



Local artists in Lhasa put on a Tibet Opera performance during the Shoton Festival, a traditional event held every late June or early July of the Tibetan calendar. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A gem for intangible cultural heritage

Culture department says regional-level representative inheritors exceed 500. **Yuan Shenggao** reports



Left: A Tibetan medical expert introduces his students to the ingredients used in the Lum medicinal bathing of Sowa Rigpa. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Right: A Tibetan artist shows thangka making during a show in Shanghai. ZHOU DONGCHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Southwest China's Tibet autonomous region has an additional 172 regional-level intangible cultural heritage representative inheritors, according to the latest list released by the Tibet Culture Department.

The department announced in early November the autonomous region's fourth list of artists with the official responsibility of carrying forward Tibet's intangible cultural heritage.

The figure brought the total number of regional-level representative inheritors of intangible cultural heritage in Tibet to 522.

According to officials at the culture department, Tibet began to select candidates for fourth batch of representative inheritors in Oct 2018 and completed the appraisal process in September 2019.

Gyigyi, head of the intangible cultural heritage office of the Tibet Culture Department, said the release of the list aims to strengthen the construction of the team of representative inheritors for various intangible cultural heritage programs in Tibet.

"The inheritors will receive further trainings to raise their level of theoretical knowledge and will visit regions outside Tibet for exchanges and for broadening their visions," the official said.

Gyigyi said the cultural authorities in Tibet also expect to involve more talented people in the course of intangible cultural heritage protection and inheritance.

Tibet Culture Department began to recommend candidate programs for the latest fifth national list for intangible cultural heritage protection. A total of 30 programs, including the Tibet nursery rhymes, were recommended.

As an important part of the Chinese culture, Tibet's intangible cultural assets are among the most brilliant in the country.

The autonomous region officially began its work on protecting intangible cultural heritage in 2005.

Under the principles of "preserving, rescuing, rationally utilizing and developing through inheritance", the autonomous region has made great achievements in in heritage development, making it one of the most important sites for the protection of cultures with Chinese characteristics, according to the local culture department.

Tibet began to establish special institutions for heritage protection even before 2005.

The regional intangible cultural heritage protection center opened in 2010 and a heritage office was established in the Tibet Culture Department in 2011.

Similar offices and institutions have also been established in the various cities and prefectures in Tibet in the years to follow.

Tibet boasts a rich store of ethnic and folk culture.

According to the regional culture department, Tibet has 89 representative intangible cultural heritage programs under State protection and there are 96 national-level representative inheritors.

Tibet is also home to 323 intangible cultural heritage items at regional level, and more than 1,800 items at city and county levels.

World heritage

After Tibet's Lum medicinal bathing of Sowa Rigpa was put on the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in November 2018, the autonomous region currently has three items on the world heritage list.

The Lum medicinal bathing of Sowa Rigpa is knowledge and practices concerning life, health and illness prevention and treatment among the Tibetan people.

In Tibetan, "Lum" refers to traditional knowledge and practices of bathing in natural hot springs, herbal water or steam to adjust the balance of mind and body and treat illnesses. Sowa Rigpa, literally meaning knowledge of recuperating, was originated on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau with an average altitude of 4,000 meters above sea level. The traditional Tibetan medicine prescriptions of treating illness with herbs and minerals dates back 2,500 years.

The Tibetan Opera and the Epic of King Gesar was included in the World Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2009.

Tibetan Opera is a kind of art integrating folk dance, singing and vocal performance in one. Hailed as "the living fossil of traditional Tibetan culture", it boasts a history of more than 600 years — about 400 years longer than China's national treasure, the Peking Opera.

The Epic of King Gesar involves such

art forms as storytelling and ballad singing and is based on the heroic legends of an 11th-century Tibetan warrior with boundless supernatural powers. The legends have been passed down orally by singers and storytellers for more than a thousand years.

Well-preserved traditions

As intangible cultural heritage is part of a region's culture and people's lifestyle in history, preserving these time-honored cultural elements is an important part of ensuring that future generations will know about their past.

In Tibet, the traditional cultural legacies are better preserved for several reasons.

One reason is the strong support from the central and local governments.

According to a report by the Xinhua News Agency in March, China has spent 300 million yuan (\$42.45 million) protecting the intangible cultural heritage of Tibet over the past 13 years.

It said from 2006 to 2018, the central government spent 195 million yuan, while the regional government spent over 80 million yuan in the protection of intangible cultural heritage. City, prefecture and county governments also invested in the cause.

Another reason for the better development of the cultural legacies is that they are still alive in people's lives and are still used for boosting the economy.

For instance, the traditional Tibetan medicines and treatments are still popular in Tibet and playing an important role in ensuring people's health.

While Tibetan Opera is popular among local residents, it is also used as an attraction to tourists to Tibet.

In the countryside of Tibet, many residents find a new way to increase incomes by using their traditional skills to make handicrafts and other products with local characteristics.

In Xiga Monba village in Manling county in Nyingchi, the village committee has set up a cooperative engaged in producing traditional Tibetan papers.

"Villagers with the skills come here to work. In addition, the cooperative pays an average dividend of 50,000 yuan from its total income to 72 households every year," said Drukdrak, a member of the village committee.

Tibet's Lhokha clothing highlighted in Beijing show

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

During a show of traditional clothing and ornaments in Beijing in October, clothes and ornaments from Tibet's Lhokha became a shining star.

The show was an important event organized by the National Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition and Demonstration Center, aiming to promote China's traditional cultural legacies in the form of fashion display.

Titled "Yalung Zangbu", the show of Lhokha's clothing and ornaments featuring local intangible cultural heritage elements was staged accompanied by the performance of Tibetan Opera Tashi Sholpa.

Amid the passionate music of Tashi Sholpa, audiences were first attracted by the backdrop of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, featuring bright sunshine, a blue sky dotted with white clouds and the Yalung Zangbu River running through the world's deepest canyon. They finally fixed their attention on the models wearing clothes and ornaments inspired by the cultural elements in Lhokha as well as the entire Tibet autonomous region.

The show was designed by Guo Ruiping, a professor at the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology and her colleagues from the same school.

Guo said the clothes and ornaments displayed at the show are a combination of traditional and modern wisdom and resources.

To improve the show, Guo's team has visited Lhokha city for four times, recording the traditional techniques and skills in making local clothes and ornaments and interviewing local craftsmen.

Guo's study tours covered local firms such as pulu fabric factories in Nedong district, Gonggar county and Dranang county. The team also studied the traditional dyeing and weaving techniques throughout the city.

The team made innovations on traditional techniques to increase the appeal of the performance to modern-day audiences in the rest of the country.

The Lhokha show in Beijing exhibited more than 70 clothes and 22 ornaments designed by Guo's team, which were adapted to meet the demands of modern customers for occasions of business, work, leisure and celebrations.

Lhokha is regarded as one of the sources of the Tibetan culture and is one of the areas in Tibet with the largest amount of items on the autonomous region's list of intangible cultural heritage.

It holds an important position in the traditional textile industry in Tibet, with three techniques on the national list of intangible cultural heritage, four on the regional list and five on the city's list.

According to Guo, the fact that Lhokha's intangible cultural assets are still alive in people's lives is the reason why her team resorted to the city for inspiration.

Fabrics, garments and ornaments made in Lhokha are still sold very well on the markets in Tibet and the rest of the world. The industries have played an important role in driving



The show in Beijing (above) is inspired by the traditional garment-making techniques in Lhokha (top). PHOTOS ROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

local economic growth and helping residents increase their income and shake off poverty.

This is also the case of the entire Tibet autonomous region.

Till this date, traditional clothes and ornaments are still overwhelmingly popular among the residents, whether they are at work, at school and in celebrations.

Worn by a group of people living on the snowy plateau, Tibetan clothing conveys not only the habits, but also the history, beliefs, and characters of the local people.

Because of the vast land and the different believes of the region's people, Tibetan clothing varies from one area to another.

Traditionally, Tibetan clothing consists of a robe and shirt. The robe worn by men is broad and is normally fastened under the right arm, while the women's robes are slightly narrower with or without sleeves. Men typically wear white shirts with high collars, while women wear various colors with turndown collars.

As the weather in Lhasa and Lhokha is warmer, males mainly wear double-layered robes, and females dress in close-fitting robes and long-sleeved shirts, with brightly decorated aprons at the waists.

The weather in northern Tibet, where herdsmen lead a nomadic life in mountain pastures, is colder. As there is a huge disparity between day and night time temperatures, local herdsmen wear a furred robe all year round, which can be used as a sort of blanket at night.



A tourist to Tibet shows her fondness of the local traditional clothing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Models display during the Beijing show a new fashion rooted from the intangible cultural heritage of Lhokha city. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY