

WARMING YOUR HANDS
WITH MOONLIGHT

ལའུརུང་བོད་ལོ་སྐད་ཀྱི་རྒྱུ་ལོ་སྐད་ཀྱི་རྒྱུ་

Lavrung Tibetan Oral Traditions and Culture

by

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Front Cover: Dbyangs 'dzom and her two granddaughters in their home in Siyuewu Village, January 2010.

Back Cover: Siyuewu Village in 2010.

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The images in this book include sacred images of *gtor ma*, *bla ma*, and mountain deities and should be treated respectfully.

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FOREWORD¹

I have several names: my mother calls ma G.yu go; my relatives and my community members call me G.yu lha; my official ID card gives Yina; and all my recent friends, classmates, and teachers call me Jody.

I am from Siyuewu Village, Puxi Township, Rangtang ('Dzam thang) County, Aba (Rnga ba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China. All Siyuewu villagers are classified by the government as Tibetan and speak a language that linguists refer to as Lavrung, but for which we have no name. In fact, we never use the word Lavrung.

My family are agro-pastoralists. Nine of us live together: my mother, grandmother, my second oldest uncle (a monk), and I support our other family members: my two younger brothers; my eldest uncle, who is a monk and has been sick with tuberculosis since 2002; my great grandmother (b. 1915), and; my late grandfather's brother, who is the local reincarnate lama. My family is large because we have three monks who did not marry and establish their own households and because we have four generations living together.

I graduated from the local county junior middle school in Rangtang County Town in 2007. I studied in the ETP (English Training Program) at Qinghai Normal University from 2007-2009. For complex reasons, I was unable to continue my study and then started my current

¹ Tibetan (Wylie), Chinese (Pinyin), and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) are used to record non-English terms. All terms with appropriate scripts are given in the Non-English Word List. Tone has been omitted in the IPA rendering of the Lavrung language. See the bibliography for references on this language.

project documenting oral tradition in my village with guidance from Gerald Roche.

Mother was not supportive when I began my research by asking her about childbirth and home remedies, because she thought such things do not constitute serious study. Great Grandmother wanted me to return home to marry if I was not enrolled in school, so my family could see me every day and worry less about me. Most villagers could not understand what I was doing and thought that my project was a strange sort of homework. However, after I explained the purpose of my research to my family and some villagers several times, they began to understand its importance and were eventually proud of me being the first person to document our community's culture. Grandmother still asks me to take the higher education entrance examination and attend college. I understand her and am careful to never directly contradict her. However, my uncles and mother say I can do what I want, since they believe in and trust me. Their support gives me confidence to continue my work.

I and other students doing similar projects were trained in conducting research interviews, data analysis, writing in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), and in using digital audio recorders, digital cameras, and computers.

I learned many things that I never knew about my community before undertaking this research. I had never heard my village's history, or even imagined that my village had a history. I now sincerely want to continue learning about my community in order to better comprehend myself and inform others about my culture.

I was bored and clueless when I conducted my first interview with an old monk, who told me that learning king stories² was best when studying oral traditions. It was a hot

² *Rgyal po dpe* 'king stories' are oral narratives relating the exploits of unspecified kings. Such narratives may be

August day and the monk suggested we go to the third floor of his house. The interview lasted three hours. Since the third floor lacked an electrical outlet, I extended a power cord from the second floor to my recorder. We then waited for an hour because there was a blackout. I was frustrated because I did not really understand the long, complicated king stories he told. After this rather unsuccessful interview, I questioned the value of further interviews.

I was told many folktales I had never heard during my second interview with an aunt. She was delighted to tell stories and comfortable being recorded. She was digging a drinking pool for her household's seven cows with her twenty-seven year-old son when I visited. He told us to do the interview while he continued digging. After we finished, my aunt asked me to return so she could tell more stories.

Later, the village leader, Reluo, helped me organize a circle dance to be videoed in his hamlet, where there are fifteen households. Everyone dressed in their best Tibetan robes and performed four circle dances. They were all delighted. *Kha btags*³ were prepared for me and I was treated like a *lama* or a leader. A former classmate gave a short speech about my work.

We were classmates as you all know, and I'm really happy that she is doing such wonderful work. Doing such cultural preservation work is important and we should support her however we can. We are not expecting to get anything from her; on the contrary, we will provide whatever we have to support her. Thank you!

extremely short – one or two minutes in duration – or up to three hours long.

³ A strip of white silk offered to high *lama* or other respected persons.

After my experiences and interviews, I increasingly felt the impact of continuing this important, multi-faceted work. My villagers' support inspires me.

One day while conducting research, I was taking a walk in the village near Cho ldan's newly built house. He was outside, fixing his hammer. I stopped and asked him about local proverbs.

"ə ʎo⁴ Cho ldan, please tell me some proverbs or metaphors," I requested, squatting next to him where he was concentrating on his work.

"You know, I'm not the right person to ask. Asking me is just like warming your hands with moonlight. You should ask someone who knows. I'm just an old man who knows nothing," Cho ldan said.

I later asked my mother what that meant – warming your hands with moonlight. She explained that the phrase meant trying to do something that brings no results. I was astonished that Cho ldan had refused my request for a metaphor with a metaphor, and I had not even noticed. I decided then that Uncle Cho ldan's metaphor would make a good title for my book.

I also made DVDs of audio, photos, and videos for the villagers. Villagers were sincerely amazed when they saw themselves on their TVs. Additionally, a few villagers acknowledged my cultural preservation work and offered their support, reminding me again of this work's importance.

The research for this book was supported by funds from the World Oral Literature Project and private donors. For online examples of materials discussed in this book visit:

<http://www.oralliterature.org/collections/gyulha001.html>

⁴ Lavrung: uncle. See Appendix Four for more on Lavrung kinship terms.





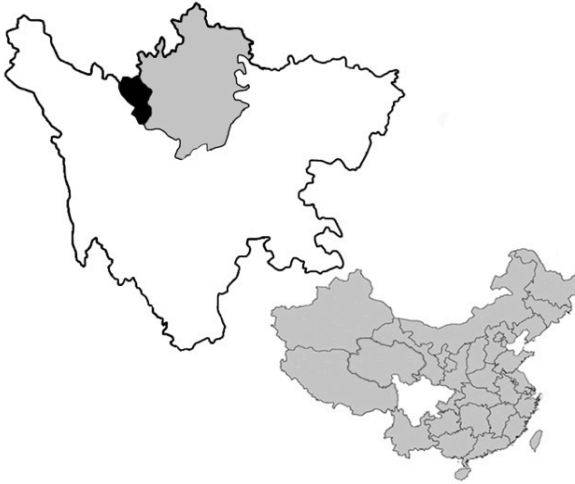
Figure One. A panorama of Siyuewu Village, February 2009.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Location and Ethnolinguistic Context

Siyewu Village is located in Puxi Township, Rangtang ('Dzam thang) County, Aba (Rnga ba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China. The village is 220 kilometers northwest of the prefecture capital, Maerkang ('Bar khams), and 200 kilometers south of the Rangtang County seat. The village consists of several hamlets scattered through a vale⁵ on National Highway 317, which runs along the Dadu River⁶ through Jinchuan and Rangtang counties, passing through several geographically distinct vales separated by narrow canyons.

Figure Two. Rangtang County (black), in Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province.⁷



⁵ A vale is a natural geographic unit consisting of a valley section bound at each end by narrow canyons.

⁶ Locals refer to the Dadu River as *rṅə mən* 'river'.

⁷ This map was created by Wikimedia user Croquant (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Croquant>) and is used under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license.

Locals typically refer to people by locality – hamlet, village, or vale – adding the particle 'va', rather than using ethnonyms. Figure Three gives examples of how people from different localities are locally referred to.

Figure Three. Siyuewu Village terms for selected locations and their inhabitants.

Location	Inhabitant
Ergali	zəgæ nɛ va
Eri	χovə zi va
Guanyinqiao	gərəm de va
Shangzhai	ʃəjə nɛ va
Shili	ʃə ni va
Xiangyang (Puxi)	x ^h ɑŋ jaŋ va
Xiaoyili	x ^h ʌy jə nɛ va
Yourigou	jəvə ɕə va
Zongke	ʃəzəŋ koχə va

Siyuewu lies halfway⁸ between Puxi Township⁹ (to the west in Rangtang County) and Ergali Township (to the east in Jinchuan County). From east to west along National

⁸ Siyuewu is approximately twelve kilometers from both township centers.

⁹ Puxi Township contains five administrative villages: Yourigou, Xiaoyili, Shangzhai/ Dayili, Xiangyang, and Siyuewu. Only Yourigou residents, who live eighteen kilometers west of Siyuewu Village, are herders. The landscape surrounding Yourigou is similar to that of Siyuewu Village, but the climate is slightly cooler because the elevation is higher. Residents of the other four villages are primarily farmers, though there are approximately ten herding families per village. Residents of all five villages are officially classified as Tibetan, though about three Han Chinese men have married into each village. All these Tibetan-Han families' children are considered Tibetan.

Highway 317 are the following vales:¹⁰ Taiyanghe,¹¹ Guanyinqiao, Eri,¹² and Ergali in Jinchuan County; and Siyuewu, Puxi, Yourigou,¹³ Xiaoyili, Zongke,¹⁴ Shangzhai, and Shili in Rangtang County.

West of Siyuewu (Rangtang County)

The Puxi Township seat is located in a vale that consists of a single administrative village – Xiangyang. Residents of Siyuewu and Xiangyang traditionally have close economic, kin, and social ties. They speak slightly different dialects but can easily understand each other. Sichuan Chinese dialect is now the *lingua franca* in the township town while the local dialect is spoken in outlying hamlets.

The mouth of Yourigou Vale is north of National Highway 317, about one and a half kilometers from Puxi Township Town. The altitude is higher than the highway. Residents are pastoralists and speak A mdo Tibetan with a pronounced local accent. About fifty percent of Siyuewu villagers can communicate in A mdo Tibetan with Yourigou residents; both parties use Sichuan Chinese dialect if communication in A mdo Tibetan proves challenging.

Approximately ten kilometers west on National Highway 317 from the mouth of Yourigou is Xiaoyili Administrative Village and vale. Villagers speak a dialect

¹⁰ In addition to being natural geographic units, each vale is also designated as an officially recognized administrative unit, either village or township.

¹¹ Taiyanghe Township seat is located in a tributary valley south of the Dadu River.

¹² This vale lies south of National Highway 317 between Guanyinqiao and Ergali.

¹³ This vale lies north of National Highway 317 between Puxi and Xiaoyili.

¹⁴ This vale lies south of National Highway 317 between Xiaoyili and Shangzhai.

resembling what is spoken in Siyuewu and Xiangyang. Villagers from Siyuewu and Xiaoyili can communicate easily, though certain words are pronounced differently (see Figure Four).

Figure Four. Dialectical differences in the Siyuewu and Xiaoyili dialects.

Location	pig	rock	livestock
Siyuewu	<i>p^hoɣə</i>	<i>zəgə me</i>	<i>su</i>
Xiaoyili	<i>pɛɣə</i>	<i>zəgə ma</i>	<i>ɣdzə</i>

A bridge three kilometers west of the mouth of Xiaoyili Vale leads southwest to Zongke Township and vale. The township town is approximately twenty kilometers southwest of the bridge. A dialect similar to Siyuewu dialect is spoken in Zongke, but Siyuewu villagers communicate with Zongke dialect speakers with difficulty. High altitude pastoralists in this valley speak a variety of A mdo Tibetan.

Shangzhai Vale, locally referred to as Dayili, is approximately six kilometers west of the bridge leading to Zongke. Dayili residents speak a dialect similar to that spoken in Zongke that is also challenging for Siyuewu villagers to comprehend.

The next vale west on National Highway 317 is Shili, which is fifteen kilometers from Shangzhai. A very different language is spoken here. Siyuewu villagers cannot use their own dialect to communicate with Shili residents and thus speak Sichuan Chinese dialect.

East of Siyuewu (Jinchuan County)

Ergali Township in Jinchuan County is twenty kilometers east of Siyuewu on National Highway 317. All residents speak a dialect similar to that spoken in Siyuewu, and communicate easily with residents from Siyuewu. Marriage between residents of the two vales was becoming increasingly common in the first decade of the twenty-first

century. In addition to speakers of the respective dialects, there is also a small population of A mdo Tibetan speakers living in high altitude pastoral communities. A mdo Tibetan is the communicative medium between these pastoralists and valley-living agriculturalists.

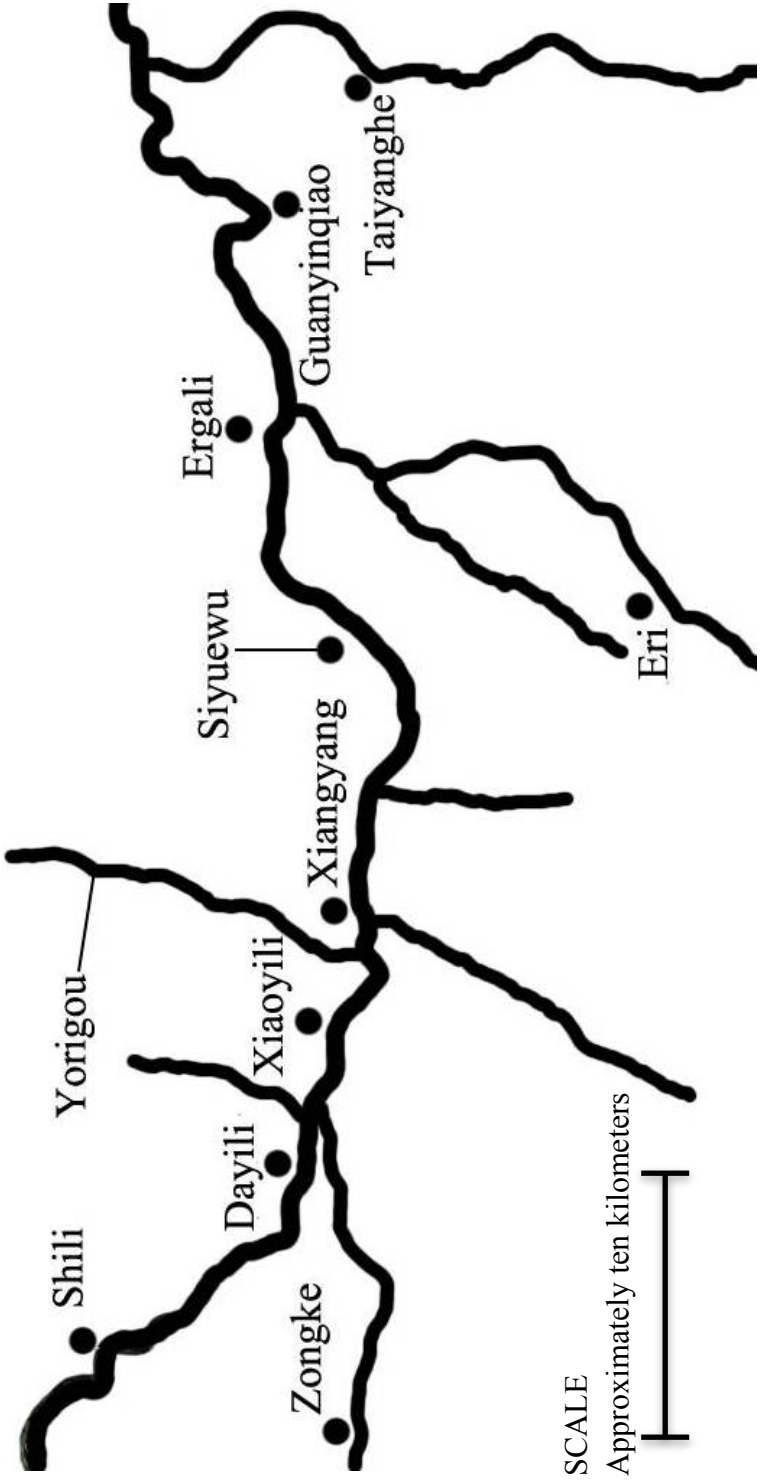
Two kilometers west of Ergali Township seat and still within Ergali Vale, is Hongqi Bridge. Eight kilometers southwest from the bridge is Eri Township, Jinchuan County. A different dialect from that spoken in Ergali and Siyuewu is spoken here. Two or three pastoral communities speak A mdo Tibetan. Residents of Siyuewu and Eri can understand each other and are linked through kin relations, though people seldom visit each other because of the significant distance between the two communities.

Approximately ten kilometers east of Hongqi Bridge on National Highway 317 is Guanyinqiao Town seat where residents speak a dialect similar to that spoken in Ergali. Siyuewu residents communicate with Guanyinqiao locals, each using their respective dialect, in part because Siyuewu villagers often come to the township on pilgrimage to the township's eponymous monastery, Guanyinqiao. Additionally, many Guanyinqiao businessmen come to Siyuewu Village to trade.

To the east of Guanyinqiao is Taiyanghe Township, where a small number of people speak a dialect similar to that spoken in Guanyinqiao; the majority of residents speak A mdo Tibetan.

Figure Five depicts the distribution of the locations mentioned above along the Dadu River and its tributaries.

Figure Five. Distribution of Lavrung-speaking Communities on the Dadu River and its Tributaries.



Siyewu: Territorial Divisions, Population, and Village Name

Siyewu Village is situated on both sides of the Dadu River in a steep, narrow valley that has several lateral tributary valleys. The shady southern side (*ko ɤar*) of the valley is dense with forest, and the sunny northern side (*nə ɤar*) is covered by grass and shrubs. Hamlets are dispersed from the top to the foot of both. The houses on the shady side of the valley are surrounded by fields, which, in turn, are surrounded by trees. Fields surrounding the houses on the sunny side of the valley are edged with bushes.

The village is officially divided into three *dui* 'government work brigades': Yi dui, Er dui, and San dui.¹⁵ It is additionally divided into eleven named hamlets¹⁶ and one unnamed hamlet. The hamlet names lack specific meaning.

Yi dui is on the sunny side of the valley and has forty households. Eight households were previously located on the upper mountain slope half a day's walk from the valley floor¹⁷ and four houses were located on each of two ridges. The hamlet on one ridge is called ɤə ts^hə and the other ɤə tsɤ.¹⁸ Downslope east of ɤə ts^hə and ɤə tsɤ on another ridge are the seven households of fə k^hɛ zɛ Hamlet. Four

¹⁵ First, Second, and Third Brigade, respectively.

¹⁶ There is no term for 'hamlet' in the local language; people refer to specific hamlets by their names. 'Hamlet' is used to denote a localized cluster of houses. Hamlets are not recognized in government administrative toponymy.

¹⁷ Six of these households have now built winter houses at the foot of the mountain. One household remains permanently on the high slope, while a remaining household occasionally spends time living with one of the family's sons near Siyewu Monastery.

¹⁸ These names are occasionally used to refer to the ridges on which the hamlets are located.

houses are located in *ŋə x^hovə* Hamlet, on a small hill an approximately twenty-minute walk downslope on the same ridge from *fə k^hε zε*. About a twenty-minute walk down from *ŋə x^hovə* is *rjæ x^hæd*, where Siyuewu Monastery is located. This hamlet of twenty-two households is nearest the road, which is a fifteen-minute walk downhill. Two households are located together to the east of these twenty-two houses, and a single household is situated to the west.

Er dui is on the shady side of the valley. *t^həm du*¹⁹ Hamlet with fifteen households faces *rjæ x^hæd* on the sunny side and is at the same altitude. A single household considered part of *t^həm du* is situated on a small hill near *t^həm du*, and is referred to as *ləgæd*.²⁰ Uphill about one hour's walk to the southwest of *t^həm du* are the four houses of *γətəvə lə* Hamlet. The thirteen households of *ŋə sbəd* Hamlet are located uphill to the southwest of *γətəvə lə* on a ridge running perpendicular to the Dadu River. There are a total of thirty-two households in Er dui.

San dui has thirty-three households and is also located on the shady side of the valley, west of both Yi dui and Er dui. Southwest of *ŋə sbəd*, across a gully and on another ridge running perpendicular to the Dadu River, are *ŋə lə* Hamlet's fifteen households. Six kilometers west from Siyuewu Monastery on the shady side of the vale is a *vro* Gəlo Valley. About one and half hour's walk into the valley are two hamlets – *vro* with thirteen households and *χəbrə ɤu* with four households. These two hamlets face each other on either side of the valley.

There were 106 households and approximately 580 people in Siyuewu Village in 2006. In the local dialect, *vsə jo* (Siyue) means 'stone mill'. According to villagers, this

¹⁹ From the Tibetan *than rdo* 'evil rock'.

²⁰ More than half of the households in Siyuewu are named. Unnamed households were established within the past two generations.

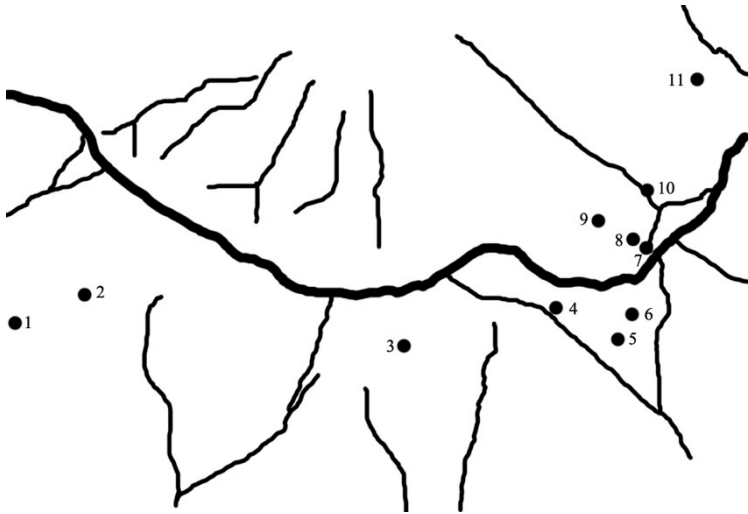
name was given because there was once a large stone mill where the village school is currently located. *ɥu* is a locative particle used to form place names. Examples of terms using *ɥu* are given in Figure Six below.

Figure Six. Use of *ɥu*.

Name	Meaning
ɣle ɥu	a place with grassland
rgə pro ɥu	a place with a stone resembling a horse
ʃou tsu ɥu	a place with many fields
vəχə ləm ɥu	a place with a large tree

The stone mill, located in Yi dui, was accidently destroyed by non-local builders when digging foundations for the village primary school in 1991. Nothing remains of the stone mill today. Elders believe that demolishing the stone mill will bring misfortune to Siyuewu Village because the stone was said to have been used by King Ge sar, the legendary Tibetan king, to sharpen his arrows and hence was considered sacred.

Figure Seven. Hamlets of Siyuewu.

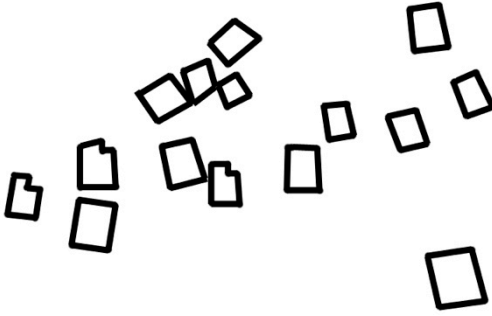


1. ɣəbrə ɓu 2. vro 3. ŋə le 4. ŋə sbəd 5. ɣətəvə le 6. tʰəm du 7. rjæ xʰəd 8. ŋə xʰovə 9. fə kʰɛ zɛ 10. ʒə tsʰə 11. ʒə tsək

Figure Eight. ŋə le Hamlet, Fields, and the Dadu River.



Figure Nine. Houses in ṅə lɛ Hamlet.



Language

All Siyuewu Villagers speak Lavrung, a Rgyalrongic dialect only spoken in Siyuewu and certain nearby villages in Rangtang and Jinchuan counties. People in Xiaoyili, Shangzhai, and Xiangyang Villages in Puxi Township; Ergali Township; and Guanyinqiao Town, Jinchuan County also speak Lavrung. The Lavrung spoken in these locations are mutually comprehensible. Lavrung is mutually unintelligible with Tibetan, though Lavrung speakers employ certain Tibetan words, particularly religious terms. Seven households in Siyuewu speak A mdo Tibetan as their mother tongue. They were herders prior to the economic reforms of the 1980s, after which they migrated to Siyuewu Village and became farmers. In addition to these seven households, approximately fifteen villagers understand and speak A mdo Tibetan. All the villagers, except some women and people born before about 1955, speak Sichuan Chinese dialect. Students and some teenagers who have dropped out of school speak Lavrung mixed with Chinese. There are no words in Lavrung for such modern items as TV, thresher, iron stove, and light bulb and thus Chinese is employed – *dian shi*, *tuo li ji*, *huo lu zi*, and *deng pao*, respectively.

In accordance with the national government's compulsory nine-year education policy, a family had to pay a 5,000 RMB fine in 2010 if a child did not attend school. This was a huge sum for local families. Children must attend school in the township center or county town where there are many Han Chinese and where classes are taught in Sichuan Chinese and Modern Standard Chinese. Children watch TV soap operas, Korean movies, and talk shows that are in Chinese, which influences the language they use.

History

Villagers were rebuilding the local monastery when I returned home in January 2010. Each family was required to send at least two people to demolish the old monastery and prepare the site for the new monastery. Many more than the required number of laborers gathered. Since my family home is near the monastery, I joined the work soon after I arrived.

Srong pel, Gnas rgyal, Cangts ko lo, and Zhangs sgyong were having afternoon tea in Bkra shes don 'grub's house near the monastery. I entered the home and was poured a bowl of black tea. I told them about my project and everyone was astonished when I said I would publish a book.

"Your book is going to be about our culture, right? Will you be famous, as many other authors are?" Gnas rgyal said skeptically.

"Yeah, right! I will be famous for sure! Would you like to be my secretary later?" I replied, laughing, making the others laugh too. "I need to know some of our village history. For example, some people say that we are Tibetan while others disagree."

"I don't think anyone really knows our village history. I've never heard anyone talk about such things. But one thing I am sure about is that we are Tibetan. Our belief in Buddhism shows we are Tibetan – and consider our other

beliefs, habits, clothing, worldview, and daily interactions. The only thing that makes us different from other Tibetans is our language," Srong pel said.

"Let me tell you something so you can understand who we are," he continued. "After a conflict between Jiarong²¹ and the Chinese, the Chinese discovered that the Jiarong stone towers were practically indestructible. They could not conquer us Jiarong people. However, four Jinchuan people were captured and taken to Beijing so the Chinese could learn how the stone towers were built. These four Jinchuan people built three stone towers – two were dismantled and one is still in Beijing. I heard once that there are Jinchuan people still living in Beijing and this explains how they got there – they are the descendants of those four captives."

"What you've just said is probably true. Once Mkhan po Tshul khrum blo gros²² was teaching us Tibetan history and he mentioned the Jinchuan people. Once he heard them sing, '*Nga'i pha yul chu chen*²³ *phyong nas yongs*. My homeland is Chu chen', when they performed circle dances," said Cang ko lo.

²¹ People from Jinchuan County and Heishui, Xiaojin, and Lixian counties in Aba Prefecture who share a common language are called Jinchuan or Jiarong people and are also considered Tibetans, both by themselves and by Siyuewu villagers. Locals are pleased to refer to themselves as Jiarong people as they consider themselves and Jiarong people to both be Tibetan.

²² Tshul khrum blo gros is a *mkhan po* 'abbot' in Gser rta Monastery, Gser rta County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Cang ko lo studied Tibetan there for two years under this *mkhan po*.

²³ Chu chen is a Tibetan name for Jinchuan, which is situated at the confluence of the Khro, Gser, and Bai rivers, hence the name Chu chen 'Big River'.

"Wherever there are stone towers, locals are Jiarong people," Srong pel added.

"There were many stone towers in the time of Gling,²⁴ and Tibetans slowly spread from Gling to Jinchuan areas, bringing stone tower construction skills to protect themselves from others. This is also why Jiarong people refer to themselves as Tibetans, not an isolated ethnicity, and it also explains why Tibetans are the origin of the Qiang,"²⁵ Gnas rgyal said.

"I agree that Tibetans expanded and came here. There were three stone towers in our village that were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). King Khro skyabs, the king of the eighteen tribes of Jinchuan... Khro skyabs... I think he may have been under Khro thong's²⁶ leadership," Gnas rgyal said.

This discussion led to Zhangs sgyong (b. 1958) telling the following account of Gling Kingdom armies chasing a monster to Siyuewu Village:

This comes from the *gnas yig*²⁷ written by Gter ston, a monk who lived in Siyuewu Village for almost ten years. He was said to be from somewhere in Rangtang County, but no one really knows where he was from. He was a *rtsis pa*,

²⁴ Gling refers to Ge sar's kingdom.

²⁵ Siyuewu villagers consider the Qiang (an ethnic group living in Aba that have a close relationship with nearby Tibetans) to be Jiarong/ Jinchuan people. Siyuewu villagers do not consider themselves Qiang.

²⁶ Khro thong was one of Ge sar's ministers.

²⁷ A *gnas yig* is a book on local history or one that predicts the future and advises what should and should not be done. High status *lama* and *rtsis pa* 'fortune tellers' write *gnas yig*. Two kinds of *gnas yig* are *sa gnas*, which are found under the earth, and *dgong gnas*, which spontaneously arise in a *lama* or *rtsis pa*'s mind and are written down.

an astronomer or fortune teller who predicted the future for villagers. He was highly respected in the village. He later left without saying farewell and never returned. Villagers asked about him to anyone they thought might know. Two years after he left, someone said that he had died. I talked with him about the history of our village twice when he was here. It is said that the *gnas yig* from Gter ston is kept in Zongke.

Gter ston said that once a monster named Srin mo kha la me 'bar 'Demoness with a Fire Mouth' fled from Gling to Siyuewu, chased by Gling's soldiers. The monster was finally caught, pinned under Zor tsa, a small rocky mountain in Siyuewu, and became part of the mountain. Marks on the rocky mountain testify to where they fought. Later, Srin mo kha la me 'bar planned to set fire to the village from under the rocky mountain. A khu Khro thong made a *gsong chabs*²⁸ near the small rocky mountain and subdued the *srin mo*, saving the village.

Afterwards, the Gling soldiers and Khro thongs celebrated the monster's defeat, giving thanks to those who had saved the village.

Village Livelihoods

Siyuewu villagers primarily subsist by agriculture though four families also keep an average of eighty yaks each in addition to their fields. Yaks are herded in a pasture about one day on foot from the village, where two or three family members live in black yak-hair tents year-round, though they also have houses in the village. These families make 2,000 to

²⁸ *Gsong chabs* are small earth balls that are consecrated by chanting. Containing a high lama's urine, they are considered sacred, and put in water that is drunk to prevent diseases and contamination by evil.

4,000 RMB per year selling about half of the butter and cheese they produce.

Locals grow barley, wheat, soybeans, mung beans, corn, and potatoes that are all locally consumed rather than sold (except for corn – see below). Cabbages, turnips, tomatoes, and spinach are cultivated in outdoor gardens in summer and spring and in homemade greenhouses in autumn and winter. Some families cultivated vegetables in homemade greenhouses in recent years but achieved poor results due to unfamiliarity with greenhouse construction techniques, and so no longer do this.

Some wealthy families previously owned over twenty *mu*²⁹ of land but, in 2000, the government implemented two policies. One was *tuigeng huanlin* (returning cropland to forest) whereby the government gave three annual grain subsidies of barley, wheat, and rice to farmers who planted sloping fields with trees provided by the government. After three years, this changed to 130 kilograms of rice or grain annually per *mu*. The second policy, *tuimu huancao* (returning pasture to grass), was designed to ease the pressure of overgrazing and reverse the damage it causes grassland. Presently, each family has an average of four *mu* of fields.

Shortly after Lo sar,³⁰ villagers fertilize fields with cow manure and then plow in late February or early March. The appearance of wild peach blossoms is taken as a sign to plow. The Tibetan Calendar is also consulted to determine the plowing time. Five to ten cows are kept per household for milking and producing manure. Each family has one to two *mdzo*³¹ for plowing. Women spread beans and corn selected by hand and potato pieces in rows after men plow

²⁹ An area measurement equal to two-thirds of a hectare.

³⁰ New Year, also referred to by the Chinese term Chunjie.

³¹ A male cow and female yak hybrid that is larger than a yak and has shorter hair.

with *mdzo*. For barley and wheat, a male or a female first sows the seed and then plows over them. Women never plow, though this is not proscribed. Women are solely responsible for taking care of fields from sowing until harvesting because men leave the village to undertake migrant labor and earn cash income after plowing.

Crops sprout in late March and early April. Villagers then weed, loosen the earth around the base of crops, and keep livestock away from crops. Fencing and scarecrows keep birds and rodents away. Fires are lit in the fields every two days to deter wild pigs and badgers. Harvest is in late July to early August. Normally, one *mu* yields 500 kilograms of corn, 250 kilograms of barley, 400 kilograms of beans or wheat, or 600 kilograms of potatoes. Barley, wheat, and potatoes are for subsistence consumption; corn sold at 1.8 to 2.4 *mao* per kilogram in 2009. Vegetables planted immediately after harvesting ripen before winter. Crops are rotated, e.g., if corn is grown in a field one year, barley or wheat is grown the next year.

Migrant labor is the main income source. Able-bodied men and women younger than fifty spend much of the year collecting caterpillar fungus and other medical substances, repairing roads, and doing construction work. Most villagers go to locations near the village, but younger villagers may go as far as the provincial capital, Chengdu. One or two family members stay at home doing housework while other family members are out working. Five to ten people who are relatives or good friends leave to work together. Daily wages for migrant labor ranged from fifty to 100 RMB in 2011.

Housing

Locals build houses from stone, wood, and adobe. If a family plans to build a house and lacks members skilled in design or

construction, they employ local experts to build the four corners of the house, as these are the most challenging part to build. Most middle-aged male villagers know how to build houses.

One house requires at least two or three builders but more makes construction faster. Builders are paid eighty to 100 RMB per day and ten or twenty RMB more is paid to those who build the corners and supervise other builders. Others help the family collect stones, make mud, provide mud and stones to the builders, and cook for the workers. These additional helpers are not paid, but the assisted family takes note of who is there and reciprocates in the future.

Houses typically have four or five floors, each with its own function. One or two floors are built in a year because it is too much work for the family and helpers to build an entire house during one construction season.

Villagers ask the local reincarnate lama to choose an auspicious location before constructing a house. He may also ask the family to invite local monks to chant scriptures or make offerings to the Buddha before laying the foundation. Immediately after determining the foundation's location, stones, earth, and wood are prepared and digging the foundation begins. After the outer walls are finished, wood beams are put across the top of the walls, and boards are laid across. A thick layer of moss is laid on the boards and two types of earth are spread atop the moss. *naχ læm* 'black earth' is laid first, followed by *kær læm* 'yellow or red earth'. Many neighbors are asked to help cover the floors. The earth is then compressed with wooden threshing flails. Builders leave immediately after the house is built.

The first floor is for livestock and is divided into two or three rooms to separate cows from calves. Manure is gathered from these stables for fertilizer. A notched log ladder leads to the second floor, which is used for eating and sleeping. There are two rooms on this floor. The larger is the main room or *jæm* and has a metal stove in the center of the

room's right side. The family cooks and sleeps around the metal stove on the wood floor. Bedding is laid out at night and then cleared away in the morning. There are four designated seating positions around the stove: *khe yar* is opposite the door and is reserved for such important people as *lama*, esteemed guests, and male family members; *kho syri* is on the right side of the stove (facing in from the door) and is for the housewife or female family member who does the housework; *khe le* is on the left side of the stove and is for ordinary guests and other family members; and *khe snə* is nearest the door and is rarely used, though female family members occasionally sleep there. The *jəm* thus functions as a living room, kitchen, and sleeping room.

Adjacent to the main room is the *k^ho*, a smaller room for storing food, bedding, and a large wood box divided into sections for different grain. The toilet juts out from the second floor. Another ladder leads up to the family's shrine room (*mchod khang*) and a bedroom for monks on the third floor. The fourth floor is used to thresh crops and store straw. Scripture flags are put on a *lab rtse*³² on the roof.

Religion

All villagers follow the Rnying ma sect³³ of Tibetan Buddhism and visit the local monastery, Guaniyinqiao, twenty-five kilometers east of Siyuewu Village in Jinchuan

³² *Lab rtse* are sacred cairns consisting of Tibetan scripture flags tied to sticks inserted into a base of stones. *Lab rtse* are considered offerings to deities. Whereas Tibetans in many areas have *lab rtse* only on mountaintops where mountain deities are considered to reside, Siyuewu villagers also have *lab rtse* on the top floors of houses.

³³ The oldest sect of Tibetan Buddhism, founded by Padmasambhava.

County. The Guanyin³⁴ figure enshrined there was unearthed by a local family in their field when plowing in 1987. Locals built a monastery for it a year later. Every year, especially in winter, pilgrims from Maerkang ('Bar khams), Ruoergai (Mdzod dge), Hongyuan (Rka khog), Aba (Rnga ba), and Banma (Pad ma) counties come worship at this monastery. Other deity images are enshrined at Guanyinqiao, but the Guanyin is the most important.

The monastery is situated on the slope of Mount Gnas mdun. There was no motorable road and it took at least three hours to walk from the foot of the mountain to the monastery before 2006. The monastery constructed a dirt road, but sharp turns make the road dangerous. A vehicle from Siyuewu Village drove off the road in 2007, killing one villager and seriously injuring three.

Siyuewu Village has its own monastery, Siyuewu Monastery, near which there is a prayer wheel hall (*'khor khang*) where villagers worship and perform circumambulations on special occasions, including the fifteenth day of each lunar month³⁵ and the birth and death days of Bcom ldan 'das, the Buddha. Each hamlet has its own small *'khor khang* built by hamlet residents, who also clean and repair it in turn. Mostly women spin prayer wheels in the morning and evening. Young people under twenty do not often spin prayer wheels because they find it boring. One person may spin 700 to 800 revolutions a day. Each family is asked by the local reincarnate lama to spin the prayer wheel a million times per year to ensure their safety.

Many elders who no longer do heavy physical labor live in rooms near the monastery and circumambulate and

³⁴ Guanyin (Thugs rje chen po) or Avalokiteshvara is a bodhisattva of compassion.

³⁵ The day the Buddha gave his first teaching to his followers. Locals commemorate this day, the beginning of the dissemination of Buddhism.

turn prayer wheels frequently in the hope of attaining a better next life. Some frail elders sit on stools near the wheels and push them while others walk around, spinning the wheels.

When a villager dies, family members take the corpse to Gser rta Monastery to be chopped into pieces and eaten by vultures. One or more relatives from each household help at funerals. Males cut small trees needed to construct prayer banner poles in a flat space in the village. Females console the deceased's family and cook food for the monks who chant in the deceased's home. The deceased's family members bring candies, matches, money, and packets of instant noodles to those spinning prayer wheels in the *'khor khang* and ask them to spin the wheels and chant *ma Ni*³⁶ for the deceased.

Families commonly have a room reserved as a family shrine room and put such scriptures as the Bka' chos and Bstan chos,³⁷ two Tibetan scriptures purchased in Maerkang that each family keeps as a basic religious observance. Pictures of deities, such famous places as Sku 'bum³⁸ and Bla brang³⁹ monasteries, and such Buddhist leaders or practitioners as Rje tsong kha pa⁴⁰ and the ninth Pan chen Lama are also enshrined. Male family members put seven small bowls filled with water in front of the deity images every morning. Women do this if the family lacks an appropriate male member. Roasted barley, rice, and *a ga ri*⁴¹

³⁶ The six sacred syllables, *oM ma Ni pad+me h+UM*.

³⁷ These two volumes each consist of many scriptures.

³⁸ Sku 'bum is located in Huangzhong County, Xining City, Qinghai Province, at the birthplace of Tsonk kha pa.

³⁹ Bla brang is located in Gansu Province.

⁴⁰ The founder of the Dge lugs sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

⁴¹ In Siyuewu Village, *a ga ri* shrub leaves are burnt instead of juniper because the latter is locally rare. *A ga ri* have small, dense leaves, grow about one and a half meters tall, and have a strong bitter smell.

are burnt daily as offerings to family deities (*khyim lha*) and mountain deities (*gə χu*) by family monks or male members at the household's incense burner (*bsang khang*) on the third floor, near the ladder leading to the fourth floor.

Monks normally live with their families except during rituals when they chant scriptures in the village monastery, where they stay throughout the chanting period. Forty monks were affiliated with Siyuewu Monastery in 1997, but most had become laymen by 2009. Monks are forbidden to have children, cannot drink liquor, and believe no one will care for them when they are old. After death, local culture stipulates that a child or grandchild must carry the corpse from the upper floor of the home, downstairs, and out of the house. A close male relative does this if the deceased is childless. This helps explain why there were only five or six full-time monks in 2009. Laymen chant when many chanters are required at the local monastery or several funerals occur simultaneously.

Home Remedies

A local doctor, Bsod mgong (b. 1958), began working in the village in 2000. He buys medicines from the prefecture seat and sells them in the village. He does both muscular and intravenous injections. Villagers visit his home near the local monastery for colds, headaches, toothaches, and insect bites. He receives no payment from the government. Villagers pay him when he treats them.

Ill villagers historically depended on home remedies, which are now used less often because access to new health care options has improved. Young people generally think such home remedies are useless superstitions.

I collected the following examples of home remedies from villagers and from personal experience:

- Irritated eyes: a drop of breast milk from a woman with a three-year-old child, particularly if the child is a boy.
- Scalds and burns: immediate application of salt or oil. The affected area may also be warmed near the stove for one to two minutes.
- Snakebites: eat earth immediately after being bitten. After biting someone, a snake burrows into the earth. The bitten person should eat earth before the snake disappears below ground or the cure will be ineffective.
- Toothache: eat a bowl of *rtsam pa*⁴² mixed with butter and a pinch of salt.
- Mushroom poisoning: immediately drink milk after eating a poisonous mushroom.
- Bleeding wounds: apply burned sheep wool ash.
- A child with white marks on its tongue who cannot breastfeed, or who cries too much: give goats milk.
- Tripping while walking on a road: spit on the road to prevent tripping again.
- Dog bites: put *rtsam pa* on the wound, leave it for about a minute, then feed it to the offending dog to prevent infection.
- If a person, especially a baby, sees a stranger and subsequently has a headache, feebleness, or nausea: hair from the patient's head is cut and burned, and the sick person or baby smells the burned hair to relieve their symptoms.
- Swollen eyes: pot soot is rubbed on the swollen eyelids; sometimes saliva is also rubbed.
- Bald infant: rub black bear fat on the infant's head everyday for one to three months.

⁴² Roasted barley flour dough that is sometimes mixed with roasted corn flour.

- Constantly crying baby: throw *len chags*⁴³ made with corn, rice, wheat, and peas from a bridge while *ma Ni* is chanted. The baby must spit into the *len cheg* or blow in it.
- Frostbite prevention: put chewed *Gə ɛ* 'walnut'⁴⁴ on the cheeks.
- Joint pain: put fat stored in pig legs for a year on the joint and sit near a fire once a day.
- Headaches: eat *mə je*⁴⁵ raw or boil it and drink the broth.

Locals do not have causal explanations for these remedies' efficacy, but trust and use them.

ji Loss

"Do not speak to the infant loudly or it will lose its *bla* (soul)," is commonly heard in Siyuewu. There are no specific symptoms associated with *bla* loss, nor are there rituals to call back the *bla*. *ji* refers to the visible soul whereas *bla* is invisible. Lost *ji* must be found and put back in the body, but nothing can be done to call back the *ji*. Those who lose their *ji* become ill or progressively weaker until they eventually die. In the same way that *bla* can be lost, the *ji* can be lost from a sudden fright, or when alone, afraid, and thinking that something bad will happen. The accounts below are of *ji* loss:

⁴³ *Len chags* are *rtsam pa* offerings made to beings called *mi ma yin* that are not human, deities, or ghosts. A long roll of *rtsam pa* is squeezed in the hand until a handprint of whoever makes it forms.

⁴⁴ *Juglans regia*, often referred to as English walnut.

⁴⁵ *mə je* is a plant that has small leaves and a fruit encased in a thick green skin. It grows in local pastures where there is dense grass near streams.

Account One. Gnas pos (b. 1947), a retiree of the county electricity management office:

It has been almost thirty-five years since I saw someone's *ji*. It was during the time of the Commune System in the 1970s, when we attended meetings almost every night, walking five kilometers to the meetings and returning at night. I was a boy and represented my family. As usual, Bso pa, some neighboring villagers, and I went to the meetings together. We were on our way home after a meeting, swapping stories about bears and leopards all the way. Bso pa led us holding a firebrand to light the rugged path. A dim moon shone on old tree-stumps.

Dbang rgyal was walking behind us and called, "Look, is this yours? Take it quickly!" I turned and saw a sky-colored thing swinging left to right. It seemed alive. It could be held in one cupped hand and was shiny. I had heard my father say we could lose our *ji* and if we did, we needed to go back to the place where we were frightened, otherwise we would go mad or have hallucinations of ghosts and evil spirits. I picked that shiny thing up and rubbed it on my chest but it spilled everywhere, sticking on my hands and chest. This time it was brighter than before, like the shining stars. It felt cool. I called out to Bso pa, because I thought it must be his. He stretched his hand out and the *ji* became like beads. It went into his hands and disappeared, including what had been stuck on my hands and chest.

I told this to my mother and she told me that I had seen *ji*, and that Bso pa would be fine and not become sick, since he got his *ji* back.

Account Two. Bai Yun (b. 1966):

When we were younger, some villagers and I went to watch movies in the neighboring village.⁴⁶ There were about ten of us and we needed to walk through a dense forest where people believed the ghost of a woman murdered by robbers still wandered. We finished watching movies and returned home on that path. Suddenly, Smon lam cried out, "What is this?"

"It's *ji*. My mother told me about it. You can lose your *ji* if you are frightened," I said, walking to the front of our group. I asked, "Is this yours, Smon lam? Try to pick it up."

"Maybe it's mine," said Smon lam trying to take it, but it went right through his hand. Then, I picked up the *ji* and it entered my hand as soon as I touched it.

Account Three. Yid bzhin lo (b. 1920):

I stayed in my aunt's home for some days. One day I was helping my uncle feed livestock on the ground floor. A notched log led to the second floor. The first floor was very dark. I had finished feeding the livestock and was going up to the second floor, holding a wood feeding pail in my hand. It was really dark. I could feel someone staring at me.

Uncle shouted worriedly when I had just about reached the second floor. "You've lost your *ji*. You must have been afraid of something. Come take it, otherwise you'll get seriously sick!" He told me he had tried to take it but it had slipped between his fingers.

I could see a bright thing moving back and forth. I was a bit afraid, wondering if it was mine or a ghost's. Finally, I

⁴⁶ At that time, township workers showed movies in an open square near the village school for two to four consecutive nights about three times a year.

closed my eyes and stretched out my left hand. I felt I had touched butter that had just been taken out from milk. It had vanished when I opened my eyes.

I was thinking about what it was and could not sleep the whole night. It seemed I could still feel that *ji* in my hand. I felt OK after that night.

ji loss stories are common. Locals say you can get your *ji* back if you lose it. Once, however, a man lost his *ji* and did not notice. He went mad, and spoke a language that no one understood. After three years of madness, he killed himself by plunging a sword into his stomach. He smiled as he died.

Love and Marriage

It was traditionally considered appropriate for young people to become aware of romance between the ages of twenty and twenty-four. In recent years, television programs, magazines, and books portraying romantic themes have influenced locals, who now become aware about love at younger ages.

Courtship is conducted carefully. People rarely directly ask a person who they like or love to begin a relationship. If a boy is interested in a girl, he finds a chance to talk to her, perhaps secretly at a party or when she is walking alone. He asks her permission to visit her home secretly that night and goes to her home later if she agrees. He asks one or two of his close friends to accompany him if he is too timid to go alone. The boy enters the girl's bedroom while his friends wait outside. The boy and girl talk about things unrelated to love if they are shy, or discuss their feelings directly. If they are certain that they love each other and want to be together, the boy continues visiting the girl's home at night until she becomes pregnant or they decide to marry. On the other hand, if he comes without her permission, she may shout, "Mother! Father! There's a thief

in our home!" until a parent asks the boy to leave. The boy may be beaten if the family dislikes him.

If a boy likes a girl that his family dislikes, his mother or father asks him to stop seeing her. The same happens with girls.

Romance is considered embarrassing and so feelings related to romance and relationships are not discussed with family members. A girl's uncles and male relatives never ask about her romances, and she never talks about her lover if her brothers might overhear. A boy does not talk with his female relatives about such relationships. This is now changing because of interactions with other people who lack such reluctance and because more children attend school.

Teenagers are currently concerned about their appearance and what the opposite gender thinks about them. Many parents closely monitor such children to ensure they do not have time to be with members of the opposite sex. Teenagers not attending school, however, are allowed to be with members of the opposite sex, and are expected to marry and help support the family as early as possible.

The following account of a young village woman is illustrative. Unmarried Lha sgron (b. 1984) graduated from senior middle school but could not enter college because of low test scores. She does not want to marry or have a family just yet, believing marriage brings much responsibility and raising a family requires hard work. She is the eldest child, and has one sister and two brothers in school.

Lha sgron's mother: Lha sgron, you are getting old. You should find a husband to care for you and our family. You don't want to be childless, do you?

Lha sgron: Come on, Mother. Why are you bringing this up again? I know when I should find a husband. Don't worry about it so much.

Lha sgron's mother: What do you know? Nothing! Nothing! Do you know what neighboring women say about

you? They think you can't find a boyfriend. They often ask me if we need their help to find you a husband.

Lha sgron: Dear Mother, can't you just ignore what others say about me? You know your daughter better than anyone else. I'll bring you a son-in-law later. Just go to sleep. Good night!

Many girls share Lha sgron's ideas. Young women are especially independent, run small businesses, and live by themselves. They do not want to have babies, constantly care for a family, and stay at home all day. They want to travel to urban centers as most men do and earn money independently, rather than depending on others, and so wait until they become older to marry. Marriage is currently less common among young women villagers.

Arranged marriages are rare in Siyuewu. However, parents may influence a youth's decision if they dislike their child's choice of partner. If the couple truly love each other, they may then elope and their families must agree to their marriage. Two or three families have forced their children to marry someone the family liked and the children agreed because they did not want to displease them.

Wedding parties are rare. Generally, a boy visits their partner's family once the couple is sure they want to be together. Neither he nor his family members ever directly ask permission from the girl's parents. The couple typically does not cohabit after publically announcing their relationship. Instead, they visit their partner's home to assist during times of plowing, cutting wood for fuel, and chanting. The couple is publicly acknowledged as *ʔmav* 'husband' and *rə jav* 'wife' in the village, though these terms are rarely used. Either partner may have relationships and bear children by another partner while married. Children fathered in an extra-marital relationship refer to their mother's husband as *ə yo* 'uncle' – a term of address applied by children and youths to elder men regardless of kinship. No formal process

terminates a marriage. The person wishing to terminate the relationship simply stops going to assist the other's family when laborers are required.

The traditional marriage form is increasingly uncommon. Younger villagers today, especially those with formal education or official government jobs, are more likely to hold a small party to celebrate their marriage, to cohabit afterwards, and to have fewer extra-marital relationships.

PART TWO: FOLK NARRATIVES

Introduction

Folktales are told in Siyuewu Village in both Lavrung and Amdo Tibetan. All stories are referred to as *χə bi* 'story'. Story genres are not distinguished, though humorous stories are referred to as *q^hæd næ to səce* 'stories that can make you laugh'.

Among a population of approximately 580, four to five villagers still tell stories to their grandchildren, who often impatiently leave before a story is finished.

Folk stories teach lessons about life or are simply for entertainment, using animals and fictional characters. Rabbits, bears, birds, horses, sheep, lice, lions, crows, and wild people (*vəcær ηi*)⁴⁷ appear in the stories.

Storytelling was performed on both informal and formal recreational occasions such as parties, gatherings of friends, and when neighboring families had meals together. Friends told stories when herding on the mountains, harvesting together, or when building a new house. Parents or grandparents told stories to children and grandchildren at bedtime. Villagers also told such stories at religious rituals.

Sometimes a story was told in strained and uncomfortable circumstances. For example, a folktale might have been told when a family invited the relatives of the family's daughter-in-law or son-in-law to a small party in order to get to know each other better. On such occasions storytelling helped relieve the tension.

More stories were told when people knew each other very well and among people who felt comfortable with each other. Few people told stories when meeting someone the first time. People say that storytelling is like a shy girl who is

⁴⁷ Lavrung for 'wild man'. Villagers tell stories of encounters with *vəcær ηi*. There are said to be *vəcær ηi* footprints in a valley near Puxi Township seat, suggesting that these creatures once existed near the village in surrounding forests.

embarrassed in front of strangers but feels relaxed with family and friends.

When I was about seven, I enjoyed visiting a neighboring house where my favorite childhood playmate lived. I liked listening to her grandfather's stories. One of my favorite stories, 'Helping Others Will Bring You What You Need', features a poor old man. I summarize the story below without dialogue:

Helping Others Will Bring You What You Need

A very poor old man, despite working hard all his life, had hardly any clothes to wear or a roof to take shelter from the rain and snow. One day he decided to visit the Buddha and ask why he couldn't be rich – why he could never own anything.

On the way he met a pair of birds that couldn't fly away from a tree and bickered constantly with each other. He also met a deer that couldn't stand, because its knees were worn out. Finally, he met a solitary horse that couldn't be with other horses and with whom no one else wanted to be.

When the old man said he was going to question the Buddha, each of the animals asked him to inquire about their situation.

He asked all their questions when he met the Buddha. The Buddha said two thieves had stored a piece of gold under the tree where the two birds perched and if someone dug up that gold then their problem would vanish. As for the deer, a wish-fulfilling jewel grew on the deer's head. If the treasure was removed the deer would walk normally. As for the horse, if it had a master it would be fine.

The old man set off home, met the horse, and conveyed the Buddha's message. The horse asked the old man to be his master. Then, the deer asked the old man to

remove the treasure from atop his head, and the two birds also asked the old man to take the gold after hearing the Buddha's message.

Just as he got home, the old man remembered that he had forgotten to ask the Buddha about himself, but realized that he was now rich.

This story has finished.⁴⁸

This story teaches the Buddhist belief that helping others brings you what you want – maybe not in this life, but perhaps in a next life.

The storyteller was my friend's grandfather, who has now passed away, but his story is told today and may still be told in the future. Maybe he is now in Heaven,⁴⁹ watching me and listening to his story. He would be very happy to hear his story because he loved telling stories. I really hope that we, as our ancestor's descendants, can preserve these valuable stories.

A unique form of local stories are narratives about Do lo, a local historical figure. The following information was provided in Lavrung by Zhangs skyong (b. 1958) while he was having dinner with his family. I was told not to retell or play the recording of the Do lo, as it might embarrass his living descendants. That was my first time to hear the name Do lo, since people hardly ever tell his stories, even though they know them.

⁴⁸ People normally end stories by saying, "*ŋæn χbi nə you* My story has finished" or "*næ xhe pəjær* Was that fun?" as a concluding formula. "*χna χna*, Long, long ago," is an opening formula.

⁴⁹ People think of *ħa jəħ* 'Heaven' as a peaceful and wonderful place with no suffering, no killing, and no conflict. After death, a person goes to Heaven if they have been good during their life. Bad people go to *χnæħ vā* 'Hell'.

Dolo's Life

Do lo ལྷ་འཕྲོ་མོ་⁵⁰ was a funny, rather stupid villager who lived in Siyewu Village about 150 years ago. He owned land and worked hard. His father died from a sickness when Do lo was just a year old. All the labor then fell on his mother's shoulders and she died of exhaustion when Do lo was just two years old. One of his mother's elderly aunts who lived alone then cared for him. She could not see well and therefore needed Do lo's help. Although they lived happily together, the deities never supported Do lo – one day his aunt tripped over a stone while fetching water from the river, stumbled, and died.

Poor Do lo was alone again. He lived by collecting mushrooms and roots to eat and by working for other families, who paid him with food. He started hunting in the mountains near the village when he was six years old after learning hunting skills from a hunter in a nearby village.

The days passed and Do lo out-grew the difficulties he had faced. Many times he escaped death while hunting alone. One rainy day he fell off a cliff, landed on a tree, and then crawled down to safety bit by bit.

Despite his hard life, Do lo had been strong since birth. He could easily lift 250 kilograms and was asked to help villagers carry things like timber and stones when they built houses. They fed him but never gave him any other payment, because he had an enormous appetite. He could eat almost two kilograms of *rtsam pa* at one sitting. One time after helping a family carry logs for a new house, he

⁵⁰ There is a taboo against saying the names of deceased people, especially females. ལྷ་འཕྲོ་མོ་ 'Heaven' is affixed after a deceased person's name and mentioning their name is thereafter avoided. For example, locals say Do lo ལྷ་འཕྲོ་མོ་ at the beginning of a story but afterwards just say ལྷ་འཕྲོ་མོ་.

ate the leg of a cow and two loaves of baked bread – a normal man could only eat one such loaf of bread.

He was short-tempered and stubbornly did whatever he wanted at such times. It was impossible to reason with him when he was in a bad mood.

Do lo married a local woman when he was fifteen and they later had a son. If Do lo returned from a day of hunting empty-handed, he became angry with his wife, son, and their livestock. People say that his appearance and simple mind made him like a *væcær ŋi*.

More examples of folk narratives follow.

The Leveret, the Sparrow, and the Pig⁵¹

A leveret, a baby sparrow, and a piglet were friends and lived together. One day, the sparrow said to the leveret, "Lo sar is coming and we have no meat. We must find a way to get some."

"You're right. I also thought that. But how can we get meat now that it has snowed so heavily? We can't even take one step outside," said the sparrow, looking at the leveret suspiciously.

"Tomorrow we will tell the stupid pig that we have to kill one of us to eat for Lo sar. I'll say, 'You could kill me, but I'm too small for both of you to eat.' Then you say, 'You could kill me, but I'm too hairy to eat.' Then the pig will say, 'Kill me!' Then we can kill the pig."

The following day, they met and everything went just as the leveret planned. After the pig agreed to be killed, the leveret asked the sparrow to steal seasoning from their neighbors. The cunning leveret wanted to eat all the pig without sharing it with the sparrow and thus tricked the

⁵¹ Told by Blo bzang (b.1991).

sparrow, who was captured and nearly killed by the neighbor's children when he went to borrow seasoning.

After the leveret killed the pig, he took the pig's tail, stuck it in a crack in the wall, and waited for the sparrow to return.

When the sparrow escaped and finally returned, the leveret said, "The naughty creature went through the stone wall when I was trying to kill him! Now we can only see his tail. What can we do?"

The sparrow pulled on the tail and it came out of the wall. "Now we have lost the delicious pig! What can we do?" cried the leveret, never imagining that the sparrow was smarter than he.

The sparrow saw a piece of pork sticking out from under the leveret's bed. Secretly, he later poisoned the pork and carefully put it back. The leveret ate the poisoned meat and died. Thus, in the end, the sparrow defeated the leveret at his own game.

The Flea and the Louse⁵²

A man as cruel as a tiger often tortured and killed various animals. One day when he was cooking his usual lunch of a pot full of insects and snakes, he got tired of waiting for the tiny fire to heat the pot.

At that moment, he saw a louse walking slowly near the stones that surrounded the fireplace, and decided to vent all his anger on the innocent louse. He grabbed a half-burnt stick and smashed the louse. The poor louse's back was singed, which is why lice have black marks on their backs.

Burning the louse still did not sate that cruel man's fury. He looked around and saw a flea struggling to come

⁵² Told by Khen thar (b.1953).

out from a crevice in his door. He got up from the fire, rushed to the door, and slammed it shut, squashing the little flea, which explains why fleas are flat.

The Bone in the Meat⁵³

Once a few friends were having a small party in a dark house near the main village road. They cooked a pot of mutton and while eating it, threw the bones out through a window. Saluo threw a sharp bone and hit a man just as he was passing by the window, blinding his right eye.

The blinded person asked very respectfully "Who was so great to aim so precisely?"

"I, Saluo, of course!" Saluo responded proudly.

The Jar Buyer⁵⁴

Long ago a man had saved money for two years and really wanted to buy a liquor jar.⁵⁵ Finally, after earning enough to buy a jar, he took his money, went to the market, and bought a nice, big jar. He then carried the jar on his head very carefully while loudly chanting, "Buddha bless me so I can take this jar safely home."

Just as he was ready to step over his threshold, he said, "OK, Buddha, I don't need your help now," and stepped inside, accidentally smashing the jar to pieces on the upper doorframe, leaving him holding two pieces of the shattered jar in his hands.

⁵³ Told by Bsod nams sgron (b. 1957).

⁵⁴ Told by Tshe ring dpal ldan (b. 1949).

⁵⁵ Clay jars are used for storing liquor that is made by every family in Siyuewu to be consumed at celebrations and in daily life.

Blo ring and zæn t̥si⁵⁶

Long ago, Blo ring and zæn t̥si were friends. Blo ring lived in the upper part of a valley and zæn t̥si lived at the bottom of the valley.

They shared ownership of a gold Buddha figure. One day, Blo ring decided he wanted the statue all for himself. He told his mother to go to the pine forest opposite their house and say, "Yes Blo ring take it," when she heard Blo ring and zæn t̥si's voices. Then he asked zæn t̥si to have dinner with him. After dinner, Blo ring said he had been thinking about a small problem between him and zæn t̥si, and he wanted to ask the pine trees to solve the problem. zæn t̥si thought this was fair and agreed. They then went outside.

"Who should take the gold statue, zæn t̥si or Blo ring? Tell me, pine trees," Blo ring shouted sincerely.

"Blo ring, take it," came the reply from the distant pine trees.

zæn t̥si was unconvinced and so indignant that he set fire to the forest, killing Blo ring's mother. Blo ring went to collect her corpse, carried it near the water mill, and propped it up to look as if she was milling. Then he called zæn t̥si again. Blo ring shouted several times to his mother, "Mother, I asked you to mill, did you hear me?" He then threw a *dʒv̥ zdoŋ zgæ ʁæx*⁵⁷ at her, knocking over the corpse.

"I have killed my mother. All I can do now is sell her flesh tomorrow," he said, hanging his head.

Blo ring took the corpse and set it outside a local king's home. Then he went inside to ask for something to

⁵⁶ Told by Bsod nams (b.1929).

⁵⁷ *dʒv̥ zdoŋ zgæ ʁæx* is a large pestle used to smash shelled walnuts. The walnut flesh is smashed into small pieces, mixed into *rtsam pa* dough, and eaten.

eat. The king had many dogs roaming about. When he left the king's house, Blo ring saw that the dogs had eaten his mother, leaving nothing but bones. He wailed sadly and demanded gold, pearls, and livestock in compensation. On the way home he passed by zæn t̥si's home with much new treasure and livestock.

"Where did you get all this?" asked zæn t̥si.

"I sold my mother's flesh," Blo ring said proudly.

zæn t̥si asked where he sold it, thinking that if he killed his own mother he would also get rich. He then killed his mother and went to sell her flesh at the king's home. The king nearly beat him to death when he announced that he was selling his mother's flesh. He returned home angrily and burnt Blo ring's house down.

"I'm going to sell the earth that remains from my house," said Blo ring the following day. On the way to sell the earth, he caught two butterflies and put them in a leather bag with the burned earth. When he reached another local king's home, he told some children playing there not to open the leather bag, or his treasure would escape. He then went inside the king's home and asked for something to eat. Unable to contain their curiosity, the children opened the sack and the two butterflies flew away.

Blo ring returned a bit later and found that his 'treasures' were not in the bag. He told the king that his treasure had turned to earth, cried, and asked for payment and thus got butter, cheese, silk, and livestock. He went home, noisily driving his newly acquired livestock past zæn t̥si's house.

"Where did you get all this?" zæn t̥si asked Blo ring from a window of his house.

"I need to thank you for burning my house down! I sold the earth from my burnt house and got all these," said Blo ring.

zæn t̥si asked how and where he had sold the earth and then burnt his own house down. He then visited the

same king that Blo ring had visited the day before, and that king also nearly beat him to death.

zæn tʃi returned and bellowed at Blo ring, "I'll kill you, you liar! You kept the gold statue. I killed my mother and burnt my house because of you!" He was so angry he could hardly speak.

Dividing Housework⁵⁸

Long ago a needle, a turnip, an earth clod, an earthenware jar, and some butter lived together. One day they divided the housework. The needle said, "I'll sweep the floor," and fell into a crack in the floor.

The turnip said, "I'll go feed the cows," and was eaten by the cows.

The earth clod said, "I'll fetch water," and turned to mud.

The earthenware jar said, "I'll go atop the cabinet and be the king," fell, and shattered.

The butter said, "I'll make a fire" and melted.

The story is finished.

The Helpless Nomad⁵⁹

Long ago a nomad traveled, making pilgrimages here and there. Once he traveled to an agricultural place and stayed in the home of a farmer who spoke Tibetan poorly. The farmer cooked green soybeans⁶⁰ for dinner. The nomad did

⁵⁸ Told by Wang Yong (b.1978).

⁵⁹ Told by 'Brug skyid (b. 1944).

⁶⁰ Green soybeans that are almost ripe and very green are a favorite dish. The green outer shell and a thin inner white shell are peeled and then the soft bean is eaten.

not know how to eat the soybeans and was too embarrassed to ask. All he could do was imitate the farmer. The only light in the room was from a feeble butter lamp. In such dim light, the nomad thought the farmer was touching the soybeans to his nose and then throwing them away. The traveler wiped the beans on his nose one by one and then threw them away.

"Dear friend, are you full now?" asked the farmer sincerely.

"No, but my nose aches!" shouted the nomad resentfully.

The poor farmer had no idea what the nomad was talking about and looked at him innocently. They did not talk for a while and then the farmer finally said, "*Grogs po lags. Khyed do nub gang la nyal. Khang gcig dang po la nyal nag sha za khrag thung yod. Gnyis pa la nyal na gnam du rdib. Gsum pa la nyal na ro khang yin.* I don't know where you want to sleep. If you sleep in the first room, there is a flesh-eating bloodsucker there. In the second-room, the sky might fall down, and corpses are stored in the third room."

Hearing the farmer's description of the three rooms, the nomad could hardly believe his ears. He thought that the flesh-eating bloodsucker's room sounded less dangerous than the falling sky and corpses. Besides, he thought, he had his sword to protect himself.

He dared not close his eyes when he went to his room, afraid that the flesh-eating bloodsucker would appear. Suddenly, the nomad heard a small creature moving in the room. Thinking it was a flesh-eating bloodsucker, he took out his sword and slashed in the air, killing the farmer's cat. Terrified, he cried out, "I killed one flesh-eating blood sucker, but I'm not sure if there are more."

"There are many, many more," murmured the half-asleep farmer.

The nomad stayed up the whole night without shutting his eyes once.⁶¹

The Hunter and his Wife⁶²

A hunter had two sacred dogs and a wife, who eventually fell in love with a giant and planned to kill the hunter.

One day the wife asked the hunter to go hunting but prevented him from taking his dogs. The giant waited in the forest, caught the hunter, and said he wanted to eat him. The hunter said he needed to give final instructions⁶³ to his parents, climbed up a tree, and called his dogs to come save him. The two dogs then came and killed the giant.

The hunter was very angry with his wife and chopped her in two with his sword. He fed one dog one piece and fed the second dog the other half.

Do lo Divides a *Mdzo*⁶⁴

Do lo lived on the shadowy side of the Dadu River and shared a *mdzo* with a family that lived on the sunny side of the valley. Almost every household had one or two *mdzo* to plow and transport goods. *Mdzo* were taken to a high

⁶¹ 'Flesh-eating, bloodsucker meant 'flea' for the farmer. "If you sleep in the second room, the sky will fall down," meant that the roof leaked. "The third room is where corpses are stored." *Ro* 'corpse' in A mdo Tibetan is identical in pronunciation to the Lavrung for 'granary'.

⁶² Told by Sgrol las (b.1927).

⁶³ People leave instructions before they die, including what should be done with their corpse and what they want their family to do in the future.

⁶⁴ Told by Zhangs skyong (b. 1958).

mountain pasture where there was sufficient water and fodder, where they remained until it was time to plow. The *mdzo* were visited every six months to see if they were still there.

Twice every year, Do lo went to the mountain to get the *mdzo* before returning to the village to plow. Then he took the *mdzo* to the *zən pɑ rɛ* Family with whom he shared it. The *zən pɑ rɛ* Family still lives in Siyuewu today and still tells this story. Do lo's house was very far from theirs – he needed to cross the river and climb up the slope to the other house in order to take the *mdzo* to them.

Do lo eventually grew tired of taking the *mdzo* across the river and up the slope over and over again. One day, he took his sword and went to the other family. He asked them where the *mdzo* was, checking if they had brought it from the mountain. They told Do lo that the *mdzo* was still on the mountain and he decided to go and get it without telling the *zən pɑ rɛ* family why he wanted it, even though it was not yet time to plow. The other family did not bother to ask, thinking that Do lo, as usual, was up to something inexplicable.

The mountain was high and the sun was scorching above Do lo's head as he climbed up. When he saw the *mdzo*, he took a deep breath, took out his sword, lifted the sword high above his head behind the *mdzo*, and then swiftly brought the sword down, slicing the *mdzo* in two. The two halves were exactly the same, except for the tail, and for one white spot on one side of the forehead of the black *mdzo*. Even Do lo was astonished at his own swordsmanship.

He slung the left side of the *mdzo* over his shoulder and left the right side on the mountain. When he reached the *zən pɑ rɛ* Family home he stood outside and called, "It was so hard for both man and beast to cross the river to my home and then come back to your home. To end this suffering, I divided the *mdzo* in two and took my portion.

Your half is still on the mountain, please go get it. The poor *mdzo* would thank me for making his life easier if he could, and you should thank me too!"

The family had no idea what had happened until they saw the half-carcass slung over Do lo's shoulder as he turned to leave. They didn't know whether to thank or scold him, as he happily disappeared into the distance.

Do lo the Hunter⁶⁵

Do lo hunted in the mountains as usual. It rained constantly and he couldn't catch anything. Many times when he was about to get his prey it evaded him. To make matters worse, he had no food and was famished. He became angry at everything he encountered – he even got angry at the trees and bit them. He bit one tree so hard that one of his teeth came out. In fact, he didn't even know that his tooth had fallen out; he thought it was just a piece of wood and spat it out. He was surprised when he saw the tooth and used one of his huge fingers to touch the tender gum where the tooth had fallen out, and then yelped in pain.

As Do lo walked home in a depressed mood, he saw his family's goats grazing near the path. He ran to the goats, grabbed one in his huge left hand, and ripped it in two.

He got used to killing his own goats when he came back from hunting without any prey and the more goats he killed the better he felt. One time he killed three goats and carried two of them on his back with his right hand, dragging the third goat with his left hand. He looked like a *væcær ŋi* walking home with his food. He was almost two meters tall and hair grew up and down his arms and legs, and all over his face.

⁶⁵ Told by Khen Iha sgron (b. 1985).

He thought that when villagers saw him bringing something with him, they would think he had killed a wild animal, and would be suitably impressed. But the villagers knew that he had killed his own goats, not wild animals, even though he returned very proudly. He sometimes gave goat meat to the villagers and told them it was the flesh of this or that wild animal. Even though the villagers knew what it was, they played along with Do lo in order to get the meat.

He killed almost twenty goats – almost half his family's herd. One day when his wife complained about this, Do lo told her to speak to the wild game, not to him. He said that if she could get the game to kill themselves, he wouldn't need to kill the goats.

The villager leader asked him to stop hunting because of all the bad karma he was accumulating, and to herd goats and help his wife in the fields. Do lo responded that, with his strong physique, he was born to hunt. He said that his only enemies were animals who might be stronger than him.

He started drinking as the days passed, and bit his wife and children when he returned from hunting without any meat. Villagers thought he was crazy and therefore shunned him. Everyone thought he and his family were stupid and no one wanted to talk to them. Do lo never realized this – only his wife and child understood. His wife often asked him to act like a normal person and not do things that made villagers think he was an idiot. His response was that he was acting like a normal person and doing what he was supposed to. He got angrier and asked her, "What makes you think I'm abnormal?" then bit her and almost killed her.

A Wild Boar Attacks⁶⁶

I was working in my family's potato field pulling weeds. The entire field had been dug up and all the potatoes had been half-eaten by a disgusting wild pig. The sun was hidden behind a thick cloud. My neighbor, Tshe lo, was also working in his field and called out, "My potatoes were eaten and I don't feel like working in my field. What about your field?" he asked.

"Mine is like yours. What can we do about this pig?" I replied.

Just then, the trees near the field shook and I heard strange sounds. I took my knife out of its sheath in my faded old Tibetan robe. The sound came nearer, and my heartbeat got faster and louder.

Suddenly, a black bristly wild pig appeared among the dense trees. It was so fat that its eyes were invisible. Tshe lo and I were like two trees – we couldn't move.

The pig charged. For a second I was too afraid to run, but then I turned and bolted. The brutish pig chased me like it hadn't eaten for a century. Just when the pig had almost caught up, a tree appeared in front of me. I quickly jumped and grabbed hold of a branch, but the wild pig still tried to catch me. My feet were hanging down and I pulled them up whenever the pig jumped at me. I was holding a knife, but had totally forgotten it. Tshe lo was standing far away. He could see me from where he stood, but dared not approach and help.

After about half an hour, the pig became tired and left. I was just like a fruit hanging from the tree; I couldn't move or speak for a while. I only remembered that I had a knife when I was back on the ground.

⁶⁶ This true close-call story was told by Bkra shes don grub (b.1940). He was eleven years old and shaking with fear when these events happened.

I asked Tshe lo why he didn't come help me, but he was even more frightened than I, and couldn't even remember what had just happened.

Conclusion

Prior to the early twenty-first century, people loved to tell stories at night during dinner and at small gatherings, but this has now changed, due to TVs, radios, MP3 players, CDs, VCDs, and DVDs that now play a significant role in villagers' daily lives. Almost all villagers over the age of seventy know many folktales, but there is no audience, as new things are considered more interesting. Electronic stories are more easily visualized. Elders no longer want to tell stories, perhaps because they have lost confidence, are tired of telling them, or have forgotten them.

PART THREE: OTHER ORAL TRADITIONS

k^hε də Riddles in Lavrung

Riddles are told in Lavrung while herding on the mountains, building houses, when several women weave a black yak hair tent, when having dinner with grandparents who are asked to tell riddles by their grandchildren, and when neighboring families rest after harvesting together. Children are curious about riddles and enjoy guessing the answers. Those who know riddles are willing to tell them when asked.

If the riddle is not guessed correctly, the guesser must chant *ma Ni*. For each incorrect answer, they must chant the six-syllable mantra *oM ma Ni pad+me h+UM* ten times, and may only then ask for the next riddle. Many children dislike chanting *ma Ni* and do not want to wait for more riddles. However, they must chant *ma Ni* if they want to hear more riddles. In this way numerous *ma Ni* are chanted just by guessing riddles. Locals believe that deceased people consume *ma Ni* as food on their long journey from this world to Heaven or Hell.

Riddle One.

Lavrung: *gə dʒε əm t^hçaxə, nə læd loŋ pa fsod*

Translation: It can be held in one hand and fills a valley
when released.

Answer: A gun.

Riddle Two.

Lavrung: *gə dʒε əm t^hçaxə nə læd jəm fsod*

Translation: It can be held in one hand and fills a house
when released.

Answer: A butter lamp.

Riddle Three.

Lavrung: *vla ma .ɪa pru kə dʒε nε vu vi*

Translation: A monk dances in a cave.

Answer: A tongue.

Riddle Four.

Lavrung: *γdə ŋgu p^had p^hoxə*

Translation: The river that goes over a mountain.

Answer: *tɕ^hæ mda*, a U-shaped metal straw used to drink barley liquor from a jar.

Riddle Five.

Lavrung: *sny sny χəŋ vde næ dʒɛ spi mid*

Translation: It is constantly seen but cannot be touched.

Answer: The sky.

Riddle Six.

Lavrung: *zgər lə ræ tə snə go əçə var mid χəzj ra*

Translation: The bent one who travels day and night.

Answer: A river.

Riddle Seven.

Lavrung: *rəza la p^hə t^hɕa*

Translation: A *rtsam pa* ball in the wall around the field.

Answer: *χə zor*, a small bearded animal that is similar to a mouse, normally lives in fields, and eats grass and grain.

Riddle Eight.

Lavrung: *sɛ la çəm rədəm*

Translation: A long metal stick in the bushes.

Answer: A snake.

Riddle Nine.

Lavrung: *je so səre mid næ p^hΛjə γdu c^hɛ o mə zæyə*

Translation: Nothing is longer, but it is not tall enough to touch a pig's belly.

Answer: A road.

Riddle Ten.

Lavrung: *ku mədə zə vədə*

Translation: What has four horns but no head?

Answer: Baskets, made of a local shrub, have four sticks that are taller than the basket itself.

Riddle Eleven.

Lavrung: *jə? gav mid yə dod sʃu*

Translation: What has no hands and no head but can dig holes?

Answer: Raindrops.

Riddle Twelve.

Lavrung: *p^hərəm tə yd^hə ko xazə kə ħəʃi, naxə tə yd^hə yə vu zəm*

Translation: The white one goes over the river and the river carries the black one away.

Answer: Sheep cross the river and their scat floats away with the river.

Riddle Thirteen.

Lavrung: *p^had ræ t^ha vəla ma zæ o və*

Translation: A monk climbs up a mountain.

Answer: Fire spreads on a mountain.

Riddle Fourteen.

Lavrung: *mə le zæ yə je jə ləŋax tə vəyər, ləŋax təyə æ mə ti jə t^hsə gi tə gi zæ kor mə səzɛ zæ zu ?*

Translation: On her back, a beautiful slender woman carries her baby, who has its mother's coat and long hair.

Answer: Corn.

Riddles are based on everyday life, however, they are rarely asked today. Knowledge of these riddles will vanish in the near future.

Sngags Secret Chants

Sngags 'secret chants' are recited in Tibetan in Siyuewu Village to treat knife cuts, insect bites, bruises, swollen fingers, and other common ailments. Almost every common complaint has a curative chant.

Secret chants should be taught to a relative the chanter respects. The teacher's chant becomes ineffective once the chant is taught to another person.

The few people who know secret chants have taught them to only a few others. I received some secret chants in Tibetan from my mother's aunt. A village monk also knows secret chants and has written them in Tibetan. I asked him to teach me. He refused at first, but later agreed when I expressed concern about the chants vanishing.

The following account is my experience of being healed by a secret chant:

"Mother! My finger is swollen! Come help me!" I cried from my bed early one morning. Mother was cooking breakfast. She came to my room, looked at my finger closely, and left as if nothing was wrong.

"Yesterday, you must have played in the sacred spring while you were herding sheep," Mother shouted as she returned to the room where I lay. She held a bowl of water, murmured something rhythmically for about a minute, blew on my swollen finger, and then poured the water from the bowl on my finger. I was confused and asked what she had chanted, but she silently left.

The swelling in my finger subsided that afternoon. Again, I asked Mother what she had chanted. She said she would tell me when I grew up. Now, nearly eleven years have passed and she still has not told me.

Chants can be learned by both men and women in their thirties. The shortest chants are three words; the longest

are only two short sentences.

One person may know many chants that cure different illnesses. Furthermore, different people may use the same chant to cure different illnesses.

Lavrung Work Songs

Four work songs are sung in vocables. Elders I asked about work songs could not contextualize them. Some thought they might be in Lavrung, but no one I talked to had ever given serious consideration to the issue. Uncle Rig gnas suggested that the songs sound Tibetan and may once have been sung by Siyewu villagers' Tibetan ancestors, but over time the pronunciation changed until the songs became unintelligible.

All other songs that villagers sing are in A mdo Tibetan or Chinese. Some people do not know the meaning of the songs but still sing them. They learn Tibetan songs after hearing them from their nomad friends and villagers who speak Tibetan. Communist propaganda and many pop songs are sung in Chinese.

Work songs are sung when threshing, breaking earth clods, when yoking *mdzo*, plowing fields, and when hoeing fields.

Clod-breaking songs require at least ten people to synchronously beat clods with *peḷə tsə* 'mallets' while singing. People may hit each other with mallets if the song is sung incorrectly. There are two clod-breaking songs. One is sung for small, easily broken clods and the second is for large, dense clods. Villagers stand in a line and move through the field following its contours breaking clods.

These songs and related labor occur on the day of plowing. All villagers divide the work on that day. For instance, two or three men plow with *mdzo*. To sow barley, seeds are scattered and then a man leads an *mdzo* with a cord through its nose while a second man steers the plow. A third

man is necessary when sowing potatoes, beans, or corn. He follows the man plowing and sows the crops. Five to ten people break the clods after a field is plowed. The more people at work, the more quickly the field is plowed and sowed.

The lyrics of these work songs are primarily vocables that create a rhythm facilitating the work. The rhythm signals when to raise the mallet and bring it down on the clods. Every home has seven to thirteen *peʒə tsə*.

The song for small, easily broken clods consists of two repeated lines of vocables:

lɛ ʃo zgo mdzæ ʒi vo je.
zgo mdzæ ʒi vo jo.
lɛ ʃo zgo mdzæ ʒi vo je.
zgo mdzæ ʒi vo jo.

It has high volume, a narrow dynamic range, a wide pitch range, and a slow, simple, regular rhythm. It has a soft, warm, smooth texture and is sung antiphonally, in call-and-response style.

The second-clod breaking song consists of two repeated syllables:

o væ, o væ...

It is sung very slowly, as villagers concentrate on breaking large earth clods in unison. This song's features are almost the same as the first clod-breaking song but with a wider volume range.

Sometimes a person leads these two songs and other workers repeat what they say, call-and-response. The song leader must be confident and have a loud voice. Both men and women sing and work together. Alternatively, the line of clod breakers may be divided with the first group singing the first sentence and the other repeating. The first group then

sings the next sentence and the other group repeats.

A song is also sung on plowing day when people cultivate the fields by hand using hoes. Such work and the accompanying song may be performed if there are many female helpers, in which case they are asked to turn the soil with *xətsəm*.⁶⁷ Also, when there is only one *mdzo* to plow and there are sufficient people, the fields are turned over by hand using *xətsəm*. Fields are turned by hand if they are small, sloping, and irregularly shaped, preventing *mdzo* from plowing them. Both men and women may join the group. The vocables of this hoeing song are:

hɔ zɑ, hɔ zɑ, hɔ hɔ. hɔ zɑ, hɔ zɑ, hɔ hɔ.

and are sung by all the cultivators in unison. Compared to the two clod-breaking songs, it has a harder texture. It has a wide dynamic range and a fast, regular rhythm.

Although work songs only have two words or one to two repeated lines, the songs have melodies that challenge inexperienced singers. These songs have wide dynamic and pitch ranges and fast regular rhythms.

Work songs are sung only while working. Elders say it is improper to sing them while not working, but do not know why.

⁶⁷ The *xətsəm* is used to loosen the soil and is made locally from a tree branch and a sharp piece of metal on the head of the handle. It resembles both a hoe and a mattock (Figure Forty-two).

PART FOUR: FIGURATIVE SPEECH

Introduction

I interviewed over a hundred villagers in researching figurative speech. Most remembered the same elements of figurative speech that are commonly used in daily life and may be in Lavrung, A mdo Tibetan, or Sichuan Chinese dialect. Some villagers speak A mdo Tibetan poorly and a few speak colloquial Sichuan Chinese. Many proverbs are spoken in all three languages.

I had difficulty explaining the meaning of 'figurative speech' during interviews with my consultants, who thought formal oratory contained figurative speech, but not daily conversation. My consultants did not really understand after I made several attempts to explain it, so I asked them to tell me a part of their life story, hoping these narratives would contain examples of figurative speech. However, few such stories used figurative speech, which is mostly employed in daily interaction, rather than during formal speech acts.

There are many metaphors in Lavrung, although both my consultants and I initially thought differently. Villagers know and use metaphors in daily interactions. After over sixty interviews on the topic, I concluded that monks provided the most figurative speech in A mdo Tibetan; middle-aged women provided figurative speech about death, menstruation, and sexual intercourse in Lavrung; and villagers who had received formal education used metaphors in Sichuan Chinese.

Metaphors and proverbs are not used in formal contexts, except during *gyod*.⁶⁸ Certain villagers are renowned for their ability to carry out conflict meditation and their ability to reach *gyod* settlements. Both Chinese and

⁶⁸ Negotiation to settle a conflict, for example, when a husband has left his wife and children for another woman. The wife's family may then call for a *gyod* to negotiate a solution.

Tibetan formal literary proverbs are commonly used among monks and students when enjoying themselves.

Proverbs

Proverbs in Lavrung

Proverb 1.

ne p^hod sov sp^hæ li.

Literally: Cut off your ears to make a patch on your bottom.

Figuratively: To do something unnecessary and stupid; to do something unhelpful.

Example:⁶⁹ "You used your jacket to wrap up the walnuts that your uncle gave you yesterday, right, Lha mo?" Mother shouted from the living room.

"Yes, Mother," said Lha mo.

"That's just like *ne p^hod sov sp^hæ li.* Now your jacket is colored with walnut stains," Mother said.

Proverb 2.

p^ho y^tç^hod p^ho je me ŋam, k^he y^tç^hod k^he je me ŋam.

Literally: There should be no pain when pigs bite pigs or dogs bite dogs.

Figuratively: Arguments between friends or relatives should not be taken to heart.

Example: "You should apologize first because you are her brother. Your sister is young and doesn't know as much as you. It is said *p^ho y^tç^hod p^ho je me ŋam, k^he y^tç^hod k^he je me ŋam,*" Rdo rje's mother said to him.

⁶⁹ The names in the examples are actual villagers' names, but the relationships and events are fictitious.

Proverb 3.

fu tce me dzed stce ge snam ce.

Literally: A mouse tries to pull a barley ear through a place a mouse cannot pass.

Figuratively: Trying to fit somewhere where there is no space, or, more metaphorically, trying to do the impossible.

Example (1): G.yu mtsho and her family were holding a religious ritual at home G.yu mtsho's ten-year-old son tried to sit near her even though the house was already packed with people. She whispered to him, "Dear son, don't *fu tce me dzed stce ge snam ce*. Go out and play with your playmates."

Example (2): Byangs skyid went to the field to loosen the soil between her family's barley seedlings. On the way, she met Mthun skyid, a neighbor who was also going to work in the field. The sun was scorching as if burning the earth. "You should take off your shoes when you work in the field so that you don't press the earth you've loosened," Byangs skyid instructed Mthun skyid.

"I know I should, but it is so hot. Being barefoot is like *fu tce me dzed stce ge snam ce*. It's really impossible," Mthun skyid said impatiently.

Proverb 4.

sk^he ro je co me bu ræd na, ^yne je mo^y me ^yme na.

Literally: A waist separates an ant's abdomen from its thorax; a pika's eyes do not close.

Figuratively: Give yourself a way out when planning to do something, and always consider the consequences.

Example: "You aren't my teacher anymore! You can never teach me again!" cried Blo bzang when his math teacher scolded him because of his carelessness.

"Don't say such silly things. *sk^he ro je co me bu ræd na, ^yne je mo^y me ^yme na* is what you should think about," said the teacher.

Proverb 5.

ʒnæ li ye ʔdzo tsʰid.

Literally: Earthworms worry that earth will run out.

Figuratively: To worry about something too much or to be stingy.

Example: "Can you give me a piece of your wool? I just need a little to tie up this stick," Tshe ring said to a friend.

"No, I don't think I have enough. I need it to knit a sweater," said the friend and walked away.

"*ʒnæ li ye ʔdzo tsʰid!*" shouted Tshe ring.

Proverb 6.

nem kʰɔ ʔge mɛ o læd zɛ zɛ je ʔu tʰa næ to, ʔbo ge næ mʈo te zɛ zɛ je rə ʈa tʰa o to.

Literally: Stones tossed to the sky will fall on your face, blowing into a jar returns a face full of air.

Figuratively: Every action has consequences. This is also said to someone who obviously lies and is used to scold someone for doing something stupid.

Example: Bkra shes met an old friend, a heavy drinker, for the first time in over a decade. Bkra shes's friend had fallen from a roof and broken his nose while drunk. Bkra shes shook his head and said, "I've already told you; *nem kʰɔ ʔge mɛ o læd zɛ zɛ je ʔu tʰa næ to, ʔbo ge næ mʈo te zɛ zɛ je rə ʈa tʰa o to.* Drinking too much brings only pain."

Proverb 7.

ʔva ʂtsem ku ʈə zu væd me qa di mou.

Literally: It's not necessarily the crow that stole your *rtsam pa* bag.

Figuratively: Something or someone that is not necessarily good may not always be wrong.

Example: Dpa' lo was a thief, but had not stolen anything for some time. When he visited a neighbor who had lost an

earring, the neighbor yelled, "Give me the earring back, you thief!

"Dpa' lo did not know what to say, because he had once been a thief, and just said "*ʻva ʻtsem ku ŋə zu væd me qa di mou,*" and left.

Two days later, the neighbor learned that her daughter had taken her earring.

Proverb 8.

və jaŋ zə bɛ lɛ kʰcoŋ yu vjæ ɣzo ɣzo.

Literally: Like a sparrow keeping company with garudas.

Figuratively: Said to someone who likes to be with beautiful, wealthy, and important people in order to exploit them.

Example: "Mother, I want to go to town with cousin Lha sgron. She is beautiful and many people will be in town today," shouted Lha mo from her room.

"Ha-ha! Why do you always keep company with beautiful people? I think I have a nice proverb for you. *və jaŋ zə bɛ lɛ kʰcoŋ yu vjæ ɣzo ɣzo,*" her mother said.

Proverb 9.

goɣ mə ʃʰəd ta ɣvi

Literally: Unable to carry a basket and yet wants to carry a water mill.

Figuratively: Said to someone who attempts something beyond their ability.

Example: "That family has only two members, but they are going to build a new house this year. That's just like *goɣ mə ʃʰəd ta ɣvi,*" some female villagers gossiped while resting in the field.

Proverb 10.

nə ɾjɛ ʋmə pʰəjæχ, o tɕə ra bro pʰəru

Literally: Sitting extinguishes the fire; standing terrifies the horse.

Figuratively: Describes a difficult situation for which there

appears to be no solution. Similar to the English, "Damned if you do, damned if you don't."

Example: "I heard Blo bzang and Sgrol las had a fight last night. Today Sgrol las's family came to ask Sgrol las to divorce Blo bzang," whispered G.yu sgron to her neighbor.

"Again? Why does that couple always fight? I just don't understand. I think both Blo bzang's and Sgrol las' families are in a difficult situation, like *nə rje smə p^həjæχ, o tɕə ra bro p^həru,*" responded G.yu sgron's neighbor.

Proverb 11.

sə χru zæ sə lou mjæm ʂəʔ^hε mə χvid

Literally: Damp wood and dried wood cannot be bound together.

Figuratively: Good and bad things cannot co-exist. This is used to suggest that something is impossible or unacceptable.

Example: "As a saying goes, *sə χru zæ sə lou mjæm ʂəʔ^hε mə χvid*. You can't get healthy by smoking," yelled a mother to her son as he lit up a cigarette.

Proverb 12.

s^hæ bo s^hmu s^hmu nax tə fsɕε

Literally: A swinging leaf takes children's time.

Figuratively: Said to someone wasting time on trivial things.

Example: Some villagers were playing cards in Don grub's yard while others were watching.

"Don grub, we're going to the monastery. Watching them play cards is like *s^hæ bo s^hmu s^hmu nax tə fsɕε,*" said Don grub's friend as he stood to leave.

Proverb 13.

χυ mə smə noγ ηdæ və ηdæ və.

Literally: Try to get the brain when the head is not well

cooked.

Figuratively: Said to someone who is impatient and short-tempered.

Example: Lha mtsho saw her neighbor Zhes lha checking if her potatoes were ready to be harvested.

"I don't think you'll have any luck, Zhes lha. It's only the middle of April. What you're doing is *χυ mə smə noy ηdæ və ηdæ və*," said Lha mtsho to Zhes lha.

Proverb 14.

zi mə ʃ^hə kæ dzər mjəd ə k^han

Literally: Giving away children like giving away *kæ tçər*.⁷⁰

Figuratively: Implies a good relationship between two people – they are willing to share whatever they have with one another.

Example: "I had twelve children and my aunt's family did not have any, so I gave two of my children to her like *zi mə ʃ^hə kæ dzər mjəd ə k^han*," said an old woman to her granddaughter.

Proverb 15.

sgon vzon ba yə ytə χcəl tə ηk^hor va ηdçε

Literally: A diligent man can make (a living) in the middle of the ocean.

Figuratively: Anything is possible with hard work.

Example: "Do you know Lo lo's son-in-law? He is extremely hard working. I believe that he is the type of person *sgon vzon ba yə ytə χcəl tə ηk^hor va ηdçε*," exclaimed Zhes lha to her daughter.

Proverb 16.

yəd x^hæd əbro yzdə

Literally: Watering the horse while fetching water.

⁷⁰ A local pickled radish leaf used as seasoning and often exchanged among households.

Figuratively: Doing two things simultaneously. Normally said to someone who works hard, and is effective and punctual.

Example: "I told you over a thousand times – take a sickle with you when you herd the cows so you can bring fodder with you when you come home. You have never once listened to my suggestion, but you really should *γdə x^hæd əbro γzdə* and not waste so much time," scolded Mtsho mo's mother.

Proverb 17.

γdə ra vde k^hə mo səræv o dzə dzə spi dzæn, dəju ra vde k^hə mo po x^hæ spi dzæn

Literally: Remember to pull the halter when approaching a river; remember to flee when you see a ghost.

Figuratively: Said when a person realizes their predicament too late.

Example: At Blo bzang's house-warming party, Bkra shes prepared to leave early because he did not want to drink too much.

"As a saying goes, *γdə ra vde k^hə mo səræv o dzə dzə spi dzæn, dəju ra vde k^hə mo po x^hæ spi dzæn*. You shouldn't have come – now I don't think you will be able to escape," murmured his friend who sat next to him.

Proverb 18.

vəju γə ηə snəd vəcær ŋi γə snəd

Literally: *vəcær ŋi* imitate humans.

Figuratively: Said to someone who does not think for himself but only follows other people's ideas or imitates what they do.⁷¹

⁷¹ People believe that wild men imitate what humans do.

Example: "It is said *vəju yə ŋə snəd vəcær ŋi yə snəd*. I saw Blo dpal's family start plowing two or three hours after your family began," said Chos go to Blo ring.

Proverb 19.

rgə me næ to sje tə p^hərao ŋo, zdəm o χəlæ sje tə mts^hu ŋo

Literally: Stones are from rocky mountains; clouds are from the ocean.

Figuratively: You must always remember your origins.

Example: "My son, even though you are now an official worker, you should always remember *rgə me næ to sje tə p^hərao ŋo, zdəm o χəlæ sje tə mts^hu ŋo*," said G.yu rgyal to Rgyal mtsho.

Proverb 20.

lu ke s^hto mə p^hrəm, s^hə kə s^hto mə mnəy

Literally: Milk does not seem white and blood does not seem red.

Figuratively: Said when someone does not care what or who is good or bad, and suggests they lack the ability to distinguish good from evil.

Example: "To him, *lu ke s^hto mə p^hrəm, s^hə kə s^hto mə mnəy*. I have helped him many times in the past, but yesterday he would not even lend me a cooking pot," Bkra shes don grub complained.

Proverb 21.

ybo yə ybo mu sjoʋ.

Literally: The earthenware vat cannot bless itself.

Figuratively: We are both in the same situation, and you cannot help me.

Example: "You're going to town tomorrow, aren't you? Can you bring me some things, as I am not able to go?" Bai Yun begged her friend.

"I'd love to help but *ybo yə ybo mu sjoʋ*. I have so many things to buy and I am worried that I won't be

able to get everything done in a day. Moreover I don't know if I can find a bus or a car," her friend said.

Proverb 22.

pəro jə mjəd jəvə ska jəvə mə fso, p^haoγ mjəd roz ska roz mə fso.

Literally: Like a horse, you do not know when to sleep. Like a pig you do not know when to get up.

Figuratively: Describes someone who is lazy and always lies, sleeps, or sits when others work.

Example: "Get up, it's almost ten! *pəro jə mjəd jəvə ska jəvə mə fso, p^haoγ mjəd roz ska roz mə fso!*" the mother yelled into her son's room.

Proverb 23.

k^ha va ka dzə mo γlɛ smo rjəd

Literally: To track the rabbit after the snow has melted.

Figuratively: Said when someone constantly delays doing something.

Example: "That damned boar has eaten one third of my corn. I should have harvested my corn when you did," said Lhamo to her neighbor G.yu mtsho.

"I warned you earlier, but you said it didn't matter. Now don't *k^ha va ka dzə mo γlɛ smo rjəd*," G.yu mtsho replied.

Proverb 24.

χzor j γə ənm k^ha vdɛ nə ənm k^ha γə χzor mu vdɛ

Literally: Pikas see the sky but the sky does not see them.

Figuratively: Said to someone who flatters the rich and powerful.

Example: "As the saying goes *χzor j γə ənm k^ha vdɛ nə ənm k^ha γə χzor mu vdɛ*. You don't need to do this," Bkra shes said to Rgyal mtsho, who was preparing to give all his walnuts to the visiting township leader.

Proverb 25.

bæ koyə na moy tə mə fs^hoy, pə na mao tə jə ɲtəu

Literally: Day breaks as usual when there is no rooster; bulls can plow fields when there is no *mdzo*.

Figuratively: Said when getting angry with someone who has been of much help in the past but no longer offers help.

Example: Cho Idan refused Zla ba lha mo's request to help cut wood.

"*bæ koyə na moy tə mə fs^hoy, pə na mao tə jə ɲtəu*. We can cut our wood by ourselves, we don't need him," said Zla ba lha mo's husband angrily.

Proverb 26.

χji yə na vs^ht dar ɲo mnoy k^hε s^hcər

Literally: Frightened by a tiger, scared by red cows.

Figuratively: Insults someone who is considered cowardly.

Example: "I really thought that stick was a snake. I've become so jittery since I was chased by a snake last summer," said 'Brug mtsho.

"It is said *χji yə na vs^ht dar ɲo mnoy k^hε s^hcər*," giggled Khen lha sgron.

Proverbs in Sichuan Chinese

Proverb 27.

意思不懂抄脑壳 *yi si be dong cao lao ko*⁷²

Literally: You understand nothing and only copy others' ideas.

Figuratively: Someone who agrees with someone even though they do not understand what is being said.

Example: "Wang La had a child and it is said that the father

⁷² These proverbs are written as spoken using Chinese characters. The *pinyin* approximates the pronunciation of Sichuan Chinese dialect, though tones are not indicated.

is not going to live with her," said Lo lo, her mother.

"Don't say such *yi si be dong cao lao ko* things! I met him and he said he is just going to do migrant labor to make money for the family," Lo lo's mother responded angrily.

Proverb 28.

老熊看石板 *lao xiong kan si ban*

Literally: A bear watches stone slabs.

Figuratively: Said about someone who knows nothing but pretends otherwise.

Example: "Father can you help me study Tibetan for my test?"

"Asking me is *lao xiong kan si ban*," the father replied.

Proverb 29.

拍马屁 *pei ma pi*

Literally: Pat a horse's bottom.

Figuratively: Flattering someone to gain benefit.

Example: "He is a person who always likes to *pei ma pi*. If he met President Hu, he would flatter him till his tongue fell off."

Proverb 30.

老鸦不打枪吃肉，猫儿不砍柴烤火 *mer be kan cai kao huo, la wa be da qiang ci ru*

Literally: Cats do not chop wood but get warm from the fire, crows do not fire guns but eat meat.

Figuratively: Said to someone who does no work but wants to enjoy the fruits of others' labor.

Example: "You are like *mer be kan cai kao huo, la wa be da qiang ci ru*. Yesterday, you didn't come help me when I asked you to carry wood, but today you come to my

home," joked Blo yig to his friend.

Proverb 31.

两天打鱼，三天晒网 *niang tian da yu, san tian sai wang*

Literally: Spend two days fishing and three days drying the net.

Figuratively: An accident or set-back has occurred. It may also be used to describe a person who is often confused.

Example: "You have been cutting wood for five days. Don't do things like *niang tian da yu, san tian sai wang*. Tomorrow we must go and finish cutting the wood or villagers will ridicule us," a wife scolded her husband.

Proverb 32.

老鼠坐板板还是洋洋得意 *lao su zuo ban ban hai si yang yang dei yi*

Literally: A mouse sits on a mousetrap in high spirits.

Figuratively: Said to someone who does not realize the bad situation he is in and still enjoys himself.

Example: "I heard that you also were among the accused in the recent theft, but you are *lao su zuo ban ban hai si yang yang dei yi*. I think you should do something before there are consequences," Byangs mo warned her brother.

Proverb 33.

好马不吃路边草 *hao ma be ci lu bian cao*

Literally: A good horse does not eat roadside grass.

Figuratively: Being self-important and disdainful of others. It is used when a girl is pursued by a boy she does not like or thinks is unsuitable for her because of his appearance or social status.

Example: Don't worry, Mother! *Hao ma be ci lu bian cao*, I do not want to be with a man like him.

Proverb 34.

吃地我要盐巴比你吃的糌粑还多 *wo ci di yan ba bi ni ci di zan ba hai yao duo*

Literally: I have eaten more salt than you have *rtsam pa*.

Figuratively: Saying that I have had much more experience than you by comparing *rtsam pa*, the staple food, to salt, a condiment.

Example: "Be careful of thieves when you pass through town on your way to the hospital," warned Don grub to Gnas rgyal.

"Wo ci di yan ba bi ni ci di zan ba hai yao duo.

Don't think that only you have been to school and I know nothing. I've been to town several times before," Gnas rgyal replied to his son.

Proverb 35.

全家死绝 *quan jia si jue*

Literally: The whole family dies!

Figuratively: A common oath used by youths twenty and younger when trying to convince someone, or when something surprising happens.

Example: "I did not lie to you. Believe me – your mother is looking for you. ***Quan jia si jue.***"

Proverb 36.

你走你的阳光道，我走我的独木桥 *ni zou ni di yang guang dao, wo zou wo di du mu qiao*

Literally: You go on your shining road and I'll go on my single-plank bridge.

Figuratively: Said by someone who is very angry with a person they have a close relationship with – a best friend, family members, or boyfriend or girlfriend.

Example: "It is said: ***ni zou ni di yang guang dao, wo zou wo di du mu qiao.*** Don't ever talk to your selfish friend

again."

Proverb 37.

山不转水转，人不转路转 *san be zuan sui zuan, ren be zuan lu zuan*

Literally: Mountains do not turn but the river turns, people do not turn but the road turns.

Figuratively: Said to someone who is proud of his own progress and also suggests that the speaker is convincing himself that they will also be successful later.

Example: "There is a proverb in Chinese that best expresses my feelings now, *san be zuan sui zuan, ren be zuan lu zuan!* That is so true," thought Skal Idan when he finally received a good hand after ten rounds of losing at cards.

Proverb 38.

纸包不住火 *zi bao bu zu huo*

Literally: Paper cannot hold fire.

Figuratively: Warning that a lie will sooner or later be discovered and is also said when doing something wrong but trying to hide the mistake.

Example: "Sister, I'm going to tell Mother about the bird we killed. I'm afraid Mtsho mo will tell her if we don't. *Zi bao bu zu huo.*"

Proverb 39.

这山望着那山高 *zei san wang zuo la san gao*

Literally: Thinking that the other mountain is taller than the one you are on.

Figuratively: Said to someone who is being selfish and greedy even though they already have enough.

Example: "Father, I want to buy a nicer gun, like Bkra shes's," said Chos go.

"It's like *zei san wang zuo la san gao.* You know

nothing. Your gun is actually much nicer than his," said Rig gnas.

Proverb 40.

兔子的尾巴长不长 *tu zi di wei ba zang be cang*

Literally: Rabbits' tails never grow longer.

Figuratively: Said to someone who makes no progress, and lacks the desire to improve.

Example: "Beloved daughter, *tu zi di wei ba zang be cang*. You were born with no beauty, taking after your mother. Nice clothes cannot dress you up."

Proverb 41.

般起石头砸自己的脚 *ban qi si tou za zi ji di jo*

Literally: To lift a stone and drop it on your foot.

Figuratively: Describes someone who tries to do something that hurts themselves. It also insults someone by suggesting they are stupid and do nothing correctly.

Example: "I heard that you fell from your roof, how interesting! You aren't even familiar with your own house. Don't ever do things like *ban qi si tou za zi ji di jo*."

Proverb 42.

响当半桶水叮 *ban tong sui ding dang xiang*

Literally: A bucket half-full of water makes much noise.

Figuratively: Describes people who have limited knowledge, have questionable moral character, are short-tempered, and shout at people, or who like to show off.

Example: "There was a guy on TV last night who truly proved the theory of *ban tong sui ding dang xiang*. His father was a famous singer and taught him music. Every time he was taught a song, he would sing that song in front of his friends to show off."

Proverb 43.

人心隔肚皮 *ren xin gei du pi*

Literally: Bellies conceal hearts.

Figuratively: We can never truly know what other people's intentions and beliefs are.

Example: "Don't trust anyone in the county town when you attend school. They might steal from you or hurt you.

Remember: *ren xin gei du pi*," Lha mo warned her son.

Proverb 44.

瞎子照电筒，没得用 *xia zi zao dian tong, me de yong*

Literally: It is useless for a blind person to turn on a flashlight.

Figuratively: Said to someone who does something useless.

Example: Nor bu was trying to pull out a huge stone from a field near his house. Tshe ring nyi ma, his sister-in-law, said, "Nor po,⁷³ *xia zi zao dian tong, me de yong*. Go call some helpers."

Proverb 45.

脚踏两只船 *jo ta niang zi cuan*

Literally: Stepping on two boats.

Figuratively: Said to someone who is promiscuous and has two boyfriends or two girlfriends at the same time.

Example: "People always say about her, *jo ta niang zi chuan*. Maybe she is beautiful and many men like to be around her."

Proverb 46.

山中无老虎，猴子称霸王 *san zong wu lao fu, hou zi cen ba wang*

Literally: The monkey is the master when tigers are not in the forest.

⁷³ Nor bu's nickname.

Figuratively: Said to someone who tries to bully or control others though they lack the power or right.

Example: "Mother, today Sister 'Brug mo bullied me when you were away," said Rig 'dzin, 'Brug mo's little brother innocently.

"Take is easy, boy. It's like *san zong wu lao fu, hou zi cen ba wang*," responded her mother.

Proverb 47.

火上加油 *huo sang jia you*

Literally: Adding oil to the fire.

Figuratively: To make a situation worse.

Example: "Your mother is angry at you now. Don't *huo sang jia you* and ask her for money," Grandmother whispered to her grandson.

A mdo Tibetan Proverbs

Proverb 48.

གཞན་ལ་ཁ་ཏེ་ཤར་ར་ར།།

རང་ལ་མགོ་འཁོར་གྱི་ལུ་ལུ།།

Literally: Teaching others with confidence, but knowing nothing themselves.

Figuratively: Said to someone who has a high sense of self-importance but actually knows nothing. It is also given as counsel.

Example: "Stop teaching me, my son! You are really behaving like *gzhan la kha ta shar ra ra, rang la mgo 'khor gyi lu lu*," said the mother when her son was trying to teach her how to make a *ñz ʒɛ* (cake).

Proverb 49.

ཁ་བདེན་གུན་གྱི་དཔོན་ཡིན།།

ལག་བདེ་ན་ཀུན་གྱི་གཡོག་སོ་ཡིན།།

Literally: Having the gift of gab destines one to be a leader, but being skillful destines one to be a servant.

Figuratively: Used to insult or make jokes to those with poor communication skills but good at physical labor. It may be used as an insult.

Example: Pad ma is very talkative but has no other skills, while his neighbor, Nor rgyam, is an honest carpenter of few words. Pad ma always says, "***Kha bde na kun kyi dpon po yin, lag bde na kun kyi gyog po yin,***" when he sees Nor rgyam.

Proverb 50.

ཁ་བཤད་ན་མ་མཁའི་འབྲུག།

དོན་རྩ་བ་རི་བོང་ར།།

Literally: Speaking like a dragon in the sky, but the main idea is like a rabbit's horn.

Figuratively: Said to someone who talks too much but never gets to the point or lacks a point – like the non-existent rabbit horn.

Example: "You've been talking for almost the entire morning, but I don't think I get you at all. A saying goes, ***kha bshad nam mkhi'i 'brug, don rtsa ba ri bong rwa,***" said Gzhan phan to his wife.

Proverb 51.

ཁྱོད་མཐོ་མཐོ་ཨ་བྲ་དོ་ཐོག་མཐོ།།

ང་མཐོ་མཐོ་མེང་གེ་ཁྱི་ཐོག་མཐོ།།

Literally: You, pika, are elevated only when standing on a rock; I, lion, am elevated when on my throne.

Figuratively: Used when someone benefits by relying on something or someone else.

Example: "***Khyod mtho mtho A bra rdo thog mtho, nga mtho mtho seng ge khri thog mtho!*** You are nothing

without the villagers' support and trust. Now you have embezzled the village's money but still deny it," said a villager, shaking his fist at the villager leader.

Proverb 52.

ཐད་ཏུ་བཞག་ན་སྒྲིན་པ་མཁས།།

ལག་ཏུ་བཞག་ན་མ་སེམས་སྐྱག།

Literally: When you consider the work, it seems anyone can do it, but when you undertake the work, even your mother is disappointed.

Figuratively: Said to someone who boasts, but is actually useless.

Example: "My beloved children, never do things like *thad du bzhag na glen pa mkhas, lag tu bzhag na ma sems sdug*. Always think before you speak."

Proverb 53.

རང་སེམས་དག་ན་དག་ནི་ཡིན།།

སྐྱབ་མཚོད་རྟེན་དཀར་ན་དཀར་ནི་ཡིན།།

Literally: It's pure when your heart is pure, it's white when the stupa is white.

Figuratively: Used to emphasize the purity and fairness of a heart. Said to someone when they do nothing wrong but are distrusted.

Example: "No matter what other people think about you, the most important thing is that you yourself know you are not the thief. As a saying goes *rang sems dag na dag ni yin, rgyab mchod rten dkar na dkar ni yin*."

Proverb 54.

རང་མགོ་ལྷ་ལེན་ལེན།།

གཞན་མགོ་ལྷ་སྐྱོན་སྐྱོན།།

Literally: (Denying responsibility like) taking off one's hat and (blaming others like) putting the hat on another's

head.

Figuratively: Said to accuse someone who blames others for their own misdeeds.

Example: "Shes rabs is a bad guy who does nothing good. He does things *rang mgo zhwa len len, gzhan mgo zhwa skon skon*. When he stole a motorcycle from another village, he slandered one of his friends, but eventually the truth came out."

Proverb 55.

འབག་མགོ་མར་ལ་གཡར་ན།།

འཇིགས་ངམ་ཚུར་ལ་སྒྲོན།།

Literally: To lend your own frightening mask to someone and then be frightened when you see it.

Figuratively: Being too kind or generous to others may have negative consequences for you.

Example: "You are with that heartless friend of yours again. He will keep the money you lent him, as always. My son, I don't want to repeat this again, but *'bag mgo phar la g.yar na, 'jigs rngam tshur la ston,*" 'Brug skyid warned her son.

Proverb 56.

ཉི་མར་ཡོད་བ་སྲོད།།

མི་ཚེར་ཡོད་བ་ཚེ་སྒོད།།

Literally: What the sun has is morning, what a human has is youth.

Figuratively: Used to warn people to not waste time and to do things as early as possible rather than postponing them. Normally elders say it to youths.

Example: "Don't go to the county town so often and spend time with your friends. It is said *nyi mar yod pa snga dro, mi tsher yod pa tshe stod*. You will regret it when you reach my age," Grandfather Tshe ldan gtor rjes said

to his nephew.

Proverb 57.

ཇ་ལིའི་ཁ་མ་རྗེས།།

སྤང་བོའི་ཁྱུག་མ་མ་སྒོལ།།

Literally: Don't ever make children angry; don't ever open a beggar's bag.

Figuratively: Lavrung culture holds that upsetting children is as offensive as destroying a temple. This proverb is used to caution against playing jokes on children.

Example: "It is said *A li'i kha ma rtses, sprang po'i khug ma ma slog*. You always play jokes on children and make them cry and then you must deal with them. Such trouble!"

Proverb 58.

ངོ་ཕྱིས་ཕྱིས་མང་ན་ཕྱི་སྤགས་འབྱུང།།

བྱ་གཅིས་ཤེད་ཆེན་དག་ཅུ་འགྱུར།།

Literally: If you wash your face too many times, it will peel. If you dote on your son too much, he will grieve you.

Figuratively: Said to mothers who spoil their children.

Example: "Mother, I told you not to allow Brother to go to bars every night, but you... Now he has not returned even though one month has passed. It is said *ngo phyis phyis mang na phyi lpags 'bud, bu gces shed che na dgra ru 'gyur*," Lha sgron said worriedly.

Proverb 59.

ཚ་བོ་ངན་པ་ཞང་གི་དགལ།།

རུ་མུར་དུ་སྤྱིས་ན་མིག་གི་དགལ།།

Literally: The uncle suffers when a nephew is bad; the eye suffers when a horn is ingrown.

Figuratively: Uncles⁷⁴ locally have a special responsibility for nephews and nieces. The ingrown horn is a metaphor for the nephew's bad behavior, the eye a metaphor for the uncle's suffering.

Example: "If you see Uncle Nor bu and his nephew, then you may understand the saying *tsha bo ngan pa zhang gi dgra, rwa thur du skyes na mig gi dgra*. Nor bu's nephew is a noted thief in the village and all the villagers visit Nor bu and scold him for his nephew's bad behavior."

Proverb 60.

གང་མ་ཁ་སྐྱོ་བུད་ན་བརྒྱ་སྐྱོ།
བརྒྱ་སྐྱོ་བུད་ན་རྒྱལ་ཁམས།།

Literally: Once spoken from the mouth, words travel to a hundred doors, then to the world.

Figuratively: Once words are spoken, they spread uncontrollably.

Example: "Bother Dpal mgon, remember last time we took a hammer from some Chinese men who were building a bridge in our village? You didn't tell anyone, did you?" whispered Rdo rje tshe ring.

"Yeah, you know my wife asked several times about where the hammer was from so I only told her," Dpal mgon said, looking worriedly into Rdo rje's eyes.

"Oh, no! *Gtam kha sgo bud na brgya sgo, brgya sgo bud na rgyal khams!*" yelled Dpal mgon at Rdo rje.

⁷⁴ The Tibetan term *zhang*, an abbreviation of *a zhang* 'maternal uncle' is used in this proverb. However, Siyuewu villagers do not distinguish between maternal and paternal uncles, unlike many other Tibetans, and thus we have translated this term as 'uncle'. Uncles are locally important because in matrilineal households uncles, rather than fathers, are the main authority figure.

Proverb 61.

ལ་ནས་རྒྱང་ལ་བཤད་ན།།

དོན་དམ་རུམ་ལ་བརྩལ་གྱི།།

Literally: I send my words on the wind while you keep yours in your robe pouch.

Figuratively: Said to someone who does not share their private affairs with others, even if others have shared with them, suggesting that they do not trust others.

Example: "Why don't you ever talk about yourself, even with your friends? *Kha nas rlung la bshad na, don dam rum la bcug gi*. You really should trust us."

Proverb 62.

མི་ཁས་དམན་ཐོག་ལ་བཤད་འདོད།།

ཤིང་སྐྱར་བོ་ཐོག་ལ་གཡུག་འདོད།།

Literally: You want to insult those who are vulnerable and you want to discard bent wood.

Figuratively: People tend to look down on reserved people, while holding themselves in high regard.

Example: "See that old widow in her tattered, faded robe in the hut near the water mill? None of the younger villagers speak to her – they won't have anything to do with her. It is said *mi khas dman thog la bshad 'dod, shing sgur bo thog la g.yug 'dod* and in this case it couldn't be truer."

Proverb 63.

མིས་བཤད་བཤད་གཏམ་མིན།།

བྱས་བརྒྱུམ་བརྒྱུམ་འབྲུ་མིན།།

Literally: Not everything a person says makes sense, and not all a bird eats is insects.

Figuratively: We cannot believe everything we hear and we should question things that we take for granted. This proverb warns people against being cheated by or lied

to by others.

Example: "Mother, Mthun skyid said that there was a lot of interesting stuff for sale in Uncle Dbang byugs's shop yesterday. Shall we go down the mountain and have a look?" asked Mtsho bde innocently.

"No. We must finish harvesting by tomorrow while the weather is still good. Moreover, I think Mthun skyid just made that up. *Mis bshad bshad gtam min, byas brgum brgum 'bu min,*" said the mother.

Proverb 64.

ཤ་མེད་ན་ཤ་མོ་ཤ་རེད།

རོག་མེད་ན་ཇོ་མོ་རོགས།

Literally: Mushrooms are meat when you don't have meat; a nun is a girlfriend when you don't have a girlfriend.

Figuratively: This proverb admonishes against wasting goods and warns of the consequences of using up all one's resources.

Example: "Uncle bought too many snacks for me from the county town. I don't want the potato chips so I'm just going to throw them away," said G.yu sgron to her mother.

"Just keep them. You'll want them later. *Sha med la sha mo sha red, rog med na jo mo rogs red,*" her mother said angrily.

Proverb 65.

དགོང་ལྷ་རྩོ་མི་བདེན་དེ་རི་བོང་གི་ཡུལ།

དགོང་ཕྱི་རྩོ་མི་བདེན་དེ་དྲེད་མོང་གི་ཕྱི་རྩིང་།

Literally: A morning changes like a rabbit's upper lip; an evening changes like a brown bear's ankles.

Figuratively: Morning passes quickly and evening passes quickly. Morning is as changeable as a rabbit's lips, which are always twitching and the evening may be as

short as a bear's non-existent ankles.

Example: "It's so true, *dgong snga dro mi bden de ri bong gi ya kha, dgong phyi dro mi bden de dred mong gi phyi rting*. You promised to take me on the summer picnic, but now you say there's no time," said Bsod nams's seven-year-old son.

Proverb 66.

ངན་པ་འདྲེས་མི་འདོད།།

ཀྱང་བོ་བྱིས་མི་འཆའ།།

Literally: Not even a ghost wants bad things; not even a dog wants shriveled food.

Figuratively: Said when trying to give or trying to refuse something bad or useless. It is impolite to say this but it may be said jokingly.

Example: "Here are old shoes I can no longer wear. Maybe they are suitable for you," said the elder brother, handing his old shoes to his younger brother.

"Ngan pa 'dres mi 'dod, kyong bo khyis mi 'cha'.

Why do I need to wear your worn out shoes?" cried his younger brother.

Proverb 67.

མི་འདུག་མཐོན་པོ་སོང་ན་དགའ།།

མི་གསོན་ནད་པ་ཤི་ན་དགའ།།

Literally: It's better for guests who must go to leave earlier; it's better for ill people who cannot escape death to die quickly.

Figuratively: Said when someone is going somewhere but is not ready, or when something is certainly going to happen but someone is trying to avoid it.

Example: "Thanks for having me, but here we say *mi 'dug mgron po song na dga', mi gson nad pa shi na dga'*. Much housework is waiting for me so I must go,"

insisted Aunt Lha mtsho to her niece, who was trying to convince Aunt Lha mtsho to stay longer.

Proverb 68.

གཅིག་བདེན་ན་ཀུན་བདེན།

གཅིག་ཇུན་ན་ཀུན་ཇུན།

Literally: If one thing proves to be true, then it's all true; if one proves to be false, then it's all lies.

Figuratively: People need to consider all the evidence carefully and not jump to conclusions.

Example: "***Gcig bden na kun bden, gcig rdzun na kun rdzun!*** I don't really believe that Tshe dbang rig 'dzin lied and said they had finished building the dam when they hadn't. He's the most trustworthy man in the village."

Proverb 69.

མཐོ་རི་གསུམ་རྩེ་ལ་འབྱེད་ན་ལྷོད།

དམའ་རྒྱ་མཚོ་གཏིང་དུ་འཕེན་ན་འཕོངས།

Literally: Go to the height of three mountains; go to the depths of the deepest ocean.

Figuratively: Said as an oath when one is doubted.

Example: "I told you that 'Brug mtsho's child is not mine. Why don't you trust me? ***Mtho ri gsum rtse la 'khyer na khyer, dma' rgya mtsho gting du 'phen na 'phongs!*** I'm not giving anything to a child who has no blood relationship with me," said Blo bzang bkra shes during negotiations.

Proverb 70.

གདམ་མང་བཤད་ཤེས་ན་མགོ་བོ་འཁོར།

ཆང་མང་འབྲུང་ཤེས་ན་མཚེན་པ་ན།

Literally: Your head becomes confused when you talk too much; your liver becomes painful when you drink too

much alcohol.

Figuratively: Said when someone talks to much, drinks too much, or both.

Example: "Father I told you, too much liquor leads only to death. Why won't you listen to me? *Gtam mang bshad shes na mgo bo 'khor, chang mang 'thung shes na mchin pa na* is what *you* say when I talk too much. Now I am saying it back to you. I hope you will drink less," the daughter said, her eyes brimming with tears.

Proverb 71.

ཉལ་ཁ་ཚུ་མ་འཐུང་།།

འཆི་ཁ་མནའ་མ་ཟ།།

Literally: Don't drink water when you go to bed; don't break your oath when you are dying.

Figuratively: Drinking before bed causes bed-wetting and breaking an oath as death approaches means one will suffer in the after-life.

Example: "You are leaving the village tomorrow, maybe forever, to another village. *Nyal kha chu ma 'thung, 'chi kha mna' ma za*. Don't forget that you made an oath to provide us with running water," said a villager to Rgyal mchog, who had joined the army. As a soldier he might have the ability to help villagers, but he might also never return.

Proverb 72.

མྱེན་ར་རོ་ཚམ་ཞིག་མེད་ས་ནས།།

ཐོག་ཚོར་བ་ཚམ་ཞིག་འཕེན་དོན་ཅི།།

Literally: Without even a goat-sized cloud, how could there be thunder?

Figuratively: Said when someone is accusing someone without evidence.

Example: "Don't be afraid if you didn't steal the yaks. As a

common saying goes, *sprun ra ro tsam zhig med sa nas, thog zor ba tsam zhig 'phen don ci*. No one can escape the truth."

Proverb 73.

ལུང་བ་ལྷུང་ཅུང་རྩ་ལྷུང་འཇོ་མཁས།།

སྐད་ཆ་ཉུང་ཅུང་མགོ་ལྷུང་ཚང་།།

Literally: There is sufficient grass and water even in a small valley; there is clarity in even a few words.

Figuratively: Something may be good quality regardless of the quantity.

Example: "I really love this proverb, *lung ba chung rung rtswa chu 'dzoms, skad cha nyung rung mgo sang tshang*. Even though people think I'm short and ugly, I run fast and am a great cook," said 'Jigs med when villagers gossiped about his appearance.

Proverb 74.

མི་ལྷུང་ལྷུང་གི་ལྷུང་མགོ་མི་གཞོན།།

དོ་ལྷུང་ལྷུང་གི་ལྷུང་མགོ་མི་གཞོན།།

Literally: Small (i.e., powerless) people cannot convince others; small stones cannot drive a tent peg.

Figuratively: Used in a situation when something or someone is incapable, and also expresses negative ideas about people in low social positions.

Example: "Bkra lo is a candidate in tomorrow's election for village leader. He had three wives in the past twenty years and all of them have died from strange illnesses. He is treated like an evil spirit, even though he is a really great guy."

"I don't want Bkra lo to be our leader. That would be so unlucky! He cannot be the leader. It is said, *mi chung chung gi sde mgo mi gnon, rdo chung chung gi phur mgo mi gnon!*" replied a village woman.

Proverb 75.

བསམ་པ་བཟང་སྟེ་སྦྱོད་པ་ངན།།

ལག་པ་རིང་སྟེ་སྤ་རུང་ལྷང་།།

Literally: Bad behavior, even though you have good motives;
long arms but short sleeves.

Figuratively: Said to someone who is not necessarily bad but who often meets mishaps and has persistent bad luck. People sometimes also say it to refer to their own embarrassing situation.

Example: "Today I suffered such embarrassment! I really proved that *bsam pa bzang ste spyod pa ngan, lag pa ring ste phu rung thung*. I walked in front of a group of villagers sitting and chatting quietly. Then I heard someone call out and looked back. Guess what? I was dragging my sash behind me and kicking up a cloud of dust in front of them. I blushed and was momentarily speechless. Then I whispered thanks and fled."

Proverb 76.

མི་སྦྱོན་ཅན་དེ་ལྷོ།།

རྟ་རྒྱལ་ཅན་དེ་འཕག།།

Literally: Flawed people easily get annoyed; a horse twitches constantly when excited.

Figuratively: Said to someone who is petty and easily angered.

Example: "I'm not having dinner tonight. You didn't let me visit my friend Nyi ma lha mo," said the daughter to her mother, covering herself with a blanket.

"My dear, I'm sorry but you mustn't be so stubborn. *Mi skyon can de khro, rta rgyag can de 'phag*. You don't want to be so petty do you?" the mother said.

Proverb 77.

མི་ངན་ལ་ཚད་ཚོད།།

གང་ལ་ལོ་ཚོད།

Literally: Bad people will be judged; rotten meat will stink.

Figuratively: Used to insult those who do not conduct themselves with dignity. Such people are compared to the smell of rotten meat.

Example: "As a proverb says, *mi ngan la tshad tshod, sha ngan la bro tshod*. The old fellow in that movie did not realize how cruel and violent he was until the end, when he found himself on the wrong end of a policeman's gun."

Proverb 78.

དབྱར་དུས་མཐོ་བའི་སྤང་ཆར།

དགུན་དུས་མཐོ་བའི་ཉི་མ།

Literally: Rain is expected in summer; the sun is expected in winter.

Figuratively: Rain is needed in summer to help people in the same way that sun is needed in winter.

Example: "Go out and enjoy the sunshine. People say, *dbyar dus mkho ba'i sbrang char, dgun dus mkho ba'i nyi ma*," the old man said to his wife.

Proverb 79.

མི་སྲུང་ལྔ་བསམ་བ་སྲུང་ལྔ།

མཚོ་སྲུང་ལྔ་ར་ཚོ་དྲུག་ལྔ།

Literally: Thirty people have thirty minds, but thirty *mdzo* have sixty horns.

Figuratively: Everyone has their own idea.

Example: "Last night Grandmother said, *mi sum cu bsam pa sum cu, mdzo sum cu rwa co sum cu* when I disagreed that youths need to stay at home rather than attend school. What does she mean?" the daughter asked her father.

"Ha-ha! It means that you can have your own

opinion about anything, like thirty people have thirty minds and thirty *mdzo* have sixty horns," explained the father.

Proverb 80.

ལྷ་མཚོ་ལྷུང་དུ་བཞག།
མཚེ་མས་གོ་ལྷོང་མཉེད།།

Literally: Standing beside an ocean while moistening dried leather with your own saliva.

Figuratively: Said to those who are more determined than intelligent in undertaking a venture.

Example: "You have the hammer, so why use a stone to break the timber? It's really like, *rgya mtsho zur du bzhas, mche mas ko kyong mnyed.*"

Proverb 81.

ལྷུང་མ་ཡོང་གོང་གི་ལྷུང་རགས།།
ལྷུང་མ་ཡོང་གོང་གི་ལྷུང་རགས།།

Literally: (Build a) dam before a flood; (build a) windbreak before a gale.

Figuratively: Someone is well prepared for any coming challenges.

Example: "You need to repair the tent before the winter comes. It's said, *chu ma yong gong gi chu ra, rlung ma yong gong gi rlung rags.*"

Proverb 82.

བརྒྱུག་བརྒྱུག་ན་ཚག་འགྲོ།
འཐེན་འཐེན་ན་ཚད་འགྲོ།

Literally: Bending, it will break; pulling, it will sever.

Figuratively: Said when no solution to a problem is suitable – damned if you do, damned if you don't.

Example: "Will you go to the township tomorrow to see your sick friend? If so, please buy me a pair of shoes," said

Rin chen to Rgyal mtsho.

"Don't bother me! My wife insists on going but I don't want to. I don't know what to do. **Bkug bkug na chag 'gro, 'then 'then na chad 'gro,**" Rgyal mtsho yelled.

Proverb 83.

མི་ཆས་ན་ཡུལ་དྲན།།

བྱ་ཆས་ན་ཚང་དྲན།།

Literally: Old people miss their homes, old birds miss their nests.

Figuratively: Elders miss home like birds miss their nests.

Example: "It's so true that, **mi rgas na yul dran, bya rgas na tshang dran.** I've been away from home for almost five years and my homesickness deepens as I age," said an old man living in the county town.

Proverb 84.

རང་དབེ་རོགས་ལ་བཞག།

སྐྱ་ཆག་གཡག་ལ་བསྟེད།།

Literally: You expect your friends to follow your example, and put a broken saddle on a yak.

Figuratively: Said when someone tries to hurt others by forcing something on them against their will.

Example: Teachers often say that students should never **rang dpe rogs la bzhag, sga chag g.yag la bstad.** Everyone deserve fair treatment.

Proverb 85.

སྐྱ་ཐོད་དཀར་གྱི་ཚོན་དུ་འདྲེ་སྣ་ནག།

Literally: The ghost with the black nose in front of the deity with the white forehead.

Figuratively: Contrast makes something more distinct.

Example: "I was the only layman in the monastery during the

chanting yesterday. I was like *lha thod dkar kyi sngon du 'dre sna nag* in front of all the red monks."

Proverb 86.

ཨ་བླ་ལྗོན་ལྷན་སེང་གེ་ཡིན་པའི་སྣང་བ་འཆར།།

Literally: The pika feels like a lion when standing on a high rock.

Figuratively: Said to those who are proud of small accomplishments or otherwise arrogant.

Example: "It's like *A bra rdo thog bud na seng ge yin pa'i snang ba 'char*. Gnas bzang used to be a farmer like us, working in the fields from morning to night, but now he has an official job. I overheard him talking to his colleagues about how difficult it must be to be a farmer, as if he'd been a government worker all his life," a woman said while chatting with villagers in a courtyard.

Proverb 87.

ཤིང་གིས་ཤིང་བཀྲུགས་ན་ཀ་བ་དང་གཏུང་ར།།

མིས་མི་བཀྲུར་ན་དཔོན་པོ་དང་གཡོག་པོ།།

Literally: When wood supports wood, they become pillars and beams, and when humans flatter each other they become leaders and servants.

Figuratively: Said in response to flattery. The person being flattered says this proverb to indirectly refuse the praise.

Example: "I don't want to make people think that I am a brown nose, even though sometimes I have to praise my boss, because you know *shing gis shing bkyags na ka ba dang gdung rda, mis mi bkur na dpon po dang gyog po*," a township bureaucrat complained to his friend.

Proverb 88.

དཔུང་ཤེས་ན་གང་བྱུང་གོམས་རྒྱ་བསྐྱེད།།

བརྟག་ཤེས་ན་གང་མཐོང་ཆ་རྒྱས་ལོན།།

Literally: If you study something, it becomes your custom; if you notice something, it is merely an experience.

Figuratively: The two lines of this proverb mirror each other, and together emphasize that observing something carefully creates knowledge of how to do it well.

Example: "Look at your homework from yesterday! It is said, *dpyad shes na gang byung goms rgya bskyed, brtag shes na gang mthong cha rgyus lon*. Be more careful and pay more attention to your homework rather than finishing rapidly," the math teacher scolded Rig 'dzin nyi ma.

Proverb 89.

སངས་རྒྱས་གནམ་ལ་འཕུར་ཀྱང་དད་པ་མེད།།

སེམས་ཅན་རྒྱ་མ་བྱུད་ཀྱང་སྡིང་རྗེ་མེད།།

Literally: You don't worship when the Buddha is flying above your head; you do not show compassion when seeing living beings disembowel themselves.

Figuratively: Said to someone who appears to be good, but does not behave well at the appropriate time.

Example: "I thought you were compassionate, but you did not save the drowning cow in the river yesterday. *Sangs rgyas gnam la 'phur kyang dad pa med, sems can rgyu ma drud kyang snying rje med*," said G.yu sgron to her neighbor.

Proverb 90.

རྒྱལ་ཁ་ས་བྲག་ལ་གཏད་ན།།

རྟ་ར་མ་གཉིས་ལས་ར་མ་མཚོགས།།

Literally: If the race is held on a rock mountain, a goat will defeat a horse.

Figuratively: Context determines the outcome of every competition.

Example: "Yesterday you made me drink a lot of liquor at your home. Today it's my turn. As a saying says, *rgyugs sa brag la gtad na, rta ra ma gnyis las ra ma mgyogs*," Rigs gnas said to his guest.

Proverb 91.

མི་ངན་ཡུལ་གྱི་སྤེལ་གཏོར།།

ལྷ་ངན་ཡུལ་གྱི་བྲག་བཞིགས།།

Literally: Bad people destroy villages; bad deer destroy mountainsides.

Figuratively: Said to insult those who contribute nothing and only do harm.

Example: "We don't want to take this second-hand generator. It's dangerous! As the saying goes, *mi ngan yul gyi sde gtor, kla ngan yul gyi brag bshigs*. It may explode and hurt people," said the Siyewu villagers when the government gave them an old generator, while all the nearby villages were receiving new ones.

Proverb 92.

སྐྱེ་རེངས་ཁ་ལ་ཞེན་ཆགས་མེད།།

སྐྱེ་རེངས་ལམ་ལ་བྱི་བཞུས་མེད།།

Literally: Don't regret before dawn; don't look back on the road before dawn.

Figuratively: One shouldn't feel regret for something that has happened and cannot be changed.

Example: "Your score has already come out. Don't worry about it even though it's not great. *Skya rengs kha la zhen chags med, skya rengs lam la pyi bltas med*. You tried your best."

Proverb 93.

ཏྲ་རྒྱལ་རྒྱལ་གི་མ་མེས་ར།།

མགོ་བཅག་བཅག་གི་རྒྱས།།

Literally: If riding a horse cannot satisfy you, then falling and cracking your head will.

Figuratively: A warning to learn from one's mistakes and not be selfish and greedy.

Example: "You *rta rgyug rgyug gi ma rmas na, mgo bcag bcag gi rmas*. You really should learn something this time. You almost went blind from drinking! Next time you won't have such luck," Don po said to his friend.

Proverb 94.

ཚིག་གིས་ཚིག་ལ་བརྒྱབ།།

ཚིག་རྐང་ཚིག་གིས་བཅད།།

Literally: Words fight words and hurt each other.

Figuratively: A verbal argument should not be escalated into a physical fight.

Example: "It is said *tshig gis tshig la brgyab, tshig rkang tshig gis bcad*. You should have fought back with words, not physically. Moreover, you fought a woman!" laughed Wang Jun when Smon lam told him about his fight with Sgrol ma the day before.

Proverb 95.

ཤུ་བོའི་ཤ་དེ་ཟད་གྱི་ཡིན།།

འུ་གཉིས་བུ་ལྷན་འགོགས་རྒྱ་ཡིན།།

Literally: The venison will finish someday, but brothers are still brothers.

Figuratively: Used between people who have a good relationship to say that they cherish their relationship more than anything else.

Example: "I really could not stand it yesterday when you refused to lend me a hundred RMB," said G.yu rgyal to his neighbor, who said nothing and sat quietly.

"There is a saying *shwa bo'i sha de zad kyi yin, 'u gnyis bu spun 'grogs rgyu yin*, but I am no longer your

friend," continued G.yu rgyal, who then spat on the ground and left.⁷⁵

Proverb 96.

མགོ་ཐོག་གི་བུམ་པ།

ལྗེ་ཐོག་གི་བདུད་རྩི།

Literally: The vase on your head; the holy medicine on your tongue.

Figuratively: Said to someone close, such as children, lovers, or intimate friends.

Example: "The worn-out sheep robe is my mother's, *mgo thog gi bum pa*, *lce thog gi bdud rtsi*. Whenever I ask her to throw it away, she refuses, and tears fill her eyes."

Proverb 97.

མི་ཚེ་རིང་བོ་མི་ལ་ཡོད།

འགྲམ་པ་རིང་བོ་སྐྱུང་ལ་ཡོད།

Literally: Humans have long lives, wolves have long claws.

Figuratively: Said by someone bored with life to indicate that humans live a long time and therefore accumulate much sin.

Example: "I am eighty-seven now. As the proverb goes, *mi tshe ring bo mi la yod*, *'gram pa ring bo spyang la yod*. How much misfortune and wrong-doing I've accumulated in my life!" regretted an old man.

Proverb 98.

བཤད་ནི་མི་བདེན་བྱ་བ་བདེན།

རླུ་ནི་མི་བདེན་མཚེ་མ་བདེན།

Literally: Words cannot be believed unless action is taken; crying cannot be believed unless there are tears.

⁷⁵ Spitting is a common expression of anger or annoyance.

Figuratively: Evidence is required to understand a person's real feelings.

Example: "Mother, remember last time Father promised to give me a toy gun, but he still hasn't!" Nor bu yelled to his mother.

"I told you, *bshad ni mi bden bya ba bden, ngu ni mi bden mchi ma bden*. He's not buying it for you, I guess," Nor bu's mother said, glaring at her son.

Proverb 99.

གྲོད་ཀྱི་ནང་དུ་རྩུན་མི་བཤད།།

མིག་གི་ནང་དུ་རྩུལ་མི་འགོ།

Literally: If there were no lies in negotiations, there would be no dust in your eyes.

Figuratively: A warning against lying, especially in conflict mediation.

Example: "It's so true when people say *gyod kyi nang du rdzun mi bshad, mig gi nang du rdul mi 'gro*. Last time I heard a story from one of my friends who is a lawyer. He was fined 10,000 RMB for telling a small lie in a legal settlement."

Proverb 100.

མི་ཡི་རི་མོ་ནང་ན་ཡོད།།

སྟག་གི་རི་མོ་ཕྱི་ལ་ཡོད།།

Literally: Human beauty is inside; a tiger's beauty is outside.

Figuratively: Personality and motives are more important than appearances.

Example: "A great saying goes *mi yi ri mo nang na yod, stag gi ri mo phyi la yod*. Even though my daughter does not wear beautiful clothes and colorful decorations, I'm proud of her education and her social skills," said a villager defensively when his friend criticized his daughter for always wearing the same clothes.

Proverb 101.

ཉོད་རྒྱུན་གཉིས་དང་མ་ཐུག་པར།

ཁ་མཁས་ཅན་རེ་སྲུ་ཡང་ཡིན།།

རྒྱ་ཚགས་གཉིས་དང་མ་ཐུག་པར།

ཁ་ཡག་ཅན་རེ་སྲུ་ཡང་ཡིན།།

Literally: If there were no conflicts, there would be no good mediators; if there were no property and no poverty, there would be no flattery.

Figuratively: Because everything has two sides, positive and negative, we need not worry too much when something bad happens.

Example: "Don't worry, Father, it's said *gyod rkyen gnyis dang ma thug par, kha mkhas can re su yang yin; rgyu tshags gnyis dang ma thug par, kha yag can re su yang yin*. You lost your wallet, but maybe it took away your sickness or some other impending disasters," comforted his daughter.

Proverb 102.

མི་གཏམ་ངོ་ལ་བཤད་ན་ཤུལ་མེད།

རྟ་ལྷགས་འཕོང་ལ་བརྒྱབ་ན་རྗེས་མེད།

Literally: There will be no bad effect if you speak to someone face-to-face; there will be no bruises if you whip the horse's rump.

Figuratively: Talking to someone directly prevents gossip from spreading.

Example: "*Mi gtam ngo la bshad na shul med, rta lcags 'phong la brgyab na rjes med*. Mtsho bde came just an hour ago and said that you told her that I took her family's corn and stored it in my house. Why did you say that?" Sangs sgron yelled at Dbyangs dkar.

Proverb 103.

ག་ལེར་སོང་ན་འགྱེལ་དོན་མེད།།

མགོ་ལག་བས་བསྐྱོར་ན་ཨ་ན་མེད།།

Literally: Walking slowly avoids tripping, covering your head with your hands avoids pain.

Figuratively: Insults those who are inattentive or careless.

Example: "You fell in that hole again? Such carelessness. *Galer song na 'gyel don med, mgo lag pas bskyor na A na med,*" the mother shouted at her daughter.

Euphemisms and Metaphors

Death

æ nə sæd tsi

He departed.

æ nəŋən ʔa jət si

He went to Heaven.

æ yə də zidyə p^hæd na yə si

He departed from suffering.

æ xhəd tsi

He disappeared.

ʕa jətʂ

Heavenly one.

Menstruation

ŋænə vdʒə və si

My companion has come.

ηænə jə go vdzə və si

My cloth companion has come.

ʒəqæl tə və si

The dirt has come.

ka llo ra vxie vlm, ya xiad se si gri.

Radishes begin growing bigger and rounder on the upper part of the mountain while on the lower part of the mountain, *se si*⁷⁶ begin to fall. (The mountain is a metaphor for an adolescent woman: radishes suggest her breasts and *se si* her menses.)

Sexual Intercourse

æ ne næ χə dzə vədzə zə zdaz

She and he were friends once.

æ ne næ f^hæɪ rə zdɪr

She and he enjoyed themselves together.

Defecating and Urinating

ηæ χəjə t^ha ræ x^hæŋ rə zɔd

I need to go to a hole.

pə jæzə sti və voŋ rə rot

I need to go out.

Advice and Reprimands

mo γə jə nə vdaɾ ni

Literally: Keep your eyes open.

Figuratively: Be careful!

⁷⁶ A local wild red fruit.

æ væ sənivə gə rəla xə a ŋlæd

Literally: He takes everything in his nose.

Figuratively: He gets angry easily.

jo ŋkən ŋdʒən ni.

Literally: Take your hands off!

Figuratively: Do not steal.

ŋæno rəŋa ʃæχə rə ʃʰad.

Literally: My face is itchy.

Figuratively: Said when someone does something amusing that makes one laugh, or when one tries to make fun of another.

nəyʊn jə gavə k^həje rə x^hə ʃʰad ?

Literally: Do the soles of your feet itch?

Figuratively: Do you want to go somewhere or do something?

ŋæ k^hε mo γə p^hərəm kə tə sdon.

Literally: Don't show me the whites of your eyes.

Figuratively: Don't be angry with me; don't be unhappy with me.

nəm k^ha nə szi.

Literally: To look at the sky.

Figuratively: To be arrogant.

æ væ mə le kə goyə ræ rə ŋo.

Literally: She is a bent girl.

Figuratively: She works very hard.

x^hoy t^ha sk^hæd

Literally: Using a sword on a louse.

Figuratively: To do something that is excessive or unnecessary.

æ tə mə lɛ tə væ χəzə dəm na mGə lə ɣu.

Literally: She is like a stick stuck in the ground.

Figuratively: She does not work much.

joɣ t^ha χtəm nan ts^hə si

Literally: A stick hits the hand.

Figuratively: Said by a recipient to shame someone who gives grudgingly.

x^hə zæ rna pa mjæm sət^hɛ

Literally: Tying barley and weeds together.

Figuratively: Doing something stupid or useless.

p^hoɣ lmi

Literally: Pig tail.

Figuratively: Said about someone, especially a girl, who has short thin hair.

χnə moɣə

Literally: Pika eyes.

Figuratively: Said to someone who has very small eyes.

jaŋ ju χjə ɣɛ

Literally: Potato cake.⁷⁷

Figuratively: Describes someone who has a big, round, ugly face. Also used as a joke among friends.

ku jɛ

Literally: Light head.

Figuratively: Said to someone who emulates others and does nothing independently.

⁷⁷ Potato cakes made from sliced potatoes are a common food. The cake is thick and round, and is baked in embers.

Gə lɛ moy

Literally: Walnut eyes.

Figuratively: Said to someone with large eyes.

x^həzi jə t^ho rɕə

Literally: To wash the pot with soup.

Figuratively: To make something worse. Used to scold those who try to achieve something in an easy, though incorrect way.

t^ho c^hi nə jad spi

Literally: Paste you inside a pot bottom.

Figuratively: Said when someone gets angry.

nə gə ɣʃə o tɕ^had

Literally: Make air come out one's ears.

Figuratively: Describes the experience of being scolded.

nu ɣdzovə p^həja xə nə zəjen nə ηæ?

Literally: Have you been putting out a fire?

Figuratively: Said to someone who drinks much cold water.

mə nə to kə jɛ, mdzə? zə ηgo dəri.

Literally: It is going to rain, the dragon has started to roar.

Figuratively: Said to a child who is about to cry.

voy kə stin nə ηæ?

Literally: Are you making barley liquor?

Figuratively: Said to someone carrying water or who often carries water.

ɣtə zgæ læɣ

Literally: (Like a) stone on a riverbed.

Figuratively: This compares a stubborn person to an unmoving stone on a riverbed.

yəm sru mbə ʎyγə mə go ɕə

Literally: To criticize a family before crossing their threshold.

Figuratively: Describes a person who gossips excessively. They cannot wait to leave a home before starting to gossip about the family.

zdær gə k^hə lɛ vra ɕə vra ɕə.

Literally: Dog shit moves on a plate.

Figuratively: Used to insult someone who tries to do things but achieves nothing in the same way that dry dog shit rolls around on a plate.

ts^hæt yə se kə zə də rə məjət.

Literally: Like a goat chopping wood.

Figuratively: Describes someone who incompetently chops wood.

ɕzə vədax mjəd zə gon x^hi.

Literally: You are as busy as a mountain deity.

Figuratively: Describes someone who has much work to do and is constantly busy.

p^haoγ jə mjəd ɕsɛ fsəd x^hæ.

Literally: Like a pig rubbing against something.

Figuratively: Describes a restless person.

rə næ li.

Literally: Worm!

Figuratively: Said to someone who is physically weak or who tries to secretly do bad things.

noyə gə pə dza.

Literally: Maggots in the brain.

Figuratively: Describes a man who often has sex and has many children with many women, just like a fly that lays

eggs in many different houses.

ʔdzɛ ʂk^ho ləm sce ŋgz^ha.

Literally: Cold tea like melted butter.

Figuratively: Tasty. Cold tea is considered tastier than hot tea.

Cold tea is equated with melted butter, which is also considered delicious.

nu vɛ voy ɣpa ræ zdæ.

Literally: You are a wine jar.

Figuratively: Describes someone who likes to drink and can drink much.

ɛpə jæ vɛr.

Literally: Chicken feather.

Figuratively: Describes a very skinny person.

sə jar t^ha joy nɛ stin ni.

Literally: Put your finger on your heart.

Figuratively: Encourages someone to persist at something.

ɛmər ɣar p^hə ski slæ ɣə.

Literally: To miss your mouth with hot *rtsam pa*.

Figuratively: To fail when success is very near.

ɛəridəm nɛ mGə ʂɣu nə ŋæ?

Literally: Did you swallow a stick?

Figuratively: Describes a lazy person, especially when doing fieldwork that requires bending.

smæd k^hçi ɣlo? nɛ t^hod də ŋæ?

Literally: Is a conch growing under your bottom?

Figuratively: Said to someone who cannot sit still or sit quietly.

ybe t^ha snaŋ li mə rəje.

Literally: Peas cannot stay on a drum.

Figuratively: Describes something that is impossible to do.

Mani khya mkhar.

Literally: Itinerant beggars and monks hold a stick hung with colorful prayers beads or cloth while begging.

Figuratively: Describes a person who likes to wear much jewelry.

Animal Comparatives

yzə sjar se yu zj

Literally: A monkey's heart is set on a tree.

Figuratively: Said to someone who is fixated on something.

p^hao ka sŋəz sja ba ŋts^hər mo

Literally: Pigs only dream about shit.

Figuratively: Said to someone jokingly, suggesting that they have a narrow, shallow mind.

naxə xu ts^ha zo la jəvə

Literally: An angry cat sleeps in the storeroom.

Figuratively: Said to someone who is easily angered and who isolates themselves.

bə le ri s^thoy gə nu rzo

Literally: A bull stuck his horn into a stone wall.

Figuratively: Said to someone who is stubborn, suggesting that they are crude and wild.

x^hoy t^ha gru

Literally: Looking for a louse's tendon.

Figuratively: Lice are thought to lack tendons, thus this is said to someone who is overly curious.

yzə ymi

Literally: Monkey's wound.

Figuratively: Said when someone has a minor wound but thinks it is serious and shows it to others, in the same way monkeys are often thought to inspect themselves.

qa ti joyə.

Literally: Crow hands.

Figuratively: Said to someone with very dirty hands.

fcə lmi də o rə? və ts^həm

Literally: A mouse's tail is longer and thinner at the end.

Figuratively: Describes something that gets progressively worse, and also suggests that those who did something bad will eventually be found out.

dzə rid

Literally: Cicada.

Figuratively: Said to someone who talks too much, makes too much noise, or talks nonsensically.

p^hæ χə mɛ ʃə.

Literally: Like a sow.

Figuratively: Women who have had many children may jokingly refer to themselves as a *p^hæ χə mɛ* 'sow'.

yzə zə.

Literally: Monkey!

Figuratively: Describes a short-tempered person.

qa ʃə k^hjaɤ.

Literally: Magpie!

Figuratively: Describes a person who likes to dress up.

k^hə dvə do ʔd gə næ χp^hw si.

Literally: The old dog falls in its bed.

Figuratively: Describes an old person who lies in bed and cannot get up; death seems imminent.

k^hə dzæd.

Literally: Barking dog!

Figuratively: Describes those who make too much noise.

pəro yədu.

Literally: To have a horse's stomach.

Figuratively: To have a large appetite.

kəsbi joy skə kə kəsto.

Literally: Turtle's hands grow backward.

Figuratively: Scolds someone who was born lacking skill at something, or who easily forgets after being shown how to do something.

yda bəje zə.

Literally: Like a duck.

Figuratively: Describes a person who bathes often or who is obsessed with cleanliness.

yəzə mjəd cən tɕ^hɛ o də snən.

Literally: Don't be such a monkey.

Figuratively: Said by parents to boisterous children.

Figurative Speech in Villagers' Narratives

Example One: Sex and Menstruation

When I was about to finish analyzing the data I had collected over the winter, I realized I had not recorded anything related to sex and romance. I then decided to interview women who liked to joke about such topics; such things are only discussed among people of the same gender.

Bai Yun, Wang Ying, and Dga' skyid were enjoying the sunshine outside Bai Yun's house and were planning to go inside for afternoon tea⁷⁸ when I arrived. I was very lucky to catch them, as the three of them were known to often talk about sexual matters. I was a bit nervous and did not know how to begin. As we began drinking tea, I finally said,

"Could you tell me **something embarrassing?**"

The room immediately fell silent. They knew I was there to do interviews and this question astonished them. Such a topic is considered shameful, unworthy, and meaningless.

"You need that kind of thing? Such things are said sometimes between us but cannot be documented in your book. Maybe we can tell you something else instead," giggled Wang Ying, amused at me for making such a foolish suggestion.

"I really need it and I don't think that such things are unworthy. Just tell me, I beg you all!" I persisted and they eventually agreed. They all knew a riddle about penises and agreed to tell me. I switched on my recorder.

"It has existed since humans have existed in the world..." Wang Ying said, laughing, unable to finish her sentence.

Dga' skyid continued, "It has been useful and we are going to tell you a riddle about it... and..." Dga' skyid was then interrupted in the middle of her sentence by Wang Ying.

"It is very important for humans, even though it cannot feed our stomachs," she said.

"**Two beggars!** What you've been saying has all been recorded," scolded Bai Yun.

"It is *ru lu gnyis kyu gtan stans na, nag pos dom kyu*

⁷⁸ A meal between four and five o' clock in the afternoon is common.

shan thab can, rgang lag med de cad se langs, nam mkha la gzig It has two pills of *ru lu* as its base, wears a black bear skin like a monk's *shan thabs*,⁷⁹ stands without feet and hands, and points straight at the sky," explained Wang Ying.

"What else do you want to know?" Wang Ying asked with a loud laugh.

"How do we refer to **that thing that comes to us females?**" I asked more comfortably than before, as they were all now enjoying themselves.

"It is called **the cloth's companion** and also **vaginal blood**. Sometimes it is red and sometimes white. You can get a baby if you are old enough to have **your companion**," said Bai Yun. "**If you sleep with a boy**, the boy's little thing gets harder and the seed of babies goes in too fast sometimes and... sometime he tries hard till he sweats," laughed Wang Ying so hard that she almost could not sit properly.

The tea had become cold when we finished talking, and Bai Yun heated another kettle of tea for us.

pəm ba **something embarrassing**

When people talk about sex and romance, they refer to it as 'something embarrassing'. People of different genders and relatives do not normally talk about such things.

sberə mə ne **two beggars**

This is used to scold someone when unhappy, in disagreement, or a person who did something wrong. As used here, it meant Bai Yun was embarrassed by what Wang Ying and Dga' skyid were saying and she was scolding them.

⁷⁹ *Shan thabs* is the outer, lower part of a monk's garment that resembles a long skirt.

ŋən jə mə ʃɛ jə və spi tə **that thing that comes to us females**

This euphemism refers to menstruation.

gə vdzə **the cloth's companion**

A term for menstruation commonly used by older women who lacked menstrual pads and whose clothes were thus soiled.

stə si **vaginal blood**

This refers to menstruation, but is rarely used because it is too direct.

vdzə **one's companion**

This example contextualizes its use: A mother asked her twenty-year-old daughter, "When will your companion come? Do you need some soft paper? I have some if you need them."

"Thanks Mother. Surely I need it. When did your companion come?"

"It finished yesterday," the mother answered.

ræ gə ræ kə jəvə **sleep with someone**

This term means to have sex with someone but may acquire other meanings depending on context. For example, a mother said to her adolescent daughter, "Listen, Daughter, you cannot sleep with a boy or you'll get pregnant," signifying having sex with a boy. However, the same phrase may have a different meaning in another context, for example, Lha mo's family had relatives staying in their home. Lha mo was seven years old and her aunt was one of the guests. Kun bzang's (the aunt's son) mother asked, "Do you want to sleep with Kun bzang?" This emphasizes the importance of understanding the context of 'sleep with someone'.

Example Two: Birth

Dbyangs chen (b. 1973) provided this account. Fifteen neighboring households of a hamlet had a small celebration on the thirteenth day of Lo sar. I visited to collect personal accounts and re-interview a consultant I had interviewed previously and who provided many sayings and examples of figurative speech.

Four middle-aged women and I were sitting some distance away from where most of the villagers were sitting. I took this chance to ask the four women to talk about sex and their experiences giving birth.

They all laughed simultaneously, embarrassing me. I understood that it was improper to ask about such issues. Nonetheless, Dbyangs chen agreed and provided this account:

I started to feel sick on September fourteenth and the baby was born the next day. We had just finished collecting beans in the fields and were drying them on the floor.⁸⁰ In the very early morning, at about four o'clock, I started feeling uncomfortable. The pain made me curl into a ball and I passed in and out of consciousness. At around seven in the morning, **Mother went to the hole** and heard me suffering. I said "Mother, I'm sick," in a very low voice.

"It is surely the pain you caused yourself. How often is it?" she said coming into my room.

"About every five minutes. I want to go to our other room away from Father so that I can calm myself a bit," I begged.

"There isn't enough time. Why do you need to be afraid of your father? We also did the same thing to have you. Don't worry my daughter!" she said, smiling broadly.

Mother went to untie the cows and then send them to the pasture near the village. Meanwhile, Father came

⁸⁰ Crops are dried and threshed on the third floor.

upstairs **for the hole**. I stifled my cries so Father wouldn't hear, and I gave birth to Zla ba lha mo three minutes later. Mother and Aunt gave me milk tea immediately after the birth, which stopped the **baby's companion**.

Kun bzangs and someone else went to the township town to call the doctor, who came late in the evening, because she had to first get some medicine from Shangzhai. The doctor gave me an injection but **the companion** still had not come a half hour later. I complained that the doctor's treatment did not work, but eventually it came. That was even more painful than **the child disease**.

Zla ba lha mo vomited and almost died from one day's starvation because I couldn't breastfeed after the exhausting birth.

æ mæ kʃo ta o tʰəd **mother went to the hole**

Mother went to the toilet.

njə gə thu nə **It is surely the pain you caused yourself.**

Her mother was worried and pretended to scold her. It meant that she had caused her own pain by having sex and becoming pregnant.

kʃo ta **for the hole**

See above.

ʃæʋə vdʒə tə ku dʒɛ **the baby's companion/ the companion**

The placenta is referred to as the baby's companion because it emerges after the baby.

ʃæʋə gɛɣə **the child disease**

Childbirth is called 'the child disease'.

Example Three: Illness One

I had been invited to my aunt's home during Lo sar. I had told her that I needed to do many interviews. I also asked people to dance so I could video them. Residents of vro Hamlet, where Aunt lives, are skilled circle dancers. Many older dancers from that hamlet know numerous circle dances that few youths now learn.

When I arrived they were celebrating the sixth day of Lo sar together. The first, second, and third days of the New Year are spent at home and neighbors pool money and celebrate jointly in tents pitched in the fields for the remainder of Lo sar. Generally, Lo sar lasts ten to fifteen days, but sometimes it ends prematurely if a villager dies or plowing begins early if there is an auspicious time.

I went down to where the tents were pitched. It was a ten-minute walk down to the tents and twenty minutes up to the houses. They had made a rule that everyone had to arrive by nine a.m. or pay a one RMB fine if they were even one minute late. My uncle, aunt, two of my cousins, and I were just on time.

I found my old consultant, E bi (b. 1934), who had spent the night in the tent and was washing his face near a small spring.

"Nice to see you again. Did you have a good night?" I shouted, since he is hard of hearing.

"Great, girl. It's good that you visited," he said, looking up at me.

"Later I'd like you to tell me some of your stories if that's OK," I said.

"I'd love to. Last time I remembered many after you left," he said and energetically went straight to his tent.

After ten minutes, everyone was sitting in a circle chatting and eating peanuts, sunflower seeds, and candies. I slowly went over to E bi, bending down to show respect to the entire group as I passed.

About thirty years ago, I was the manager of the village in Ze e tong, a valley near the village where we cut lumber to earn income. It seemed it all started after I ate *k^ha_Et⁸¹* for dinner. I started to feel uncomfortable and dizzy. My stomach became so swollen that **nails could not scratch it**. I could not vomit despite wanting to and nothing came out when I **went to the hole**. Sweat appeared on my forehead even though it was late autumn, in November. I thought I was going to die. Once, a neighbor had died from such a sickness. Gnas pos⁸² had gone to the local monastery and would not return for a month. I thought that I would die without seeing my son. Tshe ring dpal ldan and Rig 'dzin⁸³ took three horses and went to bring a doctor from far away. After a long wait, the doctor arrived and gave me an injection. I felt a bit better half an hour later.

The doctor said that there was something wrong with my upper intestinal track. In the middle of the night I had to call for the doctor every half hour. My eyes were good and I could see that my watch was correct. At that time, I felt **my life hanging by a thread. The night was like a drunken man who didn't know when to go home.**

The following day I went to the township town to be examined in the clinic. They didn't really know what was wrong with my stomach but were nonetheless able to cure it.

Almost twenty years have passed **but this sickness is still with me and I think it will not let me go.**

⁸¹ This Lavrung term is for *rtsam pa*, cheese, butter, and sugar mixed in a bowl. Tea is poured into the bowl after compacting these ingredients by hand,. The tea is then drunk and the tongue is used to lick up the wet dough at the bottom of the bowl. Tea is added again until the *rtsam pa* is finished. It is villagers' traditional staple food.

⁸² The respondent's son.

⁸³ The respondent's friends from the same village.

ηdzæ ʂəqɿ də rə mə ηjed **nails could not scratch it**

E bi suggests that his stomach was so swollen and taut that even a nail could not scratch it.

κʃo t^ha rə və **go to the hole.**

See above.

səræχə tə ræ sgəd na na kə zədə **my life hanging by a thread.**

People emphasize the fragility of life by saying that it is hanging by a thread when death seems imminent or when suffering from an extremely serious sickness.

mə də vəʃæ nvoʃ ʃə mjəd læ fso sbi rə mɪd **The night was like a drunken man who didn't know when to go home.**

A drunken man is compared to the night, which was unnaturally long. A drunk man may not know when to go home, thus the night was just like the long wait for the drunken man.

ηəm də ηæn gə ræ zdæ næ zəʃe **this sickness is still with me and I think it will not let me go**

He continues to be troubled by the sickness.

Example Four: Illness Two

Rig 'phel (b. 1972), a monk, was thirty-eight years old when this account was recorded.

I was about to leave my home for Xining the next day and wanted to collect more life stories featuring figurative speech. "Last year I heard that you were terribly ill. What happened?" I asked as he poured a bowl of black tea.

"It was the time of Byangs chub's wedding. You also attended, right?" he asked.

"No, I wasn't there. I was at school," I replied.

"You were there. Everyone from rjæ x^hæd Hamlet attended together," he said.

"Yeah, maybe they did. But I wasn't there – *lha gsum!*" I said.

"OK, no need to swear," he said.

It was last year and Byangs chub announced that he was going to marry soon. We had to rent Blo dpal's car to go to the bride's home near the township town. The bride's family hadn't prepared anything for the wedding. The groom was from our village and came with us to the bride's home. I suddenly started feeling cold and uncomfortable after we had given gifts to the bride's family. I asked my companions to leave but **they became deaf**.

We were in the township town after the wedding finished and were preparing to eat in a restaurant because the bride's family could not prepare enough food for so many people. I could not eat anything because I felt nauseous, but had given money to Sgron dkar to pay for my share of the meal, which my companions refused.

I slept in Blo dpal's car all the way back to our village. Finally we arrived. I took two hours to walk to my house even though it normally only requires fifteen minutes. **I was just like a snail, moving extremely slowly**. I had a terrible headache and constantly wanted to vomit. **My stomach ached slightly, as if an ant was biting it**. Afterwards I stayed in bed for about seven days and finally recovered.

It wasn't a good story to tell I guess. You may not want to record something very sad or something unpleasant like this.

lha gsum **three deities**

This Tibetan expression means 'the three deities' and is said to affirm the truth of a statement. It is commonly used in daily conversation. For example, if you say that you saw a

snake with legs and your friend expresses disbelief, you might say 'lha gsum' to convince your friend that what you said is true.

æ jə kəŋ npo si **they became deaf**

The others ignored him.

ŋæ zcæ pə zcæ le mjəd næ vlæŋ. **I was just like a snail,
moving extremely slowly.**

This metaphorical comparison emphasizes the speaker's slowness.

ŋæn jə ɣdu də gə rŋæ li ræ ɣə ʃc^ha ts^hə jɛ rə mjəd **My
stomach ached slightly as if an ant was biting it.**

The unusual sensation in his abdomen is described with an expression that is rarely used.

Example Five: Personal Tragedy One

Lha se sgron (b. 1984) provided this account when she was twenty-six years old. She was a junior middle school student in Mashu xiao,⁸⁴ failed the college entrance examination, and at the time of this interview was preparing to retake the exam while working part-time in a teahouse in Maerkang.

She told me a story that happened when she was in her second year of junior middle school in Mashu xiao in the winter of 2009-2010. I stayed in her home for one night while doing fieldwork, sharing a bed with her.

Almost everyone else had gone to sleep but we were still chatting. I was trying to steer the conversation towards my interest in personal experiences. She finally began her story, which she said she had not told anyone before.

⁸⁴ Mashu xiao Middle School is in Maerkang, the Aba Prefecture seat.

You know Chos mtsho,⁸⁵ right? We became best friends in the first year of junior middle school, since we were from the same home area. She grew up without a mother and was very weak when she was born. She also had elder brothers and sisters. Among her siblings, the oldest brother had an official job and so cared for her. **She could not be cut from her father's heart** since she was the youngest child. We ate together in the school cafeteria and she did not often spend money. The first year in the new school finished with excitement and joy.

The next year was our second year in Mashi xiao. **It could not be dreamt** that her father became seriously ill and was taken to Aba Prefecture Hospital. We visited him, arranged his meals, and did his laundry, because her other family members were busy. After fifteen days in hospital, he returned home as the doctors said he had recovered.

Chos mtsho called home every day and those who answered the phone told her that her father was fine and encouraged her to study hard. But finally the sad news that **her father had finished** could no longer be hidden from her. She fainted at the pay phone not far from school when she heard. I was standing a little far from her, waiting. I yelled her name but she didn't respond. I ran to her and tried to lift her but I couldn't. **It is true that the dead and unconscious are as heavy as clay statues.** I ran to the school like the wind, spending twenty seconds when normally it took at least ten minutes to walk. **I ran till I vomited from my stomach. Finally she became Chos mtsho again.**

She returned home very early the next day. She said the entire house had become dark, **as if the sky had fallen. It seemed that all the suffering of the world had fallen on her head.** It was impossible for her to continue

⁸⁵ A pseudonym.

her schooling without her father. She did not want to stay in the house where she had so many recollections of her father. After a long period of depression, she decided to run away from home.

Eventually her oldest brother brought her back. Her brothers and sisters insisted that she return to school. It had been her father's wish to not tell her about his death till she finished the semester.

She returned to school after the summer holiday and wrote me a letter describing all the events that had happened. I wept for my best friend and encouraged her every day after class. We planned to take the college entrance examination the next semester. Every day after we finished class, we called each other and went to eat together.

Once I was very late and thought that she might have already left so, I left. However, my friend had not left and continued waiting for a long time. She was angry and wrote me a letter the following day saying, "You have denigrated me since I lost my father and you no longer want to be friends with me. I did not want to say this to you but since we have been friends for a long time I must tell you, because you turned out to be such a person. I have done nothing wrong to you and neither have you to me. I'll go my way and you go yours!"

My tears fell like rain. I felt regret and apologized to her even though it wasn't all my fault. It turned out OK eventually. But then later she wrote, "You still do not want to be friends with me. You have so many things to say when you are with your other friends and have nothing to say when you are with me. You do not laugh as much as before. From now on we are no longer friends." This time I was frustrated and did not want to explain myself. We have not spoken since then.

In Chinese class I once wrote about my friendship with Chos mtsho while she was there. Later she wrote a

letter to me saying she wanted to talk to me and that she hoped I passed the examination. But once I am angry with someone there is nothing that can make me forgive them. I didn't accept her apology, and now if I see her, we don't speak much.

mə lɛ tə vy təjə sjar t^ha ə sədə də bod nə mən tɕ^hʊ **she could not be cut from her father's heart**

If one worries and cares about a person or thing, it is said that they or it can not be cut from one's heart.

rmo gə də nə mə to **it could not be dreamt**
Describes something unimaginable or unpredictable.

vy zə nə jʊʊ si **her father had finished**
The father died.

nə sæd mə zæ nə kon χɛ tə kno skə na rədəd ræn tɕ^hæ tə
nə və jɛ si **It is true that the dead and unconscious are as heavy as clay statues.**

People are thought to become very heavy when they are unconscious or dead. The image of a clay statue is used to communicate this sense of heaviness. A clay statue may also be used to describe somebody who sits all the time and is too lazy to stand and work.

ŋæ sɔo gə sozə læn ŋtɕ^haŋ mbær nə kəvəjəŋ **I ran till I vomited from my stomach.**

This hyperbole expresses having run strenuously. It can be used to describe any exertion leading to nausea, for example, "I worked so hard that I vomited from my stomach."

jɛ jʊŋ bæn ma vde scəd t^hod **Finally she became Chos mtsho again.**

She regained consciousness.

nəm k^ha jə nə kəp^hʊy jə rə mjəd **as if the sky had fallen**

Describes her bad mood after her father died.

*ηzan læŋ ræ tə jə ztəγ nə təd tə jε jə ku t^ha næ kəstəd jε
zəmⁿəd* **It seemed that all the suffering of the whole
world had fallen on her head.**

Describes an extremely stressful situation or trivial unpleasantness.

ηænə mεr pε tε^hæri x^hak məjəd næ t^hod **My tears fell like
rain.**

She was very sad and cried a great deal.

Example Six: Personal Tragedy Two

Dbyangs lo (b. 1916) had three children, one of whom starved to death.

"Great Grandmother, can you tell me about a time when you were very hungry or met difficulties in your life?" I said, moving closer to her.

"My daughter, I have forgotten everything. **Nothing can stay in my brain. My brain is full of insects.** Now I can only eat and sleep," she said.

"My grandmother always says that they lacked food yet needed to work and almost died and things like that... I'm sure you also had such experiences. It's just a chat, no need to be nervous," I encouraged.

"Yeah, right. Surely I have. But I'm worried that **I cannot tell you something that has a head and a tail.**"

"It's really OK! I know you can. Please!" I encouraged.

Once I almost went to **meet the King of Hell** when I was a servant in a wealthy home. It all began when the Red Army attacked us. We finished milking and turned the yaks loose

one sunny morning. My mother shouted, "The soldiers are coming! Everyone get ready to run!" from the entrance of our black yak-hair tent where she was feeding our dog. Neighboring villagers led seven soldiers to our community. Our four homes were attacked. When we fled, my mother forgot to bring the leather bag hung at our black tent entrance that had our jewelry, coral, and ivory.

The soldiers were in the tent by the time she returned. She stole a glance inside and saw the soldiers drinking the milk heating in a pot on the fire with bowls and spoons. Their hands and clothes were covered with milk. They took everything we had. Even the tents were cut into pieces and taken away.

I went to my grandmother's brother's home in a neighboring village. There was also an old servant who milked the *mdzo mo* and gave the milk to their children. I and another female servant only got watery milk tea. For an entire day of fieldwork, I got nothing but a small bowl of *rtsam pa* late in the evening. I was so hungry once that I ate tree roots when I was collecting wood.

I often fainted from hunger. Finally I could no longer bear such a life, and secretly went to find my family, who were very far away. I spent ten days walking to my family, a distance that generally needed only two days.

My family had only two yaks since the Red Army had **sucked** the others. But our neighbor was better off – they had relatives they could depend on. I was constantly asked to drink melted butter and I soon totally recovered.

ŋæ jə noɣ gə tʰæ mə riʃe **Nothing can stay in my brain.**

She is very old and cannot remember what happened in the past. It is a polite way to refuse to tell something.

ŋæ jə noɣ næn be edga **My brain is full of insects.**

Suggests forgetfulness.

ŋæn bæ ku lmi mtsoŋ zæ fɕæd me fsoŋ **I cannot tell you something that has a head and a tail.**

I told her I was going to write about our culture before I started the interview. She might have thought she was not an appropriate person to provide such information and was thus slightly nervous, feeling that she was unable to tell me something clearly and completely.

chu rjæŋ kə rduŋ **meet the King of Hell**

'Meet the King of Hell' is said when something bad almost leads to death.

nu zərfə **sucked**

Emphasizes the injustice of the property being taken.

Example Seven: Personal Tragedy Three

Yid bzhun lo (b. 1953) gave this account when she was fifty-seven.

"I've heard that you and many other villagers were in a terrible accident. Can you tell me about it?" I said, taking out my recorder and sipping from the bowl of tea they offered.

"**Would it be shameful if I told you this?**" she said with her head bent, tears filling her eyes.

I was astonished and speechless. My cousin, who was my companion, said, "She is collecting these kinds of life memories. It wasn't your fault. It was an accident." They were from the same hamlet.

She finally agreed and started:

It was on September fourth in a Tiger Year. It was almost twenty-four years ago and was the same year when Zha go was born. Eight of us planned to go to the hot spring. We prepared to leave very early in the morning. Three more

villagers were coming in addition to the eight of us. There were fifteen to sixteen in total who I can remember.

We were **squeezed into the tractor trailer like wood in a basket**. There was no space for us to move at all. Belongings were hanging off the trailer and then the engine started. We had almost reached Sang bze where there were some households near the road. What was that place called? I forget. The tractor was about to start up a small slope. Don grub **the Heaven** old grandpa moved a bit in the crowded trailer. I said, "Be careful! You'll cause problems for the driver," jokingly, pulling him back down in his seat.

It is said that the driver, **Devi Heaven**, pressed something on the dashboard and then something went wrong. I don't know what happened. The tractor turned over and fell off the road. We **went down**. Some people fell out on the road because the tractor was going very fast. Some were thrown near the riverbank with the tractor. Most of us died. I was with the ones thrown on the riverbank.

The moment the tractor fell, I felt the shrubs hitting my face and only heard the sound of the shrubs hitting me. It was like I had **drunk *Iməd dɕə***,⁸⁶ even I myself do not know what happened. I did not become unconscious. My legs and feet were seriously hurt and that's why I cannot walk well now. I slowly opened my eyes. Two old men were lying by me on rough stones, their heads covered with blood. Both were unconscious. The locals saw us and took a message to our village, carried us to the road, and **stood us** there till other helpers came.

Seven of us were killed in that terrible accident. It was about five floors high from the road to the riverbank. The rest of us were seriously injured. Fear comes from deep in my heart when I think back. My **heart was really**

⁸⁶ *Iməd dɕə* is a liquid mentioned in folktales that causes the drinker to experience complete memory loss.

cold for people who I saw die. Nor skyid's foot was cut and I could not feel my feet. Your grandmother (my cousin) died on the spot.

We injured ones were transported to Guanyinqiao Hospital and stayed there for three months but needed years to recover.

xə tə nu k^hɛ fshaŋ sbi zə ɕə do di? **Would it be shameful if I told you this?**

Used to introduce an unpleasant topic.

nan sə guɣ jɛ zdæ o mjəd **squeezed in the tractor trailer like wood put in a basket**

Dried branches from small trees are collected and packed tightly in locally made baskets. As used here, it describes people crowded in the trailer.

ʒa jəl **the Heaven and Devi heaven**

Normally people add their family names, names of the different parts of the village, or 'the Heaven' to refer to a deceased person. Villagers believe people go to Heaven or Hell and calling a dead person 'the Heaven' is polite because Heaven is the most wonderful place to go. Devi is the name of a village family.

lməd dɕə t^hɛ **drunk** *lməd dɕə*

The imagery of drinking *lməd dɕə* is used to describe the impact of the trauma. Forgetful people are often scolded by saying, "Have you drunk *lməd dɕə*?"

a fdu jə **stood us**

The helpers did not actually make the accident victims stand. This expression emphasizes the speaker's helplessness.

sjar ne ʂk^ho **heart was really cold**

Said to describe extreme sadness or anger.

Example Eight: A Story Fragment

Rong snong was born in 1987, graduated from junior middle school, and took the college entrance exam in 2008. She is keenly interested in learning stories and sayings from elders and provided me with many sayings in Chinese, Tibetan, and Lavrung.

"Sister Rong snong, sorry to interrupt you. Would you tell me something about romance or courtship?" I said from her door, glancing in to see if anybody else was there.

"Yeah, let me think! **Your sister**, I have never had a boyfriend, so there is no courtship to discuss. But I'm sure I know a short story about a man who really wanted a wife. But I'm afraid that my uncle will come and ask me for lunch, so we must hurry," she said, putting her book away, preparing to be recorded.

Asked: Black thing behind the door, what are you doing?

Answered: Waiting for mice.

Asked: Why are you waiting for mice?

Answered: To get mice tendon.

Asked: What do you want to do with mice tendon?

Answered: I will make a trap to kill deer.

Asked: Why do you want to kill deer?

Answered: To take the antlers.

Asked: What will you do with the antlers?

Answered: Snag black and white clouds.

Asked: Why do you want to snag black and white clouds?

Answered: To make rain.

Asked: Why do you want to make it rain?

Answered: To grow radishes.

Asked: Why do you want to grow radishes?

Answered: To raise pigs.

Asked: Why do you want to raise pigs?

Answered: To get a wife!

"Ha-ha. I finished. It's good that my uncle didn't come otherwise **I would not be in my own body**," she said when I turned the recorder off.

nunə a ta **your sister**

Villagers refer to themselves in the third person employing a relative kinship term in order to affirm the relationship between themselves and the speaker when discussing a topic that might make either feel uncomfortable. In this case, the speaker refers to herself as 'your sister' before beginning a discussion about romantic relationships. Other examples might include, 'your brother', 'your nephew', 'your niece', 'your uncle,' and so on.

nə je kɔɛ rə moŋ. **I would not be in my own body**

Said when experiencing extreme emotions. The speaker expressed that she would have been extremely embarrassed if her uncle had returned and heard her telling such a story, because it is considered inappropriate to tell such stories in the presence of relatives of the opposite sex.

Example Nine: School Life Memory

Lha se sgron (b. 1990) was twenty years old when I interviewed her. She was my junior middle school classmate. She loves to talk about her experiences and has an excellent memory. We had not seen each other since 2007. At the time

I interviewed her, she was in the third class of junior middle school in Mashixiao in Maerkang.

"My sister, we haven't talked intimately for years. Tell me about your experiences in the years we were not classmates," I said.

"My pleasure, **my throat is itching**," she said. "I'll tell you that once we were denigrated by the Mashixiao schoolmaster and heard spoken **something that shouldn't enter our ears**.

It was like this! One lunchtime, we were gathered in the school campus for a small meeting. Most students were standing listlessly. The schoolmaster was very frustrated and yelled, "You are all like Rangtang Big Bones."⁸⁷ At that very moment, tears filled my eyes. **My heart was very cold**. I glanced to the right and saw Dbyangsdkar (a classmate) had reacted the same way.

After we were dismissed, all the Rangtang students discussed how unfairly he had jeered at us. We felt that the school leader should treat all students equally.

Rangtang students stirred up one after another and headed to the schoolmaster's office in the afternoon. I called the students who were in the classroom doing their homework to also come. I was so angry that I could have killed a person at that moment. The schoolmaster wasn't there when we arrived, so all of us began explaining our feelings to him. **I cried like my mother or father had died**. Stagma (a schoolmate) said, "**Ren huoyizhanglian, shu huoyizhang pi**," and asked for an apology from the schoolmaster the following day. Shang Wang talked to us

⁸⁷ Kashin-Beck disease is a disorder of the bones and joints of the hands and fingers, elbows, knees, and ankles of children and adolescents. Locals in the areas subject to the disorder called it 'big bone disease'. Rangtang County is noted for a relatively high incidence of the disease.

reasonably and said he would talk about this to the schoolmaster.

The following day the schoolmaster left for a weeklong meeting. We slowly forgot the incident as time passed.

cæ læv læv zə ʃqad **my throat is itching**

She couldn't wait to talk, emphasizing her eagerness to share her stories. It is also used when someone wants to sing or drink.

nə gə næ mə və ba **something shouldn't enter our ears**

Describes something that people do not like to hear or are unwilling to hear, such as something false or insulting. People say, "Don't say something that shouldn't enter my ears," meaning that someone is telling them something they do not believe.

ŋæ sjar ne ʃk^ho me thsed **my heart was very cold**

Said when very angry or sad.

æ mə nə sæd na nə ɪboŋ **I cried like my mother or father had died.**

Emphasizing she had been crying a great deal.

人活一张脸, 树活一张皮 *ren huo yi zang nian, su huo yi zang pi*

Literally means a person lives for his face and a tree lives for its bark, suggesting that honor is to a person what bark is to a tree. Stag ma said it to show that they had honor, which is more important than anything else.

PART FIVE: FIGURES

Figure Two. Siyuewu Monastery is located in rjæ x^hæd Hamlet. The road below the monastery is National Road 317.



Figure Three. Zhangs sgyongs points to marks that are thought to be remnants from a fight between Gling soldiers and Srin mo kha la me 'bar.



Figure Four. Concave marks remain from the fight between the fire-breathing *srin mo* and the Gling soldiers.



Figure Five. This rock held the fire-breathing *srin mo* after the fight with Gling. The small spring (center right) was made by Khro thong to control the monster so that she would not destroy the village with fire.



红石林区
红石林区

Figure Six. Cangs ko lo stands in front of my home just before leaving for his own home. He, Srong pel, Gnas rgyal, and Zhangs sgyong provided the information on 'History'.



Figure Seven. My mother (closest to the wall) and I went to help our neighbor, Kho 'dzom, carry manure to her fields. Mother pounds the manure so that it will better nourish the crops. Gzigs lha sgron (left), a friend of Kho 'dzom, also helps. Women frequently help each other. Men also do fertilizing work. Manure is carried to the fields in a basket or plastic bag.



Figure Eight. My cousin, Lha se sgron, carries manure to her family's field early in the morning as we go to her mother's natal hamlet to conduct an interview in late February 2010.



Figure Nine. "Do I look cool with the yaks?" Kun skyongs asks. The winter herding area is a day's walk from the village. Herders occasionally go there to count their yaks in winter while two or three family members stay in a black tent in summer.

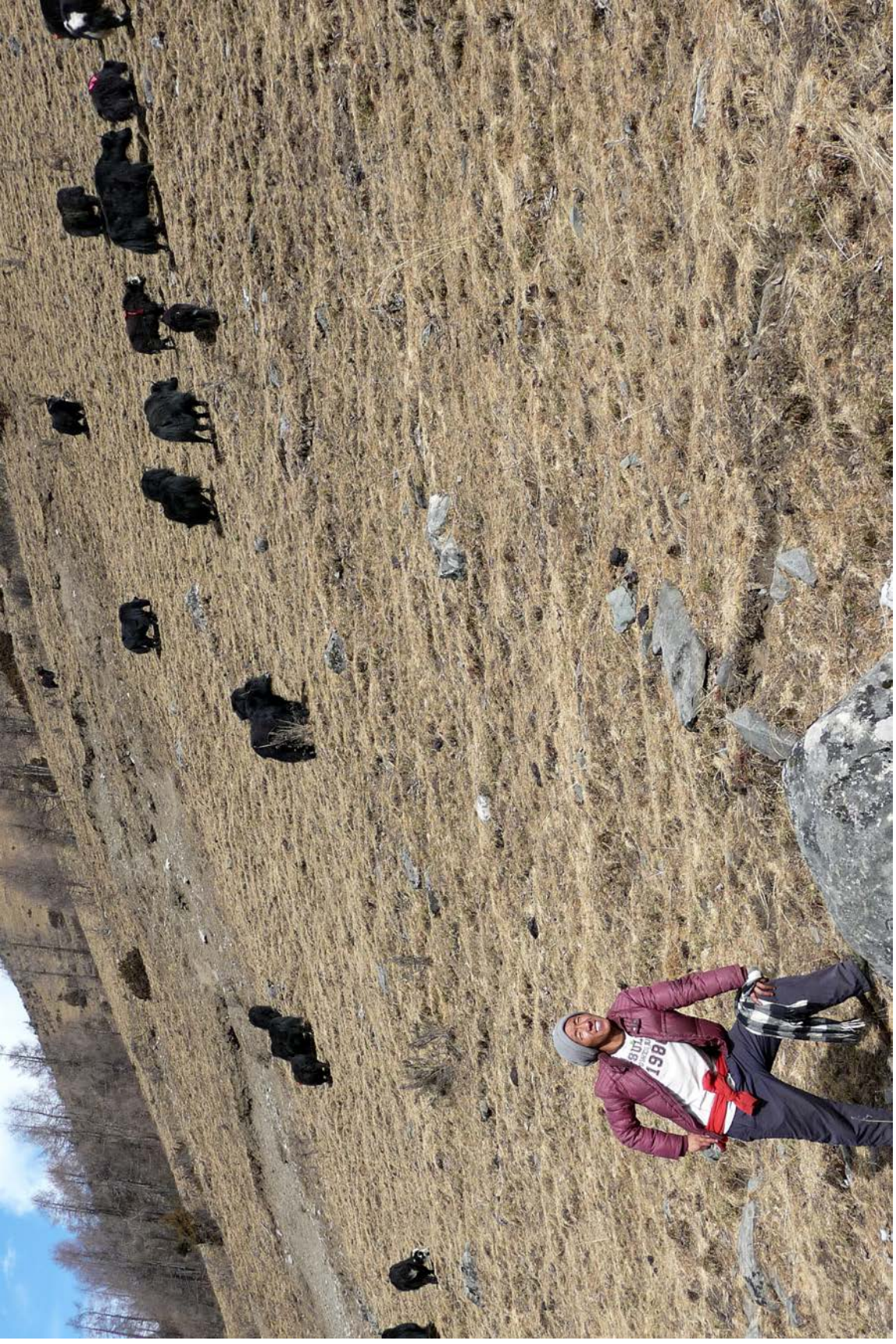


Figure Ten. Bsod mgong's family lived on a mountain two hour's walk from the local monastery. They moved closer to the highway for greater convenience. Bsod mgong is making window frames for their new house.



Figure Eleven. "Take a picture of young and handsome Shel ko instead of we wrinkled oldies!" shouted Dar rgyas (top left). Rgyal ko is next to him. Shel ko sits on the ladder near the camera, relaxing from half a day's work building their new house.



Figure Twelve. Moss collected in nearby forests is spread before covering the roof with earth to prevent soil leaking through the ceiling. Fifteen sacks of moss are needed for one floor. Uncle Dpal tho spreads moss on his sister-in-law's new house.



Figure Thirteen. I took this picture from the window of my home. Many helpers carry earth a ten minute walk to Shangs skyid and Spre khos' new house. Families currently prefer to live near the highway rather than on the upper slopes where they previously lived. Families living near the highway renew their houses more frequently as new houses are built around them. Ten families were building new houses in 2009.



Figure Fourteen. Kho 'dzom (b. 1987) was twenty-three years old and had two children in 2010. The older child was six and the younger one four. The first floor of her house was built in 2008 and the second and third floors in 2010. They plan to build a fourth and fifth floor two to four years later.



Figure Fifteen. This village house features four floors. There are also houses with five floors. Two *mdzo* are kept per family for plowing and to haul grain. Households living high in the mountains also use *mdzo* to transport goods they buy from shops.



Figure Sixteen. During the New Year, villagers go to lunch after a morning of spinning the prayer wheel in ɲə le Hamlet. Some village homes are far from the village prayer hall, and have thus built their own small prayer wheel halls in their hamlets. Fifteen households built this small prayer wheel hall in 2009.



Figure Seventeen. I took this picture at night when I was passing by our hamlet's prayer hall with my mother. I had planned to take a photo of the exterior but Mother asked me to take it of the inside instead, because the wheels were more colorful.



Figure Eighteen. A local Jinchuan family in Gunayinqiao Town found the Guanyin image. Siyewu villagers visit to worship every year. This Guanyin has a significant place in every villager's heart and is said to be the younger sister of the Jo bo deity and image in Lha sa.



Figure Nineteen. Gnas pos said jokingly, "I would like a picture with my *lag 'khor* 'prayer wheel' so that I look older than I really am." Gnas pos told me he had seen Bso pa's *ji* while walking home one night.



Figure Twenty. This is where Gnas pos saw Bsod pa's *ji*, which she lost when frightened by the huge dark stone (top left). My brother looks at the stone after I told him the story.



Figure Twenty-one. "Should I move near the window? Other people who see the picture will say what an ugly old woman I am," said Yid bzhin lo. She lo told me how she once lost her *ji* in the dark near the ladder.



Figure Twenty-two. Yid bzhin lo lost her *ji* when she was climbing up this ladder. Uncle Khen 'thar showed me the ladder and said, "That's probably the ladder Yid bzhin lo talked about."



Figure Twenty-three. Bai Yun assumes a humorous pose for the camera. She feels comfortable with the camera, maybe because I am her niece. She lost her *ji* in the place where a female ghost is believed to roam. She initially thought the *ji* was Smon lam's.



Figure Twenty-four. Bai Yun lost her *ji* in this valley as she and other villagers were walking on the path near the river.



Figure Twenty-five. At my request, villagers wore traditional clothes and performed a circle dance so I could record it. Circle dancing and circle dancing songs were once popular entertainment in Siyuewu, but are now less so. Only a few elders can now sing many such songs.



Figure Twenty-six. "Can you take a picture of us all and bring it back?" I was asked after the dancing finished. Local women typically wear long skirts they buy or make themselves. Tibetan robes are only worn on such special occasions as religious rituals, pilgrimages, and dance performances.



Figure Twenty-seven. Villagers danced in a field between the houses late one afternoon during Lo sar. Anyone who wants may dance, regardless of age or ability. Elders over fifty years old enjoy watching, and encourage youths to dance if they are reluctant.



Figure Twenty-eight. I took this picture during Lo sar after lunch when villagers were preparing for circle dancing near the village where there is a *lab rtse*. Village men had finished making *bsang*⁸⁸ and had gone to prepare to circle dance when Zhangs sgyongs and Skal Idan asked me to take their picture. "Why don't you take a picture of us with our beautiful clothes under the shining sun?" asked Skal Idan, closest to the camera.

⁸⁸ An incense offering is normally made by male villagers while offerings prayers to local deities for good fortune and luck.



Figure Twenty-nine. "Take one to show to your friends and teachers, and tell them there is such a handsome boy in your village," said Blo bzang (b. 1991), who told 'The Leveret, the Sparrow, and the Pig'.



Figure Thirty-one. I took this picture while explaining the work I was doing. They asked me to see the picture on my digital camera and said they looked more attractive than usual. Khen thar (b. 1953, left) told 'The Flea and the Louse'.



Figure Thirty-two. Tshe ring dpal ldan's (b. 1948) home had no electricity one night. His two-year-old granddaughter sat near him, her attention focused on my recorder. He told the story 'The Bone in the Meat'.



Figure Thirty-three. "I'm going to do the dishes but I'll have my photo taken first," said Aunt Bsod nams sgron (b. 1957), who provided the story 'The Jar Buyer'.



Figure Thirty-four. "I don't think that taking pictures is nice when people get old like me, but I suppose it's fine," said Bsod nams (b. 1929) when I asked if I could take his photo. He told the story 'Blo ring and zæn t̥ʂi'.



Figure Thirty-five. Wang Yong (b. 1978) relaxes after working in the field (background) all day near his house. He told the story 'Dividing Housework'. The tool he holds is used for sweeping snow.



Figure Thirty-six. 'Brug skyid was halfway through her afternoon meal of *rtsam pa* when I visited. The bowl closest to the camera contains butter, the small light blue bowl behind it contains *rtsam pa*, and the square tin to the right contains sugar. 'Brug skyid told 'The Helpless Nomad'.



Figure Thirty-seven. Sgrol las has poor vision. I called out to let her know where I was, so she would know in which direction to face for her picture. She told 'The Hunter and his Wife'.



Figure Thirty-eight. Zhangs skyong was excited when I asked to take his picture. He is hard working, responsible, and understands the importance of cultural preservation. He told me he would help whenever I needed. He first informed me about Do lo and suggested I ask others about sections of the story he had forgotten.



Figure Thirty-nine. Khen lha sgron (b. 1985) said, "Maybe I need to change my clothes if you take a picture? I've got a new coat to wear." She posed in her daily clothes. She told a Do lo story.



Figure Forty. "I love to have my picture taken but it's a bit dark," said Uncle Tshe ldan (b. 1972) as he was about to leave his home after a day of helping his sister collect earth to cover the roof of her new house. He provided the three work songs.



Figure Forty-one. I asked neighbors to sing hoeing songs while demonstrating accompanying actions using *xətsəm* in our small home garden. They gladly did so.



Figure Forty-two. *xətsəm* are used to loosen the earth while crops are growing and are also used for hoeing.



Figure Forty-three. I asked villagers to pretend to break earth clods to demonstrate how tools are used. I asked them to sing, but they could not stop laughing during the song. Clod-breaking songs are commonly sung at plowing time. People said they feel more relaxed and energetic when they sing such songs while working.



Figure Forty-four. The tool on the left with a flat head and long handle is for breaking earth clods and is called *pε̄ʒə tsə*. The other tool is for threshing, is also locally made, and is called *ʒətʃuyə*.



Figure Forty-five. Tshe ring lha mo (b. 1934) was a key consultant on Lavrung proverbs. She carries a locally-made basket on her back.



Figure Forty-six. Zhes lha (b. 1940) was a key consultant on Tibetan, Lavrung, and Chinese proverbs. She climbs down the mountain where Guanyin Monastery is located.



Figure Forty-seven. Skal Idan was a key consultant on proverbs in Chinese and Tibetan. My uncle Rgyal mtsho took this photo while I was being warmly offered liquor (right).



Figure Forty-eight. Khams rgyal stands on the newly built first floor of his home. He provided examples of figurative speech.



Figure Forty-nine. Dbyangs 'dzom and her two grandchildren sit on the first floor of their unfinished house, warming tea for lunch. She was a key consultant on euphemisms and metaphors.



Figure Fifty. "Do I need to change my clothes? Maybe not because I am so old that no one cares if I'm good looking," joked Yid she mtsho. She was a key consultant on Lavrung metaphors.



Figure Fifty-one. "My shoes don't look nice," Dga' skyid said. She and some other women provided information for the first example in the section 'Figurative Speech in Villagers' Narratives'.



Figure Fifty-two. This is where villagers celebrate Lo sar together. Dbyangs chen (b. 1973) helped women who were cooking after her picture was taken. She provided an account recalling the birth of her daughter in 'Figurative Speech in Villagers' Narratives'.



Figure Fifty-three. "I'll pretend to chant scriptures because I'm afraid to look at cameras," said Rig 'phel (b. 1972) as I was about to take his picture. He told me about his terrible illness in 2010 that he thought might kill him. See his account 'Illness Two' in the figurative speech section.



Figure Fifty-four. Bai Yun with her daughters, Lha se sgron (right) and Rong snong (left). Rong snong told a story about her best friend in junior middle school. "We three *zæ mɛ*⁸⁹ are very pretty and those who see our photo will be amazed by our beauty," Bai Yun joked while I focused the camera.

⁸⁹ Mother and daughters. See Appendix Four for more kinship terms.



Figure Fifty-five. I asked my great grandmother, Dbyangs lo (b. 1916), to go outside because it was dark inside her home. She asked me to fix her clothes so they looked good. She told me about being a servant and almost starving to death, see 'Personal Tragedy Two'.



Figure Fifty-six. Yid bzhin los's (b. 1953) grandson was watching TV so I had to hold my recorder close to her. Her narrative is 'Personal Tragedy Three'.



CONCLUSION

In this book I introduced Lavrung, a previously little-studied language, and the local culture of Lavrung Tibetans. I focused on oral traditions, particularly figurative speech – proverbs, metaphors, and euphemisms – that I collected from villagers in Siyuewu Village, Puxi Township, Rangtang County, Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China.

I first provided a general context to local oral traditions by describing Siyuewu Village's location, ethnolinguistic context, territorial divisions, population, name, history, subsistence, and housing. I also gave background on local religion and home remedies, and provided accounts of *ji* loss. Finally, I described local customs and attitudes related to love and marriage. I also provided maps showing the distribution of Lavrung-speaking communities and showing the distribution of hamlets in the village, in addition to a diagram showing the layout of a typical hamlet. The maps and information in this section provide the necessary context to understand the oral traditions presented in other portions of this book. Much of what is described in this chapter is now seriously threatened, particularly the Lavrung language.

In the second part, I introduced and provided examples of local oral stories: Helping Others Will Bring You What You Want; Do lo's Life; The Leveret, the Sparrow, and the Pig; The Flea and the Louse; The Bone in Meat; The Jar Buyer; Blo ring and zæn t̥si; Dividing Housework; The Helpless Nomad; The Hunter and His Wife; Do Lo Divides a *Mdzo*; Do lo the Hunter; and A Wild Boar Attacks. Locally, such stories are considered entertainment rather than moralizing educational devices. People enjoy hearing and telling such stories that are related to their daily life. Humorous stories are most popular. Villagers often make up their own humorous stories about events that happened to other villagers, and those who are the subject of

such stories may never get angry at their creators, because all villagers engage in this sort of creativity. Few elders tell stories to their grandchildren because children now find such stories boring compared to TV. Almost no villagers under the age of thirty tell stories because they think story telling is a waste of time.

In the third part, I introduced further examples of oral traditions from Siyewu Village: fourteen *k^hε dā* 'riddles' in Lavrung, a brief introduction of *sngags* 'secret chants', and three Lavrung work songs. *Sngags* are no longer used to cure sicknesses, as their use is considered backward and superstitious. Work songs continue to be sung during plowing time.

In the fourth part of the book, I provided transcriptions and both literal and figurative translations of twenty-six Lavrung proverbs, twenty Sichuan Chinese proverbs, and fifty-five A mdo Tibetan proverbs. This section also provided euphemisms and metaphors related to death, menstruation, sexual intercourse, defecating and urinating, advice and reprimands, and animal comparatives. This section also provided examples of figurative speech within villagers' oral narratives. Villagers typically use figurative speech in daily life, but do not value it or consider it an important part of their culture, consequently, although figurative speech is in common usage, it may disappear in the future because of locals' attitudes.

I chose figurative speech as the focus of my book for two reasons. First, when I began investigating figurative speech, a villager refused my request for an interview using a metaphor to explain that he did not know any metaphors. I was deeply impressed by the irony of this situation. Secondly, I was motivated to document figurative speech because my mother language, Lavrung, has been insufficiently documented and I therefore felt a responsibility to write about it.

The final section of the book presented photographs from my village. I took these photos, which are mostly of my

consultants, in the winter of 2009, because people have more free time in winter. People were delighted and relaxed when I took their photos and they immediately asked me to see their picture. I used quotes from my subjects as captions so that readers could get a sense of how my subjects think and feel. I wanted readers to imagine that they were looking at living people rather than just pictures.

I have not documented these materials in sophisticated English, but the materials themselves are immensely rich and complex.

Perhaps, the person who is now finishing this book is someone from my community, reading this many years after it was written or perhaps even many years after my death. I am sure many things have changed since this was written. I hope this book has been a useful resource for you to study our community's past, and a unique culture that has now perhaps been lost. I hope this book inspires you to do something similar.

APPENDIX ONE: LAVRUNG SWADESH LIST

	English	Siyuewu Village Lavrung
1	I	ŋæ
2	thou (singular)	nu
3	he	cə
4	we	ŋə nʃə
5	you (plural)	nɛ nʃə
6	they	æ jɜ
7	this	cɜ tə
8	that	æ tə
9	here	cɜ gə
10	there	æ gə
11	who	sə
12	what	tʰɛ jæ
13	where	ŋə la
14	when	nəm na
15	how	tʰɛ jæ mɲəd
16	not	mɑo
17	all	tʰæm tɕʰɛd
18	many	moŋ mæn
19	some	kɜ
20	few	e səd
21	other	kʰə kʰɑ
22	one	ræ
23	two	ɣʰənæ
24	three	xəsam
25	four	vədə

26	five	mŋɑd
27	big	q ^h əra
28	long	səre
29	wide	lem
30	thick	bixʔ
31	heavy	zɖəd
32	small	zɛ
33	short	xtə zə
34	narrow	tsə zæz
35	thin	ɤaŋ ji
36	woman	mə le
37	man (adult male)	zy
38	man (human being)	vəʃu
39	child (a youth)	lə ŋax
40	wife	rə jəv
41	husband	ʔmau
42	mother	æ mæ
43	father	ɑ va
44	animal	rə dax
45	fish	γə dax ju
46	bird	pɛ jɛ zə
47	dog	kə ta
48	louse	ɕo
49	snake	bə rə
50	worm	rəŋæ li
51	tree	sɛ
52	forest	sə po
53	stick (of wood)	ɤrə dəm

54	fruit	ɕaŋ tox
55	seed	rə və
56	leaf	sæʒə p ^h ax
57	root	ru
58	bark (of trees)	sɛ dʒə
59	flower	mɛ tæxə
60	grass	xə ɕi
61	rope	ʔbərə
62	skin (of a person)	dʒə
63	meat (as in flesh)	bjæ nɛ
64	blood	sə
65	bone	ɕɛ zə
66	fat (noun)	ʒə tsəʔ
67	egg	zɡæ ŋax
68	horn	zə
69	tail	ʒəmi
70	feather	rəmə
71	hair	ɕor mə
72	head	ku
73	ear	nə
74	eye	mo yə
75	nose	sə ni və
76	mouth	mtɕ ^h ə
77	tooth	ɕə vi
78	tongue	sni
79	finger nail	rədzɛ
80	foot	ɡav ʔp ^h ax
81	leg	ɡavə

82	knee	riŋi
83	hand	joʊə
84	wing	fɛæk pa
85	belly	ɣdu
86	guts	noŋ tɕa
87	neck	fəqəd
88	back	ske
89	breast	nə
90	heart	sjaʃ
91	liver	vse
92	to drink	t ^h ɛ
93	to eat	ʔdzjəd
94	to bite	ʃətɕ ^h a ts ^h ə
95	to suck	mpjæ pju
96	to spit	st ^h æ p ^h æd
97	to vomit	ʔp ^h æz
98	to blow (as wind)	məŋə də
99	to breathe	fɛə sxi
100	to laugh	q ^h æd
101	to see	vd ^h ɛ
102	to hear	sme
103	to know (a fact)	xəʃ tɔkə
104	to think	fsæm loŋ
105	to smell (sense odor)	ŋlʒə lʒəm
106	to fear	scər
107	to sleep	sŋə
108	to live	xəsu
109	to die	sə

110	to kill	sad
111	to fight	ħədsə dsə
112	to hunt	rŋa
113	to hit	təlɜ
114	to cut	p ^h od
115	to split	qar
116	to stab (or stick)	rədzə
117	to scratch (an itch)	sp ^h əroy
118	to dig	sʃu
119	to swim	dcaxə
120	to fly	ŋbəjəm
121	to walk	ɛri ra
122	to come	və
123	to lie (as on one's side)	jəvə
124	to sit	rəjɛ
125	to stand	dfə ra
126	to turn (change direction)	ŋnoɣr lɛ
127	to fall (as in drop)	næ ɣp ^h oyə
128	to give	k ^h a
129	to hold (in one's hand)	dʒɛ
130	to squeeze	ʃə dsoə
131	to rub	marə
132	to wash	rəʃə
133	to wipe	bəjæzə
134	to pull	ŋzəri zə
135	to push	zə sk ^h æyə
136	to throw	rən co
137	to tie	ʃk ^h ɛ

138	to sew	tçovə
139	to count	xəs rə
140	to say	fətçæd
141	to sing	χlə vi
142	to play	vər juħə
143	to float	a siŋji
144	to flow	və to
145	to freeze	ʂp ^h əm
146	to swell	γpəv
147	sun	γnə
148	moon	siŋγ lə
149	star	zɡərə
150	water	γd ^h ə
151	to rain	mə nə to
152	river	γd ^h ə
153	lake	mɔsu
154	sea (as in ocean)	mɔsu
155	salt	ɔsi
156	stone	rgə mɛ
157	sand	χəbəγ
158	dust	gɛ pə
159	earth (as in soil)	xɛdçɛ
160	cloud	zdəm
161	fog	si mət̚ ba
162	sky	nəm k ^h ɑ
163	wind (as in breeze)	γələ
164	snow	si nʊo
165	ice	ʂɛp ^h əm

166	smoke	mk ^h əd
167	fire	χəmə
168	ashes	xəji
169	to burn	ɕjo
170	road	t ^h çi
171	mountain	p ^h əd
172	red	mnəʔ
173	green	vrəŋəd
174	yellow	ɛzəŋəʔ
175	white	p ^h rəm
176	black	ŋafə
177	night	mərə
178	day (daytime)	sinə go
179	year	ʔtyu
180	warm (as in weather)	dsijəd
181	cold (as in weather)	ʂk ^h o
182	full	fəsod
183	new	sær bə
184	old	raŋ bə
185	good	ʃahə
186	bad	mə do ʔd
187	rotten (as, a log)	χəzəd
188	dirty	ʂəqəə
189	straight	stu
190	round	ħədəm
191	sharp (as a knife)	zoʔ
192	dull (as a knife)	k ^h əloy
193	smooth	ʔdʒəm

194	wet	lʊyə
195	dry (adjective)	χəru
196	right (correct)	ŋo
197	near	kən tɑχ
198	far	t ^h ʧɛzə də
199	right (side)	sçəʔ
200	left (side)	sgəʔ
201	at	æ gə
202	in	æ noŋ
203	with (accompanying)	gə ræ
204	and	æ zæ
205	if	æ nə ŋu nɑ ŋo
206	because	æ də nə ŋu sɛ
207	name	rme

APPENDIX TWO: SIYUEWU FESTIVALS

Date	Activity
January 31	Yuan dan, the last day of the year. Villagers have a one-day holiday. Neighbors share a meal together.
Twelfth lunar month	Immediately before New Year, village monks chant the Phub grub scripture for three days. The monks perform ' <i>cham</i> ⁹⁰ for two days in the local monastery and all villagers participate on the days the monks dance.
First lunar month	Lo sar, New Year. Siyuewu villagers celebrate New Year by watching TV, cooking, and visiting relatives and friends.
March 8	Sanba funü jie, Women's Day. Villagers have a one-day holiday.
The tenth day of the fourth lunar month	Monks chant the Tshe grub scripture in the local monastery for seven days to prevent illnesses and to ensure the community's safety.
May 1	Wuyi laodong jie, Workers Day. Villagers take a one-day holiday and wash their clothes.
June 1	Liuyi ertong jie, Children's Day. Villagers go to Puxi Township Town and Shangzhang Town to watch performances organized by the schools their children attend.
The tenth day of the sixth lunar month	Monks in the local monastery chant the Thos sgröl scripture for seven days for people who have died.

⁹⁰ A religious dance performed by monks.

In July	Gling zla or Kanhua jie. Each hamlet celebrates this picnic separately for ten days. Each family pitches a tent. People dance, sing, play games, joke, and drink barley liquor.
October 1	Gouqing National Day. Villagers take a one-day holiday, eat a meal together, and spin prayer wheels.
The tenth day of the eleventh lunar month	Phub grub lasts seven days and primarily consists of fasting. Monks chant in the local monastery and fast with villagers who also turn prayer wheels.

APPENDIX THREE: MEASUREMENTS

<i>mu</i> 亩	An area measurement equal to two-thirds of a hectare.
<i>mao</i> 毛	A measurement of Chinese currency. One <i>mao</i> equals 0.1 <i>yuan</i> .

APPENDIX FOUR: LAVRUNG KINSHIP TERMS

English	Lavrung
aunt	la la
brother	ʔdoɣ
brothers (two or more)	rəmæ stəɣə
daughters	mə le
father	a va
father and children (normally son)	zæ vi
granddaughter	tsæ mu
grandfather	va vu
grandmother	mə vɛ
grandparents and grandchildren	svə lə
grandson	tsæ və
husband	ɣməɣ
mother	æ mæ
mother and children (normally daughter)	zæ me
niece or nephew	vlə
older sibling	a ʔda
sister	snəm
sister	sqi
sisters (two or more)	sqɛ x ^h ə
son	zi lo
uncle	ə ɣo
uncle with their nieces and nephews	sɣə zi
wife	zjavə
younger brother	mo

APPENDIX FIVE: NON-ENGLISH WORD LIST

ʃ

ʃou tsu uɣu, *place name

ʔ

?mau, husband

,

'Bar khams འབར་ཁམས། *place name

'Brug mo འབྲུག་མོ། *person's name

'Brug mtsho འབྲུག་མཚོ། *person's name

'Brug skyid འབྲུག་སྐྱེད། *person's name

'cham འཆས། A religious dance performed by monks

'Dzam thang འཛམ་ཐང། *place name

'Jigs med འཇིགས་མེད། *person's name

'khor khang འཁོར་ཁང། prayer wheel hall

ʎ

ʎətəvə le, *place name

A

A mdo ཨ་མདོ། *place name

Aba ཨ་ཀམ། *place name

a ga ri, plants with small, dense leaves that grow about one
and a half meters tall and have a strong bitter smell

a vro Gəlo, *place name

a zhang ཨ་ཇང། Tibetan term for maternal uncle

B

Bai 白 *river's name

Bai Yun 白云 *person's name

Banma 班玛 *county name

Bcom ldan 'das བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས། the Buddha

Bka' chos བཀའ་ཚིག། *scripture's name

Bkra lo བཀྲ་ལོ། *person's name

Bkra shes བཀྲ་ཤེས། *person's name

Bkra shes don grub བཀྲ་ཤེས་དོན་གྲུབ། *person's name

bla ལྷ། soul

Bla brang ལྷ་བྲང། *place name

Blo bzang ལྷོ་བཟང། *place name

Blo bzang bkra shes ལྷོ་བཟང་བཀྲ་ཤེས། *person's name

Blo dpal ལྷོ་དཔལ། *person's name

Blo ring ལྷོ་རིང། *person's name

Blo yig ལྷོ་ཡུག། *person's name

bsang khang བསང་ཁང། incense burner

Bso pa བསོ་པ། *person's name

Bsod mgong བསོད་མགོན། *person's name

Bsod nams བསོད་ནམས། *person's name

Bsod nams sgron བསོད་ནམས་སྒྲོན། *person's name

Bstan chos བསྟན་ཚོས། *scripture's name

Byangs chub བྱངས་ཅུབ། *person's name

Byangs mo དབྱངས་མོ། *person's name

Byangs skyid བྱངས་སྦྱིད། *person's name

C

Cangs ko lo ཅངས་གོ་ལོ། *person's name

Chos go ཚོས་གོ། *person's name

Cho ldan ཚོ་ལྷན། *person's name

Chos mtsho ཚོས་མཚོ། *person's name

Chu chen ཅུ་ཅེན། *place name

Chun jie 春节 *festival name

D

Dadu 大渡, *river's name

Dar rgyas དར་རྒྱས། *person's name

Dbang byugs དབང་བྱུགས། *person's name

Dbang rgyal དབང་རྒྱལ། *person's name

Dbyangs 'dzom དབྱངས་འཛོམ། *person's name

Dbyangs chen དབྱངས་ཆེན། *person's name

Dbyangs dkar དབྱངས་དཀར། *person's name

Dbyangs lo དབྱངས་ལོ། *person's name

deng pao 灯泡, light bulb

Devi *family name

Dga' skyid དགའ་སྦྱིད། *person's name

Dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས། *sect of Tibetan Buddhism

dgong gnas དགོང་གནས། texts that spontaneously arise in a
lama or *rtsis pa's* mind

dian shi 电视, television

Dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས། *place name

Do lo དོ་ལོ། *person's name

Don grub དོན་གུབ། *person's name

Don po དོན་པོ། *person's name

Dpa' lo དཔའ་ལོ། *person's name

Dpal mgon དཔལ་མགོན། *person's name

Dpal tho དཔལ་ཐོ། *person's name

dui 队, work brigade

dzɛ zdoŋ zgæ ʒæx *pestle

E

E bi ཡེ་བི། *person's name

Er dui 二队 *place name

Ergali 二噶里 *place name

Eri 俄日, *place name

əgæd, *place name

ə ʎo, uncle

F

fə k^hɛ zɛ, *place name

G

G.yu go གཡུ་གོ། *person's name

G.yu lha གཡུ་ལྷ། *person's name

G.yu mtsho གཡུ་མཚོ། *person's name

G.yu rgyal གཡུ་རྒྱལ། *person's name

G.yu sgron གཡུ་སྒོན། *person's name

Gansu 甘肅 *place name

Gə lɛ, walnut (*Juglans regia*)

Ge sar གེ་སར། *person's name

gə ɣu, mountain deities

Gling གླིང། legendary Tibetan kingdom

Gling zla གླིང་ལྷ། *festival name

Gnas bzang གནས་བཟང། *person's name

Gnas mdun གནས་མདུན། *mountain name

Gnas pos གནས་པོས། *person's name

Gnas rgyal གནས་རྒྱལ། *person's name

gnas yig གནས་ཡིག། a book on local history or a book that predicts the future and advises people as to what they should and should not do. High status *lama* and *rtsis pa* 'fortune tellers' write *gnas yig*.

goyə no ཇེ་, *family name

Gser གསེར། *river name

Gser rta གསེར་རྟ། *place name

gsong chabs གསོང་ཆབས། small earth balls consecrated by chanting that contain a high lama's urine, are considered sacred, and are put in water that is drunk to prevent diseases and contamination by evil

Gter ston གཏེར་སྟོན། *person's name

Guanyinqiao 观音桥 *place name

Guoqing 国庆 *festival name

gyod རྒྱལ། Negotiation to settle a conflict, for example, when a husband has left his wife and children for another woman. The wife's family may then call for a *gyod* to negotiate a solution.

Gzhan phan གཞན་པམ། *person's name

Gzigs lha sgron གཟིགས་ལྷ་སྐྱོན། *person's name

H

Han 汉, *ethnic group

ħɜ kɛ, potato cake

Heishui 黑水, *place name

Hongqi 红旗, *place name

Hongyuan 红原, *place name

Huangzhong 湟中, *place name

huo lu zi 火炉子, metal stove

J

jəm, the main room of a house

ji, *soul

Jiarong 嘉绒 *place name

jin 斤, 0.5 kilograms

Jinchuan 金川, *place name

Jo bo ཇོ་བོ། *deity

jələ yu, *place name

K

kær læm, red earth

kæ tɕær, local pickled radish leaf used as seasoning and often exchanged among households

Kan hua jie 看花节, *festival name

kha btags ཁ་བཏགས། strip of white silk offered to high *lama* or other respected persons

Khams rgyal ཁམས་རྒྱལ། *person's name

Khen lha sgron ཁེན་ལྷ་སྒྲོན། *person's name

Khen thar ཁེན་ཐར། *person's name

k^hε də, riddles

khε lε, to the left of a stove

khε snə, near the stove, close to the door

khε yar, opposite the door, behind the stove

k^ho, storeroom

Kho 'dzom ཁོ་འཛོམ། *person's name

kho syri, to the right of a stove

Khro ཁྲོ། *river's name

Khro skyabs ཁྲོ་སྐྱུབས། king of the eighteen tribes of Jinchuan

Khro thong ཁྲོ་ཐོང། one of King Ge sar's ministers

khyim lha ཁྱུམ་ལྷ། family deity

ko bar, southern (shady) side of a valley

Kun bzang ཀུན་བཟང། *person's name

Kun skyongs ཀུན་སྐྱོངས། *person's name

L

lab rtse ལབ་རྗེ། *Lab rtse* are sacred cairns consisting of Tibetan scripture flags tied to sticks inserted into a base of stones. *Lab rtse* are considered offerings to deities. Whereas Tibetans in many areas have *lab rtse* only on mountaintops where mountain deities are considered to reside, Siyuewu villagers also have *lab rtse* on houses' top floors.

lama ལྷ་མ། monk

len chags ལེན་ཆགས། *Len chag* are *rtsam pa* offerings made to beings called *mi ma yin* that are neither people, deities, not ghosts. A long roll of *rtsam pa* is squeezed in the hand making a handprint.

lha gsum ལྷ་གསུམ། *an oath

Lha mo ལྷ་མོ། *person's name

Lha mtsho ལྷ་མཚོ། *person's name

Lha sa ལྷ་ས། *place name

Lha se sgron ལྷ་སེ་སྒོན། *person's name

Lha sgron ལྷ་སྒོན། *person's name

Liuyi ertong jie 六一 儿童节, *festival name

Lixian 理县, *place name

lməd dce a liquid sometimes mentioned in folktales that causes the drinker to experience complete memory loss

Lo sar ལོ་སར། New Year

Lo lo ལོ་ལོ། *person's name

ḥa jəḥ, Heaven

ḥə tsək, *place name

ḥə ts^hə, *place name

M

Maerkang 马尔康, *place name

mao 毛, *measure word

ma Ni མ་ཤི། Tibetan Buddhist mantra

Mashi xiao 马师校, *school name

mchod khang མཚོད་ཁང། shrine room

mdzo མཚོ། a male cow and female yak hybrid that it is larger than a yak and has shorter hair

Mdzo dge མཚོ་དགེ། *place name

mə je, this plant has small leaves and a fruit encased in a thick green skin. It grows in pastures where there is dense grass near streams.

mi ma yin མི་མ་ཡིན། spirit beings that are neither people, deities, or ghosts

mkhan po མཁན་པོ། abbot

Mkhan po Tshul khrum blo gros མཁན་པོ་ཚུལ་ཁུམ་བློ་གྲོས། *person's name

Mthun skyid མཐུན་སྐྱིད། *person's name

Mtsho bde མཚོ་བདེ། *person's name

Mtsho mo མཚོ་མོ། *person's name

mu མུ, *measure word

N

næn χbi nə you, My story has finished – a concluding formula for folk narratives

næ xhe pəjær, Was that fun? – a concluding formula for folk narratives

naχ læm, black earth

nə ƚar, northern (sunny) side of a valley

Nor bu རོར་བུ། *person's name

Nor po རོར་པོ། *person's name

Nor rgyam རོར་རྒྱམ། *person's name

Nor skyid རོར་སྐྱིད། *person's name

ŋə lɛ, *place name

ŋə sbəd, *place name

ŋə x^hovə, *place name

Nyi ma lha mo ཉི་མ་ལྷ་མོ། *person's name

O

oM ma ni pad+me hUM ཨོ་མ་ཎི་པདྨེ་ཧཱུྃ། mantra of Avalokiteshvara

P

Pan chen rin po che པན་ཆེན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། *person's name

Pad ma པད་མ། *place name

Padmasambhava, the founder of Rnying ma pa Tibetan Buddhism

pɛʂə tsə, a mallet used to break earth clods

p^hæ χə mɛ, sow

P^ho sɛ, *place name

p^hoyə, pig

Phub grub ཕུབ་གུབ། *scripture name

Puxi 西蒲, *place name

Q

q^hæd næ to səcɛ, stories that can make you laugh

Qiang 羌, *ethnic group

Qinghai 青海, *place name

R

Rangtang 壤塘, *place name

Rdo rje རྡོ་རྗེ། *person's name

Rdo rje tshe ring རྡོ་རྗེ་ཚེ་རིང་། *person's name

rə jav, husband

Reluo 热落, *person's name

rgə pro རྒེ་ཕྱུ། *place name

Rgyal ko རྒྱལ་ཀོ། *person's name

Rgyal mchog རྒྱལ་མཚོག། *person's name

Rgyal mtsho རྒྱལ་མཚོ། *person's name

rgyal po dpe རྒྱལ་པོ་དཔེ། king stories

Rig 'dzin རིག་འཛིན། *person's name

Rig 'dzin nyi ma རིག་འཛིན་ཉི་མ། *person's name

Rig 'phel རིག་འཕེལ། *person's name

Rigs gnas རིགས་གནས། *person's name

Rin chen རིན་ཚེན། *person's name

rjæ x^hæd, *place name

Rje tsong kha pa རྗེ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ། founder of the Dge lugs pa sect of

Tibetan Buddhism

Rka khog རྐ་ཁོག། *place name

Rnga ba རྩ་བ། *place name

Rnying ma ba རྩིང་མ་བ། *Buddhist sect

rñə mɛn, *river's name

ro རོ། corpse

Rong snong རོང་སྟོང་། *person's name
rtsam pa རྩམ་པ། roasted barley flour dough sometimes mixed
 with roasted corn flour
rtsis pa རྩེས་པ། an astronomer or fortune teller
 Rtsong khag རྩོང་ཁག་། *place name
ru lu རུ་ལུ། earth balls blessed by *bla ma* and considered to
 have medicinal qualities
 Ruoergai 若尔盖, *place name

S

sa gnas ས་གནས། *gnas yig* that are found under the earth
 Saluo 萨罗, *person's name
 San dui 三队, *place name
 Sanba funü jie 三八妇女节, *festival name
 Sang bze སང་བཟེ། *person's name
 Sangs sgron སངས་སྟོན། *person's name
sɛ si, local wild red fruit
ṣatçuyə, threshing flail
 Sgrol las སྟོལ་ལས། *person's name
 Sgrol ma སྟོལ་མ། *person's name
 Sgron dkar སྟོན་དཀར། *person's name
shan thabs ཤན་ཐབས། the outer, lower part of a monk's garment
 that resembles a long skirt
 Shangs skyid ཤངས་སྐྱིད། *person's name
 Shangzhai 上寨 *place name
 Shel ko ཤེལ་ཀོ། *person's name
 Shes rabs ཤེས་རབས། *person's name
 Shili 石里, *place name
 Sichuan 四川, *place name
 Siyuewu 斯跃武, *place name
 Skal ldan སྐལ་ལྷན། *person's name

forest

tui mu huancao 退亩还草, policy of returning pasture to
grass

tuo li ji 脱粒机, thresher

V

va, Lavrung particle used to form residents' names

va kə ʒem ɣu, *place name

vaχə ləm ɥu, *place name

vəcær ŋi, wild man

vro, *place name

vsə jo, stone mill

W

Wang Jun 王军, *person's name

Wang La 王腊, *person's name

Wang Ying 王映, *person's name

Wang Yong 王勇, *person's name

Wuyi laodong jie 五一劳动节, *festival name

X

χə bi, story

χə zor, small bearded animal similar to a mouse that
normally lives in fields, and eats grass and grain

xətsəm, a tool used to loosen soil that resembles both a hoe
and a mattock

x^hu zu ɣu, *place name

Xiangyang 襄阳, *place name

Xiaojin 小金, *place name

Xiaoyili 小伊里, *place name

χŋæʒ va, Hell

χna χna, long, long ago – an opening formula for folk
narratives

Y

- Yi dui 一队, *place name
 Yid bzhin lo ཡིད་བཞིན་ལོ། *person's name
 Yid she mtsho ཡིད་ཤེས་མཚོ། *person's name
 Yina 依娜, *person's name
 Yourigou 尤日沟, *place name
 Yuan dan 元旦, *festival name
 yle ཡལུ, *place name

Z

- zæ mɛ*, mothers and daughters
 zæn tʃi, *person's name
 zəgə me, rock
 zən pa rɛ, *family's name
 Ze e tong ཟེ་ཨེ་རྟོང་། *place name
 Zha go ཇམ་གོ། *person's name
 zhang ཇམ། abbreviated form of *a zhang*, the Tibetan term for
 maternal uncle
 Zhangs sgyong ཇམས་སྟོང་། *person's name
 Zhes lha ཇེས་ལྷ། *person's name
 Zla ba lha mo ཇལ་བ་ལྷ་མོ། *person's name
 Zongke 宗科, *place name
 Zor tsa ཇོར་ཅས། *place name
 zəbrə ཇུ, *place name

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