

Data Sources: Demography of Tibetan Populations

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Tibetan Historical Demography

From the 17th century through 1959 administrators of government, religious, and aristocratic estates compiled household registers (*sgo khra them gan*) of their subjects every third year. Very little of this data has come to light thus far. Dieter Schuh published two registers of Samtenling Monastery's subjects dating from 1939 and 1949; that data is publically available for further analysis (see Schuh 1988). In addition I have analyzed data contained in one such register from Kyirong and presented the results (Childs 2008), and have detailed a method for interpreting and quantitatively analyzing data contained in such registers (Childs 2004). Also worthy of note, scholars in China reprinted the 1830 land settlement document that provides information on landholdings by district (Tsultrim et. al. 1989). Although not a demographic data source per se, it is a key document for the study of Tibetan historical geography and demography (see Ryavec 2001).

Childs, Geoff. 2008. *Tibetan Transitions: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Fertility, Family Planning, and Demographic Change*, especially Chapter 3. Leiden: Brill.

Childs, Geoff. 2004. Ethnographic and Demographic Analysis of Small Populations Using the Own-Children Method. *Field Methods* 16(4):379-399.

Ryavec, Karl. 2001. Land use/cover change in central Tibet, c. 1830–1990: devising a GIS methodology to study a historical Tibetan land decree. *Geographical Journal* 167(4): 342-57.

Schuh, D. 1988. *Das Archiv des Klosters bKra-šis-bsam-gtan-gliñ von sKyid-gron*. Bonn: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag.

Yeshe Tsultrim, Ngawang Chödar, Lobsang Gyaltzen, and Kelsang Drolkar, eds. 1989. *Iron-monkey [year] land settlement* (lcags stag zhib gzhung). Beijing: Krung go Bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang.

Indigenous Tibetans of Nepal

Nepal's 2002 census is a useful starting point for studying the demography of Tibetan populations in that nation. Bear in mind, however, that most Tibetans identified their caste/ethnicity as something other than Tibetan (e.g., Gurung, Tamang, Sherpa) on this census. Therefore, one must be familiar with the ethnic geography of Nepal in order to effectively use this source.

Nepal Census. 2002. *Population of Nepal: Population Census 2001*. Kathmandu: His Majesty's Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission Secretariat, and Central Bureau of Statistics.

In addition, several "Demographic Health Surveys" (DHS) have been conducted in Nepal. These high quality sample surveys of the entire nation document recent fertility trends and reproductive health issues. A summary volume has been published for each of the three surveys (1996, 2001, and 2006, see below). These are available for free as pdf files via the DHS website (<http://www.measuredhs.com/>), yet are not very useful for the study of reproduction in ethnically Tibetan communities in Nepal because they do not disaggregate the data by ethnicity. Furthermore, the data is only disaggregated geographically by "Mountain", "Hill", and "Terai" regions corresponding with altitude. However, DHS does provide access to the raw data. Any bona fide scholar can download this data in a statistical package, such as SPSS, simply by requesting access from DHS. The organization is very accommodating to the requests of scholars. On the downside, if one is able to disaggregate the data by community (i.e., those that are definitely Tibetan or Sherpa) or by ethnicity (e.g., "bhote" = Tibetan), the sample sizes are very small rendering statistical analysis problematic.

Pradhan, A. et. al. 1997. *Nepal Family Health Survey 1996*. Kathmandu and Calverton: Ministry of Health [Nepal], New ERA, and Macro International.

Ministry of Health [Nepal], New ERA, and ORC Macro. 2002. *Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2001*. Calverton, Md: Family Health Division, Ministry of Health; New ERA; and ORC Macro.

Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) [Nepal], New ERA, and Macro International Inc. 2007. *Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2006*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Health and Population, New ERA and Macro International Inc.

Tibet Autonomous Region and Tibetan-inhabited areas of China

China's censuses of 1982, 1990, and 2000 gathered data on ethnic populations within the country. All of these appear in print form and can be found in major research libraries. Every province has a separate volume, and data is disaggregated by ethnicity for some--but not all--variables. One drawback is that the volumes are published in Chinese, meaning that many scholars require assistance to access the data. For Tibetan populations of China see the volumes on Tibet Autonomous Region, Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan. For example,

TAR Census. 2002. *Xizang Zizhiqu 2000 nian renkou pu cha zi liao*. Beijing: Zhongguo tongji chubanshe.

See also China's statistical yearbooks. For example:

CPSY. 2000. *China population statistics yearbook 2000*. Beijing: Zhongguo zhan wang chu ban she.

A better source for census data is the All China Data Center, based at University of Michigan. Through subscription one can access 1990 and 2000 census data. Although a subscription is expensive, this is the best source for obtaining census data that can be downloaded as Excel files and therefore is amenable for immediate analysis.

See <http://chinadataonline.org>

Note: Data is available at the county (*xian*) and township (*xiang*) levels. Place names are in Pinyin, which often makes it difficult to link with Tibetan-language place names. To find correspondences between Tibetan and Pinyin place names it is helpful to consult the interactive map on the Tibetan and Himalayan Digital Library website (<http://www.thdl.org/>).

Tibetans in Exile

The best publically available source is tabularized data, presented in two volumes, from the 1998 Tibetan Demographic Survey (Planning Council 2000). Data on age, gender, place of origin, housing, employment, etc., is broken down by region and in some cases settlement.

Planning Council. 2000. *Tibetan Demographic Survey 1998: Tabularized Data*. Dharamsala: Planning Council, Central Tibetan Administration, Gangchen Kyishong.

In addition, the Tibetan Government-in-Exile has been gathering statistics on the settlements in India and Nepal since the 1960s. Camp registers are one source of data that list every member of a household, and includes birth and death dates. However, accessing these requires permission and the data is very difficult to interpret (see Magnusson et. al. 2008). In addition, the Health Department keeps records that have been used by scholars to study demography and patterns of morbidity (see Bhatia et. al. 1998, 2002).

Bhatia, Shushum, Derrick Rowley and Tsegyal Dranyi. 1998. *The Demographic and Health Surveillance of the Tibetan Refugee Population in India*. Dharamsala: Department of Health, Central Tibetan Administration.

Bhatia, Shushum, Tsegyal Dranyi and Derrick Rowley. 2002. A Social and Demographic Study of Tibetan Refugees in India. *Social Science and Medicine* 54:411-422.

Bhatia, Shushum, Tsegyal Dranyi and Derrick Rowley. 2002. Tuberculosis among Tibetan Refugees in India. *Social Science and Medicine* 54:423-432.

Magnusson, Jan, Subramanya Nagarajarao, Geoff Childs, and Thinley Dorje. 2008. South Indian Tibetans: Development Dynamics in the Early Stages of the Tibetan Refugee Settlement lugs zung bsam grub gling, Bylakuppe. *Journal of the International Association for Tibetan Studies* 4: (forthcoming).
<http://www.thlib.org/collections/texts/jiats/>

Those interested in Tibetans living in North America are advised to consult the following report that provides very little demographic data, yet is the best estimate on exiles in North America to date.

CTAC (Conservancy for Tibetan Art and Culture). 2002. North American Tibetan community cultural needs assessment project: findings and recommendations. www.tibetanculture.org/pdf/survey_pdf/MainReport.pdf