Tibetan pastoralism in neoliberalising China: continuity and change in Gouli

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The effects of neoliberal contexts on livestock production have been relatively ignored in geography. This paper contributes to this literature through a case study of continuity and change in pastoralism on the Tibetan Plateau in China. Since use rights to winter pasture were allocated to individual households, herders in Gouli, Qinghai, have developed an extensive, new practice of renting livestock and pasture from each other. Written contracts entail a calculation of potential price of livestock and pasture, as well as a mechanism for the wealthy to offload risk of livestock loss onto the poor. Social relations between family members have become monetised as herders become market actors. At the same time, however, these transactions allow herders to partially maintain flexibility over the opportunistic use of pasture resources that has long been at the basis of pastoralist livelihood strategies. They engage in these practices in order to maintain, rather than give up, their identities as Tibetan pastoralists, which also manifest in the limited spheres in which profit-making and entrepreneurialism are condoned. Thus, pastoralists are adapting to their new circumstances, though in potentially compromising ways. As a form of governance, neoliberal rationality intersects in contingent ways not only with other logics of governance but also with historically rooted identities and cultural idioms.

Key words: Tibet, China, qualitative interviewing, pastoralism, land allocation, neoliberalism

Introduction

Noting both the importance of livestock production as the world’s most extensive land use and its relative neglect in the discipline, a recent special issue of Geoforum called for greater attention to pastoralism and rangeland in the geography of neoliberal capitalism (Sayre 2009). In Africa, efforts to maintain their own identities and ways of life within increasingly neoliberal contexts have led herders to adopt strategies that have intensified the commodification of social relations (Gardner 2009; Turner 2009). In Côte d’Ivoire, grazing rights and land lending are being monetised in anticipation of the implementation of a new land privatisation law. These new conditions constrain herd mobility, which will likely reduce pastoralists’ productivity (Bassett 2009). In the West African Sahel, increasing numbers of livestock are owned by investors, revealing the way in which livestock can serve as capital, a role that has intensified in the broader neoliberal context (Turner 2009).

We contribute to this literature through a case study from Gouli Township, Qinghai Province, a Tibetan pastoral area in China. Referring broadly to a political and ideological project that calls for reducing the role of the state and expanding the free market into ever-widening spheres of life, the term neoliberalism is now frequently used in reference to techniques of governance in China’s transition to its ‘socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics’ (Yan 2003; Harvey 2005; Wu 2008). Despite arguments that such a use stretches the term too far (Nonini 2008), we find ‘neoliberalisation’ useful to mark the deepening of market reforms since Deng Xiaoping’s 1992 ‘southern tour’, including an emphasis on commodification, the withdrawal of state welfare provisions, privatisation of formerly commonly owned assets, and increasing disparities between rich and poor. As Ong and Zhang argue, although Chinese state authorities have officially rejected the adoption of neoliberal strategies, neoliberal logics of entrepreneurialism and self-enterprise have in fact shaped the economy; ‘the adoption of neoliberal reasoning has made possible a kind of socialism at a distance, in which privatizing norms and practices proliferate in symbiosis with the maintenance of authoritarian rule’ (2006, 4).

In China’s pastoral areas, this has entailed a decentralisation of decisionmaking regarding livestock and pasture...
management to individual herders and the privatisation of use rights to pasture, but not the complete privatisation of land ownership rights or withdrawal of the state. Instead, the state has promoted numerous development projects based on the assumption that herders are insufficiently market-oriented. Its role has thus shifted from managing resources directly to trying to set the conditions for herders to become efficient and enterprising resource managers. Ongoing projects to ‘rationalise’ and individualise pastoralism through fencing, imposition of carrying capacities, housing and sedentarisation, and technical improvements for shelters and forage production are designed to help transform pastoralists into ranchers. As Sayre (2009) notes, many of these features have characterised pastoral development projects around the world since the 1950s; what makes them neoliberal is the larger geopolitical and economic context in which they are unfolding.

This study is part of a larger project on the sociopolitical and biophysical causes of grassland degradation on the Tibetan Plateau. In seeking to calculate grazing intensities, we learned that over the past decade, all households in the study area have become involved in extensive grassland and livestock contracting. While grassland renting has been mentioned in passing in the literature on Tibetan pastoralism, Gouli herders appear to be at the forefront of uneven processes of neoliberalisation on the Tibetan Plateau in the extent to which they have embraced the commodification of social relations in their transactions over pasture and livestock (cf. Levine 1999; Banks et al. 2003; Bauer 2005; Yan and Wu 2005; Yan et al. 2005; Richard et al. 2006; Sheehey et al. 2006). We examine the historical and geographical contexts of pastoralism in Gouli, patterns of land and livestock contracting, and the implications of the latter for their identity as drokpa, to or Tibetan herders.

Tibetans in Gouli: bypassed by state development

Our study was conducted from June to August 2009 in Village Five, home to 37 households and 175 residents, of Gouli (Tibetan: Guru) Township, in Dulan County, Haixi Mongol and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province (Figure 1). We conducted semi-structured interviews and extensive participant observation with 17 households. The only dirt road from the Gouli township seat to the Qinghai–Tibet highway is occasionally washed

Figure 1 Map of study area location
(Map by Galen Maclaurin)
out by summer rains. Because there is no public transpor-
tation, many herders have purchased motorcycles and
second-hand Beijing jeeps to access the market in Xian-
gride Township on the highway. Even with their jeeps, the
roughly 100-kilometre trip takes 3–6 hours. As of 2009,
Village Five did not have grid electricity or cell phone
service, though many households use solar panels to
power lights and televisions, serviced by small satellite
dishes. Because the township is remote and difficult to get
to, township leaders rarely work on site, spending most of
their time living in the county seat.

Prior to the establishment of Gouli Township in 1958,
the Guru dawa (tribe) claimed a much larger area, which
extended south to Tsonak (Ch: Donggei Cuona) Lake, now
part of Maduo County of Golog (Ch: Goluo) Prefecture.
The boundary between Gouli and Golog was fuzzy and
mobile due to frequent conflicts over livestock raiding and
access to land. After the demarcation of the boundary in
1958, Gouli became part of Dulan County, in which
Tibetans account for 22.7 per cent of the population,
Mongolians for 12.5 per cent and Han Chinese for 56.8
per cent, with the remainder being other minority groups.
Unlike most Tibetan pastoralists in China, who reside in
counties and prefectures in which Tibetans are the major-
ity population, Tibetans in Dulan are in the minority.

Gouli pastoralists complain that Mongolians dominate
government positions in Dulan, and that Mongolian areas
are favoured as targets for state projects whereas they, as
Tibetans, are marginalised. They also observe that herders
in Golog, with whom they have frequent contact, receive
more state development aid, in the form of subsidised
fencing, housing and road building. Far from rejecting
state interventions into pastoralism, herders in Gouli want
to make greater claims on the state for more development,
in part because of their perception of marginalisation (Li
1999; Zukosky 2007). These contingent factors have
shaped the way in which Gouli herders seek to manoeu-
vre within the broader neoliberalising context.

History of grassland management and
property rights

Before the 1950s, each household in Gouli owned its own
livestock, while pasture was held in common. Because
there was extensive grassland and a relatively small popu-
lation, herders did not have clearly demarcated areas for
the four seasons, as is the case today. Instead, they moved
longer distances between summer and winter pasture, but
also frequently made smaller moves within these two
general areas as needed. One or two exceptionally rich
households owned more than 200 yaks and 1000 sheep,
a handful owned roughly 100 yaks and 200 sheep, while
the remaining owned only 10–20 yaks, or no livestock at
all; the latter worked as labourers for livestock owners.

In the late 1950s, the state collectivised livestock, trans-
forming them from private to communal ownership. Unlike
many Tibetan pastoral areas, where production was
carried out by work teams assigned specific herding
tasks, in Gouli production for the commune still took
place through household units. Each household was
assigned an average of 100–200 yaks and 300–500 sheep;
these belonged to the commune but were grazed by the
household on a designated piece of the commune’s land.
In most cases, households used the same land each year,
though work team leaders adjusted livestock numbers and
land as necessary. Commune members between the ages
of 12 and 18 were considered half-labourers, while those
aged 18–60 were full labourers; each half-labour unit
 corresponded to herding 40 sheep, while each full labour
unit was assigned 60 yaks or 100 sheep. Work points were
assigned based on the amount of labour done, with 10
work points a day being the maximum, convertible to 2
RMB.2 Those households who earned 1000 RMB at the
end of the year – those with plentiful labour power – were
considered wealthy. Dairy products were collected from
the households, and could then be purchased back for
consumption through accumulated work points.

After Deng Xiaoping’s introduction of economic reform
in 1978, communes were dismantled and, in pastoral
areas, livestock were decollectivised. In Gouli, this took
place in 1983, at which time each herder over 18 received
12 yaks and 50 sheep, and those under 18 received half as
many. Two years before this, Villages Five and Six were
split. Village Five received the higher altitude land, chang-
ing land formerly used as summer and spring–fall pasture
into winter pasture, which shifted herd composition
towards a higher proportion of yaks. Unlike most pastoral
areas on the Tibetan Plateau, where winter pastures were
shared until the mid-1990s, government officials in Gouli
divided winter pastures to individual households shortly
after livestock decollectivisation. These pastures were
usually valleys or other areas marked by natural land-
scape features, mostly continuing patterns established
during the commune. Unlike winter pasture, spring–fall
and summer pastures continued to be used in common, as
they still are today (Table 1).

China’s 1985 Grassland Law introduced the Pasture
Contract System, an extension of the Household Respon-
sibility System to pastoral areas. The allocation of grass-
lands to individual households called in effect for the
transition to a ranching-style of pasture management,
though formal ownership rights to the land are retained by
the collective. A tragedy of the commons assumption was
made that overgrazing was leading to rangeland degrada-
tion, and that only privatisation would give herders incen-
tive to adequately manage their grasslands. In addition, it
was believed that this would encourage herders to
manage their assets for profit, helping them participate in
the market economy. In short, the household allocation of grassland use rights was seen as a way of converting an unproductive, traditional nomadic way of life into an efficient market-oriented production system (Levine 1999; Bauer 2005; Richard et al. 2006).

Implementation began in Inner Mongolia after 1985, but not until the mid-1990s on the Tibetan Plateau. Implementation has varied significantly, though in most places on the Plateau it is limited to winter pasture. It was introduced in Gouli in 1996, at which time herdsmen received grassland use rights certificates that legally gave them exclusive use rights to their winter pastures for 50 years. In some areas, such as Gouli, as well as Hongyuan County in Sichuan, there is strict enforcement of allocation to individual households. In others, such as Maqu County in Gansu, use rights have been contracted to individual households, but local governments have allowed groups of up to ten households to pool their pastures and share labour. Households with more livestock compensate those with fewer. In still other areas, such as Naqu in the Tibet Autonomous Region, households have the choice of individual household allotment contracts, contracts to groups of households, or contracts to the entire natural village. In the latter case, use rights per family are still calculated and a grazing fee collected per livestock unit. These fees are then redistributed from households with more livestock to those with fewer (Banks et al. 2003; Richard et al. 2006).

Gouli is unusual in that winter pasture was allocated to individual households more than a decade earlier than the formal introduction of the Pasture Contract System, which gave legal force to the system already in place. Rather than being reshuffled across the landscape, pastoralists in Gouli continued to herd their livestock on pasture they had been using since livestock decollectivisation. Some household boundaries are marked by boundary fences, while others are not, but all are in force. These changes have significantly reduced flexibility and mobility compared with patterns in place during the commune and earlier.

### Intra-village pasture and livestock contracting

Given the importance of mobility and flexibility for the opportunistic use of patchy rangeland resources, the hardening of boundaries around winter pastures at the household level creates the potential for a reduction in productivity (Scoones 1995; Niamir-Fuller 1999; McCabe 2004; Fernandez-Gimenez 2006; Kerven et al. 2008). This challenge of grassland allocation manifests in different ways, depending on each household’s herding skills, labour availability and pasture size. To meet these challenges, all households in Village Five (and across the township) now engage in some type of use rights leasing transaction over land and livestock with other households. The earlier division of winter pasture to individual households in Gouli vis-à-vis other areas on the Tibetan Plateau, and thus the longer period of reduced flexibility, helps explain the earlier emergence of intensive intra-village contracting. These transactions, which have become the norm in Gouli in the past decade, are now starting to emerge in other pastoral areas as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Livestock and land rights in Gouli</th>
<th>Other parts of Tibetan Plateau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1958</td>
<td>Livestock privately owned; pasture held in common</td>
<td>In some places in Central Tibet, pastures owned by estates and monasteries rather than in common by kinship or tribal groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Livestock and pasture collectivised. However, herding labour done by individual households on pastures designated by the commune</td>
<td>Collectivisation of livestock and pasture. Herding labour organised in work teams rather than individual households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Decollectivisation of livestock</td>
<td>Decollectivisation of livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985–6 Allocation of winter pasture to individual households</td>
<td>Grassland Law passed in 1985 but Pasture Contract System not introduced on Tibetan Plateau until about a decade later. Shared use of winter pasture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Pasture Contract System (50 year exclusive use rights to land for individual households) introduced for winter pasture. In Gouli this represented less of a change than in most areas because of government’s decision to allocate winter pasture in 1985–6</td>
<td>Grassland use rights leasing policy introduced in mid-1990s or later on the Tibetan Plateau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 and later</td>
<td>Land and livestock contracting become common</td>
<td>Maqu: pooled labour and pasture for groups of up to 10 households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Naqu: contracts to individuals, or groups, or to entire natural village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gouli’s contracting extensive and early (but now starting to emerge in other places on Tibetan Plateau)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Those herders who seek to maintain a higher level of livestock production than they calculate their current pastures can support do one of several things. Some rent pasture for periods of months to years, paying in cash, livestock or dairy products. Others rent pasture and agree to herd the pasture (use rights) owner’s livestock (along with their own), trading their labour for access to additional land. Still others contract out part of their livestock herd to others. This can be accomplished by paying cash for labour, by providing the person who herds their livestock with fencing or other materials, or by providing 65–70 per cent of the newly born livestock each year as payment.

Lhaptrik, a former village leader with a reputation as a particularly skilled herder, serves as a good illustration of the strategies of herders with adequate labour power but insufficient pasture. Lhaptrik calculates that his winter pasture can support 200 sheep and 50 yaks. Beginning in 2002, when his sheep herd reached 450, he began to contract other herders’ land for both his yak and sheep; in this way he maintains his current herd of 800 sheep and 150 yaks. This involves a frequently shifting and intricate suite of transactions with other villagers. In 2008, for example, Lhaptrik herded both his own sheep and 150 of those belonging to Wangchuk on a combination of his own winter pasture and the pasture of a herder named Genko. Wangchuk had acted as a middleman, contracting livestock and pasture from Genko, with the provision that at the end of the year Wangchuk would return to Genko all of the livestock plus an additional 30 per cent of that year’s new livestock. Wangchuk then contracted the rights to Genko’s land to Lhaptrik. Furthermore, Lhaptrik has not used his own pasture for yaks since 2000. In 2008, he contracted 100 out of his 150 yaks to a pastoralist in Golog, while also herding his remaining 50 yaks, and 200 yaks belonging to a herder named Drikhu, on Drikhu’s land. This transaction was not negotiated directly with Drikhu, however, but rather with Huanchanjia, who contracted Drikhu’s pasture as well as his yaks, and who in turn subleased them to Lhaptrik.

Whereas Lhaptrik has many livestock and relatively little pasture, others have large pastures and few livestock. These households either rent out their pastures for cash or livestock, or herd others’ livestock for cash, dairy products or young livestock born that year. They can do this just on their own pastures, or in combination with the livestock owner’s pasture. For instance, Dortri calculates that his land can support 600 sheep in a good year, but he now owns only 50 sheep and 80 yaks. In 2008 he contracted in 110 female shear from Trigko and 95 female sheep from Wangchuk. In exchange for doing the labour to herd their sheep, he received the new livestock born that year minus 30 per cent given back to the livestock owner.

The system of contracting has led some families to shift their herds over the last 5 years to a greater proportion of sheep, which can be sold sooner and are more easily contracted than yaks. While the environmental effects remain to be fully investigated, it is clear that these practices of contracting livestock and renting pasture constitute an effort to maintain the flexibility that has always been central for livestock productivity. At the same time, however, they also subtly entail the creation of more neoliberal oriented social relations and subjectivities. These practices make it necessary for herders to calculate the quality, value and size of their pasture and its capacity for sustaining livestock, as well as the costs and benefits of investment in their livestock and pasture.

In contrast to oral agreements for livestock herding that were occasionally used in the past, the new contracts for livestock and land rentals are written, with clear specifications of responsibilities and benefits. These contracts include terms that mandate compensation for livestock deaths. This becomes important during large snowstorms, which are a recurring risk for herding on the Tibetan Plateau and which frequently lead to significant livestock mortality. Indeed, it was the conjunction of severe snowstorms in the late 1990s with the deepening of economic reforms and reduced flexibility that led to the prevalence of the contracting system in Gouli. By contracting large numbers of livestock to poorer families and requiring them to return the full herd plus 30 per cent of newly born livestock, regardless of snow conditions, wealthier households essentially conscript poorer households into bearing their risk. In Village Five, this has caused some poorer households to become indebted to wealthier families, leading to a widening of the gap between rich and poor.

The shaping of more market-oriented subjectivities is also reflected in the price norms that have developed. In contrast to the nominal fees one might expect villagers to charge one another in a small, tight-knit community, there is little hesitation within Gouli to engage in high price transactions and exploitation of price differences, suggesting a gradual disembedding of the market from social relations. During the harsh winter of 2008, for example, monastery director Riktrup rented a small monastery pasture to one herder for 5000 RMB, who in turn rented it to another for 15,000 RMB for a single month. In another example, Trigko contracted 100 female yaks to one of his relatives, Palchen Gyal. The contract specified that Palchen Gyal could use Trigko’s winter pasture, and keep the calves and dairy products, for a fee of 30,000 RMB. These are extraordinary prices in a county where average net yearly income is officially reported at roughly 3000 RMB.3 In the former case the price was especially high because of the scarcity of usable pasture during a bad snowstorm. This kind of arbitrage reflects the commodifi-
cation of social relations between villagers. The latter case shows market logic at work even in relations between relatives, suggesting the deepening of calculative logics and the way in which profit motives have become ‘common sense’ in interactions among kin and fellow villagers, a reduction of family relations to money relations (Marx and Engels 1848; Polanyi 1944).

**Drokpa identity**

Gouli residents’ enthusiastic embrace of contracting appears to be the successful fulfilment of state aims of turning pastoralists into efficient market producers, within the larger political context in which the outright privatization of land ownership (as opposed to use rights) is ideologically inadmissible. However, as Ong and Zhang argue, neoliberal rationality can be present in a given situation without being the only or dominant logic of governance. Instead, the interplay of different global and situated elements that produce a particular space ‘crystallizes conditions of possibility and outcomes that do not follow a given formula or script’ (2006, 10). Whereas they emphasize divergent logics of governance, we stress here the role of cultural formations and the importance of identity as real forces that interact with elements of neoliberal calculation. Even as herdsmen in Gouli become subjects who calculate the monetary values of their pastures and livestock, their reshaping of their own behaviours is motivated not in order to give up their lives and identities as drokpa, but rather precisely to maintain them. As in East Africa, where crop cultivation by pastoralists has increasingly been seen as necessary for being able to afford to keep livestock, and thus for maintaining pastoralists’ cultural identity (McCabe 2003a 2003b), these Tibetan pastoralists are thus far adopting new neoliberal techniques to maintain an identity and a set of practices valued as ‘traditional’.

One manifestation of herdsmen’s desire to maintain their identity is their relationship to the black yak-hair tent (mgo sbra), ubiquitous until recently across the Tibetan Plateau. These traditional, durable, heavy tents are handmade out of yak hair collected from each household’s herds. As such they are widely recognised symbols of Tibetan drokpa identity. In the past decade, however, a new type of white fabric tent has become available for sale in the market and popular among herdsmen. Herders call them ‘moveable tents’, because they are lighter and easier to transport and set up, and more comfortable than traditional black tents. Despite the fact that herdsmen in Gouli now largely live in houses at their winter and spring/autumn pastures, and in the manufactured white fabric tents in the summer, many state that it is important to them to keep their black tents as a symbol of their identity, even if they are not used. In response to questions about rumours that some herdsmen had sold their black tents, Norphel, who has been a township doctor for about 20 years but still considers himself to be a drokpa, replied that he had not sold his tent nor did he intend to do so because ‘they are the inheritance from our ancestors and have symbolic meaning for us. It means being a herder. I will keep it.’ He added that it would be a bad omen to sell one’s tent, as it to predict the disappearance or destruction of one’s household. Similarly, Samkho, the richest villager, who has contracted all of his livestock to others while he engages in various forms of trade and runs a store in Xiangride township, also refuses to sell his tent because it would mean the loss of a key marker of being a drokpa.

Most villages also explicitly express an affinity for the grasslands. Lhaptrik stated that, as a former village leader, he had been on a trip to visit Hong Kong and Shenzhen. He was greatly impressed by the construction, as well as the fact that residents of these cities did not need to do physical labour to make a living. By contrast, he noted, Tibetan herdsmen must work extremely hard. Nevertheless, he believed that most herdsmen would want to stay on the grasslands if possible.

Even though it is very developed in the cities and comfortable to live there, I feel it is much better to live as a herder, able to see the livestock and the grasslands every day. I feel much happier living as a herder than I would as a city resident. Contracting of livestock and pastures enables him and his family to continue to stay on the grasslands in livestock production, maintaining their identities as Tibetan herdsmen.

Although herdsmen in Gouli frequently buy and sell livestock from each other, and also sell their livestock to middlemen to generate income, none have tried to earn a living by becoming middlemen in the business of livestock sales to slaughterhouses. They make a distinction between this activity and selling one’s own livestock, considered much less sinful. In our interviews, herdsmen stated that they would not engage in livestock trade for slaughter even if they had many loans to pay off. Herders also continue to engage in the practice of tshe thar, or ‘liberating’ livestock, designating a certain number of livestock that they will raise to old age without consuming or selling. Market reforms have shaped herdsmen as market actors, but situated cultural politics still shape realms considered to be inappropriate for market logic to penetrate.

Finally, Gouli herdsmen offer their own culturally specific explanations of wealth differentiation, which simultaneously differ from a neoliberal ideology of self-reliance and hard work, but also help to maintain and in a sense, justify, growing inequalities. On the one hand, availability of labour power and hard work are seen as necessary for
household prosperity – herders (or their children) must be willing to follow their flocks of sheep throughout the day, to guide them toward different patches of vegetation as appropriate, and to guard against wolf attacks. On the other hand, our interviewees also pointed to examples of herding families who did ‘work hard’, but were nevertheless relatively poor, with few livestock. As one wealthy herder said about a poorer family:

Danba Tsang has good winter pasture, but they really don’t have many livestock. I don’t know why. They work very hard . . . In the collective days, when religious practice was not allowed, a government official said that there is no such thing as karma. But I think there is such thing as karma . . . I think the reason that they have such small numbers of livestock may have something do with their karma.

Conclusion

The commodified social relations of herders’ recently deployed contract system, including the offloading of risk onto poorer households, the high prices herders have become willing to charge their fellow villagers, and the introduction of calculative logics in the valuation of grassland and livestock for rentals, suggest the influence of neoliberal social arrangements. At the same time, however, these new strategies have enabled herders to continue to stay on their pastures by finding a way, at least temporarily, to mitigate the loss of mobility and flexibility brought by pasture allocation and codified by the household use rights contracting system. In other words, herders in Gouli have adopted market-oriented practices to manoeuvre within the spaces and challenges brought by state policies, to try to create new forms of flexibility needed to maintain livestock production, which is central to their identity as drokpa.

These practices may contribute to deepening inequality, but this is understood locally not as the result of the uneven development of capitalism, but rather through the cultural idiom of karma. Furthermore, while seeking to make what is in some cases a significant profit from rentals of grassland use rights and from trading livestock and reinvesting the income in other forms of business, Gouli herders have not also sought to maximise their profits by selling others’ livestock directly to slaughterhouses. Thus the larger context of China’s transformation toward capitalism has not had straightforward effects on Tibetan pastoralists in Gouli; instead, what is happening is an ongoing and often contradictory process of compromise as new logics of rule negotiate with sedimented cultural identities and deep-rooted pastoral practices.

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Notes

1 In Wylie transliteration: ’brog pa.
2 Renminbi, the currency of China.
3 Based on interviews, we estimate average income to be about 6000 RMB per year.

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