I. INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the significance of the Chinese ‘xiejia’ system for Tibetan nomadic trade in Amdo and specifically in sTong ‘khor during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Amdo xiejia—literally: ‘house of repose, hostel,’ but also ‘innkeeper’—provided food and lodging and also served a variety of functions in trade relations between nomadic traders and such counterparts as wool merchants from Inland China and foreign trading companies. Furthermore, the xiejia were obliged to fulfill several semi-official tasks such as assisting in the control of trade and serving as interpreters or mediators in conflicts, first in the interest of the Qing (1644–1911) administration and after 1911 in the interest of the local warlords.

Pastoral societies are not self-sufficient entities living in closed economies. Nomads interact through direct trade and barter with both agricultural and urban societies and also mediate and participate in the trade between sedentary societies in the form of transport and middlemen. In the case of Tibet in general and Amdo specifically the most essential economic exchange traditionally consisted of bartering.
wool, salt and horses obtained from the nomads, for grain and tea obtained from the sedentary societies. In addition luxury items such as hides, musk, rhubarb and other medicinal herbs were exchanged for flour, sugar, tobacco, paper, leather, saddles and harness, boots, felt hats, silk and cotton, iron pots, articles of hardware, swords, fire-arms, gold dust and precious stones. Trade was often carried out on the spot whenever the opportunity arose, or nomads traveled to markets near and far which were held regularly and during special occasions in villages, at fairs and at monastic centers. Tibetan pastoralists also frequently combined pilgrimage with trade. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the most important permanent markets in Amdo were located in Zi ling/ Xining, in Len ju/ Lanzhou and in sTong ‘khor/ Dan’gaer (modern Huangyuan 涝源), the latter a small walled town about 50 km west of Xining. Conveniently situated on a nexus of major trading routes in the Sino-Tibetan borderland, sTong ‘khor was also the seat of one of the Dalai Lama’s commercial agents, the tsong spyi. Apart from sTong ‘khor, the market towns of bSang chu/ Xiahe 夏河 and Ru shar/ Lushaer 鲁沙尔 near the two large monastic centers of Labrang and Kumbum, respectively, were busy market places, especially when major religious festivals drew large crowds of pilgrims. In addition, nomadic trading activities were carried out on a smaller scale in many other villages, big and small, in the Sino-Tibetan border area. For example, Tibetan nomads whose pastures were situated near Tibetan farming areas, usually bartered with their

2 Apart from wool and cattle, salt also constituted a major nomadic trading good in Amdo and beyond. The well-known Qinghai salt traded in inland China and Kham, mainly came from the Chaka 茶卡 Lake near Dulan 都兰. This salt trade was under Mongol control from the end of the Ming 明 Dynasty to 1724 when the Qing Dynasty established a salt office. The salt administration obviously was mostly nominal and ceased to function altogether after 1742 until it was re-established in 1907/08. Salt remained a major trading good well into the 1940s. See Yang 1746:436–437, Zhou 1970:197–199, Zhou 2000:20–21, Li 2003b:40–42, Mian 2007:28–30, van Spengen 1995:23, Rockhill 1891:112 and Qinghai lishi jiyao 1987:253. Grenard claims that in 1894 the Golok (Tib. mGo log) nomads also traded salt from the Ngoring Nor (Tib. mTsho Ngo ring) and Kyaring Nor (Tib. mTsho Skya ring) on which they held a monopoly. This is also confirmed by a 1921 source. See Grenard 1904:196 and Anonymous 1921:516.

3 Amdo horses, especially those from the Kokonor and Liangzhou 凉州 area/ modern Wuwei 武威, were especially renowned in Tibet and China. For more information on the traditional horse and tea trade see below.

4 Tea for the Amdo markets in sTong ‘khor/ modern Huangyuan 涝源 and Xining 西宁 usually arrived via Songpan 松潘, located on the Amdo - Kham border; see van Spengen 1995:26–27 and Rockhill 1891:112.


7 Tib. Bla brang bkra shis ’khyil/ Chin. Labulengsi 拉卜楞寺.

8 Tib. sKu ’bum byams pa gling/ Chin. Taersi 塔尔寺.
sedentary Tibetan neighbors. Furthermore, Muslim Hui and Salar as well as Han Chinese merchants from the sedentary areas in Amdo traveled directly to the nomad camps to trade. In 18th/19th century Chinese sources these traders are referred to as yang ke 羊客, i.e., ‘itinerant sheep traders’, presumably because they originally traded their merchandise for sheep and goats (Chin. yang 羊). Local Amdo products such as wool, felts, salt and medicinal plants were in demand in China as well and also attracted traders from outside of Qinghai and Gansu. Most prominent among the out of province-traders were those from Shanxi 山西 and Shaanxi 陕西 provinces. They often had ties to big trading houses in their home provinces and were well organized in societies such as the Shanshaan huiguan 山陕会馆. They thus had the funds, connections and experience for long distance trade from Amdo into central China and beyond. The Shanshaan traders as they were called, usually had their main base in Xining and dependencies at all the major trading markets in Gansu and Qinghai.

Traditionally, in Amdo and elsewhere in Tibet, important trading relations were also formed between Tibetan monasteries, i.e., monks and incarnate Lamas, on the one hand and Muslim and Chinese traders on the other. For example, Buddhist pilgrims donated livestock, salt, precious stones, medicinal plants, etc. to monasteries, which were partly traded on by the Buddhist clergy to markets in Gansu and Sichuan. The monasteries also offered storage facilities for traders and some references suggest that monks were involved in the trade of grain and even in the forbidden but profitable arms’ trade. Thus, monasteries not only served as convenient locations for

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9 See Ekvall 1939:73–74, 80–81.
10 The about 10 million Hui presently living in China are supposed to descend from Arabian and Persian merchants who came to Chinese seaports to trade already in the 7th century and eventually founded new families with Chinese wives. Due to the considerable admixture of Chinese blood, these Muslim merchants assimilated linguistically and culturally to their new Chinese homeland with the exception of their religious beliefs. However, only from the early Ming Dynasty did the Hui start to form Muslim communities near mosques. Their commitment to Islam became and has remained the main common marker of the so-called Hui minority while culturally and linguistically they are as diverse as the local Chinese communities in which they live (Gladney 1996:26–36).
11 The Salar are a Turkic speaking Muslim minority numbering about 100,000 people. They live mostly in the Qinghai-Gansu border region on both sides of the Yellow River, namely in Xunhua Salar Autonomous County 循化撒拉族自治县 and Hualong Hui Autonomous County 化隆回族自治县 of Qinghai and the adjacent Jishishan Baovan, Dongxiang and Salar Autonomous County 积石山保安东乡撒拉族自治县 of Gansu.
12 Apart from the traveling merchants who were generally designated as ke shang 客商 in Chinese, 18th century Gansu and Qinghai itinerant traders called yang ke 羊客 appear to have had trade relations mainly with the then economically and politically dominant Mongol tribes of Amdo and less with the Tibetans; see La 2009:173, Qinghai tongshi 1999:388 and Hexi kaifa shi yanjiu 1996:421. According to one source, these itinerant traders were later, i.e., in the early 20th century, designated as zang ke 藏客; see Pu Yi 1981:40.
trading activities of third parties but also monks, both low and high ranking, were
involved in trading transactions; some privately, others in the interest of the
monastery.\footnote{For more general information see, for example, van Spengen 1995:45–46 and Qinghai tongshi 1999:388–389. For specific examples concerning Amdo monasteries such as Kumbum, Labrang, Rong bong, gSer khog, etc. see, for example, Filchner 1906:10, 19–23, 68, Grenard 1904:200, Schram 2006:346–351 and Nayancheng 1853:4/40, 42–43.}

Furthermore, Chinese and Muslim petty traders, the so-called \textit{diaolangzi}—literally: ‘cunning foxes’—came in regular contact with Tibetan nomads at the various market places in Amdo. They offered everyday use items such as boots, knives, pots, etc. The \textit{diaolangzi} were notorious for cheating their customers and specifically the pastoralists, who were often unaware of market prices.\footnote{See Pu/ Yi 1981:40–41 and Yuan 2007:37. The latter writes \textit{diaolangzi} with 吊 rather than 刁.} Suzy Rijnhart, a missionary who lived in sTong ‘khor in 1896, reported:

\begin{quote}
“Without the western gate, every day are to be found Chinese merchants squatted for some distance along both sides of the road, with their small stock of goods spread underneath an awning – thread, beads, bread and other things. These petty merchants are patronized by the poorer classes of people whom they fleece in every way possible. In this respect they are especially severe on the Tibetans.”\footnote{See Rijnhart 1901:134. The \textit{diaolangzi} were also present in sTong ‘khor during the mid-19th century when the Fathers Huc and Gabet visited and became their victims; see ibid. 1987/2:17. Similar descriptions for the early 20th century and the late 1930s are found in Fergusson 1911:9 and Haack 1940:12.}
\end{quote}

Within this general frame of Tibetan trade the \textit{xiejia} institution only constitutes a specific example of former Tibetan-Muslim and Tibetan-Chinese economic relations on the Sino-Tibetan border. It does, nevertheless, deserve more scholarly attention since during the 19th/early 20th centuries the \textit{xiejia} was of special relevance for Amdo Tibetan nomads and for shaping socio-economic relations among ethnic groups in Qinghai and Gansu at a time of frequent interethnic conflicts. Although the \textit{xiejia} system in Amdo is occasionally mentioned in 19th and early 20th century missionary reports and western travelogues, much written material is available in Chinese gazetteers, official documents and travelogues. In contrast, written Tibetan material has not yet come to my attention.\footnote{Unfortunately, I had no opportunity to conduct interviews with senior Tibetans in Amdo who might still be able to contribute oral accounts on this topic.} A number of illuminating, article-length studies on the \textit{xiejia} system have been published by Chinese researchers.\footnote{See, for example, Hu/ Huo 2006, Hu 2007a and 2007b, Li/ Wei 2004, Ma 2007, Ma/ He 1994, Pu/ Yi 1981, Wang 1987 and Xu 2006. Mian 2005b must be used with caution because some of his references and quotations are misleading or mistaken; see, for example, p. 236 fn. 2 and p. 237 fn. 3. In the first instance, I could not locate the quotation in chap. 10 of the \textit{Xiningfu xuzhi}}
certain aspects of the xiejia institution during certain time periods and do not cover its development from its earliest to its last occurrence, which this article endeavors to do.

II. THE XIEJIA INSTITUTION AND ITS ADVENT IN AMDO

As mentioned above, xiejia literally means ‘house of repose, hostel’ and also designates the ‘innkeeper, owner.’ For central China the xiejia (or xiedian 客店) are first mentioned in 15th century Chinese sources simply meaning ‘guesthouses,’ kedian 客店. During the second half of the 16th century the xiejia in central China had changed from pure inns providing food and lodging for travelers and traders into institutions serving a variety of semi-official functions in local trade relations, tax collection and even in legal affairs. These were the so-called guan xiejia 官歇家, i.e., officially acknowledged xiejia in contrast to the si xiejia 私歇家, i.e., ‘private’ or ‘illegal’ xiejia.19 Whereas the former were usually found at the prefectural or sub-prefectural seats of local officials, the latter were mostly situated in the vicinity of minor trading routes in remoter places to evade official control and duties.20 While this system was slowly abandoned in central China during the 18th century, it gradually gained more relevance along the Sino-Tibetan border in Amdo when the xiejia inherited certain duties of the former tea and horse trading administration (cha ma si 茶马司) such as keeping registers of traders and trading transactions. The cha ma si administration had been in place since the 11th century in order to regulate border trade, specifically the trade of Tibetan horses for Chinese tea. The longstanding policy of fixed exchange rates for Tibetan horses and Chinese tea was officially abandoned in 1735 and thereafter, the cha ma si administration was gradually dissolved.21 Although xiejia are occasionally mentioned for some Chinese border provinces by the mid-18th century,22 repeated references to the xiejia in Amdo begin to appear only in 1822 when Nayancheng,23 the Manchu Qing governor-general of Shaanxi and Gansu,

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22 See, for example, Qing Gaozong Chun Huangdi shilu 135/1248, 138/1272, 257/2410, 376/3730.
23 Nayancheng was repeatedly appointed as Governor-General of Shaanxi and Gansu, i.e., Shaan Gan zongdu 陕甘总督, and as Grand Minister Superintendent of Qinghai, i.e., Zongli Qinghai shiwu dachen 总理青海事务大臣, namely in 1804, 1809 and 1822. The latter office was also
considered certain trading activities of the *xiejia* and of the itinerant traders, the *yangke*, to be illegal. He then introduced new measures for more efficient control of the Sino-Tibetan border trade and, simultaneously, of the Mongol and Tibetan border tribes. Before and during Nayancheng’s appointment as governor and *amban*, Tibetan nomads from south of the Yellow River repeatedly pushed north towards Lake Kokonor in search of better pastures and thereby displaced some of the local Mongol tribes. Since this led to frequent armed conflicts, Nayancheng tried to put pressure on the tribes by regulating the trade relations vital to both the Mongols and the Tibetans. Furthermore, he suspected the *yangke* of selling weapons, gunpowder and bullets to these nomadic adversaries. Nayancheng thus instituted strict regulations on the *yangke* prohibiting travel to nomad camps and only permitting trade at three fixed market places, i.e., in sTong ‘khor/ Dan’gaer, gSer khog/ Datong and Khri kha/ Guide. Furthermore, the *yang ke* were obliged to apply for official permission to trade and were required to state exactly when, where and how much they wanted to trade. Han and Hui merchants who disregarded these regulations, the so-called ‘traitors’ (*jian min* 奸民 or *han jian* 汉奸), faced severe punishment. Also some of the *xiejia puhu* 歇家铺户, i.e., inns with attached shops, in Guide and Xunhua who privately sold grain and tea to the nomads, fell into this category.²⁴ These events, however, indicate that the *xiejia* institution must have been firmly in place in A mdo before 1822.²⁵

In A mdo the *xiejia* were usually run by Muslims or by Han Chinese from Gansu, Shaanxi or Shanxi provinces who exclusively served Tibetan, Mongol or Monguor²⁶ customers and who possessed the necessary language skills for communication.²⁷

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²⁵ Some indirect evidence for the existence of the *xiejia* in 18th century A mdo is provided by the Catholic missionary Maoletti (1669–1725) in a description of Toba, i.e., Duoba 多巴/ 多坝, situated half way between Xining and sTong ‘khor. In this account Toba is mentioned as a cosmopolitan trading place for Mongols, Tibetans, Indians, Persians, Turks, Armenians and Muscovites while another 17th/18th century source referred to the many guesthouses in Duoba being run by Hui from Xining as well as by Tibetans. It seems quite likely that these guesthouses were in fact *xiejia*. See Szceześniak 1959:312, Mian 2005a:56 and Hu 2007a:103.

²⁶ The Monguor are speakers of Mongolic languages in Qinghai and Gansu who have been officially classified as Tu 土 or Tuzu 土族 such as the Tongren Tu 同仁土, the Huzhu Tu 互助土 and the Minhe Tu 民和土. Monguor speak mutually unintelligible dialects/ languages, dress differently and have acculturated differently according to the respective dominant ethnic groups in their neighborhood. The main common denominator seems to be their adherence to Tibetan Buddhism while other speakers of Mongolic languages who are Muslims such as the Dongxiang and the Baoan, are classified under specific ethnonyms. See Fried 2009 and Fried 2010.

²⁷ The *xiejia* system in A mdo was also in place for local Mongols and for some time also for the Monguor. They are, however, not treated in this paper.
Thus Han Chinese traders and travelers had their own inns—which were not designated as xiejia—in which Tibetans, Mongols and Monguor were not allowed to stay. Providing food and lodging free of charge, the xiejia owners made a profit by serving as middlemen in trade transactions between Tibetan nomads and traders from Inland China and later also from abroad. They charged a commission which constituted a certain percentage of the traded goods. Furthermore, the xiejia also offered other trade related services such as storage, transport of goods and loan giving. While in the early and mid-19th century the Tibetan tribes had fixed xiejia at which they were obliged to stay, the system became more flexible towards the late 19th century. By 1904, for example, Tibetans could choose freely from among a number of xiejia at the important border market of sTong ‘khor. However, they were still not allowed to stay at hostels for Chinese merchants or travelers.

One of the earliest and most detailed accounts by foreigners on the xiejia is provided by the two Lazariste Fathers Huc and Gabet who traveled in Amdo in 1845:

“It is the custom, we may say the rule, at Si-Ning-Fou [Zi ling/ Xining], not to receive strangers, such as the Tartars, Thibetians, and others, into the inns, but to relegate them to establishments called Houses of Repose (Sie-Kia), into which no other travelers are admitted. We proceeded accordingly to one of the Houses of Repose, where we were exceedingly well entertained. The Sie-Kia differ from other inns in this important particular, that the guests are boarded, lodged, and served there gratuitously. Commerce being the leading object of travelers hither, the chiefs of the Sie-Kia indemnify themselves for their outlay by a recognized percentage upon all the goods which the guests buy or sell. The persons who keep these Houses of Repose have first to procure a license from the authorities of the town, for which they pay a certain sum, greater or less, according to the character of the commercial men who are expected to frequent the house.”

Apart from paying taxes and buying official permissions to run a xiejia (varying from 60 to 100 liang/ Taels in 1905), the xiejia were assigned other administrative duties. For example, they were required to report to the border officials and to keep registers

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28 Millward 1989:9 mentions a commission of 2 percent, but he does not provide sources.
29 For a general account of the xiejia see Pu/ Yi 1981:37–40 and Xu 1983:76–77. For the existence of fixed xiejia in 1823 see Nayancheng 1853:4/41 and Huc/ Gabet 1987/2:17 for 1845. For the changed situation in 1904 see Tafel 1914/1:180. Kozlov wrote in 1908: “As born merchants the Chinese can easily adjust to the needs of their clients. Each firm has its own set of clients: Mongols, Tanguts or Tibetans, who are generously hosted by the merchants during their stay in Xining;” see Koslow [Kozlov] 1955:192. (My translation from German.)
about their customers and the trade transactions concluded at their hostels. Furthermore, they had to serve as interpreters and mediators in conflicts between Tibetan tribes and the local Chinese government. The xiejia were also held responsible by the Qing officials for the conduct of their customers while in sTong ‘khor and in the other official market places in Amdo. Furthermore, the Tibetan tribes who regularly came to the markets, had to redeem officially reported misdeeds of any of their tribal members, including the disobedience of whole tribes. Tafel, for example, mentions that the Qing amban in Zi ling/ Xining had excluded the Golok (mGo log) tribes from trading in sTong ‘khor as punishment for a Golok raid on Przhevalsky’s expedition in 1884. Although the Hormuka (Hor skor?) sub-tribe of the Goloks had repeatedly offered to officially submit to the amban in order to regain market access in sTong ‘khor, their submission was rejected. Had any xiejia in sTong ‘khor hosted a trading caravan of the Golok tribes in spite of the official prohibition, they would have been heavily fined and their inns closed.

One source claims that the xiejia also had to make arrangements for the transport animals of Qing officials while traveling in Qinghai, and on request the xiejia also issued letters of introduction or protection to traders or other travelers who intended to travel to or through the territory of the Tibetan tribes associated with a specific xiejia.

As already indicated, the xiejia institution in Amdo was not static, but its role developed and changed over time. Several accounts from the late 19th/ early 20th centuries describe the xiejia not so much as hostel owners but as merchants and brokers or as itinerant traders such as the former yangke. For example, while the gazetteer Dan’gaer tingzhi—published in 1910—treats the xiejia primarily as inn owners/ brokers, the Qing bai lei chao—printed in 1917—treats the xiejia as combined inn owners/ brokers and as itinerant traders. By the 1930s, however, the term xiejia was apparently used almost exclusively in the sense of ‘itinerant trader’. It thus

31 See Tafel 1914/1:180, 184, Zhou 2000:20 and fn. 20.
32 For examples see Tafel 1914/1:180-181, 184, ibid. 1914/2:72–73 and Rockhill 1891:51.
35 These changes in the mode of doing business of the xiejia need further exploration. It appears at first glance that Muslim itinerant trading activities especially intensified after the resettlement of many Gansu- and Shaanxi-Muslims in the aftermaths of the two so-called Muslim rebellions of 1862–1873 and 1895/96. The resettlement into remote, barren areas in Gansu and Qinghai forced many Muslim farmers to take up sideline occupations in order to feed their families. Thus, many Muslim families increasingly specialized on itinerant trade and other professions.
37 See Zhou Zhenhe who traveled in Qinghai in the early 1930s; ibid. 1970:204–205. Also in Lipman’s account of the xiejia—where he translates xiejia as ‘lodgers’—he refers to itinerant
appears that during a transitional period at the end of the 19th/ beginning of the 20th century the xiejia still existed both in the traditional way described above and in the form of brokers and merchants who had already stopped keeping hostels. The great political and economic changes of the 1920s such as the growing monopolization of trade in Qinghai by the warlord clan of Ma Qi 马麒 and the decline of the international wool trade, meant that the xiejia institution became superfluous and thus gradually disappeared without ever having been officially dissolved.

Despite its historic relevance for the Amdo Tibetan nomads, a specific Tibetan term for xiejia is difficult to recover due to the lack of written Tibetan sources on this topic. It seems possible that the general Tibetan term gnas tshang (‘inn, place to stay’) or ten khang (Tib. ten being the phonetic transcription of Chin. dian 店) might have been used for the xiejia in the sense of ‘hostel,’ or the terms tsong dpon or mkhar dpon in the sense of ‘middleman, broker.’ Zhou Zhenhe stated that the Tibetan term for xiejia was ‘kewa 客哇’ which may be the Chinese phonetic transcription for a variety of Tibetan terms as, for example, khe pa, ‘vendor.’ It should be noted that Zhou obviously referred to the itinerant traders of the 1930s and not to the hostel keepers. Related to itinerant Muslim traders of the 1930s, Ekvall provides the term ‘wa-ka’ literally meaning ‘kettle’ and denoting the members of a caravan unit who shared the same campfire. Wa-ka is thus equated to the Chinese guozi 锅子, ‘pot, kettle’, which, in turn, is a term borrowed from Tibetan for this specific context.

Fesmire, a Protestant missionary who lived on the Gansu-Tibetan border in the 1920s/30s, provides another presumably Tibetan term, namely ‘sang sa’. This seems
to be another phonetic spelling. The correct Tibetan form might be zangs sa, ‘place of/ for the copper pot?’ and thus seems to accord with the Chinese term guozi.\textsuperscript{44}

Institutions similar to the xiejia and the yangke also existed in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces in the border region of Khams. In Sichuan, for example, we find the Chinese designation guozhuang (a variation of guozi) for itinerant traders in nomad areas and, for those who originated from Shaanxi province, the term laoshaan.\textsuperscript{45} In Yunnan, the institution similar to the xiejia seems to have been called madian.\textsuperscript{46} In these cases I am unaware of the Tibetan equivalents. Apparently, there existed various Tibetan terms for the Chinese xiejia, and these also differed locally.

III. Locations of Xiejia in A mdo

As mentioned above, references to xiejia in A mdo are mainly found in Chinese sources starting from 1822, first in connection with the reforms initiated by the governor-general Nayancheng and later in general accounts on trade in Qinghai and Gansu. According to Nayancheng’s reports to the throne from 1822 and 1823, xiejia were established in the major market places of Zi ling/ Xining, sTong ‘khor/ Dan’gaer/ modern Huangyuan, rDo sbis/ Xunhua, Khri kha/ Guide, gSer khog/ Datong and Bayan mkhar/ Bayanrong/ modern Hualong.\textsuperscript{47} For example, in 1823 eighteen officially registered xiejia, so-called guan xiejia, catered to the Mongols in Xining, twenty-one to the Tibetans and four to the Monguors/ Tu min.\textsuperscript{48} In contrast, gSer khog had only a few xiejia for the Mongols and none for Tibetans.\textsuperscript{49} In the area of Bayan mkhar, rDo sbis and Khri kha there were only about eight guan xiejia in 1823, but many private, unregistered xiejia.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{44} See Fesmire 1922:3.
\textsuperscript{45} For guozhuang see Millward 1989:31 fn. 8. A laoshaan is described by Teichman as follows: “He turned out not to be a Tibetan at all, but a Lao Shan… These hardy and courageous traders have been established in this valley [i.e., Tzako Valley in Khams] … for many years for the purpose of tapping the trade of the grass-country nomads… They are completely Tibetanised in dress and customs, and the second and third generation appear to become Tibetans altogether. The Lao Shan are to be found all over the Szechuan-Tibet frontier… They have their counterpart on the Kansu border in the Hsieh Chia, the Mahomedan middlemen who monopolise the Kokonor trade in a similar way.” See Teichman 1922:76–77, 86, 96.
\textsuperscript{46} Personal communication from a Chinese scholar.
\textsuperscript{47} See Qing Xuanzong Cheng Huangdi shilu 412/471 and Nayancheng 1853:4/41.
\textsuperscript{48} See Nayancheng 1853:4/41. Two decades later, in 1845, Huc and Gabet mentioned numerous xiejia in Xining. Since they pretended to be Mongols, they stayed in a xiejia for Mongols; see Huc/ Gabet 1987:386–387.
\textsuperscript{49} See Nayancheng 1853:4/41–43.
\textsuperscript{50} See Nayancheng 1853:4/39–40. For late 19\textsuperscript{th} / early 20\textsuperscript{th} century xiejia in Khri kha/ Guide and Xunhua see also Gu/ Lu 1934:259–260 and Rockhill 1894:89, 93–94.
Fig. 1: Important Trading Centers in 19th/ Early 20th Century Northeast A mdo (map draft: B. Horlemann, map maker: A. Gruschke)

Hostels run by Muslims are also frequently mentioned in market places near monastic centers such as bSang chu/ Xiahe near Labrang Monastery\(^{51}\) and Ru shar/ Lushaer 魯沙尔 near Kumbum Monastery\(^{52}\) as well as in Gan lho/ Heicuo 黑错/ modern Hezuo 合作 and in border towns such as Old Taozho 洮州/ modern Lintan 临潭 and Hezhou 河州/ modern Linxia 临夏, but there are no indications that they were xiejia in the sense described above. They were likely normal inns open to all travelers.

\(^{51}\) David-Neel mentioned a multi-functional Muslim inn in Sasoma (near Labrang) in 1920 with a shop for Tibetans which also provided loans. However, she did not call it a xiejia; see David-Neel 1933:52. Muslim inns are also frequently mentioned for bSang chu/ Xiahe, but they are not called xiejia either. Apparently, in bSang chu/ Xiahe those who served as brokers or middlemen in the wool trade, were also not called xiejia but ‘zhuangke’; see Dang/ Chen 1987:51–52.

\(^{52}\) For the strong presence of Muslims and Muslim traders in Ru shar/ Lushaer see Ma 2004:139 and Filchner 1906:21–23. Schram 1912:2 mentioned the construction of a new inn in Lou sa, i.e., Ru shar/ Lushaer, built exclusively for Tibetans, but he did not refer to it as a xiejia.
IV. THE XIEJIA OF sTONG ‘Khor/ DAN’GAER

In order to obtain a more detailed picture of the xiejia’s relevance for nomadic trade in A mdo, sTong ‘khor is examined more closely. As mentioned above, this important market place in the Sino-Tibetan borderland was situated about 50 km west of Xining (see map) at an altitude of 2,680 m. From sTong ‘khor major trading routes branched off to Yul shul/ Yushu and Lha sa, Tsaidam, the Gansu Corridor and via Xining and Lanzhou to inland China. sTong ‘khor was also connected to Khri kha/ Guide, Labrang and Kumbum through minor trading routes. Given its convenient location and its fame as a market place it is not surprising that sTong ‘khor is frequently mentioned by foreign explorers and travelers such as Huc and Gabet, Przhevalsky, Kozlov, Grenard, Kreitner, Hedin, Rockhill, Tafel, Filchner, Teichman, Pereira and others who all stopped in sTong ‘khor, usually in order to buy provisions and to make preparations for expeditions to central Tibet. They refer to sTong ‘khor by a great variety of names such as Donkyr/ Tonkyr, Tonkerr, Dankar/ Tankar, Tenkar, Tanko, Tang-Keou-Eul, etc. Also a number of Christian missionaries visited or lived in sTong ‘khor such as the Polhills, the Rijnharts, the Urechs and the Plymires. Several Chinese travelers, anthropologists and Guomindang/ Kuomintang officials have also left reports about sTong ‘khor.

In the aftermath of the anti-Qing rebellion of the A mdo Mongol aristocrat Lobsang Tenzin in 1723/24, sTong ‘khor received the official status as a border market by the Qing Dynasty in 1727 and thus began replacing neighboring Duoba 多巴 which, at least since the late 17th/ early 18th centuries, had been a key regional market for the much sought after Qinghai salt. By 1742, sTong ‘khor appears to have become the major entrepôt for the Qinghai salt trade which apparently continued to be dominated by Mongols until at least the early 19th century. A Qing official was placed in sTong ‘khor in 1744 to control the market fairs that had been held annually in the second and eighth lunar months and later more often until, in the mid-18th century, restrictions were lifted altogether. Presumably, the establishment of the first xiejia in sTong ‘khor took place at about the same time or shortly thereafter and thus already long before 1822 when, to my knowledge, xiejia are for the first time explicitly mentioned.

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54 See, for example, Marston 1905:111, Rijnhart 1901:133–169, Plymire 1959 and Urech 1934.
55 See, for example, Chen 1936, Fan 1936, Gu/ Lu 1934, Ma 1936, Shao/ Gao 1936 and Zhou 1970.
57 For Duoba see also fn. 25.
58 For the salt trade and the salt monopoly in Qinghai see fn. 2 as well as Yang 1982:436–437, Mian 2007:28–30, Qing Shizong Xian Huangdi shilu 32/311 and Qing Renzong Rui Huangdi shilu 74/642, 113/1037, 115/1055.
in connection with sTong ‘khor.\textsuperscript{60} sTong ‘khor became the seat of a Qing dynasty sub-prefect/\textit{ting} in 1829. The latter event was probably connected to the continuing decline of Mongol power in A mdo and the successive return of Tibetan nomad tribes to the pastures north of the rMa chu/ Huanghe and south of the mTsho sngon po/ Qinghai Lake which had led to frequent conflicts and unrest among the Mongol and Tibetan tribes starting from the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{61} During the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the Dalai Lama’s ‘tribute missions’ from Lhasa to Beijing, which were in fact official trading caravans, usually passed through sTong ‘khor enroute to the Chinese capital. At least since 1894 the Dalai Lama had placed one of his commercial agents, the\textit{tsong spyi}, in sTong ‘khor to oversee this official caravan trade.\textsuperscript{62} With regard to the overall importance for Tibetan long distance trade sTong ‘khor competed with Kangding 康定/ Daqianlu in Khams/ now Sichuan and Lijiang 丽江 in Yunnan where the other two\textit{tsong spyi} of the Dalai Lama on the Sino-Tibetan frontier were settled.\textsuperscript{63} While Kangding was the major market for the tea-wool trade in Khams and beyond, sTong ‘khor was the main trading place for A mdo wool.\textsuperscript{64} Rockhill estimated the Tibetan trade turnover for sTong ‘khor in 1889 to be about 150,000\textit{liang}/ Taels while Grenard thought it was about 40,000 British Pounds (=? Taels) in 1894 and Tafel about 400,000\textit{liang}/ Taels (about 1.3 million Reichsmark) in 1905/06.\textsuperscript{65}

It seems that sTong ‘khor was a busy market place for the greater part of the mid-18\textsuperscript{th} to the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} centuries despite Mongol-Tibetan tensions in the early to mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{66} and the series of Muslim uprisings in Gansu and Qinghai from 1862 to 1872/73 and again in 1895/96.\textsuperscript{67} As a consequence of Muslim uprisings between

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{60} \textit{Han} 汉, i.e., Chinese, and \textit{Fan} 番, i.e., non-Chinese, traders in sTong ‘khor are already explicitly mentioned in 1742, but not as \textit{xiejia}; see Yang 1982:436–437.
  \item \textsuperscript{61} See Ma 2004:139, Mian 2005a:56 and ibid. 2007:29.
  \item \textsuperscript{62} In about 1823, the annual ‘tribute’ mission of the Dalai Lama was guided by the\textit{Kanbu lama} 堪布喇嘛 through sTong ‘khor/ Dan’gaer and on that occasion the\textit{xiejia} were to report on the latter. This implies that the Dalai Lama did not have a\textit{tsong spyi} in sTong ‘khor yet; see Qing Xuanzong Cheng Huangdi shilu 50/560.
  \item \textsuperscript{63} See Rockhill 1891:110 and Grenard 1904:287.
  \item \textsuperscript{64} See van Spengen 1995:25 and Grenard 1904:292–93.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} See Rockhill 1891:111, Grenard 1904:293 and Tafel 1914/1:178 fn. 1. Included in Tafel’s estimate is the trade turnover of the Dalai Lama’s trade caravans which amounted to about 100,000 Taels. In principle, one\textit{liang} was equivalent to one ounce of silver, or to one Chinese Tael as it was called in English. However, the actual weight of one silver ounce in northwest China was not necessarily equal to one silver ounce in central China. Currency instability and its local variations posed significant problems for merchants and travelers.
  \item \textsuperscript{66} For the Mongol-Tibetan conflicts see, for example, Huangnan zangzu zizhizhou zhi 1999:1355, Qinghai sheng zhi 2, 2001:108, Qinghai jianshi 1992:169 and Wu 1995. For sTong ‘khor’s continuing importance as a market place, see, for example, the account of Huc and Gabet who claimed that in 1845 sTong ‘khor played a much more important role in commerce than Xining. See Huc/ Gabet 1987/I:386.
  \item \textsuperscript{67} Interestingly, between 1862 and 1875 sTong ‘khor was the sole place for newly submitted Tibetan tribes to receive the official trade coupons; thus trade might not have declined as much
1862 and 1873 some commerce had been diverted from sTong ‘khor to Songpan 松潘 and other places. By the 1880s, however, sTong ‘khor had obviously regained its former position as the major market in Qinghai. In the aftermath of the rebellions Muslim traders were excluded from trade in sTong ‘khor for several years and therefore there was little or no Muslim commercial participation at that time. Further disruptions followed with the anti-Qing Huangbiaohui 黄表会 Rebellion in 1910/11 led by Li Wang 李旺 and the devastating attacks against the town by the Muslim rebel troops of Ma Zhongying 马仲英 in February 1929. However, these events apparently had no long lasting effects on sTong ‘khor’s economic role in Amdo. In fact, due to the booming wool trade of the late 19th/early 20th centuries, commerce in sTong ‘khor constantly increased and a most lucrative era for the local xiejia ensued. Even after the decline of the international wool trade in the 1930s, sTong ‘khor remained an important market in Qinghai. The significance of the wool trade for sTong ‘khor will be studied in more detail in the following section.

During the 19th/20th century, sTong ‘khor had a multi-ethnic population ranging from ten to twenty thousand, composed of Han, Hui, Salar, Mongols, Tibetans and

as one would expect despite the Muslim rebellions; see *Qing Miaozong Yi Huangdi shilu* 21/375. However, Kreitner’s description of sTong ‘khor in summer 1879 as a large heap of ruins with no trade, no traffic and no Tibetan caravans from central Tibet contradicts this assumption; see Kreitner 1881:741. We should bear in mind that Kreitner’s negative impression might have been due to the fact that summer was not the main trading and caravan season, which were spring and autumn.

68 See Yang 1989:284. For example, in 1882/83 the missionary van Hecke did not include Muslims (‘*les Tartares*’ as he usually called them) among the population of sTong ‘khor, but only Chinese, Mongols, Monguor/ *Daldes* and Tibetans/ *Tangoutes*; see van Hecke 1882/83:108.

69 Li Wang 李旺, variant: Li Ming 李明, of Xichuan 西川 near Xining, founded a secret society called Huangbiaohui 黄表会 in Xining in order to topple the Qing Dynasty. The society had several thousand supporters and a center of activity was sTong ‘khor/ Dan’gaer where the salt tax bureau was destroyed by the rebels; see *Qinghai jianshi* 1992:180, *Qinghai sheng zhi* 2, 2001:116 and Li 2006:167–171.

70 Seventeen years old Ma Zhongying, the son of a cousin of Warlord Ma Qi, started a rebellion in Gansu and Qinghai in late 1928 which, he claimed, was directed against the growing dominance of the *guominjun* 国民军/ Nationalist Army faction of northern China’s Warlord Feng Yuxiang 冯玉祥 in Gansu and Qinghai. The rebellion started in Xunhua and Hezhou where it received support from the Muslim population, and then shifted towards southern Gansu. From there Ma Zhongying’s troops moved north again and, on Feb. 14th/15th, 1929 they attacked and looted Huangyuan/ Dan’gaer, allegedly killing about 2,400 of its inhabitants. After this attack on Dan’gaer, Ma Qi who had remained inactive, sent troops together with Sun Lianzhong 孙连仲—formerly army commander of the *guominjun*, then nominally governor of Qinghai since late 1927 and later governor of Gansu in 1929/30—and forced Ma Zhongying to retreat to Datong and Menyuan. See, for example, *Qinghai jianshi* 1992:207–208, *Qinghai san Ma* 1988:45, Li 2006:186–188, Li 1986:116–121 and Plymire 1929.

Tu/ Monguor and their mixed marriage descendants. About half of the inhabitants were involved in agriculture and the other half in trading and small industry.\textsuperscript{72} Apart from the major nomad trading goods such as wool, hides and salt, also furs, musk, joss-sticks, rhubarb and other medicinal herbs were bartered by Tibetan and Mongol traders. Moreover, saffron, sugar-candy, dates, shells and amber came with Tibetan trading caravans from British India. The nomads mostly wanted grain, tea, cloth and items of everyday use. Among the latter were also leather, saddles, harnesses, boots, felt hats, flour, tobacco, paper, iron pots, articles of hardware, swords and fire-arms. Accordingly, trade was carried out through many different outlets. Besides the influential Shanshaan trading houses and the commercial agents of the foreign companies there were numerous local shopkeepers and peddlers (the aforementioned diaolangzi) and the xiejia. Among the many directly involved in trade in sTong ‘khor—estimates for 1910 and 1927 mention circa 1,000 merchants—only a small fraction were xiejia. Apparently, their numbers ranged from 30 to 50.\textsuperscript{73} Ethnically the xiejia owners were mostly Han Chinese, Hui or Salar. Originally, most Han xiejia stemmed from among the Shanxi and Shaanxi traders, but they were gradually replaced by local Han and Muslim families from Gansu and Qinghai. The Muslims dominated the xiejia business during most of the 19th and 20th centuries except for the years during and immediately after the Muslim uprisings of 1862–1873 and 1895/96 when the Muslim population was much diminished in numbers and the remaining Muslim families banned from residing in sTong ‘khor.\textsuperscript{74}

In general Gansu and Qinghai Muslims were more flexible in adapting to Tibetan ways than the average Han Chinese. For instance, Muslim merchants usually spoke the local Tibetan dialects and adopted Tibetan dress and customs while trading in Tibetan areas. With regard to the xiejia, regardless of being Han or Muslim, they often had Tibetan wives or were already of mixed blood themselves, which facilitated intercultural communication with their clientele. Many xiejia established longstanding and close relationships with their Tibetan trading partners including pledges of


\textsuperscript{73} See, for example, Yang 1989:287, Ma 2003:166, Tafel 1914/1:180, Xu 1983:77 and Pu/ Yi 1981:40. Zhou 2000:20 mentions only 13 xiejia for 1914, but this seems to be a misprint, i.e. 十三 (i.e., 13) instead of 三十三 (i.e., 30). For 1912 the Belgian Catholic missionary F. Essens (1912:2) provided the following description: “Tan-ko-eul [sTong ‘khor:] belle ville d’environ 1500 famille, avec t’ting [ting, i.e., sub-prefect], sie-t’ai [xietai, i.e., assistant administrator] – t’ou-seu [tusi, i.e., aboriginal officer] et tch’eng cheou ing [chengshouying, i.e., garrison commandant]. Faubourg sud-est et ouest. 20-30 famille de hoei-hoei [i.e., Huihui/ Muslims]. Grand commerce avec les sifan’s [Xifan, i.e., Tibetans, Mongols] qui y viennent nombreux avec leurs caravans de mao-gniou [maoniu/ yak], chargés des sel, laine – peaux – beurre et y achètent leur farine de froment ou d’épeautre (tsamba) etc. 40 sie-kia [xiejia] pour loger sifan’s et 8 fam. [famille] de iang-hang [yang hang, i.e., foreign companies].”

\textsuperscript{74} See, for example, Teichman 1921:172–174 and Rockhill 1891:109–110.
brotherhood and marital ties. Nevertheless, when middlemen serve several masters and also seek profit for themselves, conflicts of interests are bound to occur and consequently xiejia were frequently accused of taking advantage of the inexperience and naivety of their customers and even of outright fraud.

“In outward show, the guests are well treated [by the xiejia], but still they are quite at the mercy of the landlords, who, having an understanding with the traders of the town, manage to make money of both parties.”

“The House of Repose, as we have already indicated, was kept by Mussulmen. One day, their Mufti who had recently arrived from Lan-Tcheou [Lanzhou] …, attended at the house to preside over some religious ceremony… Sandara the Bearded [a Monguor], however, had an explanation of his own, which was, that the Grand Lama of the Hoei-Hoei [Hui, Muslims] attended on these occasions to teach his sectaries the latest improvements in the art of cheating in trade.”

However, it seems that Tibetan nomads also attempted to increase their profits, for example, by mixing sand into the wool or by drenching it in water in order to make the loads heavier.

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WOOL TRADE FOR THE AMDO TIBETAN NOMADS and THE XIEJIA OF STONG ‘KHOR

In 1875, according to Ma Xuexian, Qinghai provided a third of China’s wool production amounting to about 8 million jin (= Chinese pounds) annually. The real Tibetan wool boom, however, came only after 1890 when wool was increasingly in demand for European and American carpet factories. This interest in Tibetan wool resulted in a quickly expanding wool market on the Sino-Tibetan frontier with sTong ‘khor as one of the main entrepôts for wool coming from or through A mdo. The

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75 See Xu 1983:77.
77 See, for example, Millward 1989:7. The xiejia themselves are accused of using similar methods when selling wool to foreign merchants; see Pu Yi 1981:39.
78 For difficulties equating the traditional jin to kg see fn. 88.
79 According to Ma 2004:140, half of Qinghai’s wool trade was handled in sTong ‘khor. Apart from sTong ‘khor other major wool markets in Qinghai apparently existed in Datong/ gSer khog and in Guide/ Khrí kha. In Gansu major markets for A mdo wool were situated in Hezhou/ modern Linxia as well as in bSang chu/ Xiahe near Labrang Monastery and probably in Old Taozhou/ near modern Lintan, although the latter apparently specialized more in hides than in wool. Furthermore, several ‘collection centers’ were distributed along the Sino-Tibetan border such as Ngul ra/ Oula 欧拉, Heicuo 黑错/ modern Hezuo 合作 or Baoan 宝安 near Reb kong/ Tongren 同仁. It should be noted that references to ‘Qinghai’ or ‘Xining wool’ often also included the wool traded in the above-mentioned Gansu markets; see Yuan 2007:37.
wool collected in nomad areas was transported to sTong ‘khor from various places in A mdo via relay stations,\textsuperscript{80} varying from ten to thirty stops. From sTong ‘khor the wool was transported to Lanzhou and from there by mule or boat along the Yellow River to the railhead in Baotou 包头 where it was repacked on trains traveling to the coastal city of Tianjin 天津. By 1900 some 20 Tianjin based foreign trading companies from Great Britain, the United States, Germany and Russia had established purchase agencies in Xining or sTong ‘khor to buy the wool more or less directly from the producers.\textsuperscript{81} The demand for Tibetan wool rose even more with the post-WWI economic boom, reaching its heyday in the mid-1920s. The Great Depression of 1929 and the growing Japanese influence in Manchuria during the 1930s, however, discouraged further western investment in northern China. In Qinghai the wool trade and wool price apparently decreased considerably after 1931 due to monetary restraints which forced many merchants into bankruptcy. The Japanese invasion of central China in 1937 finally severed the traditional northern Chinese trading routes. However, the decline of the wool trade in northern Chinese harbor cities such as Tianjin after 1929 seems to have affected sTong ‘khor less than might be expected. The Qinghai markets started to recover in the mid-1930s and wool remained the major and most important export product of Qinghai province at least until the mid 1940s, although trade volumes and wool prices seem to have decreased in comparison to the 1920s.\textsuperscript{82}

Two economic measures taken by the Ma warlords in Qinghai apparently had the most long-lasting and far-reaching effects on sTong ‘khor’s wool trade. The first measure was the growing monopolization of commerce on the Sino-Tibetan border by the big and influential trading companies of the Ma warlords such as Deshunchang 德顺昌, Deyiheng 德义恒, Yiyuanxiang 义源祥, Xiehe shangzhan 协和商栈 and Dexinghai 德兴海. These had been established starting from about 1910 and, being based in Xining, Ru shar near Kumbum, Hualong/ Ba yan mkhar, Linxia, etc., they seem to have diverted business from sTong ‘khor.\textsuperscript{83} The second measure of the Ma Clan was the increasingly successful enforcement of tax payments on A mdo nomads. Instead of paying taxes in money, most pastoralists paid in kind, i.e., in wool and hides. These ‘tax payments’ were then collected, shipped and sold by the trading companies of the Ma warlords.\textsuperscript{84} Unfortunately, we lack data for sTong ‘khor’s wool

\textsuperscript{80} Tib. sa tshigs/ rgya tshigs, Chin. yizhan 驿站.
\textsuperscript{81} See Yang 1989:274, 287, Yuan 2007:37, Liu 1995:78 and Qinghai lishi jiyao 1987:244–245. Branch offices of these foreign trading companies were also found in Guide/ Khri kha, Hezhou/ modern Linxia, Xunhua/ rDo sbis, Datong/ gSer khog, Yongan 永安 and Ebo 俄博. See Teichman 1921:172–74.
\textsuperscript{82} See Ma 2007:83 and Ma 2002:153. For figures see the table below.
market in the 1940s. This, however, might be further indication that by then, the heyday of wool trade in sTong ‘khor was definitely over.\textsuperscript{85} Nevertheless, even then Tibetan wool from Qinghai continued to be traded via Songpan, Lhasa and Kalimpong to India and to Russia via Xinjiang 新疆.\textsuperscript{86}

I have not found reliable comparative data for wool prices and trading volumes in sTong ‘khor, although several authors do provide statistics for various years. In many cases the figures are probably mere estimates and information on how they were obtained, is often lacking.\textsuperscript{87} Furthermore, we are ignorant of the price inflation rates and the exchange rates of the Chinese Tael (silver ounce, Chin. liang) over the decades, and information on the relation of the Chinese jin (Chinese pound) to the dan (picul) is contradictory (ca. 50 to 60 kg according to one source, 240 jin according to another).\textsuperscript{88} In addition, different qualities of wool existed which were subdivided according to the place of origin, the age or race of the sheep, the shearing method and the season of shearing.\textsuperscript{89} These categorizations which obviously also influenced the wool price, are not reflected in the available data on volumes and prices. Furthermore, in the 1930s prices began to be stated not only in Taels but also in ‘foreign’ yuan/ yang yuan 洋元, ‘dollars’.\textsuperscript{90} Nevertheless, the few available snippets of data do, at

\textsuperscript{85} The pastoral industry in Qinghai suffered a serious setback in the early/ mid 1940s due to livestock epidemics which, of course, also had a negative effect on the wool production; see Hunsberger 1978:175–176 and Li 2003b:23–28.


\textsuperscript{87} Chinese travelers who, especially during the 1920s and 1930s, often came on official or semi-official reconnaissance tours to northwest China, mostly relied on ‘official’ data provided by the Ma warlords and their administration, while foreign travelers probably obtained information from local traders and other informants such as missionaries. See, for example, Shao/ Gao 1936, Li 2003a, Rockhill 1891 and ibid. 1894.

\textsuperscript{88} According to the modern metric system 1 dan is equivalent to 100 jin/ pounds and to 50 kg. Xu obviously equates the dan to the t, which also means a ‘load’ of something, and then equates it to 200 jin; see Xu 1983:78. Shao/ Gao 1936:208 state that 1 dan is equal to 240 jin and according to Tafel (1914/1:347 fn.1) one picul (= 1 dan) equals 100 catty (= 100 jin), which is equivalent to 65 kg. Rockhill 1894:97 fn. has 1 jin = 1 1/3 lbs.

\textsuperscript{89} For a general description of these subdivisions see Yuan 2007:40 and for a detailed one see Zhou 1970:201–204.

\textsuperscript{90} The dollar was a widely used currency in 18th to mid-20th century China. Until the late 19th century the Mexican Silver dollar circulated in China concurrently with local Chinese currencies such as the newly issued late 19th century Chinese Silver yuan. In the course of the international adoption of the gold standard, the Mexican Silver dollar was gradually replaced by the U.S. dollar which became the new dominant currency for reference. In the first half of 1930, the value of the yuan fluctuated between 2.75 to 3.58 yuan for 1 USD; see Kansu Echo 1930:22. According to Gu/ Lu 1934:267, thirty ‘foreign’ yuan/ dollars was the minimum amount needed for subsistence in Xunhua county per person/ per year. That the monetary system was extremely complicated and that exchange rates were often used to the disadvantage of the inexperienced, is repeatedly mentioned by foreign travelers and also confirmed by [Golok] Ehoubao 1982:129-130.
first glance, roughly reflect the general trends for the A mdo wool trade as described above and are thus reproduced in the table below.

Table 1: Trade Volumes and Prices for Wool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Qinghai</th>
<th>sTong ’khor/ Dan’gaer</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>first half 19th c.</strong></td>
<td>Vol.: 1.2 million jin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yang 1910:284</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ca. 1860–1875</strong></td>
<td>Vol.: 400,000 jin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yang 1910:284</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Vol.: 8 million jin</td>
<td>Price: 1 dan = 1.8 liang/ Taels</td>
<td>Ma 2004:140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td></td>
<td>Price: 1 dan = 6 liang/ Taels</td>
<td>Rockhill 1891:111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hezhou/ Gansu: Price: 100 jin = about 1.8 liang/ Taels</td>
<td>Rockhill 1894:64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wei 2002:318</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td></td>
<td>Price: 1 dan = 11–12 liang/ Taels</td>
<td>Tafel 1914/I:347</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905/06</td>
<td>Price: 1 dan = 9 liang/ Taels</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tafel 1914/I:347 fn. 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ca. 1910</strong></td>
<td>Vol.: 600,000–700,000 jin to several millions jin</td>
<td>Price: 1 dan = about 30 liang/ Taels</td>
<td>Qinghai lishi jiyao 1987:244–245, Yang 1910:274, 284</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

91 As already mentioned above, most figures are probably mere estimates and information on how they were obtained, is usually lacking. Furthermore, since information on the relation of the Chinese jin (Chinese pound) to the dan (picul) is contradictory (ca. 50 to 65 kg, i.e., 100 to 130 pounds, according to some sources, 200 to 240 jin according to others), I have refrained from converting them into a common unit. The same applies for the liang/ Tael and the yuan.

* Era of Muslim uprisings in Gansu and Qinghai.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Qinghai</th>
<th>sTong 'khor/ Dan'gaer</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Vol.: 2.2 million jin worth 440,000 liang/ Taels, i.e., 100 jin = 20 liang/ Taels</td>
<td>Xunhua, Labrang &amp; Longwu: Vol.: 1.3 million jin, Lusha’er, Shangwuzhuang: 1.5 million jin, Guide: 1 million jin, Ebo, Datong, Yongan: 1 million jin, Yushu: 1.5 million jin</td>
<td>Zhou 1919:18–20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Vol.: 7.5 million jin</td>
<td>Vol.: 5 million jin Price: 1 dan = 20 liang/ Taels</td>
<td>Ma 2004:140, Qinghai lishi jiyao 1987:245</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926–1935</td>
<td>Tianjin/ seaport: 100 jin = about 20 liang/ Taels</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zhou 1935:200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Qinghai</td>
<td>sTong 'khor/ Dan’gaer</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Labrang: Vol.: 1.2 million jin Price: 100 jin = 14 yuan</td>
<td>Ma 2002:56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Vol.: 5 million jin Price: 100 jin = 20 yuan**</td>
<td>Gansu and Qinghai: Vol.: more than 10 million jin</td>
<td>Ma 2002:216–217</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(late) 1930s?</td>
<td>50 jin = 8 yuan, i.e., 100 jin = 16 yuan</td>
<td>Xining: Price: 100 jin = 5 yuan</td>
<td>[Golok] Ehoubao 1982:129, Xining xian fengtu diaochaji 2002:282</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before 1938</td>
<td></td>
<td>Qinghai, Xiahe and Ningxia: Vol.: about 350.000 dan</td>
<td>Li 2003:18–20, 32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Vol.: 6 million jin</td>
<td>Labrang area: Price: 1 jin = 0.2 yuan, i.e., 100 jin = 20 yuan</td>
<td>Tang 1939:522 Li 1942:133 Fan 1936:170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td></td>
<td>Qinghai, Xiahe and Ningxia: Vol.: about 200.000 dan</td>
<td>Li 2003:18–20, 32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first half of the 19th century sTong ‘khor is supposed to have exported about 1.2 million jin of wool annually. This figure decreased to about 400,000 jin during and after the Muslim rebellions of 1862 to 1873. While Przhevalsky mentioned that barter trade was still common in sTong ‘khor in 1872/73 using the sheep as the basis for trading calculations, for 1889 Rockhill presented a wool price stated in currency:

** Ma 2002:217 has 100 jin = 200 yuan which is obviously mistaken. I interpret this to be 100 jin = 20 yuan.


93 The ‘sheep currency’ worked in such a way that common trading goods such as livestock or grain, butter, etc. had fixed exchange rates: for example one horse of average quality was worth a certain number of sheep, while a good quality horse was worth more sheep. A yak, on the other hand, was worth so many horses and thus so many sheep. Another exchange rate also existed with butter as the base currency and was still in place in some nomad areas in the early
in 1889 one picul of wool was worth 1.8 Taels in sTong ‘khor.\(^{94}\) By 1891 the price was already up to 6 Taels for 200 \(jin\) (= 1 picul?) and by 1904 to 11 to 12 Taels.\(^{95}\) In 1905/06 it fell to 9 Taels for reasons not stated.\(^{96}\) In about 1910, however, the wool price allegedly reached 30 Taels per 100 \(jin\) and the trade volume of wool varied between at least 600,000 to 700,000 \(jin\) annually up to several million.\(^{97}\) Between 1918 and 1927, the average wool price amounted to 15 to 16 Taels per picul, but could rise to about 20 Taels per picul as an example from 1924 demonstrates.\(^{98}\) During the same year about 5 million \(jin\) of wool were exported from sTong ‘khor being worth circa 1 million \(liang/\) Taels, whereas the Qinghai wool export reportedly reached 7.5 million \(jin\) altogether.\(^{99}\) According to a 1934 source the average wool price in Qinghai, where the Ma warlords held the monopoly, was officially 10 \(yuan\) for 100 \(jin\) but in reality merely 6 to 7 \(yuan\) while in Gansu and Sichuan the wool price is supposed to have reached 14 to 15 \(yuan\).\(^{100}\) By 1934 the trade volume of Qinghai wool had decreased to about 6 million \(jin\) annually and by 1935 to 4.3–6 million \(jin\) depending on the source. In 1935 about 2 million \(jin\) were still handled in sTong ‘khor.\(^{101}\) Nevertheless, it seems that at least until the early 1940s wool remained

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\(^{94}\) See Rockhill 1891:111.

\(^{95}\) See Rockhill 1894:64 and Tafel 1914/1:347. However, Wei 2002:318 states that the wool price in Hezhou in 1900 was only 1.8 Taels for 100 \(jin\) of wool. Unfortunately, he does not provide a source for this figure.

\(^{96}\) At that time 1 Tael was equivalent to 3 English Shilling according to Fergusson 1911:8–10 and to 3 German Reichsmark according to Tafel. For further comparison: in Xining an average horse was worth 18 Taels in 1892 and 20–25 Taels in 1905/06; see Rockhill 1894:64 and Tafel 1914/1:347.

\(^{97}\) See *Qinghai lishi jiyao* 1987:244–245. Yang 1989:274, 284 writes that 1 \(jin\) [sic] of wool was worth 32 \(liang/\) Taels. This is obviously mistaken and I interpret this to refer to one picul instead. See also Zhou 2000:18 who reports that the Tibetans and Mongols in Qinghai sold 2.2 million \(jin\) of wool annually worth 400,000 \(liang/\) Taels, i.e., receiving 20 Taels for 100 \(jin\) of wool.

\(^{98}\) See *Qinghai lishi jiyao* 1987:284.

\(^{99}\) See Ma 2004:140 and *Qinghai lishi jiyao* 1987:245. Apparently bSang chu/ Xiahe near Labrang Monastery surpassed sTong ‘khor’s wool trading volumes from 1924 to 1927. Reportedly, bSang chu handled 7.5 million \(jin\) in 1924, 7 million \(jin\) in 1925 and 1926 and 7.5 million \(jin\) in 1927; see Ma 2004:140. For much lower figures for bSang chu/ Xiahe see Dang/ Chen 1987:52. However, their wool trade data is also somewhat contradictory. With regard to prices, a report about the economic situation of Tibetans in the Labrang area in 1939 stated that 1 \(jin\) of sheep wool was worth 0.2 \(yuan\) which equals the wool price mentioned for sTong ‘khor in 1924; see Tang 1984:522.

\(^{100}\) See Yuan 2007:40 who refers to a report by a wool production inspection group sent by the Guomindang government in 1934. I have been unable to consult this report.

the main export product of Qinghai province and still accounted for the major part of the Qinghai GNP.\textsuperscript{102}

While it is already difficult to obtain data on the trading volumes of wool and the respective wool prices in sTong ‘khor at given times, it is even more difficult to conclude in which proportion the income of the Tibetan nomads increased along with the rising market prices. We can only assume that the wool prices paid to the nomads, if they were not identical with those mentioned above, rose at least proportionally, since the xiejia mainly profited from the rising market prices through the fixed percentage of commissions they received from the Tibetan traders plus ‘presents’ from the buyers. The xiejia may also have adjusted the costs of such services as transport, storage or loan giving accordingly. One indication that the A mdo nomads profited from the wool boom as well, was their growing demand for and their improving supply of comparatively expensive firearms. While in the second half of the 19th century their weapons were usually described as poor and outdated, this changed markedly in the early 20th century.

“Their guns are as old as the middle ages – the old fashioned match-lock.”\textsuperscript{103}

“The possession of rifles, which they [the Goloks] acquire in the course of trade from the Mahomedan merchants of Kansu, has made them far more formidable than they used to be.”\textsuperscript{104}

“And rifles are plentiful in Tibet. In addition to the Tibetan-made muzzle-loaders, there are many foreign high-powered guns. Some are of Russian or Japanese make, brought in by Mongol traders, with a number of regulation British Lee-Enfield rifles crossing the Indian border.”\textsuperscript{105}

It is also striking that the A mdo nomads of the early 20th century are frequently described as rich or as well-to-do, and usually as better off than their sedentary compatriots. Apart from the nomads’ weapons, the wealth, value and beauty of the

\textsuperscript{102} See Fan 1990:170, Li Gufan 2003a:133 and Li Zhuchen 2003b:18–20, 32. Li Gufan was in Xining in 1939 and reported that Qinghai still exported 6 million jin of wool annually. Li Zhuchen visited Qinghai and Gansu in 1942 and reported that the combined trading volume of Qinghai, Gansu and Ningxia wool reached about 350,000 dan [35 million jin] annually before the anti-Japanese War and about 200,000 dan [20 million jin], i.e., 10,000 tons, in 1942.

\textsuperscript{103} See Christie 1895:2.

\textsuperscript{104} See Teichman 1922:77.

nomad women’s jewelry is repeatedly mentioned admiringly by western observers.\textsuperscript{106} Zhou Zhenhe also stated that while barter trade was still common in the early 1930s, wealthy nomads asked for silver in return for their wool.\textsuperscript{107}

Tang Niao provided the following data for the economic conditions in the Labrang area in Gansu province for 1939: on average a Tibetan nomad family kept 400 to 500 sheep and one sheep produced three to four \textit{jin} of wool annually. Accordingly the wool of 400 sheep amounted to about 1,200 \textit{jin} of wool. Since 1 \textit{jin} of wool was worth 0.2 \textit{yuan}, one family could earn about 240 \textit{yuan} if it sold the whole lot. Tang further estimated that altogether an average Tibetan nomadic household earned at least 1,000 \textit{yuan} annually by selling wool, hides and livestock.\textsuperscript{108} In comparison, thirty \textit{yuan} was estimated to be the minimum amount needed for subsistence in neighboring Xunhua County per person/ per year in 1934.\textsuperscript{109} Although these figures may be debatable, they support the notion that Tibetan nomads in early 20\textsuperscript{th} century Amdo were comparatively wealthy.\textsuperscript{110} With regard to nomads living in Qinghai province, the economic situation clearly deteriorated in the 1930s when the traditional \textit{xiejia} system had more or less vanished and the trade monopoly of the Ma warlords was firmly established. Then the Qinghai pastoralists were forced to pay taxes in kind, which meant to sell their wool under market prices (as mentioned above), while prices for commodities such as cloth, tea, etc. had risen markedly.\textsuperscript{111} Whether the Qinghai nomads were able to react by selling surplus wool and other products to markets in Gansu and Sichuan instead, needs further research.

\section*{VI. Final Remarks}

The \textit{xiejia} institution played a vital role in nomadic trade in Amdo from at least the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century onwards up to the 1920s/30s and had both advantages and disadvantages for the Tibetan pastoralists. From their perspective the traditional \textit{xiejia} provided a convenient place to stay while in a market town. The \textit{xiejia} offered accommodation, food and fodder free of charge and trading opportunities all under one roof. The drawback, however, was that the commercial success of the Tibetan trader depended to a large extent on the business connections and the honesty of the \textit{xiejia}. The latter was also true for the 20\textsuperscript{th} century itinerant \textit{xiejia} who traveled to the Tibetan camps in order to trade. Furthermore, the rising wool prices and profits also

\textsuperscript{107} See Zhou 1970:205.
\textsuperscript{108} See Tang 1984:522. Millward 1989:30 n. 6, however, states that one sheep in Qinghai produced only two to three \textit{jin} of wool annually.
\textsuperscript{109} See Gu/ Lu 1934:267.
\textsuperscript{110} Xuan Xiaifu traveled in the Tibetan Labrang area in 1925 or 1926 and stated that a gun was worth three horses and that ammunition was extremely expensive as well; see Xuan 2002:98.
\textsuperscript{111} See Yuan 2007:40.
led to a growing commercialization of trade that entailed a gradual loss of the former strong personal relationships and trust between nomads and xiejia.

From the perspective of the xiejia owner operating a xiejia promised huge profits and included serving several, usually divergent interests at the same time. First, the xiejia was interested in making a profit accrued through commissions and services paid for by Tibetan traders, as well as through the substantial ‘gifts’ received from merchants who bought the Tibetan products. In order not to lose future business, the xiejia had to keep both his Tibetan customers and the Chinese or foreign business partners content. Furthermore, the xiejia had to fully comply with the requests and regulations of the Chinese border officials in order not to be treated as a hanjian 汉奸, ‘traitor.’ Nevertheless, xiejia often tried to circumvent their semi-official duties, especially in the early/mid-19th century, as Chinese sources such as the Pingfan zouyi demonstrate.

For the Chinese border officials, on the other hand, the xiejia institution was a convenient means of indirect border control. The requirement of official permits to run a xiejia enabled the officials to hold the xiejia owner responsible for complying with his semi-official duties such as registration of trade transactions, mediation and interpreting services. Furthermore, the administration was able to exercise some indirect control over the market access of Tibetan nomadic tribes as mentioned above.

Tibetans actively traded within their own society and also participated in long distance trade with neighboring countries. Nevertheless, we repeatedly come across statements made by westerners, Chinese and even by Tibetans themselves that the Tibetans were—and still are—not very apt at professional trading and that the general population resented—respectively resents—the trading profession for religious reasons. These remarks are often coupled with observations about the superiority of Muslim or Chinese merchants with regard to their Tibetan counterparts. Unfortunately, few studies have been conducted on Tibetan trade, making it difficult to judge to what extent a culturally or religiously motivated aversion against trade as a profession is, in fact, a Tibetan attitude. I suspect common prejudices and misinterpretations produce a twisted picture. While this paper does not resolve this issue, perhaps it will rouse more interest in this neglected topic.

112 See, for example, Grenard 1904:284–285, Liu 2002:94, Mian 2005b:236–237 and Fischer 2008b:24. When I asked Tibetans in Golog Autonomous Prefecture in summer 2000 why most shops and restaurants in the local townships were run by Muslims or Chinese and not by Tibetans, the reply often was that “Tibetans are not good at trade” or more specifically “we do not know how to deal with the formalities of opening a shop or restaurant.” At the same time Tibetan traders from neighboring Nga ba were successfully conducting small scale business among the Tibetans in Golok.

113 See, for example, van Spengen 1995 and Fischer 2008a.
Fig. 2: (Muslim?) Traders in Tibetan Garb in Gansu/ Qinghai in the 1930s (Archivum Generale of the Societas Verbi Divini, Rome).

Fig. 3: Scene from a Border Market in Gansu/ Qinghai in the 1930s (Steyler Missionsbote May 1939, 66:8, 199).
Fig. 4: Tibetan Chief’s Daughter [center] in Wedding Dress with Gold Threads worth 3,000 Silver Dollars, 1934 (Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton).

Fig. 5 and 6: Bridesmaids of Tibetan Chief’s Daughter (Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton).
Fig. 7 and 8: sTong ‘khor/ Dan’gaer in 1929
(Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton).
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