
 YELLOW-HEAD HORSE

Sangs rgyas bkra shis སངས་རྒྱས་བཀྲ་ཤིས།

My family had a stallion we called Rta mgo ser 'Yellow-Head Horse'. Father and two of his brothers occasionally rode it. Father said that Yellow-Head was very wild when it was taken to join local horseraces. I didn't believe that because Yellow-Head was very gentle when Mother rode it to the local monastery and also when I rode it.

Grandmother said that Yellow-Head was especially gentle around children and women.

Father said that the Yellow-head was only gentle with my family members.

Grandmother told me that the Yellow-Head was the most beautiful and the fastest horse in our local community and that just after he was born, many visitors had come to see him because he was as white as pure milk.

Later his head gradually became yellow.

"Many outsiders heard about Yellow-Head, but never heard about our family," Grandmother commented.

In about 1999, the summer horse race was approaching and Father bridled Yellow-Head a few days before the race. Father said, "Yellow-Head is as clever as a person. If he suspects people are gathering, it is impossible to catch him."

Father and I led Yellow-Head's by his reins to the horse race. It took us about a half hour to get to the race site where there was a huge crowd. Yellow-Head tried to run away, but Father's elder brother and five other men came and forcefully led Yellow-Head to the other racehorses. When it was Yellow-Head's turn, he jumped, pranced, and kicked at everyone. About six people held him by the ears, tail, and reins.

Sangs rgyas bkra shis. 2017. Yellow-Head Horse. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:79-81.

Only Grandmother's relative, Yul lha thar, could ride him in a competition. The top three horses started, but the men still held Yellow-Head. When the horses in the lead got halfway to the finish line, the men released Yellow-Head, who flew as fast as a bird and won the competition.

Neighbor community members cursed Yellow-Head, because he always won.

Many people wanted to buy Yellow-Head, promising to pay whatever we asked, but no one in my family wanted to sell him because my family had a strong affection for Yellow-Head.

In the winter of 2000, many local horses were stolen, including Yellow-Head. Grandmother and Mother were very sad. They worried that the thieves would sell it to people who, they had heard, slaughtered horses with machines and then ate them.

Grandmother chanted *ma Ni* and burned butter lamps for Yellow-Head.

Five days after he was stolen, Mother got up early as usual, cleaned the adobe stove, and took the ash outside. Suddenly we heard her shout that Yellow-Head had returned. We all ran out and saw Yellow-Head outside of our house. Wounds on his back proved that the thieves had beaten him. Father gently washed his wounds and smeared antibiotic ointment on them.

My family members believed that Yellow-Head was an auspicious animal for our family and we resolved to never sell or kill him.

Three years later, my family was in the winter pasture where there was very little grass because it had snowed heavily. Father and my neighbor took Yellow-Head and three other horses to a mountain forest and left them, because there was more grass there than on the grassland. It took about seven hours to walk to that forest.

When Father and my neighbor went to find the horses in the spring, they found Yellow-Head dead in the bottom of a valley. Father said that it seemed Yellow-Head had tried to eat grass on a very steep

rocky mountain and then fell, probably, he conjectured, because the snow made the rocks very slippery.

The other three horses had vanished. Maybe thieves had stolen them.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

rta mgo ser རྟ་མགོ་མེད།

sangs rgyas bkra shis སངས་རྒྱལ་བཀྲ་ཤིས།

yul lha thar ཡུལ་ལྷ་ཐར།