
GLOSSARY

Amdo: Tib: one of the three provinces of Tibet, the size of France, in the northeast of the Tibetan Plateau, separated from central Tibet by semi-desert. Today, Amdo is largely the Chinese province of Qinghai, plus the Kanlho (Ch: Gannan) prefecture of Gansu province, and the Ngaba (Ch: Aba) prefecture of Sichuan.

Artificial grassland: Literal translation of a common Chinese term (also “artificial pasture”) for sown pasture, also for improved pasture sown with hybrid seed varieties.

Communes: Compulsory collectivisation of production, confiscation of personal possessions, and labour for rations distributed according to work points, under the direction of Party cadres. In Tibet communes were coercively imposed in 1959, and were not disbanded until the late 1970s. As administrative units, communes live on as today’s **townships**. On the Tibetan grasslands a “township” may have no town at all, or only an administrative compound, in charge of a large rangeland of dispersed nomads. Townships remain the lowest level of government, responsible for transmitting and implementing central policies, to be financed locally.

Degradation: Grassland degradation is the continuous deterioration in pasture quality. This includes the death of grasses, exposing soil to the erosive forces of gales, blizzards, hail and snow. Degradation includes the invasion of plant species toxic to animals, and plagues of burrowing animals once soil is exposed. Because of Tibet’s extreme climate, the vast grassland is vulnerable to degradation. Both degradation and desertification are widespread in Tibet. Once degradation starts it is hard to stop without considerable investment in resowing pasture with grasses indigenous to the area. The last stage of degradation is desertification.

Developmentalist state: A nation-state in which development is permanent top priority, to be achieved by close partnership between centralised state authority and major corporations, which may be state-owned or private, but dependent on official contracts, permission and state orchestration of a nationbuilding development policy.

Drogsa: Tib: pastoral nomads of the open rangelands, caring for herds of yak, horses, sheep and goats through sustainable techniques of mobile transhumance. See pastoral nomadism.

Ecological emigration: China’s term for a policy of excluding nomads from their traditional pastures by revoking leases granted to them in the 1990s, which were meant to be for at least 50 years. “Ecological emigration” is involuntary resettlement, requiring nomads to cease their animal-centred way of life altogether, living in rows of housing, receiving subsistence compensation, little vocational training, and with little to do. The policy is to promote regrowth of grassland or forest for the purpose of watershed protection, on the assumption that human use, traditional grazing pressure and habitat protection are incompatible. See *tuimu huancao*.

Extensive: The pattern of land use that made human life on the Tibetan Plateau possible, by spreading population extensively over the entire plateau, rather than concentrating it in towns and favoured locations. Extensive land use is dispersed, mobile, flexible, respectful of natural limits, has a light footprint, and is sustainable. **Intensive** land use is the modern productivist practice of concentrating investment, resources and people in small areas to maximise production, but with much greater impact or footprint.

Footprint: A metaphor for summing up all the impacts of human use of land and resources, enabling comparisons between countries and groups. The heavier the footprint the greater the impact, endangering sustainability.

Gormo to Lhasa railway: A rail line connecting Lhasa to the entire Chinese rail network opened in 2006. The extension of the railway from Gormo was the last step in linking central Tibet to the Chinese economy. Gormo (Ch: Golmud) is a highly industrialised city in the Tsaidam Basin of Amdo, where China extracts oil, gas and salts for the manufacture of fuels, plastics, petrochemicals and fertilisers.

Household responsibility system: China’s term for the 1980s policy of restoring land, animals, farming

implements and personal property confiscated during the revolution. On the Tibetan grasslands, restoration of herds occurred in the 1980s, but allocation of certificates guaranteeing long term leasehold rights to grazing land took much longer. The allocation of leases is often, but inaccurately, referred to as **privatisation**.

Human development: A way of measuring human well-being by using measurable indicators such as how many years of schooling a population has, the level of illiteracy, access to health care, maternal mortality rate, infant mortality, access to clean water, female participation in education and employment, income, etc. Human development is widely used by the United Nations Development Programme and other international institutions as a more inclusive measure of well-being than money, measured only by GDP, or Gross Domestic Product per person.

Infrastructure: A modern economy requires electricity, fuels, highways, railways, mines, factories, cities and a wide range of urban services; all of which require major investment. These are the prerequisites of intensified, productivist and profitable settlement of large populations concentrated in places where infrastructure is built. In addition to the “hard” infrastructure above, successful development also requires investment in the “soft” infrastructure of education and vocational training, to enable local populations to participate in new economic sectors.

Jhangthang: Tib: literally, northern plain. The vast alpine desert of western, or upper Tibet. The least populated part of Tibet, home to a widely dispersed number of *drogpa* nomads and their yak herds, as explained in a case study following the Nomads and Grasslands chapter. Home to remaining herds of *chiru*, the Tibetan antelope, wild yaks and other endangered species which need large territories for seasonal migration. Declared a protected area in the 1990s, but with few resources to ensure protection. The railway to Lhasa cuts through the eastern edge of Jhangthang. Usually spelled Chang Tang in English.

Kham: Tib: one of the three provinces of Tibet, in the rugged and well-watered east of the Tibetan Plateau. Today, Kham is fractured administratively into four Chinese provinces- the Kandze (Ch: Ganzi) prefecture of Sichuan, the Chamdo prefecture of “Tibet Autonomous Region”, the Dechen (Ch: Shangri-la) prefecture of Yunnan, and the Jyekundo (Ch: Yushu) prefecture of Qinghai.

Pastoral nomadism: Mobile seasonal care of herds of yaks, horses, sheep and goats. Mobility ensures both productivity and sustainability by taking herds to pasture as it becomes seasonally available, withdrawing herds well before the hardy grasses, forbs and sedges of the great grasslands reach the end of the short growing season and remain barely alive, their biomass largely below the surface, during the long hard Tibetan winters. Pastoral nomadism, sometimes also called transhumance, is a skilful adaptation to the vastness of the grassland, and its fragility due to the extreme climate.

Payment for Environmental Services: Certain areas provide environmental services to others, who may be far distant, by maintaining a clean environment, pure and steady water supply, carbon capture and weather cycles essential to agriculture. These services are disrupted by development, especially by productivist intensification. The entire Tibetan Plateau provides a wide range of environmental services to most of Asia, including Asia’s major rivers and the Asian monsoon, which is drawn inland by the plateau. Payment for Environmental Services (PES) provides a mechanism linking downstream beneficiaries with upstream providers, compensating Tibetans for the opportunity cost of foregoing development, for the sake of others.

Primary, secondary, tertiary sectors: Division of economic activity into three groups. Primary industry is agriculture and some basic processing of rural products e.g. hand spinning of wool. Secondary industry is mining, manufacturing and the transformation of primary products into finished goods. Tertiary sector is the wide range of services, including banking, health and education, human services, wholesale and retail trading, real estate, and administration.

Productivism: An ideology which seeks ever-increasing material production from both land and people. Productivism defines human happiness narrowly as material production, using resources intensively with little concern for long term environmental or social consequences.

Rukor or repkor: Tib: literally tent-circle. The customary community-based organisation of *drogpa* nomads, to manage herds together, by pooling several households and their animals. The *rukor* is a decision-making body to manage risks, minimise labour needed in the busy growing season, and accept responsibility for sustaining pasture over the

long term. *Repkor* is Amdowa pronunciation, *rukor* the pronunciation of central Tibet.

Shingpa: Tib: Tibetan farmers, concentrated in valleys below the upland meadows, growing barley and other crops, often for exchange with the animal products of the drogpa.

Shoutian or Shuotian: A new Chinese word for a massive system of dams and canals capturing all the major rivers of Tibet, for diversion to the Yellow River, in such quantities that water from Tibet would reach Tianjin, the port city beyond Beijing. *Shou* is the first dam, intercepting the Yarlung Tsangpo river, at Shoumatan, and *tian* is for Tianjin. China's central leaders are considering whether to finance this project.

"Tibet Autonomous Region" or TAR: China's translation of *Xizang zizhiqu*. TAR is largely the same area as U-Tsang, one of the three provinces of Tibet. The term is used in parentheses because it is only half the area and less than half the population of Tibet, and is not genuinely autonomous. Outside of TAR China classifies around 75 counties as Tibetan areas of "autonomous" governance, usually in Tibetan "Autonomous" Prefectures, or *Zangzu zizhizhou*.

Tuimu huancao: Ch: literally "retiring pasture to restore grassland." A current Chinese policy of compulsory grazing bans, destocking and exclusion of nomads from lands leased to them.

U-Tsang: Tib: One of the three provinces of Tibet, in the south of the Tibetan Plateau, which today comprises most of the "Tibet Autonomous Region." The western or upper part is alpine desert, too cold and dry to sustain much life, but historically upper Tibet and its Jhangthang are where Tibetan civilisation originated in times of more benign climate. Central U-Tsang is the grainbelt of Tibet, with Lhasa at its centre.

Work Forum: A high level meeting convened by the Chinese Communist Party of all relevant Party offices, ministries and departments involved in a specific issue, to make a co-ordinated policy so as to strongly advance the achievement of official goals.

Xibu da kaifa: Ch: literally "Open up the Great West" or "Exploit the Great West". More often translated into English as "Great Western Development" or "Go West". A Chinese policy announced in 1999 to accelerate development in the western half of China, in an attempt to narrow widening inequality, and alleviate widespread poverty.



“The world grows smaller and smaller, more and more interdependent.....today more than ever before life must be characterized by a sense of Universal Responsibility, not only nation to nation and human to human, but also human to other forms of life.”

His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama