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An aerial photo taken on January 11, shows a highway leading to Lhasa, capital city of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region

A New Lease on Life

Tibet embraces a course toward prosperity since democratic reform began 60 years ago

By Lu Yan

Sonam Dorjee and his family run a furniture cooperative in Khesum Village in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region. With an annual income of more than 600,000 yuan (\$89,300) from the cooperative, he is now living a well-off life.

But such a comfortable life would have been unheard of only 60 years ago when the village, along with all of Tibet, stood under the dark cloud of feudal serfdom. At that time, people like Sonam Dorjee, now 72, were ex-

ploited by government officials, nobles and upper-ranking lamas known as the three major estate-holders.

But it all changed in 1959 when the Chinese Central Government dissolved the aristocratic government of Tibet; the feudal theocracy was completely abolished and more than 1 million serfs were liberated.

To mark the freeing of such a large number of serfs from the feudal serfdom, March 28 was designated as the Serfs' Emancipation

Day in 2009. This year, on March 28 this year, representatives from various ethnic groups and walks of life in Tibet gathered at Potala Palace square in Lhasa, capital city of the autonomous region, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the historic reform.

Dark days

Before the democratic reform in 1959,



Khesum was one of the six manors belonging to Suokang Wangqing Geli in the Lhoka Prefecture, located at the southern bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo River, one of the richest regions in Tibet.

Khesum means three fortunes in the Tibetan language. Some people used to say that it represented the three holy mountains which could be seen from the main manor, but more people agreed that it meant the three benefits manor owners gained from forcing the serfs to work for them: land, labor and goods.

In the village, 302 serfs from 59 households worked for and were exploited by the manor owner. They did farm work, built houses and ran errands for “their owner.” They had to turn over their grain and livestock and pay heavy taxes and usury rates.

This was life for the majority of people all over Tibet; for centuries it was ruled by a

feudal theocracy, where serfs, who made up over 90 percent of the population, struggled hopelessly on the very bottom rung of society. Their basic rights were denied by the three major estate-holders, who controlled Tibet’s government and monopolized land, pastures and other means of production.

To survive, serfs had to borrow money from the rich, who used this debt to keep the people even more impoverished. More than 90 percent of Tibetan serfs were in debt, according to a white paper on democratic reform issued by China’s State Council Information Office in March.

“The debts of the grandpa of my grandpa could not be paid off by the father of my father, and the son of my son will not be able to repay even the interest,” went a popular ballad.

Serfs, who were considered property by the rich, were even used as wagers for

gambling and mortgages, as well as trade commodities and gifts. Any serf who attempted to flee and was caught would receive a lashing or have his/her feet chopped off. The three major estate-holders could torture or even kill serfs at will.

Sonam Dorjee, who was born a serf, remembers his family of nine always huddled in a small and draughty mud shed which smelled of livestock manure. His family didn’t have enough food or warm clothes, and instead had endless work and debts.

“When the spring plowing or autumn harvest came, our tough times would begin. In spite of a whole day’s hard work, we would still suffer the cruel beatings from serf owners,” he told Xinhua News Agency.

To reinforce their rule, the Tibetan theocracy promoted superstition and opposed any scientific thought. They brainwashed serfs into accepting their fate in the hope of finding ►►



A teacher conducts a cultural course for seniors at an activity center in Lhasa, capital city of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on March 4

happiness in the afterlife or the next life.

"It is safe to say that the feudal serfdom was the root of all kinds of wickedness in Tibet," said Liang Junyan, a researcher the Institute for History Studies of the China Tibetology Research Center.

End of the tunnel

Throughout human history, slavery and feudal serfdom have existed in most parts of the world, and their abolition has always come to the forefront. In Tibet, it started in the 1950s.

On May 23, 1951, the Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (17-Article Agreement) was signed, officially proclaiming the peaceful liberation of Tibet. This came on the heels of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

The peaceful liberation ended Tibet's long-lasting chaos, conflict, strangulation and stagnation. With it came new economic and social development. "It enabled local people to be like the people in the rest of the country who were heading toward a bright socialist future," said Hu Yan, a professor specializing in studies on ethnic groups and religions with

the Party School of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee. The CPC Tibet working committee was established along with branches in Lhasa and other areas.

But the old social system was not abolished. It was still a feudal serfdom, a theocracy which was "even darker and more backward than that of the Dark Ages in medieval Europe," according to An Qiyi, Deputy Director-General of the China Tibetology Research Center.

After the peaceful liberation of Tibet, fearing that their interests would be damaged, a small number of high-level leaders in local governments used ethnic and religious issues to scheme and start an insurgency. Wherever they went, they looted and raped, damaged temples and attacked monks, laymen and patriotic progressives. Conditions in Tibet worsened, especially after 1958 with the expansion of their relentless rebellion.

In March 1959, with the support of foreign reactionary forces, they launched a full-scale armed rebellion in an attempt to permanently retain their privileged rule under the feudal system of serfdom.

In the same month, the State Council issued a decree which dissolved the local Tibetan government and designated a preparatory committee for the Tibet

Autonomous Region to exercise the duties of local government. In essence, it meant that a people's democratic government was formed.

As a result of the victory over the feudal rulers under the leadership of the CPC, a million serfs were completely freed from the oppressive reign of the three major estate-holders and a magnificent democratic reform movement was launched. The feudal land ownership system and the serfs' attachment to their owners were eliminated and the serfs were liberated in terms of politics, economics, and intellectual, cultural and ideological matters.

The productive forces were greatly liberated and the Tibetan people began to enjoy all the rights stipulated in the provisions of the Chinese Constitution and laws.

The serfs became masters of their own country and their own destiny, with all the ethnic groups in Tibet making the historical leap from feudal serfdom to the new road of socialist modernization.

Reborn

Since democratic reform, Tibet has experienced transformation in all aspects. Politically, Tibetan people began to enjoy the right to



People celebrate the 60th anniversary of the campaign of democratic reform in Tibet at the Potala Palace square in Lhasa, capital city of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on March 28

participation in the administration of state and local affairs through the people's congresses at various levels.

Based on ethnic regional characteristics and the local reality, a number of local laws and regulations were introduced, such as the supplemental provisions of the Marriage Law and regulations on the learning, application and development of the Tibetan language.

Economically, the region entered a fast development period. In 1959, Tibet's GDP was merely 174 million yuan (\$25.9 million), while the figure exceeded 147 billion yuan (\$21.9 billion) in 2018, marking more than an 800-time increase.

The old Tibet had little industrial development, but now, based on the premise of strictly protecting the ecology, modern industry flourishes with the region's unique features. This includes the agricultural and animal product processing industry, the superior mineral industry, the hydroelectric energy industry, the traditional and ethnic minority handicraft industry, and the Tibetan medicine industry.

There are many striking examples of the changes that have occurred over the past 60 years. For instance, there was only one small power station in Tibet exclusively for the use of the upper nobility, but by the end of 2018,

the power grid covered 60 counties, as well as 2.72 million people. Local people also shook off the destitute and debt-ridden past and gradually worked their way out of poverty. The aim now is to eliminate absolute poverty by the end of this year.

The principles of political unity, freedom of religious belief and separation of government from religion are all strongly pursued. The Central Government and local governments invested both time and money in maintaining and restoring temples and protecting Tibetan Buddhism classics.

People's health has improved fundamentally with the upgrading of medical and health facilities and services. Government-subsidized housing projects have ensured that farmers and herdsmen have comfortable accommodations. The modern socialist system entitled people to receive education. In turn, a number of high-caliber personnel have been cultivated who are making contributions to the country's modernization drive. Tibetan people are working hard toward a prosperous life, which can be seen in the upgrading of consumption and an increasingly diversified consumption structure.


As the country's crucial eco-barrier, and with ecological conservation lifted to a na-

tional strategy, Tibet has received substantial capital and energy to enlarge nature and ecological reserves and restore biodiversity. In 2018 alone, 10.7 billion yuan (\$1.59 billion) of investment was devoted to protect and building the eco-barrier in Tibet.

Forging ahead

Liang commented that the CPC and the government's support, along with help from the rest of the country, are the fundamental reasons for the achievements in Tibet over the past six decades.

The diligence of the local people is the driving force behind its success. In addition, regional autonomy for minorities is the institutional guarantee of the transformation, according to An.

The State Council's white paper pointed out that there is still room for improvement in terms of addressing economic and social problems and imbalanced and insufficient development. In the new era, Tibet will continue to be committed to innovative, coordinated, sustainable, green, open and shared development, so as to build a beautiful Tibet and enhance the happiness of the people, the document said. 



The Starting Point

Khesum Village, of about 800 people in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, has a pioneer's place in history, as the first place where the democratic reform in Tibet started.

On March 28, 1959, the Central Government announced the dissolution of the local government of Tibet, marking the end of centuries-long feudal theocracy system in Tibet and a new start of the plateau region.

After the democratic reform, the Peasants' Association of Khesum was established, and freed serfs were elected as chairs and members of the association.

In the 60 years since, Khesum has seen a makeover. In 2017, all its residents were lifted out of poverty and in 2018, the per-capita disposable income of the village reached 19,735 yuan (\$2,948), almost 99 times that of 1978. **CI**



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WUJINX



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1. People in Khesum attend a ceremony marking the start of spring plowing on March 16
2. An aerial view of Khesum on March 16
3. A resident of Khesum, who used to be a serf before democratic reform in 1959
4. The Tears of Serfs, a play on the abject lives of Tibetan serfs, is performed in Khesum on March 26, 2018
5. Children in Khesum board their kindergarten bus on March 27, 2018



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WUJINX

Harmony Brings Prosperity

Stability in Xinjiang leads to social and economic development By Wang Hairong

Dilshat, a resident of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, once ran a family inn which brought her a good income and satisfying life. Later, under the influence of religious extremist ideas, she suspected some patrons who dined under the apricot trees in the yard of her inn of being heretics who were soiling her orchard, so she chopped down the trees and shut down the inn. Her life quickly changed for the worse.

She realized the hazards of religious extremism after studying at a vocational education and training center in Xinjiang. Once she graduated from the program, she reopened the family inn and her business is booming, which fills her with confidence and joy.

This story was recounted by Xu Hairong, Secretary of the Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) of Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang, at a press conference in Beijing on December 9, days after the U.S. House of Representatives, the lower chamber of Congress, passed the so-called Uygur Human Rights Policy Act on December 3. The bill, which attacks the human rights situation in Xinjiang and distorts China's anti-terrorism and de-radicalization efforts, was passed by the U.S. Senate earlier in September.

The act totally disregards the facts, said Shohrat Zakir, Chairman of the Xinjiang Regional Government, at the press conference, adding that it seriously violates international law and basic norms, and grossly interferes in China's internal affairs.

Education and training

"There have been no violent terrorist incidents in Xinjiang for three consecutive years. Xinjiang has become significantly safer, and people's satisfaction with social stability has greatly increased," Zakir said.

In contrast, from 1990 to the end of 2016, Xinjiang suffered thousands of violent terrorist attacks, resulting in a large number of casualties and huge property losses.

"Today's stability and peace in Xinjiang are hard won," he said. "For a period of time, violent and terrorist activities frequently occurred in Xinjiang, and as a result, the right to subsistence and development of people of all ethnic groups was seriously trampled."

In response to the grim situation of violent terrorist activities in Xinjiang, vocational education and training centers were set up according to law, Zakir said,

adding that they are an essential part of anti-terrorism and de-radicalization efforts in the region.

"People of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang believe without the vocational education and training programs, the current peaceful environment would be impossible," Xu said.

Zakir said trainees have all graduated after participating in programs consisting of standard spoken and written Chinese, understanding of the law, vocational skills and de-radicalization at vocational education and training centers. With the help of the government, they have achieved stable employment and improved their quality of life, according to him.

His point was echoed by Xu, who gave some examples. Buzūra Roz, a graduate of a vocational education and training center, set up an embroidery cooperative with the skills he learned at the center and help from the local government. He led more than 30 local villagers to increase their income and climb out of poverty.

Another example is Zoram Abduyusuf, who detached himself from religious extremism after attending the program. In addition to cleaning up his own small courtyard when he returned, he also led his neighbors to clean up the village, becoming a role model.

Since the end of last year, over 1,000 people from 91 countries, including officials, diplomats, journalists and religious figures, have visited the vocational education and training centers in Xinjiang. Xu said many of them said the region's anti-terrorism and de-radicalization efforts are in line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations and are therefore worth commending and sharing.

"The anti-terrorism and de-radicalization measures we carry out in Xinjiang are essentially no different from those of many other countries in the world, including the United States. Some people in the United States need abandon ideological prejudices and double standards on this issue," Zakir said.

Next on the agenda, Xinjiang will offer regular and open education and training for village officials, CPC members in rural areas, farmers and herdsmen, as well as



A ski resort in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, on December 8



A ski resort in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, on December 8

unemployed middle school graduates on a voluntary and necessary basis, according to the regional government. Trainees will be able to join or leave the program as needed, and will mainly be taught standard spoken and written Chinese, understanding of the law and vocational skills.

Benefits of stability

“Now society is harmonious and stable, creating conditions for economic development and the benefits of stability have been consistently delivered,” said Erkin Tuniyaz, Vice Chairman of the Xinjiang Regional Government, at the press conference.

In recent years, Xinjiang has maintained healthy and sustained economic development, according to official statistics. Since 2012, its GDP has increased 8.5 percent year on year, faster than the national average. The per-capita disposable income of urban and rural residents has risen 8.4 percent and 8.2 percent, respectively.

In the past, people shunned Xinjiang for fear of terrorist attacks. As the region has become safer, tourism has surged. In 2018, Xinjiang received 150 million domestic and foreign tourists, a year-on-year increase of 40.1 percent.

In the first 10 months of the year, the number of tourist arrivals exceeded 200 million, an increase of 42.6 percent from a year earlier, Zakir said. During the same period, Xinjiang earned 341.73 billion yuan (\$48.55 billion) in tourism revenue, and the travel industry added over 50,000 jobs.

Located on the Silk Road Economic Belt, Xinjiang has thrived through cooperation between China and other countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative. In the first 10 months of the year, the region’s foreign trade volume rose 28 percent, Zakir said.

The region has set up a zone to pilot innovation-driven development, which is home to more than 130 production, education and research organizations. Last year, the added value of strategic emerging industries in Xinjiang increased

13 percent year on year, and the added value of hi-tech manufacturing soared 33 percent.

Xinjiang has received tremendous financial support for its development from the Central Government and other local authorities. Every year, the Central Government transfers nearly 400 billion yuan (\$56.83 billion) to Xinjiang, and 19 economically developed provinces and municipalities also provide more than 15 billion yuan (\$2.13 billion) to remote areas of the region under a pairing assistance program, Zakir said.

In Xinjiang, 70 percent of the fiscal expenditure goes toward improving people’s livelihood, such as boosting employment, funding education of students from poor families, offering free health checkups to residents and providing affordable housing to eligible households.

The region has also devoted significant efforts to poverty alleviation. More than 2.38 million people in the region have left poverty behind since 2014, with the poverty rate dropping from 22.84 percent to the current 6.51 percent. **G**



Better Housing

Cona County is home to many communities of Monba ethnic group, in Shannan City of Tibet Autonomous Region, southwest China. On September 26, 2019, some residents of Xiangxian Village moved to their new homes in a newly built community called Xiaokang Village.

The new village was constructed following the ethnic tradition, in accordance with the standard of 60 square meters per person. Supporting facilities including water, electricity and roads are completed, which can ensure the improvement of people's livelihood in their new homes. **CI**



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1. A villager stands in front of his new home on September 26, in Cona County of Shannan City, Tibet Autonomous Region, southwest China

2. An aerial view of Xiaokang Village

3. People hold a traditional rite for moving into a new home

4. A villager takes part in a traditional rite

5. A Villager carries furniture to his new dwelling

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Goodbye Hardships

An ethnic minority in Yunnan's mountainous area steps out of poverty By Yuan Yuan

Flanked by snow-capped mountains bordering Myanmar in southwest China's Yunnan Province, Dulongjiang Township, named after the Dulong River that winds through it, used to be one of the poorest areas in China. The township is home to people of the Derung ethnic group, one of the ethnic minorities in China that has the smallest population. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the Derung people still lived an insulated and

primitive life.

It was not until 1999 that a road was built linking the area to the outside world, making it the last township in China to be connected by road. Access to the township was still blocked by snow for almost six months a year until a tunnel was completed in 2014.

One of the smallest and most isolated minorities, with less than 7,000 people, the Derung ethnic group announced it

shook off poverty in 2018. On April 11, the people in Dulongjiang received a letter from President Xi Jinping, congratulating them.

"Making it possible for people of all ethnic groups to have a good life has been my aspiration as well as our common goal," Xi wrote in his letter.

Yunnan, which borders Myanmar, Laos and Viet Nam, has 25 ethnic minorities. The vast mountainous areas in the



An aerial view of Dulongjiang Township in Gongshan Dulong-Nu Autonomous County, southwest China's Yunnan Province, on April 18

province have been identified as a major target for the government's poverty alleviation.

Paving the way

Gao Derong, 65, the former head of the township and a key figure in leading the local people out of poverty, read the letter from Xi to his fellow townspeople and could not hide his excitement.

"The life of the Derung people in recent years has changed dramatically," Gao said. "The president encouraged us to build a good homeland, guard the border and create a better future in his letter. We will keep this in mind and work harder on reaching greater goals."

After graduating from a normal school in Nuijiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture, Gao returned to his hometown, worked as a teacher in a primary school and helped wipe out illiteracy. Gao is one of the few people of his generation in his hometown to have gotten an education. In 1984, he started to serve in the township government with the ambition of lifting the local people out of poverty.

Even after he was promoted to higher positions in Gongshan Dulong-Nu Autonomous County, to which Dulongjiang is subordinated, and higher Nuijiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture, Gao still spent most of his time working in Dulongjiang.

"Before the founding of the PRC, people in my township lived by hunting and slash-and-burn agriculture," Gao said. "No Derung people could speak Mandarin and people still used knot-tying to keep records"

His relative, Kong Zhiqing, was the first around them to learn Mandarin and go to school. In 1952, as the head of Gongshan Dulong-Nu Autonomous County, Kong went to Beijing to attend a conference. There, he met then Premier Zhou Enlai, who decided to make Derung the official name of the ethnic group based on Kong's suggestion.

When Gao served in the government, there were no roads, no regular schools and no businesses in the township. The rolling hills and harsh climate made it difficult to even build a road. School-aged children would have to slide along a steel wire above the roaring Dulong River to get to county schools. Landslides, avalanches, wild animal attacks and traffic accidents made life extremely harsh.



A street in Dulongjiang Township on April 18

As a witness to the township's transformation from longtime poverty, Gao concluded that there were three major phases that were crucial to the township's development. The first was the founding of the PRC, which led the township from a primitive society to a socialist one. The second was when the road to the township was constructed in 1999, and the latest phase, which begun after 2010, was when the government of Yunnan launched a project to lift the Derung people out of poverty.

A visitor surnamed Wang from Beijing visited the township in 2007. He still remembers a notice he found pasted on the wall in the township during the Spring Festival.

"It said that someone donated 10,000 yuan (\$1,470) to the township and that the township decided to divide the money among all the residents. It meant in

the end, each person got less than 2 yuan (\$0.29)," Wang told *Beijing Review*. "It was the Spring Festival, the most important of all Chinese holidays, and each person only received that small amount of money. It was astonishing."

Under such harsh conditions, Gao meticulously explored methods to increase local income. As he saw it, the advantage of the township was its superb ecological environment, with more than 95 percent forest coverage, as well as rivers, waterfalls, deep valleys and mountains.

Thus, ecological protection was made a top priority. "A well-preserved ecological environment is the great treasure passed down to us by our ancestors," Gao said. "We will spare no efforts to protect it."

Eventually, he found a way to bring both economic benefits to the locals and do no harm to the environment: They started planting amomum tsao-ko, a ▶▶

spice and medicinal herb, which is well-suited for the local climate.

Gao set up a base offering free training to the townspeople and in order to encourage more of them to learn the process, he also provided free accommodations and meals.

This created a sharp rise in locals' income. So far, there are more than 4,000 hectares of amomum tsao-ko farmland in Dulongjiang.

"The market for amomum tsao-ko has been growing in recent years, which has led to a boom in locals getting involved in the business," said Zhang Jun, Deputy Director of the Publicity Department of Gongshan. "In addition, we have developed planting of paradis, another medical herb, and beekeeping, along with cow and chicken breeding, which have all greatly expanded locals' income sources."

Zhang said that in 2018, the average income of local people was 6,122 yuan (\$900), an increase of 23.5 percent from 2017. Amomum tsao-ko alone brought in 7.43 million yuan (\$1.09 million).

Furthermore, the forestry department in Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture has made all the people from 195 impoverished Derung households ecological rangers, providing them with an income for protecting the forests in their native land.

In the process, various levels of government support has offered a boost. In 2010, the provincial government implemented entire village advancement projects as well as pilot projects for the improvement of entire townships, with Dulongjiang included. Financial aid and related programs from the government put the town's development on a fast

track.

During the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), the Central Government set the target of achieving an annual gross regional product growth of over 8 percent in ethnic minority regions.

In 2017, China demarcated three regions and three prefectures as the poorest areas in the country. The three regions are located in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, four areas in south Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and Tibetan-inhabited regions in Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan and Gansu provinces in northwest or southwest China. The three prefectures are Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, and Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province. More resources have been allocated to these



Gao Derong, former head of Dulongjiang Township, works on an amomum tsao-ko field March 18, 2013

areas.

In addition, developed regions in the country's east, including the metropolis of Shanghai, have provided targeted aid for construction projects, industrial development and personnel training.

Promising future

As a result, Dulongjiang now has a brand new look. Many new houses have been erected along the road, as residents living in uninhabitable conditions have been relocated to new houses. The 4G network covers the entire township and is accessible to quite a few delivery service providers.

In the early 2000s, a school covering six years of elementary and three years of secondary education was set up in the township. Children don't have to slide along a wire to attend schools further away anymore.

Moreover, the improvement in transportation has brought tourists to the township, leading some local people to renovate their houses into restaurants and inns to increase their income.

Gao said that there are two directions for the township's future progress; one is to develop the ecological economy and the other is to develop rural tourism.

Tang Xiacong, a 28-year-old local, runs a restaurant with his wife in Maku Village. Their average income each month is about 6,000 yuan (\$882).

"We were relocated three times before we settled down in Maku," Tang said. "The houses we lived in before were made of either bamboo or wood. They were freezing in winter and leaked when it rained. Our house now is built of bricks and is steady and firm with three bedrooms and a spacious kitchen. My parents said they never dreamed of living in a house like this."

Tang received his education outside Dulongjiang and served in the army for several years before returning to his hometown. These experiences broadened his horizons. In 2014, he came back to his village and opened up a restaurant.

"It has not been just the road and tunnel that has connected the township with the outside world," Tang said. "The 4G network has also linked it up. A growing number of locals are selling their agricultural products on online business platforms."

Tang Jiajia, who also runs a restaurant



Pupils at an elementary school in a village in Dulongjiang Township at class on May 27, 2017

in the township, is from Lijiang, a city in Yunnan. She followed relatives to Dulongjiang 11 years ago, seeking business opportunities.

She started as a food vendor with her mother, and although the business was not that profitable back then, Tang Jiajia chose to stay because the locals were all very nice people.

Shops in Dulongjiang enjoy a tax-free policy and rent is inexpensive. Thus, she decided to settle down in the township and married a local man. Her business has since developed into a restaurant. "Now we can easily earn 100,000 yuan (\$14,700) a year," Tang Jiajia said. "With more tourists visiting in the future, we

believe the business will get better."

Following the Derung people, two more ethnic groups from Yunnan, the Deang and Jino people, also declared that they had successfully climbed out of poverty.

Huang Yunbo, head of the provincial office of poverty alleviation and development in Yunnan, said a total of seven ethnic minority groups will be removed from the poverty list this year and in 2020, the number is expected to increase to 11.

"Just as President Xi said in his letter, poverty eradication is only the first step, and better days are yet to come," Gao said. "We will work hard to make the better days arrive sooner." ❏



New Year Festival

Thousands of tourists gathered at Shuanglonggou scenic area to celebrate a big festival of the Miao ethnic group.

The Miao people have the tradition to perform dances and play lusheng, a folk instrument, to celebrate Miao New Year in late December, in Rongshui Miao autonomous county of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, South China. In 2019, the festival fell on December 21.

Built as part of a relocation program of the county, the scenic area is home to hundreds of immigrants who moved there last year and 140 of them now work for the scenic area, which has received 700,000 tourists since its opening in 2018. **CI**





The Miao people celebrate Miao New Year in Rongshui Miao autonomous county of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, south China, on December 21

A Fortune in Hand

How an ethnic minority man in Yunnan gets out of poverty by operating a family inn

By He Shan



The entrance of a family inn run by Yu Wulin in Laomudeng Village on April 20



Yu Wulin (right) introduces a folk instrument of the Nu ethnic group to his guests in his family inn on April 20

Tucked in a remote hamlet named Laomudeng Village in Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China's Yunnan Province, Yu Wulin's guesthouse is tidy, cozy and more or less exotic.

However, 43-year-old Yu, who is from the Nu ethnic group, hadn't dreamed of being an innkeeper while growing up a farmer like most of his neighbors in the impoverished region.

In the Nu dialect, Laomudeng means "the place people love to go." The hillside village, surrounded by tall mountains and green fields, is best known for its view of a canyon on the Nujiang River.

Prime real estate

As the fifth and youngest child in his family, Yu grew up with little food and clothing, and even without shoes.

What his family did have was a picturesque view of a steep valley and the winding Nujiang River. The area remains primitive and unspoiled by the world's hustle and bustle. In the 1990s, he began noticing backpackers trekking muddy roads to reach his village. Many asked his family for lodgings and meals and paid cash when they left. Still, Yu didn't consider it an opportunity for business.

"We were just curious and wondered why they had nothing better to do than backpack to such a remote village," he said.

In 1996, Yu dropped out of high school and left for Shanghai as a singer, marking the first time he traveled outside his village. Seeing the metropolis was certainly a novelty for Yu, but he grew homesick by the day and finally return to Laomudeng at the end of 1997.

He married a woman from the Dulong ethnic group whom he had met in Shanghai, a coworker from the performance troupe. The couple devoted themselves to farm work but found that they could barely make ends meet.

"Back then we lived in a bamboo house, we could only buy new clothes for our kids once a year and could hardly ever afford to go to the county seat," Yu said.

A helping hand



GEO ANNING

A view from the rooms of the family inn run by Yu Wulin in Laomudeng Village in Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China's Yunnan Province, on April 20

Things began to change in 2000. The local government granted aid to local residents in order to promote tourism, and the couple was the first in Laomudeng Village to open a guesthouse.

"The experience of working in Shanghai had broadened my horizons and given me the opportunity to make new friends," Yu said.

Some of these friends helped him promote the family inn on the Internet. Yu also became fluent in Mandarin, a precious skill in his ethnically diverse hometown where most people communicate in local dialects.

Since Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture has historically been one of China's poorest western areas, the Central Government worked out targeted measures to help develop of the area.

It helped the local people build houses and pave roads and provided access to running water at home.

"My success with my guesthouses can be largely attributed to the favorable policies and support of the government," Yu said.

In 2012, as more tourists visited the

village, he expanded the inn. To help him build new rooms, the local tourism bureau granted him 50,000 yuan (\$7,430) in subsidies, and the county government gave him 10 tons of cement.

When the renovated 11-room inn couldn't accommodate all his customers, Yu opened a second inn in 2017, with a low-interest bank loan of 2.7 million yuan (\$398,871).

It was built to be more modern, complete with toilets, Wi-Fi and a public area to allow different groups of guests to eat together and sit around an indoor fire pit.

As a musician and singer, Yu often presents guests with traditional Nu ethnic dances and music together with local folk performers, bringing them a taste of the local culture.

The upgrades allowed Yu to charge a premium rate of 260 yuan (\$38) for a standard room, compared to 20 yuan (\$3) a bed when he first started. His annual income has climbed to 400,000 yuan (\$59,100), a small fortune in the area.

Setting an example

Yu's inns employ dozens of local villagers, including some of his relatives, and he pays them monthly salaries between 2,000-2,600 yuan (\$295-\$384).

His success also inspired others: 18 households in the village have since opened guesthouses, and the once shanty-filled village is now colored with brightly painted houses with modern comforts.

"Yu is always ready to help whenever his peer villagers run into difficulties while operating a guesthouse," said Bian Jianwen, an official of the government of Fugong County, which Yu's village is located. "Villagers also meet from time to time to discuss business and projects they can work on together."

Yu's two sons are now majoring in hotel management at a technical secondary school in Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan.

"I hope they will come back after graduation and help run my guesthouses," he said. **C**



New Chapter of Life

Wu Caizhong is a 36-year-old man from the Mulao ethnic minority group. His family, together with other Mulao ethnic people, used to live in Xiyantun of Mianhua Village, a village plagued by inadequate development due to karst rocky desertification and poor traffic conditions in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China. In June 2018, Wu's family and other villagers were relocated to a new residential area for Mulao ethnic people in Luocheng of Guangxi.

This residential area, with multiple supporting facilities including shopping mall, school, hospital, market and industrial park, houses a total of 8,931 people from 1,915 households. All of Wu Caizhong's five family members now live in a new residence with a floor area of over 100 square meters.

Wu's son studies in a school nearby, while he and his wife work in an electronic company next to the residential area. "We are grateful for the relocation policy because it makes our life happier," Pang Shuidi, Wu's wife, said. **CI**





1. An aerial photo shows the view of a relocation area and its supporting facilities for Mulao ethnic people in Luocheng County, south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on November 6

2. Wu Caizhong's son (third right) reads books with his classmates at his school

3. Wu Caizhong and his family watch television at their new home

4. Wu Caizhong (right) and his wife have lunch at a canteen of their company in Luocheng County

5. Wu Caizhong works in his company

Working in the Clouds

Assistance program for the development of Tibet creates miracles in the autonomous region's 'dead zone' By Li Nan



COURTESY PHOTO

A research team from Ocean University of China takes a group photo with Liang Nanyu (sixth left), Deputy Mayor of Shuanghu County in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region

Liang Nanyu, Deputy Mayor of Shuanghu, a county in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, which is also the highest county in the world, has the distinction of initiating several "firsts" in the past three years.

He made it possible for the county, with an average altitude of 5,000 meters

above sea level, to have its first C-section operation that created a medical record. He broke the monopoly in the local economy's pillar industry and upgraded it, ensuring greater income for the impoverished residents. Also, he was the first to get the county's students enroll in free seats in schools in big cities.

The 39-year-old arrived in Shuanghu in July 2016 as part of a Central Government program to assist in the region's development. In 1994, the Central Government set a new policy to rally greater support for Tibet. Certain provinces were given responsibilities to help specific cities or counties in the auto-

mous region. The program is known as partnership assistance. And eight years later, 17 leading state-owned enterprises (SOEs) joined the program. The China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC) was one of them and Liang, one of its officials, was subsequently assigned to Shuanghu.

Shuanghu is located at the heart of the Changtang National Nature Reserve on the Tibetan Plateau, 700 km northwest of Lhasa, capital city of the autonomous region. It is China's youngest county, established in 2013. Though vast, it is scarcely populated.

The CNPC has donated 390 million yuan (\$56.42 million) for 113 projects in Shuanghu, most of them to improve infrastructure. But after Liang took office in Shuanghu, he advised the local government and the CNPC to make some changes to the partnership assistance projects in Shuanghu, focusing more on healthcare services, education and income-generating industries.

Based on his suggestions, assistance funds were more used in projects related to improving people's lives and creating jobs.

World's highest C-section

Pasang Norbu, 21 months old, has two names. His Tibetan name, Pasang Norbu, means sweetheart of the Pasang family. The Han-style name Huo Dangsheng denotes the baby born by Shuanghu's first C-section operation conducted by a doctor surnamed Huo.

"The birth of this child set a record for C-section done at the highest altitude in medical history—4,962 meters," Liang said.

With its inhospitable terrain and rarified air, Shuanghu is also known as the "dead zone." The average life expectancy of its residents is 58 years, 10 years less than the regional average. "Locals suffer from widespread high-altitude illnesses and newborn deaths," Liang said.

Before Liang's arrival, there were no surgeons and no functional surgical equipment in the local hospital. If a woman went into difficult labor, she had to be taken to Nagqu, a bigger city 550 km away and nearly seven hours' journey

due to the bumpy road.

From 2009, a medical team sent by the CNPC began visiting the county once a year to provide free medicine and treatment. But they addressed just short-term ailments, not major diseases. So Liang recommended that surgery be introduced.

The first operation done in the county was a C-section. "Many thought it was an impossible mission," Liang said. The preparation took 10 months. A team from the People's Hospital of Shuanghu County was sent to the CNPC Central Hospital in Hebei Province to receive training.

Some 1.13 million yuan (\$162,749) from the CNPC's assistance fund was earmarked to buy equipment for the operation such as respirators.

August 23, 2017, was a landmark day for both Shuanghu and Liang. At 19:30, an expectant mother was sent to the operation room.

Liang, together with the patient's family, waited outside. "I felt more anxious than when my own baby was born eight years ago," he said.

At 20:33, a newborn's cries broke out and when the baby was carried out of the room, all those waiting outside smiled in relief.

Today, with the CNPC's help, 28 doctors from Shuanghu have been trained to do appendicitis operations. Teaming up with a medical team from CNPC, doctors in Shuanghu have performed a dozen of operations in the past three years.

Changdren, head of the People's Hospital of Shuanghu County, said the county hospital now has more qualified staff and advanced machines, offering better service to locals.

In the coming years, the aim is to ensure that common diseases can be treated in a timely manner in Shuanghu. As Liang said, "If we cannot ensure people's health, we cannot achieve moderate prosperity in all respects."

A game changer

Assistance projects, especially to develop new industries, have become a major way to fight poverty in Tibet. From 2013 to 2017, over 1,700 assistance

Partnership Assistance For Tibet Autonomous Region

(1 yuan=\$0.147)

It is estimated that financial aid from the central budget totaled



1.24 tln yuan
from 1980 to 2018,
making up



of Tibet's financial expenditure.

To date, a total of



18,000

officials and professionals

from supporting provinces have been involved in the assistance campaign.

More than



10,000
projects

are receiving support, representing a total investment of over

40 bln yuan.



(Source: *Democratic Reform in Tibet—Sixty Years On*; designed by Pamela Tobey)

projects worth 14.35 billion yuan (\$2.08 billion) had been launched, according to a white paper on democratic reform in Tibet released by China's State Council Information Office in March.

Shuanghu is a poverty-stricken county with 21.9 percent of the population ▶▶

living under the poverty line. "Our target is to bring all of them out of poverty this year," Liang said.

While looking for industries that could provide a sustainable way out of poverty, he chanced upon the local brine shrimp egg industry. Some saltwater lakes in Shuanghu are home to the brine shrimp whose eggs are perfect for aquaculture. Since the 1990s, selling raw brine shrimp eggs has been the main source of Shuanghu's revenue and local residents' income. "It's the purse of Shuanghu," Liang said.

He planned to upgrade the industry. After a rigorous third-party scientific study and dozens of market surveys, he mapped out a three-tier trajectory for the industry's growth: first, to build a factory to process the eggs, which would fetch more profit; second, to produce a specialty food with the eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) present in the eggs, a fatty acid that can lower the risk of heart diseases and help regulate blood fat and sugar as well as prevent insomnia; finally, to develop a drug with the EPA.

Before 2015, most of Shuanghu's brine shrimp eggs were snapped up at a very low price by one businessman from a neighboring province. To end the monopoly, Liang organized two public tenders in 2017 and 2018, but both failed, allegedly due to the trader's interference.

But Liang didn't give up. He continued to prepare for the third public tender in

January 2019. At that time, the volume of imported brine shrimp eggs in China was large, slashing the price of the processed product in half. Liang was prepared for the worst: If the tender failed again, they would outsource the raw materials to make the finished product.

Before the bidding, he hit upon the idea of circulating the tender notice by e-mail. In an accompanying letter, he said: "Catching brine shrimp eggs means fishermen have to camp by the lake in below zero-degree Celsius temperature for a month. It is not easy money. Selling the eggs is a key way to pull Shuanghu out of poverty. It's our duty to fetch a good price for local residents...I hope you will seize the opportunity and work with us to create a win-win future based on mutual trust."

And his efforts paid off. Ten bidders attended the public bidding. "We recorded a price of 70,000 yuan (\$10,126) per ton, the highest in the history of Shuanghu," Liang said.

Next, he advised the CNPC to donate 13.8 million yuan (\$2.06 million) to build a processing factory in Nagqu City, which is expected to be ready in July. Then the eggs will be processed and bring more profits than the raw material. Every Shuanghu resident involved in the business is expected to earn an extra average income of 3,990 yuan (\$594) per year.

A specialty food has been developed from the eggs by Ocean University of

China and Yantai University in east China's Shandong Province and is expected to be available in the market soon.

In addition, Shuanghu County Government plans to seek partnerships with big domestic pharmaceutical companies to develop a drug with the EPA found in the eggs.

"Processing the eggs will create a reliable and long-term route out of poverty," Liang said.

Dawn of education

Although children in the autonomous region enjoy a 15-year free education, while most places in the country implement a nine-year compulsory education, the high school enrollment rate in Shuanghu was less than 10 percent since most parents, herdsmen by profession, didn't think education could ensure a promising future for their children.

Twenty-one provinces and cities outside Tibet offer free classes for meritorious Tibetan students. However, from 2013 to 2017, no student from Shuanghu qualified for the free classes.

Then in 2017 and 2018, because of Liang's efforts 25 students were sent to study in Lhasa and Beijing for free. When the first batch of students was selected in 2017, no parents came to witness the selection. Nobody cared whose child would be selected since studying in Lhasa wasn't considered a good enough opportunity.

Last year, three students passed the tests to get into the free Tibetan classes in other provinces thanks to a new incentive mechanism. And it created a strong impact in Shuanghu.

When the local government selected two students to study in Lhasa in 2018, 12 parents came to monitor the selection. "It was beyond my expectations. From showing little interest in education to monitoring the selection procedure, the local parents showed a pleasant change," Liang said.

Mission continued

Due to the high altitude and the ensuing difficulties, officials and professionals from supporting provinces, government departments and SOEs are deployed in Tibet for three years. During their tenure, more than 30 percent of them suffer

Partnership Assistance Program

Assistance to Tibet Autonomous Region from some provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the Central Government, as well as large and medium-sized enterprises began in the 1960s.

Since the start of reform and opening up in 1978, assistance from developed provinces and cities has increased.

In 1994, the Third National Symposium on Work in Tibet set down the principle of rallying national support for Tibet and specified the assistance pattern of allocating responsibilities to certain provinces and rotating them in regular intervals, giving more impetus to Tibet's development.

To date, a total of 18,000 officials and professionals from supporting provinces have been involved in the assistance campaign. Since 2015, assistance by educational and medical personnel from across the country has contributed to social development in Tibet. More than 10,000 projects are receiving support, representing a total investment of over 40 billion yuan (\$5.8 billion).

With deeper reform and opening up, the economic and cultural ties between people in Tibet and those in the rest of the country have become closer, with an increasing number of mixed communities and a closer emotional bond.



COURTESY PHOTO

The first batch of Tibetan Children from Shuanghu start their studies in Lhasa on August 31, 2017, with free tuition and accommodations provided

from high blood pressure, hyperlipidemia—abnormally high fat levels in the blood, and hyperuricemia—abnormally high levels of uric acid in the blood, according to Shao Zhengyi, a Beijing doctor who worked at the People’s Hospital of Lhasa in 2012. Insomnia and headaches resulting from the lack of oxygen in the air are other common problems.

Even after almost three years’ acclimatization in Shuanghu, Liang still gets insomnia and headaches.

But though his tenure is to end in July, Liang has decided to ask for another three years’ extension. “It’s a critical moment in our fight against poverty. I will stay on to develop the local industry and accomplish my tasks,” he said. **CI**



COURTESY PHOTO

Liang Nanyu (left), Deputy Mayor of Shuanghu, gives free traditional Chinese medicine to local residents on January 3. The medicine was provided by the Beijing Yuruomu Charity Foundation