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[Adhering to the party baseline, organising socialist trade], Tibet Daily February 8.


--- (1981). 'Qingchu nooqing yixuqiang, cujin minzu shouqongyue fazhan' [Cleaning the influence of the left tendency, promoting the development of the nationality handicraft industry], Tibet Daily April 26.


CHAPTER FIVE

In the name of conservation and harmonious development: The separation of pastoralists from pastures in Tibet

Tashi Nyima

Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is to explore the practice of development as a state strategy in contemporary Tibet in light of the implementation of the nationwide Pastures to Grasslands (Chi.: taimu liancan, hereafter PG) campaign aimed at protecting the ecology and preventing the overall degradation of the vast grasslands of China. In the Sanjiangyuan Tibetan area, the policy is associated in local government discourse with the concept of ‘ecological migration’ (Chi.: shengtai yimin), which is a component of the Chinese state’s plan to create a harmonious socialist countryside. The State Council, the highest body within the Chinese government, launched the nationwide PG campaign in 2003 with the stated objective of protecting grassland ecology and preventing degradation. The grasslands in China have been classified into three conservation zones on the basis of degree of degradation and conservation priorities: prohibited grazing, which bans grazing completely for a given time period; seasonal grazing, which allows grazing seasonally; and rotational grazing, in which permission to graze is based on the quality of the pastures regardless of time limit or season (Wang 2006). The State Council relayed the policy directives to the pastoral provinces based on what it called the ‘five to the provinces’ principle, which transferred the target, task, funding, grain, and responsibility to the provinces for implementation (ibid.). Local governments in Sanjiangyuan (Tib.: gtsang guam chu mge) started to implement the PG policy between late
2003 and early 2004. Intervention in the form of ecological migration programmes in Sanjiangyuan likewise affected the pastures and pastoral livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Tibetan herdiers.

This chapter examines one such community subjected to ecological migration in the Yushul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. It analyses the perspectives and voices of diverse actors, focusing specifically on the process of resettlement and efforts to create post-resettlement livelihoods in this previously pastoral community. I argue that, contrary to the official representation of Tibetan herdiers as 'passive' recipients of development aid and intervention, herdiers in Yushul (Chl.: Yushu) have actively engaged, whether through peaceful resistance within the framework of the state system or public defiance in the streets, in shaping the processes and outcomes of sustainable development interventions and their impact on local subsistence capacities. At the same time, despite the diverse interfaces of strategies and counter-strategies, the planned state interventions have had severe and adverse effects on local subsistence-based lifestyles. The questions thus raised in this chapter are: How do these diverse actors in Sanjiangyuan in general and Yushul in particular experience, strategize, resist, negotiate, and, above all, deploy development in the context of planned development interventions? What are the wider implications of such encounters on pastoral livelihoods and on the relationship between local Tibetans and the Chinese state? Rather than focusing on the macro-level policy rationale of conservation and grassland degradation in Sanjiangyuan dealt with elsewhere (Nyima 2010; see also Cancetti, ch. 6 in this volume), this chapter specifically explores grassroots interventions and the responses of herdiers in the 'actor interface', namely that between officials and herdiers. The advantage of the 'actor interface' approach, according to Long and Liu (2009), is that it provides access to the self-organizing process of human agency and life-worlds of individual actors in determining mutual relationships between actors. It is, in this respect, useful for elucidating how the relationship between Tibetan herdiers and local state officials has been shaped and strategized in the wake of planned interventions. Furthermore, this chapter will show that there has in fact been an increase in the modes of interface, which I call 'diversification of interfaces'. In what follows I first provide an introduction to the sustainable development discourse in Sanjiangyuan and outline the case of resettlement in Gyewa. This will be followed by mapping the diversification of modes of interaction between state agents and local herdiers, specifically with regard to pastoral subsistence capacity. Finally, I shall discuss the impact of official interventions on the ecologically protected area Sanjiangyuan, which has led to the emergence of a variety of new grassroots actors and forms of resistance.

The issue of effectively conserving biodiversity in the process of development has been intensely discussed in recent conservation and development studies. The debate is primarily confined to two conservation-development models, namely the modernist protectionist 'fortress conservation' model and the 'postmodern' community-based participatory model. The general pattern is that the community-based approach takes precedence in the wake of the failure of the protectionist approach in a constructive yet critical debate, and vice versa (Fletcher 2010). Early critiques targeted the modernist discursive context of 'external' actors — that is, national and international institutions — and the way development practice was being articulated, including the top-down and technocratic styles of engagement (Escobar 1999; Ferguson 1999; Randers 2003; Scott 1999). Later critiques mainly concentrated on the ideological perception of development and conservation, that is, the modernist perception of nature as separate and distinct from its indigenous inhabitants and their knowledge of nature. In both sets of criticism, power relations embedded in institutions, knowledge, and discourse play a central role in the interface between the intervening forces and the impacted actors when defining conservation and development (Campbell 2005; De Vries 2007; Ferguson 1994, 1999, Mazzullo 2005; Smith 2007). At the same time, resistance to state development projects and programmes has been an important theme in studies of contention politics in rural China (O'Brien and Li 2006). Of particular relevance in terms of local resistance to planned sustainable development intervention in contemporary Tibet is, therefore, not only Scattian forms of everyday cultural resistance (in contrast to socio-political movements) (Scott 1985), but also the concept of 'rightful resistance' of O'Brien and Li (2006), which provides a middle ground to the idea of resistance in rural China. According to O'Brien and Li, rightful resistance has been understood as resistance or counter-discourse based on the rights and norms of the Party-state in the wake of addressing local grievances. I argue that a similar form of resistance, in
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addition to the two conventional forms, exists and is prevalent in Yushu, where this study has been carried out.

With the combination of "environmentality" and the critique of modernist development as the point of departure, this chapter explores into the implementation of PG as a sustainable development practice, its goals, and its effects on pastoral livelihoods—particularly in relation to subsistence capacity (Fischer 2008). More specifically, it explores the practice of development as a state strategy in contemporary Tibet. Apart from conservation, the policy objective also comprises the redesigning of new pastoral communities in Sanjiangyuan under the overall development philosophy of the 'harmonious society' proposed by the incumbent president Hu Jintao. The inclusion of an ecological dimension in the official development discourse has given birth to the concept of 'harmonious development' (Chu: hánhフレjrahäh), which aims to create so-called human–human (Chu: ren ren) and human–nature (Chu: ren ren) harmony. Official lore as well as officially sponsored academic reports in China have prescribed what they call 'the road to harmonious development' (Lu 2011; Palmer et al. 2012), despite a somewhat vague definition of the concept per se. In Sanjiangyuan, the idea has widely been used in official documents emerging from local-level policy implementation. For example, the tainphubla, a national-level working group, has described the PG implementation as follows:

The construction of an ecological compensation mechanism is in accordance with the ecological culture strategy proposed by the Seventeenth Party Congress. It is also in line with the development needs of a prosperous society. More importantly, it is in agreement with the goal of constructing a socialist and harmonious society through scientific development. (Tiumbmo 2007: 1)

The local government has thus aimed to create harmony with nature as well as within society through this conservation and development intervention. In other words, harmonious development in Sanjiangyuan, unlike a purely conservation-based approach, is designed to harmoniously bring about economic growth, ecological protection, and social stability. The official figure for grassland degradation in Sanjiangyuan

1. Environmentality, according to Agnew (2005) denotes the creation of new environmentalist-oriented subjectivities through technologies of self and power.

2. All translations from Chinese and Tibetan into English are the author's own.

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is more than 90 per cent,1 aggravated by overgrazing and global warming and resulting in increased drought, desertification, and soil erosion. Located at an average altitude of 4,300 metres above sea level in southern Qinghai, Sanjiangyuan covers an area of 563,100 square kilometres, constituting 43 per cent of Qinghai Province. Sanjiangyuan covers 16 counties, one township, and one municipality scattered throughout the Yushu and Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures, as well as in the Malho, Tsekho Tibetans, and Mongolian Autonomous Prefectures in the Khams and Amdo regions. As a newly created ‘protected area’ (Chu: baxhák), Sanjiangyuan is not, however, an administrative entity. Its 662,000 inhabitants, of which 573,000 are Tibetan herdsmen (Sanjiangyuan Bangongjil 2007: 18), account for a total of 2.2 million sheep equivalent units (SU).2 The Yushu Prefecture studied in this chapter was one of the first prefectures to implement the PG policy in Qinghai Province. This prefecture comprises 267,000 square kilometres and constitutes 73 per cent of Sanjiangyuan and 37 per cent of Qinghai Province (Tiumbmo 2007). The sources of all three of the great rivers – the Yangtze, the Yellow, and the Mekong – are located within Yushu prefecture. Three years prior to the implementation of PG, the Qinghai provincial government had selected an area of 152,300 square kilometres and designated it the Sanjiangyuan Nature Reserve.

Tibetan pastoralism has been studied by scholars in China focusing mainly on grassland degradation, regrassing, and biodiversity.3 In contrast, Western-based scholars have primarily dealt with socio-economic issues in relation to state development interventions or macro-level discourses, including changes to subsistence practices, household income, and job opportunities.4 Scholars generally agree that the traditional subsistence economy based on land and livestock provides Tibetan herdsmen with a basic income to survive and to make employment decisions. The

3. Official Chinese data have often been criticized as unreliable when used in academic work outside China. In this chapter I use official data primarily to reconstruct official arguments and intentions rather than to prove the reliability or validity of any hypothesis. Thus, such criticisms have little relevance for this particular analysis.

4. In this system of ‘sheep equivalent units’ (SU), 1 yak = 5 sheep; 1 horse = 1 sheep.

5. Studies on Tibetan pastoralism in China include, among others, Chen (2006); Ding and Liang (2003); Hou and Shi (2003); Wang and Zhang (1993); Zhang et al. (2004).

6. Examples of studies by Western-based scholars are Costello (2009); Ding and Nelson (2004); Fischer (2008); Goldstein et al. (2010); Gruschka (2000); Miller (2000); Young and Shen (2004).
notion of subsistence capacity is relevant here because it measures the non-conventional and non-monetary wealth of rural Tibetan households. Andrew Fischer (2008) argues that while subsistence capacity is difficult to capture using conventional economic measurements, it provides a measure of the material independence necessary to respond to rapid socio-economic change, and is therefore an important tool for evaluating rural Tibetans’ ability to subsist on household production (Fischer 2008, Goldstein et al. 2010). Rural Tibetan households, according to Fischer, aim to maintain a combination of land and livestock assets at a level sufficient to meet minimum subsistence needs. Likewise, drawing on Fischer’s conclusions on subsistence capacity, Andreas Gruschke (2008) argues that while herders in Yushu prefer to maintain their traditional subsistence economy, they tend to augment their own livelihood opportunities by harvesting and selling caterpillar fungus and investing in education. Thus, as the present chapter corroborates, although state development interventions have a major impact on the herders’ subsistence capacity, Tibetans are not deprived of agency.

The resettlement community that I present here is Gyewa, a pastoral township (Tib.: 'brag ba), which is different from the semi-nomadic settlements (Tib.: sa 'brag) found elsewhere in Tibet. Gyewa was an inhabited valley before the local government turned it into the largest ‘model’ resettlement community in the prefecture. The herdsmen have been resettled here from Rawa (also a fictitious name), a township located approximately 75 kilometres from the prefecture centre of Kyegu. I met these resettled herdsmen over the course of three and a half months of fieldwork conducted in Yushu and Karze Tibetan prefectures in 2007, and have continued communicating with them to the present day. Being a Khampa Tibetan myself, I speak the local dialect of Yushu. I am also fluent in Chinese, which was particularly useful when interviewing local Han officials. The downside of being a native Tibetan was that in my encounters with the agents of the state I had to downplay my background as a Tibetan living in the West. Fortunately, whenever I introduced myself as a student from the University of Oslo, it was assumed that I was a Tibetan studying abroad, and not someone living outside Tibet for political reasons. I believe that this ‘misunderstanding’ worked in my favour and helped to some extent to evade the political sensitivities involved, although I still had to stay alert to avoid surveillance as I moved in and out of the community. For the herdsmen, the fact that I was living abroad often awakened their curiosity in Tibetans in exile and the Dalai Lama. All in all, I conducted structured interviews with 25 pastoral households in Gyewa, and had in addition more than 50 informal conversations. Moreover, I conducted in-depth interviews over time with eight local intellectuals, five NGO staff members, and ten local officials, including village-level officials.

Sustainable development discourse in Sanjiangyuan

With 7.5 billion yuan for the protection of the forests, wetlands, and wild animals of the grasslands, the PG was the second largest central government investment on the Tibetan Plateau, second only to the Qinghai-Tibet railway (China Tibet Information 2004). Prefecture governments established new offices in the Bureaus of Agriculture in almost all counties in Sanjiangyuan, which then formed workstations in every pastoral village committee (Chi.: nuwezhi), the lowest rung of the state administrative structure. To monitor the conservation work according to a specific restoration plan for Sanjiangyuan, a province-based agency, the Sanjiangyuan Bangongshe, was established in 2005. The central government invested funds to protect the nature reserve and limited the provincial authority over what became known as the ‘water tower of China’ (Chi.: zongliu diaoxian), a huge water reservoir, by declaring it to be ‘protected by law’. The central government’s funding had been allocated for the purposes of replanting, grassland fencing, regressing programmes, and resettlement (Li 2005), but only a small fraction of the budget was in fact used for resettlement, despite the fact that as many as 50,000 herdsmen had been relocated by 2009 (Ren 2009).

The Sanjiangyuan Nature Reserve was divided into a core zone, a buffer zone, and an experimental zone, and then further sub-divided into 18 conservation areas irrespective of winter and summer pastures. In contrast to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), the implementation of the PG in Qinghai particularly emphasized the policy of ecological migration, which is normally implemented where serious ecological conditions threaten human survival (Xie 2010). However, grassland degradation in Qinghai, including Sanjiangyuan, has not been reported
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to be any worse than in the TAR; in fact if anything, the situation is less critical. According to the policy plan in Sanjiangyuan, approximately two-thirds of the herders came under the ‘restriction of livestock based on pasture’ (Chi.: yicuo dinggou) programme, while resettlement had only affected one-fourth of all herders and one-third of the total livestock as of 2007. At the same time, one-sixth of the pasture was slated to be returned to grasslands (Chen 2006: 110). While some scholars (Deng and Liang 2003; Zhang et al. 2004) supported the policy, critics (Wang 2006) have accused the Qinghai government of misinterpreting the central government’s policy for pastoral resettlement. One provincial official with whom I talked dismissed the criticism, saying, ‘if we misinterpreted the programme, we did so under the careful instruction of the central government.’ Even so, a number of Western scholars have criticized the official rationale—that overgrazing has led to degradation—as based on faulty assumptions and logical conclusions (Goldstein 1996; Harris 2010; Miller 2000).

The central government of the PRC has operated with a ‘Marxist’ developmentalist perspective that depicts pastoralism as a primitive form of human development and views settling herders as a form of progress. The current resettlement pattern (Chi.: banzhan/shengtai yimin) is different from the settlements (Chi.: dixing) for relocated Tibetan herders established in the course of earlier schemes that had been carried out in conjunction with the privatization of pastoral land since the late 1990s. According to my findings in Yushu, these previous resettlement schemes did not require Tibetan herders to give up pastoral practice altogether; they could move into modern houses and have a strictly regulated number of livestock grazing on the summer pastures. This is still the main policy practice in the TAR. In contrast, according to the new policies, herders are supposed to give up pastoral practice altogether and relocate to towns. Hundreds of resettlement communities for collective migration have been constructed in the nearby towns across Sanjiangyuan, but herders are also allowed to move individually to the place of their choice as long as they vacate the grasslands.8 The rationale

8. On the validity of the official explanation for degradation, see Nyima 2010.
9. Resettlement has been divided into three types: self-determined (Chi.: zizhu banzhan), which refers to free resettlement and individual relocation into towns without being part of a collective resettlement programme; organized resettlement (zhuangtong banzhan) refers to collective relocation such as the one to Gyze; and scattered resettlement (fanban banzhan).

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behind ‘sustainable development’ interventions is based on the ecological goal of restoring the once ‘pristine nature’, but also on ‘developing’ the traditional, remote, and backward community of herders, a goal that is linked to social harmony and stability. The planned intervention is therefore described as a ‘win–win’ (Chi.: shuangying) strategy (Wang 2009a). Official discourse describing the socio-economic and political objectives of state-planned development in Sanjiangyuan mirrors the discourse on the overall development of Tibet after its incorporation into the PRC, in which modernity had to be imposed on an isolated and backward Tibet, as the following excerpt illustrates:

In the past people from inland China did not have access to Sanjiangyuan due to its remoteness, while people from Sanjiangyuan rarely went out of their homeland. This self-imposed isolation was thus the root cause of its underdevelopment, thereby affecting ethnic unity and social stability. Development [in this case] is to break open such isolation, raise pastoralist income, and speed up socio-economic improvement. Given its strategic location at the crossroads of the Tibetan regions of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Sichuan, GanSu, and Qinghai, Sanjiangyuan plays an important role in achieving ethnic harmony, social stability, and national security. (Cao 2007: 33)

The Tibetan regions are the least urbanized in China, with an urbanization rate of between 18 and 20 per cent, compared to China’s overall national average of 35 per cent (Gele et al. 2006). The central government wanted to speed up urbanization and marketization, which it considers the combined key to ‘restoring’ the grasslands and exercising effective control. ‘Urbanization’ (Chi.: chengzhuhui) means constructing compact settlements with modern houses in and around marlet towns, but it also entails an ‘administrative urbanization’ (Yeh and Henderson 2008) aimed at strengthening local government institutions. Whether one agrees with the development discourse or not, development itself is defined by a single intervening actor—the state—and the pastoral resettlement policy has been enforced with far-reaching consequences for pastoral subsistence capacity, as will be shown below. On the one hand, herders have been perceived as passive recipients of state development schemes in a dichotomized relationship of developer versus underdeveloped. On the other hand, the state mission of sustainable development has been portrayed as both scientific and rational. It is articulated primarily within a discourse
of regulating the behaviour of the herders, who are presumed to have "destroyed" the grassland ecology through overgrazing and overpopulation. At the same time, being situated at a strategic location in terms of both natural resources and political control, Sanjiangyuan has thus been an important target for state sustainable development discourse regardless of what that means in actual practice.

Restoring pastures to grasslands in Yushu Prefecture

According to the central plans, Sanjiangyuan is supposed to reduce by one-third its total number of herders and livestock, and more than one-third of the total pastureage must be returned to grasslands (Chen 2008). In the first three years after the policy was implemented in 2004, Yushu prefecture had returned a total of 34.24 million mu of pasture to grassland, which represented 19.6 per cent of the total usable grassland area of the prefecture. Approximately 30,000 herders (6.7 per cent of the total population) and 1.66 million SU of livestock had been removed from the pastures as of 2007 (Yushu Prefecture Government 2007).

The total number of livestock within the prefecture has been officially reported as 2.7 million head, while the reduction as stated above is given in terms of SU (sheep units), which makes it all the more confusing. According to the proposed plan of the Yushu Prefecture government, a total of 270 million yuan has been allocated annually to compensate resettled herders in 20 resettlement communities during the 10-year project period. The annual compensation fund includes 500 yuan per mu of pasture, and between 400 and 800 yuan per SU, depending on the market price. In addition, a one-time allowance of 15,000 yuan was to be allocated to cover water, electricity, fuel, and transportation costs, and another 30,000 yuan was supposed to be allocated to cover living expenses such as the cost of meat, cooking oil, flour, rice, and vegetables.

According to the Yushu Prefecture government project proposal in 2009, 31,084 herders had been designated for resettlement in the prefecture alone (ibid.), which amounted to a little more than 60 per cent of the total number of resettled herders officially reported for the entire region of Sanjiangyuan by the end of 2009 (Xinhua 2009).

Sources: Yushu shoushi (2005: 89); Yushu County Government (2005: 1).

The Gyawa resettlement comprises 229 households and 848 herders (Yushu County Government 2005), who were the first pastoral group from a series of resettlement plans from Rawa Township in Yushu County. As noted above, the prefecture government had promised the resettled herders 15,000 yuan (approximately $2,000) per household per year for ten years to cover living expenses, including water and energy costs in the new settlement. Herders who held a grassland-use certificate received an additional 6,000 yuan per year, while those without such a certificate received an additional 3,000 yuan. The county agricultural department distributed the payments to households, which constituted the primary unit for compensation purposes regardless of the number of household members. The actual amount of compensation that herd- ers received in hand is a different matter that I will return to later. The duration of the project was fixed at ten years, after which the herders in theory could return to their grassland homes if they chose to do so.

Usable grasslands in Rawa amounted to 95.6 per cent of the total area of the township in 2002, and the number of livestock was only 107,000 SU, far below the 'carrying capacity' of 195,500 SU, according to official sources (Yushu County Government 2005). As is illustrated in Table S.1, the figures contradict the official assumption that there is a posi-

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10. 1 mu = 0.00666 square kilometres.
ive correlation between population size and livestock number and that
grazing area degradation is due to overstocking beyond capacity. As far as
population in Rawu is concerned, there was an increase between 1996
and 2003, mainly due to migration and natural growth. After the PG and
resettlement programmes were implemented in 2002, their impact was
obvious from both population and livestock decline. In terms of official
statistical representation, there was also visible economic gap between
herders and urban residents. Although the average per capita net
income for herders more than doubled from 659 yuan in 1996 to 1,520
yuan in 2002 (Yushu Zhouzhi 2005; Yushu Prefecture Government
2009), the average rural net income, which includes farmers and trad-
ers in addition to herders, was still only 1,335 yuan (Qinghai Yearbook
2002), whereas the average urban net income was 6,950 yuan in Yushu
(Qinghai Yearbook 2003). On the basis of these figures, officials argue
that rural herders should be transformed into town residents.
There were a total of 1,740 households in Rawu in 2002, including
1,085 with grassland certificates and 655 without. The government
planned to limit the livestock of 1,080 households according to ‘the
availability of pasture’. Furthermore, the plan called for 662 households
to be resettled, of which 505 households had already relocated. Table 5.2
shows the figures for the implementation plan in Rawu, Yushu. Of the
229 households resettled from Rawu to Gyewa, only 91 held grassland
Received on 2005-05-23

Table 5.2: PG implementation plan in Rawa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Grazing Before PG</th>
<th>Monopolized</th>
<th>Resettlement</th>
<th>Grassland Reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,740</td>
<td>1,085</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>1,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,455,000 mu</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>8.53%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>102,708 mu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thus far I have presented some facts and figures concerning pastoral-
ism in Rawu. I shall now take a chronological look at the planned inter-
tervention on the ground, starting with the grassroots encounters between
local officials and herders.

Officials from the State Council all the way down to the local govern-
ment carried out the policy intervention in Sanjiangyuan (Luo 2003).
According to my interlocutors, a delegation of prefecture and county

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The idea of being left without livestock and moved from our ancestral
home was not even dreamt of until the officials came to implement their
policy. We were ‘ordered’ [Tib.: sku' gyu qong sang] to leave our home
for a brighter future than we had enjoyed previously. What could we do
and say? We did not dare go against the will of the government. Neither
did we understand much about the real intentions of the policy, since
we could not read or write. We were told about the many positive sides
of the new life, such as new housing, good money, good jobs, better
access to schools, to the town market, to medical services, and so on.

During the first meetings the abrupt policy implementation had
initially generated strong scepticism and uncertainty across the pastoral
community, as reflected in the low approval rate. When the majority of
the pastoral households rejected the plan in defence of their traditional
way of life, local officials intensified their campaign and tactically ‘per-
suaded’ the herders with a mixture of promises and threats. Rumours
were also spread within the community to the effect that it was the
model households that were portrayed to have benefited immensely.

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The new life: From subsistence to state dependence

The reaction of herders was detrimental to the realization of the stated goal expressed in terms of livestock reduction. Medium-income and wealthier households resisted the plan because it was to their economic advantage not to be resettled. Given the high prices of pastoral products such as meat and butter, these herders had a vested economic interest in maintaining their traditional livelihood, not to mention other reasons. As a counter-strategy, in some pastoral households, young people between the ages of 30 and 40 resettled, while their parents or close relatives remained on the grasslands to continue raising some of their livestock. In this regard, those remaining behind were able to supply meat and butter for consumption to those who resettled in the town home. In other words, some herders concealed their livestock through this kinship relation. It is difficult to say how prevalent this strategy was within the resettlement community of Gyewa because it was practised in secret, but it has also been observed by Cencetti (ch. 6 in this volume).

Despite such livestock-maintaining strategies on the part of the herders, the local official work group in Rawa reported having reduced the total number of livestock by 30,200 SU (approximately one-third of the original 102,708 SU) by 2005, only two years after the implementation.

In the official discourse, new houses were an important symbol of modernity in Tibetan pastoral regions (see also Cencetti, this volume). Two hundred and ten houses of 60 square metres and 9 houses of 80 square metres each were built in Gyewa. Each household had to pay 15,000 yuan for what the officials described as ‘construction fees’ for its new house. This surprised the herders, as it meant that they did not receive any compensation for the first few years (the compensation being automatically deducted to pay for the construction fees). Each house had room divisions with no specific space designated for kitchen, bathroom, or toilet. There was only one public toilet in the middle of the settlement, near a basketball court. A two-story public security tower was erected for surveillance at a strategic location overlooking the community. The high-walled building stood out in sharp contrast to the other houses in terms of both quality and size. The school that had

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13. On the basis of my own fieldwork data on livestock in Rawa, I distinguish between poor households (those that owned 10-100 SU), medium-income households (those with 100-300 SU), and rich households (more than 300 SU).
been promised for the children had yet to be built. Before making the move, the herders had viewed the resettlement programme as both an economic and an educational opportunity, and it was especially the latter that incited them to relocate. According to the official register there were 130 school-age children within the community, 98 per cent of whom were enrolled in school, mostly in Kyegu town (Yushu County Government 2005: 6). Nevertheless, during fieldwork I frequently observed children of a variety of ages playing in the playground in the resettlement area even during school hours. It is, however, difficult to conclusively verify or discredit the official data.

When asked what they thought about the new houses, one respondent said: "They are nice, but we are herders, and are not used to living in this kind of compact settlement. We still prefer our traditional homes", he said, referring to their nomadic black tents. Government officials nevertheless boasted of the development and design in their report about Gyewa: "The houses have been scientifically constructed; [they are] economically low-cost, environmentally friendly, culturally Tibetan, and seismically resistant" (Yushu County Government 2005: 17). However, when a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck in April 2010, I was told that 90 per cent of the houses in Gyewa were damaged, 98 herders lost their lives, and 130 were injured.

Several counter-narratives about the PG intervention circulated among the herders, even though they had agreed to resettle. Questions were raised regarding the intention of the government: Perhaps the real reason behind the collective relocation was to make way for the mining companies? Maybe the government moved the herders simply to keep them under better control? Or was the true reason for resettlement the fact that corrupt local officials were after their livestock and land? In addition to this distrust, a sense of uprootedness was palpable, especially as livelihood pressure was on the rise. After more than a year without compensation they had used up the money made from selling their livestock and, in most cases also being unemployed, the herders ended up struggling to make ends meet.

The herders I interviewed in Gyewa waxed nostalgic whenever they were asked to recount the differences between their former way of life in Rawa and their new lives in the settlement. The separation from pasture and livestock had almost brought an end to their traditional subsistence economy. In the 1990s cheap wool imported from the United States and Australia drove down prices for locally produced wool, diminishing the subsistence capacity of herders throughout the rural areas (Fischer 2008; Gruschke 2008; Miller 2000). In Rawa, however, the falling prices did not affect herders’ livelihoods as severely as it did elsewhere, as wool was not the main commodity in the township. In addition to the sale of caterpillar fungus, the dominant sources of income included meat, butter, cheese, and yoghurt, and those commodities had maintained a rising price trajectory for decades. By the time of my fieldwork, not only had the traditional pastoral way of life come to an end for those herders who had been turned into town residents, but their subsistence capacity and real income had diminished, and most of the resettled herders were unemployed. One herder in his forties narrated his life prior to and following resettlement as follows:

When we were in our pastoral home, we had around 60 yaks, in addition to sheep and other livestock. We had [enough] meat and butter to eat, milk and yoghurt to drink. In spite of the hard labour, our life was happy and comfortable (Thib. skyid po yag po). Most of what we needed on a daily basis was self-produced. We also sold meat, butter, cheese, yoghurt, wool, and skins, and collected caterpillar fungus in the summer. Our total annual income reached approximately 8,000 yuan, including 3,000 yuan that was livestock related and around 5,000 yuan from the caterpillar fungus. The resettlement has completely turned our lives upside down.

His household had owned approximately 200 SU, which would place him in the medium-income category according to my own estimates (see note 13), and wealthier than the average household according Gruschke’s estimates. Average household income before and after the resettlement in Gyewa, based on my own interview data, is given in Table 5.3 (the average household size in Gyewa was four members, normally a young couple with one to three children). Table 5.3 does not reveal much difference between before- and after-resettlement income, in part because it does not reflect the fact that people living in the settlement now had to buy many basic necessities that they used to produce for themselves. Previously, the average income from the sale of animal products and caterpillar fungus

Table 5.3: Estimated average household cash income before and after resettlement (in yuan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income source</th>
<th>Before resettlement</th>
<th>After resettlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sale of animal products</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caterpillar fungus</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State compensation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,000 or 6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>6,500 or 9,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview data, 2007. Please note that the average household cash income in this table has been calculated on the assumption that the herders would receive state compensation in time, without deducting the 15,000 yuan 'construction fee' for the newly acquired houses.

was approximately 7,500 yuan (above and beyond household consumption). After resettlement, the income from caterpillar fungus and state compensation (if it was paid at all) could reach either 6,500 or 9,500 yuan, depending on whether one possessed a grassland certificate or not. However, expenditures for food constituted a significant proportion of the living costs for the average household in Gyewa. In other words, expenses had increased significantly, while the household income remained roughly the same, all against a backdrop of rising inflation.

According to a survey conducted in 2004 on living costs for resettled herders in Maduo (Matuo), a neighboring county in Golok Prefecture, the total expenses for food, fuel, and clothing per year per herder amounted to 4,959 yuan (Chen 2008). This figure comprises 12 per cent for fuel, 47 per cent for food, and 21 per cent for clothing (bid.). The total cost per household was at least 8,000 yuan per year. The above data did not include expenses for housing, medical services, education, or cultural and religious activities, all of which normally constitute a significant part of household spending (Liu 2010). Educational expenses for one child were around 400 yuan annually, including the cost of books, supplies, and extra-curricular activities. In Gyewa, subsistence items and products, which had previously been taken for granted, now became a substantial living cost. Cow dung is a typical example: when they lived as herders on the grasslands, dung was available in abundance as a free cooking fuel; however, after resettlement, herders have to buy it for approximately 200–300 yuan per month. Thus, the increased cost of living, coupled with the government’s failure to compensate herders for the loss of pastoral subsistence, creates new pressures on households.

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Like relocated farmers elsewhere in China (Zhao 2003), the majority of the herders in my survey were unemployed in the sense that they did not have steady jobs at the time of the interview. They had to take xiaogang jobs, that is, low-paid, part-time, temporary jobs often found in the private service sector in town. The main source of income, however, was the collection and sale of caterpillar fungus during the summer. The access rights to collect caterpillar fungus, a valuable Chinese medicinal plant, on their previous pastures had been maintained even after the relocation. The herders I interviewed combined the gathering and sale of caterpillar fungus in the summer with their search for work in the urban labour market during the rest of the year. Seizing job opportunities became a core concern for many herders. In competition with their urban counterparts, particularly Han Chinese, the resettled herders faced structural disadvantages in terms of language skills, educational qualifications, work experience, and social networks. Moreover, with the illiteracy rate at approximately 60 per cent, many were unable to write in Tibetan, let alone communicate in Chinese. Women apparently faced 'double' discrimination, both as herdsmen and as women, and their unemployment numbers were particularly high. In the first few years of resettlement, between 2004 and 2006, the local government set up training courses in a few car-repair, handicrafts, and construction workshops funded by foreign NGOs. Some participants were temporarily recruited after completing the courses, but soon became unemployed again. Local official reports as well as government informants often pointed to these programmes as indicators of government support. When asked why many of these skilled workers were still not employed even two years after completing a training course, a county official said that the failure was due to the herders’ ‘backward mentality’, and added that ‘they are lazy and uninterested in work. The government has been very keen to bring them to the urban labour market, but even those who have been employed do not get along with their employees.’

In addition to local government and public enterprise support for employment training, a foreign NGO funded short-term training programmes, including a Chinese language course. When I was there in 2007, no training was taking place, and I was told that it was hopeless to find jobs through employment training anyway. The training was either too short to learn anything or, the herders lamented, there was little...
chance of getting a good job through those channels. Moreover, given the high subsistence capacity of the traditional pastoral community, the majority of the herders I interviewed tended to be quite selective about the types of jobs they were willing to accept, especially in the beginning. This tendency is confirmed by Fischer (2008) and Yeh (2007), who observe that rural Tibetans shun low-paid petty jobs because of the high subsistence capacity associated with the pastoral lifestyle. In Yulshul, however, this capacity is rapidly diminishing as more and more herders resettle and become dependent on state subsidies, regardless of whether they are provided or not.

Counter-strategies

In Yulshul, as Tibetan herders constantly struggle to shape the outcome of the planned interventions on their livelihood, they have crossed the boundaries of conventional discourse. The relocated herders do not perceive development as a one-sided, exclusively top-down intervention, and they are questioning the nature of development imposed upon them from above. When I probed into the meaning of development, one middle-aged herder responded:

Generally speaking, I don’t know much about economics, but I do know for sure that this is not development. I do not quite understand the logic behind this. Our lives have not been made any better. Promises have not been kept and we have been left empty-handed. We are not allowed to talk about our grievances to the visiting officials. The local officials on the other hand only present well-off families to the visiting leaders, which only account for about fifteen households.

Several households lived under dire economic conditions in the new settlement. One grave case was that of a middle-aged father of three whose wife had been hospitalized for almost three months and then died. The family had spent most of their income from the sale of their livestock to pay her medical expenses, and the family was now in great debt. When I visited them, the house was almost empty of furniture, the three small children were hungry, and the father was unable to provide them with three meals a day. There were other families who had also ended up in economic hardship, unable to fulfill the dream of becoming prosperous once they settled in town. Life was already difficult in the new settlement after being uprooted from pasture and livestock.

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The herders blamed the government for their hardship. However, the main task of the government tshemben office, as its leader saw it, was to ensure that the grassland restoration and resettlement work was carried out properly, while no attention was paid to creating post-settlement opportunities for the herders. Since it was government promises that had lured the herders into the new settlement in the first place, the herders began to demand that the local government keep its promises and eliminate the extra cost of housing. The herders often expressed their grievances in the form of peaceful but defiant protests and public petitions. When these tactics were interpreted as threats to social stability and therefore silenced with heavy-handed force, local herders were forced to turn to other counter-strategies. In the summer of 2005, more than 200 representatives from Gyewa mobilized and marched to the prefecture headquarters to demand fair compensation and a stop to corruption. According to the herders I interviewed, village-level officials were sympathetic to the herders’ grievances, but the township leader was not. He rushed to the scene and reprimanded the protesters, and as a warning he angrily slapped one of the participants. Since this neither silenced them nor made them return to their homes, the township leader changed tactics. He promised them that he would convene a meeting as soon as they returned to their homes, and so they did. Contrary to his promise, however, the township leader did not show up for the meeting that day or the next. Instead, armed police raided the community the following night. Ten herders were identified as ringleaders and were arrested. They were released after a few days, having been interrogated and tortured. The local government, especially township officials, labelled the protests ‘socially destabilizing activities’, thereby justifying their harsh crackdown and subsequent police surveillance. The resettled herders were left with only two options: to defy the authorities in the form of protest or to engage in covert resistance.

Another dominant group of actors engaged in promulgating the local counter-discourse included village-level officials and local environmental activists in Yulshul, who made up the local elite. These elites have increasingly started to give voice to local discontent and resistance beyond the community and prefecture boundaries in order to participate in and influence national-level mainstream discourse (Liu 2009; Wang 2009b; Zhang 2011). They have also challenged in public fora the official explanation for grassland degradation and the rationale behind ‘sustainable development’
initiatives, as well as the discourse of conservation and development. One obvious example of this was a seminar on Sanjiangyuan held in Beijing, which was widely reported on the Internet in China (Zhang 2011). There, one Party secretary from Ganda village of Yushu pointed out the devastating effects of the PG policy on herdsmen:

In the past the herdsmen were scattered throughout the grasslands and protected their own pastures when they were in danger. No one could damage the grasslands because customary rules were strictly observed. After the resettlement, while the effects of the policy on the grasslands are still uncertain, the number of miners coming from elsewhere has increased drastically. No one is there to prevent them from destroying the environment. Poachers have also returned. (Zhang 2011)

He was supported by Karma, a Party secretary from Takhoti village, who argued that the greatest ecological concern of the herdsmen is the negative impact of mining activities and harvesting of caterpillar fungus on the grasslands. These Party secretaries are better informed than their counterparts within the community about government policy and state institutions, as well as about their own legal rights as citizens according to the Chinese constitution. The news media, as well as academic and activists' conferences, have made it possible for the local elite to express local grievances in a language appropriated from official policy discourse. Moreover, the alliance between local village officials and herdsmen has become critical in advancing local grievances.

In another strategic move, the herdsmen in Yushu turned to the central government and to environmental organizations for help when local action, including defiance, did not resolve the conflict of interests. Since households were moved to Gyewa, mining companies have started to establish themselves in Rawa, including on the 'sacred' mountain of the locality. A series of controlled explosions carried out by the mining operations in 2006 took place around the same time as some minor earthquakes in the vicinity, leading the herdsmen to believe that these events were interconnected (Jiumei 2010). Government officials dismissed this as superstition. The herdsmen also believed that mining activities increased the child mortality rate, and led to health hazards and ecological and cultural destruction. Since the local government supported the mining companies, the herdsmen's public protests against the mining activities were silenced by force. During a violent clash in 2006, the police even opened fire on the protesters.

The herdsmen from Rawa gave up on the idea of seeking justice via the local government. Instead, they joined forces with other herdsmen and formed a group of representatives that travelled to Beijing in March 2010 to petition the State Council for intervention (Jiumei 2010). This took place one month prior to the earthquake in 2010. They appealed to the central government to intervene in what they called a 'serious environmental crime' being committed by profit-driven miners coming from outside their community. In their petition, they singled out one man in particular, a Han private investor from Shandong. Basing their arguments on existing Chinese constitutional provisions for the protection of the environment, and mixing existing official discourse with local narratives of grievances, the petitioners argued against what they called the 'destruction of our grasslands and cultural landscape'. Their complaint received some short-lived attention from the central government and on down the system to the provincial and prefecture governments, and even triggered the closure of two small mining companies. Even though the trip to Beijing did not have much of a tangible outcome in the sense of changing the course of mining-centred development, it nevertheless provoked the state to react, though on its own terms. Thus, by embracing the official discourse of degradation, the herdsmen managed to create space for articulating their vision of development within the constraints of the system.

Conclusion

Two main results of the nationwide Pastures to Grasslands campaign have been described in depth in this chapter. First, the top-down and semi-forced pastoral resettlement has undermined the traditional subsistence lifestyle, replacing it with compensation in the form of state subsidies. This has resulted in the decline, if not the complete disappearance, of the herdsmen's subsistence capacity and the loss of their traditional way of life. Second, the interventions have replaced the relative independence of the herdsmen's traditional livelihood with a complex web of dependency on the Chinese state. These are but two side effects of state policies, whether intended or not, aimed ostensibly at creating social harmony and stability. It reminds us of James Ferguson's (1994)
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analysis of the instrumental effects of development, which include both
the institutional effects of the expansion of bureaucratic state power
and the ideological effects of the depoliticization of both poverty and
the state. In this instance, disappearance of subsistence capacity and
dependence of the herders on the state is the major instrumental ef-
fect of the current development intervention. While the stated goals
are conservation and social transformation, actualization of effective
control has been the unspoken side effect of the fortress-based concept
of nature conservation. Such effects have been somewhat depoliticized
in the official discourse. As Ferguson (1994: 254) rightly concludes, "[T]
it may be what is most important about a "development" project is not
so much what it fails to do but what it does do." In Yulshul in particular
and Sanjiangyuan in general, development intervention in the name of
'sustainable development' has become an effective government strategy
for bringing about state power over these remote pastoral communities.
Such power is achieved through expansion of the Party-state structure
and disintegration of subsistence pastoral communities due to state de-
velopment interventions.

In addition to describing these extensive structural changes to
pastoral livelihoods and the subsistence capacity of herders, which has
also been done by Fischer (2008) and Gruschke (2008), this chapter
has investigated the process of resettlement and the dilemma of post-
resettlement livelihoods by bringing the perspectives and voices of
diverse local actors into the analysis. The findings have shown that,
contrary to the reification of Tibetans as the passive objects of Chinese
state development, local herders have managed to creatively and stra-
tegically manipulate the planned interventions despite the constrained
circumstances. Consequently, there has been a diversification of inter-
faces and forms of resistances. Let me end with some details on the actor
interface, following Long’s (2001) argument that these interfaces are the
'battlefields of knowledge' - the complex arenas where the interests and
values of differently positioned actors such as herders and local officials
are contested in disharmony.

In Yulshul, the diversification of interfaces and rightful resistance
occurs in three main institutional arenas that I categorize as micro-, in-
termediate-, and macro-level interfaces. The micro-level interface and
resistance is the encounter at the local level in which herders choose

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or are forced to accept or reject the planned development interven-
tions that enter their life-worlds, or remain silent in the face of these
intrusions. This interaction takes place within the village and prefecture
institutions, though under conditions of constrained power relations.

This interface encounter involves physical interaction, which in-
cludes concrete strategies and counter-strategies of development actors,
whether government officials or local Tibetan herders, in the context of
the implementation of the PG intervention. These are imbued with sus-
picion, deception, threat, persuasion, dreams, and disappointment, but
are still in a state of negotiation. We recognized this when the tshangkhang
officials met the herders to persuade them to accept resettlement, and
again after the relocation when the herders voiced their grievances.
Nevertheless, when this interface interaction is no longer effective or
functional, the herders move on to the second level of interface. This
intermediate-level interface is more discursive, and often takes place at
environmental and sustainable development conferences in the pres-
ence of a broader audience. In this public arena, local elites have often
represented the herders and their grievances before government officials
and policy makers. Local actors tend to embrace the official language of
sustainable development, which results in an interdiscursive appropria-
tion of official discourse.

When these two interfaces do not satisfy the grievances of the herd-
er, then they turn to the final resistance interface, which links them to the
State Council, the utmost authority of the Chinese state. This interface
involves seeking help from the State Council to address the grievances
that the local government is unable to remedy. The State Council, how-
ever, uses the same official top-down channels through the provincial
and local governments when making a symbolic inquiry into these is-
suces. Such an inquiry has little impact on the status quo on the ground.
When these institutional interfaces and rightful resistance are unable
to produce the desired outcome in addressing local grievances, that
is, to provide leverage to pastoral knowledge and voice, as is often the
case, public defiance and peaceful protest have become the alternative
strategies of choice. Local government officials, for their part, view these
responses as "unlawful" and 'socially disruptive', even labelling them as
'separatist' activities, and therefore often resort to repressive means. At
the same time, central and provincial government development funds

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have been poured into the region in order to create stability, achieve sustainable development, and meet conservation goals. In reality, however, the resettlement strategy has failed to deliver social stability, despite more effective state control over the previously scattered communities. Similar findings have also been reported elsewhere in Sanjiangyuan by Cencetti (ch. 6, this volume).

The majority of the herders that I interviewed in Yushul initially viewed the sustainable development intervention as a continuation of past deception and injustice. Accompanied by a series of government promises and forceful tactics, the intervention has been carried out in spite of widespread scepticism and opposition. The deeper conflict, however, resurfaced in the aftermath of the resettlement. Pressures arising from urban living expenses increase when everything has to be bought in cash, and the herders start to realize the real value of the compensation they receive and to appreciate the economic value of their previous subsistence lifestyle, which they have lost. On the other hand, frustration over the government’s inability to fulfill its promises in terms of helping the herders establish a post-resettlement livelihood has turned into public defiance, which has been silenced abruptly through the deployment of sheer disciplinary power.

There is an apparent correlation between the failure of rightful resistance interfaces within the state system and defiant forms of resistance. The failure in the official–herder interface has laid the groundwork for further aggravation of public opposition, which has been increasingly radicalised. Defiant protests in the form of self-immolations, which numbered more than one hundred cases at the time of the writing of this chapter, have dominated the academic and popular discourse about contemporary Tibet in the West (McGranahan and Litzinger 2012). The question of what leads self-immolators to choose such an extreme form of protest often arises within this context of state interventions and local responses. One answer lies precisely in the way interface encounters between state officials and herders play out. As the case in Yushul suggests, the encounter takes place in the vicious cycle of intervention, instability, and the process of forceful ‘harmonization’. In this regard, harmony is a scarce commodity. The massively funded sustainable development interventions have resulted in effective control over pastoral communities, but at the cost of genuine harmony between the herders and state agents. As a policy mechanism, the PG campaign has inherently produced a great deal of disharmony and instability, although it has generated economic growth due to the intensification of development interventions such as urbanization and road construction. Thus, the goal of harmonious development is far from being realized within the framework of this inherently disharmonious-producing mode of development practice.

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CHAPTER SIX

New settlements on the Tibetan Plateau of Amdo-Qinghai: Spatialized power devices

Elisa Cencetti

Introduction

In the past decade new settlements for Tibetan herders have mushroomed throughout the Amdo-Qinghai region in the eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau. Identical numbered houses aligned in a chessboard grid surrounded by grasslands have become a common sight in this region's landscape. These new settlements serve different purposes for the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) — poverty alleviation, infrastructural and socio-economic development, environmental protection, and ideally also social stability — which all lead to the same result: the relocation of Tibetan herders previously living scattered over the grasslands. According to an official Chinese source (Xinhua 2012), the central government has provided more than 200,000 herders with houses in new settlements in Qinghai Province since 2009, and planned to create similar housing for an additional 50,000 herders by the end of 2012.

New settlements for Tibetan herders have been created as part of the Sanjiangyuan (Tib.: gtsang gsum rgya khangs, also discussed by Nyima in ch. 5 of this volume), which represents a provincial-level reflection of the national aims of the Open Up the West campaign (Tib.: sngag rgyud

1. The Tibetan regions can be divided into three cultural units: Amdo (s-nam), Uyang (bshag gsum), and Xigaze (ghros). The territories of Amdo are split between the PRC's provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan. Although most new settlements are located in the western regions of the PRC, which have been only marginally affected by the socio-economic boom seen in the eastern provinces over the last three decades, there are examples of new settlements located in eastern China that are based on ecological and socio-economic policies similar to those described in this chapter (Asian Development Bank 1991, 2006; Cull 1999; He et al. 2009; Haggard 2004; International Rivers Network 2003).