

## APPENDIX II

### People, Pigs, and Tigers in Shangri-La: A Story<sup>1</sup>

James P. Lassoic<sup>2</sup>

*Setting: Today in the small village of Chumey in Jigme Singye Wangchuk National Park, Bhutan*

Karma Wang couldn't help nodding off while his daughter, Sonam, finished telling the family about how well she was doing in English and of her recent award-winning essay. No one really minded, as they all knew he had been up for many nights in a row, and a short nap following dinner was well earned. It was nearing harvest time for barley in this region, and Karma was not alone in his sleeplessness. All his neighbors were also guarding their fields from the wild pigs that ventured nightly from the forest reserve to raid their croplands. The Wang's had already lost perhaps 30% of this year's corn crop to these persistent pests, and he was determined to keep them away from their barley. Karma always made light of the situation around his extended family, but he knew quite well that any further losses would mean severe hardships in the forthcoming months. It wasn't just food, but he desperately wanted to provide his daughter with an education he had had to deny his oldest son, Tashi, because of his inability to pay additional school expenses. Of course, the boy was also needed on the farm.

A sudden burst of laughter woke Karma with a jolt; he apologized for falling asleep again, congratulated Sonam, and rose to gather his old jacket and blanket. His wife's mother met him at the door with a small container of dried beef, rice, hot peppers, and cheese, and he gently reminded her to keep some food warm for Tashi as he stepped into the late afternoon sun.

Taking the short dirt path to his field he soon met his nearest neighbor. After a shared salutation, they walked together until Chukey finally broke the silence. "My dear and wise friend, I grow very tired of these long nights away from my wife." Karma hummed in agreement. "Last week, old Tenzin lost one of the only two cows he had to a tiger, or leopard, or something – for sure his family will need our help this winter." Karma hummed again. "I've lost corn and so did you – I don't know what we'll face in the coming months if these damned pigs get our barley. And we have cows too. I am sick with worry and don't know what to do." Karma was silent and looked down as they walked.

Reaching a fork in the trail they paused to look over the broad, open landscape marked by golden fields of barley scattered with simple lean-tos and rimed with dense, dark forests. They could just make out a few people moving across the fields, dispersing towards their respective crop-guarding shacks.

---

<sup>1</sup> The characters and events in this story are factitious, but based on actual incidents. The author acknowledges the assistance of James Monahan and Phuntsho Thinley, Cornell University, in the development of this story.

<sup>2</sup> International Professor of Conservation, Fernow Hall, Department of Natural Resources, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA; JPL4@cornell.edu

***Insert Photo Here:  
Agricultural Fields with Fences and Lean-tos***

“And what choices do we now have my long-time neighbor? Chukey, were we not concerned when the National Assembly passed the Nature Conservation Act in 1995, but said nothing? Didn’t we take and use the poison that the government provided us to kill the wild dogs when we complained they were harassing our livestock? So, now we have pigs, lots of pigs. Aren’t we hoping the government will help, while expecting they will do little? You know as well as I, they value these wild creatures far more than they value you and me dear friend.” There was a long pause. “I’ve even heard talk of secretly killing these pests, but how can we face our Monks, our neighbors, ourselves after such desecration?” Chukey hummed in sad agreement – then smiled and added, “Maybe this new democracy will help us.” They shared a quick laugh, and then parted with a nod, each heading for a different patch of darkening golden yellow.

After about fifteen minutes of brisk walking Karma saw the dim outline of his rickety lean-to and a hungry Tashi scanning around anxiously for his replacement. He anticipated the hot meal that awaited him at home, but was concerned that his father faced another long night alone, chasing pigs, wondering where the tigers are, and worrying about his family’s future.

Unfortunately, Karma fell asleep that night and a herd of wild pigs destroyed at least 10% of the family’s barley crop before he awoke and chased them back into the adjacent forest. He immediately knew that this loss along with the damage to his corn crop would force him to borrow money from relatives in Paro to cover Sonam’s school costs. Karma immediately began to worry about his ability to protect next year’s crops and repay this loan. Unfortunately, his plight was not unique, as farmers throughout Bhutan were also facing uncertain futures because of problem wildlife.

After hearing the complaints of famers, officials from the Wildlife Conservation Division under the Government of Bhutan’s Ministry of Agriculture and Forests called for a public hearing in Chumey. Representatives from geog administration (equivalent to county government in the United States), the Tourism Council of Bhutan, and World Wildlife Fund-Bhutan Program will also be attending. Even the district’s recently elected representative to the National Assembly of Bhutan, Pema Wangchuk, will be in attendance. Karma and his neighbors were anxious to see how Bhutan’s new democratic government was going to help them protect their crops and livestock from problem wildlife.