8 Pastoralists by Choice

Adaptations in Contemporary Pastoralism in Eastern Kham

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Abstract

The Chinese state's categorical distinction between *mumin* (herder) and *nongmin* (farmers) views the former as a mode of production conducted out of environmental necessity in places unable to be productively cultivated by dominant agrarian settlements. Such a view has been integral in narratives of Chinese state legibility. Focusing on a contemporary community in eastern Kham and their everyday practices as well as narrative choices to remain *drokpa*, or pastoralists, this chapter re-examines pastoralism as a degree of specialization. In the process, it seeks to demonstrate how local specificities and experiences not only clarify a general understanding of Tibetan pastoralism but also complicate a presentation of Chinese state governmentality.

Keywords: *mumin*, pastoralism, degree of specialization, adaptation, state legibility, margins

Introduction

Among a group of nomadic pastoralists in the Minyak area of Kham (see Map 1),¹ a recent development related to the scope of pastoral activity has occurred. Beginning around 2010, increased numbers of pastoral households have started to plant 'leaves' (*loma*) in the fenced enclosures of their winter houses. These fenced enclosures and winter houses were built in the 1990s as a direct result of the Chinese government's 'Four

¹ Minyak (also Minyag) derives its name from Minyak Rab, one of the six ranges that comprises the region of Kham, which is also known as 'four rivers, six ranges' (*chushi gangdruk*).

Constructions that Form a Set' (*si peitao*) policy that sought to introduce material improvements in pastoral areas. This policy saw the construction of winter houses, fenced enclosures for annual forage, barns for animals, and fenced winter pastures in an effort to reorganize pastoral populations from the cooperatism of the earlier period towards individual households and enhanced technical productivity. Presently, this group of pastoralists in Minyak Kham continues to herd yaks and to move with them from pasture to fresh pasture during the summer and autumn months. During the winter and spring months, the pastoralists live in simple stone-and-mud houses. By directing their efforts and labour primarily towards animal husbandry and orienting their lives towards movement, these pastoralists identify as *drokpa*, 'people of the pastures' who live on the hoof (Ekvall 1968) and consider themselves different from both *rongpa* or farmers, and *rongmadrok* or semi-pastoralists. The latter especially have been written about in the literature as agropastoralists who engage in practices of animal husbandry but whose primary orientation is towards their agricultural fields and the fixity of residence in houses (Ekvall 1968). Given the pastoralists' self-presentation as *drokpa*, the relatively recent attention to planting requires greater consideration.

The planting of these 'leaves', which are a small Chinese cabbage (Ch. *xiao bai cai*, Tib. tshal dkar, sp. *Brassica rapa subsp. Chinensis*), is not the first or only activity of small-scale planting by these pastoralists. In the early 2000s, an international development organization working in the area had initiated a grass-seed planting project. The organization handed out grass-seeds to each household and urged them to plant the seeds in the fenced enclosures of their winter houses in order to encourage pastoralists to supplement their animals' annual forage by supplying fodder.² A handful of households dutifully scattered the seeds in their fenced enclosures in the first year; yet despite the efforts of the organization, most pastoralists did not enthusiastically take up the grass-seeding project. Many regarded the seeds as 'feeding the birds' rather than resulting in fodder for the animals. Either because of lack of attention or skill, the seeds did not produce the harvest fodder expected and interest soon waned. While the grass-seeding project has now been left fallow, the planting of 'leaves' in recent times

2 Bringing fodder to animals rather than leading animals out to pasture is an act that distinguishes ranching from pastoralism: by enabling greater capital investment in the animals, the rancher is able to achieve higher productive intensity in terms of milk and meat (Chang and Koster 1994, Ingold 1980). Pastoralism, on the other hand, refers to a set of unimproved activities around animal husbandry and produces relatively low yields (Asad 1978, Bates and Lees 1977).

has gained steady momentum. Of the approximately 80 households in the community, around half of these have planted leaves in the past eight years. This chapter will probe the ethnographic reasons behind this example to better understand its overall import in the complex interplay between environment, livelihood, and culture for contemporary Tibetan pastoralists of Minyak Kham. It will demonstrate, moreover, how the ethnographic data reveal limitations of overly determined categories of livelihood and way of life, such as *mumin* (herder) and *nongmin* (farmer), as they play out in state policies and modes of legibility.

State delineations of what 'counts' as agriculture – with respect to labour required, kinds of crops planted, and scale in which the crops are cultivated – need to be probed further. This chapter picks up one thread in the literature, namely that what counts as agriculture is determined largely by state categories and measures of production intensity and volume, kind of crops planted, and sedentism, in other words, the 'scientific agriculture' proposed by Scott (1998) as part of high modernist ideology. Thus, in the context of the Chinese state, we have seen from Mark Frank's contribution (this volume) that the 'agrarian nationalism' of the Republican government favoured cereal farming and specific crops of wheat and corn, as it harboured the belief that scientific agriculture was an 'improvement' (Ch. *gaijin*, *gailiang*). Such nationalism assumed not only a binary opposition between 'agrarian states' and 'industrial states' but also an internal opposition between a dominant farming population and marginalized herder populations. This internal opposition was shaped also by sentiments of superiority and civility by the Chinese state – built on Han agricultural sedentism – over the notable pastoral populations within its territoriality. This superiority is certainly echoed in Mark Frank's presentation of Zhang Yunping's manifesto (see Frank, this volume). From the perspective of state legibility, then, nomadic herders comprise a simplified and abstracted category that is articulated in opposition to sedentary farmers. Countering this perspective is not, however, to merely refute a state perspective but to pay careful attention to how empirical practices of pastoralism do not necessarily exclude other livelihood activities. It also demands an empirically-derived refinement of state legibility to examine how processes of governmentality also include practices of illegibility, namely how Minyak *drokpa* not only resist but also adapt to policy implementations. This last point bears particularly on the question posed in Stéphane Gros' Introduction to Part II of this volume about how state control is achieved and maintained in borderland regions, which often express realities that run counter to centrist narratives.

State Legibility

In his work, *Seeing Like a State* (1998), the political scientist James Scott highlights how state governmentality works according to processes of legibility that include acts of simplification and abstraction. In order to control its subjects and engineer social projects, the state must first reduce complex realities to simplified and standard categories. The category most relevant to this examination of Chinese state legibility is the term *mumin*, or herder. It is a category that operates on several levels of definition and meaning, and these levels are often blurred, even in policy documents. At the productive level, the term *mumin* is drawn in clear distinction with *nongmin*, or farmer. As a mode of production, herding refers to the activity of keeping livestock as a primary source of livelihood. It may or may not entail nomadism. In terms of state legibility, it is distinct from farming, which refers to the activity of planting (and animal husbandry) as a primary mode of livelihood. Because of their reliance on fields, farmers also denote a settled population. For the Chinese state, *mumin* applies to all populations (usually minority groups) that primarily herd and who, according to policy documents such as the Nomad Settlement Project (Ch. *you mumin dingju*), share similar conditions, including 'having no fixed abode, lacking in production and living conditions, and suffering from the onslaught of natural disasters'.³ Such a categorization applies irrespective of whether those concerned are from Tibet, Xinjiang, or Inner Mongolia, of the kinds of animals herded, and of the historical or cultural factors that have influenced their lives as herders.

The term *mumin* is not only deployed in terms of mode of production, however. It is also and simultaneously a social category, one that is described in policy documents through often derogatory language. *Mumin* are generally portrayed as traditionalists who have relied on the heavens for good fortune (rather than on scientific and technical progress).⁴ For example, the Nomad Settlement Project policy document describes herders as 'one of the weak links in building a well-off society in an all-rounded way'.⁵ The most consistent descriptor used in relation to *mumin* is 'backward' (*luo hou*),

3 Chinese government document 2011, 2.

4 Interestingly, this attitude and language are reminiscent of the more general Han Chinese sense of self, 'as the vanguard of the proletariat' (Gladney 1998, 9). Harrell's articulation of the three metaphors – sexual, educational, historical – that inflect how the civilizing centre (Han) regards its peripheral peoples (Others) offers another perspective on this view, particularly as the ethnic identification project (*minzu shibie*) occurred under Communist rule (Harrell 1995, 23).

5 Chinese government document 2011, 2.

which reveals the state's generally derisive and superior attitude towards this group. That herders are often from minority nationalities adds to the emphasis of Han superiority.

Interpretive levels based on mode of production and social distinction of *mumin* are often conflated and collapsed in processes of Chinese state legibility. In his examination of Han Chinese ecological identity, Dee Williams (2002) writes that the Chinese term *huang* not only denotes unfamiliar ecological zones as 'waste' or 'barren', and therefore carries assumptions on the kinds of productive activity that can be achieved in such regions, but it also carries connotations for behaviour and character. On this point, references made towards the emptiness of the grasslands or the absence of domestication have been reinforced in Chinese idioms, such as 'herders eat unethical grain' (Ch. *mumin chi kuixin liang*), which criticized the herders for living off grain they did not produce (Hong 2005, 648). By extension, *mumin* were viewed as lazy and slothful because they were perceived as not tilling the land and not labouring productively (Williams 2002, 32). Being *mumin* is thus represented in policy documents through a set of collective physical and social problems, such as 'poor hygienic conditions' (*wei sheng tiao jian ji cha*), 'breed degradation' (*pin zhong tui hua*), and 'weak disaster prevention and mitigation capacity' (*fang zai jian zai neng li ruo*). The category of *mumin* as one of state legibility contains assumptions of ecological determinism, social characterization, and moral deficiency.

For Scott, state legibility and the simplified, abstracted categories created are the basis on which the state develops its various projects of 'improvement'. By 'improvement', Scott refers to efforts to achieve an assumed evolutionary pinnacle of civilization: organized nature, permanent settlements, maximized production, and social engineering informed by high modernist ideology. The last, in particular, is based on a confidence in 'scientific and technical progress [and] the expansion of production' (Scott 1998, 4) that undergirds Chinese state policies towards its pastoral populations. This echoes the observations made by both Mark Frank and Pat Giersch in this volume on state agricultural 'improvement' and state development initiative. It is observed by Emily Yeh (2007) in her article on how the trope of indolence combines with state development discourse to recreate notions of what constitutes 'proper work' in Lhasa, Tibet.⁶ In the case of the contemporary Chinese state, the language of science, of technical improvements, and of

6 The specifically local idioms of development and their role in allowing local manoeuvre of state discourses operate in ways not dissimilar to what I suggest here, following Das and Poole's (2004) formulation of 'margins'.

intensive production is used liberally in plans to ‘improve’ the conditions of living and production for *mumin*. Starting from the policies of Four Constructions that Form a Set (*si peitao jianshe*) in the 1990s to the Develop the West (*xibu dakaifa*) and Restoring the Pastures (*tuimu huancao*) policies of the 2000s and the more recent policies of Ecological Migration (*shengtai yimin*) and Nomad Settlement (*you mumin dingju*), these policy templates have been explicitly designed to alter the material bases of livelihood and production for all herders (see Table 8.1). Therefore, the Nomad Settlement Project focuses on 1) building a well-off society in a well-rounded way, 2) transforming the development of animal husbandry in pastoral places, 3) protecting grassland ecology, and 4) maintaining national unity and frontier stability. Specifically, the Nomad Settlement Project promotes the construction of houses, livestock sheds, and storage huts for fodder in an effort to increase the productive yields of pastoral regions.

Table 8.1 Overview of selected government policies in Kham, 1990s-present

Three Constructions that Form a Set, <i>san peitao jianshe</i>	三配套建设	1990s-2000s
Four Constructions that Form a Set, <i>si peitao jianshe</i>	四配套建设	1990s-2000s
Develop the West, <i>xibu dakaifa</i>	西部 大开发	2000
Restoring the Pastures, <i>tuimu huancao</i>	退牧还草	2003-2012
Ecological Migration, <i>shengtai yimin</i>	生态移民	2003
Nomad Settlement, <i>you mumin dingju</i>	游牧民定居	2009

However, ‘improvement’ relates not just to the material conditions and environment of the *mumin*, but also to the *mumin* themselves, revealing more clearly the connections among ecological determinism, mode of production, and social and moral characterization of the state category of *mumin*. Therefore, while the *san peitao* and *si peitao* constructions and *tuimu huancao* policy focused on the construction and management of material grassland ‘improvements’, policy refinements now extend to a ‘transformation of people and methods’ (*zhuan ren, zhuan fangshi*) by ‘raising efficiency’ (*di xiao*). In order to achieve these measures, government departments increasingly conduct training sessions with local communities. For instance, the Animal Husbandry Bureau of Dartsedo County selects and trains people in targeted communities in order to set up ‘demonstration households’ (*shi fan hu*). Local nomadic pastoralists are increasingly called on to participate in meetings in which they register their households and livestock in order to receive subsidies of grain feed. Along with information from additional forums such as the National Conference on Pastoral Regions

and the creation of monetary schemes, current policies are clearly facilitating change with a different emphasis: intensifying pastoral production to achieve economic development. By moving from extensive herding to an intensive market-oriented livestock industry that takes advantage of growing conditions in pastoral regions, the Chinese state intends to transform Tibetans from 'backwards' nomadic pastoralists to neoliberal, market-oriented, and governable subjects (Gaerrang 2015, Yeh and Gaerrang 2011).

Categories of *mumin* and *nongmin*, examined through policy documents, reveal modes of legibility. Yet, focusing only on state legibility runs the danger of presenting a state that is practically solid and coherent. This may be heuristically convenient, but as anthropologists of the state such as Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004) have noted, the state not only functions to create and maintain order (to which categories belong) but also exists as a ghostly form, a 'spectral state' that looms as a power to be resisted or subverted (Mueggler 2001). In this conceptual articulation, and through its modes of legibility, the state appears as 'a self-reproducing, totalizing constellation of forces' (Kapferer 2010, 128). However, Das and Poole (2004, 6, 9-10) observe that *illegibility*, where modes of legibility break away from intent, is part of the process of state governmentality, and practices of illegibility most frequently occur at the margins. These margins include borderland regions such as Kham, which – through processes of aligning with, yet also adapting, state policies – reveal state-margins relationships as dynamic and mutually constitutive, as I will discuss in the final section of this chapter. Actual practices of daily life as *drokpa*⁷, for one pastoral group in Minyak Kham, and the specific conditions that historically frame their continuing self-presentation as *drokpa* elaborate how being *drokpa* is equally about a way of life as it is about sustaining a livelihood. This self-expression goes beyond ecological and cultural determinants of the category of *mumin*, and instead, complicate simplified abstractions. Activities such as planting leaves, caterpillar fungus gathering, and trade, while fully coherent to *drokpa* themselves, are read as illegible in the context of state legibility.

Being *Minyak Drokpa*

The pastoralists in question live in the eastern section of the Hengduan mountain range on high-altitude pastures (3900-4200 metres above sea

7 In this regard, I translate *drokpa* as pastoralist in order to signal a more inclusive definition than that of *mumin* (herder).

level) that are now part of the administrative township of Tagong (Lhagang) in Kangding (Dartsedo) County, Ganzi (Kandzé) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. During the winter and spring months, the community of around 80 households live in simple houses, variously constructed of mud and stone and of concrete. The location of the late autumn, winter, and early spring pastures is along a high valley (3900 metres above sea level) in the foothills of a snow-capped mountain named Zhamo (5270m). According to locals, Zhamo is the wife-mountain of a more dominant snow peak, Zhara Latse (5650 m). Ecologically, the pastures are in a 'subtropical montane coniferous forest zone of southeastern Tibet, high-cold vegetation' ecoregion (Chang 1981) with specific characteristics given by altitude and orientation. The *Kobresia* sedge is a currently dominant plant species in these pastures. During the late spring, summer, and early autumn months, these pastoralists move with their animals to higher elevation (4200 metres above sea level) and live in black yak-hair tents. While adaptations to household organization have seen growing numbers of elderly pastoralists remaining in winter houses during the summer and autumn months, the orientation of the community continues to be towards the herding and care of animals, mainly yaks, and movements with the herd. Pastoralists in the community often refer to themselves as '*Minyak drokpa*', with *drokpa* displaying a primary orientation towards the herd and movement rather than towards the house and fields as displayed by semi-pastoralists. *Drokpa*, therefore, is more than the practice of animal husbandry; it encompasses a way of life.

The specificity in the way these pastoralists refer to the term *Minyak* requires some explanation. In common use, *Minyak* is a self-identifying term rather than one that refers to an abstract territory or region of clear boundaries. The identification is complex and relies on multiple factors, which may shift in emphasis depending on the community and context. For this community in a contemporary context, an important part of being *Minyak drokpa* is the mountain Zhara Latse. Zhara is a mountain with several meanings and practices attached to it: it is a *zhidak* or territorial master, which is part of the host of immanent deities in a Tibetan life-world; it is a *lari* or soul mountain, which houses the *la*, or soul, of a particular community; and it is also a *néri* or pilgrimage mountain/site, which is a site of ritual practice.⁸ As a *néri*, it is referred to as *Minyak Latse* in the nineteenth-century narrative map of the Nyingma master, Chogyur Lingpa, called the Twenty-five Great Sites of Kham. The map, which was further elaborated by Jamgon Kongtrul of Palpung monastery, contained sacred sites

8 For more details on each of these terms, see Huber (1994), Tan (2016).

that expressed the extent of the region of Kham (see Gros, this volume).⁹ As one of the twenty-five great sites of Kham, Minyak Zhara Latse is the southeasternmost point of the region of Kham and is a focal ritual and narrative site for the pastoralists living in its vicinity. Pastoralists in this community enact the multiple meanings attached to Zhara as part of their continuing self-representation as Minyak *drokpa*.

Another aspect of identity lies in the community's continuing self-presentation as Minyak *drokpa*. To further understand this, we must appreciate the community's history. 'More than a hundred years ago', as it was explained to me, this pastoral community moved from the vicinity of Nanglang lake in what is now Pelyul County to the grasslands where they currently live. To place this move in historical context, Nanglang lake is located in what was the area comprising the lower districts of Nyarong, and the grasslands presently occupied were part of the Chakla kingdom.¹⁰ To appreciate the cause of the move, some further historical details will be considered.

Prior to the creation of Xikang Province by the Chinese Republican government in 1939, the physical area delineated by the region of Kham was dominated by the presence of four large Tibetan kingdoms, known in Chinese as the 'four great *tusi*' (*si da tusi*).¹¹ These kingdoms were Dergé, Lithang, Bathang, and Chakla, and they gave their allegiance to the Qing emperor. In addition to these kingdoms, there were also smaller fiefdoms; the British Consul Teichman (1922) noted that, in the early twentieth century, there were as many as twenty Khampa states 'under Chinese protection' (excluding the Gyelrong kingdoms). Such a proliferation of 'states' – both dominant and minor – created a historical situation where the rule of law of a central authority could not be guaranteed. Expressed at the level of self-identity, Khampas fought and resisted *both* the Chinese administration in Beijing and Tibetan administration in Lhasa. On a political level, the Chinese presence in Kham served as an immediate counter-manoeuvre to Central Tibet and its attempt to establish rule in Kham. Moreover, the

9 Gardner (2006, 154) notes that Jamgon Kongtrul's revision of the map was intra-sectarian because it combined sacred sites of the Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Bon traditions. However, it explicitly expressed resistance to the real enemy of the day, namely Lhasa and its dominant Gelukpa order.

10 While it is common to associate the Chakla kingdom with the area of Minyak, the two are not entirely coterminous.

11 The word *tusi* is an official Chinese title bestowed by the Qing emperor and refers to the Tibetan titles for *gyelpo*, *depa*, and *ponpo*. Teichman (1922) glosses the first as 'king', and the other two as 'hereditary officials'. The latter term, 'hereditary officials', is how *tusi* and *tuguan* are generally glossed in English. However, Gardner (2003, 72) notes that the kingdoms that were officially *tusi* and *tuguan* are difficult to distinguish from each other.

involvement of foreign powers in Kham activated both a strategic use of resistance among the kingdoms and a system of patronage that was mirrored previously in the seventeenth century when the Mongols defeated in Lithang the Jang kingship of Lijiang and established priest-patron relationships with the Geluk sect of Tibetan Buddhism. The interplay between kings and foreign powers in maintaining local autonomy on the one hand, and in jostling for the right to rule on the other, characterized the historical struggles of Kham.

These historical struggles had direct bearing on nomadic pastoralists who were often recruited to fight because of their prowess on horseback and with weapons. The struggles also influenced the movements of communities of pastoralists and, in some cases, instigated migrations across valley and mountain ranges. One struggle, noteworthy in relation to my fieldsite, was an uprising that occurred in 1837. The military leader Gönpo Namgyel, also known as the 'Nyarong demon', began a military uprising in the valley of Nyarong. Gönpo Namgyel waged war in Nyarong and united the upper, middle, and lower districts under his control. He also succeeded in bringing together neighbouring nomadic tribes (Gardner 2003). By the early 1860s, Gönpo Namgyel had conquered most of northwestern Kham, taking Dergé in 1862. Shortly after, a counter-move to the authority of Gönpo Namgyel came from the Chakla kingdom based in Dartsedo and a trade bastion for the Chinese since the Ming dynasty (Tsomu 2016). According to oral history, this counter-move by the Chakla kingdom occurred at the approximate time – 'more than a hundred years ago' – that the pastoral community moved from the vicinity of Nanglang lake in the lower districts of Nyarong to the grasslands that were part of the Chakla kingdom.

When the pastoralists first moved from Nanglang lake, they first grazed their animals on the pastures that are now the location of their summer pastures. This explains why their monastery is located in the grasslands of the summer pastures since pastoral rotations once revolved around that location. As the community grew, it gradually incorporated other pastures at slightly lower altitude into their grazing rotations. Different parts of the community occupied different pastures in the area and, under the current Chinese system, the original community is divided into four administratively distinct 'villages' (*cun*), each with its own 'village leader' (*cun zhang*) and 'village party secretary' (*cun shuji*). The particular group, or 'village', of my fieldwork eventually occupied its current winter pastures in the high valley at the foothills of the Zhara and Zhamo mountains that were once inhabited by farmers, or *rongpa*. Even now, households of farmers are located further along the valley towards the direction of Dartsedo.

Nonetheless, when the pastoralists eventually incorporated the pastures into their winter and spring grazing rotations, living in winter black tents woven from yarn made from the thick down of their animals, they continued a pastoral way of life. Their continuing identification as *drokpa* is – to no small extent – because they were *drokpa* in Pelyul and choose to persist with this way of life.

This point is especially relevant given that environmental conditions in these pastures allowed the planting of highland barley and other crops associated with small-scale agriculture. Moreover, the relative proximity of villages of farmers further along the valley made it important for these pastoralists to distinguish themselves by re-asserting their pastoral identity, echoing Robert Ekvall’s (1968, 85) observation in Golok that the *drokpa* identify as such, and usually by asserting a general superiority over farmers. Their assertion as *drokpa* is also practically manifest in their current pastoral movements: households typically move seven times a year over a maximum distance of approximately seven kilometres across an altitude range of 300 metres (see Table 8.2). While several of the moves are dictated by ecological benefit such as the movement to pastures at a higher altitude at a later period of the summer season, the other moves – particularly the first move of around 100 metres from the winter house to winter-spring pastures, and the last move from one part of the winter pastures to another – are not ecologically necessary.

Table 8.2 Detail of pastoral movements

Movement	Approximate Month (according to Tibetan calendar)	Approximate Altitude (metres above sea level)	Approximate Distance (metres) from previous location
One	Fourth	3900	100
Two	Fourth	3900	500
Three	Fifth	4100	7000
Four	Sixth	4200	1000
Five	Seventh	4100	5000
Six	Seventh	3960	1000
Seven	Eighth	3900	500

Thus, while literature on pastoralism has both explained movement in terms of ecological determinants such as altitude, herd size, access to land and water (Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson 1980, Hjort 1981, Western and Dunne 1979), and analysed movement as crucial because it maximizes environmental resilience (by minimizing risk of disease, for example), this

group of pastoralists moves more than is ecologically required and, indeed, more than other groups of pastoralists in Kham. For instance, pastoralists of the Sershül tribes move four times in a year corresponding with the four seasons and distinct sets of seasonal pastures. Yet here in Minyak Kham, it would seem that pastoralists are committed to moving with their animals above and beyond what is ecologically necessary. Given that Minyak pastoralists are committed to pastoralism in a location where small-scale agriculture is viable, any argument that yak-rearing is a marginalized practice because of high altitude and unviable agriculture also does not apply. In Minyak Kham, pastoralists choose to continue moving with their animals because of cultural and historical self-identification as *drokpa* and not because of environmental factors.

Shifting *Mumin*

To return to the pastoralists' increased attention to planting leaves, it is important to first appreciate that this activity supplies leaves for personal consumption rather than as fodder for animals. This point is significant because growing barley for animal fodder is one key policy measure of the Nomad Settlement Project. Yet while that measure has not been taken up by pastoralists in this community of Minyak Kham, the planting of *Brassica rapa* has been consistent over the past five to seven years. The larger context is that growing numbers of pastoralists elsewhere in Kham have increased their consumption of vegetables or 'leaves' and either decreased their meat consumption or removed meat altogether in their diet. The increase in instances of 'vegetarianism' among nomadic pastoralists in both Kham and Amdo has been addressed extensively by Gaerrang (2016), who notes that vegetarianism for nomadic pastoralists and Tibetans generally is enacted in different ways. For example, it may be practiced only during religious periods; it may involve abstinence from only certain kinds of meat; or it may involve abstinence only on certain days (Gaerrang 2016). Among Tibetan pastoralists, vegetarianism is a practice that is flexible and, importantly, it is instigated out of respect for and obedience to the reincarnate lamas. The so-called vegetarian movement that is currently growing across eastern Tibet is the result of the efforts of one incarnate lama in particular, Khenpo Tsultrim Lodrö of Larung Gar, a Tibetan Buddhist complex in Serthar County, Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Gaerrang (2012) has related the movement towards teachings on vegetarianism directly with a sharp increase in livestock sales to slaughterhouses in some pastoral communities.

Contemporary motivations towards vegetarianism has multiple aspects, but one clear motivation is to counter the increasing commodification of animals for meat production and its clash with Buddhist ethics on slaughter. In Kham, the teachings and influence of Khenpo Tsultrim Lodrö, who is of the Nyingma sect of Tibetan Buddhism, have extended *beyond* communities with high slaughter rates.

In this community of pastoralists in Minyak Kham, slaughter rates of yaks are relatively low, yet the general increase in consumption of vegetables and corollary decrease in meat consumption is the result of instruction from its own incarnate lama, also of the Nyingma sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Out of obedience to this lama, many households in this community now have at least one member who does not eat meat. To supplement the household's growing consumption of vegetables, these pastoralists now use the enclosure of small plots from the 'four that form a set' constructions of the 1990s to grow vegetables for their personal use. Even though the sentiment of many who have increased their consumption of vegetables is that 'leaves are not tasty', they continue to follow the practice. Vegetables are consumed fresh when the harvest is recent and bunches are dried to be added to Tibetan noodles, in the cooler months. In most cases, the amount of vegetables planted and harvested is not sufficient for the entire year and households supplement their intake by also purchasing vegetables in the nearby township seat. The money used to purchase vegetables is derived from the household's caterpillar fungus (*yartsa gunbu*) sales in the year.

Interestingly, the care of these plants has mainly fallen on male members of households, who tend to have more additional time and labour than female pastoralists to spend on 'other' activities – namely activities not directly associated with animal husbandry. This in itself reveals that planting (and consuming) leaves has not in any way replaced a pastoral mode of production and way of life. The care of animals and use of animal products, mainly milk but also hair and fur, for their daily sustenance and living needs continues to be the primary orientation of these pastoralists. As one older pastoralist has said in response to the household's continued practice of animal husbandry: 'If we didn't have our animals, how could we eat?' This statement is not, of course, necessarily directed to the consumption of animals. Literature on pastoralist practices around the world has demonstrated that the primary product of animal husbandry is milk because it is a renewable product (Galaty and Johnson 1990), and not meat. For communities that do not necessarily have external capital to regenerate the herd and that practice a low-yield and low-intensity form of animal husbandry, a continued reliance on the renewable products of their animals is vital.

In these pastures, small-scale agriculture is possible and growing 'leaves' has become important because of pastoralists' increased consumption of vegetables. The growing period in this place is relatively brief with hail and frost still likely in June (typically the fifth Tibetan month). Even though the 'leaves' are generally frost hardy and adapted to cooler climates, *Brassica rapa* does require between 40 and 60 days from sowing to harvesting. For this reason, the best time to plant them in this place is in the sixth Tibetan month, which also coincides with the grazing rotation at the summer pastures. Depending on household demographics, the planting is done either by elder members of the household who increasingly do not move with the herd and other family members to the summer pasture or by male members of the household who travel back on horseback to the winter house to plant the 'leaves'. The fenced enclosure in front of the winter house, which is where the animals are herded into during the nights in the winter and spring seasons, is manure-rich despite daily clearing for dried yak dung (*ciwa*) during the winter and spring. As such, this fenced enclosure is rich with muck soil that is conducive for growing *Brassica rapa*. Environmental conditions support small-scale agriculture in this place, a fact also confirmed by previous farming of highland barley by households of farmers.

Even though planting *Brassica rapa* for human consumption (and not as fodder for animals) is a practice of illegibility with regard to *mumin* and assumptions associated with this category of legibility, it is readily interpreted within pastoralism. Pastoralism is a way of life and sustenance, defined generally as animal husbandry, or the breeding, care, and use of herd animals as a way to sustain life and as a mode of production. It is often viewed as 'production for subsistence' (Asad 1978, 58) because it does not give naturally high yields. Within these definitions, pastoralism emphasizes a set of unimproved productive activities to secure food in the form of milk, meat, and blood, and items for the maintenance of daily life. Despite a shared foundation in animal husbandry, pastoralism is generally thought to be different from ranching, although the factors for claiming difference vary by kind and degree. One suggested distinction is that ranching depends on a production system predicated on individual access to animals and individual appropriation of pastures (Ingold 1980). This definition is often supported by the argument that ranching is based on a primary relationship to animals as capitalist commodity. By contrast, pastoralism highlights a production system where 'pastoralists employ a system of social relations, which combines the principles of divided access to animals and common access to pasture' (Chang and Koster 1994, 5). The methods for establishing common access vary: for example, Tibetan nomadic pastoralists in Serthar

had a grazing allocation that was redistributed every three years to ensure fair access to good or bad pastures (Gelek 2002). Additionally, pastoralism is thought to encompass a set of relationships to animals that is more than a relationship premised on the fundamental value of a commodity (Ingold 1980). In the case of Minyak *drokpa*, animals are incorporated into the meaningful dimensions of culture as symbol, offering, and exchange such as Buddhist liberated life (*tshe thar*), where animals are 'released' from herding or capture for reasons associated with generating merit or offerings to worldly deities (Tan 2016).

In practice, animal husbandry readily combines with a variety of other activities such as agriculture. Thus, it is usually more fruitful to think about degrees of specialization of pastoralism and agriculture, rather than ideal-types based on the binary between *mumin* and *nongmin*. In this way, pastoralism is fully specialized when pursued as exclusive reliance on animal husbandry¹² and generalized when the strategy is combined with raising at least some crops or pursuing some other form of sustenance (Bates and Lees 1977).¹³ Specialization also depends on the analytic interaction of people-animals-land. The ratio of animals to land area, also called density (Galaty and Johnson 1990, 12-14), is often represented by a low ratio in pastoralist communities. Moreover, a lower density corresponds with a greater degree of pastoral specialization. The ratio of people to animals is termed intensity, where high-intensity ratios are marked by low population density in proportion with large animal holdings. In this configuration, pastoral systems are relatively low-density and low-intensity systems in comparison with ranching, dairying, and mixed farming. In the case of pastoralism in Kham, increasing density expressed through a high ratio of animals to land area is impacted by a high rate of 'non-productive', that is male, animals in a herd. This means that, despite a comparatively low density, Tibetan pastoralists often have to resort to additional forms of livelihood activity; that is, they have a lesser degree of specialization for the low density displayed.

Contemporary pastoralism in Kham – even in those northern and western regions such as Serzhül where unimproved agriculture is not possible – is generalized in that other activities are conducted alongside

12 Using fieldwork data among Baluchi pastoralists in Iran, Salzman (1972) argues against attributing pastoral identity to a model of 'pure' pastoralism or even to pastoralism as a fully specialized activity.

13 Transhumance would constitute a specific form of generalized pastoralism, with limited migration between two places, as analysed by Jones (2005).

animal husbandry. Migrant jobbing in the form of road construction labour, driving tractors, and hire of motorcycle transport is a popular activity that generates supplemental household income. The gathering of grassland products such as a medicinal bulb (Ch. *bei mu*, *Fritillaria* sp.) and an edible tuber (Tib. *gro ma*, *Potentilla anserina* L.) continues to be done for personal consumption or small-scale trade with local doctors and other contacts. The gathering of *yartsa gunbu*, or caterpillar fungus, has increased exponentially in some pastoral areas, particularly in Serzhül County, Kandzé Prefecture and in Yushul Prefecture, Qinghai Province, over the past twenty years. This phenomenal addition to pastoral income for some households is directly related with the similarly phenomenal growth in the Chinese market in the past two decades. When nomadic pastoralism is studied and evidenced in all its complexity, Philip Salzman (1972) suggests that it should be viewed as a mode of production that depends on *multiple* strategies of livelihood and *multiple* uses of resources, highlighting how pastoralism – in practice – relies on multi-resource nomadism.

In Kham, these corollary activities are not recent phenomena; patterns of multi-resource nomadic pastoralism can be traced historically. In the kingdom of Dergé, pastoralists of the estate of Zilphukhog had a reciprocal and complementary relationship with their hereditary masters (Thargyal 2007) that allowed pastoral dependents freedom to move to other areas of the kingdom – when not assisting with the estate's labour needs – for barter and trade of grassland products in exchange for tea, gunpowder, and musk. Lattimore reminds us that even the fiercely independent Golok pastoralists conducted trade with Muslims in Gansu (Lattimore 1962 [1951], 212). It was during the early-to-mid twentieth century that a trade embargo was placed on pastoral products from the Golok and Washul Serthar pastoralists, which restricted their ability to acquire tea, grain, and salt and thus led to predatory raids by these pastoralists. The trade embargo was placed on the pastoralists by Ma Bufang, the Muslim warlord of Qinghai. By imposing this embargo on pastoral products, Ma Bufang forced these pastoralists to raid others and attack caravans of wealthy merchants using both the Yushu-Songpan and Dartsedo trade routes (Gelek 2002, 45-48). Yet the Golok pastoralists were also more than predators since they strategically supplied animals for caravans in central Asia and were, in this regard, entrepreneurs (Lattimore 1962 [1951]). For the group of pastoralists in Minyak Kham, the relative proximity of their grasslands to Dartsedo – itself a trade bastion for the Chakla kingdom and the Qing empire – as well as the location of the grasslands along the northern Sichuan-Tibet road meant that they were in relatively early contact with Tibetan traders. One account in local folklore

is that the legendary Tibetan merchant, Tsongpo Norbu Zangpo, himself stayed in the grasslands of the winter pastures for some time and that one of his precious *gzi* stones¹⁴ was lost – and still remains – somewhere in the pastures.

Within the framework of multi-resource nomadism and generalized pastoralism, the practice of animal husbandry as a primary mode of pastoral livelihood incorporates other activities from migrant jobbing to gathering of grassland products and from trade to entrepreneurship. The planting of *Brassica rapa* in order to satisfy increased personal consumption of vegetables as a result of an edict by the local incarnate lama is readily interpreted within this frame. What this further implies is that the mode of livelihood – pastoralism as fully specialized, and therefore the only livelihood activity, or as generalized, and therefore one of different types of livelihood activity – is not always nor necessarily determined by environmental conditions. The choice to identify as *drokpa* is influenced by a complex of factors: historical movements and narratives, networks of relationships that involve animals and territorial masters (Tan 2018), strategies of mobility that allow for unexpected opportunities such as caterpillar fungus gathering, and a sense of identity that is distinct from others such as farmers and semi-pastoralists.

From the Margins

In their work theorizing the margins of the state, anthropologists Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004, 8) suggest that margins are sites where nature is imagined as wild and uncontrolled at the same time as where the state is constantly refounding its modes of order and law-making. This resonates strongly with the Chinese concept of *huang*, as both geographic wasteland and social category of moral deficiency while simultaneously a place for state order and improvement. Yet they also argue against the idea that the state is 'about' its legibility, thus constituting an actor with full intentionality and insight. Rather, ethnographies of the state point to 'the many different spaces, forms, and practices through which the state is continually both experienced and undone through the illegibility of its own practices, documents, and words' (Das and Poole 2004, 10). In this final section, I consider how the practices of Minyak *drokpa* constitute margins – similar to the

14 *Gzi* stones are a kind of natural agate that is used as beads in necklaces and bracelets. It is thought to have auspicious benefits for the wearer.

'remote areas' discussed by Gros in his introductory chapter – understood as sites of adaptation to state modes of legibility and expressed in ways that are 'invisible' to the state.

Referring again to the Nomad Settlement project, the associated policy document contains detailed specifications about housing construction. The houses themselves must be at least 60 square metres.¹⁵ Livestock sheds are specified according to animal species, with sheep sheds required to be 0.5-0.7 square metres, yak calf sheds to be 1.4-1.8 square metres, and adult yak sheds to be 2.5-3.0 square metres. Further specifications on the costs of houses and sheds are provided, and disbursed through county-level animal husbandry bureaux. These specifications and disbursements are practically neglected in actual construction. In one county of Sichuan Province, the county government offered RMB30,000 worth of materials and labour to each household through external building contractors, and the households themselves were expected to pay any remaining costs for the house. For that community, the specifications were followed by the external contractors although there was concern about the quality of materials used. However, other households in another community took the money directly from the county government and used it to construct the houses themselves using traditional methods and materials. Individual households altered the specifications, and many found ways to save on construction costs. Animal sheds and greenhouses were yet to be constructed in either of these communities.

Of the houses themselves, intended to be the primary residence for pastoralists, there were also adaptations that rendered the houses illegible in the context of the policy. In one community, many houses remained vacant or were used as storage for the household's supply of *tsampa* and other sundry items. If the household had enough family members, then an elderly member of the house might take up residence in the newly constructed house while other members of the household continued living in their previous residence and herding animals. Not all households of a given community would take up the offer of money; some stated that they could not afford to contribute to the new houses because their caterpillar fungus harvest was not good enough, and they did not want to take up a state loan. More resourceful households were considering ways to include the new houses in a multi-resource strategy: one village leader thought it was possible to take advantage of the new houses' location beside a new road and wondered if the houses could be used as accommodation for tourists.

15 In Inner Mongolia, houses should be no less than 50 square metres.

Both modifications to the specifications of houses as well as adaptations to their use are read, in this instance, as practices that remake state legibility in ways that render the margins as integral to processes of governmentality. Forms of illegibility and partial belonging that are found in the margins of the state may constitute its necessary condition as a theoretical and political 'object' (Das and Poole 2004, 6).

To return, also, to the categories of *mumin* and *nongmin*, these have been employed by the state to simplify and abstract complex local realities. On the one hand, the Chinese state creates an internal opposition between a superior Han and agrarian-based majority with 'backward' minority pastoral populations. Yet a closer examination of state processes of legibility also reveals that Chinese state governmentality is not a static act but rather one that is able to incorporate local experiments to modify the way it implements its high modernist ideology. The environmental capacity for small-scale agriculture in eastern Tibet along with the coexistence of multiple sources of livelihood for pastoralists have long been known to the Chinese state. The contributions from Scott Relyea and Mark Frank (this volume) demonstrate how the state was testing agricultural improvements in the Republican period. One could read these ventures, where the borderlands were used as experimental sites, as a way of testing the limits, or margins, of the state and of state governmentality. A tension is displayed between two coexisting assumptions of how the Chinese state regards the minority pastoralists within its territoriality: 1) as a category of *mumin* articulated in opposition with *nongmin* and dependent on an ideal-type and 2) as a specific understanding of actual pastoral practices – including pastoralism as a degree of specialization and small-scale agriculture – that refines and modifies policy plans and implementation.

For the most part, pastoralism in eastern Tibet has been approached from a perspective that prioritizes environmental conditions to explain a mode of livelihood and a way of life. Notwithstanding that there are undoubted ecological benefits to, and constraints on, the practice of mobile animal husbandry, environmental determinants do not always account for decisions to be *drokpa*. This chapter has demonstrated that pastoralism in Minyak Kham is based on a complex of reasons including cultural and historical factors and that pastoralism, as animal husbandry and way of life, is therefore not only environmentally determined. Understanding that pastoralists identify as *drokpa* both for a variety of cultural and historical reasons and through a range of actual practices opens up to a wider exploration of the concept of pastoralism itself. The everyday practices of those who identify as *drokpa* are more varied than is assumed under

an ideal-type model of pastoralism, particularly when defined in opposition to agriculture. Under this definition, activities such as planting are antithetical to pastoralism. Yet as the ethnographic example has shown, the activity is carried out by pastoralists and without any contradiction to how they continue to regard themselves as *drokpa*. Moreover, multiple strategies of livelihood and multiple uses of resources have been practically employed by pastoralists around the world, leading to a perspective that pastoralism is better understood as a degree of specialization, which ranges from fully specialized at one end to generalized at the other end. The data and analyses presented in this chapter suggest that processes of state governmentality and legibility themselves shift and adapt in order to remain viable. The shifts and adaptations – to some extent – respond to what unfolds in ‘the margins of the state’ (Das and Poole 2003), which are themselves never static or even, from the perspective adopted in this chapter, marginalized. The discursive processes occurring between the state and its margins continue to influence how pastoralism – as activity and way of life – offers important insights into Chinese state governmentality.

Glossary of Chinese and Tibetan terms

Chushi gangdruk	chu bzhi sgang drug
<i>ciwa</i>	lci wa
<i>cun</i>	村
<i>cun shuji</i>	村書記
<i>cun zhang</i>	村長
Dartsedo	Dar rtse mdo
<i>depa</i>	sde pa
<i>di xiao</i>	抵銷
Dokham Nechen Nyernga	Mdo khams gnas chen nyer lnga
<i>drokpa</i>	‘brog pa
<i>droma</i>	gro ma, gyo ma
<i>fang zai jian zai nengli ruo</i>	防災減災能力弱
Gelukpa	Dge lugs pa
<i>gyelpo</i>	rgyal po
<i>huang</i>	荒
Kagyü	Bka’ brgyud
Kangding	康定
<i>la</i>	bla

<i>lari</i>	bla ri
Lhagang	Lha sgang
<i>loma</i>	lo ma
<i>luo hou</i>	落後
Minyak Rab	Mi nyag rab sgang
<i>mumin chi kuixin liang</i>	牧民吃虧心糧
<i>néri</i>	gnas ri
Nyingma	Rnying ma
<i>pin zhong tui hua</i>	品種退化
<i>ponpo</i>	dpon po
<i>rongmadrok</i>	Rong ma 'brog
<i>rongpa</i>	Rong pa
Sakya	Sa skya
<i>shi fan hu</i>	示範戶
<i>si da tusi</i>	四大土司
<i>si peitao</i>	四配套
Tagong	塔公
<i>tshe thar</i>	tshe thar
Tsongpo Norbu Zangpo	Tshong dpon Nor bu Bzang po
<i>weisheng tiaojian ji cha</i>	衛生條件極差
<i>yartsa gunbu</i>	dbyar rtswa dgun 'bu
Zhamo	Bzhag mo
Zhara Latse	Bzhag bra lha rtse
<i>zhidak</i>	zhing bdag, gzhi bdag
<i>zhuan ren, zhuan fangshi</i>	專人專方式

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