ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND LOCAL SOCIETIES:
"CHANGE IN WORLDS" IN THE SONGPAN REGION, 1800-2005

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the relationship between human societies and natural landscape in the Songpan region of northern Sichuan, China from 1800 to 2005. It seeks to achieve three goals. First, it seeks to complicate our understanding of China's modern political transformation from dynastic state to republic and socialist state by adding an environmental perspective to these changes. Second, it seeks to complicate existing understanding of China's environmental history, which is largely concerned with developments in "China proper," by focusing on an isolated and historically autonomous locality in western China. Finally, this dissertation seeks to understand the historical processes that led to the region's gradual incorporation into the Chinese state in terms of changing patterns of land use, resource management, and how a variety of local actors interacted with one another to produce these changes. To achieve these goals, the dissertation explores and analyzes the various ways that indigenous communities, largely Tibetan, and successive Chinese states have inhabited the eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau and how their socio-economic structures, land use strategies, political ideologies, and technologies combined with environmental factors to shape the world around them.

This program of research contributes a local environmental and socio-economic dimension to existing political and religious histories of the Sino-Tibetan borderlands. No separate study has analyzed the social, political, economic and environmental encounters in the late imperial, Republican, and modern periods as a whole in western China. In order to analyze the dynamics of local socio-economic and environmental change, this dissertation de-centers
China geographically and socially in order to look at an "exceptional typical" periphery. In the process, it challenges common and ideological historical chronologies of social and political development in western China. By analyzing Tibetan-Chinese political, social and market relations, it also adds to the literature of local elite and state patterns of dominance in twentieth century China. Finally, it contributes to a growing literature on Chinese environmental history by analyzing the role of changing systems of resource use and development in western China while revealing the often complex and dialectical ways that human societies and environmental factors have interacted in western China.
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<td>Aba thou wenshi ziliao xuanji</td>
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<td>AZZ 1994</td>
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<td>AZZZGK 1985</td>
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<td>SAZSD 1985</td>
<td>Sichuan sheng aba zangzu shehui lishi diaocha</td>
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In 1903, in the waning days of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), a European visitor reported that the Songpan region was a constant scene of Han-Tibetan fighting in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the region was under the nominal jurisdiction of the Qing government, local officials rarely interfered with local Tibetan elites outside of the town of Songpan. His report also noted the region's rich and untapped natural resources, lively provincial and local commodity trade, and the numerically superior and industrious Tibetan population along the Min River and around town.¹ This apt description of north-central Sichuan depicts it as a rugged, mountainous and isolated landscape inhabited by diverse communities, few of them Chinese. Approximately thirty years later, a Chinese journalist visiting the same region and town noted continuing inter-ethnic strife and apparent local autonomy in the Songpan and Nanping Counties. He also described the terribly impoverished Tibetan population, the coercive landlord and opium based economy, an excess of official and deserter Han Chinese military forces, and a natural environment headed toward ruin.² In the late 1950s, anthropological and socio-economic studies initiated by the new socialist state explored the same topics, noting many of the same problems with the exception of environmental concerns. The cadres emphasized that under the new centralized socialist state, this region was undergoing

¹ William C. Haines Watson was an Imperial Maritimes Commissioner of the British government in Chongqing who oversaw tax and customs receipts in Sichuan that were ostensibly used to pay down the Qing debt dating from the Opium Wars (1839-42, 1858-60). See William C. Haines Watson, “Journey to Sungp’an,” in Journal of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society 36 (1905), 51-101; 74-81.

² The journalist was Fan Changjiang. His study of western China highlighted inter-ethnic tensions, poverty, and the costs of warfare. In 1935 this meant war between Sichuan warlords, Mao Zedong’s Long Marchers, Nationalist forces, and bandits. His account was produced in serial form for newspaper readers in eastern China. See Fan Changjiang, Zhongguo de xibei jiao [China’s Northwest Corner] (Shanghai: Dagong bao guan, 1934). China’s Northwest Corner appeared serially in the Shanghai Dagong bao guan in 1934-35. I used a reprint, Fan Changjiang, Zhongguo de xibei jiao [China’s Northwest Corner] (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1980), 23-28.
great change. Local elites were being replaced by central officials, land was redistributed, and means were being sought to exploit the rich natural resources and labor pool for the good of the nation. Finally, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, other Chinese authors continued to note the rich natural resources, especially grasslands and forests of the region that was now one of four separate counties with a small but now more diverse ethnic community with the presence of more Han Chinese. These authors also noted the problems of the isolated regional economy that also included a growing tourism sector, and that the Songpan region was an indelible part of the Chinese nation. Since the late imperial period, officials and settlers, local ethnic elites and commoners, central and local governments, and tourists have in their interactions with one another encountered a variety of individual polities and local landscapes, practiced a variety of market exchanges, and exploited the natural resources of the Songpan region. This study relates these social, economic and ecological encounters—the story of the changes wrought in local society and landscapes, and of Songpan’s incorporation into the wider Chinese world.

This dissertation examines the relationship between the human society and the natural landscape of the Songpan region of northern Sichuan, China from 1800 to 2005. It seeks to achieve three goals. First, it seeks to enrich and complicate our understanding of China’s modern political transformation from dynastic state to republic and socialist state by adding an environmental perspective to these changes. Second, it seeks to complicate existing

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3 See Nationalities Institute of Minority Nationalities of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Sichuan Investigation Team of Social History of National Minorities, Sichuan sheng abazhou zangzu shehui lishi diaocha [A Survey of Tibetan Society and History in Aba Prefecture, Sichuan Province] (neibu, collection of 1957-61 field reports from various cadres, university study groups, anthropologists, and army survey teams). Most of these reports were reprinted in 1985 under Nationalities Institute of Minority Nationalities of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Southwest Nationalities College, Sichuan sheng abazhou zangzu shehui lishi diaocha [A Survey of Tibetan Society and History in Aba Prefecture, Sichuan Province] (Chengdu: Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1985) (hereafter SAZSD), 20-24.

4 See Editorial Board of Aba Prefecture, Aba zangzu zizhizhou gaikuang [A General Description of Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture] (Chengdu: Minzu chubanshe, 1985), 1-12; Da Er’ji and Li Mao, Aba tonglun [An Overview of Aba (Prefecture)] (Chengdu: Sichuan cishu chubanshe, 2001, 2nd ed.), 6-23, 52-76; Ran Guangrong and Ou Zegao, Sichuan zangqu de fazhan zhi lu [The Development Path in Sichuan Tibetan Areas] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2000).
understanding of China’s environmental history, which is largely concerned with developments in “China proper” (the eastern and central provinces) by focusing on an isolated and historically autonomous locality in western China. Finally, this dissertation seeks to understand the historical processes that led to the region’s gradual incorporation into the Chinese state in terms of changing patterns of land use, resource management, and how a variety of local actors—Tibetan, Han Chinese, state officials, local elites, and businessmen—interacted with one another to produce these changes. To achieve these goals, the dissertation explores and analyzes the various ways that indigenous communities, largely Tibetan, and successive Chinese states have inhabited the eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau and how their socio-economic structures, land use strategies, political ideologies, and technologies combined with environmental factors to shape the world around them.

Changes in the Songpan region in the twentieth century were so great that local Tibetans use the term 'Jig rTen (a shift in worlds) to describe their magnitude and constancy. In the Songpan region, the legacy of changing markets, different patterns of land use, local autonomy and incorporation under the socialist state, and technological and environmental factors demonstrates that both Tibetans and Chinese progressively extended their reach over regional ecosystems. They eventually reengineered local society and landscapes to serve national states, regional markets and local needs. Prior to the 1950s, the most important agents of social and environmental change were local Tibetan elites, supplemented in the early twentieth century by increasing numbers of Han Chinese elites, criminal networks, and state military officials. But the social, political and economic transformations of the late imperial and Republican eras were small compared to the transformative power of the socialist state and state-led command economy after the 1950s, and even larger market forces later on. Under state-led command
economies, ideological and social remodeling, and infrastructure development the socialist
Chinese state accelerated processes of resource and socio-political development that resulted in
the incorporation of this previously isolated and autonomous region into the centralized political
and economic structures of the modern Chinese state. Yet the development and implementation
of state policy in this largely Tibetan region was neither linear nor uniform.

The major agents of political and social change included not just state representatives
after the 1950s, but also local Tibetan elites, who sometimes faced great ideological pressures
from the state, and at other times helped shape local and regional social and political practices
vis-à-vis the central state. Changes in land and resource use patterns were not just a function of
state quotas or local elite patterns of dominance, but a reaction to a variety of economic forces in
the twentieth century that included changing tax structures, access to and control of timber,
redistribution of land, and the globalization of ethno-ecological tourism to name a few. At the
same time, all of these changes and processes of transformation combined to transform the
regional landscape—a landscape shaped by both Tibetans and the Chinese state. Changes from
land use strategies that promoted biological diversity and relative ecological stability in the
forests and grasslands of the Songpan region shifted to more ideological and commercial
strategies in the twentieth century. These changes led to a profound restructuring of the local
landscape, more profound than earlier Tibetan transformations of the forests and grasslands. In
the process of environmental and resource transformation, local society was also fundamentally
reshaped in such a way that local ethnic cultures became commodities in much the same manner
as the environment, and it was likewise exploited.
1.2 The Scope and Purpose of the Dissertation

Dissatisfied with the general and often ideological interpretations of north Sichuan social and political history, I became interested in understanding Songpan’s regional social and environmental history. No social or cultural history of the region has been written that includes the length and breadth of the late imperial, Republican and post 1949 periods. The Songpan region, with its rich geographical, ecological and ethnographic diversity, constitutes a world of its own, different from central Tibet (Kham) and west-central China centered on the Chengdu Plain and Yangtze River. No separate study has analyzed the socio-political, economic and environmental encounters in the late imperial, Republican Era, and modern period as a whole—when arguably, the majority of modern patterns of social, political and environmental interaction developed. How did local society evolve? What economic patterns developed in the region, and what effect did they have on local society and landscapes? How drastic were socio-political changes under the socialist state, and when did they happen here? If the environment of the region was constantly undergoing change, what were the political, social and economic loci of change?

Past research on the northern and western Sichuan and the Songpan region falls into two general and somewhat contrasting categories. In the first category, research by Chinese cultural and socio-economic historians tends to mention the Songpan region within the generalized context of the slow expansion of late imperial authority into the region and treats the subject largely within discussions of the evolution of the “tusi system” on the whole of Sichuan’s Sino-Tibetan borderlands of Kham and Amdo. Some of the most influential Chinese research on the

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5 She Yize, Zhongguo tusi zhida [China’s Tusi System] (Chongqing: Zhengzhong Bookstore, 1944); Gong Yin, Zhongguo tusi zhida [The Chinese Tusi System] (Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 1992); Yu Xiangwen, “Xibei yu nu zangqu zhi shehui diaocha” [A Social Survey of the Tibetan Areas of our Northwest] (Chicago: Manuscript, 1947); Wang Xiguang, Anduo zangqu tusi jiazu pu jilu yanjiu [Research on Amdo Tibetan Area Tusi-Clan Family
region mentions the distribution and general features of indigenous (Tibetan) leaders in the region and Qing “control,” and this characterization has been popularly adopted as applicable to all regions where the Qing came into contact with indigenous leaders in western China. However, what was observed in official discourse varied considerably with what happened in local practice. In contrast, in Western socio-historical and anthropological literature, the Songpan area, if it is mentioned at all, is sandwiched between entirely autonomous Tibetan sub-states and the functional and powerful Qing state with its representatives in Chengdu and eastern Sichuan. In addition to these more China-centered studies, there are studies on Tibetan religion and the Chinese state—with Chinese authors mostly discussing indigenous religion in the remote past or under the socialist transition, and Western authors examining contemporary issues and relationships between Bon and Buddhist religions and the Reform Era socialist state (1978-...).

The second category of research that mentions the Songpan region discusses the environment and economy in the context of the Tibetan Plateau as a whole. The Chinese environmental literature of the northern Sichuan has pointed out that human activities such as overgrazing, improper reclamation, and heavy bio-collection of fuel wood and medicinal herbs

Trees] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2000); History and Economic Studies Department of Sichuan University, *Sichuan Minjiang shangyou lishi wenhua yanyiu* [Historical and Cultural Research on Sichuan’s Upper Reaches of the Min River] (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 1996); Luo Runcang and Ran Xinjian, eds., *Sichuan zangxue lunwen ji* [Collected Essays on Tibetan Culture in Sichuan] (Chengdu: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1993).

6 She Yize 1944; Gong Yin 1992; Herold Wien, *China’s March Toward the Tropics: A Discussion of the Southward Penetration of China’s Culture, Peoples, and Political Control in Relation to the Non-Han Chinese People’s of South China and in the Perspective of Historical and Cultural Geography* (Hamden: Shoestring Press, 1954); John Herman, “National Integration and Regional Hegemony: The Political and Cultural Dynamics of Qing State Expansion,” PhD dissertation, University of Washington (1993);


have contributed to environmental degradation. These studies usually point overwhelmingly to contemporary climatic and indigenous factors as at fault in recent environmental developments. In socio-economic literature, other Chinese authors have discussed the region as a whole, often including all of western and northern Sichuan. In these studies, the core of regional issues revolves around Tibetans and their relationship with the landscape and the modern state, or how the up-river environment of northern Sichuan plays a role in political and environmental issues along the Yangtze River. With an emphasis on environmental conditions and mitigating environmental problems, the discourse on this region and its ethnic groups posits that national and regional issues could be vastly improved if the Chinese state provided proper funding and guidance for economic social development.

This dissertation analyzes the social and environmental history of the Songpan region as a distinct place shaped by geography, trade, and a wide variety of forms of political governance. I argue that local elites, whether indigenous (largely Tibetan) or state representatives, have adapted, used and led coercive strategies of development to shape the markets and landscape of the region—from agro-pastoral production to an opium regime, and from state-making and forestry regimes to cultural commodification and tourism. Especially after 1958, local Han and Tibetan cadres have helped to shape state policy to serve local or regional purposes. I view these

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10 See, for example, Ran and Ou 2000; articles in Ran Guangrong (series editor), *Xibu kaifa zhong xizang ji zitazangqu* 3 vls. [Research on the Characteristics of Western Development in Tibet and Tibetan Areas] (Heilongjiang: Heilongjiang chubanshe, 2003); Li Shantong (ed.), *Xibu dakaifa yu diao shehui fazhan* [Develop the Great Northwest in Regional Social Development] (Beijing: Gaodili shuguan, 2003).
political, social, and economic development projects as two way processes, in which states have pursued their own different market and administrative policies, and local agents of change have manipulated and altered the course of these policies to their own advantage. These social, political and economic patterns and processes have had distinctive consequences for the local landscape, sometimes with great and at other times with limited impact on both the local and wider environments.

Despite our growing understanding of the dynamics of society, politics and the environment of eastern China, we still know little about western China's political, economic, social and environmental transformations. There are at least two reasons for this lack of knowledge. First, no major studies have sought to understand early modern and modern indigenous actors and their roles or perspectives in the socio-political and environmental history of western China, even though non-Chinese communities never ceased to be politically, culturally, or economically central to the region. Second, we are only beginning to investigate the continuities and discontinuities inherent in the varieties of land use, social regulation, economic markets, and adaptive power of local societies in the socio-political and environmental landscapes of western China. The majority of studies on socio-political and environmental transformation have hinged on eastern, Han China. Without an understanding of indigenous

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communities in their local context, their own transformative or adaptive power on political and environmental landscapes, or central-local relationships we are unable to explain fully the long-term transformations of border politics, economics, and societies. Further, we are left unprepared to fully understand modern developments.

The challenge of this thesis is to enrich our political-social narrative of nineteenth and twentieth century China by integrating the local, ethnic, and environmental story of north central Sichuan. This dissertation contributes a local environmental and socio-economic dimension to existing political, ideological and religious histories of the Sino-Tibetan borderlands of western China. By analyzing Tibetan-Chinese social and market relations, it also adds to the literature of local elite and state patterns of coercion and dominance in twentieth century China. Finally, it also contributes to a growing literature on Chinese environmental history by analyzing the role of changing systems of resource use and development on China’s western frontier while revealing the often complex and dialectical ways that human societies and environmental factors have interacted in northern Sichuan over the past three centuries.

1.3 Methodology

This dissertation approaches social, political and environmental issues on several fronts in a manner reminiscent of historians Richard White and Arun Agrawal that include locality, ethnicity and the environment with the interior Sino-Tibetan border region as its focus. In order to reflect an emphasis on societies, politics, markets and environment with a focus on local events, this dissertation de-centers China geographically, ethnically, and socially in order to look
at an “exceptional typical” periphery of China in northern Sichuan. In Chinese studies in
general, and in studies of ethnic and ecological borderland areas of western China, this shift in
perspectives has been marked by re-examining of the centralized view of Chinese hegemony and
local subordination. Traditional studies of western China have often emphasized the imperial
state, centers of power, or the socialist state as the sole historically-important actor in the
relationship between the center and periphery, and in doing so, they have denied the local
perspective and agency of border societies by portraying them as largely passive subjects. In
this sense, these studies have overlooked the border societies’ initiatives as well as their
responses to the hegemonic center. Recent scholarship in Qing studies, studies of ethnic
groups and historical experience in southwestern China and elsewhere have begun to question to
the hegemonic power of the center in Chinese history. Such questioning has led to a “reentering
of the local.” In this regard, in a study of the Sino-Tibetan borders in Amdo-Kham, Lawrence
Epstein recently noted, “…Pre- eminent meta-narratives of nation-states are under critical

13 I borrow the term “exceptional typical” from Matti Peltonen’s study of micro-macro history and the
methodologies of “clues” and “margins” in introducing locality into much grander narratives. See Matti Peltonen,
“Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research,” History and Theory 40
14 Another recent and useful book in this regard, especially for western China, is Susan Blum and Lionel Jensen’s
edited volume China Off Center (2002). In this text, various authors approach contemporary and historical China as
a complex, decentralized place where the view from the center (Beijing, eastern and Han China) is a skewed one.
Their text points to a China that is better conceived of as a “set of Chinas.” These “Chinas” are made up of different
environments, different ethnicities, and different languages in a complex set of dialogues contrasting localism with
regionalism to nationalism and centralization. See Jensen and Blum (eds.), China Off Center: Mapping the Margins
of the Middle Kingdom (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), xiii-xv, 2-17.
15 For example, Kent Smith’s dissertation “Ch‘ing Policy and the Development of Southwest China” (PhD
dissertation, University of Washington, 1970), and Pei Huang’s conclusions about the aggressiveness of Qing
frontier policy in Autocracy at Work: A Study of the Yung-Cheng Period (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,
1974), while both good studies of major issues in western China, understand local relations among Han, Tibetan,
Hui and other ethnic groups strictly from the imperial center’s point of view.
16 In this regard, I attempt to take the approach of Guha (1990) and Agrawal (2005) and analyze local environments
exploited by elites or the state, local forms of resistance to central hegemony, and their environmental consequences.
See Ramachandra Guha, The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya
17 This is what Richard White would term “at the center of the scene.” See Richard White, The Middle Ground:
Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1991), ix. See also, C. Patterson Giersch, Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China’s Yunnan Frontier
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Janet Sturgeon, Border Landscapes: The Politics of Akha Land Use
scrutiny with concern over local voices and events in history-making, rather than their being submerged by grand narratives."

With an emphasis on local contexts, events unfold as a dialogue and negotiation rather than with a hegemonic center and passive local. Even when the state and centralizing forces are ascendant, as it can be argued for periods of post-1949 China, state policies and practice still unfold in a dynamic process at the local level that can often include creative adaptations of official policy used by the local vis-à-vis the state. Recent studies of borderland areas of China, their diverse societies, and their socio-political experiences under the modern Chinese state take note of the dynamism inherent in this approach. However, those borderlands are truly at the geographical borders of the nation while the Songpan region, in contrast, is near the geographical center of China.

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19 Tibetan studies in general have begun to shift away from centralizing or hegemonic views of a singular Tibet or unitary history of the Tibetan people. A variety of new “local histories” explore the diversity of Tibetan societies and social formation across the entire Tibetan Plateau, from Mustang in Nepal to Amdo Tibetans in Qinghai, Sichuan, and Gansu. These studies of local histories, Sino- and Indo-Tibetan borderlands, place different groups and localities of Tibetans at the forefront of regional events, acting in dialogue with or contrast to centralizing forces in China, Lhasa, or elsewhere. See David Jackson, *The Mollas of Mustang: Historical, Religious, and Oratorical Traditions of the Nepalese-Tibetan Borderland* (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1984); Lawrence Epstein 2002; Toni Huber (ed.), *Amdo Tibetans in Transition: Society and Culture in the Post-Mao Era* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). See also, Steven Harrell (ed.), *Cultural Encounters on China’s Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

As with traditional frontier and border studies of Chinese-Tibetan interaction, studies of relationships between successive Chinese political regimes and central and eastern Tibet also tend to focus on the official policies or the establishment of administrative and military institutions by the center of power. See, for example, Hsiao-Ting Lin, *Tibet and Nationalist China’s Frontier: Intrigues and Ethnopolitics, 1928-49* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); Peng Wenbin, “Frontier Process, Provincial Politics and Movements for Khampa Autonomy During the Republican Period,” in Lawrence Epstein 2000.

By shifting focus from a Sino-centered approach to an internal border or periphery and local approach, we also shift from hegemonic state-centered views of elite states to the activities of elites in local society. The result is a more diverse picture of local elites rather different from late imperial scholar-gentry norms as well as from traditional post 1949 views of regional and central bureaucratic loci of decision making. This dissertation expands the concept of local elites (Chinese gentry-elites) to include the figure of the local strongman and ethnic elites in the late imperial and Republican periods, and a new view of local cadres, forestry bureau officials, and minority elites in the post 1949 period. Earlier approaches to local elites in the late imperial period focused on their status as educated and gentry landholding figures in eastern China.  

This dissertation is guided more by recent studies of periphery elites and the diversity of late imperial local elite patterns of dominance in Johanna Meskill’s *Chinese Pioneer Family* (1979) and Joseph Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin’s *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (1990). Frontier society elites in China (and there were many in the southwest), were made up of local strongmen, ethnic elites and power holders, military commanders, and were largely beyond the power of the state. Where these local elites met with state level administration, when they met at all, it was in a kind of “middle ground” in which the state and local ethnic elites used and manipulated one another, however intermittently, with neither group holding absolute power over the other, the region, or local resources.  

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borderland, these elites thus created their own largely autonomous local political structures and patterns of dominance in a way that highlights patterns of "society making" reminiscent of Roberto Unger’s work.25

According to Unger, underneath the state-led networks of administration and power there was another important set of interventions, a different if often complementary process of society led and society making interventions that influenced and continue to mould both daily life and the natural environment. “Society making” is a process by which people interact with each other through structured networks and make the conditions of their social existence on the basis of the resources available to them by virtue of their social position. “These resources include governmental power, economic capital, technical expertise and prestigious ideals or the forms of argument that claim to show implications of these ideals.”26 While the state may seek to influence how these resources become available and how they may be used, the actual forms of the processes through which the state intervenes to shape ranks and roles depends on the practices current within everyday life, regardless of the state’s own legitimacy and authority claims. In this way, in the Songpan region a structure of largely autonomous government was created with only a thin veneer state administration even during the Republican period.

In contrast, other forms of administrative management came into play in the post 1949 period, one in which “state-making” played a greater role in local elite structures of management and resource use, and one that helped create patterns of local resistance. In this sense, I examine “state-making” in socialist China through the lens of strategies of knowledge and power and of


26 Unger 1993, 151-52.
changing technologies of government in the production of "governmentalized localities." Arun Agrawal most clearly presents this kind of shift and difficulties between localities and centralized state management in his study of environmental decision making and the creation of "regulatory communities" in colonial Kumaon, India. The "state making" process in the Songpan region had very strong implications for land use in a shift from a predominance of poppy agriculture to separate agricultural regimes for Tibetans and a forestry regime for Chinese and the state. Not only was local society and the local landscape "governmentalized" and brought to heel for the first time in local history under the socialist state, but it has remained under firm control. Even in the Reform era after devolution of some elements of centralized control, the state, its policy norms and discourses have continued to play a primary role in local social and environmental developments. In this sense, the late 1950s were a historic change for the Songpan region—however, the power of the state and its restructuring of the region and society obscures some of the more interesting and telling shifts going on with the creation of the new state.

Because local ethnic groups never entirely left the landscape of the Songpan region, they obviously played an even greater role during the early years of the socialist state, during the height of Cultural Revolution, and especially when more ethnic cadres began to play a greater and greater role in local administration in the 1980s and '90s, respectively. In this sense, my analysis builds on the idioms of local resistance in James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) and his more general reflections on the relationship between domination, resistance, and forms of

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28 This interpretation is generally in agreement with "legibility," "seeing," and "high modernism" in Scott’s *Seeing Like a State* (1998). In his discussion of state making and regulation, Scott uses the example of scientific forestry, which will be discussed at some length in Chapter Four of this study. See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 4-5, 14-18.
state “simplification” in *Seeing Like a State* (1998). The ideology of what Scott calls “high modernism” pervaded structures of social and environmental management in the Songpan region from the late 1950s to the early 1990s, with some rather severe consequences for local ethnic groups and local and downstream environments. Self confidence in scientific and technical progress, expansion of production, and creation of infrastructure and social organization characterized the high modernist approach in China, as well as the regimentalization of local society (making it more “legible”) and exponential expansion of regional forestry. The modernist approach expressed the political and economic interest of state officials and elites. In the twenty-first century, the most recent form that “high modernism” has taken in the Songpan region has been cultural commodification and expansion of an environmental tourism regime in the face of low levels of local economic development, the implosion of the state forestry sector, and in the wake of environmental disasters caused by state-led developments in the regional forestry industry. But all the while, local indigenous populations, especially local Tibetans, have played a major role in the process. Through overt and subtle forms of resistance, Tibetans in the region protested or revolted against state administrative management in the late 1950s. By the 1980s, they were again a part of the local administrative structure and able to help channel state policies and monies to their region for the benefit of local Tibetans.

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30 Scott 1998, 4-6.
31 In order to identify the various key players in local politics and social governance—the various state and society agents channeling local efforts to transform or utilize the environment—this dissertation references the recent work on the roles of Chinese “elite”, whether local gentry or Cadres, in local society by Helen Siu and Jean Oi, but more specifically, the work of Xiaolin Guo in her “Land Expropriation and Rural Conflicts in China,” *China Quarterly* 166 (2001), 422-39, and “Rural Cadres and Rural Conflicts in Chinese Society” (unpublished manuscript, 2006). See also Jean Oi, *Rural China Takes Off: Institutional Foundations of Economic Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Jean Oi and Andrew Walder (eds.), *Property Rights and Economic Reform in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
Finally, in terms of my approach to the importance of the environment in the social and political history of this region, this study speaks to the heart of the field of environmental history by uncovering and making sense of the changing relationship between human societies and the natural world. The strong correlation between trends in socio-economic and environmental changes in the Songpan region suggests, but does not establish, a close relationship among changes in local society, political patterns of development, and patterns of environmental degradation. Ethnic relations, local autonomy, and changing economic markets have all played significant roles in the socio-political and environmental dimensions of historical change in the region—yet the influence of the changed landscape, and how the environment has played into market, social and political developments is only starting to be recognized. In addition to contributing to our understanding of the past human-ecological dynamics, this approach with the insights it yields has much to contribute to the complex environmental debates that currently reverberate across China. Although, as I show here, human-induced environmental change in the Songpan region is not a new phenomenon, it reached a far more extensive and comprehensive

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33 A "localized" example of Chinese socio-political and environmental history is Keith Schoppa’s *Song Full of Tears* (2002). In his research on Xiang Lake in Zhejiang Province, Schoppa links mundane local disputes over lake water and dike systems with wider trends in late imperial China. He uses these disputes as examples that allow him to comment on social evolution, elite patterns of dominance, economic development, and environmental problems. Other environmentally minded studies recognize the problem of China’s massive population growth, migration, and the glass ceiling for land reclamation of marginal areas in their discussions of state-society relations. What these studies have in common in state-society-environment interaction is that they focus on state control and water administration, rice-paddy agriculture, elite patterns of dominance in the countryside, and elements of peasant unrest, all of which take place in eastern or southeastern China. Thus, the socio-political and environmental legacy of late imperial China is most often one of hydrological control, Han elite and peasant society, and persistence or devolution of state institutions in eastern and central China. See Keith Schoppa 2002, Perdue, 1987; Marks 2000; Ping-ti Ho, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368-1953* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959); Dodgen, 2000; Marks 2002. A major exception is Nick Menzies’ study focusing on forests and forestry. However, this study focuses on forests and timbering across vast portions of China and related environmental degradation in the late imperial period, and less on social or political issues in particular areas. See Nicholas Menzies, *Forest and Land Management in Imperial China* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994).
stage in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{34} We need a better understanding of how human activities have affected ecosystems and the primary processes embedded in them over time. This understanding, after all, is part of what the ecologist Aldo Leopold counseled more than a half century ago when he called for an "ecological interpretation of history" and a general broadening of humankind's ethical boundaries to include "soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively: the land."\textsuperscript{35}

With focus on ecological interpretation and environmental history, this dissertation follows from shifts highlighted in Richard White’s study of Washington State’s Island County and Mark Elvin’s \textit{Retreat of the Elephants} (2004).\textsuperscript{36} White points to the complexity of human-nature relationships, and the premise that different types of land use have created different kinds of landscapes.\textsuperscript{37} The processes to create these landscapes have been fundamentally administrative and market processes by both indigenous groups and outsiders. In the Songpan region, the processes most affecting the environment stemmed from a long history of landscape management though fire, grazing, and agricultural development—long before the Chinese state came in to cut trees and expand agro-pastoral pursuits. In this sense, not only do I follow White’s line on and ecological consequences of all human actors in a region, but I am also inspired by the work of William Cronon and Toni Huber to view land and resource use critically and historically.\textsuperscript{38} This kind of approach has implications not just for discussions of state management of the environment, but also on the mythology of “green” Tibetans—a process in


\textsuperscript{35} Aldo Leopold, \textit{A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There} (1949; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 204-05.

\textsuperscript{36} White 1992; and Elvin 2004.

\textsuperscript{37} White 1992, 5, 8-9.

\textsuperscript{38} Cronon 2003; Toni Huber, Toni Huber, “Green Tibetans: A Brief Social History,” (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997).
which representations of cultural identity are produced within political exile groups. Thus, in the following pages, I have much to say about land use strategies, economic developments, technological and governmental advances, transportation networks, and local and local-center politics, as well as geography, rivers, climate, dirt, forests, wildlife, grasses and fire and the ways in which all of these combined to shape socio-political and environmental change.

Finally, in terms of Mark Elvin's research on ancient and early modern China, the "cash in imperative" of the regional landscape, its place in local, and later national, markets, is key to understanding both social and environmental changes in the region. The market regimes that have dominated the economic development of the region have stemmed from central patterns of forest removal and agro-pastoral development in the Songpan region. These patterns were not started in the twentieth century, but had a much longer heritage; yet in the twentieth century there was a great expansion and acceleration of these patterns based on state centralization, technological innovations and infrastructure development.


40 Elvin 2006, xviii.

41 J.R. McNeill finds similar patterns across the face of the earth during the twentieth century. For J. R. McNeill, the long term goal of environmental and social history is the combination of natural and social sciences to understand the evolving human-nature relationship that impacts and is impacted upon by society, economy, and state structures of management. In particular, his research focuses on how human economic and political experiments have refashioned the earth, air, water, and biosphere in the twentieth century. This has happened not just through war, ideology and economic change, but through an unprecedented scale and intensity of "uncontrolled experiments" combining aspects of local and global culture, competing political systems, expanding economies (and appetites), and waste. J.R. McNeill, Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), 4-5, 16-17. See also, J.R. McNeill, "Chinese Environmental History in World Perspective," in Mark Elvin and Liu Ts’ui-jung (eds.), Sediments of Time: Environment and Society in Chinese History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 31-49; Cronon, 2003, 13-14; Mark Elvin, The Retreat of the Elephants (New Haven, 2004), xx-xxi; and Elvin and Liu 1998, 7-8.

42 See White 1992, 8.
1.4 Terminology

My study defines the Songpan region on several levels: geographic, political, and socio-economic. Geographically, it is a region shaped by distinct topography. Though it is internally divided by a number of topographical barriers, it is held together in large part by the two major river systems of the region, the Min and Baishui Rivers. It is also the easternmost leading edge of the Tibetan Plateau. More importantly, this region is one part of the geographical and ethnic Sino-Tibetan borderlands—a relatively isolated one. While “frontiers” and “borderlands” do not comprise the focus of this study, “borderlands” is a useful term in framing and complicating the mental and physical location of the Songpan region. In this sense, I define

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43 The dissertation will not only examine Songpan County, but also portions of Jiuzhaigou, Hongyuan, and Mdzod dge Counties. Until 1936, Songpan County included significant portions, if not all, of the above counties first as Songpan Ting under the Qing Dynasty and then as Songpan County under subsequent twentieth century Chinese states. In 1936, Songpan County was part of the greater Sichuan 16th Administrative Region. In 1954, Ruo’er gai (Mdzod dge) County was incorporated as a distinct entity, and in 1960, the second administrative region of Songpan County, Nanping County (renamed Jiuzhaigou County in 2000) was incorporated. In 1960, Hongyuan County was created from portions of Ruo’er gai, Songpan, Li Counties. While the dissertation will refer to the Songpan region in general when analyzing the environment, administration, society and events, it will also note administrative changes where pertinent depending on the time period. For overviews of territorial and administrative changes, see the chronological outlines of county history and prefecture administrative boundaries in Aba Prefecture Songpan County Editorial Board, Yang Tiolin, Ma Delong, et al. (eds.), Songpan Xianzhi [Songpan County Gazetteer] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1999), 164-65 (hereafter SXZ 1999) and The Sichuan Province Aba Tibetan and Qiang Minority Autonomous Prefecture Geographical Gazetteer Study Committee, Aba Zangzu Qiangzu Zizhizhou zhi, 3 vls. [Aba Tibetan and Qiang Minority Autonomous Prefecture Gazetteer] (Chengdu: Chengdu ditu chubanshe, 1994) (hereafter AZZ 1994).

44 Scholarship on the “frontier” is more or less a part of theoretical framework and debate surrounding Frederick Jackson Turner’s infamous definition of the frontier as the “meeting point between savagery and civilization.” While this may have resonated with some Qing officials who considered the Sino-Tibetan borderlands to be a dangerous place of “barbarians” (yì, chi.), immorality and chaos, other scholars have developed more nuanced and balanced approaches to the “frontier.” A better way to define a frontier, for example, is a territory or zone in which multiple peoples meet, with one group being intrusive and the other indigenous. This is closer to Owen Lattimore’s “Inner Asian frontier” in northwestern China bordering Xinjiang Province, Russia/Soviet Union, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and India. For the Songpan region, however, I believe the “borderland” term to be better as Han Chinese and Hui had also lived in and shared the region with Tibetans since at least the Tang and Yuan Dynasties respectively. The Sino-Tibetan borderland/frontier was also problematic in that the Qing, Republican and contemporary Chinese states have never truly recognized Tibet as a separate sovereign state in the sense of other frontier border areas shared with Southeast Asian, South Asian, and Central Asian states. See Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” Report of the American Historical Association for 1893 (1894), 199-227; Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China (London: Oxford University Press, 1940); Piper Rae Gaubatz, Beyond the Great Wall: Urban Form and Transformation on the Chinese Frontiers (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Peter Perdue, “Empire and Nation in Comparative Perspective: Frontier Administration in Eighteenth-Century China,” The Journal of Early Modern History 5:4 (2001), 285; Peter Perdue, China Marches West: The Chinese Conquest of Central Asia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Diana Lary (ed.), The Chinese State at the Borders (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).
this region as a Sino-Tibetan borderland, and interior borderland, of China—a place that was not fixed in the late imperial period by a concrete line, but more as a gradual transition from topographical and ethnic China to Tibetan dominated areas of the Tibetan Plateau. In the post 1949 period, a new set of boundaries were drawn up by the central state in order to help define its borders and governmentalize the region. This resulted in a division of the region into four separate counties. Yet because of the flux of boundaries throughout the time period under consideration, and the obscurity of the actual location of borders until the 1960s and diversity of ethnicities, it is better to view this region more generally. It is a transition zone between two entities, the end of one and the beginning of another that implies that the region is permeable, flexible, and interpenetrable by both Tibetan and Chinese ethnicities and administrations.45

The issue of borders becomes particularly evident in trying to define the political realms important in Songpan region history. Prior to the 1950s, there was no single unified political authority or hierarchical social organization that could dominate and govern the region. In order to define the variety of forms of local governance, I have settled on the term “polity” to describe social organization and administration under different Tibetan headmen, religious institutions, warlords, and Qing and Republican states through the 1950s. I borrow this approach from the social anthropologist Geoffrey Samuel who argues that historical Tibetan societies across the Tibetan Plateau were best characterized as stateless societies.46 The term stateless society works not only for Tibetan society in the hinterland and near county seats, but also in the sense of early Republican Sichuan Province, warlord, and the Nationalist states as they were unable to

45 This definition is based on the recent work of Diana Lary and others in Diana Lary (ed.), The Chinese State at the Borders (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 5-6.
completely dominate or permanently stabilize the region, but rather only parts of it.\textsuperscript{47} In addition, in order to reflect the diversity of local elites and patterns of governance, I consciously use “local elites and patterns of dominance” to describe the variety of forms of administration and regional variation over time because there was no “central” government, yet local patterns of administration did guide, coerce, and affect patterns of land use, resource exploitation, social hierarchy, and social relations.\textsuperscript{48}

In the 1950s, however, local governance patterns changed. Under the socialist state, a new form of administration not only redefined local borders, but also shifted the relationship between the state and localities. The region was no longer an isolated and largely autonomous zone of contact and trade, but rather a part of what Agrawal has termed a “governmentalized locality.”\textsuperscript{49} New centers of decision making emerged with the state regulating both people and the local landscape through a variety of new technologies (for example, surveys, categorization, renaming, enforcement structures, laws), and in the process the new restrictions and their enforcement criminalized everyday behavior by making illegal a range of what might be called customary social and resource use practices.\textsuperscript{50} At one level, new ways of governing local people and natural resources were the result of changing perceptions about their potential uses. At another level, though, new procedures and practices based on the technologies of administering the region redefined legitimate ways to use local society and resources, especially after the 1980s.

Finally, on a socio-economic level, the Songpan region has been defined and shaped by a series of socio-economic “regimes.” I use the term regime to signify a socio-economic system in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{47} See also Xiao-Ting Lin, \textit{Tibet and Nationalist China’s Frontier: Intrigues and Ethnopolitics} (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 13-14.
\textsuperscript{48} See Esherick and Rankin 1990, 10-11, 17, 23-24.
\textsuperscript{49} Agrawal 2005, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{50} This is also reminiscent of James Scott’s work. The patterns of legibility and tools the state used helped the state “assimilate” and “control” the countryside and its peoples for the abstract good of the state. See Scott 1998, 24-26.
\end{footnotesize}
which an authority (local Tibetan elites, warlords, Mao’s government, or local cadre officials) declares its right to control certain practices, and develops policies and mechanisms to exercise that right within its presumed domain.\textsuperscript{51} Socio-economic "regimes" operated in the Songpan region in five different stages. One was the informal agro-pastoral market regime structured around Tibetan common and elite socio-economic life in the late imperial period. An opium regime operated from the 1920s to 1940s functioning with a well organized network of authority to obtain a particular end (a profitable exchange of opium). A “governmentalization” regime operated in the 1950s and early ‘60s to consciously assimilate the region into the wider Chinese nation. A state organized, officially staffed forestry regime exploited local timber reserves from the 1960s to early 1990s. And finally, currently in place there is a consciously constructed ethnic and environmental tourism regime with state and local elements. What characterizes these various regimes generally is their ability to impose conformity in policies and practices that are profitable to it in society, political structures, and markets. The term regime is particularly useful as it highlights the systematic and comprehensive character of the socio-economic market entities as they operate not just in an economic realm, but also a local and state political realm and thereby have major influences on the nature of the regional landscape and environment.

1.5 Sources

It is self-evident that historians invariably depend on available source material to explore their questions; in dealing with northern Sichuan, identifying key source material is a challenge. This study utilizes diverse materials and insights from several disciplines. The most common form of primary evidence relied on here are the observations, descriptions and interpretations of

\textsuperscript{51} I borrow this term from Timothy Brook and Ted Wakabayashi’s insightful introduction and collection of studies on Chinese, British, and Japanese “opium regimes.” However, I expand its definition somewhat to include a wider range of socio-political and socio-economic structures. See Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayshi (eds.), \textit{Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 4-5.
people such as explorers, naturalists, traders, government officials, academics, businessmen, and tourists and travelers. Their journals, letters, maps, drawings, legal rulings, census reports, land surveys, mining and agricultural reports, and ethnographic studies provide valuable evidence for assessing human-ecological and socio-political relationships over time.

Important primary sources for the Songpan region are the original nineteenth and twentieth century xianzhi (gazetteers), especially the two Songpan xianzhi (1924; 1999), related collections of regional gazetteers, and the Aba Prefecture Gazetteer (1994) that discuss the region in broader detail. I have also consulted relevant passages in the Qing Veritable Records and Da Qing luli and tuhui [Great Qing Code and Sub-statutes] to obtain greater detail related to state reports of this border region, legal issues and tusi (headmen) conditions. I have tried to keep in mind Beatrice Bartlett’s admonition the limitations and biases of “official sources,”—that because of their purpose as records of and for the state, they are unavoidably full of rhetorical devices and language that highlight the supremacy of the state and ruling dynasty, a limitation that to some extent is just as applicable for the 1999 Songpan Gazetteer as other sources. There are always discrepancies between idealized versions of imperial or centralized state policies and programs and what was (or is) actually put into practice at the local level. In terms of late imperial history, the most common works on the region involve studies of the “tusi system” in China. These official and academic sources often have strong biases against reporting dissent because of the dominance of either Confucian or Maoist ideological norms with

52 See Xu Xiang and Fu Chongqu (eds.), Songpan Xianzhi [Songpan County Gazetteer] (n.p.: Mingguo 13 [1924], 8 juan) (hereafter SXZ 1924); SXZ 1999; AZZ 1994.
their emphasis on stability and control. Thus I have taken into account exaggerations by officials for political purposes, biases and other limitations as indicated in previous scholarly research when using the official sources on local resources, local customs and practices, and regional production.\textsuperscript{55}

This dissertation has a great deal to say about Tibetans, Chinese and Hui and their social, political and environmental relationships with the state. Despite the omnipresent nature of Tibetans in this study, very few Tibetan materials were used. The majority of Tibetan literary sources do not apply to many of the questions I have tried to ask and analyze in the Songpan region. Very few original Tibetan sources exist for the region, the majority of which deal with local Bon and Buddhist religion and religious practices.\textsuperscript{56} The majority of these materials I have used were in Chinese, not Tibetan, as the majority of the information collected and pertinent to this study was not originally prepared in the Tibetan language, but part of ethnic identification projects and studies of the 1950s and ‘60s. However, these are the best local and regional accounts of the social and political history of the region. In my discussion of the geographical, social-cultural, and political milieu of the region, I consulted the historical lineages of monastic figures (\textit{ldan rabs}, tib.), the genealogies and lineage histories of certain prominent families (\textit{gdung rabs}, tib.), and local socio-economic references collected in the cultural and historical materials published by the People’s Consultative Conference of Aba Tibetan-Qiang Autonomous

\textsuperscript{55} For example, I have relied on the careful generally well received statistical study by Steven Marshall and Susette Cooke, \textit{Tibet Outside the TAR: Control Exploitation and Assimilation development with Chinese Characteristics} (CD, the Alliance for Research in Tibet, 1997), and commentaries on materials related to Tibetan areas of Sichuan and nearby in the various Proceedings of the seminars of the International Association of Tibetan Studies (IATS) in 2000 and 2002. See Epstein 2002; Huber 2002.

\textsuperscript{56} One of the best discussions of local literature is Toni Huber’s study of ritual revival, pilgrimage, and local Tibetan literary production. The majority of these local materials are collections of oral religious traditions, local religious history and personal recollections of senior members of Bon and Buddhist institutions in the region by clerics and lay historians. In particular, they deal with local holy mountains, gompas, holy sites, and pilgrimage routes. See Toni Huber, “Ritual Revival and Innovation at Bird Cemetery Mountain,” in Huber 2002, 113-143.
I also reference some Tibetan biographies and autobiographies in Chapter Two, although the majority of their information concerns religious themes of spiritual development. In addition, I also refer to important field reports about the local culture, customs, norms as well as social and moral world views conducted by the Gazetteer Compilation Office of Songpan, Nanping, Hongyuan, and Ruo’er gai Counties. I also use other archival sources, gazetteers, local histories and commissioned state or prefecture studies of the Songpan region, Amdo, and Sichuan compiled during the Republican and post 1949 periods that provide rich information about the societies, politics, and environment in the region. Many of these sources were in the municipal, prefecture and provincial archives in Songpan, Jiuzhaigou, Ma’erkang, and Chengdu, Sichuan. Key Republican Era sources include studies of forestry, pastoral and grassland management, “border surveys”, and economic research. While these sources have to be used with care as they are products of their cultural

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59 These works include Republican era journals in Sichuan Province like Nonglin Xuebao [Rural Forestry Studies] (1921-43); Sichuan Songpan caodi shimu linye zhouli baogao [] (1938), Chen Rong’s, Cao lin ke lun [Discussions of Silviculture] (Agricultural Association of Nanjing, 1933); Fan Changjiang, Zhongguo de xibei jiao [China’s Northwestern Corner] (Shanghai: Dagong baoguang, 1934), a Chinese news reporter’s study of the region; Ma Hetian’s, Gan Qing Cang bianqu kaochaji [Survey of Border Regions of Gansu, Qinghai, and Tibet] (Shanghai: Trade Press, 1947); Wang Zhiwen, Gansusheng xinanbu bianqu kaochaji [Survey of Southwestern Border Region of Gansu Province] (Lanzhou: Bank of Gansu Province, 1942); and the Zhongyang yinhang jingji yanjiuchu [Economic Research Section of the Central Bank], Sichuan jingji jilue [Brief Record of the Economy of Sichuan] (Shanghai: Central Bank Press, 1935). Manuscript studies from the Sichuan Provincial Archive include Chuankang yuanzheng ziliao qiyao [Sichuan/Xikang politics and resources] (c. 1925 on Aba Prefecture region including
and wartime milieu, they are useful for their insights into what provincial and national authorities viewed as primary issues with resources, development and stability in the region. Furthermore, most of the works and manuscripts used in this study were used by later government researchers and scientists as the basis for their own studies and plans for northern Sichuan natural resources and peoples.

Other sources I use include a variety of cultural and historical materials published by the People’s Consultative Conference in Aba Tibetan-Qiang Autonomous Prefecture.60 These natural resource, census and population surveys, historical and ethnographic studies, and economic reports were part of the early socialist state’s attempt to develop formal knowledge about their territories in order to make “once-peripheral peoples into… Zhongguo ren [people of the central country], or Chinese.”61 In addition to other collected works on local Tibetan, Qiang, Hui and Han customs, language, history, and religion, these early studies by the new socialist state have proved invaluable in detailing the local practices and beliefs in the Songpan region. In particular, for my overview of the political, social, and economic structures of the region, I have relied on a series of reports concerning fieldwork carried out in the region in the 1950s and ‘60s, as well as the work of later Chinese social and economic historians in the 1970s and ‘90s by Ren

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60 See the Nationalities Institute of Minority Nationalities of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Sichuan Investigation Team of Social History of National Minorities, *Aba zang qiang zu zizhizhou Songpan xian zangzi qingkuang diaocha ziliao* [Fieldwork report on Tibetan Temples in Songpan County, Aba Prefecture] (not for circulation [neibu], 1962-63); N.A., *Sichuan sheng abazhou zangzu shehui lishi zhoushi* [Tibetan Society and History Studies in Aba Prefecture, Sichuan Province] (not for circulation [neibu], 1985 collection of 1956-58 field reports). Many of these materials were collected in SAZSD 1985. The Southwest Minorities Investigation Committee, *Caodi zangzu diaocha cailiao* [Grassland Tibetan Survey Materials] (not for circulation [neibu], 1982; compiled between 1952-1964) was also useful.

Naiqiang, Ran Guangrong, and Qin Heping.\footnote{See previous footnote and Ran Guangrong, “Gailun Chuanxibei zangzu de yapian yu zhengfu” [An Outline of Opium and Governance in Northwestern Sichuan Tibetan Areas] in Sichuan Province social sciences college history association, Luo Runcang and Ran Xinjian, eds., Si\-chuan zangxue lunwen ji [An overview of studies on the culture of Tibetans in Sichuan] (Chengdu: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1993), 268-84; Ran 1996; Ran, Zhongguo zangkuang fojiao siyuan [China’s Tibetan Buddhist Temples and Areas] (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1994); Ran and Ou 2000; and Ran and Li Tao (eds.), Xi\-bu kaifa zhong xizang yu qidi zangqu chayesheng yanjiu, 3 vls. [Developing the West: Tibet and Tibetan areas Monographical Research] (Heilongjiang: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 2003); and Qin Heping, Sichuan Youpian wenti yu yanyuandong [Sichuan’s Opium Problem and Prohibition] (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 2001).} I also utilize more unusual sources of information like local popular literature, guidebooks for tourists as well as local handbooks and pamphlets, in addition to traditional sources like local and regional newspapers and county studies.

Western materials on the nineteenth and twentieth century Songpan are few and far between, and mostly concern travel accounts and plant hunting expeditions into the Songpan region. Many Western sources are based on later compilations and accounts by people like William Rockhill, Ernst Henry Wilson, Albert Tafel, Charles Graham, Joseph Rock, and other explorer-scientist-adventurers.\footnote{William Gill, The River of Golden Sand: Being the Narrative of a Journey Through China and Tibet to Burmah (London: John Murray, 1883); David Crockett Graham, “A Collecting Trip to Songpan,” Journal of West China Border Research Society 2 (1924-25); Albert Tafel, Meine Tibetreise: A Research Trip Through Northwest China and Inner Mongolia into Eastern Tibet [in German] (Stuttgart: Der Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1914); Ernst Henry Wilson, A Naturalist in Western China (London: Methuen and Co., 1913); E.H. Wilson, China, Mother of Gardens (1929, reprint New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971); Joseph Rock, “Seeking the mountains of mystery—an Expedition on the China-Tibet Frontier to the Unexplored Amnyi Machen Range,” National Geographic Magazine 57:4 (1930); J. Rock, “The Amnyi Machen Range and adjacent regions,” Serie Orientale Roma XII (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio Estremo Orientale, 1956), J. Rock, The Fieldnotes, Letters and Documents of Joseph Rock, 1884-1962 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000).} While much of their work refers more generally to northern Sichuan, southern Gansu and southern Qinghai Provinces, respectively, what is useful often is their way of making notes on their wanderings, on their work as trained scientists or government officials, and on their keen observations of local society. Their observations of changes in the landscape, descriptions of certain kinds of cultural or social practices, and sometimes the descriptions of rocks and trees combine with Chinese ethnographic and social materials to paint pictures of social, political, and environmental actions that would otherwise be lost to the
contemporary observer. However, I am mindful too of their particular situations as visiting foreigners and as products of their own particular imperialist times.

In addition, I employ other Western academic sources including scholarly discussions of the Qing era *tusi* organization, Republican era opium regimes, and post 1949 local governance. I also employ the limited but rich ethnographic literature concerning the general nature of nomadic and semi-nomadic Tibetans, Hui and Han Chinese in the greater Amdo and Kham regions as these studies often include discussions of local religious, social, and political values and customs. Recent scholarly work on the Songpan area itself is scarce, but growing. Bon and Buddhist religion scholars and anthropologists like Samten Karmay, Philip Sagant, Toni Huber, Mona Schrempf and Peng Wenbin have also studied aspects of the religious and cultural history of the region, though the majority of their work focuses on only the past twenty to twenty-five years.

Finally, I utilize an equally important set of source materials drawn from the natural and environmental sciences. Though technical studies by geographers, ecologists, botanists, biologists, zoologists, and soil scientists may not be familiar to many historians, they are often crucial sources for assessing the composition of past environments and explaining the influence

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of natural phenomena. As William Cronon, and Wolfgang Holzner and Monika Kreichbaum have shown elsewhere, these kinds of materials give tremendous insights into what can be learned about a region. Fossil pollens in bogs, charcoal deposits and rotting trunks, and studies of relict stands tell a great deal about forested areas, as do grasslands and grassland animal species for the Songpan plateau highlands.

1.6 The Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized chronologically and thematically. Each chapter discusses trends, events, and processes that contributed to the socio-economic, political, and environmental history of the Songpan region. They reflect my intent to stake a claim to a dynamic early modern and modern past for the region and its peoples. In the ensuing pages, I have much to say about land use strategies, economic developments, the natural environment, social and political patterns of management, and state-local relations. These themes are tied together in a


chronological and thematic manner by examining economic and political developments and how they combined to transform the nature of the socio-environmental landscape of the region.

The dissertation begins with an environmental, political and socio-economic narrative divided into two chapters. Chapter One introduces the land, climate, and peoples of the Songpan region. I then analyze the efficacy of late imperial state and local Tibetan elite governance in the region, its agro-pastoral market structure, and the environmental consequences of local resource production and use. In this chapter I show how isolated and autonomous the region was, how Tibetans were the main agents of change, and how local patterns of control and resource use helped set the stage for later economic and environmental developments. Chapter Two examines the Songpan region under the early Republic, warlord administration, and Nationalist state. While the agro-pastoral regime continued to play a role, the formation of an opium regime in the region in the 1920s played a greater role in local social and environmental transformations. With the addition of warlord military-administrators and Pao ge (criminal networks), political continuities in local administration and elite patterns of dominance were more important in the opium regime than attempts at state building under the Nationalists. In the end, increasing local unrest in the late Republican Period and environmental degradation and disasters left the area ripe for the policies and opportunities offered by the new socialist state.

In the dissertation's second section, I shift focus to the socio-political and environmental realm under a centralized state apparatus. The 1950s were a watershed for traditions of local autonomy and socio-economic organization, and the relative isolation of the region disappeared in the face of infrastructure development and increasing state exploitation of the social and natural landscape—furthermore, the agents of change were not indigenous elites, but Han Chinese representatives of the state. Chapter Three analyzes the integration of the region into the
socialist state in the 1950s. A new governmentalization regime was created in the region, one in which local Tibetans were initially treated very differently from Han and Hui populations. However, based on infrastructure development and new forms of centralized local control, all of the region was soon incorporated into the new state apparatus despite intense local Tibetan revolts. Chapter Four analyzes the creation of the state forestry regime in the 1960s and its implications for local society, landscape management, and the environment. This chapter highlights the success of forms of governmentalization in separating local ethnic groups from their local natural resources and discusses their long term implications. Chapter Five looks at the broader implications of capitalist reform, the implosion of the state forestry sector because of environmental degradation, and the creation of new forms of social and environmental commodification and control with the creation of the modern Songpan ethno-environmental tourism regime. This approach provides a new way to understand late imperial and Republican local elites and market regimes from a regional and indigenous perspective, a new way to conceptualize state-local and ethnic relations after 1949, and a way that personalizes and particularizes the practice of local socio-political and environmental change from the late imperial period into the twenty-first century.
II A WORLD OF ITS OWN: SONGPAN’S LAND AND AGRO-PASTORAL REGIME BEFORE 1911

The source of the Min River is at Yangbo Ridge [Gonggang Pass], in the dun colored region to the north of Songpan, around 4000m above sea level. Nonetheless, because the relative change in altitudes between the plateau, river course, and the grassland areas, the ridgelines protect more lush areas. To the north of the grasslands there are more trees as you approach the Bailong River. Associated with these waters and grasslands are high rocky areas, but as you move closer to the waters [Min River] of the middle region around Zhe’an [Songpan] you enter canyon-grasslands. These canyon areas, with high ridgelines and mountain ranges go far to the south. From the northern rocky hills and swamp [Ruo’er gai] to the center, there are few trees and the region is known as the Songpan grasslands.... This is the road to the encampments and towns of Qinghai.

Ren Naiqiang, 1956

2.1 Introduction

By the end of the nineteenth century the Songpan region was becoming one of the most significant providers of pastoral and non-timber forest products to Sichuan Province and parts of western China. Yet despite its growing importance in western China’s trade after the eighteenth century, and Qing and Tibetan imperial state presence on four sides, it was only nominally integrated into these two late imperial polities. Rather, the region was largely dominated by a diversity of local ethnic, mostly Tibetan, elites. In this chapter I argue that the growth of regional trade and unofficial associations between Songpan locals and wider late imperial marketing networks, not “official” associations between local elites and the Qing state, nominally integrated this remote region into the late imperial political and economic world. Challenging geography and ecology in the region isolated it from wider Qing China, helped sustain a predominantly Tibetan agro-pastoral regime in the region, and made it more difficult for late imperial states to improve control over regional trade and people. Before 1911, it was

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68 Ren Naiqiang, Chuankang zang nongye qu hua yijian [Comments on the Boundary Drawing of Sichuan-Xikang Tibetan Agricultural Areas] (Chengdu: Xinan minwei weiyuan, 1956).
trade, specifically developing export trade in pastoral products and natural medicinal plants that linked the Songpan area to the outside world and mobilized the local resources and peoples to create access to regional riches.

How did this little known region of southern Tibetan Amdo and northern Sichuan become significant in wider markets, yet remain largely disassociated from late imperial polities? In order to illustrate the economy and limited political integration of the Songpan region into the wider late imperial world, this chapter examines Tibetan agro-pastoral land use practices, local elites, and the political, social, and economic "patterns of dominance" that defined regional life and landscapes. It first considers the impact of Songpan's unique geographical position and natural environment. Physical geography isolated Songpan from other polities, limited large scale trade into and out of the region, and fostered local land use systems. Having established the reasons for Songpan's physical isolation from the outside world, the chapter then goes on to consider the nominal influence of the Qing state and the negligible presence of the Lhasa-centered Tibetan state in this predominantly Tibetan area. While the Qing imperial state retained a political and military presence in the region, Qing policies and governance had much less impact than in other minority areas during this period. Rather, the Songpan region of northern Sichuan can be better understood as occupying what Richard White has described as a "middle ground" in the American Great Lakes region. Whereas the "official middle ground" was weak

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69 I consciously borrow "local elites and patterns of dominance" from Esherick and Rankin's (1990) edited volume on the diversity of late imperial Chinese elites in eastern China and their implications for the late imperial Qing state. In their introduction to the volume, Esherick and Rankin introduce several types of late imperial elites in order to highlight the diversity of governance in China. For the purposes of this chapter, their discussions of local elites and their power vis-à-vis the Qing state and local peoples are particularly apt—local elites in peripheral zones and frontier elites in ethnic areas (ie. the ethnic elites themselves) played a particularly key role in local governance, local markets, long distance trade, and local resources, not on the late imperial state. See Joseph Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin (eds.), *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 23-24.

in the Songpan region, the “unofficial middle ground” of “peripheral” or “frontier” Tibetan elites and regional trade flourished. After analyzing official Qing policy and practice in the region, I will discuss the Tibetan elites (tusi and tuguan (chi.), ‘go ba and dpon po (tib.)) who dominated the region politically and economically. Next I examine the nature of the local elite-dominated economy that linked this region with the wider Qing world. The final section examines the environmental consequences of the late imperial Tibetan agro-pastoral regime. Until the twentieth century, the Songpan region was almost completely dominated by local Tibetans and was largely free of imperial Qing and Lhasa-centered political control. Using local natural resources, Tibetans created a rich regional society and market structure—and in the process strongly altered and shaped the environment that had shaped and isolated them.

2.2 The People, Rivers, Mountains, and Climate of the Songpan Region

The relative isolation of the Songpan region, its politics and society, was created by its social and physical geography. The rivers, mountains, forests and climate fundamentally shaped regional politics and Tibetan society. While the rivers and gorges provided natural north-south trade routes and valley agriculture in the northern parts of the region, they were un-navigable and dangerous. High mountain ranges, dense forests and steep gorges precluded major roadways and high volume east-west trade. Finally, harsh climatic conditions and high altitude left many areas of the region unsuitable for year-round settlement and agriculture. These factors combined to create significant geographical barriers, limiting centralized political regimes from fully

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71 In important ways, this is reminiscent of discussions of local elites and patterns dominance in late imperial China. As Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin have noted, China's late imperial, thinly spread and weakly rooted state apparatus had a limited ability to penetrate local Chinese society, and much of the governance and trade of the period fell to local elites operating outside the formal bureaucracy. This was equally true for the Songpan region with its numerically dominant Tibetan and ethnic minority population and diverse physical environment far from the political core of the Qing Empire. See Esherick and Rankin 1990, 3.

72 When transliterating Chinese and Tibetan terms, hereafter Chinese terms will be followed by (chi.) and Tibetan terms by (tib.). This dissertation will not try to transliterate all Chinese and Tibetan terms simultaneously, but when appropriate will provide common local usages in Chinese, Tibetan, or both languages.
controlling or taxing the region, and partially isolating it from wider political and economic networks.

The Songpan region lies on the margins of the Amdo Tibetan plateau, mostly above three-thousand meters, and is one of the eastern-most Tibetan populated areas. Being on an ethnic border, local Tibetans have lived here for centuries in close proximity with Qiang, Han and various Chinese-speaking Muslim communities largely grouped under the label of Hui since 1956. The majority population and majority land holders of the Songpan region, historically compromising Songpan, Jiuzhaigou, Ruo’er gai, and Hongyuan Counties, have been Tibetan.73

The Tibetans of Songpan region speak an Amdo Tibetan dialect and are predominantly followers of Bon religion with a minority Buddhist presence in the southern and western areas of the region. The majority of historical and contemporary Han and Hui Chinese in the region settled along the Min and Baishui Rivers in Songpan, Nanping (now Jiuzhaigou), and a select number of small villages south of Songpan. The Qiang of the Songpan region live in the farthest southern reaches of the Songpan region.74

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73 According to late imperial county gazetteers (c. 1910), the Songpan region, centered on Songpan town and along the Min, Baishui and Mao’er gai Rivers supported approximately 33,500 Han and Hui, and 44,200 Tibetans. Most of the Han and Hui lived in Songpan and Nanping towns, with smaller village populations only along the lower Min and Baishui Rivers—in effect, a very small portion of the overall territory of Songpan Prefecture. According to Chinese sources, the population of regional Tibetans was likely greatly under-reported. Although Songpan itself was always a Chinese town, the number and distribution of Han and Hui in the county and region as a whole increased significantly only after 1950. In 2000, 28,484 Tibetans, 24,167 Han Chinese, 9,968 Hui, and 6372 Qiang lived in Songpan County—with Tibetans remaining the historical majority population of the greater part of the region since 1950. See Aba Prefecture Songpan County Editorial Board, Yin Guanli, Ma Dechuan, et al. (eds.), Songpan Xianzhi [Songpan County Gazetteer] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1999), 164-65 (hearafter SXZ 1999); Ran Guangrong, Sichuan Zanggu de kaifa zhilu [The Road to Development in Sichuan’s Tibetan Areas] (Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2000), 414-15; National Bureau of Statistics and State Ethnic Affairs Commission, 2000 Nian renkou diaocha: Zhongguo minzu renkou ziliao [2000 Population Census: China’s Minority Population Data] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2001), vl. 1 626, 676; vl. 2 1176.

74 The discussions of social, political and environmental issues in the Songpan region that will follow in this dissertation will refer almost entirely to the two largest populations, vast majority of land holders, and political forces of the Songpan region, the Tibetans and Han Chinese as these two groups (with occasional reference to local Hui) were most often referred to in historical and contemporary source materials.
The Songpan region can be divided into two distinct geographical areas. In the north are grasslands, plateaus, and low mountains, while in the south there are steep mountain ranges, torrential rivers, and deep gorges. Political, social and economic life in the Songpan region flows alongside the major rivers that crisscross the region. The primary rivers in the region are the Min River (Zung chu, tib.; Minjiang, chi.) and its primary tributaries, the Mao’er gai River (dMudge chu, tib.; Mao’er gai he, chi.) and Xiaoxing/Rewu River (Xiaoxing or Rewu he, chi.; Rewu chu, tib.). Two other rivers in the northern and eastern sections of the region, the Baishui and Fu (Baishui jiang and Fujiang, chi.), are important economic pathways that lead to passes over the Min Mountains (Minshan, chi.) and into the Min River valley.\(^{75}\) [See Maps 1.1 and 2.1]

Since at least the sixth century, the Min River system has facilitated the movement of goods and people along its main tributaries, mostly along a north-south trade route and to a lesser extent into western Sichuan along its main tributaries. The Min River and its tributaries are not navigable by boat: the swift current, long sections of rapids and sometime rapid changes in volume preclude barge or boat traffic.\(^{76}\) The single Qing “highway” through the region ran north-south along the Min River. This imperial postal road, paths along Min River tributaries and the other major rivers of the region, and a network of east-west passes and paths that

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\(^{75}\) Though the Min River is only 711km long, it drains over 13 million square kilometers in northern Sichuan. The Min He, the upper reach of the Min River system and its two major tributaries, the Heishui River (Mao’er gai River) and Nyaglo River, is over 341kilometers long and provides over 14% of the water flow to the Chengdu Basin and Yangtze River. Along with the Jinsha and Dadu River systems in western Sichuan and northern Yunnan are larger, the Min river is considered the third primary watershed of the Yangtze River basin system. In total, over 50 tributaries flow into the upper Min River by the time it reaches the Sichuan Basin, most of which are fed by snowmelt, small glacier systems, and the Songpan and Hongyuan grasslands. The Baishui River that drains Jiuzhaigou County, and Fu River that drains the easternmost section of Songpan County, eventually drain into the Yangtze River through the northern portion of the Sichuan Basin. See Xu Junhai (ed.), *Minjiang zhi* [Min River Gazetteer] (Chengdu: Sichuan Province Hydrology and Hydroelectric History Association, 1991), 2-3.

\(^{76}\) Historically, most river crossings were accomplished by vine, bamboo, or wooden bridges or structures. Timber was the only product moved on the rivers, and then only if they could not be moved by animal or by hand from easily accessible areas. The rapids and gorges had a tendency to splinter and destroy logs. See *Minjiang zhi*, 1991; Ernest Henry Wilson, *A Naturalist in Western China* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1913), 118-19.
navigated the north-south running mountain ranges provided limited communication with the outside world.

In its upper reaches the Min River varies in depth and width as it runs through different geographic zones. The headwaters of the Min, Mao’er gai and Heishui Rivers run relatively shallow until the southern gorges of the region. However, because of the narrow confines of their banks, very rocky beds, and varying peak/low water flows, all of the rivers are difficult to cross. Most of the Min River is fairly narrow until the confluence of the Min and Nyaglo Rivers in Wenchuan County. The varying and often torrential characteristics of the river system are the result of the steep gorges and basins the Min River system cut through the Hengduan Mountain massif, specifically the Qionglai mountain range, before it empties into the Sichuan Basin north of Chengdu.

Heavy summer rains cause the regional river systems to flood annually. These seasonal floods fill the bottom of the valleys and canyons, destroy bridges and roads, and have entirely destroyed historical and contemporary villages. The geographer Ren Naiqiang in the 1920s noted that the key to developing the region would be tame the rivers and build better roads into and out of the remote mountain valleys, not to mention across swampy grassland areas, as the topographical difficulties of the region were mostly to blame for its lack of economic development and “backwardness” during the late Qing.77

Songpan’s Min River system also runs through several mountain ranges along active fault lines, resulting in earthquakes and major landslides. The rivers flow along the fault lines that

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77 See Minjiang zhi, 283. See also Ren Naiqiang, Kangqingzang gaoyuan pianjin chuyi [A Proposal for the Kangxi-Qinghai-Tibet Highlands Border Gold] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1977). Ren Naiqiang, a noted geographer and cadre-scientist assigned to northern and western Sichuan, studied the region’s harsh geography, climate, and late imperial and early Republican era Tibetan society from the early 1920s to ‘40s to discuss potential development projects to help improve living, economic and social conditions.
split up the major mountain ranges in the region.\textsuperscript{78} The primary mountain ranges in the Songpan region are the high altitude Daxue and Qionglai Mountains. The Qionglai are further subdivided into two sections, the greater Qionglai Mountains to the west of the Min River and Minshan range to the east and north. The long and high mountain chains that surround the river valleys on the west, east and northeast resulted in varying ecological and geological zones that slope slightly downward from south to north.\textsuperscript{79} The mountain ranges have many natural passes, but most passes are iced over, snowed in, or funnel particularly high winds from October to April. These rivers and mountains are also relatively rich in minerals.\textsuperscript{80}

All of the major tributaries of the rivers rise in the mountains or grassland plateau region.\textsuperscript{81} The northern rivers and streams flow gently through the lower mountain chains and

\textsuperscript{78} These mountains range between 3000-4000 meters generally, with the highest peaks between 5000-5588 meters. The highest mountain in the region, Xuebaoding Mountain (Snow Treasure Mountain; Shardungri, tib.; East Conch Mountain) is 5588 meters, and is the tallest, easternmost mountain of the Tibetan Plateau.

\textsuperscript{79} Geologically, the Songpan region falls within the Qinling-Kunlun latitudinal tectonic zone and Snow Mountain Great Fault, while the Minjiang river system follows the Min River fault, and its tributaries flow along other minor fault systems connecting the various faults together. Tectonic activity, in the form of earthquakes, is fairly frequent and sometimes very devastating. Several major tectonic events have shaped both the landscape and people of the Songpan region. Regional xianzhi mention a number of seismic events dating back to 1400s, for example, SXZ 1999, 907-15. For the "Songpan earthquake disaster of 1933", see Zhu Jiezuo, Songpan dizhen [Songpan’s Earthquake] (Hong Kong: n.d., 1980?); more generally, see Xia Mingfang, Minguo shiqi ziranzaihai yu xiangcun shehui [Republican Period Natural Disasters and Rural Society] (Beijing: Zhonghua shupian chubanshe, 2000)). The most significant seismic events in recent history took place in 1933, 1960, and 1976. In 1933, an earthquake estimated in excess of 7.0 on the Richter scale devastated the region, destroying homes, roads, bridges, and leaving hundreds dead. This particular quake also destroyed an entire mountain near Jiaochang (on the Songpan-Mao County border). The mountain crumbled into the Min River gorge, created a lake on the river and buried several villages.

\textsuperscript{80} During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the region was known for limited gold production, mostly from placer mining deposits in the riverbeds. The only major underground mining was carried out in and around the town of Zhangla (west of the town of Zhuanzhu si) along the banks of one of the upper Min River tributaries. On the whole, this region was only lightly mined because of the relative cost of transporting the minerals, some local opposition to mining, and the high taxes (tankuan) on mining in general during the late imperial period. Ren Naiqiang and Ren Xinchang, Sichuan huangchin fazhan [The Development of Gold Mining in Sichuan] (Chengdu: Sichuan University Press, 1981), 78. The most accessible overview of the mineral resources of the region are available in the "mineral and soils" and "mining" sections of the SXZ 1999, 157-159 and Aba Tibetan-Qiang Autonomous Prefecture Geographical Gazetteer Editorial Board, Aba Zhouzhi (Chengdu: Minzu chubanshe, 1994), vl. 1, 301, vl. 2, 1285-86 (hereafter AZZ 1994). For specific historical gold, silver and other mining operations in the region, see Peter J. Golas, Science and Civilization in China, Vol. 5: Part XIII Mining (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 54-57, 109-113, and 123-26.

\textsuperscript{81} In the late imperial period, the Songpan region had much better access to the north through the lower reaches of the Min Mountains and Ruo’er gai grasslands (Mdzod dge rtsa, tib.) to Gansu and Qinghai than south and east to Chengdu and the Sichuan Basin. However, travel through the grasslands to the north northwest was difficult as they flooded seasonally.
grassland plateaus, forming relatively shallow and broad riverbeds suitable for agriculture and herding. The northern regions are, however, at higher altitude and less protected from extremes in temperature. In contrast, in the southern part of the Songpan region, the mountain ranges are steep, and torrential rivers gouge deep gorges along their slopes, leaving small alluvial basins for farming and herding. The gorges become gradually deeper as they continue southward. The most productive farming and fruit producing areas of the region are located in this steeper but warmer southern area.\textsuperscript{82}

In addition to difficult rivers, mountains and mountain passes, sections of the northeastern mountains and plateaus of Jiuzhaigou County and central and southern Songpan County mountain ranges are heavily forested. These forests make up a patchwork of densely forested mountainsides that prevent easy access to many passes or more gentle hillsides that slope off of the Min Mountain range.\textsuperscript{83} Juniper forests originally extended continuously into

\textsuperscript{82} Altitude played a significant role in the development of the region. The villages at lower altitudes, with the most frost-free days, were located in the southern gorges of the region with the least amount of arable agricultural land and pasture. The western and northern reaches were at higher altitude and susceptible not only to more frost and sudden snow-falls, but also greater ultraviolet air and solar radiation (insolation from direct sunlight). The northern agricultural settlements were predominantly based in valleys below 3800 meters where solar radiation and alluvial soils provided more favorable conditions for cereal crop production as compared to areas farther north and west. As well, the deep canyons protected historical and modern agriculture from most winter climatic events that more adversely affected the northern portions of the Songpan region.

\textsuperscript{83} Many foreign observers visiting during the late Qing and early Republican era (1880s-1926) claimed that Tibetans in the region destroyed trees out of hand, but also noted how dense and diverse the forests were outside of the Min and lower Baishui River valleys. Taking Chinese and Tibetan commentaries into account, significant stands of timber, including juniper and pine forests existed all over the southern, eastern, and northeastern parts of the region. For foreign accounts, see Joseph Rock, “Seeking the Mountains of Mystery: An Expedition on the China-Tibet Frontier to the Unexplored Amnyi Machen Range,” \textit{National Geographic Magazine} 57:4 (1930), 131-85, J. Rock, “The Amnyi Machen Range and Adjacent Regions,” \textit{Serie Orientale Roma} 12 (Rome: Instituto Italiano per il Medio Estremo Oriental, 1956), and J. Rock, \textit{The Fieldnotes, Letters and Document of Joseph Rock}, 1884-1962 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000) [in German]; Albert Tafel, \textit{Meine Tibet Reise} [My Trip to Tibet; in German] (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1914); E.H. Wilson 1913. For regional and local Chinese accounts, see Xu Xiang (ed.), \textit{Songpan Xianzhi} [Songpan County Gazetteer (Republican Period)] (Minguo 13 nian kanben; 8 juan, juan shou, 1924), \textit{juan} 1 (hereafter SXZ 1924); \textit{Nonglin Xuebao} [Rural Forest Studies] (1921-43); \textit{Sichuan Songpan caodi shimu linye zhouli baogao} [Sichuan’s Songpan Grassland Business, Rangeland and Forestry Newsletter] (Chengdu: n.p., 1938); Chen Rong, \textit{Zhongguo senlin shiliao} [Historical materials on the study of forestry in China] (Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1981); and the Sichuan Natural Resources Group, \textit{Sichuan zhi Linye} [Sichuan Forestry] (ms., 1941).
Qinghai and Gansu, but by the late imperial period had receded to slopes in central and southern portions of the Songpan region that are now dominated by sub-alpine conifer forests. By the late nineteenth century, these woods were among the most heavily forested areas of China—in large part because of regular and heavy summer precipitation and relative isolation from major logging operations. The rugged terrain fosters a wide range of temperatures, precipitation and evaporation, contributing to high biodiversity. The tree line, one of the highest in the world, reaches up to 4500 meters above sea level and thus blocks many lower passes and access to higher passes in the Min and Qionglai Mountains.

Finally, the climate itself is often a major hindrance to travel, trade, and local agro-pastoral pursuits. The climate of the Songpan region that feeds the rivers and shapes the mountains, forests and grasslands is determined by continental and maritime monsoons.

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85 Literary records, archeological findings and other physical evidence confirm the presence of trees in the northern parts of the Amdo and throughout modern grasslands. Semi-aridity, poor soils, past dominance of certain kinds of shrubs, and the absence of much tree pollen suggest that there were grasslands mixed with shrubs and light forest cover, most of which is now gone on the farther north one travels. The current scientific view is that the open savannah and desert of the far northwest gradually closed in to river valleys that contained a complex primitive mosaic of vegetation, with the forests along the rivers and into the higher mountains (with their rain shadows) varying in type from hardwood to coniferous and scrub largely as a function of the altitude and slope direction. This was exacerbated by the human influence of overstocking rangeland with large herds and widespread use of fire to clear grazing land. This chapter will discuss this at much greater length in the third sub-section. See also Daniel Winkler, “The Forests of Eastern Parts of the Tibetan Plateau: A Case Study from Jiuzhaigou (Zitsa degu; Northwestern Sichuan),” Plant Research and Development 47/48 (Tubingen, 1998), 184-210; Nicholas Menzies, Forest and Land Management in Imperial China (New York: St. Martins Press, 1994); Liu Qing (ed.), Yagaoshan zhenyelin shengtai xue yanjiu [Ecological Research on Subalpine Coniferous Forests in China] (Chengdu: Sichuan University Press, 2002).

86 Chen Rong 1981, 213.

87 The forests consist mainly of fir-spruce forests, but a strong broadleaved element is present along some of the north and northeastern slopes in local occurring cloud-forest zones. Broad-leaved trees such as birch, poplar, willow, oak, and walnut are on the lower elevations and river valleys. Degraded south slope sites are frequently covered by evergreen oak or in more continental sites by juniper forests. Larch, hemlock, pine, spruce and juniper dominate in the middle and upper elevations. The larch forests in Songpan, Hongyuan, and Jiuzhaigou Counties are most prominent in the ecotone forest-grassland shift in the northern part of the region. For a concise English language overview of the plants and trees of northern Sichuan, see Department of Biology, Sichuan University, “Plant Resources of Sichuan,” accessed at http://www.blasum.net/holger/wri/biol/sichuanp.html (June, 2003).
Songpan region summers receive far more and intense precipitation. In summer, the hot zones in northern and western China, and the deserts of Central Asia create low pressure zones that draw the southeastern ocean monsoon across the region. As already noted, these wet months, especially June and July, bring regular flooding, erosion and landslides. In contrast, in winter airstreams move from zones of higher air pressure on the Tibetan Plateau toward low pressure zones to the south and east. These monsoons bring cold, clear, and dry winters with little snow and regular, high winds. The only frost-free months in the northern, central, and western parts of the region are June to mid-September.

In the valley floors along the major rivers, winters are relatively mild though much of the rest of the Songpan region, especially on the grassland plateaus of its northern half, face bitterly cold winters, brutal and high winds, and regular “winter disasters.” The high winter winds and intense solar radiation, coupled with little or no rain or snow fall also mean that late winter and early spring grasslands and forests are particularly vulnerable to fires, a frequent occurrence that will be dealt with at greater length in the fourth section of this chapter. These long winters leave their mark on the agricultural and pastoral activities of the region. The short growing season demands extra care with dry grasses and forests in the spring, intensive work between April/May

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88 The region receives as much rainfall as 900 millimeters of precipitation in summer months, compared to 25 millimeters in winter months. The grassland plateaus receive less rainfall in general, averaging around 600 millimeters per annum, while the southern canyons and forested areas receive about 700 to 800mm annually. In comparison, the eastern reaches of the region on the Min Mountains receive an annual precipitation of 900 to 1000mm annually. Because of local wind systems, valley floors are often dryer due to local wind systems receiving 400 to 700mm annually, while higher slopes receive much more. In the forested upper reaches of the region, the altitudinal temperate cloud and rain belts are created at about 3600 meters above sea level enabling trees to grow up to that level, though in the interior with greater precipitation the forests grow up to 4500 meters.

89 SXZ 1999, 922-24; Aba Prefecture Hongyuan County Editorial Board, Hongyuan xianzhi [Hongyuan County Gazetteer] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2000), 742-48; Aba Prefecture Ruo’er gai County Editorial Board, Ruo’er gai xianzhi [Ruo’er gai County Gazetteer] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1998), 661-70.
and September harvests, and also determines seasonal movements of animals to high alpine pastures or out into the grasslands during the summer months.\textsuperscript{90}

Pastoral and agricultural practices of Songpan Tibetans and other residents of the region were strongly shaped by the harsh climate and regional geography. The ecological landscape, and the ways in which it evolved over time, was a result of both ecological dynamics and human history. Nature always made its presence felt and the areas along the Min River alone witnessed at least one natural calamity every two to three years during the late Qing (1875-1911), including heavy thunderstorms, floods, premature frosts, snow disasters, forest and range fires, and major earthquakes.\textsuperscript{91} The rivers and their tributaries ran through a landscape divided by mountains and forests that isolated the region. Significant distances over grasslands, summer floods, bad roads and narrow paths through treacherous gorges and high passes complicated communication and economic ties between widely scattered river villages and towns and the wider world. The natural and physical environment of the Songpan region complicated local governance of the region, much less the extension of the centralized Qing state into the region during the late imperial period. Yet important elements of the ecological landscape, including the forests and the grasslands, were shaped by local societies’ relationship with the land. The following sections of this chapter will examine the social, political and economic ramifications of the isolation of the Songpan region before returning to the environment to examine how local people, especially Tibetans, crafted their ecological relationship with the natural landscape.

\textsuperscript{90} The contrast between summer and winter is dramatic. In Songpan city (2849m), the temperature in January ranges from -18° to July and August temperatures of 25° to 30°C. The Mao’er gai area, around Shangba zhai (3256m) ranges from -26° to 30°C. In the grasslands to the north, average temperatures are much the same as the Mao’er gai area. The hottest parts of the region are in the southern reaches of the upper Min River and the eastern slopes of the Min Mountains. Short springs and autumns create long winters—cold weather in the region lasts until April and begins in September. See SXZ, 1999, 135-36.

\textsuperscript{91} SXZ 1999, 907-27.
2.3 The Songpan Region Prior to 1911: The Qing State, Tuguan/Tusi, and the “Official Middle Ground”

One of the most fruitful ways to consider the socio-political and environmental consequences of the presence of the Qing state, Tibetans and other peoples in the Songpan region is to think of the region as a kind of late imperial “middle ground.” In Songpan town and along the rivers of the region, Qing authorities and Tibetan headmen and lamas were compelled to work with one another and accommodate their mutual interests. These accommodations can best be understood using Richard White’s concept of “middle ground.” White’s “middle ground” was the region around the North American Great Lakes where French and Algonquian peoples met, traded, warred and interacted in the seventeenth century. Both groups were unable to completely comprehend or dominate the other and out of necessity and for mutual benefit, the two societies (made up of a variety of local polities and entities) forged an accommodation by finding a “middle ground” that allowed each to pursue its own interests while minimizing conflict among the contending groups. White argues that the “middle ground” was created by the two societies in order “to meet the demands of a particular historical situation…,” as well as in the face of a difficult and sometimes hostile natural environment.\(^\text{92}\)

Likewise, representatives of the Qing state and various local polities, dominated by Tibetan elites, created a kind of “middle ground” in the Songpan region. This “middle ground” developed in a context of both official and unofficial activities. The next section will elaborate the late imperial “official middle ground” in the Songpan region and the extent of late imperial Qing (1644-1911) governance in the region, while the following section discusses the “unofficial middle ground” of trade and local Tibetan elites’ patterns of dominance and customary law and practice. By “official middle ground,” I mean areas where administrative channels were

\(^{92}\) White 1991, 33, 50.
developed to negotiate between Qing and local Tibetan leaders. The Qing state officially ruled the region, but its control was nominal in comparison to the role of local Tibetan elites and political structures. And while the majority of local elites and land holders were Tibetan, the Tibetan state centered in Lhasa had no functional control of this region or its people whatsoever. In practice, the “official middle ground” was a local system that largely governed itself. It had a Qing representative and small Qing garrison that to a limited degree “governed” the large Songpan sub-Prefecture (ting, chi.), but was in practice run by local Tibetan elites who utilized the trappings of the Qing state to enhance their local positions vis-à-vis other Tibetans, other local populations, and the Qing state.

The “Official Middle Ground” and the Qing State in Late Imperial Songpan

The geographical makeup of the Songpan region did not engender the formation of centralized administrative control by a single ruler. As noted in the previous section, the natural environment of southern Amdo and northern Sichuan, with its lofty ridges and mountain ranges, dense forests, alpine and plateau grasslands and crisscrossing river valleys, hindered communication within the region and with the wider late imperial world. Geography favored the establishment of multiple autonomous political entities. These mini-polities were largely independent from each other and ruled their individual areas according to local interests. The majority of these polities, with the exception of Chinese villages on the lower Baishui River around Nanping (contemporary Jiuzhaigou), a few Hui villages to the immediate north and south of Songpan, and the sub-prefectural seat at Songpan were dominated by Tibetan elites. The political status of other local populations of Han and Hui in the Songpan region fell under the purview of local Qing officials in Songpan and Nanping. But for the vast majority of the Songpan region, Tibetan headmen determined local political and social governance. However,
none of the largely autonomous Tibetan elites and Tibetan areas on their own had the requisite
economic and population resources to become a predatory power strong enough to unify the area
under strictly Tibetan leadership. Instead, a patchwork of small polity-like entities evolved that
were only nominally part of the wider Qing Empire. [See Map 2.1]

It is difficult to physically locate the Songpan region in late imperial sources and
governance as the official and unofficial boundaries of the Songpan region changed over the
course of the Qing Dynasty. This is in part indicative of the isolation and harsh topography of
the region. It was also a function of the fluidity of political or administrative organization the
region faced under a situation of only nominal Qing governance, tempered by the largely
autonomous nature of Tibetan elite governance in individual villages and valleys outside the
immediate proximity of the Min and Baishui River valley roads and the Qing magistrate and
military garrison at Songpan town. The Songpan region was known to Tibetans as Shar khog
(Zung chu kha, tib.) and to the Qing state as Songpan sub-Prefecture or Songpan County
(Songpan Ting/Songpan Xian, chi.). According to ancient Tibetan geographical traditions,

93 The Songpan region displayed a bewildering variety of Tibetan polities, in many ways similar to the Tibetan states
of the K'am (or Kham) region to the west. However, a major difference lies in the amount of settled agriculture in
the region in comparison to areas of the Amdo and Khams to the west and north. Some underlying patterns are,
however, discernable from both the existing Chinese literature related to the region and foreign observations and
studies conducted in the region during the prior to 1911 and during the Republican era.

94 Some Chinese historical geography texts list the Songpan region as part of the Tang imperial state, but do not
show the Songpan and Kham region as part of the greater Chinese empire until the Ming Dynasty under Songzhou
Prefecture. The Chinese regional political potentates and regions were known by their official titles, zhizhou during
Ming Dynasty Songzhou, and zhifu and tongzhi during Qing Dynasty Songpan Ding. See Aba Prefecture Songpan
County, Sichuan sheng Aba zangzu zizhizhou Songpan xian diming lu [List of Place Names of Songpan County, Aba
Tibetan-Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province] (Songpan xian: Committee of Place Names of Songpan
County, 1983), 1-3. See also Charles O. Hucker, A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China (Stanford:
Stanford University Press, 1985); SXZ 1999, 10-16; Xu Xiang and Fu Chongqu (eds.), Songpan Xianzhi [Songpan
County Gazetteer] (n.p.: Minguo 13 [1924], 8 juan) (hereafter SXZ 1924), juan 2. Given the nature of most of the
sources used in this study, the author will usually refer to the area by its Chinese name, Songpan, with reference to
Shar khog when appropriate.

95 The contemporary Songpan region is in northeastern Aba Prefecture, Sichuan Province, the People's Republic of
China. The region in question comprises all of contemporary Songpan County (Zungchu dzong, tib.), and the
easternmost parts of Hongyuan County (Kakhog dzong, tib.) and southern areas of Jiuzhaigou (Zitsa degu, tib.) and
Ruo’er gai Counties (Dzodge dzong or Mdzod dge, tib). The “region” is a spatial entity that formed the
Songpan was a military outpost established in the seventh century and part of southern Amdo and easternmost Kham. According to the Tibetan scholar Gedun Chopel, “Kham-Amdo” referred to “frontier” or “border” in Tibetan, while “Amdo” as a separate geographical designation was a fairly recent invention. Both terms were used interchangeably by both Tibetans and Han Chinese to situate the Songpan region. Yet after the eighth century, only Chinese sources seem to have mentioned the region, and only then in the context of the Tang and Ming imperial states. Since the early eighteenth century, the western regions of Kham were nominally under the control of the Tibetan government of Lhasa, while the eastern regions, including Songpan, were under the jurisdiction of Sichuan Province and the imperial Qing government.

Tibetans and Tibetan elites in the Songpan region were separated into various groups occupying geographically distinct areas that included farming communities, farming and herding communities, and strictly pastoral communities. The Qing sub-Prefecture seat located at Jin’an (contemporary Songpan town), the villages, clans and numerous small polities of the Songpan area were all characterized by a complex variety of leadership patterns. These included local

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96 Kham and Amdo were two of the three traditional geographical divisions of Tibet, the upper three districts of Ngari, the middle four “horns” of Utsang, and the six mountain ranges of Amdo-Kham. In Tibetan, these three traditional geographical divisions are known as stod mnga' ris skor gsum, bar dbus gsang ru bzhi, and smad mdo Kham sgang drug. The earliest mention of Zong chu (tib.) was in the Dunhuang documents. Cited in Jean Bacot, F. W. Thomas, and C. Toussaint, Documents de Touen-Houang relatifs à l'Histoire du Tibet [Dunhuang Documents Related to the History of Tibet] (Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1940), 18, 39.

97 According to Chopel, Kham is the region in the east where Amdo and Kham proper meet, almost exactly along the edge of the Mdzod dge grasslands and Min and Qionglai Mountain ranges. In other words, the area where Amdo and Kham meet encompasses the Shar khog/Songpan region in its entirety, but is not properly part of either given its location. See Gedun Chopel, White Annals (Deb ther dkar po), trans. Samten Norboo (Dharamsala: The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1978), 25. See also Mona Schrempf, “Hwa shang at the Border: Transformations of History and Reconstructions of Identity in Modern Amdo,” Journal of International Association of Tibetan Studies, no. 2 (August 2006), 1-32; 5, accessed at http://www.thdl.org?id=2721 (accessed November 2006).


99 SXZ 1924, juan 2; SXZ 1999, 10-12; AZZ, vi. 1, 187.
headmen appointed by Tibetan elders and by the Qing state, local lay “princes”, hereditary lamas or monastic officials, and local “big men” (self-appointed strong men). The degree of control exercised by these various leaders over their populations also varied widely, with one extreme being the Qing-appointed magistrates or chiefs of the Lappa Tibetans located around the largely sedentary villages along the Min River and the other being the “wild” Tibetan populations to the north and west of Songpan and Mao’er gai. On the whole, however, the region was characterized by rather decentralized forms of political control.

The Tibetan government in Lhasa had very little influence over the Tibetan areas of Songpan region. While the Lhasa government did draft some soldiers from parts of Kham (to the west) in 1791 and 1855 and conducted a land and population census in part of eastern Kham in 1811, Tibetan officials from Lhasa never reached the Songpan region. As the Tibetan scholar Gedun Chopel noted, eastern Tibet was viewed in relation to the Tibetan center, the region of Ustang. Amdo and Kham were, in different time periods, nominally attached to the Tibetan empire, but Amdo was almost entirely free of Tibetan or Qing imperial control after the sixteenth century. The most significant influence of Tibet proper on this area of northern Sichuan prior to 1911 was through religious connections, especially Buddhist Gelugpa

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100 SXZ 1924, juan 1.
101 According to Philippe Sagant and Samten Karmay (a Tibetan scholar born in Songpan County), the Songpan region, including parts of modern Hongyuan and Jiuzhaigou Counties were more or less defined by a system of “small autonomous federations” whose leaders were sometimes hereditary or elected chiefs, but not representatives of centralized power. On the whole, they were representatives of a type of governance defined by force (the “big man”) or agreement (elected by circles of elders and/or confirmed by the local magistrate in Songpan). I will elaborate this system in the following section. See Samten Karmay and Philippe Sagant, Les Neuf Forces de l’Homme: Recits des confines du Tibet [The Nine Forces of Man: Narratives of Inner Tibet] (Nanterre: Societite d’ethnologie, 1998), and Anne-Marie Blondeau, “Religions Tibétaines, Annuaire” [Tibetan Religion Yearbook], Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Vc. section Sciences religieuses 94 (1985-86), 145-54; 152; and Samuel 1993, 87-90.
102 Xizang sheng shehui kexue suoyuan he Sichuan shehui kexu suoyuan, Jindai kangzang zhongda shijian shiliao [Key historical events in modern Kham] (Lhasa: Xizang gudai chubanshe, 2001), 134-40.
103 Chopel 1978, 98.
monasteries. Yet even the direct influence of Tibetan Buddhism on parts of the region has to be treated carefully as much of the local Tibetan population were as much Bon practitioners as Buddhist. In other words, Lhasa had little direct contact and even less control over the Tibetans of most of the Songpan region.

By contrast, the presence of the Qing state was more clearly felt in the Songpan region, although it too was limited in its power. The late imperial Qing “center” of the region was the walled town of Jin’an, commonly known as Songpan, that “governed” the sub-prefecture. This town was developed as a touchstone of regional governance, the “official middle ground,” and by the late imperial period functionally linked Chinese and Amo Tibetan territories. Officials of the Yuan and Ming Dynasties were stationed in Songpan, while Ming military commanders built the late imperial walls and military citadel and stationed troops in the region. Late imperial Chinese governments of the Ming and Qing sought to control the area by utilizing the tusi system of appointing hereditary Tibetan headmen with official Ming and Qing ranks. The Qing government also located a military-settler colony in Songpan which was under the local Qing Magistrate. Despite these endeavors, however, Qing officials were only nominally successful in corrailling local practices and garnering much in the way of taxes or military control.

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104 A key contemporary study of the importance of Lhasa and western Tibet in Gelugpa monastic traditions and economic positions in the Amo and Kham region is Ran Guangrong’s Zhongguo zangzhi fojiao siyuan [Traditional Tibetan Buddhist Monastaries in China] (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1994). The section on modern Aba Autonomous region discusses the Lhasa’s general lack of influence over Songpan region Gelugpa monasteries, though their other interactions, especially training of monks, some limited tax remissions, and movements of Songpan region Tibetans on pilgrimage to western Tibet at least situated them in the regional cultural mindset. Lhasa’s influence was much more evident in Kham than in southern Amo. See Ran 1994, 108-110, 117-22.

105 Tibetan Bon religion, and its derivative Bonpo, have been employed by Tibetan and Western scholars to refer to various allegedly pre-Buddhist and non-Buddhist elements of Tibetan religion, often including the shamanist, folk-religious cults of local deities (yul lha, tib.) and local mountain deities (gnas ri yul lha, tib.). See Geoffrey Samuels, Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 10-12.

Around 1700, the Qing government started to form a kind of official “middle ground” in the Songpan region. After the Kangxi emperor consolidated his control of most of eastern China, he turned his attention to the ethnic frontiers of western China, including Xinjiang, Yunnan, the Sino-Tibetan frontier in western and northern Sichuan, and to stamping out Ming pretenders to the throne in other areas of Asia. However, Qing control of the Songpan region remained very limited. In frontier and Tibetan areas the Qing rulers encouraged local leaders to submit to the dynasty voluntarily.\footnote{In 1684, the Shunzhi emperor issued an edict that indigenous leaders would be allowed to inherit 
\textit{tusi} positions if they submitted to the Qing. They would also be rewarded and promoted if they captured Ming loyalists or other rebels to Qing rule. See \textit{Qing shilu: Shizhuliu} [Qing Veritable Records: Shizu] vol. 41, 14; Gong Yin, \textit{Zhongguo tusi zhidu} [The Chinese Tusi System] (Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 1992), 110.} It was not until after 1700 that the Qing government tried to officially incorporate the region under its governance by sending armies into Kham and Amdo.\footnote{See \textit{Ganzi zangzu zizhizhou minzu zhi} [History of Nationalities in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture] (Beijing: Jindai zhongguo chubanshe, 1994), 30; SXZ 1999, 12-13.} After 1724, when the Qing established more direct links with local leaders, they met with frequent opposition from Tibetans in the north and west, and with Qiang in the southern parts of northern Sichuan. Local Tibetan elites opposed any extension of Chinese influence into their territories.\footnote{The Songpan region of southern Amdo was officially separated from Tibet in 1724 and placed under the control of the governor general of Sichuan Province. Stone stele were erected along the “frontier” in parts of Kham, but the Songpan region was far enough east that it did not warrant stele-signposts. \textit{Qing shilu Zangzu shiliu}, vlm 1 [Materials on Tibetans in the Qing Veritable Records] (Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe, 1982), 312-13; see also \textit{Qing shilu: Shizong shilu}, vol. 38, 2a-3b.}

The most significant invasion of Chinese forces into the Songpan region was in 1757.\footnote{The Yongzheng Emperor sent settler-military colonists to Songpan to help pacify the central part of the Min River valley and provide soldiers to patrol the Qing era postal road to Chengdu and supply manpower to grow food for the local Qing magistrate. See See Kent Smith, “Ch’ing Policy and the Development of Southwestern China: Aspects of Ortai’s Governor Generalship, 1726-31,” PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1970, 253.} As Kent Smith has shown, Chinese military and agricultural colonies were initially founded on parts of the Min and Dadu River valleys during the eighteenth century. Five such colonies were founded in northern and western Sichuan, with one in the upper watershed of the Min River.

The Min River colony was in the village of Jin’an, otherwise known as the Songpan garrison.
This small colony was established to help govern and control local Tibetans and Hui, and succeeded in keeping the central and southern villages of the Min River valley under the control of the local Qing magistrate. The soldier-settlers who made up these colonies were stranded in the Songpan region with the idea that they would help acclimatize the local ethnic population to Qing governance and acculturate the local ethnic population to the Han Chinese way of life.

As the years passed, the soldier-settlers married local women and settled down to farming life. In effect, they formed the bulk of the Han Chinese population in northern Sichuan prior to 1911. Their presence also revealed two important elements of Qing governance in the region. The eighteenth century colonies demonstrated that the Qing government was serious in their attempt to control the region, not just by sending soldiers, but by giving them land and permanently settling them in the region. Conversely, it also showed a weakness in the program as over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the local Han Chinese population did not greatly expand in the region in comparison to local Tibetan households. With the exception of the Min River valley from just north of Songpan to the Mao-Songpan County borders, Tibetans were hardly assimilated in any significant way into the greater Chinese cultural world, and with the exception of the original colony in Jin'an (and north to the town of Zhuanzhusi) Tibetans vastly outnumbered Han Chinese.

The *tusi* system was far more important for “official” governance of the region than the military colonies, but had its own limitations. Under this system, local leaders were given one of two designations: *tusi* (local ethnic hereditary leaders under the “direct command” of the local magistrate) or *tuguan* (local ethnic hereditary leaders who received imperial recognition but were

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112 SXZ 1924, juan 2; SXZ 1999, 164-65.
not actually under the command of an imperial magistrate.\textsuperscript{113} The expansion of the \textit{tusi} system under the Qing state, “using barbarians to rule barbarians” (\textit{yiyi zhiyi}, chi.), represented an endeavor to pacify and rule frontier regions as cheaply and easily as possible.\textsuperscript{114} The \textit{tusi-tuguan} institution or “\textit{tusi} system” grew out of a kind of “loose rein” policy started under the Ming Dynasty.\textsuperscript{115} The \textit{tusi-tuguan} systems of the Ming Dynasty co-opted existing local political structures by assigning local leaders official and imperial titles. The titles entitled local leaders to certain privileges from and obligations to the imperial government.\textsuperscript{116} The idea behind this “loose rein” policy was to exert a certain amount of control over indigenous rulers on the fringe of the Chinese empire, but not to the extent that the rulers would grow intractable and cut off the relationship. In official discourse, the Qing state claimed to have indirectly or directly ruled the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{113} Hucker 1984, 547. In the Songpan region, the Tibetan villages in the upper Min, upper Baishui, and Fu River valleys all received \textit{tuguan} or \textit{tusi} designations that recognized their closer relationship with the magistrates in Songpan. The village leaders of the grasslands to the northeast and north and Mao’er gai and Rewu River area received \textit{tuguan} designations only as they were entirely outside of the control of local magistrates. See SXZ 1924, juan 3.
\item \textsuperscript{114} The \textit{Songpan xianzhi} 1924 noted local Tibetans fell into the “tame barbarians” (\textit{jia fanzi}, chi.) and “half-barbarian” (\textit{pan fanzi}, chi.) categories. Local Tibetans were generally and interchangeably referred to as \textit{zang}, \textit{yifan} and \textit{yi}. Foreign commentators on local Tibetans fall into much the same pattern of description, but usually broadly referring to them as Tibetans or Sifan. The chief problem would become separating references to \textit{sifan}, \textit{yifan} and \textit{zangzuren} from references to Tibetans and Qiang, who would be considered separate ethnicities after the 1950s. Investigators visiting the region for Mao’s cadres would continue to perpetuate such stereotypes, especially that local minority groups were not civilized because of their lack of agricultural innovation and dependence on pastoralism. See SXZ 1924, juan 3; William C. Haines Watson, “Journey to Sungp’an,” in \textit{Journal of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society} 36 (1905), 51-101; 76-77; Wilson 1913, 141; Robert Ekvall, \textit{Cultural Relations on the Kansu-Tibetan Border} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 31, 63; Robert Ekvall, “Some Differences in Tibetan Land Tenure and Utilization,” in \textit{Sinologica}, no. 4 (1954), 39-48, 39-40; and Southwest minorities investigation committee, \textit{Caodi zangzu diaocha cailiao} [Grassland Tibetan Survey Materials] (uncirculated document, 1982; compiled between 1952-1964), 24.
\item \textsuperscript{115} She Yize, \textit{Zhongguo tsui zhidu} [China’s Chieftainship System] (Chongqing: Zhengzhong Bookstore, 1944) 10. The \textit{tusi} system was created and used in earlier dynasties including the Qin, Han, Tang, and Song. See also Yin 1992, 1; and Harold Wien, \textit{China’s March toward the Tropics: A Discussion of the Southward Penetration of China’s Culture, Peoples, and Political Control in Relation to the Non-Han-Chinese Peoples of south China and in the Perspective of Historical Cultural Geography} (Hamden: Shoe String Press, 1954).
\item \textsuperscript{116} This “system” was fully developed during the Ming when regulations concerning rank, promotion, demotion, rewards, punishments, inheritance, tribute and taxes were formulated. See She Yize 1944, 2-3, 9-10.
\end{itemize}
frontier regions through the tusi system—yet they had to accommodate local leaders by giving
them the titles in the first place in order to gain any titular control of the region.117

Under this policy Tibetan elites in the Songpan region were recognized as heads of newly
created prefectures, districts, and garrisons “under a loose rein,” enjoyed considerable latitude in
the governance of local affairs, and could pass on their positions.118 Under the Qing, reforms
mandated this inheritance process be linked to some form of officially sanctioned education in
Confucian schools. In the walled city of Songpan, one such school (shuyuan, chi.) was
established during the Qing Dynasty (from 1673-1861). However, despite official rhetoric local
tusi-tuguan were not regularly required to attend it,119 and in this regard, state policies to control
the borderlands while instilling Chinese culture in local society failed.120 In John Herman’s
study of the Qing expansion into Tibetan areas of northern and western Sichuan in the
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries he argues that the Qing state was able to assert control over
Tibetan elites on the Sino-Tibetan borderlands.121 However, as Bill Coleman points out in his

117 The Qing government conferred over 100 titles of various levels on local leaders in eastern Tibet and northern
Sichuan, including pacification commissioners, appeasement commissioners, chiefs, chiliarchs, and centurions. See
Lai Zuozhong, “Qing wangchao zai chuanbian zanggu de tusi shezhi” [The Establishment of Tusi by the Qing
Dynasty in Tibetan Areas of the Sichuan Borderlands], Ganzi zhou wenshi ziliao xuanji, vol. 11 [Selected Cultural
and Historical Materials of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture] (Kangding: Ganzi zizhizhou renmin suoyuan,
1985), 9-44; 135.
119 The first local academy was established in 1566 but closed within thirty years. The academy established in 1673
was open through 1861, but was destroyed several times during local Tibetan insurrections and never seems to have
had many students. The local gazetteer noted that very few students stayed with the academy over long periods and
it was continually short of funds and teachers. The majority of its students came from local Han families, from
either soldier families stationed with the garrison or the very few local Han elites (including various members of
120 SXZ 1924, juan 4. The education system was theoretically part and parcel of the tusi system, but in the Songpan
region, Confucian schools were never actually built to accommodate training local tusi elites, and tusi rarely came to
the county ding capital for more than trade. This is in direct contrast to the education system conceived and put in
place in tusi-dominated parts of Yunnan. See Charles Patterson Giersch, Jr., “Qing China’s Reluctant Subjects:
Indigenous Communities and Empire along the Yunnan Frontier,” PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1998, 119-73. See
also C. Patterson Giersch, Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China’s Yunnan Frontier
121 Herman maintains that Tibetan elites were required to cede Qing representatives a great deal of local power,
including regulated inheritance of tusi-tuguan positions and regular tribute. See John Herman, “National Integration
studies of eastern Kham and southern Amdo in the early twentieth century, Herman’s argument was only supported by official Chinese records. In addition, judging from later Qing records and nineteenth century reports by western missionaries and adventurers in the region, the Qing policies depicted by Herman were not as successful as the claims made in official records. It was more likely that these late imperial policies were enacted on paper, not in reality. These reforms were intended to lead to increased state control over the native chieftain selection process, but it seems clear that the Qing had not been able to implement these controls in a consistent manner.

In return for their efforts, the Qing supposedly received a nominal amount of land tax from local leaders, and the latter also sent tribute annually or at three year intervals. The land tax and tribute were more important for their symbolic than their material value. To some degree tax payments indicated that local Tibetan elites had submitted to the Qing government—in theory, these tax receipts or annual tribute incorporated local Tibetan leaders into tusi and the orbit of the imperial Qing state. However, the Qing court sometimes exempted local leaders from tribute missions, and sometimes provided their territories with annual subsidies. The taxes were also nominal in Tibetan areas outside of the immediate environs of Songpan, and the local gazetteer notes that “grain tribute” was often paid for in advance by the local magistrate—not taken in kind as tax or tribute. Based on these observations, we can probably conclude that Qing control over local leaders and their territories through officially stipulated Confucian education, taxes and tribute was nominal and rather weak at best.

123 SXZ 1924, juan 2.
124 Ibid., juan 2. See the discussion of issues between 1850-62 in the previous section for further information in this regard.
Yet local leaders accepted the *tusi* institution as it served their local and personal interests. By accepting imperial titles local leaders gained a kind of limited imperial authority that served to bolster their legitimacy and consolidate their control over villages, land, and natural resources in the region. They also, theoretically, were entitled to military protection from regional Qing garrisons—more often as not, however, they helped the local authorities fight or apprehend rebellious locals or criminals. As noted earlier, while local leaders were supposed to pay a limited amount of annual tribute to the state, collect taxes and help in cadastral surveys, in reality they rarely did so, an issue I will return to in the next section. One definite perk was the rare gifts from the emperor in return for tribute—the gifts usually greatly exceeded the tribute offered, and the tribute-presenting trips were great opportunities to engage in trade. In other words, accepting the *tusi* designation empowered local leaders with political and economic advantages that exceed their responsibilities or roles to the state.

Qing authorities and local Tibetan leaders thus entered into an alliance that served them both, but mostly served local Tibetans. This alliance maintained an official sort of middle ground that accommodated and benefited both groups, but only in as much as indirect rule did little to constrain local Tibetan elites. The Qing did not (and probably could not) impose its political institutions on the Tibetans in this remote region and if they had, the latter would likely have resisted their rule. The limits of Qing rule and Tibetan obligations to the local Qing

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125 A good general discussion of the sheer number of Tibetan *tusi* in the Amdo region (including the northern parts of the Songpan region), see Wang Xiguang, *Anduo zangqu tusi jiazu pu jilu yanjiu* [Research on Amdo Tibetan Area *Tusi*-Clan Family Trees] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2000), 3-6.

126 Local Tibetan *tusi-tuguan* sometimes helped the local magistrate—and the dMudge, Lappa, and Shar ba chieftains were sometimes given cash rewards for their work. See SXZ 1924, juan 4.

127 The annual or three year tribute was supposed to consist of horses, animal skins, and medicinal herbs. See Guo Qing, “Chuyi qingdai zangqu tusi zhidu” [A Discussion of the Qing Dynasty Tusi System], in *Xizang Yanjiu* no. 2, (1997) 39-46. However, horses were primary tribute noted by the Songpan Xianzhi (1924). See SXZ 1924, juan 4.

128 In return for various tribute presented by *tusi*, the emperor granted them gifts in gold and silver, silks, various kinds of cloth, tea, daily utensils and tools. See Guo Qing, “Chuyi qingdai zangqu tusi zhidu” [A Discussion of the *Tusi* System of the Qing Period], *Xizang yanjiu* [Tibetan Studies] 2 (1997), 39-46; 43.
magistrate were best demonstrated by a nineteenth century Chinese-Tibetan conflict in the Songpan area. Between 1850 and 1862 there was a major Chinese-Tibetan conflict in the Min River valley that destroyed the town of Songpan and expelled the majority of Han Chinese and Qing troops from the region. The Qing magistrate in Songpan had attempted to slightly expand and more carefully control local grain allotments owed (but subsidized by the state) by Tibetan tuguan and tusi to the magistrate and his soldiers. Tibetan tuguan and tusi in the Dazhai, Muni, Zhuanzhu si, Daxing and Xiaoxing areas were required to provide a certain amount of grain and barley to the Chinese garrison in Songpan each autumn. These grain and barley supplies were supposed to be paid for in advance by the Qing magistrate each spring. Local Tibetan elites were supposed to distribute the money paid by the state to the respective Tibetan farming families according to a list containing their names. In 1857, Tibetans complained to the local magistrate that they were being paid less—the annual grain quota was higher, but they were paid the old fixed quota. Supposedly, the magistrate or local tusi-tuguan was keeping the surplus grain and money to themselves.

In 1859 the matter came to a head when Chinese troops were stripped from the garrison to deal with a Tibetan rebellion in Ganzi Prefecture to the west. Tibetan tusi and tuguan did not supply their grain-barley quota that year and seeing the limited number of troops, they rebelled. According to the Songpan Xianzhi (1924), the rebellion started with the Rewu tuguan (at the mouth of Rewu River in the village of XiaoXingGuo, chi., Zhang ngu khog, tib.).

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129 Mona Schrempf also elaborates this 19th Century history, but in the context of discussing Tibetan and Han Chinese identity formation and popular historical memory. See Schrempf 2006, 7-12. See also, SXZ 1999, 14-15, 58-59.
130 SXZ 1924, juan 2. William Gill also discussed the conflict, but broke it into three separate events starting in 1851. See William Gill, River of Golden Sand (London: John Murray, 1883), 133-34.
131 Tibetan tuguan and tusi were given 1 wen 2 fen cash in silver coins per 100 kilograms of grain or barley (dou) and were supposed to distribute the money to their constituents accordingly. SXZ 1924, juan 2.
was attacked, many Han Chinese were killed (including the local Han Chinese military commander), and the city was reduced to ashes.\textsuperscript{133} After two abortive attempts at retaking the region, it was not until 1862 that the region was pacified and a new peace treaty signed by Tibetan elites and the provincial government. This treaty was actually brokered by a Tibetan Bonpo lama of Rin sprungs Monastery (Linbo si, chi.) and the local commander of Chinese troops sent to crush the rebellion.\textsuperscript{134} More importantly, the Qing government provided 2000 silver \textit{taels} per year to local Tibetan \textit{tuguan} and \textit{tusi} to form a kind of Tibetan police force (\textit{tubian}, chi.) under Tibetan control to guarantee peace in the region.\textsuperscript{135} As Qing forces could not keep a permanent peace, Tibetan forces under local \textit{tuguan} and \textit{tusi} were paid to do so outside of Songpan’s walls.

Another example of the limits of Qing rule in the region relates to tax collection and cadastral surveys. In areas that magistrates or other Chinese officials in \textit{tusi} dominated regions nominally ruled, local village or indigenous leaders fulfilled a dual purpose. On one hand, the Qing state demonstrated its overarching military and administrative power by assigning imperial ranks, titles, and posts to local Tibetan elites under the \textit{tuguan-tusi} system. These ranks also allowed for some limited tax collection or obligatory services (as above), cadastral surveys (population surveys for tax purposes), and enabled the local representatives of state power to place blame on individual groups, villages or lineages who attacked, robbed, or sometimes murdered Chinese merchants, officials or soldiers traveling through the region.\textsuperscript{136} Yet the local

\textsuperscript{133} SXZ 1924, \textit{juan} 2.
\textsuperscript{134} SXZ 1924, \textit{juan} 2. The local treaty not only restored relations and re-instated local \textit{tuguan} and \textit{tusi} under Qing governance it also paid a significant dividend (a percentage of the total sub-prefecture tea tax (2 \textit{wen} per packet of tea) and title (\textit{Sichuan kanbu}, chi.) to the Bonpo lama of Linbo Temple (Rin sprungs Monastery, tib.).
\textsuperscript{135} This was financed through the local and prefecture taxes on tea (the tea tax or \textit{chapiao}, chi.).
\textsuperscript{136} Songpan xianzhi 1924 [Songpan Gazetteer] references abound to the local magistrate taking Tibetans and \textit{tusi} to task for violating the rights of Han and Hui merchants traveling through the area, as well as notes on the locations of Tibetan villages and primitive cadastral surveys (basic headcounts for the purposes of assessing local taxes to be paid to the \textit{zhou} and \textit{xian} local government). SXZ 1924, \textit{juan} 2. See also Gill 1883, 134; Tafel 1914, \textit{vl.} 2, 265-66.
Qing magistrate only rarely tried to collect taxes or perform cadastral surveys outside of the Min River valley.

Taxes were minimal, and in many cases, locals Tibetan elites did not pay them or complained bitterly when they did. Albert Tafel described one such incident toward the end of the late imperial period. He described a conflict over grain and labor between the local magistrate, his soldiers, and Munigou tusi (Munigu or Khrom rje, tib.).137 Basically, Tibetans under the Maonigou tusi were required to provide corvée labor and a limited amount of grain to soldiers stationed in Songpan—the tusi’s answer to the request was less than cordial:

You may not drink the water from our stream, you may not take wood from our forests, your animals should not eat our grass, and the last thing we will provide for you is corvée labor (’u lag, tib.).

The Tibetans initially refused the request, but after arguing with the soldiers and repeated threats from the magistrate they eventually provided the labor and grain for a small fee. While this particular incident happened toward the close of the Qing Dynasty, it was indicative of the problems faced by the local magistrate—they often had to pay for supposedly free, requisitioned labor.138

In most cases, however, taxes were low or non-existent—for example, tuguan leaders of the nine villages of the Mao’er gai area were only obliged to pay 97 tael per year for an area the size of the entire upper watershed of the Min River.139 Tuguan in the uppermost reaches of the Min River valley and on the northern grasslands were not required to pay any tax at all. Ideally, for local Chinese officials in the late imperial period, control over Songpan Tibetans was accomplished through regular meetings, some limited taxation around Songpan itself, and

137 Tafel 1914, vl. 2, 266. According to Tafel, this disagreement took place in 1905.
138 SXZ 1924, juan 3 also mentions this and similar incidents in the late 19th Century. One of the reasons the tusi probably had to provide the grain and labor was the proximity of Maonigou to Songpan—it was approximately a half-hour ride on horseback to the village in question. Tusi and tuguan located in the farther reaches of the region had much less to worry about.
139 SXZ 1924, juan 3.
payment in kind for yearly services. As W.C. Haines Watson (assistant English Consul in Chongqing) noted in his study and travels through Songpan in 1905, “the local Fu... told me that he seldom interfered, except in cases happening in the city itself as it was found to work more smoothly to leave the people to the care of different Tu Ssu and made personally responsible for the good behavior of their sections.”\(^{140}\) Actual control of the region was left largely to local leaders, and even with the “loose rein policy” in effect for the region, Tibetans remained very fractious throughout the late imperial period.\(^{141}\)

In other words, an “official middle ground” of sorts existed in the Songpan region, but had its limitations. Unlike the extensive “middle ground” that existed in neighboring Yunnan Province where Qing civil and military institutions co-existed with Tai institutions, the official middle ground in the Songpan region was rather limited throughout the entire late imperial period.\(^{142}\) The official middle ground in Songpan really functioned only along the Min River and in Songpan town itself where the Qing presence was strongest. The practical imperial presence here was limited to the magistrate in the walled town of Songpan and to military officers and escorts along the southern road. As there was no official Qing or Han Chinese presence in most of the rest of the region, there was little official “middle ground.” Because of the region’s inaccessibility and lack of material wealth, the Qing government was satisfied with the status quo in the Songpan region and “ruled” the area through tuguan and tusi. These Tibetan

\(^{140}\) Haines Watson 1905, 76.

\(^{141}\) For examples of local Tibetan-Tibetan and Tibetan-Chinese fractiousness in the late imperial period, see SXZ 1924, juan 2; SXZ 1999, 12-15. Gill, Haines Watson, Wilson, and Tafel all noted that the Songpan region was beset with minor local conflicts between individual Tibetan groups and villages, as well as minor and major conflicts between Tibetans and representatives of the Qing state. Most of these problems revolved around theft and blood feuds over Tibetans fighting one another or Han Chinese soldiers or farmers. See Gill 1883, 374, 385-86; Haines Watson 1905, 76-77; Wilson 1913, 140-41, 145; Tafel 1914, vol. 2, 255-56, 277-78, 282.

\(^{142}\) A stronger Qing state presence, military and administrative, existed alongside indigenous Tai organizations and Tai polities in Xishuangbanna and other areas of Yunnan. This sort of middle ground was much closer to the *quid pro quo* offered by Richard White in his original study of Native Americans and the French. See Giersch 1998, 119-73.
“representatives” of the Qing state were the real power holders in the Songpan region, and they determined the nature of both resource use and social control in the region.

**Local Tibetan Elites: Tsho ba, dPon po, ‘Go ba, and dBang can in the Songpan Area**

The Tibetans of Songpan Region were partly agricultural and partly pastoral. This was in large part due to the diverse topography of the region; the same topography that made late imperial Qing control of the region difficult also splintered local Tibetan forms of governance. The diverse forms of Tibetan governance, and subsequent Tibetan elites, fell into four distinct groups, sometimes referred to as *Tsho ba* (village federations, tribes, territories, or lineages): the agro-pastoral Sharba Tibetans in the upper reaches of the Min River valley and upper Fu River valley, the Lappa Tibetans in Daxing and on the Rewu River to the south, the dMudge Tibetans along the Mao’er gai River, and the largely pastoral Mewa, Baxi, Tu encampments, and Tangke Tibetans in the northern and western grasslands. This section will elaborate some of

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143 The agricultural groups were called *rong pa* (tib., people of the valleys), the pastoralists *’brog pa* (tib., people of the pastures. Robert Ekvall also referred to the Shar ba Tibetans of the upper Min River and Tibetans in the upper drainage system of the Baishui as the *Zung rtsa* (tib., people of the river valleys) in his anthropological research of the border region of Sichuan-Qinghai-Gansu. See Ekvall 1939; Ekvall 1954, 39-48.

144 The definition of *Tsho ba* (or sometimes *Tsho wa*, tib.) depends on the region one examines. The term reflects the diversity of polities and governance styles in the region. In effect, *Tsho ba* is connection with a Tibetan group and leader based on residence, lineage, or membership in an area. According to Dr. Tsering Shakya, *Tsho ba* could incorporate village federations, tribes, physical territories, or lineage groups. In the Songpan and Kham region, a *Tsho ba* was usually defined as a tribe or a territorial entity (like a large town/village or set of villages). However, in the Machu (upper Yellow River) and Mdzod dge (Ruo’er gai Grasslands) areas of northern Songpan and Qinghai, it could also mean a lineage group descended from a single mythical or near-mythical figure. A final example was the Golok Confederacy of the Aba County and Dadu River region in northern Kham that mixed both the lineage descent description and a confederation structure of various tribes under a single *Tsho ba* and king (term the inner and outer phyir *Tsho ba*, tib.). In terms of the Songpan region, however, the vast majority of *Tsho ba* fell into the village confederation and tribal *Tsho ba* categories headed by a single leader or set of village elders. Communication with Tsering Shakya (May, 2007). See also, Ekvall 1954, 40-44; Rockhill 1891, 73-74; Yu Xiangwen, “Xibei yu mu zangqu zhi shehui diaocha” [A Social Survey of the Tibetan Areas of our Northwest] (Chicago: Manuscript, 1947).

145 Qing dynasty officials and administration recognized a series of *tuguan* and *tusi* from specific *Tsho ba* in the region. According to the *Songpan Gazetteer* (1999), there were seventy-two total *Tsho ba* with *tusi-tuguan* in the region. SXZ 1999, 165. For example, the principle ones in Songpan, Jiuzhaigou, eastern Hongyuan, and southern Ruo’er gai Counties included: Shanba, Maoni, E’mi, Qibu, Xianba, Qiming, Daxing and Xiaoxing (Rewu, tib.), Yandi, Yangdong, Hanpan, the twenty encampments of the Tuwan, Tubai, and Tu’er, the nine village heads of Mao’er gai, Huangshengguan, Mewa, Baxi, Baozuo, Diuqiu, Dazhi, Zhongcha, Shangzuohua, Heiyongdu, Dalang, Zangzi, Bachen, Lungwa, and Qiama. Tangke, officially under the rule of the Ambans of Labrang Temple, also had *Tsho ba tuguan* that answered to the Songpan magistrate because their summer and spring grazing grounds were in the Songpan *dacaodi* (Songpan Great Grasslands). Four “temple” *tusi* were also mentioned: Jisuomang si, Xuanwei
the principal forms of local elite governance and land use policies prevalent in these areas of the Songpan region. Two axes of local power governed the Tsho ba of the Songpan region—Tibetan headmen and local monasteries. Tibetan forms of governance in the region, chiefly by the local Tibetan elites enumerated below, were the key to understanding Songpan’s “unofficial middle ground.”

In the Songpan region, in exchange for nominal taxes and tribute, the Qing state was able to incorporate the Tibetan elites of the Songpan region into its imperial system by turning Tibetan Tsho ba, dpon po, 'Go ba, and dbang can (various kinds of local Tibetan leaders) into Qing tusi or tuguan. Thus the official middle ground and its accommodations did play a role in the nature of patterns of local elite dominance. Yet while local leaders often sought Qing titles to bolster their local standing, in the end local hereditary elites, local monasteries, and local “big men” formed their own tapestry of local polities that ruled the majority of the Songpan region without state interference. In effect, most of the Tibetans outside of the Min, Baishui, and Fu River valleys were politically autonomous in all of their local affairs, and even the Tibetans nearest Songpan were relatively autonomous.

The patterns of dominance and power of local elite governance also resonate with several of the studies of Chinese elites in other areas of Qing China in Joseph Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin’s edited volume Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Domination (1990). This collection of studies on the diversity of forms of local elite governance in the late Qing elucidates the importance of local and extra-bureaucratic sources of gentry power in most of the core eastern

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and central parts of China. In particular, Esherick and Rankin’s discussion of “frontier elites” applies to the Tibetan elites of the Songpan region. “Frontier elites,” including non-Han minorities who were “largely beyond state power,” relied on local and often isolated resources, and above all on their own military or inherited positions rather than the state. Most of the common patterns of elite dominance and advancement like scholar-gentry bureaucratic positions, examination degrees and military support for the Qing state common to much of the rest of China did not apply to Songpan regional elites. This did not mean, however, that local elites did not utilize Qing official discourses and practices to bolster their local position. Like other areas of nineteenth century China, the local patterns of elite dominance in the Songpan region faced a relatively weak imperial state, maintained their local positions of power, garnered the lion’s share of local resources, and ultimately demonstrated the diversity of late imperial Qing governance while using official discourse to secure their positions.

The Tibetan elites of the Songpan region also conform to Geoffrey Samuel’s study of Tibetan agricultural communities. Geoffrey Samuel argued that many of the decentralizing features, and the sheer variety of features, of Tibetan elites were the product of the geographic isolation, changing political environments (primarily the weaknesses of imperial states in the central and eastern portions of the Tibetan ethnographic world), and the rigors of a harsh climate and environment. Villages and Tibetan elites had to be flexible in the face of harsh climate and isolation, as well as centralizing state forces, but on the whole, they were autonomous

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147 Esherick and Rankin 1990, 8-9.  
148 Ibid., 24.  
political entities that crafted their own political order, policed themselves, and fought amongst one another.\(^{150}\)

The local \(tuguan\)-\(tusi\) recognized by the Qing government were normally leaders of local villages, lineages and/or clan groups. These local elites were the first axis of power in local Tibetan society, the “headmen” of Songpan \(Tsho\ ba\).\(^{151}\) Tibetan elites determined the customary legal and political structures that regulated local resource use and people. Each of the regional \(Tsho\ ba\) were led by a locally elected Tibetan popular leader or “big man” (\(dbang\ can\), tib.), a hereditary “headman” (‘\(go\ ba\), tib.; \(tuguan\) or \(tusi\), chi.), or in the case of the mainly pastoral groups, a “chieftain” (\(dpon\ po\), tib.) who was a member of the dominant or founding clan. Under the local headman most \(Tsho\ ba\) had another set of leader-representatives, a “leader of ten” (\(bcu\ dpon\), tib.), individual villages or extended households or tent-holds in pastoral groups.\(^{152}\) In the case of the Sharba \(Tsho\ ba\), a federation of eight Tibetan villages north of Songpan, the primary leader of the village federation was a ‘\(go\ ba\)-\(tuguan\) (headman), while each village also had its own individual leader, a \(dbang\ can\) or \(bcu\ dpon\) (leader of ten).

In the agro-pastoral communities of the Songpan region, primarily the Sharba, Lappa, and dMudge \(Tsho\ ba\), the village was the important land owning unit. Local elite families owned much of the land, determined how village land was divided among poorer households, and sometimes granted land to destitute Tibetans who acted as a kind of tenant farmer (\(khral\ pa\) or

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150 “Communities that were at one time under the sway of a locally centered kingdom or a powerful local chieftain might find themselves 50-100 years later in a situation remote from any effective political authority.” Samuels 1993, 131.

151 See also Footnote 76 for the definition of \(Tsho\ ba\).

152 The \(dcu\ dpon\) were reminiscent of the \(paojia\) household/village local policing system of the late imperial period. However, I could not find any sources that actually related these two entities to one another. The “leader of ten” did not necessarily mean ten people, ten households, or ten tents in the Songpan region, but in other Tibetan areas (for instance, among the Golok and Serthar Tribes to the west), they literally were leaders of ten tent-holds. See Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu shehui lishi diaocha [Social and Historical Observations on Tibetans and Mongols of Qinghai Province] (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1985), 250-53.
In most cases, these agro-pastoral Tsho ba were internally divided into people who lived as farmers in the lowlands while others led a more pastoral life in the high grazing lands but returned to village lands in the winter months. Generally, villagers shared common ownership of grazing and forest land. Arable land was held by individual families, but local Tibetan elites and village elders forbade its sale to outsiders and permission of the village leader was required to open new land to cultivation. As pasture land was often at some distance from villages, local elites also determined the movement of animals to different pastures, and divided high quality and lower quality pastures according to the size of individual herds. In effect, local Tibetan elites, the ‘go ba, dbang can, and dbon po determined the timing of seasonal movements and herding destinations, and assigned the rotations of Tsho ba members to keep guard over villages, pastureland and to fight in their defense.

Individual rights to Tsho ba land were rarely considered truly fixed rights—rather, they were community rights. Most agricultural rights were based on community rights, what Geoffrey Samuel has termed “centralized agricultural communities.” Local governance in these communities usually took the form of a select number of local elites making key decisions concerning distributing and controlling land use. In addition, rights and duties derived from

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153 According to Robert Ekvall, in the agro-pastoral villages of the Sharba and Lappa Tsho ba there were very few tenant farmers and only a trace of sharecropping. Ekvall 1954, 42. However, sharecropping and tenant farming was more common among in the dMudge Tsho ba. See Tafel, vl. 2, 309. According to Ekvall, the hired help might own a few animals they could graze with their employer’s, and any monies accrued from these animals were at the servant’s disposal. With some patronage, these hired hands could eventually obtain their own land and get out from under their employer as an independent member-household of the village or camp. See Ekvall 1954, 47-48. Ekvall’s fairly equitable and self-governing descriptions of the pastoral Songpan region, Qinghai and Gansu have been called into question. See Samuel 1993, 133.

154 Gradations obviously existed between the amount of agriculture and herding practiced by individual Tsho ba. In any case, there was an exchange of products among the two parts, and in some cases, single families included both pastoral and farming members. See Ekvall 1939; Ekvall 1954; AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 1080-81, 1086, 1142.

155 Ekvall 1954, 42-44. SXZ 1924, juan 3.

156 In order to reduce confusion over the variety of Tibetan elites/headmen in the region, I will hereafter refer to tuguan-tusi, ‘go ba, dbon po, dbang can, and bcu dpon collectively as “headmen” or the local Tibetan elites.

157 According to Samuel, “[T]he key element in the centralized agricultural pattern is the estate system, by which peasant families have the hereditary rights to cultivate land in exchange for the payment of tax or labor to a particular estate.” See Samuel 1993, 116.
pastoral land depended on the season—summer pastures that were not the property of a smaller
tsho ba were distributed according to the numbers of animals and family size on a yearly
basis. But while use of summer sites might change from year to year, winter homes and camp
sites were not fluid. Households within individual tsho ba had “individual and exclusive rights
over certain family hayfields” near winter sites. In their winter camps, Tibetans owned the
homes, yak/cattle pens, and the land on which they stood. Furthermore, there were carefully
guarded plots of the best pasture land that produce hay for winter use.

In agricultural villages, there were two categories of land holding households—farmers
who had received their land rights from local headmen were called khral patrepa (taxpayers),
and others who held their land rights from big landowning elites (other than the headman) or
monasteries, farmers who worked for “estates,” were known as kholpa (servants). Both
groups paid taxes in kind and by providing services to their landlords. In addition to the taxes
paid on land, local pastoral Tibetans were sub-divided into various grades in accordance with the

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158 Pedro Carrasco, Land and Polity in Tibet (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959), 76. Aba zhou wenshi ziliao xuanji (1-7) [Selected Cultural and Historical Materials of Aba Prefecture] (Maerkang: Compilation Committee of the People’s Consultative Conference of Aba Tibetan Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, n.d.), 21 (hereafter AZWZX). In this region there was relative social equality in general in that most of the tsho ba were fairly small. However, as Tsering Shakya and others have pointed out, this “social equality” among nomads and agro-pastoral communities were contingent on a number of factors. Shakya has noted that regardless of the region, issues of clean and unclean (rig or rus) groups existed according to the care with which rural Tibetans followed strictures laid down in Lhasa. Communication with Tsering Shakya (April, 2006). The Aba zhou wenshi ziliao xuanji also notes that various levels of servants existed (75), as noted earlier, or based social stratification on the number of animals owned. Tafel also noted that there was less equality among local Tibetans in larger villages like Mao’er gai than among the grassland groups. Tafel 1914, 260, 262-63.

159 Ekvall 1954; also Ran 2000, 208.


161 See AZWZX, 24. See also Tsomu 2006, 62, 65 for a similar discussion of agricultural and pastoral taxpayers on the Sino-Tibetan frontier.

162 SXZ 1924, juan 2 (section on land administration); SXZ 1999, 395.
number of large livestock they owned. *Khral pa* (taxpayers), the primary group, owned over thirty animals (yaks, cross breeds, cattle, or oxen). In addition, there were three groups of poor nomads, the first referring to those with 15-30 cattle, the second owning fewer than 15 cattle, and the "beggar" or "wanderer" (*khyams po*, tib.) who had no cattle at all.

The other axis of local power in Tibetan communities was the leaders of local Buddhist and Bon monasteries (*bla ma* or lama, tib.). In addition to local headmen, local monasteries played a role in social and resource management as arbitrators and landowners. Each of the *Tsho ba* in the Songpan region had its own territorial cult based on a local mountain deity (*yul lha* or *gzhi bdag*, tib.) and its own local monastery. The granting of land by headman, Tibetan elites, or common Tibetans to large and small monasteries elevated their status as important competing power centers to the local *tusi* headmen. Through gifts from local Tibetan communities and leaders, monasteries often accumulated significant holdings of land. According to some sources, these monasteries neither owned land nor collected taxes. They depended mainly upon lay donations that local Tibetan headmen, merchants, and big farmers were willing to give. This depended, however, on the region in question. According to local

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163 *Amdo nanbu shehui qingkuang diaocha* [Investigation of social conditions in southern Amdo] (n.a., n.d.), 32.
164 Discussion with Ran Guangrong, April 2005; Ran 1994, 117; Ran Guangrong, *Sichaun zangqu de kaifa zhilu* [The Development Path in Sichuan Tibetan Areas] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2000), 12. Tafel discusses local blood money issues for the Songpan area—see Tafel 1914, 282.
165 The primary example of monastic power and land holding in the Songpan region was the large monastery at Shangba zhai (modern Mao’er gai). In accordance with fieldwork conducted in the 1950s and ‘60s, the monastery at Mao’er gai owned about 1000 acres of cultivated land along the Mao’er gai River, which accounted for about 12% of the total cultivated land in the western half of the county. Other smaller monasteries in the region also owned significant acreage, including the small Shangbala si outside of Dazhai village to the east of Songpan. See Nationalities Institute of Minority Nationalities of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Sichuan Investigation Team of Social History of National Minorities, *Aba zangzu qiangzu zizhizhou Songpan xian zangsi qingkuang diaocha ziliao* [Fieldwork report on Tibetan Temples in Songpan County, Aba Prefecture] (neibu, 1962-63) (hereafter *AZQXSDZ*); *Sichaun xiating ganyisheng zangzu shehui lishi zhoushi* [Tibetan Social and Historical Surveys in Aba Prefecture, Sichuan Province] (neibu, 1985 collection of 1956-58 field reports) (hereafter *SAZSD*), and Southwest minorities investigation committee, *Caodi zangzu diaocha cailiao* [Grassland Tibetan Survey Materials] (neibu, 1982; compiled between 1952-1964).
Chinese sources, both Buddhist (Gelugpa sect) and Bon monasteries in the Songpan region owned land, engaged extensively in trade, and often mediated conflicts among Tibetans, as well as conflicts with Qing authorities in Songpan. The major temple land holders were Buddhist institutions in the Songpan area, in the dMudge Tsho ba (Mao’er gai), and a temple in Mewa (on the Ruo’er gai grasslands to the northwest). Bon temples all over the upper reaches of the Min River and its tributaries, along the Rewu River, near Mao’er gai, and in the western half of Jiuzhaigou County also owned land and retained some tenant farmers. The land owned or controlled by the monasteries not only provided wealth to them, but also allowed them to branch out into pastoral herding and money lending.

With the growth of their economic importance over time, many large and small monasteries in the region also began to be actively involved in long distance trade. The economic position enjoyed by the monasteries in turn strengthened their political influence. In addition to the political and economic privileges noted above, monasteries also frequently functioned as the cultural centers for local communities and as safe havens for local farmers and nomads where they could store produce safely and take refuge against bandits. Monasteries also played important roles as mediators in Tsho ba and other Tibetan conflicts, and in the case noted in the previous section, they also mediated between local Tibetan elites and representatives of the Chinese state. Consequently, lamas and monks wielded political power as land owners,

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167 The primary sources that speak of temple lands, temple economics, and temple practices in the Songpan region include, SXZ 1924, juan 3; Ran 1994, 117-18; Religious Affairs Bureau of Songpan County, Songpan zang zhuan fojiao gaikuang [A General Account of Songpan Tibetan Buddhist Institutions] (Songpan County, 1987); SXZ 1999, 838-42.
169 According to Ran Guangrong 1994, 115-17 and AZQXSDZ, six monasteries were active in local and regional trade, and the SXZ 1924, juan 2 noted that most of the monasteries were active in the tea-horse trade, money lending to Tibetans, as owners of land and forested areas, and as storage areas for goods waiting for temple festivals.
170 This element of monastic influence is only noted in passing in the SXZ 1924, juan 3, but in general, I follow the outline of decentralized political and bureaucratic structures noted by Samuel 1993, 215-229 as it seems to generally correspond to the 1950s and '60s investigations of the region by communist cadres.
religious institutions, providers of safe havens, and as local mercantile entities. In other words, monasteries exerted influence over the political tapestry of the region in much the same way as local Tibetan headmen.

In addition to their individual power in villages, Tibetan elites were also key figures in "policing" the Songpan region in a way that the Qing magistrate could only imagine from his fortified compound in Songpan. Most of the problems that local headmen and monastic leaders had to deal with rose out of illicit encroachments by people and animals of one group into other *Tsho ba* lands, thefts of herd animals, and the inevitable consequences of fighting over land and yaks (eg. blood money for lives lost in fighting over all of the above). Minor disputes between tribes, encampments or villages over animal thefts were initially mediated by the leaders of the local groups—but if that did not work, they would seek higher Tibetan authorities such as the headmen of *Tsho ba* or particular Bon or Buddhist lamas.171

Furthermore, Tibetan elites also had to deal with regular raiding and trade-related violence. They often simply participated. Commerce was often not a peaceful process—violence was an option for acquiring goods and for protecting them.172 While the Tibetan economy outside of the immediate vicinity of the Min River and its imperial roadway was largely self-supporting, locals still traded for grain, tea, and salt. They obtained these goods largely through normal market exchanges along the Min River villages with farmers and other more sedentary Tibetans, but many such dealings were not friendly or even businesslike. The

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171 If the two groups had bad relations, the leader of a third group might be called in or another individual known for his mediating skills (*gzu ba mkhan* or *bjo dpon*). If the mediators failed, disputants would seek resolution from the head of a local *Tsho ba* or from a major local lama. I did not find a single example of feuding groups going to the local Qing magistrate for mediation in any of my primary and secondary sources. See AZWZX), 30-31.

172 The elements of local elites "policing" their regions, as well as the level of violence inherent in trade and inter-ethnic contact resonate strongly with both Richard White's discussion of the level of violence (and "official" and "unofficial" accommodations of the "middle ground" to prevent or at least try to constrain it) in trade and inter-ethnic contacts, as well as Edward McCord's article on local military power and elite formation in late imperial Guizhou. See White 1991, 53-54, 75-82; Edward McCord, "Local Military Power and Elite Formation: the Liu Family of Xingyi County, Guizhou," in Esherick and Rankin 1990, 164-67.
Tibetans in northern and western Songpan County regularly conducted raids on each other's villages as well as on traders traveling through the region. They sometimes even attacked local imperial officials.

Like the Golok and Aba Tibetans to the northwest, Tibetans in the northern and western parts of the region set great store in martial activities and viewed raiding as a chance to display individual courage. Adult males of the dMudge Tsho ba and pastoral herders on the grasslands were expected to behave (and be brave) in this manner. However, they drew a firm distinction between robbery as part of a raid or a retaliatory strike, and theft from fellow tribe members or from people under the tribe's protection. On the one hand, open robbery was supported and praised, but on the other, "in-group" theft was strictly punished as it was considered a shameful action. Locals would rob not only one another (for fun and profit) but also freely strike at trade caravans, and especially non-local Tibetans, traveling through their region. These outsiders often carried items of worth, and if they were not Tibetan, they were fair game. At the very least, outsiders were held responsible to pay local Tsho ba compensation for trespassing on or traveling through the lands they crossed. But while commerce was not always a peaceful process, it nonetheless tied the region together in a functional way. With local Tibetan elites more or less fractured along geographical lines, and the Qing state unable to control the region from Songpan, commercial transactions often provided the sole basis for regional connections.

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173 Tafel 1914, vl. 2, 137; Haines Watson 1905; Robert Ekvall's discussion of pastoral communities in northern Sichuan and Gansu during the 1930s, including the Sharwa/Shar ba Tsho ba in modern Ruo'er gai and Songpan Counties, Ekvall 1939.
174 SXZ 1999, 18; Sichuan Shengzhi: Dashi jishu, vlm 1 [Annals of Sichuan Province: Account of Major Events] (Chengdu: Sichuan kexue shehui chubanshe, 1999); Wilson 1913; Watson Haines 1905.
175 Tafel, in particular, has an interesting set of observations on robbery and travel in the Songpan region. He made several trips through the grasslands and forests surrounding Mao'er gai, Songpan, and the Ruo'er gai grasslands, and continually complained about problems with thieves, merchants, dealing with local headmen and monasteries to get stolen animals returned, and so forth. See Tafel 1914, vl. 2, 255-300.
176 Wilson, Tafel, and Rock all describe the need for Tibetan traders, camp followers, or large numbers of Han Chinese soldiers to journey outside of the Min River valley and other areas of northern Sichuan for fear of attack, excessive theft, and to overcome local language barriers.
177 Carrasco 1959, 76.
The "official middle ground" based on Qing governance in Songpan was thus relatively weak in the face of local elite political organization. But an extensive "unofficial middle ground" also formed through trade and cultural contacts between Chinese immigrants (farmers, soldiers and officials) and local Tibetans. Despite occasional flare-ups between the local Qing magistrate and Tibetan elites, and the dangers of travel and trade in the region, the town of Songpan and a few of the major villages along the Min and Baishui Rivers functioned as a convenient frontier trading center, an "unofficial middle ground." Songpan, in particular, was for Tibetan elites and commoners a clearinghouse for local and regional trade, a convenient location to bring products to market.\(^\text{178}\) For the Chinese, Songpan represented the furthest extent of significant Chinese settlement and Qing administration in northern Sichuan, one of three major frontier administrative and trade emporiums.\(^\text{179}\)

2.4 The "Unofficial Middle Ground": How Trade and Markets Connected Songpan Tibetans to the Wider Qing World

As noted in the previous section, the official Qing presence in Songpan was relatively weak. In practice, the political and land use structure of the Songpan area was dominated by a patchwork of regional Tibetan elites, strongmen and religious institutions who interacted with one another in extensive trading—especially in the larger towns and villages along the Min, Baishui, and Mao'er gai Rivers. In these towns, but especially in Songpan itself, the Tibetan world of Songpan interacted with the wider late imperial world. Even though the Qing state

\(^{178}\) Songpan as the center of regional trade and nearly the sole center of trade in the Songpan region resonates strongly with Esherick and Rankins introductory comments on the key elements of local elites and patterns of governance in periphery areas of Qing China. The key to local elite power, and the nominal touchstone of imperial governance were especially tied in their discussion of "periphery elites" to the importance of trade and local market centers in isolated prefectures like Songpan. See Esherick and Rankin 1990, 23.

\(^{179}\) Tafel 1914, 275 and Haines Watson 1905 list Da Qianlu, Songpan, and Xining as the three main front-runners of Qing administration on the Tibetan border and important ingress and egress points for the Tibet trade in the Amdo-Kham region. Ran Guangrong takes it a step farther and lists the northern Sichuan route to and from Xining/Songpan as the second largest tea trade depot with Tibet proper. Ran 2000, 197.
exercised little functional control of the Songpan region, Songpan was still linked to the outside world mainly through a regional trade in pastoral products, animal skins, and medicinal herbs exchanged for Chinese salt, tea, and other trade goods. Tibetan communities in the Songpan region responded to these market opportunities by acting as go-betweens, and actively participated in local and long distance trade by raising and herding pastoral animals to market and collecting other local goods. The Sharba, Lappa and dMudge Tsho ba formed a trading link between the Chinese trading and garrison town of Songpan, which for centuries had to be protected by thick walls against aggressive intruders (especially local Tibetans), and the Amado Tibetan pastoralist communities of the high plateaus to the northwest and agro-pastoral Tibetans of the Tibetan border states of Kham.

Songpan’s trade-oriented unofficial middle ground functioned on two levels, linking diverse and isolated groups of Tibetans to the wider Tibetan and Chinese worlds. At one level, the regional tea trade linked Songpan to the Qing state through government trade monopolies, as well as to Tibetan areas to the west, including Lhasa itself. On another level, other products produced in the region including herd animals (yak and cattle), wild animal skins, and medicinal herbs were much desired in provincial and national markets. Trade in these commodities drew the majority of small traders into and out of the hinterland, and from Songpan to major trade centers to the south and north. Regional trade and markets did thrive on the tea-pastoral-herb trade, but this intra-regional trade was ultimately severely hampered by poor roads and the danger of traveling in the hinterland.

Commodities entering Songpan through this regional trade included, in the first place, tea, silk and cotton goods, ironware and salt—trade goods that Tibetans could not themselves produce. For these goods, especially tea, Songpan Tibetans traded skins, medicines and herbs,
livestock, and wool. Embedded in the historical tea trade (chama shangdao, chi.; ja lam, tib.) was the expectation that local Tibetans would exchange horses and livestock for tea. This exchange gave late imperial Chinese states (both the Ming and Qing states) fine animals and food for their armies in exchange for a relatively common commodity that could not be grown in the region. Perhaps more importantly for the Qing state, the tea trade was a government monopoly that provided a great deal of tax revenue in western China. In the Songpan region, in fact, the tea trade was nearly the only source of direct, regular revenue for the local magistrate. Salaries for local administrators and military troops came from state-controlled tea taxes (cha piao, chi.) and whatever land taxes the local magistrate could collect from lands around Songpan.

While the existence of government tea trade monopolies was certainly evident in local trade to foreign observers, visitors to the Songpan region toward the close of the nineteenth century noted that most regional trade was handled by local Tibetan, Hui and Han merchants.

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180 See SXZ 1924, juan 2; Haines-Watson 1905, 51-101; 90-92; Gill 1883, 375-85; Wilson 1913, 143-44. The best overview of goods going into and out the region in value and amount was Haines-Watson’s “Journey to Sung’pan.” Based on lists of commodities in local gazetteers, this section of the dissertation tries to give an idea of the sheer amount of goods moved out of the region in comparison to what was traded in. In other words, I try to demonstrate that the raising of large amounts of livestock, gathering herbs and medicines, slaughter of local fur-bearing animals and deer, and wool had as much or more to do with local resource use and society as governments and officials.

181 The chama gudao, or ancient tea-horse route, was also known as the jalam or ja lam to Tibetans. This network of roads and paths funneled most late imperial Chinese-Tibetan trade through one of four areas—Lijiang in northern Yunnan to the Lhasa region, Kangding in western Sichuan to Lhasa and the Kham region, and Songpan in northern Sichuan and Xining in Qinghai to eastern Tibet, Kham and Amdo. Songpan was the smallest of the four regional trade centers. Since the Song Dynasty, Chinese tea had become an inalienable part of the Tibetan economy. Tea traders gathered in these areas, transporting and selling hundreds of thousands of brick tea packages to Lhasa, Kham, and Amdo Tibetan regions. The tea traders in turn bought horses, Tibetan medicinal goods, and herd animals. See SXZ 1999, 595-98; Jia Daquan, "Chuan zang dao di xingqi yu chuan zang guanxi de fazhan" [The Rise of the Sichuan-Tibet Route and the Development of the Sichuan-Tibetan Relations], in Hong Quanhu (ed.), Liang an shaoshu minzu wenti [Minority Issues on Both Sides of the Taiwan Strait] (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1996), 83-85; and Kangding xianzhi [Kangding County Gazetteer] (Chengdu: Sichaun renmin chubanshe, 1995), 168-69.


183 SXZ 1924, juan 2. See also, AZWX 1986, vl. 4, 10-11.

184 Songpan had offices of five of the major Chahong (Tea Hongs/Tea Guilds) of the Late Qing. The primary tea hongs were the Benli sheng, Wutai qin, Yangmeng tai, and Tangli yuan hong, all with their primary Sichuan offices located in Chengdu and Chongqing.
rather than the Hui-dominated government tea monopolies that controlled most of the long-distance and high-gross tea trade with Tibetans in Kham and Tibet proper. Almost all trade outside of the Min River valley and westwards was conducted by Tibetan intermediaries or very strongly protected Han and Hui mule and ox trains. These mule and ox trains were usually on their way to Tibet proper or Kham with one of the larger tea trading trains, while local Tibetan yak and horse trains supplied regional trade depots and merchants in larger villages or monasteries in the western and northern parts of the Songpan region and the nearer parts of Qinghai and Kham.

Sheep skins, sheep and some yak and cattle for meat, along with medicinal herbs gathered in the hinterland, were the primary and only significant exports from the region. These goods were much sought after in wider markets as extra animals and skins were difficult to come by in more agricultural-oriented areas of the Sichuan Basin, and the medicinal herbs were unique to the eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau. By the turn of the nineteenth century, over 10,000 sheep were annually slaughtered in Songpan for local and regional use, with most of their skins and wool shipped south to Chengdu. William C. Haines Watson and Ran Guangrong estimated that over 5000 yaks and oxen, and over 10,000 goats were slaughtered or herded to southern markets annually. The skins and wool were most important, but many of the animals were herded south and east for their meat as well. For the local and intra-regional market, trade in agricultural commodities like barley and wheat was also important.

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185 On the tea trade in Songpan, see AZWZX 1986, vl. 4, 10-23; Baimacuo 1994, 35-39; and Jia Daquan, “Chuan chaguan zang de lishi zuoyong” [The Historical Role of the Tea Monopolies in Sichuan’s Tibetan Areas], in Luo Runcang and Ran Xinjian, eds., Sichuan zangxue lunwen ji [An overview of studies on the culture of Tibetans in Sichuan] (Chengdu: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1993), 1-34.
186 See Haines Watson 1905, 90; Tafel 1914; AZZ, 397-98, 883-87; Ran Guangrong 2000, 195-97.
187 Haines Watson 1905, 94; Ran Guangrong 2000, 98, 222-23.
188 All of the county gazetteers of the region discuss the chief agricultural products of the area, mostly barley for Tibetans, but some wheat as well. See SXZ 1924, juan 2 and 3; see also Li Yangshu, Wenzhi jilu [Wen Gazetteer Notes] (Wenchuan County, six juan, 1799), juan 1. Later materials drawing on local memories do much the same.
were the chief staple crops of the region, peas, lentils, potatoes, mustard and some maize were also grown along the southern and middle reaches of the upper Min River and traded into the hinterland in exchange for other more marketable commodities like animals and medicinal herbs. Trade in these local commodities, as a part of the larger long distance commodities trade, was especially important for the grasslands *Tsho ba* of the northern and western reaches of the Songpan region.\(^\text{189}\)

Although pastoral and agricultural products accounted for the bulk of trade and taxes in the local economy, farming, hunting and herb gathering were also important. In early 1877, William Gill described these local fairs and trade in Songpan area. “[In Songpan Ting] in the month of July there is an annual fair, when the Si-fan [Tibetans and Qiang], the Mongols of the Ko-Ko-Nor, and the Man-tzu [Hui] bring in their produce to sell. Skins of all kinds, musk, deer-horns, rhubarb, and medicines are the chief articles brought down, for which they take up in exchange crockery, cotton goods, and little trifles.\(^\text{190}\) All of these goods and animals were traded at regular fairs in Songpan and nearby areas during annual Tibetan celebrations. From there they were shipped to Chengdu and points south and east,\(^\text{191}\) or in some cases, to other Tibetan areas.\(^\text{192}\)

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See AZWZX 1986, vl. 1, 167. The majority of grain and barley tax was collected local Tibetan elites for themselves and their *Tsho ba*, and only rarely was much grain collected as tax by the local magistrate. See section two for a primary example of difficulties in collecting local grain taxes.

\(^{189}\) See Wang 1993, 53-55.

\(^{190}\) William Gill 1883, 128-29.

\(^{191}\) Haines Watson 1905, 92-3; David Crockett Graham, “A Collecting Trip to Songpan,” *Journal of West China Border Research Society* 2 (1924-25), 24; SXZ 1924, *juan* 3 mentions regular trade fairs/trade meetings in the context of meetings and negotiations with Tibetan *tusi* headmen. When the local magistrate visited to “collect taxes” and “survey local conditions”, the event often entailed a small trade fair with Tibetan, Hui and Han traders doing business. It was safer to travel with the local Songpan magistrate through the region; it was often worth a Han or Hui trader’s life to enter more thoroughly Tibetan areas west and north of Songpan town itself.

\(^{192}\) Despite their reputations as robbers, Tibetans in the Songpan region traded westward to Golok, Kham, and the eastern reaches of Lhasa’s Tibet. See *Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu shehui lishi diaocha* [Social and Historical Observations on Tibetans and Mongols of Qinghai Province] (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1985), 250-53; Bianca Horlemann, “Modernisation Efforts in mGo Log,” in T. Huber (ed.), *Amdo Tibetans in Transition* (2002),
The skin trade, not just in sheep and yak skins, was almost as important in regional and trans-regional trade as sheep. The mountains, grasslands and forests of the region were home to many fur-bearing animals including leopards, fox, sable, squirrels, deer, weasels, and wolves. During the late imperial period, these animals were hunted for their pelts.\textsuperscript{193} The temperate forests and grasslands were also home to deer (musk and red deer), boar, rabbits, and antelope. During the late Qing, the Songpan region was well known throughout southwestern and central China for its skin/fur and animal product medicinal trade.

Animal skins and products were only a part of the lucrative forest products trade; mushrooms and traditional medicinal herbs constituted one of the most lucrative and important items in trans-regional trade linking the Songpan region to the outside world. The primary forest products gathered from the forests, like mushrooms and traditional medicinal plants, were significant enough to have their own set of specific Qing period taxes.\textsuperscript{194} Forest goods were collected from areas above 3000 meters, and with the exception of the caterpillar fungus \textit{(chongcao, chi.; dbyar tsa dgun 'bu, tib.)}\textsuperscript{195} collected in grassland or meadow areas, were from forested areas. As William C. Haines Watson noted at the end of the nineteenth century, “The different varieties of medicines brought to Sungp’an are well known and held in great esteem by the Chinese all over the Empire.”\textsuperscript{196} Local Tibetans gathered not only musk (from local musk

\textsuperscript{193} This was especially true for fox, sable, wolf and leopard pelts. They were used both for trade with other areas and southward, as well as to accessorize local clothing styles. See SXZ 1999, 23; Haines Watson 1905, 91-2.

\textsuperscript{194} This section of the chapter was inspired and draws on, in part, the fascinating studies of mushroom and traditional medicinal plant trade in non-TAR Tibetan areas of China by Emily Yeh 2000, and Daniel Winkler, “Forest Use and Implications of the 1998 Logging Ban in the Tibetan Prefectures of Sichuan: Case Study on Forestry , Reforestation, and NTFP in Litang County, Ganzi TAP, China,” in \textit{Informatore Botanico Italiano} 35:1 (2003). Key discussions of the importance of this trade and its late imperial taxes can be found in Haines-Watson 1905, 98-99; Oscar Coales, “Economic Notes on Eastern Tibet,” \textit{Geographic Journal}, no. 54 (1919), 242-47, 245-46; Gui 1993, 20-21, 30-31.

\textsuperscript{195} \textit{Yartsa Gunbu} (tib.) is a high-altitude (3000m-5000m) grassland fungus parasitizing on the larvae of a small whitish ghost moth, \textit{Hepialus armoricanus}.

\textsuperscript{196} Haines Watson 1905, 93.
deer) and deer horn for Chinese Traditional Medicine, but a large number of medicinal plants, herbs and mushrooms for Tibetan Traditional Medicine. Many medicinal plants were and are used in both Tibetan and Chinese medicine, but the Traditional Chinese medicines dominated actual market exchanges from the late nineteenth century to the present. One of the most important of these goods was the caterpillar fungus. Other important medicinal plant parts collected in the region were bulbs of *Fritillaria* spp. (*Beimu*, chi.), roots of *Rheum* spp. (*Dahuang*, chi.) and *Astragalus* spp. (*Huangqi*, chi.), and rhubarb (*Rheum*). Large amounts of

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197 Trade of forest products like mushrooms and traditional medicines was dominated by matsutake (*Tricholoma matsutake* (*songrong*, chi.), *T. quercicola* and *T. bakamatsutake*) and caterpillar fungus (*Cordyceps sinensis*). The regional mushroom market included not just the matsutake, but also tree ear (*Auricularia auricular*, *mu'er*), king bolete (*Boletus edulis*), other boletes (*Boletus spp.*, *Leccinium* spp.), hedgehog (*Hydnum repandum*), scaly tooth (*Sarcodon imbricatus*), corals (*Ramaria* spp.), and morels (*Morchella* spp.) and basket stinkhorn (*Dictyophora indusiata*). Both in the past and present, these mushrooms provided a niche market for local Tibetans to sell in Songpan and other larger villages and towns, cross country to other parts of Amdo and Kham, as well as for domestic consumption. I am deeply indebted to Daniel Winkler (MSc) for providing much of my information on mycology in eastern Tibet and the Songpan Region.

198 Early western explorers William Rockhill, *The Land of the Lamas: Notes of a Journey through China, Mongolia and Tibet* (New York: Century, 1891); Watson Haines 1905; Wilson, 1913; Jacques Bacot, “Le Populations du Tibet oriental” [The Population of Oriental Tibet], *Revue d'Ethnographie et de Sociologie* (1912), 203-210; and Coales 1919 mention the export of medicinal plants from Tibetan areas to lowland China, often traded for tea. Coales 1919, “The medicines exported are mainly rhubarb and other vegetable drugs for the Chinese market,” and the aforementioned Watson Haines 1905 also discusses a variety of local and indigenous mushrooms, local pepper, wild honey, and traditional medicinal remedies, especially *songbei*, a fritillary bulb of alpine grass, and *dongchong xiaocao* (often shortened to *chongcao*, chi.), or Sichuan Caterpillar Fungus. Ran Guangrong 2000 also notes the importance of the traditional medicine trade for Tibetan areas of the region in his study on historical development projects of the region. In his study of the opium trade in the region during the Republican Era (1911-49), he noted that the traditional medicine trade was one of the only set of products that continued to be produced locally and regularly traded beyond the growing and then dominant opium trade. See Ran Guangrong, “Gailun Chuan xibei zangqu de youpian yu zhengju” [A Discussion of Opium Prohibition and Politics in Northeastern Sichuan Tibetan Areas], in Luo Runcang and Ren Xinjian 1993, 268-84; 279.

199 Haines Watson 1905, 89 noted that a single cattie of *chongcao* in Songpan went for 4.50 silver taels, vastly outstripping other local traditional medicines in the marketplace. Oscar Coales discusses the caterpillar fungus trade: “The most interesting is the curious Chungsiao [ch. *chongcao*] or insect grass, a dried caterpillar about 2 inches [5cm] long, which has been killed by a fungus of about the same length growing out of one of its segments. It is supposed to be an excellent restorative to weak constitutions.” According to Liu, old statistics for Xikang Province to the west and south (c. 1939) reported a *Cordyceps* harvest of 15,000kg. While older records of *chongcao* harvests do not exist for the Songpan Region, several of the explorers of the region mention its importance in local trade. See Coales 1919, 242-47; Liu Jianbang (ed.), *Ganzi zangzu zizhizhou linye zhi* [Forestry History of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture] (Chengdu: Sichuan kexue jisu chubanshe, 1994).
fritillary bulbs were collected in autumn, and *Astragalus* root was dug in lower elevations in spring.\(^{200}\)

The unofficial middle ground of regional trade and markets was the key element shaping the regional landscape and land use practices prior to 1911. There was, however, a major problem with expanding the regional and local markets beyond existing late imperial levels. The biggest limits to greater trans-regional investment in the region were the relative autonomy of Tibetan elites in the region and the state of local roads and paths that market trade depended upon. The problem of banditry among local Tibetan *Tsho ba* has already been alluded to. Yet it was the state of roads and paths, the infrastructure necessary to widen trade and exploitation of regional resources that limited further development of this region. The network of paths and the imperial postal road that connected the communities of the region to Songpan and beyond were part of Sichuan Province’s *chama gudao* (tea-horse route).\(^{201}\) The Songpan region imperial road and paths were viewed as one section of the Xining-Qinghai lower tea-horse route (*chama shangdao*, chi.).\(^{202}\)

While a great many imperial postal roads ran throughout China by the late nineteenth century, this border region of Sichuan Province had only a single major road, a large path really, connecting Chengdu to Songpan, and Songpan to the northeastern-most sections of the Sichuan Basin. The Qing postal road was both steep and dangerous—travelers could not safely ride in many sections, and did not accommodate wagons anywhere along its length.\(^{203}\) The roads and

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\(^{200}\) Other local plants valuable to the regional and provincial traditional medicine trade included seabuckthorn (*Hippophae* spp., ch. *shaji*, tib. *tarbu*), a small deciduous native tree or shrub and the deciduous tree *Eucommia ulmoides* (Chi. *Dozhong*). This is still an important local tree/shrub for a variety of reasons and will be treated at greater length in the final chapter of this dissertation.

\(^{201}\) See *SXZ* 1999, 595-98 and Jia 1993, 83-85.


\(^{203}\) *SXZ* 1924, *juan* 1; *SXZ* 1999, 499-500.
rivers themselves were in very poor shape at the end of the nineteenth century. As E. H. Wilson recalled at the close of the Qing Dynasty,

_In prosperous parts of China, highways connect all the principal cities, town and villages. These were usually 8 to 10 feet wide... originally paved... and now in a state of more or less disrepair. Nearly all the towns and villages in Western China [northern Sichuan and Gansu in this case] are situated on the banks of streams for the simple reason that the valleys offered lines of least resistance. Even when the streams are not navigable they afford easier means of access to the interior than the mountains and forest-clad country. ...the older roads follow the courses of streams as closely as possible, leaving them only when the nature of the country necessitates the departure and watersheds intervene._

Wilson goes on to note that on his two trips to Songpan region the Min River watershed was very difficult to traverse. The steady climb in altitude, steep canyon walls, miserable paths, regular landslides and river-side erosion were constant problems. Ren Naiqiang, a near contemporary of Wilson, would have agreed with this commentary. His geographical analysis of the area concluded that the terrible roads, gorges, and the “wildness” of both people and nature in the western and northern Sichuan precluded any significant economic interest in the region prior to the twentieth century.

While trade could and did link the Songpan region to the outside world, and made up a significant part of the unofficial “middle ground” between late Qing representatives and Tibetan elites, it had its limitations. Unlike the official “middle ground” centered on Songpan, the “middle ground” formed through trade and economic activities was comparatively more extensive, but was mainly confined to larger villages and the sub-prefecture seat. The rugged geography, the variety of small Tibetan polities with their local traditions of banditry and

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204 Wilson 1913, 25-6.
206 The path to Songpan washed out in significant sections of the roadway every year and was almost impassible during the summer monsoon season. On the dangers and issues of the Min River canyons and travel into and out of the Songpan region, see Wilson 1913, 25-8 in particular, and Chapter 10 in general. See also Minjiang zhi 1991, 141-42.
attitudes toward “trespassing,” and the miserable roads in the hinterland all contributed to limiting the unofficial “middle ground” formed by official and private Han and Hui merchants, Tibetan elites, go-betweens and local farmers and herders to a few towns and villages located along established Sino-Tibetan trade routes.

Thus, despite attempts to constrain and channel local culture through official Qing policies and tusi-tuguan office holder requirements, wider late imperial political culture and centralization did not control this region. Rather, late Qing and Tibetan elite political and economic cultures co-existed, while off the main Qing highway and away from Songpan, indigenous Tibetan towns and villages were largely untouched by Qing institutions. As we have seen from the above summary, Qing control over the Songpan region was indirect and nominal.

The various polities and Tibetan elites in the region were highly autonomous and events in the region were mainly controlled by local interests. Yet the regional pastoral and medicinal trade did link the region’s isolated and autonomous villages and elites with the wider Qing world. Moreover, regional production of and trade in herd animals (sheep and yak in particular) and medicinal products also had an additional effect, fostering a regional and trans-regional “agro-pastoral regime” that determined how Tibetans managed their landscape.

2.5 Thang rtsa [rich Plains Grass] and Yul ’brog [Agro-pastoralism]: How Tibetans Shaped the Landscape of the Songpan Region

Pastoral production and agriculture were tightly bound with the social and environmental history of the Songpan region. Yak, sheep and goat production underpinned the local economy and Tibetan society throughout most of the Songpan region in the late imperial period. To meet the challenges of the sometimes harsh and unfriendly environment of this part of the Tibetan Plateau, Tibetan headmen, herders, monastic institutions, and the Qing state were all aware of the
importance of land use management. However, it was Tibetans themselves who most thoroughly shaped the regional landscape, through terracing of hillsides for agricultural production, herding practices and pervasive use of fire to create pastureland. This final section examines these transformative forces that Tibetans used to shape their landscape. By shaping the natural landscape and ecological environment around them, Songpan Tibetans created an “agro-pastoral regime” that lasted throughout the late imperial period.

The chief mode of production in the Songpan region was locally known as yul 'brog (or Zhingdrok, tib.), a practice that combined animal herding and farming. This was especially true of the lightly forested and terraced areas along the Min River, the upper reaches of the Baishui River, along the Mao’er gai River, and along the minor rivers and streams of the northern and eastern parts of the region. One of the major transformative processes that Tibetans utilized to expand their agricultural plots was to terrace the accessible hillsides near major villages and

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207 Indigenous Tibetans, in popular press and imagination, are often seen as more environmentally friendly for the landscape than the Chinese government or Han Chinese in general. Setting aside the general fallacy of this standpoint, a number of scholars have demonstrated that indigenous populations worldwide and in Tibetan areas of China have had just as much impact on the environment and natural landscape as states, majority populations, or outside ethnicities and colonial governments. A primary discussion of the impact of indigenous Native North Americans practices shaping the environment in significant ways can be found in Richard White’s *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980), 20-25. Basic discussions of how Tibetans have significantly altered their landscapes and grasslands in general, and on religious pilgrimage specifically, can be found in Toni Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain: Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary Landscape in Tibet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 29-32, 196-201, and Graham E. Clarke, “Tradition, Modernity, and Environmental Change in Tibet,” in Thierry Dodin and Heinz Rather’s *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections, and Fantasies* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 339-56. For a blunt assessment of Buddhism, Tibetans and their impact on the environment in the Himalaya, see Toni Huber, “Traditional Environmental Protectionism in Tibet Reconsidered,” *Tibet Journal* 16:3 (1991), 63-77.

208 I use “agro-pastoral regime” to refer to a “system in which an authority declares its right to control certain practices, and develops policies or mechanisms to exercise that right within a presumed domain.” (see Brook and Wakabayashi, 4-5) This concept of a “regime” comes from Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi’s volume on the “opium regimes” of East Asia in the first half of the 20th Century. I use this “regime” model to analyze issues in land and resource use during the Republican era (1911-1949), and it fits equally well to explain issues of land and resource use under Tibetan elites during the late imperial period with a different set of signifiers—terracing, fire use, and carrying capacity of the land. See Tim Brook and Bob Wakabayashi (eds.), *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 4-13.
towards. By the late imperial period, terracing was a common practice among the Tibetan villages, especially along the Min, Baishui and Mao’er gai Rivers.  

In the eastern most parts of the Tibetan world, where there was significant rainfall, intensive cultivation of bottom lands and terraces occurred side by side with rainfall agriculture on the wooded slopes of the higher mountains. In this region, rainfall agriculture based on the summer seasonal monsoons prevailed.  

Although the agricultural base of the Tibetan Plateau in general was in part arable land as in lowland China, agricultural production in the Songpan region was more localized in river valleys. Barley and wheat production are carried out along with animal husbandry, based on extensive use of the pastoral grasslands and lightly forested areas throughout the region. Thus the alluvial valleys of the Min, Mao’er gai, and Baishui Rivers were mixed agricultural and pastoral areas watered by rainfall and snowmelt, and by very limited irrigation networks. While terracing in general was only one element of local agricultural practices, it was one that directly shaped the landscape for a variety of agricultural purposes that in the late imperial period included pea, barley, wheat, and hay-fodder production. In the early twentieth century, the terraces of the Songpan region were largely converted from full-time food and fodder production to part-time agriculture and opium agriculture. However, grassland and highland meadow pastoral production was more important in the economic and agro-pastoral regime supporting local and long-distance trade. To meet the challenges of climatic and environmental conditions, local Tibetans developed a system of land use management that involved sharing of grazing lands. For the most part, herders rotated from

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209 Gill, Wilson, Ekvall, and Tafel all note the extensive terracing of the valley hillsides and villages throughout the upper Min River watershed. Tafel notes this not only along the Min River, but along the Rewu and Mao’er gai Rivers. See Gill 1883, 374-75; Wilson 1913, 137, 141-42; Tafel 1914, vl. 2, 258, 259, 261, 275-76. In general, see Carrasco 1959, 10-11.

210 Carrasco 1959, 10-11.

211 SXZ 1924, juan 2.
winter lowlands to summer grassland or high meadows grazing yak and sheep. Living a semi-nomadic or fully nomadic way of life, they supplemented their animal husbandry with medicinal herb gathering in the grasslands and forested areas they grazed. But it was the yak, sheep and goat herding that formed the basis of Tibetan standard of living and social status. The primary importance of yak and sheep pastoralism on the Tibetan Plateau has been examined by a number of researchers. In northern Sichuan, it was recognized as historically the most important economic pursuit. Yak and sheep were not only important food and material sources, but were also culturally and socially significant—so much so that yak had a place alongside other animals, both real and mythical, in the history, legends, and mythology of the Tibetan regions of northern Sichuan.

Grazing land in both the little and big grasslands (dacaodi and xiaocaodi, chi.; Sbang rtsa and Thang rtsa, tib.) and alpine meadows of the Songpan region were of great importance to settled, semi-nomadic, and nomadic Tibetans. Land was the ultimate source of wealth and security, and the sole means by which Tibetans could achieve their goals of maintaining healthy


animals and seeing their herds increase to the point where, as those in Songpan described it, "They cover the plain and hillside." The fodder on the land, the grasses in lush lowlands, high meadows, and intermediate scrubland that supported the herd animals, was categorized accordingly and managed in different ways.214

Yak and sheep herding put very specific and visible pressures on the landscape—to the extent that numerous late imperial visitors to the region thought the grasslands and hillsides totally overgrazed.215 While the nature of local trade, trade goods, and agricultural land use remained largely unchanged until after 1911, Tibetans in the region were continually expanding their herds and forage lands. Tibetans increased their herds and extended their rangelands by continually creating more pasture areas through controlled and uncontrolled burns. Over time, these practices also transformed the landscape by increasing the carrying capacity of the region, that is, increasing the sheer numbers of animals feeding on the rangeland areas.216

214 Local Tibetans divide their grass into three qualities, each managed differently, from worst to most carefully. The hill and mountainside grass is called Sbang rtsa (pangsa), is usually the most heavily grazed in day to day movements of animals. This turf grass is mixed with hillside bushes, is usually found in regularly burnt off areas, and is considered the "rough grass" and not as good. Thang rtsa (tangsa) is the "plains grass" found on the lower, better watered slopes of valleys, but in high and low altitude winter and summer grazing areas. This grass has fewer bushes, is thicker and taller, and is where many herders overnight their animals. The richest grass, "lush grass" is Nags rtsa (Nangsa) and is in the wettest and swampy areas of extensive wetlands or swamps in lower valleys. The grasses in the northwestern area of Songpan county, Ruo' er gai and Hongyuan Counties are considered "lush grass" and much sought after. These grasses are often fenced, and prior to the 1970s, walled off in a variety of ways from animals and harvested in the autumn and early winter.

215 While many foreign visitors to the region noted overgrazing near the Min River and in areas farther north on the way to Qinghai and Gansu, the question remains "why" and "what" were they noting in their travels. Despite an overall paucity of textual material, what is evident from Republican period sources (1911-1949) and studies made by cadres and scholars for the new communist government in the 1950s and '60s was that an increasing local population was putting more strain on local society and landscape.

216 No reliable statistical data exists for the number of Tibetans or animals prior to the 1940s. One way to tackle the problem lies in Republican era studies of the northern grasslands and related studies by the communist government in the early 1950s. In both cases, the authors of the articles mentioned below interviewed Songpan locals and studied both tax receipts and related economic materials to come to some general conclusions about improving the animal husbandry output of the region. While other documents might exist in the form of monastic records of donations of animals to Tibetan monasteries and herds kept by the monasteries (most had large herds of their own in addition to what was either donated to them or garnered through local taxes), these records are at present unavailable or did not survive the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960s.
Several studies of pastoral products and economy of northern Sichuan discuss the impact of increased herd sizes and diminished forests in the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The main animal products sent to population centers to the south were not the yaks, cherished by locals as status symbols, items of local trade, and food, but rather more sheep (specifically sheep skins and wool) and goats. These were the animals that were being raised in greater and greater numbers, and considering the impact of sheep on other rangelands in China, they undoubtedly had a significant impact on the nature of the regional landscape.

At the close of the nineteenth century, Watson Haines noted that over 10,000 sheep were slaughtered annually in Songpan for local and regional use alone, and that many times more were necessary to support the large local, regional, and provincial trade of wool to areas south. Another study noted that at the beginning of the twentieth century noted that the local grasslands were degraded by decades of overuse.

Scarcity of pasturage rarely seemed to have been a problem with the exception of areas closest to the Min River valley. However, both around the Min River and in the hinterland,

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217 See Zhan mu xinbao (Chengdu Rural Development Committee newsletter, 1931-35) that includes both policy recommendations for development as well as a studies of the easiest ways to move animals and products to Chengdu and Chongqing; and occasional studies of the grassland areas of northern Sichuan that include the 1928 Chang Xinqien, Sichuan Songpan caodi muqu jingji ziliao [Materials on Grassland Pastoral Economics in Songpan, Sichuan] (Chengdu/Songpan County: Sichuan Province Government Construction Office Study Group, 1928) who predicted, based on his study of herd products from the late 19th and early 20th Century, that the region would be major supplier of meat and animal products to Chengdu via Dujiangyan based on its remoteness from warlord depredations.

218 According to the works of Longworth and Williamson that discuss the use and overstocking of sheep and goats on rangeland in Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Qinghai and Gansu, there were few animals that are more likely to quickly and efficiently overgraze and degrade pastureland than sheep and goats. John Longworth and Gregory Williamson, China’s Pastoral Region: Sheep and Wool, Minority Nationalities, Rangeland Degradation and Sustainable Development (Wallingford, UK: CAB International, 1993), 30-32; 56-8; individual case studies of Gansu counties on the Sichuan border.

219 Haines Watson 1905, 94.

220 This was generally attributed by the Han Chinese authors to both improper animal husbandry skills of Tibetans and climatic issues of drought years, range disasters (fires) and drastic overgrazing near the county seat. Chang Xinqien 1928, 2-4; see also Aba zangzu zizhi zhou gaikuang [A General Account of Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture] (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1985, 158 (hereafter AZZGK 1985). Robert Ekvall describes southern Amdo has having an amazing capacity and expanse for pastoral pursuits. In one case he even mentioned the Songpan and Mao’er gai regions had having good grasslands, but as he did not
Tibetans were converting large swaths of the landscape for pasturage. Most pasture-grassland areas created prior to the twentieth century were converted from forested areas. In the Ming Dynasty, there was a famous saying about the grasslands and forests of northern Sichuan (including the Songpan region)—“A single fire is a disaster, like a man’s battle of 10,000 swords.” *(tianzai yi ba hou, renbao wan ba dao).* 222 The *Songpan Xianzhi* (1924) further notes that several times during the nineteenth century major fires broke out that devastated both the forests and grasslands of the region—and that these fires were not always natural but sometimes caused by local Tibetans. 223 By the turn of the century, Albert Tafel noted that “traces of forest fires are a common sight,” and observed one fire north of Songpan completely destroying several square kilometers of “beautiful primary forests.” 224 In a study of western Jiuzhaigou County, common and persistent use of fire to clear shrubs and trees for grazing land shaped the tree stands and grazing areas, as well as expanded local Tibetan populations. 225 Tibetans in all of the regional counties regularly burned off forested areas to create more alpine meadowland and annually cleared trees and brushwood with fire on lower mountainsides and winter pasture sites near towns and villages.

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222 Quoted in **AZZGK** 1985, 152.

223 This natural disaster section of the county gazetteer noted over 87 fires for the 19th Century alone, at least half of which were blamed on Tibetans and human causes. **SXZ** 1924, juan 8.

224 Tafel’s observations included both the area on the Sichuan-Gansu border as well as the Songpan area proper. See Tafel 1914, vl. 2, 173 and 290-91.

225 Daniel Winkler has demonstrated this in a couple of his silviculture, historical and social studies of the Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve. Fire clearances and large-scale stock carrying on the up-river areas of the Baishui were carried out until the 1960s, but even more common in the late 19th Century when most of the grazing land was created. This had interesting implications for the contemporary landscape of Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve. This reserve, noted for its beautiful and varied flora, fauna, and jewel-like waters is in part a manufactured landscape shaped by hundreds of years of purposeful fire use. This kind of creative firing of the landscape was outlawed in the 1950s and no major fires have hit the nature reserve since. As the plant communities evolve and are replaced by successor groups, the very nature of the scenic draw may change. See Daniel Winkler, “Participation in Forestry in Tibetan Southwestern China,” in *Mountain Research Development* 22:4 (2002), 397; and D. Winkler, “Deforestation in Eastern Tibet: Human Impact Past and Present,” in Graham Clarke (ed.), *Development, Society, and Environment in Tibet* (Vienna: Verlag der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1998), 84-85.
Most foreign observers traveling through western China at the close of the Qing Dynasty and the early years of the Republic (1880-1925) observed the apparently relentless destruction of these forest areas in the region and blamed both the Tibetans and Chinese. In one case, Joseph Rock concluded that Tibetans and Chinese suffered from a cultural bias against forests and the earth, and described them as "destructive," "ruthless," or even as having an innate hatred of trees and grass.²²⁶ Besides the commentaries on forest destruction and cultural biases, some scholars noted that these fires did create local pasturage.²²⁷ An alternative view was that deforestation and environmental degradation in China was inevitable because of population pressures and local ignorance of the scientific principles of forest and rangeland management.²²⁸ In either case, the assumption of outsiders was that Tibetans had shown themselves to be incapable of regulating and controlling the use of their natural resources. This in turn was viewed by outside observers like Albert Tafel, Joseph Rock and S. C. Teng as a primary reason for the region's alleged poverty and hardship. While it is hard to credit the commentaries of plant hunters (botanists cataloguing and searching for new trees and flowers), late nineteenth century "tourists," and newly trained forestry "experts" with an unbiased perspective on the "destruction" of local forests and grasslands, their commentaries do demonstrate the widespread use of fire to expand rangeland for yak and sheep.

²²⁷ S.C. Teng observed that forest destruction through wood removal or forest burning was initially followed by a predominance of shrub growth and grasses. "Repeated fires have been responsible for converting the scrub areas into grasslands. This condition has led certain observers to uphold the erroneous view that southern slopes [in northern Sichuan and southern Gansu] are natural grasslands." Teng Shu-chun, "The Forest Regions of Kansu and their Ecological Aspects," Botanical Bulletin of Academia Sinica, vol. 1 (Sept, 1947), 187-200.
Using fire to convert forests to pastureland was a common and widespread practice in Tibetan areas of China. Forested areas abutting meadows and lower mid-grade grassy areas were repeatedly burned to establish new pastures or expand existing ones. Tafel concluded from his observations of fires in northern Sichuan that “As every pastoralist the Tibetan nomad is an ardent enemy of all forest… He is recklessly burning down forests.”

Similarly, Frank Kingdon Ward recognized that “in forested areas, woody vegetation is cut and burnt to extend grazing, and considerable change results.” Recent scientific studies confirm that portions of Hongyuan and Mdzod dge/Ruo’er gai grassland areas used to be forested, but were converted, especially on south facing slopes.

The absence of forests near major roads, pathways, villages and towns, and on south-facing slopes in particular, was more the result of repeated burnings and intense grazing than

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229 Tafel 1914, 254.
231 See Marcus Thelaus, “Some Characteristics of the Mire Development in Hongyuan County, Eastern Tibetan Plateau,” Proceedings of the 9th International Peat Congress, vlm 1 (1992), 334-51; 336. See also Frenzel, Li and Liu, “On the Upper Quaternary Palaeoecology of Eastern Tibet: Preliminary Results of an Expedition to the Eastern Tibetan Plateau,” Science in China (series B) 38:4 (1995), 143-66. I should also note the issue of south-facing forest free slopes. The most accessible studies of this phenomenon were produced by Daniel Winkler. See Daniel Winkler, “Patterns of Forest Distribution and the Impact of Pastoralism in the Forest Regions of the Tibetan Plateau,” in Gang Miehe and Zhang Yili (eds.), Environmental Change in High Asia (Marburger Geographische Schriften 135, 2000), 201-227. Toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, numerous foreign observers commented on northern Sichuan’s forest-free south-facing slopes. These bare slopes were often next to dense forestland on shady slopes. Unlike other forested and semi-forested parts of Eastern Tibet, forest-free slopes in the Songpan region occurred almost exclusively on south facing slopes or directly abutting major river valleys, rather than on sunny sites in general. Chinese geographers suggested that human activity did not have any significant historical effect on the vegetation, rather, that an increasingly warm climate and desertification were to blame. However, the present pattern of forest distribution cannot be explained without considering the impact of Tibetans’ grazing practices and their ongoing use of fire to extend or clear pasturelands. See Tafel (1914); Teng (1947); Ernst Schafer, “Ornithologische Ergebnisse zweier Forschungsreisen nach Tibet [Ornithological Findings of Two Research Trips to Tibet], Journal fur Ornithologie 86 (Sonderheft Berlin, 1938); Helmut von Wissman, “Stufen und Gurtel der Vegetation und des Klimas in Hochasien und seinen Randgebieten. A: Hygrische Raumgliederung und Exposition B: thermische Raumgliederung und Frostboden” [Interior and Content of the Vegetation and Climate of High Altitude Asia and Region. A: Hygrian Variations, B: Thermal Variations and Permafrost], Erdkunde 14 (1960), 249-72; 15 (1961), 19-44; Ku Chang-chu and Cheo Yang-cheng, “A Preliminary Survey of Forests in Western China,” Sinesia 12 (1941), 81-113. Chinese discussions of these “yinpo” and “yangpo” (shady and sunny slopes) slopes usually argue for a climatic explanation. For Chinese scientific views, see Zheng (1986), 33, and Lin Chao and Li Changwen, “Yinyangpo zai shandi dili yanjiu zhong de siyi” [The Significance of Shady and Sunny Slope Aspects in Mountain Geography], Dili xuebao [Acta Geographica Sinica] 40:1 (1985), 20-40.
other factors. A large number of local Tibetans in Jiuzhaigou and Songpan Counties have confirmed that south-facing pastures were burnt on a regular basis to keep them free of shrubs. Development of winter pastures on sunny slopes played a key role in livestock husbandry, because it offered a way to overcome the scarcity of fodder during the cold and dark months near permanent winter dwellings. Not only do archival materials demonstrate that local Tibetans regularly utilized range and forest fires to create pastureland, agricultural land, or clear unwanted shrubs and trees which reduced fodder production, but given the climate and seasonal monsoons lightning ignition also regularly caused small and sometimes very devastating forest and range fires.

In addition to the role of fire, the direct impact of grazing had a further effect on the landscape. The extension of pastoralism had a direct impact on wild animal populations that fed on the same grasslands by limiting their habitat and altering the growth patterns of wild forbes (plant ground cover) and herbs that animals (herd and wild alike) depended on, especially in

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232 “Winter is the dry season when travelers and new settlers often burn off the countryside for heat, to create ash for fertilizer or to clear land for farming and grazing. South slopes exposed to the sunshine and wind become dry. The fire destroys the conifer-rhododendron combination. North slopes remain snow covered and are moist. Here nature protects the conifers until man’s axe moves in.” See Richard Johnson, “Exploring a Grass Wonderland of Wild West China,” The National Geographic Magazine 85:6 (1944), 713-42; 737.

233 SXZ 1924, juan 8; SXZ 1999, 915-18.

234 For a much more extensive analysis of similar indigenous practices, see William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003). Cronon describes how the changing circumstances, and the natural environment that Old World settlers found in the New World, were a direct result of the extensive management of the natural environment by Native Americans. Fire played a significant role in this process, and was further utilized by the new settlers in ways that further transformed the environment.

235 Forest fires are a widespread hazard in the forested and grassland regions of the south-eastern Tibetan plateau. Pine forest are especially afflicted (Yang 1987, 76; Chen, 1987) and spruce and fir forests, more common in the past 50 years burn just as hotly. These have a heavy fuel load and are dry and highly flammable in winter and early spring and during the summer monsoon between July and October. One modern report suggests that in west Sichuan 20% of forest fires have natural ignition by lightning, and at least 40% are human caused (Yang 1987, 77). In numerous discussions with Tibetan and Hui horsetrekking guides, they jokingly told me stories of “human lightning strikes”, a common occurrence despite its illegality. See Yang Yupo, “Alpine Forests in Western Sichuan: China and the Effects of Forest Management,” in Fujimori and Kimura (eds.), Human Impact and Management of Mountain Forests (Ibaraki, Japan: Proceedings of an International Workshop of IUFRO, 1987), 67-79; 76-77; and Chen Chengguo, “Standordliche, vegetationskundliche und waldbauliche Analyse chinesischer Gebirgsnadelwalder und Anwendung alpiner Gebirgswaldbau-Methoden im chinesischen fichtenreichen Gebirgsnadelwald” [Standardizations, Vegetation Counts, and Forest Analysis of China’s sub-Alpine Dark Mountain Conifer Forests and an Approach to Alpine Conifer Forests in China’s Alpine Conifer Forests] PhD Dissertation, Universitat Bodenkultur Wien (1987). See also AZZGK, 151-53.
favored habitats such as along rivers or on south facing slopes. Joseph Rock commented on this kind of effect on the grass and forest lands north and west of the Songpan Region along the upper Yellow River (Machu area): “The nomads with their yak and sheep have ruined this region. From all appearances, forests once covered the valley slopes, at least those facing north, but they are in a dying condition. The undergrowth... a species of moss... has entirely disappeared, and only where there are small groups of healthy trees to be found is the moss present, often over a foot in thickness and completely covering the ground. Thousands of dead trees are witness to the evil work of the yak and sheep.” Continuous grazing clearly impeded forest regeneration; sheep and yaks in the region reduce undergrowth, trample and destroy seedlings with their hooves, and even eat seedling pine trees.

2.6 Conclusion

Prior to 1911, most inhabitants of the Songpan region, with the exception of the residents of a few major towns, lived as agro-pastoralist semi-nomads who heavily utilized their available arable land as well as the region’s extensive grassland and high meadow rangelands. While the valleys were characterized by yul 'brog (the combination of animal herding and farming), the northern and western plateaus and grasslands sustained a more traditional semi-nomadic and nomadic Tibetan pastoral economy based on yak and sheep herding. In the process of slowly expanding this localized pastoral production to meet the demands of a growing regional trade, the Tibetans of the Songpan region fundamentally shaped their environment through fire to extend increased grazing to enhance their livelihood and status.

236 Research by George Schaller in the northwestern parts of the Tibetan Plateau has shown a direct link with expanding and contracting herd sizes and wild animal populations. Daniel Winkler has also found some similar issues in western and northern Sichuan in his studies of forest fragmentation. See George Schaller and Bing Gu, “Ungulates in Northwest Tibet,” National Geographic Research 10:3 (1994), 266-93, and Winkler 2000, 201-227.

237 Rock’s statement was based on observations in the 1920s and on interviews with local Tibetans that noted they were simply doing what Tibetans had been doing for many generations. Joseph Rock 1956, 100.
As presented in the foregoing discussion of the Tibetan and Qing imperial aspirations for the region, late imperial control over the Songpan region was indirect and nominal at best. Local Tibetan elites did, however, utilize elements of the late imperial state to bolster their positions, and thus bought into some aspects of late Qing official culture. In this respect, official titles and some tribute trade and taxation were accommodated by both local and state governing bodies. Yet the various local headmen and “officials” of the region were highly autonomous and events like popular rebellions, or tax collection, were primarily controlled by local Tibetan elites, not official representatives of the state. The decentralized politics and polities of the area kept a balance of power in the region, a kind of “middle ground” with no one particular Qing magistrate, tuguan-tusi or ‘go ba exercising overall authority in the region. Tibetan elites more or less ruled the region in practice, and determined how local resources were to be used and how society was ordered.

Unlike Songpan’s limited official “middle ground”, the unofficial “middle ground” of the region was formed through extensive trade and economic activities. Because of its rugged topography, the isolation of many communities and Tsho ba, and suspicion of outsiders and non-Tibetans (they were the most common target for robbery in the hinterlands), the unofficial “middle ground” formed with merchants (mostly Tibetan, but some Han and Hui as well), farmers, and herders in the towns and villages along major waterways. Local Tibetans and Tibetan elites traded Songpan’s portable and ambulatory commodities to wider regional markets. This predominantly Tibetan dominance of the region and mercantile “middle ground” also had implications for the local landscape in that Tibetan elites and commoners alike were part of a local “agro-pastoral regime” that continued to expand in the late imperial period. The sedentary villagers of the region built and expanded terracing in the region to support local agriculture and
set the stage for future agricultural developments. As we shall see, the expansion of the pastoral element of this regime through fire and increased stocking shaped the twentieth century landscape in fundamental ways.
Map 2.1: Qing Dynasty Songpan (c. 1800)
III LOCAL ELITES AND OPIUM IN COMMAND: MARKETS, THE OPIUM REGIME, AND SOCIETY MAKING IN THE REPUBLICAN ERA, 1911-1949

Their [Pao ge/Gelaohui] organization is widespread in different counties with different ethnic groups. Starting from Songpan [Jin’an], they are divided into southeast and northwest groups along the roads, and the subordinates along other roads and paths in other counties. For example, the Zhenjiang district belonged to the south road gang, and they are named the Da Tong Gang of the Songpan South Road, Zhenjiang Branch.... Where Han and Hui live together, most of them have joined the Gelaohui... the [Songpan-Mao County] road is ruled by many different Gelaohui district gangs, and all of them answer to the Li family.

“Collected Materials from the Southern Songpan Emergency” (1942)²³⁸

3.1 Introduction

After 1911 the Chinese Republican state, criminal organizations and local government gradually began to play a greater role in the development of Songpan’s natural resources and local society. This chapter analyzes Republican Era trends in land use, tax policies and resource development in order to show continuities with late imperial patterns of elite dominance and regional autonomy while highlighting new socio-economic trends and a more organized state presence in the region. It begins in the early Republic with a brief examination of developments in mining and the harvesting and trade in medicinal products, as well as the tax structure related to these commodities. The major focus of the chapter is on the development of opium based agriculture and the emergence of Sichuan’s provincial “opium regime.”²³⁹ The emergence of

²³⁹ I borrow this term from Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi’s volume of collected essays on East Asian opium regimes. The term “opium regime” is used to “…signify a system in which an authority declares its right to control certain practices, and develops policies and mechanisms to exercise that right within its presumed domain” (4-5). See Timothy Brook and Bob Wakabayashi (eds.), Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 4-13. See also Lucien Bianco, “The Responses of Opium Growers to Eradication Campaigns and the Poppy Tax, 1907-1949,” in Brook and Wakabayashi (eds.), Opium Regimes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 292-319, and Qin Heping, Sichuan yupian wenti yu jinyan yundong [Sichuan’s Opium Question and Opium Ban Campaign] (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 2001).
This “opium regime” in the Songpan region shows how elite patterns of dominance and increasingly coercive methods of local resource management and governance after 1920 created a new web of local power holders as well as an increased state presence in the region and greater local unrest. This chapter shows how Republican Era politics, land use policies, and “new” natural resources continued to transform Songpan’s natural and social landscape in fundamental ways, and how changing social, political and economic networks illustrate patterns of society making and breaking in the Songpan region prior to 1949.

This chapter argues that the rise of the opium regime and state presence in the Songpan region was enabled by three key economic and strategic processes. It also resulted in new activities for and a change of composition of local elites. The nature of opium as a lightweight, high-value product, and its use as a trade good, currency, and a pillar of regional taxes resulted in a significant shift in the late Qing agro-pastoral regime, which had implications not only for local society, but for regional governance as well. The incorporation of local Tibetan elites into the much larger and coercive opium regime made this transformation possible, but did not empower or enrich ordinary Tibetans to the same degree as local elites who profited from opium’s commercial exchange. Finally, the deployment of warlord and Nationalist troops and military administrators in the region made it possible for this otherwise isolated and largely autonomous area to become incorporated into the Nationalist state. In the end, however, Songpan local elites

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240 This chapter is in keeping with recent studies of elite patterns of power, markets, and new forms of governments by Mary Rankin and Edward McCord. Mary Rankin has shown how the early Republic to 1918 acted to both bolster local autonomy, and with the death of Yuan Shikai, marked a significant shift in patterns of government toward regional and more centralized form of governance with warlord militarism. Edward McCord has further studied the importance of early Republic and warlord governance and militarism for both helping create new forms of military-bureaucracy networks of power (elite patterns of dominance) dependant on regional and sometimes isolated bases of power, as well as the new elite patterns of dominance that resulted. See Mary Rankin, “State and Society in Early Republican Politics,” in Frederick Wakeman and Richard Louis Edmonds (eds.), Reappraising Republican China (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6-27; 14-20, 26-27; Edward McCord, “Local Military Power and Elite Formation: The Liu Family of Xingyi County, Guizhou,” in Esherick and Rankin 1990, 162-188; 184-88.
remained arguably more powerful than the Nationalist state in the face of rising local unrest and political instability in China in the 1930s and '40s. Thus, it is illustrative to think of the Republican period in this region as involving a process of "society making" in which local elites forged a new and flexible social network. This new social network rose out of growing market and social changes that resulted from the increasingly important regional opium regime.\textsuperscript{241}

"Society making" is a concept explored by Roberto Unger in his research on state and society making processes and their interaction at the local level.\textsuperscript{242} "Society making" involves a process by which people (usually in a hierarchy of elites and subordinates) interact with each other through structured networks and make the conditions of their social existence on the basis of the resources available to them by virtue of their social position. These resources include "governmental power, economic capital, technical expertise and prestigious ideals or the forms of argument that claim to show implications of these ideals."\textsuperscript{243} The state may seek to influence how these resources become available and how they may legally be used, but the actual forms of the processes through which the state intervenes to shape ranks and roles depends on the practices current within everyday life. The creation of an opium regime in the Songpan region

\textsuperscript{241} In this sense, this chapter is in accord with the work of other historians of the Republican Era. According to James Sheridan, disintegration and disorder were at their height during the Republican Era in the revolutionary transformation of China’s urban and rural areas. (4) In terms of the concept of national integration, the early Republican and Nationalist governments failed to territorially and ideologically integrate Chine enough to face the challenges of the first half of the twentieth century. The local and regional elite factionalism of warlord governments, and even under Jiang Jieshi’s Nanjing Decade (1927-37), were such powerful forces that the Republican endeavor failed. In the end, the social integration, reforms, and mobilization of Mao’s Communists proved a more viable and successful force in changing not just the nature of state governance in China, but in that they spelled a radical and dynamic change in local patterns of elite dominance. (18-26) See James Sheridan, \textit{China in Disintegration: The Republican Era in Chinese History, 1912-1949} (New York: Free Press, 1975).

\textsuperscript{242} Underneath state making and state led networks of power there are important sets of interventions by local society that functionally control local society. In this sense, as Unger posits, these society making and society led structures end up shaping not only the processes whereby local society is managed, but the very state structures that supposedly manage localities and local elites. See Roberto Unger, \textit{Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task}, vol. 1 of \textit{Politics} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 151-52. See also, Unger quoted in Timothy Brook, \textit{The Chinese State and Ming Society} (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 8.

\textsuperscript{243} Unger in Brook 2005, 7.
was in part based on pre-existing local elite power structures and patterns of dominance, but was expanded during the Republican period to include new players.

In the Songpan region, this kind of “society making” played out against a background of local elite players including traditional Tibetan and Han elites and landowners, Pao ge (criminal) networks, a warlord and his officers, and representatives of the Nationalist government. By considering local elites and their patterns of dominance as part of a society making endeavor in the Republican period, I thus try to track networks of control and their consequences for local society and the landscape. New and old players among the local elites used the agro-pastoral economy, new market commodities, and ultimately opium production to support their social position while restructuring local social networks in the face of changing forms of government. Ultimately, the forms of society making and elite dominance not only call attention to an underlying coerciveness upholding the social position of local elites, Han, Tibetan and Hui, but also allow us to focus on the dynamics and processes of elite power and on the dialectical relationship of elites to subordinate and state actors in local society. These local elites were not a uniform group, but were fractured along ethnic lines and according to proximity to Songpan, transportation routes, and the local opium regime. These patterns of dominance, however, do allow us to also see how coercive elements of elite dominance tied to the opium regime would eventually become “society breaking” under the Mao’s early state.

244 In this sense, my use of society making diverges from Unger’s. Unger’s purpose was to field an argument in favor of a radical reorganization of power to enable commoners and citizens to create a democratic institution not under the control of the state. In this study, local elites and their patterns of dominance, concepts borrowed from Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin, continued in their positions of power, but vis-à-vis a more intrusive state apparatus by the mid 1930s. See Unger 1987, 152-53; Esherick and Rankin 1990, 10.
3.2 Early Republican Markets and Taxes: Songpan Mining, Forestry and Traditional Medicines

This section examines continuities and departures in Songpan’s market economy and tax regimes during the first two decades of the Republic. It will begin with an overview of late imperial and early Republican era political and tax regimes. Then it will examine how the warlord tax regime influenced nascent mining, forestry and the traditional medicines trade in the Songpan region. While late imperial-early Republican Era continuities in tax regimes were important for local stability, it was the new tax regimes of the warlord regimes that would play a decisive role in transforming the Songpan agro-pastoral market regime to an opium regime in the 1920s.

Early Republican Political, Market and Tax Regimes

As shown in Chapter One, by the beginning of the Republican period, Sichuan Province was only marginally integrated into the national-political structure of China. As Robert Kapp has noted, Sichuan’s provincial militarism and relative autonomy in the Republican Era were in part a symptom of the times, a manifestation of conditions that stemmed from a long imperial history of provincial independence and separatism as well as specific twentieth century conflicts over political organization after the Qing state collapsed. Developments in the military field after the abolition of the Qing Empire laid the ground work for the emergence of Sichuan’s warlord elite after 1911. Sub-national militarism or “warlordism” in Sichuan and other

246 The warlords active in Sichuan were products of the late imperial “New Army” and of military schools for the training of New Army officers. Before 1911, these officers were subordinate to the Qing state, but when the dynasty fell, they set out on their own. Without a state framework for advancement, they forged a new route of power based on personal military strength. All of the major Sichuan warlords were Sichuan natives. Kapp 1973, 24-25.
provinces after 1916-17 fed on the fundamental uncertainty over what kind of political regime should replace the Qing state and failed Western-style constitutionalism.\textsuperscript{247}

Sichuan Province, with its five big and numerous weaker warlords was a case in point.\textsuperscript{248}

For most of the period from 1912 to 1937 the province was largely beyond the reach of outside political authority and military power. Like the Songpan region, Sichuan warlord's political position after 1912 rested on the province's relative geographic isolation from the rest of China and on its wealth and diverse population.\textsuperscript{249} Following warlord battles that accompanied the dissolution of Yuan Shi-kai's government in 1915-16,\textsuperscript{250} parts of Sichuan including the Songpan region remained beyond provincial authority until 1919-1920 when individual warlords consolidated control of sections of the province and stationed troops in areas they wanted to control. In the early Republican period, Sichuan Province remained, in effect, a world unto itself, and so too were the individual territories under different warlords in the province. The military and political fragmentation of the province under the warlords, and the creation of their individual garrisons, helps to explain the relative economic and political autonomy of many parts of the province. Conversely, it also highlights how, through economic coercion and military might, individual warlords could remain largely autonomous and pay for the armies that


\textsuperscript{248} According to Kapp, the independence of Sichuan was rooted in developments of the first 15 years of Republican China. In the first place, militarization engulfed provincial government and society, unified political provincial authority gave way to geo-political fragmentation, Sichuan's involvement in China passed through a series of changes but was limited, and finally, the early Republican militarists that rose to power in 1911 were replaced by a second generation of "warlords" that constituted the ruling elite in Sichuan until the 1930s and '40s. See Kapp 1973, 7-8.

\textsuperscript{250} In 1915-16, Sichuan became the principal battleground in the war against Yuan Shi-kai that brought him down. Several of the major late Qing-early Republican militarists were part of the "Army to Protect the Nation" and fought and beat Yuan's troops in Sichuan. In the spring of 1916 the provincial governor declared Sichuan's independence when Yuan refused to relinquish the presidency. Sichuan would not be a part of the Nationalist government and politics until 1936-37.
supported their political and administrative claims while re-developing local resources to meet their needs.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the Songpan region was barely incorporated into late imperial China and, with its dissolution, was tied to the wider world and province only through regional trade networks. This isolation changed in the early 1920s when the warlord Deng Xihou stationed troops in the region and began to institute a new tax and military-administrative regime that depended heavily on local elites. In 1921, Deng Xihou officially carved out a region for himself and his troops in northern and central Sichuan, but his troops were active along the Min River as early as 1918-19. As a powerful Sichuan warlord, Deng depended on the territories under his control for revenues and goods to feed and arm his troops, as well as military and civil appointments to cement his official position.

As noted in the previous chapter, the primary industry in the Songpan region during the late imperial period was pastoral, supplemented by exchanges of medicinal and agricultural products. While much trade between the Songpan region and the Sichuan Basin remained in these local products through the 1920s, a short burst in forestry and mining between 1913 and the late 1920s also supplied the area with new revenues. The regional trade in medicinal

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251 Deng Xihou was a Sichuan native and received his education at the Nanking Army Middle school and Paoting Military Academy. In 1916 he participated in the campaign against Yuan Shi-kai which resulted in Sichuan’s independence. For his actions during that campaign, he was elevated to brigadier general in 1917, commissioner for purging the countryside, and in 1921, command of the 3rd Army Division (one of the five largest military groups) in Sichuan. See Howard Boorman (ed.), Biographical Dictionary of Republican China, vl. 3 (New York: Columbia University, 1970), 251-52.

252 In 1924, Deng became civil governor of Sichuan, and in 1926, the military governor. In 1927, he cemented his ties with the Nationalists by becoming a member of the Military Affairs Commission and commander of the 7th Route Army, but prior to 1935, these were largely ceremonial positions in comparison to his military and civil appointments in Sichuan. Because of his various official civil and military positions, Deng was second only to the warlord Liu Wenlui in terms of political and military clout. Over the course of his warlord career prior to 1937, Deng Xihou was also the individual most often in physical control of Chengdu (in part because of the proximity of his warlord territories to Chengdu and the north central part of the Sichuan Basin). Boorman 1970, vl. 3, 52. See also Sichuan Provincial Cultural History Research Bureau, Sichuan guomin dang shizhi [Historical Gazetteer of Sichuan’s Nationalist Political Factions] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1994), 21-24, 48-49, 192-94; Sichuan shengzhi: dashi jishu, vl. 2 [Annals of Sichuan Province: An Account of Major Events] (Chengdu: Sichuan kexue jishu chubanshe, 1999), 59-60, 96.
products also continued to play a role in regional markets, especially for Tibetans. However, despite the short-term gain for some individuals, neither mining nor forestry were major factors in the regional economy after the 1920s because of excessive warlord taxation and the difficulty in obtaining and moving timber. The medicinal trade also faced high taxes, and while it remained an important part of rural household incomes, it did not expand exponentially like the opium trade. Profit for gold mining, large scale forestry, and the medicinal trade was simply not lucrative enough compared to more portable and high profit opium agriculture and transport. In the end, the key to understanding the rise and fall of Songpan’s regional trade, with its important implications for local society and the landscape, was the local, provincial and warlord tax regimes.

During the late imperial and early Republic periods, Songpan residents were subject to a bewildering variety of different taxes and taxing authorities. Tibetan commoners, Han and Hui were expected to pay a number of taxes and fees to their local village headmen (former tusi or tuguan) and other local elites as part of their tax burden. In addition, during the final decade of the Qing Dynasty, “state taxes” were also collected at a variety of locations in Sichuan province, but the only major sites in Songpan were in the immediate vicinity of Songpan town itself, in and around Nanping, and at a toll station near the border of Mao County.253 Songpan’s early Republican and warlord tax regime was based on the previous Qing system. In this late imperial tax regime there were two sets of taxes collected from the major tea trading guilds (cha hong, chi.): the local administration tax and a second larger tax at the Mao County toll site. As the major tea guilds dominated both the ingress and egress of goods, they were the easiest groups to

253 Both Haines Watson and Wilson mention the “toll” sites in their discussions of the Min River and Songpan region, both at contemporary Wenchuan (K’uan hsien) and Maoxian (Mao Chow). See Haines Watson 1905, 61-62, 91, 98-99; Wilson 1913, 119-20, 132.
The main taxes (*lijin, chi.*) levied were for general administration (*san-fei, chi.; three-expenditures*) and a transport tax (*guoshui, chi.*) on wool and medicines. Until 1911, the local Tibetan, Han and Hui elites also collected a small property tax in the larger towns along the Min River for the Songpan magistrate.255 According to local gazetteers in Songpan County, Han landlords and Hui headmen paid taxes and collected rents on over 36% of the arable land along the Min River, and Tibetan elites collected taxes on all of the rest of the region.256 The only other regular tax the Songpan magistrate collected in Songpan on local pastoral products was on livestock, with yak and oxen more heavily taxed than goats and sheep according to their relative worth.257

Local Tibetan headmen and Buddhist and Bon temples each had their own set of taxes for local *Tsho ba* and common Tibetans.258 In the upper reaches of the Min River watershed, *tusi-tuguan* headmen and temples collected fees for themselves, in addition to whatever taxes they turned over to the district magistrate. Throughout the region, Tibetan headmen and temples were the largest landowners and leased their land on a yearly basis to common Tibetan families; the individuals who worked agricultural land usually had to remit three basic taxes. The headmen and temples also collected fees for both summer and winter grazing areas they (or their *Tsho ba*

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254 See Haines Watson 1905, 96-7; see also Wang Yan, “Qing kejiu de gongye huashengchan yu sichuan zangqu de jingji fazhan” [Grain Alcohol Enterprises, Expenses, Production, and the Economic Development of Sichuan’s Tibetan Areas], in Sichuan Province Social Sciences College History Association, Luo Runcang and Ren Xinjian, eds., *Sichuan zangxue lunwen ji* [An overview of studies on the culture of Tibetans in Sichuan] (Chengdu: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1993), 53-61.
255 *SXZ* 1924, juan 1. See also the next section on tax systems in the early Republic.
256 *SXZ* 1924, juan 2; *SXZ* 1999, 395.
257 Watson Haines 1905, 99.
258 For Tibetans, these fees normally included, “...horse fees, range use fees, temple fees, and hard work (*xinku fei*) fees.” For Tibetans, Han and Hui in immediate proximity of the Min or Baishui Rivers, these taxes were regular land and herd animal taxes based on late Qing taxes. Quoted in *SXZ* 1999, 62. See also Sichuan Province Compilation Committee, *Sichuan sheng abazhou zangzu shehui lishi diaocha* [Sichuan Province Aba Prefecture Tibetan Social History Surveys] (Chengdu: Zhongguo shaoshu minzu shehui lishi diaocha ziyuan congkan, 1985), 24-31, 173-77. (hereafter, *SAZSD* 1985) The rural surveys in this collection cover Tibetan society, economy, language and local history in northern Sichuan and took place between 1952-64.
or temple) ostensibly controlled. Several studies from the 1930s and ‘40s demonstrate that generally larger and larger numbers of animals (mostly sheep, but also yak and goats) were being raised in the region between 1905 and the 1930s to pay these local taxes.

Under post-1911 administrations, these diverse local tax regimes remained largely unchanged. If anything, tax burdens in the hinterland were smaller—it was harder for local administrators from the new government to regularly collect any taxes outside of the immediate river roads. In 1913, the region was incorporated under a larger prefecture headquartered in Mao County, though it initially retained its Qing Dynasty ting (sub-prefecture) designation. Six years earlier, local tysi-tuguan had lost their official titles in the failed late Qing effort to consolidate central authority. However, local Tibetan elites remained in firm control of their territories after 1912, collecting a very limited amount of land tax for new government inspectors along the main river systems. During the first six or so years of the new Chinese republic, few if any taxes were collected on a regular basis for the provincial government or state.

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259 Agricultural/farm based taxes included rent for annual use of land, standard annual tribute owed by all members of individual Tsho ba to their headman in goods (butter, hay, sheep/yak, cloth), and occasional corvee labor (ula, tib.). Additional fees owed to headmen were grist mill and threshing fees, and taxes on hiring additional labor to harvest grain, barley or other food stuffs. Temples extracted taxes on individuals working their own land as well as fees for religious matters. These fees and taxes included holidays, funerals, finding auspicious dates to plant and harvest, and commercial fees for trade (temples were often the center of local trade with visiting Chinese and Tibetan merchants). See SXZ 1924, juan 3, SXZ 1999, 395; SAZSD, 10-12, 24-31, 173-77. A similar study done in the 1940s in the Kham region is Chen 1949, 84-85, 97-99. See also, Kangding Minority Nationalities Publications Committee, Ganzi zangzu zizhi zhi minzu zhi [History of Nationalities in the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture] (Beijing: Contemporary China Publishing House, 1994).

260 See Zhan mu xinbao (Chengdu Rural Development Committee newsletter, 1931-35) that includes both policy recommendations for development and studies of the easiest ways to move animals and products to Chengdu and Chongqing, and occasional studies of the grassland areas of northern Sichuan that include the Chang Xinqien, Sichuan Songpan caodi muqu jingji ziliao [Sichuan’s Songpan Grassland Pastoral-Agriculture Economics Report] (Chengdu/Songpan County: Sichuan Province Government Construction Office Study Group, 1928) who predicted that the region would be major supplier of meat and animal products to Chengdu via Dujiangyan due to the region’s remoteness from major warlord conflicts.

261 AZZ 1994, 523.

262 The abolition of imperial titles in 1905 for local Tibetan elite actually led to a very short lived rebellion in Songpan sub-prefecture. This rebellion and the few military actions that followed it did not really amount to much. See SXZ 1999, 31.

263 Detailed research on the Sino-Tibetan border region (including Kham and the Songpan region) and late-Qing reforms in 1905 can be found in Feng Minzhu’s, Jindai zhongying xizang jiaoshe yu chuanzang bianqing [Sino-British Negotiations over the Tibetan Issue and the Sichuan-Tibetan Border Situations in the Modern Era] (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1996), 209-54.
representatives in Songpan. Rather, local Tibetan headmen continued to collect taxes for their
Tsho ba according to the fee schedule employed during the late Qing—mostly for themselves.
However, a new set of taxes entered their world as the warlords took control of Sichuan Province
after 1916. Local representatives of the Sichuan Provincial government collected taxes based on
late Qing schedules and forwarded them to Chengdu. Then, in 1921, the warlord Deng Xihou
stationed increasing numbers of troops in the Songpan region to collect taxes for his express
use.

By the mid 1920s Sichuan Province was broken up into five military districts, the
garrison areas (fangqu, chi.) that in effect reflected the five major territories of provincial
warlords in Sichuan after 1917. One of these territories was Deng Xihou’s garrison area that
included the Songpan region. Under Deng’s governance (1920-35/36), the Songpan region
(known progressively as Songpan sub-Prefecture, Mao Prefecture, and the 16th District)
provided taxes and foodstuffs to his armies and army commanders. These taxes and goods were
often the sole source of support for his troops and for fighting with other warlords in the
Chengdu Basin. Just as under the Qing government, Deng Xihou’s earliest source of tax
revenue was from land and transport taxes, but additional taxes were increasingly collected on
new mining and timber concerns in the region. Subsequent excessive taxation of the mining

\[264\] The tax collectors for the Songpan region, essentially contemporary Songpan, Hongyuan, and Jiuzhaigou
Counties were former office holders under the Qing and/or major local Han and Hui landlords. They included Ma
Chengyan, Ma Shaozhen, and Li Zongyi. These “officials” of the new Republican government were supported by a
small, permanent military contingent (78 soldiers) and a local militia from the Han, Hui and a few Tibetan villages
\[265\] SXZ 1999, 59-60.
\[266\] See Ping Qing (pseudo.), “Shupei qun zhengfu zhengli shimo” [An Account of the Establishment of the Military
Government of Northern Sichuan], Sichuan wenxian [Sichuan Documents] (Taipei, 1962-72), November 1965, 7-9;
and Robert Kapp, Szechwan and the Chinese Republic: Provincial Militarism and Central Power, 1911-1938 (New
\[267\] AZZ 1994, 523.
\[268\] In Sichuan, by the early 1930s the only agencies of the central government that functioned were the Post and
Telegraph Administration, the Maritime Customs Service, the Salt Inspectorate, and a branch of the Bank of China.
The Maritime Customs revenues, obtained under foreign supervision, were the only monies collected in the province
that found their way to Nanjing. See Kapp 1973, 25-35.
industry contributed decisively to the shift to opium as the primary local industry by the late 1920s.

*Mining and Taxes in the Songpan Region*

Prior to the development of timber and traditional medicines, gold mining was important in the initial expansion of Chinese governance in the Songpan region. Both Ming and Qing governments recognized the region as an occasional gold producer, and they both sought to control and tax gold production accordingly.\(^{269}\) However, there was little mention outside of the locally produced *Songpan xianzhi* (1924 edition) of any significant mining during the late Qing Dynasty.\(^{270}\) This situation changed at the end of the Qing period and during the first half of the Republican Period when significant (at least workable) deposits of placer gold were discovered and exploited. In 1908, gold was discovered west of Zhuanzhu si and 500 liang of gold was mined.\(^{271}\) By 1916 over 1000 local people were employed in two locations and over 800 liang of gold was produced annually. According to Ren Xinjian, with a much limited government presence in the region after the downfall of the Qing, an early low tax burden, and high profit margin, gold mining became a payable prospect in a few locations along the Min and Baishui Rivers.\(^{272}\)

Three medium sized mining companies were active in the Songpan County region between 1916 and 1938, and were considered major primary industries of the region in the early

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269 As early as 700s CE, both Tibetan and Chinese sources recognized the Min River watershed and Min Mountains as sources of placer gold. During the Ming Dynasty, several major deposits along the Minjiang in Songpan Ding and Maowen County were mined and carefully watched by the Qing government. See Ren Xinjian, "Jindai Sichuan zanggu de huangchin kaifa" [Development of Mining in Contemporary Sichuan’s Tibetan Areas], in Sichuan Province Social Sciences College History Association, Luo Runcang and Ren Xinjian (eds.), *Sichuan zangxue lunwen ji* [An overview of studies on the culture of Tibetans in Sichuan] (Chengdu: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1993), 36-37.

270 SXZ 1924, *juan* 1. The *Shanshui* section of the gazetteer describes some of the mineral and timber wealth of the region.

271 Wilson 1913, vl. 2 Chapter 15, "Mining and Minerals in Sichuan," 195-97; Ran Xinjian 1993, 38; SXZ 1999, 332-33. 1 liang (tael) = 376.8 grams of fine silver.

272 Ren goes on to elaborate a list of small and mid-sized gold mining companies active in the Songpan region between 1908 and 1936. See Ren in Luo and Ren 1993, 40-42.
Republican period. At the peak of mining in the region (1927), these companies employed over 3000 people, including Tibetan and Qiang locals. During this period, over 82,000 liang of gold were mined, and the ore was processed at Zheqiang and Songpan gullies and a few kilometers west of Zhuanzhusi at the Zhangla gold mines (Zhongbeizhai and Zhangla gullies).\textsuperscript{273} The larger of the two companies mining at Zhuanzhusi, the Gongzhe jinsi,\textsuperscript{274} initially worked with local Tibetan elites to hire Tibetans and Han Chinese to mine the gold. As the mines grew, this company brought in Han Chinese from the Chengdu Basin. The smaller of the two companies, Qingchuan jinkuang, was a local company, owned by Han and Hui businessmen from Songpan, that operated open pit mines and gold panning along a few of the eastern tributaries of the Min River. This company almost exclusively hired local Tibetans and Hui as per an agreement with local Tibetan elites who owned the land being mined.\textsuperscript{275} This smaller company operated from 1929-33, and managed to extract only around 2800 liang of gold.

A number of factors led to the decline of local mining by both companies. To begin with, getting at the gold was not an easy process. The gold veins in question run deep and were mixed with other conglomerates making extraction and ore processing difficult.\textsuperscript{276} Although local production was small in scale and traditional technology was used, these factors did not

\textsuperscript{273} Quoted in Ren Xinjian 1993, 47. See also, Yang Zhangsen and Zhang Fuqing, Sichuan huangjin ziyuan yu shengchan xianzhuan [An Outline of Sichuan's Gold Resources and Businesses] (Chengdu: Sichuan University Press, 1981).
\textsuperscript{274} Gongzhe jinsi was based out of Chongqing and was owned by Han Chinese. They operated in Songpan County from 1916-1933, and in other Tibetan areas of Sichuan through 1947.
\textsuperscript{275} Ren 1993, 48; see also SXZ 1999, 480. The xianzhi mentions a third small company, the Baohua gongsi, run by Zhang Zhisan and other local Pao ge affiliates in the Shiheqiao area (just south of Songpan town). I was unable to verify this statement. However, the Shiheqiao stream is now the site of a major gold prospect run by the Central China Goldfields Company. See the next footnote for source material.
\textsuperscript{276} Gold mining is seeing a serious comeback in the region with foreign investment and new techniques of mining and ore processing. See World Gold Special Issue, Beyond the Wall: Foreign Involvement in China's Gold Mining Industry (London: Kernow Mining Publications, 2005), especially pages 52-57, and on Central China Goldfields Company, 82-87.
eventually halt production. Rather, two related processes—warlord taxation and local anti-mining religious institutions and practices—led to a gradual decline in the industry. In the first place, the warlord Deng Xihou levied a fairly substantial tax on any mining activities. According to some sources, his representatives could and would take as much as 50% of the gross profits of the mining concerns in the region. In addition, while the road to and from Songpan County was not terribly dangerous in the early Republican period, over the course of the 1920s and ‘30s, it increasingly became plagued by bandits, especially in the southern reaches of the Minjiang watershed. These bandits were not only Tibetans down on their luck, but also warlord soldiers, local provincial administrators who collected road taxes, and Deng Xihou’s military commanders in the region.

In addition to low profits, local religious institutions and many Tibetans in general opposed mining operations. From the standpoint of cultural practices and religion, the Gelugpa and local Bon monasteries opposed mining operations north of Zhuanzhusi and east of Songpan because of their proximity to major monastic centers and Bon holy mountains. Local Tibetans and monasteries were also against mining in the region because mining muddied local water sources waters, undercut river banks, disturbed pathways and skor lam (circumambulation)

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277 The traditional technology noted by Ren 1993 and Yang and Zhang 1981 fall into categories noted by Peter Golas in his massive study of mining technology in Chinese civilization. Golas notes the preponderance of small-scale and seasonal mining throughout China (with the exception of salt mining) prior to the 1950s. “Traditional” mining in China, and western China in this case, was mostly surface and placer mining utilizing washing processes (panning in various forms) and surface pit mining. The only exception to this in the Songpan region was some underground tunnel mining to the west of Chuanzhusi in the early Republic. See Peter Golas, Science and Civilization in China: Chemistry and Chemical Technology, 5:13, Mining (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 238-59.

278 Ren 1993, 46.

279 See Ran Guangrong (ed.), Sichuan minjiang shangyou lishi wenhua yanjiu [Research on Sichuan’s upper regions of the Min River history and culture] (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 1996), 211; Ran, et al. (eds.), Sichuan Zangqu de kaifa zhilu [The road to development in Sichuan’s Tibetan areas] (Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 2000), mining section, chapter 7.

routes, and often did not profit local monasteries. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, mining operations languished under increasing local and regional taxes. To a limited degree, local forestry operations replaced mining as a source of livelihood for some locals in the late 1920s, but even forestry and the traditional local economic mainstay of traditional medicines and mushrooms were hurt by excessive local taxation.

Forestry, Chinese Medicines, and Pastoral Products and Early Republican Taxes

As noted in the previous chapter, Songpan's Tibetans were continuously converting forested areas to pastureland and harvesting timber for local use as they had for several hundred years. Early timber felling and transport to markets was noted by William W. Rockhill who observed Chinese woodcutters and their camps. He also noted that wood was river-rafted by Han Chinese, and rarely by Tibetans, down the Minjiang, Baishui, and Fujiang rivers to Sichuan Basin markets to the south and east. Contemporary Chinese sources note commercial logging in the headwaters of the Minjiang at the beginning of the century and by the 1930s "hundreds of thousands of logs" were rafted down river annually. To the north, logging was described in detail by Ku and Cheo where it was undertaken by contractors organized from Chengdu. In the Tibetan area of southwestern Gansu at the border of Jiuzhaigou County "a few hundred dollars [could] purchase a large tract of forest" from local elites. Other reports noted that monasteries in the Songpan region planted spruce and juniper to replace logged over areas. On the whole,  

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281 SAZSD 1985, 66-67. The two major mountains in question were Shar dungri (Xuebaoding, Chi.) and Byang Byadur (Xiaoxitian, Chi.) with their various related Bon and Buddhist monasteries.  
282 Rockhill 1891, 103.  
284 Ku and Cheo 1941, 95, 93.  
285 "Trees have been planted by the Lama. It is a noteworthy fact since spruce has never [before then] been adopted in tree planting in China." See Ku and Cheo 1941, 88 and Sichuan Province Forestry Bureau, Sichuan Senlin [Sichuan Forestry] (Chengdu: China Forestry Press, 1992), vl. 1, 169. Similar observations have been made about temples maintaining or planting forest reserves on the edges of the Songpan region around Xiahe, Gansu Province, Hongyuan and Ru’er gai Counties. As noted in Chapter Two, see also Five Old Gazetteers of Qinghai on trees at Hongyuan-Songpan border area and the Hongyuan and Ru’er gai County Gazetteers.
though, forestry practices during the late Qing and early Republican period had only a marginal
impact on local forests. Though tracts of forest land were cut for downstream use, the
difficulty in reaching Sichuan Basin markets precluded large scale timber extraction in the upper
Min River and Mao'er gai River systems. Timber was usually cut and shipped if on or near a
major river like the Min, Baishui or Fujiang. However, in late imperial and early Republican
Songpan, the most accessible areas on these rivers were already heavily developed for pastoral
and agricultural pursuits, and harvested for local use by Tibetans. During the early 1920s,
representatives of Deng Xihou began to tax cut timber based on the length of dressed and limbed
trees. Considering the difficulty of extracting much of the timber from more remote areas and
floating it down the Min River and its tributaries, few local timber companies survived the
1920s.

The regional medicinal trade, like the other forestry and mineral products, went into
decline early in the 1920s. Under the late Qing government, a nominal tax was collected on

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286 Taxes on forestry and timber were limited in the late Qing to those collected by local monasteries and Tibetan elites; the local magistrate did not tax timber.
287 The exception to this seems to have been the Fujiang River to the east and the lower reaches of the Baishui River to the northeast. Both of these rivers abutted An County in the northern part of the Sichuan Basin—and as such, provided a greater access to timber. See Sichuan Natural Resources Group, *Sichuan zhi Linye* [Sichuan’s Forests, manuscript] (1941), 286-95. This manuscript describes the various small and large companies active in the area from about 1897-1940, and especially the areas they were most active in eastern Songpan County and eastern Jiuzhaigou County. See also AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 977-78.
288 *Minjiang zhi* 1990, 211; Sichuan Natural Resources Group, *Sichuan zhi Linye* [Sichuan’s Forests, manuscript] (1941), 12-13; Chen Rong, *Zhongguo senlin shi liao* [Historical materials on the study of forestry in China] (Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1981). See also AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 977-78.
289 See *Sichuan zhi linye* 1941, 17-18, 186-94 and AZZ 1994, vl. 2, 1003-04. Both sources estimate that some 900,000 de-limbed trees were floated down the Min and Baishui Rivers from 1930-38 by a several small companies. While the statistics probably represent no more than rough estimates, and account for the entire 16th District of Republican era Sichuan (six prefectures and approximately 18% of Sichuan Province), they were drafted from tax receipt records from Deng Xihou’s warlord administration and later Nationalist government statistics, they do show a steady decrease in timber rafted down the rivers, with the peak amount shipped in 1931/32 and steadily decreasing thereafter.
290 The major exceptions to this were two Chinese companies on the Baishui River to the north. These companies were based out of An County to the east, with foresting crews on the lower reaches of the Baishui River in extreme northeast of the Songpan Region. These companies had a better water link to downstream towns and prefectures, and would occasionally send large rafts of wood in the late 1930s as far south as Chongqing. See *Sichuan zhi Linye* [Sichuan’s Forests, manuscript] (1941), 293-95 and AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 977-78.
musk, deer horns, and other medicines in the Songpan market, and again in Mao County.²⁹¹

Throughout the Republican period, herbal medicines and mushrooms were traded locally, but the inter-regional medicinal trade changed in the late 1920s when the increase in both regional transport taxes and warlord taxes in effect raised the price of the herbs sharply. This effectively constrained local collecting and production, thereby choking off another element of local and extra-regional trade.²⁹²

By the late 1920s the primary tax base of the Songpan region was reduced to two primary commodities: animals and land. While the lijin, or tax on goods in transport, continued to be levied, local land and commodity taxes remained more important. Animals were initially taxed according to late Qing levels. However, by the mid 1920s yaks, sheep and goats brought to market in Songpan were taxed not just at the point of sale, but also as a part of the household herd (eg., they were taxed twice, once for owning the animal, and again for selling the animal at market), for their skins or wool, as well as the normal additional taxes for transport out of the region.²⁹³

A number of local goods were economically significant to Tibetans, Han and Hui in the Songpan region. While pastoral products remained the mainstay of the regional market, in the early Republican era, minerals, timber and traditional medicines became important for a short while. However, with the advent of a new warlord tax regime by the early 1920s, these new sectors faced increasing constraints. After 1925 a new set of land taxes were introduced to “create” new revenues as Sichuan warlords demanded ever more funds to finance their expanding armies and to pay for armed conflicts of increasing frequency and intensity. Under these circumstances, the development of local trade in new or existing commodities, which could

²⁹¹ Watson Haines 1905, 99.
have created new revenue, was thwarted. Some other commodity was needed to help fill the increased land tax burden. For the warlord Deng Xihou, the most viable means of creating and extracting more taxes and revenue from the Songpan region would mean a greater reliance on opium production. In this way, an opium regime was created in the region that would transform the social and environmental landscape of the region for decades to come.

3.3 Developing Opium Agriculture in the Songpan Region: Warlord Taxes and Local Elites in Action

Skyrocketing military expenditures presented a problem for Sichuan warlords because their sources of revenue were severely limited, due in part to provincial political circumstances. By the mid-1920s, the province had been separated into five different garrison areas, each controlled by a different warlord. Politically, the garrison areas were nearly autonomous. Financially, the garrison areas were self-contained units; almost all of their revenues were internally generated, mainly from the land tax.294 The most lucrative product to grow for the land tax was opium.295

This section will analyze the creation of the Songpan regional opium regime through tax systems and elite coercion. It will begin with an analysis of the land tax, the basis of tax revenues in late imperial and Republican China, and show how the tax was transformed by warlord policies. Then it considers Deng Xihou and his warlord-local elite administration in Songpan. It then examines the role of local elites, especially local Tibetan elites, in the

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294 See Qin 2001, 210-11.
295 According to Ran Guangrong, opium had been grown in the Songpan region, especially in eastern Songpan County (the Huaili area below Huanglongsi), since at least the 1830s. However, local opium was used mostly for the local market as a medicinal herb. The classical term for opium in China was yingsu, but it was locally known as chuantu (Chuan, chi., or Sichuan opium). It did not, however, come into prominence as an extra-regional market good until the late 1910s. See Ran 1993, 272.
expansion of opium agriculture and the patterns of coercion that accompanied it. Finally, it will
discuss the initial ramifications of creating a new market regime in the region.

Warlords, the Land Tax and Sichuan’s Opium Regime

The livelihood of commoners and elites in the Songpan region changed greatly as a result
of warlord taxation policies. In 1912, the late Qing land tax (zhengliang, chi.) consisted of only
three components (the collection fee, a surtax, and a regular land tax (zhenggong, chi.)). By the
mid-1930s, the land tax had expanded into a series of surcharges, including numerous army
related ones (for boots, ammunition, commanders, sub-commanders, soldier “pensions” and so
on).296 Most of the additional funds went to the garrison-area armies and the balance to county
governments. County governments added further surcharges because of extra fees levied on
them by regional warlords like Deng Xihou, including extra processing fees, local affairs fees,
construction and finance fees, militia fees, and extra administration fees.297 In other words, local
farmers and herders closest to the Min River road and areas patrolled by warlord soldiers and
officials could expect to pay the regular land tax, army surcharges, and the various local
government surcharges.298 This system of taxation, common throughout Sichuan Province by
the late 1920s, can be best understood in the context of what Jerome Ch’en has referred to as the
“pretaxation system.”299 As an excuse for their endless extortion of funds for warfare, Sichuan
warlords competed with one another in imposing “pretaxes” on local households in their garrison
areas. They would levy one or more years’ land tax in advance in addition to the annual tax

296 Qin 2001, 213-14, 220.
297 Qin Heping collected an excellent overview of these taxes broken down by region, county and city. See Qin
2001, 186-207.
298 See Lu Pingdeng, Sichuan nongcun jingji [Sichuan’s Agrarian Economy] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936),
461-62.
299 Jerome Ch’en, 1979; 1992. I am also indebted to an important study on the topic of pretaxation by Richard
Gunde. This study inspired my inquiry into similar processes in Tibetan areas of Sichuan during the Republican
quota due. In most of Sichuan, an advanced levy was known as “apportioned funds” (tankuan, chi.). District provincial and warlord authorities\(^{300}\) (both civilian and military personnel) would request village headmen and local administrators to pay a certain sum, leaving it up to the local government(s) to “apportion” the payments. In effect, Sichuan warlords levied and collected taxes in the name of the provincial government, but in their individual garrison areas kept the vast majority if not all of these taxes for their own use. In other parts of the province, the tankuan had the effect of linking settlements and taxable land, as well as a political consequence in that the village or county administrator assumed a more prominent role in local government.\(^{301}\)

Along the Min River, this tax system was a major force in daily life, while outside the immediate vicinity of the main rivers and roads it did not make much headway. Local Tibetan headmen and elites in more remote areas mostly ignored the tax by staying away from the county seat and protecting themselves with their own local “militia forces.” The county seat (with its small army) had little ability to penetrate the hinterland to the west, and few options but to extensively tax the immediate surrounding areas along the Min, Baishui, and Fu Rivers.

The taxation snowball rolled heavier and faster so that by the early 1930s a dozen terms of tax were collected in a single year, and in certain areas people were required to pay the tax for the twenty-first century! Deng Xihou’s 28th Army levied pretaxes on the region and other counties in northwestern Sichuan as far into the future as 1991.\(^{302}\) The majority of these pretaxes

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\(^{300}\) These authorities were both civilian and military personnel at what is now the prefecture level. The provincial civilian and chief warlord officials were stationed in Mao County in the 1920s. Lower level civilian officials were drawn from county level owning elites, former Qing officials (or clerks), and sometimes Tibetan headmen. Lower level warlord military officers were also stationed at the county level in major towns like Songpan and Nanping to protect Deng Xihou’s fiscal interests, help collect taxes, and provide a limited number of “official” troops vis-à-vis local elites and local “police” forces. See SAZSD 1985, 21-22 and SXZ 1999, 60-61.


fell to Min, Baishui, and Fu River peasants, herders and headmen to pay. To cope with the
situation Songpan residents along the Min watershed and parts of the Mao’er gai and Baishui
(modern Jiuzhaigou County) watersheds began extensive illegal but profitable opium poppy
cultivation. Most families intercropped opium with food crops, seasonally shifted fields from
fodder or extra food crops to poppy cultivation, or in some cases shifted their agriculture to
exclusive poppy cultivation.\textsuperscript{303} As tax burdens increased over the 1920s and early 1930s,
Tibetan, Hui and Han peasants along the major rivers had greater difficulty meeting both local
and warlord taxes. In some cases, they had to abandon their land and flee their homes entirely.\textsuperscript{304}
However, the majority of land was in the hands of local Tibetan and Han Chinese elites. Both
local Tibetan headmen and Chinese and Hui landlords joined in the general poppy growing trend
and tried to get their local clansmen to grow it and allow the headmen to sell it in Songpan to
meet their own tax burdens or economic interests.\textsuperscript{305}

By the turn of the twentieth century and throughout the Republican period, Sichuan
Province was arguably the largest producer and consumer of domestic opium in China. In 1906,
Sichuan produced 40\% of the opium in China. Despite a short hiatus under the late Qing Opium
Eradication campaigns, by the mid 1920s, Sichuan had regained its position as the preeminent
producer and consumer of the drug in China.\textsuperscript{306} As a result, mass amounts of land were
converted to poppy cultivation on a seasonal basis. Simply put, poppy was the winter crop of
choice for most Han and Tibetan peasants in the Min and Baishui River valleys, and by the late

\textsuperscript{303} SXZ 1999, 62-63, 66-67.
\textsuperscript{304} Ran 1993, 274.
\textsuperscript{305} I am deeply indebted to Ran Guangrong for providing me with various materials and two short articles he wrote
on opium production in northern Sichuan. See Ran 1993, 268-84. See also, Qin Heping, \textit{Sichuan yupian wenti yu jinyou yuanding} [Sichuan’s opium problem and smoking issues; history of opium production in Sichuan] (Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 2001), 393-99.
\textsuperscript{306} See Wen Jingming, “Yapian yu jindai xi’nan shehui” [Opium and the Modern Southwest Society], MA Thesis,
Sichuan University, 1993, 4. See also, Judith Wyman, “Opium and the State in Late-Qing China,” in Brook and
Wakabayashi 2000, 212-27.
'30s for many Tibetans within two-three days ride of the Min, Baishui, Fu and Mao'er gai River valleys. Along with local civilian officials and elites, warlord soldier-officials, local and regional Pao ge groups (loosely organized criminal syndicates, discussed below) were active in opium production and constituted the regional opium regime.

**Songpan Warlord Administration and Local Elites**

At the apex of the warlord administration of the Songpan region was Deng Xihou. The local tax regime, provincial administrators and local elites nominally in charge of the region, and opium production were all tied into and affected by the larger political machinations of northern Sichuan's regional warlord. Deng Xihou was a product of the warlord fighting endemic to China from 1916-1927. He was based in the county of Guanxian (modern Dujiangyan City) and Chengdu. Deng, who rose to prominence in northwestern Sichuan and directly governed the Songpan region from 1921 until the mid 1930s, was one of the “Big Four” warlords of Sichuan. From the early 1920s he was loosely affiliated with Liu Wenhui through the opium trade and in a number of short-lived alliances to fight other warlords in the Chengdu Basin as well as the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) 1st and 4th Route Armies which passed through the region in 1935. Deng Xihou allied himself with both Liu Wenhui and Liu Xiang in the early 1920s and with Chiang Kai-shek after 1927. For his efforts, he was given command of the 28th Army of the

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308 Historians mostly agree that war was endemic during the warlord period. One writer asserts that more than 400 large scale and small civil wars took place in Sichuan alone between 1911 and 1937. See James Sheridan, *China in Disintegration: The Republican Era in Chinese History, 1912-1949* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 89 passim.

309 The warlord Liu Wenhui, through alliances, superior-subordinate military relationships, and graft, nominally ruled Sichuan Province until he was ousted from Chengdu by a rival militarist—his own nephew Liu Xiang. A family-brokered peace was arranged which mollified Liu Wenhui with control of Xikang province to the west and north of Chengdu, a sparsely populated but opium-rich territory on the Tibetan periphery of Han China. Kapp 1973, 23-26.
National Revolutionary Army, made a member of the Military Affairs Commission in Nanjing, and Commander in Chief of the 7th Route Army of the Guomindang.\(^{310}\)

While Deng had his military headquarters in the city of Dujiangyan in the north of the Sichuan Basin, he also maintained military forces and officer-officials in Songpan. In the Songpan region, Deng set about the highest priorities of a warlord: self-preservation and self-enrichment. The latter was relatively secure through the illicit but largely uncontrollable opium trade. The former goal (survival) entailed maintaining troops but using them as little as possible. The Songpan region and his other territories were advantageous to Deng for several reasons. Their isolated position in Sichuan province effectively insulated him from rival warlords, as well as from military engagements ordered by the Republican government. In the Chinese expression, Deng’s base was blessed, for "the mountains are high and the emperor far away."

Deng’s civil administration for the Songpan region derived from his chairmanship of the northern Sichuan Administrative Affairs Committee (Chengwu weiyuanhui, chi.). From this chair he appointed district magistrates and chiefs of the various sections within his regional civilian government. These magistrates, and the district commander for the Songpan region, were officials for a nominally civilian bureaucracy, but in fact were military personnel or office holders with a special relationship to someone in Deng’s military command.\(^{311}\) The ability to appoint local and regional representatives of the provincial government allowed Deng to effectively control local taxes, but it also gave him a powerful position among Songpan elites. These elites, who had often served in one capacity or another under the late Qing administration


\(^{311}\) On Sichuan native estimated in 1935 that more than half of the administrative officeholders in all of the garrison areas, including Deng’s, got their jobs because they knew someone in the army or were already part of it. Relatives or former schoolmates of brigade or division commanders or of the army commander himself were especially favored, as were long time members of the army headquarters staff. See Chou Kaiqing, “Qienshi xin Sichuan di chanwang” [Outlook for the Creation of a New Sichuan], in *Guowen zhoubao* [National News Weekly], (Tianjin 1924-37), May 27, 1935.
and pre-warlord local administration, worked closely with Deng and his local military commanders to retain their positions of influence, and with the opium regime, expand their livelihoods.

One local elite landholder and administrator who worked particularly closely with the various governments of the Republican period was Li Yangsan. The Li family moved to the Songpan region toward the end of the nineteenth century, and Li's uncle, Li Zongyi, was one of the first "officials" of the new Republic after 1911.\textsuperscript{312} Li Yangsan was originally a local Han Chinese baojia militia commander under the last Qing magistrate and continued as a local militia representative under the post 1911 Chinese Republic. In the early 1920s he worked with Deng Xihou's army commanders in the region, was subsequently appointed a military commander of the Songpan district, and then became a Guomindang official in 1933-34. However, Li Yangsan was not just a military commander and local representative of Deng Xihou's warlord garrison in the Songpan region. He was also a major figure in the local Pao ge, and along with his two sons, was one of the primary stakeholders in the regional opium regime and transport network to Gansu and central Sichuan. By utilizing pre-existing local elites, Deng Xihou bolstered his position and extractive power without having to use too many troops. At the same time, local elites like Li Yangsan and other Han and Hui elites around Songpan and Nanping, had the opportunity to play a significant role in new administrations while enriching themselves in the new opium regime. However, the other group of elites, Tibetan elites had to be brought into the fold for the expansion of the opium regime and new taxation system to work.

\textsuperscript{312} See SXZ 1999, 59-60.
Tibetan Elites, Business, and Poppy Cultivation in the 1920s

According to Ran Guangrong, the expansion of opium agriculture in the Songpan region resulted in a "web" of production and expansion.\(^{313}\) Local elites, including Tibetan headmen and some Buddhist and Bon temples, would use one of three methods to expand opium production, enrich themselves, and pay their local land taxes to county and garrison officials. Landlords and headmen used their landlord or elite status to force tenant farmers to intercrop poppy with food crops or fully convert land to poppy cultivation. Officials near Songpan and Nanping could also arrest and punish Tibetans, Han, and Hui who attempted to pay or remit taxes in food stuffs or other media. A second way the local elites from Songpan town worked to expand opium production was to tempt (youshi, chi.) Tibetan headmen and temple elites to use similar policies with their local villages or clan groups as a whole—both by telling them there were "laws" that required they remit taxes in poppy bulbs or by loaning them poppy seeds (through contract agreements) and forcing Tibetans to pay with opium. Finally, local shop owners and opium traffickers would try to put Tibetans in "opium debt." These shop owners would loan Tibetans a pair of shoes, cigarettes, a weight of sugar or salt, and one liang of opium seeds in the spring before or during planting season. The "interest" on the loan of goods, however, amounted to returning the shop or business owners five liang of poppy bulbs in the fall. This cycle of temptation and indebtedness effectively brought larger and larger numbers of Tibetans into the web of Minjiang opium production and pretaxation.

In the process, opium became a catalyst of commercial exchange, something that had previously scarcely existed in the largely self-sufficient economy of the Songpan region. The towns of Songpan, Nanping, Zhuanzhu si, Xiaoxing, Zhengjiang guan, and Xiaohe were transformed from small villages and towns into bustling commercial markets because of the

\(^{313}\) Ran 1993, 273.
opium trade and the expansion of opium agriculture in areas adjacent to them. Although Han and Hui businessmen from Sichuan and Gansu Provinces dominated commercial opium transactions, Tibetan businessmen, headmen, and stewards of regional temples were also involved in exchanging opium for salt, tea, and other everyday necessities. Eventually several major Songpan Tibetan elites, including the headmen of Dazhai, Daxing, the Buddhist monastery of Tangke (in contemporary Ruo’er gai County), most of the former tusi-tuguan along the Baishui River (central and western Jiuzhaigou County), and almost all of the Tibetan elites and temples in the Mao’er gai watershed joined in the business. As in other ethnic minority areas of Sichuan Province, like the Liangshan Yi society, the opium regime also brought more guns into the region.

The local elites involved in the opium regime were not, however, a uniform group changing in relation to the larger regional economy—the composition of the local elite in the Republican era changed in different ways for local elites depending on their proximity to Songpan, local criminal organizations, warlord and Nationalist officials. However, despite the importance of opium in the overall regional economy, the elites and their dependents throughout the region continued to be largely isolated from one another. As already noted, some Tibetan elites and monasteries, especially in the northern Min River watershed and the Mao’er gai areas were part of the opium regime structure. Han Chinese and Hui landlords along the Min, and

315 SXZ 1999, 66. Many other smaller tusi joined the opium regime, but the Songpan xianzhi links these headmen as the biggest offenders.
317 A few representative local Tibetan elites involved heavily in poppy agriculture and the opium trade included Li Degang (former tuguan, southern Mao’er gai River valley and Heishui County), Lang Chinbao (Munigou area, Songpan County), Lang Ka du zhen (abbot of Muni temple, Songpan County), and Song Deqing (former tusi, Daxing area, Songpan County). The major Hui elites that played significant roles during the Republican era included Ma Chuanhua (Songpan), Du Tieqiao (Han Chinese, married into an important Hui landlord family in the Minjiang village area), and the Ma brothers in Zhenjiang ping (Songpan County). These local elites in Songpan
especially along the Rewu River were involved as well. The elites in these areas worked with warlord, military, criminals, and later Nationalist officials, to coerce local farmers of all ethnicities to grow poppies. Yet this was only a small part of the overall area, and only a portion of the villages in the region. Some local Tibetan and Hui elites were not a part of the opium regime, including communities in parts of northwestern Songpan County, western Nanping (Jiuzhaigou) County, and eastern Hongyuan County.318

In addition to taxes on agriculture and opium in particular, warlord officials also continued to impose opium related surtaxes like the “opium-prohibition fee” (yamu fajin/mufa, chi.) and “lazy tax” (lan yanjuan/lanjuan, chi.) on farmers who failed to obey orders to grow opium, the most profitable and taxable crop. Ironically, the “opium prohibition fees” stemmed from the 1906 Qing prohibition of opium production that had served to greatly shrink opium production until after 1916. While it was never a major factor in the Songpan region, the “lazy tax” was put into action between 1927-36 under Deng Xihou’s Mao County garrison officials.

In terms of early poppy production, it is illustrative to note that the trained botanist and landscape aficionado E. H. Wilson did not observe opium production in his visits to the Songpan region in the first years of the Chinese Republic (c. 1911-13). However, as Ran Guangrong notes in his study of opium use and cultivation in Tibetan areas of Sichuan, the Songpan region became a major source of opium revenues for the warlord Deng Xihou and later for the

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318 For example, Tibetans in Mewa, A mu, and Baozuo villages, and the Hui villages of Majia and Duochuan were not listed as poppy producing communities, as other areas were. The Aba Prefecture Gazetteer states that very few Han and Hui landlords were not part of poppy agriculture in 1930s and '40s, but does not that only some Tibetans were part of this system. See AZZ 1993, vl. 1, 520; vl. 2, 886-87. See also, Zuo 2000, 407-09 on how an influx of retired or deserter soldiers added to the opium regime in the region, but in large part only along the lower Baishui and middle Min Rivers.
Guomindang government in Chongqing.\textsuperscript{319} Ran not only discusses the rapid growth of poppy cultivation in the 1920s and '30s, but also shows that by 1942 the opium industry in the Songpan region netted large scale grower-marketers over 250,000 \textit{yuan} annually after pretaxes.\textsuperscript{320} A number of official and local documents discuss opium cultivation and Songpan County. As noted by the provincial and local governments, the region was ideal for growing poppy plants, was readily connected to the provincial market by roads, and was remote enough that much of the production was protected from depredation by the Japanese, communists, and the intense warlord fighting in the Chengdu Basin.\textsuperscript{321} Although much of the poppy cultivation and sales was in the hands of Han and Hui merchants Chinese along the Min River, Tibetans also converted agricultural and formerly forested land immediately adjacent to the main rivers to the production of the drug. But the opium did not enrich and empower ordinary Tibetans. The huge profits from opium were realized mostly in the process of commercial exchange. When Songpan opium reached Gansu, the price would be quadrupled, and it would be even higher if was sold as far away as Xinjiang or Hunan. Though the profit margin was extremely high, few members of the Tibetan community benefited. Except for chieftains (former \textit{tusi-tuguan}), headmen, stewards of temples, and a small number of wealthy landowners, the majority of Tibetans were not involved in the opium business because of its capital-intensive nature.\textsuperscript{322} Generally speaking, Han and Hui opium merchants tied to Pao ge networks controlled transactions in opium; the ordinary Tibetan was relegated to the role of opium producer.

Thus, by the mid 1930s, most of Songpan's local and regional economy was based on the expanding opium trade and pre-taxation policies of the warlord and subsequent Guomindang.

\textsuperscript{319} Ran 1993, 269-70, 272-73.
\textsuperscript{320} Ran 1993, 269.
\textsuperscript{321} From an informal discussion with Ran Guangrong (April 2005). See also Benjamin Yang, \textit{From Revolution to Politics: Chinese Communists on the Long March} (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 79-82.
\textsuperscript{322} \textit{SAZSD} 1985, 334.
governments. Because of the remote location of the region, largely protected from warlord fighting in the rest of China and in Sichuan Province in particular, and blessed with a viable local economy, the Songpan region continued to produce substantial revenues for regional governments and local elites. The local market economy, increasingly tied to the wider Chinese opium regime, continued to bear its growing tax burden. However, with the coming of the CCP Long Marchers in the mid 1930s and the eventual displacement of the Nanjing Guomindang administration to Chongqing, coupled with preexisting competition involving warlords, local Tibetan elites, and opium-running Pao ge networks, Songpan’s market economy started to have serious problems.

3.4 Competing Elites in the 1930s: The Pao ge, Long Marchers, and Nationalists

In the 1920s, the garrison area system in Sichuan grew out of the collapse of standardized late imperial administrative mechanisms and the militarization of the province following the abortive presidency of Yuan Shikai. In the mid 1930s, warlord administration of the region was transformed again when the CCP Long Marchers and Nationalists came to the Songpan region. Yet while the over-arching structure of government changed several times between 1911-1935, the forms of local administration, especially local elite patterns of dominance and local Pao ge (criminal) networking, changed very little. In this section we examine the changing local networks of power that dominated the region. The expansion of the opium regime in the region coincided in the 1930s with new forms of state penetration in the region in direct competition with existing power structures.

As shown in the previous section, Tibetan headmen and religious institutions took on key roles in the new opium-based extractive process, but the most influential elites in this process of market change were Han, Hui and Tibetan elites along the Min and Baishui Rivers working with
Deng Xihou’s warlord regime. The collapse of Qing authority and the militarization of Sichuan as a whole did not obliterate or radically change preexisting social and economic structures in the Songpan region—but the Republican Era did bring an expanded set of local elites and new patterns of dominance. Local Tibetan headmen remained in charge of the hinterland while the warlord officials and Pao ge criminal networks, in effect the “urban” elite of the region, were increasingly in charge of major villages and towns along the Min, Baishui, and Fujiang Rivers.

In the mid-1930s, two other players were added to existing elite power structures. In 1935 the Long Marchers under Mao Zedong entered the region, and following on their heels were Nationalist forces and officials. This resulted in a heightened state presence in the region, perhaps the strongest state presence in Songpan since the late 1700s. However, with five major players in increasing competition for opium revenues and control of the countryside, banditry and corruption became an even greater problem.

Pao ge Networks in the Songpan Region

The Pao ge, along with warlord soldier officials and local elites, were a primary force in the opium trade and local affairs from the 1920s to the early 1950s. The Gelaohui was a hierarchical criminal network in Sichuan and other provinces, including the local Pao ge who attracted many members from the armed forces, transport workers, the urban and rural poor, and merchants and landowners. These groups, sometimes called “blood oath Brotherhoods,” were regional secret societies and criminal gangs that operated throughout much of China from the


324 The Brotherhood could be divided into five nominal but only three actual hierarchical “generations” (bei, chi.): kind (ren, chi.), for landowning and educated; righteous (yi, chi.), for merchants; and polite (li, chi.), for the lower classes. The two higher generations were more for trading than landowning and often quarreled with the lower and numerically strong one as the lower echelons had absorbed many “murky” (hun, chi.; criminal) elements. See Jerome Chen, The Highlanders of Central China: A History, 1895-1937 (New York: ME Sharpe, 1992), 207. Songpan region Pao ge also followed a similar, if not the same hierarchical organization. See SXZ 1999, 63, 66.
late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{325} Pao ge brotherhoods were amply and strategically located throughout Sichuan Province to produce opium and carry out illegal transport and sales both within Sichuan and to most other parts of China. The Pao ge in the Songpan region helped local elites to coerce peasants into growing opium and transported the drug in collusion, and sometimes at odds with, local warlord officials. According to Ran Guangrong, Songpan Pao ge were part of one of the most widespread Sichuan Gelaohui.\textsuperscript{326} In the Songpan region, the local Pao ge were affiliated with larger provincial bands based in Chengdu and Chongqing, as well as the regional warlord government and later Guomindang government. In most Chinese sources, the Pao ge are considered bandits. However, in addition to their criminal activities in coercing locals to expand opium production, they also fulfilled local social roles as militia-protectors and aid givers.\textsuperscript{327}

Banditry in the Songpan region targeted landlords and businessmen, usually chosen because they were regarded as particularly stingy or otherwise offensive. As noted in the previous chapter, it was nearly impossible for local Han or Hui merchants to travel into the Tibetan controlled hinterland without being robbed or killed. The only safe way to travel the region was in groups accompanied by large numbers of soldiers. By the late 1930s nearly everyone was a target for banditry; the Pao ge and their hold on the opium trade were at least in part responsible for this situation.\textsuperscript{328} In most respects, these kinds of Pao ge actions were similar to the banditry practiced by Mao’er gai Tsho ba on one another and on travelers to their

\textsuperscript{325} Jerome Chen discusses the Gelaohui in eastern Sichuan as one of the three principal militia/bandit groups running the countryside and opium trade. See Chen 1992, 24-25, 206-07.
\textsuperscript{326} Personal Communication with Ran Guangrong (April, 2005).
\textsuperscript{327} This dual role is best understood in terms of Liz Perry’s “predatory” and “protective” bandit strategies. See Liz Perry, Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 48-50, 218. See also Jerome Chen 1991, 24-25. Chinese sources tend to view Pao ge and Gelaohui as criminal elements that destabilized local society, especially for their role in opium production and shipping. A good summary of research on Pao ge and how they are viewed in modern Sichuan historiography is in Qin 2001, for Gelaohui in Sichuan in general, 51-72, 267-99, and for the Songpan region Pao ge in particular, 410-14.
\textsuperscript{328} SXZ 1999, 63, 66-7.
On the whole, though, *Pao ge* in the Songpan region were often able to establish cordial relations with local governments—they often worked with local military and other officials, and were often as not themselves military and administrative officials in the region.

One story that captures the essence of the process of subversion and interaction between the *Pao ge* and local military and other officials took place in the early 1930s. As the opium trade, like the *Pao ge*, was always officially illegal, the government (both warlord and Nationalist) would pass down an order to round up the bandits involved and destroy their opium. The local militias, however, would often warn their "brothers." Then, when the militia went out on their "raid," they would fire their guns loudly, and when they returned they would report their success in terms of how many bullets they had fired. In truth they would trade their extra bullets and guns to the bandits for opium. This collaboration eventually grew into a blatant swap of guns and ammunition for opium, with landlords and officials fully participating. This story echoes reports of *Pao ge* practices in other areas of southwestern Sichuan, especially in Ya’an County.

Often, local officials were themselves members of *Pao ge* networks. In the 1920s and ‘30s, Songpan *Pao ge* were already part and parcel of the legal and illegal opium growing and transport system. Li Yangsan and his extended family are a perfect example of local collusion. As noted earlier, Li Yangsan was a local warlord official, a Consultative Conference head (political commissioner) of the Guomindang government, and major landowner. His son, Li Ergang was the director of the county bank and the leader of the local *Pao ge* (*datong gongshe*,

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329 See Perry 1980, 48-50, 218 for the bandit-protector typology. See previous chapter for discussions of local travel in the hinterland by Tafel 1914, Ward 1913, and others.
330 Two versions of this story were told to me by local Tibetans in Songpan County as campfire stories while trekking. The only major difference in the stories was that one of the story tellers stated his grandfather was once part of the *Pao ge* in Songpan. Informal discussion, April 2005 and May 2005, Songpan County, Sichuan Province.
332 SXZ 1999, 66-68.
A friend and relative by marriage, Zung Huoren, was also the local county military commander appointed by Chengdu, police chief of Songpan, and a local landowner. All three officials were landlords and collected rents from a number of Han and Tibetan villages in and around the Minjiang River, but mostly fairly close to Songpan itself. All of them were also members of the provincial Gelaohui. These three used their official and extracurricular power to extract money for taxes and try to get more and more Tibetans to grow poppies. Although Li Yangsan would later be expunged in most respects from local histories of the region (the contemporary Songpan Gazetteer does not mention him), his son would become a major figure in local lore. Not only was Li Ergang a local Pao ge leader and banker for the Nationalist government, he also had ties with the Long Marchers. When the CCP Long Marchers under Mao and Zhang entered the region, Nationalist troops were not far behind. When the Long Marchers came to the Songpan region, the Nationalist government of the Guomindang (GMD) under Jiang Jieshi subsequently established themselves both in Sichuan and in Songpan itself.

The Long March and the Songpan Region

In the summer of 1935 Mao Zedong and Zhang Guotao’s Long Marchers converged in the Mao’er gai area of the Songpan region. The Long Marchers had abandoned the Jiangxi Soviet in 1934 and were in their final stages of their long retreat to find a safe haven. Up until 1934, Sichuan warlords, no matter their lip service to Jiang Jieshi in Nanjing, were virtually divorced from the Nationalist government. However, conflicts among Sichuan warlords invited the incursion of the Red Army, and in turn, the expansion of the Red Army temporarily mitigated the warlord conflicts. After overcoming their differences and successfully facing off

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334 Kapp 1973, 72.
335 A military agreement reached among the warlords Liu Wenhui, Tian Songyao, and Deng Xihou in Chengdu in January of 1933 halted warlord hostilities. In February of that year the warlord Tian Songyao was appointed
against the Long Marchers, another outbreak of warlord hostilities gave the Nationalist government an excuse to intervene in Sichuan. When the 1st and 4th Route Armies of the Long Marchers met up in the Songpan region, the Nationalist government sent troops under Hu Zongnan to try to finish them off. Deng Xihou promptly turned the administration of the entire region over to the Nationalist government and was rewarded for his efforts with a major military posting. These actions spelled the end of several Sichuan warlords and the ascendancy of Deng Xihou in Sichuan Province and national politics. 336

The main reason the Nationalist government was able to intrude into northern Sichuan at all was the “menace” of the Chinese communists. From 1935 onward, the principal theme in Sichuan politics was Nanjing’s effort to incorporate Sichuan into a unified and centrally managed political structure. Nationalist and provincial aspirations had two primary implications for local society: first, the imminent but ultimately non-existent threat of full scale war between the Long Marchers and Nationalist troops, and second, a new layer of government officials, regulations, taxes, and soldiers.

In 1935, Mao’s 1st Route Army slowly made its way through southwestern China to western Sichuan. However, the 4th Route Army under the command of Zhang Guotao was already active in northeastern Sichuan at least as early as 1932, and in west-central Sichuan after

“Supervisor of the Rebel Extermination on the Sichuan-Shaanxi Border” by the Nanjing government and he battled with communist forces in the northern and eastern parts of Sichuan. Then renewed warlord fighting instigated by Liu Wenhui in the summer of 1933 forced Tian to ignore the communists and return to the Chengdu area to protect his interests. His departure created a breathing space that lasted into 1934 and allowed the 4th Route Army under Zhang Guotao to regroup and the First Route Army under Mao to march over 700 miles to join Zhang’s forces in northern Sichuan near Mao’er gai. See Zhou Kaiqing, Minguo chuanshi jiyiao [A basic account of Sichuan Affairs in the Republican period] (Taipei: Sichuan wenxian, 1974), 501-07.
336 On the whole, the engagements around Xikang and northern Sichuan in 1934 and ’35 did not involve many of Deng’s troops. Rather, the 21st Army of the Guomindang that was garrisoned just across the Sichuan border in Mingshan and around Songpan Township proper did what little fighting that went on. Deng Xihou was given ostensible command of these troops and continued to collect regional taxes to support not only his own troops, but the Guomindang troops as well. In 1937 Deng’s troops left the region to fight against the Japanese, but several brigades of the 21st Army remained to “keep order.”
The 4th Route Army operated in and around Ya’an County southwest of the Songpan region for three and a half years and the First Route Army was in the area for approximately four months. In passing through the western half of the Songpan region, they engaged in the kind of rural organization for which they were famous. The result was a very short-lived and small rural “soviet.” This soviet, headquartered south of Mao’er gai, lasted for all of one month. While in the Mao’er gai area, the Long Marchers were not treated particularly well. Many Tibetans tried to keep them from confiscating or buying up local food. In addition, the Long Marchers burned some of the local poppy crops, convinced a few local youths to join their cause, and otherwise disrupted local trade that normally flowed eastward into the Min River valley or south into Heishui County. Neither the Tibetans nor the Long Marchers were particularly happy with one another.

When the Red Army left on the final leg of their journey through the Rou’er region, the Red Army, on the other hand, did not force conscription. In the local gazetteer, they are remembered more fondly. They funded their army through the confiscation of goods from the “rich landlords.” They paid cash for the services of local laborers who carried rice for them, and they bought the food they took from small farmers. They were remembered as polite. Their methods were effective and young people voluntarily chose to join them, seeing in the Red Army an opportunity to improve their social and economic position, as well as to get at the GMD. Twenty six locals joined the Red Army/Long March in the summer and fall of 1935. Most of these individuals were men from western villages like Baiyangcun and Mao’er gai’s villages, but also included six young men from Hui villages along the Minjiang. The most famous of the local Long Marchers, who died enroute, was Li Reji, a young man of Xueluo village (far southwest of county). He helped convince local tusi headmen to work with or at least not attack...
gai wetlands and the Min Mountains, their local government structure in the area quickly unraveled.\textsuperscript{341} In the end, the influence of the Long Marchers in the region was limited in scope and short-lived; the communists helped destabilize the region and, in the long term, exacerbated local banditry, warlord-style taxation schemes, and local problems.

\textit{The Impact of the Guomindang and Nationalist Policies in the Songpan Region}

Of much greater significance for the Songpan region was the addition of another layer of local and provincial administration by the Nationalists in 1935.\textsuperscript{342} In 1935, Jiang Jieshi appointed Yang Yungtai as chief inspector of Sichuan Province and sent troops to the Songpan region to root out the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 4\textsuperscript{th} Route Armies as part of an overall plan to incorporate the largely autonomous Sichuan Province into the Nationalist government and military.\textsuperscript{343} From the beginning, Yang was a controversial figure in Sichuan and his administration spelled some interesting changes for the superstructure of the Songpan government.

The main point of a series of reforms that Yang tried to implement in Sichuan Province was to define a vertical chain of command that would concentrate political, military and financial power in as few hands as possible. Theoretically, this chain of command would have upended

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\textsuperscript{341} The strategic concerns more or less were related to infighting between Mao and Zhang over an attack on Songpan Township and the Nationalist forces stationed there—see Ben Yang 1990.

\textsuperscript{342} In addition to the creation of physical administrative offices, there were other proposals forwarded between 1927-1937. At various meetings of the National Conference and the Central Executive Committee of the Guomindang to carry out a series of reconstruction programs in frontier territories. There were also proposals to work on economic development through surveys and reports on minority areas of western Sichuan. These reports tried to identify the "vast" reserves of natural resources and suggest possible plans for their future exploitation. Finally, the Nationalist government sent a series of officials as special envoys to console frontier inhabitants and publicize the goodwill of the central government (\textit{xuanwei, chi}). However, few of these proposals were realized and the most of the forestry, mineral, and pastoral surveys took between 5-7 years to complete. Not for nothing the Nanjing Decade abounds with references to the Nationalist government’s impotence and inability to implement "paper proposals." See "Important Statutes Adopted by the Fourth National Congress of the Guomindang," November 19, 1931, in No. 2 Historical Archives of China, \textit{Zhonghua minguoshi dang’an ziliao huibian} [Compendium of Published Historical Materials on Republic of China] (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1994-), vl. 5, juan 1 (1994), Politics (2), 333-37.

\textsuperscript{343} Yang Yungtai was a nationalist politician and leading member of the Political Science Clique within the Nationalist government. He also served as secretary-general of Jiang’s Nanchang headquarters. Early in 1935 he was sent to Sichuan to incorporate the province as a new Bandit Suppression Province and lay the groundwork to move Jiang’s headquarters to Chongqing. See Boorman 1971, vl. 4, 17-19.
the entire late Qing and early Republican systems of hands-off government at the county levels. In the end, while this system failed like most Nationalist initiatives, it did have one significant effect on the Songpan region. In 1935, the region was downgraded from its late Qing sub-prefecture status to one of six “special administrative inspectorates” (*Xingcheng duzha chuanyuan qu*, chi.) headquartered in Mao County.\(^{344}\) [See Map 3.1] This was ostensibly a very small change in early Republican and warlord administration of the region—yet its significance lay in the nature of the local “inspector” for the region. Ideally, the inspector would serve as a district magistrate in the district where his office was located, and his specific duties were to “investigate and supervise” (*duzha*, chi.) other officials in the region. He was also given command of “peace preservation forces” (*baoan dui*, chi.) to control banditry and illegal transportation of opium and poppy agriculture.\(^{345}\) In practice, however, from 1936-42 the special inspector based out of Maoxian County turned over most of his duties in the Songpan region to none other than Li Yangsan and his sons in Songpan. The inspector also revived the largely defunct *baojia* (militia) system that made local headmen responsible for the people in their district. Local Tibetan headmen and Hui and Han landholders then had the legal right to band together small militia units. These militia units neatly segued into existing *Tsho ba* kin groups and *Pao ge* gangs, and would soon lead to more banditry and conflicts over local opium production and transport. By officially sanctioning the creation of (or existing) local militias, the Nationalists actually fuelled local conflicts which would eventually destabilize the region.

A further goal of Yang Yungtai’s 1935-36 reforms in Songpan (and Sichuan in general) was to change the warlord tax structure. On the surface, this reform would eliminate the multiple collections of basic land tax (pre-taxing), and institute a single land tax similar to the late Qing

\(^{344}\) The Songpan region was broken into six inspectorates under the overarching designation of Sector #16. *SXZ* 1999, 64; *AZZ* 1994, vl. 1, 520.

\(^{345}\) See Kapp 1973, 111; *SXZ* 1999, 64.
standard land tax. However, aware of the drastic revenue reductions this would cause, the provincial government permitted local county governments to collect special “bandit suppression fees” equal to three times the land tax for the duration of the “military crisis” with the communists. In the Songpan region, this new suppression fee amounted to the original warlord multi-tax, plus some extra fees for the new Nationalist administration. A final goal of the regional and provincial Nationalist government was to rein in opium production through an effort to reinstitute the late Qing opium prohibition ban.

Although the late Qing opium prohibition efforts and sporadic Nationalist campaigns succeeded in some locations to force peasants and landlords to produce less opium, China remained the world’s foremost producer in the first half of the twentieth century. Officially, Jiang Jieshi was in favor of eradicating opium. However, his official stance belied practices of the Nationalist regime. The compelling reasons that had induced competing warlords to “raise the tax on opium in order to eliminate opium” led Jiang to turn the opium trade into a governmental monopoly (wherever possible) in order to pay for his expensive armies and weapons. Besides producing badly needed revenue, the Nationalist opium policy provided Jiang an excuse to increase his military strength, as well as a lever to get opium producing warlords to...

346 According to one commentator, the reason Sichuan did not defeat the Long Marchers was the excessive tax structure under individual warlords. In 1934, the author called for a more centralized tax structure that prefigured Yang Yungtai's financial reforms of 1935-36. See Yu Nong (pseud.), “Sichuan zhi koquante haiwuo yang jiaozhi qinlu” [Sichuan's burdensome taxes and miscellaneous levies and the future of bandit suppression], Guoli Wuhan daxue Sichuan tongxue hui huikan, 1:2 (1934).

347 Huang Yenpei, Shu dao [The Road to Shu] (Shanghai: n.p., 1936), 86-88.

348 These efforts started in earnest with Lin Zexu's opium bans in Guangdong in 1838. The most successful Qing prohibition effort was under Sichuan's Governor General Zhao Erxun from 1908-1911. Under his prohibition efforts, over 80% of Sichuan's opium production was halted and would not recover until the early 1920s. See Judith Wyman, “Opium and the State in Late-Qing Sichuan,” in Brook and Wakabayashi, 2000, 212-227.

349 Everyone had a hand in the opium trade. Sometimes it is noted that the Communists were a mitigating force in the production and use of opium, and while that is true to some degree, especially after 1950, in reality, they were running drugs almost as much as the Guomindang and warlords between 1935-48/49. See Chen Yungfa, “The Blooming Poppy under the Red Sun: The Yan'an Way and the Opium Trade,” in T. Saich and H. van de Ven (eds.), New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution (New York: ME Sharpe, 1995).

350 Quoted in Bianco 2000, 294.
obey. Beginning in 1936, Sichuan had to create an anti-opium program that fit into the national regulations handed down from Nanjing. However, these regulations and the ban were neither rigorously enforced nor coherently implemented. Resistance to Nationalist bans and regulations requiring Songpan locals to sell to the government (at lower prices and not in lieu of taxes) depended largely on how vigorous individual district commissioners were. The anti-opium program was largely ineffective (until the early 1940s) as local government representatives were deeply implicated in the regional opium regime.

Weak local and provincial administrations under the early Republic, warlordism, and the Nationalists never effectively controlled the Songpan region. Local elites—Han, Tibetan, and Pao ge networks—remained largely autonomous in their own areas of northern Sichuan despite overarching government structures imposed from Chengdu and Nanjing. What controlled the region, and linked it in the strongest ways to the wider Chinese world was the opium regime, just as the agro-pastoral regime had linked late imperial Songpan to the outside world. But trade in opium was problematic as it brought with it increased banditry, criminal networks, and competition to maximize profits. And just as an effective “opium regime” was crafted by warlord functionaries and local and regional Pao ge elites in the early 1930s, the CCP Long Marchers and Nationalists entered the region, with the Nationalists adding yet another layer of administration to an already tax-burdened local populace. Despite some efforts by the Nationalists to rein in the worst of local tax policies that supported the opium regime, they actually exacerbated the problem by creating new taxes, participating officially and unofficially

[^]: Jiang basically enlisted “special” extra troops above and beyond troop numbers he had agreed with provincial warlords. These special troops officially aimed at fighting opium traffickers and managing official opium agriculture, transport, and sales. See Xiao Juetian, “Jiang Jieshi jinyan de neimu” [Inner workings of Jiang Jieshi’s Opium Prohibition], Wenshi ziliao xuanji 34 (1986), 154-74; 161.

in opium production and trade, and allowing the same opium bosses to remain in most positions of dominance throughout their territories. When Songpan faced natural disasters and increased banditry and unrest over the opium trade, the local administrative and social structures, whether traditional Tibetan Tsho ba relationships, Pao ge networks, or Nationalist administrations, failed to keep the region from spiraling into widespread poverty, famine and outright gang warfare.

3.5 Society Breaking and Lawlessness: Climate, Local Rebellions and Gang Warfare from 1936-49

The patterns of elite dominance and political alliances that had helped to define the market regime of the Songpan region prior to 1936 began to face increasing problems almost as soon as the Long Marchers left the region. In 1934-35, Fan Changjiang, a journalist, traversed northern and western China to chronicle ethnic relations, the state of the western provinces, and to comment on national unity in China. His description of Songpan in 1935 illustrates some of the major problems facing the region with the coming of the Nationalist administration. Adding to the Nationalist government’s problems in China starting in 1936, western China faced a major drought. As the drought wore on, war broke out between the Nationalist government and Japan after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July of 1937. In order to help pay for increased troop movements, new arms, and to eventually move his government to Wuhan and Chongqing, Jiang’s inspectors in the region continued to squeeze local producers for more opium. This pressure led to some minor local revolts in 1936-37. Then as the war rolled on, there were increasing numbers of local insurrections against both opium prohibition forces and rising taxes, and increased opium turf wars between rival Pao ge in the region. The regional market

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354 SAZSD 1985, 11, 14, 22, 26-28. This social survey, one of the major social surveys undertaken by the new People’s Republic of China between 1957-1961 of the Songpan region, mentions fighting among Nanping (Jiuzhaigou) baojia (militia), bandits, and Pao ge in the poppy growing areas of the upper Baishui River in 1936. It
society of the late Qing and early Republican era that had survived through the mid 1930s rapidly unraveled in the face of these revolts and turf wars. Even with Nationalist troops and landlord and *Pao ge* militia in the region, local elites and peasants staged their own uprisings and bandits ran amuck in the 1940s. Continuation of prior policies under many of the early warlord and nationalist officials, another drought and then an excessively wet year, overemphasis on opium rather than food agriculture, and eventually famine all contributed to an almost complete breakdown of local markets, society and government administration by 1948.

_Fan Changjiang’s Account of the Songpan Region in the mid-1930s_

Fan Changjiang’s *Zhongguo de xibei jiao* [China’s Northwest Corner] chronicles the author’s “dangerous journeys to the edges of China’s war-torn wilderness.” Fan, a noted Nationalist and then CCP journalist, traveled through Songpan and Jiuzhaigou (Nanping) Counties in late 1935. He provided a snapshot of a rugged region in crisis, where he observed the drastic social and economic changes brought about by militarization, a chaotic mix of remnant warlordism, clashes between communists and nationalists, and the constant threat of banditry along the Min River. Central to Fan’s discussion was his perception of socio-economic malaise and military repression, the lack of functioning administrative organs in the region, and environmental destruction. In the process of describing local society, he also described changes in the landscape—specifically, transformation wrought by war and the prevalence of certain

also notes an increase in tensions between local elites in Mao’er gai, among the Min River villages, and in rural farming areas from 1936-1941. In the context of descriptions of local resources, agriculture, herding and trade, these tensions were described mostly in terms of local relations, but also included several descriptions of outright banditry and fighting between rival groups of Tibetans, Han and Hui. While the *Pao ge* are only mentioned incidentally in this source, considering the prevalence of opium agriculture, increased tax rates from the Nationalists, and *Pao ge* networks active in the same places, described in Ran Guangrong’s study of opium and *Pao ge* in the Songpan region, it is not much of a stretch to extrapolate that the inter-ethnic tensions among villages and *baojia* fighting in Nanping was related to local opium production, transport and taxation. As Ran later notes, increased taxes eventually led to a major regional uprising in 1941. See also Ran 1993, 272-75.

kinds of commodities (or lack thereof) like opium and trees. Near the city of Pingcheng, in the eastern quarter of Songpan County, he related how war had changed the landscape:

...the roadside is covered with the marks of war. In the mountains to the west of the road, there was no place without some kind of fortification; of the peasants in the countryside [here referring to Tibetans and Han], a large portion was conscripted by Xu Xiangqian, while the rest had fled, and there were very few who had returned. (Fan, 18)

Fan described Songpan and Nanping as a region rife with racism, cruelty and corruption.  

According to Fan, opium was the mainstay of the local economy in 1934-35. He saw local Han soldiers, Han Chinese landlords and Tibetan headmen as crushing local Han and Tibetan peasants under terrible taxes, usurious interest rates, and he comments on how local pressures for opium production were destroying forest and field landscapes in Jiuzhaigou County.

Some places described to him as formerly bustling market centers, had become ghost towns, often inhabited by destitute women and children in tatters and with little or no food, and decommissioned or deserting soldiers opportunistically plying the trades of merchants (sometimes of locally grown opium) and innkeepers in the absences of their conscripted owners.

In the Huanglong area east of Songpan, Fan related one such an encounter:

_Luckily, we found a thatched hut two or three li into the yellow dragon temple complex [Huanglongsi, the largest existing temple within Huanglong Reserve], with no walls, chairs, tables, or any kind of furnishing. But there was a dilapidated heated bed [kang] already covered with sleeping soldiers, and... half an oil can that could be used as a pot for cooking rice. The hosts were two little girls, each about ten years old, their tattered clothes barely covering their bodies. When asked about their parents, they said they had died in the fighting. In regards to food, they said when someone passes through they use the can to fix the meal and might get to eat the leftovers. (Fan, 29)

After reflecting on the abject poverty, economic collapse, and widespread starvation, Fan goes on to describe the remnants of the 19th and 21st Route Army (Nationalists) stationed in the

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area. Most of the soldiers, who had came from eastern China, ended up fighting and living in this mountainous area on the borders of “civilization” and could not return home. In his final description of the region, Fan critiques the state of roads and how they demonstrate the mess that Republican China was in. His target was not only the poor quality of the recently constructed, government-funded highways, but also the expensive yet shabby hostels and eateries established along the way. He contrasts this state of affairs with the substantial contributions to economic and geographical development of the northwest in the previous century, represented especially by the wide, tree-lined roads of the Xinjiang highway. In the end, his description of the Songpan region was negative, but only a foretaste of the problems the region would face in the coming decade.

Weather, Gang Warfare, and Social Disturbances in the late 1930s

A drought struck Sichuan in the summer of 1936 and continued for almost a year. Most of the provincial food crop was lost, and in Songpan, people faced the first of a series of major famines that would strike nearly every other year until 1951. The drought brought about a sharp increase in rural social disturbance in Sichuan in 1936-37. In addition to the drought, a new wave of Nationalist taxes began to bite heavily into county tax receipts. Local governments all over Sichuan and in the Songpan region re-examined land deeds, Tibetan tax obligations and land deeds along the major rivers, and declared that if locals could not pay their “deed examination fees”, they would lose their land. Most Tibetan Tsho ba and headmen subsequently ran local assessors out of the western and northern parts of the region, but some lost their land along the Min, Baishui and Fujiang Rivers. A second drought hit Songpan in 1939-40, and

360 Fan 1980, 85-86.
362 See Mi 1936, 161; Chang Yu, “Bosui zhi Sichuan nongcun” [Sichuan’s Bankrupt Agrarian Villages], Guowen zhoubao [National News Weekly] (Tianjin, July 20, 1936); SXZ 1999, 22. This initial spike in rural disturbances in
was followed by a particularly wet year that washed many seedlings and opium plants away in the Min, Mao’er gai and Baishui watersheds. A final two year drought hit in 1946-47.\textsuperscript{363} Again, local food supplies were insufficient and a minor famine and local revolt followed in the areas along the Min River.\textsuperscript{364} These alternating drought and wet years were particularly onerous as local headmen, \textit{Pao ge} and government officials still demanded normal tax burdens and as much of the local opium as possible.\textsuperscript{365} Yet local revolts and insurrection were not just the result of climatic variations alone, but also the outcome of increased fighting among \textit{Pao ge} groups. Between 1937-47 there were twelve major armed uprisings (\textit{wucheng, chi.}) in the Songpan region that stemmed from either \textit{Pao ge} turf wars that exploded out of control or peasant uprisings against opium prohibition campaigns and taxes.

The turf wars originated in competition between two of the larger \textit{Pao ge} networks in the Songpan region.\textsuperscript{366} In the 1920s and early ‘30s, \textit{Pao ge} networks competed more like rival companies than enemies; after the successive droughts in the late ‘30s and early ‘40s, their rivalries became far more intense. As Ran Guangrong has noted, the flood of opium from the region brought increased numbers of \textit{Pao ge} and guns. With all of the guns and rival gangs, it was only a matter of time before all out war broke out over control of the regional opium trade.\textsuperscript{367} Furthermore, the \textit{baojia} (“official” militias of local elites and in major towns became

\textsuperscript{363} Sichuan confirms Lucien Bianco’s chronology of peasant revolts related to opium taxation and prohibition. See Bianco 2000, 295-301.
\textsuperscript{364} SXZ 1999, 918, 924.
\textsuperscript{365} SXZ 1999, 23.
\textsuperscript{366} This was especially true for the 1936 and 1946-47 drought years. See SXZ 1999, 67-68; Zuo 2001, 395-96.
\textsuperscript{367} One was the network run by the Li family and Songpan Police Chief Zhang Huoren. Their territory was the area directly around Songpan itself, and north into the Jiuzhaigou area and east into An County along the Fujiang River. The second group was two loosely affiliated networks run by the two Hui, the Ma brothers, based out of Zhengjiangyang and Du Tijiao in Qinghua.
increasingly mixed up in battles between local “big men” (duobazi, chi.). As local gang warfare increased, the Pao ge increasingly became what David Ownby describes as “violence entrepreneurs.” In the process, Tibetan elites and villages used their own forces to prey on trade and fight amongst themselves and local Pao ge groups. Along the Chengdu-Songpan Road, where criminal activities were most intense, open warfare would be observed between rival groups, and stories circulated of battles that razed whole villages to the ground. In other cases, forested and brush covered land was put to the torch along the Min River, at the edges of villages, and up many tributaries in an attempt to eradicate hiding and ambushes. According to Ran Guangrong’s research on opium and Pao ge networks along the Min and Baishui Rivers, it was said that there was a time in Songpan when everyone carried a gun on market day, and one could count on every man being either a soldier or a bandit. It was also said that at times, the river ran black with ash because of forest and village fires started by marauding Pao ge, Tsho ba militia, and military forces. These Pao ge rivalries were usually deemed “bandit attacks” in official missives, but were rooted in pre-existing traditions of banditry associated with traveling

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368 The “big men” were usually landlords, Hui Chinese and Tibetan headmen with their own Tsho ba militia, fighting to control territory and trade along the Min River. See footnote 108. See also Zuo 2001, 393-95.
370 One of the most interesting stories related to Tibetan rivalries stems from some battles over building a Buddhist religious site on traditionally Bon Tibetan Shardung ri (Xue Bao Ding Mountain). This shrine was built by a local Tibetan lama (monastery leader) in 1936 with funds that included money from poppy production nearby. The local Buddhists built a large chorten (reliquary shrine) on the side of the mountain along the traditional Bon circumambulation route (and near an important Bon shrine and lamasery, Shar dungri Gompa). Local Bon practitioners tried to prevent it, and attacked workers and the militia members sent by the Buddhist Tibetans. However, the local Buddhists complained to Nationalist representatives in Mao County and Chengdu and were able to complete their shrine. Following its completion, a large group of local Tibetan Buddhists were attacked by local Bon supporters which resulted in some loss of life on both sides. During the Cultural Revolution, local Bon practitioners got their revenge when they tore down the shrine in the name of the People’s Republic. See Songpan County Religious Affairs Bureau, Songpan zang zhuan jiaofo jiaikuang [A General Description of Songpan Tibetan Buddhism] (Songpan County, 1987), 7-8. See also Toni Huber 2006, 11-12.
371 Ran Guangrong elaborated some of this information in an informal interview (May 2005). He wrote up part of the information his 1993 article on opium in northern Sichuan. See Ran 1993, 273-74.
and trading in the Tibetan hinterland of the Songpan region as well as *Pao ge* network competition.\textsuperscript{372}

**Rural Unrest and the Nationalist State**

In addition to the related issues of *Pao ge* rivalry, local Tibetan rivalries, and the local opium regime, social unrest also flared up in the region in the ‘30s and ‘40s over the heavy burden of taxation, opium ban campaigns and incoherent Nationalist policy reversals.\textsuperscript{373} In 1937, November 1941, April-June 1943, July 1944, and October 1945, parts of the Songpan region revolted against state-led “Opium Eradication Campaigns”.\textsuperscript{374} The first rebellion in the region was not caused by reluctance to comply with poppy farming, but rather because of the undue tax burden on it. As both Ran Guangrong and Zuo Heping have demonstrated, local growers in northern Sichuan owed a minimum of 45% of their poppy production to the government by 1941, and another 20-35% to local *Pao ge*, Tibetan headmen, or landlords. Locals were quite willing to grow the poppy plants—it was too lucrative not to. To get around official taxes, *Pao ge* and local elites often tried to get farmers to plant poppy in remote areas not likely to be inspected, hide it with other crops, or uproot or trade in the obvious plants, while holding others back.\textsuperscript{375}

The latter rebellions were based on policy reversals and inconsistent responses by opium eradication officials as the Nationalist government tried to control a larger portion of opium

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\textsuperscript{372} Two different missives sent from the local pacification commissioner in the Songpan region illustrate this. This commissioner, Wu Jingbo, and his aide, Wang Yuandi, noted that their organization was widespread, of mixed ethnicities, and had subordinates in every small village along the major rivers. They were also not sure that all bandit activities were *Pao ge* activities and attributed some of the banditry to Tibetans unassociated with local *Pao ge*. He noted that, as an example, the Ma brothers along the south road in the Zhenjiang district were the “Da Tong Gang, Songpan South Road, Zhenjiang District Branch” of the southern *Pao ge* group. This commissioner twice requested help from the 16\textsuperscript{th} District command and head commissioner, Yen Guangxi, when the gangs were fighting over opium turf and disrupting shipments. See Sichuan Dang’an guan [Sichuan Provincial Archives], Telegram Yen Guangxi, “Report on Summer Opium Ban Activities” (July, 1941), and Telegram from Yen Guangxi to Zhang Chun, “Opium Ban Activities” (August, 1941).

\textsuperscript{373} In this respect, this research follows closely the findings of Lucien Bianco for most of the rest of southwestern China in his study of opium bans and peasant uprisings. See Bianco 2000.

\textsuperscript{374} SXZ 1999, 23-25.

\textsuperscript{375} Ran 1993, 281-82; Zuo 2001, 394-95.
production in the early 1940s. The policy reversal and opium ban campaign in 1941 was particularly resented by local opium producers (and elites) as it targeted only some fields. Jiang Jieshi, through his local military representatives ordered:

> Regulations [regarding opium production] are not being followed in the Songpan area as native people only apply them in certain places. This deception cannot go on. In order to comply with [government] regulations, arrange to publicly announce and publish official bans [on opium], avoid allowing any more trafficking from the region [upper Min River valley to the Chengdu Basin], and destroy illegal fields. This is important and we [the government] expect you should concentrate on this problem. (Telegram from Zhang Chun to 16th District Commissioners)

What is important to note is that this edict applied to the “illegal” opium fields controlled by Pao ge and local elites and not to “officially mandated” fields controlled by the Nationalist government.\(^{376}\)

Government poppy eradication and taxation in most of northern and western Songpan region was a farce.\(^{377}\) Despite some major battles over uprooting plants, there was no consistent policy to either expand or hinder opium production—just occasional directives from the Nationalist capital. However, open rebellion could result—especially when the opium plants matured. The rebellions in 1943 and '44 resulted from the 16th District Opium Suppression commander Wang Yuanhui trying to collect more than the usual taxes. When locals refused,


\(^{377}\) In 1941, the Opium Ban Commissioner in Mao County, Yen Guangxi was ordered by Zhang Chun, Jiang Jieshi’s opium commissioner in charge of Sichuan Province, to crack down on illicit opium production in the Songpan region. The Nationalist government wanted to get a bigger part of the opium proceeds through official channels while strangling illegal Pao ge channels. Yen was given two brigades of troops, allowed to allocate some money from the regional tax budget, and strict orders to comply. Yen ordered his opium commissioner in Songpan, Wu Jingbo, to recount local edicts and post them in all villages along the Min River and its tributaries. He also ordered him to burn local fields (using one of those brigades) and investigate Li Yangsan, the local Nationalist administrator, for his complicity in the opium growing and Pao ge activities. To say the least, Wu tread very carefully. He only targeted a few rivals of Li, burned their fields, and subsequently started a major local war between government troops, rival Pao ge gangs, and the Tibetan and Han locals targeted in the field burning. The original telegram from Jiang and Zhang Chun to Yen Guangxi arrived in April, 1941. Sichuan Dang'an guan [Sichuan Provincial Archives], Telegram from Jiang Jieshi and Zhang Chun to Yen Guangxi, “Orders for Opium Suppression Activities in the Songpan Area” (April, 1941). Jiang Jieshi further reiterated these orders to all prefectures in northern and western Sichuan. Sichuan Dang'an guan, Telegram to 16th District Prefectures, “Field Orders Regarding the Maogong Uprising and Regulations;” (October, 1941).
Nationalist forces destroyed large numbers of crops not just near Songpan, but also in a wide radius around the county, constantly fighting with Tibetans militias, *Pao ge* bandit groups, and Han and Hui peasants in the Min River valley. From 1938-46, local autonomy remained a major issue in local market production and politics; however, the centralizing forces of the state were impinging on local autonomy as they tried their best to control, constrain, or eradicate opium production at different times. In effect, there were a series of competing power groups in the region, including opium-running *Pao ge*, Tibetan elites or *Tsho ba* affiliated (or not) with *Pao ge*, and local Nationalist soldiers, most of whom were fighting over the most lucrative commodity in the region. As the depredations of the local elites, *Pao ge*, and Nationalists increased in the Songpan region, the major peasant uprisings that resulted further destabilized the local economy. By 1947, “spontaneous peasant disturbances” (*zifa*, chi.) were the norm in the region. Yet local elites remained in power and opium continued to flow from the region even if later depictions of the region pointed towards the high level of poverty, violence, and elite coercion.378

*The Resiliency of Local Elites in the Songpan Region*

A major reason for the intensity of the opium regime in the region was in large part due to the staying power of local elites in the face of political and economic change. Many of the Tibetan headmen, *Pao ge* bosses and functionaries, warlord and Nationalist officials did not leave the region but remained in place or cycled in and out of the region while remaining at least affiliated with the lucrative regional opium trade. The reason these elites and officials managed to stay in power was their ability to “change hats” on a regular basis in order to protect both their territory, and the tax and land ownership structures. Many examples, such as the warlord Deng

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378 *SAZSD* (1985) surveys of the region point out the lawlessness, lack of regional or national governance by the late 1940s, and the absolute poverty of ordinary peasants and herders at the end of the Republican period. *SAZSD* 1985, 38-43.
Xihou and the Li family, illustrate how the local regional elites and their patterns of dominance remained more or less in control of the region.

After the outbreak in hostilities between the Nationalist government and Japan in 1937, Deng Xihou and the other major warlords and their armies moved out of Sichuan to the Shansi front.\textsuperscript{379} In Songpan, local governance continued as before, with local Tibetan elites and Han and Hui landlords in control of the river valleys and hinterland, and Guomindang military officers and officials ostensibly in command in the larger towns. By the early 1940s, the 16\textsuperscript{th} District had only a limited number of administrators in place, many of whom had been there since Deng Xihou had taken the area over in the early '20s. In 1946, Deng Xihou returned to Sichuan as acting governor of Sichuan, and remained in the area as the pacification commissioner of the Sichuan-Shanxi-Gansu border area until he threw his lot in with the communists in 1949.

From the mid 1930s onward, Deng Xihou walked the tightrope of allegiance between local military forces, minority groups, and even the communists.\textsuperscript{380} He made sure that his forces saw as little action as possible, while at the same time remaining careful not to arouse the full wrath of Chiang Kai-shek or the two Lius in Chengdu, and thereby continued to reap the benefits of wearing the Nationalist mantle. In 1935 he not only received field command of the 45\textsuperscript{th} Army during the “Sichuan Bandit-Suppression Campaign,” he was also the first Sichuan warlord to turn over his defense area to the Nationalist government, thus securing his patronage with the Nationalists during the war with Japan. At the same time, despite poor relations with the

\textsuperscript{379} See Kapp 1973, 137.
\textsuperscript{380} Not for nothing, Deng Xihou was known as “the crystal monkey” and “crafty and cowardly”—epithets he earned for his cleverness and slippery behavior while waiting on the political and military sidelines to maximize personal and political profit. See Clubb, 1933, 23; Kapp 1973, 28.
communists, he worked to minimize conflict with them and in 1949 joined their cause in order to secure a place in the new government and military.\footnote{Not surprisingly, the liberation of the Songpan region in 1949 was relatively peaceful, and Deng Xihou, after fighting for the Guomindang against the Japanese in Shanxi and Sichuan, actually joined with Liu Wenxiu in Xikang and threw in with the communist cause in the 1949. He subsequently held various posts in the PRC government and military until his death in 1964, including vice chairman of the Sichuan Provincial government, delegate to the National People’s Congress, and membership in the National Defense Council.}

Just as Deng survived by learning to "wear many hats," successful lower level officials and local elites also learned to turn the flux of authority and opium regime to their own advantage. In its simplest form, this involved Pao ge bandits melting in and out of military units, or local militias changing color into communist guerrillas and then back to militias when the landlords returned. At the township and village level, the key to survival and wealth was simultaneous allegiance to the Deng Xihou, the Nationalists, the Pao ge, and even the communists. The Li family, active in the region from the late nineteenth century, exemplifies this local process. Li Zheng settled in the region in the 1880s and proceeded to work out arrangements with local Tibetan headmen and Hui landowners to farm territory. He managed to gather enough money to buy his own farm outside of Songpan and proceeded to work under the local magistrate as a soldier and then baojia officer. He used his earnings to buy more and more land and eventually shifted from local agriculture to growing poppy plants on his land. With increasing profits in the early 1910s, he made sure his son Li Yangsan trained in the local militia, and when the new Republic and warlord Deng Xihou took over the region, his son worked for one then the other as a militia leader, a low level official and eventually the equivalent of the local magistrate. Li Yangsan used his position and opium profits to gain more land to the north of Songpan and was evidently a major local Pao ge figure from the early 1920s. He and his sons then used their increasing number of positions in warlord and Nationalist administrations to...
secure some of the largest individual profits in the region. Thus while the warlord and Nationalists administrations officially held the regional reins of power, they shared local and regional power with local Tibetan and Han Chinese elites who more or less controlled the hinterland. The absence of an effective state-led administration meant that local elites and local social forces maintained local and regional order in the 1940s in a way that Prasenjit Duara has suggested amounted to incomplete state making that had a deleterious effect on rural communities by encouraging the rise of entrepreneurial, sub-administrative “state brokers” who profited at the expense of both the government and ordinary Tibetans and peasants.

In Tibetan areas of the region, Tibetan elites managed local affairs; in the areas technically dominated by the Republican state, the Pao ge often dominated local politics, usually in collusion with local Nationalist officials. While the local Pao ge associations had limited ties to the state, it is perhaps more useful to say that the state had a stronger presence in local affairs and governance through the provenance of the local Pao ge associations. Taken together, the local elites of the Songpan region were “society making” within the context of the market networks of the Nationalist period, but as their rivalries increased, and the Nationalist state tried to play its own hand in the region, serious social unrest followed. Locals continued throughout the late Republican period to produce opium for their landlords, headmen and the local government, but at an increasing price. The opium did not enrich or empower ordinary farmers

382 Other good examples of local elites learning to “wear many hats” in the region include Li Erkang, Du Tieqiao, Li Degang, and Yang Chengxian. Li Erkang, who used his gift in Tibetan and Qiang languages to help expand Pao ge operations into minority areas in the Songpan region, worked for Deng Xihou, was a bank manager in Songpan for the Nationalist regime, and Pao ge member. Du Tieqiao was another major regional Pao ge figure who worked closely with Hui communities along the Min River and in Heishui for both Deng Xihou and the Nationalist 16th District commander. Li Degang was a Tibetan who worked closely with Heishui and Songpan Pao ge groups, fought rival Hui Pao ge in the Min River valley, and the Nationalist government. After 1949, he eventually became an important figure in Aba Prefecture for his work in various campaigns to study, organize, and chair committees dealing with former tusi-tuguan, education programs, and even forestry development programs. Yang was another Tibetan headman, but also a major Pao ge figure in Nanping opium production. After 1949, he was a surveyor and crew boss who helped build the Songpan-Nanping road, and was a local cadre in Nanping until the Cultural Revolution. See AZZ 1994, vl. 3, 2600-04, 2679-81, 2715.

in the region, and with increasing competition for its profits as the war with Japan rolled on, local climatic events, and inconsistent government policies led to a number of armed conflicts and peasant uprisings in the region. This set the stage for “Liberation” under the new socialist state, with one of their first priorities being the dismantling of the regional opium regime and incarcerating some local elites.

3.6 Conclusion

In the early Republic, very little changed in the Songpan region—local elites were mostly autonomous and the agro-pastoral regime, along with a few new market commodities kept the status quo. However, in the early 1920s, market, land use, and tax structures changed a great deal under warlord guidance and the early opium regime. Elite power structures and networks followed suit by adding new layers of power brokers in a kind of “society making” process while expanding their revenues under poppy agriculture. In this process, many of the same elites remained in positions of power and enriched themselves by learning to operate within new tax structures, with new methods of coercion, and by the 1930s, in the face of an increasingly intrusive central state. These various social, political and economic processes, tied to the creation of a regional opium regime, help to explain the pattern of society making and elite survival in a changing world. They also elaborate the ultimately failed effort at state making under the Nationalist administration in northern Sichuan in the face of entrenched local autonomy, and rich and well armed local elites. The policies of the warlords and the Nationalist government, the attempt by state and regional authorities to reach into the Songpan area, control it, use its markets, and ultimately assimilate it into the rest of the nation were at best

marginally "successful," in that they helped to foster and garner tax revenues from the regional
opium regime.

As Philip Kuhn asserts in his *The Origins of the Modern Chinese State* (2002), the state,
or its representatives in localities, tried to take a step toward firmer control over revenues in the
countryside during the Republican period (1911-1937). This step was an outgrowth of the late
imperial attempt to extract more revenue and resources, and to exert more control over rural
society for the enrichment of both the state and rural society. In the Songpan region, however,
the new tax system and changes in regional governance did not accomplish much for the early
Republican state, warlords or the Nationalists other than to provide some extra revenue. Rather,
regional warlord representatives, Pao ge networks, and local elites (in some cases, all the same
person) continued to retain control of local monies, taxation and governance in the Songpan
region. Under warlord administration, a tax structure was created in the Songpan region that
effectively stifled other entrepreneurial pursuits in favor of an opium regime. Under the
Nationalists, this tax structure was supposed to be reformed, and officially, the opium regime be
shut down. But with the opening of hostilities with Japan, Nationalist experiments in pacifying
and controlling northern Sichuan had to be put on hold. While the Nationalists managed to
superimpose an administrative structure and gain limited control of opium production, they did
so by retaining most of the same local elites that had existed under warlord tenure. The results of
this new administration, with its inspectors, special opium forces, districts and sub-districts were
limited. As the British Ambassador to China commented on Sichuan in 1937, "The central
government's influence is at present being exercised only in a military sense; it has not touched
the civil administration which remains to be dealt with." The functional reach of the state into

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386 Quoted in Kapp 1973, 133.
local governance, the coveted realm of local elites, would have to wait until the rise of a new, more powerful and determined socialist state in the 1950s.

In Chapter One I explored local elite autonomy and how pastoralism and agriculture formed the basis of local market structures in pre-twentieth century Songpan. This agro-pastoral regime supported local elite patterns of dominance, the limited presence of the late Qing state, and had significant ramifications for the regional environment. In this chapter we have explored how Songpan’s relative isolation began to end with the advent of a local opium regime and a new state presence in the region. We examined how the opium led market created new webs of elite relations in the region among traditional elites, warlord officials, and criminal organizations. And finally we considered the waning years of the Republican Era and the social and environmental consequences of the opium regime as increased unrest, banditry, famine and even open warfare threatened the region.

With the eventual success of Mao Zedong’s socialist revolution in 1949, a new era would open for the region. In this new era an entirely different administrative world came to dominate Songpan’s social, economic, and political life, welding the region into the new socialist state, finally breaking local elite patterns of dominance and replacing them with new ones. Mao’s socialist revolution would also eventually shift the regional economy to a new natural resource regime, forestry, while renewing pastoral pursuits under centralized management regimes. There was, however, a significant transition period in the 1950s before radical changes would spell the end of traditional forms of social and resource management. This transitional period forms the focus of the following chapter.
4.1 Introduction

The first thirteen years of socialist China (1949-1962) were a watershed period in governance and natural resource management in the Songpan region. This period witnessed the conjuncture of a range of struggles over local governance and resource use: between the new state and locals, and between state land management and local practices. In the early years of the new socialist state, official policy aimed to bring Tibetan society and local natural and social resources under centralized control. Whereas the Nationalist state had failed to effectively control the region, the new socialist state insinuated itself deeply into the processes of local administration and resource management, and for the first time established a successful state-making program in the region. During the 1950s, the CCP created and instituted an entirely new set of procedures to control, manage, and exploit Songpan’s social and natural landscapes.

This chapter argues that the “gradualist approach” of early socialist state-building in the Songpan region initially served to perpetuate some forms of local elite dominance and resource use, but with “full democratic reform” in 1957-58, local Tibetan elite patterns of dominance were thoroughly transformed. Furthermore, in the early years of the new state, local power holders were treated differently; for reasons we shall see, the experience of Han and Hui elites in the region was vastly different from that of local Tibetans. The process of “governmentalization” adopted by the CCP state, the way in which the national government made local administration and people “legible” and accompanying infrastructure development to dominate indigenous peoples, helps to explain this seeming discrepancy.  

I take the term “governmentalization” from Arun Agrawal’s discussion of “governmentalized localities” and “state making” from the “high modernist” state development programs analyzed by James C. Scott.
Three issues stand out during the first thirteen years of PRC state making in the Songpan region. First, Songpan was finally fully incorporated into the Chinese state through a process of state-led development and governmentalization of local society and resources. Second, the new socialist state adopted a clear and conscious “nationalities” policy that was non-assimilationist, at least theoretically and ideologically; this led to a “gradualist approach” towards Tibetans and resource use in the region until the late 1950s with nearly simultaneous “Democratic Reform” and the Great Leap Forward campaigns. Tibetans elites played significant roles in local governance during this early transition period, unlike local Han and Hui. Finally, while local Tibetans sometimes look back on the early 1950s as the “Good times,” as more invasive state social and resource use initiatives in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s became the norm, Tibetan revolts and unrest harmed local economic development and social relations. These later developments also had significant local environmental consequences.

By examining these first thirteen years of state-building and governmentalization of local society and natural resource use in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties, this chapter analyzes governmentalization as a Foucauldian term Agrawal borrows to analyze political and social “knowledge production,” new institutions of control, and ethnic subjectivities created by colonial and modern governments. Knowledge production and institutions of control, often based on ethnicity and hierarchical social typologies “...was accomplished by the creation, activation, and execution of new procedures for surveying, demarcating, consolidating, protecting, planting, managing, harvesting and marketing forests.” (Agrawal 2005, 6-7) The governmentalization and state-making process in Scott’s “high modernist state” makes similar use of schematicized simplification in national (not local or regional) models of development and centralized administration. In effect, both authors use social and natural resource use planning to highlight the problems in centrally managed state institutions and how they harm local social and environmental conditions. In addition, they point to how these coercive state making processes cause social unrest and overt and passive forms of resistance to state-making and centralized “modern” states. See Arun Agrawal, Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 6-7, 12-13 and James C. Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 4-6.

388 The geographical and political focus of this chapter shifts from late Imperial and Nationalist era conceptions of a greater Songpan region to a more narrow focus on Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties. Because the Songpan region was collapsed into four different counties under the newly created Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, with its prefecture seat in Maerkang, I have chosen to focus on two counties that were the locus of the opium regime and continued to maintain a mix of agro-pastoral and forestry industries that I believe better exemplify the situations and experiences of a wider range of Tibetans along the southern and eastern rim of the Tibetan Plateau. The other two counties’ (Hongyuan and Ru’er gai Counties) industries were almost entirely focused on herding and grassland management. A more thorough analysis and discussion of the forestry regime will follow in Chapter Four.
how official procedures and regulations which were based on commissioned studies, quotas, hierarchical social representations of ethnicity, and different strategies of social and resource management served to define and redefine the landscape and people of the Songpan region in a series of discontinuous waves. These processes legitimated, validated, and deemed inappropriate various ways of looking at the landscape and its people as they were incorporated into socialist China through a series of socio-political and economic campaigns (yundong, chi.; las 'gul, tib.).

This chapter outlines this state-led process of governmentalization by examining the incorporation of the region into the new Chinese state and the destruction of the opium regime. It then examines the creation of the Songpan socialist, administrative and agricultural regime. It closes with an analysis of the impact of the nearly simultaneous “Democratic Reforms,” Tibetan revolts, and Great Leap Forward campaigns on the local social and landscape environments.

4.2 The Governmentalization Regime and State Building in the Songpan Region

When the societies of the Songpan region, Tibetan, Han and Hui, were incorporated into the modern Chinese nation state for the first time in the early to mid 1950s, life changed irrevocably. This change was so radical that many elderly Tibetans in northern Sichuan still describe it as a “shift in worlds” (‘Jig rTen, tib.). Not only was the production system altered from a largely self-contained one to a state-run command-style economy, but the previous opium regime was destroyed, grazing and herding practices were changed, the local medicinal trade was collectivized, and all trees and forests became the property of the state. In addition to the socio-economic changes that would transform local livelihood, sections of Songpan region governed from the Songpan county seat were transferred to Nanping (modern Jiuzhaigou), Ruo’er gai and
Hongyuan Counties in a process of parcelization of the people and resources in the region that helped the new state gain better control of movements of animals, people and goods.\(^{389}\)

By initially taking a “gradualist approach,” the new state recognized the importance of gaining the support of local minorities in the process of struggling for local administrative control and consequently faced only limited local resistance.\(^{390}\) Indeed, the early stages of state consolidation and state making were welcomed in Tibetan areas of the region as they provided a new administration willing to work with local Tibetans (and Tibetan interests). However, the slow but sure centralization and a political shift in attitude toward rural and indigenous power structures led to violent protest and rebellion in the late 1950s which was brutally crushed by the new state. While the new state offered only limited positions for local elites in the long run, it was the eventual transfer of land ownership and natural resources to local governments that caused major unrest.

**The Socialist State and Opium Suppression: Early Ethno-Economic Relations**

From 1950-58 the new state embarked on a systematic penetration into the Sino-Tibetan borderlands of the Songpan region.\(^{391}\) The initial approach was to centralize systems of management with local help; the first socialist committee and county commissioner settled in Songpan town in 1950 when three military units were stationed in Songpan and Nanping

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\(^{389}\) This theoretically happened in the 1930s, but never made any difference except on regional Guomindang maps. In 1951, and again in 1958, parts of Songpan County were incorporated into other counties (Hongyuan and Nanping/Jiuzhaigou Counties in particular). See *Sichuan shengzhi: dili zhi*, vl. 1 [Sichuan Province Gazetteer: Geographical Gazetteer] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1986), 100-101; *AZZ* 1993, vl. 1, 213-15.

\(^{390}\) Although their policies were deeply influenced by official Soviet views based on Stalin’s nationality theory, as some scholars have observed, “the policy of the Chinese Communist Party towards minority nationalities in the early 1950s was cautious and gradualist, providing an interesting contrast with the Soviet Union.” See Brian Brugger and Steven Reglar, *Politics, Economy and Society in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 313.

\(^{391}\) This process “national construction” and systematic penetration of hinterland-frontier areas is close to what Benedict Anderson depicts in his study of the creation of the nation and nationalism in colonial and neo-colonial Southeast Asia. Anderson develops the importance of mapping, census taking, and the creation of national imaginary, which in the Songpan region, was just as important for the new socialist state. This will be developed at greater length in section one of this chapter. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso Publishers, 1983), 6-7.
(Jiuzhaigou) and a local Public Security Bureau (gongan ju, chi.) was created to consolidated local control along the Min and Baishui Rivers in the largest towns in the region. 392

Political consolidation of the region into the new state was established only in 1951-52 when the first “work groups” were sent out from Songpan to begin work with regional Tibetan villages and headmen. 393 From 1952 onwards, work groups and cadres began to fan out into the wider countryside to gradually set up a network of small administrative centers at different strategic points and with local and military help, begin to create a regional transportation infrastructure. 394 However, the state presence in the region was relatively limited in this initial period of state-building. By 1954, only forty-eight official party members and administrative personnel were working in the whole of the Songpan region. 395 While local state military forces were fairly significant, the limited number of official personnel necessitated a close working relationship with existing local elites—especially Tibetan elites in the countryside. 396

392 SXZ 1999, From 1949-52, People’s Liberation Army (PLA) forces moved to consolidate their control over “public order” and win the support of the masses. Opium, landlords and bandits all were exorcised in mass campaigns led by the new government in Songpan town and in a few of the largest villages along the Min and Baishui Rivers (most of which were dominated by Han Chinese and Hui). The period of 1950-52 was the first stage of Land Reform in Songpan County—a period known by the slogan “Clean up banditry, overturn local despots, reduce rents and rollback pressure” (Qingfei fanba, jianzu tuiya, chi.). During this period many bandits and landlords were executed or demoted to the lowliest tasks and the first steps were taken to measure land holdings, assign class labels, and give “land to the tiller.” Programs helped former addicts to overcome addictions to opium and gained control of criminal activities. SXZ 1999, 69-74, 231-32. See also, AZZ 1993, vl. 1, 555. See also Sichuan shengzi: minzheng zhi [Sichuan Province Gazetteer: Civil Administration Gazetteer] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1996), 409-410.


394 SXZ 1999, 193-94.

395 Of these forty-eight personnel, only two were Tibetans. From the beginning, the vast majority of official state representatives to this largely Tibetan region were Tibetan. This was obvious not just in official county and bureau positions, but also in local Communist Party membership. See SXZ 1999, 195.

396 There were over 1500 socialist military forces stationed in the region from 1951 onward. In contrast, there were at least 44,200 Tibetans and over 9000 Han Chinese and Hui in the region in c. 1954. The number of military forces consistently expanded through the late 1950s to mid 1960s with increasing Tibetan unrest and local rebellions. While these statistics, compiled in the 1950s and ‘60s, should be considered a little suspect, they do give some idea of the nature of local population, as well as the influx of Han Chinese in the early years of the new republic. See SXZ 1999, 165, 319-22.
After setting up district wide and county administrations in major cities of northern Sichuan, one of the first tasks of the new state was to suppress the regional opium regime.\textsuperscript{397} Facing complex social and ethnic problems, the state and its local forces moved cautiously in dealing with the local opium issue, tackling it step by step and differentiating the Tibetans from Han and other ethnic groups. It took much longer to eradicate the opium problem in the Songpan region than in the rest of the country. In 1951-53, opium suppression was carried out in areas cleared of remnants of Nationalist military forces along the lower Min and Baishui Rivers, and along the lower Rewu River, a Min River tributary south of Songpan and one of the two centers of opium production in the region.\textsuperscript{398} In 1954, the campaign to suppress opium was extended to other areas of the Songpan region, but very gradually. In the same year, land reform was carried out in the Han, Hui and Qiang along the Min and Baishui Rivers and in the southernmost reaches of Songpan County, reducing poppy agriculture further. In 1958-59, the whole region was collectivized and poppy planting was virtually eradicated.\textsuperscript{399}

This step by step strategy was used concurrently with one of differentiating and stratifying different ethnic groups during the course of opium eradication campaigns. Theoretically, with the exception of the Han Chinese, all ethnic groups in Songpan belonged to officially designated minority nationalities and were entitled to certain rights under the so-called nationality policy of the Communist Party. It is interesting that in the anti-opium campaigns of

\textsuperscript{397}The official administrative center of northern Sichuan was first established in Mao County, the regional seat of the Republican 16\textsuperscript{th} District. Smaller county administrations followed suit, and were established in Republican Era county seats. After 1956, the region was incorporated into Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, with the prefecture seat in Ma’erkaing.

\textsuperscript{398}These areas, however, only constituted about 56\% of the poppy agriculture areas of the Songpan region c. 1952-53. Opium production along the lower Min, Rewu, and Baishui were areas primarily controlled by Han Chinese and Hui groups, and largely run by Pao ge networks. The other 44\% of poppy agriculture was in Tibetan controlled areas of the upper Min and Rewu Rivers, the Mao’er gai region, and the remote areas of western Nanping. See SXZ 1999, 362-64.

the Songpan region during the 1950s, differentiation was made not only between Han and non-Han Chinese, but also among the three other main ethnic groups in the region (the Tibetan, Qiang and Hui).

Before 1950, the majority of local opium was sold to Gansu and south-central Sichuan, and its trade was controlled by Hui and Han trafficking networks (usually the Pao ge). Thus, from the very beginning of regional state campaigns to eradicate opium after 1950, Han and Hui were the main targets of opium-suppression policies. At the end of 1951, the public security bureau of Songpan County ordered and began a crackdown on Han and Hui traffickers. However, in dealing with Tibetan and Qiang farmers and agro-pastoralists, and headmen and merchants who dealt in the drug, local authorities were instructed to use persuasion only and to let Tibetan elites handle the issue.400 Paradoxically, as far as opium trafficking was concerned, the Hui were obviously deprived of their rights as a minority nationality under the new government, while the Qiang, a newly constituted ethnic minority in the eyes of the government, were given the same treatment as the Tibetans.401 However, since the majority of the Qiang lived in Mao County to the south, and had close contact with Han Chinese in that area, the authorities did not differentiate the Qiang from the Han when they conducted land reform in the

400 This was especially true for what early surveys called the “Songpan-Nanping shanda” (or Songpan-Nanping highlands/mountain areas). See SAZSD 1985, 27-28. See also, Sichuan Province Geographical Gazetteer Editorial Board, Sichuan sheng zhi: Minzheng zhi [Sichuan Province Gazetteer: Civil Administration Gazetteer] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1996), 409-10.

401 While some readers may note that I have barely discussed the Qiang ethnic group in the Songpan region, it is because of the difficulty in establishing their ethnic status in the Songpan region prior to the latter half of the twentieth century. The Qiang (approximately 3% of the population of the region) are not covered exhaustively in this dissertation as they are historically very difficult to distinguish from local Tibetans until one reaches the southern regions of Aba Prefecture, especially Wenchuan and Mao Counties, where they make up a significant portion of the local population. However, the main reason this group is not treated in the dissertation is that their identity is in question in general. As noted by Dru Gladney, the Qiang are an “ethnic nationality” distributed throughout southern China whose name was found by Chinese ethno-historians to date from as early as the Qin Dynasty (300s BC). A fantastic leap was made in the mid twentieth century to identify a set of people of indeterminate ethnicity in Sichuan as direct descendants of these obscure semi-nomadic peoples. While the Qiang are certainly deserving of further historical research, as they are such a small portion of the local population of Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties, I largely leave them out of my discussions. See Dru Gladney, Ethnic Identity in China: The Making of a Muslim Minority Nationality (Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1998), 162.
fall of 1954 and thus subjected them to the same standard of opium suppression as in other Han areas of China and northern Sichuan.\textsuperscript{402}

Tibetans occupied the extreme low end in the process of ethnic stratification that accompanied the opium suppression campaign, and they therefore enjoyed more tolerance in the suppression attempts. The national anti-drug campaign of 1952 was directed at only the Han Chinese in the Songpan region. Local officials suggested to provincial authorities forbidding poppy plantation throughout northern Sichuan for all ethnicities on September 28, 1952, but the latter were cautious and waited more than a year before instructing the local authorities to carry out anti-drug campaigns through a combination of propaganda and education. Furthermore, the instructions emphasized that opium suppression should be strictly limited in its target to the Han and Hui opium trafficking groups, especially those Han traffickers from outside of the Songpan region.\textsuperscript{403} Since in some parts of the Songpan region opium was still a primary source of income for ordinary farmers, local authorities clearly realized that without full control of those areas and without replacement of poppies with other crops or cash generating sidelines, conducting opium suppression would have provoked strong resistance and even riots, as happened in the Liangshan Yi areas in southern Sichuan.\textsuperscript{404} It is therefore understandable that only after the democratic reform and collectivization in Tibetan areas was poppy agriculture finally stopped in 1958-59.

As the previous discussion of opium suppression and ethnicity makes clear, a new kind of ethnic relations, the careful dismantling of the opium regime, and new administrative structures (like the public security bureau) meant great changes for the Songpan region. More importantly, it

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{402} See AZZ 1994, vl. 1, 388-90.
\item \textsuperscript{403} Yang 1993, 321.
\end{itemize}
points out an early but significant problem in the way the state treated local indigenous groups: as land redistribution and changes in government policy progressed, Tibetans were forced to make later and more severe changes based on their “ethnic particularities.” In other words, because they were treated leniently in the early 1950s, local Tibetans bore the brunt of later efforts to remake Songpan society. But the state-ordered dissolution of the opium regime was only one example of overall changes in “governmentalizing” ethnic groups in Songpan society.

Population, Counties, and Landlords: Inscribing the Socialist State in Songpan

The strategies used by local agents of the new state to define the peoples, territories, and resources of the new socialist state aimed to utilize local resources for the betterment of the entire country while gradually building up and enforcing control in the region. Measures taken to enforce control of the Songpan region included re-demarcation of administrative areas, renaming of entire sections of the landscape, census and natural resource surveys, “democratic reform” and suppression of rebellion, and collectivization. This was a strategy of “place-making”—whereby the socialist state inscribed itself on the local landscape, society, and administrative culture of the region. However, what made all of this possible was a slow but sure build up of reformers and officials from outside of the region, including an expansion of state military forces in the region. This was all part of the early socialist “national construction” (guojia jianshe, chi.) campaign. At least until the Tibetan uprisings of 1958-60, locals often referred to the gradual intrusion of the PRC state into their lives as the “Good Times.”

An important change framing local administrative and social developments in Songpan was the slow but sure increase in the Han Chinese population of the region during the first fifteen years of the People’s Republic. These administrators, military personnel, and workers were brought in from outside of the region to help “liberate,” study, and educate locals in their new

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405 AZWZX 1986, vl. 4, 71; SXZ 1999, 72.
responsibilities under state socialism. In addition, local Han and Hui populations, after bearing the brunt of opium suppression and land reform campaigns in the early and mid-1950s, became some of the staunchest supporters of the new regime and significant players in local administration when the local Tibetan rebellion flared up in 1958-60. Population surveys of the 1950s show two very significant spikes in Han Chinese vis-à-vis other local ethnic populations. Prior to 1950, the local Tibetan population always had a clear majority; after 1951, they became a true minority population in their region. In 1951-52, the Han Chinese population jumped nearly 11% when other local ethnic groups remained almost entirely static, and again in 1959 by a little over 12%. Both of these population spikes occurred as the region was drastically downsized in terms of physical space and population—with Tibetan and Hui populations remaining nearly static or with less than 2% growth annually, while Han Chinese populations literally exploded with 5-7% growth and two years of double digit growth. Local surveys attributed this growth to two factors: first, slowly increasing military and administrative populations (almost all of which were Han Chinese) were settled in the region, and second, major growth came in the form of PLA troops sent to help implement land reform, opium suppression campaigns, and in the late ‘50s, to fight a local Tibetan rebellion.

The scientific modernizing paradigm of Chinese socialism and ‘industrialized’ land-use policies slated for the Songpan region were based on a program of campaigns (yundong, chi.; las ‘gul, tib.). As Gordon Bennett has noted, campaigns are a fundamental political institution in

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406 While it may seem obvious that the parcelization of the Songpan region into new four new counties contributed to this shift in population, the Songpan Gazetteer actually notes that its population figures (no matter how problematic) are adjusted to reflect the population of the Songpan County as if said post 1949 county had always existed as it did in 1960. See SXZ 1999, 165-170.
408 AZZ 1994, vl. 1, 352-57. These will be covered at much greater length in the following chapter. See also, SXZ 1999, 169-70.
409 One of the best overall treatments of various campaigns from the 1950s and ‘60s in English is Judith Shapiro’s Mao’s War on Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China (Cambridge: Cambridge University
China. A yundong (campaign), according to Bennett, is a government-sponsored effort to overwhelm an issue or problem in Chinese society under socialist administration through intensive mass mobilization and active personal commitment. These campaigns could include newspaper articles, posters and slogans, study sessions, mass (and household) meetings, investigations, or even surveys (like the minzu shibie (minority research studies) campaigns).

The initial policy statements discussing and regulating the governance of ethnic groups, grasslands, and forests of the Songpan region were based on a program of campaigns that called for the establishment of organizations to introduce socialist institutions and inculcate socialist values, as well as redistribute land, implement afforestation programs, new endeavors in herding and agriculture, and wasteland reclamation for national and local modernization. One of the earliest of these campaigns was the “opium suppression” campaign already discussed, but equally important and far-reaching campaigns were started at approximately the same time, including a boundary survey campaign and restrictions on movement, and rural census and natural resource surveys that began to utterly change local Tibetan and Han elite patterns of dominance.


As Bennett notes, campaigns in action could include creating new policies and disseminating them, implementing existing policies, emulating existing campaigns across regions, and correcting deviations (or perceived deviations) from official policies. The third chapter of this book on mass campaigns (46-74) is a masterful typology and list of the varied kinds of campaigns and their uses in socialist China prior to the Reform period (1978-...). See Bennett 1976, 46-65 in particular.

In the end, what Bennett found was that campaigns comprise a great variety of forms of political and mass action—and form a kind of policy apparatus to implement changing political policies. I would add that campaigns also acted to fulfill quotas and give form to administrative activities in a very practical manner while allowing for great flexibility at the local level to implement high level policy while taking into account, to a degree, local variability (for example, allowing local and prefecture administrators a great deal of leeway in terms of implementing campaigns for local indigenous populations with “frontier particularity” in land reform or national construction through foresting on non-state forested lands in minority collective forest lands).
The “divide and rule” tactics favored by the late Qing imperial court to control ethnic minorities in western China certainly influenced the politics of the early PRC, though in a more efficient way.\(^{413}\) Historical relations between Tibetan communities in Songpan, Nanping, Hongyuan and Ruo’er gai Counties were disconnected from the greater Songpan County, as these various county level entities were created for the first time between 1951 and 1956.\(^{414}\) Between 1950 and 1952, the Songpan region was divided into various governing districts (qu, chi.) that were further divided into counties and sub-districts.\(^{415}\) In 1953, the counties (xian, chi.) were subdivided into areas (qu, chi.) and administrative villages (xiang, chi.) that more or less corresponded to the official Nationalist local administrative hierarchy, with the result that the larger Tibetan Tsho ba were divided among smaller administrative units.\(^{416}\) Not only was over 200 years of local administration upended, but also locals were “settled” for the first time.

Regional mobility of Tibetans and Hui prior to the 1950s had been relatively common. They would travel to various large towns and temples in the region, or to Gansu, Qinghai and Tibet to


\(^{415}\) SXZ 1999, 28-31.

\(^{416}\) Unlike the late Imperial administrative system in the region, the Nationalists established the district (qu) between the county (xian) and the administrative villages (xiang) and/or towns. This system was never formally introduced in the Songpan region except along the Min and Baishui Rivers where Guomindang officials and military held sway. The qu was a supervisory agent by which the xian government managed the xiang, which, with a fairly well developed governmental structure, constituted the most basic level of government administration in Nationalist China. Large xiang were sometimes called market towns (zhen). The new socialist government expanded the districts (qu), roughly doubling their number in China as a whole by 1955, and in the Songpan area by 1957. As collectivization increased the size of each agricultural producer cooperative, the xiang expanded to ensure continued coherence between economic and administrative organizations. As the xiang grew they began to approximate the size of the qu, so most qu were abandoned in the region by 1957 in favor of xiang as the major sub-county administrative level. See SXZ 1999, 74-75; AZZ 1993, vl. 1, 213-14. See also, A. Doak Barnett, Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 318-38, Franz Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 453-54, and David Zweig, “Urbanizing Rural China: Bureaucratic Authority and Local Autonomy,” in Kenneth Lieberthal and David Lampton (eds.), Bureaucracy and Decision Making in Post-Mao China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 336-37.
trade local commodities or on pilgrimage. With the re-demarcation of county lines and the official “settling” of individuals in their respective counties, mobility was greatly reduced. Locals (Han, Hui and Tibetan) were “settled” through required household registration and permits, regular identity cards (shen fen zheng, chi.) that required locals stay in their sub-district or face penalties like fines, jail time, or extra labor. Little physically prevented locals from moving around—except that PLA forces patrolled local highways and roads, and cadre-administrative personnel were staffed in local villages of twenty households or more to keep track of and “educate” their rural brethren. In effect, this prevented the earlier more fluid movement throughout the region.

Local Tibetans especially felt the brunt of the new policy. For example, while Tibetans of the greater Songpan region were speakers of the Amdo dialect of Tibetan, their regional differences were minimized by commercial and religious ties. In addition to trading in animals, skins, medicinal plants, and other products, local Tibetans had traveled annually to two major and three minor religious sites along the Min, Mao’er gai, Baishui, and Fu Rivers. These trips to visit major sacred sites were almost completely halted by the late 1950s. The process of controlling the movements of Tibetans had started as early as 1954; after 1958 Tibetan

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419 These early “hukou”-like registrations were first distributed in Songpan and Nanping towns in 1955-56. SXZ 1999, 74-75.
420 These sites were major regional centers of Bon and Buddhist circumambulation and temples. They included major temples like Dga’ mal dgon khag at Byadur dga’ mal Mountain, Gser mtsho (Golden Lakes) in modern Huanglong Nature Reserve, Mkhar chung Bon monastery at the foot of Shar Dungri, Brag ba Monastery in the Munigou natural area, and other regional sites. See Karmay and Sagant 1998; Religious Affairs Bureau of Songpan County, Songpan zangzhuan fojiao gaikuang [A Brief Account of Songpan Tibetan Buddhism] (Songpan County, 1987), 7-8.
communities were relatively isolated from one another. Meanwhile, there was a dramatic increase in trips of state officials to visit local villages and households.

In addition to the fixing of local Tibetans to specific locations and counties, rural surveys also incorporated new naming systems for local political, social and land features. The establishment of the PRC ushered in a new ideological era in which the population and territory of the state was reconceived. As in other Tibetan areas of western China, Warren Smith has noted that the Nationalities Policy of the CCP in northern Sichuan also had as its primary goal the integration of minority nationality areas into the country’s administrative structure in preparation for their socialist transformation. Before local Tibetans could be “integrated”, however, their regions had to be mapped and the minorities groups themselves identified and named (the famous “ethnic identification projects,” minzu shibie, chi.)—minorities and their landscape were in this sense constructed by agents of the new state. Beginning with geographical, natural resource, and socio-political surveys of the early and mid-1950s, local and regional cadres (mostly Han Chinese) regularly renamed local townships, villages, and distinctive physical features in Chinese and incorporated these new names into the maps and survey materials that would subsequently define and typify the region.

421 There is a tremendous amount of confusion over not only place names, but also plant, animal and mineral designations for Tibetan areas of western and northern Sichuan. The primary Chinese text for place names, in Chinese and Tibetan, is Songpan County Place Name Study Group, Sichuan sheng aba zangzu zizhizhou Songpan xian diminglu [List of Place Names in Songpan County Sichuan Province Tibetan Qiang Autonomous Prefecture] (Songpan County, 1983). On the difficulties in transliterating place names in Amdo and Kham in general, see Susan L. Kelly, “Resolving Place Names in Amdo and Kham: A Gazetteer for the Hengduan Mountains Region of Southwest China,” in Acta Phlotaxonomica Sinica 44:6 (2006), 721-732.


423 Examples of this change in place names abound. See the penultimate local guide, the Sichuan sheng aba zang qiangzu zizhizhou songpan xian diminglu [List of Place Names in Songpan County Sichuan Province Tibetan Qiang Autonomous Prefecture] (Songpan County, 1986), or similar guides for Hongyuan, Nanping, Ruo’er gai Counties. Illustrative examples would include renaming Byang bya dur (Bird Cemetery, tib.) Xiaoxitian (Little Western Heaven, or Xiangxia dou’er, chi.) or Shar dungri (Eastern Conch Mountain, tib.) Xuebaoding shan (Snow Treasure Mountain, chi.). Some towns were formally renamed, for instance, the towns and districts along the Rewu River (including renaming Mali village Hongtu (Red Earth, chi.). In many cases, however, Chinese transliterations of
Thus, census and county boundary surveys played a key role in the process of inscribing the “body politic” on Tibetans and their landscape in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{424} The knowledge the surveys produced facilitated the establishment of administrative units at the grass roots level. The regular household registration system these data helped to create became an effective means to control the flow of population.\textsuperscript{425} Households were registered annually, under direct control of the Bureau of Public Security. The first national census survey was conducted in 1953 and the second in 1964. According to local gazetteers, the first survey listed only the population numbers in the Songpan region (including the other new counties), while the second survey was expanded to include professional, educational, ethnic and class status, in addition to other standard census data.\textsuperscript{426}

In 1952-55 the “class” labels had served to differentiate the “bad elements” from the general populace across the entire Songpan region. Prior to 1956, the only “bad elements” recognized in the region were Han and Hui opium traffickers and Han Chinese landlords along the Min and Baishui Rivers. According to local statistics, these Han Chinese landlords (especially in the Songpan and Zhenjiang districts of Songpan County; also known as dizhu, chi.) made up only 13\% of local households, but controlled over 36\% of the arable land in the

\textsuperscript{424} Benedict Anderson discusses this inscription of knowledge on national citizens through the creation of the “national imaginary.” Mapping, census taking and so forth all work in what Agrawal would term a governmentalization process to both make states and national(ist) citizens. See Benedict Anderson, 1983; Agrawal 2005.

\textsuperscript{425} While the formal hukou (household registration) was not instituted until the famines following the Great Leap Forward (1960-61), a version of the hukou, regular identity cards (shen fen zheng, chi.) were in place in rural areas of China by 1956-57. Household registration in surveys and land reform helped the state settle local households, but especially Tibetan, Mongolian, and Uighur herders and agro-pastoralists in western China. See Colin Mackerras, \textit{China’s Minority Cultures: Identities and Integration since 1912} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995). See also Barnett 1967, 233-34.

This practice of class differentiation started in 1952 as part of the “Peaceful Liberation” (heping jiefang, chi.) and early Land Reform (tudi gaige, chi.) for Han and Hui groups tied to the opium regime and otherwise owning large amounts of land (i.e. those who received the moniker dizhu, chi., or “landlord”). However, during and after 1955, the people of “bad class background” were expanded to former tuguan-tusi Tibetan headmen, major Tibetan land owners, and monks, who, amazingly enough, were now alleged to have owned all the land and all the animals in the countryside. Between 1952-55, approximately 6.5% of the households in Songpan County (some 693 individuals), mostly Han Chinese and Hui, were designated as “bad class” elements. The early approach to land reform and “bad elements” was used to enable the county to “adjust land ownership, renegotiate rent and liberate the serfs” and form mutual aid teams and elementary cooperatives. However, between 1955-57, another 539 individuals were given the bad class label under re-examination, and almost all of them were Tibetans. This process of re-identification and labeling demonstrated an important shift in local ethnic relations and government policies towards ethnic groups in the Songpan region.

Local Tibetan Elites and the Early Socialist State: The “Good Times”

The reason many local Tibetan land holders escaped early land reform policies targeting them was that forms of state and cooperative ownership and tenure were based on prevailing

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427 SXZ 1999, 160-161, 395. Han and Hui landlords were concentrated mainly along the Min and Baishui Rivers, especially around Songpan town, and in Zhenjiang, Xiaohe (Huanglong), and the Zhe’an qu (local districts). Tibetans nearly equally shared the Songpan town and Xiaohe districts, and dominated rural northern and western Songpan in the Mao’er gai and Rewu Canyon districts.

428 Tibetans were simply not part of major anti-landlord and anti-local elite campaigns prior to 1956. This is similar to what Barnett found in his “X” county, where one of the first tasks public security agencies had was to find and control “bad elements” in local societies, but not everyone was always treated the same way in this process (at least in the beginning). SXZ 1999, 224-25; Barnett 1967, 231-34.

429 SXZ 1999, 74-75, 225. By 1955, the mutual-aid system was organized. However, after land reform, at least until 1958, production was still organized on a household or individual basis (ge ren ge fu, chi.). Formal land redistribution for the six districts (qu) and 29 administrative villages (xiang) was carried out in Songpan County in 1956. It was one of the first largely Tibetan areas in northern Sichuan completely surveyed, counted, and fully administered by the new socialist administration.

430 SXZ 1999, 225.
views and policies toward “minority populations” (*shaoshu minzu*, chi.) that included “ethnic particularism.” In the early 1950s, the PRC state took steps to reinvent societies as quickly as possible. As a new and radically different governing body with a weak presence in vast stretches of western China, the new state needed to consolidate power relatively quickly in the ethnically diverse and fractious region along the Tibetan border, the new government worked closely with local social forces crucial to local stability—which in this region meant local Tibetan elites.

The importance of historical materialism in Chinese Communist Party thought created a classification of social development in western China that was applied to the Songpan region. The minority populations of the Songpan region, predominantly Tibetan, but also including Qiang and Hui were designated as belonging to one of three forms of historical development: “late primitive communalism” (*yuanshi gongshe moqi*, chi.), “feudal suzerain” (*fengjian lingzhu zhi*, chi.), and the more standard “landlord” more commonly applied to other parts of China. This hierarchical discourse framed a way of thinking about minorities that also included discourses of “advanced vs. backwards” and “civilized vs. primitive.” In Songpan, this hierarchy resulted in placing Tibetans lower on the scale and in need of special help to realize the goals of socialism.

Thus, land reform was carried out over a longer period of time through “peaceful consultation” (*heping xieshang*, chi.; *zhi ba’i gros mthun*, tib.) and with more local personnel (mostly local elites) helping a limited number of cadres carry out their work. Direct or Peaceful Transition was carried out in different ways throughout China. The chief difference

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431 To understand just how fractious and problematic the region was, see Hsiao-ting Lin’s *Tibet and Nationalist China’s Frontier: Intrigues and Ethnopolitics, 1928-49* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).
433 SXZ 1999, 35, 75.
was between the interior (neidi, chi.) and frontier (bianjiang, chi.) regions of China, especially in the west. Songpan and nearby counties were considered very bianjiang despite their rather central location in the neidi (interior) of China. The formulation of this governmentalization attitude, “frontier particularity” (bianjiang teshu lun, chi.) and “minority nationality backwardness” (minzu luohou lun, chi.), were followed only until 1958 when significant institutional changes, in conjunction with the anti-rightist campaign and second five year plan, changed the nature of how the socialist government treated ethnic minorities throughout southwestern China.434

However, the other means to keep local Tibetan elites happy and working with the limited number of local state authorities, was to make friendly overtures, allow them to keep their preeminent positions in local resource and social management (at least in the countryside), and place them on local and region committees. These first overtures were meetings in the early 1950s meetings between local Tsho ba leaders and a mission (fanwentuan, chi.) sent from Beijing to express the good wishes of the new government to each ethnic group. Furthermore, cadres sent to ethnic minority areas were to “do good deeds and make friends” to improve relations between each ethnic group and the government, to secure the cooperation of or remove indigenous leaders and political structures, to mediate historical and current conflicts between ethnic groups, to establishing local autonomous governance in some regions, and to promote economic development and improvement of livelihoods where possible.435 In addition, communist cadres initiated infrastructure projects, including the building simple schools,

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434 The region was considered rather bianjiang (frontier) because of its location on the Sino-Tibetan borderlands, as it had a significant population of former tusi-tuguan figures (tusi laomin shehui, chi.), and because of its variety and large numbers of ethnic minorities. As with other like areas in southwestern China, the counties of the Songpan region (as they were created) and local Tibetans and Qiang were allowed a certain amount of leeway based on their “frontier particularity.” See SXZ 1999, 207-08.
hospitals, and veterinary stations beginning in 1953 in areas beyond Songpan town, including the
important Baqen-Songpan and Maowen-Songpan roads into the heart of the region.436

In the process of identifying minorities and redrawing political boundaries, Tibetans and
Qiang received their designation as national minorities and their own “nationalities autonomous
prefecture” (shaoshu minzu zizhizhou, chi.) in northern Sichuan.437 The creation of the
autonomous prefecture was a success for regional Tibetans and Qiang. On one hand, the
creation of the regional entity reinforced the hierarchical order of the new national state—as the
pre-existing largely autonomous and Tibetan region was given its official designation by state
authorities. However, for local Tibetans it also meant that a large number of posts (some more
ceremonial than others) were reserved for local Tibetans, some of whom were tied to the Long
March, while others were landed elites and opium traffickers under the Qing and Republican
governments. The CCP program of socialist revolution started locally with the establishment of
the autonomous region that incorporated local ethnic elite into the state bureaucracy. As a result,
local headmen were soon civil servants of the state in a way they had never been under the Qing
or Republican administrations.438 The early PRC state supported an ethnic officialdom
incorporating both state and locally led elements of governance that held important continuities
with late Republican era local governance. This centrally-mandated and state-led but locally

436 These simple infrastructural developments were created hand in hand with a new road from Maowen to Songpan.
Furthermore, almost all of the new schools and development were built in Songpan, not the Tibetan areas of the
county outside of the Min River valley. The sole exception was a school, veterinary and trading shop in Shangba
zhai on the Mao'er gai River that would later become the commune headquarters for that part of the county. SXZ
437 The new Aba zangzu qiangzu zizhizhou (Aba Tibetan-Qiang Minority Autonomous Prefecture) was created in
November, 1955. In December 1955, Maerkang (in Barkam County) was made the prefecture capital. AZZ 1993, vl.
1, 40, 99; Sichuan Shengzhi: dili zhi 1986, 100.
438 Helen Siu and Janet Sturgeon both discusses how local minority elites became civil administrators or at the least
part of local governments in the early years of the new state. See Siu 1989, 48; Sturgeon 2005, 83-84.
staffed administration gave new roles to Tibetan elites while beginning to change the nature of their hold over local resources and people.  

This strategy both kept the peace and allowed the socialist state to indoctrinate local elites with what Michael Schoenhals has termed "scientific formulations," namely ways of naming and thinking that were presented in official publications and speeches on Party ideology and practice to maintain political control.  

As socialism was considered the chief vehicle of development and nation building in China, embracing it meant that many local elites could retain power and continue to have a say in the ways local resources were used. Starting in 1953, many promising Tibetan youth were also sent to Chengdu and Mao County (where the Minorities College had a branch school) and trained in new minorities colleges (minzu xueyuan, chi.) in socialist thought and administrative practices. By 1957-58, over 4300 newly trained cadres and personnel from the new Southwest Minorities College training center were active in Aba Prefecture, with 468 active in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties. These individuals carried out a variety of the tasks noted above, but many were active on the work teams helping to assign official class status.

In the long run, the prerequisite of carrying out such a policy involving local ethnic elites was to determine who belonged to the different "classes" and identify land owners and serfs. In other words, local elites were invited to join the political process, but they had to "buy into it" in the sense that they carried out policy directives from the center. One of these directives was to "identify" and "clarify" land and resource ownership in their areas. This process of identification also included who "owned" specific local resources like agricultural plots, trees

439 Until 1957-58, many of the early cooperatives, bureaus, economic commissions, and village councils had at least two or three Tibetans (and in the Min River valley, one or two Hui) as well as Han Chinese provincial and prefecture personnel in each major administrative body. SXZ 1999, 193-199, 203-204, 207-08, 234-38.


441 See SXZ 1999, 201-03, 206-10, 692-93; AZWZX, 45; SAZSD 1985, 15.
and rangeland. After work teams had collected information on every family, each household was assigned an official class status (jieji chengfen, chi.). The chief class categories included chieftains (tusi-tuguan), serf owners, (nongnu zhu, chi.), land owners (dizhu, chi.), wealthy farmers (fu nong, chi.), middle farmers (zhong nong, chi.), poor farmers (pin nong, chi.), and serfs (nongnu, chi.). However, the process of identification was less easy than it might have seemed as Tibetan society in the region was less strictly hierarchical than in central and western Tibet. Unlike other areas, there were no aristocratic families per se, nor were there outcast families of unclean people (Drib, tib.) like blacksmiths and corpse cutters. However, the idea of servant or lower-class people did exist in local Tibetan society. There were wealthy landowners, tusi-tuguan headmen and chieftains, village elder leagues (tsho ba, tib.), some of whom kept hereditary servants known locally as khol pa/bran gyog (servants/serfs, tib.), local 'khyams po (extremely poor pastoralists), and kholpa/khral pa (tenant farmers). Finally, there were local bla mas (monastic abbots, and monastic or lay holy men in both Buddhist and Bon religious practice), monks, and monastic officials, all of whom were technically “bad elements” in socialist ideological discourses.

Until 1955-56, most of the Tibetan elites that would have been struggled against and lost their lands retained their elite positions in local society, as well as most of their properties. However, as part of “Democratic Reform” (minzhu gaige, chi.) from 1956-58, land belonging to local Tibetan headmen, “serf owners” (who had bran gyog, tib.), wealthy land owners, and local temples and monasteries was increasingly targeted for land reform in the countryside. The lands

442 SXZ 1999, 224; AZWZX, vl. 4, 147; SAZSD 1985, 10-11.
443 SXZ 1999, 32-33, 74; AZZ 1993, 673-75.
445 See the discussion of local society and agricultural and pastoral rights in Chapter Two (35-36).
446 SXZ 1999, 395. However, almost all land along the Min River, the lowest reaches of the Rewu River, and much of the upper Baishui was re-distributed between 1953-54. Considering, however, that this comprised about half of the arable land in river bottoms, local Tibetan elites certainly did not face the same early pressures as local Han and Hui elites who suffered the most along the Min River under early land reform.
were seized and redistributed, but amazingly, until 1957 most local elites and their families were not individually targeted for “re-education” or given poor class status by local authorities.\textsuperscript{447}

**Natural Resource Surveys, Roads, and Post-Opium Regime Economic Development**

In addition to the census surveys and household registration, a large number of natural resources surveys took place throughout the 1950s. In 1953, the Third Brigade of the Peoples Forestry Survey Team surveyed the forests of Songpan County (as well as Hongyuan and soon-to-be Nanping (Jiuzhaigou) Counties). More importantly for state led developments in the 1960s, the first development survey of the forests of western China targeted the Songpan region as one of the primary forestry resource locations for the Southwestern Region of China that included the provinces of Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, and Guangxi.\textsuperscript{448} In contrast to other major forest products regions of southwestern China, the Songpan area was fully surveyed by 1953-54. The first minority region forestry bureau in China was created in 1954 in Aba Prefecture and started to deliver timber from the Huanglong area in Songpan County to points east in 1955.\textsuperscript{449} Thus provincial and national forces moved quickly to both target and begin to exploit the natural resources of the region. In addition to forests, other survey groups in the 1950s examined animal husbandry and an army corps studied the geology and mining potential of the region.\textsuperscript{450} These natural resource surveys not only targeted local resources for exploitation, but also sought to

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\textsuperscript{447} Along the Min River, the initial land transfers were from Tibetan and Hui temples in Munigou (Mao ni gully), Zhe’an Hui village near Songpan, around Zhuanzhusi, and among the predominantly Han and Hui villages near Zhenjiang village in the south of the county. Formal land reform of the six districts and 29 village administrations of Songpan County was carried out in 1956-57. \textit{SXZ} 1999, 74-75.

\textsuperscript{448} The \textit{Xinan du} (Southwestern Region) comprising these provinces was a major regional designation of the first five years of the new government and headed by none other than Deng Xiaoping. Initially, the communist cadres, under orders from none other than Deng Xiaoping, set up seven autonomous areas in the Songpan region and sent work groups to the Mao’er gai area in 1951. However, these were all abolished in 1958 as part of the campaign to deal with “ethno-nationalist tendencies” amongst Tibetans in the region. See \textit{Aba tonglun} 2001, 16.

\textsuperscript{449} This first minority forestry bureau was the Sichuan sheng zangzu zizhiqu huanglong linju [Sichuan Province, Aba Tibetan Prefecture Huanglong Forest Office]. The first logs were cut in 1954-55 and floated down the Fu River into Pingwu County in the summer of 1955. See \textit{SXZ} 1999, 409; \textit{Aba zangzu zizhizhou linyezhi} [Aba Tibetan Prefecture Forestry Gazetteer] (Chengdu: Ministry of Forestry Press, 1993).

\textsuperscript{450} \textit{SXZ} 1999, 406; for mining in 1955, 480; for animals in 1957, 423.
determine, in conjunction with the land reform initiatives and minorities studies which individuals had claim to what resources in rural Songpan. Local Tibetans and Hui, from local elite and former land holders to regular herders, were consulted in this process. But the forests and people of the region had to become more accessible to the new state in order to carry out both the governmentalization and early forestry regime projects.

Prior to the 1950s, roads in and out of the Songpan region were almost entirely unpaved dirt tracks and trails up major watercourses and over high altitude passes. One of the first priorities of the new government was to construct a better road into the region along the Min and Baishui Rivers. The major road construction project from the prefecture capital into the heart of the region, the Baqen-Songpan Road, was constructed between 1955 and 1958. This road connected Songpan County to Hongyuan County, with its major road following the Baihe River (a tributary of the Yellow River that flows northward through mid-Hongyuan County) and connecting to the Ma’erkang to the southwest. Another road up the Baishui River (Jiuzhaigou County) was started in 1953 and reached Songpan County over Gongang Pass in 1962. The Songpan-Mao County road along the Min River was initially surveyed and major portions were constructed by People’s Liberation Army (PLA) troops between 1958 and 1959. This road, however, was not completed until 1964. The Songpan-Mao County Road and Nanping (Jiuzhaigou)-Songpan Road were constructed with a great deal of local Tibetan and Han Chinese labor. Roads into the back country along other water courses were surveyed but not built until the 1960s, usually to reach significant stands of timber in the central parts of the region. These

451 SXZ 1999, 495.
452 Difficulties in reaching Songpan County from the south included regular landslides and earthquakes along the Min River, the Min River Gorge in Mao County, and precipitous terrain in the bottom of the gorge.
roads were largely welcomed as they allowed for more movement of animals and goods into and out of the more remote parts of the region. [See Map 4.1]

In addition to conducting the surveys and road infrastructure, state authorities helped local Tibetans, Han and Hui create their first elementary cooperatives (chuquishe, chi.) between 1955 and 1957. These cooperatives were instigated and helped along by the state in order to help fill the void of the slowly dispersing opium regime. Three kinds of early cooperatives were developed in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties—agricultural cooperatives (nongye hezuo, chi.), pastoral cooperatives (nongmu hezuo, chi.) and herbal medicine cooperatives (yesheng yaocai hezuo, chi.). The agricultural and pastoral cooperatives dominated local market and administrative affairs, and almost the entire agro-pastoral output of the region stayed local.454 Interestingly, the primary export for the region remained medicinal herbs, and large, early cooperatives were created in 1954-55, employing primarily Tibetans in the collection and packaging of herbs in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties.455 These elementary cooperatives doubled local output of medicinal herbs as compared to pre-cooperative times; with the exception of the revolt period (1958-60) these medicinal herbs were an early major source of revenue for new county governments.456 Agricultural and pastoral cooperatives and collectives did not fare as well.457 Songpan and Jiuzhaigou cooperatives continued to expand after the Great Leap Forward and local Tibetan revolt, but their input into county revenues was overtaken by forestry revenues and some agro-pastoral revenues by 1964. What was significant about the

454 SXZ 1999, 368, 399-400.
455 AZZ 1993, vl. 3, 2335-36.
456 In 1954 alone, revenues doubled from 11,000 yuan to 29,200 yuan under cooperative management. By 1958, revenues were over 33,000 yuan/year and the Songpan elementary cooperative gained a new title, Nongmu ye shengchan hezuo [Rural-pastoral production cooperative]. See AZZ 1993, vl. 3, 2335-2337.
457 Agricultural collectives provided subsistence level amounts of food until the 1960s. Pastoral cooperatives and collectives were more problematic as local Tibetans were loath to let go of their animals (yaks especially) for collective use and slaughter. Added to the revolts in the late 1950s, pastoral production was so low that it was only about one third or less of local production in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties through 1962 (in comparison to half of all production and output value by the mid 1970s). See SXZ 1999, 370-71; AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 1102-1105.
herbal medicine cooperatives was that they stayed primarily Tibetan cooperatives (and later collectives) whereas forestry collectives were dominated by Han Chinese sent to the region from the Sichuan Basin. Finally, through developing Tibetan pastoral, herbal medicine and agricultural cooperatives, regional administrations would continue to develop these primary and "traditional" Tibetan pursuits in future campaigns.

Socialist revolution (*shehuizhuyi geming*, chi.; *sbyi tshogs ring lugs*, tib.) started in the region in earnest only in 1956 after local Tibetan elites had been partly incorporated into the administrative system and given or helped the government obtain detailed information on natural resources, population surveys, and household registration data. Ideally, democratic reform and socialist revolution were the state means to change the nature of local governance and centralize control. In Songpan, this took the form of redistributing land, registering households, and creating agro-pastoral cooperatives.\(^{458}\) Each household had a fixed amount of land, and each household was also fixed on their share of land (part of the new *hukou* registration system). As a result, movement and migration to other places became impossible, as the household registration system was interlocked with land distribution and the work point system.\(^{459}\) At the same time, newly appointed Aba Prefecture "People's Committees" (*Aba zangzu zizhizhou renmin weiyuan*

\(^{458}\) SXZ 1999, 74; AZZ 1993, vl. 1, 524-25. See also Barnett 1967, 405-06.

\(^{459}\) Land Reform covered the period 1953 to 1956, after which production was arranged on an independent household basis until 1957 when the mutual-aid teams were established. Mutual-aid teams were based on poor and lower-middle peasant associations organized to "trade labor." The *chujishe* (or cooperative, *hezuoshe*, chi.) began in 1957, and marked the beginning of the work point system, with "bad elements" or people with "bad class backgrounds" excluded. The higher cooperatives were begun in 1957 and were basically the same as the *chujishe* except the administrative units were larger. The higher level cooperatives lasted until 1959 when the mass cafeterias and GLF work started. The "work point system" was the payment system under advanced cooperatives and collectives. Under this system, dividends that had been distributed according to property share were eliminated and all remuneration was based solely on labor credits accrued through work. In general, each farm, work group, or collective was given a certain number of points in terms of its physical and technical difficulties. At the end of the year the total profit available from work remuneration was the income all the commune members earned after deductions for taxes, investment, and a welfare fund. See SXZ 1999, 224-25; Yin Rusheng, "China's Rural Forestry Since 1949," *The Journal of World Forest Management*, 7 (1994), 73-100, 77. For an overview of the period, cooperatives, the mutual aid system and work points, see also Brian Stavis, "Rural Institutions in China," in Robert Barker, et al. (eds.), *The Chinese Agricultural Economy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982) and Barnett 1967, 296-98.
hui, chi.), sent from the provincial and prefecture capitals, and duly trained in the new socialist institutions in Chengdu and elsewhere and equipped with their “scientific formulations,” began to increasingly run local affairs without the input of former Tibetan elites or local voices.460

Tibetan elites, unlike many rural elites in the immediate post-1949 administrative consolidation of China, managed to retain many of their vestiges of power and a degree of control in the Songpan hinterland. This was because Tibetans, Qiang, Han and Hui communities in the Songpan region were all treated differently according to a hierarchy of ethnic stratification in opium suppression, land redistribution, and local governance. The application of different state policies had more to do with the level of the government’s actual control over particular ethnic groups in particular areas at particular times than with a theory of social differentiation. The Tibetans of the Songpan region were not initially under the firm control of the newly established People’s Republic, and so authorities had to conduct opium suppression campaigns, social and resource surveys, land reform, and local administration step by step with the completion of political and social transformation in this area. The standard of ethnic differentiation was thus established mainly out of local practical concerns, according to the degree of potential threat posed by such communities to the local authorities.

The cautious and gradualist approach of the nationality policy in the early to mid 1950s did not last long. The desire to transform old, backward societies into new, civilized ones that fit a vision of the new socialist China prompted regional and provincial authorities to launch a new wave of “democratic reforms” after 1956 that targeted Tibetan communities in particular. These reforms met strong resistance from local Tibetan communities and outright revolt from 1958-60, but their success was ensured by the military and political power of the state. State political power was in turn bolstered by Tibetan elite participation in local administrations, the return of

state trained and indoctrinated Tibetans to local areas, and successful infrastructure development that enabled quick and easy troop movements into the region. Central to the difficulties local Tibetans faced at the end of the 1950s was the reality of land reform for local elites and religious properties and administrative “re-examination” (fucha, chi.) that targeted local Tibetans in county administration.\(^{461}\) Both issues combined with the Great Leap Forward to utterly destroy local traditions of Tibetan autonomy, Tibetan control of the hinterland and many natural resources, and finally break the power of local Tibetan elites in rural social administration.

4.3 The Tibetan Revolt, Collectivization and Campaigns, 1957-1962

The completion of land reform largely ended the close relationship between the remnants of the pre-1949 local Tibetan elite and the socialist state. This section analyzes the regional rectification and re-examination campaigns, ethnic revolts, collectivization, and The Great Leap Forward in that order. Not only was local society going through a constant series of political, social and economic campaigns, increasingly resented by local Tibetans, but Tibetans were also being separated from many of their local natural resources, especially their forests, under targeted “social reform.”

\(^{461}\) In 1957-58, work teams, made up largely of non-regional and Han Chinese party officials who based themselves in local villages where they conducted their interviews, crosschecked earlier individual class designations to determine the “real situation at the grassroots.” The “fucha” work team in Songpan, and then smaller work teams in Mao’ergai, Dazhai, and Chuanzhusi quickly began to uncover problems and contradictions, and previously unknown aspects of people's backgrounds before Liberation came to official attention. Investigation led to a reversal of fortune for the old network of power. Changes in leadership meant that hitherto concealed connivance came into the open. Whereas initially class labels were based on self-reporting and village consensus, and thus no one was labeled higher than middle peasant, the reinvestigation work team reviewed the designations and reclassified many locals as “exploiters.” The policy determined an average-size land holding: 35% more land than the standard earned the label landlord; 25% more the class label of rich peasant. Class labels were determined by this landholding standard, as well as on hired or inherited laborers/servants (in particular, local Tibetan shenyog and kholpa). For example, in Mao’ergai, many middling land owning families that had land but few animals were reclassified as rich peasant as they had previously contracted out most of their labor to local Tibetans with less land and more animals. While this was perfectly normal under the older tusi and kin networks of the late Qing and Republican periods, and in fact was expected of them given their situation, this was a serious issue for the re-examination teams. This re-examination was part of the larger rectification and reassessment campaigns waged in other parts of China discussed at length by June Dreyer. See June Teufel Dreyer, China’s Forty Millions (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 150-53.
Beginning in 1957, state-led campaigns (yundong, chi.) increasingly dominated social and political life at the local level in Songpan and Nanping (Jiuzhaigou) Counties. These campaigns began to drastically change utilization of local natural resources and agro-pastoral practices. To begin with, local “re-examination” campaigns targeting Tibetan elites, religious institutions, and Tibetan religious practice led to a short but intense local revolt in 1957, and an inter-regional Tibetan revolt from 1958-60. The collectivization of all levels of society and ethnic groups in the Songpan region (1958-59) overlapped with the first year of the Great Leap Forward Campaign (1958-60). The defining factor of the next five years (1957-62) would be remolding the region through campaigns (yundong, chi.). As Judith Shapiro has noted in Mao’s War on Nature, “…leaders value their [campaigns] efficiency, for models facilitate uniformity, centralization, regimentation, coordination, and mobilization while working to suppress spontaneity, individualism, and airing of alternatives that might interfere with governmental control.” And as Roderick MacFarquhar notes on the Mao years, “…models encouraged the centrally led campaign pattern of development, and the speed it engendered.” The Maoist approach to campaigns, especially in using singular development patterns without consideration for local conditions, in other words, cutting everything with one slice of the knife (yi dao qie, chi.), as well as efforts to “get grain from mountaintops…” (xiang shan yao liang, chi.) would have major consequences for the region. This was especially true not just in local agro-pastoral development, but in the creation of a state forestry regime in the 1960s. The early socialist and Maoist approach to campaigns and governance through administrative zeal not only typified and channeled local people into certain kinds of practices to follow central directives, but also gave a free hand to administrative and official entities strip mine local resources.

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462 Shapiro 2001, 98.
Re-examination, Rectification and Tibetan Revolt in Songpan (1957-60)

The political campaigns of the late 1950s, already a major fixture in other parts of China, dominated administrative action through to the mid-1970s. In 1957-58, subsequent to initial achievements in increasing overall productivity in China proper, Mao's government also enthusiastically launched a political campaign to consolidate control in the "borderlands." This sparked a major, but ultimately failed, local revolt. For the Songpan region, local campaigns to formally collectivize all land and properties, and to re-examine and clamp down on local ethnic elites, had as much or more impact on local society and the environment as the subsequent Great Leap Forward—these local campaigns ultimately led to a serious deterioration of local ethnic relations, a regional rebellion, and degraded environmental conditions.

A few months after the national wide "rectification" (zhengfeng, chi.) campaign began in the Chengdu Basin (October, 1957), an official "re-examination" (fucha, chi.) campaign began to review the land reform in "frontier regions" and the special treatment of ethnic elites in southwestern China. The formulations of "frontier particularity" (bianjiang teshu lun, chi.) and "nationality backwardness" (minzu luohou lun, chi.) that had granted local elites some element of local control, and above all, different treatment vis-à-vis Han and Hui in the region in the early years of Mao's state-building became subject to re-examination and review. As noted in the previous section, local Tibetan elites were a part of the early governance structure of the Songpan region, hand in hand with local state officials. In 1957-58, based on a series of policy shifts at the national level, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCCP) determined that minority issues and policy were ultimately issues of class policy. This

464 SXZ 1999, 34-35. See also Dreyer 1997, 366-68. This rectification was a part of the policies of the anti-Rightist campaign that targeted critics from the immediately preceding Hundred Flowers campaign. See Roderick MacFarquhar, The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Volume 1: Contradictions Among the People (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974-83).

changed the policy emphasis from a gradualist approach to borderland ethnic assimilation into the socialist state to the more standard class identification and class struggle. This was in part a response to ethnic insurgency in Qinghai and western Sichuan’s Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. The re-examination campaign targeted Tibetan areas of Sichuan as well as Tibetan elites (or commoners) who had received potentially inaccurate “class status” designations during the previous eight years based on earlier “gradualist policies.” It also coincided with campaigns against “local ethno-nationalism” (difang minzu zhuyi, chi.). These campaigns especially targeted local ethnic cadres and Tibetan elites who were deemed to have resisted socialism, discriminated against Han Chinese, and attacked party cadre policies in the Tibetan hinterland. As collectivization reached its highpoint in 1957-58 and a new push to develop local resources for areas outside of the new autonomous region, class struggle based on these two campaigns intensified in the Tibetan areas outside of the Min River area. Local elites and monasteries that had avoided major tangles with land reform bore the brunt of local re-examination and rectification precisely because they had avoided earlier moves under gradualist policies.

466 See Horlemann 2002, 247-48. See also Epstein 2002. Xiaolin Guo has also discussed this transition in minority nationalities policy, and points out the Great Helmsman, Mao Zedong, stated in a CCP politbureau meeting on discussing ethnic insurgencies by Tibetans and Yi in 1957 that, “The nature of battles was basically class struggle but not ethnic conflict.” This statement by Mao basically brought issues of ethnic relations closer to his beloved class struggle, which in turn gave policy makers and military commanders in Sichuan a free hand to stamp out local revolts without worry of interference from or recourse to prior CCP policy. See Xiaoling Guo, “Warming up to Socialism in the Cold Mountains: Ethnic Officaildom and Chinese Discourse,” unpublished manuscript (2005).

467 In 1956-57, studies of land and commodity holdings in Songpan and Nanping Counties up to 1952 determined that Han Chinese landlords or rich peasants owned or expropriated over 7% of the livestock and 17% of arable farmland; Hui owned or expropriated 2% of livestock and 3% of land (but as much as 23% of town businesses); and Tibetans (considered mostly Tibetan elites, including religious institutions) owned or expropriated 76% of livestock and 40% of farmland. Interestingly, “wasteland” (huangdi, chi.) owned and expropriated by Han Chinese was also significant, in large part linked to poppy agriculture in the hinterland—Han Chinese 31% and Tibetans 51% of wastelands. Based on these statistics, Tibetan elites and Tibetans were targeted for “re-examination” in 1957-58 and their class status reconsidered. See SXZ 1999, 196-97. Arable farmland and wasteland ownership and control was calculated in terms of 1mu to .12 hectares.

468 In Sichuan, CCP provincial committees outlined four primary forms of ethno-nationalism: resisting socialism in the name of ethnic particularities, exclusionist approach to ethnic relations, discrimination against Han cadres in the name of regional autonomy, and attacks on Party policy. See Guo Jiaji 1998, 157.
Local Tibetan revolt was sparked first in 1957 with re-examination of “democratic reform” and collectivization.\textsuperscript{469} This first, small uprising started in rural Songpan, Hongyuan, and Nanping Counties in late 1957 and grew through 1958 when further when anti-“ethno-nationalism” campaigns started in early 1958. The revolt started when officials re-examined the class status of many local Tibetan headmen and their families and assigned them new ones. It also coincided with collectivization efforts to take local elites livestock herds under collective control and partially close many forested areas slated for forestry bureau operations.\textsuperscript{470} As the rectification campaign shifted to the anti-ethno-nationalism campaigns, even more local elites were targeted, including religious institutions.

The investigation teams also placed restraints on local Tibetan elites and their families, closed temples and turned out monks. Local Tibetans began to resist. As the revolt spread, local monasteries and remote villages throughout the region were used by rebels as bases of operation. In addition to rectification and anti-“ethno-nationalism” campaigns, and in conjunction with collectivization, this period also witnessed the campaign for “anti-superstition” during which all religious activities were banned. Pilgrimage, visiting monasteries, praying, and even fumigating ones’ self in the morning were condemned as “feudal remnants”, a “waste of time”, and “harmful to production.”\textsuperscript{471} During these campaigns certain scores were settled beyond the local anti-PRC revolt. As Toni Huber has noted in recent research on ethnic and religious relations in Songpan County, there was little love lost among the various religious groups in the Songpan region prior

\textsuperscript{469} One of the few sources that indicate a local revolt was going on in Songpan and Nanping Counties is the Songpan Gazetteer (1999) discussion of local the military in the late 1950s. It is fairly obvious that the areas referred to in this section of the gazetteer were rural Tibetan areas with major temples that were undergoing closure and class re-examination in 1957. See SXZ 1999, 321-22.

\textsuperscript{470} Under re-examination and redistribution in 1957-58, all lands, including timberland were grouped, together with other goods such as yak, sheep, cattle, and farm tools, as collective property. Collective property meant that members of a commune were to produce collectively and the commune was exclusively entitled to the fruits of that production.

\textsuperscript{471} AZWZX, vl. 4, 342-44.
to the PRC takeover—and when the anti-superstition campaigns started, some Bon and Buddhist groups actually took the initiative to attack one another's religious sites in the name of socialism.\textsuperscript{472} But these incidents were relatively few and far between—the majority of unrest was premised on state campaigns to clamp down on local religious practice and shut down centers of Buddhist and Bon activity. The Songpan Tibetan rebellion spread beyond county boundaries when locals joined the ongoing anti-PRC Khams revolt.\textsuperscript{473} This wider revolt was only put down after nearly two years fighting, significant loss of life, and some major fires on grasslands and in the forests bordering the region.\textsuperscript{474}

However, in conjunction with an influx of cadres charged with bringing the Great Leap Forward to the region, more PLA troops entered the region and put down the uprising by 1960.\textsuperscript{475} As the rebellion was repressed, a process of population concentration was initiated during which many local Tibetan households were forced to resettle in larger, permanent villages to prevent them from providing shelter for rebels.\textsuperscript{476} As the revolt died down in the winter and spring 1959-60, local rebels took to setting major fires that burned down significant stands of timber—so much so that some sources state that this period saw one of the major natural forest

\textsuperscript{472} Huber discusses a major Bon-Buddhist dispute over a reliquary shrine on Xuebaoding Mountain. Adherents of Bon took the opportunity in 1968 to destroy a Buddhist site they had loathed since it was built in the 1930s. Other examples include Bon practitioners helping to destroy Buddhist sites in Jiuzhaigou valley, Gelugpa Buddhists expressly participating in tearing down two Bon sites in Songpan County, and others regionally. See Huber 2006, 10-12; Ran Guangrong 1994, 109-110.


\textsuperscript{475} Crushing the Tibetan revolt and The Great Leap Forward in the Songpan region could not have been accomplished without major access to the region. In 1958 the expanded, larger, and newly surfaced Baqen-Songpan-Nanping (Jiuzhaigou) road (from the prefecture seat to Songpan to the northern Sichuan Basin) was completed. See SXZ 1999, 35.

disasters of the region in the second half of the century.\textsuperscript{477} The revolt also damaged the regional economy. Local county administrations depended on local agro-pastoral and medicinal herb production. While agricultural output in Songpan and Nanping (Jiuzhaigou) Counties remained nominally steady, in 1959-60 pastoral and medicinal herb output were both reduced by one third and the burgeoning forestry sector reduced by one half.\textsuperscript{478} This loss of output can be attributed to both the local revolt and to the Great Leap.\textsuperscript{479}

\textit{The Collective and Campaigns in the late 1950s}

In 1958-59, the population of Songpan and Nanping Counties were assigned to newly established people's communes (\textit{renmin gongshe}, chi.; \textit{mi dmangs kung hre}, tib.)—with land and property collectively owned. Songpan County was eventually divided into seven communes made up of twenty-five production brigades that conjoined numbers of formally separate \textit{Tsho ba}, which in turn were internally divided into 127 Tibetan, Hui and Han Chinese agricultural, pastoral, and manufacturing production teams (\textit{nongmuye shengchan jiti}, chi.; \textit{thon sked ru khag}, tib.). Communes controlled all productive resources within their borders while production activities were organized at the team level.\textsuperscript{480} Within each production team, people were assigned to one type of labor or another—yak herding, milking, butter production,

\textsuperscript{477} See \textit{Aba zanggu zizhizhou linye zhi} 1993; SXZ 1999, 915-918.
\textsuperscript{478} SXZ 1999, 370; AZZ 1993, vl. 3, 2338 (on medicinal herbs).
\textsuperscript{479} In the \textit{Songpan County Gazetteer} 1999, 1959 and 1961 are both left out of the statistical output values and income of the local county government. Though 1960 was included, the numbers are questionable. When existing data from the \textit{Songpan Gazetteer} and the \textit{Aba Prefecture Gazetteer} are correlated, it seems fairly evident that the 1959 disruptions were based on the regional revolt as the problems with the Great Leap were not yet being felt. The disruptions in 1961 were more likely effects of the Great Leap, the same effects felt in other parts of China, as the quick modernization and industrialization of the countryside turned out to be a disaster for national and regional economies. See SXZ 1999, 370; AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 1106-07, 1128; vl. 3, 2338. See also, Roderick MacFarquhar, \textit{The Origins of the Cultural Revolution}, vl. 2: \textit{The Great Leap Forward} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974-83); Dali Yang, \textit{Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society and Institutional Change Since the Great Leap Forward} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
\textsuperscript{480} SXZ 1999, 31-33. See also Melvyn Goldstein, "Change, Conflict and Continuity Among a Community of Nomadic Pastoralists: A Case Study from Western Tibet, 1950-1990," on western and central Tibet in Barnett and Akiner 1994, 91-93.
medicinal/plant gathering, tree harvesting/forestry, handicrafts industry, or agriculture.\textsuperscript{481} The features of commune organization were fairly uniform throughout the nomadic and agricultural Tibetan communities of northern, western and eastern Songpan County. The same features were characteristic of Han and Hui dominated communes in villages and towns along the Min and Baishui Rivers, and as well for communes in central and western Tibet.\textsuperscript{482}

Land became either state- or collectively-owned under this system of management. Collective ownership included the land of townships, administrative villages, and village household groups (equivalent to communes, production brigades, and production teams respectively).\textsuperscript{483} The state itself took over the majority of timber stands and reserved rights the grasslands as well. The primary point here is that the trees and grass (rangeland) became the\textit{ de jure} (legal) property of the state through the local communes, not the\textit{ de facto} (customary) property of individuals or the commons. Agricultural plots, however, remained the purview of local collective groups. Spurred by a larger number of Han cadres in the region as well as a larger PLA presence (contesting with local rebels) the number of rural households that were incorporated into advanced cooperatives increased from approximately 5% in 1956 to 96% by 1961.\textsuperscript{484}

Other concurrent political economy campaigns that took local agricultural and pastoral practices into account sought to change the nature of how Tibetans and Hui managed their

lands—lands that were now the purview of the state and its local representatives, not just of individual households. Some of the more influential campaigns noted in local gazetteers and studies of the region included land reclamation campaigns such as “on steep slopes, open wastelands” (doupo kaihuang, chi.) and “take grain as the key link, self reliance, fulfill the government’s grain supply surplus responsibility” (yi Jiang wei gang, ziji zizu, wancheng zhengfu de gongyu liang paihou renwu, chi.). In using “grain as the key link” to reclaim marginal land, Tibetans, Han and Hui were expected to plant grain in areas that traditionally grew barley, sugar beets and rapeseed, or worse yet, stock fodder (grass) for family households. Although local soils were fertile, rather high altitude solar radiation, harsh changes in daily temperatures, a short growing season, and intermittent and seasonal water supplies precluded growing varieties of wheat as many cadres demanded locals do.

In 1958, local pastoral production teams were also challenged to expand their herds. In most Tibetan pastoral areas, the traditional nomadic pastoral production system began to fundamentally change in 1956-57 with the implementation of the “mutual-aid” program, the first step towards communal livestock production. Beginning in early 1959, private ownership of animals was replaced entirely by people’s communes and collective ownership. For the first time, Tibetans and Hui sheep herders did not own the livestock they cared for. According to official sources, livestock numbers dramatically increased in the first year of communalization, especially near towns. The increase was partly because local Tibetans could no longer hide most of their animals in the outback, take care of them part time, or have a family member care for them. With herd communalization, at least partly in fact, no one was able to care for extraneous

animals. Many locals turned in their animals at this point so that the overall communal herds “grew” at a tremendous pace.487

While profitable for the state in the short term, this increase was not environmentally sustainable. As John Longworth and Gregory Williamson and Dee Mack Williams have shown for Gansu, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia during the late 1950s and early ‘60s, communalization of herd animals was not so much a problem as “grain first policies” and agriculture on steep hillsides that pushed herd animals off of winter and summer grazing and led to overstocking on more limited amounts of land.488 By late 1960-61, Songpan had lost about 50% of its livestock because of the revolt and a combination of negligence, mismanagement, and the establishment of unviable agricultural state farms.489 Thereafter, the region suffered from a number of famines, despite the fact that local county governments continued to report high stock numbers and increasing grain production.490

487 However, the following two years were a very different picture as stock numbers were reduced by nearly half due to starvation, poor care, and drought. Personal discussions with locals, April 2005; see also SAZSD 1985 and Southwest Minorities Investigation Committee, Caodi zangzu diaocha cailiao [Grassland Tibetan Survey Materials] (neibu/internal circulation only, 1982).
489 Animal husbandry statistics show a significant drop in pastoral production output between 1959-61—before 1950 the area had allegedly over 1 million livestock, but in 1959 only 650,000. Considering that the famines common to the Great Leap Forward projects in other parts of China did not affect this region as severely, one wonders why so many animals died in such a short amount of time. According to locals, they hid animals and/or lost them during the revolt and its aftermath, or noted that the local officials and people in charge of animal husbandry were often ignorant of some of the basic problems with moving herds from area to area that caused many animals to starve because of insufficient fodder. AZWZX, vl. 4, 47; Ran 1993; SXZ 1999.
490 Stories of suffering during and after the Cultural Revolution are much more common in Songpan County than during the Great Leap Forward. Famines noted on only three occasions in the Qing and Republican periods followed on two to three year droughts. However, the Songpan Gazetteer noted 10 famine disasters since 1949. Given the centrality of famines in “natural disasters” chapters of other gazetteers, especially in southern and eastern China, one wonders why this region was spared. This dissertation works from the hypothesis that there were fewer famines in the region prior to 1949 based on regional generalities made by other Tibet scholars, visitors to the region before 1949, and based on textual material in uncirculated documents studying the region dating from the 1950s onward. SXZ 1999, 75.
In addition to campaigns to change the nature of local culture and “invigorate” agricultural and pastoral pursuits for the state, other campaigns sought to change local practices that were believed to contribute to the destruction of natural resources the state deemed important for national construction. Especially targeted was local forest use. According to Republican Era studies and local research from the *Minzu shibie* studies, Tibetans were blamed for destroying large amounts of timber each year.\(^{491}\) While to some degree this was true as we have seen in earlier chapters, the state took this issue to a new level by starting anti-burning campaigns in the region and constraining legal use of forested lands. One particular campaign, *Yufang weizhu, jijipumie* (emphasize prevention and work hard to put out [fires]) blamed Tibetans for the majority of fires that plagued regional forests every year. Campaigns were also aimed at preventing fires on the grasslands.\(^{492}\) Over the course of the ’60s and ’70s, these campaigns were so successful that the region won national recognition and prizes for fire prevention.\(^{493}\) The idea was to protect a national resource, and “change” Tibetan ways for the better. The three basic elements of these regional campaigns included discussions of fire prevention with cadres and local leaders at the village level, posting campaign slogans and signs in major villages, and fines or other prescriptive measures if locals were caught starting fires.\(^{494}\) These campaigns and many of the discussions related to them did not take into account natural sources of ignition, like lightning, and man-made sources from expanding foresting operations where most of the fires of the ’60s and ’70s occurred.\(^{495}\) In the late 1950s and early ’60s, however, these anti-fire campaigns were aimed at a single ethnic group already undergoing

\(^{491}\) *Sichuan zhi linye* 1943; *Aba zangzu zizhizhou linye zhi* 1993; AZZ 1994, vl. 2, 987.
\(^{492}\) SAZSD 1985, 31.
\(^{493}\) *AZZGK* 1985, 152-53.
\(^{494}\) Personal Communication with Shu Lifu and Tian Xiaorui, Division of Forest Fire Research, Chinese Academy of Forestry (September, 2005).
\(^{495}\) This is, however, recognized in more recent writings. See Ibid., 152-53; Ran 2000.
serious “social re-education” for their “minority nationality backwardness” (minzu luohou lun, chi.).

Another example of administrative actions to change local culture was the afforestation campaigns that were initiated in 1957-58 and were expanded under the Great Leap Forward. In 1956, a new policy was handed down to Songpan region administrators. This policy, “Orders Concerning the Development of Afforestation” (Guanyu kaifa zhishun zaolin de zhishi, chi.), identified areas of Songpan and Nanping (Jiuzhaigou) Counties that needed afforestation, specifically in the townships north of Songpan along the headwaters of the Min River and old clearcut areas north and west of Nanping town (Jiuzhaigou). Between 1957 and 1959, over 2000 acres were replanted in two major, local campaigns. These campaigns used local Han and Tibetan labor to afforest cut over and burned off lands with fruit trees, future “economic” stock, and shrubs. The afforestation campaigns were tied to two parallel campaigns, “ten reasons not to burn” (shi bu shao, chi.) and the “five anti-s” (wu fan dui, chi.) that targeted regional (mostly Tibetan) fire-use practices.

*The Great Leap Forward*

The Great Leap Forward campaign did not cause the same level of famine in Songpan as it did in other parts of China. However, the Great Leap and formation of advanced

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496 One example of this approach locally was the late 1950s regulations were handed down to the Songpan region to prevent forest fires. They targeted, specifically, Tibetan villages in mountainous and forested areas of Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties. SXZ 1999, 416.


498 SXZ 1999, 416.

499 A very good scholarly treatment of the Great Leap and its famine is by Dali Yang who estimates that around 25-30 million people died as a result of this campaign. Other discussions by Becker and Kane place the number higher, around 30-60 million dead. Indicative Chinese estimates place the disaster between 15-30 million dead and highlights climatic factors. See Dali Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change Since the Great Leap Forward* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 57; Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 64, 74-75; Penny Kane, *Famine in China, 1959-61* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988). See also some of the most recent research from reputable institutions in China where the primary blame for the famine (at least 60-40) is on natural conditions, with only a nod to human factors: Chen Donglin, “An Investigation of the “Three Year’s Natural Disaster” using Disaster Economics”, in
cooperatives and people’s communes did lead to environmental degradation, significant loss of herd animals, problems in the early forestry sector, and a limited famine in 1961-62. The Great Leap was also commonly remembered by one of its constituent phenomena, that exaggeration of achievements the "bragging wind" (fukua feng, chi.). While it was implied that the bragging wind was an enduring character of Chinese bureaucracy, it certainly reached peak velocity during the Great Leap Forward. During the Great Leap, Mao’s government functioned via a system of setting and fulfilling targets (renwu, chi.) which reinforced an emphasis on quantity over quality. During the Great Leap Forward, local officials, in principle more inclined to protect the farmers with whom they lived, had to contend with inflated targets handed down from higher-ups who were competing with the exaggerations of other officials in other parts of Sichuan and China.

Advanced producers collectives (nongmuye jiti, chi.; mnyam las khang, tib.) were established among Songpan Tibetan communities during the Great Leap Forward campaign and had incorporated all production in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties by 1960. Under the

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500 It was nearly impossible to find statistics related to the Great Leap in county gazetteers. However, the prefecture gazetteer notes that roughly 5000 individuals were adversely affected (350 dead) by famines and “problems” between 1959 and 1962. These statistics related mostly to southern counties in the prefecture. The Songpan and Jiuzhaigou county gazetteers do not mention any major population losses, but population figures, steadily rising until 1959, were stagnant from 1960-62 (a steady 37,500 people for all three years). While it is largely impossible to construct a picture of Great Leap Forward related deaths in the region, the figures are indicative of problems during this time period (and after the revolts of 1958-60). See *AZZ* 1993, vl. 1, 45-46; *SXZ* 1999, 168.

501 This short discussion of the “bragging wind” was based on some informal discussions with local Tibetans and Chinese in Songpan County (May, 2005). However, among others, Tim Cheek discusses the “bragging wind” and “empty talk” in his study of Deng Tuo’s relationship with the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Zedong in the 1950s and ’60s. Deng Tuo, a party official and expert on famines in Chinese history, ridiculed the Great Leap, leftist deviation, and elements of commune administration for their “empty talk” and “bragging wind” in a series of satires and articles that eventually caused his complete and total downfall in the Cultural Revolution. See Timothy Cheek, “Deng Tuo: Culture, Leninism, and Alternative Marxism in the Chinese Communist Party,” *The China Quarterly* 87 (September, 1981), 470-491; 487-88.

502 The bragging wind refers to the tendency of officials to exaggerate achievements, namely the statistics of production in order to gain political benefit.

503 Judith Shapiro 2001, 71.

504 *AZZ* 1993, vl. 1, 555.
advanced cooperative and commune system in the Songpan region, a state-owned procurement system was responsible for compulsory delivery of pastoral, agricultural, and forest products from the commune to the prefecture and provincial governments. Under this procurement system, the government purchased designated quotas or targets of agro-pastoral or forest products from the communes at administratively low price. The fulfillment of government target tasks became the criterion for achievements. Annual work summaries for the Songpan government usually described the percentage fulfilled over the planned goal: 112.35% for grain production in 1959 for example.

These production targets were impossible to meet and in fact, agriculture was suffering major setbacks from the forced implementation of extravagant new techniques, part of the facade of progress. Further changes in herding practices exacerbated land use problems as well. While many of the local herds were concentrated in the hands of a few families working on behalf of the commune, most able bodied locals were sent to work on building roads, bridges, and basic infrastructure. With a numbers of large mono-animal herds in place, local grasslands and grassland-forest zones suffered significant overgrazing. In the end, grain and animals were taken away from villages based on inflated estimates of production and laborers.

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506 SXZ 1999.
507 An infamous local example of “extravagant new techniques” was re-terracing much of the land along the Min River from Songpan to Zhuanzhusi (15km north). The idea was that with more and improved terraces, more grain could be planted and harvested as per Mao’s “Greater, faster, better, more economical” (Duo kuai hao sheng), “Aim high” (Lizheng shangyou), and “grain first” policies. The problem was that on the older, existing terraces, mostly grass fodder, some barley, and very limited amounts of grain were grown because of the lack of accessible water; the terraces depended almost entirely on seasonal rainfall and sturdy and drought resistant crops.
508 According to the Songpan sources, during the Great Leap, and under the People's Communes, two out of every three locals were working on projects to improve output in the county. SXZ 1999, 400.
509 Locally, communalization meant that the majority of Tibetans and Hui were reorganized to work on production teams relating to infrastructure development—especially road building, conversion of land to crop terracing (for the year of 1959), and limited expansion of herds (but more limited numbers of individuals actually herding monocultures of animals). Despite the revolt in the Khampa region, and the smaller one in the Songpan region as a whole, most people were working for the Great Leap Forward.
were organized into work projects on the basis of projected abundance.\textsuperscript{510} The excessive control of central planning allowed no freedom for local people to plan for different crops or livestock movements in the face climatic extremes.

While the transformation of the Min and Baishui Rivers under the Great Leap Forward campaign contributed to a new organization and sense of identity in local life, more infrastructure construction in 1959-60 literally paved the way for large trucks in the region and what the provincial and local party saw as the final victory of modernization over feudalism, the highest stage of collectivization in the People's commune of the Great Leap Forward. The Great Leap was intended to bring the benefits of science to backward areas of China in a single act of will through \textit{yundong} (campaigns). However, these projects largely resulted in local problems—the destruction of forests along the immediate Min River, erosion problems and ill advised planting of lowland grain species on formerly barley producing or animal fodder hillsides, and a terracing campaign around Songpan city itself that is now used largely for hay/fodder production.

\subsection*{4.4 Conclusion}

The history of the Songpan region in the 1950s reveals that change was difficult and even violent as local residents mobilized their resources in an effort to preserve their powers and privileges vis-à-vis the new state—but it did not start out that way. While local Tibetans initially welcomed the new state and the developments it brought with it, Han and Hui Chinese were targeted early on by state opium suppression and land reform campaigns. At the same time, state strategies of "place-making" and "state-making" transformed processes of political, social and rangeland-forest management in the region. These state-led systems of governance were based

\textsuperscript{510} According to the Songpan County gazetteer, slightly less than 56\% of agro-pastoral products were collected under the Second Five Year Plan (during which the Great Leap took place) and shipped as part of their local quotas. SXZ 1999, 368.
on new socialist discourses that redefined local people in terms of the new nation, class distinctions, and in terms of their access or use of the local environment. It was accomplished through mass political campaigns and changes in local jurisdiction.

The state-led projects and campaigns that began with social and resource surveys dominated local life and the state-making process in the region. They resulted in a relatively peaceful transition from the Republican to early socialist governments. For local Tibetans, the gradualist approach the state took was a boon; yet step by step, local Tibetan elites and commoners alike were assimilated into the administrative system that had already changed Han and Hui social and political life in the early 1950s. However, when local Tibetans were more forcefully incorporated into the governmentalization regime under collectivization and class-rectification campaigns in 1957-58, local ethnic relations turned for the worse as locals revolted. The Great Leap Forward and other regional political economic campaigns added to the strain on local Tibetans and the landscape, though in the end the effects were not as severe as they were elsewhere in the country.

The importance of the state governmentalization regime and ethno-social relations cannot be understated. As Glen Peterson has shown in his research on literacy campaigns and the political, economic and social uses of education in the 1950s, campaigns in the linguistically diverse, socially complex and politically sensitive coastal province of Guangdong were instrumental in shaping not only local-state relations, but also in how the spread of literacy was conceived at the state level and used in locales. In his work on the 1950s, he demonstrates how literacy campaigns, schools and teachers were instruments of the state—conduits of political

propaganda—that not only faced shifting priorities of state leaders, but at the grass roots level, an urgent priority to facilitate bureaucratic communication and comprehension.\footnote{Peterson 1997, 73-4.}

In Songpan and Nanping (Jiuzhaigou Counties), education was equally important, but political campaigns targeting local indigenous populations were at center stage in the governmentalization process. They first and foremost played the role of articulating state policy of consolidation of political control and dealing with the remote, ethnically, socially and economically diverse Sino-Tibetan hinterland. In this region the socialist state appears initially to have made a strategic decision to adopt a gradualist approach toward the isolated and numerically superior Tibetan population at the expense of local Han and Hui populations. But as the region was increasingly incorporated into the new nation-state, campaigns could shift gear to impose greater uniformity and depth of control on all local societies. This highlights the goal of the new state to fully incorporate the region into the nation. Yet when contrasted with the sheer scope of campaigns, and the local revolts they touched off, it also highlights the state’s hubristic belief that with either a gradualist or a decisive stroke the state could easily persuade local Tibetans to abandon their local autonomy, traditional practices, and control over many local natural resources. In the end, the state had to impose its will through military action and even more political economic campaigns, much as Tibetan elites had imposed their will upon social and political structures through patterns of coercion since the late imperial times. The experience of Tibetans and other ethnic groups in the 1950s also demonstrates that there were a variety of ways in which the new state both gained power in isolated and multi-ethnic borderlands, as well as how it inscribed the new nation on local populations.

These patterns are highlighted in an even more decisive manner in the next chapter.

Based on the political economic campaigns of the 1950s, the Chinese state continued to
transform the nature of local society, land use and property regimes in the Songpan region. In a process that inexorably tied local Tibetans to agro-pastoralism and continued socio-political re-education, state governmentalization of the forest resources in the region added a new element to the story of state-local relations and environmental change—one focused not just on local control, but rather on the extractive power of state and industrial forces. The next stage in human and forest governmentalization did not just spell more another round of administrative and social changes for local society, but it also had severe environmental consequences.
Map 4.1: Songpan Region Road Construction From 1949-1982

- Songpan Region Boundary
- County Boundaries
- Major Roads Built 1949-1964
- Major Roads Built 1965-1982

- Major Rivers
- Prefecture Capital
- County Seat
- Major Town/Village

15 km
V THE SONGPAN STATE FORESTRY REGIME: THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION

Large timber is abundant in the north, northwest, west, and southwest... large timber near rivers and streams in the Minshan are accessible. However, the timber is in rugged and precipitous terrain in Tibetan areas that was impossible to get to in earlier times... The rivers and streams of the north and west have many deep gorges and ravines, but the water can be used to transport the timber if it is harvested.

Sichuan zhi linye [Sichuan Forestry], juan 1, 1943, 4513

5.1 Introduction

In the 1950s the pace of tree cutting began to increase in China as a whole as the economy and society were reoriented toward “national construction,” and new modes of transportation and the expansion of older methods allowed for increased timber extraction. All timber and forested areas in northern Sichuan became the property of the state through a forestry regime that identified them as strategic resources that needed protection from the depredations of local Tibetans. In the 1960s, widespread and large scale foresting by state forestry bureaus, often termed the “Second Great Cutting,” harvested massive amounts of timber from the Songpan region. This chapter analyzes the second wave of Songpan’s incorporation into the PRC state, in which forestry became a key focus of official policy and transportation infrastructure development facilitated exploitation of local resources. This chapter also examines the continued governmentalization of local Tibetan society, which served to further de-link Tibetans from their traditional access to trees and other natural resources.

Throughout the 1960s, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the 1960s and ‘70s “Third Front” development of Sichuan, greater and greater amounts of timber were harvested in

513 The Songpan region was part of the late Nationalist survey that catalogued natural resources and markets in Sichuan in the early 1940s. This survey/study, initially under the title Songpan diaocha senlin ziyuan, was incorporated into a manuscript study of the province that especially highlighted the Liangshan region of southern Sichuan, the Xikang region (modern Ganzi Prefecture), and Songpan region (modern Aba Prefecture). See Chuan-kang jingji jianshe weiyuanhui, Sichuan zhi: linye [Sichuan Gazetteer: Forestry] (Manuscript, 1943; Sichuan Provincial Archive, 076/820 #6); see also SXZ 1999, 409.
the Songpan region with significant consequences for local society and landscapes. Analyzing forestry development in the Songpan region offers a window into the variations in rural forestry development in China, especially western China and ethnic minority areas. Several important studies of China's forestry sector assess forestry development in modern China, but few scholars have treated the subject in minority areas of western China to any great extent. The rapid changes and inconsistencies in policy application in the 1960s and '70s set the stage for the “third great cutting”, a predominantly local and privately over-harvest of trees in the early Reform period (1978-83). Decentralization and reform of social and forest policies in northern Sichuan that led to the “third great cutting” did not stabilize land or tree tenure as some had hoped it would, but actually exacerbated the worst aspects of the latter years of socialist China’s state-led forestry regime.

5.2 Creating the Forestry Regime in the Songpan Region, 1962-1978

This section examines the creation of the forestry bureau and state forestry regime in the Songpan region. In the process of state-making and forestry regime development, Tibetans were required to take up pastoralism and certain collective sidelines, while at the same time they were de-linked from their access to local forests. The discussion of China’s state forestry economy in

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this region and the strategic roles of trees and people reveals that trees and forests changed during this period from under-utilized local resources to a key national commodity. However, the policies the state developed to exploit trees were inconsistent and implementation led to repetitive problems with tree tenure, collective forest use, and land ownership. I will first examine the mid-century historical setting and then the creation of local infrastructure and institutional setting for the state forestry regime. This section also discusses forestry issues related to the social and environmental consequences of collectivization. Finally, we will examine the consequences of the Cultural Revolution in terms of changes in land use management that impacted local forest and grasslands. Issues related to state discourses on forest management and ethnicity is brought to the fore in order to expand discussion of the Cultural Revolution beyond the state forestry regime, adding to our understanding of local social and environmental developments in the 1960s.

**The Historical Setting**

In 1939-40, the Sichuan-Xikang Economic Development Committee was charged with cataloguing a variety of natural resources throughout Sichuan Province. In 1943, they reported in the *Sichuan zhi linye* [Sichuan Forestry] that timber of sizes and in a volume to be "useful to developing the province and helping in the war" could be found in the northwestern, relatively isolated, Tibetan dominated mountain ranges and plateaus. These forests were difficult

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515 This committee, formed in March of 1939, with Jiang Jieshi as chairman, later became a standing organ within the Nationalist party. The actual survey work was done by survey groups. These groups, consisting of several dozen members of the People’s Political Council, did on the spot investigations in more than one hundred counties and districts in Sichuan and Xikang Provinces. In the forestry survey noted above, the Min River region figured prominently. After approximately one year’s work, a detailed 900,000 character report was issued for Jiang’s reference, containing detailed surveys of political, economic, cultural, geographical and natural resources. See Chen Yanyun, *Zhang Qun you Chuan-Kang jingji jianshe weiyuanhui* [Zhang Qun and the Committee for Sichuan-Xikang Economic Development], in *Sichuan wenshi ziliao xuanji* [Selections from Sichuan Literary and Historical Materials], 29 (1983), 188-99; Du Shuiben, "Ran Naijiang dui Sichuan zangqu kaifa de gongxian" [The Contributions of Ran Naijiang to the Development of Tibetan Areas of Sichuan] in Luo Runcang and Ran Xinjian, eds., *Sichuan zangxue lunwen ji* [An overview of studies on the culture of Tibetans in Sichuan], (Chengdu: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1993); Zhang Qiyun, "Jinhou kangzhan zhi xinan jingji jichu" [economic foundations of the southwest after the war of resistance], *Xinan Bianjiang* [Southwestern Frontiers] 2 (1938), 21-26.
to get to and challenging to exploit. As noted in chapter one, trees in the Songpan region were managed to a limited degree, but were also frequently destroyed in order to clear rangeland. Trees were usually considered communal or monastic property if property at all, owned by whichever local Tsho ba or landholder had claim to the land on which they stood. Because of the difficulty of transport, except for immediate local use, trees were not harvested on a large scale. Limited commercial logging began at the outset of the twentieth century in Jiuzhaigou County and easternmost Songpan County (along the Fu River), and the first logging company was founded in 1921 on the upper reaches of the Min River to supply Zhuanzhu si and Songpan with dressed logs. However, it was not until the 1960s when the new socialist state built roads into the region and into its forests that large-scale logging began to take place.

The major roads in and out of Songpan County, as well as the social and physical landscape along the Min and related rivers were constructed in stages in the 1950s and ‘60s. The Songpan-Nanping (Jiuzhaigou County) and Songpan-Baqen (Hongyuan County) roads reached Songpan in 1958. In the same year, the three main people's communes were established in regional village agriculture, timbering, and animal husbandry that would help to transform the “largely pastoral local ethnic minorities [Tibetans] into productive national workers.” Forests were minimally harvested prior to the 1960s; thus they escaped what some scholars have called the “first great cutting” of timber in the late 1950s. However, as state and provincial timber

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516 Personal communication with Dr. Ran Guangrong (April, 2005); Ran 2000, 129; SXZ 1999, 409. In 1956, local surveys of Han and Hui landlords that held title to and exploited timber retained only 256.9 mu (1 mu was equal to .12 hectares) of timberland. The majority of timber land was considered “wasteland” (huangdi, chi.) or “fuel wood.” See SXZ 1999, 397. The vast majority of timber land, some 80,000 mu, was under the control of local Tibetan headmen and religious institutions, or claimed by no one at all. SXZ 1999, 409.


518 SXZ 1999 32-36, 409, 500-01.

519 See Zhao Ang, “Sichuan zangqu senlin de liwei, kunjing he zouxiang lianxin xunhuan de sikao [The Crises of the Forest Industry in Sichuan Tibetan Areas and Ways Towards Positive Development],” Jingji dili [Economic
concerns increasingly used local timber resources for national development into the ‘60s and ‘70s, official characterizations of Tibetans as agricultural, handicraft and pastoral oriented peoples allowed elite state administrative bodies a free hand in developing Songpan’s timber. Tibetans in the Songpan region were expected to expand local pastoral and agricultural production while settled in towns and villages, and the state and its forestry bureaus were to develop the region’s full timber potential. In order to do this, however, the state had to develop an infrastructure to support timber extraction.

While the major construction of roads leading in and out of the region along the major waterways commenced in 1954, the early incarnations of the major provincial roadways used today were not fully completed until 1966. By 1957 the two primary roads (zhuyao gonglu, chi.) were passable for cattle carts, and by 1958 the first buses and logging trucks could reach the Songpan and Jiuzhaigou districts along the Min and Baishui Rivers. Throughout the 1960s, roads linking all of the major watersheds and forested areas of the Songpan region were built by county and prefecture forestry bureaus. The primary drive behind the construction of passable roads up the various watersheds had less to do with “socialist construction” in the region than it did with exploiting old-growth timber stock in roadless areas.

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520 This was especially significant in that rural surveys done in the late 1940s and 1950s showed that forests covered at least 45% of Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties. See AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 973-74.

521 The Baqen-Songpan and Songpan-Nanping (to Mianyang City in northcentral Chengdu Plain) roads were completed in 1958. The primary provincial trunk route from Chengdu to Songpan, the Songpan-Maowen Highway was completed in 1964. Other improved roadways (ie. truck and car carrying capacity) in the interior of Songpan County, for example to Pingwu and Mao’er gai (due east and west of Songpan) would wait for 1976 and 1986 respectively for completion. Hauling logs via trucks was never a major way to move timber out of the region prior to the late 1970s, but hauling Han Chinese Sichuan peasants and laborers into the forested interior commenced in earnest 1963 with the near completion of the main trunk route via Mao County. Prior to 1976, most logs that were harvested in the region were floated down the various rivers during their early summer flood stage by the Minjiang muxing shuiyuan ju [Min River Timber Raft Water Bureau]. See SXZ 1999, 500-01; AZZ 1993, 995-96.

Improved transportation in the region coupled with the transformation of land tenure into a more “egalitarian” structure was a local manifestation of the socialist national construction initiative (guojia jianshe, chi.). This was on of the first large-scale projects to develop the west that in turn enabled further infrastructure development and resource exploitation. Another related construction project in the region involved building several small hydropower facilities built to supply Songpan and a few towns along the Min and Baishui Rivers. This element of “National Construction” held out the promise of creating a new and improved living standard for local peoples, and the construction of primary roads and land reform gave the state local legitimacy and currency in the 1950s. But these infrastructure projects were only a part of the overall state-building and state-led initiatives in the region. The state also proceeded to set up a forestry regime in the region which was separate from local communes and county administrations, and staffed largely by Han Chinese from the Sichuan Basin.

The Institutional Setting for the Forestry Regime

Prior to 1949, there was no Ministry of Forestry or Forestry Department of note in Sichuan. The first forestry program in China clearly based on a resource assessment was set out in the national Plan for Agriculture instituted in 1956. Initially, pronouncements on land use in 1956 specified that areas in China’s southwest would be designated as state forests. Most

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524 As the Songpan County Gazetteer acknowledges in its overview of population, a significant portion of Han Chinese migration into the area and Han population growth was connected to forestry development in the 1960s and ‘70s. In the published population statistics, this is demonstrated by two serious population spikes in 1968-69 and 1972-73 that corresponded with the opening of untouched forested areas to development. See SXZ 1999, 165, 168-69.
525 This National Plan set up a program to harvest forests surveyed by the Nationalist government before the war. Targets and quotas for harvesting, afforestation, and shelter plantations were set in 1956 and assumptions about the standing volume of trees throughout China guided official policy through the late 1960s. See Stanley Richardson, Forests and Forestry in China: Changing Patterns of Resource Development (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1990), 182. See also, AZZ 1993, 975. The Aba Zhouzhi sets out the initial standing reserves of Aba Prefecture (Songpan regional forests accounting for approximately one third of the forests), based on Nationalist surveys in the 1940s, at 150 million board feet.
other wooded areas, approximately two-thirds of all forestland, were allocated to households for subsistence purposes. The newly formed Ministry of Forestry managed state forests as a source of raw materials and treated timber as a free good—as no human labor was invested yet, timber was a “free” good. Until 1958, forest ownership in the Songpan region was largely private and in the hands of local Tibetans and Tibetan elites. Most rural households continued to operate individually or within existing mutual aid teams. When elementary level cooperatives began to operate in the region in 1956, member households were required to pool their resources (whether timber, animal, or agricultural). However, they retained ownership of their properties and the trees on them until 1958 when private ownership of all forested areas was abolished.

Two basic policies came out of merging the cooperatives and collective ownership of forest resources of the Songpan region. Some scholars have argued that there was a link between large-scale deforestation in the late 1950s and early ‘60s and the radical ownership transformation that began in 1956. In the first place, advanced cooperatives were required to value private forests in monetary terms and compensate member households. This policy was not, however, strictly enforced. Second, all non-timber trees remained the property of households or villages and remained more or less private property. For Songpan locals this meant that the majority of primary old-growth timber, all of the rest of timber in northern Sichuan in the 1950s, was nationalized as “state forests” and came under the purview of the leaders of advanced cooperatives and prefecture forest bureaus. Local commune leadership and

528 This was due to the Songpan region’s “autonomous region” status, which meant that land and tenure reforms would have to proceed more slowly than in other parts of “more advanced” Han China. The situation in the Songpan region echoes the findings of Liu Dachang who discusses the configurations of forest ownership more generally for China in the 1950s and ‘60s. The only exception was some early foresting done along the southern border of Mao’er gai township by Heishui County Forestry Burea in 1956. SXZ 1999, 409 and Liu Dachang 2001, 241. See also Janet Sturgeon on the Thai-Chinese border among the Akha minority; Janet Sturgeon 2005, 53-4.
forestry board members—two separate entities in practice—were not elected but were appointed cadres and officials of the prefecture and provincial governments.\footnote{In elementary and administrative cooperatives, there was some democratic and ethnic representation in the groups responsible for governing land use. However, the state appointee commune leadership and thus the party managed and administered land use. For the breakdown of commune leadership running local development and commune projects, see SXZ 1999, 967-88—only 17% of the leadership in the late 1950s and ‘60s were Tibetan or Hui, and of those that were, none were locals. See also AZZ 1993, 990 and Liu 2001, 243.}

The forest bureaus (\textit{linye ju}, chi.; \textit{nags las cus}, tib.) that took over management of most of Songpan’s timber after 1957-58 were based in county and prefecture seats. These bureaus acted as “representatives” of local communes and their forest resources even though they had no direct administrative link to them.\footnote{The two earliest bureaus starting forestry operations in the Songpan region were the Chuanxi sengongju linye ding [Sichuan forest production bureau forestry office] in Maerkang (after 1956 Aba zhou linye ju [Aba Prefecture Forestry Bureau]) and Heishui linyeju [Heishui County forestry bureau]. AZZ 1993, 990. The Heishui office established a satellite office in Mao’er gai’s Xiaba Village, started their operations in the southernmost reaches of Mao’er gai Township and rafted their logs down the Mao’ergai-Heishui River starting in 1957. SXZ 1999, 409.} Between 1958 and 1961, four bureau offices, two forest farms (sometimes referred to as forest centers, or \textit{linchang}, chi.; \textit{shing khang}, tib.), and two logging stations (\textit{linye zhan}, chi.) were created in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties and logging operations commenced.\footnote{The offices were located at the mouth of the Rewu River (Zhengjiang) in the upper Min River watershed north of Songpan (Changla) and along the lower reaches of the Fu River (Hezangjing). They began to survey local forests for harvesting and were commencing operations with their own logging crews by 1960. The two timber farms began cutting and afforestation work on the middle and upper Baishui River (Jiuzhaigou County), and the logging crews started work outside of Nanping (modern Jiuzhaigou township) and along the Little River (Xiaohce) part of the Fu River (around modern Huanglong Nature Reserve). SXZ 1999, 409-411.} These offices and logging units were staffed mainly by Han Chinese from the Sichuan Basin working under prefecture bosses, although some logging units (especially afforestation teams) also included Tibetans from Jiuzhaigou County.\footnote{The second major wave of afforestation in the Songpan region took place between 1961-66. Again, a significant portion of the afforestation work was done by Tibetans taking part in various “national construction” campaigns. Interestingly enough, after 1966, further afforestation campaigns and funding were not extended into state-collective forests until the 1978-79 and 1981-82. SXZ 1999, 411.} As the various forest offices experienced further collectivization or expansion in the early 1960s, they grew larger, and continued to draw on large numbers of Han Chinese from outside of the region.

The official argument for collectivization and the Great Leap Forward in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s was that further collectivization would increase rural capital formation and be conducive to...
local public works. By mobilizing rural surplus labor, to enhance output and productivity, China would “catch up” with the West. Under collective ownership, the dividends from forest harvesting that were supposed to be distributed according to property shares were replaced by labor credits accrued through the work point system.\(^{534}\) While the work point system to a degree served the workers in the forests, the Tibetans who had previously “owned” the timber land received very little in the way of labor credits or work points as they were not involved in harvesting the timber. Those work points and the benefits of the timber itself were accrued by outside bureaus and their workers.\(^{535}\) Furthermore, as the collectives owned all timber in the region, local Tibetans, Hui and Han working along the major rivers who were not part of the forestry bureaus had limited legal access to scattered individual trees surrounding their homes, agricultural plots and villages.

Forestry bureau officials from Ma’erkang, Aba Prefecture’s capital, worked with the provincial ministry and departments of forestry to greatly expand timber harvesting based on increased timber harvesting quotas. In particular, the Mao’er gai region on the headwaters of the Heishui River was targeted from 1958-61, and the Nanping (Jiuzhaigou area), Zhenjiang (mid-Songpan region), and Changla commune forests at the headwaters of the Min River were other major forests clear cut between 1961 and 1971.\(^{536}\) A good example of the results of centralizing primary forest stands under collective ownership vested in local governments and run by outside

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\(^{534}\) Following a study by Brian Stavis of rural Sichuan, communes and collectives no longer acknowledged private ownership of the means of production as well as the right to compensation in regional forests. In the Songpan region this meant that local Tibetans lost out on any kind remuneration for their trees. See Brian Stavis, “Rural Institutions in China,” in Robert Barker (ed.), *The Chinese Agricultural Economy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982).

\(^{535}\) An exception to this process was afforestation campaigns carried out in mass drives in 1959-60 in the Songpan region. Many Tibetans took part in these drives (they were mandatory in some areas along the Min and Baishui Rivers) and accrued work points accordingly. See SXZ 1999, 411.

\(^{536}\) SXZ 1999, 370-71, 409, 420-21. The Mao’er gai area was targeted and first peaked between 1959-60; the other areas were clearcut between 1969-72. From 1977 onward, the major areas exploited were Maonigou, the area along the Zhengjiang River (central county), and smaller stands in the eastern and northern part of the county left over from the early ‘60s.
bureaus can be seen in how these forests were officially rated over time. The primary forest stands (old growth, large timber) in the Zhenjiang and Changla communes discussed in the 1943 Sichuan Resources Committee report and in the original 1950s forest resource surveys of the region by the People’s Forestry Survey were rated “thin and sparse” (shulin, chi.) or “shrub dominated” (guan mulin, chi.) forest lands by the early 1980s. According to local sources these stands were harvested between 1961 and 1978. These two areas, over 1000 hectares each, went from dense forest to lightly or un-forested land in less than twenty years.

Campaigns, Policy Changes, and Early Forestry Issues

Vesting timber tenure with local government officials and cadres resulted in major problems for Songpan’s timber stands. By 1962, the provincial and prefecture government changed their forest tenure practices again, shifting forest tenure and management to lower levels. Forest ownership remained collective, but was now distributed among communes, production brigades (the equivalent of advanced cooperatives), and production teams (the equivalent of elementary cooperatives). However, devolution of control was premised on the tree species involved, so that certain kinds of high volume, high quality wood from the spruce and pine species remained under the purview of higher level management (not local forestry bureaus, but

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537 Forests in Sichuan were zoned into eleven common, exploitable forest types according to the Sichuan Ministry of Forestry. These types of forests were common use, shelter, economic, “special”, bamboo, thin/sparse, shrub/scrub, immature, nursery, former, and suitable forested wasteland forests. In 1999, the most accessible statistics on forested areas of the county stated that state and provincial foresting entities were utilizing (in one fashion or another) 14% of the common use forests, 32% of the shelter forests, and over 40% of the shrub/scrub forests. SXZ 1999, 407-08; see also Sichuan sheng senlin zhi 1990; AZZ 1994, 1023-24, for changes over time. The most important timber stocks harvested in the region were divided into two belts, montane and sub-alpine temperate forests. The trees targeted for harvest from these belts were fir, spruce and pine from the montane belt, and fir, spruce, larch and juniper from the sub-alpine temperate forests. See SXZ 1999, 406-07 and Sichuan Vegetation Studies Editorial Board, Sichuan Zhubei [Sichuan’s Vegetation] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1980), 297-306.

538 This was not just the case in the Songpan region, but in other forested regions as well. See Yin Rusheng 1994, 79.
under provincial management) while less desirable species such as willows, fruit trees, and scrub trees used for fuelwood were transferred to county forestry bureaus and individuals.\textsuperscript{539}

Afforestation campaigns, which included Tibetan labor, also proved problematic in the late 1950s through the mid-1960s. In the dry valleys of the Upper Min River, for example, revegetation was concentrated on tree planting even though it was realized that afforestation on cut and grazed-over land might not be sustainable.\textsuperscript{540} In the late 1950s, sapling transplants were used but with few exceptions failed. Local cadres and forestry scientists felt that key reasons for local failures included daily and seasonal temperature extremes on the bare hillsides and dependence on seasonal rainfall. From the early to mid 1960s, other strategies were attempted, including planting saplings along prepared contour lines and uplifting water from local streams and the Min River.\textsuperscript{541} Three to five times yearly, in the dry months in late spring and autumn months, water was uplifted from local water sources to irrigate saplings. As a result of these experiments, according to local sources, approximately 80\% of local saplings survived.\textsuperscript{542} However, these trees had to be irrigated several times a year to ensure their survival. The survival rate for the trees was low not just because of the difficulty in keeping them watered, but exacerbated by fuel wood “gathering” by locals and collective grazing practices and related sapling degradation from over-grazing.\textsuperscript{543} In addition, the large scale and continuous irrigation of hillside trees as well as natural rainfall on afforested plots led to soil erosion and debris flows.

\textsuperscript{539}SXZ 1999, 419-20.
\textsuperscript{541} Liu 1985, 105-06.
\textsuperscript{542} SXZ 1999, 411; Liu 1985, 106. Approximately 7500 mu were afforested, with approximately 80\% success rates.
\textsuperscript{543} Liu 1985, 106-07.

Furthermore, the start of the “Four Cleanups Campaign” in 1964 and the Cultural Revolution in 1966 brought about another policy reversal for household and regional ownership and control of forests.\footnote{Basically, timber tenure changed yet again as part of the Four Cleanups Campaign of 1964. “Leftists” elements of the provincial and prefecture government claimed that any household ownership of trees and plantations (cut-over land or not) conflicted with socialism. See AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 1055 and Liu 2001, 245.} All tree ownership in the Songpan region was once again centralized, re-collectivized, and transferred to production teams or production brigades run by the provincial Ministry of Forestry.\footnote{Ministry of Forestry, China Forestry Yearbook 1949-1987, 210-11; China Forestry Yearbook 1994, 30; China Forestry Yearbook 1997, 26-29.} After 1966, local forestry bureaus took their marching orders from the provincial center. The result of this reorganization was that all production activities, including forestry, were put under strict quota regulations. These regulations could include detailed cropping patterns, planting acreage or afforesting wasteland, seed/seedling selection, field practices, output targets and delivery specifications. Regardless of the outcome of various tenure practices, the functional relationship of the provincial and prefecture authorities with the forests and local people remained essentially one of resource extraction. During the 1960s and ‘70s, national grain policy and party ideology discouraged local households and collectives from investing in forests and timber management, and state owned forest farms run by the provincial Ministry of Forestry frequently encroached on the forests of local collectives and mined their timber resources.\footnote{The “Take Grain as the Key Link” campaign (Yiliang weigang, chi.) and Learn from Dazhai (the Daizhi lu or Daizhai Road) were both major policy initiatives that had impact on the foresting policies of northern Sichuan in the 1960s and ‘70s. With the communes concentrating on food production, study sessions and class struggle, and cultural destruction and re-education, the state-led Bureau of Forestry and its administrators locally had more or less a free hand to fell their trees, ignore afforestation work, and move on to the next stand. Even though the state run forest administrators were supposed to leave local collective stands alone, they did not. Perhaps the most egregious}
One of the most important aspects of the creation of Songpan’s forestry regime was the “Third Front” campaign carried out between 1964 and 1971. This military development program was intended to create a huge self-sufficient industrial base area to serve as a strategic reserve if China entered a war with the United States or the Soviet Union. Study of deforestation in China has traditionally placed a great deal of emphasis on the Great Leap Forward and even earlier practices. However, in the Songpan region, it was not the “first cutting” during the Great Leap, but the “second cutting” under the Third Front campaign and Cultural Revolution that set the parameters for government management of regional forests and felling practices.

The Third Front (the Big Third Front or da sanxian, chi.) was first proposed in 1962, but started in earnest in August of 1964. The socialist government called for a huge investment in western China, in particular to construct infrastructure and huge integrated steel and aluminum mills in Sichuan and Gansu. Sichuan, often likened to a mountain fortress, received a great deal of the initial and subsequent Third Front funds and administrative support. It was designed as a large scale industrial network, supported by machine tool factories, mines,

example of their forest mining on collective lands was in the Mao’er gai forest department where after 1971, no contiguous forest areas were left at all even though over 45% of the forested area of the region was collectively owned by local Tibetans who were not allowed to work on the crews and saw little money trickle down to them after the logs were cut. The Tibetans were left with a largely denuded scrubland landscape where large old-growth forests stood as late as the late 1960s. See SXZ 1999, 420-21; Zhao 1992; Dan Winkler, “Deforestation in Eastern Tibet: Human Impact – Past and Present,” Graham Clarke (ed.), Development, Society and Environment in Tibet (Vienna: Verlag der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), 79-96; D. Winkler, “Patterns of Forest Distribution and the Impact of Fire and Pastoralism in the Forest Region of Eastern Tibet,” in Miehe and Zhang (eds.), Environmental Change in High Asia (Marburg: Marburger Geographische Schriften 135, 2000), 201-227; D. Winkler, “Forest Use and Implications of the 1998 Logging Ban in the Tibetan Prefectures of Sichuan,” Informatore Botanico Italiano 35:1 (2003), 116-25; and personal observations 2005.

548 Barry Naughton’s study is the best overview of the “Third Front.” See Barry Naughton, “The Third Front: Defence Industrialization in the Chinese Interior,” China Quarterly 115 (September 1988), 351-86. 549 For example, Judith Shapiro and Stanley Richardson posit that the Great Leap was the originating point for state led forestry practices that would cause many later problems in China. See Shapiro 2001, 80-82; Richardson 1990, 8. 550 See Naughton 1988, 352-53. 551 These two mills, Panzhihua Steel Mill and Baiyin Aluminum Plant, ate up a significant portion of Third Front funds, but were only two of many, many projects throughout Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai. See Fang Weizhong (ed.), Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jingji dashiji 1949-1980 [Economic Chronology of the People’s Republic of China, 1949-1980] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1984), 377-78; Xiantai zhongguo de yibaixiang jianshe [100 Construction Projects of Contemporary China] (Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe, 1985), 3-8. 552 Naughton 1988, 353.
smelting, railways, hydropower facilities and more, and was intentionally sited in particularly remote areas. Among its first tasks (c. 1964-65) was the completion or accelerated construction of railway lines from Chongqing to Guiyang and into the Sichuan hinterland as well as construction of processing plants to support the larger steel and aluminum mills.

The Songpan region itself saw little direct Third front investment, but it provided a significant amount of resources for the campaign. Regional forests were felled for Third Front projects and rafted downstream at an increasing pace after 1964, but especially 1966-67 and 1971-73.\( ^{553} \) The majority of north Sichuan timber was rafted downstream for three reasons linked to the Third Front. First, a cluster of new enterprises was constructed in the rugged mountains where the Min River flowed onto the Chengdu Plain, including the South-west Aluminum Processing Plant which stamped out huge precision parts of aluminum and light alloy steels for airplanes, missiles and ships.\( ^{554} \) Second, a thousand miles of railway had to be constructed linking Chengdu with Kunming and Guiyang, which were needed to supply the machine-building and steel mill construction at Panzhihua and other areas of southern Sichuan.\( ^{555} \) Finally, the hundreds of thousands of workers necessary for the construction and new mills and factories needed offices, buildings, housing and sundry wooden materials.\( ^{556} \) In particular, to the southeast and east along the Chengdu-Xian railroad, several heavy machinery enterprises were constructed.\( ^{557} \) All of the enterprises, but especially the railroads, needed regular and massive supplies of timber. This timber was readily available in the Songpan region.

Among the first areas tapped for Third Front development were the forests along the Baishui and

\( ^{553} \) SXZ 1999, 420-21.
\( ^{554} \) Xiandai 1985, 230-35.
\( ^{557} \) Fang 1984, 399; Cui 1985, 177.
Fu Rivers, which had easier access to the Chengdu Plain and the early Third Front development along the Chengdu-Xian railway (due east of each river). Timber from along the Min River and its tributaries was rafted down to the plants and towns constructed for the Third Front in Wenchuan and Mao Counties. Beside timber rafted down the major rivers for projects outside of the region, it also provided rock and gravel for road and other construction projects, lime deposits (mostly in Mao County), and food stuffs.

The Third Front was a classic manifestation of the ability of a centrally planned system to mobilize vast quantities of resources (in the Songpan region, timber) for industrial development and get it shipped. In February of 1965, the central government set up a “southwest construction commission” with comprehensive powers over Third Front construction. This body created “command posts” throughout Yunnan, Sichuan and Guizhou to oversee construction of the railroads and production facilities. In the Songpan region, prior to 1971, Third Front quotas for timber or other raw materials were handed down through state forest bureaus and offices. In 1971, the construction commission set up a “command post” in Mao’er gai to begin exploiting larger amounts of timber and rafting it downstream for use at both the lime and aluminum mills in Mao and Wenchuan Counties. In this way, Third Front offices were able to bypass regional and county governments to reallocate large amounts of timber for construction use. Outside of exploiting the region for its timber (and to a much lesser degree, its stone), the Third Front campaign did not reach into the daily lives of locals—just into their forests. Other forces were on the move beyond the Third Front that would continue to change the nature of local society.

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558 Fang 1984, 389-90. See also Naughton 1988, 367.
559 SXZ 1999, 410. See also Xu Junhai, ed. Minjiang zhi [Min River Gazetteer] (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shuili dianli ting tingzhang, 1990), 100, 234-35.
During the mid-1960s, there was rampant and largely indiscriminate felling of tree stocks in China’s national “second timber base,” which included Songpan forests. Degradation of timber stocks during this time were not caused, as some sources note, by population pressure, criminal elements, or local farmers, or because of the Great Leap Forward. Rather, degradation of the environment and over-harvesting of timber in the Songpan region was the outcome of planned commercial timber extraction based on government quotas. Timber was not only in great demand for China’s rapidly developing national economy, but also often the most important source of cash revenue for local administrations for funding education and health infrastructure. State forest enterprises were required to sell a minimum timber quota, often as much as three times the sustainable yield, at a price that was often below production costs. To compensate for this they often sold even more timber on the “free market.” As a result, in some areas annual felling was four times more than the sustainable yield. Consequently, forest cover in Sichuan fell from 30% to 6.5% between 1950 and 1982. Deforestation in Aba Prefecture as a whole began in the 1960s when it supplied up to 84% of Sichuan’s timber quota, and in the Songpan region, approximately 34% of Aba Prefecture’s total stock. By the late 1980s, the high state and provincial timber quotas for the region had fallen to less than 15% because the major

560 The “second timber base” was in Yunnan and Sichuan collectively. Sichuan’s forests in Tibetan areas of western and northern Sichuan were considered the third largest and best timber reserves of all of China. AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 1058-59.
563 The real issue for the communes and forestry bureaus was not the compulsory quota so much as the quota prices imposed by the government. The quota prices were set so low that the gap between market and quota prices was large. Through price differentials and accompanying subsidies to urban consumers, farmers and foresters in China made substantial contributions to urbanization and industrialization—the goal of the Chinese state. The result for local forests, local communes that theoretically held them, and for the environment, though, was rampant over-harvesting. The best concise overview of the problem of the compulsory delivery system and pricing mechanism for forests is outlined in Sun 1992, 36. See also Dwight Perkins and Samuel Yusuf, Rural Development in China (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984).
stands were already gone. According to some sources, in the upper reaches of the Min River, state-led foresting on state forest and collective forest land decimated the large tree timber stands of the region from approximately 33% forest cover in 1950 to less than 16% forest cover by 1986.

The Cultural Revolution and Landscape Management

By 1967-68, the fervor of the Cultural Revolution had reached the Songpan region, and yet another set of parameters defined and redefined the forests, local life and the landscape. First, between 1967-1976 the “Dazhai spirit” had been the chief model for developing the Songpan area, and slogans such as “Grasp revolution, spur production” (Zhuang geming, cu shangsi, chi.) emphasized Mao thought to conquer nature and took precedence over the usual practicalities of agriculture and forestry in the region. With backbreaking physical sacrifices, it was thought that communal efforts could wrest more food and timber from an inhospitable landscape. The best overall analysis of the overall effect of “Learn from Dazhai” campaigns on the environment is Judith Shapiro’s discussion of the grainfields and lakes in Yunnan and the political ideology of how “the Foolish Old Man Removed Mountains” and its impact on local environments. In northern Sichuan, following the Dazhai path meant different developments and consequences.

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566 The best example of the coming of the Cultural Revolution is in the outline of historical events in the Songpan Gazetteer. The Wenhua da geming (Cultural Revolution) first came to Songpan in 1966, and major campaigns gained momentum in the summer of 1967 when the “Grasp revolution, spur production” campaign was officially instituted. The “Learn from Dazhai” campaign began in earnest in 1970 with the arrival of “sent down youth.” SXZ 1999, 39-40, 76-77.
567 SXZ 1999, 76.
568 Shapiro 2001, 100-112. See also AZZ 1993, vl. 1, 676. The prefecture gazetteer notes in particular how the “Learn from Dazhai” campaign and story of the “Foolish old man who removed mountains” impacted official administration.
569 The “Learn from Dazhai” campaign ran roughshod over regional differences and usurped the power of decision makers with proven experience in local practices. The effort to “Get grain from the mountaintops” (Xiang shan yao liang, chi.) in northern Sichuan led to inappropriate terracing on steep slopes in areas with thin topsoil, brought
Following the Dazhai road meant more than expanding output; it also entailed more and more thorough re-education of bad elements and backward peoples. A new series of “class” campaigns were initiated that targeted several social groups of local Tibetans and Hui. Chief among these were the “cleansing the class ranks” campaign, carried out by provincial and prefecture revolutionary committees. This campaign, that on a nationwide level was little short of organized terror, had a significant impact on the Songpan region—the “cleansing the class ranks” campaigns especially re-targeted people with bad class labels carried over from the 1950s and also included a fairly significant number of minority cadres and workers who had avoided condemnation in earlier campaigns. A number of such minority cadres who worked in natural resource positions were purged and replaced by Han Chinese “Red” officials from the Chengdu Plain or elsewhere in eastern China.

The political-ecological landscape of the late 1960s was dominated by forest, infrastructure, agriculture, and animal husbandry development tied to the creation of the “Third Front” in Sichuan and Yunnan. Mao’s final great campaign of the ‘60s and early ‘70s set up further social re-education of local ethnic groups and increased exploitation of regional timber

deforestation, soil erosion, and stunted crops to the region A range of other land reclamation slogans and campaigns were practiced in Sichuan including: “Encircle the rivers and build land” (Weihu zaotian, chi.); “Destroy the forests and open the wastelands” (Huilin kaihuang, chi.); “On steep slopes, open the wastelands” (Doupo kai huang, chi.); “Destroy the pasturelands, open the wastelands” (Huimu kaihuang, chi.). To some degree or another all of these campaigns were practiced in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s in the region, but with the exception of the “Learn from Dazhai” campaign, none of them were noted in county or prefecture gazetteers. My source for these colorful campaign slogans was a series of informal discussions with Hui and Tibetan trekking guides and Songpan County locals in June 2002 and May 2005.

570 See also Michael Schoenhals 2004. The prefecture gazetteer notes that the “red science” movement had an impact particularly on cadre instructors and science and health oriented cadres in northern Sichuan. AZZ 1993, 1, 676-78.

571SXZ 1999, 77. The “Third Front” was one of the final and large-scale campaigns spearheaded by Mao Zedong between 1968-76. In this campaign, CCP leadership called for at least one-quarter of all industrial production and facilities to move to more remote and dispersed locations in case of a Soviet or American nuclear attack. “Third Front” activities only slightly impacted the Songpan region as the relocation of important industrial and manufacturing facilities were not placed in the region. They were, however, placed downstream near the lower reaches of the upper Min River (basically a range of industrial and manufacturing centers located on the Min River for 75 kilometers north of Dujiangyan City). The people and industrial centers required timber for a variety of purposes, so timber harvesting was increased in the region between 1971-75 to help support their relocation. AZZ 1993, 2, 1008-09. See also Minjiang zhi 1990, 258.
reserves. In contrast to mobilizing local forces to “conquer nature” as a communal entity, local populations of Tibetans and Hui continued to be mobilized primarily to work on road infrastructure, agriculture (chiefly trying to grow wheat in a region where wheat does not fare well), and animal husbandry—and above all, to continue to take part in ideological re-education.573

Furthermore, the majority of 1960s and ‘70s forestry personnel in the region were from outside of the area. Han Chinese and “Sent down youth” (Shangshan xiaxiang, chi., or “Up to the mountains, down to the countryside” campaign) from throughout the province were brought in to fell trees, facilitate their transportation on the rivers or limited trucking system, and survey and help build new roads into areas with viable big timber. Much of the effort from 1969-73 was centered in the southern half of the region, especially the Kalong and Mao’er gai forestry farm and logging operations. By 1974 these stocks were largely exhausted and timbering had to be moved to the more central Rewu District.574 A massive amount of timber had been felled in the region for state and provincial use. As with the 1960s, very little of the harvesting was done by the local residents these projects would most thoroughly affect. Rather, it was mostly outsiders who worked the forest farms and stations and harvested not just state forests but local communal ones as well. Very little afforestation was carried out during this period; instead, forest stations would exhaust an area and move on. In some of the most decimated forest regions of northern and western Sichuan, entire departments had to move three times between 1965 and 1981 as they had completely exhausted local timber reserves.575

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573 See AZWX, vl. 4, 490-92; Ran 2000, 105.
574 The Mao’er gai district produced over 1.4 Mm3 board feet of timber between 1969-73, and the Rewu district about half that by 1978. SXZ 1999, 421; AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 994-95. See also, Aba zangzu zizhi zhou linye zhi 1993.
The frequency of policy reversals during this time was staggering. The history of change of ownership of juniper and larches in Songpan County between 1956 and 1981 is indicative of the problem. Ownership of these trees, commonly used in religious ceremonies and for building materials, was transferred from households to advanced cooperatives in 1956, and to the commune in 1958. In 1963 ownership was transferred from the commune back to households, and then in 1966 to the production team. In 1973, junipers were transferred back to households and in 1978 to production teams, and after 1981, to individual households, collectives, prefecture, provincial, and state forestry bureaus. This frequent shift in property rights over a relatively brief period of time had an impact on forest management and the livelihoods of rural people. However, inconsistent policies over tree tenure were only part of the problem. Over-felling of timber based on unrealistic government and non-local timbering quotas, popular campaigns, and disenfranchisement of locals from the timbering process also had a major effect. The use of Maoist models to transform the natural world had strong potential to damage the environment because terrain was indiscriminately treated like that of the model, regardless of variations in topography, soil conditions, rainfall, or local practices.

The consequences of expanded state-led foresting in Songpan under the “Dazhai road” model that remained in force until the late 1970s can be understood in three primary ways. First, there was a policy shift on who actually owned the trees, with more strategic trees like older growth pine, fir and spruces once again relinquished to higher level production teams and the commune, though managed by provincial and prefecture forest bureaus. In practice, state and most commune forests were seen as the same properties. While local communes and the regional county governments did receive significant revenues, they tended to invest in local

576 Aba zang qiangzu zizhizhou linye zhi 1993, 210-12.
infrastructure and to expand existing foresting and light industry projects as the ‘70s progressed.  

Second, the Tibetans and Hui who theoretically owned and benefited from the forests had become mostly divorced from the entire process of foresting by the mid 1960s. Most locals, especially Tibetans, were tied more closely to their “traditional” practices, coerced and trained to prevent them from using their forests as they had for centuries (with the exception of medicinal herb gathering), and spent much of their time participating in that were intended to transform them into socialist citizens or working on projects that benefited the forestry bureaus like road building. While their county administrations continued to receive some forest revenues at the grassroots level, Tibetans and Hui received very little in return for the large-scale harvesting of their forests. Collective ownership of Songpan forests vested prefecture and provincial authorities with primary decision-making regarding tees and made large-scale state-led deforestation possible.

Third, the constant policy changes left locals with little faith in the security of local ownership (or even the commune’s) rights to the landscape and its features around them. Under such conditions, it became quite reasonable for locals to “mine” forest and animal resources for as much benefit as quickly as they could, before policy changes again left them with less control over their forests and trees (if there were any trees left at that point). For example, bursts of individual foresting from 1961-64 led local forest users to get cut what they could, while they could. The ambiguities over tenure and who could cut the trees also led to significant ambiguity  

578 In other words, local officials relied heavily on a single element of local primary industry to base their tax and construction revenues. As forest stocks were exhausted, the region had to rely more and more heavily on shrinking state subsidies. See Zhao 1992; Winkler 2002; Ran 2000.
about who was supposed to reforest regions clearcut in the 1960s and ‘70s. While provincial and prefecture forestry bureaus saw the need for afforestation projects, they did little in this regard.

The frequency of changes and afforestation failures outlined in the previous section suggests three important underlying issues for understanding the impact of the forestry regime and the overall context of forestry and rural development in Songpan from the late 1950s to 1978. First, as noted by Changjin Sun (1992) in his study of rural forestry across China as a whole, insecure tenure and constant policy changes at the individual household, cooperative, commune, and brigade levels over the course of the period made rural people reluctant to invest in reforestation of harvested timberland. The most important drawback of the various incarnations of the commune system in the Songpan region was the failure to work out an effective incentive mechanism given the poorly defined individual rights, responsibilities and benefits within the commune. The forestry bureaus, county administration, and even the Han Chinese forestry personnel reaped the rewards of foresting while Tibetans and locals were confined within certain occupations that the state deemed “traditional” Tibetan occupations.

These repeated cycles of centralization and decentralization have implications for understanding local social capital as well. One conclusion reached by Liu Dachang in his study on non-state forests in China was a relationship between group size and successful collective management. Mutual aid teams, elementary cooperatives, advanced cooperatives, and communes, functioned alternately as owner or manager of collective forests from 1956-1978. In the Songpan region, when the ownership of land and forest was transferred back to production

579 Insecure tenure made local governments less willing to afforest denuded areas prior to the 1980s as they were uncertain they would actually benefit from investing in afforestation efforts.
580 Sun 1992, 36.
teams or production brigades, it was because the recognized as begin too large and less efficient than production teams in managing agricultural and forest production. Decision making in elementary cooperatives changed from twenty or thirty households making management decisions for their forests to advanced cooperatives and forestry bureau personnel making decisions for ten to twenty times the number of households. In addition, compared to the elementary cooperatives, communes failed to mount effective afforestation projects, even when they had the official support and seedlings to undertake them. Forest management in Songpan was further complicated by having managers of the forestry bureaus who were outside of the region and as well by national provincial and prefecture quotas that ignored actual local timber stocks and reported afforestation “successes.” Thus for this region, group size and outside management appeared to be inversely related to successful collective management of existing forest stock.

Finally, from the 1950s through the 1970s the cycles of centralization and decentralization represented attempts by the government to create social capital at different levels and through radically varying institutional forms. The problems encountered by these forms of collective action, premised on working with locals, shifting them away from their forests and bringing in outsiders who were unaware of local conditions, as well as various “red experts,” may point to the limits of the socialist government’s ability to create social capital at the grassroots from scratch. State led efforts at collectivization were premised on creating a series of new institutional forms of social and forest management that ultimately failed. As noted in Chapter Four, Tibetan and locally initiated collective action, though based on remnant forms of elite management, had succeeded in feeding, paying and caring for local people in the 1950s. This success had been achieved in conjunction with the new socialist government,
without changing earlier existing institutional forms. After 1957, however, the institutional
arrangements of the early 1950s was jettisoned in favor of “civilizing” the region through outside
collective management and state institutions like the forestry regime in which locals had few if
any vested interests. The nature of the state forestry regime, an exploitative and coercive
structure that divorced local communities from their resources, was limited in its ability to help
locals and their communities; it even managed to exacerbate some environmental issues. In the
end, the excessive and improper clearance of forests in '60s and '70s were often called the
“second great cutting.” The parcelization of regional administration and de-linking of
Tibetans from the burgeoning forestry regime, reliance on campaigns (especially collectivization
and the Dazhai model), and policy and administrative inconsistencies from the 1950s to mid '70s
all were significant factors for understanding the next wave of forest destruction that would face
the Songpan region in the early Reform Period. During the 1978-81 Reform Period (Xiahai,
chi.), localized cutting frenzies burst forth as individuals and state-run companies broke with
their communal past. The “Third Great Cutting” followed in this time of legal ambiguity and
widespread clear cutting.

### 5.3 Diversification of State Policies in the early Reform Period

Changes in policies toward forests, forested land, and ethnic nationalities developed
slowly over the course of the 1970s, culminating in the legal reforms of the early 1980s. This
section argues that these changes resulted in a “relaxation” of land and forest tenure practices for
regional ethnic minorities, but also heralded serious problems for the regional environment as
limited timber tenure devolution (under decollectivization, thon sked ‘gan gtsang, tib.) meant
that not only were state forestry bureaus overharvesting timber stocks, but local Tibetans were

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adding to the problem on their own lands. I trace this process of policy diversification and its consequences through an examination of changes in forest laws and policy, Reform era collective, household, and “self-determinant” timber, and the implications of a new “ethnic officialdom” and Tibetan forestry practices in the early 1980s, and finally, through the environmental implications of opening the area up to the “third great cutting.” Reform period policies and their inconsistencies, like the state building projects of the preceding decades, had serious implications for regional and downstream forest and social environments.

Reforms in the 1970s: Forest Laws and Government Policies

In 1972, the status of minorities, their forests, and governance practices in northern Sichuan came under review. In early 1972, the CCP Central Committee reviewed the “political frontier defense” campaign and determined that it had led to a major breakdown of ethnic relations and good governance. This resulted in a major policy overhaul in nationalities work, and in turn led to new policy initiatives at the prefecture level and empowerment of prefecture level governments. Following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, serious economic and political reforms accelerated in China. By 1978-79, China’s economic reform was well under way in tandem with a major ethnic minority areas overhaul that renounced the concept of class ideology in ethnic relations that had dominated China since the late 1950s. The subsequent implementation of preferential policies by the central government, including a range of financial subsidies to “autonomous” regional governments, changes in land and property tenure, and personal benefits from education to birth control, significantly altered local practices in regards local management of natural resources and heralded a more accommodationist approach to local society-led initiatives and ethnic culture.

583 AZZ 1993, vl. 1, 526.
Thus, 1976 was a watershed year in northern Sichuan which brought important changes to villagers’ lives. The significance of 1976 was not just that Mao Zedong passed away, but that food shortages in the area and a marked increase in private tree harvesting signaled a de facto end to the collective economy that had governed the region since the late 1950s. After 1976 the state stressed the need for social and economic stability in the Songpan region. In 1976-77 it resumed reforms and infrastructure projects in the Songpan region halted by the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. Nationally, after 1976 the new Party leadership laid the foundation for a gradual restructuring of the state planned economy to a more market-oriented policy.

While this restructuring process would not reach the Songpan region until 1981-1982, there was basically an official recognition of a fait accompli that started around 1976. However, the process of reform, what would eventually become decollectivization in the early 1980s, lagged behind changes on the ground; people waded in untested waters and the rules were unclear. From other counties in Sichuan, there are stories of competitive clear-cutting that became particularly fierce in 1979. Reform was in the air and some elements of collective property were divested.

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585 One of the main slogans associated with the earliest part of regional reforms in northern Sichuan was “Cultivate and multiply” (xiuyang shengxi, chi.). This was not an official slogan, but as Bianca Horlemann notes in her study of the Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture to the northwest (southeastern Qinghai), the state undertook a series of new measures to overcome the acute political economic crises of the Cultural Revolution. This change in policies also came to the Songpan region, but as with Golog Prefecture, did not make serious inroads in the regional economy until the mid to late 1970s. These policy shifts were started by post-Mao party leadership in Beijing, despite difficulties, and tried to move China out of the extreme policy shifts of the late ’60s and early ’70s to a more stable economic and social base that eventually culminated in the restructuring of communes and the gradual restructuring of the state planned economy towards a more market oriented economy. See Horlemann 2002, 249-51.

586 In 1977, in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties, this meant an increase in forestry infrastructure projects (not a particularly new action), as well as expansion of schools, local hydropower stations were built to provide more (though limited) electricity to towns and villages along the Bai and Min Rivers, the creation of several new handicraft industry bureaus (mostly dealing with medicinal herbs and beef/yak meat), and a major expansion of the county vehicle fleets for market and shipping use. SXZ 1999, 43-44.


to local individuals. Some of the primary collective properties decollectivized after 1978 were clear cut and lightly forested areas.

In the period 1976-1982 the practice of cutting trees for personal gain seemed to reach a peak. Although officially still managed by production teams, the collective economy had exhausted itself, and a new order struggled to emerge. The farmers, herders and officials of the Songpan region were anxious to take up whatever new private opportunities for gain emerged to lift themselves out of their collective poverty. As long as the collective system remained the formal organizing principle, the conflict between the emergent order and the old order would do battle on the landscape, and trees would remain the victims. In 1972-73, the major forest area around Mao’er gai was exhausted, but until 1975-76, no other major forest stand in the region would be exploited by the state forestry regime. In addition, a massive forest and range fire spread from a neighboring county into the eastern half of Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties causing significant damage. Unseasonably high winds, late hailstorms and flooding in 1973 further damaged local crop production, and in a time of “regional self-sufficiency”, meant there was much less to go around. For this two-year period, the local government was particularly hard-pressed to provide much help to local minority groups. In late 1974-75, many locals began to expand “sideline” practices, including harvesting limited numbers of trees and selling them to local “handicraft collectives” for extra money and food. In some villages individual families competed with one another to cut the most trees the fastest. Seeing that affairs were in flux, they sought to profit from village lands before they become the private property of someone

590 SXZ 1999, 41-42.  
591 SXZ 1999, 421, 917.
else. After 1976-77, state forestry bureaus began to greatly expand their harvesting in the largest remaining forested stands in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties.  

Starting in 1978 and culminating in the new PRC *Forest Law* of 1981, among other sweeping amended regulations, the Central Committee of the CCP and the State Council issued documents that marked the start of a period of formal reform in China’s Minority policies and forestry sector. The PRC *Minority Nationalities Regional Autonomy Law* (1984) granted autonomous regions and counties the authority to draw up “autonomous regulations” and “special regulations”, as well as the authority to make adaptive alterations to resolutions, orders, and instructions emanating from superior levels as long as their determinations did not contradict the PRC Constitution.  

The PRC *Marriage Law, Criminal Law, Grasslands Law, and Forest Law*, issued between 1980 and 1982 all explicitly stipulated that minority autonomous prefectures and counties in China could make adaptations and issue supplementary regulations when implementing these laws in their region.  

From 1956 to 1981, Han Chinese cadres and officials controlled county governments. While there had been at least one Hui and one Tibetan member during the 35 year period, when the county government was reorganized in the wake of the nationwide abolition of Revolutionary Committees in 1981, various posts including the posts of chairman of the county government and party secretary passed to local Tibetans and Hui.  

From 1981-1990, Tibetans actually dominated many of the local government positions that dealt

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592 A look at the main events taking place in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties in the mid to late 1970s demonstrates that the forestry bureaus were greatly expanding their harvesting techniques at the very beginning of the Reform period. While some cut over and lightly forested areas were divested by collectives and given over to individuals starting in 1979, the vast majority of forest land remained under state control. Seeing changes in the wind, prefecture and provincial forestry bureaus doubled their work force in the region and expanded their output of cut logs from 11,500 1975 to an average of 25,000 (21,000-33,000 logs a year) until 1990. *SXZ* 1999, 42-47, 410, 421.

593 See Shi Jun 1990.

594 Under the new marriage law Tibetans received special consideration changing national provisions dealing with marriage eligibility and age limit.

595 *SXZ* 1999, 259-61.
with state-led programs and regional governance for the first time in the twentieth century. In terms of the Forestry Law of 1981, special provisions allowed regional autonomous governments to have more autonomy in decision making concerning exploitation of forest resources and distribution of timber, and to enjoy more economic benefits in the management of regional forestry funds.

Timber Decollectivization and the Forestry Regime

Grinspoon and Liu record the most substantial forestry changes during the “Three Fixes” in the early 1980s. To begin with, local people, including many Han Chinese forestry workers, were issued certificates to confirm forest resource tenure in hopes of stabilizing the timber sector. Forest boundaries were surveyed and where disputes arose, prefecture level officials helped parties to reconcile ownership claims. Second, many clear cut and non-forested lands (what Liu calls degraded or wasteland forest areas) were parceled out to households as family plots (ziliushan, chi.; or for local Tibetans, commonly termed thon sked ‘gan gtsang, tib.). Finally, some fully and semi-forested areas were turned over to households or communities under the contract responsibility system (zerenshan, chi.). In effect, these actions served to diversify patterns of forest tenure and management arrangements. On the whole, most forest lands in the Songpan region remained collective property (or in terms of forests, jitilin, chi.; shing ru khag, tib.); only about 12% of the collective lands in Songpan County were devolved to household level use. On the other hand, about 20% of collective forested land in the region was distributed to households or communities under the contract responsibility system (zerenshan, chi.).

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596 It should be noted however, that Tibetans did not dominate all of the key positions—especially those that dealt with forestry, economic work, construction, or the county chief.
598 A discussion of zerenshan and household responsibility systems in Songpan County can be found in SXZ 1999, 77-78.
599 SXZ 1999, 408. This was a very complicated issue, and more so if one considers the different kinds of land decollectivized for what purposes throughout China. For discussions of decollectivization of local properties and their social and environmental consequences in other areas of China see Gregory Chin, “Securing a Rural Land
was distributed or contracted to households on long term leases in the early '80s. While the
rights to timber can thus be discussed in terms of collective management (still the purview of the
prefecture and provincial governments) or household-based management, the vast majority of
forested areas remained under strict control of region and provincial level ministries who
continued to log the region heavily until the 1998 logging ban.600

While most forested lands in the region remained under state control, it is illustrative to
examine non-state forested lands in the context of local social and political relations. The most
important element of local tenure over timber in the region was the contract responsibility system,
something created in the aftermath of the successful household responsibility system in the
agricultural sector. Locally, contract responsibility hills (zerenshan, chi., also sometimes called
“self determinant timber”) are mostly “non-timber forests” (fruit, nut and brush trees) and “fuel
wood forests” (very immature tree stands, wasteland/clear cuts, and the least desirable trees).
There were three primary forms of household responsibility management for forestlands. The
first involved family plots managed in conjunction with responsibility hills. The second entailed
the merger of individually contracted responsibility hills into larger units. Benefits were divided
amongst the contributing households. The third was simply household management of the

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Market: Political-Economic Determinants of Institutional Change in China’s Agricultural Sector,” *Asian Perspective*
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Routleidge, 2000), 120-142 on agriculture in general; and Dee Mack Williams, *Beyond Great Walls: Environment,
Identity, and Development on the Chinese Grasslands of Inner Mongolia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press,
2002); Chris Coggins, *The Tiger and the Pangolin: Nature, Culture and Conservation in China* (Honolulu:
Comparison of Two Townships in Northwest Yunnan,” and Gregory Ruf, “Collective Enterprise and Property
Rights in a Sichuan Village: The Rise and Decline of Managerial Corporatism,” in Jean Oi and Andrew Walder
(eds.), *Property Rights and Economic Reform in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 71-94 on
minority groups, decollectivization and the reform era in Inner Mongolia, Fujian, Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces.
600 SXZ 1999, 367; See also Liu Dachang 2001, 247, where “…in ethnic minority areas… traditional systems (state)
have persisted and… central government policy is not so vigorously communicated or pursued.”
contracted responsibility hill. Several shareholding entities also existed—the most common in the Songpan region being timbered land that is not allocated, leased, or contracted out, but remains the collective property of either natural or administrative villages managed by the village government in "consultation" with the Sichuan Ministry of Forestry. This sort of shareholding system equally divides returns from forest to villagers and is the primary form of tenure arrangement to date in the region.

This short overview of Reform Era changes in forest tenure management highlights the common types of collective forest arrangements in northern Sichuan. It should be obvious that there was no single model of collective forestry management or ownership during the early Reform period. It demonstrates the diversity of tenure arrangements that exist(ed) between provinces, townships, villages, and individuals. As Yin Rusheng has noted for Chinese forests under decollectivization generally, two significant problems arose. First, forest regeneration and management lagged to a marked degree, and second, strong liquidation pressure was put on existing resources as collectives collapsed and property rights conflicts over forested and semi-

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601 See Liu 2001, 247-49. Based on discussions with local and regional forest officials about Songpan County forests and zerenshan timber, devolution of rights to forests even went to a few Buddhist and Bon temples in the region. The responsibility hills deeded to the temples were, however, nearly devoid of trees on steep slopes, and while some success has come with afforesting parts of these "wastelands", where there was success at growing and protecting some marketable timber over a 15 year period, the timber was subsequently co-opted by local collectives for joint use.

602 According to Changjin Sun, this type of arrangement was common in Sichuan and Yunnan minority areas. The shareholding approach, with state management, meant that provincial and prefecture timber companies working at the county level were given authority to purchase and sell "self-determinant timber." This timber, timber that an authorized company could sell on the free market after it had met its designated annual delivery quota, was usually bought from local collectives legally (or illegally if harvested by individuals without a license which was often the case) and was often substandard. As the state kept the best timber land under its own purview, it was rare for locals to legally harvest high quality or large timber. See Sun 1992, 37; and Sun Changjin, "An Assessment of the Current Situation and Projection of the Developing Trends of the Forestry Reforms in the Southern Forestry Region," Senlin jingji yanjiu 86:4 (1986), 9-14; 12.

forested land came to the foreground. Collective forests in the Songpan region faced the same sorts of problems. The biggest problem was that the most productive and large tracts of timber land remained state or collective owned—in other words these timber areas were owned or controlled by state forestry officials through prefecture and county forestry bureaus. These lands continued to be poorly managed based on national quotas. On collective village and township lands that were devolved to individuals, both family timberland and responsibility timberland covered the least productive lands (ie. barren land and small patches of cut over or timberland with few trees). Furthermore, since any substandard timber could be categorized as self-determinant timber (or zerenshan lin, chi.) and sold at a higher market price, authorized timber companies in the region had an incentive to intentionally make standard timber substandard in order to increase their profits. In addition, returns from the sale of self-determinant timber, instead of being used for afforestation or other forestry ventures, were often channeled into more profitable non-forestry investments.

The central problem of this limited devolution of timber tenure and management was that it succeeded in producing another massive cutting of regional timber throughout the 1980 and into the early '90s. For those who believe that clarifying private property rights are what it takes to ensure sustainable management of forest resources, the post-reform period has lessons to teach. In 1982, long-term land leases were given to individuals and with this stability in their

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604 Yin 1994, 86.
605 According to Sun’s research, this was because most government officials early in the Reform period believed that the early forestry reforms were administrative expediency and that good timber land should remain the purview of the state in order to symbolize and safeguard the socialist economy. He also noted that allocating barren lands was less contentious than reallocating timberland with significant volumes of trees. Sun 1992, 37.
606 As noted in chapter 2, the expansion of yak and animal herding also had a role to play to some degree in pulses of forest grow and degradation. Especially on the margins of ecotone shifts with large numbers of larch and immature conifers, intruding yaks, goats and sheep disturb and may prevent forest regeneration. Coupled with already extensive clear cutting and forestland degradation, it can be postulated (and hopefully proven in later research) that grasslands and animal herds actually expanded from the '70s to '90s not just based on local entrepreneurship, but as much on timber overuse, animal distribution and disturbance in ecotone areas, and excessive herd sizes.
tenure over individual agricultural plots, semi- or lightly forested areas, and grassland for small
to mid-sized households, many households began to grow. This was not, however, a return to
the status quo of the pre-socialist times. Local mechanisms for dispute settlement were gone,
expectations for economic development were greater and local society, both in superstructure
and material base, was changed. Although trees were recognized as part of an individual
household's capital where trees, semi-forested, or wastelands were “owned” by locals or held by
local collectives, trees remained “free” resources best liquidated before any more policy changes
potentially took this lucrative commodity away.\textsuperscript{607} Thus, two forces proceeded to degrade local
forest resources and again reshape the local landscape.

In the first place, state led development continued to expand its forest harvesting. In Aba
Prefecture as a whole, forest industry production value accounted for just over 70\% of the total
industrial output in 1980. By 1990, it had only decreased to 60\%.\textsuperscript{608} Dong Zhiyong, a former
Sichuan Province Vice-State-Secretary of Forestry stated that the "...administration of forest
industry has not conformed to natural and economic principles" and "...as a whole, there has not
been any attempt to manage the forests".\textsuperscript{609} Zhao Ang, a member of the Communist Party
Policy Research Department, pointed out that the state forest enterprises, who controlled most of
the forests, had to meet minimum state timber quotas which were much higher than the forests' natural annual production.\textsuperscript{610} Zheng Du indicated for the region that the harvest was 2.3 times

\textsuperscript{607} Not only was this understandable in the context of the see-saw of policy shifts experienced by locals and
government officials, it was not inaccurate as the state, starting in 1995, began to “protect” large swaths of local
collective lands by nationalizing or provincializing them and turn them into larger and larger nature reserves, scenic
areas, and animal protection zones that slowly but surely cut the local Tibetans and Hui out of even more of their
limited forested territory. Yin Rusheng’s study of changes in the rural forestry sector in Sichuan and Yunnan best
outlines this process in the early 1980s. See Yin 1994, 87-88.
\textsuperscript{608} Zhao 1992, 56; AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 1023.
\textsuperscript{609} Dong Zhiyong, "The Present situation of forest administration in SW China and its role in river basin
Management in the Hindukush-Himalaya Region (Kathmandu and Lhasa: ICIMOD/CAS, 1986), 55.
\textsuperscript{610} Zhao 1992, 55-61.
higher, and Vaclav Smil,\textsuperscript{611} up to three times higher than productivity and afforestation could possibly match in terms of sustainable yields. To make matters worse the state enterprises were required to sell the quota timber well below market prices and even production cost. Most of them tried to compensate for serious losses by selling even more timber on the free market.\textsuperscript{612} Not surprisingly Yang stated that in Aba Prefecture, the actual "annual consumption of forest resources [is] over four times more than the annual afforestation increment."\textsuperscript{613}

In the early 1950s the standing resources of Aba Prefecture were estimated at 340Mm$^3$ board feet. Between 1950 and 1985 some 155Mm$^3$ were cut. According to regional statistics, another 180Mm$^3$ remains. However, to put things in perspective, out of eleven state forest enterprises, eight exhausted their resources entirely by 1989, five had no contiguous forest areas left in 1990, and in Songpan County, the major state-owned forest stocks were so depleted that only one of the five original state forestry operations remained active.\textsuperscript{614} Yet these entities still had to fund the pensions of their former employees, who far outnumbered their active employees. In order to continue to support their retired employees and meet state and provincial timber quotas, the state and provincial timber bureaus started to fell protection and shelter forests, as well as encroach on collective forests. As these forest reserves were hardly enough to meet continued demand, the booming economy and increased market deregulation induced local and regional "private entrepreneurs" to load their trucks with illegally felled logs, bought to the

\textsuperscript{611} Smil 1984, 227.
\textsuperscript{613} Yang Yupo. "Great Importance Should be Attached to the Ecological Balance of the Subalpine Forest of Western Sichuan" (Manuscript) (Chengdu: Sichuan Forest Research Institute, 1985), 14.
\textsuperscript{614} AZZ 1994, 1003-08; SXZ 1999, 114, 421. The remaining state-owned forestry area under heavy use (not counting the collective lands under provincial and prefecture purview) was located in Maonigou, only 8km from Songpan.
roadside by Tibetans and Hui utilizing their zerenshan, illegally logging collective lands, and otherwise out to join the market economy in a moderately deregulated environment.615

Overall, it is clear that the underlying institutional structure and local, individual timber harvesting were the leading causes for recent deforestation in the Tibetan Prefectures of Sichuan. By imposing a state procurement rate which was not based on ecologically and economically sustainable principles, the provincial administration chose to overexploit its forest resources. Since the Reform period started, economic pressures and accounting responsibilities appear to have perpetuated highly unsustainable production levels for increased sales on the free market in order to finance pensions and losses from state quota sales. However, not all of the blame for the “Third Great Cutting” can be laid at the feet of state-led projects and practices. The second major force in degrading local forest resources were the households taking advantage of both the zerenshan and new collective forestry management systems under partly local and “ethnic” (mostly Tibetan) management in the region.

Ethnic Officialdom and Tibetan Forestry in the 1980s

A key reason for increasing local control over resources in Songpan was that local Tibetans and Hui were increasingly active and a part of the process of defining how and when local resources could be used in collective forested areas. Not only were local Tibetans and others more involved in the legal and illegal felling of timberland in the region at the market level, there was an expansion of local “ethnic officialdom”616 in administrations. A central task of these local ethnic party and administrative officials was not only to command and implement

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615 At the household and individual level, market reform radically changed the former subsistence economy—people required a cash income after the 1970s. Working as a slash logger for a company, or privately collecting and reselling wood, was one of the ways for Tibetans to make extra money in the Songpan region.

Party discourse in terms of new regulations under varying socialist regimes, as the "reform" period wore on, they were able to exercise new levels of autonomy in their autonomous regions. Correct use of the Party's discourse facilitated implementation of state policies in the 1980s like major poverty relief campaigns, increasing use of forest and non-timber forest products monies, and allowed ethnic locals to work within state structures as they had in the 1950s to support local projects and issues. While this issue will be more fully covered in the next chapter, one example of local ethnic officialdom is illustrative of the new kinds of "middle ground" that started to effect local policies on ethnic issues and forest use on collective and state lands.

Prior to the 1990s, large-scale clear cutting in forested areas of northern Sichuan was the norm—and as might be imagined, this was detrimental to local timber concerns when afforestation measures were neglected. Although reforestation measures were required by both provincial and national law, and numerous campaigns to reforest parts of China were part and parcel of state-led development programs and remediation efforts to control desertification, afforestation after clear-cutting was the exception in northern Sichuan. 617 Most forested areas were left to regenerate on their own, and estimates of the ratio of trees felled to trees planted in the region was as high as 10:1 from the 1960s to 1990s. 618 As noted in chapter two, and as past studies of deforestation worldwide have noted, once forests are destroyed and replaced by grasslands, regeneration of forests can be seriously hindered, particularly if slopes are used for

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617 Li and Zhang 1986, 10; major campaigns in the Songpan region were carried out to afforest slopes along the Min River (and only this area) in 1959, 1961-66, and 1989-90. Even according to local forestry and official sources, these campaigns planted around 180,000 seedlings on a total of 31% of the former heavy forested areas. While this may seem like quite a bit, it has been estimated that less than 30% of seedlings survive in Aba Prefecture yearly. In addition, afforested areas are also "economic tree" plantations that include fruit and nut orchards, and in some cases bamboo. SXZ 1999, 411-14; AZZ 1994, 1050-52; Yang 1992, 22; Li 1993, 103.

618 He 1991, 26; and of the total reforested area in the south-western mountain region was only about 12.7 per cent of the deforested area. See Li 1993, 103.
grazing, as is common throughout the Hui and Tibetan collective properties.\footnote{This process of land conversion to grasslands was only exacerbated from the ’60s and ’70s and large mono-animal herds operated under state guidelines heavily foraged on seedlings and young trees in clearcut areas. In the 1980s, the situation stabilized then worsened as individual households expanded their individual herd sizes after herds were decollectivized. Personal communications with local herders and foresters; Ran Guangrong 2000, 111; Yang 1986, 42. For the national and international perspective, see Stanley Richardson, \textit{Forests and Forestry in China} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and Scott Rozelle et al. (eds.), \textit{China: From Afforestation to Poverty Alleviation and Natural Forest Management} (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 2000).} Canopy destruction itself allowed for increased exposure of seedlings to extreme frosts common to the region. Chinese research further confirmed that if forests were cut or destroyed, and not afforested by artificially cultivated seedlings in time, then they would often devolve to scrub or meadow lands—hence the terms scrub, trace, and suitable semi-forested wastelands to describe approximately 45% of the forestlands of the Songpan region. One Ministry of Forestry official recommended that such “…clear-cut plots should be dispersed and limited to three to five hectares…”\footnote{Han 1985, 71; Yang 1987, 78; SXZ 1999, 407.}

As part of the economic and administrative reforms of the early 1980s, Songpan region Han and Tibetan officials pushed for increased devolution of forested and semi-forested collective land under \textit{zerenshan} and household management with the idea that Tibetan and local investment in forested land would lead to afforestation projects and work on marginal lands. Based on provincial policies and Ministry of Forestry funds and seedlings, the idea was to afforest lands with as little overhead costs as possible by devolving the seedlings, a limited amount of funding, and the future rights to trees to local people. Significant numbers of local people participated in these reform projects—but not in the way envisioned by local officials. While a limited number of families applied for seedlings and state support to afforest “their” lands, the majority of participants cut whatever timber remained on their responsibility lands and took the opportunity to expand their herd sizes. Even in areas where people planted the trees,
they would often graze expanded herds on the seedling areas, and sheep especially would feed on the new seedlings.

While over 71% of the forest resources in the Songpan region remained under control of government agencies, those areas under collective management and individual management came under increasing pressure from local Tibetan and Hui management. As Liu Dachang has pointed out for locally managed forest areas of Yunnan and other parts of southern China, the effects of family plot and responsibility hills actually degraded forests more than they helped. Even though policy planners stated in the early 1980s that devolving semi-forested and wasteland would lead farmers and minorities to plant trees for long term investment, they found that only 20-45% of the land was actually afforested. Another result was that Tibetans and Hui actually tried (and usually succeeded) in selling their zerenshan timber to state forestry companies—thus causing further deforestation in already marginal timber lands. Heavy fines, a strict regulatory structure, and regular road blocks and border checks did not succeed in slowing down black market timber logging. This kind of logging, for household and local profit, also led to other problems in the Songpan region. While communities were entitled to extract timber for their own needs, and logging required an application and a small payment to the regional forest bureau, individuals and collectives regularly “stole timber” (huxiang tou, chi.) from one another to expand their monetary opportunities.

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621 SXZ 1999, 407-08. However, it should be noted that while jitilin forest areas were approximately 15% and County State forests (xianguoyoulin, chi.) at 73% of Songpan’s forest area, local forestry officials stated that over 95% of Songpan’s forests were owned by the state circa 2000. This contradictory information reflects the fact that although local communities might own some forestland on paper, their ownership neither entitled them to forest management nor to profiting from state timber exploitation, a situation in stark contrast to non-minority areas in China.


624 Technically, each person in a collective had an allotment of forest land and a limit to the amount they were allowed to cut each year. According to some conversations with locals and local forest bureau representatives, families, and sometimes even larger groups in collectives would not pay enough attention to their cutting limits.
However, it was state forestry bureaus that did most of the cutting, processing, and buying of legally and illegally felled timber. Prior to 1985, the state strictly pursued a policy of state control of the purchase of timber. As a way to reduce state intervention and increase the role of the market, such controls were abolished in all of the southern provinces of China in 1985. Timber markets were opened and farmers were legally allowed to sell their timber in markets for about two years. State companies, private timber dealers, and Songpan locals with access or tenure over forested areas flooded into the market. Timber prices soared and the government monopoly on timber dissipated while everyone in the timber market saw increased income. But the positive side-effects were countered by an increase in county and provincial taxes and fees, over harvesting of marginal timber lands by both individuals and forest bureaus, and little or no afforestation of cut over lands. In response, the state closed free timber markets after only two years in an attempt to curtail illegal felling and further forest degradation. This effectively cut many of the timber middlemen out of the picture, but did not curtail forestry bureau practices as the government did not curtail or control distribution channels. After 1987, only forest departments and state timber companies were allowed to collect timber from farmers and act as wholesalers. Despite the fact that new taxes and permits were required to continue to sell to the state, often at lower prices than the “free markets,” local Tibetans, Han and Hui continued to sell their marginal timber to the state. Yet the rapid changes in forest policies paled beside the environmental costs of the first five years of the “third great cutting.”

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626 Sun 1986, 12-14.
628 Sun 1992, 38. See also Winkler 2003, 4.
Environmental Implications of the State and Local Forestry Regimes

The environmental effects of the “second great cutting” under socialist state building projects, and the “third great cutting” under early reforms were significant and are best understood when discussed in tandem. The heavy deforestation of the Min River watershed produced devastating consequences for the local environment and downstream areas. Large tracts of contiguous forest literally disappeared throughout the region, incidents of fire increased, water transport of wood had severe effects on soil erosion and regional hydropower, massive soil erosion in areas contiguous with logging and water transport of logs to the rivers, and flood disasters in the summer increased while overall water flow in the Min River from late autumn to late spring actually decreased dramatically.

According to Chinese sources, Sichuan had forest reserves of approximately 1.6 billion meters³. By 1980, these reserves were cut at least in half. While these numbers were for the whole of Sichuan Province, this halving of timber stock was noted for the Songpan region as well as it provided significant amounts of timber to the Sichuan Basin floated down the Min, Baishui and Fu Rivers after 1958. According to Wang Hongchang, over 83% of lumber production in Sichuan Province occurred in Aba and Ganzi Tibetan Prefectures, with only 30% of the afforestation projects listed for Sichuan between 1956-1978. In addition to the process of harvesting, local sources also note that incidents of forest fires (that would often spread to become range fires) increased in forested areas under the forestry regime between 1956-76.

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629 It is best to discuss them in tandem as long term impacts of deforestation and dessication are more easily seen over the thirty-three year period than in individual sections.
630 At its height, water transport of wood down the Min River and its watershed was around 1 million logs a year, although this number had dropped to 180,000 logs by 1990. Logs were usually transported to major water sources by sluice ways, dredging existing streams to carry logs to larger ones, or by human/animal power. As might be imagined, moving this volume of logs had its own considerable impact on water flow, erosion, streambeds, animal and fish habitat, and downstream environments.
631 Wang 1997, 9-10. Wang’s numbers, compiled from Chinese sources and GIS surveying were further supported by my own study of regional statistics. See AZZ 1993, 1023-24, 1036-37 and Sichuan Senlin 1992, 870-75.
Despite the major campaigns to "re-educate" Tibetans not to burn their (state) timber reserves, major fires during the 1960s and '70s occurred in or adjacent to all major forestry projects. While many of these fires were attributed to Tibetans (who were not working on most of the forestry projects) or lightning ignition, recent sources note that many were caused by forestry operations. As the forestry regime spread, so too did the incidence of fire in remote areas of the region.

In addition to issues directly related to the forests, hydrology took a hit under the forestry regime during this period. The vast majority of the harvested timber was moved in the major waterways. The sheer volume of timber floated during the late spring and summer flood stages on the region's rivers had a serious impact on water quality, erosion, and occasional flood disasters downstream, especially along the Min River. The total volume of water in the Min and Baishui Rivers increased during flood stages and decreased during the rest of the year and drought periods. According to some authors, these changes, dessication of the Min River and its tributaries, were directly related to deforestation and low-technology water transport of timber during the state building and Mao era.

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633 *SXZ* 1999, 416-17.
634 Many of the fires were attributed to natural causes and droughts. Indeed, regional statistics support this claim—for drought years (for example, 1961-63). In years where major forestry operations were opened up or closed down, however, the incidence of major conflagrations was very high (for example, 1966-68, and 1970-74). *SXZ* 1999, 416; AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 1038-40, 1043.
635 The logs rafts floated downriver during flood stage would sometimes hang up and cause water flow to erode the banks and cliff-gorges of the Min River. Sometimes the log rafts would hang up and dam the river flow, and were blasted out, resulting in major flood surges that hit villages and towns downriver and even caused problems as far downstream as Dujiangyan. See *Minjiang zhi* 1992, 37. See also, Sichuan Provincial Hydro-Electric Bureau, *Sichuan sheng shuili zhi* [Sichuan Province Hydrology Gazetteer] (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shuili dian li ding, 1985), vl. 7, 169-72.
5.4 Conclusion

The socialist state began in the early 1960s to institute its own new official economic regime for the region—a forestry regime largely separate from local collectives and county administrations. This forestry regime would come to dominate the official economies of Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties in a way that the agro-pastoral and opium regimes had dominated the late Imperial and Republican eras. By the 1970s a strong state-led forestry regime was in place in the Songpan region, yet local Tibetans were only indirectly involved in it and its profits. Local society was more involved in state campaigns to control and remold ethnic society. After 1978, during the early stages of the Reform Period, this began to change as Tibetans found themselves once again in limited control of some of their forests and land, but this stage of policy diversification exacerbated the next stage in forest clearance by Tibetans and provincial and state forest managers.

As this state-led forestry regime exploited the timber of the region, it also suffered from an almost continual plague of high level policy changes concerning to local resource ownership. On the surface, these policy changes were related in no small part to national ideologies of self-sufficiency, views toward minority groups (and their supposed ties to the landscape), and sociopolitical campaigns as the chief mode of disseminating policy. The effect of these shifts was to abruptly and sometimes destructively change regional policies that affected local society and the environment. The state forestry regime, forest policies and tenure from the 1960s to early 1980s were examples of the problems of insecure resource tenure, cycles of centralization and decentralization, and government attempts to create social capital in different ways but on a constant basis, and how these policies contributed to local social and environmental problems. However, in the end, the state forestry regime controlled most of the region’s timber reserves and continued to cut, process and ship it, leading to two “great cuttings” and the degradation of the
local environment. The deforestation of parts of the Songpan region, however, was not a product of the Great Leap Forward (the “first great cutting”), rather an effect of the Third Front campaign development. The majority of trees in the region were rafted down the major rivers for railway, town and manufacturing-mill construction just outside of the region.

However, state making and state-led development of the region was not the only reason for environmental degradation. While state-led development in the forestry regime created both the administrative apparatus and infrastructure to deforest entire sections of the Songpan region, during the Reform period, local ethnic minorities under decollectivization also played a role in expanding forestry at the expense of afforestation in an orgy of government planned and private tree harvesting. In the end, the command economies of the Mao Era and early Reform Era state acted to coerce different levels of production, and in the case of the forestry sector to maximize exploitation of an ultimately limited local resource. When viewed over three decades, these forces in the forestry sector, made up of national, prefecture, and county administrators, local individuals, and timber companies, have much in common. They demonstrate not only the extensive penetration of the new Chinese state into its hinterland, and the changing nature of ethnic minorities’ involvement in governance and practice, but also the consequences of frequent policy changes, inconsistencies, natural resource exploitation, and market reforms. The challenges of state-making, sustaining the forest command economy, and market reforms all set the stage for the next series of administrative policy decisions and the search for a new economic regime to replace a shrinking and degraded forestry sector. In addition, local Tibetans began to play an even greater role in the next economic regime, as did the natural landscape, but in new ways.
VI ECOLOGICAL AND TOURISM MARKETS: ENVIRONMENT AND ETHNICITY IN NORTHERN SICHUAN, 1983-2005

The construction of scenic spots and scenic areas must both fully reflect modern material civilization (wuzhi wenming, chi.) and fully display the positive and advancing spiritual civilization (jingshen wenming, chi.) of the Chinese race (zhonghua minzu, chi.). Indeed, this is what distinguishes the socialist tourism industry with Chinese characteristics from Western capitalist tourism industry.

Zhang Gu (2000), 121.

6.1 Introduction

Since the mid 1980s the Songpan region has experienced a new phase in land use and environmental policy, as well as a new form of governmentalization of local ethnic society and the landscape. In the 1980s and 1990s the land use and social policies of the state shifted to environmental protection and market development of the landscape and local cultures. This new ecological and “cultural turn” in regional development was not just a reflection of a statist urge to control resources and people, but stemmed from recognition of the costs of environmental degradation, new governmentalization projects tied to poverty alleviation, and the development of tourism markets.637

This chapter examines the shift from a soviet-style planned economy and resource development regime to a more free-wheeling, market-oriented economy in which everything, including culture, was for sale. However, changes in resource ownership and market forces did not necessarily mean radical shifts in the scale of government involvement in regional

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637 Pun Ngai suggest this “cultural turn” represents a “new mode of governmentality.” This cultural turn and mode of governance ties in with Premier Zhu Rongji and Wen Jiabao’s leadership discourse. In Pun’s analysis of the leadership discourse of the 1990s and early 2000s, these premiers promoted “harmonious society” (hexie shehui, chi.), “community building” (shequ jianshe, chi.), and “cultural construction” (wenhua jianshe, chi.) with the purpose of both maintaining a strong sense of Chinese nationalism while expanding economic reforms and development, especially in ethnic areas of northern and western China. See Pun Ngai, “Subsumption or Consumption? The Phantom of Consumer Revolution in ‘Globalizing’ China,” Cultural Anthropology 18:4 (2003), 469-492; 475-76.
This chapter argues that while new opportunities opened up for local society in the Songpan region in the 1980s and '90s, increasing governmentalization of the ecological environment and local culture also strengthened the role and power of state administration in the region. Along with these shifts in land use and social policy, the state-run forestry regime that had grown up during the late 1980s suddenly collapsed in the late 1990s, and was replaced by a new state-led tourism and governmentalized environment development regime. The chapter begins with an analysis of policy changes and shifts in local socio-economic market regimes linked to poverty alleviation programs (jianqing pinkun, chi.; dbul bcos phyug sgyur, tib.), the forestry regime, and land use policy. It then examines the development of the state tourism regime and the impact of the “Great Western Development Program” in the context of reshaping local commodities and the environment as “cultural resources.” It closes with a discussion of the policy changes that rationalized these major shifts in terms of new state discourses on raising local “quality” (suzhi, chi.) and “material civilization” (wuzhi wenming, chi.).

As David Goodman and Dali Yang both point out, while some fiscal and administrative decentralization have brought the politics of regionalism back to the fore in contemporary China, provincial governments have gained the majority of power in this process, and conversely, local governance has experienced heightened state administration in particular areas—especially in environmental protectionism, methods state ideology and interpretation, and the kinds of economic development aid available at the local level. In terms of land use policy, this decentralization also resulted in property becoming more of what Andrew Waldner and Jean Oi have termed “bundles of rights” in land use management. These “bundles of rights” in some ways give more control to local stakeholders, but conversely retain major elements of control in the hands of state officials. In the same text Xiaolin Guo demonstrates the significance of this decentralization with additional strong state management characteristics in poor mountainous areas of Yunnan. In Yunnan, the presence of rural bureaucrats and local land and business owners may reflect strategic administrative decisions and existing incentives more than individual land use rights. See David Goodman, “The Politics of Regionalism: Economic Development, Conflict and Negotiation,” in David Goodman and Gerald Segal (eds.), China Deconstructs: Politics, Trade and Regionalism (New York: Routledge, 1994), 1, 3-4; Dali Yang, “Reform and the Restructuring of Central-Local Relations,” in Goodman and Segal (eds.), China Deconstructs (New York: Routledge, 1994); Andrew Waldner and Jean Oi, “Property Rights in the Chinese Economy: Contours of the Process of Change,” in A. Waldner and J. Oi (eds.), Property Rights and Economic Reform in China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 4-6; Xiaolin Guo, “The Role of Local Government in Creating Property Rights: A Comparison of Two Townships in Northwest Yunnan,” in Waldner and Oi (eds.), Property Rights and Economic Reform (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 71-72.
This chapter analyzes the environment and tourism development regime of the 1990s and 2000s that has since commodified Songpan’s landscape and Tibetan society in the context of state modernist discourses. With changes in land tenure policies and the subsequent dissolution of the regional forestry regime in the mid-1990s, new avenues to build the region’s “material civilization” had to be found. In the process of reshaping the local landscape and society as tourist resources, the tourism and environment regime has heightened and added new techniques of governmentalization to local administrative society. Local and provincial “culture brokers” accomplished this process of transformation and the new environmental protection and tourism regime has had both positive and negative effects on local society. Fundamental to this process were assumptions underlying state-led development discourses of the late 1980s and early ‘90s. These discourses on “quality,” “material civilization,” and “poverty alleviation” had a direct impact on the natural environment, land use policy, and local society by tying state development projects, as well as their funding, to “modernist” civilizing projects that served the nation-state and entrepreneurial capitalism while addressing pressing environmental and local poverty issues.

640 The term “culture brokers” comes from Valene Smith’s discussion of actors in the northern Canadian tourism who engaged strongly and self-interestedly in cultural commodification of local goods and practices. For Daniel Greenwood, the activities of culture brokers amount to a violation of people’s cultural rights in that culture brokers appropriate facets of a lifestyle into a tourism package to help sales in a competitive market, and also retain the profits of touristifying a locale and its people. See Valene Smith, “Eskimo Tourism: Micro-models and Marginal Men,” in Valene Smith (ed.), Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 55-82; 57; Daniel Greenwood, “Culture by the Pound: An Anthropological Perspective on Tourism as Cultural Commodity,” in Valene Smith, Hosts and Guests (1989), 171-86; 179.
641 This modernist civilizing project is reminiscent of Aihwa Ong’s discussion of the “modernist imaginary of the nation state in tension with the modernist imaginary of entrepreneurial capitalism.” Tim Oakes finds the modernist tourist landscapes a major part of how China has tried to deal with the forces of the Reform Period, the semi-socialist state coping with a capitalist world, and the forces of decentralization like ethnic separatism. For Oakes, China has used the tourist market regime and discourses of “civilization” to better maintain its grip on the ethnic hinterland while using the capital benefits of tourism to improve both national and local economies. See Aihwa Ong, “Chinese Modernities: Narratives of Nation and of Capitalism,” in Aihwa Ong and Daniel Nonini (eds.), Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Chinese Transnationalism (New York: Routledge Press, 1997), 172; and Timothy Oakes, Tourism and Modernity in China (New York: Routledge Press, 1998), 45-48.
6.2 Changes in Land Use Policy, Poverty Alleviation, and the Forestry Regime

In practice, poverty alleviation campaigns succeeded in raising the standard of living for some individuals and provided a new source of revenue for local governments in the late 1980s and early 90s; the campaigns also ultimately helped to deal with certain problems in the regional environment. Contemporary state sponsored approaches to development in northern Sichuan dates from market reforms of the early 1980s and subsequently from a serious commitment in the 1990s to redeveloping minority areas in Sichuan. In the 1990s there was a greater emphasis on not only the importance and efficacy of local culture, but also on individual and limited collective pastoral production, forestry, and a new emphasis on protecting the environment. This section will examine three related issues in land use policy and local forests from the late 1980s to late 1990s. First, the creation of poverty alleviation programs begs the question of why the region was so low in national socio-economic rankings despite a growing forestry industry. A description follows of the creation of local nature reserves and re-governmentalization of Tibetan collective forests and their impact on forest use. The final part of this section provides an analysis of the impact of the implosion of the forestry industry in the late 1990s with the 1998 Logging Ban.

Land Use Policy Changes, Collective Forests and Nature Reserves

When considering the period from 1981-2005, it should be borne in mind that development and implementation of state policy in the region was neither linear nor uniform. Local Tibetans and Hui have had to respond to numerous regimes of unanticipated change created for them by directives of national, provincial, and prefecture level planners. Two examples, one economic and one cultural, clearly outline the nature of these issues. In terms of local economic transformation, Tibetan herders and semi-pastoral farmers faced numerous changes to the policies that gave them access to their primary resources—forested areas,
pasturelands and livestock. The initial redistribution of community rights over collectivized forests and pastures in the early to mid-1980s led to a fairly fluid situation regarding forest use, pasture, access to alpine meadows and grasslands and control of livestock. For the most part, Tibetans felt they had a variety of choices and strategies available to them. However, during the late 1980s and early ‘90s, Tibetans in the Songpan region faced yet another set of policy decisions. With a variety of new policy proposals pushing increased timber extraction under state control in the late 1980s, timber in the Songpan region was returned to collective management by local timber procurement firms under county forestry bureaus, so that local Tibetans were largely shut out of the forestry regime. At the same time, under “scientific market management” of the local pastoral economy, local Tibetans had to deal with policies that gave them a form of private ownership and use of pasture coupled with increasing state-ordered sedentarization and limitations on herd size and composition. In cultural matters, the 1980s and early ‘90s brought about a surge of activity in Tibetan religious life. This resurgence was, however, limited to particular types of cultural practices that served both local and national needs in the wake of “separatist movements,” poverty alleviation, and state guided cultural development.

642 These comments are both based on personal communications in the Songpan region with local herders and semi-pastoral households, as well as discussions with Ran Guangrong and Peng Wenbin on grasslands management and issues in the 1980s and ‘90s in parts of southern Qinghai, and in Sichuan, Ruo’er gai, Songpan and Hongyuan Counties. Personal Communications with Ran Guangrong (April 2005) and Peng Wenbin (March 2006). See also Toni Huber’s “Introduction” to the Proceedings of the 9th Conference of the International Association for Tibetan Studies in Toni Huber (ed.), Amdo Tibetans in Transition: Society and Culture in the Post Mao Era (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), xi-xxiii.


645 In the 1980s, temples were rebuilt, refurbished, and re-opened in the Songpan region and individuals began to join monasteries, go on retreats to local Buddhism and Bon monasteries, and circumambulate major holy mountains.
In terms of its local economy c. 1990s, using Songpan County as an example, the area was economically “average” for Han and Hui, but fairly low on the economic scale for Tibetans. Its GDP (137.6 million RMB in 1994) ranked it fifth of Aba Prefecture’s thirteen counties, though by population, it ranked sixth. Like most of the counties in the region, production was led by the primary sector (60 million RMB, 44% of the total in 1994) that included agriculture, pastoral products, and forests. The tertiary industry, namely the burgeoning tourism industry, hotels, transport and most local government activities, produced about 38.4 million RMB in 1994. Per capita GDP was 2117 RMB in 1994, net rural income 772 RMB in 1992, and “agriculture and pastoral people” (nong xumu ren, chi.), 93% of which were Tibetans, 535 RMB in 1992.646 This low level of net rural income for local Tibetans was similar to the experience of other Tibetan regions in China—and put 1990s Songpan County on the map as a poverty stricken area.647 By 2001 the economic status of Songpan had improved somewhat with the GDP (352.8 million RMB) ranking the County fourth in Aba Prefecture. While the primary sector mainstays of agriculture and pastoral products still ranked first in revenue production, tourism and the tertiary sector was bringing in over 100 million RMB. The per capita GDP rose to 4256 RMB,
and the rural agro-pastoralist to 1191 RMB, taking some local Tibetans out of the poverty level all together.648

Yet when one considers how the region was tagged as a “poverty stricken area” despite its extensive forestry regime in the 1980s and early ’90s, one wonders why the state forestry regime managing local collective forests was not providing a better living standard for local people. In the 1980s, the logging industry provided up to 70% of the cash revenue of many counties of northern Sichuan, which were ranked among the poorest counties in the nation under the poverty alleviation programs. Between 1981 and 1990 forestry in the region provided north Sichuan prefecture and county governments in excess of 131 million RMB yearly.649 However, easily accessible forests were depleted rapidly throughout the Mao era, and the “Third Great Cutting” of 1980s only accelerated trends in clear cutting. In the 1980s and early ’90s, state procurement logging quotas were two to three times higher than natural increments, and as forestry bureaus produced timber for the free market as well, they would often cut wood illegally to balance losses incurred from quota timber sales.650 Thus, by the early 1990s the annual harvest including local consumption was estimated to reach nearly five times the natural growth in Aba Prefecture.651

Collective forests could theoretically offset some of the problems of state quotas for timber sales; in much of southern China collective forests were considered to contribute significantly to local livelihoods and poverty alleviation.652 As Zheng Baohua has noted, forest resources, especially collective forestlands whose timber have been devolved to the individual

648 From Zhongguo minzu gongzuo nianjian 2001, in Ran 2003, 181. However, most of Songpan County townships were still ranked as poverty stricken areas.
650 Zhao 1992, 57.
households and shareholding systems, as well as non-timber forest products were primary sources of income in Tibetan areas of north and west Sichuan.\(^{653}\) However, in most areas where rich forest resources remained in China, like northern Sichuan, poverty prevailed. The usual policy answer to this issue was that the forest resources were in remote regions without rail or good water access, or distant enough from regional and national markets that they were not cost-effective to utilize. Of the 592 poverty stricken areas noted in 1996 reports, 496 of the areas had forest reserves of one sort or another, were in mountainous regions, had many minority groups or administrations to deal with, or had lands that were protected. Yet the forestry sector in the Songpan region expanded in scope and output from the late 1980s to 1998.\(^{654}\) However, local Tibetans gained very little from this expansion. The location, administrations, and policies that infringed on rights to resources all impeded rural inhabitants from benefiting from their local resources.\(^{655}\)

As noted in the previous chapter, collective forests and their products did not functionally offset issues of forest sector development as the collectives were in any event largely state and province controlled. Another reason that collective forests were not offsetting poverty in a stronger way was the sheer amount of collective forest land that was co-opted in the Songpan region in the 1980s and '90s into nature reserves, protected areas, or scenic areas—areas that most local Tibetans were increasingly shut out of. For example, beginning in 1975 Jiuzhaigou was “discovered” by the national and provincial government and made a nature reserve


\(^{654}\) The highest years of timber output from the Songpan region occurred between 1986 and 1996—ten years of major output that dwarfed all but two of the previous thirty years in log volume, county timber revenues, and state quotas. See SXZ 1999, 421; AZZ 1993, vl. 2, 1036-37; Ran 2000, 134-36.

(baohuqu, chi.) in 1978. In 1982, Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve became a National Biosphere Nature Reserve (Shengwutu ziran baohuqu, chi.), and then a World Heritage Site in 1992. From the early 1980s onward, environmental protection and ecological conservation through the creation of nature reserves gained much momentum through the building of institutional capacity, scaling up campaign programs and law enforcement. For local people who had collectively owned such lands before their “discovery,” there was now more strictly regulated access to and use of local natural resources.656

The Rio Conference in 1992657 played a major role in the involvement of Chinese authorities in expanding protected areas in China and in switching their priorities to a “sustainable development” model in which resources were to be exploited to meet current needs without being detrimental to the environment or future generations.658 The rapid increase of nature reserves in China after 1990 reflected the development of awareness of Chinese authorities of the need for environmental protection; in turn, they created national campaigns to raise public awareness of this concern in the Chinese population as well as support for the development of eco-tourism. After Jiuzhaigou was pinpointed as a major tourism development site by the Sichuan provincial government (along with Wolong Nature Reserve to the south),659


657 The Rio United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change took place on July 2, 1992. China ratified the Framework Convention, completed a paper assessing the impact of climate change on China using Global Circulation Model results, and conducted various pilot studies on least-cost emissions reduction. In effect the Rio Conference and its related studies was intended to help create a framework for many countries on the planet to cut fossil-fuel emissions and set up “sustainable development” models to help protect the environment and resources for future generations; however, like many other countries, including the United States, China has moved very cautiously in this regard and done most of its work on paper. See Lester Ross, “China: Environmental Protection, Domestic Policy Trends, Patterns of Participation in Regimes and Compliance with International Norms,” in Richard Louis Edmonds (ed.), Managing the Chinese Environment (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 85-111; 93.


the region as a whole began to experience an ever-increasing influx of tourists. Through protecting forested land by co-opting it into nature reserves and other kinds of protected areas, by 1996 over 17% of county collective lands (mostly forested areas) had become protected areas under the purview of state and provincial authorities.660

Almost all of these co-opted forested lands were part of the Tibetan collectives; they were largely old growth timber that had not been harvested by state or provincial forestry bureaus in the latter half of the 20th Century or areas that had recovered from harvesting in the late '50s and early '60s. In addition, because of greater and greater numbers of foreign and then domestic tourists, and several embarrassing accidents along the highway, it was decided in 1990, as part of the strategic plan for World Heritage Status at sites in northern Sichuan, to upgrade the road along the Min River and pinpoint other natural sites for development. Huanglong Nature Reserve to the west of Songpan city, Munigou Scenic Area (fengjingqu, chi.), and several smaller animal and plant species management areas (shenghuan/dongwu guanliqu, chi.) were added to the itinerary and also closed for local use.661 In the Songpan region, by 1998, over 15% of the county, including over 35% of the forested areas (almost entirely Tibetan collective forests), had been set aside as nature reserves or protected scenic areas.662 Yet the creation of protected areas was only one of two major initiatives that further separated Tibetans from forest administration and control in the 1990s. Until 1998, forestry remained a primary through waning money-making concern of the county and prefecture, but after the 1998 Logging Ban went into effect, other forms of funding had to be more fully developed.

660 In 1985, Songpan County received 400,000 RMB for fire protection, protection of the Huanglong and Munigou areas, and for studies on how to improve the tourist infrastructure of the region to visit these areas. In 1986, Songpan County was officially opened to foreign and domestic tourism. SXZ 1999, 407, 867-77.


From the 1998 Logging Ban and Forestry Regimes to the Primary Tourist Circuit

As noted in the previous chapter, by the mid 1990s, the Min River (among others in the Songpan region) was facing serious problems deforestation and desiccation. Deforestation and desiccation were directly linked to the excessive harvesting quotas and mining of Tibetan collective lands after the 1950s.\textsuperscript{663} The "Third Great Cutting" under state and local auspices changed the landscape in the Songpan region to such an extent between 1986 and 2000 that several recent studies using Landsat Thematic Mapper (LTM) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) have conclusively demonstrated that over 11% of the forested areas of the upper Min River and Baishui Rivers were converted from forest to shrub or grassland, and that between 1990 and 2000, over 25% of remaining old growth natural forested lands were harvested.\textsuperscript{664} At the end of the 1990s, China finally began to recognize the effects of the state forestry regime's exploitation of the region.

In August 1998, the national government of China issued a logging ban (\textit{jinfa/jinyun}, chi.) in natural forests as part of the Natural Forest Protection Program (NFPP).\textsuperscript{665} Although official national statistics of the Ministry of Forestry reported an increase of forest area in China of 8.2% with a standing volume increase of 1.42% between 1980 and 1988, an analysis based on data from the provincial- and prefecture-level ministries and bureaus reveals that the amount of land in timber production declined by 1%, while the volume of trees decreased by 10.3% in the same period.\textsuperscript{666} This loss of volume was especially attributed to logging of old-growth forests in

\textsuperscript{663} See the end of Chapter Four for further discussion. See also, for example, Wang 1997.
\textsuperscript{665} The NFPP was implemented in 1998 and 1999 before the program was fully launched in 2000. See Miao and West 2004, 289-90.
remote areas like the Songpan region. Before the ban in 1998, the Ministry of Forestry carried out a study of primarily old-growth forests that demonstrated the severity of the economic and ecological crisis in state and some collective timber forests of Sichuan and Yunnan. The study suggested phasing out logging of natural forests by 2010 and shifting timber production to plantations that would be required to adhere to sustainable harvesting regimes.\(^{667}\) The devastating floods on the lower Yangtze in 1998 secured forest protection proponents the necessary political influence to implement strong counter measures.\(^{668}\)

Although the NFPP applied to eighteen provinces and autonomous regions in China,\(^ {669}\) the focus of the logging ban was the headwaters of the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers, especially the Jinsha, Dadu and Minjiang River systems.\(^ {670}\) On the upper Yangtze, all commercial timber harvesting was halted in natural forests after September 1, 1998 at least through 2010. According

\(^{667}\) Harkness 1998.

\(^{668}\) Triggered by the extensive flooding in 1997-98, the State Council issued an emergency circular in August 1998 announcing an immediate ban on logging in natural forests, no opening of new lands at the expense of forests, freezing of all construction projects on forested land for one year, and requiring direct cabinet approval of any occupation of forested land. In the following months, four additional provisions were added to the ban that would have tremendous impact on the Songpan region. First of all, the state and Sichuan Province halted all foresting activities of any sort (including fuel wood gathering) in the region without a permit. Second, the government launched a new investment program to improve natural forest management to increase afforestation, transfer state loggers to more environmentally sustainable employment, and to co-opt state and collective forest lands into nature reserves or otherwise protected areas. Third, the government enacted additional forest land use laws to promote more efficient use of land and increased reforestation. In the Songpan region, this new legislation highlighted ecotourism as a mainstay for “proper” forest use. Finally, the NFPP launched another program in 1999 to convert steep lands on the Min River (among other areas of the upper Yangtze and Yellow Rivers) from agriculture and herding back to forest and grasslands. See Ran 2000, 137-41 and Sylvie Demurger, Martin Fournier, and Shen Guozhen, “Forest Conservation Policies and Rural Livelihood in North Sichuan Tibetan Areas,” (June 2005), available at http://ssrn.com/abstract=876870 (accessed and downloaded September 15, 2005), 1, 4-5. See also Liu Shiqing, *Changjiang shang you jingjidai xibudakaifa zhanlue yu zhengce yanjiu* [Research on Strategies and Policies of the Western development Campaign in the Economic Belts of the Upper Waters of the Yangtze River] (Chengdu: Sichuan kexue chubanshe, 2003), 250-53.

\(^{669}\) Zhang et al. 2000.

to China's National Bureau of Statistics the Chinese timber output plummeted 23.2% in the first nine months of 1999 to 16.64 million m$^3$. The NFPP also included a major reforestation and revegetation component to reduce soil erosion. In 1998 the central government invested 4 billion RMB, in 1999 6 billion RMB, and in 2000 7 billion RMB (US$ 875 million) for reforestation, provision of alternative employment and pensions for state enterprise employees ("work relief funds" or yigong daizhen, chi.), and limited funding to collective forests for similar projects.

While the logging ban was intended to control timber concerns on state lands, in 2001 it was formally extended by Sichuan provincial authorities to include all collective forested land as well.

The impact on Sichuan was swift and considerable. The ban affected not only the major forestry concerns of the state and provinces, but local people as well. In the more extreme cases, the ban was expanded to prohibit harvesting fuel wood and wood for non-commercial use. In some areas of northern Sichuan, infrastructure (roads and bridges) was destroyed or closed to

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672 Timber production from natural forests was reduced from 32 million m$^3$ in 1997 to 29 million m$^3$ in 1998 and 23 million m$^3$ in 1999. The details of the NFPP were worked out over the fall of 1999. In Fall and Winter 1999, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji went on a fact-finding mission to affected areas including Sichuan's Tibetan north and Songpan County. Following his tour, he announced the following five aspects of the new government policy: 1. the government will cover the financial losses of local administrations caused by the NFPP; 2. the forestry sector including the timber enterprises will be reformed. It is crucial to provide re-employment of state forest workers as planters and to provide financial support for those workers who must be laid off; 3. sloped farmland needs to be re-vegetated and/or afforested; the government will compensate farmland losses with grains; 4. it is necessary to develop and implement effective reforestation and forest protection; 5. demand for wood products needs to be satisfied and rural firewood dependency reduced. Zhu Rongji also emphasized that the economic structure in the region must change—specifically that tourism, forestry and animal husbandry had to be developed in new and improved ways, at high speed, to take care of the backward and under-developed areas of the west. See Xinhua, Sept. 13, 1999. In 2000 the central government launched the "Great Develop the West" campaign and linked significant portions of afforestation and poverty alleviation funds in it to the NFPP, mining, and infrastructure improvements, such as road and communication improvements. See Li 2003, 351-53.
673 The autonomous regions in Xinjiang were the first to institute the complete logging ban on all forests—Sichuan and Yunnan then followed suit, and their initiatives were given official national seal with weeks. See Zuo Ting, "Implementation of the National Forest Protection Plan," in Xu Jintao et al. (eds.), Implementing the Natural Forest Protection Program and the Sloping Land Conversion Program: Lessons and Policy Recommendations (Beijing: Zhongguo senlin chubanshe, 2001). See also Ran 2000, 138-39.
prevent local people from accessing their collective lands.\textsuperscript{674} Overall, forestry output from collective forests was reduced to 6% of past levels resulting in a provincial loss of 120.8 million RMB. Employment and the number of township level forestry enterprises were more than halved, and incomes of mostly Han laborers in Tibetan areas were reduced in the neighboring Ganzi Prefecture by over 75%.\textsuperscript{675} Furthermore, one quarter of the land in the Songpan region was set aside as nature reserve lands, almost all of it co-opted from Tibetan collective timber lands.\textsuperscript{676} While approximately 15% of forested land was already part of protected areas by 1996, the changes between 1998 and 2000 came as a blow to local forest users who in the 1980s and '90s had been allowed some measure of control over their formerly collectivized forest lands through decollectivization.\textsuperscript{677} After 1998 national programs to protect forest lands were implemented locally. In the Songpan region, centrally designed policies following these national programs had three kinds of local impacts. First, new restrictions were placed on wood cutting and applied. Second, land conversion projects were put into place, with some compensation for converted forest lands (discussed at greater length later in this section), and third, local controls and repressive measures were instituted to target local Tibetans and their forest use.\textsuperscript{678}

The new restrictions on forest use targeted in particular Tibetan fuel wood gathering. Depending on the area in the Songpan region, these restrictions varied though on the Min and Baishui Rivers they were the most thorough and severe. Fuel wood had been gathered in collective forests, managed either by villages or village groups (\textit{zu, chi}). In other places, it had been gathered on private forest lands (\textit{ziliushan, chi}) formed under decollectivization of scrub

\textsuperscript{674} Zuo 2001.

\textsuperscript{675} I have been unable to find reliable statistics on the initial impact on Han and Tibetan forestry labor in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties for the same period. See ibid.; Chen et al. 2001.

\textsuperscript{676} Li Yihui 2002, 363-65.

\textsuperscript{677} See my discussion of de-collectivization in the 1980s in Chapter Four. See also SXZ 1999, 418-19.

\textsuperscript{678} This section of research was inspired by and draws on Sylvie Demurger's study of similar issues in Pingwu and Jiuzhaigou Counties. See Demurger et al. 2005, 6-9.
forest collective lands. Originally, under “collective” management by villages or township administration, locals could gather fuel wood more or less freely, from both shrub and timber trees. After the restrictions were put in place, and new forest guards (usually local villagers hired to keep track of fuel wood collection and use) were put in place in all regional townships, with only limited cutting of shrubs and trees allowed, and permits and fees required. Although policies for collective forest areas were somewhat vague and usually poorly policed, fuel wood gathering past a certain amount was now considered illegal and commercial logging and could garner heavy fines. In the case of private plots (ziliushan, chi.), households could collect as much fuel wood as they wanted, but they had to ask permission to harvest any trees (especially for construction). In effect, what the fuel wood restrictions have done is to greatly limit the amount and kinds of wood that could be collected on both private and township/village lands, and they have made any collection on state lands illegal. Access and utilization of forest lands has been further constrained by putting some areas for collection so far from villages and households, in both distance and time, that many households have to buy fuel wood from local ziliushan-private plot holders rather than access their state and local guaranteed forested areas. The sanctions that help make these constraints possible include monetary penalties (market value of the wood usually multiplied by three), confiscation of tools, and the obligation to replant trees at the behest of township, county or prefecture governments.

While the foregoing regulations may seem to be good for the maintenance of regional forests, these new restrictions were problematic for local users of collective forests. In the first place, collective forest user’s rights to their timber and non-timber forest products were guaranteed both in the PRC constitution and in the Forest Law. These rights were denied local

679 Since 2002, there have been additional restrictions on the size of wood collected (it had to be less than 8-15 centimeters in diameter) and locals have not been allowed to collect fuel wood of any kind outside of their own plots.
users when their collective and decollectivized forests were included in the NFPP without consultation during the program’s design. The logging ban component of the program was compulsory, included state and private tree felling of any sort in the headwaters of the Yangtze River systems, and did not give owners recourse to contest. The program also did not initially include an instrument to compensate collective forest owners and users. The only group eligible for Xibudakaifa (Great Western Development; nub rgyud thon ‘byed, tib.) and state funding for their economic losses were state employees of the Ministry of Forestry. Over 92% of the forestry employees officially working in the region that received monetary help were Han Chinese, while the primary users and stakeholders of the collective forests, over 75% of which were Tibetan, received no help at all and subsequently had another set of laws, permits, and taxes on use of their collective timber lands. The short and long term answer to this drastic shortfall in local funding was to further develop and expand the tourism sector, and in conjunction with development programs like the “Grain for Green” project and poverty alleviation programs, radically expand the opportunities for local workers laid off in the forestry sector. While these programs were a boon for local Han Chinese, the majority of the forestry workers affected by the logging ban, it would take more time for the full force of the environmental and tourism regimes to help local Tibetans.

6.3 The Tourism Regime and “Great Western Development Program”

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Songpan region faced a new spate of state-led development projects. Tourism development projects were ongoing and growing from 1986, but did not have a significant impact on regional revenues until the mid 1990s. The tourism regime expanded because of early county and prefecture level investments and later national Great

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Western Development Campaign programs after the 1998 Logging Ban. This section elaborates the creation of the latest state-led governmentalization programs based on tourism, ethno-cultural development, and eco-tourism. It argues that the Chinese state increased its administrative presence and its control over natural resources and people helped to improve standards of living. This was accomplished by a two pronged, state-led development program—one related to ethno-cultural tourism and the other to environmental protectionism-poverty alleviation. While these policies and administrative actions did contribute to the goal of providing local benefits, they also had negative economic and other problematic consequences for local minority groups.

Ethno-Environmental Tourism Development

Tourism, poverty alleviation and the Great Western Development campaigns were all melded together by the Chinese state in the late 1990s. Tourism and other development projects for poverty reduction were begun in earnest by “Helping Eighty Million People in Seven Years” (also known as the 8-7 Plan) which announced the state’s intention to develop tourism in western China in particular. The 8-7 Plan was initiated in 1994 with the goal of eliminating absolute poverty in rural and minority areas by building on assets considered less desirable in other industries (ie. remote access, grasslands, protected forests, and minority cultures). Cultural and environmental assets in western China were viewed with particular favor for approved forms of development.

681 State policies linking tourism, poverty alleviation and the Great Western Development campaigns were not just responses environmental concerns, but also linked to growing inequality between coastal and interior provinces, as well as between the Han Chinese majority and ethnic minority areas, the socio-political fallout of Tiananmen Square, and Tibetan and Uighur protests. Keeping the nation together, by economic or other means thus became key concerns of the Chinese state. This is perhaps best seen in the major White Papers published by the State Council in the early to late 1990s. Key papers include “Environmental Protection in China” (June 1996), “The Grain Issue” (October 1996), “New Progress in Human Rights in the Tibetan Autonomous Region” (February 1998), “National Minorities Policy and Its Practice in China” (September 1999), and “The Development of Tibetan Culture” (June 2000), all of which were reflections of ongoing and official state policy and planning carried out starting in the early 1990s. See White Papers of the Chinese Government, vl. 2 and 3, 2000, 2002. The growing elasticity of income of the lowest earners in China, and between provinces is best introduced in Cook and White 1998. See Sara Cook and Gordon White, “The Changing Patterns of Poverty in China: Issues for Research and Policy,” Institute of Development Studies Working Paper 67 (Brighton: University of Sussex, 1998) and David Goodman in Goodman, etal. 1994, 6-7, 11-15.
of cultural and eco-tourism. Public spending in general, through infrastructure development, business development (usually tied to tourism) and natural ecological protection, especially through the Great Western Development projects, complemented the targeted state tourism plans.

In the same manner as Yunnan Province in the mid-1990s, Sichuan Province embarked on a project of developing a “Great Ethnic Culture Province” tied to the overall “Great Western Development” campaign. Provincial authorities began drafting contemporary strategic plans in the mid 1980s, and with more state funding, again in 1990. One of the main purposes of this project was to improve transportation routes for tourists to access the Jiuzhaigou

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684 To date, the best and most thorough discussion of the “Great Ethnic Province” policy and campaigns in Yunnan can be found in the work of Andreas Wilkes. See Andreas Wilkes, “Multiculturalisms and Bioculturalisms: Ethnic Minorities, Natural Resources, and Development in Southwestern China,” Manuscript presented at the Western Conference of the Association of Asian Studies (Seattle, WA 2004). This paper is a part of Mr. Wilkes overall dissertation (in progress) from the University of Kent.
685 See Li Shantong 2003, 359-61 on programs of the Xibudakaifa that specifically deal with tourism development in Sichuan, including funds and work earmarked for development of northern Sichuan roads and tourist destinations.
686 As early as 1985, regional administrators recognized the tourism potential of Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties and began to develop both plans and sites. The first reserve area offices were opened in Jiuzhaigou in 1980 and Huanglong in 1984. However, the first major prefecture level plan was funded and developed in 1985-86. The first official plan linked to poverty-alleviation and long term sustainable tourism in the region was introduced in 1988, with Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong Temple linked as the West Sichuan Tourism and Culture Plan (Chuan xi luyou wenhua she jihua, chi.). The 8th Five Year Plan was a watershed in funding, administrative oversight, and long term development strategies; it not only helped fund the expansion of local TVEs to support tourism consumerism, funded park, trail, and access mandates, and local tourism marketing and development offices (by 1990 over 75 full time staff worked in both reserves, for all accounts and purposes to expand or support tourism in the area), it also pinpointed infrastructure development (road building in particular) as a primary concern for tourism in northern Sichuan in the 1990s. See SXZ 1999, 854-56, 867-71; AZZ 1993, vl. 3, 2261-62. See also Tang Banxing, etal. 1990 and Fang Yiping 2002 on the development of tourism in Jiuzhaigou and Songpan Counties in the late 1980s and 1990s. Tang Banxing, Shi Feng, Liu Shuqing, “Tourism in the Northwestern Part of Sichuan Province, PR China,” Geojournal 21:1-2 (1990), 155-59; Fang Yiping, “Ecotourism in Western Sichuan, China,” Mountain Research and Development 22:2 (2002), 113-115. Two of the best economic studies of the development of tourism and its relation to local development and poverty alleviation in northern Sichuan are Xu Gang and Claudia Kruse, “Economic Impact of Tourism in China,” in Alan Lew, Lawrence Yu, John Ap, and Zhang Guangrui (eds.), Tourism in China (London: The Haworth Hospitality Press, 2003), 83-102, and using Jiuzhaigou as a case study, Kreg Lindberg, Clem Tisdel and Dayuan Xue, “Ecotourism in China’s Nature Reserves,” in Lew, etal. (eds.), Tourism in China (London: Haworth Hospitality Press, 2003), 103-127.
Nature Reserve. When this reserve and Songpan County’s Huanglong Nature Reserve received UNESCO World Natural Heritage status in 1992, there was a rapid increase in not only foreign but also domestic tourists journeying to their “natural fairyland” (tonghua shijie, chi.). In addition to the nature reserves, the “Great Ethnic Culture Province” and “Great Western Development” projects also sought to develop alternative key industries. This new policy and development regime viewed ethnic culture, non-timber forest products, grasslands, and the natural landscape as commodifiable resources. These tertiary sector resources would replace timber exploitation by the state and fuel economic growth in the county, prefecture and province. While the rationale for this policy approach may have included a trend toward allowing more expression of ethnic particularity and a regeneration of many aspects of culture that were forbidden until the early 1980s, development of the new policies and economic regimes also followed from an extension of the logic of ethnic inclusion expressed by the mainstream academics and policy specialists.

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690 In Ran’s discussion of the culture and “historical materialism” of northern Sichuan, Tibetan pastoralism and the natural environment stand out in explicating historical and contemporary reasons for past under-development and current projects; toward the end of his introductory comments, the cultural and environmental setting are highlighted as good grounds for tourism and business development in the region. See Ran 2000, 29-32; Yang Zhenzhi 2003, 216-19. See also, Ran, etal. 2003, 125, 134-37.
The primary purpose of ethnicity in the Great Western Development campaign and related development projects, at least in Sichuan, was to bring into play the unique advantage of ethnic cultural diversity and the local environment, and to let "culture merge with economics" to foster "ethnic culture enterprises" and create "environmental tourist enterprises." These enterprises would promote a new economic growth point, sustainable cultural, ecological and economic development of a multi-ethnic area, and build ethnic areas into an economically prosperous, culturally developed, "ethnically united and socially civilized modern strong part of China." Thus the focus on this official strategy was on the economic role of both culture and the local environment. In order to accomplish this, environmental and ethnic tourism policies promoted the following perspectives.

Historically rooted discourse and perspectives were evident in the promotion of culture and the environment in developing the local economy. First, harking back to the late '80s and early '90s, state discourse developers and administrators, the "culture brokers" of northern Sichuan, continued to use terms like "quality" and "material and spiritual civilization" to frame their development projects. By enunciating the view that the ethnic and cultural diversity of Aba Prefecture had topographical origins that had been enriched by migrations of ethnic peoples and a diverse natural environment, the state and provincial policies tie contemporary ethnic cultures with the ancient origins. These nationalities, and even local flora and fauna in the local environment or tied to distinctive local practices, were depicted as "living fossils" (huohuashi, chi.), a designation that primitivized local culture. By enumerating these artifacts (people, animals, and plants), practices and aspects of the natural environment of the minority groups, all

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691 For pertinent mountain area development and natural heritage articles see Yang Zhenzhi in Ran and Li 2003, 212-13, 217-18; and Yuan 1998.
of them were essentially identified as discrete units of culture that could be commercialized.\(^{692}\) Under new guidelines, the "suzhi di" ("low quality") of the Songpan region based on cultural and geographical issues in the late 1980s and early ‘90s was thus transformed into a positive element of "raising the quality" (tigao suzhi, chi.) in the region.

During the 1980s and ‘90s, when foreign tourists were gradually allowed to visit China’s west, areas inhabited by ethnic minorities became popular destinations. The Songpan region was first opened to domestic and limited foreign tourism in 1986. Travel to China’s west has since become a major industry, accounting for more than 5% of the country’s GDP in 2000.\(^{693}\) The central government regulation to prolong national holidays in 1999 also helped to spur China’s domestic tourist market. The following year, earnings from domestic tourism (about 90% of all tourism in 2000) reached 317 billion RMB, while foreign exchange from overseas tourists totaled more than 16 billion US dollars.\(^{694}\) As already noted, tourism was developed as a development strategy for Tibetan and other ethnic minority areas beginning in the early 1980s. While minority areas experienced less domestic and foreign tourism than coastal, central and urban China, the importance of tourism has grown significantly. In the northern counties of Sichuan Province 1998-2000, tourism revenue reached between 10%-15% of local GDP of Tibetan areas, while taxes and profits amounted to over 15% of local revenue, and from 2000-2005 reached 15-20% GDP and 20%+ of local revenue.\(^{695}\)

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\(^{692}\) Examples of these primitivized local culture in the Songpan region include Yak jerky, raw meat, local traditional medicines and teas, Tibetan and Qiang handicrafts (especially local weaving styles and distinctive clothing), riding horses and trekking, local festivals (like horse racing, temple fairs, and the like), and above all, the local natural environment most often experienced in "nature reserves," living fossil relict animal species (like pandas and golden monkeys), and unusual plants and trees. All of these things, from people to animals to trees were located on and co-opted from local collective lands.


\(^{695}\) Local statistics from Ru’er gai, Jiuzhaigou and Songpan Counties, 2005; Ran 2000, 339-341. See also *Zhongguo minzu nianjian 1997* [China’s Minority Yearbook, 1997] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1997), 373.
In the process of developing plans for tourism development and poverty alleviation in Sichuan, the Songpan region and parts of western Sichuan were designated as special tourist and cultural economic zones on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River. The 2001 State Council resolution “On Further Accelerating the Development of the Tourism Sector” (Guanyu jin yi bu jiakuai luyouye fazhan de tongzhi, chi.) called for the establishment of these “experimental zones for poverty alleviation through tourism” (Luyou fupin shiyanqu, chi.) as well as the construction of new airports and roads. The Committee on Nationalities and Religions of the People’s Consultative Conference also joined the tourism bandwagon by issuing a “Proposal to accelerate the development of the tourism sector in nationality areas” (Guanyu jaikuai fazhan minzu diqu luyou chanye de jianyi, chi.) that gave local temples a new lease on life to rebuild, refurbish, and otherwise expand their local holdings. These special economic zones were developed as administrative entities with major seed funding from richer economic zones along the Yangtze River like Chongqing, Wuhan and Shanghai. Funds were to be used to create a viable infrastructure to support increased tourism, make local grasslands and pastoral pastimes more efficient and economical, and protect the environment (for example, to prevent such disasters as the 1998 floods).

In addition to tourism for poverty alleviation, environmental reserves and afforestation projects, and monies and loans to support them, were also proposed, debated, and put into practice. Besides the micro-credit funds provided by the World Bank discussed in an earlier section, the other most significant projects in the Songpan region were the “Grain for Green”

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696 In this case, I am referring to Tim Oakes’ sense of “touristified peoples” and areas under poverty alleviation programs. In his study, he was looking at rural areas of Guizhou. See Oakes 1998, 120-21, 124-25.
697 Wen 2003.
700 Wen 2003, 253-58 and Li 2003, 359-74 elaborates specific programs and goals.
land conversion project and road building spree from 2000 to 2004. The Grain for Green Project 
(*Tui geng huan lin*, chi.; *sa shing nags tshal du sgyurba*, tib.; literally, “to promote conversion 
back to trees”) was created to reduce soil erosion by returning cultivated land on slopes of 25° or 
more to shrub or forest land in the upper Yangtze River Basin, especially including the Songpan 
region.\(^{701}\)

Launched in 1999 in three pilot provinces (Gansu, Shaanxi and Sichuan), the sloping land 
conversion program was subsequently extended to twenty-five provinces.\(^{702}\) To maintain income 
for the local people, the state provided some subsidies both in kind (grain and seedlings) and 
cash for a period of eight years if land was converted to “ecological forests” (timber producing 
forests), and for five years if the land was converted to “economic forests” (mainly orchards and 
trees or shrubs with medicinal or commercial value).\(^{703}\) In the Upper Min River basin between 
1998 and 2001, over 336 kilometers\(^2\) of cultivated land was planted with trees. In effect, this 
meant that approximately 27% of land on over 25° slopes was converted to forested or shrub 
land in just three years.\(^{704}\) The state committed to compensate farmer families for their loss in 
converting cultivated land. The farmers in Songpan County were allotted a grain subsidy of 150 
kilograms plus 70 yuan (50 yuan for seedlings, and 20 yuan for health care and education) for 
each *mu* (.12 hectare) of cultivated land returned to forest or grassland.\(^{705}\) However, it should be

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\(^{701}\) Chen Guojie, “Problems and Countermeasures on “Grain for Green” and “Logging Ban” in the Upper Reaches of 
the Yangtze River” [in Chinese with an English Abstract], *Changjiang shangyou ziran ziyuan yanjiu* [Resources and 
and Chen Shaojun and Zheng Yisheng, “Cong wei dagong chang dao shehui xietiao” [From Great Projects to Social 
Harmonization], in China Social Sciences College Environment and Development Research Center, *Zhongguo 
huanjing yu fazhan pinglun* [China Environment and Development Review], vl. 2 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenji 
chubanshe, 2004), 355-86.

\(^{702}\) Xu Zhigang, Michael Bennett, Tao Ran, and Xu Jintao, “China’s Sloping Land Conversion Program Four Years 

\(^{703}\) Ye et al., 2003, 348-49.

\(^{704}\) Another 34% of farm land was converted to cash tree crops in less sloping land in the region. See Ye, et al. 2003, 
349; Chen 2001, 548.

\(^{705}\) To support conversion, the state provided seedlings and grain for food, over 75,000 tons of husked grain, over 10 
million RMB ($1.22 million U.S.) for education and health care, and over 25 million RMB ($3 million U.S.) for tree
noted that most farmers preferred to plant species (Chinese prickly ash, apple, and sea buckthorn, all fruit or medicinal plants) for commercial rather than ecological reasons. This program has since become a major source of concern in the Songpan region as so many locals took advantage of it. Many farmers and agro-pastoral families took advantage of the program to plant trees and shrubs; since 2002 they have worried about their future livelihoods because the project does not clearly indicate whether government subsidies will continue after 2008. Once the subsidies end and there are no other benefits, farmers may have to return to growing crops or grazing on the sloping land and using the “forests” for firewood.  

The final major element in the Great Western Development programs slated for the Songpan region was infrastructure development. In order to better serve the needs of the growing tourism industry and other potential pastoral and agricultural development projects, the state invested heavily in highway construction. In Songpan County, the highway leading to Juizhaigou was the only fully upgraded road for tourism and economic transport until 2004. In fall of 2004, the Sichuan Construction Ministry, in conjunction with the National Bureau of Construction, invested over 1 Billion RMB in upgrading the North Sichuan-Gansu Highway (as well as the Jiuzhaigou spur into the newly minted Jiuzhaigou County). They also built a major airport to the north of Songpan—HuangJiu National Airport—to service those interested in flying into Juizhaigou and Huanglong Nature Reserves rather than taking the 10 ½ hour bus ride from Chengdu. However, almost all of the subsidiary roads in the county beyond the main

and bush seedlings. The land conversion took place mostly along the warm and dry valleys of the Min River and its tributaries, and to a limited degree in some parts of the Mao'er gai and Baishui River watersheds. Using questionnaires, in their study of the Songpan region Ye Yanqiong and Sylvie Demurger showed that the main impact of the Grain for Green Project in the upper Min River Basin and adjacent areas was very positive—local stakeholders were guaranteed a basic livelihood through government subsidies, educated in environmental awareness, and compensated appropriately. See Ye 2003, 349; Demurger et al. 2005, 8; and Tan Yan and Wang Yiqian, “Environmental Migration and Sustainable Development in the Upper Reaches of the Yangtze River,” Population and Environment 25:6 (2004), 613-36; 623-24.

See Ye et al. 2003, 351.

highway remain either gravel or dirt tracks prone to landslides, washouts, and seasonal closure. The road to Huanglong Nature Reserve was only fully upgraded to semi-paved and heavy gravel in 2005, and Mao’ergai Township road from Zhengjiang to Mao’er gai is still largely unimproved from its c. 1978 gravel surface. In early Great Western Development proposals, the primary roads in the Songpan region were supposed to be upgraded to support both tourism and the expansion of local pastoral industry. However, road infrastructure development has almost totally concentrated on the Chengdu-Huanglong-Jiuzhaigou tourist circuit, building and upgrading the airport outside of Chuanzhu si, and upgrading the road connections to other tourism sites in Ru’er gai and Hongyuan Counties creating the Chengdu-Songpan-Jiuzhaigou-Ruo’er gai-Ma’erkang tourist circuit.

Following the general guidelines enumerated in the previous section, county and provincial officials embarked in the late-1990s and early 2000s on a large-scale development campaign to reshape the nature of the increasingly popular tourist and eco-environmental Songpan region. Tourism revenue increased in Songpan County tenfold between 1996-2002, when it exceeded 250 million RMB (around $28 million U.S.) and became the largest sector in the economy. The growth was in large part related to the marketing and popularity of neighboring Jiuzhaigou, but Huanglong, Chuanzhu si, and Songpan together served over 440,000 guests in 2002. After the airport in Chuanzhu si opened, visitors to Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong doubled (from approximately 1 million in 2003 to 1.95 million in 2004).

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709 The greater emphasis on roads as serving tourism development needs is best seen in Ran Guangrong, Li Tao and Wang Chuan’s discussion of tourism industry development from 2000-2003. See Ran et al. 2003, 139-144.
The Great Western Development programs in the Songpan region for poverty alleviation through tourism coupled with subsidiary programs to set aside protected areas, further constraints on local use of forested areas, the Grain for Green, and infrastructure projects, have pumped billions of yuan into the region. Public spending on environmental protection and poverty alleviation were a way for the Chinese state to redistribute the benefits of a growing economy while both developing local economies and addressing some pressing environmental issues in a meaningful and public manner. However, while the exigencies of the market and environmental awareness are often cited in China as a catch-all rationale for environmental governmentalization and tourism development, they are only part of the explanation for what is happening in northern Sichuan. Echoing the policy discourses of the late ‘80s and ‘90s, the civilizing rhetoric plays a major role in generation of socio-economic development and promotion of tourist destinations. As tourism grows in the region, distribution of benefits from the new tourism and eco-environmental regime is one of the emerging concerns. Using Songpan County as a case study of major issues, the next section analyzes some of the socio-economic and ideological costs and benefits of the contemporary state-led tourism development regime and how local people have managed to use it in some ways to their advantage.

6.4 Reshaping Local Commodities, People and the Environment as “Cultural Resources”

In addressing tourism, political and cultural issues in Third World communities, Dean MacCannell maintains that “reconstructed ethnic forms are appearing as the more or less automatic result of all the groups in the world entering a global network of commercial transactions.” MacCannell claims that “ethnicities can begin to use former colorful ways both as commodities to be bought and sold and as rhetorical weaponry in their dealings with one

another. In research on Guizhou and Yunnan, both Tim Oakes and Ashild Kolas highlight the importance and power of the state and its mechanisms in producing political and economic outcomes in ethnic tourism. Oakes discusses how ethnic tourism and mechanisms to develop tourist areas in Guizhou help to both civilize the “tourees” and to respond to official calls for correct notions and practices; a state-led “construction” of authenticity in tourism and “modern practices” among ethnic groups that builds on the imaginary of the modernist nation-state and entrepreneurial capitalism. Kolas discusses the same issues in northern Yunnan with the construction of the imaginary of “Shangrila” as part of the Chinese nation-state as well as the methods of profiteering in cultural commodification. Both Oakes and Kolas touch on the eco-environment as part of this economic and political process, but in neither case do they make the point that the ecological environment, eco-tourism, and ethnic commodification are directly linked as they are in the Songpan region. Some Chinese authors have interpreted the socio-cultural and spatial transformation of tourist locales and the environment in western China as a result the intrusion of global markets and appropriate state actions to alleviate poverty; inexorable forces locals were both unable and often unwilling to resist. I believe the local socio-political and environmental landscapes are more complicated than that.

This section elaborates three aspects of the state’s development of environment and tourism regimes in Songpan County since 1998. First the roles of the actors involved are identified, second the basic means through which income and revenue are distributed are identified.
described, and third the effects on the people and the landscape are explained. By examining local developments, state projects and local responses, the actions of and benefits to principal actors, and elements of local experience will be clarified. The analysis of particular ideological and distributive outcomes and the ever-shifting political and economic ground that the local minorities face in the area makes evident that the government control of the environment, tourism development and poverty alleviation has generated income and jobs as well as a new set of problems in northern Sichuan.

*The Ideological Framework of “Civilizing” Songpan*

Tourism in northern Sichuan has grown tremendously since the early 1990s, and as Pal Nyiri has shown, was a firmly established element of domestic and international urban consumer lifestyle by the beginning of the twenty-first century.\(^717\) Tourism is also an arena to transform “tourees”—local Han, Tibetans and Hui who take part in the tourism regime.\(^718\) Chinese officials often state that tourism “synthesizes the material and spiritual civilization.”\(^719\) Thus, national, regional and local officials became the “culture brokers” that determined the how and why of cultural commodification at the local level. The ideal of the consumer-citizen was clearly implicit in the State Council’s 1993 “Opinion on Actively Developing the Domestic Tourism Industry” (*Guanyu jiji fazhan guonei luyouye de yuijian*, chi) which declares that “the emergence and development of a domestic tourism industry has satisfied the popular masses’ demand for material culture, which grows day by day, and strengthened the popular masses’ patriotic cohesion.” With a different inflection, the 2001 “Notice on Further Accelerating the

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Development of the Tourism Industry” called for “closely connecting the development of tourism with the construction of socialist spiritual civilization; cultivating superior national culture through tourist activities; strengthening patriotic education.”

Speaking of ethno-ecological tourism in 2000, the Deputy Director of the Sichuan Provincial Tourism Bureau stated “The construction of scenic spots and scenic areas must both fully reflect modern material civilization and fully display the positive and advancing spiritual civilization of the Chinese race. Indeed, this is what distinguishes the socialist tourism industry with Chinese characteristics from Western capitalist tourism industry.”

Thus, Chinese authorities see the correctly framed consumption (and construction) of places as an instrument of strengthening national consciousness. In order for Songpan County to be transformed into a scenic spot, it had to convert spontaneously evolving local ways of consuming space into national spaces of civilization to truly fit into the modern state-led “touristic models.”

Songpan County tourism development since 2000 demonstrates two major types of construction of national spaces of civilization that link tourism-ethnicity-environment in state planning. One has been urban (fanggujie, chi.) and the other in the rural landscape (bendi fengjing, chi.), and both types of construction require local ethnic and environmental landscapes to function. To begin with, the most visible signs of Songpan’s “touristic modernity” were not found in rural villages of rural Songpan County but in urban areas along the Min River in or near Songpan and Zhuanzhu si. One aspect of the poverty alleviation and development projects of the 1990s was the creation of economic development zones in the major towns slated for tourist

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Zhang 2000, 121.
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development; however, these zones had to be recreated and promoted so that they would have what Wei Xiaoan called “ethnic form [but] modernized content.”

Urban Ethno-Environmental Tourism

The effects of civilizing Songpan, as opposed to just market-induced change, have been real precisely because they have been linked to the inducements of the market. Over five years of intense demolition, construction, and urban-tourism-environment planning, the town’s spaces have been nationalized and its inhabitants civilized in order to be suitable for tourism. Songpan officials have also tried to highlight their regional environment by both advertising it in town as well as link local tours to natural sites. Songpan has been transformed into the standardized category of “old town” (gucheng or fangujie, chi.), a touristic genre represented by hundreds of sites across China, from Zhouzhuang near Shanghai to Lijiang in Yunnan. The creation of Songpan as an “old town” started in the late 1980s with the designation of its Ming Dynasty (c. 16th Century) wall and three urban temples as state heritage sites and as a part of the Jiuzhaigou tourist route. However, reconstruction of Songpan did not begin until the 21st Century under the Great Western Development program. Reconstruction began in 2000-03 when the ruined city wall was rebuilt, connecting the remaining aging sections with a new wall that necessitated tearing down a number of Tibetan and Hui homes and businesses. In 2002 when Songpan city was given additional funds to touristify the city, local and prefecture tourism bureaus went into construction overdrive. Under the aegis of “infrastructure development,” the entire downtown

723 Wei 2000, 139.
725 SXZ 1999, 868-69.
727 Reconstruction took place in large part and at such a pace after 2002 when provincial authorities decided to hold the Second Sichuan International Tourism Festival in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou over the course of August and early September in 2004.
was torn down, houses on and around the city wall were destroyed, the wall painted a uniform light grey, and the downtown business district rebuilt in the style of the traditional architecture of Chengdu and eastern China (reminiscent of traditional Chinese architectural styles common to eastern China).⁷²⁸ As well, local Han Chinese and Hui temples were given a facelift, and an “ancient Imperial fort” (the pre-2003 version dating from the 1920s) above the city is being rebuilt along the lines of the main gate to the Forbidden City in Beijing.⁷²⁹

After the old town was clearly bounded by the wall, the border between mundane and touristic space was further defined through gates, pedestals, and wall paintings. The town gates were rebuilt, spotlighted, and old Chinese stele were embedded in their interiors. The northern part of Songpan now has several wide ceremonial spaces, its own little Tiananmen Square, and a standard monument. This monument—not a statue of Mao Zedong—depicts the Tan Dynasty Han Chinese princess Wencheng and her Tibetan king-bridegroom with a tablet that states, “Hanzang heqin” (Han and Tibetan Harmony and Amity). Finally, the main tourist street through the town was lined with Zhouzhuang-like lanterns and fake and real flower beds familiar from the Wangfujing or Qintailu pedestrian zones in Beijing and Chengdu. In strategic places, large murals of the grasslands with yaks amid tall grass, Huanglong Nature Reserve’s golden pools, and Xuebaoding Mountain depicted in vibrant detail. All of these monuments to Han-Tibetan relations, greater China (Beijing and all), the surrounding natural environment and Chinese military occupation of the town in the distant and recent past, identified the town

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⁷²⁸ The Tourism Bureau in Songpan County wanted to “rebuild” a late imperial Ming-Qing town with appropriate houses, businesses, and color. Songpan was actually rebuilt in what they called “Tibet style restoration” (zangzu fuyuan, chi.). The building styles in the downtown district, with wood facing and tracery, traditional scalloped roofs, and roof tiles and gables reminiscent of the Forbidden City in Beijing are distinctly Chinese. But the paint facades around lintels and windows were painted in Tibetan patterns; that is, geometrical patterns in shades of ochre, sometimes highlighted with azure blue or malachite green, as well as “Tibetan style” iron doors. Local Hui Muslims were allowed to paint green and white crescents on their buildings.

⁷²⁹ Personal communication with Songpan County Tourism Development Bureau (September 2004).
explicitly and implicitly as part of the Chinese nation and the status of Songpan as an ethnic-environmental and “civilized” part of China.

*Rural Ethno-Environmental Tourism*

In the countryside, an example of the “civilizing” effect of modern tourism is in the Huanglong Nature Reserve and along its tourist route, the Songpan-Chuanzhu si-Long March Memorial-Huanglong Reserve and Temples. Since the late 1950s, the identification of Tibetan areas of northern Sichuan was something that the Chinese state saw fit to manipulate in a variety of ways without reference to the Tibetans themselves. For example, prior to the 1980s the landscape and places in the Tibetan areas of the region were renamed with Chinese names, not just on maps, but on all of the local signs and postings. More profound was the way in which Chinese territorial claims about the mountains, valleys and plains of the region have systematically erased Tibetan discourse from their narratives and replaced it with state approved “history” and “myths.”

The history and myths of the region revolve around three related historical occurrences—the Long March through the region (not, however, near the monument), Chinese Emperor Yu and Daoism in the nature reserve, and protection of the reserve area as an important ecological and geological site instead of as an important cultural location for Tibetans.

One of the first things one sees when taking the road to Huanglong is the huge Long March memorial pillar to the north of the road. This monument is prominent on the landscape

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730 In 1983, Xuebaoding Mountain, some adjacent territory, and the lakes area of Huanglong were designated as the 640 square-kilometer Yellow Dragon Valley Scenic District and Protection Zone. See Li Wenhua and Zhao Xianying, *China's Nature Reserves* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1989), 155-56, 182. See also SXZ 1999, 47, 868-69.

731 As I have already noted in Chapter Three, as part of the official governmentalization of the region under Mao’s new government.

732 Toni Huber also carefully articulates this process in his study of Shardungr/G Xuebaoding Mountain in Huber 2006. In and around Huanglong Nature Reserve, Toni Huber has studied how the “ritual territories” (Huanglong Lakes and Xuebaoding Mountain) of the region have been interpreted and re-interpreted by local Tibetans and the Chinese state, highlighting the confusing and contradictory status of the mountain and Huanglong in local and state discourses. See Huber 2006.
and in tourist literature related to the area, and does not represent Tibetans at all. Thus the state has used the symbolic power of the Long March in order to deeply anchor both Songpan County and its natural landscape within the national historical consciousness of greater China. Branches of the Long March did traverse the westernmost part of Songpan County in 1935. However, the Long Marchers never went near Huanglong or the Min River, the core of the tourist economic zone. In the early 1990s Chinese authorities built the huge monumental sculpture park and lighted tower memorializing the Long March right at the entrance to Huanglong Nature Reserve. This site, a kind of “theme park,” is one that every tourist or traveler who arrives by road or plane must pass through. The creators of this monument have taken great pains to blend it harmoniously into the discourse of the local mountain landscape. The Huanglong management plan points out that “…the monumental park in the memory of the Long March by the Red Army… and the natural surroundings are organically linked together, adding splendor and beauty to each other and reflecting the intimate affinity between Man and nature.”

The eulogy for the site, a short note on all of the postcards that one can buy anywhere along the Min River, situates the monument in the landscape in a very specific way: “It is of far-reaching significance to build the monument here. Behind it stands fairyland Huanglong. The golden monument shines brilliance over the surrounding mountains and rivers and the merit stands high in the human world.”

Huanglong nature reserve, though, includes Tibetans as part of its narrative. The narrative cultural history of Huanglong Nature Reserve in the state management plan discusses the reserve in four primary contexts—that the area was neglected by Han and Tibetan Chinese,

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733 The Songpan Gazetteer lists the Long March, along with Huanglong Nature Reserve, Munigou Scenic Area, various plants, animals, and the features of the landscape as primary resources (ziyuan, chi.) for tourism development. SXZ 1999, 856.

that it was linked to ancient Chinese history through myth stories of Emperor Yu, that Chinese poets eulogized the region during and after the Ming Dynasty, and that after Han Chinese built various temples, local Tibetans, Han and Qiang worshipped it as a sacred place. Thus the site gained an illustrious Chinese history without mention of the Tibetan discourse about the “golden lakes” or the holy mountain, Shardung ri (Chi. Xuebaoding) or any of the other sacred sites in or adjacent to the nature reserve. This is only one example of the many interesting new Chinese “myths” about the area that have been created by state agencies to foster domestic tourism and lay “undeniable claim” to Tibetan areas of China.

The Huanglong Nature Reserve was the home, dating from the Ming Dynasty, of several Daoist temples. According to most tour guides and most tourist leaflets and materials available at the reserve entrance, the natural beauty of the place is the most important reason for controlling access, developing the area as a preserve for natural plants and unique scenic beauty, and making it a stop on the tourist itinerary. If you ask at the entrance, ask the tour guides, or read some of the path-side markers, there are also a number of short descriptions of the importance of the mineral pools, various underwater shapes, and the medicinal and purported magical powers of certain plants and herbs that grow in the area. The “temples” that exist now were supposedly built in during the Ming Dynasty (c. sixteenth century). “Temples” around the lakes were largely in ruin by 1949, and further demolished by Red Guards during the

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736 Other examples of creative mythmaking in the region include commercializing a-historical “temple fairs” in Huanglongsi, on Shardung ri, around Kalonggou, dispensing with Tibetan culture altogether around Jiuzhaigou or southern Songpan by using other exotic signifiers like the Qiang or Hui minorities, creatively anchoring the Long March (c. 1935) in the area by building a monumental sculpture park (who missed the area by about 160kms.), and commercialization of temples and monasteries throughout the region (the state has funded the restoration of “accessible” monasteries with the aim of opening them to mass tourism, but not as large-scale sites for teaching Tibetan monks).
737 AZZ 1993, vl. 3, 2494, 2563.
738 According to local documents there were indeed a few buildings used by practitioners of Daoism built during the late Ming Dynasty, but they were in ruins by the mid Qing period. See SXZ 1999, 837.
Cultural Revolution. If you push local guides, they will tell you about that. A basic problem with this narrative of the lakes area was that according to David Crockett Graham, a naturalist who visited the area in 1924, Chinese temple officials at Huanglong said the first Daoist temple was only built in the 1820s during the Daoguang imperial reign (1821-50). Another issue not raised in literature relating to Huanglong was that the Chinese state opened one of its first forest farms and harvesting operations in the valley and adjacent territory in the late 1950s, harvesting timber in the 1950s and again in the early 1970s. The forested landscape as it exists now is an outgrowth of those clear cuts and limited afforestation projects. The roads that lead to Huanglong were originally built to get people, equipment and timber in and out of the area.

One major point that the tour guides or official documentation mention is the special place that Huanglong valley, locally known as Gser mtsho or Golden Lakes, holds for Tibetans. The valley was and is a major part of a skor lam (circumambulation) route around Xuebaoding Mountain (Shardung ri, tib.), one of four major Tibetan pilgrimage sites in Aba Prefecture, and once home to a small Tibetan temple. The valley was the destination of the circumambulation route that once linked four small Bon temples surrounding the mountain. Only one of these temples is still in use, largely because of its proximity to Songpan city and the number of tourists that trek to it and the base of Xuebaoding Mountain. However, the circumambulation route and the Tibetan temples of Xuebaoding Mountain and Huanglong Nature Reserve are largely airbrushed by the modern environmental and tourism discourse of the significance of this area. In addition to the religious factors of the nature reserve, other temples along the horse trekking routes and in Munigou Scenic Area have been refurbished or built outright to support the local

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tourist industry. Most local Tibetans are thrilled to have new or rebuilt temples. While the positive elements of local religious revival and state-led building of Tibetan temples destroyed during the Cultural Revolution should not be downplayed, there were also local concerns that most of these institutions were for show, and were being built by local labor using official funds rather than resources from the local religious and cultural context.

With the intention of emphasizing "ethnic form" for the development of tourism, as well as the ecological environment, it has been noted earlier how the public spaces of Songpan have since 1998 acquired "socialist content." From the government's standpoint, the logic of these developments was not antagonistic but rather synergistic. There was and is a relationship between tourism and civilization evident in the simultaneous appearance of slogans about party members' education and the environment in the newly remade town, the creation of the Long March monument and Huanglong Nature Reserve. The success of these accomplishments in turning the county into a major tourist area hinged on how the state discourse framed their successful bid to turn the county into a major tourist site. But all of these accomplishments hinged on how the state framed consumption of place and landscape as national spaces of civilization. It remained to be seen what effect the tourist income would have in terms of poverty alleviation in Songpan County.

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741 An earlier study (1990) by scholars in the Chengdu Institute of Mountain Disaster and Environment and the tourism bureau highlighted similar issues, but also pointed out that Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties should simply build temples in the grasslands and along the road and "hold some religious and traditional activities to promote tourism" as "all of these activities have not been organized but take place spontaneously in inconvenient locations." See Tang et al. 1990, 158.

742 Another element of "manufacturing minzu culture" for tourist consumption is how some kind of "temple fair" has been invented to provide a historical bent for markets in Huanglong Nature Reserve and an invented yearly "celebration" (touted in Chinese and Western Tourist literature). See Toni Huber 2006, 23-26.
The Eco-Tourism Distributive Network: Local Land, Fees and Jobs

In 1998, the Prefecture Tourism Department issued a document detailing their plans for the development of tourism in Aba Prefecture and in Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties. Among the main challenges were to improve infrastructure, to compete for talented business managers in the service sector, to compete with other areas of Sichuan in developing tourism, and the need to raise awareness about the importance of tourism among the “staff of all government departments and people of all professions.” Finally, the document describes the sustainable development of natural resources as a “serious challenge” for Aba Prefecture tourism. Possible depletion of cultural resources was not mentioned in this report probably because of local officials’ lack of awareness and hence concern about “cultural commodification.” As with other later influential studies of tourism in northern Sichuan, the issue of cultural commodification, problems with land expropriation of land for development, and discussions of cultural sensitivity were lacking. The major problems that emerged in the development drive in Songpan County were with land expropriation, fees for land and tourist related businesses, and increasing concerns in the local job market. At the same time, the commodification of traditional local practices also greatly benefited local minorities as they took advantage of their local knowledge to pursue them.

745 Local Tibetans, Hui and Han tout the ever increasing amount of tourism-related money flowing into the county—money that has allowed them to build new homes, send children to school in Chengdu and beyond, and move much higher in local and provincial social standing. These monies have also allowed locals to support works of interest to them including rebuilding and refurbishing local mosques and Tibetan religious sites—this has come at various costs to the local environment, historical relics and buildings, and even reshaped locals understanding of their history and
The head of Aba Prefecture Tourism Department explained that the department concentrated on two types of tourism—ecotourism (shengtai luyou, chi.) and ethnic tourism (minzu luyou, chi.). With the rapid increase in tourist arrivals one of the plans was to decentralize tourism by creating opportunities for tourists to reach more remote areas of the prefecture. The department head envisioned that as additional areas became developed foreign tourists with a wish to "return to nature" would make up the majority of tourists in the future. In terms of domestic tourism, the strategy was to encourage quantity over quality as most domestic tourists were not interested in visiting sites outside of established itineraries. The tourism department then worked very closely with local travel service providers and hotels to develop appropriate and profitable tourist attractions and places to stay depending on the kind of group it would target.

With the total dissolution of the forestry industry in 1998, the already growing tourism industry based on local culture and landscape appeared to be a particularly promising source of revenue for Songpan County. The challenge was to continue to expand the local tourist infrastructure in such a way that it could support the influx of visitors. After 1998, Songpan and Jiuzhaigou Counties were designated as a special economic development zone. The zone
featured plans for a set of holiday and vacation resorts, linked to existing resorts around Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve, and catering to the zone’s prospective free-spending investors. These officially sanctioned “Tourism and Vacation Zones” were created in and around Songpan and Zhuanzhu si by expropriating land (zhandi, chi.; sa zin ba, tib.) from local farmers.

Following decollectivization, land in rural and urban areas of the Songpan region had been largely parceled out to individual households and village collective bodies. However, the township government had the right to expropriate land it needed for infrastructure development. The practice of expropriation was relatively uncommon prior to the late 1990s, and then had been used only for projects directly managed by the township authorities such as schools or TVEs. However, since 2002, various township and county officials, most tied into the tourism industry, have increasingly become land brokers, acting as agents in arrangements between farmers and village officials and private companies with more varied interests. The process of zhandi (land expropriation) was controversial because the property rights to land did not unequivocally belong to the local stakeholders. Just as has been noted relating to local forest areas, farmers and semi-pastoral members of agricultural collectives had contracted the right to farm land, but rights to transfer land to other interests and purposes was often ambiguous, and involved the prerogatives of local officials. Usually zhandi was carried out through negotiated settlements with the farmers, where township officials act as middlemen in determining and managing compensation.

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749 See Aba Prefecture Tourism Development Plan 1998. This is very similar to Tim Oakes findings in Guizhou in the late 1990s. See Oakes 1998, 126-27.

750 One reason it has been difficult to establish a simple standard for compensating farmers for their land is that providing farmers with permanent jobs in the new enterprise in exchange for land given up for that enterprise has been a popular model. Making the transition from peasant to worker is a common ideal for many young people in this region, but the jobs offered are highly variable in quality, not necessarily available to all family members, and sometimes fail to materialize if the planned developments fail. Many older members of collectives or households with claim on land have little or no interest in taking jobs with new enterprises. Grain payments have been yet another standard for paying farmers. For example, the state has promised each farmer a specific number of years of
Examples of the problematic process of expropriation include two high profile hotel developments started in 1992 and 1994 by the Songpan County Department of Tourism and local Forestry Bureau. The land sites of the two hotels, the Songpan Bingguan and Hongbao Shandian, were both fairly productive agricultural land that had to be expropriated from local farmers who had received them during decollectivization. Escrow accounts were set up for the farmers whose land was affected and in addition jobs were to be provided to their families in the new operations. In 1996, the villagers who had had their land expropriated began to mistrust the township when reports of a wave of speculative investing on the part of corrupt officials, and rumors of empty bank and escrow accounts spread across the prefecture. By 2002, only one of the two hotels was in operation during the summer and while most of the escrow accounts were forthcoming, the jobs had failed to materialize. Another issue was that the land for the failed hotel could not be reclaimed by the local farmers as it had been paved over. In addition to these expropriation issues, as the region began to experience Great Western Development funds in earnest in the early 2000s, Songpan County enterprises formerly under public ownership, including hotels and travel agencies, were privatized. The only problem was that hotels and business owned by the government were contracted out, but not to local Tibetans. With few exceptions, they were “outsourced” to Han Chinese from Chengdu, connected Han and Hui from the prefecture seat, or local cadres. However, the follow-through on land expropriation agreements was only one of the issues that faced the local government.

In addition to taxes and fees collected through local tourism and hotels stays, local governments of Songpan County also mandated and collect entrance fees to local scenic and grain based on the production potential of the land being expropriated. Farmers prefer a price set in pounds of grain as opposed to cash as a hedge against inflationary risks. A third arrangement offers farmers a simple one-time cash payment for transfer of land rights. These have become increasingly popular as the payments can be quite substantial and because more specifically they are preferred because the up-front payment is more reliable than counting on future administrators to honor promises made by their predecessors.
nature reserve sites, and fees for traveling to and from them.\textsuperscript{751} According to local managers, as of 2000 they had well over one million paying visitors annually to the nature reserves. The income from ticket sales for the “big three attractions,” at Jiuzhaigou, Huanglong, and Munigou in 2001 was in excess of 123 million RMB, of which local governments received approximately 10 million RMB.\textsuperscript{752} The Songpan County government had found a rich source of revenue in tourism development. However, the townships where these developments were located and received few direct returns from the county and prefecture governments with the exception of some improved roads and power supplies. As part of the original deal to develop Munigou Scenic area, the township government of Muni, predominantly Tibetan in the early '90s when the agreement was first negotiated was supposed to receive a small share of the ticket sales and a new road. Since 2002, the agreement has been renegotiated after locals had invested funds in improving the “scenic area” the township no longer received a share of the income of ticket sales—rather, the ticket sales were subsumed under the greater state run Jiuzhaigou-Huanglong Nature Reserves administration.\textsuperscript{753} In addition to steadily raising the fees the Songpan County minwei, or Ethnic and Religious Affairs Office, has also introduced entrance fees for visitors to Tibetan and Bon monasteries, initiated and managed not by the temples and monasteries. These fees, too, were initiated by local government officials.\textsuperscript{754}

\textsuperscript{751} In the two main locations where they can collect fees, local Tibetans often collect additional fees for local temples and monasteries. They do so because horse trekking around Xuebaoding and parts of Munigou cross important Bon and Buddhist sites. These fees also go to the support of local temples.

\textsuperscript{752} Ran 2000, 341-42; Yang 2003, 237.

\textsuperscript{753} Local Tibetans have also lost the right to harvest medicinal herbs, herd their animals through the scenic area, and otherwise use the upper reaches of their township as a zoned multi-function area. According to early studies and agreements, local Tibetans were supposed to be able to continue to use the area, but have since lost access to it. See Aba Prefecture Tourism Development Plan 1998.

\textsuperscript{754} These fees are administered by a special office under the Songpan County Finance Department (Guoyou zichuang guanli ju, chi.). This office collects the money from ticket receipts and “helps” the various monasteries manage their funds—from the county seat. An official in this office also told me that “this is a very good thing for the monasteries in our county, because the monks are not used to dealing with economic management and in this way they can focus on their studies.” Of course, these same monks, at least the elders, have handled financial affairs.
Privatization of formerly state-owned enterprises has caused changes in the job market in Songpan. Until 1998, all middle school, college and university graduates were guaranteed employment after their graduation under the system of “work assignments” (fanpei, chi.). When this system was cancelled, graduates were forced into a highly competitive provincial market. High unemployment, the easing of restrictions on mobility and the rapid growth of tourism in the county combined to make the county a very attractive destination for jobseekers. Since 2000, especially with the construction boom between 2002 and 2004, there has been a large scale migration of Han Chinese from elsewhere in Sichuan (mostly from the Chengdu Basin), as well as from Hunan and Zhejiang Provinces. Because of the influx of jobseekers from outside Songpan County and Aba Prefecture, there was a marked change in the ethnic makeup of the Min River parts of Songpan County. Some migrants are workers and others rent the vast majority of shops in the downtown shopping district. While it is hard to determine how much

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755 One place this is obvious is the large growth in Han Chinese population in both the 2000 census and local statistics. While it is hard to say exactly how many Han Chinese have moved into the area, some are part of the “floating population” that go from construction job to construction job, growth in the Han Chinese population outstripped steady Tibetan growth of the past fifteen years. According to the China Population Statistics Yearbook 1990, Tibetans made up 38% to Han Chinese 42% of the County population in 1990; in the 2000 Yearbook, Tibetans made up 39% to 38% of Han Chinese. These statistics describe permanent residents. They show a drop in overall Han Chinese population, but in another section of the 2000 Yearbook, and in a study of Songpan County in 2004, if the Han Chinese migrant population is added into the totals, they change for 2000 to 38% Tibetan and 40% for seasonal and permanent Han Chinese residents. See Zhongguo minzu renkou ziliao (1990 nian renkou pucha shuju) [Tabulation on China’s Nationalities: Data of the 1990 Population Census] (Beijing: Zhongguo minzu chubanshe, 1990); Zhongguo minzu renkou ziliao (2000 nian renkou pucha shuju) [Tabulation on China’s Nationalities: Data of the 2000 Population Census] (Beijing: Zhongguo minzu chubanshe, 2001); Chen Yong, Chen Guojie, Yang Duguang, “Distribution of Human Settlements in the Upper Min River and Their Ecological Characteristics [Chinese with an English Abstract], Changjiang shangyou ziyuan huanjing yanjiu [Resource and Environment on the Upper Yangtze River] 13:1 (2004), 72-77.

756 In 2002, when I visited Songpan, I spoke with local shop owners along the main tourist thoroughfare, 75% of them were Tibetan. In 2005, Tibetan shop owners in downtown Songpan had dropped to 23% of the businesses. While opening new businesses in a normal market setting is neither a surprise nor particularly harmful to the local economy in general, it is problematic in some respects for Songpan Tibetans. In the 1990s, many locals enjoyed the fruits of increasing tourism to the area by selling locally produced goods. Tibetans dominated the most accessible local open-air market and were at least equal in numbers to Hui and Han merchant stores combined. After 2000, a shift began in favor of Han and Hui merchants, and after 2002, many of the Tibetans were forced out of the store business altogether. With this shift, the move toward importing goods to be sold as local cultural commodities increased markedly. Fewer local Tibetans are producing goods for sale to tourists, and have found themselves
the makeover of the town of Songpan has affected whether or not local Tibetans and Hui are sharing in the increasing profits of the tourism regime, the benefits are great enough to draw numerous outsiders to settle along the Min River corridor and open new businesses in the downtown Songpan. Local tour guides, especially in the local horsetrekking businesses, are Tibetan and Hui. However, the majority of tour guides in the nature reserves, as well just under half of staff in local scenic areas, are Han Chinese.757

*Ethnic Commodities, Horsetrekking, and the Local Environment*

Besides the creation of an eco-tourism infrastructure in the area, there are two final areas of the tourism-environment regime that have directly affected local livelihoods. With the cultural and ecological commodification of Songpan County through various state-led projects, locals have benefited considerably from “traditional” pastimes like medicinal herb gathering and sale of a variety of truly local products as well as local horse trekking tours. Elements of local culture, whether manufactured by the state as in the case of some of the rural tourist sites, or traditional products from the region, are viewed as a kind of renewable resource on par with the natural environment that the state seeks to protect in the region.

Songpan was historically home to a variety of goods that were trekked to Chengdu and beyond, as noted in earlier chapters. Historically speaking, the chief exports were traditional medicine plants and animal products, and horses. Since the mid 1990s, these and other goods have come to be defined as products of Songpan County. Brand names have been created for local products and practices that are sold locally and nationally to promote interest in northern pursuing more traditional agro-pastoral pursuits, or moving from the area altogether. The group of people most affected by this change in the local market ownership and venue are the local Tibetans. In other Tibetan areas of China, there was and is serious resentment toward migrant businesspeople. While I found few examples of local resentment toward migrant business people, I did not conduct formal interviews on the subject. See Tibet Information Network, “Rebuilding and Renovation in Lhasa,” *Special Report of the Tibet Information Network* (2002), www.tibetinfo.net/news-updates/2002/1009.htm (accessed August 2005); Heather Peters, “Making Tourism Work for Heritage Preservation: Lijiang—A Case Study,” in Tan et al. 2001, 313-332. 757 Personal Communication with Songpan Tourism Bureau (January 2005);
These products include local teas, traditional Tibetan and Chinese medicinal plants and animals. Products like *songbei* (a fritillary bulb of alpine grass), *chongcai* (caterpillar fungus), deer musk, prickly ash bark, a variety of mushrooms, local pepper, wild honey, wool products, felted yak hair, and dried yak meat. These “…superior aspects of traditional cultural knowledge of the Tibetans and Hui directly create social wealth so as to increase social productivity and play positive roles in the sustainable development of the whole society (*duo guojia*, chi.). So we must fully recognize and grasp the superior aspects of the traditional cultural knowledge of local nationalities and exploit it (*kaifa liyong*, chi.).”

All of the local products are now touted as the primary products of the county, important for export purposes and the tourism industry. Processing and sales are staffed and run predominantly by local Tibetans in the businesses formerly organized as collectives. One local industry cooperative, prior to 1996 known as the Songpan County Market Development Company, and now the Sichuan Songpan County Huanglong Tourism Market Development Company, buys these goods from locals, processes them, and markets them in the county pharmacies. It ships processed and packaged medicinal herbs to Chengdu and elsewhere.

Nearly every business catering to tourists, and many that do not, displays these goods labeled with the development company’s name.

Another great source of revenue in the county from the tourism-environment regime, not related to state-led tourism development planning or poverty alleviation programs, has been horse trekking. The deputy head of the County Tourism Board admits that the popularity of

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758 This company, a TVE started in 1988, but now dominating local production of goods for tourist resale, is a major player in local politics. Other companies in Chengdu, Wuhan, and Shanghai sell goods marketed as Songpan, Xueshan (Snowy Mountains), and Huanglong-Jiuzhaigou related goods. SXZ 486-88; Yang Zhenzhi, *Luyou kaifa yu guihua* [Tourism Development and Planning] (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 2002), 20-25.

759 Personal Communication with Songpan County Tourism Bureau (May 2005).
Songpan with foreigners was not the result of state planning, but rather the initiatives of two horse trekking companies. Guo Shang, the general manager of Shunjiang Horse Treks claims he started the business in 1987 to cater to Israeli and Swiss students who had come from Beijing to see the local scenery and go horseback riding. The horse trekking companies now employ over 70 guides with their horses. In 2002-03 this particular local industry brought over 2700 tourists to the county. The local Shunjiang Horse Trekking Company estimated that it brought about 4000 tourists in 2004. These numbers have grown steadily over the past fifteen years and have spawned a whole service sector for domestic and international tourists on the northern end of the city, and as well in a number of local villages and the two nature reserves. Guides take people to see the scenery, experience Tibetan culture, and ride and climb local mountains. Part of the overall redevelopment of Songpan City was to make certain services like the horse trekking and tourist housing were more viable and visible to people on inbound busses. In 2004, the local horse trekking company, using redevelopment funds in part, opened a large hotel in the new bus station, expanded several existing hostels, and opened or redeveloped a number of restaurants.

With the horse trekking and other eco-tourism in local nature reserves and scenic areas, since 1998 the local income has increased over 40 times its 1990s income. In 2004, the eco-tourism and environmental protection economic regime contributed about 70% of Songpan County’s revenues. As a result the county government was able to spend 35% of its budget on health and education including building a new high school in 2005-06, that benefited the entire local community. The original goals of tourism-poverty alleviation policy and development did

760 This number, and the statistics stated prior to them shift dramatically depending on who you talk to in the county. According to the county tourism bureau, the horse trekking company brings in a steady 2000 people a year and all of the guides are either Hui or Tibetan; however, having spoken to the current and previous owners and the guides themselves, as well as having examined their books, the numbers I note above seem to reflect reality.


762 Chen 2004, 76.
contribute to the goal of providing local benefits. While achievements of the original goals of the poverty alleviation related development and Great Western Development campaign has provided local benefits, the eco-tourist and environmental protections regime has created new problems directly related to its distributive structure, as well as some new environmental problems.

Huanglong Nature Reserve and Munigou Scenic Area have not only provided local jobs and fees for the county they have also closed access to areas in and around them. Thus tourism in Songpan County has led to a reduction in resident access to areas under development as they have been set aside for the environmental-tourism regime. The existing policy largely limits horse trekking to four designated areas in the county: to the entrance of Huanglong Nature Reserve, the entrance of Munigou Scenic Area, to the foot of Xuebaoding Mountain, and to an area called the “little grasslands” of northwestern Songpan County. In both of the nature reserves, access is granted along entrance roads to reach the parks, but not to enter them with animals. All four areas have new Buddhist and Bon temples, a limited number of licensed shops catering to trekkers, well established paths that are at least marginally accessible by road, and are areas officially designated in county and provincial plans to “develop the minority regions of Aba Prefecture,” because of accessibility and an existing Tibetan cultural heritage. These development areas and trekking routes are viewed positively in the sense that local


764 Until 2003, horse trekkers could go almost anywhere in the county including into the reserves on horseback. It is now illegal to ride in the reserves and heavy fines are given to any Tibetans herding on the verge of reserve areas, taking stock through them to other rangeland areas, or otherwise trespassing on state property.

765 This is not a small region as it covers nearly 11% of Songpan County. These areas are not “under developed”, but have been slated as the chief recipients of Songpan County’s rural development projects premised on the cultural commodification.
Tibetans in those areas receive more tourist foot and horse traffic as well as greater leeway in the development of their local Buddhist and Bon institutions and practice of religion. However, Tibetans in the developed areas and beyond complain that areas accessed by the main highway and those shared by both Hui and Tibetans, are slated for such development. The regions in which the majority of trekking pursuits take place are still largely owned and managed by the provincial or prefecture government or are under the purview of collective management—in other words, these areas are not controlled by local individuals or township collectives, but rather by officials appointed by the county, prefecture, or provincial government, with use and programming fees flowing out of the local economy to bureaus and official coffers that support them. Thus further development of trekking routes would mean that the Tibetans would experience further loss of control over lands and loss of potential revenue from increased areas for trekking.

The second element of the environment-trekking matrix is even less positive. The historical and contemporary environmental impact of the trekking is severe in the areas where trekking is currently permitted. On all of the local trekking circuits, the owners of the trekking company vet and receive environmental impact permits, but the guidelines for these permits are almost entirely ignored. According to one (of three) of the permits obtained from the local...
government, there are a number of basic rules trekkers and their guides are supposed to follow. No smoking (fire control), control of localization of human waste, no tree/brush cutting, and no littering regulations figure prominently. However, a visit to any of the sites on the routes demonstrates that waste control and fire issues are ignored. In fact, whenever a camp is established for the increasing numbers of trekkers, trees are stripped of their lower branches to create bedding and to fuel fires. Hillsides blackened by cigarette ignited burns, sever erosion because of horses on a very limited number of trails, hillsides formerly covered with grass and brush, denuded trees, and piles of trash and human waste abound. While the system of local use permits has potential for accountability, it is not possible at present for the single county environment official to issue binding mandates or fine polluters. This official works for both the provincial environmental agency, as well as the local tourism development bureau, and depends on the local and tourist dollars for his pay. His current structure for enforcement relies on the local trekking company to bury garbage once a year and their promise to spread tree and brush gathering over a wide area surrounding designated camping sites.

In addition to the problematic environmental footprint of the local horse trekking is the issue of plant gathering and scenic wonder development. Most of the guides not only take care of their clients, but also gather for them local medicinal plants and mushrooms. In the areas serviced by the trekking industry, it is now almost impossible to find the local herbal and medicinal plants sold in Songpan. These plants are becoming increasingly difficult to find.

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767 When considering the numerous regulations on using trees and forest products on collective and state lands, the regular cutting of boughs from trees for trekkers and tourism is very interesting. As far as I was able to determine, local trekking guides are allowed to use “limited” amounts of fuel wood and boughs for bedding despite county, prefecture, provincial and national policies and laws. I believe this to be an interesting outgrowth of the regional tourism regime, and it highlights the importance of tourism related use of state and local forested areas vis-à-vis more general strictures on local Tibetan forest use and fresh and dead wood collection.
anywhere in the county. In the nature reserve and scenic area there has been development of more "natural wonders" to pad local sites. In Munigou, park managers have recently built sand and concrete dams to create more colored pools, have dug out new springs (drying up existing natural springs), and channeled water during the dry season to fill lower pools that in turn have killed off plant life in less accessible pools have changed the nature of the valley drainage system. In effect, the very areas that are billed as the tourist draws for Songpan County are being developed and used at such a rate that the local environment is losing its beauty as well as its efficacy as a natural wonder. While the positive cultural and economic developments of the horse trekking region should not be overlooked, neither should the ensuing environmental consequences be ignored.

6.5 Quality Development, Material Civilization, and Infrastructure Development

Policy changes and economic developments in the 1980s and '90s gave rise to a new set of issues in the Songpan region. These issues were felt not just in northern Sichuan, but in other areas of China. In turn, they gave rise to a set of state discourses that rationalized and justified new administrative policies. In this section, I will discuss two of these state discourses and how they fit into poverty alleviation and western development programs. The policy and economic

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768 Issues related to local flora and fauna that make up the medicinal trade are becoming increasingly problematic. Sustained gathering and harvesting by local Tibetans and Hui, and increasing improper harvesting by outside Chinese have devastated local mushrooming areas, and many of the more rare goods, like the songbei and chongcai, are now only found in the most rural and wild areas of the county. Other goods, like the local ferns, mountain ash, nettles and other medicinal-tea related flora are shipped in from farms in the Sichuan Basin or farther west in Ganzi Prefecture to be processed and sold as local goods.

769 At Huanglong Reserve, this has taken the form of building a Tibetan cultural village for show at the foot of the reserve. This is more a phenomena of developing tourism shows for both foreign and domestic visitors, but in Muni Scenic Area it was more a function of horse trekking tourism until 2005 when the park was re-developed for tourist busses on the Jiuzhaigou-Huanglong-Munigou tourist circuit.

770 Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve has faced similar problems in the course of its development. Construction and reconstruction of roads, large numbers of tourists littering and bathing, and increased soil erosion have resulted in significant problems for three unique species of fish that live in the streams of the valley. Their stocks have fallen by as much as two-thirds since 1999. See Zhang Shenyu, "Fish Stocks, Pollution, and Other Environmental Issues in Jiuzhaigou's Mountain Streams," Neijiang shifa xueyuan xuebao [Neijiang Normal College Journal] 6 (2004), 69-73.
changes of this period did not just give rise to new discourses they also expanded the level of state involvement in and manipulation of local affairs.

By the late 1980s, the economic reforms and decollectivization of the early Reform Period had not only produced considerable economic growth in some regions of China, but had also precipitated new economic and social problems. After Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) staged several anti-Chinese protests in Lhasa in the late 1980s, and after Chinese students in Beijing had demanded more democracy in the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989, the 1990s were set to become a period of political reining in and readjustment through social and economic reforms. The state's approach was two-fold—on the one hand, it tightened political control to subdue any aspirations for more democracy or true autonomy within China. The implementation of the so-called “Love the Motherland” campaign is only one such example. On the other hand, the state mainly attributed growing social unrest and dissatisfaction, especially in areas of western China, to the relative economic underdevelopment and backwardness of the region compared to the booming eastern coastal economies. A decision was made to encourage greater state and private investments in western China. The result of this new emphasis on western China was a significant influx of financial and economic development aid to launch a series of special programs. Major programs were premised on specific state developmental discourses of “material civilization,” improving the “quality” of the people, and “poverty alleviation.” Poverty alleviation programs in the early 1990s were the first stage in attempting to reframe regional social and economic problems; the second stage started in the late 1990s.

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771 This particular campaign, started in the TAR, but also widely adopted in Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Yunnan and Qinghai was launched in 1996. It produced and spread propaganda designed to discredit the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamsala in order to eliminate separatist activities. In Sichuan Province, this campaign was known as the Patriotic Education campaign.
1990s with the launching of the Xibudakaifa [Great Western Development Campaign] programs.\(^{772}\)

"Creation of New Culture" and "Material Civilization"

After China’s leadership turned its political emphasis from class struggle to economic development in the 1980s, new discourses were introduced to rationalize the Party’s new policies. These included discourses informed by “quality” (suzhi), “material civilization” (wuzhi wenming), and “poverty alleviation” (jianqing pinkun, chi.). In recent studies, several authors have analyzed the Chinese state’s concern with improving the “quality” of people, tying it to the state’s drive to create modern consumer-citizens and producers.\(^{773}\) Appropriately directed consumption and production would ideally stimulate the economy and provide a new identification with the nation-state, reinforced by the recognition of one’s “quality.”\(^{774}\)

John Flower has described the poverty alleviation and Xibudakaifa campaigns to build “material and spiritual civilizations” as a “Chinese inflection of the global development discourse.”\(^{775}\)

However, there was more to these development programs than economic development for development’s sake—they were also part of a state civilizing discourse that formulated a specific format for the proper transformation of minority areas and administrations. While local ethnic culture played an important role in this process, it was what one of China’s leading tourism

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\(^{772}\) This campaign, literally “Great Develop the Western Regions” campaign, was officially launched in 1999 in time for the millennium. It had been recognized in the early ’90s that something had to be done about the economic and social issues plaguing the west and “causing” separatism activities. The majority of the current campaign is centered around large scale construction and building projects, exploiting natural resources, and conversely, protecting strategic natural resources and site for tourism development. One of the best overall discussions of the history and transformation of multiple early ’90s campaigns into the Xibudakaifa campaigns in Chinese is Li Shantong’s (ed.) Xibu dakaifa yu diqu xietiao fazhan [Great Western Development Program and Regional Coordinated Development] (Beijing: Gaodili shuguan, 2003).


\(^{774}\) Pun 2003, 471.

\(^{775}\) Flower 2004, 651.
scholars has termed a revival, specific selection, and “creation of new culture” (chuangzao xin wenhua, chi.) specified by state administrators.\textsuperscript{776} For Tim Oakes, this “creation of new culture” not only helps local culture contribute to cultural development and actively modernize through transformation of their culture, integration and transformation through “creation” standardizes local diversity and commodification of culture breeds new relations of dependence and vulnerability.\textsuperscript{777}

Poverty alleviation, economic development premised on infrastructure development and tourism, and resource development were top priorities for state and provincial economic planners as a part of the effort to build “material civilization” (wuzhi wenming, chi.).\textsuperscript{778} Ever since its deliberate inclusion in China’s “National Social and Economic Development Plan” of the 7\textsuperscript{th} Five Year Plan (1985-1990), poverty alleviation in western China and tourism development have become important parts of the socio-political changes in western China, and the Songpan region in particular.\textsuperscript{779} In many ways, this pursuit of material civilization is crucial in understanding how different levels of government and individual businesses were trying to develop the economic potential of western China. However, the same planners also took steps toward protecting the country’s natural resources and environmental heritage, in ways that conformed with the discourses of “spiritual civilization” and allowed for the existence and development of

\textsuperscript{776} Guo Laixi quoted in Oakes 1998, 140-41.
\textsuperscript{777} In Oakes discussion of “creation of new culture” he is referring to Guizhou Province’s “transformed” and commodified local and minority cultures. For him, this is an expression of Guizhou’s continued internal colonialism that precludes an autonomous indigenous modernity in this “periphery” province. Oakes 1998, 139-141.
\textsuperscript{778} See, for example, the PRC White Papers on “The Development of Tibetan Culture” (June 2000) and “Tibet’s March Toward Modernization” (November 2001), in \textit{White Papers of the Chinese Government}, vl. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2003); also, in a number of personal communications with officials in the Sichuan Bureau of Tourism and academics at the \textit{Xinan minzu xueyuan} in Chengdu, when discussing the development frameworks and policies concerning development of Tibetan areas of northern Sichuan I was told that in order to develop the “backward” minorities of Sichuan, a stern approach using “material civilization” (wuzhi wenming) was necessary. While the “spiritual” elements of local and ethnic practices were useful for tourism, they had little practical use beyond their local flavor for tourism.
\textsuperscript{779} See Xu Guang, “Tourism and Local Economic Development in China: Case Studies from Guilin, Suzhou, and Beidaihe,” PhD Dissertation, Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany (1996), 16.
“diverse cultures of different natures (duoyuan, chi.), different types (duo leixing, chi.), and different regions (duo quyu, chi.).” These diverse cultures of different natures, types and regions in northern Sichuan usually refer to the “local culture” (diqu wenhua, chi.) of Tibetans, Qiang, and Hui. This assumption of diversity and how it has developed was an important departure from earlier ways of ordering ethnic society and utilizing the environment in northern Sichuan. The spiritual and cultural civilization of contemporary China and of individual ethnic cultures were considered equally important in the development of material civilization in the Songpan region—not so much for the individual worth of diverse local cultures, but for how those elements of local culture could be best utilized to promote coordinated and systematic economic development of the backward hinterland.

One example of how these “material civilization” has played out in recent scholarly literature is Ran Guangrong’s *The Road to Development in Sichuan’s Tibetan Areas* (2000). Ran takes a wide-ranging look at ethnic relations and development issues in Tibetan areas of Sichuan by reviewing northern and western Sichuan’s socio-economic history and modern economic development from 1982 to the mid-1990s. He presents a concise argument for (1) the reasons, despite its ethnic and cultural diversity, the Tibetans of Sichuan are considered an inseparable part of the Chinese nation; (2) the role of ecological adaptations in creating the present pattern of ethnic relations in Sichuan; and (3) the need for continued, concentrated “economic development” efforts in Sichuan’s Tibetan minority areas. This viewpoint, also expressed in

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other important texts relating to public policy and development in northern Sichuan, can be considered close to the administration’s view on the matter.\textsuperscript{781}

Based on his research and that of other prominent Chinese historians and anthropologists of Sichuan’s Tibetan areas, Ran divides Sichuan into historical and economic northwestern, southern and eastern “types” wherein the south is agricultural and the rest “mountainous areas” (\textit{shanqu}, chi.) animal husbandry.\textsuperscript{782} While this division over generalizes, it also implies a hierarchy of modes of production, mostly in terms of historical experience, but including the Reform Period. Sichuan’s plains areas are suited to and dominated by agricultural cultivation in a natural environment that attracted the primarily \textit{agricultural} and \textit{market oriented} Han migrants with their ties to the east. The advanced agricultural and market techniques of the Han were desired by various Sichuan ethnic groups whose agricultural technology level was lower and by \textit{pastoral oriented} groups. For Ran, a central feature of the ethnic relations in Tibetan areas was not just the occupation of land by Han migrants and their rise to dominance in local political and economic spheres, but more importantly that the differences in levels of technological development provided the conditions for the basis of cultural interchange between the ethnic

\textsuperscript{781} This book is one of the major works of Dr. Ran, a professor of history and social sciences at Sichuan University. It draws not only on his extensive research in Tibetan areas of Sichuan (particularly Aba Prefecture), but also from the Sichuan Province Social Science Five Year Plan. This plan was part of a major undertaking of the Sichuan Provincial government in the mid-1990s to study various ways to develop ethnic areas of Sichuan and was monitored by the provincial Communist Party Propaganda Department; to some extent, the book in question can be taken as a statement of a “government” position on ethnic diversity and issues in Sichuan. Other important texts related to developing the diverse, yet inseparable, minority areas in Sichuan in general include Lin Yanzhao, “Luyou chengshi jingshen wenming jianshe de tedian ji cuoshi” [Distinguishing Characteristics and Measures of the Construction of Spiritual Civilization in Tourist Cities], \textit{Luyou yanjiu yu shijian} [Tourism Research and Statistics] 4 (1998) and Li Shantong 2003, 5-8, 335-37. For the Songpan region specifically, see Yang Zhenzhi, “Qingzang gaoyuan dongdu zangqu luyouye fazhan yeqi shehui wenhua jinga” [Tourism development and its impact on social culture in the Tibetan areas of the eastern Qinghai-Tibet plateau uplands], in Ran Guangrong and Li Tao (eds.), \textit{Xibu kaifa zhong xizang yu qidi zangqu chayesheng yanjiu} [Developing the West: Tibet and Tibetan Areas Monograph Research], (Heilongjiang: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 2003); and Zhang Gu, “Gengxin wu da guannian, jiakuai fazhan Sichuan luyou chanye” [Refresh Five Big Concepts, Accelerate the Development of Sichuan’s Tourism Industry], \textit{Lilun yu gaige} [Theory and Practice] 5 (2000), 120-22; 120.

\textsuperscript{782} This typification is based on Fei Xiaotong’s well known arguments for why China is a “multi-national, unitary nation.” See Ran 2000, pp 16-17; personal communication with author (April 2005); and Fei 1989, 17-24. See also, Ma Rong, “On the Definition of ‘Nation’,” in \textit{Minzu ya shehui fazhan} [Minority and Social Development] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2001), 105-110.
groups, and in particular the learning of Han market and production techniques by minorities. Han dominance of southern Sichuan and migration not only led to the incorporation of frontier areas into the nation, but also helped establish Han and south-central Sichuan as the core (hexin, chi.) of all ethnic groups in the province. This core had “relatively strong economic and cultural advantages and radiated [its culture] to the ethnic groups of the mountain areas.” Because of the differences in the development levels of their economies, mountain and plains groups formed, respectively less-developed (houjin, chi.) and advanced (xianjin, chi.) ethnic groups. Together, the ordering of more and less advanced production technologies, the distinction between mountain and plains agriculture, and the unilineal spread of culture from the Han core to the periphery provided the conditions for the incorporation of these ethnic groups within the Chinese nation. Thus, “Sichuan’s complex geographical environment had a clear influence on the pattern of ethnic relations in Sichuan and had a basic function to play in Tibetan areas of Sichuan finally becoming part of the multi-ethnic Chinese nation (zhonghua minzu duoyuan geju, chi.).”

Several points in this approach to minority groups in Sichuan are worth highlighting. Ran’s account of the process informing the formation of ethnic cultures stresses the importance of environmental diversity in creating cultural diversity. Secondly, cultures inhere in homogeneous ethnic groups, and the distinguishing characteristic of culture is its production techniques and the social relations of production. Third, production techniques, and therefore the ethnic groups that practiced them, can be ordered hierarchically. Finally, Ran’s discussion seeks to explain the process of inclusion of ethnic minority groups within not just the physical borders of China but also the Chinese nation, such that ethnic identity works on two levels—a lower level ethnic minority which partakes at the same time in a higher level Chinese (zhonghua, chi.)

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784 Ran 2000, 435.
ethnic identity. This view is fundamentally linked to what Steven Harrell has characterized as “a program of rabid nationalism combined with a commitment to limited ethnic and cultural diversity.” But it also has important implications for the legitimization of economic policies and practices. Given that ethnic groups are assumed to share a common interest, it follows naturally that all ethnic groups that are a part of the larger Chinese ethnic group desire “development” despite or because of the ordering of production methods described above.

The “Quality” Discourse and Poverty Alleviation

A common term in the development discourses applied to the Songpan region and its ethnic minorities was suzhi (quality). While this term first entered the political and economic discourse of Sichuan in the mid 1980s, it remains a part of theoretical and policy terminology today. Suzhi literally stands for “quality” in the sense of sterling quality. When used with terms like development, population, culture and management, it connotes an evolutionary approach and progressive degrees of cultivation, and ability. In relation to minority workers and peasants, suzhi cha (quality) versus suzhi di (poor/low quality) was a major factor delimiting development or progress. In terms of state-led development, work by institutions like the Ministry of Education, the Communist Youth League, Party Schools, the Academy of Social Sciences, the Commission for Nationalities Affairs, and other government or research entities can thus “raise the quality” (tigao suzhi, chi.) of “low quality areas.” The notion has pervaded administrative,

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786 An excellent and pertinent discussion utilizing the “quality” discourses in terms of environmental and tourism research on Tibetan areas of Sichuan is Yang Zhenzhi (2003). Central to his discussion is the motivation for new kinds of developmental ideologies and state-led development practices because of the “low quality” of regional structures of management including agriculture and pastoralism. His view agrees with Li Baolin’s study of cultural and legal structures in minority areas of Sichuan and the impediments of “quality” development in western China. See Yang 2003, 212-13; Li Baolin, “A Probe into the Cultural Structure of Legal Construction in Minority Areas” [in Chinese with an English Abstract], Zhonghua minzu da xue xuebao [Journal of the Central University for Nationalities] 27:4 (2000), 13-16.
development and scientific literature since the 1980s. This term could be used to develop discourses and commentaries to deflect from policy failures by scapegoating other people or groups (particularly “traditional” and “backward” minorities). It could also be used by individuals and social groups as a weapon to make claims on the state. An example of how suzhi cha and suzhi di were used by both state officials and local officials to their own ends was in local poverty alleviation campaigns (Jianqing pinkun yundong, chi.), specifically targeted at minority areas in Sichuan.

Beginning in 1986, the national government of China classified poverty stricken prefectures and counties, and launched “poverty alleviation programs” to help those regions with the new designation. The 7th Five Year Plan (1985-90) recognized all four of the Songpan region counties as poverty stricken, but initially provided funds only to study their situation and

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787 A major and influential study of the peoples (populations) and environment of the Tibetan Plateau makes heavy use of the term suzhi in its theoretical, geographical, historical, and cultural analysis of the “problems and special characteristics” of grassland areas of western China—including the Songpan region. See Wang Tianjin, Qingzang gaoyuan renkou yu huanjing chengzaili [Tibetan Plateau Population and Environmental Sustainability] (Beijing: China Tibetan Studies Press, 1995), especially Chapter Three on population pressures and the negative influences of disordered people and blind economic activities (57-78) and Chapter Five on the primary industry (pastoralism) and the obstacles hindering a “highly profitable” ecology and economy (154-188). Numerous later studies continue to use “quality” vs. “low quality” comparison relating to Tibetan areas of Sichuan. More recently, a series of government sponsored grasslands and animal husbandry studies in Sichuan caoyuan [Journal of Sichuan’s Grasslands], reporting on developmental strategies and analyzing weaknesses in market and economic practices of Tibetans (as compared to Han and Hui) took the same line in 1998. See Sichuan caoyuan, no. 4 (1998). Even more recently, two studies on the upper reaches of the Min River and grassland resources contrast the problems of sustainable development in animal husbandry with “traditional and wasteful” Tibetan actions; if accelerated sustainable and quality carrying capacity systems of Han scientists were used (though a thorough explanation of what such a sustainable carrying capacity system actually was or is), quality development of the area would increase. See Ze Bai, "Baohu caodi shencai haunjing beikai chuan xibei muqu xuqye keteci fazhan" [Accelerate the sustainable development of animal husbandry in the pastoral area of northwestern Sichuan by protecting the ecological environment], Sichuan caoyuan [Sichuan Grasslands] 1 (2000) 1-4; Chen Wennian, Wu Ning, and Luo Peng, “Minjiang shangyou diqu de caodi ziyuan yu xumuye fazhan” [Grassland resources and mountain pastoralism development on the upper reaches of the Min River], Sichuan caoyuan [Sichuan Grasslands] 1 (2002), 1-5.

788 As Elisabeth Croll has noted in her research on Yunnan and Guizhou villages in rural China, various levels of “help the poor” campaigns started as early as 1984. In practical terms, from 1986-90, poverty alleviation programs constituted of government increases in regional and local investment (usually lump sums to county heads and programs), exemptions from the agricultural tax for up to five years, and supervised economic and resource studies in rural areas to help pinpoint the poorest, as well as highlight strategies for improvement. Elisabeth Croll, From Heaven to Earth: Images and Experiences of Development in China (New York: Routledge Press, 1994), 144-46. The 7th Five Year Plan (1986-90) had numerous allocations of funding and policy for this purpose and included the funds and offices for a new administrative entity, the Poverty Alleviation Office.
draw up plans for the 8th Five Year Plan. Under the 8th and 9th Five Year Plans, poverty alleviation, township village enterprises (TVEs), and micro-credit programs, with a corresponding state bureaucracy under county Poverty Alleviation Offices (jianqing pinkun ju, chi.), were initiated. In Songpan County, the Poverty Alleviation Office and committee was particularly important in that it worked consistently to garner state funds for the region and then parceled them out to various offices at the local level, TVEs and some individuals. The office also helped control and distribute funds not only for poverty alleviation, but in conjunction with other major initiatives like the “grain for green” program, programs tied to local tourism development and construction, and with the World Bank, micro-credit loans.

Under the National 8th Five Year Plan (1990-95), the poverty line was revised, with the addition of 592 poverty stricken counties 73 of which were in Sichuan Province. In terms of development programs in general and northern Sichuan in particular, while the provincial and prefecture governments prodded the county governments to improve their “quality,” the Tibetan counties of northern Sichuan did not markedly improve. A second redefinition of the poverty line in 2000 noted a change of 90 counties rising out of poverty, but they were replaced by the same number of newcomers. There was a paradoxical effect of the national and provincial poverty alleviation program—the policy was linked directly to financial subsidies at the county (not individual or village-township) level, so that retaining the status of poverty stricken meant

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789 See Ran 2000, 373-74. A primary study of the creation and impact of poverty alleviation programs by Li Yihui, etal. 2002, discusses how the initial policy formulations and studies played out. Like Ran’s discussion (2000) of the hierarchization of ethnic groups, quality, and diversity (and thus usefulness) in Tibetan areas of northern Sichuan, this study breaks the region down along geographical (Min, Mao’er gai, and Baishui Rivers and mountain areas) and ethnic (Tibetan, Han, and Hui) lines. The original formulation of “poverty stricken areas” and designation of funds and development projects for “poverty alleviation” both follow from the assumption that the Songpan region was dominated by forestry and pastoral economic regimes (in need of further development), a lack of viable entrepreneurial business development (and thus in need of Township Village Enterprises (TVEs)), and the need for a new administrative regime to control local land use and business development practices. See Li Yihui, Huang Sicheng, and Li Keju (eds.), Sichuan sheng minzu zizhizhou difang fazhan yanjiu [Minority Nationality Autonomous Locales Development Research in Sichuan Province] (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 2002), 194-95, 200-11. 790 Liu Jiang 2000, 619.
continued eligibility for major financial subsidies from the government. The counties of the
Songpan region tried very hard to retain their poverty status; only a few townships actually lost
this standing in 2000.\footnote{Because of the 1998 Logging Ban (discussed below), Songpan County managed to retain most of its poverty alleviation funds, but along with several Tibetan townships in Nanping/Jiuzhaigou County, also lost funds along the Min and Baishui Rivers. These areas were making too much money from tourist receipts in Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong-Songpan Town protected tourist areas. The other Tibetan areas that had none or only minimal tourism receipts (and had already been heavily cutover) retained their poverty alleviation funds and programs.}

Because of the low level of income of rural herders and pastoralists in Songpan County,
through poverty designation in the late 1980s and early '90s grain, cash sums, or clothes and
quilts (bedding) were available for the most desperately off. However, very few Tibetans were
eligible. While the county received poverty alleviation funding under the 7th Five Year Plan,
only about 12% of Tibetans received some grain and only about 5% of locals received cash
payments or clothes/quilt during the “planning stage” of the program.\footnote{Personal Communication with Songpan County official (May 2005). See also, Li etal. 2002, 204; Ran 2000, 373-74.} Relief to individuals
was a very small part of the plan—the main goal of the early stages of poverty alleviation was
planning. With the increased state funding under the 8th Five Year Plan, both regional and
locally, increased supplies of grain, fertilizer, plastic sheeting, new funds for TVEs, and micro-
credit financing introduced by the World Bank helped expand agricultural output, animal herds,
orchards, and local business.\footnote{In the beginning, funding was provided for collectives, which by the early 1990s were run as TVEs. These included the Aba-Songpan Wheat Collective, Aba Prefecture Medicinal Herb Collective, Aba Prefecture Rape-seed Oil Company, and Aba Prefecture Fruit Growers Business Collective, and regional Pastoral Collectives (Li etal. 2002, 204-210, 217). After 1995, funding was expanded for individuals and new collective enterprises through rural micro-finance loans. The funding for these loans was provided mostly by a World Bank program and to a limited degree by the Chinese state under a pilot-program that since 2002 has been expanded for much of the rest of Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Yunnan, and Qinghai. See Li etal. 2002, 210-213; Ran 2000, 375-82; and Ruomei Sun, “The Development of Microfinance in China” (Hong Kong: Rural Development Institute and Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2003), 3, 18.} Villages and counties were targeted for the program; after
securing funds, they could loan the funds to collectives or individual households. In the early 1990s the majority of the poorest households did not take advantage of the loans as they were
either deemed not credit worthy or did not want to take on the onus of loans in general. Instead, larger households and village leaders used many of the funds to support their own projects (like local township village enterprises or tourism oriented projects) or to expand existing herds or fields. However, by 1995-96 increased numbers of individual households were able to take advantage of poverty alleviation programs to fund their own personal projects.

While Songpan County received over 45 million RMB of poverty alleviation funds between 1988 and 2000, the actual number of poverty stricken people increased. As county officials put it—“Songpan County had a low and poor foundation to start with (qidian di, dizi bao, chi.) even though it has many natural resources.” The main point of many accounts of poverty alleviation programs in the Songpan region began and ended with discussions of the population’s “quality” and how Tibetans often lacked the “commodity-science-technology-competition-innovation spirit.” One “could only rely on the state” (zhineng kao guojia, chi.) without whose help the people of the Songpan region would never climb out of their poverty stricken and backward ways. This use of “low quality” discourse (suzhi di, chi.) was effective for both minority and Han cadres in the Songpan region in obtaining further poverty alleviation funds. However, the overall problem of economic (and thus social and political) development remained to be solved. While most policy discussions centered on the nature of improving minority relations and economies in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s, the majority of their recommendations involved further “scientific” and “administrative” development of existing

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794 As Croll has noted, a primary problem of the poverty alleviation programs was that improvements were made as loans with little chance of repayment and more so that they were biased toward economic generation of income, not actually helping the poorest households subsist. See Croll 1994, 151.
795 The majority of “personal projects” were expanded funding for converting fields to trees, increased herd size, or small business in the tourist towns along the Min and Baishui Rivers. Personal projects will be discussed at greater length in the following section as they relate directly to projects to deal with the imploding forestry sector and environmental protection.
796 Personal Communication with Songpan County official (May 2005). See also Li et al. 2002, 690.
local resources—especially forests, grasslands, and local industry. In this sense, if one accepts that the Chinese state making and state-led development in the 1950s, 1970s, and 1990s were “scientific” there was a tremendous amount of continuity across markedly different periods and state policies.

Given the background of state led development, it should be no surprise that, if in the 1990s and today, ethnic minority production patterns, technologies and cultures are still seen as backward in relation to an advanced Han (increasingly identified as scientific and market oriented) technology and culture. Today the inclusion of ethnic minorities in the state still relies on the perpetuation of this ordering with solutions, development and technology flowing from the Han core to minority regions. Through state-led production of discourses and new administrative entities to develop and alleviate pressing problems in ethnic areas, the Chinese state has not lessened its control or presence in the Songpan region; it has expanded the level of its involvement in and manipulation of local affairs, local land use, and local practices.

There are numerous examples of minority related policy recommendations along these lines. Whether the reference is from the numerous White Papers of the ‘90s, discussions of population issues, discussions of separatism or ethno-nationalism, or agriculture-forest-industry developmental recommendations, they nearly all use the same basic language that poverty stricken minority areas can be saved by their plentiful resources if they were better utilized. For a few examples that relate to western China as a whole or northern Sichuan in particular, see Information Office of the State Council, White Papers of the Chinese Government, 1989-96, vl. 1, 1996-99, vl. 2, 2000-02, vl. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1997, 2001, 2003); Huang Wanlun and Li Wencho, Zhongguo shaoxu minzu jingji xinlun [New Introduction to China National Minority Economics] (Beijing: Zhongguo minzu xueyuan chubanshe, 1990), 504-13; Ni Zhaoyu, Huangjing jingji xue [Environmental Economic Studies] (Canton: Guangdong jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995); Sichuan sheng renkou puchaban gongshi, Sichuan zangzu renkou [Sichuan’s Minority Populations] (Beijing: Zhongguo tongji chubanshe, 1994); Yin Zhuxin (ed.), Minzu jingjiya yanjiu [Minority economic development] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2003); Yu W., “Some thoughts on tourism development in poor mountain areas,” Minzu luntan 2 (1996) 31-32; Li Difeng, Sichuan sheng minzu zizhi difang fazhan yanjiu [research on Sichuan Province minority prefectures development] (1992); Ran Guangrong, Li Tao, and Wang Chuan, Xibu kaifa zhong xizang ji qita zangqu teshuxing yanjiu: xizang he qita zangqu teshu fazhan tujing [Specific Characteristics of Development in Developing the West in Tibet and Other Tibetan Areas: Development Characteristics Channeling Tibet and Other Tibetan Areas] (Heilongjiang: Renmin chubanshe, 2003). See Ran et al. 2003; Yang 1988; Zhou Yangshan, Sichuan minzu jingji wenhou [Sichuan minority economies and cultures] (Chengdu: Kehua daxue chubanshe, 1994).

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6.6 Conclusion

The "ecological" and "cultural turn" in the Songpan region developed out of several state-led programs and policy discourses. This chapter has outlined the roles of new governmentalization projects to protect the environment while dealing with the implosion of the forestry sector, development projects to alleviate poverty by constructing a tourist industry and poverty alleviation bureaus angling for state funds, and the policy discourses that have rationalized and justified these developments. Although the "Reform Period" in China is often construed as a time of decentralization and the relaxation of state control, in Songpan the opposite has been true; Reform Era changes have resulted in more, not less, state involvement in local society, local markets, and the local environment.\(^798\) While combating local poverty, dealing with the implosion of the forestry regime, and developing an ethnic and environmental tourism regime, the state managed to expand both its reach into and control of the socio-environmental landscape through the discourses and "science" of state-led development projects.

Through shifting land use and social policy, state authorities in the Songpan region created a new tourism and environmental regime that benefited most stakeholders to one degree or another. But the effects of "civilizing" and "touristifying" the region while saving the environment were strong precisely because they were linked to the inducements of the market and to the cultural commodification of the natural landscape and people. Official "cultural brokers" in the tourism regime have benefited most and controlled much of this process; they have also shaped how the landscape is viewed and interpreted based on official discourses and interests. The towns and ethnic minorities of the region had to be nationalized and civilized in order to be made suitable for tourism. Furthermore, as we saw with the case study of the tourism

\(^798\) This has also been observed by Vivian Shue (1988) as well. See Vivian Shue, *The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).
and environment regimes in Songpan County, while local Tibetans have been active in the
environmental and tourism regimes, their access to much of the tourism market and revenues, as
well as some of their lands, have been carefully defined by the state.

The consequences of tourism in terms of the local distribution of wealth are clear. People
with money to invest are making good use of the new opportunities brought on by the promotion
of tourism and environmental protectionism. As a result the income gap is widening among
villagers, and between villagers and townspeople. Another clear result is that tourism is creating
a new demand for “ethnic culture,” leading to the development of a range of new “cultural
products.” These cultural products of the Tibetan minority are increasing in commercial value,
but the Tibetans are not profiting as much as the state and investors. Yet the Tibetans are
profiting—a trend that may well be labeled “cultural commodification.” Governmentalization of
the environment and development of tourism have helped to create new markets for “cultural
products” in the wake of the implosion of the forestry sector, and coupled with the various forms
of poverty alleviation like micro-credit programs and environmental protection programs such as
the Green for Grain have truly helped both the local society and environment. Not all
commodification of ethnic, cultural and environmental tourism is a cause of concern in the
Songpan region.
VII CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored the landscape, social and political history of the Songpan region and illustrates the importance of local agency in shaping the history of northern Sichuan. It has described the historical relationships between humans and landscapes, market economies and local governments, and local people and national states. The purpose of this story has been to enrich our understanding of China’s late Imperial and twentieth century political transformations by adding local agency, indigenous agency and an environmental perspective to these changes. It has also sought to focus our attention not on the social and environmental history of eastern and central China, but on Sino-Tibetan areas of western China, a hitherto neglected region. Finally, the dissertation sought to elaborate a methodological structure to analyze and understand historical processes that led to this region’s incorporation into the Chinese state. This methodology—one of elite patterns of dominance, economic regimes, and governmentalization—was based on a study of changing patterns of land use, resource management, and how the various actors at the local level interacted with one another to produce local and regional changes. My exploration of the social and environmental history of the Songpan region illustrates the importance of local agency and assertion in shaping the history of northern Sichuan. It should be evident to readers of this dissertation that the importance of the Songpan region was that it emerged out of a combination of local geographical, social, political and economic factors that have continued to shape not just local practices, but how the state has tried to control the region. I have sought to demonstrate the fluidity and inconstant nature of environmental, social and state transformative processes and their impact on one another—a constant shift in worlds and transformative systems that over time imprinted itself not only on the landscape, but on society and the state as well.
In Chapter One we saw that the geographical and natural environment shaped local people in significant ways—not just their livelihood, but also the forms of governance and identity formation in the region. The geographical makeup of the Songpan region did not engender the creation of centralized administrative control by a single ruler. The natural environment of the Songpan region, with its lofty ridges, high mountains, plateau grasslands, and crisscrossing valleys river valleys, and the isolation of the region favored the establishment of multiple autonomous political entities, largely independent of one another, and to a great degree, outside state orders until the mid twentieth century. None of these autonomous polities, essentially Tibetan, Han and Hui communities, had the requisite economic and population resources to become a predatory power strong enough to totally control the region. Instead, the area was described in both foreign and domestic literature as politically and socially autonomous from other areas of China and Tibet.

In Chapter Two, we saw the overall picture of processes of land and social control in the region begin to change—from the shifting roles of Tibetan and Han Chinese political and social management under the early Republic and warlord administrations, to the production of an opium regime, criminal networks, and accompanying social and environmental degradation in the late 1930s and 1940s. But a diversity of political and land management orders continued to dominate the landscape; the Nationalist state did not effectively control the region so much as add another layer on top of existing layers of local elites. Extremes of resource management of exploitation, especially related to the opium regime under warlords, the Nationalist state and local administrative elites, prefaced later coercive patterns of management. As both of the preceding chapters demonstrate, while the common popular perception of traditional Tibetan forms of governance are often viewed as less hostile and aggressive than later state (Chinese)
methods of social and environmental management, an analysis of local conditions in the Songpan region demonstrates otherwise.

In Chapter three we saw how the new Chinese state completely upended traditions of local autonomy, resource management, and social hierarchies through a process of state making. With the systematic transformation of local market regimes, from opium to agro-pastoral pursuits and a governmentalization regime, local elites and commoners were utterly transformed in the region. However, this process was inconstant—local Han and Hui communities were immediately targeted by the new state for radical reform, while Tibetans were first treated very carefully, and then suddenly forced to reinvent local social and land use norms. This in turn led to a major, but ultimately failed revolt. More importantly, the 1950s, with their constant changes in social and political economy campaigns set the stage for the development of a state forestry regime and continued socio-economic transformation in the region.

In Chapter Four, we examined the development of this state led forestry regime and further issues in local ethnic and political relations. Constant changes in land and forest tenure, related to radical changes in state policy, emphasized almost thirty years of inconsistencies in administrative management relating to post 1949 ideological shifts. An important aspect of these changes was the de-linking of local Tibetans from many of their local natural resources. These inconsistencies and rapid changes in state policy helped set the stage for the “third great cutting,” a predominantly local and privately undertaken over-harvest of the trees in the Songpan region under decollectivization. Perhaps more than any other chapter, we also saw how local and state policies and practices directly effected the environment.

In Chapter Five we saw the latest developments in the political ecology of land tenure, market reform, and ethnic and environmental commodification through the case of tourism. The
web of land tenure arrangements, recent market reforms and decollectivization, and implosion of the state forestry sector, complex in any case, was further complicated by a new economic tourism regime, state development and protection policies, and new governance discourses. While local Tibetan administrative elites made a limited comeback at the local level, and the free-wheeling market oriented economy eventually began to raise local standards of living, changes in state policy and practice did not necessarily mean a reduced state presence in the region. New directions in social and environmental administration brought with them a more nuanced and integrated state-led approach to the environment and ethnic relations, and has resulted in new tensions over continuities and discontinuities in resource use and management.

I set out to examine the Songpan region in three key ways: complicating socio-political transformations in western China with an environmental perspective, decentering studies of social and environmental history from eastern China to a multi-ethnic locale in the west, and to analyze and discuss how this borderland region has been gradually integrated into the Chinese state. In the process of examining these key themes in and around Songpan, the regional environment, local indigenous actors and elites, Chinese states, market regimes and regional officials have interacted with one another in a variety of ways to create and refashion local societies and landscapes for over two hundred years. Thus, I have examined the Songpan region on several levels—environmental and geographic, socio-economic, and political. These three levels of analysis are related in a complex relationship that does not easily fit any national or global formula. Each of them had variations which interfered with one another and changed over time and can be best understood in the context of Songpan’s local landscape and local socio-political relations, in terms of a multi-ethnic and regional framework, and in terms of the key local common, elite, and official actors.
In terms of the first theme, this study attests to the importance of the landscape and environment in understanding the socio-political and economic history of the Songpan region. Geography and climate, the physical environment as an active element of the relationship between society, state and landscape, helped shape human activities in the Songpan region, shaping local and regional trade, coherent political organization and administration, and development projects. On one hand, the fertile soils, rich natural resources, minerals, grasslands, and flora and fauna made the region an inviting place for individual and state interests. But the harsh climate, deep forests, high mountains and altitude made accessing natural resources a difficult proposition. Roads were regularly destroyed by summer floods, isolated groups of individuals preyed on travelers, and unpredictable weather made access and travel to and from the region relatively difficult. Yet at the same time, the same landscape was a blessing for local societies as the river system connected them to the outside world, but the mountains and isolation protected them to a great degree from wars and excesses of many political programs that wrecked China's political centers throughout the time period in question. The soils were fertile enough to grow a variety of hardy crops, the grasslands lush enough to support significant herds and pastoral lifestyles, and the forests were large enough that they were regularly converted to pastoral and agricultural pursuits in addition to supplying plentiful timber to local markets. Thus, the Songpan locale was a regional hub of agro-pastoral trade, even if it was limited in its ability to export large amounts of goods to the elsewhere prior to the twentieth century.

This isolation, which in turn fostered and autonomous and fragmented set of local polities until the 1950s clearly helped protect the ethnic, political, economic, and social diversity of the region. It also led to a certain level of local socio-economic flexibility in the face of the regional topography, climate, and landscape, a kind of society making that helped the diverse groups of
people living in the region survive and thrive. In other words, the environment helped to encourage the kind of official and un-official "middle ground" that grew up in the region. In the late 1950s, however, this isolation came to a final end with the complete political and military domination of the region in the wake of local Tibetan and Khams pa revolts. The socialist nation state proceeded to de-fragment the various societies led by local elites in a process of state-making that redefined boundaries, resource ownership, and land use. As James Scott has shown elsewhere, the centralizing processes of modern nation state, with their schematicization of ownership, land and resource use, standardization and simplification of complex environments to tame nature and societies, and disparagement of local, rural practices, has proven problematic at best and disastrous as often as not. While this had implications for the status and power of local ethnic groups in the grander scheme of Chinese political history, it also had serious implications for the local landscape and environment. Hand in hand with the political incorporation of the region, the new state also cast a hungry eye on regional natural resources and subsequently mined the forests, hillsides, grasslands, and agriculture of the region for all they were worth. While the relatively flexible forms of grassland and forest use under indigenous elites and societies had shaped the local environment, they did far less overall damage, in a much shorter time, than what followed from the late 1950s to 1990s under state led development of local resources. State measures to make the local environment and resources "legible," exploitable, and maximize access under state centralization led to rampant clear

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799 Scott begins his discussion and critique of "seeing" and acting like a centralized state with the example of the forestry sector in Germany. By examining nineteenth century forestry industry and the problems it entailed for the environment and society of large parts of Germany, Scott sets up a schematic to critique the schematic, standardized, and centralizing forces of modern states. In large part, Scott's process was based on standardized scientific and thin simplifications in contrast to local, practical knowledge that simply did not fit state notions of conformity, "high modernism" (111-17), and notions of control. He moves on to heavily criticize state measures that "forged legibility" (25-26), and later chapters discuss socialist states and their problems in particular (193-222). When contrasted to political fragmentation/de-fragmentation processes and forest management in the Songpan region, this becomes particularly pertinent. See Scott 1998, 25-26, 30-31, 38-39, 45-47, 193-222, 309-41.
cutting, industrial (and sometimes failed) agriculture, major erosion problems, and hydrological problems. In the 1980s and ‘90s this kind of approach to the environment led in turn to the need for major poverty alleviation programs and a mad scramble to protect remaining forest, animal, and grassland biodiversity in the “wilderness.”

As we have seen in early chapters of the dissertation, agro-pastoralism and Republican era poppy agriculture played important roles in the socio-economic and environmental history of a region that the state and most outsiders considered a “wilderness.” However, a key point of this region’s social and environmental history is that the cultural and political landscapes of the Songpan region have been the natural landscape—there never was any “wilderness.” Rather, the region was heavily managed and adapted by local Tibetans under very flexible terms of land and resource tenure long before socialist pastoral policies, forestry regimes, environmental protectionism and tourism began to play greater roles in the region. This earlier and equally pervasive form of resource management centered on pastoral and agricultural pursuits shifted strongly toward forestry and agricultural systems under state-led development once transportation and administrative infrastructures were created to exploit the region—but not before converting significant portions of forested land to rangeland. In post 1949 socialist and twenty-first century Songpan, the highly managed environment of the region continues to be shaped by social, political and economic forces of change to preserve aspects of the natural environment while utilizing it for economic growth. But the new and significant changes of the latter half of the twentieth and early twenty-first century are changes in degree and not changes in kind in the long dance between humans, states and land in Songpan.

Thus, there were long-term historical transformations taking place in the local landscape before the Chinese socialist state began to create the infrastructure necessary to expand
exploitation of regional resources. Geography and climate had already left their mark on local indigenous society—but they would also leave their mark on external state-led attempts to develop the region. For example, before a road infrastructure was finally finished at great cost and effort in the early 1960s, major exploitation of the timber and grasslands in the upper reaches of the Min River watershed was delayed. Only relatively limited amounts of timber could be seasonally floated down the rivers to non-local markets. Despite a number of studies as well as individual and corporate investment in the region, until truly significant state-led infrastructure projects were completed and large numbers of technically skilled personnel brought into the region in the late 1950s, mass harvesting of the extensive forests and agricultural and pastoral expansion in the region could not be pursued. These first large-scale “harvests” of the natural resources in the region were not for the capitalist market, but for the socialist state as it attempted to incorporate this isolated region into eastern China. Political and economic exploitation of the region could not be accomplished, however, until geographical and natural barriers were surmounted for the first time.

Finally, my choice of the Songpan region as a geographic location, rather than an administrative entity, defines it as an interplay of natural features and local human activities. In a recent review of regionalism scholarship and Fernand Braudel, R. Bin Wong refers to localized regions with no fixed boundaries as units of analysis. Regionalizations like China’s southwest (xinan bu, chi.), western China (da xi bu, chi.), northern Sichuan, Aba Tibetan-Qiang Minority Autonomous Prefecture (Aba zang qiangzu zizhizhou), and even Amdo are relatively recent

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800 As with the earlier discussion of isolation and political fragmentation/de-fragmentation, this element of the dissertation relates back to Scott’s discussion of “accessibility” in centralizing and controlling means of production in state making. See Scott’s (1998) discussion of land tenure (33-36), mapping (53-59), and control of local and regional traffic patterns (73-76).

constructions. Fifty years ago, this region was part of the Southwest Region, the 124th Military region, and Sichuan; sixty years ago, portions of the region in question were part of *Shar khog* (Sharwa/Shar ba), Kokonor, Amdo and Xikang; over one hundred twenty years ago, it was part of the rGyal-rong Tibetan states, the Hor states, sometimes part of Khampa, sometimes part of Amdo, and equally claimed by the Qing governor-general of Sichuan. In the process of naming and surveying, the boundaries and names of locales and physical features have shifted a number of times in the name of national or regional political organization. At the local level, things were politically fragmented, and more realistically, connected by trade, cultural interaction, and poor roads. My discussion of the region as an ecological zone and river system, bound by its topography and natural landscape, recognizes the differences and difficulties in topography, environment and human activity, rather than focusing on the state boundaries that largely ignore the tremendous diversity that characterize this locale.

As the state further developed the region, it created new nodal points of trade and transport that changed local environments and people and administrative structures. Future research into this region and elsewhere should take into account the changing nature of frontiers and regions, and the changing nature of ideological construction of space.

Yet the social and environmental history of the Songpan region is more than a story of overcoming geographical and environmental isolation or the vagaries of regional socio-political and environmental history. In terms of the second theme, this dissertation has sought to “decenter” discussion from “China proper” to the messy borderland reality of isolated, multi-ethnic, and fragmented Sino-Tibetan Songpan. It has also sought to highlight the importance of local agency in these discussions. A study of the region and its social and environmental history shifts the locus of inquiry away from a hegemonic state-centered view of Han China to an

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internal-periphery and multi-ethnic discussion of the inherent diversity of China. For example, the history of environmental change in western China and the Songpan region, tied intimately to social and political changes over the past three centuries, is very different from and more complex than the themes and periodizations of eastern and central China's. In this region, there was no centrality of Confucian ethical values in the socio-cultural realm, no overwhelming ethnic majority, and hydrological bodies were less central (though still important) to the local economy and environment. In post 1949 Songpan, state policies, campaigns, and resource development and exploitation have all followed different paths in this region in comparison to most of eastern and central China.

In addition, while the state was certainly an important player at different times, in terms of practice, the particular characteristics of local administration, ethnic relations and resource management have played their own sometimes divisive roles in complicating state designs for the region. In Chinese and Tibetan Studies in general, and in studies of borderlands and environmental relationships in particular, this shift has been marked by reexamining the centralized view of Chinese hegemony and local subordination. What the Songpan region demonstrates, in contrast to eastern and central China, is that its grasslands and forests, local elites of late Imperial, Republican and socialist states, and local ethnic relations with one another

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803 Dealing with the Songpan region in particular is problematic as it is truly the frontier of the Kham pa, Amdo, and Han Sichuan regions. This issue is further complicated by the contemporary political concerns of both China and the Tibetan diaspora. In Chinese parlance, the region is colored by political interest; approaches to it are motivated by the need to demonstrate unity to the “motherland” and emphasize continuity and uniformity with late Imperial, Republican and communist governments. Suggestions of local difference and evidence of a lack of Qing, Republican and early communist control are deemphasized and glossed over. In terms of the Tibet community, these issues are also problematic. As Carole McGranahan has pointed out, the unified history of Tibet as presented in popular literatures and diaspora representations also denies local identity and regional history in favor of a national Tibetan history. These perceptions are colored by the events of the 1950s, just as are the communist ones—where regional differences and local history are emphasized to forge a unified identity in opposition to the dominant others. At another level, much of the work in Tibetan studies is concentrated on religious history—and has lead to the treatment of Buddhism as a unify theme. To some degree this cannot be denied, however, there a great many variations to practice at the local level, as well as equally important non-Buddhist alternatives like Bon and Islam at the local level the inform and effect local practice. See Carole McGranahan, “Arrested Histories: Between Empire and Exile in 20th Century Tibet,” (Ph.D dissertation, Michigan University, 2001), 4.
and the state have played key roles in social and environmental developments in the region. As we have seen in the case of the post 1949 transition, local ethnic relations and socialist state-making played important roles in delaying land reform, policies to rid China of poppy agriculture, and in the governmentalization of the local populace. In this region, locality, multiple ethnicities, and prior ways to exploit the landscape trumped state building processes ongoing in other areas of China. In other words, local practice in this region complicates grander and national narratives of the nature and trajectories of social and environmental change in China.

Before the Songpan region became a part of the socialist state, it had a life of its own. As William Cronon has demonstrated in his work on Native American and European resource use, region, and ecology in New England, cultures and environments cannot simply be viewed through the lens of ideology, state administration, or economics, but need to take into account local practices, frames of communication, and manipulation of ethnic identities and the environment.\(^{804}\) Furthermore, cultural and environmental history require “...not only human actors, conflicts and economies, but... ecosystems as well.”\(^{805}\) Like many peripheral mountain areas around the world, the Songpan region has experienced periods of relative isolation and internally mediated development on the one hand, and intensive management by central authorities or occupation forces on the other. For over two centuries, the Tibetans and other long-term inhabitants of the Songpan region have not been passive survivors; they have often been difficult to control. They have remained actively engaged in adapting to and exploiting exogenous and endogenous social, economic, political, and environmental forces—they have remained local agents of social and environmental change. Because of the nature of local travel, the varieties of indigenous populations, and local topography, local elites, commoners, and

\(^{804}\) Cronon 2003, 6-7.
\(^{805}\) Ibid., 6.
officials well into the latter half of the twentieth century had to flexible when it came to accommodating the unique environmental and indigenous political and cultural institutions encountered on this borderland. In the late imperial period, the use of multiple methods to incorporate local elites into elements of the late Qing state is just one example of this flexibility. But it is also clear in the nature of local market regimes—in order to sustain local administrations and elites the region has undergone a series of economic regime shifts, sometimes instigated by local elites, sometimes by the state, but always accomplished by local means. And even when local society finally became a part of the process of social and economic development under national models after 1949, local developments and negotiation with the local environment and people always complicated and sometimes even defeated the aims of the state.

The Songpan region was a contact zone between different ethnic groups and within ethnic groups, as well as larger social and political entities. Migrants, lamas, traders, soldiers, herdsmen, and villagers of Han, Tibetan and Hui ethnicity came into contact and dealt with one another through exchange, trade, religion, or divisions of labor. In the process of interaction, and with the barest foothold that some states maintained in the region prior to the mid-1950s, they borrowed from each other's culture, establishing a society that was intimately related to the local landscape and environment, converting it to various forms more usable by locals, and somewhat different from traditional Tibetan and Han Chinese societies to the west and east. Starting the 1950s, the state took a much more central and controlling role in society, but even then, still had to negotiate to a degree with established locals in order to best accomplish its national political and economic goals. While the state subsumed local ethnicities and culture to a great extent under the socialist government, later in the twentieth century, it found itself once again negotiating political and economic space with more regional and local social entities.
Throughout the period under consideration, the various economic regimes that have dominated the Songpan region have played a significant role in shaping not only the face of the landscape, but also the nature of resource use (from agro-pastoral to opium, and from forest exploitation to protectionism and tourism), the ways in which local actors participate in wider economies, and the level of interaction the locality has had with the wider world.

Another important proposition of this dissertation has been to complicate our understanding of the historical processes that led to Songpan’s gradual incorporation into the Chinese state. Despite its isolation, challenging environment, and fragmented and fractious populations, long-term historical transformations were taking place that led to Songpan’s incorporation into the China. However, in this study, I demonstrate that the peripheries and the local are equally important partners in central-periphery relations, rather than being passive recipients as has been proposed in some historical narratives of Chinese history. In many ways, my approach reflects the recent trend in historiography to focus on local events, rather than to take the perspective of national narrative or national history at face value. A “decentered” study of local agency, and the local in relation to the center, means that indigenous populations take center stage. The Songpan region is part of the Sino-Tibetan borderlands, a zone of political and economic contact between different groups. It takes seriously the trajectory of local Tibetan and Han Chinese social history and the potential for and functional role of local indigenous agency. Although no community lived in isolation and it is impossible to focus exclusively on one group, I have emphasized how Tibetans in particular have adapted their political and social institutions to meet the challenges of changing economic regimes, governmentalization, and the expanding state presence in their region. As Janet Sturgeon observed regarding borderland, multi-ethnic and local landscape history in southern China, “... landscape was not just topography and land
cover, but sites for maneuvering and struggle. In diverse and conflicting ways, Akha have produced their livelihoods at the juncture of state actions, border possibilities, and in their own sedimented local history of place.

In much the same manner, Tibetans and their landscape have set the stage for society making and state making projects in the Songpan region, and continue to do so.

This approach has generally painted a more diverse picture not only of Sichuan’s ethno-social history, but a clearer picture of the diversity of local elites and patterns of dominance in western China from the late imperial period to the early twenty-first century. The Songpan region was an internal-borderland of largely autonomous political and social structures, even into the 1950s and ‘60s—and society making and state making in Songpan tell us much about the diversity of patterns of land use and policy implementation in China. These processes of society making and state making that have transformed local society in Songpan not only have implications for the socio-political history of China, but for its environmental history as well. For example, the various uses of the forested lands of the region, benign neglect or destruction under local Tibetan and Han elites until the 1940s, rampant state-led exploitation in the ‘60s and ‘70s, local cutting frenzies in the ‘80s, and contemporary protection and eco-tourism based approach taken together enrich our understanding of land use management under Tibetan elites and socialist states as both groups have played key roles at each stage in destroying, clear cutting, or protecting trees. Furthermore, through this study of local agency, these historical processes demonstrate that both state and local forces were implicated in the historical use and misuse of China’s forests, as well as the contemporary trend toward protectionism.

In focusing on the Sino-Tibetan borderlands, this dissertation does not just relate the decisions of the center, it reveals how state policy was implemented and actually played out at

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806 Sturgeon 2005, 8.
the local level. It attempts to reconstruct the socio-economic, political and environmental history of the Songpan region as a pattern of development shaped by a multitude of local actors, including officials, Tibetan elites, criminal organizations, warlords, party officials, forestry bureaus, and local farmers and herders. For example, Tibetan elites, as already noted, were courted by the Qing, Republican, and early socialist states—they were incorporated into state systems in order to protect limited or expanding state interests in the region. Some earlier works have discussed the governance of the region in the late Imperial period from the standpoint of the tusi system and how this concept and practice allowed the Qing to indirectly rule their periphery. Certainly there were “native officials” (tusi and tuguan), but there was never system of government that ensured central control. On the contrary, the ethnic polities of the Songpan region used Qing systems of management to bolster their own prestige and local autonomy. After 1949, Tibetan (but not Han or Hui) elites were initially incorporated into the socialist state in the 1950s in order to make for a relatively smooth transition of state making, infrastructure development, and eventual resource exploitation. Even when local Tibetan elites were targeted for social reform in the late ‘50s and ‘60s, they never entirely disappeared from local and regional governance and have since made a significant comeback in local administration. What this demonstrates in particular is that local elites in late imperial, Republican, early socialist, and the Reform periods had their own key roles in local governance, economies, and land use management. While the ethnic elites of the Songpan region do not fit the traditional definitions of “China proper,” or even other frontier areas, they have played a key role.

This study has also questioned the popularly accepted notion that the Chinese state has always ruled the Sino-Tibetan borderlands in Sichuan. It does not assume that monolithic Qing empire or socialist state and Chinese culture have washed over this region like a wave,
swallowing each community, eroding local practices, and somehow laying down, like a flood of sediment, the basics of "Chinese" political, economic, and social culture. Instead, it has demonstrated that local indigenous leaders have always enjoyed varying degrees of autonomy and authority roles in the region. They have also both supported and resisted state military forces and processes of state-making. Although the late imperial period and Republican era helped to define how some elements of local governance would proceed in the region, the labors of Han Chinese officials in the region were not a part of an irreversible historical trend toward unification that was destined to produce the "multi-ethnic nation" that China now claims to be; rather, the Songpan region demonstrates that centralized expansion and state-making were not smooth matters, but slow and halting projects including state and local actors that are still ongoing.

Nevertheless, on a political level, the Songpan region was a part of Chinese late imperial and twentieth century state-led expansion. However, where the region has most often intersected the wider Chinese world has not been in the large-scale wars and battles, or high level political campaigns, but in exploiting or accessing its markets and natural resources. In the late imperial period, the region was a mixed market dominated not so much by Han Chinese or Tibetans in the region, but by the Han, Tibetan and Hui elites with wider market ties to different parts of China. In the late imperial period, a complicated mix of polities met in another kind of "middle ground," and despite occasional unrest, traded and dealt extensively with one another. Under the state-led developments of the mid twentieth century, ethnic groups still played a major role in the beginning in the transformation of the local market regimes. While the state led forces of governmentalization obviously had the upper hand in the latter half of the twentieth century, they still had to negotiate with the ethnic majorities that dominated the populations of the region by
negotiating borders, surveying them and their lands, and slowly (at least early on) transforming local elites and their patterns of dominance. Geography and ethnicity complicated these relationships between the central and local governments—but once the state was sure of its local presence, the socialist state, like any transformative state, took steps to reinvent societies as soon as it became practically feasible to do so. This process continues in the twenty-first century under the guise of environmental and tourism regimes that dominate the economy and politics of the Songpan region. Finally, Tibetan elites of one stripe or another have dominated, or at least managed to survive as a viable force channeling national and regional political and socio-economic decisions at the local and prefecture level. Late imperial local autonomy, Republican era patterns of elite dominance, preferential treatment and incorporation under the early socialist state, regional autonomous prefecture governments, and more recent ethnic officialdom use of policy and party ideology have all helped Tibetans retain a significant position in local and regional administration.

A complete environmental or social history of the Songpan region of northern Sichuan has yet to be written. My dissertation discusses how state and social interests depleted some of the area’s resources and expanded others—in the forests, grasslands and agricultural river valley areas that define the parameters of local society, economy and administration. Both state and social groups made claims over natural resources and developed them without regard for future generations. In the early twentieth century, economic concerns and the Republican state tried to claim and develop land for mining, forestry, and expanded animal husbandry. But poppy agriculture under the auspices of local Tibetan, Han and Hui elites and regional criminal groups (in the context of no real central authority) were the primary forces in development. In the later half of the century, the socialist state arrived and upended the opium, agricultural and animal
husbandry regimes. In the name of nation-building and social development, it also cut down a significant portion of the forests in the process—disrupting local ecologies and shifting the nature of local administration from resource management to resource protection and environmental and ethnic tourism toward the end of the century.

The Songpan region is a complex ecosystem shared by Tibetans, Han, and Hui, as well as by competing local, regional, and national administrations. As a region, this area has never really recognized political frontiers; yet ecological concern about this region is a very recent phenomenon. About the only point of congruence in this process is that the ecology and autonomous regions of northern Sichuan are “middle grounds” where political and economic interests between the state, ethnic officialdom, and the environment meet and are accommodated—and if not accommodated, at least negotiated. The Songpan region is an administrative, ethnic and environmental landscape of struggle and maneuvering. In diverse and sometimes conflicting ways, local Tibetans, Han, and Hui, agents of the Forestry Bureaus, county administration, and prefecture government produce their livelihoods at the juncture of state and provincial frameworks of policy and discourse, manipulation of state and local mechanisms of governance and resource use, and above all, in the daily practices of local people to meet daily needs.

Studies of property regimes, access to resources, and the environment are often stories of struggle. So how are struggles manifested, and equally, how do people cooperate? In her study of property regimes and resource control, Carol Rose suggests that storytelling is inherent in both processes—“We tell tales to create a community in which cooperation is possible.”807 In the Songpan region, local, regional, provincial and state administrations tell stories of how they have developed (usually for the better) the local environment and resources; locals tell stories of focal

points of conflict, resources claims, and local practices. Both groups tell stories of property and rules to protect it, whether it is grasslands, trees, soil, water, or animals. Narratives about land use and local resources are basic to both states and local people. They are narratives about the environment—visions of landscape—that explicate forms of resource access. An understanding of the shifting nature of local resource access and use also contributes to the scholarship on property rights. In recent studies of resource rights, access claims are highly contested, but the resources themselves are usually considered stable categories. By contrast, property rights, use and access in northern Sichuan keeps moving about, changing to different locations over time, and shifting with state land-use regulations. While state agents in the Songpan region have set out to sedentarize and constrain local land use policies and flexibility, the state itself has constantly developed tenure arrangements and controlled resource access to maximize its own flexibility. This was most clearly articulated in the dissertation in the discussions of collective or state tenure over trees and forested land, but more remains to be done in this regard.

This social and political history of just one environmental and ethnic region of China has revealed something of the nature of local and regional resource use, access control, and social and ecological ordering. It has discussed both state-led and society-led development of local resources and peoples, for better or for worse, and demonstrates fairly clearly the dynamic and ever changing nature of such development systems for local society and the environment. All

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808 Rose argues that storytelling is basic to property, as exemplified by Locke’s extended narration in the Second Treatise on Government about a farmer appropriating land, more farmers appropriating land, and suddenly having government with its rules to protect property. As Rose notes, Locke’s story has no basis in historical fact, yet his ideas have become the basis for Western property conceptions of tenure and management. To confirm Rose’s point, there is a historical basis for Adam Smith’s story about herders either! Narratives about property are basic to the state—and as Louise Fortmann puts it, “Stories have the power to frame and create understanding-to create and maintain moral communities.” (1054) The stories give us clues to the symbolic contestations that gather in a larger number of actors in the property play, including local villagers and herders, state officials and traders—agents of political-economic transformations that prompted the tale. Rose, 1994; Louise Fortmann, “Talking Claims: Discursive strategies in contesting property,” World Development 23:6 (1997), 1053-63.

aspects of the social and cultural and ecological life of the region were transformed by both local and state transformative processes—now being increasingly linked to and modified by emerging national and global systems, trends, and demands, of which mass tourism is currently a typical local manifestation. In this environment we would only expect further innovation and change to occur in the Songpan region in local resource use, society and landscapes.
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若尔盖
三大伐
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山区
少数民族
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生还-动物管理区
生态旅游
生物圈自然保护区
十不烧
松潘
素质差
素质低
摊款
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退更换林
文州
五份对
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以工代赈
一粮为刚
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youshi
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yundong

Zangzu
zangzu fuyuan
zerenshan
zhandi
zhengfeng
zhineng kao guojia
zhua geming, cu shengchan
zifa
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