

Modern Tibet-Burma Trade Caravans—A Transnational Economic Structure of the 21st Century

Dr. P. Christiaan Klieger

Abstract

It would be impossible to adequately describe the modern Tibetan economy in a short paper. Even in so-called simpler times, when Tibet was not as politically integrated with China, the region's economy was not an isolated system. Even in those classical times, Tibetans, with their proclivity towards long-distance trade, were enmeshed in the world system. This paper, therefore, examines a small portion of the wide variety of Tibetan economic activity in the world, the traditional transnational trade between Tibet and Burma.

In 2001 and 2002-2003, the author and his team from the California Academy of Sciences, flew to the remote town of Putao in the north Kachin state, Myanmar, to try to ascertain whether the ancient trade routes from Yunnan and Tibet to Burma was still in operation. Research was sponsored by the U.S. National Science Foundation. During the 2002-2003 field season, the expedition walked from Putao for 15 days to reach the headwaters of the Irrawaddy River at 5,000m.Mt. Hkakabo Razi Passing through Rawang, T' rung, and finally Khampa Tibetan Villages, we followed one of the main trails leading from Tibet into Burma, one that has been active for hundreds of years. We found that much of the traditional trade patterns are still in operation, despite the government of Burma's creation of Hkakabo Razi National Park in 1997.

Throughout most of Central Asia, traditional overland trade routes have ceased to operate due to advances in transportation and distribution networks. But despite great advances in road construction in China, the remote eastern limit of the Himalayan range remains one of the most isolated inhabited regions on earth. This is the region where most of the great rivers of Asia pass through narrowly confined corridors: the Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, Salween, Mekong, and Yangtse. Traditionally, Tibetan traders would travel into northernmost Burma, bringing vitally needed salt into the tropical highlands of Southeast Asia. Here they would barter for rice, jade, rubies, ginseng, musk, goat horn, tiger parts, and other medicinal products of the highland forests. In the past, even slaves would be captured and taken back across the passes.

Tibetan and Yunnan traders often captured individuals from a pygmy group of Rawang speakers, known as the T' rung, the smallest people of East Asian origin known.

During the Expedition of 2002-2003, we discovered that in summer, when mountain passes are open, Khampa Tibetans from Burma sell animal parts and herbs from the forests in the towns of Jete and Dzayul in Tibet. Here they buy commodities such as brick tea, finished Tibetan medicines, Chinese consumer goods, and salt to take back to Burma. In the winter, the Burmese Khampas bring forest products and Tibetan medicines to the Kachin town of Putao, selling them for rice, South East Asian consumer goods, and salt. The Khampas sell these items to the Rawang people in the northernmost villages of Burma. While slave trade disappeared in the 1930s under British pressure, the T'rung population of Mt.Hkakabo Razi also plummeted. Only five individuals still live in Burma, with possibly other T'rung in Yunnan and southeast Tibet.

It remains to be seen if this traditional trade pattern continues, especially as better roads are built on both sides, and governmental development of ecotourism brings Tibetans and Rawang into the wage labor market.

現代藏緬貿易 - 21 世紀之跨國經濟結構

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中文摘要

在短短的一篇論文中想要充分描述現代西藏的經濟是不可能的事。即使是在西藏與中國在政治上分而治之的所謂較單純年代，西藏地區的經濟也不是一個獨立系統。即使在那傳統的年代裡，西藏人與生俱來的長途交易習性仍引領著他們與世界經濟系統發生關係。本文將檢視西藏人在全世界廣泛的經濟活動中的一小部份 - 西藏和緬甸之間的傳統跨國貿易。

2001 年至 2002-2003 年間，作者和研究小組從加州科學院(California Academy of Sciences)飛往緬甸克欽邦(Kachin state)北部一個叫葡萄鎮(Putao)的偏遠城鎮，試圖確定從雲南和西藏通往緬甸的古代商隊路線是否仍在使用。這項研究是由美國國家科學基金會(National Science Foundation)所贊助的。

2002-2003 年田野季期間，考察隊從葡萄鎮步行了 15 天，來到海拔 5,000 公尺的開加博峰(Mt. Hkakabo Razi)中的伊洛瓦底江(Irrawaddy River)源頭，沿途經過了日旺(Rawang)、獨龍(T'rung)、和康巴(Khampa)等西藏村落。我們沿著從西藏到緬甸的一條主要山徑前進，這條山路數百年來一直非常熱鬧。我們發現，儘管緬甸政府已於 1997 年將開加博峰劃為國家公園，但許多傳統貿易模式仍在該地區內盛行著。

由於交通工具和物流網路的進步，中亞大部份地區的傳統陸路商隊路線都已經停用了。但儘管中國在公路興建方面已經大有進步，但喜馬拉亞山脈東部的偏遠山區，仍是地球上最與世隔絕的人居地區之一。亞洲大多數的河川都流經該地區的狹長隘道，包括雅魯藏布江、伊洛瓦底江、薩爾溫江、湄公河、和揚子江。傳統上，西藏商人會步行到緬甸的北端，將當地人最需要的鹽帶入這個東南亞熱帶高原地區。他們在這裡以易貨貿易的方式換取稻米、玉石、紅寶石、人參、麝香、羊角、老虎肢體、及其他高原森林中的藥用產品。在過去，甚至有山區居民被抓回去當奴隸使喚。西藏和雲南商人經常會抓山區裡一種操日旺語的侏儒族人。這個少數民族稱為獨龍族(T'rung)，是已知東亞血統民族中人數最少的一族。

在 2002-2003 年考察期間，我們發現，在夏天當山區路徑可以通行時，來自緬甸的康巴藏人(Khampa Tibetans)會在當地販售他們從西藏熱泰鎮(Jete)和色雨鎮(Dzayul)森林中所抓動物的肢體和採集的草藥。他們在這裡採購各種商品帶回緬甸，譬如紅茶、西藏成藥、中國消費品、和鹽。到了冬天，緬甸康巴人(Burmese Khampas)則帶著森林產品和西藏藥品來到克欽邦葡萄鎮販售，以換取稻米、東南亞消費品、和鹽。康巴人將這些物品賣給緬甸北端村落中的日旺族人。雖然奴隸交易於 1930 年代在英國人施壓下絕跡了，但開加博峰山區的獨龍族人口仍然急速減少。目前只有 5 個獨龍族人仍住在緬甸，其他獨龍族人可能都住在雲南和西藏東南部。

此傳統貿易模式是否會繼續有待觀察，尤其現在藏緬雙方的道路狀況都比較進步，且政府所倡導的生態旅遊也將西藏人和日旺人帶入支領薪水的勞動市場。

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This paper¹ discusses the current operation of ancient trade routes from Tibet and Yunnan into Burma and Southeast Asia, which at the beginning of the 21st century, surely seems an anachronism. Yet in some roadless regions of Asia, such as along the Sino-Indian and Burmese interface, long distance foot traffic is the only practical means of transportation and trade. One trail extends from the Nujiang and Dulongjiang valleys in southwest Yunnan, following the east tributary of the Irrawaddy River, into northern Kachin State in Burma, and up over Dhipuk-la into Assam, India, where it is met by another trail from the Dza Yul valley in Tibet. Another trail extends from the Tibetan plateau over Nangmi-la, and enters northernmost Burma at the base of 5,600-meter Mt. Hkakabo Razi, the highest peak in Southeast Asia. This trail continues down another tributary of the Irrawaddy for about 300 km until it reaches the old British Ft. Hertz at Putao, formerly the capital of the Kingdom of the Khamti Shan. Other trails exist as well.

In 2001, and in 2002-2003, I trekked from Putao to the northernmost village in Burma along the second trail, hoping to ascertain whether the traditional caravans of salt traders were still extant. The results were surprising—not only was the trade continuing, Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman groups involved in the trade seemed to be adapting successfully to the “3ms” of the 20th and 21st centuries--modernization, monetization, and missionaries.

Three Traditional Economic Patterns

Throughout most of Central Asia, traditional overland trade routes have ceased to operate due to advances in transportation and changes in distribution networks, product availability and demand. But despite great advances in road construction in China, the remote eastern limit of the Himalayan range remains one of the most isolated inhabited regions on earth. This is the rugged area where five of the greatest rivers of Asia surge through narrowly confined corridors. These rivers include the Brahmaputra (Tsang Po), Irrawaddy, Salween (Nujiang), Mekong, and the Yangtze.

¹ This research was sponsored by grants from the American National Science Foundation and the Lindsey Research Fund of the California Academy of Sciences, and is based on field trips in 2001 and 2002-2003.

Traditionally, Tibetan traders traveled into northernmost Burma, bringing vitally needed salt into the tropical highlands of Southeast Asia. Here they would barter for rice, gems, and forest products. In the past, even slaves would be captured and taken back across the passes into Tibet. Tibetan and Yunnan traders reportedly captured individuals from a pygmy group of Tibeto-Burman Rawang speakers, known as the T’rung, the smallest people of East Asian origin ever reported.

Because the traditional salt and forest product trade deals in endangered plant and animals, it has caught the attention of the international environmental conservation community. In Burma and elsewhere, concern for the international trade of endangered species has led to the development of national parks and preserves, wherein the human collecting of these products and their trade is at least theoretically restricted. If enforced, these laws would have the potential to radically change the type of commodities exchanged, if not permanently end the centuries-old trading patterns. If anything, though, Tibetan traders have consistently showed to be adaptable in their itinerant trading patterns throughout the Tibetan cultural sphere. Long-distance travel may continue, although the type of goods may change.

It could be suggested that the classic economic construct of Tibetan culture, viewed broadly, could be parceled into three distinct primary subsistence activities, each of which strongly conditions and is in-turn influenced by, the social structure. When one thinks of the lay Tibetan lifestyle, one pictures perhaps two forms of transhumanance, 1) nomadic pastoralism and 2) long-distance trading, and 3) small scale farming. Marriage type, kinship patterns, the structure of power relations, gender, and even monastic organizations have all been functionally and deterministically described as having been generated from these basic subsistence patterns.² Polyandry, for example, has long been associated in Tibet studies with both trading and pastoral transhumanance. In practice, there is considerable overlap in these three types of economic activity—some Tibetan households trade, farm, and raise animals.

Second, Tibet has always been a laboratory of sorts for social scientists interested in understanding the holism of small-scale economic systems. Studies that encompass economic development, society, and the environment seem especially well-linked and appropriate subjects for investigation high up on the Tibetan plateau. This is in part

² To this must be added the growing urban economic impact of wage-labor and the professions, especially in the 21st century and most notably in the large cities.

due to Tibet's extreme geographic and political isolation. Like the distant islands of the South Pacific, Tibetan culture as a bounded conceptual scheme is envisioned, with a certain confidence, by its geopolitical delimitations. Isolation, so the theories go, might provide a ground from which the universal human processes of cultural change, evolution, and adaptation, may be more clearly tested than among larger scale societies more fully embedded in the world system. What better place to study change and adjustment of primary economic systems than in the remote heart of Central Asia?

This perspective has allowed for some remarkable monographs in the study of Tibetan political economy, especially on pastoralism. Robert Ekvall's work on nomadic pastoralism³ and the Mongolian-focused work of Owen Lattimore⁴ are early classics in the study of livestock-based transhumanance. A somewhat broader approach is seen in Pedro Carrasco's *Land and Polity in Tibet*.⁵ This 'University of Washington' school of Tibetan political economy has been, in more recent years, represented by scholars such as Epstein,⁶ Levine,⁷ and McGranahan,⁸ and perhaps Aziz⁹ and Clarke.¹⁰ One of the most prominent case studies of the economy of Tibetan pastoralism in recent years is seen in the work of Goldstein & Beall¹¹ and in

3 Robert Ekvall, *Fields on the Hoof* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: The Waveland Press, 1968).

4 Owen Lattimore, *Nomads and Commissars* (New York: Oxford University Press).

5 Pedro Carrasco, *Land and Polity in Tibet* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959).

6 Lawrence Epstein and Peng Wenbin, "Ritual, Ethnicity and Generational Conflict" in Melvyn C. Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein (eds.), *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

7 Nancy Levine, "From Nomads to Ranchers: Managing Pasture among Ethnic Tibetans in Sichuan" in Graham Clarke (ed.) *Development, Society, and Environment in Tibet* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1998), pp. 69-76.

8 Carole McGranahan, "Empire and the Status of Tibet: British, Chinese, and Tibetan Negotiations, 1913-1934 (unpublished manuscript, 2002).

9 Barbara Nimri Aziz, *Tibetan Frontier Families: Reflections of Three Generations from Ding-ri* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1978).

10 Graham E. Clarke, "Development, Society and Environment in Tibet" in Graham Clarke (ed.) *Development, Society, and Environment in Tibet* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1998), pp. 1-45

11 M.C. Goldstein and C.M. Beall, *Nomads of Western Tibet* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).

Goldstein's *A History of Modern Tibet*.¹²

Aziz worked in Tibetan agricultural communities. Yeh is studying the political economy of modern Lhasa, noting a mix of innovation, modernization, and tradition in a rapidly sanitizing metropolis.¹³ Kunchok Tsundue¹⁴ sees three phases of agrarian change in Tibet, and states one of the difficulties has been the Beijing-centralized agricultural policy. A centrally planned Mutual Aid Team began in 1951 and lasted until 1962, and was marked by anticipated structural and system reform in Tibet. The second phase (1965-1982) started after the advent of Cultural Revolution in China, and was geared to speeding up the process of “gradual” agrarian change in Tibet through the imposition of collectivization. Aided by agricultural surpluses, the traditional system was subjected to drastic transformation with the introduction of a new system of pastoralism and spatial cropping pattern entirely foreign to the existing one. The third phase of reform was based in the Household Reform System, which was developed in China in 1978 and introduced to Tibet in 1982. By the end of 1989, intensification of farming was occurring primarily by imposing state procurement quota and livestock limitations, and collecting taxes in the pastoral districts. These agrarian policies generally were problematic in that they overlooked local needs and Tibet's peculiar environmental conditions. Many of the centrally organized agrarian development plans were neither sustainable nor supportive of native biodiversity. Famine and severe soil depletion have been the result of many of these centrist scheme.

Long distance trade, as a type of transhumanance, is another classic pattern of the Tibetan economy. The culture of trade along the fabled Silk Road may be more popular and romantic, but the exchange of salt over the vast distances of the Asian heartland was perhaps more essential and far older. In the instance of the millennia-old salt trade of Central Asia, salt collected from the briny lakes of northeastern Tibet was brought across the plateau and down the great river gorges of far eastern Tibet into the highland forests of Southeast Asia. Salt was a very scarce commodity in these remote jungles, but one fundamental for life. In villages and towns scattered throughout the highland forests of Burma, salt brought down from the north was exchanged for rice, jade, rubies, musk, tiger, ivory, and red panda pelts, medicinal plants such as ginseng, and other animal parts such as goral horn. Most

¹² M.C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989).

¹³ Emily Yeh, University of California—Berkeley. Personal communication.

¹⁴ Kunchok Tsundue, “Revisiting the Roots,” *Tibetan Bulletin* 3, No. 1 (January 1999), p. 25.

were gathered locally in the forests of Kachin State. Animal and plant exotics were found here, even to this day, primarily because the region is generally inaccessible and hostile to permanent human habitation. Infested with leeches, malarial mosquitoes, venomous snakes, and biting sand flies carrying a host of lethal diseases, the five-gorge region of the eastern Himalayas retains to this day its old-growth forests and rich biological diversity. Geologically isolated for tens of thousands of years has been described as an island of paleofaunal and paleofloral survivors.

Long distance trade along the southeastern Tibetan margin was notably studied by Ann Maxwell Hill in Yunnan.¹⁵ Abdul Wahid Radhu¹⁶ documented Muslim Tibetan caravans that plied the plateau from Leh to Lhasa until the advent of motorized transportation. Hill's research is strongly influenced by the work of Edmund Leach, in his *Highland Systems of Northern Burma* (1954).¹⁷ Here, ethnicity and the process of ethnic boundary maintenance play vital roles in the development and maintenance of long-enduring trading networks. I had wondered if similar processes were still at work in the remote border regions of the India, Burma, Tibet, and Yunnan quadrangle.

Itinerant trading activity is an occupation that has successfully transplanted to the Tibetan refugee diaspora, in South Asia as well as abroad. In the 25 years that I have been visiting Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India, exile home of the Dalai Lama, I have seen several trade networks develop—some like the sweater garment trade, involve seasonal migration between the sweater-knitting regions and the large northern Indian cities, which are fairly cool in the winter. There is also considerable India-Nepal-T.A.R. trade in Tibet-themed tourist souvenirs, a system that has developed since the 1980s. Much of the low-end jewelry and metal work sold today in the open bazaars of Lhasa and Shigatse are in fact of Nepalese origin. The same is true in the markets of Dharamsala, where 'Tibetan' goods traded at the tourists' shops are more frequently made by non-Tibetans.

While the merchandise may be different, this pattern of itinerant trade is traditional. For many Tibetans who travel, buying goods were there is surplus, and selling at

¹⁵ Ann Maxwell Hill, *Merchants and Migrants: Ethnicity and Trade among Yunnanese Chinese in Southeast Asia*. (New Haven, CT: Yale Southeast Asia Studies, Monograph 47, 1998).

¹⁶ Abdul Wahid Radhu, *Islam in Tibet* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1997).

¹⁷ Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (London, 1954).

distant locations where there is scarcity, is almost second-nature. Many times my Tibetan informants admonished me for not buying and selling goods when I traveled between India, Nepal, and Tibet. They could not understand why I would waste an opportunity to make a profit whenever I traveled. They took great pains at explaining the gains I could make from various types of merchandise, from rugs to raw turquoise.

In the mid-1980s, when the Nepal/China border was wide open to independent tourist travel and even visits by Tibetans living in exile, an interesting practice developed in the major cities of the T.A.R. Local Tibetan women, usually Khampa, were hired by Tibetan refugee merchants to modeling jewelry while walking through the Barkhor bazaar in Lhasa. Appearing as pilgrims selling some of their jewelry to pay for their visit to the holy places, the women would approach Western tourists. Much of the jewelry was synthetic amber and turquoise—the metal work was mostly Nepalese. This method of merchandizing proved to be very profitable to refugee merchants until the Lhasa uprisings in 1988-89 brought an end to that phase of the tourist boom in Tibet.

The tourist trade in products reflecting Tibetan culture has a broad international market. Tibetan-inspired rugs and carpets, most of which are made in Nepal using Nepalese labor, are now seen around the world. Tibetan religious scrolls, *thangka*, are also mass produced in Nepal and sold at shops, galleries, and Himalayan fairs in large Western cities. The Tibetan refugees, in their zeal for long-distance trade, have taken an active role in the commodification of Tibetan religious and semi-religious art for the Western market. Throughout the larger cities of Europe and America, Tibetan-themed jewelry, artworks, carpets, books, Dalai Lama cards and Free Tibet bumper stickers can be found for sale at innumerable Himalayan fairs, often staffed by expatriate Tibetans who made the circuit of such trade shows. In many cases in the West, such informal trading only supplements a Tibetan family's main, waged-based income—for others, it remains their primary activity.

The 2001 Survey

Our cultural survey of northernmost Burma, assessing the viability of the ancient trade routes between Tibet and Southeast Asia, was initially designed as part of a larger biosurvey in Hkakabo Razi National Park with scientists from the California Academy of Sciences, Kunming (Yunnan, China) Academy of Zoology, and Kunming Academy of Botany, with other participants from Harvard University and National Geographic Society. Hkakabo Razi National Park was established in 1998 by the

Government of Myanmar, as promoted by wildlife conservationist Alan Rabinowitz of New York's Wildlife Conservation Society.¹⁸

With regards to relevance to general patterns of anthropological knowledge, the 2001 survey had two goals: First, with Myanmar governmental plans for the curtailment of the endangered animal and botanical products trade with the establishment of the Hkakabo Razi preserve, great changes to the traditional ways of life was indicative in the short term for the T'ring and other Rawang peoples, as well as the members of the extended Khampa Tibetan community. To what extent has the traditional salt trade continue in this region? As long as there has been documentation, Rawang, Tibetan and Chinese have been trading salt, tea, and other commodities for forest products such as animal pelts, musk, ginseng, goral horn, and other medicinals. Second, the project relates to the larger issue of how and why peoples such as the T'ring have maintained an ethnic separateness. The T'ring of Burma have been reduced to five full-T'ring individuals. Using the rhetoric of wildlife conservation urgency, Rabinowitz considers that these five T'ring are among the most endangered tribes on Earth.¹⁹ What can be learned from these remaining individuals about the uniqueness of the T'ring culture, if indeed they are nearly extinct? How are the Rawang related to Tibetans? All the Rawang in Burma have been under the influence of Christian missionaries since the 1940s—what if anything remains of the traditional animistic religion, and how could the old Rawang religion possibly relate to old Tibetan forms of the same?

In addition to collecting basic ethnographic data among the T'ring Rawang (a.k.a. Taron/Tarong), Tibetan, and other Rawang residents of Hkakabo Razi, I proposed gathering information on the utilization of the local natural resources, such as logging, hunting, fishing, and especially the harvesting of local plants and animals for medicinal consumption and cross-border trade with China. Has the establishment of the park destroyed this traditional activity, which is of course one of the primary economic justifications for long-distance trading?

In 2001, as part of the larger biodiversity team, we arrived at the Burmese capital of Yangon and flew to Putao, about 1200 km to the north in Kachin State. Putao is the old British Ft. Hertz, built to guard the border regions with China, Tibet, and India, all

¹⁸ Alan Rabinowitz, *Beyond the Last Village* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2001).

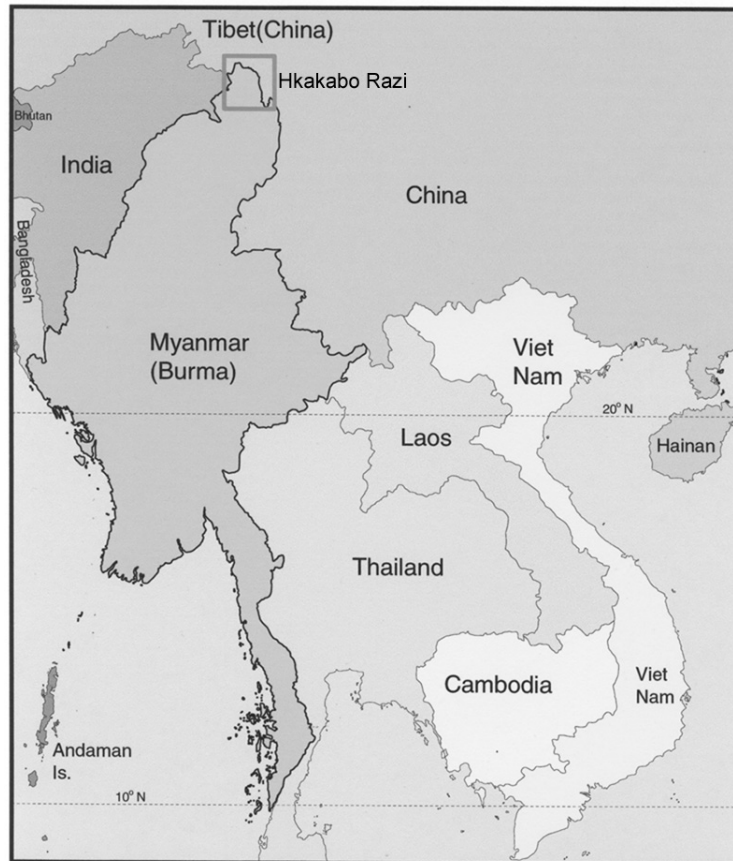
¹⁹ Ibid.

located within short distances of Putao. This village of about 23,000 is the northernmost airfield in Burma. Its population consists mostly of Rawang, Lissu, and Khamti Shan peoples. The Rawang are further divided into subgroups, each with its own dialectical variant of the Rawang language.

With the assistance of the Government of Myanmar Department of Forestry, the group left Putao in mid-August for the town of Machambo on the Mali Kha River. Here we disembarked and walked northeast about 80 km to Ratbaw, collecting botanical and faunal specimens along the way. I interviewed Rawang in villages we stayed in, as well as our entourage of 50-60 porters, cooks, and guides, most of whom were also Rawang. Heavy rains, leeches, and insects slowed our progress and the gathering of anthropological data. We still had at least 80 km more to walk before we entered Hkakabo Razi National Park. At Ratbaw we suffered a tragedy—herpetologist Joseph Slowinski, leader of the expedition, was bitten by a venomous krait (cobra) and died there some 30 hours later. He could not be evacuated by helicopter due to the adverse weather. Because of the accident, and the coincidental September 11 attack on the United States, the trip was cancelled and the party returned to Yangon.

Background to the 2002-2003 Expedition

The anthropological team regrouped for the 2002-2003 dry season in northern Kachin State. Again, I proposed meeting with and interviewing the apparent last members of the T'rung tribe of Rawang and other Rawang groups in Hkakabo Razi to learn about their traditional trade networks and occupations. Possible affiliation with families in adjacent areas in India, Tibet, and Yunnan were to be explored, in particular the Rawang/Nung relationship in China and the possible T'rung/Taraon relationship in India. The expedition was also slated to visit and interview Tibetan settlers known to be living in the northernmost villages in Burma.



(Figure 1. Locational Map of Hkakabo Razi Region)

In our journey to Hkakabo Razi, we would trace the dusty footsteps of only a handful of Western visitors. In 1895-6, Prince Henri d'Orleans and party “discovered” the source of the Irrawaddy in the Hkakabo Razi Range. The great river’s main eastern branch is the Dulongjiang, since 1961 a part of China, known locally as the T’rung (Stony) River. The T’rung branch of the Rawang group of Tibeto-Burman speakers takes its name from that river. They appear to be a group that long ago settled in the highlands, prior to the arrival of Khampa Tibetans in the area in the early 20th century. Most distinctive about the T’rung is their extremely small stature, and they appear to be among the smallest of all groups of East Asian origin. Unlike the Negritos of the Philippines, Malaysia, and the Adaman Islands, the T’rung are otherwise similar in physical characteristics to other Tibeto-Burman groups. Along the upper Dulongjiang, the Frenchman Prince Henri d'Orleans provided the first Western description of the shy T’rung:

The men mostly had a twig or thorn in the ear as ornament; the women sometimes a large silver ear-ring. The latter also were tattooed in green round the mouth. Formerly they used to be unmolested, but the

Loutsuses made war on them, and it was then that they lived for precaution in holes under the trees.

The natives who came in with food were well formed, though diminutive, almost naked, and wholly dirty...²⁰

William Rockhill earlier noted the presence of slavery on the Tibetan side of the Hkakabo Razi range:

While speaking of the Tsarong it is proper to note that the slavery exists there in a more aggravated form than in any other portion of Tibet...[The slaves] are taken from among the Lissus and other non-Tibetan tribes inhabiting the country.²¹

Bailey in 1911 also portrayed the T'ring people as exploited slaves by Tibetans living along the upper Salween or Nujiang, one valley east of Dulongjiang, again in the Khampa county of Tsarong:

Menkong used to be a centre for the slave trade, and we found many slaves of a dwarf race (probably Nungs) who had been brought from a country called by the Tibetans Tsong Yul, seven days journey south. Edgard measured some typical ones. A man was four foot four inches...one woman had a tattooed face.²²

In the literature of early exploration in the region, the T'ring are also known as Dulong, Daru, Kiutzu, Nung, Tellu, and Taron, usually according to local pronunciation. "Kiutzu" is a Chinese name for the pygmoid T'ring of the Irrawaddy. The T'ring may even be the same people as the Lhopa who live north of Assam.

English botanist Kingdon-Ward visiting the eastern Himalayan gorges in the 1920s and 1930s also wrote about T'ring slavery:

We were once more ferried across the Salween...the loads being carried by dwarf Nung slaves, both women and men. The former were tattooed with indigo from between the eyes...²³

Most of them were slaves of the Tibetans—pygmies from the Taron.²⁴

²⁰ Henri D'Orleans, *From Tonkin to India by the Sources of the Irawadi*. (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1999 (1898), p. 248.

²¹ William Rockhill, *Land of the Lamas: Notes on a Journey through China, Mongolia, and Tibet* (New York: Century Co., 1881), pp. 285-286.

²² F.M. Bailey, *China-Tibet-Assam. A Journey, 1911* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1945), p. 89.

²³ Frank Kingdon-Ward, *The Mystery Rivers of Tibet* (London: Seeley Service Co. Ltd., 1923), p. 284.

In Burma, along the Adung Long (or Adung Wang) tributary of the Irrawaddy, Kingdon-Ward further described the indigenous people as two distinct types, a pygmoid type not over five feet high and a “taller muscular, well-built strain.” He believed the Taron Pygmies were stunted as a result of diet. Further west in Dza Yul in Tibet, about 40 km west of Mt. Hkakabo Razi, he further described a population that:

Consists of two distinct elements, Tibetan and aboriginal. The aborigines must have swarmed off some common stock long ago, and remained in undisturbed possession of Zayul until comparatively late years. They are pygmies and now form the serf population...shapeless pygmies with fat round face and wide nose... They dress in drab sacking, and for decoration wear only a multitude of bright yellow bead necklaces...it hides the goitrous lump in the neck.²⁵

The goitrous condition observed is no doubt a result of the lack of iodine in the diet, a condition seen in pre-modern, inland mountainous regions everywhere. The critical need for salt carrying trace amounts of iodine is clearly evident historically. Kingdon-Ward noted further west of Dza Yul, he had saw Tibetanized pygmies in almost every village he passed through.

Similarly, Kaulback noted in 1938 “ One the way down we saw a couple of dwarfs on the path, driving cattle. There are a few of these [dwarfs] in Zayul...I now think they must be the remnants of an aboriginal race...The dwarfs that remain are more or less slaves.”²⁶ Clearly, a pattern of distribution emerges.

While Bailey²⁷ commented that slaves could be purchased for 45 *sang*, Harold Fletcher colorfully related that the prices of a slave “were a dagger for each limb, a sword for the head and a sack of flour for the body!”²⁸

²⁴ Kingdon-Ward, *Plant Hunter's Paradise* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937). pp. 276-277.

²⁵ Kingdon-Ward, *A Plant Hunter in Tibet* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934), pp. 45-46.

²⁶ Ronald Kaulback, *Tibetan Trek* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934), pp. 253-254.

²⁷ F.M. Bailey, *No Passport to Tibet* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), p. 219.

²⁸ Harold Fletcher, *A Quest for Flowers: The Plant Explorations of Frank Ludlow and George Sherriff* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), p. 188.

Until around 1932, Tibetans and Chinese raiders used to assault the Adung Long valley in Burma annually, forcing the T’rung to collect ginseng and other medicinals. They also were prone to carry some T’rung Rawang off for use as slaves, according to Nebreda.²⁹ One might conclude that the population of pygmoid slaves noted in Dza Yul and Mendong are captured T’rung rather than indigenous peoples. However, the oral history of the T’rung themselves refer to their most recent homeland being along the upper reaches of the T’rung River, the Dulongjiang, thus very close to Mendong. The T’rung may have moved into Burma due to their harassment by the Khampas moving into Tsarong. Despite the move, however, they were still raided upon in Adung Long. The annexation of northern Burma by the British seems to have brought an end to the slave raids into the Hkakabo Razi region, but it is hard to verify because no additional Western explorer entered the area until modern times.

In 1954 Burmese Colonel Saw Myint rediscovered the T’rung of Adung Long. He also was amazed at their very short stature, very high rate of mental retardation, and significant infant mortality. Myint concluded that this was the result of the build up of recessive genetic characteristics due to inbreeding. In his report he warned that the population would soon be extinct if the T’rung practice of clan endogamy didn’t stop.³⁰ Indeed, there are only a handful of full T’rung remaining.

In the mid-1960s, under the direction of Dr. M. Mya-Tu, a team of physicians of the Burma Medical Research Society visited Hkakabo Razi, accomplishing the first national field research in population genetics. They visited the villages of Htalatu and Krone on the Adung Long River and surveyed all 68 remaining adult T’rung and all 24 Htalu, another tribe of the larger Rawang group. Those with a least one T’rung grandparent were considered T’rung. They collected standard anthropometric data, measured physiological parameters, general fitness, haematology, inventoried nutrition and diet, looked for parasites, took family histories, and analyzed the water. The T’rung were apparently terrorized by the experience.³¹

²⁹ Santiago Lazcano Nebrada “La Cuestión de la Servidumbre en el Sudeste de Tíbet y Regiones Colindantes del Himalaya Oriental hasta la Ocupación China de 1950” *Separata del Boletín de la Asociación Española de Orientalistas*, 35 (1999), pp. 229-246.

³⁰ In M. Mya-Tu, et al., *The Tarons of Burma*. (Rangoon: Burma Medical Research Society, 1966).

³¹ *Ibid.*

The Burmese survey found the mean height of adult T’rung males at 1.43 m (4’6”) and females 1.40 m (4’5”). Anthropometric measurements showed that the T’rung were of East Asian origin, and had no Negrito characteristics like other small peoples of Asia. The T’rung appeared to have an adequate diet with sufficient protein and vitamins. However, a very high incidence of goiter was found, along with mental retardation, hypertension, and “enormously high” infant mortality, similar to earlier explorers’ accounts.

The 1960s’ team interviewed many local people familiar with Longdam on the Dulongjiang, the ancestral home of the parent stock of the Burmese T’rung. All informants concurred that the Longdam people there were of short stature vis-à-vis other Rawang—they did not become short upon moving to Burma. It is unknown if the three original settlers in Krone were short. The Burmese medical team concluded that there was no relationship between hypothyroidism and short-stature, that the former was probably the result of iodine-deficiency, a common occurrence in salt-deficient mountainous regions of the world. There was no clinical evidence for the T’rung short stature—in the physicians’ opinion, the T’rung are moderate and proportionately built but genetically small, as in the case of other pygmy groups.

The T’rung perhaps were genetically isolated over many, many generations, a condition exacerbated by their move to even more isolated Adung Long valley in Burma. The high rates of mental deficiency and infant mortality noted by the Burmese medical team, and earlier Western explorers may be expressions of homozygous recessive traits increasing in relative reproductive isolation. Most achondroplastic dwarfism, however, is genetically dominant, so it would tend to proliferate even in less extreme isolation. One could conclude that dwarfism, once established and relatively isolated, would tend to persist in a population, while more debilitating recessive characteristics would disappear. T’rung mental deficiency is probably a symptom of severe, developmental hyperthyroidism—a chronic lack of iodine from conception onwards, rather than so-called in-breeding.

According to their own oral history, the T’rung followed other Rawang groups into Burma. The Rawang groups migrated from the Tibetan plateau in search of their most prized game animal, an ox they call *ngapuk* (Bur. *myintun*; *Bos javanicus birmanicus*). Following the Mekong valley, they eventually crossed over the ridge

into the Salween drainage, then over the Gaoligong Shan into the Dulongjiang valley. The T’rung entered modern Burma over Thala K’la pass from Dulongjiang, establishing the village of Krone in the Adung Long valley, the lower parts of the Irrawaddy drainage having been previously settled by other Rawang. All the T’rung in Burma are considered descended from three men: Adung Long Hpone, brother Thala Long Hpone, and Soomdum Hpone—all from Longdam on the Dulongjiang. The history describes the three brothers’ grandfather and great uncle had a great argument with Limbu, their Tibetan landlord, which resulted in Adung Long, Thala Long, and Soomdum eventually moving west in the 1880s.

According to Roux, geographer on Prince Henri’s trip, the eastern T’rung in 1895-96 were still obligated to pay tribute to the Tibetan chiefs, who 50 years before (ca. 1845) came from the Mekong valley and had made war on them. This seems to conform to the T’rung oral history. At this time the T’rung allegedly began to sleep in trees and live in caves to avoid human predation. The three T’rung families of Adung Long valley kept in touch with the T’rungs of Longdam, exchanging matrimonial partners, until a series of earthquakes in 1949-1951 blocked the trails.

The 2002-2003 Expedition

We did learn from local Rawang in 2001 that Tibetans still came down from the north to trade in the towns of Naung Mung and Putao, but only during a brief period during the dry, sunny winter months, usually December or January. The Rawang said they purchase Tibetan medicine from many of the Tibetans. To maximize the chances of encountering Tibetan traders in Hkakabo Razi, the next phase of the expedition was scheduled for the winter of 2002-2003.

On November 1, 2002, my field research assistant Daw Khin Ma Ma Thwin from Yangon arrived at the Rawang capital of Putao and began initial ethnographic survey of that community with the cooperation of the Director of Hkakabo Razi National Park. Through formal interviews of 85 Rawang individuals in that town, she collected basic background demographic data, including name, age, marital status, education, occupation, knowledge and impressions of the T’rung and Tibetan peoples, and seasonality of occupations. Particular attention was given in these oral histories to the elucidation of Rawang migration to Myanmar. All interviews were conducted in the Burmese language, recorded on tape, and transcribed and translated into English. The interviews have provided a foundation for further work in the Rawang territory.

In Putao, the principle town of Putao Township, a sizable percentage of the work

force has occupations in the government sector, either in the military or civil service. Others work in shops or in the handful of restaurants that have recently popped up. Most of the adult male population in the Putao region, however, maintains small rice paddies or highland rice terraces and gardens. Most supplement their annual income with individual gold prospecting along the swiftly flowing rivers, or by wage labor in the nearby jade mines or as porters for the occasional scientific expedition or tourist trek.

On December 15, California Academy of Sciences' photographer Dong Lin and myself left San Francisco for Burma, arriving at the town of Putao in Kachin State on December 17, 2002. Photographs of scores informants previously interviewed by the field assistant Thwin were taken during that first day. A few days were spent at Putao arranging for the trek north to the northernmost villages, home of the T'run, Rawang, and Khampa Tibetan peoples. The trekking group consisted of the principal investigator, photographer, mountain guide, head cook-Rawang translator, and about 12 porters. The team walked northward from Putao, along a trail that once had been a British-built road until Gaw Lei, when the road became a small trail. We stopped at each major village for the night, interviewing local people where possible. This included towns such as Naung Mung on the Nam Tisang River, Pangnamdim on the Nmai Hka River, and Tezutu, Krone, and finally Tehaundan on the Adung Long River. It took 15 days to reach this northernmost village in Burma. We stayed a few days in the Tibetan village of Tehaundan, a few days in the T'run village of Krone, and then walked an additional 15 days back to Putao. Data and photo documentation were collected from three groups: Khampa Tibetans, T'run, and Rawang.

Results

The expedition met three distinct groups on its survey to the last village in northernmost Myanmar. All groups encountered speak languages from the eastern Tibeto-Burman linguistic subdivision and all have settled in these remote regions within the last few hundred years.



(Figure 2. Map of 2002-2003 Expedition through Hkakabo Razi National Park, Burma)

1. Khampa Tibetans of Burma

A Burmese social survey of 1997 reported the existence of about 200 Tibetans living in three villages, Saden, Maden, and Tehaundan in northernmost Myanmar.³² Saden is on the Seinkhu River, a western tributary of the Nmai Hka River. Maden is on the eastern branch, the Thala Long, and Tehaundan is on the middle stream, the Adung Long. The rivers become the Nmai Hka downstream, which flows directly from the Hkakabo Razi Range, and is the central tributary of the Irrawaddy.

The Tibetan communities of the Burmese frontier provided a particular surprise for

³² Unpublished manuscript in author's possession.

our team, as it has not been generally known in the literature that Tibetan immigrants have established permanent settlements within Burma itself. These Tibetans speak Khampa dialect, but some of the elders could understand my Lhasa dialect. In fact, the Khampas are the probably most recent migrants to Hkakabo Razi. I learned from the elders of Tehaundan that their grandparents came into the Adung valley during the period of warfare between local Khampas and the Kuomintang Army of the Republic of China for control over Khams, the eastern province of the Tibetan State. This would have been in the 1930s. Kingdon-Ward in 1931 noted Tibetans already in Tehaundan, and they had built substantial houses of logs. He described tall Tibetans living in multi-roomed, windowless houses, and noted that they lorded over the diminutive Daru Rawang.³³ In 2003, Tehaundan was occupied by about 100 Khampas, most of whom still live in frame houses covered with hand-hewn wooden planks. No Rawang now live in Tehaundan, although the Htalatu Rawang headman of Krone claimed to be ruler of Tehaundan as well.

Tehaundan lies in the deep valley of the Adung Long, about 5 km beyond the end of the green canopy of broadleaf deciduous forest, and well within the scattered pines and rhododendron of the Himalayan foothills. Flowering *Prunus* are also typical. Perhaps the world's most famous 'plant hunter' in his day, Kingdon-Ward described a particularly brilliant cherry tree in full bloom in the environs of Tehaundan village:

This, the most magnificent hardy flowering tree I have ever seen...was quite leafless and just a mass of blossom, stark crimson...*Prunus puddum*, as it grows in the Adung valley, is one of the largest of the deciduous trees. It grows eighty to a hundred feet high, and its branches have a very wide spread. The ruby-red flower-buds appear about the middle of March, in compact clusters towards the ends of the branches, and the tree is swiftly transformed into a frozen fountain of precious stones.³⁴

The Burmese Khampas I interviewed related that the town of Dza Yul or Rima, immediately northwest of Hkakabo Razi in Tibet, was their original home. To reach the Adung Valley their ancestors walked into Assam following the Lohit River, then crossed over Diphuk La into Burma.

From the Tehaundan community, I was able to ascertain that the local Tibetans, the

³³ Kingdon Ward, *In the Land of the Blue Poppies* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), p. 196.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

Burmese Khampas, is the group now primarily engaged in trade between the market town of Putao and the Rawang villages north of town. Rawang apparently do not engage in itinerant trading; Tibetans and Chinese in China no longer enter northern Burma for trade. In the past, Tibetans from Mendong and Dzu Yul comprised the bulk of the trading caravans to this portal to Southeast Asia. Modern Burmese Khampa trading activity occurs only during the sunny, dry months of December and January, and in July and August, when the Tehaundan Khampas cross the high Himalayan passes to Dza Yul and Jite, Tibet. The latter town is about 50 km north of Tehaundan, over Namni La, in Tsarong, Khams. Recently a Chinese frontier post was established there. The route over Dhiphuk La enters India briefly before turning north to Tibet. Technically the border has been closed since the student uprisings in Burma in 1989. Understandably, informants were reluctant to discuss whether they transited India illegally or not. Heavy monsoon rains, which wash out the simple rattan bridges, cause landslides, and fill the forest with bloodthirsty leeches, make travel at other times in the region uncomfortable if not impossible.³⁵

The continued existence of human trade caravans into Burma essentially confirmed the main hypothesis of the research survey—that Tibetans still trade between Yunnan and Tibet and Southeast Asia. Significantly different, however, is that Tibetans from China apparently do not now cross the border into Burma for trade. Off to the west in India is an area of extreme isolation within Arunachal Pradesh, deep within the McMahon Line of dispute between China and India.

We met several trading parties on the trail between Putao and Tehaundan. The first, consisting of four young Tibetan men, were encountered in mid-December at the bazaar at Naung Mung, two days walk northeast from Putao. They were buying tea for the year, and selling forest-based medicines.. Most likely they would be hiring local Rawang porters to help carry the goods the 200 kilometers back to Tehaundan. Farther north along the trail we met a Tibetan man and his young son returning from Putao, carrying household goods to their home at Tehuandan. Among other wares, they carried a large aluminum wok, a fluorescent lamp, rice, and brick tea.

One large group of Tibetans, about 30-40 each, was met coming down to Putao. It did not appear that they were transporting a significant amount of goods to Putao,

³⁵ Despite the accident in 2001, we would have had to turn back about half to Hkakabo Razi anyway due to bridges being out.

with the possible exception of ginseng and some other medicinals. It would be safe, then, to assume that cash would be the medium of transaction for goods bought in Naung Mung and Putao, perhaps some medicinal plants and animal parts as well. We met the same group returning to Tehaundan, fully loaded with rice, tea, tobacco, and household supplies. The clothes that these young Tibetans wore were a combination of western style shirts and pants of Thai or Chinese manufacture. Most wore Chinese army boots, which are lightweight, cheap, and rugged—perfect for jungle trails. Most of the large group consisted of young men and teenaged boys, I learned nearly the entire younger generation of Tehaundan.

At Tehaundan we stayed with the Tibetan man and son we had met on the trail, and noted the day-to-day routine, material culture, crops raised, etc. The family is polyandrous—two brothers share a wife and have seven children. This is rare among Khampas, but seems to work in a manner similar to other polyandrous Tibetans—husbands rotate being home and away on trading trips or in pastures, characteristic of the two forms of transhumanance that support the functionalist interpretations of polyandry. The family seemed quite well off, with resources far above those of neighboring Htalu and T’rung Rawang people.

Our host’s home was typical of houses in Tehaundan, with the exception of being a bit larger. The floor and walls were made of hand-planed timbers, with a beamed roof covered with slate tiles. There were three large rooms—a living room with central fire pit, a kitchen that also served as the main sleeping room, a private bedroom, and a small storeroom. A central hallway provided egress, and the house was surrounded by a small balcony. The whole house was raised up on timbers, about 2 meters off the ground. The house was devoid of modern fixtures and conveniences save a small radio, a lightbulb and wires. The family had acquired a small solar panel and battery charger, which could power the two electrical appliances. The head of the household showed me ginseng and other medicinal plants he had collected and preserved in rice wine. He commented on the top prices he received for these products when sold at the market in Putao and in China.

The Khampa elders of Tehaundan interviewed said that they traditionally transport animals skins and parts (goral horn, musk, tiger teeth, etc.) and medicinal plants collected to the Chinese markets in Tibet, receiving cash for the purchase of salt, rice, and household goods. A similar trade is carried on to the south at Naung Mung and Putao.

In addition to the itinerant trading activity, the Tibetans of Tehaundan are also farmers who cultivate maize, vegetables, wheat, and millet on small family farms, raise chickens and pigs, and keep *Bos javanicus* for dairy and meat. They also hunt wild game (goral, monkey, barking deer, etc.) for food as well as trade.

The Khampa Tibetans from Tehaundan are Buddhist and are attended to by a full time Burmese Theravada monk and visiting Nyingmapa lamas from Tibet. As one may imagine, they are extremely isolated from the font of Tibetan culture in Lhasa, from population centers in Khams, and from more recent groups of Tibetan immigrants to South Asia. The Burmese Tibetans are the only known population of Tibetans living permanently in Southeast Asia.

2. Rawang

The Rawang are a large group of Eastern Tibetan-speaking people who mostly subsist through a seasonal combination of paddy or shifting-slope rice cultivation, hunting and gathering, vegetable gardening, and wage labor in the gold and jade mines and forest produce harvesting (e.g. rattan). The Rawang capital is Putao, an extended township with a population of 22,623. There is a fresh produce farmer's market and a household goods shopping area in Putao where items of Burmese, Thai, and Chinese manufacture are found. Headquarters for Hkakabo Razi National Park is in the town.

The Rawang consist of several groups, notably the Daru, Mutwang, Tangsar, Lungmi, Htalu, and T'rung. Most of the Rawang now live in Burma and China (as the Nung and Dulong peoples), with some reported in India and even Thailand. The main population of T'rung Rawang still lives in Dulongjiang, Yunnan, and perhaps in Tibet. Most of the Burmese Rawang were converted to Pentecostal Baptist Christianity by American missionaries from China in the 1930s and 1940s. Seventh Day Adventist, Theravada Buddhist, and Roman Catholic communities are also common in the Putao township. Prior to their conversion, the Rawang practiced an animist religion similar to *nat* worship in other parts of Myanmar.

Preliminary indications of the Rawang origin stories indicate strong affiliation to and descent from common ancestors of the peoples of Tibet. According to the most common versions, the Rawang and Tibetan peoples went their separate ways around 2,000 years ago, as they headed south from the Mongolia plains, the "land of nine lakes and nine rivers" and across the Tibetan plateau. The Rawang peoples entered the headwaters of the Mekong, following the semi-domesticated bovine *ngapuk*, their

main source of food. In fact their name is a contraction of the phrase, *re we wang she* “the people of the Middle River.” After living a long time in the valleys of the Mekong and Salween, they went west into the Irrawaddy drainage along the Dulong (T’rung), and into what later became Kachin State of Myanmar. Some Rawang have continued to move southward into Thailand, and westward into India.

The Rawang are presently dominant in most villages from Putao northward to Tehaundan. The Myanmar Government Planning office has estimated their total population at about 50,000. Other neighbors in northern Kachin State include the Lissu, Jinpaw, and the Khampti Shan, a Thai-speaking group.

To date, no systematic ethnography has been developed with the Rawang of Kachin State, although a history written in Burmese by Rawang cultural leaders is currently in press. Missionary influence has destroyed considerable cultural memory of the old religion, but there are a few legends and myths that have been collected by the linguist Randy La Polla.³⁶

Trade, Change, and Ethnicity along the Tibeto-Burmese Border

Further study of the T’rung may demonstrate the old anthropologist posit that physical characteristics, language, and cultural practices are separate entities in the expression of human diversity, and do not necessarily come bounded in tight packages. While their short stature may be genetic, their endemic cretinism and hypothyroidism appear to be a result of environmental limitations. Recent T’rung behavior, including their historical reticence, tattooing, cave-living, and more recent abandonment of endogamous marriage, appears to be cultural adjustments to environmental, social, and genetic factors. The T’rung illustrate both an interesting case in population genetics and reveal a social dynamic responding to the extreme physical challenges of the remote eastern Himalayan valleys. Only a complete survey of these regions will reveal whether or not the T’rung are really on the verge of disappearing.

A similar assessment of the relative endurance of their cultural communities could be suggested for the other Rawang and the Khampa Tibetans of Burma who are engaged in the small-scale, foot-borne trade between Tibet and Yunnan, China, down to the towns of Naung Mung and Putao in Kachin State. The Rawang, who spend considerable time hunting and collecting forest products, generally leave the trading to the Khampas. A small amount of salt is now being provided by the government at

³⁶ Unpublished manuscript.

Putao for distribution farther north.

Rawang were not seen working as porters for the Tibetans. The traditional trade patterns in the region, i.e. salt for animal parts and medicinal plants, are envisioned by the Government of Myanmar to eventually disappear with the establishment of the forest reserves. In its place, ecotourism is envisioned as a panacea for the disruption of livelihood the national parks might create. Rawang and Tibetan traders will now conceivably become porters and guides for hordes of tourists, according to the Burmese government, following the model most notably established in Nepal.

However, with only a handful of foreign visitors entering Hkakabo Razi National Park since its inception in 1998, ecotourism has not yet drastically altered many traditional cultural practices relating to long-distance trade. And without the resources and perhaps the will to enforce the rules against hunting endangered wildlife, the Burmese authorities have yet to significantly interfere with the day-to-day life of the Burmese Khampa and their Rawang trading partners. Indigenous people in the reserve are allowed to hunt and gather for subsistence only—not to collect forest products for trade. The government and the private sector thus far have lacked capital resources to develop the infrastructure that would encourage significant foreign tourism interest in northern Burma. Roads, landing strips, hotels and restaurants, and even telephones and electricity, would have to be built to provide even the most basic of international tourist services.

Even if ecotourism completely replaces traditional trade patterns in the eastern Himalayas, it is not necessarily fatal to continued ethnic identification of Rawang and Tibetan peoples in the region. Leach and his students, in fact, have portrayed highland Burma cultures as a classic example of relational ethnicity. From Valene Smith's consummate *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*,³⁷ and its updated version,³⁸ to Swain's work on tourism in China,³⁹ anthropologists have been investigating the close link between tourism and ethnicity in developing parts of the

³⁷ Valene Smith, *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (College Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977).

³⁸ Valene Smith and Maryann Brent eds. *Hosts and Guests Revisited: Tourism Issues of the 21st Century* (Elmsford, NY: Cognizant Communication Corp, 2001).

³⁹ Margaret Swain, ed., *Tourism in Rural China and SE Asia* (Elmsford, NY: Cognizant Communication Corp., in press).

world. In Tibet, the impact of the visitor industry has been studied by Epstein,⁴⁰ Klieger and Liker,⁴¹ Klieger,⁴² and others. “Successful” cultures possess long histories of adaptation, operating favorably under agents of change—the boundaries of the ethnic unit may not shift—but their cultural “contents” may. One could image a scenario in the eastern Himalayas wherein social agents that normally define or condition ethnic identity are routinely transferred, with traditional cultural activities being modified to serve the needs of tourism. This processual model of “continuous change, perpetual identity” may be useful in projecting the potential effects of ecotourism upon the Rawang and Khampa Tibetan people of northern Burma. It is conceivable tourism development may offer current Rawang and Tibetan traders a sustainable niche in the overall economic system of the region not wholly dissimilar to the Sherpas of Nepal.

⁴⁰ Lawrence Epstein and Peng Wenbin, "Tourism and the Culture of Identity in Jiuzhaigou," *Xinan Wenhua Yanjiu* (Southwest China Culture Research) (Kunming: Institute of History, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, in press).

⁴¹ P. Christiaan Klieger and Keith A. Liker, "Tourism, Politics, and Relocation in Tibet," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 12, No.4, (1988).

⁴² P. Christiaan Klieger, *Tibetan Nationalism* (Meerut, India: Archana, 1992).