

## *The 1958 sKyid grong Census: Implications for the Study of Tibetan Historical Demography\**

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Tibetan historical demography is a topic that has much potential, yet has only been addressed from the periphery using problematic assumptions and questionable data. Not only do we lack reliable estimates of Tibet's past population size,<sup>2</sup> but we cannot even agree whether the population was growing or diminishing.<sup>3</sup> To date most research on Tibetan populations has been either micro-level community studies of groups living on the fringes of areas formerly controlled by the central Tibetan administration [e.g., in Nepal (Goldstein 1976; Schuler 1987; Levine 1988; Childs 1998) and in Ladakh/Zangskar (Attenborough 1994; Wiley 1998)] or macro-scale analyses of recent survey data in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and neighboring provinces of the Peoples Republic of China (e.g., Liu 1989; Zhang 1989; PCOSC 1992; Sun and Li 1996; Ma 1996). Although both of these approaches reveal interesting aspects about contemporary Tibetan populations, neither can be used to conclude much about historical demographic processes. Thus far the only methodologically sound attempt at historical demography is Schuh's seminal work using population data from the archives of bKra shis bsam gtan gling Monastery in sKyid grong district (Schuh 1988). Although a step in the right direction, the small sample size (about 400 individuals) limits the depth of analysis.

Rather than trying to tackle the macro issues without requisite data, I contend that a more valid approach to Tibetan historical demography is to conduct in-depth, diachronically oriented, interdisciplinary population studies of specific regions or communities. Data requirements for such an endeavor include (1) tax-related documents (e.g., *zhib gzhung*, *sa tho*) that enumerate households and their members by name, age, and relationship; and (2) contextual economic, historical, and ethnographic data. Tibetans regularly produced population registers for taxation purposes prior to 1959, albeit very few have been accessed thus far. The contextual data is of critical importance since political, economic, and family systems not only have discernible demographic implications, but also provide an analytical framework for interpreting the raw numbers extracted from household registers.

In this paper I will present a very preliminary analysis of a 1958 sKyid grong tax assessment which includes a detailed household enumeration.<sup>4</sup> Those wishing to see a thorough analysis of the document and its contents will have to be patient, for my intent here is first and foremost to kindle interest in Tibetan historical demography by demonstrating that it *can* be done. As more household enumeration documents come to light and are dealt with using well-explicated methodologies, then our discussions of demographic processes in Tibet's past can take a quantum leap from the realm of speculation into the domain of scholarly debates based on solid evidence and careful analysis.

## THE DOCUMENT

The full title of the document is *Sa khyi lo'i skyid grong rgya dgu'i sgo khra them gan* (henceforth referred to as the *sKyid grong sgo khra*), which roughly translates as "The Earth Dog Year (1958) Household Enumeration for the Nine Divisions of sKyid grong District."<sup>5</sup> Housed in the archives of the Library for Tibetan Works and Archives, the manuscript is in scroll format, measures approximately one meter in width by ten meters in length, and is written in cursive script.

*sKyid grong sgo khra* enumerates households and landholdings of those individuals who are subjects of government estates (*gzhung rgyug khral pa*),<sup>6</sup> the purpose being to establish how many people were farming government lands and to assess their tax obligations. Ultimate responsibility for collecting the data and assuring that taxes were paid fell upon the *rdzong dpon* (District Commissioner). A new *rdzong dpon* was appointed to sKyid grong in 1958. One of his first duties was presumably to carry out a land examination with the assistance of aristocratic officials (*gtso drag*), village headmen (*rgan po*), and representatives from the villages (*'thus*) (see Surkhang 1966: 16-20, for a description of how the data was collected and recorded).

*Skyid grong sgo khra* commences with a short preface detailing reasons behind the compilation and naming those involved. After this introduction comes the crux of the text—the enumeration of households by sub-division (*lding 'og*) and village. The eight sub-divisions range from a single large town (e.g., sKyid zhol *lding 'og* consists of only sKyid zhol) to a cluster of villages and hamlets (e.g., sMad *lding 'og* consists of sBram khang, Sa le, sPang che, Se chung, and La phyi villages). Each section detailing a *lding 'og* contains the following four elements:

1. A statement of taxable land with reference to a previous land settlement (the *me 'brug zhib gsal* of 1856 or 1916).<sup>7</sup> For example:

According to the above verbal agreement the taxable land is 33 and  $1/4^{\text{th}}$  *rkang*<sup>8</sup> for the people of sPang zhing as listed in the Fire Dragon Year land settlement.<sup>9</sup>

For gNas nub the taxable land, which was listed as 16 and  $3/8^{\text{th}}$  *rkang* in the Fire Dragon Year land settlement is being reduced by 4 and  $3/8^{\text{th}}$  *rkang*, so the taxable land is now 12 *rkang*.<sup>10</sup>

2. An enumeration of households for each village within the *lding 'og*. Each household is introduced by a statement of the amount of government land that they farm (listed in *rkang*), and then household members are listed including their ages and relationships within the household. For example:

One and a half *rkang*. The taxpayer (*'dzin mi*) of the house named sTag nang 'og is the father (*pha*) Don 'grub, age 74. Son (*bu*) dBang phyug, age 38. Daughter-in-law (*mna' ma*) Lag srol, age 44. Daughter (*bu mo*) sPen lha, age 6. Daughter (*bu mo*) Phur bu, age 3.<sup>11</sup>

1 *rkang*. The taxpayer (*'dzin mi*) is the male (*khyo*) Mig tshe, age 63. Wife (*za zla dman*) Phur bu, age 58. Daughter (*bu mo*) rTa mgrin dbang mo, age 23. Woman (*dman*) Nyi ma chos 'dzoms, age 33. Matrilocally resident son-in-law (*go mag*) mGon po, age 39. Son (*bu*) 'Gyur med rdo rje, age 7. Younger daughter (*de 'og bu mo*) Phur sgron, age 5.<sup>12</sup>

3. After all tax paying households have been enumerated comes a list of those who belong to the *dud chung* and *mi bogs* social categories. In some but not all cases they are listed according to whose land they labor upon.

4. Finally there is a statement of witnesses such as the following:

There are absolutely no discrepancies of any sort. Witnesses from the administrative subdivision (*lding*) were Tshe ring don 'grub, the Representative (*'thus*) Zla ba, and the Village Headman (*rgan*) Chos skyabs. bSod nams, the Representative from gNas nub was a witness. The Village Headman sPen pa was a witness. Nyi ma don 'grub, the Village Headman and Representative from Tshong 'dus, was a witness.<sup>13</sup>

The document ends with the final statement of witness.

#### METHODOLOGY FOR INTERPRETATION

Data from the *sKyid grong sgo khra* (or any similar document) should not be analyzed in a contextual void, but must be interpreted within a well-informed ethnographic framework. Doing so involves a convergence of qualitative and quantitative methods, an approach now advocated within both disciplines of demography and anthropology (e.g., Obermeyer 1997; Basu and Aaby 1998). Anthropologist David Kertzer has argued that the explanation of the causes and consequences of the demographic characteristics of past populations “*clearly* cannot be pursued by quantitative approaches alone. How and why people acted as they did, how they came to change their behavior, and of course the impact of these changed demographic behaviors on other aspects of their lives and on larger social institutions and social interactions—these can only be understood in terms of a complex web of relationships involving cultural norms, social structure, political power, and economic relations” (Kertzer 1997: 839). In other words, if we want to move beyond a mere description of population characteristics (e.g., size, age/sex structure, vital rates) and begin to grasp the logic behind peoples’ motivations, then it is necessary to understand the socio-cultural context within which the demographic data was gathered.

Since many of those enumerated in the *sKyid grong sgo khra* are still alive, it is possible to draw methodological insights from the microdemographic approaches (Caldwell, Hill and Hull 1988; Axinn, Fricke, and Thornton 1991) that involves conducting formal survey research simultaneously with traditional anthropological techniques such as participant observation and extensive interviewing. The intent is to allow the researcher to examine “systemic relations between culture, social organization, elements of subjective meaning, and individual behavior” (Fricke 1997: 830), and has been used productively by both anthropologists (e.g., Netting 1981; Fricke 1994) and demographers (Caldwell, Reddy and Caldwell 1988).

The two types of data can be mutually reinforcing. Quantitative data often reveals important trends, the implications of which can be explored using qualitative methods. In our case here the demographic data has already been collected and presented in the *sKyid grong sgo khra*. The research goal is therefore to conduct interviews with elderly people about the family system and household economics in order to provide a context within which the significance of the quantitative data can be better understood. One obvious importance of such interviews is to check the validity of the data found in the *sKyid grong sgo khra*. Recorded household structures

can be compared with informants' memories of who was co-resident at that time, how they were all related, and who may have been omitted from the survey. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions can be used to detail numerous socio-cultural practices that have demographic implications (norms of inheritance, marriage practices, family management strategies, rules about illegitimacy, etc.).

A shortcoming of such an approach, one that must be borne in mind at all stages of analysis, is that peoples' answers often reflect cultural ideals rather than behavioral norms. Unfortunately there is no way to gather direct evidence (such as through participant observation) to substantiate or call into question the data from such retrospective interviews. Nevertheless, the demographic data can help reveal discrepancies between what is stated as an ideal, and what was actually happening. For example, several elderly informants declared emphatically that it was normative behavior for women to marry, and that "almost all" women did in fact marry. Given the also-stated norm of fraternal polyandry, if all women were to marry then there would have to be a sex ratio imbalance (i.e., more males than females) brought about by higher female mortality or other factors. Crook and Shakya (1983) have suggested (based on a *very* small sample size) that such a scenario may have existed in Ladakh, and in one well-documented case Levine (1987) argues that female infant mortality among the Nyinba of Nepal was higher in part due to negligent care engendered by low female status within the household.<sup>14</sup> Data from the *sKyid grong sgo khra* does not show evidence of a sex ratio imbalance, which leaves the possibility open that—contrary to the statements made by elderly informants—many women remained unmarried (albeit not necessarily celibate). In fact, it is evident from an initial reading of the *sKyid grong sgo khra* that a significant number of apparently unmarried women in their 30s and 40s resided in their natal households with parents (if still alive) and brothers. Furthermore, many of these apparently unmarried women had children. For example, in one stem family household the 60 year-old taxpayer (*'dzin mi*) sPen chog is listed as having six sons ranging in age from 39 to 17, and two daughters aged 40 and 13. The eldest son (and presumably his brothers) has a wife, who has two surviving children. The 40 year-old daughter is listed as having two sons of her own, aged 6 and 2. It can be assumed that she has not returned to this particular household after marital dissolution, since the sons of a divorced woman remain with their father, and a widow never returns to her natal household. Therefore, it is clear that she is unmarried and has two illegitimate children. Numerous such cases are found in the census.

This is just one example of how the two types of data (quantitative from the census and qualitative from retrospective interviews) may be in conflict. Such a conflict does not mean that informants are wrong or provided misleading answers (i.e., Bleek 1987). Rather their statements reflect cultural ideals and hence tell us much about general attitudes concerning marriage and gender relations. Resolving discrepancies between ethnographic interviews and the demographic data can be accomplished by first of all making sure that key informants are actually good informants (see Johnson 1990). Furthermore, a continuous assessment should be made to identify potential contradictions. Once recognized, one can attempt reconciliation through probing follow-up interviews. Such cross checking procedures will still not guarantee

incontrovertible accuracy. But the more rigorous the approach, the more confident one can be about ultimate conclusions.

#### SOME RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The following is a very preliminary analysis of the data contained within the *sKyid grong sgo khra*. The purpose is to demonstrate the types of questions that data sources such as the *sKyid grong sgo khra* have the potential to address. A more thorough presentation of the text and data will be published in the near future.

2,844 individuals are listed in the document.<sup>15</sup> This, however, does not represent the entire population of *sKyid grong rdzong*, but only those classified as government *khral 'dzin*, *dud chung*, and *mi bogs*. The list does not include (1) aristocrats (*sger pa*) and their tax paying subjects; (2) monks of *bKra shis bsam gtan gling* monastery and nuns of *bKra shis chos gling* nunnery; (3) tax paying subjects of *bKra shis bsam gtan gling* monastery; (4) blacksmiths (*mgar, ka mi*), butchers (*bshas pa*), and other occupational caste members who do not farm and hence may lay outside of the tax system; and (5) Newari merchants.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, it seems as if most land in *sKyid grong* was government estate (*gzhung gzhis*), so it is reasonable to estimate that over 75% of the district's population is recorded in the *sKyid grong sgo khra*.

Table 1 lists people according to their tax paying status. The 14 individuals whose sex could not be determined are not included in this analysis.

TABLE 1: POPULATION BY STATUS

Status	Male	Female	Total
<i>Khral 'dzin</i>	89.0% (1249)	84.0% (1198)	86.5% (2447)
<i>Dud chung</i> <i>And mi bogs</i>	11.0% (154)	16.0% (229)	13.5% (383)

Goldstein's argument (1971a: 4) that the majority of Tibetans in the past were classified as *dud chung* is not substantiated by the *sKyid grong* data. However, regional variation is a characteristic of Tibet so no generalizations should be made at this point. What may be of interest is the fact that more women are classified as *dud chung* than men. Could this be related to the high rate of female nonmarriage engendered by polyandry? Bear in mind that bound *dud chung* did not have heritable rights to land (generally passed on from father to son, except in *mag pa* households), so it is possible that nonmarrying women (*mo hrang*) could end up as *dud chung* if separated from their brothers' households. This is just one possible explanation for the difference noted above.

The mean size of households can only be determined for *khral 'dzin* since those listed as *dud chung* and *mi bogs* are not always enumerated according to family units. Whereas some *khral 'dzin* households are large, stem family units (12-18 members), others are nuclear families consisting of only a few members. The 364 *khral 'dzin* households have an average size of 6.8 members per household. According to

informants, aged parents sometimes occupied small houses called *rgan tshang* ("elder's house") that were attached to the larger homes inhabited by their son(s) and daughter-in-law, reminiscent of the *khang chen/khang chung* system found in Ladakh. Despite a separate physical residence they were treated as a single household for taxation purposes.

The average age of the population is 28.4 years with the female mean (29.2 years) being slightly higher than the male mean (27.6 years). The maximum ages for men and women were 83 and 85 respectively.<sup>17</sup> Table 2 breaks the population down by age and sex.

TABLE 2: POPULATION BY AGE COHORT AND SEX

Age	Male	Female	Unknown	Total	%	%	Total %
					Male	Female	
0-4	155	158	3	316	5.48	5.59	11.13
5-9	143	140	1	284	5.06	4.95	10.00
10-14	143	133	0	276	5.06	4.71	9.72
15-19	131	103	1	235	4.64	3.64	8.27
20-24	111	132	2	245	3.93	4.67	8.63
25-29	119	123	1	243	4.21	4.35	8.56
30-34	116	103	0	219	4.10	3.64	7.71
35-39	94	116	1	211	3.33	4.10	7.43
40-44	86	74	1	161	3.04	2.62	5.67
45-49	83	68	0	151	2.94	2.41	5.32
50-54	70	71	1	142	2.48	2.51	5.00
55-59	51	68	3	122	1.80	2.41	4.30
60-64	41	55	0	96	1.45	1.95	3.38
65-69	24	24	0	48	0.85	0.85	1.69
70-74	23	32	0	55	0.81	1.13	1.94
75+	11	25	0	36	0.39	0.88	1.27
Total	1401	1425	14	2840	49.58	50.42	100.00

Females outnumber males by a small margin. If we assume a similar sex ratio among subjects of aristocratic estates and bKra shis bsam gtan gling, and if we assume that there were more monks than nuns in sKyid grong, then it is possible that males slightly outnumbered females in the sKyid grong population. However, the difference would not be substantial enough to conclude that female mortality, especially among infants, was much higher than male mortality.

Table 3 presents comparative data on age structure from several contemporary Himalayan communities<sup>18</sup> and rural TAR (Liu 1989: 219).

TABLE 3: AGE STRUCTURES OF TIBETAN POPULATIONS COMPARED

Cohort	0-14	15-29	30-44	45-59	60+
sKyid grong, 1958	30.9%	25.4%	20.8%	14.5%	8.3%
Rural TAR, 1982	33.8%	23.3%	15.1%	11.3%	16.5%
Average of Hima- Layan Communities	34.6%	25.7%	18.9%	12.5%	8.1%

The fact that the youngest cohort in the sKyid grong population is smaller than the other two populations could be an indication of a lower fertility rate (i.e., perhaps induced by higher rates of polyandry and female nonmarriage), a higher infant and childhood mortality rate, or both. Himalayan Tibetan communities tend to have very high rates of infant mortality, due in great part to unsanitary living conditions and the lack of medical facilities. For example, infant mortality in Nubri during the 1990s was 230/1000 (meaning 23% of infants die prior to their first birthday) (Childs 1998: 334-340), and among the Nyinba of Humla the rate was 216/1000 from 1965 to 1982 (Levine 1988: 290). These rates are at the extreme end of the spectrum, especially when we consider that India and Nepal's national rates were one-third that level in the mid 1990s (72/1000 and 79/1000 respectively), and their rates were far above those found in developed nations like the USA (7/1000 in 1996) and Sweden (4/1000 in 1996). Unfortunately we have no idea about comparable rates in Tibet prior to the present day, let alone for sKyid grong. Claims of past infant mortality rates in Tibet as high as 430/1000 (Sun and Li 1996: 226) remain unsubstantiated. In 1990 infant mortality in the TAR was 92/1000 (Sun and Li 1996: 226).

The only other remarkable difference in Table 3 is the percentage of old folks in the rural TAR population compared to sKyid grong in 1958 and contemporary Himalayan communities. This could be evidence of improving health conditions in the TAR, or it could be evidence of age-specific migration that removes many young and middle-aged individuals from the population. The data in and of it permits no definite conclusions to be drawn. The point of this exercise is merely to demonstrate that by accessing the sKyid grong data we have a basis for comparative studies aimed at assessing changes over time.

Fig.1 shows a population pyramid derived from the *sKyid grong sgo khra*:

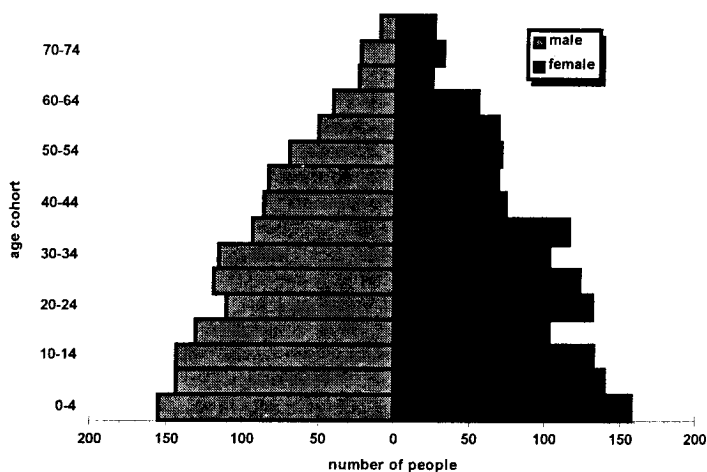


FIG.1: POPULATION PYRAMID DERIVED FROM 1958 SKYID GRONG SGO KHRA

The pyramid has a shape characteristic of a population that is undergoing slow or no growth at all.<sup>19</sup> Goldstein (1981) argues that rural Tibetan populations are (and were) indeed capable of slow growth despite high levels of polyandry and mortality, a finding confirmed by my own data gathered in the ethnically Tibetan communities of Nubri, Nepal, where intrinsic rates of population growth in different villages ranged from 0.7% (doubling time = 105 years) to 1.5% (doubling time = 50 years) per annum (Childs 1998: 369). Naturally, data from one valley or even one *rdzong* cannot be used to generalize about population growth throughout the Tibetan ethnographic area, yet as a case study the *sKyid grong* data can be used to form hypotheses capable of being tested against similar data sets. Through continual testing and revising we can learn as much about inter-regional similarities as we can about local variability.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The *sKyid grong sgo khra* cannot be used to address such thorny issues as Tibet's pre-1959 population size. Furthermore, any generalizations from this site-specific data to larger units of analysis (e.g., Central Tibet) must be demonstrated rather than assumed. Nevertheless, I do wish to point out that documents like the *sKyid grong sgo khra* are invaluable for the study of Tibetan historical demography, at least at the micro-level. Not only can we assess the age and sex structures of well-defined populations, but we can also use indirect statistical techniques to estimate fertility, mortality, nuptiality, migration, and population growth rates. The really interesting and significant work will come when (or if) we can find two censuses taken a decade or so apart. Techniques used by demographers and anthropologists for determining fertility and mortality rates from two consecutive censuses (e.g., Preston 1983; Gage,



Dyke and Riviere 1984; Gage 1985) could certainly be applied to Tibetan population registers.

Only a small window of opportunity remains to use the method presented above. Bear in mind that today's Tibetans who are now in their seventies were in their 30s when the major social changes commenced. In 1958 they were not wizened preservers of cultural knowledge, but middle-aged men and women whose primary concerns centered upon economic necessities and the process of family building. Nevertheless, they are the last generation of Tibetans who remember what it was like to be householders in pre-1959 Tibet, so their knowledge, albeit having limitations, is still invaluable. In another decade or two it will not be possible to use retrospective interviews to interpret demographic data.

The data presented above is literally the tip of an iceberg. Far more ethnographic interviewing, historical documentation, and statistical analysis is required before final interpretations can be made regarding how socio-cultural practices and political systems were related to demographic trends in sKyid grong's past. My primary intent here is to show the potential that household enumeration documents possess with respect to the study of Tibetan historical demography, and in the process to encourage all who encounter population registers to make note of them so that, eventually, we can form an inventory that is amenable to systematic analysis. Only then will it finally be possible to say something demonstrably sensible about Tibetan historical demography.

## Notes

1. I would like to acknowledge the insightful comments on a seminar version of this paper from colleagues at the Demography Program, Australian National University, whose contributions have helped the conceptual development of this paper. Zhongwei Zhao was most kind in tracking down the contemporary Chinese scholarship cited herein, which was translated for me by Lin Kuei-Hsiu. Christine Varga provided several valuable suggestions. I would also like to thank Toni Huber for many stimulating conversations leading to the realization that, indeed, more effort should be dedicated to Tibetan historical demography. The current research on sKyid grong is being supported by a fellowship in anthropological demography from the Andrew Mellon Foundation.
2. The actual size of the Tibetan population prior to 1959 is a contentious political issue. On the one hand the Tibetan government-in-exile asserts that there were 6 million Tibetans prior to 1959, 1.2 million of whom were killed as a direct result of China's occupation (e.g., see the official government-in-exile website at [www.tibet.com](http://www.tibet.com)). On the other hand scholars in the PRC claim that there were only 2.7 million ethnic Tibetans in 1953 (Sun and Li 1996), and since the 1950s the population has grown at a steady clip of 2.1% per annum (Liu 1989: 12). As Clarke points out, "The original baseline figures (i.e., 6 million) are estimates from a time when there were no modern census records, and the current figures for Tibet (i.e., 2.7 million) come from Chinese statistics the absolute basis of which is unclear" (Clarke 1988: 28). For a lucid treatment of previous population estimates, see Martin (1996: 8-13).
3. Some assert that the Tibetan population has undergone a persistent decline from the collapse of the empire to the modern era (e.g. Ekvall 1972; Anderson 1981), or from the collapse of the empire to the imposition of Mongol rule (Liu 1989: 58), or at least during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Sun and Li 1996: 222). Meanwhile, several small-

scale studies demonstrate how Tibetan populations characterized by high levels of polyandry, female nonmarriage, and mortality are nevertheless capable of slow but steady growth (Goldstein 1981; Levine 1988; Childs 1998). It bears mentioning again (see Goldstein 1981) that assumptions about Tibet's population decline are based on highly suspect data such as estimates of Tibet's army size during the imperial period and the Mongol census of 1268 (see Petech 1980). Regarding the latter, Petech maintains that a population of 223,000 individuals (excluding nomads) calculated from the census in mNga' ris, dBus and gTsang is a reasonable estimate (1980: 234). This number is often cited, sometimes cautiously and sometimes boldly, as an authoritative population figure. Yet the only people included in the census were those living in *hor dud* households which were by definition farmers living in their own homes with husband, wife, and children present, and which had land sufficient for sowing 12 *khal* of grain (Petech 1980: 234). How many people were excluded from this census is anybody's guess, but it is clearly an under-enumeration of farmers not to mention a complete exclusion of nomads.

4. I would like to thank Tashi Tsering of the Amnye Machen Institute, Dharamsala, for informing me of the existence of the document, and Lobsang Shastri of the LTWA for his generous support in locating it and providing me with a copy and Jamyang Tenzin (LTWA) for typesetting the manuscript.
5. sKyid grong district (*rdzong*) was smaller in the past than it is today. Present-day sKyid grong (*xian*) comprises what were formerly two separate *rdzong*, sKyid grong and rDzong dga'. For a brief description of sKyid grong by the former *lding dpon* of Gyes phug (one of the traditional divisions of sKyid grong *rdzong*), see Zla ba grags pa (1997).
6. These people are classified as *mi ser*, a term that has been translated as anything from "serf" to "subject" to "commoner". *Mi ser* were responsible for farming the fields of lords, whether on government estates (*gzhung gzhis*), aristocratic estates (*sger gzhis*), or religious estates (*chos gzhis*). All those who held heritable usufruct rights to certain fields were classified as taxpayers (*khral pa*), whereas those who did not but were tied to a specific estate were classified as *dud chung*. People who received permission to work anywhere on the condition that they pay an annual fee to their lord were classified as *mi bogs* ("human lease"). For discussions of the Tibetan social structure and its relation to taxation, see Surkhang (1966, 1986), Goldstein (1971a, 1971b, 1986), and Dargyay (1982).
7. The background behind *zhib gzhung* or *zhib gsal* documents is discussed by Surkhang (1966: 15-23) and Ye shes tshul khriims et. al. (1989: 1-16).
8. The *rkang* was the basic Tibetan unit of land measurement for taxation purposes. The amount of tax paid in material and labor was determined by the amount of a lord's land that a *khral 'dzin* family farmed (see Surkhang 1986: 24-26 for a list of tax obligations that are incurred by farming one *rkang* of land).
9. *spang zhing ha/ 'ha' mrdzod gong zhu/ me 'brug zhib gsal sgrub rkang sum cu so gsum dang bzhi chal gcig gi sa 'dzin bsdad lag yod gras/*
10. *gnas nub nas/ me 'brug zhib gsal sgrub rkang bcu drug dang bzhi cha phyed gnyis nas rkang bzhi dang bzhi cha phyed gnyis tsho dgu nang gses ngan chag gtong mus sngar gnas sgrub rkang 12 kyis sa 'dzin bsdad lag yod gras/*
11. In this case we have a stem family household consisting of three generations. *rkang gcig dang phyed 'dzin mi stag nang 'og pha don 'grub rang lo 74 bu dbang phyug rang lo 38 mna' ma lhag sgrul rang lo 44 bu mo spen lha rang lo 6 bu mo phur bu rang lo 3 bcas/*
12. In this case we have a stem family household consisting of a father and mother and their two daughters, the elder of whom (the one listed as *dman* = woman, wife) is married to the matrilocally resident son-in-law (*go mag* = *mag pa*). The couple has

- two children. It is possible that both daughters were married to mGon po since, according to elderly informants, polygyny was practiced in sKyid grong's mag pa households. *rkang l 'dzin mi khyo mig tshe rang lo 63 za zla dman phur bu rang lo 58 bu mo rta mgrin dbang mo rang lo 23 dman nyi ma chos 'dzoms rang lo 33 go mag mgon po rang lo 39 bu 'gyur med rdo rje rang lo 7 de 'og bu mo phur sgron rang lo 5*
13. *he bags rigs gtan nas med zhu lding las thog tshe ring don 'grub dang 'thus zla ba/rgan chos skyabs bcas kyi rtags/ gnas nub 'thus bsod nams kyi rtags/ rgan spen pa'i rtags/ tshong 'dus rgan 'thus gcig 'thus nyi ma don 'grub rtags/ gong zhu/*
  14. Levine (1987) further argues that high parity males and illegitimate infants were also subjected to less benevolent treatment and hence had higher rates of mortality. It was not strictly a gender issue, but a matter of households' needs for children and whether or not those needs had been satisfied.
  15. Of these the ages of all but 4 individuals are listed, and the gender of all but 14 individuals could be determined.
  16. Much more work will be required in order to determine how many individuals are not included in the sKyid grong sgo khra. What we do know is that bKra shis bsam gtan gling's estate lands included 407 individuals in 1939 (Schuh 1988). Elderly people from sKyid grong today claim that there were around 70 monks at bKra shis bsam gtan gling, two dozen or so nuns at bKra shis chos gling, and 22 households of Newari merchants living in sKyid zhol. As for the occupational castes, the term *ka mi* prefaces some peoples' names in the sKyid grong sgo khra, so blacksmiths may have been counted.
  17. One year was subtracted from the listed age of each individual due to the Tibetan custom of considering a child one-year-old from the time of birth until the beginning of the New Year. Age heaping is noticeable, for example 67 individuals are listed as being age 3, 73 individuals as age 5, but only 20 individuals as age 4. Reasons for this are unknown, but analyzing the population in five-year age cohorts minimizes the affect of heaping.
  18. The figure in column three represents an average of several Tibetan communities in the Himalayas where demographic data was gathered during the past three decades. The following is a list of locations and sources: Zangskar (Attenborough 1994: 303; Elford 1994: 333); Humla (Goldstein 1976: 225; Levine 1988: 288); Dolpo (Jest 1975: 214); Helambu (Bishop 1998: 117); Khumbu (Weitz et. al. 1978: 184); and Nubri (Childs 1998: 407).
  19. I would like to thank my demographer colleagues Peter McDonald and Chris Wilson for confirming this observation. Generally, a fast growing population has a very wide base (indicative of a high birth rate) that tapers rapidly toward the middle age cohorts. Conversely a slowly growing population has a more square shape wherein the difference between the base and mid-region cohorts is not that great.

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