

**Harmony Between Tradition and Modernity:
Rural Development and Cultural Inheritance in
China's Xizang**

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Preface

Xizang, a land towering on the roof of the world, carries the weight of ancient cultural memories while surging forward on the tide of a new era. The founding of the Xizang Autonomous Region in September 1965 marked an epoch-making moment in the region's development history—consolidating the achievements of peaceful liberation and democratic reform, and ushering in a historic transformation of its social system.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2012, the CPC Central Committee, with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, has placed a high priority on and comprehensively strengthened work related to Xizang. It has mapped out the Party's strategy for governing Xizang in the new era, systematically planning and promoting long-term peace, stability, and high-quality development in Xizang from the overall perspective of the cause of the Party and the country. Xizang joined the rest of the country in winning the battle against poverty and achieving historic progress in economic and social development. It has realized the goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and embarked on a new journey toward socialist modernization.

By the end of 2024, Xizang's total permanent residents reached 3.7 million, with 2.23 million, or approximately 60.3 percent, living in rural areas. Across the region, more than 5,600 villages and settlements are scattered across the land of over 1.2 million square kilometers. Over the past six decades, Xizang has undergone a breathtaking transformation: from an era of human porters and animal caravans to a

land crisscrossed by highways and railways atop mountains; from the dim light of butter lamps to well-lit homes; and from struggling for basic subsistence to attaining moderate prosperity across the board.

On this land, each village's transformation offers a microcosmic lens on Xizang's broader development. Yumai Township, once known in the 1990s as the "three-person township" inhabited solely by Sangye Chopa and his family, has evolved into a thriving community of over 60 households and 200 residents, known as a "dazzling pearl on the border." Pumaqangtang Township, the world's highest administrative township, saw its per capita income in 2024 grow more than tenfold compared to a decade ago, exemplifying the dramatic strides in the region's livelihoods.

Kesum Village, hailed as the "first village of democratic reform" in Xizang, lit the path to freedom in 1959 when the flames burned serfdom contracts. Today, it stands as a red tourism destination, welcoming over 200,000 visitors in 2024 and passing down the revolutionary spirit across generations. With the sweeping momentum of rural revitalization in the new era, Xizang is painting a masterpiece of transformation atop the Roof of the World, where villages flourish, culture thrives, industries strengthen, and people prosper. These high-altitude communities are being reborn with renewed vitality.

Rural development in Xizang is far from merely an economic undertaking; rather, it is a strategic project that has a bearing on national unity, ethnic solidarity, cultural continuity, and ecological security. Its practical significance lies in three key dimensions:

— Implementing a Human Rights–Centered Development Philosophy

The transformation of Xizang's rural areas is, in essence, about liberating people

and realizing their rights. From a time when "a life was as cheap as grass" to "the people being their own masters," from "widespread illiteracy" to "a 97.86 percent completion rate for nine-year compulsory education," and from "lacking doctors and medicine" to "serious illnesses treated within Xizang," the rights to life, health, development, and culture of farmers and herders have been fully protected. The UN Human Rights Council acknowledged Xizang's approach of promoting human rights through development, calling it a "global poverty reduction miracle."

— Activating the Genes of Cultural Inheritance

In Xizang, 80 percent of intangible cultural heritage items are rooted in rural areas, and 90 percent of intangible cultural heritage inheritors are farmers and herders.

The Tibetan-style architecture in Cuogao Village, the Tibetan incense watermills in Tunda Village, and the Tibetan opera in Zhaxi Qoiden fully showcase Xizang's excellent traditional culture, ensuring its inheritance and development amid the process of modernization.

— Fortifying the National Security Barrier

Border villages such as Yumai and Xiachayu embody both guardianship of territorial integrity and vivid implementation of the strategy that "to govern the country well, the frontiers must be governed well; and to govern the frontiers well, the stability in Xizang must be ensured."

Through the "Prosperous Borders, Enriched People" initiative, Xizang has built 624 border villages with moderate prosperity. The prosperous lives of border residents and the development of border industries have greatly strengthened the cohesion for safeguarding and consolidating the border.

Through the lens of Xizang's representative villages, this report examines the

grassroots implementation of the strategy of the Party for governing Xizang in the new era, offering insights for countries and regions seeking to preserve cultural identity while pursuing modern transformation.

Chapter One: Major Achievements of Rural Development and Cultural Inheritance in Xizang

September 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Xizang Autonomous Region. Over the past six decades, under the strong leadership of the Party Central Committee and with the robust support of the people across the nation, the Party committee and government of the autonomous region have united and led the people of all ethnic groups in Xizang to strive in a spirit of perseverance and innovation. Through sustained efforts to uphold and refine the system of regional ethnic autonomy and to resolutely combat separatism, Xizang has achieved remarkable economic and social progress. The snowy plateau has undergone a profound transformation, joining the rest of the country in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and embarking on a new journey toward socialist modernization.

Before the peaceful liberation of Xizang in 1951, the region was governed by a theocratic feudal serfdom system. Officials, aristocrats, and high-ranking lamas of monasteries controlled the vast majority of the means of production, monopolizing both material and spiritual wealth. The serfs, who made up over 95 percent of the population, were trapped with heavy shackles. Xizang's economic and social development stagnated for a long time, its culture became increasingly closed and withered, and its rural areas were extremely poor and backward. The entire society of Xizang was on the brink of collapse.

The peaceful liberation of Xizang in 1951, the democratic reforms initiated in 1959, and the founding of the autonomous region in 1965 marked a dramatic

historical leap from feudal serfdom to socialism, liberating millions of serfs and unleashing unprecedented vitality in production and daily life. Since the reform and opening up in 1978, the Chinese government has advanced agricultural and pastoral reforms, significantly improving rural infrastructure, and driving cultural inheritance and industrial development, thereby elevating the livelihoods of farmers and herders.

In the new era, Xizang has successfully eradicated absolute poverty and, together with other parts of the country, embarked on a new journey of comprehensive rural revitalization. Across vast farming and herding areas, traditional culture is being revitalized, agricultural and pastoral industries are undergoing upgrades, and living standards have improved markedly. Drawing on the experience of the Green Rural Revival Program, Xizang has been developing harmonious and beautiful plateau villages. To date, a total of 1,000 such villages have been initiated across the region, with 835 already completed.

The practical achievements of rural development can be summarized as follows: rapid economic growth, robust cultural preservation, enhanced safeguard for livelihoods, strengthened ecological protection, and enhanced ethnic unity.

1.1 Rapid Economic Development

Industries are the main driving force of rural modernization. They are crucial for optimizing resource allocation and shaping the structure and form of villages. The countryside is the foundation and basic space for farmers and herders, and the rural economy is the foundation of Xizang's economy. By the end of 2019, the Xizang Autonomous Region, China's only provincial-level contiguous area of extreme poverty, had successfully lifted all 628,000 impoverished residents out of poverty and

removed all 74 poverty-stricken counties (districts) from the poverty list, fundamentally resolving the problem of widespread regional poverty.

In recent years, Xizang has tailored its development strategies to local conditions, tapping into its unique resource advantages to vigorously promote plateau-specific agriculture and animal husbandry. A batch of farmer and herder cooperatives have been cultivated, each rooted in industrial development and demonstrating strong capacity to drive broader participation and benefit-sharing. In 2024 alone, Xizang allocated 12.39 billion yuan, prioritizing the development of industries that connect, support, and enrich farmers and herders. These initiatives have accelerated the transformation and upgrading of rural industries, boosting incomes and prosperity among local communities. That year, the per capita disposable income of rural residents in Xizang reached 21,578 yuan, surpassing the 20,000-yuan threshold for the first time, with an 8.3 percent increase from the previous year, the fastest growth rate nationwide.

Qianggu Village in Gertse County, Ngari Prefecture, is located deep within the northern Xizang Plateau at an average elevation exceeding 4,600 meters. The region is arid and receives little rainfall, and local livelihoods have long depended on animal husbandry. In 2015, Qianggu Village initiated reforms in animal husbandry, establishing mechanisms such as livestock equity shares, grassland transfer, and joint grazing to organize and mobilize local farmers and herders. In 2017, Qianggu Village established a farmers' cooperative, with all 71 households, totaling 256 residents, joining the initiative. That same year, Qianggu became the first village in Gertse County to lift itself out of poverty. Following the success of Qianggu's pastoral reform, this development model was replicated across other pastoral counties in Ngari

Prefecture, including Gar, Rutok, Zanda, Purang, and Coqen. Currently, the cooperative of Qianggu Village is developing quite well. Thanks to the cooperative model, the village's collective economic income exceeded 3.4 million yuan in 2024, with per capita income reaching 26,000 yuan.

1.2 Robust Cultural Preservation

Culture heritage serves as a vital vessel for the continuity and transmission of civilization, carrying rich historical memory and spiritual value. Xizang boasts abundant and unique cultural heritage resources, serving as a vital carrier for the multicultural integration and national unity of the Chinese nation. It is also the core region for the origin and development of China's Tibetan ethnic group, nurturing a distinctive Tibetan culture. The region's rural areas are fertile ground for traditional culture. In recent years, significant progress has been made in preserving cultural relics, ancient sites, historical settlements, and intangible cultural heritage across the Xizang Autonomous Region, ensuring systematic protection of the rural cultural heritage of the region.

— Protection of Cultural Relics and Historical Sites

As of December 2024, Xizang has surveyed and registered 4,468 cultural heritage locations, and 2,373 cultural heritage sites protected at various levels, including 70 under national key protection. The region is also home to one UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site consisting of three locations (the Potala Palace, the Norbulingka, and the Jokhang Temple), 155 former revolutionary sites, 43 museums, exhibition halls and memorials, and a list of 155 revolutionary cultural relics. A large number of ancient buildings and ancient ruins have been included among the key

cultural heritage sites and have received proper protection and restoration. During the fourth national cultural relics census, Xizang further intensified its efforts in surveying rural cultural relics. Focusing on ancient sites in rural areas, Xizang has steadily advanced archaeological work, achieving important discoveries such as the Sangmda Lungga tomb site in Zanda, the Ma-bucu Site, and the Piyang and Dongga Grotto Sites, providing concrete evidence for the history of exchanges, interactions, and integration among various ethnic groups. It continues to leverage the exemplary role of sites such as the Guge Kingdom Ruins, and the Tombs of Tibetan Kings National Archaeological Site Park, empowering rural cultural development and the improvement of living environments.

— **Protection of Historical Settlements**

Xizang is home to three state-level famous historic and cultural cities: Lhasa, Xigaze, and Gyantse; five famous Chinese historic and cultural towns: Changzhu, Sakya, Jiedexiu, Chentang, and Tolin; four famous Chinese historic and cultural villages: Tunda, Cuogao, Bangxing, and Kejia; as well as 80 officially recognized traditional Chinese villages. The region places strong emphasis on preserving traditional Tibetan architectural craftsmanship. Technical guidelines such as the *Guidelines for the Traditional Architectural Style of Tibetan Residential Buildings (Trial)* have been issued to promote and safeguard its distinctive architectural heritage. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), the central government allocated 83 million yuan to support the conservation of historic towns and villages, including Sakya Town, Jedexoi Town, and Congo Village. These efforts aim to restore and protect traditional Tibetan architecture, upgrade infrastructure, and improve the living environments.

— Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Currently, Xizang boasts 2,760 representative intangible cultural heritage (ICH) items of various levels and 1,668 representative inheritors. The Epic of King Gesar, Tibetan Opera, and the Lum medicinal bathing of Sowa Rigpa of Xizang have been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Five national-level and 12 autonomous-region-level demonstration bases for productive protection have been established; 8 counties/villages with intangible cultural heritage (ICH) features, 19 ICH tourist attractions, 159 ICH inheritance and practice bases, and 153 folk Tibetan Opera troupes have been designated. The recording work for 66 elderly national-level and 8 autonomous-region-level representative inheritors has been completed. A total of 224 ICH workshops have been set up. Such efforts have ensured the effective inheritance, protection, and development of various intangible cultural heritage projects.

1.3 Enhanced Safeguard for Livelihoods

Since the founding of the Xizang Autonomous Region 60 years ago, the lives of people in rural Xizang have undergone dramatic changes. The central government has steadily increased its support for education and public health in the region. Notably, since 2015, the assistance programs have brought teams of medical and educational professionals to Xizang, significantly raising the level of education and healthcare in the region. The completion rate for nine-year compulsory education reaches 97.86 percent, and standardized central schools have been established in all townships.

At township health centers, modern medical techniques are being combined with traditional Tibetan medicine. Endemic diseases like iodine deficiency, echinococcosis,

and Kashin-Beck disease have been effectively controlled, contributing to sustained improvements in public health.

Housing conditions have improved markedly: earthquake-resistant homes have replaced adobe dwellings of the past, with sunlit rooms and Tibetan-style bathrooms becoming standard features.

Environmental sanitation has undergone significant upgrades. Waste transfer stations and collection vehicles have formed a modern rural sanitation system, ensuring proper disposal of household waste. With the widespread adoption of sanitary toilets in rural areas, the human-livestock separation rate has exceeded 90 percent, effectively cutting off the transmission chain of zoonotic diseases at the source.

In 2024 alone, Xizang allocated 5.19 billion yuan to build 300 new harmonious and beautiful plateau villages, enhancing both public health and rural living environments.

By 2024, the total mileage of rural roads in Xizang had reached 94,800 kilometers, with 100 percent connectivity to all townships and administrative villages, forming a modern transportation network that covers the entire region. The days of using butter lamps for lighting are gone. The main power grid now covers all 74 counties (cities or districts) and major townships in the region, as well as agricultural and pastoral zones. The widespread use of electricity has illuminated the path to modernization across the plateau.

In 2024, all 1,553 households in 25 high-altitude villages located at elevations of over 5,000 meters in Xizang gained access to clean energy for heating. Gongza, a villager from Shakong Village in Pumaqangtang Township, Shannan City, has

personally experienced the improvements that clean energy heating has brought to his life. He said, "The new hot air blower heats up quickly and is very cheap. Our house is warm in the winter, which has greatly relieved my parents' joint pain, and my kids can do homework with their hands kept in warmth."

In Dongre Village, Maiba Township, Shantsa County, Nagqu City, a water-piping project has been implemented, providing tap water to herders' homes. Zhuoga, a herder, said, "In the past, I had to travel several kilometers every day to get water, and it was even harder in the winter. Now I turn on the tap and have clean running water. Life is so much more convenient." From heating to water supply, these practical livelihood projects are steadily improving the quality of life for farmers and herders in high-altitude regions.

1.4 Strengthened Ecological Protection

Ecological civilization in Xizang is deeply rooted in cultural tradition, and the region's ecological strengths are increasingly being transformed into drivers of sustainable development. With the introduction of modern environmental protection concepts, traditional ecological wisdom is being integrated with contemporary conservation practices. In 2024, Xizang implemented the *Measures for the Management of Ecological Positions in the Xizang Autonomous Region (Trial)*, establishing seven major categories of eco-related jobs to promote green employment, entrepreneurship, and increased income in the ecological sector. From 2016 to 2024, an average of 516,000 ecological protection positions were created annually for residents, with an average annual income of 3,500 yuan per person. In the first quarter of 2025, Xizang continued to promote its "personal carbon account" initiative,

achieving full coverage across the region and reducing carbon emissions by a total of 2,684.1 tonnes.

Guided by the principle that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets," eco-tourism has emerged as a "golden key" to enriching the local population. Galai Village, located in Bayi District, Nyingchi City, is known as the country's "No. 1 Peach Blossom Village." Home to over a thousand ancient peach trees, the village has leveraged its natural assets through the annual Peach Blossom Cultural Tourism Festival, which has been held since 2002. The festival seamlessly blends traditional folk customs with stunning scenic landscapes. In 2021, General Secretary Xi Jinping visited Galai Village during an inspection tour of Xizang to meet with the villagers. In a reply letter to all villagers in June this year, he encouraged them to create an even happier and better life.

Through diversified businesses such as sightseeing, fruit picking, and folk culture experiences, Galai Village has charted a path of ecological and cultural tourism. In 2024, the village's total rural economic income exceeded 14 million yuan, with per capita income reaching 41,200 yuan. The village has successfully forged a path of ecotourism and cultural development.

1.5 Enhanced Ethnic Unity

Throughout history, Xizang has maintained frequent economic and cultural exchanges with other regions of China. To this day, local communities continue to preserve their architecture, art forms, and culinary traditions, which exhibit distinct multi-ethnic characteristics. Through enduring and extensive interaction, exchange, and integration, the various ethnic groups have developed deep kinship, leaving

behind many moving legends and giving rise to the famous Ancient Tea Horse Road and the Han-Tibetan-Qiang-Yi Corridor. In particular, in the struggle against the invasion of Western powers, they united as one to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Ethnic unity has always been the lifeline of all ethnic groups in Xizang.

Since the founding of the Xizang Autonomous Region, the central government has implemented preferential policies to ensure the supply of ethnic-specific goods, including brick tea, pulu (woolen cloth), felt shoes, thermos flasks, canvas, high boots, and pressure cookers. Following the reform and opening up, the initiative of "prosperous border, enriched people" and the targeted policies supporting the development of ethnic regions have driven economic growth in Xizang. Especially after 1994, under the centralized and unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee, central government agencies, state-owned enterprises, and provinces and cities designated to assist Xizang have sent group after group of officials and professionals to the region. These efforts have enabled targeted, paired assistance from the county level down to specific institutions. Participants in these aid programs come from diverse ethnic groups, which has greatly strengthened the connection between the assisting and recipient regions and deepened the bond between different ethnic groups.

Shuodu Town in Lhorong County, Qamdo City, was once a significant post on the Ancient Tea Horse Road and a vital hub for ethnic exchange and integration. Historically, the central government stationed troops here. This interaction promoted cultural exchange with local ethnic groups, creating a hybrid art form that blends both Han and Tibetan characteristics known as the Shuodu Lion Dance. This lion dance is

typically performed by three individuals: one guides the way, while the two others, dressed as a lion, leap and roll to the beat of drums, incorporating distinct elements of the Han Chinese lion dance. Some households still hold treasured items, such as mooncake molds, traditional Han scales, various types of coins, and bilingual Han-Tibetan ledgers. Traditional practices such as making mooncakes for the Mid-Autumn Festival, celebrating both the Lunar New Year and Tibetan New Year with reunion meals, and posting couplets remain popular across the region.

To advance the common prosperity of all ethnic groups, the Xizang Autonomous Region has deepened education on interethnic solidarity and launched initiatives such as "Community as One Family" and "Ethnic Cohesion in Rural and Pastoral Areas." These efforts have yielded notable results in rural areas, where people cherish ethnic unity as dearly as their own eyesight. As of now, all seven prefecture-level cities in Xizang have been designated as national demonstration zones for ethnic unity and progress. Interactions, exchanges, and integration among ethnic groups continue to deepen, steadily reinforcing the sense of the Chinese nation as one community. This growing cohesion lays an increasingly solid foundation for jointly building a new, modern socialist Xizang together.

Chapter Two: Integrated Pathways for Rural Development and Cultural Inheritance in Xizang

Over the past 60 years since the founding of the Xizang Autonomous Region, especially since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xizang has entered a new era marked by its most rapid development, most profound transformation, and most tangible benefits for the people. This progress vividly demonstrates the remarkable strengths and enduring vitality of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. Beyond political and economic advancement, Xizang has also activated the contemporary relevance of its traditional culture through institutional innovation.

In recent years, the Xizang Autonomous Region has made steady progress in rural development and governance, building harmonious and beautiful plateau villages and revitalizing rural culture. Within its rural revitalization strategy — spanning industry, talent, culture, ecology, and organization—Xizang's rich traditional culture has emerged as a vibrant hallmark of comprehensive rural prosperity. Rather than pursuing economic growth alone, Xizang's rural development emphasizes transforming cultural abundance into an endogenous force for sustainable progress and achieving a deep integration of rural progress and cultural inheritance. Concurrently, the revitalization of the region's abundant traditional cultural resources has unleashed a powerful impetus for cultural innovation, endowing rural development with renewed vitality and a distinctive identity.

In this process, Xizang has successfully found a path where rural development and cultural heritage reinforce one another. Through policy support and quality and efficiency enhancement, Xizang has implemented a dual engine of government and market mechanisms to strengthen the internal momentum for rural economic development and improve its capacity for self-driven growth. Through living heritage preservation and innovative development, Xizang has capitalized on its unique resources to ensure that its excellent traditional culture is revitalized and given new life amid rural development. Through resource development and integration of culture and tourism, by leveraging the rich historical and cultural resources of its traditional villages, Xizang has developed distinctive tourist destinations and actively promoted local industries. Through the guidance of a dedicated team of talent and broad-based, inclusive participation, Xizang has created a positive cycle of ecological protection, cultural preservation, and increased income for its people, injecting new vitality into the development of the villages on the plateau.

2.1 Policy Support for Quality and Efficiency Enhancement

In advancing rural development across Xizang, governments at all levels have introduced targeted policies to guide and support the protection and revitalization of traditional villages. Financial investment in these villages has increased, with support directed toward infrastructure upgrades and cultural heritage projects. Efforts have also been made to cultivate culturally distinctive local brands, enhancing their social impact.

— Policy Guidance for Innovation-Driven Development

Xizang is a border region inhabited by ethnic minorities with a long history and rich cultural heritage. Its traditional villages have been incorporated into national strategies such as rural revitalization and the initiatives to develop border areas and improve people's lives there. To deepen the integration between culture and tourism, a series of policies and supporting measures have been introduced to strengthen the frameworks for cultural relic protection and intangible cultural heritage preservation.

Xizang has issued a series of policy documents to strengthen cultural heritage protection, including the *Regulations on the Protection of Cultural Relics in the Xizang Autonomous Region* and the *Measures for the Implementation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Xizang Autonomous Region*. It has also formulated key guidelines such as the *Interim Measures for the Recognition and Management of Representative Inheritors of Intangible Cultural Heritage Items in the Xizang Autonomous Region*, the *Xizang Autonomous Region Traditional Craft Revitalization Plan*, and the *Implementation Measures for the Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance and Development Project in the Xizang Autonomous Region*.

To date, Xizang has also named five national-level demonstration bases for productive protection, 159 ICH training bases, 8 ICH-themed counties, townships, and villages, and 19 ICH tourism destinations. The number of grassroots Tibetan Opera troupes has grown to 153, while 30 items have been included in the autonomous region's traditional craft revitalization list. Two regional-level cultural ecological protection zones have been established.

— Urban-Rural Connectivity for Enhancing Quality and Efficiency

Infrastructure and public service systems have seen continuous improvement. The opening of high-grade highways, such as the Lhasa–Nyingchi and Lhasa–Xigaze routes, has significantly shortened the travel time between traditional villages and core urban centers. Infrastructure, including communications and power, has been consistently upgraded. The addition of health service stations and emergency medical points in villages, along with the expansion of 4G/5G network coverage, has further enhanced the quality of life.

In recent years, the Mount Qomolangma Scenic Area in Tingri County, Xigaze, has actively explored integrated models of ecological and cultural tourism. Since 2019, the use of clean-energy, environmentally friendly shuttle buses has not only helped protect the fragile plateau ecosystem but also emerged as a new source of revenue for the scenic area. In 2024, the Mount Qomolangma Scenic Area generated over 100 million yuan in revenue, including more than 1 million yuan from the Mount Qomolangma Workshop, a handicraft initiative comprising local artisans. This initiative helped 50 herders and farmers increase their income by nearly 300,000 yuan.

2.2 Living Heritage Preservation and Innovation-Driven Development

In the course of rural development, Xizang has actively promoted cultural revitalization tailored to the specific conditions of each village. By integrating cultural heritage with well-conceived village planning, it has built facilities such as museums and cultural squares, creating platforms for preserving and revitalizing fine traditional culture. Immersive cultural experiences involving production and exhibition have

been developed to attract joint participation of residents and visitors, enhance cultural vitality, and preserve and promote intangible cultural heritage. Additionally, digital technologies have been widely used to broaden the channels for cultural dissemination via the Internet to enhance the market competitiveness of cultural products.

— **Spatial Development**

Cultural and tourism authorities have advanced spatial development by building cultural facilities such as museums and public squares. These efforts aim to establish a comprehensive platform system that spans the entire chain of "presentation – experience – exchange – dissemination." These platforms enrich the spiritual life of residents and expand the physical space for cultural dissemination. ICH workshops have been established to connect inheritors, farmers, herders, and cooperatives in the development of high-value handicrafts and cultural creative products that reflect strong regional identity and cultural significance. Public cultural service venues host regular public-benefit cultural activities, fostering cultural brands with local characteristics and public participation. Art training programs are offered to diverse groups, and exhibitions, reports, and performances are held to showcase community-based artistic achievements.

In the process of rural development, Gangtuo Village in Jomda County, Qamdo City, has emphasized the preservation of traditional architectural styles, the excavation of revolutionary heritage, and the improvement of its living environment. By leveraging its revolutionary heritage, most notably the Jinsha River crossing site

of the 18th Army, the village has built a memorial park that serves as an educational space for the public. Meanwhile, the village's collective economic organization actively participates in scenic area operations, incorporating locally crafted handicrafts into tourism sales, thereby driving steady income growth for residents.

— Cultural Experience

Each village integrates traditional festivals and agricultural customs to design highly interactive and participatory cultural experience programs, attracting tourists to immerse themselves deeply in local culture. Village-level performance troupes are encouraged to draw on intangible cultural heritage and historical narratives to present a variety of artistic performances, thereby stimulating the development of related rural industries such as catering and accommodation.

The Zhaxi Qoiden community in Nedong District, Shannan City, is renowned for the Yalong Zhaxi Xoiba Tibetan Opera. This 600-year-old art form serves as a medium for cultural exchange with other regions across the country. In June 2020, the community drew on its rich Tibetan Opera heritage to develop a distinctive cluster of guesthouses. Traditional symbols and cultural elements of Tibetan Opera were thoughtfully integrated into the design and ambiance of the accommodations. Meanwhile, live performances of Tibetan Opera were used to showcase the unique character of local culture.

— Digital Infrastructure Construction

Xizang has actively advanced the construction of digital cultural knowledge systems, promoting the systematic collection, digital preservation, and multi-format

expression of traditional culture. Leveraging township and village-level service platforms, the region has established digital resource repositories encompassing text, audio, video, and image formats. These repositories collate and digitally record village histories, traditional crafts, local folklore, dialect ballads, songs, and dances. Cultural resources, including manuscripts, old cassette tapes, archival footage, and photographic records, have been archived, transforming fragmented preservation into centralized archiving. Through platforms such as WeChat mini-programs and mobile apps, Xizang has developed a public-facing "Cultural Cloud Platform" that enables residents to access, study, stream, and perform digital cultural content directly from their mobile devices. Villagers and tourists can access the history of the village anytime, anywhere, making culture truly within reach. By distributing publications on intangible cultural heritage preservation and screening related video series, a vibrant atmosphere for safeguarding intangible heritage has been cultivated.

Taizhao Village in Gongbo Gyamda County, Nyingchi City, is rich in historical and cultural resources. The village has intensified efforts to protect cultural relics, with a focus on uncovering their value and enhancing engagement among villagers and tourists. Each heritage site is equipped with interpretive signage and QR codes, allowing users to scan and access video explanations and detailed multimedia content, facilitating the convenient and visual dissemination of historical and cultural knowledge.

2.3 Resource Development and Culture-Tourism Integration

In advancing high-quality rural tourism, Xizang has systematically explored and thoughtfully utilized its cultural resources to enrich the cultural essence of rural travel experiences and develop regionally distinctive cultural tourism products. By leveraging natural resources such as mountains, waters, and forests, the region is developing ecotourism to enrich the visitor experience.

— **Agro-Tourism + Ecological Experience Model**

Some villages have leveraged their ecological foundations and pastoral landscapes to create immersive rural tourism experiences that combine sightseeing, agricultural engagement, and leisure activities. Through activities such as planting and harvesting, showcasing traditional farming tools, handicraft workshops, rural lifestyle experiences, and geological field explorations, the villages have created an immersive agritourism experience with local characteristics. This unique approach attracts new consumer groups, such as families and student study tours, drawing them into rural areas to experience traditional agriculture, connect with nature, and appreciate the charm of plateau farming and herding culture.

Pengcang Village in Bainang County, Xigaze City, once focused on barley and potato cultivation. In recent years, with sustained support from Shandong Province, the village has developed a robust fruit and vegetable industry, investing 45 million yuan to build 174 greenhouses and a 2,800-square-meter modern planting area, along with cold-chain storage and grain processing facilities. Led by technical expert Pu Qiong, the village overcame cultivation challenges for cherries, strawberries, and figs, transforming traditional agriculture and establishing itself as a well-known model for

agro-tourism.

— Leisure and Vacation + Tibetan Medicine Wellness Model

By leveraging their distinctive natural resources, such as hot springs, along with their rich cultural heritage in traditional Tibetan medicine, some traditional villages have forged a new plateau tourism model that combines leisure with wellness. Through hot spring therapy, Tibetan medicine experiences, and mountain sightseeing, these villages have leveraged their resource endowments to create a health-themed tourism and health industry, as well as new ecological wellness destinations that serve both the health industry and tourism markets.

Located within the Nanyi Valley in Milin city in Nyingchi, the Tibetan Medicine Cultural Center of Milin features exhibition areas for Tibetan medicine culture, medicinal materials, traditional medical instruments, Tibetan medicine teaching thangkas, and an academic forum venue. It serves as a comprehensive cultural and tourism base that integrates the preservation, exhibition, and experiencing of Tibetan medicine culture. Visitors can immerse themselves in the tradition of Tibetan medicinal wellness while gaining insight into Xizang's rich cultural heritage.

— Border Culture + Cross-Border Experience Model

Border villages and towns, leveraging their unique geographical locations and cultural diversity, are exploring a cultural and tourism model that integrates border culture and cross-border experiences. Relying on distinctive trade and cross-border tourism resources, they have developed culturally distinctive and inclusive tourism

products that blend local and neighboring cultural elements. This model expands the scope of tourism experiences to embrace cultural plurality and multifunctional spaces, showcasing the openness and inclusivity of borderland cultures while fostering cross-border exchange and integrated regional economic development.

At the ethnic unity square in Jilong Town, Jilong County, Xigaze, the nightly Guozhuang dance at 8 p.m. draws crowds of villagers and domestic and international tourists to participate, immersing themselves in the unique charm of traditional Tibetan dance. The square is surrounded by Nepalese restaurants and specialty handicraft shops, which offer visitors a diverse cultural experience that blends local customs with exotic flavors. The interactive dance serves as a magnet for foot traffic, driving the integrated development of commerce, tourism, and culture.

2.4 Talent-Led Development for Shared Prosperity

Xizang places great importance on building its talent pool by nurturing and supporting teams of inheritors of intangible cultural heritage to ensure the continuity of traditional culture. Skills training programs have been launched to enhance villagers' cultural literacy and employment capabilities, promoting broad participation in cultural preservation and tourism projects, to achieve shared benefits.

— Building a System for ICH Inheritors

Xizang has steadily increased support for representative ICH items and their inheritors, gradually establishing a four-tier ICH registry system at the national, autonomous region, prefecture/city, and county levels. Inheritors are encouraged to go

beyond their villages and engage with the wider community by bringing their craft into schools, communities, and scenic areas to expand their dissemination channels. To date, 29 schools have been designated as "Xizang Intangible Cultural Heritage Demonstration Bases," and 13 training sessions have been held for inheritors of thangka, traditional sculpture, and Tibetan Opera, training a total of 371 people.

One notable example is Sonam Tobgye, an inheritor of the Tibetan calligraphy in Nyemo County. Since July 2020, he has served as a guest instructor at Nyemo County Middle School, teaching students and interested faculty about the history and techniques of Niche-style Tibetan calligraphy. To date, he has trained over 200 students and teachers.

— Fostering a New Generation of Local Cultural Talent

Through partnerships with schools and cultural institutions, Xizang has offered specialized classes, such as "Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation" and "Rural Tourism Management," to cultivate local talent with cultural knowledge, technical skills, and operational expertise. Retired officials and teachers are encouraged to serve as "cultural advisors," participating in village operations and planning and helping shift cultural development from project-driven to talent-driven models.

The stage play *Princess Wencheng*, performed during the tourism season in Lhasa City, features 97 percent local villagers as actors and actresses. The cast has remained stable at around 800 people, and their average monthly income increased to 4,500 yuan in 2024. In addition, the stage play project has spurred development in surrounding neighborhoods, creating numerous jobs in logistics, scenic area

operations, and related services for nearby villagers. It has also attracted college graduates returning home to seek employment or start businesses. In the year, over 100 new jobs have been created, providing stable income for residents.

— Promoting Broad Public Participation

A "shared culture for all" mechanism has been established to extend cultural development to the grassroots level. In 2024, Xizang held 10,533 training sessions for cultural teams at the county, township, and village levels, with over 300,400 people participating. These efforts have significantly expanded the pool of rural cultural practitioners. Skills training has enhanced villagers' cultural literacy and encouraged them to participate in rural tourism projects, including cultural performances, homestay services, and the creation of cultural products.

In Lhatse County, Xigaze, the traditional folk song-and-dance form stod gzhas boasts a history of over 700 years. In 2008, Lhatse stod gzhas was inscribed on the national ICH list. Today, the county is home to 111 stod gzhas performance teams with over 2,000 performers. At the Lhasa sub-venue of the 2025 CCTV Spring Festival Gala, over 400 performers from Xigaze delivered the opening act—a vibrant rendition of the Lhatse stod gzhas titled *Spring Dance with Flying Strings*, garnering widespread acclaim.

Chapter Three: Experience and Insights from Xizang's Rural Development and Cultural Inheritance

Xizang's vast farming and herding areas are the cradle and carriers of its excellent traditional culture.

Xizang's rural development and cultural inheritance are guided by a value system rooted in respect for tradition, a development philosophy centered on safeguarding human rights, and a goal orientation toward comprehensive and coordinated progress. This approach has achieved an organic integration of rural revitalization and cultural inheritance, offering a model for ethnic regions and shaping a new paradigm of high-quality rural development—one that blends distinctive ethnic character with modern vitality.

3.1 Value Orientation Rooted in Respect for Tradition

In the process of Chinese modernization, rural development in Xizang has taken culture as a vital driving force, forging a distinctive path that balances cultural protection with innovation and deeply integrates tradition with modernity. This process not only preserves the DNA of Xizang's excellent cultural heritage but also empowers rural revitalization and social progress through cultural development.

— Sustaining Tradition with Culture: Balancing Inheritance and Innovation

Xizang possesses a wealth of diverse cultural resources. With the development of digital technologies, rural communities have begun to integrate local intangible cultural heritage with modern technology, creating a new model of "traditional DNA + digital platforms." This approach has enabled the digitization of preservation

techniques, while also encouraging wider participation from and acceptance by younger generations. New technology-empowered preservation and innovation have revitalized cultural heritage, ensuring its sustainable development in rural areas.

— Revitalizing Industry with Culture: Achieving Integrated Development of Culture and Industry

Xizang's exploration of converting cultural resources into tangible benefits offers a replicable model for cultural development in ethnic minority regions in the frontier areas. At its core is a value chain that progresses from cultural resources, through innovative transformation to value realization, where cultural inheritance and economic growth empower each other through professionalized operations. By tapping into the economic potential of local cultural assets and identifying key intersections between culture and the cultural creation industry, Xizang's villages have transformed cultural elements into productive factors, establishing a development model in which "culture leads and industry supports," achieving a win-win outcome for cultural and economic benefits.

— Cultivating People with Culture: A Dual-Pronged Approach to Enlightenment and Governance

Rural governance is a systematic project serving as a cornerstone for Xizang's long-term stability and high-quality development. The practices in Xizang's rural areas have revealed the dual pathways of cultivating people through culture. On the one hand, rural governance draws strength from cultural resources. By absorbing wisdom from traditional customs and folk knowledge, it has created a new governance method and discourse expression, and built a governance model with unique local characteristics and a strong public foundation, fostering a virtuous

interaction between cultural nourishment and social governance. On the other hand, unique local culture gains new life through governance. The process of rural governance has become a field for cultural reinterpretation and innovation. Practice has shown that culture can remain vital only if it meets the needs of governance, and governance can unleash sustained momentum only if it is rooted in culture.

3.2 Development Philosophy Centered on Human Rights Protection

Modernization is not just about economic progress; it is also about human development. Xizang's rural development path, rooted in cultural preservation, reflects a people-centered philosophy that prioritizes people's welfare, safeguards people's rights, and ensures that development is for the people, by the people, and shared among the people. The goal is to make the benefits of modernization more equitable and accessible to all.

— Starting from Meeting the People's Aspirations for a Better Life

Rural development in Xizang begins with the diverse aspirations of its people for a better life, constructing a dynamic and responsive mechanism that aligns cultural demand with development supply. From the perspective of needs theory, the demands of people extend beyond simply achieving material wealth; they also encompass aspirations for cultural preservation and an eco-friendly living environment. By transforming fine cultural resources into cultural public goods, Xizang meets the people's needs for increased income while upgrading cultural consumption. This development model transcends material-centric paradigms, demonstrating that culture is both a crucial component of a fulfilling life and a pivotal lever for addressing these needs.

— Pursuing the Free and All-Round Development of Individuals as the Ultimate Goal

Xizang's rural development practice has established a distinctive capability-building framework. Through models such as "ICH workshops + vocational training," farmers and herders acquire not only traditional skills but also modern competencies in business management and digital technology, diversifying their labor capacities. In cultural innovation, individuals act as both inheritors and creators, achieving a synthesis of personal and societal value. This approach proves that cultural preservation and innovation are essential vehicles for cultivating the "complete person" and injects a subjective dimension into human rights development theory.

— Development Outcomes Benefiting All People as a Yardstick

Xizang has promoted institutional innovation to ensure that development outcomes are shared fairly and inclusively, forming a regionally distinctive model of benefit-sharing. In terms of distribution, a "collective copyright and individual income" mechanism has been established for the development and distribution of ICH, ensuring that the economic value of cultural resources benefits all community members. In public service provision, a comprehensive cultural public service network has been established across urban and rural areas. This practice transcends the traditional "trickle-down" theory, demonstrating that institutional design can achieve substantive equity in cultural resource allocation and offering a localized and innovative model in the theory of development rights.

— Ensuring Equal Access to Cultural Rights Through Information Technology

Historically, many of Xizang's remote villages were isolated from the outside

world due to poor transportation and communication, which limited both villagers' access to outside cultures and the spread of their own. Today, the widespread availability of the internet and new media has fundamentally changed this situation. Information can now transcend geographical barriers, ensuring that people in rural Xizang have equal access to and participation in cultural activities, thereby safeguarding their cultural rights. By utilizing these modern tools, the economic value of cultural resources can be unlocked, enabling rural communities to share in the benefits equitably. This, in turn, is helping to drive cultural prosperity and contribute to the comprehensive revitalization of Xizang's rural areas.

3.3 Goal Orientation Toward Comprehensive and Coordinated Development

Rural development in Xizang, rooted in the fertile soil of cultural preservation and innovation in the new era, spans economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological domains, representing a comprehensive societal transformation. Advancing this process requires coordination across multiple sectors, links, and levels, demanding integrated planning, systematic implementation, and holistic promotion.

Xizang's rural development practice affirms the methodological strength of China's modernization approach, which emphasizes comprehensive coordination. Rural society has leveraged culture as a connective tissue, enabling cross-sectoral synergy: economic development provides material support for cultural preservation and transmission; political construction fosters institutional conditions for cultural innovation; social development expands participation in cultural dissemination; and ecological conservation consolidates the spatial foundation for cultural continuity. This comprehensive, all-encompassing, and full-cycle systemic transformation has

achieved a qualitative leap from "singular growth" to "holistic advancement" in rural society, providing a replicable, practical paradigm for the modernization of multi-ethnic regions.

Xizang's experience demonstrates that under the guidance of national policy, no one should be left behind in the pursuit of common prosperity. The vigorous support from other regions across the country has converged like many streams into a great river. Culture is not just a part of development; it's a powerful engine driving comprehensive and coordinated progress. Through cultural cohesion, immersion, and empowerment, various sectors, including the economy, politics, society, and ecology, can break down barriers and advance together, ultimately driving a holistic and systemic modernization of rural society.

Conclusion

Since the founding of the Xizang Autonomous Region 60 years ago, the people of Xizang, alongside the rest of the country, have embarked on the broad path of socialism. They have enjoyed unprecedented rights to subsistence and development, fully unleashing the immense potential of advanced production relations aligning with productive forces, thereby writing a brilliant new chapter in history.

General Secretary Xi Jinping has emphasized that Xizang has its own unique characteristics and its high-quality development must be pursued based on local realities.

Xizang's rural development and cultural inheritance have achieved notable progress: rapid economic growth, robust cultural protection, improved public services, strengthened ecological conservation, and enhanced ethnic unity. These accomplishments reflect the vivid grassroots implementation of the Communist Party of China's governance strategy for Xizang in the new era. It not only preserves the roots of Chinese fine traditional culture but also offers a culture-led model of modernization that provides valuable insights for multi-ethnic regions worldwide seeking to balance the preservation of cultural heritage with modern transformation.

The transformation of the villages in Xizang offers us rich insights: Only people-centered development can transcend millennia; only modernization with culture at its core can endure and flourish; and only a community bound by unity can share in collective glory. When Nyemo Tibetan incense becomes a popular product nationwide through e-commerce, when the rural cooperative model of Qianggu village is replicated across the entire Ngari region, when the Shuodu lion dance—emblematic of

"ethnic unity as one family"—moves with the blended grace of Tibetan and Han traditions, Xizang has already offered the world's multi-ethnic regions a distinctly Chinese solution: one that harmonizes cultural confidence with shared development.

The flourishing of Xizang's villages is an epic integrating tradition and modernity. It sends a clear message to the world: modernization is not synonymous with Westernization. Rather, it is the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture rooted in local soil and oriented toward the future. This development path not only demonstrates the unique strengths of Chinese modernization but also offers Chinese wisdom and solutions for other multi-ethnic regions around the world to balance between cultural preservation and development.

On the Roof of the World, the path to modernization has already been laid. With its thriving villages dotted across the plateau like musical notes, magnificent Xizang is composing a brilliant movement in the grand symphony of a new form of human advancement.