

Rural Urbanization in China's Tibetan Region—Duilongdeqing County as a Typical Example

Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, China's rural areas embarked on the road to urbanization under the influence of the great tide of reform and the open policy. Has Tibet, a broad, interior region on the southwestern borders of the fatherland, been swept into this urbanization tide? What progress has been made? What are the influences of urbanization on Tibetan society, its economy, and its culture? In November 1993, we made a case study of Duilongdeqing County on the near suburbs of Lhasa to find answers to the above questions.

I. Definition of Urbanization and the Basic Situation in Duilongdeqing

The concept of urbanization is controversial in China and abroad. Different disciplines have different explanations. Geographers claim that urbanization is a territorial transformation, while demographers say it refers to the extent of concentration of rural population in the cities, and economists emphasize urban economic centers and their development and expansion to nearby rural areas. In short, urbanization includes three developments:

1. The shift of rural population into urban districts; large numbers of agricultural population becoming nonagricultural; and the continuous rise of urban population as a proportion of the total national population.
2. Changes in the status of cities and expansion of their sizes. For instance, expansion of old city limits to include neighboring rural areas, or changes in the character of certain communities to become new cities or towns.
3. The expansion of urban economic relations and lifestyles—gradual adoption of the urban way of life in the rural areas and changes in rural living standards in the urban mode.

Scholars of urban studies currently pay a great deal of attention to the first two points but often neglect the third. In this respect, the American anthropologist Gregory Guldin has pointed out that urbanization does not simply mean more

Ge Le and Li Tao, "Zhongguo Zangqu xiangcun chengshihua qushi."

and more people living in cities and towns; it is the process in which the urban and nonurban areas of a society increase communication and ties.¹ That is to say, with the reciprocal influence of cities and rural areas upon each other and mutual contact and integration of urban-rural cultures, an integrated social ideal has been generated that includes elements of both the rural and the urban civilization. This phenomenon is "rural urbanization." In the wake of rural urbanization comes a narrowing of the urban-rural gap; the structure of rural productive forces, its production and management, income level and structure, way of life, ideas, and thinking become increasingly close to and in unity with that of cities. Here, we will illustrate the rural urbanization process in the Tibetan region through the changes that have occurred in Duilongdeqing.

Duilongdeqing county is located on the western outskirts of Lhasa, the capital of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. The county seat is only 14 km from the center of Lhasa. Most of the county lies in the Yaluzangbu river valley, on the southern bank of the Lhasa River and the banks of a tributary, the Duilong Zangbu. On the northwest, the county borders on the north Tibet grasslands; on its southeast, it forms part of the southern Tibet river valley. Two southeastern ridges of the Nianqing Tanggula Mountains meander to the north and south of the county, giving it two different types of climate and natural resources. In the main, the county is topographically in a high plains valley region with its western part high and eastern part low. The highest sea elevation is 5,500 m, the lowest 3,640 m, the difference being 1,360 m. Annual mean temperature is 7 degrees Centigrade, with the January temperature ranging to below -10° C. Annual rainfall is 440 mm. In the autumn alone, the rainfall reaches 310 mm; the heaviest rainfall in a day is 140 mm. There are 70 days of rain and snow. The region has sixty-odd rivers and streams. The Duilong Zangbu River has the richest water resources and the longest flow path, 95 km. It flows through 14 km² and has the potential to generate 4,000 kw of power. Natural resources are abundant, including rare animals and plants as well as medicinal herbs such as river deer, deer, otter, brown bears, leopards, black neck cranes, blue Tibetan horse-chicken (*Crossoptilon*), Chinese caterpillar fungus, fritillary bulbs, and snow lotus.

Duilongdeqing, the Tibetan characters for which mean "Joy on the Heights," has a long history. As far back as the time of Songzanganbu, it was economically developed by the Tibetan kings as the "granary" of Luoxie (the capital Lhasa). Agriculture was predominant in the region along with some livestock raising. In 1992, the county had an area of 2,600 km² and had jurisdiction over 12 *xiang* (townships), namely: Qiusang, Deqing, Langba, Maxiang, Naga, Gurong, Yangda, Dongga, Jiare, Naiqiong, Sangda, and Liuwu, comprising 90 administrative villages. Total population of the county was 33,581 in 6,500 households, of which 31,181 or 6,128 households—94.28 percent and 92.29 percent, respectively—engaged in farming. Around 90 percent of the total population was Tibetan. Residents of other nationalities were concentrated in the county town.

Table 1

Structure of and Changes in Duilongdeqing's Rural Labor Force

(Unit: one person)

	1984	%	1988	%	1992	%
Labor force total	16,283	100	17,100	100	17,556	100
Primary sector (agriculture, husbandry, forestry, fishery)	14,686	90.19	14,100	82.46	14,274	81.31
Industry	—	—	300	1.75	107	0.61
Construction	125	0.77	400	2.34	239	1.36
Transportation, ports & telecomm.	405	2.49	700	4.09	984	5.60
Commerce, food & bev., services	139	0.85	200	1.17	218	1.24
Culture/education, health	188	1.15	200	1.17	227	1.29
<i>Xiang</i> administrative personnel	—	—	—	—	33	0.19
Finance/insurance	—	—	—	—	1	0.01
Absentee labor	740	4.54	1,200	7.02	1,473*	8.39

*3,000 in 1993

Source: Provided by the Duilongdeqing County Planning Commission and the Lhasa Statistical Bureau.

II. Labor Structure and Population Movement

Before the 1980s, most of the rural labor power in Duilongdeqing County, as elsewhere in the autonomous region, farmed and raised livestock; only a very few engaged in subsidiary occupations. The structure of the rural labor force was monolithic. In the wake of reform and the open policy, this structure has changed greatly, beginning to evolve toward diversification. Peasants and herdsman also ventured into industry, construction, transportation, commerce, food and beverages, finance and insurance, culture and education, and health. (See Table 1.)

The laboring population engaged in farming and livestock-raising has decreased year by year. Between 1984 and 1992, its proportion in the total labor force decreased by 10 percentage points. The number of people in other

occupations has steadily mounted, by contrast, especially in transportation and posts and telecommunications, as well as those who left home to work outside: from 2.49 percent and 4.54 percent, respectively, in 1984, rising to 5.6 percent and 8.39 percent in 1992. The number of people engaged in commerce, food and beverage and other service trades has also risen rapidly—from 139 in 1984 to 218 in 1992. As the table shows, not only does the industrial work force make up a small proportion of the total but it is dropping drastically. In the mid-1980s, the county had cooperated with inland regions to build many types of county-, *xiang*- and village-run factories and processing plants. Due to poor management and lack of resources, virtually all closed down. In 1992, the construction work force had also decreased as compared to 1988, when it was expanding rapidly to meet the needs of Lhasa's "43 engineering projects." Generally speaking, however, the construction work force is still on the rise.

In short, transportation, construction, commerce, food and beverages and other services are the industries that changed the structure of the rural labor force of Duilongdeqing County, and in fact of all the Tibetan region.

As for labor force who had left home, that is not, strictly speaking, in the same category as those who have turned to other occupations. They do, however, occupy a unique position within the rural labor force, being large in number and swift to grow. Our surveys showed that the numbers that have gone elsewhere are far greater than those statistically estimated. In villages close to cities where transportation is convenient, 50–60 percent leave their homes for outside work during the slack farming seasons. Ninety percent of them end up in Lhasa and 5 percent in Rigeze, Tibet's second-largest city (a few hours' car ride from Lhasa). The rest go to Zhangmu, Yadong, Geermu, and inland areas; not a few are in Nepal or India. When away, these people are engaged in transportation, construction, or business, or are carpenters, painters, stonecutters, *qingke* wine brewers, or odd-jobs men. This is a growing force in the county that cannot be ignored.

III. Changes in Production and Management

During the urbanization process, the first areas to change in the villages are usually the production and management modes. Duilongdeqing peasants had worked in nothing but farming and livestock-breeding for centuries; their modes of production and management were traditional and backward. Since reform and the open policy, not only has the economy diversified into the nationality handicrafts industry, transportation, construction, commerce, food and beverages and other services, but traditional modes of farming and livestock-raising have also changed enormously.

According to statistical data, there are currently twenty-eight township enterprises in Duilongdeqing, including cement factories, a limited holding company for mineral water, and a comprehensive welfare services company, as well as factories manufacturing or processing traditional Tibetan *hada* (ceremonial silk

scarves), vermicelli, and cakes of roasted barley flour. As to sources of financing, besides investment from the county and *xiang* as well as individuals, lateral cooperation has spread into areas outside the county or autonomous region in order to raise all funds possible. For instance, the Lianying Cement Plant in Dongga township was jointly financed by the township and the Economic Development Company of Gansu Province's Township Enterprise Bureau. The Yangda Mineral Water Ltd. was a joint venture among the county Economic Development Corp., Yangda *xiang*, the Geothermal and Geological Team of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and the region's Geothermal Development Company. The investment ratio among these entities was 43:19:33:5. The Dongga Comprehensive Welfare Services Company was financed by the Civil Administration of Lhasa with 110,000 *yuan*. As to the size of enterprises, Duilongdeqing has large ones with millions of *yuan* of investment and hiring several hundred workers, as well as smaller ones with several thousand *yuan* investment and a handful of workers. In short, the rise and rapid development of township enterprises in Duilongdeqing was a major factor in changing the rural production structure.

Diversification has brought even greater changes to Duilongdeqing's rural economy. Hinging on the needs of Lhasa, it has branched into many industries including transportation, processing, gathering, subcontracting, commerce, food and beverages, and services. According to county government statistics, up to September 1993, 4,291 people were employed in these industries, or 25 percent of the county's rural labor force. Farmers in the county owned altogether 329 automobiles (thirty-four of which are vehicles for hire), 159 large- and medium-sized tractors, and 610 manual tractors, most of which are concentrated in townships close to Lhasa, including Dongga town, Yangda *xiang*, Naiqiong *xiang*, and Jiare *xiang*. Dongga town alone had 103 automobiles; in Xiachong Village, virtually every family owned a tractor (including manual ones) or automobile. These cars and tractors carried out farm and subsidiary products and brought back agricultural means of production and daily articles. They were also used by neighboring state factories or farms or townships for transportation, going as far afield as Geermu and Zhangmu port to carry freight. Some rural dwellers bought large or compact passenger cars to enter the transportation business, ferrying passengers to Lhasa, Qushui, Zedang, or Rigece, thus increasing income, facilitating commuting for the masses, and enhancing the link between town and country. At present, riders can get a peasant's *zhaoshou ting* (hitchhiker's) cab for a fare of one *yuan* for the few dozen minutes' ride between Lhasa and Duilongdeqing.

Processing is also relatively well developed in the various *xiang*. In Naiqiong, a dozen peasant families started a flour mill and half a dozen families opened a noodle factory. Between the two, local wheat was milled into flour and made into noodles, which were sold in the county as well as Lhasa. In Jiare, a group of disabled people and financially strapped families organized a woolen mill, the products of which were sold to carpet-making factories. This brought them a

Table 2

1993 Outputs of Subsidiary Occupations in Naiqiong Xiang

(Unit: yuan)

<i>Occupation</i>	Transportation	Construction	Handicrafts	Noodle-making	Flour milling
<i>Revenue</i>	189,492	46,310	5,436	1,822	6,959
<i>Occupation</i>	Qingke wine-making	Retail stores	Eggs	Forestry	Stone quarrying
<i>Revenue</i>	1,200	3,380	1,645	550	16,204
<i>Occupation</i>	Adobe making	Other	Total		
<i>Revenue</i>	2,200	750	275,948		

Source: Provided by Naiqiong. The *xiang* has seven villages with 726 families (724 of which were agricultural households) and 3,193 people (3,173 of which were in the farming sector).

sizable income.

In recent years, snack shops and sweet tea shops have sprung up everywhere. In Naiqiong alone, there are four tea shops and one snack shop. The *xiang* head, a young woman, took the lead in setting up a sweet tea shop, which we visited at the conclusion of our survey. Business was extremely good. Customers were discussing business, eating noodles (Tibetan sweet tea shops also provide Tibetan noodles), or playing mahjong. We saw elderly *po-la* [Tibetan for "paternal grandfather"] in their sixties and seventies as well as children of five or six years. In some *xiang*, peasants are running pool halls and video arcades. The proliferation of snack shops, sweet tea shops, and video games in the rural areas will no doubt have a big influence on the rural mode of production.

A major source of income for rural dwellers in this county was going outside the local area to work and subcontract. In the beginning of the reform era and the open policy, this was one way the rural economy went about primary accumulation. With economic development, higher productivity, and the enlargement of labor surplus, the number of rural dwellers working outside the local area rose rapidly.

Rather than listing the many areas of diversification in the county's rural areas, we will provide a table of the output values in one *xiang*. (See Table 2.)

The rise of township enterprises and growing economic diversification not only did not affect farm and livestock production, but enhanced the county's swift economic development. This was due to a more prosperous rural economy, which gave rural dwellers the wherewithal to improve their management level and increase output. (See Table 3.)

The table clearly shows that between 1980 and 1992, despite the decrease in

Table 3

Structure of Agricultural Production in Duilongdeqing County

Cultivable land		1952	1976	1980	1984	1989	1992
Total		8.8	11.05	9.66	9.65	9.62	9.60
Acreage under farm crops (unit: 10,000 mu)	Total	8.49	10.50	9.66	9.64	9.57	9.57
	<i>Qingke</i>	3.70	4.28	3.84	4.05	4.06	5.01
	Wheat	0.43	3.93	3.11	2.22	2.23	2.57
	Peas, beans	2.38	1.92	2.04	2.51	2.16	1.22
	Misc. grain	1.80	0.01	—	0.38	0.63	0.32
	Rapesd	0.18	0.33	0.33	0.29	0.35	0.31
	Vegtbls	—	—	0.30	0.07	0.07	0.04
	Other	—	0.03	0.04	0.12	0.07	0.10
Grain output: (unit: 10,000 catties)	Total	824.20	2,831.59	3,181.34	3,193.86	3,529.70	4,439.78
	<i>Qingke</i>	377.40	1,130.37	1,254.93	1,626.29	1,797.99	2,547.56
	Wheat	40.85	1,173.30	1,363.06	964.01	335.31	1,499.71
	Peas, beans	231.35	525.08	563.35	540.18	548.48	343.61
	Misc. grain	174.60	2.84	—	63.38	149.92	48.82
	Rapeseed	9.18	50.31	50.03	58.83	64.75	62.04
	Vegetables	—	—	104.32	149.38	N.A.	34.61
	Other	—	18.43	—	0.64	N.A.	9.58

Source: Figures come from *Lhasa in Progress, 1952-84* and *Statistical Data on the National Economy in Lhasa, 1989* published by the Lhasa Statistical Bureau, and *Compilation of Farm and Livestock Production Statistics, 1992* published by the Duilongdeqing County Planning Commission.

cultivated acreage and in acreage under farm crops due to urbanization, the growth of agricultural output far exceeded that of the prior twenty years; further, the types of farm crops also diversified. This was chiefly the result of the changes in the production and management of agriculture and livestock-raising.

In agriculture, the county's farmers increasingly adopted scientific methods, and many volunteered to take courses in science and technology. In 1992, 5,930

rural dwellers, or 92 percent of the rural households, participated in such training. Naiqiong set up a Science Popularization Association, and the *xiang* head personally assumed the chairmanship. Members came from all the local villages. The updating of ideas was instrumental in changing the outdated traditional management mode. This was shown in the following:

1. Active popularization and use of new and improved strains. In many remote Tibetan areas even today, peasants used to the old ways reject new scientific ways. In Duilongdeqing, the reverse was true. Peasants voluntarily exchanged the seeds they had at home with new strains at the region's Agro-Technical Institute. In 1992, 79,000 *mu* of county land, or 87.8 percent of total farmland planted to grain, were planted with new strains.

2. More use of fertilizers, including both organic and chemical fertilizers. With rising family incomes, farmers could afford to buy more chemical fertilizers. This year, despite short supplies, each *mu* in the county still averaged twenty-eight catties of chemical fertilizer; in 1984, by contrast, the average was nineteen.

3. A higher degree of mechanization and expanded acreage under mechanized farming.

4. Greater emphasis on irrigation. Large-scale irrigation projects have been built in the past few years in the county using a combination of fund sources including investment by the country, the collective, and the individual. In 1992, with the 112,000 *yuan* provided by the autonomous region's Water Conservancy Bureau, the 250,000 *yuan* appropriated by the county, and funds from individuals, the county repaired or built many irrigation ditches, water-discharge outlets, and ponds, built new river dikes, and rebuilt low-yielding farmland.

5. What is most noteworthy is that, because many county peasants were either working in the cities or in the tertiary sector and because they now had the financial capability to do so, they hired friends and relatives locally or from other counties to come and help out in the fields. This usually took place during the busy sowing, harvesting, or threshing seasons. After the work was done, they went back outside to earn money, leaving the elderly, the weak, and women and children to weed and water the fields. This phenomenon was particularly common in villages where transportation was convenient.

Animal husbandry made up only a small part of the county's agricultural sector. Management's function was mainly to control the number of livestock so as to alleviate fodder shortage, adjust herd structure, enhance quality, and speed up the fertility rate in order to raise the commodity price.

IV. Rural Dweller Income Levels and Structure

With the reform of traditional production methods, great changes have also taken place in the income levels and structure of Tibetan farmers and herders. The

Table 4

Duilongdeqing Farmers' Per Capita Cash Income, 1959-90

(Unit: yuan)

Year	Per Capita	Year	Per Capita	Year	Per Capita	Year	Per Capita
1959	67.39	1968	96.57	1977	154.17	1986	377
1960	74.88	1969	91.97	1978	172.12	1987	352.36
1961	78.82	1970	103.34	1979	175.96	1988	369.48
1962	86.61	1971	111.12	1980	217.49	1989	415.52
1963	92.14	1972	111.33	1981	201.48	1990	441.95
1964	99.07	1973	124.51	1982	253.88		
1965	105.39	1974	141.57	1983	255.51		
1966	106.45	1975	135.25	1984	392.57		
1967	102.36	1976	144.56	1985	498.94		

Sources: Figures taken from *Duilongdeqing County's Compilation of Statistical Data, 1959-84* and yearly editions from 1984 to 1991 of *Statistical Data of the National Economy in Lhasa, 1984-91*.

income level of those in Duilongdeqing has mounted sharply due to the promotion of scientific methods, higher efficiency, and diversification of the production structure. (See Table 4.)

Between 1959 and 1979, the per capita annual increase in cash income among the county's rural populace was 4.68 percent, but between 1980 and 1990, the increase rose to 6.66 percent. Obviously, cash income in the 1980s has far outstripped that in the two previous decades.

Since the advent of reform and the open policy, not only has there been rapid growth in the income levels of farmers and herders, but also a big change in income structure. Income from agriculture and/or livestock-raising are no longer the sole income source of a farming or herding family. The proportion of income from the tertiary and secondary industries has increased (see Table 5), and in villages near cities, the income from industry and subsidiary occupations has far surpassed that from agriculture and livestock-raising.

V. Changes in Lifestyle

In the process of rural urbanization, significant changes took place in the rural dwellers' mode of production, their living standards and quality of life were immeasurably enhanced, and the gap between town and country was increasingly bridged.

Table 5

Changes in Duilongdeqing Farmers' Income Composition(Unit: 10,000 *yuan*%)

	1986		1988	1990	1992	
	Amount	%	Amount	Amount	Amount	%
Total rural income	1,474.01	100	1,677.23	1,913.14	3,373.11	100
Primary sector	1,128.95	76.59	1,321.78	1,409.07	2,634.53	78.10
Agriculture	770.74	52.29	913.60	999.57	2,030.51	60.20
Forestry	5.40	0.37	2.34	3.59	21.63	0.64
Herding	156.37	10.61	181.99	167.95	337.00	9.99
Sub. occup.	196.44	13.33	223.85	237.96	245.39	7.27
Fishery	—	—	—	—	—	—
Secondary sector	27.61	1.87	62.14	54.08	87.50	2.59
Industry	13.47	0.91	28.63	30.05	51.14	1.52
Construction	14.14	0.96	33.51	24.03	36.36	1.08
Tertiary sector	317.45	21.54	293.31	449.99	651.08	19.30
Transportation	203.29	13.79	222.06	355.67	507.86	15.06
Commerce, food, beverage	34.70	2.35	25.07	35.95	77.24	2.29
Services	14.56	0.99	7.25	11.45	8.36	0.25
Other	64.90	4.40	38.93	46.92	57.62	1.71

Source: Figures provided by the Lhasa Statistical Bureau.

Let us first examine the rural dwellers' consumer spending. According to a random sampling of thirty rural families in the county by the Rural Socioeconomic Investigation Team of the Tibet Autonomous Region (the Rural Investigation Team, for short), per capita spending on consumables in the rural areas was 306.18 *yuan* in 1985 but rose to 608.36 *yuan* in 1992, making up 51.17 percent and 67.10 percent of total per capita spending, respectively, in those two years.

Table 6

Comparison Between Urban and Rural Household Consumption

(Unit: %)

	Rural Inhabitant 1985	Urban Resident* 1985	Rural Inhabitant 1992	Urban Resident* 1991
Total livelihood spending	100	100	100	100
Expenses on durables	1.16	3.08	1.84	5.58
Expenses on consumables	99.62	96.92	98.16	94.42
Itemized spending on consum- ables				
Food	76.28	57.26	69.29	66.98
Clothing	13.84	14.47	11.35	16.88
Housing	2.04	3.42	3.98	0.1
Fuel	2.11	1.91	8.14	1.29
Daily articles	5.73	21.93	7.25	14.48

Source: Tibet Autonomous Region Statistical Bureau, *Data on the Livelihood and Commodity Prices for Lhasa Residents, 1985–90*; *Data on the Livelihood and Commodity Prices for Residents of Townships in Lhasa Municipality, 1991*; *Data Obtained from a Random Sampling of Rural Households in the Tibet Autonomous Region, 1985*; and *Annual Compilation of Statistics on Duilongdeqing Residents, 1992*.

This shows not only a rapid rise in rural dwellers' living expenses but also the increasing proportion of consumables in family consumption. With respect to the various items under household expenses, although consumable items still predominate, the proportion of expenses on durables rose steadily during 1985–92, by a total of 0.68 percentage points. At the same time, the spending ratio of different items of rural dwellers' livelihood consumption also changed and became increasingly close to that of urban residents. (See Table 6.)

In Table 6, we are comparing Duilongdeqing rural dwellers' and Lhasa residents' different areas of household consumer spending during the same year or consecutive years. Obviously, the gap was smaller in the early 1990s as compared to the mid-1980s. Some points of explanation are necessary, however:

1. Because of the open policy on grain and edible oil in recent years, which led to a big rise in the prices of staple foods, the proportion of food expenses of urban dwellers in 1991 was higher than in 1985.
2. Particularly worth noting is the fact that, in 1985, there was a rush in Lhasa to buy home appliances and build private housing, bringing up the proportion of expenses in the two areas of daily articles and housing. Looking at 1980 to 1992,

city residents' daily article expenses showed a tendency to rise. As most city residents lived in public housing, their rent was included in noncommodity spending.

3. In recent years, rural people began to buy, rather than self-supply, fuel, thus causing a sharp rise in the fuel cost category.

The narrowing gap between urban and rural consumer spending demonstrates rural-urban convergence in thinking in regard to consumption. This change is directly affecting and guiding people's behavior. Let us now examine in more detail the way of life of rural dwellers in clothing, food, housing, and articles of daily use.

Food

For the longest time, food customs were monolithic in rural Tibet, with the major foods being *tsampa* (roasted *qingke* barley cakes) and beef and mutton. Very few vegetables were eaten and there was little variety—turnips, potatoes, and Chinese cabbage [*bai cai* or bok choy—ed.]. In famine years, people ate wild vegetables. Since the third plenary session of the Eleventh Central Committee, the rural economic situation has improved, and its food and drink structure has changed drastically: It became much more diversified, and more attention was paid to healthy food. With more communication between urban and rural areas and under the influence of the eating habits of city people and in surrounding factories and mines, rural food habits also became more complex and diversified. For instance, we visited Bazhu's family in the Number Two Brigade of Naiqiong *xiang*'s Number Three village and asked them about their meals. The lady of the house, Bianbazhuoga, told us: "In the morning, we generally eat *mantou* [steamed bread] and drink buttered tea; occasionally we also eat *tsampa*. Noon-time we often eat noodles. At supper, we have rice and fried dishes, sometimes also noodles. What kind of fried dishes? Lots: vermicelli, broccoli, cucumber. . . . Basically what they eat in the cities." From what we discovered, *man tou*, noodles, rice, and fried dishes were the daily fare in rural families in Naiqiong and throughout Tibet. Changes in this area in rural Tibet were manifested in the following four ways:

Change in Staple Food Structure and More Diversified Nonstaples

In the past, rural Tibetans ate mainly *tsampa*, but more and more they like noodles and rice. In villages closer to the cities, such as Naiqiong and Liuwu, noodles and rice are the staples, with *tsampa* relegated to a special taste. In the past, peasants seldom ate vegetables and fruit. Now these frequently appear on the dining table. Of course, expenses for nonstaples had also gone up. According to the Rural Investigation Team's data, in 1985, the county's rural dwellers spent

81.56 *yuan* per capita on staples and 68.05 on nonstaples; by 1992, the former had become 145.04 and the latter 179.74, which was even higher than the former. Between 1985 and 1992, the consumption of such traditional Tibetan foods as beef and mutton dropped, but that of fruit and other new types of food rose by a large margin. (See Table 7.)

Increasing Diversity in Food Preparation

Due to improved communications with other areas, new ways of preparing food (primarily urban ways) had spread to the rural areas. New cooking utensils and fuel, plus rural food processing, all contributed. For instance, a dozen noodle factories had sprung up in Naiqiong, and this completely eliminated manual noodle making. It was then possible to eat noodles of different lengths, widths, and shapes.

More Dining Out

According to statistics of the Rural Investigation Team survey, in 1985, the per capita expense of peasants in the county for eating out was 2.62 *yuan*. By 1992, this had tripled to 8.17 *yuan*.

More Commodity Food Items Were Bought

From 1985 to 1992, the quantities bought and expenses paid for all food items except beef and mutton had risen. They demonstrate the rise in rural-sector purchasing power in the wake of economic development. Further, the social division of labor in the rural areas was more clear than before, the self-contained nature of the rural economy had been thoroughly eliminated, and there were more urban-rural economic ties. Finally, the flourishing market economy also provided the conditions for this phenomenon. Small retail stores had opened all over, interspersed with rural markets. Naiqiong peasants no longer had to go to Lhasa or the county town to buy vegetables; they could get them in the village from peddlers who were dependents of workers in neighboring contracting teams or factories or mines. In this *xiang*, peasants grew some vegetables in the summer for their own use but generally bought them in the winter.

Clothing

In the past, rural Tibetans generally made their own woolen fabrics and brought in tailors to make clothes in the off-seasons. This was also true of Duilongdeqing, although better-quality items were purchased or ordered from Shannan. At that time, whether male or female, young or old, the vast majority all wore Tibetan costume. Later, people began to feel that working in heavy woolen

Table 7

Changes in Rural Food Consumption in Dullongdeqing County

	Unit	1985		1992	
		Amount Consumed	Amount Purchased	Amount Consumed	Amount Purchased
Vegetables	kg	31.11	0.86	20.98	2.25
	yuan		1.18		3.13
Bean products	kg	—	—	—	0.46
	yuan		—		1.55
Vegetable oil	kg	2.7	—	2.79	—
	yuan		—		—
Pork	kg	0.73	0.08	0.35	0.32
	yuan		0.29		2.16
Beef, mutton	kg	13.36	4.51	10.42	3.56
	yuan		12.86		21.62
Cow/goat milk	kg	17.70	—	36.28	—
	yuan		—		—
Eggs	kg	0.41	—	0.53	—
	yuan		—		—
Sugar	kg	2.30	2.15	1.31	1.30
	yuan		4.25		4.43
Confectionary	kg	0.34	0.38	0.69	0.69
	yuan		1.26		2.76
Pastries	kg	0.36	0.41	0.25	0.37
	yuan		0.78		0.98
Fruit	kg	0.10	0.08	0.90	0.90
	yuan		0.16		1.66
Tea	kg	4.60	4.18	28.91	28.91
	yuan		12.38		9.26
Tobacco	cartons	15.46	10.73	18.32	18.42
	yuan		5.90		18.14
Liquor	kg	23.38	0.03	36.87	0.13
	yuan		1.79		0.31

Source: Data provided by the Rural Investigation Team of the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

clothing was not as convenient as working in Han clothing, and the more open-minded began to don Han clothing. With the advent of reform and the open policy, in line with changes in rural thinking and affordability, more and more people changed to Han clothing. In the rural areas today, especially near cities, few young people could still be found wearing Tibetan clothing, which had become a kind of ceremonial dress for the elderly or for people during the New Year or holidays. Young women who put on Tibetan dress at New Year's often complained of backaches from the heavy weight of the long skirts. In the villages we visited, people had begun to consider Tibetan costumes too *tuqi* ("hickish"). Relatives who came visiting in such clothes were often a source of embarrassment. With the change of clothes, rural people began to have wider choice of fabrics and tailoring styles. The native Tibetan woolen fabric is now seldom used. Cotton, synthetic fibers, flannel, and silk are bought from the stores, even for making Tibetan costumes. Tailors no longer come to people's homes; customers go to them. More and more, rural Tibetans like to buy ready-made clothing. (See Table 8.) In 1992, the quantities of shirts, pants, and shoes bought by Duilongdeqing's peasants were far greater than that in 1985. From Table 8 we can also see that, prior to the 1980s, peasants chiefly wore cotton clothing; in the 1990s, however, due to rising incomes, they chiefly wore synthetic fibers. (Note: Unlike in the industrially developed West, in China where agriculture predominates, cotton fabrics are still cheaper than synthetic fibers.)

From the changes in clothing styles, use of fabrics and tailoring, one can also see that rural Tibetans had gradually departed from self-sufficiency to reliance on cities and industry. According to the survey of the Rural Investigation Team, per capita spending on clothes was 42.21 *yuan* in Duilongdeqing's rural areas in 1985, of which 40.59 *yuan* was in cash. In 1992, per capita spending was 67.77 *yuan*, all of which was in cash. This demonstrates that while country dwellers were still making part of their own clothing in the mid-1980s, they were paying cash for all clothing in the 1990s.

Housing

Rural housing conditions also improved with economic development. Beginning in the 1980s, country dwellers built many new houses. Even before 1990, 70 percent of the county's rural residents had moved into new houses. Per capita living space quickly expanded. Between 1985 and 1992, every peasant's living space increased by 1.75 m², the per capita value of such space being an extra 813.09 *yuan*. In contrast to the crude simple dwellings of the past, houses built in the 1980s were lavish and decorative. Modern construction materials such as concrete and cement were used. From interior to exterior, rural houses were no different from urban ones. Furthermore, great changes had also taken place in rural living facilities. No longer were people casually relieving themselves outside, but instead were using hygienic bathrooms. Fuel was now provided by

Table 8

Changes in Rural Clothing Usage Patterns

	Unit	1985	1992
Cotton cloth	meter	3.05	2.26
	cost in <i>yuan</i>	12.84	10.48
Of above,	garments	1.35	0.67
cotton clothing	cost in <i>yuan</i>	11.90	8.39
Synthetic fabrics	meter	0.27	1.62
	cost in <i>yuan</i>	1.89	17.09
Of above,	garments	0.10	0.84
clothing	cost in <i>yuan</i>	1.64	17.60
Nylon fabric	meter	0.14	0.02
	cost in <i>yuan</i>	2.28	—
Of above,	garments	0.03	0.02
clothing	cost in <i>yuan</i>	1.01	0.27
Silk and brocade	meter	0.08	—
	cost in <i>yuan</i>	0.79	—
Of above,	garments	0.05	—
clothing	cost in <i>yuan</i>	0.73	—
Flannel/woolen	kg	0.02	0.68
knitwear	cost in <i>yuan</i>	0.33	0.80
Nylon shirts/pants	garments	0.02	0.02
	cost in <i>yuan</i>	0.16	0.07
Cotton jersey	garments	0.01	0.22
shirts/pants	cost in <i>yuan</i>	0.12	1.95
Sweatshirts/pants	garments	—	—
	cost in <i>yuan</i>	—	—
Leather shoes	pair	0.36	0.45
	cost in <i>yuan</i>	5.64	8.93
Sneakers	pair	0.68	1.37
	cost in <i>yuan</i>	3.60	9.95

Source: Tibetan Autonomous Region's Rural Investigation Team. Data obtained from *A Random Sampling of Rural Households in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, 1985* and *Annual Compilation of Statistics on Duilongdeqing Residents, 1992*.

wood, solar energy, and power in place of the cow and sheep dung and dried grass of the past. Liquefied fuel had appeared in a few homes. With frequent trips out of town, peasants loved to bring back new gadgets which they displayed in their homes. In the rural homes we visited, interior decoration had become much closer to urban styles.

Use

According to a sampling by the Rural Investigation Team of articles of daily use in Duilongdeqing homes, in 1992 per capita consumption of daily articles rose by 147.8 percent over that of 1985. Types of articles found also differed: More was being paid for recreation and books and periodicals. (See Table 9.) More rural homes now had modern home appliances and other articles. (See Table 10.) During the early 1980s, most peasants here had never seen a TV; in some remote areas, it was still unknown. In 1992, many families owned TV sets, especially those in villages near Lhasa. In Xiachong village, Liuwu *xiang*, 70 percent of the families owned color TVs in 1992. Black-and-white sets were being gradually eliminated. Modern appliances had replaced traditional ones. Electric blenders had replaced butter tea urns—modernizing a centuries-old traditional process in Tibetan homes.

The updating of various use articles was no doubt a direct factor in changing rural lifestyles.

Cultural and Recreational Activities

In the past, villagers loved to gather after work to sing and dance, drink *qingke* liquor, and play Tibetan cards and dice. Yet at that time, village cultural life allowed few other choices. With reform and the open policy, recreational activities had become much richer in form and content. This included watching TV and videos, listening to radio broadcasts, playing pool and video games, participating in karaoke programs, social dancing in clubs, drinking tea at sweet tea shops, and playing mahjong. By 1992, almost all forms of recreation found in cities were found here.

With the changes urbanization brought to rural clothing, food, housing, goods, and transportation, Tibetan villages in the 1980s and 1990s acquired an entirely new lifestyle. The backward and confining nature of their past life and rural self-sufficiency had completely disappeared. Agriculture was now dependent on industry, on the outside world, and on the cities.

VI. Rising Cultural Quality and Changing Values

Human beings are the mainstream of all social change. Changes in the human being—enhancing of cultural quality and updating of value concepts—are important

Table 9

Changes in Consumer Spending Structure

	1985		1992	
	Per capita % of cash spending (yuan)	Percentage of total	Per capita % of cash spending (yuan)	Percentage of total
Total expenditures	17.47	100	43.29	100
Daily necessities	16.64	95.25	36.33	83.92
Recreation	—	—	5.46	12.61
Books, magazines	—	—	0.07	0.16
Other	0.83	4.75	1.43	3.30

Source: Same as Table 8.

Table 10

Changes in Per Capita Durable Goods Owned

	1985	1992
Bicycle	0.10	0.20
Sewing machine	0.03	0.05
Clock and/or watch	0.12	0.23
Electric fan	—	—
Washing machine	—	—
Electric refrigerator	—	—
Motorcycle	0.07	—
Radio	0.09	0.09
Television	—	0.03
Cassette recorder	0.02	0.08
Camera	—	—

Source: Same as Table 8.

manifestations of social change. With economic development, Tibetan peasants and herdsmen themselves had changed dramatically, as shown below:

1. *The general raising of cultural and educational levels of farmers and herders.* Before the peaceful liberation of Tibet, culture was a prerogative of the slave-owning and religious clergy strata. After the liberation, the party and the government instituted compulsory education and campaigns to wipe out illiteracy, greatly raising the cultural and education level among peasants and herders in Tibet. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, most rural inhabitants were passive in learning, and they had to be forcibly inculcated. In the 1980s and 1990s, with the modernization of production and the economy and increasingly frequent contact with the outside world, the masses of farmers and herdsmen began to embrace education with a rising awareness of its importance. They actively participated in the campaigns to wipe out illiteracy. In 1993, 5,000 people attended language classes and technical training classes in agrotechnology, vegetable growing, and hog-raising. This started a new wave. A peasant in his thirties or forties told us: "I didn't use to speak the Han language and got ripped off by businessmen in the interior." They not only learned the Han language, but also English and Hindi. Aboard minibuses owned by Duilongdeqing rural inhabitants, one could often see ticket sellers speaking fluent English with foreign passengers; village women in their forties or fifties hawked their goods to foreign visitors with a few words of English.

Farmers and herdsmen today are concerned not only about their own education, but that of their offspring. In the early period of reform and the open policy when land and livestock were returned to the peasant households for management, most families kept their school-age children at home to take care of smaller children or graze the livestock. Despite compulsory education, teachers had to attract students to school with a daily attendance stipend, despite which the attendance rate remained low. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, when people began to realize the importance of education, they not only actively sent their children to school but tried to get them the best education in good schools. Some wealthy families in Naiqiong, for instance, had sent their children to neighboring schools for the children of workers and miners, or even to Lhasa at great expense. When state education funds were low, they made donations or built or repaired school buildings and bought educational equipment themselves. According to 1988–90 data, donations amounting to 260,000 *yuan* were made by county residents to renovate twenty-six local, community-run elementary schools. In the same period, state appropriations amounted to only 70,000 *yuan*.

2. *Changes in ideas about marriage and children.* In the 1960s and 1970s, due to the mammoth gap between urban and rural living conditions, the "dream husbands" of peasant girls were national-level cadres (*guojia ganbu*) who had an "iron rice bowl" filled with "the emperor's grain." They longed to leave the rural areas and become nonfarming urban dwellers. It was not easy, however, for a

simple farm girl who had never left home to find a city dweller. That was why servicemen from the rural areas were all the rage; they had a good chance of promotion in the services and were assured of good jobs as nonfarming residents after demobilization. In the 1980s, along with the narrowing of the gap, conditions for the selection of marriage partners changed drastically. The pull of urban dwellers lessened and "specialized households" working in farming, raising hogs, or doing business in the rural areas became priority targets. One motivation for young fellows in the rural areas to get rich through their own efforts, in fact, was "to get rich and find a good wife."

Planned birth is a difficult task to implement in the Chinese hinterland. The state exercises a special policy in the Tibetan rural areas of allowing three children per couple. Our investigation in Duilongdeqing yielded surprising results. In Naiqiong, for instance, most of the young people indicated they wanted only two children, with no preference for male or female. They did not want too many children to take care of and support. Bazhu's family, our priority investigative source, had two boys, one five years old and one eleven.

3. *Change in religious beliefs.* During the early period of reform and the open policy, villages experienced a "religious fever," with peasants going to the temples or monasteries and worshipping whenever they had time. Some postponed farm work to join religious activities. All family income after necessary living expenses for the year was donated to the temples or monasteries. Lamas recited sutras at illnesses, deaths, or marriages. This situation has quietly changed. With higher family incomes, religious expenses did not dwindle but increased, but at the same time, more money was used to expand production. Lamas were still invited to perform rites at large-scale marriages and funerals, but it was more a prestige and wealth display expressed through custom. Heartfelt devotion to religion decreased. In some families, patients were first sent to hospitals. They asked lamas to perform rites only when that did not work.

4. *Appearance of new social relationship circles and the strengthening of information exchange.* Social circles built around monasteries, villages, or relatives had existed for a long time in rural Tibet. With reform and opening and changes in production and lifestyles, peasants had a lot more communication with the outside world and the once conservative and closed social circles of the past had broken up, to be replaced by new modern relationships. Groups formed around common economic interests, not by blood or similar surnames, and the boundaries between "clans" and "tribes" have been surmounted. Relations between different households in a community, too, changed. For instance, the few families that first had TV soon became gathering places for the whole village. When more families acquired TVs and VCRs, elders of the entire village continued to gather at one home to watch Tibetan-language films. Videos dubbed in Tibetan, such as *Journey to the West*, *Water Margin*, and *Magistrate Ji*, were special favorites. Young women gathered at another home to watch romances and dramas. Young men preferred martial arts films. In addition, sweet tea shops

had also become centers of village activity, where young and old, male and female gathered. (A few years earlier, women had been ridiculed for patronizing these shops.) Here they relaxed, met members of the opposite sex, talked business, or exchanged information. These shops had become places for villagers to go for entertainment and to get in touch with others.

In regard to communication between rural and urban Tibetans, since the peaceful liberation of the region, the serfs had become the masters of their own destinies. Many had become national cadres and changed from rural to urban residents. In the 1960s and 1970s, because of the huge urban-rural gap, city people did not have much to do with their rural relatives apart from financial aid. In the 1980s, along with the development of the tertiary sector in the cities, urban residents began to invite in their relatives and help them set up businesses in the city. The latter's monthly incomes were now often higher than those of national cadres, and they turned around and helped their city relatives financially. This author had made a survey of Balang Street in Lhasa and discovered many individual business people to have been rural inhabitants whose city relatives helped them rent housing and/or set up businesses. Once they settled down, more rural relatives were brought over. Ties with city dwellers thus became increasingly close. The social circles of the farmers and herdsmen expanded constantly. Not only had the communication mode among farmers and herdsmen themselves changed and become more frequent, their relations with city residents had also become much closer.

Through increased communication with the outside world and media channels such as the TV, VCR, and Tibetan-language newspapers and magazines such as the *Tibetan Daily* and *Tibetan Science and Technology*, rural Tibetans are increasingly up-to-date with information. We discovered with surprise that peasants in Naqiong were extremely savvy about market supply and demand in Zhangmu port.

5. *Formation of the concept of a commodity.* In the self-contained, closed and backward rural areas of the past, the concept of a commodity was extremely weak. In the last dozen years, however, the change in rural production and management modes had enhanced the farmers' and herdsmen's value concepts. Those who worked out of town had to hire other people to work on their own land, or they covertly rented out the land that they had contracted (state policy forbade assignment of land). Whatever the form, the essence was that the exchange mode was one of commodity exchange. From our survey, we found that most people who owned vehicles in Duilongdeqing saved up the money from working elsewhere. Their first vehicle was generally an old-fashioned Dongfeng truck, for which they would hire a driver at 7 or 8 *yuan* per day (food and lodging supplied). They would learn to drive from this driver and take over in a year. After they earned more money, they would sell the old truck and buy a new one. Some other people would first work in a family with a vehicle as the driver's assistant. They could earn up to 5 *yuan* a day and learn to drive as well.

After a time, they bought and drove their own vehicles. The purchase or trading of cars, hiring of drivers, or helping out in learning to drive all showed sound business sense. The formation of this commodity concept is an indispensable condition for entry into a commodity society.

VII. Urbanization Mode of Tibetan Villages and Our Evaluation

In the above, we have analyzed changes to Tibet's villages in the structure of productive forces, production and management modes, income level, lifestyles, and farmer/herder values. We can thus definitively state: Tibetan villages have already entered the urbanization process. The level is low compared to interior and coastal China, however, and the process is still in its start-up stage. After more than a decade of development, though, the urbanization model of rural Tibet has begun to form. That is, with the reform and open policy in China, rural productive forces in rural Tibet have been released, impelling a large mass of surplus labor to shift to the cities into construction and other industries. The money earned by such outside work provides the "primary accumulation" for rural economic development, with which came changes in production and management styles. The rise of a diverse economy comprising rural transportation, construction, commerce, and food and beverage industries not only brought wealth to peasant families but also to the *xiang* and townships—the collective and the county. This provided the start-up capital for township enterprises. Township enterprises, in turn, concentrated scattered rural capital and capital from other places, provinces, and even foreign countries. This further stimulated the rural economy and raised the inhabitants' income level. Rising incomes raised rural living standards and promoted changes in the rural way of life, bringing the once self-sufficient rural lifestyle closer to its urban counterpart, which depends on consumption. Farmers and herdsmen's concepts of value and consumption have also moved closer to those of city residents. In addition, rural cultural quality has improved, which further promoted production and the economy. Urbanization first takes place in villages close to cities and convenient to transportation. Their development will influence more villages to embark on urbanization. Thus, a unique path to rural urbanization has been found in Tibet.

The changes brought about by a short dozen years of urbanization far exceed those experienced in scores of years or centuries in the past. In a few years, peasants' incomes have risen manyfold. Diversification has replaced traditional farming and livestock-raising, which had predominated for thousands of years. Modern urban lifestyles have replaced the self-contained and traditionally closed lifestyle of the past. The concept of commodities has replaced conservative and backward rural thinking. In short, urbanization has integrated rural with urban culture, giving birth to a new, more ideal type of culture which contains elements of both rural and urban civilization. It has brought social and cultural changes unimaginable before.

Naturally, confronted with such abrupt social and cultural changes, Tibetan villages as communities are facing the problem of how to make the transition from the traditional to a new urban life and how to rebuild community order. Farmers and herdsmen, as individual members of these communities faced with a new cultural system far removed from the one they knew, have the problem of how to absorb the new culture while retaining elements of their former culture. How the two processes merge into one will not be smooth. Some worthwhile elements of their former culture may be discarded while not-so-good ones may be preserved. This includes, for instance, the discarding of traditional singing and dancing at wedding ceremonies while mahjong games became widespread.

Nonetheless, the positive side of urbanization no doubt outweighs the negative. Rural urbanization is a shortcut, an indispensable path, to the economic development of our nationalities' regions. We must do our best to guide and promote this road, first in villages close to cities and convenient to transportation, so that they can promote overall rural economic development.

Note

1. Guldin, Gregory Eliyu, "An Urbanizing China," in Guldin (ed.), *Urbanizing China*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993, p. 5.