby was tucked in a spacious pocket of a gown (*paktsag*), or loaded on a harmless and hornless yak in a pannier whose weight was counterbalanced by another pannier containing an object of equal weight on the opposite side of the yak saddle.

At the age of five or six, children already began contributing to the household work, as can be seen clearly in figure 19, "Phases of pastoral working life in Zilphukhog". These very young children were given the task of looking after cheese being dried in the sun, and helping to separate lambs from their mothers at milking time. Grandchildren and grandparents were jointly delegated the task of driving away crows, goats, sheep etc. from cheese and other food products which were being processed around the camp. As children grew bigger, the nature of their work became tougher and they had to become more responsible. In their early adolescence, they no longer dealt with lambs and cheese and instead they herded fully grown ovines such as sheep and goats. Children in their mid-teens were responsible persons who herded the main pastoral livestock, the yak and *dri*. At the age of 18 or 19 adolescents reached adulthood, which meant that they became marriageable.

Infanticide was not practiced in Zilphukhog. This is understandable in view of the fact that both Yudrug-tsang and the dependents were determined to increase the population. However, a discriminating

attitude to the sex of the child was prevalent. The birth of sons was celebrated and that of girls was not equally appreciated. The birth of three, five or seven sons was prestigious and auspicious because the three numbers had religious connotations. The number three is associated with at least two triadic concepts in the Buddhist doctrine. One is the "Three Jewels" or Konchok Sum, which refers to the Buddha, his teachings known as the Dharma, and the Sangha or monastic community. The second derives from the Buddhist pantheon where three patron deities or *gompo* (*mgon po*) are identified together as a set, being Chenrezig, Chagna Dorjee, and Jambeyang, and collectively called Rigsum Gompo, meaning the "Three Protectors", or more literally, "Lords of the Three [Buddha] Families"). The number five reflects the image of Gyalwa Ringnya (the "Five Dhyani Buddhas"), while seven is also sacred in the Buddhist pantheon. The assumed superiority of brothers born in the above numbers was related to such popular number symbolism among Tibetans.

I have already outlined above the reasons for the perceived and actual importance of men, and here I shall discuss why women were relegated to an inferior status. Giving birth to many girls was scorned, and being an infertile woman was stigmatized. Infertile women were considered to be innately threatening or defiling. They were not allowed to be in the vicinity of human or animal birthing. Their presence was believed to jeopardize the success of the event in progress. Neither were they allowed to enter the tent of a sick man for their intrinsic harmful nature would only exacerbate his illness. Infertile women were known as *rab-cheg* (*rabs chad*) or "lineage cutters". The stigmatization of infertile women reflects a philosophical predicament or paradox of Tibetan society. They theoretically found themselves in a sort of double bind situation, where the precepts of Buddhism and the exigency of societal necessity were diametrically opposed. The former advocated the discontinuity of humanity, that is, the attainment of Nirvana through non-rebirth, while the latter demanded the perpetuity of society through successive reproduction. The paradox can be seen in the stigmatization of the infertile women whose sterility logically complies with the Buddhist tenets.

DEATH

According to Buddhism, death only entails leaving the physical body behind while some kind of continuity carries over to the next life. The notion of transmigration was and is familiar for most Tibetans, although few had in-depth knowledge of the philosophical doctrine behind it. Belief in the law of karma or action presupposes a particular deterministic view of life, in which one's fate has been preordained by one's past actions and their moral quality. But Tibetans also applied this logic to the idea of being able therefore to influence the future fortunes of a deceased person at the time of death. The bereaved could assist the deceased by performing appropriate ritual ceremonies for them. Exactly what kind of death rituals a family performed was wholly dependent upon its economic means.

When a person died in the poor dependent households, the corpse was put in a corner of the tent, but a well-to-do family usually improvised a separate tent for it. The limbs were tied together such that the shrouded corpse sat in the embryonic position. Preferably on the third day following death, a high lama or an incarnate *trulku* was invited to perform the *phowa* (*'pho ba*) rite. The officiant sat in front of the corpse and chanted religious formulae punctuated by the sudden utterances of "*Hic phe*! *Hic phe*! " Some writers have called this rite a "soul sending" ceremony.[2] The rationale behind this rite was that the consciousness principle or soul of the dead person required the guidance of an adept officiant. During the first three days or so after death, the soul of the person fainted or remained unconscious of the fact of his or her own death, owing to which the officiant had to inform the dead person of his or her death and that they must now leave their bodies and other attachments behind. The purpose of *phowa* was to send the entrapped soul out through the crown of the deceased's head to a Buddhist pure-land or paradise known as Dewachen. Failure to do so meant that the soul was liable to leave the body through one of the other apertures, such as the anus, which might have meant a journey to the nether-world. Butter lamps and some symbolic foods were placed in front of the corpse.

On the third day after death the corpse was disposed of by a specialist. A hornless yak was required for the disposal, and it was always available even if a family did not own such an animal because

[2] MacDonald 1929:149.

relatives or neighbours would provide one. Most corpses were dismembered and then fed to vultures, but there were exceptions owing to various reasons. The death astrologer chose an appropriate disposal day and a suitable cemetery, although there were only two cemeteries to choose from in Zilphukhog. When death occurred in a wealthy family such as Yudrug-tsang or Gechung-tsang, there was a procession of friends and relatives that were led by the monk-officiant. But the body of a poor dependent was disposed of by a couple of people only.

The corpse was placed on the *durtro* (*dur khrod*) or cemetery, which was a round structure of stone slabs on which the corpse was placed on its stomach so that it did not make any reflexive movements while it was being dismembered. First, the flesh was cut into suitable strips so that the vultures could eat them easily, and when the flesh was gleaned the bones were pounded into minute pieces that were also fed to the vultures by mixing them with barley flour. Nothing of the corpse was left behind. The bones of rich people and high lamas were pounded and mixed with a plasticine-like clay compound, and made into small religious plaques called *tsatsa* (*tsha tsha*) that were piled or exhibited on religious monuments such as *chortens* (*mchod rten*, i.e. *stūpa* or reliquary monuments). If the vultures hesitated to eat the corpse all at once, it was considered that the deceased had committed many sins. In this case, the officiant had to chant religious formulae that might induce the vultures to eat the body. Several popular writers have mentioned that the officiant himself ate a bit of the flesh first, but I am certain that this was not practiced in Zilphukhog. Nor was the corpse fed to dogs and predatory animals as some writers have suggested. Only the bodies of very high lamas were cremated. The crematory ash was mixed with fine earth and then it was made into small *tsatsa*.

There were two other alternative ways of disposing of corpses, namely earth and water burial, which had a much lower frequency. People who died because of age and common sicknesses were disposed of in the manner discussed above. I have been told that most children were buried in—or rather, on—water. Sokey remembered how she buried her infant daughter when she died at the age of two. The body was put in a wooden vessel that floated upon river water inside a small improvised stone structure so that it was not carried away by the river. No adult in Zilphukhog was buried under water. People who died a violent death, those killed by swords or guns, and

those who died of infectious diseases were buried in the earth. The burial ceremony was the same as that for disposal by dismemberment and feeding to the vultures, except that the body was buried whole in the earth. When the earth was frozen in winter, burials sometimes had to wait until spring came. The kind of burial one received was largely determined by the astrologer, who calculated the deceased's horoscope, with the elements, the day of the death, the hour of the death, and other information.

Earth burial seems to have been to hinder the spreading of infectious diseases, as both the other two forms could potentially contaminate nature. When Shigo's parents died of an infectious disease they were buried. Droteng lost all the members of his family to leprosy. Since nobody dared to bury their dead bodies for fear of infection, instead their house was pulled down around the corpses to create a form of earth burial. Since dismemberment burial was more expensive, poor families might have resorted to earth burial to avoid costs.

According to Tibetan Buddhist theory, the transitional period between death and rebirth is considered to be a period of 49 days. The law of *karma* is thought to decide the fate of each individual, but what happens to the consciousness principle or soul of the dead person during this critical period is supposed to be efficacious. In addition to the other death ceremonies, the reading of religious scriptures by monks was considered to be very helpful to the wandering and searching soul of the deceased. Rich families like Yudrug-tsang and some of the well-off dependent households would invite several monks to read the holy scriptures, chant prayers, and perform rites during the whole transitional period. Every weekend, an incarnate lama was invited to help the wandering soul find the right path. Only the rich and most pious families could perform such a lengthy death ceremony. On the 49th day after death, a very high lama was invited to conclude the ceremony as well as to offer guidance to the soul. The invitation of monks and high lamas entailed providing food and fees for the whole duration. High lamas received a yak or a *zo* and monks received somewhat lower fees. Normatively all the personal possessions of the dead person were to be given to different monasteries and lamas for helping to guide the soul to a better place. Other personal effects might be given to beggars and the destitute in order to accumulate merits.

Reading prayer and reciting scriptures was beyond what the ordinary dependents could afford upon a death in the household. Upon the death of an ordinary dependent, it was considered lucky for the dead even if a lama could be invited to just perform the *phowa* rite. And even if this was not possible, a lama was asked to perform the *phowa* rite from a distance by offering him a personal effect of the dead person. It was considered well done if several monks could be invited to read the scriptures a couple of times during the 49 day transitional period.

Despite the impact of Buddhism, and its warning of the dire consequences of not being pious and meritorious, my informants did not seem to have been preoccupied with death and future rebirth, nor with the need to be altruistic and pious. Most of them thought that farmers were bigger sinners than themselves as nomads, because the farmers killed countless worms and other living beings in the process of ploughing and sowing their fields. Nomads did not take too many lives and the preference for killing bovines was that one single animal could provide enough meat for many people for a longer period, thus involving much less total life-taking overall. Remembering death and being pious was the domain of retiring grandparents whose contribution to the household management was dwindling. None of my informants had reached that age when they left their homes to go into exile.

CHAPTER TEN

THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

During the lifetime of my informants and their parents, the prestige and power of the kingdom of Dege and the house of Dege-tsang became shattered. This resulted from repeated rivalries and intrigues within the royal house itself, as well as various Chinese interventions and the machinations of hostile neighbouring states. Dege embarked upon a process of disintegration into what were effectively miniature "kingdoms", whose preoccupation was to maximize their own advantages at the expense of all others. Nevertheless, with the exception of those states immediately adjacent to the Chinese border, such as Batang and Litang, most of Kham, Dege included, remained largely undisturbed by external developments until the beginning of the Chinese Communist onslaughts on Tibet that started during the 1950s.[1] The cultural intactness of the region up until that time was due largely to its difficult geography of mountain ranges and deep river gorges, and the ingrained disinclination of the natives to live under the sway of any alien power. This was the political environment in which the community of Zilphukhog found itself during the first half of the 20th century.

The prevailing political environment in Dege, and in Kham in general up to the mid-20th century, had an impact, however discretely, upon the interrelationships between Tibetan superordinates and subordinates throughout the region. That is to say, political developments made local agents increasingly aware of unprecedented scope or room for maneuvering or exploiting their opportunity situations. By political "environment" here I mean the extra- and inter-state political factors for whose emergence my informants were not responsible, but by which they were constrained and facilitated in their own choices and actions. F.G. Bailey defines the same concept in his book *Stratagems and Spoils*, "In effect, the environment is defined as

[1] Editor's note: Although Rinzin's assessment is generally correct, see Peng Wenbin 2002 on the Chinese establishment of the province of Xikang across Kham from 1939-1955, and some of the Khampa "self-rule movements" which arose in response to Chinese political activity in the region.

everything which is not part of that particular political structure".[2] This definition is applicable to my conceptualization, since both the extra-state and inter-estate political factors were exogenous phenomena in Zilphukhog.

While China certainly loomed large in the process of gradually whittling away the power of Dege-tsang, inter-state clashes, inter-estate and internecine rivalry, and the proximity of volatile regions such as Golok, all contributed to the overall instability in and around Dege. Since the central political apparatus of Dege had been rendered almost moribund due to this combination of pressures, individual or provincial ambition and aspirations could be asserted in an unprecedented manner. The weakening of the state and the effects of various political upheavals resulted in the movement of manpower, which was not only scarce but now more mobile than before. This gave dependents an unprecedented bargaining power vis-à-vis their lords or leaders. To put it metaphorically, in a sea of political fluidity and fluctuation, one could swim almost in any direction one chose given that one was prepared to take the risk of drowning.

DEGE AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

The very complex political nature of eastern Tibet was a compounding factor influencing the environment in and around Dege during the early 20th century. Kham was a congeries of up to twenty-five independent or semi-independent native states, kingdoms, and other stateless areas, while Dege itself maintained borders with no less than eight of these neighbouring entities (see figure 6). These mosaic-like states could not always live in peaceful co-existence. Historically, it appears that only the state of Nyarong immediately to the east of Dege had the ambition to subject the whole of Kham under its sway, while the others were preoccupied with protracted inter-state conflicts over pockets of land and their inhabitants. The Nyarong chief, Gompo Namgyal (d. 1865), invaded Dege and other neighbouring states in 1860, but he was defeated in 1865 with the help of the Central Tibetan state.[3] This invasion not only temporarily disrupted the status quo of

[2] Bailey 1977:191.
[3] Editor's note: See now, Tashi Tsering 1985.

Dege, but its repercussions, to which I will return below, were also far reaching.

Dege-tsang had armed clashes with several of its neighbours. A conflict arose around the beginning of the 20th century between Dege-tsang and a religious hierarch, Lab Kyabgon, whose monastery was in the northwest of Dege. The dispute was over a small border village named Chunkhu Rowa, which consisted of 8 or 9 households. Lab Kyabgon's headquarters were in the area known as Jyade, well to the west of Dege. Jyade was then under the nominal authority of the Chinese Amban in Xining, owing to which Lab Kyabgon apparently obtained assistance from the resident Chinese representative during this border clash. Dege-tsang proved to be the victor, and the village became an integral part of Dege, but feelings of hostility continued to simmer between the two antagonists. It was rumoured that Lab Kyabgon cursed Dege-tsang to mitigate his defeat, but what is more certain is that he sought protection from the Xining Chinese authorities. Turning to an alien power in times of internal political rifts has over and again proved to be the most disruptive thing a Tibetan could do in terms of regional or national unity, but this peculiar Tibetan way of settling internal differences was repeatedly resorted to by many different parties.

Dege-tsang had another armed clash with the people of Golok around the turn of the century. The large and mainly pastoral nomadic region of Golok lies to the north of Dege, and in pre-modern times it was home to approximately 18 different groups of varying size. The region was inhabited by some of the most aggressive and least accessible people in pre-modern Tibet. My informants who actually lived in Golok for six years told me that it was composed of numerous independent groups whose leaders emerged and disappeared according to their success or failure to defend and lead their groups. Nor were those individual groups "tribal" as they are often referred to in the literature. Many of them were, in the main, amalgamations of immigrants, refugees, and defectors from almost every corner of Kham and Amdo, as the name Golok suggests. "Golok" (Tibetan *mgo log*) means something like "turncoat" or "rebel". Golok functioned as something of a haven for miscreants, malcontents, refugees and even perhaps criminals. Once a newcomer had been accepted as a member of a host group, that group would do almost anything on his behalf. Regardless of his background, a member's personal safety was ensured by his host group no matter what the cost might be; it was the

code of honour. One, therefore, automatically felt intimidated if one's enemy or enemies had headed for Golok for they could turn up unexpectedly with scores of armed Golok horsemen to settle old debts. The Golok Shokha, the group whom Yudrug-tsang befriended, was about 200 armed horse-men strong and ready to fight to aid its allies.

The threat—real or imagined—of raiders from Golok was often felt in Zilphukhog. One early winter, when my informants Tsethon and Shigo were still in their teens, they were rounding up the herds to take them home for the night when suddenly 10-15 armed riders appeared, blocking the way by shouting and shooting in front of the animals. About 100 of the animals ran in the opposite direction towards a pass beyond which Yudrug-tsang had no territorial jurisdiction. As soon as the Zilphukhog herders discovered that their animals had been raided, most of them ran home to convey the tidings so that a pursuit by the local militia or *ramda* (*ra mda'*, literally "arrow fence") could be launched. They ran towards the camp shouting, "Raiders drove the animals! Raiders drove the animals!" (*Zog japei deg song*! *Zog japei deg song*!).[4] The ensuing pursuit was in vain as the raiders had gotten far enough away and night had soon fallen. However, Shigo remained behind and stealthily followed the raiders up to the pass where she found about a dozen or so animals. Many more animals had strayed on either side of the pass, but about 40-50 head of livestock had actually been successfully driven away by the raiders. Those accused of the raid were a fraternal group who had left Dege and settled on the border between Dzachuka and Golok. The accusation was lodged on the basis that one of the herding girls putatively recognized the voice of one of the raiders who was related to her. The girl herder was reported to have shouted "Uncle! Uncle!" (*Ashang*! *Ashang*!) when one of the raiders spoke to another. The accused were severely punished and deprived of their possessions—their herds and other properties—by the court of Dege, but it was later doubted whether the accused were actually the real culprits. I shall return to relations with Golok below.

[4] *Zog jag pa'i 'ded song / Zog jag pa'i 'ded song.*

COLLAPSE OF THE HOUSE OF DEGE

In addition to intra-Kham conflicts and clashes which impacted upon Dege and Zilphukhog, the internal cohesion of the house of Dege was also undermined by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors and this eventually had its effect upon Yudrug-tsang and Zilphukhog.

The forty-fifth monarch of Dege, Lodrö Phuntsok (alias Chimi Tagpay Dorjee), had two sons, Jigme Dorjee Senge (1877-1926) (see figure 11) the elder and his younger brother Nawang Jampal Rinchen, apparently from two different wives.[5] Jigme Dorjee Senge's mother was a native of Dege, while Nawang Jampal Rinchen's was probably a woman who belonged to Lhasa. Nawang Jampal Rinchen, the younger brother, and his mother allegedly acted in collusion with some powerful ministers to form a faction opposed to Jigme Dorjee Senge and his father. The fraternal rivalry between the two brothers and their respective factions for the throne became so intense that the Viceroy of Sichuan, the Dalai Lama, the Lhasa Amban, and eventually even the Chinese emperor himself all became involved in the affair, either by request or by design. The result was that a sort of oscillating power struggle ensued between the elder heir-apparent to the throne and his younger pretender brother until, that is, the Chinese general Zhao Ehrfeng invaded Dege by a ruse in 1908 and rendered both the brothers powerless. On the pretext of settling the fraternal rivalry, Zhao Ehrfeng's march into Dege Gonchen was unopposed, owing to which Nawang Jampal Rinchen the pretender fled to Golok and on to Xining. His elder brother Jigme Dorjee Senge received an imperial pension and was exiled as a state prisoner in Batang. Following Zhao Ehrfeng's death and the collapse of the Manchu Dynasty in 1912, the temporary Chinese rule in Dege ceased to operate. However, the Dege state's central political apparatus had been rendered too weak to re-exert its resilience.

The contending brothers had managed to polarize the Dege nobility into two factions. Nawang Jampal Rinchen was apparently supported by the noble families to the east of the Yangtze while Jigme Dorjee Senge was supported by those to the west of the river. Yudrug-tsang

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[5] Editor's note: Concerning the unresolved historical problem of whether there were two wives, or whether another man fathered Nawang Jampal Rinchen to the same wife, Rinzin followed Li An-che 1947:282, as well as his informants' oral accounts, but he mentioned the alternative view given in Teichman 1922:6. See now the review of all available sources on the issue in Hartley 1997:50-55.

remained neutral despite the all-pervasive factional atmosphere, although neutrality did not spare it from the vagaries of the time. Due to its adamant reluctance to become partisan, Yudrug-tsang was subjected to pressure and intimidation by both factions. Owing to his disinclination to take sides, Yudrug Trapa was then thrown into prison at Dege Gonchen by a powerful leader of one of the factions. An informer disclosed the news to the rest of the house of Yudrug-tsang that Trapa was soon to be executed, and they immediately sent two rescuers, Lagyag Tsering (Tsethon's father) and another servant to Dege Gonchen. Under cover of darkness, the two men broke into the prison and carried Trapa with his feet still shackled to Zilphukhog.

Dege-tsang was now a nominal head of the state, and the forty-eighth[6] monarch, Tsewang Dudul (1916-1942), was a man of peace not given to mundane pursuits of power and politics. He was survived by his queen and his son, and single male heir, Urgyen Dudul (b. 1938), who still lived in Tibet during the 1980s. At the time, the widowed queen was unable to consolidate the waning power of Dege-tsang, and her son had not yet come of age. The decline of Dege-tsang throughout the first half of the 20th century let loose ambitious individual noble families to accumulate and consolidate their power in an unprecedented manner. This phenomenon of building up local or regional strongholds also had a feedback effect on the local chiefs, who tried to solidify and build up their own sphere of power and influence, in fear of encroachment from their rival peers.

While sketching the political environment in which the people of Dege found themselves, I have discussed two sub-categories of this environment, extra-state and intra-state, which represent what might be called the national level. I shall now deal with the affectedness of the communal and inter-estate level, which seems to have been largely an epiphenomenon of the national level.

INTER-ESTATE ENCROACHMENT

The extra-state political environment that directly affected estates and their dependents was characterized by the proximity of such regions as Golok and Nangchen. These and other nearby states in Kham

[6] Editor's note: Taking account that the brothers Nawang Jampal Rinchen and Jigme Dorjee Senge both held the throne during the same generation.

would readily incorporate and absorb any political refugee, defector, and fortune seeker. Tibet, at large, was experiencing an acute shortage of manpower owing precisely to which manpower had become a scarce 'commodity'. Those states hostile to each other would delight at the loss of the manpower of their rivals. Moreover, most states were indifferent or insensitive to the loss of others' manpower, and once a defector had entered the domain of another state it almost invariably ensured the safety of the defector. Any pursuit of a defector within the territory of another king or monarch was considered to be violating the sovereignty of that state and thus answerable by the state or the local chief. The phenomenon of seeking refuge was known as *gotakpa* (*mgo btags pa*) and accepting a refugee was known as *golenpa* (*mgo len pa*). The latter involved the code of honour for the patron to defend his client no matter what it may cost. Any deviation from the code of honour would tarnish the reputation of the patron as a man of honour and reliability, which in turn would make him powerless and dishonourable. In other words, he risked being labeled a coward and unreliable, and such attributes were reserved only for criminals and weaklings.

To illustrate inter-estate encroachment and the facilitating effect of the intra-Kham environment, I shall outline how and why Yudrug-tsang sought political asylum in Golok, which has been briefly alluded to in previous chapters. Yudrug-tsang was at its height during the incumbency of Trapa about three generations ago, but it declined abruptly following Trapa's death. Trapa had three sons, two of whom became learned monks in the local monastery, Galen Gon. The third son, Phurba Trelen, was to perpetuate the name of Yudrug-tsang. He married a daughter from the noble house of Dingo-tsang. He served Dege-tsang as its chief of the Trade Department, but he was soon killed by robbers while leading a trade expedition to Dartsendo, which was the largest border and commercial town between Kham and China. About a year later, his wife and child both died during childbirth. Suddenly Yudrug-tsang found itself without a male heir to continue the ancestral house. The monk-sons had become devout members of the monastic community and they would not renounce their celibate existence in order to try and produce more male children.

Faced with this situation, Trapa could have chosen to marry in a son-in-law or *magpa* for his unmarried daughter, Jamyang Chodon, as his other daughters had already left the family with their own

husbands. But he did not do so because Jamyang Chodon had fallen in love with the son of his archenemy, Topo Khamyu, of the neighbouring district of Korlodo. Topo Khamyu was an ambitious non-hereditary leader of the Korlodo, but he was shrewd and enjoyed some real power. His power was derived from the Chinese authorities who occupied Dege during the fraternal power struggle, and not from his capacity as a Topo, which was a type of elected village elder. Topo Khamyu persuaded his superordinates that Marong-nang, a small peasant district that was under Trapa's jurisdiction, was too small to remain an independent district and that it should be annexed to Korlodo. Trapa nearly lost the case to retain his control of Marong-nang.

Consequently, ingrained hatred developed between the two men, such that Trapa would never consent to his daughter's idea of marrying his enemy's son. Instead, he gave his daughter to two brothers who were twice the age of their bride. Trapa gave Jamyang Chodon to the estate of Sakar-tsang, a house which boasted powerful relatives. However, before she was dispatched to her new patrilocal home, Jamyang Chodon gave birth to her only child, the seventh representative of Yudrug-tsang, Chimi Rinzin. He was delivered in the tent of a dependent household to make it appear that it was the mother of that household who had given birth to the child. The baby boy remained there for six months. Despite his dislike of the baby's father, Trapa must have seen hope in the child as a potential heir to the patrimony. When Trapa died the baby boy was entrusted to the care of his faithful servant Konchok Wangyal and his wife until the boy reached the age of seven. In the meantime, the formal affairs of Yudrug-tsang were managed by two relatives of the house.

As mentioned, the intra-state or inter-estate political environment did not fail to affect Yudrug-tsang. When Chimi Rinzin reached the age of seven, his monk uncle, Sangyal Tenzin, took him to his hermitage to teach his nephew how to read religious texts. In the meantime, Yudrug-tsang was being treated as a dependent of Sakar-tsang, which was using two of Yudrug-tsang's able dependents, Nagtsog and Buchung, as its errand boys. However, encroaching on Yudrug-tsang was not the end of it, and Sakar-tsang was bent on abolishing the name of Yudrug-tsang altogether. Most informants used the expression "*Za kha yongwa*"[7] to describe Sakar-tsang's

[7] *Za kha yong ba.*

intentions. The expression's literal meaning is "to come to eat", which figuratively means to engulf. This invokes the notion of unprovoked and calculated imposition of one's will on another person or family. If Yudrug-tsang was to cease to exist, Chimi Rinzin had to be disposed of, but that was not an easy task. Thus, Sakar-tsang contrived a means that would disqualify Chimi Rinzin from continuing the hereditary line of Yudrug-tsang, and encouraged the idea that Chimi Rinzin should be sent to the well-known monastery of Dzogchen, which was several days' journey from Zilphukhog. Thus, he was to become a monk who was to lead a celibate life that was completely incompatible with the biological succession required for the continuation of Yudrug-tsang.

In this manner, Sakar-tsang achieved a vital step in fulfilling its expansionist ambitions. However, loyal dependents of Yudrug-tsang, especially Buchung, Nagtsog, Tratsog and Thontra could not remain indifferent to the state of affairs. Together with two monks whom they had persuaded, the group demanded that Chimi Rinzin should renounce his celibate life in order to perpetuate the ancestral house of Yudrug-tsang and look after its dependents. These dependents are credited with the statement, "*Go yo na shu gu go re. Go me na shu gu go ma re*"[8] or literally "When there is a head a tail is needed. If there is no head a tail is not needed", which meant that a lord and his dependents were dependent upon each other. Chimi Rinzin was then brought back to Zilphukhog after three years of monastic life. Some Powerful friends of Sakar-tsang who were members of the Dege cabinet told Chimi Rinzin that he should now be content to accept a peasant dependent household called Trampa Dapa, along with a couple of fields, instead of the estate of Yudrug-tsang. Yudrug-tsang and its dependents could not accept the ultimatum and therefore lodged a legal case against Sakar-tsang. The cabinet, which was the highest judicial body in Dege, could not or would not settle the case, as both parties had enough of their own supporters or relatives within cabinet itself such that a deadlock ensued and the case dragged on for three years. However, while the court was in a state of indecision, Sakar-tsang raided Yudrug-tsang at least twice during the course of those three years. During the first raid about 30-40 head of livestock were driven from Zilphukhog by three servants of Sakar-tsang. When the raiders drove the animals towards the local monastery, Galen Gon,

[8] *Mgo yod na gzhug gu dgos red / mgo med na gzhug gu dgos ma red.*

some of the monks, who were Yudrug-tsang dependents, blocked the way while others invited the leader of the raiding party to take some refreshment. After a short time, Buchung, Thontra and other dependents arrived in pursuit of the raiders. Under the circumstances, a skirmish could not be avoided. One of the raiders and a local monk were killed while another monk was shot in the leg, which was not fatal.

Following these incidents, it was clear that Yudrug-tsang was struggling for survival and the future looked bleak. Yudrug-tsang was finally compelled to take advantage of the extra-state environment outlined above. Thus, with a journey into exile that lasted 13 days and nights, Yudrug-tsang secretly escaped to neighbouring Golok where they dwelt for six years. Golok was the most strategically advantageous place Yudrug-tsang could go to at that time. An uncle of Chimi Rinzin, Dzogchen Pentra, had previously moved to Golok for reasons of their own, and would assist Chimi Rinzin if the need arose. Yudrug-tsang soon struck up friendships with certain groups of Golok who were reliable and helpful. Making a friendship pact with the Golok involved crossing the index fingers in a hooked fashion and swearing pledges that they would help each other at all times and under all circumstances. At the beginning of their exile, Yudrug-tsang was only eight families strong, but gradually it evolved into a group of 18 families. One of their most important Golok allies was Getse Chodar, a leader who led a party of 200 horsemen.

During the six years of their exile in Golok, Yudrug-tsang made several trips to Zilphukhog and Marong-nang. Within only one year of their arrival in Golok, Yudrug-tsang sent several armed raiding parties back to their Marong-nang estate in order to harass their enemies. The raiders burned all of the harvested crops because Sakar-tsang had already assumed ownership of Marong-nang estate for itself. Half a year later, a dozen riders were sent out to raid a nomadic family in Zilphukhog as a punishment for its having informed Sakar-tsang of Yudrug-tsang's departure for Golok. Yudrug-tsang intimidated and menaced Sakar-tsang with this hit and run strategy from their base in Golok, and now that it was the aggressor, neither Sakar-tsang nor anyone else dared a confrontation with the exiles.

During the mid-1950s, the differences between Sakar-tsang and Yudrug-tsang were settled by the most powerful man in Dege at that time, Jago Topden. His life had once been saved by the Yudrug-tsang monk-physician Tsongnam who was the brother of Phurbu Trelen of

the sixth generation and uncle of Chimi Rinzin. It appears that it was Jago Topden who constrained powerful friends of Sakar-tsang from engulfing Yudrug-tsang, and it is evident that Yudrug-tsang's success in Golok was enhanced by Jago Topden because the part of Golok where Yudrug-tsang stayed was more or less under Topden's sway. Yudrug-tsang returned to Zilphukhog and lived there in peace for three years until the Chinese People's Liberation Army invaded the area.

DEPENDENT DEFECTIONS

The above case history not only aptly illustrates the extent of inter-estate encroachment, it also demonstrates the exploitation of the extra-state environment which was possible, even by an estate such as Yudrug-tsang. Although the manner in which this particular case of inter-estate encroachment occurred was perhaps unique, inter-estate encroachment itself was a political phenomenon that occurred repeatedly in Dege. Furthermore, the extra-state political environment could also in fact be exploited by dependents, although no dependent of Yudrug-tsang resorted to it. To exemplify what I mean I shall cite a case history from a neighbouring estate concerning two brothers, Rinchen and Tado, and a third man, Ayago. All three were dependents of a leading nobleman, Khado Nyerpa, who was a cabinet minister (Nyerpa) in the Dege kingdom. Khado Nyerpa was distantly related to Yudrug-tsang, due to which a number of his dependents lived for much of the year on Yudrug-tsang's territory for only a nominal rent.

Every winter, on the eve of the Tibetan New Year, a religious ceremony known as Gutor ("Cast offering of the twenty-ninth day") took place in the local monastery of Khado Gon. It was one of the few occasions when both peasants and nomads could come to the local monastery as spectators of, and participants in monastic ritual. Due to the occasion, peasants and nomads alike all wore their best clothes, but especially those who actually took part in the religious ceremonies which, among other things, consisted of casting *torma* (*gtor ma*) or ritual structures, and the shooting of guns into the air by laymen on the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth month of the Tibetan lunar year. On the eve of one particular Gutor ceremony at Khado Gon, the three aforementioned Khado dependents, Rinchen, Tado, and Ayago, borrowed horses, guns, and good clothing from three of their

neighbours, that is, Lomo-tsang, Shangku-tsang, and Gawa-tsang. The three households from whom they borrowed were all Khado dependents who lived in Zilphukhog for most of the year. The three men then absconded with everything they had borrowed and headed for Lab Tidu where the religious hierarch Lab Kyabgon, an enemy of the Dege kingdom, had his headquarters. The three men also took eight head of livestock with them on the day of their flight, and thus they were pursued. Yudrug-tsang dispatched two of his men to help Khado-tsang pursue the defectors. By all accounts, at least one if not all of the defectors successfully escaped to a new lord.

Yudrug-tsang's dependents felt that they did not have to defect, owing mainly to the positively viewed reciprocal economic and political interrelations that we have described in preceding chapters, and the phenomenon of defection was considered a measure of last resort in Zilphukhog. While there was no defection *from* Zilphukhog, a number of people defected or immigrated *to* Zilphukhog. As examples, we can mention the origins of various households, such as Acha-tsang which had originally come from Litang, or Lothenma, Thontra, Gompo of Dusar-tsang, and others who had all come from Chidrog which was a nomadic region of Dege to the west of the Yangtze River. Many others came to Zilphukhog from neighbouring communities, such as Karsumdo and Marong-nang. While it is not known exactly why these early immigrants moved to Zilphukhog in the past, it is clear that more recent defectors came to Zilphukhog as a result of conflicts with their neighbours. For instance, a man named Lutse Wangyal defected to Zilphukhog when local thugs stole most of his animals upon his return from a transport expedition moving Chinese goods. The perpetrators were so aggressive and intimidating that Lutse Wangyal felt he had to immediately defect with his entire family.

It can now be seen that the possibilities and restraints offered by the extra-state environment and inter-estate encroachment could certainly effect the ambitions of an estate lord. Even Khado-tsang, who was considered to be one of the most puissant lords in Dege, was not able to suppress defections: The extra-state environment rendered every leader vulnerable.

A salient question here is whether Yudrug-tsang's dependents were too timid or too much affected by loyalty and allegiance to defect? These factors might have been in operation to a certain extent, but all the dependents were cognizant of the advantageous situation they

enjoyed compared to other estates, and they also knew the risks that defection would have entailed. Besides, Yudrug-tsang presumably was not ready, or not in a position to maltreat dependents for two reason. Firstly, Yudrug-tsang was extremely ambitious and successful to a large extent, and alienating its dependents would have only eroded all that it had been trying to build up. Secondly, having as many dependents as possible was essential in the face of inter-estate conflicts. Because of these factors the Yudrug-tsang dependents regarded themselves as being more fortunate compared to the situation of other dependents under other leaders elsewhere. Moreover, defection was not something one readily chose to do because it clearly entailed a number of risks, including being pursued by one's lord and punished, cutting one's social ties and networks, sometimes leaving behind one's spouse or relatives, and starting a new life from scratch in an alien country. A potential defector had to carefully consider all the pros and cons of eventual defection.[9]

The above constraints must have made defection less attractive, but defection did constitute a last resort should the need arise. Due precisely to the availability of this last resort, and also to the fact of inter-estate encroachment, the lord/dependent relationship in Zilphu-khog necessarily had to be reciprocal and complementary. In other words, the constraining political environment had the capacity to render Yudrug-tsang and its peers more realistic and reciprocal, and less demanding.

[9] Editor's note: For a discussion of the question of dependents "running away" from estates in pre-modern Central Tibet published after Rinzin's work, see Goldstein 1989.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Throughout this book, I have presented my data about Zilphukhog primarily on a descriptive level. Although each chapter has dealt with a disparate social phenomenon or a set of phenomena, two constraining factors have loomed large throughout most of the discussion, that is, those described as political and economic factors. This final chapter will summarize much of the detail presented so far in order to explain how and why these underlying factors affected people in Zilphukhog in terms of their social organization. Before offering my own analytical approach to this issue, I want to present the native model, beginning first with a brief discussion of its applicability or relevance.

It is of interest to me that although the native theory and my own interpretation are arrived at in radically different ways, they come to the same conclusion: an essential degree of interdependence and reciprocity prevailed between the local Tibetan lord and his dependents. I therefore feel, notwithstanding the putative causal factors of the native model, that it nevertheless compliments and perhaps strengthens my own interpretation. Ladislav Holy and Milan Stuchlik pointed out that, "an analytical model is not supposed to compete with the folk model, but to take it as data."[1] What differentiates the two models in this case are their causal factors, which are antithetical. It appears that the native model derived from normative Buddhist tenets which pervaded every aspect of Tibetan culture. Or alternatively, any mundane causal factors were suppressed as they would be discrepant and disturbing in a moral world. However, the weakness of the native model is, perhaps, its unavailability for empirical verification which reduces its explanatory force, especially in terms of defining what empirical processes were involved for the emergence of a given social system. Fredrik Barth has described the inadequacy of interpretations based on the norms of society: "The model does not depict any intervening social process between the moral injunction and the pattern. There is indeed no science of social life in this procedure, no

[1] Holy and Stuchlik 1981:9-10.

explanation of how actual forms, much less frequency distributions, in behaviour come about, beyond the axiomatic: What people do is influenced by moral injunctions."[2] While resort to the native model alone is inadequate for my attempt to explain the emergent social form and processes in Zilphukhog, a brief presentation of it is nevertheless worthwhile here.

THE NATIVE MODEL

Without going into exhaustive detail, I shall outline how my informants accounted for or explained the mutualism and balance in the relationship between the lord and his dependents. Firstly, we must consider a pair of indigenous concepts, *jampo* (*'jam po*) and *tsupo* (*rtsub po*), by which Tibetans characterized the nature of man and things into two polar categories. The vernacular terms *jampo* ("smooth, gentle, mild, etc.") and *tsupo* ("crude, rough, callous, etc.") are evaluative words. For example, *mi jampo* is a person (*mi*) endowed with consideration, sympathy, philanthropy, compassion, etc., while *mi tsupo* is a person given to whims, roughness, callousness, and the like. The ideal example of *mi jampo* would be a serene hermit who is completely detached from worldly affairs and emotionally tranquil and balanced. This is, of course, a far-fetched example, but it illustrates the use of the concept of *jampo*.

My informants have been unanimous in asserting that the house of Yudrug-tsang had provided *jampo* lords, especially compared to some of its peers in other regions of Dege. Yudrug-tsang, undoubtedly, had been comparatively *jampo* to its dependents, but my informants' interpretation of this liberal attitude on the part of Yudrug-tsang differs decisively from my own. For instance, my informants considered that Yudrug-tsang had been *jampo* to them because of intrinsic Buddhist qualities, that is, being endowed with the virtuous qualities of compassion, altruism, philanthropy, and so forth. This notion or interpretation is plausible and logical to them on several grounds. Firstly, Yudrug-tsang had always been a staunch supporter of the Chögyal of Dege throughout the period of its status as local lord. Most of the monarchs of Dege had apparently been very religiously inclined and the state apparatus was analogous to that of a monastic

[2] Barth 1981a:35.

community. All the state functions had a religious character and there did not exist any standing army in Dege, except for a few royal bodyguards. Some Chögyal of Dege, such as Tenpa Tsering (1678-1738), were quite famous in Tibet for their contributions to the Sakyapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Tenpa Tsering won his fame due to his establishment in 1729 of the famous Dege Parkhang, a printing house which produced copies of the Tibetan Buddhist canon (*Kanjur* and *Tenjur*), along with many other texts, at the capital of Dege Gonchen. Yudrug-tsang's loyalty and service to the Chögyal of Dege was interpreted as enhancing and contributing to Buddhism, and was thus religiously meritorious. Secondly, Yudrug-tsang had an unbroken succession of Buddhist monks who had also been medical adepts. For instance, among the three brothers in the sixth generation, both Sangyal Tenzin and Tsongnam were celibate monks. Prior to the brothers' withdrawal to a nearby hermitage in their advanced age, Sangyal Tenzin had been in charge of the local monastery while Tsongnam had practiced charitable medicine, for which he had become renowned. Helping the sick and poor by giving medicine to them free of charge was considered an extremely humane act. Moreover, Tibetan medicine cannot be separated from Buddhism in its tenets, and the Tibetan god of medicine is considered to be an aspect of the Buddha known as Sangyal Mengilha or "Buddha of Medicine".

While the above examples of the house of Yudrug-tsang's behaviour and qualities are highly compatible with the principles of Buddhism, this is not to imply that such activities were consciously contrived to manipulate the dependents. Whatever interpretive approaches one might advocate, both my informants and I come to the same conclusion, that the *pon*/*khorpa* relationship had been reciprocal.

ANALYSIS

Rolf Stein put forward an interesting observation about the nature of authority in Tibet in his well-known work *Tibetan Civilization*, which he derived mainly from studying Tibetan historical sources:

> Two principles exemplified in the family are found again when we turn to consider the structure of authority: cohesion and the strength of the group, on the one hand; the hereditary authority of one person and a

> keen sense of hierarchy, on the other. Time and again one has the feeling that the second of these principles has won the day, but that the first continues to counterbalance it.[3]

Stein was alluding to a sort of a tug-of-war between two diametrically opposed principles, and the background "counterbalancing" nature of the first principle. However, Stein's claim that the second principle had won the day is a moot question to which I shall return and address in the analysis below. My own data convince me that group cohesion and strength in Zilphukhog was actually a matter of intentionality and premeditation. Intentionality and choice are two sides of the same coin, and the transformation of the former into the latter entailed the actualization of a given choice from an array of options. However, every alternative entailed a concomitant price to be paid, and hence the more rational and pragmatic course was to aim for the most optimal choice. Choice was neither pre-ordained nor imposed, but necessity rendered it indispensable owing to its optimal viability in a given social situation.

My investigation throughout this work has focused on how power and economic factors vis-à-vis the political environment constrained and facilitated the way of life in a Tibetan pastoral estate. My data fail to support the notion that crude exploitation (slavery or serfdom) had universal application in pre-modern Tibet,[4] although I am not claiming it never occurred in some areas. My data also indicate the antithesis of what one would have anticipated from the highly stratified and hierarchical social organization of the Dege kingdom. The incompatibility of my data with the assumed and anticipated social phenomenon may be slightly baffling at first sight. Just as the king could have been imperial, and enjoyed power by virtue of his being the sovereign of the kingdom, so too local estate owners could also have behaved as kings in miniature in their own right. These local replicas of the king were not only endowed by the king with land, but also with dependents in lieu of salary for their service and loyalty to the state. Thus, the political apparatus would have permitted or tolerated the basest form of exploitation of the dependents. Instead of this kind of exploitation, a more reciprocal and counterbalanced social form emerged in estates such as Zilphukhog. The fundamental character-

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[3] Stein 1972:125.

[4] For examples, see Strong 1960, Gelder and Gelder 1964, and Chen Han-seng 1949.

istics of the social form were interdependence, complementarity, reciprocity, and so forth. Hence, my task here is to summarize again why the above social phenomena manifested in such an apparently unlikely setting.

There were four main kinds of constraining factors that made their effects felt in Dege in general, and in Zilphukhog in particular. These were described above as the decline of Dege-tsang, inter-estate encroachment, individual ambition, and the impact of adjacent states. I have summarized the influences of these constraining factors upon the local system of lord and dependents in Zilphukhog on the left-hand half of figure 21, "Social organization of Zilphukhog". As a contrast to this, we can envisage a hypothetical situation plotted on the right-hand half of figure 21, where different choices could have been made by the lord and his dependents under the influence of these same constraining factors.

In this hypothetical situation, a lord who was engrossed in a keen sense of hereditary authority could, for example, have imposed severe restrictions on his dependents' physical movement (e.g. for trading trips), their social mobility, marriage choices and locality, and generally condemned them to extreme servitude. This kind of situation certainly did not occur in Zilphukhog, and it is unlikely that such a situation occurred in any other neighbouring community, since it would have required the lord to be invulnerable amidst the constraining political environment. However, there certainly did exist the possibility of dependents having a taxpayer status imposed upon them, as shown in the hypothetical state of affairs in figure 21. A dependent could be exchanging with a taxpayer to assume the latter's status. Exchanging dependents—such as those who were lazy or non-compliant—with taxpayers—such as those who won the favour of their district magistrate—was permitted by Dege-tsang, or it was undertaken by local lords at Dege-tsang's expense. It appears that the lot of the poor taxpayer was much harder than that of the dependent. In the extreme cases cited by informants, taxpayers in the districts immediately around Dege Gonchen, such as Kontog or Chagra, had to serve or pay tax to three different masters from time to time. In addition to local demands, occasionally both Central Tibetan and Chinese civil and military officials exacted various forms of tax from the inhabitants of these areas while on their way back and forth between Lhasa and China. Due to their proximity to the capital, the above mentioned districts were subjected to disproportionate taxation,

owing to which my informants said people prayed not to be reborn in or sent to these districts. Dege-tsang, therefore, sent its recalcitrant subjects to these over-taxed districts as a form of punishment.

In the hypothetical situation plotted in figure 21, the community would have been gradually whittled away by the joint force of encroaching estates and defection of dependents, and the lord would have embarked on a downward spiral, if not abrupt self-destruction. In reality, avoiding such extreme situations was the common strategy, and a more accommodating social form prevailed. It had the virtues of being pragmatic rather than dogmatic, and facilitating rather than constraining. If a lord was single-mindedly ambitious and inclined to augment his prestige and power, he had to be responsive to the constraints. He had to possess a sort of concentric capacity or force that the periphery sought for protection, help, alliance, and the like. Being in the centre of things meant power and prestige, but because of the main constraining factors, prestige and power had to be obtained in a counterbalanced way.

I shall now briefly review six features of the emergent social form in Zilphukhog as they were generated by the impingement of the constraining factors on hereditary authority, which in turn affected the community significantly.

1. *She*, the practice of leasing milch-cows, was described in Chapter Five. Every needy dependent household in Zilphukhog received *she*. Without the mechanism of *she* to help render economic viability and recovery from natural disaster, many new households established by both immigrants and resident dependents would have dissolved. Thus, *she* constituted an economic incentive or attraction that might have recruited new dependents on the one hand, and rendered resident dependents content with their lot on the other hand. This economic mechanism had to be concrete and enduring, i.e. it had to be available to anybody whenever the need arose. As manpower constituted an asset and was a rare "commodity" to obtain, lords as rivals and peers found themselves as interest groups desiring and competing for the same limited pool of manpower. In view of this, the party that could outbid its rivals in terms of economic and social possibilities or incentives could also outwit its rivals: The party whose credentials were good attracted more people.

2. The physical mobility of dependents in terms of trading expeditions has been discussed in Chapter Five, and it was shown that

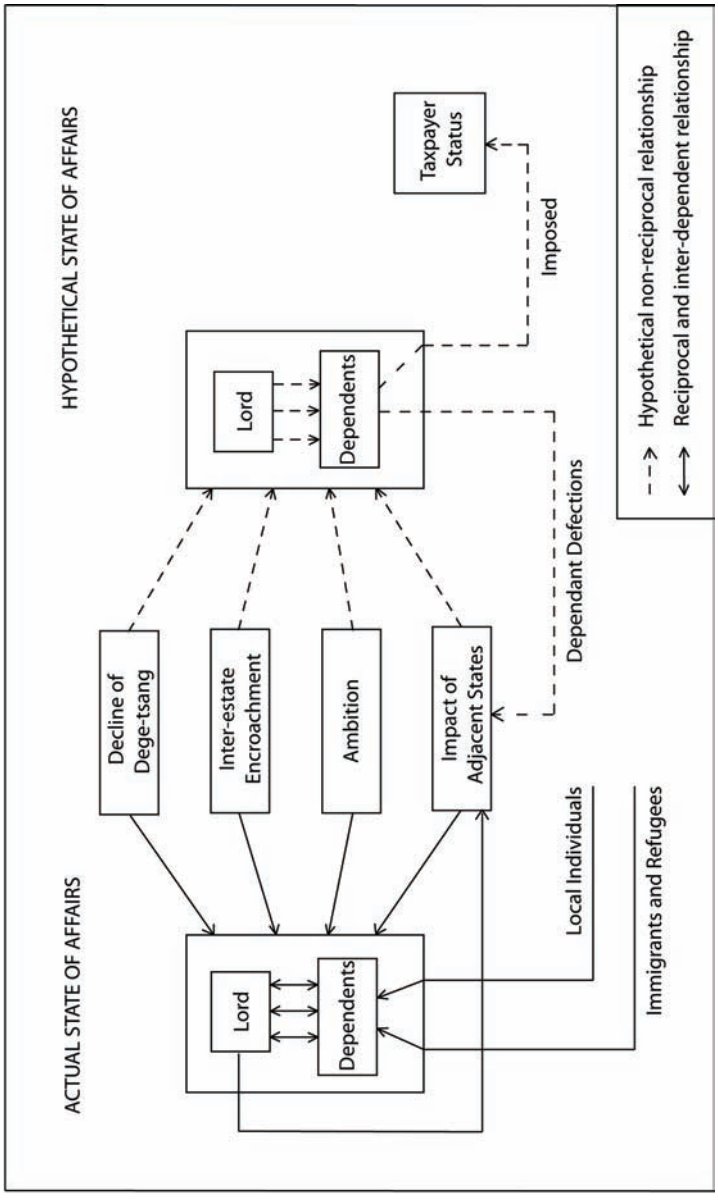

Figure 21. Social organization of Zilphukhog.

seasonal trade was imperative for the viability of the dependent population. Although seasonal pastoral movement was confined to limited parameters within the physical sphere of the valley of Zilphukhog, the actual annual extent of geographical movement undertaken by people in Zilphukhog was considerable due to trade. Trade offered ample opportunity for adventure, entrepreneurial initiative, and freedom of movement. For example, a trip to Rongpa-tsa, which lay outside of the kingdom of Dege, took over a month, and thus gave the dependents ample time and freedom for safe defection, that is, defection without the danger of pursuit. Trade also offered the opportunity to initiate entrepreneurial enterprise, given the availability of the necessary means and business acumen on the part of dependents. Curtailing trade and physical movement would have been self-defeating for Yudrug-tsang, as without supplementing the household economy by seasonal trade most dependent households would not have been viable.

3. Labour service has been described in great detail in Chapter Three, which demonstrated that it was mild in Zilphukhog since only one member of a household was required to perform seasonal labour service while the other family members were free to manage their household economy and utilize its wealth, property, etc. independently. Moreover, new households that usually lacked the necessary labour power were exempted from labour service until they augmented their labour power through reproduction. Labour service in itself is connotative of exploitation of one group by another, but it is essential to investigate its nature and consider on what condition it was based. Labour service could be interpreted as a form of reciprocity, i.e. it was obligatory on the condition that dependents acquiesced in their status and took advantage of the benefits which that status entailed. These benefits very significantly included freedom from all other types of state taxes. Generally, writers on Tibet have tended to rank the taxpayer above the dependent, but my informants were of the opinion that in Dege the taxpayers lived a harder life.

4. Chapter Eight described how the degree of matrimonial freedom within the community was great. Although male dependents were not allowed to marry extra-communally, neolocal or conjugal households mushroomed. The peculiarity of the marital system in Zilphukhog was that marriages were encouraged rather than hampered. According to my data, no individual was held as a bondsman whose freedom to marry was denied because of its inconvenience to the lord. On the

contrary, even the lone and often destitute immigrants were encouraged to marry and even assisted to establish independent households. Neolocal marriages dominated among the dependents and they had two advantages: Less well-off dependents could leave their natal homes and seek their fortunes on their own; and neolocal marriages were compatible with love marriages, which were largely denied by plural marriages. Any spouse was welcome to Zilphukhog, although grooms scarcely crossed the communal threshold owing precisely to the scarcity and importance of the male population. Although there was a mushrooming of conjugal and neolocal marriages in Zilphukhog, other forms of marriage, such as polyandry and polygyny, were practiced and could be practiced according to the means and necessity of individual families.

5. At various points throughout this book, I have given examples of how refugees of different background and individuals from neighbouring areas gravitated to Zilphukhog and established dependent households there. Moreover, the local code of honour held that the asylum granter protect any refugees once they had been granted refuge. Without implying that Yudrug-tsang was the only lord with whom refugees and immigrants sought refuge, its attraction for such people was significant. It is my belief that there were an array of potential estates to choose from in the kingdom of Dege, but only some of them possessed the kind of centripetal force that attracted non-dependents of varying backgrounds so that they could be established as new dependents.

6. The potential for, and realization of social mobility has been another recurrent theme throughout the foregoing chapters. While the superordinate and his subordinates certainly did not change social positions in Zilphukhog, the potential room for economic achievement and social advancement appears to have been very great. Some dependent households rivaled if not surpassed Yudrug-tsang in terms of their wealth in *nor* or livestock. Certain individuals and families literally abandoned peasant status within a single generation. The achievement of a new status naturally meant the accumulation of wealth in *nor* and prestige. At the lower end of the social system, the transition entailed casting off an ephemeral status as a household without a common, inheritable name, and the adoption of a status that could be perpetuated through an inheritable house name. Another case in point was the transformation of lone immigrants or refugees whose status changed from that of anonymity and nonentity to having some

degree of wealth and prestige within a generation or two though the foundation of new dependent households. At the upper end of the social system, Yudrug-tsang's own history exemplifies the dynamic social dimension of the Dege polity during the 19th- and early 20th centuries. Yudrug-tsang's successive leaders acquired the status of Norma (keeper of the royal herds), then Hoda (lesser non-noble leader), and finally the higher rank of Poncha (leaders who were aspirants to nobility). At the zenith of Yudrug-tsang's achievement it had attained a *de facto* noble status which was especially reflected in its marriage partners, and it probably equaled if not surpassed an established but mediocre Dukor or noble estate in terms of the number of its dependents, the size of its estate holdings (both pastoral and agricultural), wealth, and prestige.

The four main constraining factors initially outlined in this section, including the decline of Dege-tsang, inter-estate encroachment, individual ambition, and the impact of adjacent states, were some of the most salient conditions that affected the lord/dependent relationship in Zilphukhog. Whether consciously contrived or not, the six features of the emergent social form in Zilphukhog just reviewed above had the capacity to counterbalance the constraining factors and thus hinder institutionalized or hereditary authority. Here it is germane to summarize Fredrik Barth's concept of integrity through non-cost free choice:

> The key which secures this integrity of people as actors is the concept of choice. Not free choice—indeed that is precisely what makes an analysis of choice illuminating: choices are decisions which are constrained by the perceptions of the actors, the circumstances under which persons act, and the reactions of others.[5]

I have been arguing for the availability of several potential choices of differing viability and the actualization of the optimal alternative. A lord could have been heavy-handed and autocratic, but this policy would have been incompatible with his ambition and aspirations under the prevailing circumstances. Similarly, dependents could have defected to other places. Thus, institutionalized inequality, i.e. hereditary authority as opposed to group strength and cooperation, had been devoid of the force and energy to hold the constraining factors at bay without having to pay too high a price for it. Therefore, institu-

[5] Barth 1981:129.

tionalized inequality in the form of hereditary authority succumbed to the pervasiveness of these constraining factors in Zilphukhog. I suggest, in contradiction to Rolf Stein, that the first of the two principles with which he characterized the nature of authority in Tibetan societies—cohesion and the strength of the group—won the day, by choice, at least in Zilphukhog. This was so precisely because of the above constraining factors, and the determination of both the superordinate and the subordinates to make the best out of their differential opportunity situations.

CONCLUSIONS

In analyzing the social organization of Zilphukhog, and identifying causal factors responsible for its emergence, my data necessarily confined me to one local community which was encapsulated within a larger state. The question is whether this local approach has any relevance to the polity as a whole? Although not a core aspect of my study, there was a certain similarity and parallelism between the estate of Zilphukhog and the polity of Dege. It appears that both state and local community experienced political vicissitudes and they were both vulnerable to the constraining political environment discussed in the foregoing chapters. Because of these causal factors, a centrifugal process appears to have resulted at the level of the state.

Whatever the degree of comparability between the two levels, two societal features seem to have operated in Zilphukhog: interdependence and social mobility. Given the overall political insecurity I have repeatedly emphasized, the dyadic interrelationship between the lord and his dependents had to be complementary and counterbalanced. A sort of minimum threshold or mutual expectation was maintained, and going beyond it signaled the disruption of the mutuality. In other words, each party was in a distinctive opportunity situation, of which the optimal exploitation rendered it satisfied. This notion precludes the eventuality of equal opportunity situations, but it nevertheless entailed equal opportunity to extend and exploit each party's differential situation optimally, within given parameters. I maintain that each party's access to the possibility of extending and exploiting its opportunity situation made the dyadic interrelationship viable and enduring in the midst of encroaching elements.

It may sound paradoxical to assert that Zilphukhog was a dynamic society, as pre-modern Tibet was known to have been isolated both culturally and geographically, and is often held to have been rather static. Admittedly, neither acculturation nor revolutions took place in Dege, but the unstable and impinging political environment appears to have rendered the society dynamic. The imperatives of interdependence and complementarity would have made a more static society impractical.

I agree with S.F. Nadel when he stated that, "No one will quarrel with the assertion that social existence is controlled existence." Karl Popper's famous Platonic assertion that, "Unlimited freedom means that a strong man is free to bully one who is weak and rob him of his freedom" is also enlightening.[6] However, while my informants lived a controlled existence and none of them had unlimited freedom, their social organization was not predetermined, nor was it the only possible organizational arrangement. Being constrained necessitated them as social actors to weigh and evaluate their actions strategically. I consider constrained actions to be the canalized child of counteracting factors. This process invariably entailed a minute assessment of the pros and cons of the emergent (canalized) action. Using my data I have identified the major constraining factors which were largely responsible for the emergence of the form of social organization that was extant in Zilphukhog before 1959, and in which the relationship between lord and dependents was reciprocal and more horizontal rather than vertical. This social organization, in all its dimensions I have outlined, seemed to have had the optimal adaptive properties.

[6] Popper 1980:124.

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INDEX

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