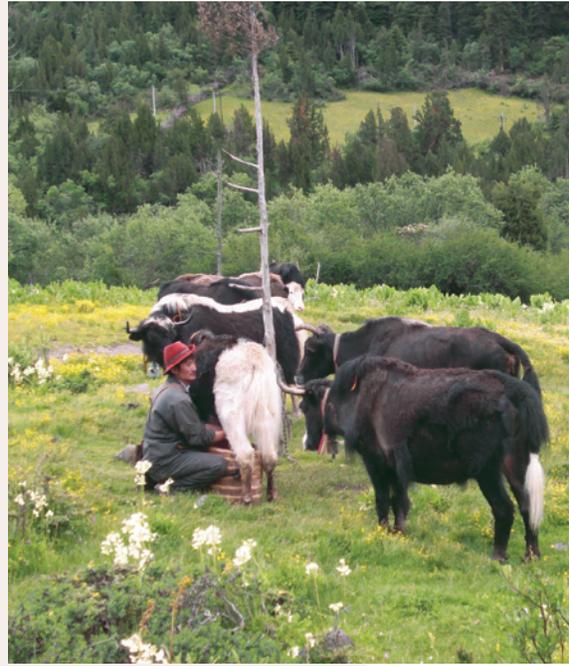


Yak and the Tibetans

犛牛與藏族社會



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犛牛是青藏高原上最常見的一種動物，牠的四肢短小有力，體型厚實粗壯，在綠草映襯下，一身黝黑格外引人注目。犛牛除了為牧民提供豐富的牛奶外，還是家裡最重要的財富來源。牧民對犛牛有一種特殊的感情，尤其是那些長期產奶的母犛牛。牧民認為有負於牠們，因而即便到了牠們不能產奶時，仍會將這些「無用的」犛牛留在畜群，照顧牠們直至終老。從事畜牧研究的人士大都有這樣的困惑：為何牧民寧可把犛牛留著，也不願意出售給市場呢？畢竟賣牛獲得的收入既能補貼家用，又能降低冬季雪災帶來的損失。而牧民因保持大畜群對草原生態造成的壓力，又成為草原保護人士的指責對象。

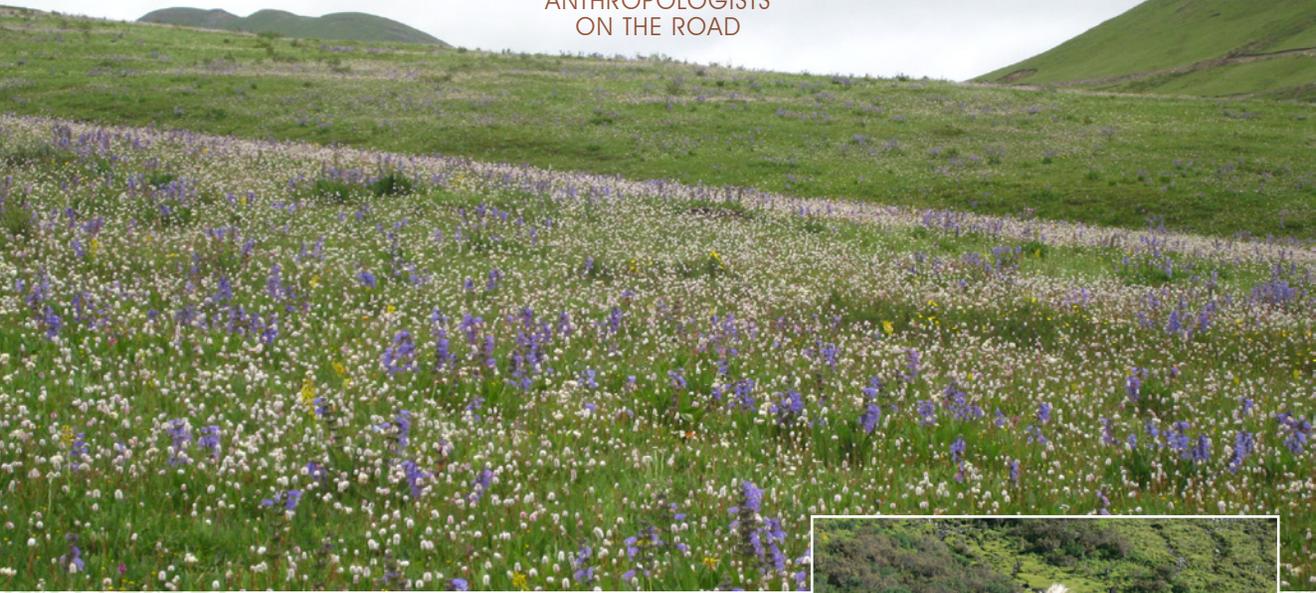
Yaks are iconic on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Their husky bodies, short but powerful legs and swarthy hair easily stand out on the green meadow. Yaks are substantial source of a herder's wealth, and they give out generous amount of milk. A unique sentiment is seen between herders and yaks - especially female yaks giving out milk for years. Herdsmen owe a great deal to them. Old yaks are kept in the drove until they die even after they run out of milk. Researchers on pastoralism have a common question in mind: why don't herders just sell those yaks in the markets, as they need money to subsidize the family as well as the loss caused by the winter snowstorms? And from the environmentalists' point of view, they are to be blamed for keeping such a massive drove that exhausts the grasslands.



牧民維持大畜群的策略，一方面是為了增強畜群抵禦雪災和雪災後快速恢復的能力，另一方面與他們的宗教觀念相關，認為隨意出售犛牛是變相的殺生。後一種解釋或許有些牽強，畢竟牧民殺牛吃牛肉也是不爭的事實。這裡涉及到有限消費和贖罪的問題。其實如果仔細觀察畜群，會發現其中有部分犛牛的耳朵上打有印記，牠們是作為放生用的。在藏區，也常聽到這樣的一類事：一群藏民衝入屠宰場，不分青紅皂白地將牛、羊全部放生。場主花大價錢買來的牲畜，就這樣消失了。在同情場主遭遇的同時，也為他無視當地文化而感嘆：在藏民聚居區開設屠宰場，無異於自尋麻煩。

Indeed, a populous drove is more resistant to snowstorms and recovers faster afterwards. And there is religious consideration - selling yaks means murder. This may sound a bit far-fetched, as the herders also kill yaks and eat them. Yet here is a fine line between "limited consumption" and "atonement". Take a closer look to the drove you'll find some yaks with a mark on the ear. They are the yaks to be let free. In the ethnic Tibetan areas you hear things like this: a group of Tibetans intrude the abattoir, releasing all cattle and sheep. The fortunes of the owner vanish in no time. You may sympathize the owner, but this is the price to pay for neglecting the local culture - setting up an abattoir in the Tibetan settlements is never wise!





犛牛 Yak Customs 風俗

犛牛在藏文化中的意義遠不止這些，因為地域、習慣的差異，與犛牛相關的風俗又呈現出多樣性。在青海玉樹和西藏林芝地區，有為犛牛過年的風俗。犛牛新年這一天，除了要拿出牠們最喜歡吃的食物，還要把經過喇嘛加持的繩子繫在牠們的尾巴上，以保佑犛牛免遭大型捕食動物的襲擊並順利過冬。從這天開始直到牧草新生期間，牧民不再擠牛奶。在藏民過年時，也有些習俗是占卜來年農業或牧業收成的。例如，藏曆十月一日貢布新年前夜，貢布人點完花炮，緊接著就是請狗赴宴的儀式。主人會在盤子裏擺上糌粑、酥油和肉，把狗喊來，觀察狗先吃甚麼。按當地說法，狗是通神靈的，狗吃甚麼，來年就會豐收甚麼。如果先吃糌粑，預示糧食豐產；先吃酥油，意味牧業興旺。但要是先吃肉的話，表示來年肉多，引申意則是來年犛牛死得多。奇怪的是，狗在這天先吃肉的情況並不多見。



Meanings embodied by yaks in Tibetan culture are far more than these, and they are very diverse among Tibetan groups in different regions. In Yushu County of Qinghai Province and the Nyingchi County of Tibet Autonomous Region, people celebrate a special “Yak’s New Year” dedicated to their dear animal. On that day people prepare the yaks for their favourite food, and tie a string blessed by a Lama on their tails, wishing them safe from winter’s fridity and large predators. Herders rest from milking from this day till the pasture grows again. Fortune-telling on harvest and livestock is also common during Tibetan New Year’s Day. For instance, people in Kongpo celebrate on the eve of their New Year (1st October of the Tibetan calendar) with sparklers, followed by inviting their dogs to a meal: Tsampa, yak butter and meat are placed on three different plates in front of the dogs. They believe that dogs are mediumistic; the food they choose to eat at once are said to be abundant in the coming year. If Tsampa is picked, food will be ample; if butter is eaten first, livestock will thrive. But if meat is chosen, there will be rich supply of meat - meaning more deaths of the yaks. Weird enough, the dogs seldom choose the meat.

此外，林芝魯朗還有分牛宴的集會。原本村裡每戶人家都得輪流拿出一頭犛牛來承擔宴會，村裡會象徵性地購買這頭牛，購買的價格當然會遠遠低於市場價。宴會第一天，牧民把牛肉做成饅饅，全村人圍坐在村裡的公共場地上一起分享；第二天，則把剩下的牛骨頭和上土豆做湯喝。由於不是所有的牧民都有能力負擔犛牛，這宴會最後就變成犛牛多的家庭輪流請全村人品嚐。由於宴會一年一次，犛牛多的家庭樂意為全村效勞。

A "Yak Sharing Feast" is held in the Lulang Town of Nyingchi County. Originally, every household of the village took turns to offer a yak for the feast, bought by the village committee at a price far lower than the market price. Yak meat is made into steamed dumplings on the first day and shared by all villagers sitting in a circle in the village's open area. On the second day, yak bones are cooked into soup with potatoes. As not all families can afford contributing a yak, the families that keep more yaks normally take turns to feast the whole village with a yak for free happily.



放牧 Yak 犛牛 Herding

放牧犛牛並非是無序、隨意的，牧民會依據當地的生態環境而採取不同的放牧方式。在森林草地生態類型中，通常採取垂直遷移。夏季來臨，牧民前往高山牧區；氣溫上升，再搬去更高的牧場；等到氣溫回落時，才逐漸返回谷地牧區。

The herding of yak is never unscrupulous. Different herding practices are adopted according to local environment. Vertical migration is usually seen in a forest-pasture ecotype. Herders drive the yaks to alpine pastures in the summer and relocate to higher ones if temperature keeps rising. They move to valley pastures when temperature drops.



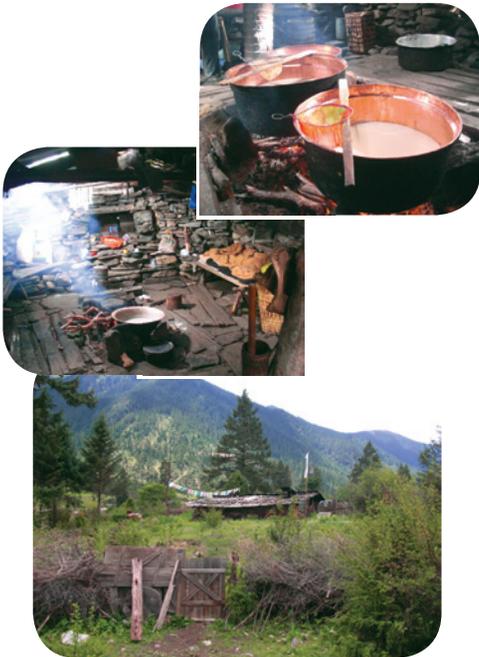
為了高效管理牧草資源，牧民將高山牧區按山脊劃分成多個片區，每個片區內又按海拔的高低和牧草的優劣劃分牧場，牧民只能在分到的特定片區內轉換牧場，卻不能隨意跨越片區放牧。同時，為了保證牧民能平等地獲取新生牧草，前往同一牧場的各牧戶需在協定好的日子遷入。谷地牧區，按種植的農作物類型，分為青稞和小麥兩大區域。與高山放牧不同的是，雖然牧民跨區域放牧不受限制，但是只能在每個區域中屬於自己的或共用的牧場上放牧。為了確保放牧制度能夠嚴格執行，牧民甚至建立了監督和罰款機制。



For effective management of the pastures, herders divide the alpine pastoral region into numerous areas. The pastures in each area are classified by elevation as well as quality of the grass. Herders are allowed to shift around pastures, but that must be within their allotted area. At the same time, to ensure fair distribution of new grass, herders heading to the same pasture have to move on the same day agreed by all. Pastoral regions in the valleys are divided into barley area and wheat area according to the crops planted. A bit different from that on the highlands, cross-area herding is allowed here, but only limited to pastures that belong to the particular herder or common pastures. For such a system to be implemented strictly, the herders have a sophisticated supervision and penalty mechanism.

牧房的日常工作同樣不簡單。每天清晨，牧民就得前往牧場尋找擠奶的犏牛，把牛趕回來後，開始擠奶、打酥油、製酸奶、做奶渣、餵小牛等一系列的工序。完成時，差不多已是下午一點。吃點糌粑，喝幾口酥油茶，再小睡一會，又得去牧場找牛。工作就這樣一天連著一天重複進行，只要看著架子上的酥油漸漸地多起來，牧民就心滿意足了。

Herder's daily work is not easy either. Just before dawn, the herders are already out in the meadows to search for dairy yaks. A lot of work then follows after driving them back: milking, making butter and curds, feeding the calf and so on. When these chores are finished it is nearly 1 p.m. A quick lunch of Tsampa and yak butter tea then follows. After a nap, they go out for yaks again. The routine goes on from day to day, yet the growing amount of butter can make their days.



困境 Facing Difficulties 生存

近些年，青藏高原深受全球氣候變化的影響。氣溫升高、冰川退縮、湖泊擴大幾乎成為青藏高原的普遍現象。氣候變化也同樣直接或間接地威脅著犛牛的生存。犛牛是喜陰動物，溫度上升，牠的食草量、產奶量都會減少，長膘速度變緩；這時的牛群最容易受到傳染性疾病的侵襲。犛牛只能不斷向山頂攀爬來避暑。然而，氣溫升高導致犛牛在高山牧區停留的時間延長，不僅造成牧草資源匱乏，反過來因為犛牛集中於溫度較低的特定區域，造成過度放牧和踐踏，從而引起草場退化。

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau suffers greatly from climatic change in recent years: rising temperature, retreating glaciers and expanding lakes on the plateau threaten the survival of the yaks. As yaks are shade-loving, they eat less grass, produce less milk and gain weight slower when the weather gets hot. Such yaks are also more prone to infectious diseases. They have to climb upper to avoid the heat. As more of them stay longer in the alpine pastures, grasses in these areas are eaten up quickly. Degradation of grassland occurs due to overgrazing and trampling.

氣候變化也影響著建立在地方性知識上的社會運作體系。牧民不得不採取更靈活、更多樣化的放牧策略來適應不斷變化的氣候。面對牧草和水源的短缺，牧民之間、村落之間甚至地域之間也許會建立新型的資源管理模式或強化聯合行動來共同應對，當然也可能伴隨著矛盾和衝突。總之，氣候變化對犛牛的生存以及牧區的發展帶來了前所未有的挑戰。牧區的未來又會怎樣呢？❖

Moreover, climate change is affecting the social operation systems based on local knowledge. Herders must adopt a more flexible and diverse herding strategies for the changing climate. To tackle shortages of pastures and water, new modes of resource management or intensified collective actions may come up among herders, villages or even territories, followed likely by disagreements and conflicts. To sum up, I'd say climate change has brought unprecedented challenges to the survival of yaks and the development of the pastoral regions. How will their future be? ❖

