

## CHAPTER TEN

### MODERNIZATION EFFORTS IN MGO LOG: A CHRONICLE, 1970-2000

BIANCA HORLEMANN

This study<sup>1</sup> provides a general outline of thirty years of modernization efforts in the Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP).<sup>2</sup> It focuses mainly on economic development as one major aspect of modernization, and it largely neglects other aspects such as education or scientific and technological development.

The chronicle of modernization efforts in Mgo log presented herein is predominantly based upon published Chinese and Tibetan sources. These have appeared in a surprisingly large number considering that Mgo log is an otherwise little studied pastoral area of Amdo.<sup>3</sup> The sources published in the People's Republic of China that deal with modernization often contain a considerable amount of political propaganda,<sup>4</sup> and therefore must be used with due caution. Extensive fieldwork will be required in the future for a more in-depth understanding and analysis of modern developments in Mgo log.

---

<sup>1</sup> This study has been conducted in connection with a research project on different aspects of identity in cultural Tibetan areas in the PRC, 1950-1999, led by Thomas Hoppe and Charles Ramble, and funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung, Hannover. A separate publication is forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> Tib. *Mgo log bod rigs rang skyong khru'u/khul*, Chin. *Guoluo zangzu zizhizhou*.

<sup>3</sup> Publications in Tibetan usually only deal with Mgo log history up to 1950. See, for example, *Mgo log rigs gnas lo rgyus*, 3 vols., Xining 1991, 1999 and *'Gu log gi lo rgyus gnyan po gyu rtse'i bsang dud*, 2 vols., Dharamsala 2000. Some aspects of traditional and modern Mgo log society have been studied by Goldstein 1996, Levine 1999, and Yeh n.d.

<sup>4</sup> Many of the sources have been published in connection with political anniversaries. See, for example, *Guoluo sishinian* (Forty Years of the Mgo log [TAP]) and *Qinghai jingji fazhan 50 nian* (Fifty Years of Economic Development in Qinghai).

Hence, this study has to be considered as being preliminary in many respects.<sup>5</sup>

*Introduction to Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture*

The Mgo log TAP is one of a total of six autonomous prefectures of Qinghai Province.<sup>6</sup> It is situated in the southeast corner of Qinghai Province and covers an area of approximately 75,000 km<sup>2</sup>, corresponding roughly to the size of Austria.<sup>7</sup> The Mgo log TAP generally includes the territory from the sources of the Yellow River<sup>8</sup> in the west to its first northward bend in the east, which also marks the border with neighbouring Gansu Province. To the north lies the A myes rma chen Mountain Range (Chin. Animaqin/qing *shan*), with its highest peak rising to about 6,300 m, while in the south the Mgo log TAP borders on Sichuan Province.

The Mgo log TAP consists of six counties (Tib. *rdzong/shan//zhan*, Chin. *xian*) and 50 rural townships (Tib. *shang/zhang*, Chin. *xiang*) plus one town (Chin. *zhen*). The six counties are Rma chen (Maqin), Gcig sgril (Jiuzhi), Pad ma (Banma), Dar lag (Dari), Dga' bde (Gande) and Rma stod (Maduo), with the prefectural capital of Rta bo (Dawu) being located in Rma chen County (see figure 15). The counties differ considerably in size, with Rma stod covering more than 25,000 km<sup>2</sup> and Dga' bde only about 7,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

The terrain gradually rises from the southeast to the northwest, with an average altitude of 3,500 m to 4,500 m above sea level. The climate is extremely harsh: the average annual temperature is around 0°C, whereas during winter temperatures can drop as low as -48°C. In summer, temperatures can rise to about +20°C during

---

<sup>5</sup> The written sources have been supplemented by personal observations made in Mgo log in summer 2000. I am also grateful for many valuable comments on a previous draft of this paper made by Melvyn Goldstein and by Emily Yeh. Any errors are entirely my own responsibility.

<sup>6</sup> Five are Tibetan autonomous prefectures and one is Mongolian.

<sup>7</sup> The territory traditionally known as Mgo log has been gradually reduced from its former area of approximately 100,000 km<sup>2</sup>, due to several administrative land swaps with neighbouring provinces and also within Qinghai Province itself; Don grub/Nor sde 1991:6.

<sup>8</sup> Tib. Rma chu, Chin. Huanghe.

Fig. 15: Map of the Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (B. Horlemann/N. Schmidt)

the day, and still fall to freezing point at night.<sup>9</sup> The annual amount of precipitation decreases from east to west, with Gcig sgril County receiving about 700 mm per annum, central Mgo log 400 mm, and western Mgo log 200 mm.<sup>10</sup> Weather conditions are also rather unpredictable. A sunny blue sky can suddenly change to severe hail, snow or thunderstorms, and strong winds are often encountered.

The landscape of Mgo log consists mainly of treeless rolling hills of grassland, and is home to Tibetan nomadic pastoralists. Animal husbandry therefore was—and continues to be—the mainstay of local production, and which remains to a large extent a subsistence economy. In addition, small-scale field cultivation was traditionally conducted in the lower lying areas of Pad ma County with its slightly milder climate and its relatively high levels of precipitation. In addition, some of the area near Rwa rgya monastery in Rma chen County is presently tilled. Furthermore, the Mgo log region is rich in natural resources, such as gold, coal, iron and copper, as well as in medical plants. Some virgin forests can still be found in Pad ma and Rma chen, but unfortunately, these forests are currently endangered by logging.

Qinghai Province is one of the poorer and more underdeveloped provinces of China, lagging behind in both productivity and income.<sup>11</sup> Within Qinghai Province, the Mgo log TAP is considered to be one of the least developed and poorest areas, together with the Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures of Yul shul (Chin. Yushu) and Rma lho (Chin. Huangnan). In the early 1990s, 80% of the Mgo log TAP's annual budget was still financed through subsidies from the provincial or national governments.<sup>12</sup> Hence, its infrastructure is still rather underdeveloped. The Mgo log TAP has few roads, most of which are unpaved and in poor condition, and many areas are still only accessible on horseback. Although electricity and telecommunication facilities (TV, telephone) are available at the county seats and in rural townships, most of the pastoralists' homes on the grassland

---

<sup>9</sup> Don grub/Nor sde 1991:6-7; Xing 1994:1-7.

<sup>10</sup> Zhang Zhongxiao 1997:168.

<sup>11</sup> In 1997, the Chinese national GDP per capita was Yuan 6,079, while in Qinghai it was Yuan 4,066. In 1998, Qinghai ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> of 31 provinces for its GDP; *Qinghai jingji fazhan* 2000:21.

<sup>12</sup> *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:57.

remain unconnected.<sup>13</sup> Access to hospitals, pharmacies, postal services, public transport and education<sup>14</sup> is available in each county seat, but partly also in the rural townships. As an example which is still typical of conditions in many parts of Mgo log, one pastoralist whom I met in Dga' bde had to ride on horseback for two days to take his sick baby from his home to the hospital in Dga' bde County seat.<sup>15</sup>

### *Historical Overview to 1970*

Traditionally, the Mgo log people lived as nomadic pastoralists and were organised in clan-based tribal groups. They are usually referred to as consisting of three main divisions: the *Mgo log ('bum pa) khag gsum*, namely the "Upper Division", the "Middle Division" and "Lower Division."<sup>16</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Mgo log were divided into more than 200 tribes and sub-tribes who were mostly independent from one another, sometimes forming loose confederations, and often feuding.<sup>17</sup> They had a reputation of being warlike and fierce, and at least since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Mgo log were notorious as brigands on the old caravan routes through A mdo.<sup>18</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Mgo

<sup>13</sup> Even if accessible, many pastoralists object to paying a connection fee and thus remain without electricity. Personal communications.

<sup>14</sup> This comprises elementary schools and junior middle schools, each in Chinese and in Tibetan medium.

<sup>15</sup> In Chinese, the county seats are usually designated as "X-(county) county seat," instead of using the proper place names. For example, the county seat of Dga' bde County, which is called Bag chen, is usually referred to as "Dga' bde County seat" (Chin. Gande *xiancheng*).

<sup>16</sup> The Tibetan and Chinese terms are *Stod kyi mgo log/Mgo log stod ma* (Chin. *Shang Guoluo*), *Bar gyi mgo log/Mgo log bar ma* (*Zhong Guoluo*) and *Smad kyi mgo log/Mgo log smad ma* (*Xia Guoluo*). Differentiating between the "Upper, Middle and Lower Division" appears to be a Chinese convention rather than a Tibetan one. The Tibetans generally use the tribal names to designate the different divisions: Dbang chen 'bum (= Upper Division), A skyong 'bum (= Middle Division) and Pad ma 'bum (= Lower Division). Furthermore—and rather confusingly—the term *Mgo log khag gsum* also denominates the division of the A skyong tribe into the three main tribes of the south-eastern Mgo log area, i.e. the Khang rgan, Khang gsar and Gong ma tribes; Chen 1995:80, 106, 115; Don grub/Nor sde 1991:2, 14, 29-31.

<sup>17</sup> Chen 1995:106, 115; *Guoluo zangzu zizhizhou* 1984:66.

<sup>18</sup> Namkhai Norbu 1997:70; Xing 1994:15-16; Huc/Gabet 1987:117; Rock 1956:127.

log themselves took much pride in being independent from both Tibetan and Chinese overlords.<sup>19</sup> However, a few tribes did occasionally acknowledge the authority of the Dga' ldan Pho brang government in Lhasa by accepting official ranks and paying taxes, while others also accepted official ranks and insignia from the Chinese imperium.<sup>20</sup> In spite of their reputation as robbers, the Mgo log also entertained regular trading relationships with neighbouring Rnga ba, Shar khog (Songpan), Bla brang and Sde dge.<sup>21</sup> And, in contrast to their image as outlaws, some Mgo log chieftains had founded and funded an elementary school for Mgo log children near Bla brang already in the early 1940s.<sup>22</sup>

After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, many in the Chinese elite began to feel the need for China to modernize and to catch up with the industrialised countries in the west. However, the first efforts towards these goals were very localised and hardly touched the lives of the bulk of the population. In Qinghai and parts of Gansu, the Ma clan, an influential family of Chinese Muslims, came to power and commenced an ambitious and rigid modernization program in order to consolidate their rule and to open up new financial resources.<sup>23</sup> The different infrastructure projects they undertook included the construction of a motor road from Xining to Skye dgu mdo/Yul shul along the border of the Mgo log region, and the establishment of goldmines in the A myes rma chen Range. However, these endeavours met with violent Tibetan resistance, since the Mgo log regarded such acts as an unwanted transgression into their territory and as a serious disturbance of the local territorial gods. Because the Ma clan was not willing to renounce its claim to superior authority over the area, it repeatedly harassed the Mgo log tribes with severe military expeditions from 1917 to 1941.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Rock 1956:127.

<sup>20</sup> Lodey Lhawang 1994:16; Roerich 1933:740; Xing 1994:18; Zhang Xuezhong 1990:250-253.

<sup>21</sup> *Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu* 1985:250-253.

<sup>22</sup> The curriculum consisted of language, mathematics, history, geography, general knowledge and music. Classes were taught in Tibetan and in Chinese; *Guoluo zangzu zizhizhou* 1984:139; Su 1993:236.

<sup>23</sup> Qinghai Province was officially established in January 1929.

<sup>24</sup> For a general review of the Ma clan's rule in Qinghai, see Hunsberger 1978. On the Mgo log – Ma conflicts, see, for example, Don grub/Nor sde 1991:153-173; *Guoluo zangzu zizhizhou* 1984:43-49.

After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, the new communist China vigorously endeavoured to quickly modernize the whole country. Initially, in theory at least, the Chinese state propagated flexible policies towards divergent local conditions and different levels of development, and specifically for the so-called "minority areas" on China's periphery. However, it soon started to implement the same policies all over the country, regardless of the actual local situation. Yet, for a time, Mgo log remained an exception to this in some respects. Subsequent to some negative experiences of the 6<sup>th</sup> army group in Mgo log during the Long March in 1936, the Chinese communists did not immediately include the Mgo log area into their "liberation plans" in 1950.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the first official contacts were allegedly established only in 1951, after some Mgo log groups themselves had taken the initiative. Thereafter, from 1952 onwards, the Chinese sent so-called "work groups" to Mgo log—with Mgo log permission, or at least tolerance—and gradually set up a network of small administrative centres at different strategic points.

In order to incorporate the area into the Chinese polity, the communists established local "people's governments" and attempted to win the Tibetan population over by way of massive propaganda activities. In addition, they initiated infrastructure projects, such as the establishment of simple schools, hospitals, veterinary stations and trading posts—all in tents—which appear to have been well received by the local population in the beginning. However, the Mgo log became increasingly aware of, and opposed to China's growing influence, and finally joined the then already ongoing anti-Chinese resistance movement in A mdo and Khams in 1958.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> When the 6<sup>th</sup> army group passed through the area of Pad ma and Gcig sgril, under extreme hardship on its way from Sichuan to Gansu, it had expected some support from the pastoralists, because the communists considered they were fighting a common enemy, i.e. the Ma clan. However, the Mgo log did not offer any help, and many communists died on the way; See Ekvall 1968:95. These events are usually glossed over in modern Chinese and Tibetan sources. See Don grub/Nor sde 1991:173-175; Li/Li 1992:221-223; Zhang Zhongxiao 1997:195-196.

<sup>26</sup> Contrary to the general assumption in western sources that the Mgo log had staged violent resistance against the Chinese intrusion from 1952 onwards, it appears that the situation in Mgo log remained surprisingly calm until 1958. For a more detailed account see the forthcoming publication in connection with the aforementioned research project (note 1).

In 1958, and subsequent to initial achievements in increasing overall productivity in China proper, the communists enthusiastically launched a new nation-wide campaign: the Great Leap Forward. However, this campaign, which propagated a quick modernization and industrialisation of the countryside, together with the idea of gaining local autarchy, turned out to be a disaster for the Chinese economy, because its provisions were blindly applied regardless of feasibility and local conditions. When the communist government had just started to rectify these mistakes, the Cultural Revolution took hold in 1966, and pushed the country into a new state of anarchy and turmoil.

In Mgo log, where the Chinese had only been able to quell the revolts of 1958/59 with great difficulty, the Great Leap Forward campaign—and the Cultural Revolution later on—served as a ready means to further consolidate China's rule over this rebellious area. Thus, besides other coercive measures, the communists pushed hard for the collectivisation of the pastoralists into communes, but this was only fully achieved by the late 1960s.<sup>27</sup>

The early Chinese efforts at modernization in Mgo log proved disastrous for the region. In the late 1950s alone, Mgo log had lost about 50% of its livestock due to the revolt and a combination of negligence, mismanagement and the establishment of unviable agricultural state farms and factories.<sup>28</sup> Thereafter, the region suffered from severe and extensive famines, which had never before been experienced by the pastoralists.<sup>29</sup> With the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the overall situation in Mgo log deteriorated yet again. An intensified “class struggle” led to further destruction, which effected all aspects of life. Not only the few remaining monasteries, but also the newly founded tent schools were closed again,

---

<sup>27</sup> In Mgo log, collectivisation was initially implemented in a few pilot areas from 1956/57 onwards. It then started in earnest after 1959, but was probably not completed before 1966, or even later. For a more detailed account, see the forthcoming publication in connection with the aforementioned research project (note 1).

<sup>28</sup> In 1957, the Mgo log area had allegedly 1.6 million head of livestock, while in 1959 only 800,000. See *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:175, 321; *Guoluo zangzu zizhizhou* 1984:110.

<sup>29</sup> Before 1950, Tibetan pastoralists in A mdo were relatively affluent compared to the agriculturists. Although they periodically met with natural or human made disasters, they usually suffered less from hunger and deprivation than their settled neighbours. See, Ekvall 1968:96.



and private trade was prohibited.<sup>30</sup> Thus, compared to the 1950s and before, the 1960s witnessed a considerable retrogression of economic development in Mgo log.<sup>31</sup>

*1970-1984: "Recuperate and Multiply"*

After the Cultural Revolution had been officially called off in 1969, the Chinese government undertook new measures to overcome the acute political and economic crisis. With the slogan "recuperate and multiply",<sup>32</sup> the communists stressed the need for social and economic stabilisation, as well as for economic growth. Thus, in the early 1970s, China resumed those reforms and infrastructure projects that had been stopped in the mid-1960s by the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. Furthermore, a minor liberalisation occurred with the restructuring of communes. Major economic reforms, however, were only initiated after Mao Zedong had died in September 1976. Thereafter, the new Party leadership laid the foundation for a gradual restructuring of the state planned economy towards a more market-oriented economy. It took new fiscal measures, such as the cutting of taxes and of production targets, and introduced a new household responsibility and bonus system.

Work on infrastructure projects was also resumed in Mgo log and the first steps were taken towards a more market-oriented production system. Hence, a deer farm was established at the A myes rma chen Commune in 1970, since deer antlers sell well in Asia for use in Chinese medicine and aphrodisiac preparations. The milk powder factory in Rta bo also opened a new production line of dried yak meat. A telephone line from Xining to Yul shul and Mgo log was com-

<sup>30</sup> By the end of 1959, all 57 monasteries in Mgo log had been closed down. However, eight of them were officially re-opened in 1962, although it can be presumed that they only functioned as a pretence of religious freedom; *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:77, 80, 344. Schools re-opened only in the mid-1970s.

<sup>31</sup> The officially claimed livestock increase in Mgo log, from 1 million head in 1961, to 2.9 million in 1970, is evidently highly inflated. This would mean an almost 200% increase within only 9 years, which is in stark contrast to an alleged average livestock doubling time in Mgo log of about 28 years; *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:321. For a critical assessment of official livestock figures and growth rates in Mgo log, see also Goldstein 1996:3-4.

<sup>32</sup> In Chinese, the slogan reads "*xiuyang shengxi*." This was obviously not an official slogan, but it appears frequently in connection with the envisaged reforms.

pleted in 1971, and a conventional power plant was constructed in Rta bo in 1972. Furthermore, Mgo log built its first cold-storage chamber for fresh meat in 1973. Two new coal mines were established in Dga' bde and Gcig sgril counties, and all major roads in Mgo log were upgraded by 1974, as well as new roads being opened in Rma chen and Gcig sgril in October 1978. Work on the first hydro-electric power plant commenced in 1977, and it started operating in 1980.<sup>33</sup> At first glance, such developments as listed here appear to be signs of successful improvement of the local infrastructure. However, it has to be noted that, for example, the roads were only very simple, unpaved dirt roads, and that the new hydro-electric power plant in Rta bo could not even regularly supply sufficient energy for the prefectural seat, let alone for any other areas.<sup>34</sup> It thus seems very doubtful whether all the other early infrastructural projects mentioned in the sources did, in fact, function properly for any length of time.

However, in accordance with the new goal to increase productivity, the unviable agricultural state farms in Mgo log were finally closed down, and the focus returned to animal husbandry and its "modernization." In the 1970s, several conferences on pastoralism were held in Qinghai, all focused on the question of how livestock production could be strengthened and organised more effectively. Of major concern was the high mortality rate of livestock during the winter-spring season, for which a "traditional pastoral attitude of leaning on heaven to raise livestock" was held responsible, together with the old system of seasonal migrations.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the necessity of the "use of scientific methods and modern technology" was stressed, in order to strengthen animal husbandry. This included, first of all, vaccination programs, the introduction of new animal breeds,<sup>36</sup> research on grass species for supplementary fodder production, the

<sup>33</sup> *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:131, 310, 348-350, 353; *Guoluo zangzu zizhizhou* 1984:121, 124; Li Shicai 1993:92-93.

<sup>34</sup> In 1980, the power plant allegedly supplied energy on five days per week; *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:352.

<sup>35</sup> It was argued that the pastoralists often had to travel considerable distances from one pasture to the next, and that many animals got lost or died from accidents on the way; Li Shicai 1993:129.

<sup>36</sup> This mainly concerned sheep. Several attempts were made to improve the local sheep by cross-breeding.

erection of hay barns and the fencing in of grassland.<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, the so-called “*san pei tao*” program,<sup>38</sup> which comprised the three measures of fencing of pasture, supplementary fodder production and the construction of animal shelters, was also launched in Mgo log, initially by the Dongqinggou Brigade in Rma chen. The Dongqinggou Brigade started to fence in grassland for supplementary fodder production in 1975, built the first simple huts for storage in 1976, and determined which pastures would be used for rotational grazing of livestock by 1979.<sup>39</sup> However, the *san pei tao* program was apparently not extended to other areas in Mgo log before the 1980s.

In 1980, as a second step towards economic reform, the Qinghai provincial government decided to encourage the raising of private livestock herds by commune members, and to permit sideline production. In addition, control over production decisions was partly passed down from the centre to the local administration, and in some cases even further down to the household level by way of the introduction of new “household production responsibility systems.”<sup>40</sup> The latter were intended to give new incentives to pastoralists to take better care of livestock by providing bonuses and also by sharing losses according to the performance of individual households. In Mgo log, the first four pilot communes for these new initiatives were selected in Dga’ bde County in 1981.<sup>41</sup> By December 1982, about 150 production teams—out of a total of around 500—practised the new system.

The official livestock statistics for Mgo log appear, at first glance, to confirm the achievements of these new reform programs, with an increase from 2.8 million head of livestock in 1970 to 3.6 million head in 1978. However, if we take into account that during the collectivisation period production figures were often over-reported in order to paint a brighter picture of the socialist reforms, and also that from July 1974 onwards the Mgo log TAP met with a series of natu-

<sup>37</sup> *Qinghai jingji fazhan* 2000:159, 163; *Dangdai Qinghai jianshi* 1996:229; *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:158.

<sup>38</sup> *San pei tao* means “to use three pieces to form a whole set.”

<sup>39</sup> A detailed account of how these measures were proposed—allegedly by a Tibetan cadre, then discussed by the pastoralists and finally implemented, is provided by Li Shicai 1993:133-139.

<sup>40</sup> Several models were designed in order to cater for different conditions and preferences; *Dangdai Qinghai jianshi* 1996:208-209, 271-276.

<sup>41</sup> *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:353.

ral disasters which decimated livestock from an alledged 3.5 million head in 1974 down to 3 million in 1975, only to increase again to 3.6 million in 1978,<sup>42</sup> these figures appear rather inflated. For both the period before and after the natural disasters of the mid-1970s, this would mean an increase of about 25% over four years, or of about 20% over three years, whereas the average annual rate of increase for the period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s was approximately only 2.5%.<sup>43</sup> Thereafter, the official livestock numbers decreased again in 1984 to 2.9 million head after another series of natural disasters in 1983 and 1984.<sup>44</sup>

*1984-1989: "Get Rich!"*

The next period of modernization efforts in Mgo log, from 1984 to 1989, was backgrounded by far-reaching economic reforms in China proper, in which restructuring towards a market-oriented system was continued and intensified. In fact, a new *de facto* capitalist era began, one which might best be subsumed under the new unofficial slogan of "get rich!"<sup>45</sup> Suddenly, it was not only acceptable to display a spirit of enterprise, but the state-controlled newspapers even publicly lauded the first so-called "10,000 Yuan farmers" and pastoralists. Political liberalisation, however, was not envisaged, or only insofar as this was unavoidable in order to support economic reforms. This also held true for China's reinvigorated "nationalities' policy"<sup>46</sup> which postulated that the "special characteristics" of the minorities

---

<sup>42</sup> First, Rta bo and Rma stod were flooded after strong hail storms. Then heavy snowfalls from October 1974 to February 1975 aggravated the situation, and caused the loss of more than 430,000 head of livestock; *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:39, 349. However, when using Chinese statistics, we have to be aware that the figures often differ from source to source, sometimes considerably. Thus, the available data cannot be taken at face value, although it is mentioned nevertheless, because the figures might still be indicative of general trends.

<sup>43</sup> Goldstein 1996:3-4.

<sup>44</sup> *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:322, 354.

<sup>45</sup> The Chinese slogan reads "*xiahai facai*", which literally means "go out on the sea and get rich", but which can also be understood as "professionalize and get rich."

<sup>46</sup> The nationalities' policy had been drafted in the early 1950s for those areas in which the majority of the local population was not of Han nationality, but belonged to what was now called a "national minority." Under this policy, the "minorities" were, theoretically, free to reject unwanted socialist reforms.

were to be respected to a larger extent, and that more local autonomy was to be granted. Nonetheless, it has to be stressed that this policy—from the government’s point of view—also mainly served the purpose of facilitating the implementation of economic reforms.

Most crucial among the economic reforms was decollectivisation, that is, the abolition of communes and the privatisation of the means of production. In Mgo log, the abolition of communes was announced in June 1984, and went hand in hand with the reform of territorial administration. The prefecture was vertically re-structured into 6 counties, 49 rural townships and 190 villages (Chin. *cun*) whereby, in general, the communes were transformed into rural township units and the brigades into village units.<sup>47</sup> The former 575 production teams were officially transformed into 579 co-operatives (Chin. *hezuoshe*) which were later dissolved.<sup>48</sup>

Another aspect of the post-1984 decollectivisation of Mgo log pastoralists was the concurrent privatisation of livestock and pasture. Since the new national law on regional autonomy had provided the Mgo log TAP with more authority to direct its political, economic and cultural development “according to its own characteristics”, each Mgo log county did, in fact, follow different policies.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Rma stod, Rma chen and Gcig sgril, for example, adopted the method of “selling the livestock back to the households which will own, raise and manage the livestock independently”,<sup>50</sup> whereas Dga’ bde and Pad ma decided to implement the policy “to publicly own, but to privately raise the livestock, and to retain collective management, but to return any surplus [to the individual household].” Dar lag, however, at first adopted the slogan of “redistributing the livestock free of charge, to privately own and raise [the livestock], and to manage it

<sup>47</sup> The “villages” are also rendered as “herder’s associations”, based on the Tibetan term *’brog dmangs u yon lhan khang*. Goldstein 1996:10.

<sup>48</sup> Another minor reform occurred in January 1987. Thereafter, the Mgo log TAP had 6 counties, 50 rural townships (plus one town/*zhen*) and 186 villages; *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:88, 355, 357.

<sup>49</sup> However, the counties apparently did not design totally new concepts, but probably had to choose between a given set of options provided by the government. The new autonomous rights were still subject to the guidelines and the approval of the provincial and central governments.

<sup>50</sup> From the Chinese sources, it remains unclear how this “sale” was conducted and whether the pastoralists actually had to pay cash for their share of the collective’s animals.

independently,” but changed its policy in 1990 when it started to propagate the establishment of joint management groups on a contract basis.<sup>51</sup>

Livestock was redistributed to pastoralist households in proportion to the number of household members, including children and the elderly. On average, each household received around 25 to 30 animals per member, depending on the wealth of the former communes and brigades.<sup>52</sup> Also, the pastures of the former communes were redistributed along with the livestock, either to individual households or to groups of households that had formed joint management groups. However, since all land is nominally owned by the state and cannot become private property, pastures were “leased out” on a contract basis, which the pastoralists are charged for by way of taxes and quota sales. Nevertheless, these contracts provide long-term leases of thirty or fifty years, and they are generally understood to become permanent.<sup>53</sup> Not all of the available pastures were leased out at once, but winter pastures were contracted out first and summer pastures followed only later. Furthermore, the method and speed of implementation of these reforms differed from county to county and maybe even from township to township. The whole process apparently lasted at least until the early 1990s.<sup>54</sup>

In spite of the newly proclaimed goal of increasing production through privatisation, thus enabling individual pastoral households to become rich, the overall livestock figures for Mgo log did, in fact, steadily decrease from 2.9 million head in 1985 to 2.5 million in

<sup>51</sup> Chin. *lianchan chengbao zerenzhi*; *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:26, 155.

<sup>52</sup> In Phala (Bar la), western TAR, each nomad received about 37 animals upon decollectivisation. The pastures, however, were allocated to small groups of several households rather than to individuals; Goldstein 1994:99; Goldstein/Beall 1991:146. For redistribution methods in Gnam mtsho in the TAR, see Clarke 1987:44-45.

<sup>53</sup> By granting long-term leases the state endeavoured to reassure the pastoralists that it would be worthwhile to invest in the maintenance of their individual pastures. However, this system has also the disadvantage of being fixed, and thus of being inflexible with regard to alterations in the individual pastoral household's need for more or less pasture than originally obtained. *Dangdai Qinghai jianshi* 1996:321.

<sup>54</sup> I was told in summer 2000 that by then all the available pastures in Mgo log had been leased out except for a few plots of very inferior quality. The history of the whole process of decollectivisation in Mgo log needs to be further supplemented by fieldwork, since the written sources provide but scarce information. A specific example of the methods used for the distribution of grassland in Gsang ri ma Township is provided by Goldstein 1996:9-11.

1989. The causes of this decrease are not entirely clear, although this development might be mainly due to serious snow disasters which occurred in 1985 and 1988,<sup>55</sup> and, to a lesser extent, to initial management problems following decollectivisation. In some cases, young orphans or elderly people who were also entitled to their share of animals, were not capable of properly managing the livestock and lost it all within a few years.<sup>56</sup> Thus, subsequent to the economic reforms, a new social stratification has emerged in Mgo log, in which a few pastoralists own several hundred yaks and sheep, and the majority of pastoral households have around 100 yaks and/or sheep. This officially classifies the latter as belonging to the middle socio-economic stratum, but apparently this herd size is just a little above that required for subsistence by the average household of five to six persons.<sup>57</sup>

The national modernization program for China's economy in the 1980s also promoted further development of local infrastructure. In Mgo log, the steady supply of energy to the county seats was of major concern. Thus, in the 1980s, the Mgo log TAP turned away from conventional power plants to small scale hydro-electrical power plants which, for the present, appear to generate sufficient capacity.<sup>58</sup> In addition, road construction to facilitate more efficient transport to and from Mgo log, as well as within the prefecture itself, has remained a constant challenge until today.<sup>59</sup> Two new bridges over the

---

<sup>55</sup> *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:355-358.

<sup>56</sup> Personal communications.

<sup>57</sup> Herd composition differs from area to area, as does the classification of "poor" or "rich". In Pad ma and Gcig sgril, where few sheep are kept, the number of yaks and yak hybrids owned is decisive, whereas in Dar lag, Dga' bde and Rma chen, the number of sheep is as important. In Phala, in western TAR, an average of 37 animals per person were distributed at decollectivisation. However, already by 1988, about 38% of the pastoralists owned less than 30 animals per capita and 10% owned over 90 animals per capita; Goldstein/Beall 1991:166.

<sup>58</sup> In 1985, Gcig sgril County invested in the construction of the Shahehe electric power plant, and in 1987, the first small-scale hydro-electric power plant was completed in Pad ma County, as was another one in Rma chen County; *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:355, 357.

<sup>59</sup> In 1994, it was still stressed that first and foremost for effective poverty alleviation in Mgo log, the traffic and transportation system had to be improved considerably. In summer 2000, the only paved road I travelled on in the Mgo log TAP was from the prefectural seat of Rta bo to the provincial capital Xining. The roads connecting the county seats of Gcig sgril, Pad ma, Dar lag, Dga' bde and Rta bo were

Yellow River were completed in October 1986: one in Rma stod and the second at Rwa rgya monastery in Rma chen, with the latter being prerequisite for the new direct road from Rta bo to Xining which opened in November 1990. The new road has a length of 441 km and avoids the former detour of 186 km via the Xining-Yul shul road.<sup>60</sup>

Tourism was also discovered as a new means for additional income in Mgo log. Since foreign mountaineers had showed an interest in climbing the A myes rma chen Range, this mountain, together with the Gnyan po g.yu rtse peaks (Chin. Nianbaoyeshence *shan*) in Geig sgril and Pad ma, was made accessible for mountaineering around 1986.<sup>61</sup> In April 1988, the first hotel, the Rta bo Nationality Hotel (now called “Snow Mountains Hotel”, Chin. Xueshan *bin-guan*), was opened in the prefectural seat of the Mgo log TAP.<sup>62</sup>

In addition, during the mid-1980s, a minor gold rush saw approximately 20,000, mainly Han, people enter the A myes rma chen region and other parts of Rma stod County when private gold washing was permitted or at least tolerated. However, after the need to exploit local natural resources had been stressed by the provincial and central governments, a state-run goldmine was officially opened in Rma stod in summer 1987, and private gold washing subsequently came to an end. In 2000, the Mgo log TAP reportedly had two alluvial gold mining areas, one in Rma stod on the northern bank of Sdo ring mtsho Lake (Chin. Eling *hu*), and another in southern Pad ma County.<sup>63</sup> In Rma chen County, copper, cobalt and zinc are also mined. In Dga’ bde and Dar lag, new coal deposits were discovered in 1987 and 1990 respectively.<sup>64</sup>

---

all unpaved. I presume that the road from Xining via Rma stod to Yul shul is now paved as well, although I did not travel on it.

<sup>60</sup> *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:356-359.

<sup>61</sup> *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:352. However, general access to the latter two counties was only granted to foreign tourists in summer 2000.

<sup>62</sup> *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:358. Furthermore, a travel agency from Xining has now set up an office in Rta bo.

<sup>63</sup> When travelling in Rma chen County, I saw another one close to the A myes rma chen Range which might be—provincially—of minor importance.

<sup>64</sup> *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:22, 131; Li Shicai 1993:112; *Qinghai jingji fazhan* 2000:177 and map no. 3 on the mineral resources of Qinghai Province.



*1989-2000: Readjustment of Reforms*

By the mid- to late 1980s, economic reforms had not only produced considerable economic growth in some regions of China, they had also helped precipitate new socio-economic and political problems. Thus, after Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region had staged several anti-Chinese protests in Lhasa in the late 1980s,<sup>65</sup> and after Chinese students in Beijing had demanded more democracy in Tian'anmen Square during 1989, the 1990s was set to become a period of political reigning in and of readjustment of several economic reforms. The state's approach was twofold. On the one hand, it tightened political control to subdue any aspirations for more democracy or true autonomy within China in general, and in the "minorities" areas as well. The implementation of the so-called Love of the Motherland campaign is only one such example.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, the state mainly attributed growing social unrest and dissatisfaction—especially in China's north-western regions—to the relative economic underdevelopment and backwardness of these areas in comparison with the much more affluent eastern coastal regions. Hence, it endeavoured to counter this situation by way of massive financial and economic development aid, launching special programs for China's northwest in the mid-1990s. These programs were later officially subsumed under the "*Xibu da kaifa*" campaign banner.<sup>67</sup>

Whereas the average annual income of Mgo log pastoralists in the 1980s was apparently moderately higher than the average rural income in Qinghai Province as a whole, this trend obviously changed in the 1990s (see table 1). Thus, in 1994, Mgo log began to

Table 1: Average Annual Net Income in Yuan (Renminbi)

<sup>65</sup> A resurgence of Tibetan nationalist feelings had led to demonstrations for Tibetan independence in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

<sup>66</sup> This campaign, which is also known as the Patriotic Education campaign, was first launched in the TAR in 1996 to attack and destroy loyalty to the Dalai Lama and to eliminate alleged separatist activities.

<sup>67</sup> The *Xibu da kaifa* campaign, which literally means "the great opening of the western regions," was officially launched in 1999/2000, although the necessity to accelerate economic development in China's poor western regions had already been acknowledged since the mid-1990s. The new campaign, however, lays much stress on the exploitation of natural resources, from which China proper will profit considerably.

Year	PRC	Qinghai Province	Mgo log TAP	Individual Mgo log Counties	Source*
1976	261		166,97	300 (Rma stod) 142 (Gcig sgril)	GLZZZZZ/ ZGTJNJ/ GLSSN
1980	439 urban 191 rural		202	436 (Rma stod)	GLZZZZZ/ GLSSN/ ZGTJNJ
1981	459 urban 223 rural	418 urban 191 rural	197,85		GLZZZZZ/ QHJJFZ/ ZGTJNJ
1982	495 urban 270 rural		210,38	476 (Rma stod)	GLZZZZZ/ ZGTJNJ
1984				123 (Pad ma)	GLSSN
1985	685 urban 398 rural	749 urban 343 rural	470		QHJJFZ/ ZGTJNJ/ GLSSN
1991	1,544 urban 709 rural	492 rural	638	437 (Pad ma) 587 (Dga' bde) 600 (Gcig sgril) 1,010 (Rma chen) 1,207 (Rma stod)	ZGMZTJ/ LBC/ GLSSN
1998	5,425 urban 2,162 rural	4,240 urban/ 3,954 urban 1,426 rural			CA/ QHJJFZ
1999	5,854 urban 2,210 rural		ca. 1,350		CA/ Unofficial Estimate

\* C.a. = Schüller in: China aktuell; DDQHJS = *Dangdai Qinghai jianshi*; GLZZZZZ = *Guoluo zangzu zizhizhou*; GLSSN = *Guoluo sishinian*; LBC = Herrmann-Pillath et al., Länderbericht China; Marshall = Marshall/Cooke; QHJJFZ = *Qinghai jingji fazhan*; ZGMZTJ = *Zhongguo minzu tongji*; ZGTJNJ = *Zhongguo tongji nianjian*

participate in a special Seven Year Poverty Alleviation Program that was launched in Qinghai after the central government had sent inspection teams to several pastoral areas. Conspicuously, there exists a substantial difference in net incomes among the various Mgo log counties. Whereas Pad ma County had an average annual net income

of Yuan 437 in 1991, the net income in Rma stod was Yuan 1,207.<sup>68</sup> However, by the end of 1998, Pad ma had officially overcome poverty.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, Rma stod County has allegedly fallen back to the last ranks together with Dar lag and Dga' bde.<sup>70</sup>

In March 1996, the Qinghai government officially launched a campaign "for the large scale implementation of the *si pei tao* program in Qinghai" after the Chinese president Jiang Zemin had stressed, once again, the need for a fast development of China's western regions.<sup>71</sup> The *si pei tao* program was an enlarged version of the original *san pei tao* program initiated in the 1970s, and which involved—in addition to the fencing of pasture, supplementary fodder production and the construction of animal shelters—the sedentarization of the pastoralists. By the end of 1998, the *si pei tao* program had allegedly reached 16,000 households in Mgo log, Yul shul and Rma lho, and had produced 89,000 m<sup>2</sup> of animal shelters, 4,310,000 *mu* (ca. 290,000 ha) of fenced in pastures and 96,000 *mu* (ca. 6,400 ha) of newly planted grass.<sup>72</sup>

However, in the Mgo log TAP, the *si pei tao* program has not been evenly implemented, and this continues to be the case.<sup>73</sup> With regard to fencing, for instance, Gcig sgril and Pad ma had very few fenced pastures in summer 2000, and many pastoralists thought that since the pastoralists were generally against fencing, it would not be introduced in these two counties. In contrast, in Dar lag and Dga' bde where a considerable part of the rangelands is of relatively poor quality, fencing—as a means to protect the grassland—has been ex-

<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately, the sources do not mention exactly how the annual net income of a pastoralist is calculated.

<sup>69</sup> *Qinghai jingji fazhan* 2000:191.

<sup>70</sup> Officially, in the case of Rma stod, rapid grassland degradation and desertification caused by overstocking are held to be responsible. Personal communications.

<sup>71</sup> *Qinghai jingji fazhan* 2000:188-189.

<sup>72</sup> *Qinghai jingji fazhan* 2000:57, 59, 189.

<sup>73</sup> According to one source, by the end of 1991, 1,653 pastures (or 564,880 *mu* of rangelands) had been fenced in Mgo log, 477 animal shelters erected and 65.2% of the pastoralists settled. Allegedly, altogether 960 households had fully implemented the *si pei tao* program. In Dga' bde, however, only 36 households actually owned a winter house in 1992; *Guoluo sishimian* 1993:15, 24. In 1996, a Mgo log official estimated that about 30% of the Mgo log households had established all four aspects of the program, and that by the end of the century, this would have increased to 70%; Goldstein 1996:13.

tensive, despite the mental reservations of many pastoralists.<sup>74</sup> In Rma chen County, fenced winter pastures are encountered in some areas, while not in others. Fencing is still very controversial in Mgo log, partly because it is expensive, and partly because it also creates a new source of conflicts between neighbours and with herders on transfer from summer to winter pastures.<sup>75</sup>

Concerning supplementary fodder production and the construction of animal shelters, their realization also differs from area to area. It appears that supplementary fodder production is not very common, although it has been reported for Rma chen and Dar lag.<sup>76</sup> Animal shelters are often encountered close to winter houses. They are usually open pens with walls made of sod, stones or wire, but new style concrete shelters with roofs of polyurethane are apparently becoming more frequent.<sup>77</sup>

Although China had already started to propagate sedentarization policies in the late 1950s, the policy of “fixed abodes and nomadic herd raising” has still not been fully implemented in the Mgo log TAP. After the first winter houses had been constructed from 1980 onwards in the model brigade of Dongqinggou in Rma chen, the settlement of the Mgo log pastoralists advanced only very slowly, although it apparently received a new impetus with the new *si pei tao* campaign in 1996.<sup>78</sup> Winter houses of differing size and quality are now frequently seen along the roads. Although many Mgo log Tibetans still cannot afford to build a house, most pastoralists now appreciate the idea of a more solid abode in winter than a tent.<sup>79</sup>

In the period from 1970 to the late 1980s, economic success in Tibetan pastoral areas like Mgo log was judged solely in terms of increase in productivity, and thus substantial herd growth was advocated and desired. In contrast, the later *si pei tao* program also began

<sup>74</sup> Personal observations and communications.

<sup>75</sup> Goldstein 1996:15. For a resurgence of grassland conflicts, see Yeh n.d.

<sup>76</sup> Corral planting of oats has been reported as a norm for Xueshan Township in Rma chen. In Dar lag, however, it appears that mainly reseeding of grassland is conducted: Goldstein 1996:17, 19. In neighbouring Dзам thang County in Sichuan, *avena sativa*, an improved oat species, is already commonly planted by the pastoralists: Manderscheid 1999:178.

<sup>77</sup> For the new style shelters, see Goldstein 1996:17.

<sup>78</sup> *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:352.

<sup>79</sup> The construction of winter houses was—and apparently only in some areas still is—subsidised by granting low interest rates loans. See also Goldstein 1996:13.

to stress the need to protect pastures from overgrazing, especially after pasture degradation, increasing salination and erosion had been reported for many pastoral areas. Excessive herd sizes and overgrazing were held responsible as the primary causes. Consequently, a reduction of herd sizes began to be encouraged, together with the need for more fenced pastures.<sup>80</sup>

Grassland degradation is also a serious problem in Mgo log, although its extent differs considerably from county to county, and sometimes even from township to township. The livestock numbers in Mgo log have increased overall from 2.5 million head in 1990 to about 3 million in 2000, if this unofficial estimate by a Mgo log official is taken to be correct. However, whether this means that the carrying capacity of the pastures in Mgo log has now been exceeded, is still in dispute. The general view that overgrazing, and subsequent rodent plagues, are the main causes for grassland degradation is not only questioned by the pastoralists themselves but also by a growing number of experts from outside China.<sup>81</sup> For instance, in Dar lag and Dga' bde counties, where the rangelands are of comparatively poor quality and are heavily populated by 'a sbra/'a bra (Chin. *gaoshan laoshu*), the local rodent, the pastoralists usually refer to the following points: First, the presently available grassland in Dar lag and Dga' bde has always been of inferior quality compared to that of Geig sgril and Pad ma;<sup>82</sup> second, the climate has become noticeably drier during the last few decades, and; third, the 'a sbra plagues have only become worse after each attempt to eliminate the rodents with chemical poisons.<sup>83</sup> A grassland project in Dar lag County, which has

<sup>80</sup> In Phala, western TAR, a 20% reduction of herd sizes was ordered by the local administration already in 1987; Goldstein/Beall 1991:174. In 'Dam gzhung, central TAR, attempts at a voluntary limitation of livestock numbers were made; Clarke 1998:115. For Mgo log, however, which had suffered from a series of natural disasters between 1983 and 1985, and a subsequent loss of ca. 450,000 head of livestock, it seems that no further reduction of livestock numbers were considered necessary in the late 1980s; *Qinghai jingji fazhan* 2000:171, 174, 176, 178-180; *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:354-355, 358.

<sup>81</sup> Goldstein/Beall 1991:177-179; Barfield 1993:216; Clarke 1998:31-33.

<sup>82</sup> In the case of Dar lag, the county lost a large proportion of its key winter pastures to Sichuan in about 1976; Goldstein 1996:18, *Guoluo sishinian* 1993:350.

<sup>83</sup> Many pastoralists therefore return to the use of traditional magical 'ab tho to drive away the 'a sbra. The hunting of too many foxes, which are the natural predators of the 'a sbra, has also aggravated the problem, as many local Tibetans admit. In other pastoral areas in the TAR, such as Phala, Dzam thang and 'Dam gzhung,

been initiated by the European Union, might hopefully help to provide new insights into how to prevent and how to possibly reverse pasture degradation in the future.<sup>84</sup>

In the 1990s, the exploitation of mushrooms and medical plants, which are highly prized in Asia and plentiful in Mgo log, became another potential source of additional income. However, these plants were—and still are—mostly collected by seasonal migrant workers from Gansu and Sichuan, and scarcely by the Mgo log pastoralists themselves.<sup>85</sup> The collectors have to buy a permit from the local authorities, which grants exclusive collection rights for certain plots. However, the pastoralists who lease the pastures, and thus have the right of usufruct for these plots, receive only a small fraction of the collection fees, although they are the ones who suffer most from the grassland degradation caused by extensive digging. Most of the profit goes to the local authorities, that is, to the townships and to the village/herders' associations.<sup>86</sup>

Another side effect of new economic development in the Mgo log TAP is the influx of Han and Hui migrants as petty entrepreneurs, along with Tibetans from Mtsho lho, Rma lho and Rnga ba.<sup>87</sup> The

---

the pastoralists also deny that overgrazing has caused pasture degradation; see Goldstein 1994:108; Manderscheid 1999:172; Clarke 1998:110.

<sup>84</sup> In 1994, the EU signed an agreement with the Qinghai Bureau of Animal Husbandry for a Qinghai Livestock Development Project, which mainly focused on the problem of grassland degradation in Mgo log.

<sup>85</sup> In summer 2000, one kilogram of *Fritillaria* (Tib. *Rdza yung* or *Pas mo*; Chin. *Beimu*) could earn about Yuan 130. *Saussurea involucrata* (Tib. *Gangs lha me thog*; Chin. *Xuelianhua*) and some other plants like *Notopterygium* (Tib. *Srig nag*, Chin. *Qianghuo*) and *Gentiana Crassicaulia* (Tib. *Shas thang*, Chin. *Qinsu*) could earn about Yuan 30/kg. The most valuable plant is *Cordyceps/Caterpillar fungus* (Tib. *Dpyar rtsa dgun 'bu*; Chin. *Dongchongxiacao*) which can be sold for Yuan 7,000 to 10,000/kg, depending on quality. In Mgo log, a traditional taboo was imposed on the collection of these plants, which might explain the persistent reluctance to exploit these resources by the pastoralists themselves. For the taboo, see Namkhai Norbu 1997:68, 80; *Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu* 1985:82.

<sup>86</sup> I was told that the permits cost up to Yuan 10,000 per season. In a specific example provided by Goldstein, the fees were Yuan 700 per person, while 5% of the fee went to the township and the rest to a Common Fund of the Herder's Association; Goldstein 1996:19.

<sup>87</sup> In Geig sgril and Pad ma, most of the migrants come from the neighbouring Sichuan Province, whereas in central and northern Mgo log, most migrants come from Gansu and Qinghai Province, with a large proportion being Muslim Hui. Many of the non-Mgo log Tibetans initially came for government employments as teachers, administrative staff, policemen etc., because the Mgo log area could not provide

migrants mainly settle in the county seats where they run the majority of restaurants, shops and workshops. They thus gradually displace the Mgo log pastoralists from potential employments in the secondary and tertiary economic sectors. According to the 1990 census, the Mgo log TAP had a total population of about 120,000 people, of which 88% were Tibetan, 10% Han, 1% Hui, and 1% belonged to other nationalities.<sup>88</sup> The new 2000 national census will probably record a shift towards an increased percentage of non-Tibetan residents. Apparently, there is also a new trend of out-migration from Mgo log, especially among young males who look for better employment opportunities in bigger towns and cities, although no specific data on this is available to date.

The general population growth rates in Mgo log pose another potential threat to its fragile ecosystem, which can only support a certain number of people and their livestock. Although the population density still appears very low, with less than one person/km<sup>2</sup> in Rma stod, and two to three persons/km<sup>2</sup> in Rma chen County,<sup>89</sup> it is difficult to assess how many more inhabitants will start to seriously stress the grassland and mountain ecosystem. In 1998, the official net population increase in Qinghai Province was 1.4%.<sup>90</sup> For the Mgo log TAP, where the latest available data is from 1994, the net increase varies—according to the figures used—between 8.4% and 12.15% for the period from 1985 to 1990, and between 5.1% and 10.3% for the period from 1990 to 1994 (see table 2). The average annual increases have thus been between 1% and 2% respectively.<sup>91</sup> These figures also indicate that the population growth in Mgo log has decelerated from the last half of the 1980s to the first half of the 1990s.<sup>92</sup> According to my own observations, the

---

enough trained personnel. Nowadays, most of the newly arrived Tibetans do itinerant trade.

<sup>88</sup> *Qinghai jingji fazhan* 2000:population chart on first page. Unofficial estimates, based on the then still ongoing census of the year 2000, anticipated a population growth to ca. 130,000. The results of the 2000 census were not yet published when this article was written.

<sup>89</sup> *Qinghai jingji fazhan* 2000:population chart on first page.

<sup>90</sup> *Qinghai jingji fazhan* 2000:4.

<sup>91</sup> Marshall and Cooke have arrived at a 1.6% increase for Mgo log from 1990 to 1994, and an annual rate of 0.4%, which seems to be due to a misreading of figures; Marshall/Cooke 1997:2208.

<sup>92</sup> The same trend is evident when looking at the population growth figures from the individual counties.

Table 2: Demographic Development in the Mgo log Area

Year	Sources			Remarks
	GLZZSH <sup>1</sup>	GLSSN <sup>2</sup>	Others	
1964	56,071 (p.130) (26,382 men; 29,686 women) 56,900 (p.233)	56,936 (27,466 men; 29,470 women)		Second Chinese Census
1976		88,305		
1982	103,718 (p.130) (51,684 men; 52,024 women) 105,200 (p.233) (52,300 men; 52,800 women)	105,152 (52,332 men; 52,820 women)		Third Chinese Census
1990	120,400 (p.233) (59,800 men; 60,600 women) 119,973 (p.130) (61,652 men; 58,321 women) 112,531 (p.130)	116,565 (57,936 men; 58,629 women)	120,000 <sup>5</sup>	Fourth Chinese Census
1994			127,900 <sup>6</sup> (121,900) <sup>6</sup>	
2000			130,000	Fifth Chinese Census: Unofficial estimate

<sup>1</sup> *Guoluo zangzu shehui* <sup>2</sup> *Guoluo sishinian* <sup>3</sup> Zhang Xuezhong <sup>4</sup> *Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu* <sup>5</sup> *Zhongguo minzu tongji* <sup>6</sup> Marshall/Cooke

number of children per household generally varied between two to seven, while their number was closely related to the profession and education level of their parents. Whereas the pastoralists usually had four and more children, Tibetan cadres, teachers, policemen, and so on had the officially acceptable number of two to three children.<sup>93</sup> I

<sup>93</sup> However, the sample I took was purely random and very small—only a few dozens of people—and might not be representative. Relatively large average household sizes for the post-1980 period have also been reported for other Tibetan pastoral areas. For Phala, western TAR, see Goldstein 1994:106-107. For Dzam thang



Table 3: Development of Average Household Sizes in Mgo log

Year	Households	Persons	Average Household Size	Source*
1982 Mgo log TAP	22,700	103,718	4.5	GLZZSH:130
1984 Dar lag + West Rma chen County	2,214	10,304	4.6	GLSSN:354
1990 Mgo log TAP	25,526/ 25,525	112,531/ 119,973	4.4/ 4.7	GLZZSH:130/ GLZZSH:130
1997 Changmahe sub- County	141	685	4.8	Data collected by Thomas Hoppe

\* GLSSN = *Guoluo sishinian*; GLZZSH = *Guoluo zangzu shehui*; DDQHJS = *Dangdai Qinghai jianshi*

therefore suspect that the officially published growth rates might be lower than the actual ones, because the pastoralists often believe it is more favourable not to report all of their children. Many families thus attempt to evade the compulsory nine years of schooling for their offspring, as well as avoiding paying any fees and taxes in full which are calculated on a per capita basis.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, local administrators also apparently tend to round off population figures before reporting them to their superiors, presumably because the

---

in Sichuan, see Manderscheid 1999:87, 93. For Gser thar in Sichuan, see Levine 1999:163.

<sup>94</sup> In fact, the pastoralists are usually taxed according to the size of their herds. However, they are often charged with extra fees on a local level. My informants usually only knew the total amount of money they were obliged to pay as taxes, but were not able to explain the composition of the amount or the method used for calculating it.

figures run counter to the official State Family Planning Policy,<sup>95</sup> and the local cadres thus fear negative consequences.<sup>96</sup>

At this early stage of research, given the scarcity and relative unreliability of available data, it remains difficult to draw valid conclusions for the actual state of economic development in Mgo log. It can at least be pointed out that the Mgo log TAP still appears a long way from attaining the officially stated goal—the same as that proclaimed for the Tibet-Qinghai Plateau in general—of transformation “into a prosperous modern livestock base...[with] rational grassland management.”<sup>97</sup> Many severe and unresolved problems will still need to be overcome in order to realize such a goal. Among these are the questions of how to effectively prevent further pasture degradation, how to deal with inheritance rights to a previously fixed number of pastures under a growing population pressure, and how to provide employment for displaced pastoralists—to name but a few. If the central and local governments do not seriously address these questions in good time, social unrest and discontentment may grow instead of being reduced by the recent efforts at modernization.

---

<sup>95</sup> The State Family Planning Policy, which has been implemented since the early 1980s, allows a one child family for Han people in urban areas, two children for those in rural areas, and two to three children per family for the “national minorities.”

<sup>96</sup> For a vivid description of the problems encountered when collecting data for the 1991 census in Mgo log, see Li Shicai 1993:228, 232.

<sup>97</sup> Lobsang 1998:77.

CHINESE GLOSSARY

Animaqin/qing shan °çÄáÂê	mu Ä¶
Çβ /ÇäÉ½	Nianbaoyeshenze shan
Banma °àÂê	Äê±£Ö³Ê²ÔòÉ½
beimu ±'Ä¿	Qinghai Çà°£
cun 'â	qianghuo Ç¼⁄⁴»î
Dari 'iÈÖ	qinsu ÇØÈÖ
Dawu 'ólã	san pei tao ÈýÄä×
dongchongxiacao ¶³æĬÄ²Ý	Shang Guoluo ÉĬ¹ûÄâ
Eling hu ¶ĬóÁê°þ	si pei tao ÈÄÄäĬ×
Gande ,ÊµÄ	Xia Guoluo ĬÄ¹ûÄâ
gaoshan laoshu ,β É½ ÄĬ Êó	xiahai facai ĬÄ °£ ·ç ²Æ
Guoluo zangzu zizhizhou ¹û	xian ĬØ
Äâ ²Ø ×â ×Ö ÖĬ ÖÝ	xiancheng ĬØ³Ç
Han °°	xiang Ĭç
hezuoshe °Ĭ ×÷ Éç	Xibu da kaifa Ĭ÷ ²¿ 'ó ¿ª ·ç
Huanghe »Æ°Ó	Xining Ĭ÷Äþ
Huangnan »Æ ÄĬ	xiuyang shengxi ÐÝÑøÉúĬç
Hui »Ø	xuelianhua Ñ©Ä«»
Jiuzhi ¾ÄÖĬ	Xueshan binguan Ñ©É½±ö¹Ý
lianchan chengbao zerenzhi	Yushu ÓñÈ÷
Áª ²ú ³Ð °ü Ôð ÈĬ ÖÆ	zhen Öò
Maduo Äê¶Ĭà	Zhong Guoluo ÖÐ¹ûÄâ
Maqin ÄêÇβ	

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barfield, Thomas J. (1993). *The Nomadic Alternative*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Chen, Qingying ³ÄÇiÓç (1995). *Zangzu buluo zhidu yanjiu* ²Ø×â²iÄäÖÆ¶ËÑÐ³/4i. Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe.
- Clarke, Graham E. (1987). "China's Reforms of Tibet, and their Effects on Pastoralism", in Institute of Development Studies (ed.), *Discussion Paper 237*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 1-60.
- Clarke, Graham E. ed. (1998). *Development, Society, and Environment in Tibet*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Don grub dbang rgyal & Nor sde (1991). "Mgo log lo rgyus deb ther", in *Mgo log rig gnas lo rgyus*, 1. Xining: Srid gros Mgo log khul u rig gnas lo rgyus rgyu cha zhib 'jug u yon ltan khang.
- Dangdai Qinghai jianshi* μ±'úÇà°£¼òÊ· (1996). Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo chubanshe.
- Ekvall, Robert B. (1968). *Fields on the hoof*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Goldstein, Melvyn C. (1994). "Change, conflict and continuity among a community of nomadic pastoralists", in Robert Barnett & Shirin Akiner (eds.), *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*. London: Hurst & Co., 76-111.
- Goldstein, Melvyn C. (1996). "Nomads of Golok, Qinghai: A Report" Published online: <http://www.cwru.edu/affil/tibet/nomads.html>.
- Goldstein, Melvyn C. & Cynthia M. Beall (1991). *Die Nomaden Westtibets*. Nürnberg: DA Verlag Das Andere.
- Guoluo sishinian* 'û Äâ ÊÄ Ê® Äê (1993). Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe.
- Guoluo zangzu zizhizhou gaikuang* 'ûÄâ²Ø×â×ÖÖÍÖÝ, Äiö (1984). Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe.
- 'Gu log Dam chos dpal bzang (2000). *'Gu log gi lo rgyus gnyan po gyu rtse'i bsang dud*, 2 vols. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- Herrmann-Pillath, Carsten, et al. eds. (1998). *Länderbericht China*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.
- Huc, Evariste-Régis & Joseph Gabet (1987). *Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China, 1844-1846*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Hunsberger, Merrill R. (1978). *Ma Bufang in Qinghai*. Doctoral dissertation, reprint: *Ma Bufang zai Qinghai* Äí²½¼ÖÜÇà°£. 1994. Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe.
- Levine, Nancy (1999). "Cattle and the Cash Economy: Responses to Change Among Tibetan Nomadic Pastoralists in Sichuan, China", *Human Organization*, 58:2, 161-172.
- Li, Zonghua Àè×Ú»ª & Yanqi Li ÄíÑÓèç (1992). *Anduo zangzu shilüe* °²¶ä²Ø×âÊ·. Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe.
- Li, Shicai ÄíÊi²Ä ed. (1993). *Guoluo, zhaoxia ruhuo* 'ûÄâ³Í¼Èç»ð. Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe.
- Lobsang (1998). "The Development of Animal Husbandry on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau", in Graham Clarke (ed.), *Development, Society, and Environment in Tibet*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 77-78.
- Lodey Lhawang (1994). "The Conferring of Tibetan Government Ranks on the Chieftains of Golok", *Lungta*, 8, 13-17.

- Namkhai Norbu (1997). *Journey among the Tibetan Nomads. An Account of a Remote Civilization*. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- Manderscheid, Angela (1999). *Lebens- und Wirtschaftsformen von Nomaden im Osten des tibetischen Hochlandes*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag GmbH.
- Marshall, Steven D. & Susette T. Cooke (1997). *Tibet Outside the TAR. Control, Exploitation and Assimilation. Development with Chinese Characteristics*. CD-Rom.
- Qinghai jingji fazhan 50 nian* Çà °£ ¾- ¼Ä ·ç Ö¹ Îâ Ê® Äê (2000). Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe.
- Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu shehui lishi diaocha* Çà°£Ê;²Ø×âÄÊ¹Ä×âÉç»á ÁúÊ·µ²é (1985). Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe.
- Rock, Joseph F. (1956). *The Amnye Ma-chhen Range and Adjacent Regions*. Rome: Is.M.E.O.
- Roerich, Georges (1933). "Les Goloks et leur caractère ethnique", *XVe Congrès International d'Anthropologie & d'Archeologie Préhistorique, Ve Session de l'Institut International d'Anthropologie, Paris 20-27 Septembre 1931*. Paris: Librairie E. Nourry, 736-741.
- Schüller, Margot (2000). "PRC Social and Economic Data for 1998 and 1999", *China aktuell*, 11, 1345/29-1346/30.
- Su, Faxiang ÊÖ·çĪé (1993). "Qinghai Guoluo diqu minzu jiaoyu de guoqu he xianzhuang Çà°£¹úÄâµÇøÄñ×â½ıİÓýµÄ¹ýË¥°İÖ×", *Zangxue yanjiu* ²ØÑ§ÑĐ¾ı. Beijing, 235-243.
- Xing, Haining ĐĪ°£Äþ (1994). *Guoluo zangzu shehui* ¹úÄâ²Ø×âÉç»á. Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe.
- Yeh, Emily (n.d.). "Tibetan Range Wars: Spatial politics and authority on the grasslands of Amdo", unpublished manuscript.
- Zhang Xuezhong ÖÄÑ§ÖÖ (1990). "Shilun Qing wangchao zai Guoluo de shizheng fanglüe ÊÖÄÛÇälö³~ ÖÚ¹úÄâµÄÊ©Öþ·½ÄÖ", in *Zangxue yanjiu luncong* ²ØÑ§ÑĐ¾ı. ÄÚ'Ö, 2. Lhasa, 242-253.
- Zhang Zhongxiao ÖÄÖÖĐç (1997). *Qinghai you* Çà°£ÖĪ. Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe.
- Zhongguo minzu tongji 1992* ÖĐ¹úÄñ×âı³¼Æ 1992 (1993). Beijing: Zhongguo tongji chubanshe.
- Zhongguo tongji nianjian 1989* ÖĐ¹úı³¼ÆÄê¼ø 1989 (1990). Beijing: Zhongguo tongji chubanshe.