

# TOWARDS A LOCALIZED DEVELOPMENT APPROACH IN TIBETAN AREAS OF CHINA

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## ABSTRACT

Since initiating far-reaching economic reforms in the late 1970s, China has experienced significant economic change and growth. However, Tibetans face many challenges such as growing inequality between rural and urban areas, poor education, and marginalization in the market place. These problems are analyzed and a localized development approach that takes into account the unique Tibetan environment, culture, and material development conditions, is suggested to address such issues.

## KEY WORDS

China, development, localized approach, Tibetan

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Since the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) initiated its Reform and Opening (*gaige kaifang*) program in the late 1970s, China has experienced significant economic change and growth. However, this growth has not been equitable, and the present economic gap between eastern and western China is wide. Using gross domestic product (GDP) per capita as an example, one can see that most western provinces and regions lag far behind the provinces in the coastal areas. In 1998, the national GDP per capita was calculated to be 6,404 RMB<sup>2</sup> but, in the western regions, only Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region reached this figure. The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), with a GDP per capita of 3,696 RMB, barely reached 57 percent of the national average (Zhuang 2003:39).

The Chinese government sought to address this disparity in its 'Western Development' program (*xibu dakaiifa*), which it announced in 1999. Since then, the western provinces and regions have demonstrated rapid and unprecedented economic growth. One of the major tasks of the Western Development program has been to mitigate the huge gap between west and east, and yet, the gap continues to widen. In 2005, the TAR and Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces reported per capita GDP in RMB, of 9,114 (TAR), 10,045 (Qinghai), 7,477 (Gansu), 9,060 (Sichuan), and 7,835 (Yunnan). In contrast, the GDP for Zhejiang, Guangdong, and Jiangsu provinces was RMB 27,703, 24,435, and 24,560, respectively (NBS 2006:66). The gap had been about 10,000 RMB in 2002, which translates into a doubling of the gap in just three years.

The stark difference in wealth between eastern and western China is also observable in specific areas pertaining to the social, material, and technical infrastructure, directly and indirectly impacting general economic development of the regions concerned. Crucial discrepancies may be found especially in technology, education, management practices, and levels of innovation. One area

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<sup>1</sup> Much of this article is a revised version of Wang (2009b).

<sup>2</sup> Renminbi refers to the currency of the People's Republic of China.

in which this gap is especially notable is in literacy rates, which are very low in western areas. In 2005, the national literacy rate (for people over the age of fifteen) was 88.96 percent. However, other than in Xinjiang and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, the literacy rate in the western regions was, on average, only about seventy-nine percent (NBS 2006:114). Tibetans, in particular, are in a dire situation in terms of literacy; in 2005, for example, literacy in the TAR stood at only 55.16 percent.

In recognition of the growing gaps between east and west in terms of education and income, the central government increased investment in Tibetan areas of China (Fischer 2012). The TAR has received special attention from the central government, in addition to assistance as part of the Western Development program. This is clear from records of the Fourth Tibet Forum held in late June 2001, during which it was decided that the central government would finance 117 projects worth 31.2 billion RMB in the TAR. An additional 1.06 billion RMB was to be provided by other provinces and municipalities to sponsor an additional seventy projects. Most such projects were dedicated to modernizing and improving agriculture, animal husbandry, infrastructure, science, and education, or to improving grassroots Communist Party organizations and environmental protection (Wang et al. 2004:100).

These investments have been the key factor supporting the TAR's above-national average growth rates since the launch of the Western Development program (Fischer 2012), but serious challenges remain. Certain of these problems are common to China's development experiences more generally, but many are unique to Tibetan areas. Similar to other autonomous regions, the Tibetan areas of China have been handicapped by transport difficulties, backward infrastructure, slow industrial development, and so on. However, the expanding urban-rural divide, marginalization of indigenous populations, and low quality education are particularly serious in Tibetan areas. Such problems are exacerbated by the centrally-devised development strategies that are inappropriately applied from eastern coastal regions to the western hinterlands. In

light of this, a locally appropriate model of development for China's Tibetan areas is proposed that takes into consideration the region's unique environment, local culture, and conditions of material production. Before turning to a detailed examination of this localized development model, however, I first outline some of the challenges such a model hopes to redress: issues related to the urban-rural divide, education, and market exclusion in the post-reform era.

#### MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR TIBETANS SINCE THE REFORM AND OPEN PROGRAM

##### The Rural-Urban Divide in Tibetan Areas

Inequality has risen between rural and urban areas all over China since the national Reform and Opening program was initiated (Wang 2009). However, Tibetan areas, especially in the TAR, display some of the most extreme examples of this in China. In 1985, the annual average income for farmers in China was 398 RMB while, in the TAR, it was 353 RMB. In 1996, these figures were 2,090 RMB and 975 RMB respectively – a dramatic increase in the gap between the TAR and China as a whole in this eleven year period. Nevertheless, per capita annual income of the TAR urban households was higher than the national average. For instance, in 1988, per capita annual income of the TAR's urban households was 1,211 RMB, while this figure was 1,192 RMB for China as a whole. In 1996, per capita annual income of the TAR's urban households increased to 5,912 RMB, while it was 5,160 RMB for China as a whole (Nan 2002:125). At this time, the average income of the TAR's urban citizen was therefore higher than that of China's average urban citizen, ranking seventh after Shanghai, Beijing, Guangdong, Zhejiang, Tianjin, and Fujian.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This disparity had reversed by 2005, when per capita annual income of the TAR's urban households was 10,659 RMB, lower than the national average of 11,321 RMB

Meanwhile, rural incomes lag far behind. As Xu (2003:74) indicated, with the exception of Lhasa, all of the TAR's seventy-three counties are impoverished, making the TAR the largest impoverished area in China. The ratio of average income between the TAR's urban and rural areas increased from 2.79:1 in 1985 to 4.8:1 in 2000, nearly double the ratio of China's national urban to rural ratio. In 2005, per capita annual income of the TAR's rural households was 2,078 RMB, far less than the national average of 3,255 RMB (NBS 2006:357, 370). The ratio of average income between the TAR's urban and rural areas had, by this time, further increased to 5.1:1, despite a quarter of a century having elapsed since the Reform and Open program was implemented.

The situation is even more striking if we examine the average expenditures of urban and rural households in the TAR. As Figure 1 (following page) shows, in 1985, the TAR's average urban household consumption expenditure was 3.37 times that of the TAR's rural households, which had increased to 6.92 times by 1999. More specifically, the average TAR urban households' expenditure on food, housing, transportation, and communication increased much more than rural household expenditure from 1985 to 1999. Among these expenses, transportation and communication posted a huge increase from 1.04 times in 1985 to 37.9 times in 1999. Although the gap in medical services, education, and recreation narrowed somewhat, the difference between the TAR rural and urban areas remains immense.

Figure 1. Comparison of per capita annual consumption expenditure of the TAR's urban and rural households (Rural=1).<sup>4</sup>

Item	Year		
	1985	1995	1999
Average consumption expenditure	3.37	4.36	6.92
Food	2.74	3.50	4.99
Clothing	6.30	8.75	8.49
Housing	0.97	3.36	7.11
Domestic appliances and services	7.46	2.16	3.87
Medical and health	80.00	18.17	12.29
Transportation and communication	1.04	11.33	37.90
Education and recreation	48.48	54.33	46.38
Other goods and services	6.00	25.67	32.42

### Poor Education

A key challenge faced by Tibetans in the modern economic environment is limited access to quality education. Education plays a crucial role in today's knowledge-based economy. Investment in education contributes significantly to productivity growth and to fostering technological change and diffusion. Better education is essential for employability and reducing social exclusion. However, despite impressive progress in educational development in Tibetan areas of China since 1978, a large gap remains between the educational attainments of Tibetans and the Han Chinese majority, and between Tibetans and other ethnic minorities. Education in Tibetan areas is still hampered by such basic issues as improper language of instruction, under-qualified teachers, and lack of materials.

For example, as recently as 1990, less than twenty percent of Tibetans in the TAR had a primary school education (Postiglione et al. 2006). Although this figure increased to 42.3 percent by 2005, the

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<sup>4</sup> Hu and Wen (2001).

illiteracy rate in the TAR was 44.84 percent in the same year, the highest among the western provinces and regions and far higher than the national illiteracy rate of 11.04 percent. The failure at the level of secondary education is astonishing. By 2005, at the national level, 38.3 percent of PRC citizens had a junior secondary education and 12.4 percent had a senior secondary education, while in the TAR these numbers were 8.4 percent and 2.1 percent respectively, the lowest educational levels in all of China (NBS 2006:112-114).

Additionally, among Tibetans who have been to school, only a small number have received a skills-oriented education. Most jobs available to students are as cadres and teachers and the requirement is usually a college education. The major reasons for this are, firstly, the initial educational policy in ethnic minority areas was mainly to train minority cadres in order for the government to strengthen its political power. Consequently, the training needs of personnel in other sectors were neglected. Secondly, the primary economic activities in Tibetan areas are farming and herding. Although the government has established some modern industry in Tibetan areas,<sup>5</sup> most industries were established with the help of more developed provinces and with central government management. As a result, most personnel also came from those provinces. Therefore, there was little need for skilled technicians from Tibetan areas, which is why the training of local people was neglected (Wang 2007).

Education is critical for Tibet's economic development and Tibetan market participation. Language remains a critical issue in hampering the educational outcomes of Tibetans in China. As the official language of China, Chinese plays an important role in people's daily lives, and has become the language of commerce in many Tibetan towns, due to the increased number of Han migrants. Consequently, many government leaders and officials believe that learning Chinese well is crucial for Tibetans to be more competitive in the market. In order to learn Chinese well, they order schools to use Chinese as the instructional language, even though most Tibetan students speak no Chinese, or speak it poorly. This ignores Tibetan

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<sup>5</sup> For more detail, see Wang (2009b).

realities and the importance of mother tongue schooling (Wang 2007). Consequently, Tibetan students do not learn the content of various subjects well, and educational attainment suffers enormously. Nonetheless, many government officials, both Han and Tibetan, persist in thinking that Tibetans' poor Chinese language skills explain their poor educational outcomes.

Finally, the rugged topography and low population density of the Tibetan Plateau make providing educational infrastructure in the region particularly difficult. Additionally, poverty in Tibetan areas makes popularizing basic education a daunting task because of the expenses associated with maintaining children in schools that are often far from home. Furthermore, unbalanced educational structure and vague educational policies contribute to the difficulties of educational development.

### Marginalization of Tibetans in the Market

Limited Tibetan market participation is another critical challenge. It was partially in recognition of this problem that the PRC government launched its Western Development program. Although government policies provide many business opportunities, Tibetans are poorly equipped to respond to and take advantage of such opportunities. My research (Wang 2009a) reveals that, though the Tibetan population is in the majority in most Tibetan areas of China, Tibetans own only about twenty percent of businesses in those areas. This figure alone suggests challenges faced by the Tibetan community, revealing serious competition in seeking employment in their home areas (Wang 2009a).

Because government organizations do not organize and compile business information by ethnicity, I did not obtain information regarding private enterprises by sector during my research. However, Tibetan businesses are usually very small – they are not even medium-sized by international standards. Since small shops represent the most common Tibetan business, I counted small



shops in several major towns in Tibetan areas, and then sorted them by sector and owner ethnicity. For example, in Hezuo – the prefectural seat of Gannan – I visited two main streets where many shops were located and found a total of 370 shops that included clothing (sixty-three), commodities (fifty-nine), restaurants (fifty-two), and small food shops (fifty-two). Others included barbershops, shoe sales, and entertainment centers. The business owners were primarily Han and Muslims.<sup>6</sup> Only forty-two businesses (eleven percent) were owned by Tibetans.

Although the number of Tibetan-owned businesses in this case was limited, many of my interviewees claimed that an increasing number of Tibetans are now involved in business. They said that it was difficult to find a Tibetan-owned business in Hezuo in the late 1990s, but now, many Tibetans were doing business. Interviewees commented that, compared to other counties in Gannan Prefecture, more Tibetans do business in Xiahe, Hezuo, Maqu, and Luqu; nearly half of the restaurants in Xiahe are owned by Tibetans. However, in terms of absolute numbers, the number of Tibetan-owned businesses in Gannan Prefecture remains small. Most businesses are owned by Han and Muslims.

I was told a similar story in Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, during a research visit in 2006. While still few in absolute numbers, the number of Tibetans involved in business had increased in the past several years. For example, although Tibetans constitute more than ninety-five percent of Zeku County's population (as I was told by the director of the county's Bureau of Industry and Commerce), Tibetan-owned businesses accounted for only about thirty percent of the total number of businesses. In relation to the general population, the number of Tibetans involved in business was very small but, compared to seven years ago, there had been a dramatic increase. There were only five restaurants and fifteen shops run by Tibetans in 1999, but in 2006

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<sup>6</sup> The term Muslim refers primarily to members of the Hui and Salar ethnic groups.

there were twenty-three restaurants and 139 shops run by Tibetans in Zeku County Town.

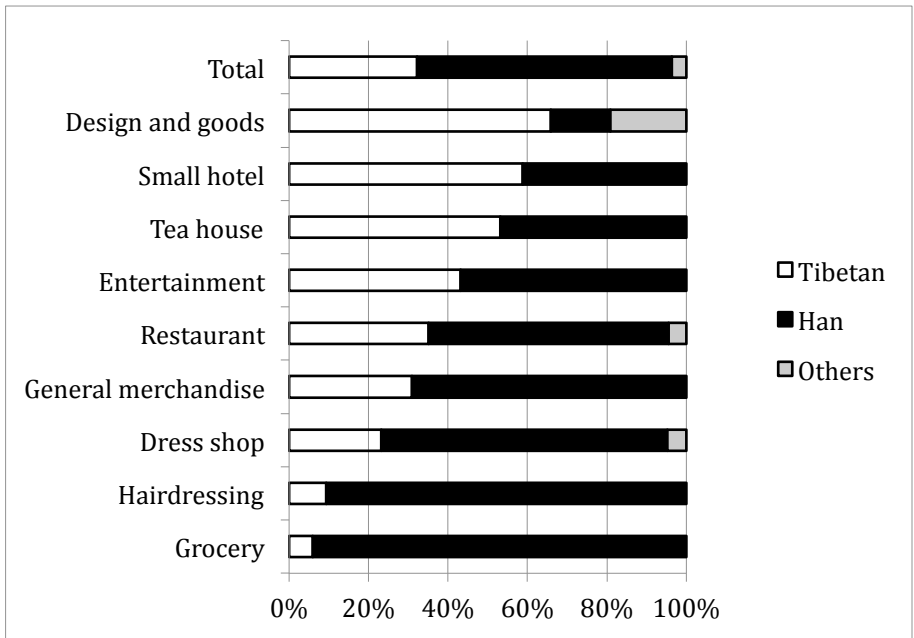
In Jianzha County Town, Huangnan Prefecture, there were a total of 529 businesses, but only fifty-three were Tibetan-owned, accounting for only around ten percent of the total in 2006. However, the Tibetan population accounts for sixty-nine percent of the total county population.<sup>7</sup> Again, compared to 1999, the number of Tibetan-owned businesses had increased significantly by 2006. For example, there were only eight newly-opened restaurants and a few shops run by Tibetans in Jianzha in 1999, but in 2006, there were seventeen restaurants and thirty-one shops run by Tibetans.

Aba Prefecture in Sichuan Province may serve as another example. Due to a relatively well-developed tourism sector, this prefecture's economy is stronger than that of many other Tibetan prefectures (Pad ma 'tsho 2010). However, Tibetan involvement in business activities remains limited. For instance, I counted a total of 675 businesses in 'Bar khams, the Aba Prefecture seat, of which 433 were owned by Han, while 217 were owned by Tibetans, twenty-two were owned by Muslims, and the remaining were owned by people from other nationalities (e.g., Bai). Tibetan-owned business accounted for about thirty-two percent of the total.

Figure 2 provides a breakdown of businesses according to nationality in Ma'erkang highlighting the finding that Tibetan businesses are concentrated in a few sectors, with virtually no Tibetan businesses in such trades as groceries and hairdressing salons.

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<sup>7</sup> See: <http://www.tjcn.org/rkpcgb/rkpcgb/201112/22722.html>, accessed 5 April 2013.

Figure 2. Sample of business breakdown by nationality in 'Bar khams'.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, as Hu (2003:28) noted, private businesses in China are generally divided into two groups. Small businesses such as small shops are called 'Individual Industrial and Commercial Households' (*geti gongshang hu*) and 'Business Households' (*geti hu*); large ones are called 'Private Enterprises' (*siying qiye*).

Interviewees told me that most 'private enterprises' were run by people of Han and Muslim backgrounds and that there were very few Tibetan-run enterprises. For example, according to information provided by the Bureau of Industry and Commerce of Aba County in late 2003, only two of the nine private enterprises in Aba County were run by Tibetans. According to information provided by the Bureau of Industry and Commerce of Hongyuan County, none of the county's seven private enterprises involved Tibetans.

Lhasa has received much more financial support from the central government than other Tibetan areas. Nonetheless, the

<sup>8</sup> Source: fieldwork in the summer of 2006.

situation there is no better than in other Tibetan areas. According to survey data provided by the Lhasa Federation of Industry and Commerce, the number of registered private enterprises in Lhasa was 438 in 2004. The survey carried out a sample analysis of 178 private enterprises. Of these, three enterprises were engaged in primary industry, seventeen in secondary industry, and 158 in the service sector. Among private enterprises, thirty-seven were owned by Tibetans, accounting for twenty-one percent of total enterprises; and 141 enterprises were owned by Han and other ethnic groups, accounting for 79.1 percent of the total.

Some of the Lhasa market displayed an even worse situation. For example, the market on the Potala Palace's west side was locally considered a substantial, significant market. Of its 645 businesses in 2003, Tibetans owned only two. The market with the highest proportion of Tibetan-owned businesses was central Lhasa, where two of the city's most famous temples – Jokhang and Ramoche – are located. Nonetheless, although the share of Tibetan-owned businesses in this area was the highest in Lhasa, it was less than forty percent of the total (Wang and Zhu 2005:169-170). Non-Tibetan migrants owned most businesses in Lhasa.

Tibetan marginalization in the market has been one of the most significant challenges facing Tibetans in their daily life since the promulgation of China's new economic policies. Without local Tibetan participation in the market, there can be only limited economic development. More importantly, development must be rooted where people live if people's well-being is the goal of development.

#### TOWARDS A LOCALIZED DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The myriad challenges Tibetans face in the realm of development are interwoven. Various factors explain the persistence of these challenges into the twenty-first century, but the government's failure to take local conditions into account is critical. Without considering

Tibet's realities, simply replicating the eastern, coastal development model results in economic failure and continued reliance on government subsidies. Enterprise is not generating the expected capital for Tibet's economic development, and subsidizing industry has become a heavy burden for local governments. Consequently, they rely heavily on central government funding, creating a system of economic dependency that Fischer (2012) dubs 'fiscal Maoism'.

I argue that a localized development approach in Tibet would not only help to relieve this burden, but that it is in accordance with China's overall development strategy. Since rural Tibetans comprise approximately eighty percent of the TAR's population, a localized development strategy focusing on rural Tibet would meet the objectives of the government's people-oriented approach,<sup>9</sup> and is crucial to the central government's political concern of stabilizing Tibet. A localized development strategy must comprehend actual local conditions. Such an approach would assist in addressing the challenges mentioned above, and would need to take into account at least three significant factors of local realities on the Tibetan Plateau: the environment, local culture, and conditions of material production, each explored below.

### The Tibetan Environment

The Tibetan Plateau's environment is characterized by fragility and anthropogenic degradation. The Tibetan Plateau is often called the 'Roof of the World' in reference to its average altitude ranging from 3,000-5,000 meters above sea level. The weather is harsh and arid, and its environment is fragile. However, the Tibetan Plateau is also an extremely important environment. Tibet is the source of major rivers that support life throughout east, south, and southeast Asia, and is thus known as the 'Water Tower of Asia'. In this capacity, Tibet's environment is also of crucial importance to human

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<sup>9</sup> This refers to the government's plan of 'people-focused' development (*yi ren wei ben*).

populations in Asia and, more broadly, to planetary life-support systems. As Shi et al. (2006:10) observed, the Plateau's value in terms of ecosystem services is immeasurable in terms of GDP. Negative changes in the Tibetan Plateau's biosphere directly affects China's environment, impacting its security and development.

Environmental deterioration in Tibet is greatly affected by unrestricted human activity. For example, using the increased number of livestock as an indicator of development, Maduo County in Qinghai Province's Guoluo Prefecture saw an increase in livestock number while neglecting grassland grazing capacity. In 1979, Maduo was reclassified as a rich county due its high livestock productivity (Nan 2002). However, because the number of livestock exceeded the grazing capacity of the grassland, the percentage of deteriorated grassland relative to the total grassland area increased from ten percent in the 1960s to seventy percent in 1998. Consequently, the number of livestock decreased by 55.8 percent from 1979 to 1999, and Maduo become one of the poorest counties in the nation.

Since 1995, the rate of desertification has been twenty percent, and eighty percent of Maduo County's lakes and rivers have dried (Nan 2002:86). The negative effect of grassland deterioration is also demonstrated by loss in livestock weight. The average weight of a sheep and yak in the area was forty to fifty kilograms and 400-500 kilograms, respectively, in the 1970s, but only twenty to twenty-five kilograms and 300 kilograms at the turn of the century (Shi et al. 2006:145). Though a single case, this demonstrates the potentially disastrous results of improper environmental development policy. In addition, the total area of eroded land in China is 3,600,000 square kilometers and the Tibetan Plateau comprises one-third of that total (Shi et al. 2006:103). According to Deng (2005:131-139), each year, on average, about 1,310,000 hectares<sup>10</sup> of grassland of the Tibetan Plateau deteriorated from 1980 to 2000. Additionally, from 1980 to 2000, the average annual grassland deterioration rate of the Tibetan Plateau exceeded China's average, increasing 0.98 percent for China as a whole, but 1.16 percent on the Tibetan Plateau. Deng concluded

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<sup>10</sup> 1,310,000 hectares = 13,100 square kilometers.

that, even though natural causes were an important factor, human activities such as overgrazing were major causes.<sup>11</sup>

### Traditional Tibetan Culture

Traditional cultural practices on the Tibetan Plateau have positive environmental impacts, for example, in maintaining biodiversity (Wu 1997, Shen et al. 2011, Shen and Tan 2012). Indigenous knowledge also has an important role in managing the livestock and pastures of the extensive Tibetan grasslands (Wu 1998). It is important to avoid romanticizing Tibetan culture as inherently and exclusively environmentally friendly (Huber and Pedersen 1997) and acknowledge that traditional landscape management practices did, at times, result in environmental degradation, for example, the misuse of fires to manage pastures (Winkler 1998a) and deforestation (Winkler 1998b). However, it must also be noted that certain traditional environmental practices embody environmentally sound practices with demonstrable positive impacts, such as the practice of 'sealing' territories from human activity (Huber 2004). Such practices suggest that Tibetans have had a vested interest in understanding and adaptively managing the natural environment in which they live.

In addition to such practices, Tibetan Buddhist ideals regarding the interconnectedness of all life and dictums against excessive greed also influence environmental management practices (Xu 2012). After centuries of such practice, it has become difficult for many Tibetans to differentiate between the practice of religion and concern for the environment. Therefore, Tibetan Buddhism and its high-altitude adapted economy of animal husbandry and farming are thoroughly compatible.

Appropriate, localized development of Tibetan areas will consider the limits of the environment and employ Buddhist and other traditional environmental practices, rather than oppose them

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<sup>11</sup> See Stuart and Roche (2012) for a recent review on pastoral policies and environmental issues on the Tibetan Plateau.

as 'backward' and 'superstitious'. Buddhism is based on causality and a belief in the power of reason, which many Buddhist adepts see as according well with modern scientific methodologies (Mkhan chen 'Jigs med phun tshogs 'byung gnas 1995), even if it is at odds with the ideology of dialectical materialism. Employing Buddhism is even more meaningful for a people-oriented development strategy, because it has ideological weight in Tibetan communities. Tibetan well-being cannot be realized without Buddhist values.

### Material Production on the Tibetan Plateau

In addition to recognizing Tibet's unique environment and culture, a localized development approach must consider the local conditions of material development on the Plateau. Approximately eighty percent of Tibetans live in rural areas where animal husbandry and farming are their primary economic activities.<sup>12</sup> Rural poverty is a key factor hindering economic development in Tibetan areas of China and, therefore, focus on Tibet's rural areas is important for economic change and growth, and crucial in benefitting rural Tibetans, thereby increasing the well-being of the majority of Tibetans. However, given the Plateau environment's extreme fragility, expanding the scale of animal husbandry and agriculture are not options. Instead, optimizing high-altitude-adapted animal husbandry and farming production should be the focus of a localized economic development strategy. This strategy should be accompanied by appropriate use of state-of-the art technology, thus capitalizing on the region's unique characteristics and creating a high value-added and competitive product.

Tibetan areas produce localized items that have special value, such as yaks and highland barley. Consequently, one key for a localized development strategy is combining Tibet's unique production strategies and capacities with modern technology.

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<sup>12</sup> Rapid urbanization and resettlement is significantly changing this figure, however, rural poverty remains a major issue in Tibetan areas of China.



Recognizing Tibet's environment, traditional methods of production, and cultural conditions, I suggest that Tibet's economic development should focus on developing high-end, environmentally-friendly, and culturally-sensitive production. Manufacturing, tourism, and other forms of economic production in Tibet should be value-added by combining Tibet's unique resources with modern technology. Production with low environmental impacts should be prioritized. Meanwhile, relevant Tibetan cultural value is attached to production, adding additional value, making it more attractive and competitive. Consequently, the fragile environment would be optimally and sustainably exploited by a focus on high-end production, not mass production, and would also be further protected during production processing. Meanwhile, Tibet's unique material resources are better marketed by attaching cultural value, further demonstrating the uniqueness of Tibetan production. Since markets are increasingly competitive, the proposed development strategy is the only way to integrate Tibetans into a competitive market while preserving their culture and environment.

Tibet's economic development should be based on the local environment and production conditions, while utilizing Tibetan culture for the benefit of creating a sustainable economy. Tibetans understand their environment, production conditions, and culture better than anyone else. Consequently, Tibetan market participation would be greatly increased if such a localized development policy were implemented.

## CONCLUSION

Tibetans have experienced overall improvement in their standards of living since the implementation of the Open and Reform and Develop the West programs. Changes are notable in people's economic life, and also in their religious activities, e.g., Kelsang Norbu and Stuart (2013) note a dramatic increase in the number and accessibility of pilgrimage destinations in the early twenty-first century. This

coincides with Rdo rje bkra shis et al. (2012), who report twenty-two percent of an Amdo family's total annual income in 2011 was spent on religious activities. Nevertheless, Tibetans face such challenges as the expanding urban-rural divide, marginalization of the indigenous population, low quality education, and environmental deterioration. Many political, social, cultural, and environmental factors explain the difficulties met by Tibetan communities. However, the government's failure to take local conditions into account in its policy development has exacerbated the situation.

This paper suggests that a localized development approach would assist in addressing many of these issues. Such a localized model of development would take into consideration three features of the Tibetan Plateau that distinguish it from the rest of China: its fragile and degraded environment; local culture; and conditions of material production. If such a model of development were implemented in China's Tibetan regions then many of the mentioned issues would be solved.

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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

A

Aba 阿坝

B

Bai 白

'Bar khams འབར་ཁམས།

Beijing 北京

F

Fujian 福建

G

*gaige kaifang* 改革开放

Gannan 甘南

Gansu 甘肃

*geti gongshang hu* 个体工商户

*geti hu* 个体户

Guangdong 广东

Guangxi 广西

Guoluo 果洛

H

Han 汉

Hezuo 合作

Hongyuan 红原

Huangnan 黄南

J

Jiangsu 江苏

Jianzha 尖扎

Jokhang ཇོ་ཁང།



L

Lhasa ལྷ་ས།

Luqu 碌曲

M

Maduo 玛多

Maqu 玛曲

P

Potala པོ་ཏ་ལ།

Q

Qinghai 青海

R

Ramoche ར་མོ་ཚེ།

RMB 人民币

S

Salar (Sala) 撒拉

Shanghai 上海

Sichuan 四川

*siying qiye* 私营企业

T

Tianjin 天津

W

Wang Shiyong 王士勇

X

Xiahe 夏河

Xibu Dakaifa 西部大开发

Xinjiang 新疆

Y

*yuan* 元

Yunnan 云南

Z

Zeku 泽库

*yi ren wei ben* 以人为本

Zhejiang 浙江