

ASIAN HIGHLANDS PERSPECTIVES

VOLUME 6

Edited by

Charles Kevin Stuart

Gerald Roche

Tshe dbang rdo rje ཚེ་དབང་རྡོ་རྗེ། 才项多杰

Timothy Thurston

Rin chen rdo rje རིན་ཆེན་རྡོ་རྗེ། 仁青多杰

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Front Cover: This photograph by G.yu lha (of her mother) was taken in Siyuewu 斯跃武 Village, Puxi 蒲西 Township, 'Dzam thang (Rangtang 壤塘) County, Rnga ba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture (Aba zangzu qiangzu zizhizhou 阿坝藏族羌族自治州), Sichuan 四川 Province. Siyuewu Villagers are officially classified as Tibetans and consider themselves as such, but speak the Rgyalrongic Lavrung language.

Back Cover: Workers rest while building the wall of a prayer hall using traditional building tools. Photograph by Zla ba sgrol ma, Sman shad Region, Sde dge (Dege 德格) County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Ganzi zangzu zizhizhou 甘孜藏族自治州), Sichuan Province.

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FROM THE EDITORS

Asian Highlands Perspectives welcomes submissions that allow us to better hear and understand voices from the highlands of Asia relating their experiences—what they mean and how they are understood—all with a view to enriching our knowledge of this vast area. We hope to feature autobiographical accounts and studies of songs, jokes, tongue twisters, weddings, divorce, funerals, 'dirty' stories and songs, love songs, rituals of romance, illness, medicine, healing, clothing, music, rites of passages, orations, gender, herding techniques, agricultural practices, trading, flora and fauna, the annual cycle of work in rural communities, 'development', language, religion, conflict, architecture, education, apprenticeships, art, and everything else that informs us.

Prospective authors are welcome to use theory to interpret what they report, however, the editors are particularly interested in careful, detailed, contextualized descriptions revealing local meanings of what is being described, and how this connects with relevant publications. It is especially hoped that local scholars who lack access to educational systems emphasizing theory will contribute. All submissions are peer reviewed. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* is available in hardcopy as well as on-line. Published authors receive PDF versions of their published work.

Charles Kevin Stuart

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Editors

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STORY: A BLEEDING WATERMELON

Norsang

There were three dormitory rooms for me, an Art Department freshman, to choose from on 1 September 2003. I chose the one on the eighth floor. The four-boy room looked new and comfortable. Nobody had moved in yet. I was really pleased with the choice I had made.

I went near the only window of this room, opened it, and looked out. I had a grand view of the university campus—green trees rustled in a gentle breeze, charming flowers beckoned with nodding heads, and students strolled energetically about in colorful clothing. Everything seemed peaceful. I stretched out my head and looked down from the window to concrete pavement. Acrophobia made me nervous and uncomfortable. I drew back, told myself to relax, and then set to work making up my bed, which I finished in a couple of minutes. I lay down, hoping I would have nice roommates.

Somebody knocked on the door, opened it, and in came a tall, thin, long-haired young man wearing a black leather jacket. He put down an enormous backpack and asked, "Is this a dorm room for students in the Art Department?"

"Yes," I replied.

"It's a nice dormitory room, isn't? What's your name?" he asked, offering a cigarette.

"Dorji," I answered, waving my left hand, signaling I did not smoke. "Yours?"

"Norbu," he replied.

The door opened again as Norbu and I were introducing ourselves. Two boys came in and asked the same question that Norbu had asked and, once sure they were in the right room, quickly made up their beds.

Renchin and Gongbo, the second two arrivals were both from Golok. Somehow, Norbu didn't tell us where he was from.

A month later, we had become friends. Except for the time we spent in the classroom, we spent most of our time in the dorm room, doing homework, playing the guitar, reading, and talking about women.

One night when we were chatting as usual, Gongbo said. "I had a strange dream last night."

"Tell us about it," Renchin said curiously.

"Well, it was about a watermelon. It fell from very high up, hit the ground, and then exploded into hundreds of bright red pieces," Gongbo said.

"Is that a strange dream?" I asked.

"You must have been thirsty when you were dreaming—that's why you dreamed about a watermelon," said Renchin, laughing.

"Would you please let me finish?" said Gongbo in irritation. "The watermelon hit the ground and then splattered. But I saw blood. It was bleeding and something white oozed out.

"A bleeding watermelon? What a ridiculous dream," I said, feeling disgusted.

"That was a sick dream," Renchin added.

"I shouldn't have told you guys anything about my dream," said Gongbo unpleasantly, which ended our discussion.



A screaming ambulance siren woke me. I got up, opened the window, and looked down. An ambulance was right by our dormitory building. I was going to return to bed and then I noticed Gongbo's quilt lay limply on the floor. His bed was empty. I woke up my other two roommates and asked them about Gongbo, but they said they did not know.

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I went to the classroom, still wondering about Gongbo. Before the teacher began class, Norbu, Renchin, and I were called into the hallway by a policeman. Gongbo was dead. He had fallen out the dorm room window and died when his head struck the concrete pavement.

We spent a day with the police who examined everything in our dorm room. The final conclusion was that Gongbo had committed suicide.

A month later, everything had pretty much returned to normal. We avoided talking about Gongbo, especially in our dorm room.

One night when we were doing homework, Renchin asked. "Do you remember the dream that Gongbo had? I had the same dream last night."

"Please don't talk about him!" I said.

"OK, whatever," said Renchin, and returned to his homework.

Norbu said nothing as he continued to smoke and read.

I was awakened the next morning by a blaring ambulance siren. I blearily looked at Renchin's bed. It was empty.

Renchin was dead. He had died in exactly the same way as Gongbo. I was terrified. I talked to two of my teachers and they both said the same thing: "Don't worry. Don't think too much. It was just coincidence."

I was dreadfully nervous and wondered if I was to be the next victim.

That night I went back to the dorm room around nine o'clock. It was very dark. I turned on the light. Norbu was sitting on his bed.

I felt this was odd and asked, "Why didn't you turn on the light?"

"Don't worry, man! Everything's going to be fine," he said, ignoring my question

"Thanks!" I replied and then lay on my bed and tried

to sleep.

That night I dreamed of a watermelon falling to the ground. It broke when it hit the ground. Blood was everywhere. Something white oozed out from the splattered main part of the watermelon. I woke up and was terrified. "I will die," I said to myself. "That's the dream that they had before they left this world." I rushed out of the room, down the stairs, and ran to the police station near the school gate. "I don't want to die. Help! Help!" I shouted to the policemen.

They ignored me, assuming I was insane. I shouted and cried and finally fainted.

I woke up and found I was lying in my dormitory bed. The room was cloaked in a somber atmosphere. My head ached. I looked at my watch. It was 10:01 a.m. I assumed my classmates had brought me to my room. I looked around. Norbu was sitting on his bed, staring at me with eyes that gleamed and seemed strangely green. I tried to shout but I couldn't make a sound. I felt myself moving from the bed. I couldn't control it. I willed my body to stop as it neared the window. My hands opened the window and I jumped out. I was falling to the ground upside down. I could hear the wind blow past my ears. I could see the concrete pavement ever more vividly. I even saw the blood marks that Renchin and Gongbo's broken heads had left on the pavement. I suddenly realized that that oozy white stuff was human brains.

I woke up and noticed the three beds were still empty. I was panting. Someone knocked on the dormitory door and opened it. A tall, thin, long-haired young man entered. He wore a black jacket and was carrying a huge backpack.

"Is this a dorm room for Art Department freshmen?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, staring at him. I felt I had seen him somewhere before.

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A Bleeding Water Melon was written by Norsang (Nor bzang; b. 1988), a native of Dpa ris (Rab rgyas (Huazangsi 华藏寺 Township, Tianzhu 天祝 Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu 甘肃 Province). Norsang writes:

I heard that a university student opened an elevator door in a campus building still under construction. The elevator shaft was empty and he fell to his death. Many people had questions about his death. This inspired me to write this story.