

Andreas Gruschke and Ingo Breuer (eds)

Tibetan Pastoralists and Development: Negotiating the Future of Grassland Livelihoods

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It is a bittersweet task to review this book, as its editor, geographer Andreas Gruschke, sadly passed away in January 2018. His Tibetan Studies colleagues around the world will sorely miss him. Co-edited with Ingo Breuer, *Tibetan Pastoralists and Development* builds on Gruschke's extensive research on contemporary Tibetan pastoralism. The volume brings together fifteen brief contributions, mostly by Tibetan, Chinese and European researchers. The origins of the volume lie in an international conference held in Beijing in December 2009. The time lag means that, with a few exceptions, authors do not seem to have updated their chapters with relevant literature published after 2012. Though not particularly new, the volume is nevertheless quite comprehensive in its coverage of issues facing contemporary Tibetan pastoralists.

The volume opens with two introductory chapters by the two co-editors. Chapter One explains the key aim of the book, namely to investigate the futures of Tibetan pastoralism in the context of the Chinese state's uniquely deep interventions into pastoral livelihoods and settings. The editors argue that, while pastoralism is unlikely to disappear, Tibetan pastoral communities are increasingly fragmented and differentiated. Chapter Two reminds readers of the geographical diversity of the Tibetan Plateau. Succinctly summarising recent political-economic transformations as well as pastoralists' changing relationships with rangeland and livestock, the authors stress the importance of grassland degradation and declining livestock productivity, the availability of caterpillar fungus, and state plans for urbanisation in shaping trajectories of *drokpa* (Tibetan pastoralist) lives and livelihoods.

In Chapter Three Wu Ning argues that climate change should not be analysed in isolation, but rather is interwoven with processes of globalisation. Drawing on data from the Zorge Plateau area of northern Sichuan and southern Gansu provinces, Wu further suggests that, while pastoralists have long had highly effective strategies for coping with climate events, they lack the same capabilities to cope with globalisation. These important points resonate with political ecology and discussions of 'double exposure' in the vulnerability literature.

Unfortunately, though, the chapter is in some places confusingly written, as when the author seems to make contradictory arguments about the relationship between precipitation and

livestock numbers.

The following three chapters all tackle the immensely important question of caterpillar fungus, known in Tibetan as *yartsa gunbu*. Daniel Winkler focuses on the extreme economic dependence of rural Tibetan households on caterpillar fungus, and on questions about the sustainability of the harvest. Though much of the material is familiar from his earlier publications, Winkler states that he has now come to believe that, at least in Yushu Tibet Autonomous Prefecture, caterpillar fungus production is facing a crisis of over-harvesting.

Linke's chapter argues that, contrary to popular opinion, Tibetans have significant power and agency in the caterpillar fungus market. The differentiated actors in this market include those with direct access to caterpillar fungus-producing pastures; those with indirect access due to kin relationships or *hukou* status; non-local harvesters with no access rights; and those who have contracted their grasslands to businesspeople who hire harvesters as wage labourers. Linke provides compelling descriptions of the precarious situation of non-local harvesters from non-producing regions who illegally try to access pastures. In contrast, pasture use rights-holders can mitigate their own financial risk while securing an income through contracting. Linke also provides evidence of a growing number of Tibetans engaging in large-scale full-time trading.

Luorongzhandui, Gruschke and Breuer's chapter discusses a report written by Luorongzhandui following a 2005 field study that found the lack of regulation of access to caterpillar fungus in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) leading to violent conflicts, environmental degradation and marginalisation of local residents. Luorongzhandui wrote a report to the government, which led to the implementation of a new TAR regulation on access. The authors state that this regulation has led to TAR locals receiving a significantly increased share of caterpillar fungus income, a decrease in poverty in producing regions, fewer conflicts and less habitat destruction.

Building on his earlier work on ecological resettlement from Madoi County in Golog Prefecture, Du Fachun's Chapter 7 discusses divergences between herders' and official views on the causes of grassland degradation, noting that resettlement may not fully address the underlying causes of degradation. Through the case of Madoi herders resettled in distant Tongde (Rebgong) County, Du analyses problems of livelihood and identity wrought by the ecological resettlement programme and offers helpful policy recommendations.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 all discuss the implementation of grassland division and enclosures.

Konchok Gelek draws on fieldwork in Yushu to argue that, though grassland division has increased household conflicts, some communities have maintained or returned to collective herding. In addition, he shows how the Four Allocations programme, which entailed provision of a house, shed, fencing material for reserve pasture and fodder production area to each household, has not necessarily positively impacted on livestock productivity. The evidence on butter production and loss of livestock from snowstorms is quite useful, despite the fact that the chapter does not really consider the full range of reasons why exclosures have not improved productivity.

The theme of exclosure is also developed by Jarmila Ptackova, who provides an overview of various types of fencing programmes on the Tibetan Plateau, how the programmes have been differentially implemented, and with what effects. Ptackova points out that wealthy households tend to oppose fencing of individual parcels, whereas households with fewer livestock tend to favour it because it enables them to more easily gain income from renting out their allocated pasture. Like the previous chapter, this one reproduces the common assumption that exclosure necessarily leads to faster regeneration of vegetation, confusing the distinction between accumulated biomass and new annual production.

Yan Zhaoli's Chapter 10 draws on case studies from different parts of the Tibetan Plateau to argue that local herders need to be involved in decision-making and policy implementation processes. Like Konchok Gelek, she observes that, despite rangeland use rights privatisation, herders in some areas have (re)initiated their own forms of co-management and common property in ways that both decrease wealth gaps and improve resilience.

In Chapter 11, Dawa Tsering and John Farrington, both formerly of WWF in Tibet, discuss the results of a 2006 survey on human–wildlife conflict in the southern Chang Tang. They find a dramatic and geographically differentiated increase in pastoralist conflicts with brown bears, snow leopards, wolves, fox and lynx, as well as grazing competition with wild ungulates, after the creation of nature reserves and confiscation of guns and traps. Based on these findings, they warn about undocumented retaliatory killing of wildlife by herders on whose livestock and houses there has been predation, particularly by bears.

Next, Shamo Thar takes up the extraordinarily important issue of how the 2009 Education Centralisation Policy, which has closed village primary schools in favour of township and county boarding schools, has affected education and lives in pastoral areas. Based on a case study from Xinghai County, Qinghai, she finds that the programme has increased financial

burdens, due to the need for family members to move to town to be with young children, and resulted in high dropout rates for pastoral children.

The following chapter, by Marc Foggin and Marion Torrence Foggin, summarises the authors' experience working with a local Tibetan herding community in Zhiduo County, Qinghai, beginning in 1998 with their NGO, Plateau Perspectives, and through the five-year Yangtze River Headwaters Sustainable Development project beginning in 2003. Reviewing their successful work with local communities in their priority areas of health, education and environmental protection, the authors demonstrate that sustainability and services do not require relocation of herders to towns. They also provide a helpful update of new community-based and co-management projects in which they engaged following the Yushu earthquake of 2010.

The last two chapters, by Tibetan women, refreshingly take on the challenges of gender roles in Tibetan society. Based on interviews conducted in Nyerong County, TAR in 2010, Tsering Yangdzom finds that, despite settlement, housing projects and increased infrastructure, the basic gender division of labour remains unchanged for pastoral households. Women work longer hours and have a significantly smaller role than men in household decision-making. In the final chapter, Lhamotso articulates an explicitly feminist critique of Tibetan folktales, understandings of karma, and gendered language as anchors of gender inequity across the Tibetan Plateau.

I have some small quibbles with the volume. In a few places authors reproduce problematic and almost certainly exaggerated figures about grassland degradation. Most of the authors do not address recent developments, such as changes in caterpillar fungus demand in the face of high-level anti-corruption drives, or engage with the most up-to-date literature. Nevertheless, the volume is admirably thorough in its coverage of issues, provides very informative data and delivers a coherent set of arguments about the need to take Tibetan herders' perspectives, experiences and knowledge seriously, and about Tibetan herders' agency in shaping future *drokpa* trajectories. The volume's inclusion of many Tibetan authors is also a definite strength. In sum, it will be of great interest to those new to the field of contemporary Tibetan pastoralism as well as a handy reference for seasoned researchers and practitioners.

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