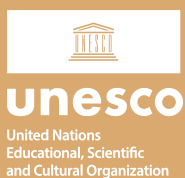


Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Development:

Policy
Guideline
for
Gansu's
Cultural
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Yang Pass Ruins, Dunhuang © Shichun Wang

Foreword

Gansu Province, with its rich history as a crossroads of civilizations along the Silk Road, stands today as a dynamic example of how culture and creativity can serve as powerful drivers of sustainable development. This Policy Guideline demonstrates how the province's cultural endowments – ranging from its World Heritage sites and vibrant intangible cultural heritage to its diverse cultural and creative industries – are being harnessed to advance inclusive growth, community well-being, and innovation.

Through the application of the Cities, Culture and Creativity (CCC) Framework, developed by UNESCO and the World Bank, this report highlights how Gansu is translating global principles into local strategies. The findings show that by strengthening enabling environments – such as cultural infrastructure, human capital, digital ecosystems, and inclusive policies – Gansu has significant potential to expand employment opportunities, foster rural revitalization, and enhance urban livability. The report also illustrates how Gansu's unique cultural assets can be leveraged to position the province as a hub for cultural tourism, creative entrepreneurship, and cross-regional cooperation.

Importantly, the analysis demonstrates that the benefits of culture and creativity extend far beyond the economy. Investments in cultural services and creative networks contribute to social cohesion, community identity, and inclusion of vulnerable groups, while also improving quality of life. These insights reaffirm the transformative power of culture and creativity to generate spatial, economic, and social benefits in line with the global evidence presented by the CCC Framework.

This Policy Guideline is the outcome of close collaboration between the Government of Gansu Province and UNESCO, with contributions from many researchers, practitioners, and communities. It provides a practical roadmap for Gansu and offers lessons of broader relevance for other provinces in China and beyond that seek to harness culture and creativity for sustainable and inclusive development.

We hope this publication will inspire continued investment, innovation, and partnerships to advance culture-based development pathways – ensuring that Gansu's rich heritage and creative vitality continue to contribute to the wellbeing of its people and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Professor Shahbaz Khan
Representative and Director,
UNESCO Regional Office for East
Asia

Dr. He Xiaozu
Director-General, Gansu
Provincial Department of Culture
and Tourism

Acknowledgement

“Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Development: Policy Guideline for Gansu’s Cultural and Creative Industries” is the result of a collaborative effort among many institutions and individuals, developed within the scope of the Gansu Revitalization and Innovation Project, carried out in partnership between Gansu Provincial Government, UNESCO and the World Bank.

The core body of the guideline was prepared by the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (WHITR-AP Beijing), resulting from a research conducted under the supervision of Kuanghan Li and Siyu Wang, with contributions from the following individuals: Xiaoxi Wang, Xinyu Bai, Yuwei He, Xiangcheng Li, Lina Park, Jing Sun, Meili Vergnolle, Shaohan Wang, Ziqing Yuan, Qianyu Zhou, Zijie Zhou, Yuxin Zhu. Graphic design and layout by Slime Club.

Part of the research drew upon the fieldwork conducted in Gansu Province during the 2024 Peking University Cultural Heritage Joint Workshop. The fieldwork was guided by instructors include: Kuanghan Li, Siyu Wang, Xiaoxi Wang, Jing Sun, Shaohan Wang, Lina Park, with participation of Xinyu Bai, Haoyang Chen, Yuwei He, Chunlin Jiang, An’ning Kang, Jina Li, Yumeng Li, Fangyu Liu, He Lu, Lerong Ma, Yizhu Qiu, Yan Teng, Jiaojiao Wang, Zhiyi Wu, Yue Xiu, Youduo Xu, Yi Yang, Dian’er Yu, Ziqing Yuan, Runlin Zhang, Tianxi Zhang, Yinuo Zhao. The fieldwork was supported by Peking University School of Archaeology and Museology, Peking University Centre of Public Archaeology and Art, and the Graduate School of Peking University.

The Cultural Profile chapter was drafted through desk research and consultation with relevant partners in Gansu, led by Hangying Li and Yining Zhang of the UNESCO Regional Office for East Asia. The findings were further validated and substantiated by the WHITR-AP Beijing research team.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Gansu Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism and the World Bank Loan Project Office of the Gansu Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism for their invaluable support in resource coordination and facilitation throughout the research and writing process of this guideline. We also thank the Gansu Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Centre and the sub-project offices of the World Bank Loan Project in Gansu Province for their valuable feedback and suggestions in refining the guideline.

We are especially grateful to all the interviewees and organisations that contributed their time and insights to this guideline. Due to the large number of individuals involved, we are unable to list them all by name, but we sincerely express our gratitude to each and every one of them.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the experts and colleagues who enriched this guideline with their guidance, advice and support: Ahmed Eiweida, Global Coordinator for Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Tourism at the World Bank; Shahbaz Khan, Director, Duong Bich Hanh, Program Specialist for Culture, and Juan Guo, Programme Assistant at the UNESCO East Asia Regional Office; as well as Xiaofan Du, Yafang Gao, Paul Burtenshaw, and other external experts who generously contributed their knowledge.

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Chapter 1

Background



Zhangye Colorful Danxia © Wang Shichun

1.1

Introduction

1.1.1

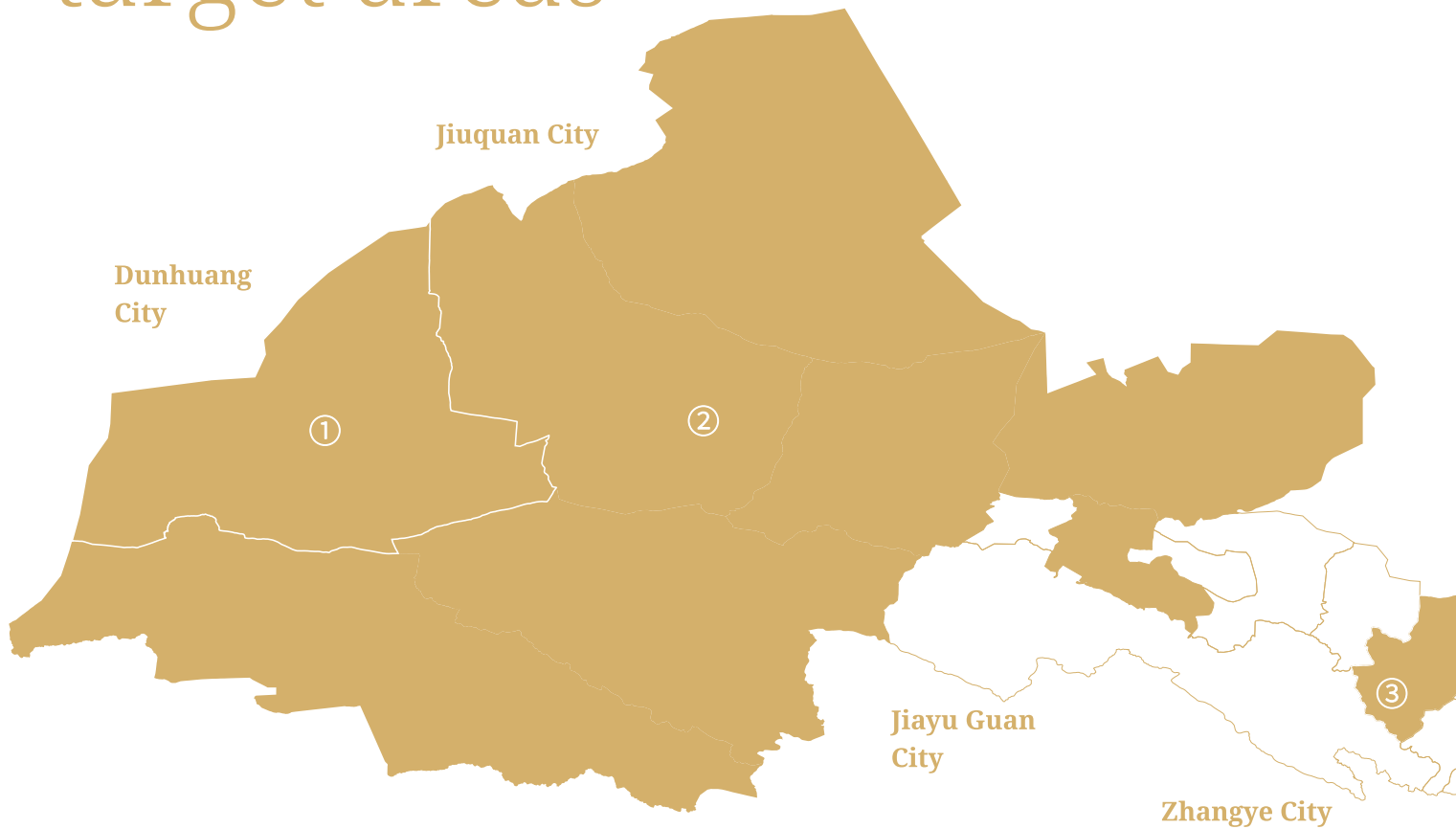
About “Gansu Revitalization and Innovation Project”

Cities carry the potential for creating new forms of diverse cultural expressions as sources of employment, creative economy and innovation. Culture has the power to make cities more prosperous, sustainable and secure. Creativity can generate broad opportunities for cultural professionals and organizations to promote social inclusion. It also has significant economic impacts, provide solutions to challenging urban issues, concerning mobility, urbanism, environment and citizen wellbeing. At a time of global crisis, dialogue on culture and creativity to promote peace and shared human values is getting increasingly vital.

Gansu province has a long and rich history, owing to its strategic location as a major thoroughfare along the Silk Road, along which diverse culture and civilizations connected and converged. Home to seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 152 Nationally Protected Cultural Sites and numerous movable and immovable cultural relics, today, Gansu still preserves a large amount of heritage and traditional culture that are foundational to the growth of a variety of cultural and creative industries (CCIs), such as crafts and folk arts, music, gastronomy, and Silk Road-related literature and manuscripts. [1] This gives it a unique competitive edge and comparative advantage to further develop its service sector, including creative industries, as part of the overall provincial strategy of economic transformation, poverty reduction, and shared prosperity.

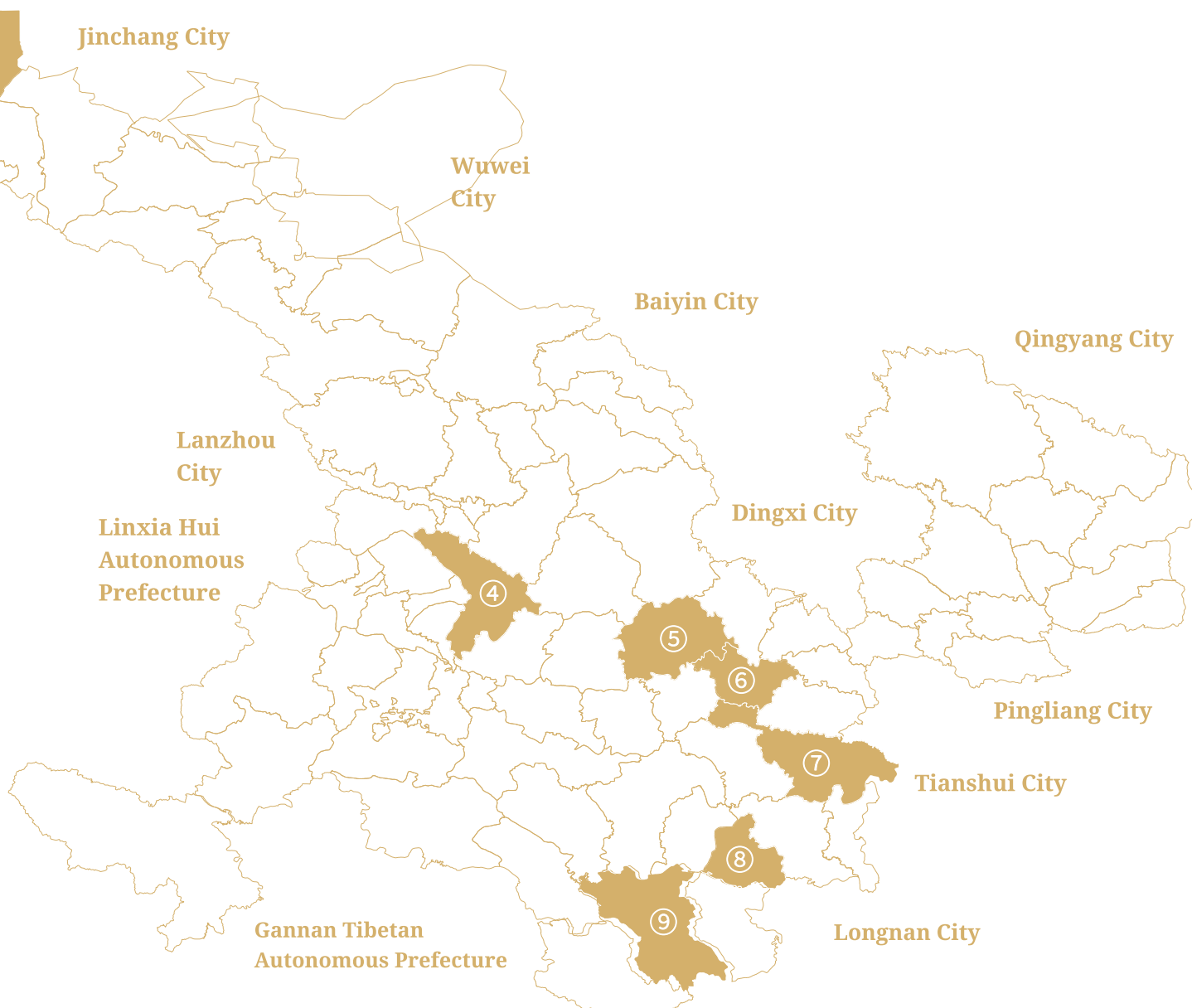
In Gansu, the cultural and creative sector is growing and has potential for economic growth in utilizing its unique cultural endowments. As such, the World Bank, International Finance Corporation (IFC), UNESCO, and World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism) have partnered with the Gansu provincial government and the Government of China to design and implement the “Gansu Revitalization and Innovation Project (GRIP)” in support of Gansu’s sustainable tourism and CCIs. [2]

Basic information of target areas



Location	City size/ km ²	Population	GDP/ CNY / 100 million CNY *2023	World Bank project
① Dunhuang City, Jiuquan City	26,700	185,000	97.2	● Sub-Project for the Conservation and Development of the Xuanquan Post Site in Dunhuang City
② Jiuquan City	122,148	157,600	908.7	● Jiuquan Silk Road Culture Research Centre and Library
③ Ganzhou District, Zhangye City	3,361	511,000	260.71	● Rural regeneration of folk village in Wulan ancient town of Zhangye
④ Lintao County, Dingxi City	2,851	473,000	110.17	● Rural regeneration of eight villages ● Majiayao Cultural Exhibition, Research, and Incubator Centre
⑤ Tongwei County, Dingxi City	2,908	318,000	72.16	● Tongwei Calligraphy and Ink Painting Creative Industry Exhibition and Incubator Centre

Location	City size/ km ²	Population	GDP/ CNY / 100 million CNY *2023	World Bank project
⑥ Qin'an County, Tianshui City	1,604	401,000	103.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Urban regeneration of Wuying town of Dadiwan area ● Urban regeneration of Longcheng historic town of Dadiwan area ● Urban regeneration of Shangguan Ming-and Qing-Dynasty historic street of Dadiwan area ● Dadiwan Cultural Experience Zone, Incubator Space, and Tourist Service Centre
⑦ Maiji District, Tianshui City	3,480	540,000	224.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yellow River Lacquerware Creative Industry and Incubator Centre
⑧ Cheng County, Longnan City	1,676	236,000	87.62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Millennium Ancient County” Cultural Heritage Exhibition Project in Cheng County, Longnan City
⑨ Wudu District, Longnan City	4,649	541,000	178.85	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Construction Project of the “Gaoshan Opera” Exhibition Centre



This US\$312 million program (including US\$180 million financing from the World Bank) supports the long-term vision of the provincial government of Gansu to strengthen the cultural, tourism and creative industries, contributing to culture-based socio-economic development in nine counties and districts along the Silk Road, which are Maiji District and Qin'an County in Tianshui Municipality; Lintao County and Tongwei County in Dingxi Municipality; Wudu District and Cheng County in Longnan Municipality; Ganzhou District in Zhangye Municipality; Dunhuang Municipality and Jiuquan Municipality. While varying in city sizes, population and GDP, these target areas each holds rich cultural resources and together form an integrated network of cultural and creative economy.

This program aims to demonstrate how pockets of poverty can be reduced through strategic improvements to local infrastructure and by enabling CCIs to connect to the growing service economy, and how small towns along major infrastructure networks can leverage their existing CCI endowments to benefit from, and contribute to, economic growth.

[1] All data reported in this document dates to the year of publication unless otherwise noted.

[2] For further reference, see UNESCO introduction on the Gansu Revitalisation and Innovation Project. <https://www.unesco.org/en/project/gansu-revitalization-and-innovation-project>.

1.1.2

About “Cities, Culture and Creativity” Framework

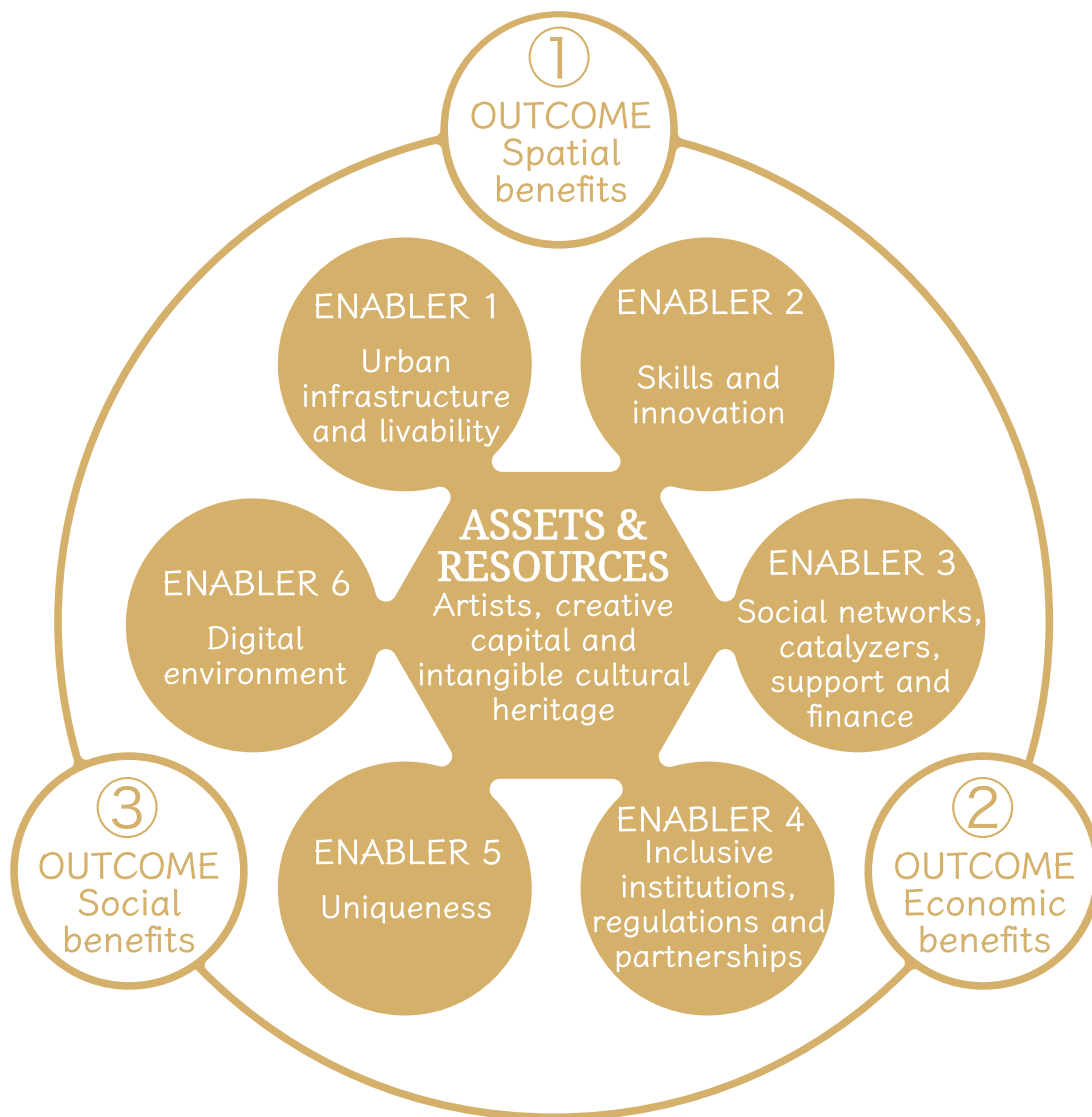
Culture and creativity have untapped potential to deliver social, economic, and spatial benefits for cities and communities. CCIs are key drivers of the creative economy and represent important sources of employment, economic growth, and innovation, thus contributing to city competitiveness and sustainability. Through their contribution to urban regeneration and sustainable urban development, CCIs make cities more attractive places for people to live in and for economic activity to develop. Culture and creativity also contribute to social cohesion at the neighbourhood level, enable creative networks to form and advance innovation and growth, and create opportunities for those who are often socially and economically excluded.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a deep impact on the cultural sector, yet it has also revealed the power of CCIs as a resource for city recovery and resilience. More generally, cities, are hubs of the creative economy and have a critical role to play in harnessing the transformative potential of CCIs through policies and enabling environments at the local level.

“Cities, Culture, and Creativity” (CCC), developed by UNESCO and the World Bank, provides guiding principles to support cities in unlocking the power of CCIs for sustainable urban development, city competitiveness, and social inclusion. [1] Drawing from global studies and the experiences of nine diverse cities from across the world, the CCC Framework offers concrete guidance for the range of actors – city, state, and national governments, creative industry and related private-sector organizations, creatives, culture professionals and civil society – to harness culture and creativity with the goal of boosting local creative economies and build resilient, inclusive, and dynamic cities.

[1] UNESCO and INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT/ THE WORLD BANK, *Cities, Culture Creativity: Leveraging culture and creativity for sustainable urban development and inclusive growth*, Washington DC, 2021.
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377427>.

Cities, Culture, and Creativity Framework



1.1.3

Objectives

This Policy Guideline for Gansu's CCIs adapts the CCC framework to the local conditions of Gansu, while referencing the larger context of culture-based development at the national level.

The guideline serves to provide a framework for leveraging creativity, culture, and CCIs to address urban development challenges and local socio-economic development issues in Gansu Province. It is expected that the Policy Guideline can also serve as a reference tool for other provinces of China undergoing similar development challenges.

The specific objectives are as follow:

1. Create a policy guideline to support city and decision makers in Gansu to address urban development challenges and local socio-economic issues by leveraging creativity, culture and CCIs.
2. Generate a comprehensive understanding of the current state of the cultural tourism and CCIs in the nine districts and counties in Gansu that benefited from the GRIP, and how the collective narrative of the Silk Road comes into play.
3. Establish opportunities for exchanges and engagement with relevant stakeholders.
4. Align and adapt the CCC Framework catered to the specific conditions of Gansu and China.
5. Ensure effective implementation and monitoring through development of planning, assessment and evaluation tools and mechanism.

1.2

Methodological Approach

1.2.1

Research methodologies and approaches

The main pillars of our approach towards designing research methodologies and for the development of the policy guideline are:

Integrated and collaborative approach:

A research team consists of members with diverse but relevant disciplinary trainings was assigned to carry out field research in the target areas. Established scholars and professionals from various research institutions of relevant fields were invited to participate in the field work and provided expertise guidance to ensure professionalism of the research.

Multi-disciplinary and interactive approach:

A multi-disciplinary research team consists of senior undergraduate students and graduate students led by heritage professionals were assembled to investigate the diverse range of cultural resources and CCIs, and their key catalysers under the CCC Framework's enablers in Gansu. In addition, a constant process of monitoring and self-assessment guided the development and revision of the policy guideline ensuring flexibility to adapt to the specific and changing needs of the different actors.

Context specific:

The research aims to effectively respond to the diverse conditions of each target areas and align with the existing policies and regulations of Gansu. Vigorous field work and consultation with local stakeholders and expertise are essential for the appropriate contextualisation and customisation of the policy guideline development process.

The guideline development was divided into three main components and the respective methodologies were employed:

Phase 1: Literature review

Desk review of existing frameworks, reports of workshop and meeting implemented within the scope of GRIP project, annual progress reports, existing cultural policies and strategies currently under implementation in Gansu and project locations, and other relevant published literature.

The literature review was divided into three main themes:

Research on cultural creativity city and research methods:

Review of current academic discussions about the ideas, developments and challenges of cultural creativity city and cultural evaluation, identifying the most relevant and critical issues and potential research areas. The research employs different basic qualitative and quantitative research methods, as such, a detailed analysis about the application of such methods were also reviewed.

Comparative study on relevant case studies and best practices:

Multiple cities with rich cultural resources have been defined as cultural city or creative city by international and national organizations and the academia communities. The analysis of such case studies helps to understand the key ideas and global trends on cultural creative cities and identified examples of best practices.

Background research on Gansu province's cultural heritage and traditional culture, cultural tourism and CCIs:

The research focused on the target areas in Gansu province, which have multiple mentions in Chinese literature and official reports. Review of such literature and reports before the field trips helps to develop basic understanding of the areas and designing an effective and efficient research plan.

Phase 2: Field work

The project team conducted field work in Gansu during July and August 2024 where a multi-disciplinary team with backgrounds in cultural heritage, museum studies, archaeology, tourism, CCI management, fine arts and design, architecture, urban planning, economics, anthropology, sociology, etc. collected relevant

data and conducted studies in the nine target district and counties. Due to the rich array of cultural resources, field investigation and documentation mainly focused on selected major sites and resources that are most relevant to the development of local CCIs and to the city's or region's brand identity.

At least three types of field research methods were applied:

Documentation and review of local cultural policies:

The development of a cultural creative city will not thrive without the positive support of official policies at the city, provincial and national levels. Therefore, one of the primary tasks during the field work was collecting and understanding relevant cultural policies in the last decades to have a better grasp of the current political situation in Gansu.

Qualitative interview:

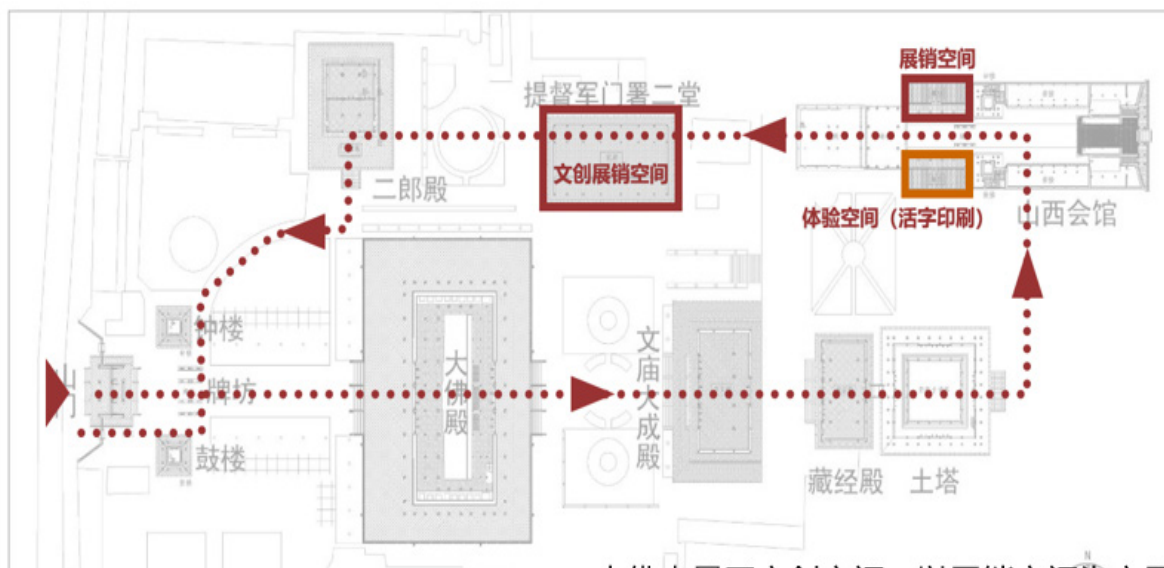
This method was employed in multiple situations, including interviewing the official authorities, stakeholders, local communities and the visitors or consumers. The team performed a combination of random interviews and semi-structured interviews pending on the situations and needs.

Questionnaire survey and field observation:

These are the most effective and efficient methods to do a rapid assessment of the basic conditions of massive samples. The questionnaire survey method was most commonly applied in understanding the attitudes and feelings of the local communities, visitors and consumers and was conducted at selected heritage sites and cultural creative projects. It is unavoidable that the interview and questionnaire methods will cause interference to the natural behaviour of the visitors and consumers. As such, field observation method was employed during the field visits as a complementary method to make up for such shortcomings.

Phase 3: Data analyses

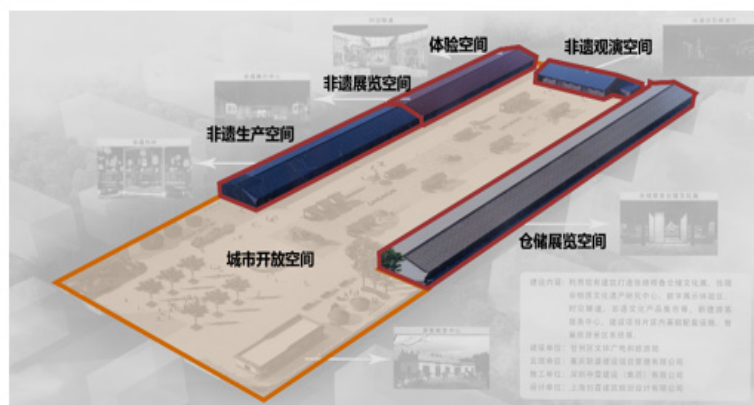
Data collected in the field then was organized and analysed accordingly. The types of data analysed include policy analyses from the perspective of the historical and national political contexts to identify gaps between practice and current policies, quantitative analyses of the questionnaire survey and field observations, collation of qualitative data from the interviews and field documentations to better understand the actions of different agents and stakeholders, and visual mapping and analyses of spatial data.



大佛寺景区文创空间：以展销空间为主导



高总兵故居：以展示空间为主导



东仓：以非遗体验空间为主导

Example of visual mapping: Spatial Analyses of Various Cultural and Historical Spaces in Zhangye City. © WHITR-AP Beijing

1.2.2

CCC Framework and indicators

Following the six enabling environment categories highlighted in the CCC Framework, which have proven critical to translating culture and creativity into spatial, economic, and social benefits, we have identified corresponding key catalysers for each enabler that will serve as specific indicators for the research.

Enabler 1: Urban infrastructure and liveability

Creatives need affordable and often adaptable workspaces that offer proximity to a broader creative ecosystem as well as their homes. They often drive or contribute to urban regeneration of neighbourhoods by utilizing abandoned or underused spaces. They also seek environments that offer good quality of life, including basic infrastructure, services, and amenities.

Key catalysers and indicators may include:

1.1 Creative production spaces

quantity, location, rent/property prices, management and ownership, infrastructure, policies, etc.

1.2 Cultural hubs or incubators

quantity, location, rent/property prices, management and ownership, infrastructure, stakeholders, policies, etc.

1.3 Spatial costs

location, rent/property prices, management and ownership, infrastructure, etc.

1.4 Living spaces for cultural professionals

location, rent/property prices, management and ownership, infrastructure, policies, etc.

1.5 Amenities

quantity, location, function, management and ownership, infrastructure, policies, etc.

Enabler 2: Skills and innovation

Creatives and others working in creative ecosystems need opportunities to grow and evolve their skills. They require a combination of formal learning opportunities, as well as informal opportunities to learn and contribute to the transmission of intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

Key catalysers and indicators may include:

2.1 Creative Masses Index

2.2 Human Capital Index

level of education, proportion of educated females

2.3 Vocational training centres and courses

organization and accessibility, public/private classes, etc.

2.4 Participants of vocational training

number, demographic, skills, professions, types of job, average income, etc.

2.4 Knowledge-sharing platforms and spaces online and offline

quantity, infrastructure, reach or influence, etc.

2.5 Organizers of vocational training

stakeholders including organizers, instructors and other participants

Enabler 3: Social networks, catalysers, supports and finance

Important network effects within and between CCIs in creative cities enhance relationships among creatives and CCI participants and contribute to innovation and growth of the intangible economy. Creative individuals seek inspiration from one another and jump from one creative occupation to another, encouraging growth and development in CCIs. Catalysers make connections between creatives and other partners. Creatives need business development services and access to finance tailored to the risks associated with their work.

Key catalysers and indicators may include:

3.1 Research institutes

quantity, funding sources, function, types of organization, ownership, level, etc.)

3.2 Support organizations

quantity, funding sources, function, types of organization, ownership, level, etc.

3.3 Artist networks

quantity, infrastructure, reach or influence, resources, etc.

3.4 Creative industry internal networks

quantity, infrastructure, reach or influence, resources, etc.

3.5 Networks among creative industries

quantity, infrastructure, reach or influence, resources, etc.

3.6 Investor networks

major players, information sources, level of investment, types of investment, return, etc.

3.7 Community network

by trade, interests, demographic, geographical relations, etc.

Enabler 4: Inclusive institutions, regulations and partnerships

Creatives, including artists and cultural professionals, need institutions and regulations conducive to safeguarding their practices and their ability to live and produce in creative cities, such as those protecting intellectual property (IP), promoting diversity and inclusion, and enabling their access to affordable housing. The types of interventions required to foster an environment supportive of the development of CCIs often require partnerships between a range of public and private actors.

Key catalysers and indicators may include:

4.1 Relevant institutions and regulations

4.2 Intellectual property rights

4.3 Financial support and preferential policies

4.4 Public-private sector relationship stipulated by the government and respective industries.

Enabler 5: Uniqueness

A city's unique combination of intrinsic and related features allows it to generate value and attract and cultivate creative talent and the audiences that will enjoy and consume what they produce.

Key catalysers and indicators may include:

5.1 Landmark sites

branding, quantity, location, class of protection, popularity in terms of visitation and social media presence, preservation and management status, income generated etc.

5.2 Representative ceremonies, celebrations and other cultural traditions

quantity, associated location/culture/community, class of protection, popularity in terms of visitation and social media presence, preservation and management status, income generated etc.

5.3 Representative culinary traditions

quantity, associated location/culture/community, source of ingredients, popularity in terms of visitation and social media presence, income generated etc.

5.4 Community uniqueness

ethnic group, culture, geographic location, natural environment, infrastructure, profession, demographic, etc.

Enabler 6: Digital environment

Digitalization contributes to the development of methods and tools that can increase the efficiency of the entire value chain of some CCIs.

Key catalysers and indicators may include:

6.1 Digital infrastructure development

city branding, investments in digital infrastructure, digital royalty regulations, etc.

6.2 Online cultural production

6.3 Digital marketing and communications

6.4 Online commerce vitality

6.5 Digital networks

Benefits

Culture and creativity can contribute to various outcomes in creative cities which can generate spatial, economic and social benefits. We have further defined corresponding indicators for evaluation of potential benefits.

1. Spatial benefits

When CCIs drive regeneration or are leveraged to make cities more attractive and entertaining places to live, they demonstrate an amenity effect, attracting people and sometimes companies to relocate. In fact, high-amenity cities have been observed to grow faster than low amenity cities. According to the CCC report, in the United States, the role of amenities in attracting new residents into cities has increased over time and is a good predictor of urban revival by young populations; and according to a global survey covering Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America, local amenities, public services, and safety are important determinants for migration.

Indicators may include:

1.1 Liveability

1.2 Improvement of living environment such as move in of population and companies and improvement in amenities, public services and security

2. Economic benefits

When CCIs create jobs – often jobs highly accessible to marginalized and vulnerable communities – and help generate income, they contribute economically to city and national wealth. Large shares of women and youth are employed in

the culture sector and in CCIs in particular. Globally, approximately 20 per cent of employed people ages 15-29 work in CCIs, which as a sector is the largest employer of youth. Many CCIs also generate many non-creative jobs. A preliminary calculation using UNESCO data suggests that, overall, for every creative job in a CCIs, 1.7 non-creative jobs are created. These jobs often do not require specific qualifications, and therefore provide significant employment opportunities (though a large share of these jobs may not be of high quality).

Indicators may include:

2.1 Gross Domestic Product

2.2 Tourism income

2.3 Profitability of relevant businesses

2.4 Increase in employed persons and of specific demographics such as proportion of female employees, proportion of youth employees, proportion of non-creative employees

3. Social benefits

By offering individuals and societies ways to express themselves and make connections, CCIs contribute to social capital and network formation, which can enhance innovation and growth. Furthermore, several cases have shown that efforts to rebuild cities leveraging local CCIs and in a participatory manner can contribute to greater social cohesion and greater tolerance across different ethnic groups.

Indicators may include:

3.1 Enhanced community identity

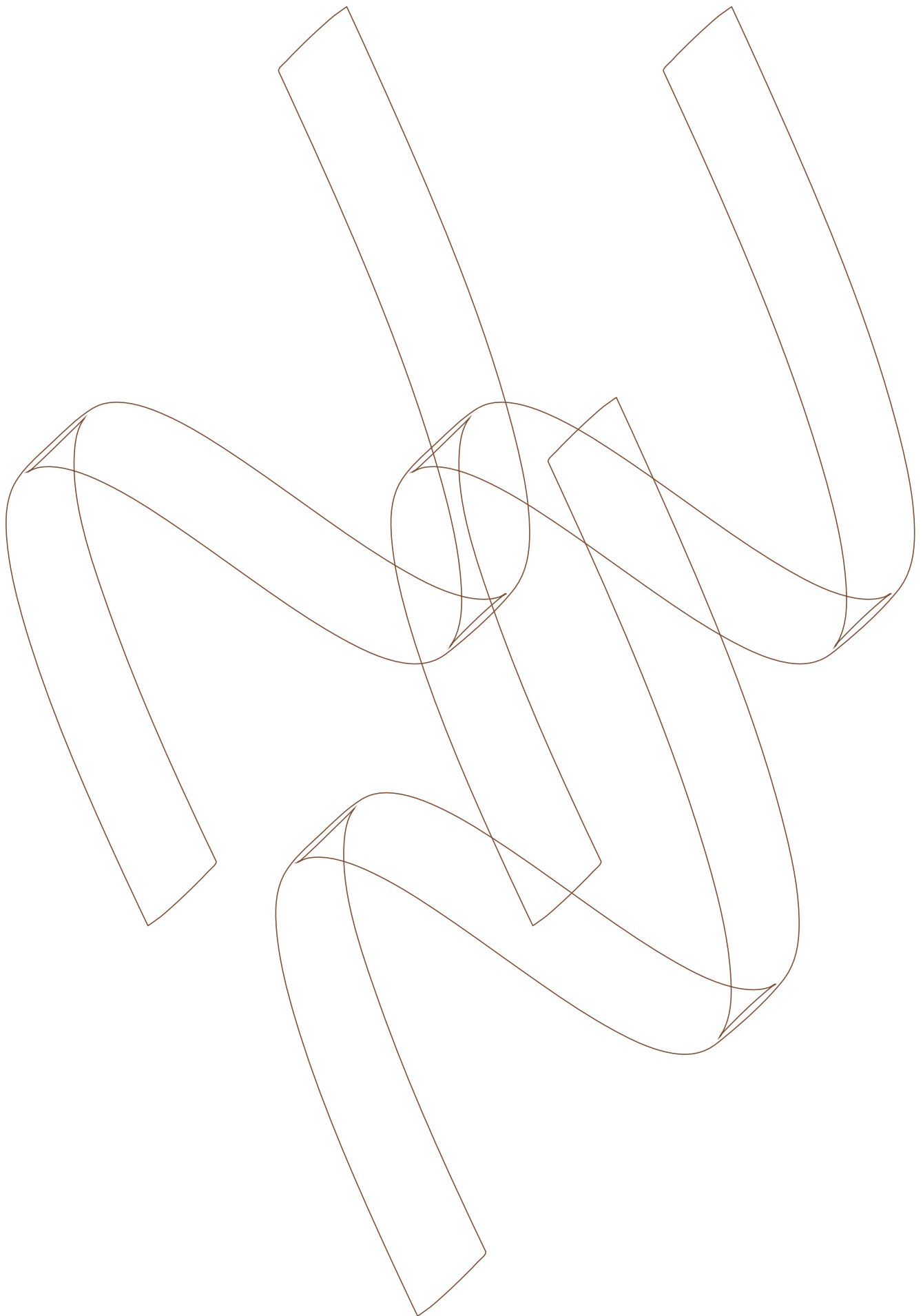
3.2 Improvement in social justice

3.3 Sense of happiness

3.4 Enhanced community cohesion







Chapter *2*

Cultural Profile

2.0

Overview of Gansu Province



Gansu is in the upper reaches of the Yellow River. Situated in the geographical centre of China, it borders Shaanxi province in the east, Sichuan and Qinghai provinces in the south, Xinjiang in the west, and Inner Mongolia and Ningxia in the north.

The complexity and diversity of landforms in Gansu are defined by hilly and mountainous terrains, plateaus, plains, river valleys and deserts, tilting from southwest to northeast. The long and narrow terrain, 1655 kilometres long from east to west and 530 kilometres wide from north to south, can be divided into six major topographic areas. The climate is dry in most areas of Gansu.

There are 14 municipalities and prefectures under the jurisdiction of Gansu province, including two autonomous prefectures. There are 86 counties in Gansu. The resident population of the whole province is 24.58 million by the end of 2024, ranking number 23 out of 34 provinces in China.

As one of the most under-developed regions in the country, Gansu has implemented a variety of poverty alleviation initiatives and achieved positive outcomes in areas of infrastructure, education, health services, and living conditions. In 2020, China has reached a major milestone in ending absolute poverty, and the policy has since shifted from poverty reduction to rural revitalization. According to data from the Chinese National Bureau of Statistics, in 2024, 43.17 per cent of Gansu's population lived in rural area. Rural revitalization has become one of Gansu's main focuses, and many cultural activities are linked to rural revitalization initiatives.

Gansu is situated on the main traffic route of the ancient Silk Road, where Chinese and Western civilizations integrated and prosperous from mutual learning. With the advancement of the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI), a global infra-

structure development strategy adopted by the government of China, Gansu has transformed from an inland backwater to an open frontier and an important global portal of culture.

Gansu has a splendid cultural heritage as reflected by its richness in World Cultural Heritage. In 2014, China, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan successfully nominated “Silk Roads: the Roads Network of Chang’an-Tianshan Corridor” to the World Heritage List, marking the first transnational cooperation World Cultural Heritage project. In total, Gansu has seven World Cultural Heritage sites: Mogao Grottoes, Jiayuguan Great Wall, Yumen Pass, Maijishan Grottoes, Xuanquan Post Site, Bingling Temple Grottoes, Suoyang City Site. Gansu also has three elements on the UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity: Hua’er (folk songs), Huanzhou Daoqing shadow puppetry, and the Epic of King Gesar. There are also 83 ICH elements identified and included in the national list.

Gansu focuses on building an international exchange platform. In recent years, Gansu has held seven sessions of the “Silk Road Dunhuang International Cultural Expo” and the first, fourth, ninth, and tenth sessions of the “Silk Road International Tourism Festival,” continuously strengthening cultural and tourism exchanges and cooperation with countries and regions along the BRI and striving to promote cultural and tourism innovation. These festivals and events have become an important platform for cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and countries along the Silk Road, and an important portal for Chinese culture to go global.

Gansu also focuses on building an international tourist destination. In 2017, Gansu was listed as the best travel destination in Asia by Lonely Planet magazine. Gansu ranked 17th in the list of “52 must-see destinations in the world in 2018” released by the New York Times, the only province in China that was selected that year. In recent years, Gansu has strengthened international cultural tourism exchanges and cooperation via holding Gansu cultural tourism and investment promotion events in 24 countries and regions along the BRI. Gansu has established marketing and promotion centres in Singapore and Japan, and actively developed the Gansu cultural tourism brand image and tourism route promotion. Inbound tourists and tourism foreign exchange income increased by 38 per cent and 43 per cent annually. In 2023, the Gansu Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism was elected as a member of the second session of the World Tourism Alliance Council.

2.1

Tianshui Municipality: Maiji District



Maiji District is in the southeast of Tianshui City, bordered by the Qinling Mountains to the north, it serves as the “eastern gateway” of Gansu Province. As a key hub along the ancient Silk Road, Tianshui played a significant role in cultural exchanges between China and the West. The district is named after the renowned Maijishan Grottoes within its territory, which houses a vast collection of Buddhist statues dating from the Later Qin Dynasty (384-417 CE) to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912 CE). The region is also closely associated with the mythological ancestral figures of Fuxi and Nüwa.

The district enjoys mild summers and winters, with forest coverage reaching 68 per cent, earning it the nickname “Little Jiangnan of Gansu.” Centred around the grotto culture and complemented by natural landscapes such as the Xiaolongshan Forest Park, Maiji has become an important cultural tourism destination. Traditional local crafts such as carved lacquerware and straw weaving, along with other intangible cultural heritage, reflect the district’s rich cultural legacy.

Key cultural assets and resources

The following summaries selected major heritage sites and cultural resources of highest significance and relevance for promoting urban and rural development, enhancing regional brand identity, and stimulating the growth of the CCIs.

Tangible heritage

There are 347 cultural heritage protection units in Maiji District, including three national key cultural relics protection units (Maijishan Grottoes, Fuxi Temple, Fangmatan Tombs), six provincial-level units and 88 county-level units. The district museum has a collection of 5,083 cultural heritage objects, including 217 precious objects.

Major heritage sites include:

Maijishan Grottoes

Known as the “Oriental Sculpture Art Gallery,” Maijishan Grottoes were initially constructed during the Later Qin Dynasty (384-417 CE) and expanded through multiple dynasties. Currently, there are 221 existing caves where over 7,800 statues and more than 1,000 square meters of murals are preserved. The grottoes incorporate diverse artistic styles demonstrating over a thousand years of cultural exchanges between East and West.

Fuxi Temple

This is China’s largest and most well-preserved temple dedicated to Fuxi, one of the founding ancestors of Chinese civilization in ancient mythology. Originally built during the Ming Dynasty (1483-1484 CE), it has served as a significant venue for both official and folk worship of Fuxi, reflecting Chinese civilization’s reverence for ancestral culture. Now a national key cultural relic protection unit, it hosts public ceremonial activities on the 16th day of the first lunar month and the summer solstice, along with the Fuxi Cultural Tourism Festival.



Maijishan Grottoes © WHITR-AP Beijing



Fuxi Temple ceremonial gate
© Tianshui Museum

Intangible cultural heritage

Maiji District has a total of 80 inscribed ICH elements including two at the provincial level, 18 at the municipal level, 60 at the district level, and 103 district-level ICH representative practitioners.

Representative ICH include:

Lacquer Craftsmanship

Tianshui's carved lacquer craft has a history spanning over a thousand years. Its unique characteristic lies in the bone and stone inlay technique, reflecting the "robust" style characteristic of Northwest China. In 2008, the carved lacquer craftsmanship was inscribed on the second National Intangible Cultural Heritage Listing.

Taihao Fuxi Ceremony

In 2006, the Taihao Fuxi Ceremony was inscribed on the first National Intangible Cultural Heritage Listing. The ceremony currently had one national-level practitioner and four municipal-level practitioners. The primary cultural spaces are the Fuxi Temple and Guatai Mountain. The Taihao Fuxi Ceremony generally consists of annual public ceremonies organized by the officials, folk spring and autumn ceremonies, and regular ceremonies on the first and fifteenth days of each lunar month.



Yellow River Carved Lacquerware © Maiji Culture, Sports, TV, Radio and Tourism Bureau



Grand Memorial Ceremony for Fuxi © Tianshui Museum

Cultural and creative industries

CCIs account for 3.86 per cent of GDP of Maiji District and generates around 15,000 direct employees. Currently, there are 216 cultural-related enterprises.

Major local CCIs include:

Gansu Siku Cultural Development Group

A large-scale cultural enterprise dedicated to transmission of Chinese culture, focusing on the development of major scenic areas in the Gansu section of the Silk Road Economic Belt. The company has two representative performance projects — See Dunhuang Again and Tianshui Through the Ages. The latter is an indoor experiential drama about Tianshui's rich history and culture, set against the backdrop of Fuxi culture and Maiji Mountain.

Tianshui Carved Lacquer Cultural Expo Park

The expo park was designated as a key construction project of China's Silk Road Characteristic Cultural Industry in 2015. After four years of construction by Tianshui Yellow River Carved Lacquer Craft Co., Ltd., the expo park now comprises of Tianshui Carved Lacquer Museum, Tianshui Carved Lacquer Cultural Skills Inheritance Training Centre, Tianshui Carved Lacquer Skills Exhibition and Interactive Centre, and Innovation, Research, Design Office Building.

Tourism

The district has 347 cultural heritage protection units at all levels, more than 100 natural landscapes and 25 scenic area developments. Tourism resources in Maiji account for more than 70 per cent of Tianshui city's total tourism resources.

Key destination includes the World Heritage Site Maijishan Grottoes, Fuxi Temple, Xianren Cliff, Shimen (nicknamed "Little Yellow Mountain"), the scenic Quxi, and Xiaolongshan Botanical Garden with rare species.

In 2019, the district received a total of 22.76 million tourists, generating 11.5 billion CNY in income. In 2020, affected by the COVID-19, tourists arrival dipped to 10.8 million, generating 5.1 billion CNY income. Since 2021, the tourism industry showed healthy sign of recovery. In 2024, the district received 24.08 million tourists, generating 14.75 billion CNY.

To date, there are more than 540 rural guesthouse operators, 27 travel agencies, eight A-level tourist attractions, six star-rated tourist hotels, and more than 50 other tourism enterprises, and about 15,000 direct employees in the tourism industry, which indirectly drives the employment of more than 30,000 people.

Cultural heritage
protection units

347

More than

100

natural landscapes

25

Scenic area
developments

Tourism resources
in Maiji account for
more than

70%

of Tianshui city's total
tourism resources

Key
destination

Maijishan Grottoes,
Xianren Cliff,
Shimen,
Xiaolongshan
Botanical Garden,
etc.

2019

Tourists:

22.76 million

Tourism income:

11,500,000,000 CNY

2020

Tourists:

10.8 million

Tourism income:

5,100,000,000 CNY

2024

Tourists:

24.08 million

Tourism income:

14,750,000,000 CNY

more than

540 rural
guesthouses

27

travel agencies

8

A-level tourist
attractions

6

star-rated tourist
hotels

more than

50 other tourism
enterprises

about

15,000

direct employees in the
tourism industry

Cultural institutions

Local cultural institutions include Maiji District Museum, Maiji District Library and Maiji District Cultural Centre (which includes the Tianshui Maiji District ICH Centre). The Maiji District Museum has a collection of 5,082 artifacts including 217 precious relics. The Maiji District Cultural Centre is responsible for organizing mass cultural and artistic activities, the safeguarding of folk culture and ICH, and archiving local culture and arts.

Digital environment

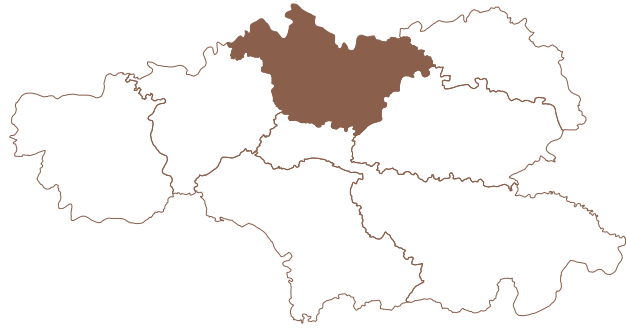
Digital marketing and communications

Maiji district has established a cultural communication network using popular social media platforms such as WeChat Official Accounts and Apps (Ganwen Calligraphy and Painting APP, Gansu Provincial Cultural Property Trading Centre Silk Road Digital Copyright Trading Platform, Tianshui Maiji Release, Maiji Culture and Tourism).

The Maijishan Grottoes official website features a “Panoramic Maiji” section, providing digital presentation of Maijishan’s panoramic views, classic caves, and cultural relics. Maijishan Grottoes was featured in the documentary series, China’s Grotto Corridor Episode 3.

2.2

Qin'an County, Tianshui Municipality



Qin'an County is located in the northern part of Tianshui City. It is an ancient county situated on the Longxi Loess Plateau, the core area of the ancient Chengji, a renowned historic town in the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE). Strategically positioned along the Silk Road, its core cultural heritage can be represented by the “Hometown of Fuxi and Nüwa” and Dadiwan Site — a significant Neolithic period site and one of the key birthplaces of Chinese civilization. Other historical and cultural treasures in the Qin'an area include Xingguo Temple, the Confucian Temple Scenic Area, Kequan Temple Scenic Area, and the Shangguan Ming-Qing Dynasty Historic Block. Qin'an enjoys a mild climate with abundant sunshine, and relatively low rainfall. Its natural landscapes also serve as unique tourism resources. Qin'an boasts a rich and diverse folk culture, most notably represented by Qin'an folk songs and the Nüwa sacrificial rituals.

Key cultural assets and resources

The following summaries selected major heritage sites and cultural resources of highest significance and relevance for promoting urban and rural development, enhancing regional brand identity, and stimulating the growth of the CCIs.

Tangible heritage

There are three national key cultural relics protection units in Qin'an county, including Dadiwan Site, Xingguo Temple, and Dacheng Hall of Confucian Temple, and six provincial-level units and 65 county-level units. In addition, 72 Neolithic cultural sites including the Yangshao, Majiayao, and Qijia Cultures have been discovered in the county.

Major heritage sites include:

Dadiwan Site

Located in Dadiwan Village, Qin'an County, this is one of China's most significant Neolithic sites, dates back approximately 5,000 to 8,000 years. Discovered in the 1970s, the site has since undergone several archaeological excavations, revealing a plethora of building remains, tombs, pottery, stone tools, and other artifacts. The discovery of the Dadiwan Site confirmed that the Wei River Valley is one of the earliest cradles of agriculture in China. The site has been designated as a national key cultural relics protection unit and is open to the public.

Intangible cultural heritage

Qin'an County has a total of 62 inscribed ICH elements including two at the national level, seven at the provincial level, 17 at the municipal level and 36 at the county level.

Representative ICH include:

Nuwa Ceremony

Qin'an celebrates the Nüwa festival, a sacrificial festival for the legendary mother goddess. It is celebrated yearly on the fifteenth of the third lunar calendar months. This festival is not only a reverence and commemoration of the ancestral goddess Nuwa, but also serves as a secular religious expression for locals to pray for a bountiful year, celebrate peace, honour deities, and engage in community exchanges.

Qin'an Xiaoqu

Qin'an Xiaoqu is a traditional form of folk balladry, known for its diverse content that often draws from folk tales, historical legends, and everyday life. The performance styles of Qin'an Xiaoqu range from solos, duets, to choruses, and are sometimes complemented by dance movements. The Qin'an Xiaoqu performances are an integral part of festive celebrations, temple fairs, and other social gatherings, fostering solidarity among community members.



Dadiwan Site © UNESCO



Nuwa Ceremony © UNESCO

Cultural and creative industries

Qin'an County's CCIs accounts for 0.45 per cent of local GDP, and generates a workforce of 2060 people. 1/9 of the public finance is spent on cultural and creative activities. The county has a total of 107 registered cultural enterprises with a workforce of 1,925 people and total assets of 158 million CNY.



Major local CCIs include:

Dadiwan Site Research Centre

The largest comprehensive archaeological research base in Northwest China and also China's first AI-assisted research base. The base features Northwest China's largest 1:1 archaeological site simulation and recreates an 8,000-year-old hunting scene immersive experience. In addition, the base offers various specialized courses, such as fire-making through wood drilling, pottery drum and ocarina heaven-worship ceremonies, and ancient pottery-making workshops. Through practical and innovative teaching, it promotes historical cultural transmission and improve cultural literacy. The base also collaborates with local enterprises and educational institutions to support local economy and build community connections.

Qin'an Dadiwan Cultural Tourism Industrial Park

The industrial Park is established by the Qin'an County Committee and County Government's Dadiwan Cultural Tourism Industrial Park Development and Construction Leadership Group, with government leaders serving as core company personnel.

Tourism

Qin'an County has five Grade A tourist attractions, including one national 4A-level tourist attraction (Fengshan Scenic Area), and 15 rural tourism scenic spots. Among them, Dadiwan Site stands out uniquely. Other popular destinations include Jieting Ancient Battlefield, Fengshan Scenic Area and Qianhu Apricot Bay. To date, there are three star-rated hotels in Qin'an.

Cultural institutions

Qin'an County's cultural institutions include 18 libraries, two museums, three art galleries, a theatre, and a cinema, along with five creative hubs. Qin'an County Museum, Dadiwan Museum (also known as the Gansu Dadiwan Cultural Relics Protection Research Institute), and the Qin'an County Liberation Memorial Hall are known the three major cultural institutions of Qin'an County.

Major local cultural institutions include:

Dadiwan Museum

Located on the south bank of the Qingshui River in Qin'an County, it is a specialized museum showcasing Gansu's prehistoric cultural sites. Opened in 2011 with free admission, the museum houses 4,200 cultural relics, including 45 first-grade artifacts. Under the management of the Gansu Dadiwan Cultural Relics Protection Research Institute, the museum is responsible for site protection, research, and public education. The museum integrates digital technology, enhancing visitor experience through 3D modelling, VR interaction, and developed the cultural IP "Xiao Zuzong" (Little Ancestor). In 2024, the Dadiwan (International) Research Base was inaugurated as a national third-grade museum integrating site exhibition, cultural dissemination, and digital innovation.



Dadiwan Research Base © Gansu Dadiwan Institute for Cultural Relics Preservation and Research



Dadiwan Museum © Gansu Dadiwan Institute for Cultural Relics Preservation and Research

Digital environment

Digital infrastructural development

The Dadiwan Site digitalization project was launched in 2022. The project has completed digitalization of parts of the site and artifacts and established a digital resource management system. With support from the Dunhuang Research Institute, 16 monitoring points have been installed within the site area for real-time environmental data monitoring, and archaeological data is analysed through big data and artificial intelligence, constructing a comprehensive cultural relics and archaeological database. The Dadiwan Site and museum have also jointly created an online exhibition platform, allowing audiences to experience Dadiwan's historical culture and immersive experiences remotely.

2.3

Lintao County, Dingxi Municipality



Lintao County, historically known as Di Dao, is a renowned town in the north-west with a history of more than 2400 years. It is located on the ancient Silk Road and is known as one of the important cradles of Chinese civilization and the ancient Yellow River culture. Lintao is celebrated as the “Hometown of Polychrome Pottery” and recognized as the “Great County of Culture.” The area is home to a wealth of cultural heritage sites, including the Majiayao Site, the Warring States Qin Great Wall, the ancestral residence of the Li family from Longxi, the Han Dynasty tomb clusters, and the Tang Dynasty Ge Shuhan Memorial Stele. The folk cultures of paper-cutting, shadow puppetry, Hua’er singing, and Nuo dance contribute to the rich and colourful tapestry of local traditions.

Key cultural assets and resources

The following summaries selected major heritage sites and cultural resources of highest significance and relevance for promoting urban and rural development, enhancing regional brand identity, and stimulating the growth of the CCIs.

Tangible heritage

At present, Lintao county has four national key cultural heritage protection units (Majiayao Site, Siwan Site, Xin Dian Site, and the Warring States Qin Great Wall Site), 10 provincial-level units, three municipal-level units, 35 county-level units, and 111 general units.

Major heritage sites include:

Majiayao Site:

Located in Majiayao Village, approximately 10-12 kilometres northeast of Taoyang County Town. This site dates to the middle and late Neolithic period (approximately 5200-4400 BCE) and is the namesake of the renowned “Majiayao Culture” in Chinese archaeology. The site is characterized by its abundant polychrome pottery remains, exquisite vessel forms, and vibrant decorative patterns. Currently, the Majiayao site is in the reburial phase. The present-day Majiayao Village, situated in the Tao River valley, overlaps spatially with the archaeological site. In 2021, the village undergone a rehabilitation and development project. The Majiayao Site Park features unique architectural designs with considerable construction challenges, the exhibitions will focus on exhibiting excavated artifacts from the site. While the park is scheduled to open next year, funding for supporting facilities has yet to be secured.

Intangible cultural heritage

Lintao has nine provincial-level ICH elements and seven provincial-level representative practitioners; 46 municipal-level ICH elements and 27 municipal-level representative practitioners; 80 county-level ICH elements and 77 county-level representative practitioners.

Representative ICH include:

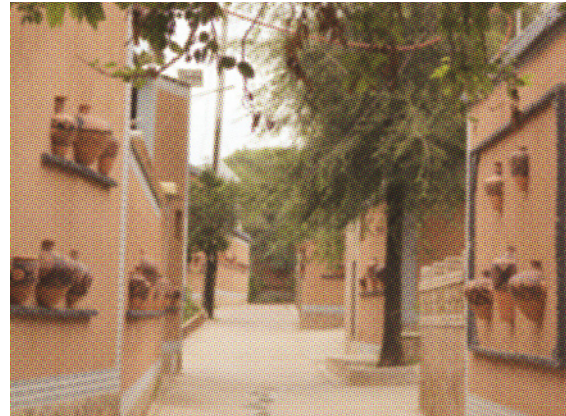
Lintao Paper-cutting

As a municipal-level ICH of Dingxi City, this art form has four representative practitioners. Its distinctive features include colour-layering techniques and freehand cutting, incorporating Lintao elements such as Majiayao painted pottery, Lintao purple-spotted peony, Tao River, and Mount Yuelu. The Lintao

Paper-cutting Training Centre provides exhibition, retail, and on-site training services. Currently, it is passed down within families as a hobby, with uncertain long-term inheritance prospects. The main transmission activity is voluntary teaching at schools, libraries, museums, cultural centres, and the county women's federation, ranging from dozens to hundreds of participants.



Lintao Paper-cutting © WHITR-AP Beijing



Majiayao Village © WHITR-AP Beijing

Lazha Festival

The Lazha Festival is a significant festive celebration in Lintao County and surrounding Han-Tibetan mixed communities, lasting from the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month to the twenty-fifth day of the tenth lunar month. It covers 116 villages and includes 30 celebratory events. As a provincial ICH, the festival demonstrates integration of Han and Tibetan cultures through blessing, evil-exPELLING, and worship rituals, showcasing traditional performances including dance, music, and painting, highlighting Lintao County's artistic charm.

Cultural and creative industries

Major local CCIs include:

Majiayao Polychrome Pottery Cultural Town

This project, based around the Majiayao site, aims to interpret, transmit, protect, and innovate Majiayao culture. Currently, the town has completed partial infrastructure construction, including a pottery commercial street, youth pottery experience centre, and pottery master studios. Its business activities centre around

Majiayao polychrome pottery culture, exhibiting unearthed artifacts from the Majiayao site and offering experiential activities such as pottery painting.

Lintao County Cibao Hall Cultural Arts Co., Ltd.

Established in 2018, this company specializes in Buddhist statue sculpture, religious artifact design, temple mural painting, interior and exterior design, landscape design, modern urban sculpture design, cultural product development, and art education. The company's general manager, Zang Bo, is a municipal level representative practitioner of Lintao Traditional Religious Murals. Revenue is derived from sales of custom cultural products for government institutions and schools, mural reproduction and historic mural restoration, and study tour activities.



Majiayao Polychrome Pottery Cultural Town © WHITR-AP Beijing



Majiayao Polychrome Pottery Cultural Town © WHITR-AP Beijing

The Majiayao Culture Festival

It is an annual celebration that takes place in Lintao County and holds immense local cultural significance. It is designed to bolster the Majiayao cultural brand and to encourage integrated development of culture, tourism, and sports, establishing Majiayao as a renowned cultural IP and a world-class cultural tourism destination.

Tourism

There are 62 tourist destinations in the county, including two national 4A scenic spots, four national 3A-level scenic spots, three national 2A-level scenic spots, one national rural tourism demonstration site and six provincial rural tourism demonstration villages. Currently, there are 30 star-rated country B&B, 12 travel

agencies, three three-star hotels, 15 travel agencies, and more than 6,000 industry employees. In 2024, the county received 3.93 million tourists and generated 2.27 billion CNY in tourism revenue. Tourism industry has become the first leading industry in Lintao.

Lintao County has invested heavily in tourist infrastructure surrounding the Majiayao Culture. Completed projects include the Majiayao Polychrome Pottery Culture Town and the Majiayao Cultural Commercial Pedestrian Street. In addition, the Majiayao Site Park and its visitor reception centre and the Majiayao Culture Research and Exhibition Centre are in construction. Other projects include the Majiayao Culture Exhibition Centre, Majiayao Culture Experience Centre, Majiayao Culture Research and Exchange Centre, and the Majiayao Cultural Industry Incubation Centre. The objective is to establish Lintao as a high-level base of the CCIs, a cultural tourism industrial park, and a city of creative culture, all centred around the polychrome pottery culture.

Cultural institutions

Major local cultural institutions include:

Lintao County Museum, Lintao County Cultural Centre, and Lintao County Library

The museum shares a building with the Lintao County Cultural Centre and County Library, collectively known as the “Three Institutions.” The museum houses 1,279 cultural relics, the collection primarily features pottery from Majiayao, Xindian, and Siwa cultures. The museum regularly exchanges exhibitions with museums nationwide, hosts various on and off-site activities, maintains a volunteer organization, and demonstrates considerable vitality for a county-level institution. The cultural centre focuses on promoting Lintao’s “Four Cultural Highlights,” hosting events that showcase local heritage. The Lintao County Library holds weekly reading clubs and quiz contests. It also organizes handicraft and painting workshops for children on an irregular basis.

Majiayao Culture Research and Exhibition Centre

Currently under construction, this centre is one of Lintao County’s World Bank loan projects. Located in Hekou Village, approximately 10 kilometres from the Majiayao site, the design of the main structure is inspired by Majiayao pottery-making techniques. The centre plans to include five functional areas: a cultural exhibition centre, experience centre, research and exchange centre, cultural industry incubation centre, and logistics area. Upon completion, it will operate in conjunction with the polychrome pottery town and ICH exhibition centre.

Gansu Province Majiayao Polychrome Pottery Culture Museum

Established in 2003 with approval from the Gansu Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau, this is China's first non-state-owned museum specialising in Majiayao culture. Created by the Lintao Majiayao Culture Research Association for its internal collection, the museum operates primarily through corporate and exhibition sponsorships, offering visits by appointment only. Its distinctive feature lies in incorporating the latest academic perspectives into exhibitions and interpretations, providing in-depth cultural experiences for specific audiences such as experts, scholars, officials, and students.

Lintao County Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition Centre

Located in Shuanglian Village, this centre includes exhibition halls, art galleries, cultural creative stores, agricultural support platforms, employment assistance workshops, and research bases for intangible cultural heritage.

Digital environment

Digital infrastructure development

Lintao County's public cultural institutions demonstrate high levels of digital technology adoption. The "Three Institutions" (museum, cultural centre, and library) have established comprehensive online platforms and on-site digital operation systems. The museum's expanding digital exhibition hall employs technologies like virtual and augmented reality to present cultural heritage more vividly. The cultural centre utilizes MOOC websites to provide public access to cultural learning. The library's online borrowing system has significantly improved resource utilization efficiency. New public cultural facilities like the Majiayao Site Park and Cultural Research Exhibition Centre have incorporated advanced digital technologies and equipment in their planning stages.

Digital marketing and communications

Lintao County has established a cultural communication network using popular social media platforms such as WeChat Official Accounts and Douyin. The Majiayao Culture Research Association's official website serves as an important, well-developed digital platform. The county has produced a series of documentary films, such as *Majiayao: China Before China* and *Century-old Cibao Hall*, to narrate Lintao's cultural elements.

2.4

Tongwei County, Dingxi Municipality



Tongwei County is to the east of Dingxi City with relative accessibility to Lanzhou. The area has been home to human settlements since the Neolithic Age as witnessed by the Majiayao and Qijia cultures. Historically, Tongwei held an important military position and preserved remnants of the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BCE) Great Wall and historic fortresses. Tongwei County was also a significant location for the Red Army during the Long March, where a pivotal political meeting was held in Bangluo Town, attended by key figures like Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, an event of great significance in the history of the Chinese Communist Party. [1]

Since the fourteen century CE, Tongwei has been a cradle of calligraphers and painters, where art collection and creation continues to flourish today.

[1] The Long March was a military retreat by the Chinese Communist Party's Red Army from 1934 to 1936. They travelled over 9,000 kilometres to escape attacks by the Nationalist army. The Long March is seen as an important moment in modern Chinese history

Key cultural assets and resources

The following summaries selected major heritage sites and cultural resources of highest significance and relevance for promoting urban and rural development, enhancing regional brand identity, and stimulating the growth of the CCIs.

Tangible heritage

Tongwei county has two national key cultural heritage protection units (Bangluo Conference Historical Sites, Tongwei Section of the Warring State Era Great Wall), six provincial-level units, five municipal-level units, and 54 county-level units.

Major heritage sites include:

Bangluo Conference Historical Sites

The sites, testament to a pivotal event during the Long March, comprise of nearly 90 elements, including historical meeting sites, Red Army encampment sites, Long March routes, etc. Among which, the Bangluo Conference site is of profound historical significance and is an integral element of the cultural legacy associated with the Red Army's Long March. The Bangluo Conference Memorial Hall stands as a nationally recognized base for patriotic education, which the Tongwei government aims to develop it as a cornerstone of red tourism.

Intangible cultural heritage

Tongwei has two national level ICH elements, namely Tongwei Xiaoqu Opera and Tongwei Shadow Tune, nine provincial-level, 63 municipal-level and 87 county-level ICH elements.

Representative ICH include:

Tongwei Shadow Tune

As a national-level ICH, this is a form of shadow puppetry widely popular among locals. Originating in the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912 CE), it is a folk drama performed using puppet silhouettes made of animal hide or cardboard, mostly passed down within families. While Shadow Tune remains popular among rural and elderly populations, younger generation shows limited interest in its safeguarding.

Tongwei Straw Weaving

A provincial-level ICH, Tongwei Straw Weaving is rooted in local folk culture with a long history. This craft uses wheat straw as raw material to create artworks that combine practicality with aesthetic value. The industry primarily consists of individual practitioners who rely on straw weaving as their primary income source, serving mostly local customers while also extending sales to nearby Lintao county and the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia area, with some products reaching international markets.

Tongwei Wheat Straw Painting

A municipal-level ICH of Dingxi City, this art form uses wheat straw as the main painting material. The representative practitioner, Yifei Ran, runs a cultural space in Tongwei County town, aiming to combine sales and training workshops. Current transmission activities primarily involve government organised rural trainings, providing local farmers and disabled individuals with opportunities for supplementary income.



Tongwei Wheat Straw Painting © Gansu Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism



Tongwei Art Museum © WHITR-AP Beijing

Cultural and creative industries

There are more than 10,000 calligraphy and painting artists in the county, and more than 1,200 members of various art and calligraphy associations at national and provincial levels. More than 800 national cultural and artistic celebrities has visited Tongwei, reinforcing the county brand “Calligraphy and Painting Tongwei”.

Major local CCIs include:

Tongwei Calligraphy and Painting Culture Festival

This festival is a vital means for Tongwei to invigorate its calligraphy and painting heritage. It has been held 12 times, typically commences in August and spans two weeks. Throughout this period, exhibitions, auctions, performances, and forums are conducted across multiple cultural venues in Tongwei County, all revolving around the theme of Tongwei's calligraphy and painting culture generating considerable domestic impact.

Tourism

In 2024 Tongwei County received 2.75 million tourists and a total tourism income of 1.522 billion CNY. The county has three national 4A-level tourist attractions (Bangluo Conference Memorial Hall and Yuexin International Calligraphy and Painting Village, Hawthorn Town Tourist Scenic Area), one national 3A-level tourist scenic spot, one national 2A-level tourist scenic spot, three three-star tourist hotels and one provincial level forest park. The Bangluo Conference Memorial Hall is selected as one of the 30 national red tourism routes and one of the 100 red tourism classic sites.

Major tourist resources include:

The Yuexin Calligraphy and Painting Village is located in western Tongwei County. This national 4A tourist attraction is a cultural tourism destination integrating calligraphy and painting exchanges, artistic training, leisure vacation, and hot spring wellness. The village comprises of five components: Yuexin Calligraphy and Painting Gallery, Yuexin Art Museum, Yuexin Hot Spring Water World, Yuexin Garden Resort Hotel, and Yuexin Organic Fruit and Vegetable Picking Base. Covering 214 mu and a building area of 129,000 square meters, it has a total investment of 360 million CNY. Currently, it houses over 100 galleries, over 30 master creation bases and studios, and hosts more than 30,000 professional and amateur art brokers and artists. The village also showcases local folk arts such as Tongwei straw weaving, paper cutting, wood carving, and brick carving.



The Yuexin Calligraphy and Painting Village © Tongwei County Cultural Centre Beijing



Folk Village in Wulan Ancient Town © WHITR-AP Beijing



Calligraphy and Painting Trade Fair at the Calligraphy and Painting Cultural Festival © Tongwei County Cultural Centre



Cultural institutions

Major local cultural institutions include:

Tongwei County Museum, Tongwei County Cultural Centre

The museum, cultural centre and the county library are located in the Tongwei County Cultural Building, an aging building with limited exhibition spaces. A new facility is under construction, which, once completed, will offer upgraded and expanded exhibition spaces. The Tongwei County Cultural centre is responsible for organizing, training, and guiding county-wide cultural and artistic activities, and public cultural activities and intangible cultural heritage promotion.

Tongwei Hanmo Cultural Center

This World Bank-funded project in Tongwei County's Moxiang Calligraphy and Painting Town has a total investment of 130 million CNY, including 98.92 million CNY in World Bank loans and 32 million CNY in self-raised matching funds. Covering 99,000 square meters with a total construction area of 22,000 square meters, the project, completed in October 2024, comprises of Hanmo Cultural Art Centre, Hanmo Cultural Street, and Hanmo Square. The Cultural Street is planned as a commercial area for calligraphy, painting, and cultural creative products, generating income through shop rentals.

Digital environment

Digital infrastructure development

The county's key public cultural institutions demonstrate relatively low levels of digital technology application. The evident inadequacy of digital infrastructure and lack of advanced digital equipment and system support create notable deficiencies in the digital preservation, exhibition, and dissemination of cultural resources.

Digital marketing and communications

Tongwei County's cultural venues utilize social media platforms such as WeChat Official Accounts, Douyin, and Kuaishou for live streaming promotion. The Tongwei Museum conducts live broadcasts of cultural relics guided talks through WeChat Video Channel. The Cultural Centre shares cultural performances like traditional opera and folk dance through its WeChat Official Account. Yuexin Calligraphy and Painting Village operators conduct live streams on Kuaishou, demonstrating calligraphy and painting creation processes.

Online business vitality

Tongwei's calligraphy and painting industry is relatively active online. Specifically, art brokers in Yuexin Calligraphy and Painting Village actively use shopping platforms like Xianyu to accept orders, expand sales channels and improve operational efficiency. The integrated online and offline business model has injected new vitality into Tongwei's calligraphy and painting industry. In addition, Tongwei County's handicraft trade maintains stable online sales channels. For instance, the Tongwei Wheat Straw Painting practitioner reports notably better business performance on Douyin compared to offline sales.

2.5

Zhangye Municipality: Ganzhou District



Ganzhou District of Zhangye City, a geographical hub and historical core of the Hexi Corridor, derives its name from the strategic westwards expansion efforts during the Western Han Dynasty (202-8 BCE), reflecting its pivotal role in the nation's historical governance of the northwest. The character “甘” (Gān) in the name of Gansu Province originates from Ganzhou. Historically, Ganzhou District was a critical convergence point for diverse civilizations along the Silk Road. It is also renowned for its unique ecological characteristics and earned the names “Jiangnan Beyond the Great Wall” and “Golden Zhangye.” The Heihe River system nurtures wetland landscapes and cultural traditions, forming a distinctive regional interaction pattern. The various ethnic regimes — such as the Xiongnu, Tubo, and Western Xia — collectively shaped Ganzhou's multi-layered historical and cultural genealogy. As the political, economic, and cultural centre of Zhangye City, Ganzhou District is recognized as a famous historical and cultural city and an outstanding tourist destination.

Key cultural assets and resources

The following summaries selected major heritage sites and cultural resources of highest significance and relevance for promoting urban and rural development, enhancing regional brand identity, and stimulating the growth of the CCIs.

Tangible heritage

Ganzhou District houses 245 immovable cultural relics from different historical periods, including 10 national key cultural heritage protection units and nine provincial-level units. The museum collection includes a total of 10,879 movable cultural relics.

Major heritage sites include:

Dafo Temple of Zhangye

Originally named Jiaye Rulai Temple, it is also known as “Reclining Buddha Temple” due to its Nirvana statue of Sakyamuni. As an imperial temple and a national 4A tourist attraction, it covers over 30,000 square meters. Founded in 1098 by the Western Xia Empire, the temple complex is a significant historical site along the Silk Road and a landmark of Zhangye city. It houses China’s largest Western Xia period Buddhist Hall, the largest indoor clay-wooden reclining Buddha statue, and the most complete first-edition “Yongle Northern Collection” scripture. As a Buddhist art museum, it integrates architecture, sculptures, murals, carvings, scriptures, and other artifacts. It was inscribed as a national key cultural heritage protection unit in 1996.

Folk Village in Wulan Ancient Town

Located in Gucheng Village, Jiantan Township, Ganzhou District, the village contains three cultural heritage protection units within its boundary and was inscribed on the sixth listing of Chinese Traditional Village in 2023. The rural regeneration of folk village in Wulan ancient town is one of the three World Bank-funded projects in Zhangye city.



Dafo Temple of Zhangye © WHITR-AP Beijing



Folk Village in Wulan Ancient Town © WHITR-AP Beijing

Intangible cultural heritage

Ganzhou District currently has one national-level, five provincial-level and 16 municipal-level ICH elements. Among them, Wulan Ancient Town's "Jiuqu Yellow River Lantern Array" was included in the Guinness World Records. The district also has 11 provincial-level, 22 municipal-level, and 16 district-level representative practitioners.

Representative ICH include:

Shao Family Rod Puppet Show

According to local chronicles, this puppet show was called "Tuo'ou" and commonly known as "Three Sticks" or "Elbow Dolls" in Zhangye. It is traditionally performed at weddings, funerals, and seasonal festivals. Performances can be held in theatres, tea gardens, courtyards, or on grasslands, unrestricted by venue conditions. In 2008, it was inscribed on Gansu Province's second ICH listing. In 2015, with support from provincial and local cultural departments, a Shao Family Rod Puppet Show training centre was established at the Ganzhou District Cultural Centre.

Jiuqu Yellow River Lantern Array

This ICH has been passed down for centuries in the Gucheng Village of Jiantan Town, Ganzhou District. It is a folk cultural activity performed during Spring Festival with significant local influence, now recognized as a provincial level ICH of Gansu.

Yugur Ethnic Costume

A national-level ICH element. The representative practitioner has established the Sarma Ethnic Traditional Workshop at the Zhangye Silk Road Culture and Art Centre. The space's commercial operations comprises of sales of traditional Yugur costumes and cultural creative products.

Ganzhou Xiaodiao

A traditional narrative singing art with a long history in Zhangye. This Ganzhou folk art was designated as a national ICH in 2021. Currently, Ganzhou Xiaodiao is a relatively popular art form in Ganzhou District, performed by several civic groups.

Hexi Baojuan

A form of folk narrative literature widespread in the Hexi region of Gansu, featuring both written records and orally transmitted chanting melodies. It was listed in the first listing of national ICH in 2006.

Cultural and creative industries

Major local CCIIs include:

Zhangye Chuanshi Classic Culture Development Co., Ltd.

The owner of this cultural enterprise, Xu Jing, is a district representative practitioner of Ganzhou embroidery and tie-dye. She founded the company and her personal brand “Xu Jing Handcraft” based on her handicraft skills. The products are distributed through a consignment partnership model in cultural and creative shops across major attractions in Ganzhou District. She also collaborates with public cultural institutions in public education initiatives such as Ganzhou embroidery training, study tours, outreach programmes in schools, communities, and townships.



Ganzhou Xiaodiao © WHITR-AP Beijing



Xu Jing Handcraft © WHITR-AP Beijing

Gansu Yunheng Embroidery House Cultural Arts Co., Ltd.

The company has established local brand IPs including “Ganzhou Craftsmanship,” “Cultural Embroidery Danxia,” and “Yunheng Embroidery House.” They engage local women in traditional craft training and employment, offering hundreds of products using original designs with Zhangye elements and Zhangye folk embroidery.

Rainbow Silk Road Performance Co., Ltd.

In support of national propaganda initiatives, Rainbow Silk Road has conducted various benefit performances. They have performed at significant events such as the “Belt and Road” Cultural Communication Summit Forum and Gansu’s Western Development Region Economic Seminar. The show Ganzhou Music and Dance, commissioned by the Ganzhou District’s Intangible Cultural Heritage

Centre, uses local cultural heritage as material and is touted as “a must-see performance of the Silk Road”.

Gansu Xiyou Cultural Media Co., Ltd.

Their promotional videos and cultural creative products have received widespread acclaim, particularly the Yugur-themed micro-films and Zhangye tourism-themed short videos, which have effectively enhanced Zhangye’s recognition. The company established the “This is Zhangye” cultural creative flagship store in Zhangye Old Street, creating distinctive cultural products that reflect Zhangye characteristics, designing story-rich products with youth-oriented thinking to promote Zhangye’s culture.

Ganzhou District Tourism Investment Company

Established in May 2011, it is a state-owned enterprise directly under the Ganzhou District government. The company has successfully developed several key urban projects, including the Zhangye National Desert Sports Park, Lanxin High-speed Railway Zhangye West Station Plaza and road engineering, and the Xilai Temple Cultural Landscape project.

Tourism

The cultural and tourism industry in Ganzhou District accounts for more than 56 per cent of GDP, and the growth rate is higher than the GDP growth rate of the entire region. The cultural tourism industry has become the first industry in the district and is also an important support for the high-quality economic development of Ganzhou District.

Currently, there are 776 cultural operation entities in the Ganzhou, with over 20,000 direct employees in the tourism industry. In recent years, the district has received an average of over 13 million tourists annually, with total tourism revenue reaching over eight billion CNY per year. The growth rate of tourist arrivals and tourism revenue is maintained at about 30 per cent each year.

There are more than 400 accommodation businesses in the entire region, including 18 star-rated hotels and over 20 distinctive homestays, over 200 specialty dining enterprises, 42 star-rated rural guesthouses, and 126 travel agencies.

Major tourist resources include:

Colourful Danxia Scenic Area

This 5A tourist attraction serves as Zhangye's landmark and a significant geological park in Northwest China, combining aesthetic value and geological research significance. In 2024, the scenic area received 3.48 million visitors, generating revenue of over 300 million CNY, with out-of-province tourists accounting for 95 per cent.

Danxia Kou Cultural Tourism Town

This tourism project is designed to extend and complement the business chain of the Colourful Danxi Scenic Area. Covering approximately 0.13 square kilometres in area, it serves as a themed tourism resort town with diverse operations. In addition to hotels, theatres, folk cuisine, and bars, it also serves as a base for folk culture inheritance.

Pingshanhu Canyon Scenic Area

Located in Pingshanhu Mongolian Township, Ganzhou District, the scenic area lies about 56 kilometres from downtown Zhangye, covering an area of 100 square kilometres at an elevation ranging from 1,500 to 2,550 meters. Pingshanhu Grand Canyon is a natural gorge formed over hundreds of millions of years through tectonic uplift, wind and water erosion, and chemical weathering. It is one of the three major Danxia landform scenic areas in Zhangye.

Lushuiwan Scenic Area

Situated in the water conservation zone of Binhai New District, Zhangye City, the Lushuiwan Scenic Area spans roughly 4,500 *mu* (approximately 300 hectares), with 2,260 *mu* (about 150 hectares) of water surface. Through a decade of ecological restoration, the area has been transformed from a rocky shoal and sand quarry into a national 4A-level tourist attraction and a provincial-level tourist resort. It is made up of three man-made lakes creating a tranquil ecological setting. It is celebrated as Zhangye's "back garden" and "natural humidifier."



Colourful Danxia © WHITR-AP Beijing



Danxia Kou Cultural Tourism Town
© WHITR-AP Beijing

Cultural institutions

There are two libraries, seven museums, three art galleries, two theatres, four cinemas, three music halls, and ten creative hubs in Ganzhou District.

Major local cultural institutions include:

Zhangye Museum

One of the earliest museums in the province, it houses over 11,000 historical artifacts, ranging from ancient times to the modern era. The exhibitions highlights Zhangye's far-reaching influence as a major Silk Road Town, cultural city, military fortress, and economic centre of the Hexi region.

The Zhangye Silk Road Culture and Art Centre (Zhangye Grand Theatre)

The centre is in the Binhe New District of Zhangye City, serving as a major public welfare cultural development base and cultural platform for the city. The project has a total land area of 74,000 square meters and total floor area of 45,000 square meters with functions including the Zhangye Grand Theatre, public cultural leisure plaza and, the Qiyi Theatre for local opera performance, community cultural centre and CCI incubator space. The project will play a vital role in advancing Zhangye's public cultural services, serving as a multi-functional cultural tourism landmark, bridging traditional culture, artistic innovation, and public engagement.

Digital environment

Digital infrastructure development

In recent years, the city has actively promoted the city brand "Rainbow Zhangye" through the WeChat mini app "Zhangye Culture and Tourism," the WeChat public account "Jin Zhangye Tourism" and other online platforms. The city also launched the "Rainbow City" theme mascot "Rainbow Horse," modelled after the Shandan military horse, highlighting Zhangye's profound historical and cultural heritage. Zhangye vigorously invested in digital infrastructure construction, built 3,034 5G base stations in 2023, achieving 5G network coverage in key scenic spots and townships and conduct accurate analysis of visitor behaviour using the smart city big data centre. In addition, Zhangye has limited ventures in the digitalisation of cultural heritage at Dafo Temple and Ganzhou Xiaodiao. Through the intelligent scenic area big data platform, the Colourful Danxia Scenic Area has realized visualization of operation, management and precise marketing.

Public cultural institutions and tourist attractions in Zhangye have set up on-site digital experience projects at Dafo Temple and the Zhangye Museum to improve tourist experience. However, lack of regular maintenance of the digital experience facilities have caused some malfunctions during the field visits, creating negative impacts on visitor experience.

Digital marketing and dissemination

Currently, online cultural production content related to Zhangye is mainly based on cultural and tourism-related. Travel vlogs, short videos, and photography are widely disseminated on video websites and social media platforms, making it easy for cultural production content to receive attention and gain revenue. However, apart from the use of digital platforms to publish and disseminate cultural and tourism content, local artists, cultural professionals and practitioners do not make extensive use of digital technologies to form online cultural production chains and networks. In general, Ganzhou District is aware of the use of digital media platforms for promotion and dissemination, but the content of the dissemination is crude and unappealing.

Online business vitality

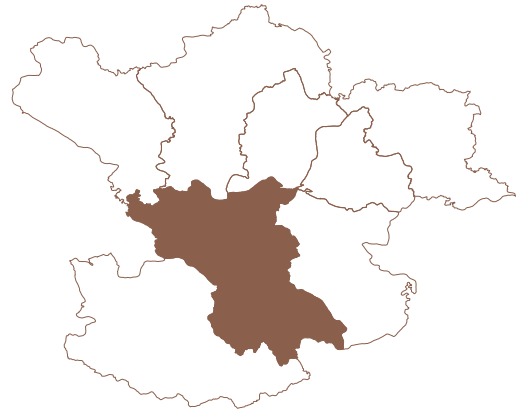
The online business vitality of the CCIs in Ganzhou District is relatively weak, lacking mature online business model. Insufficient training for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has is a major hinder for the development of online business.



Zhangye "Rainbow City" Theme Mascot "Rainbow Horse" © Golden Zhangye Tourism Wechat Official Account

2.6

Wudu District, Longnan Municipality



The Longnan Municipality Government is seated in Wudu District, and Cheng County is one of Longnan's eight subordinate counties. Following the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake that severely impacted Longnan, post-disaster reconstruction efforts were initiated with strong support from national and local governments. The “Four Venues and One Centre” complex in Wudu District is an example of such reconstruction project, both the library and museum were completed and opened in 2022. After achieving poverty alleviation goals in 2021, the district government prioritized cultural tourism development. Leveraging cultural heritage, Wudu District actively integrates regional tourism resources, focusing on landscape-based tourism and developing wellness tourism around the Wanxiang Cave scenic area. The opening of the Wu-Jiu Expressway has significantly reduced travel time between Longnan City and Jiuzhaigou, incorporating Longnan into Jiuzhaigou's tourism circuit. Consequently, Wudu District is actively developing more hospitality and cultural facilities, stimulating the local market economy.

Key cultural assets and resources

The following summaries selected major heritage sites and cultural resources of highest significance and relevance for promoting urban and rural development, enhancing regional brand identity, and stimulating the growth of the CCIs.

Tangible heritage

Wudu District currently has four provincial-level key cultural heritage protection units and other diverse cultural heritage such as ancient mountain fortresses, ancient beacon towers and ancient plank roads.

Major heritage sites include:

Wanxiang Cave Scenic Area

Located on a hillside in Yangpang Village, Hanwang Town, Wudu District, 10 kilometres from the city centre. With a history spanning 250-300 million years, Wanxiang Cave represents one of Northwest China's largest karst formations. The area includes 11 scenic zones with over 120 major attractions and three cave realms. The Wanxiang Cave Inscriptions is inscribed as a provincial-level key cultural heritage protection unit.

Zhangba Ancient Village

The village is situated in Pipa Town, Wudu District, at the junction of Shaanxi, Gansu, and Sichuan provinces. With 130 extant courtyards, this 600-year-old village primarily features Ming and Qing dynasty architecture. It represents not only a typical rural settlement in the Longnan region but also boasts one of Gansu Province's best-preserved traditional rural architecture. In 2023, it was inscribed on the sixth listing of Chinese Traditional Village.



Wudu Wanxiang Cave © Longnan Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism

Intangible cultural heritage

Wudu District has a total of 61 inscribed ICH elements including one national-level element (Gaoshan Opera), seven provincial-level, 17 municipal-level, and 36 county-level ICH elements.

Representative ICH include:

Wudu Gaoshan Opera

Originated in Yulong Town, Wudu District, this opera form is widely performed in the townships of Kang County. Traditionally, Gaoshan Opera had no fixed scripts, and is passed down orally by senior artists known as “opera mothers” or “opera models.” It wasn’t until the late 1970s that Yin Weixin, a representative practitioner, created the first formal script “The Old and Young Exchange,” marking it the first written documentation of the art form.



Gaoshan Opera “Zou Yin” Ritual © Wang Zhengying

Cultural and creative industries

Major local CCIs include:

Longnan Local Cultural Tourism Creative Development Co., Ltd.

A small cultural and creative enterprise that specialises in exploring and integrating Longnan’s rich cultural elements. Following a development strategy of “IP creation + derivative product development + online and offline retail channels,”

the company combines local elements with VR technology applications and experiential tourism marketing to create influential local cultural symbols. The company sells products through physical stores and online social media platforms such as the Red Note and government procurements.

Tourism

Wudu District has rich natural and cultural tourism resources, including one National 4A tourist attraction (Wanxiang Cave Scenic Area) and two 3A attractions. The district also includes multiple rural tourism attractions like the scenic Bailong River coastline and the traditional Pipa Ancient Town.

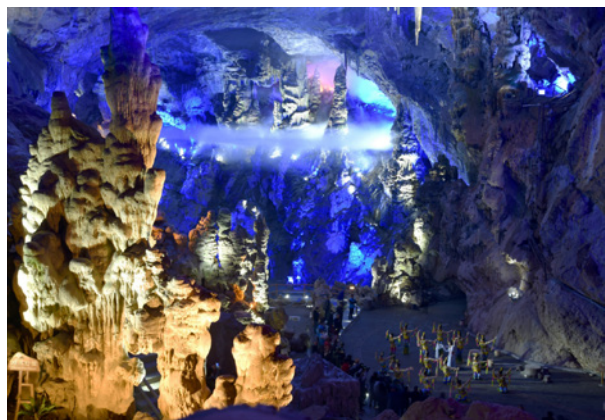
Major tourist resources include:

Wanxiang Cave Scenic Area

Leveraging Wudu District's geographical advantages and the poverty alleviation efforts, the district government has invested heavily in cultural tourism, planning and constructing scenic areas and supporting facilities. The Wanxiang Cave scenic area is currently in the construction and operational phase. The new urban area below Wanxiang Cave Mountain is a government-built complex, the mountain area features over 66.67 square kilometers of grassland that connects to Yaozhai Valley, creating a diverse tourism cluster. The Wanxiang Cave scenic area has established a mature operational system, with plans for additional scenic areas under development.



Wanxiang Cave Scenic Area © Longnan Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism



Wanxiang Cave Scenic Area © Longnan Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism

Cultural institutions

Longnan City has one museum, one library, one art museum, one cultural centre and one intangible cultural heritage research centre forming the cultural district in the city centre.

The Longnan City Museum is rebuilt in 2011 as a post-disaster reconstruction project. It has a building area of 5,132 square meters housing 1,278 pieces of collections. The Longnan City Cultural Centre was originally named Wudu District Mass Art Gallery. It was rebuilt after the Wenchuan earthquake and is located in the same building as the Longnan City Library. The Longnan City Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Centre is dedicated to safeguarding and transmitting the region's rich intangible cultural heritage. The centre organizes free public courses and experiential activities, showcases and actively promotes diverse ICH projects.

Major local cultural institutions include:

Wudu District Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre

This facility also serves as the Gaoshan Opera Exhibition and Research Centre. It is larger than the Longnan City Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre in terms of physical space and features more diverse exhibitions. Yin Libao, who serves as the chairman of the Opera Artists Association and council member of the Provincial Drama Association, plays a crucial role at the centre, promoting the safeguarding and development of Gaoshan Opera. The centre is engaged in training for ICH practitioners, documents, transmits and promotes ICH projects with public funding, ICH project grant application and organises community activities to raise public awareness and participation in ICH projects.



Wudu District Intangible Cultural Heritage
Centre © WHITR-AP Beijing

2.7

Cheng County, Longnan Municipality



Cheng County is the only county in Longnan City with a well-developed modern transportation system, including railways, highways and an airport. The county has generally well-established creative production spaces, offering a comprehensive range of functions and facilities to meet cultural needs. However, the museum buildings and the spatial layout are dated, not meeting the needs of modern creative industries. The “Xixia Song” Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) stone carving, which combines art and natural landscape, is a key tourism development project in Cheng County. Notably, local CCIs has developed a series of profitable ceramic products based on Cheng County’s local intangible cultural heritage of pottery-making and collaborates with local University in product design, driving local employment while also promoting product innovation and cultural heritage.

Key cultural assets and resources

The following summaries selected major heritage sites and cultural resources of highest significance and relevance for promoting urban and rural development, enhancing regional brand identity, and stimulating the growth of the CCIs.

Tangible heritage

Cheng County in Longnan City has two national key cultural heritage protection units (Xixia Song Cliff Carvings and Wu Ting Tomb), four provincial-level units, and numerous historical remains such as Han Dynasty beacon tower ruins, ancient trade route remains, and traditional villages famous for their walnut industry.

Major heritage sites include:

Xixia Song Cliff Carvings

Located in Xixia Valley of Cheng County, these carvings were created in 171 CE during the Eastern Han Dynasty. The inscriptions praise Li Xi, the governor of Wudu, for his construction of a trade route and are hailed as masterpieces of ancient Chinese calligraphy. This is currently a key tourism development project in Cheng County.

Intangible cultural heritage

Cheng County is home to seven provincial-level ICH elements, 19 municipal-level and 61 county-level ICH elements, covering a wide range of categories such as traditional opera, handicrafts, and folk customs. The provincial ICH elements include Chengzhou Dough Figurines, Cheng County Walnut Carving Techniques, Cheng County Hemp Weaving Techniques, and Longnan Daoqing. Cheng County also has one national-level, seven provincial-level and 19 municipal-level representative practitioners. They continue to safeguard and innovate in fields such as shadow puppetry, carving techniques, and folk music.

Cultural and creative industries

Major local CCIs include:

Longnan Jiarui Cultural Creative Design Co., Ltd.

The company focus on the design and production of ceramics and other cultural creative products. The company's ceramics, particularly teapots, account for about 80 per cent of its sales. The company collaborates with Longnan Normal University, involving university students in product design, fostering innovation and cultural heritage transmission. The company also receives support from the government, participating in government-organized exhibitions and sales events, benefiting from cultural project funding.



Jiarui Cultural Creative Offline Exhibition Hall © WHI-TR-AP Beijing

Tourism

Cheng County boasts rich natural and cultural tourism resources, with one 4A tourist attraction and two 3A tourist attractions. In addition, Cheng County has several rural tourism destinations, such as Suochi Ancient Town and the Hongchuan Wine Culture Park, showcasing local brewing techniques and culture.

Major tourist resources include:

Xixia Song Scenic Area

Located in the Yuqiao Gorge at the foot of Tianjing Mountain, about thirteen kilometres west of Cheng County, this national 4A tourist attraction is known for its

historical Eastern Han Dynasty cliff carvings (171 CE) of the “Xixia Song” and the magnificent canyon scenery. This is a key tourism project under development in Cheng County.

Cultural institutions

Major local cultural institutions include:

Cheng County Museum

Established in October 2000, the new museum building opened to the public in October 2013. The Cheng County Museum is part of the World Bank’s “Millennium Ancient County” cultural heritage exhibition project and plans to build a new facility to improve its infrastructure.

Cheng County Cultural Centre

The Cheng County Cultural Centre primarily organizes public cultural activities, provides training for cultural professionals in both urban and rural areas, and handles the organization, identification, exhibition, and reporting of cultural heritage.

Longnan Normal University

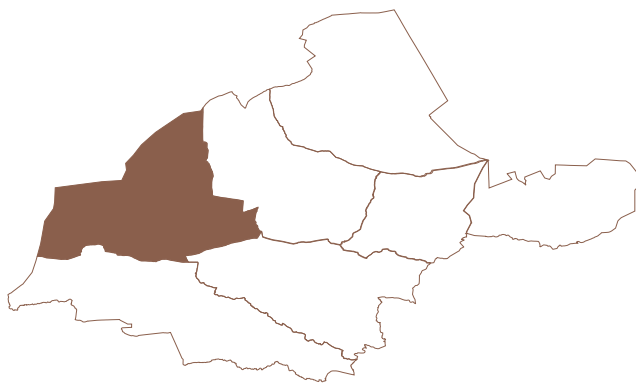
Longnan Normal University focuses on arts education, dedicated to the transmission and safeguarding of southeastern Gansu culture, intangible cultural heritage, and local folk culture, as well as research in ICH education at regional universities.



Intangible Cultural Heritage Course, Longnan Normal University © WHITR-AP Beijing

2.8

Dunhuang City, Jiuquan Municipality



Dunhuang City, nestled in the northwest of Gansu Province, is part of the Jiuquan City jurisdiction. It stands strategically at the crossroads of Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang provinces. The city is flanked by the Qilian Mountains on the south, Mazong Mountains on its north and surrounded by the Gobi Desert on the eastern and western fronts. Dunhuang is a treasure trove of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, a harmonious blend of natural desert landscapes and rich cultural tapestry. The city is also an important hub of the ancient Silk Road's legacy, instrumental in fostering the exchange and integration of ancient civilizations between the East and the West. Dunhuang City has developed six major international cultural brand, including three World Heritage sites (Mogao Caves, Yumen Pass Ruins, and the Xuanquan Post site), one UNESCO Global Geopark (Dunhuang Yadrang National Geopark) , and the internationally significant academic field of “Dunhuang Studies”.

Key cultural assets and resources

The following summaries selected major heritage sites and cultural resources of highest significance and relevance for promoting urban and rural development, enhancing regional brand identity, and stimulating the growth of the CCIs.

Tangible heritage

Dunhuang City boasts an extensive array of cultural heritage sites. Prominent among these are the national key cultural relics protection units and World Heritage sites, Yumen Pass and the Great Wall beacon tower ruins, Mogao Caves, and Xuanquan Post site. Dunhuang also has 12 provincial level protection sites, such as the remains of Shouchang City, Yangguan ruins, Shazhou ancient city site, Dunhuang South Warehouse, etc.

Major heritage sites include:

Mogao Caves

Mogao Caves, also known as the Thousand Buddha Grottoes, has 735 extant caves, over 3,000 polychrome statues, and 45,000 square meters of murals dating from the fourth to the tenth century CE. These caves house a vast collection of Buddhist art spanning over thousand years of history.

Xuanquan Post Site

This site is part of the Han Empire's transportation and defence system, an example of a typical relay station along the Silk Road's starting section along the Hexi Corridor. The ruin serves as a testament to the postal relay system of the Han Empire, which played a crucial role in supporting long-distance travel and communication, contributing to the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Site "Silk Road: The Starting Section and the Tianshan Corridor."



Mogao Caves, Dunhuang © UNESCO



Xuanquan Post Site © WHITR-AP Beijing

Intangible cultural heritage

Dunhuang City has in total 156 inscribes ICH elements including one national level ICH element (Dunhuang Tune Opera) and 14 provincial-level ICH elements, encompassing traditional arts such as Dunhuang paper-cutting, polychrome sculpture making, stone powder painting, and Dunhuang folk songs.

Dunhuang has strategically planned and established a series of institutions dedicated to the preservation, transmission, study, exhibition, and innovation of these ICH. Notable among these are the Dunhuang Painting Academy, Mingsha Academy and the Mogao Li Craftsmen Village. These initiatives have significantly propelled the continuation and evolution of Dunhuang's intangible cultural heritage.

Cultural and creative industries

Major local CCIs include:

Dunhuang National Cultural Industry Park

In 2014, the Chinese Ministry of Culture designated the Dunhuang National Cultural Industry Park as a national cultural industry demonstration zone. The designation comprises of “one core, five clusters”: “one core” refers to the core area of the cultural industry park, and “five clusters” refer to the Mogao Caves Cultural Heritage Cluster, Xuanquan Post Cultural Relics Cluster, Great Wall Border Culture Cluster, Mingsha Mountain Crescent Spring Cluster, and the Urban Research and Experience Cluster, encompassing almost all the significant tourist attractions and cultural industries in Dunhuang.

Dunhuang Bookstore

This is the first cultural space to integrate Dunhuang's literature, painting and calligraphy, cultural creative products, cafe, and cultural activities, offering a service system centred on cultural content.

Silk Road Souvenirs Cultural Communication Co., Ltd.

This enterprise was established in June 2017. Its scope of business includes creative design, cultural product production and sales, event planning and tourism management.

Mogao Li Craftsmen Village

Located at the foot of Sanwei Mountain, twelve kilometres from the Mogao Caves, Mogao Li Craftsmen Village was established in 2018 and has developed

into a multi-functional training base integrating lectures and teachings on Dunhuang culture, mural and calligraphy study, art design, polychrome sculpture, seal cutting arts, traditional brewing and agriculture. The “village chief,” Yongwei Du, is a representative practitioner of Gansu’s intangible cultural heritage “Dunhuang Polychrome Sculpture Making.”

The Four Major Productions

The four major productions include *See Dunhuang Again*, *Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes*, *Dunhuang in Motion* and *Dunhuang Splendour*, all created in inspiration of Dunhuang’s history and culture, showcasing its rich cultural heritage. *See Dunhuang Again* is produced by Gansu Siku Cultural Development Group Co., Ltd. with an investment of 800 million CNY as the world’s first indoor immersive theatrical experience. *Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes* is inspired by the “Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes Guanyin” mural at Mogao Grottoes. Performed by 50 hearing impaired dancers and visually impaired musicians and singers of the China Disabled People’s Art Troupe, using music, dance, instrumental performance, and multimedia. *Dunhuang in Motion* delves into Dunhuang culture, reviving ancient musical instruments and scores from the Mogao Caves, using advanced technologies like holographic projections and 3D effects to present an immersive experience performance. *Dunhuang Splendour* is an outdoor live performance that combines desert landscape with modern stage design, showcasing Dunhuang’s historical culture and humanistic features.



Mogao Li Craftsmen Village Dunhuang
Polychrome Sculpture Technique © WHITR-AP Beijing



Dunhuang Bookstore © WHITR-AP Beijing



Art Education and Study Session at Mogao Li Craftsmen Village © WHITR-AP Beijing



Mogao Li Craftsmen Village Dunhuang Mural Copying Craft © WHITR-AP Beijing



Stage Photo of *Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes* © WHITR-AP Beijing



Dunhuang in Motion © World Bank Loan Project Office, Gansu Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism

Tourism

In Dunhuang, there are 13 A-grade scenic spots, 21 tourism car companies, over 200 hotels and restaurants, nearly 380 travel agencies, and 1,522 tour guides. Dunhuang has developed high-quality tourism routes such as cultural and art experiential tours, desert landscape outdoor tours, nighttime city tours, beautiful countryside tours, and pilgrimages to Dunhuang. In addition, various cultural experiences are introduced at Mogao Grottoes, Yangguan Gate, and Yardang National Geopark.

Major tourist resources include:

Dunhuang Night Market

Established in 1991, the night market is located in the commercial hub of Dunhuang and is one of China's top 10 famous night markets. Covering an area of about 69,000 square meters, it is a 3A tourist attraction boasting an annual visitor count of about three million. In 2021, it was awarded the title of National Night Cultural Tourism Consumption Cluster. In 2024, it was recognized as a national-level tourism and leisure district, Gansu provincial leisure street, and Gansu Provincial Entrepreneurship and Employment Incubation Base.

Mingsha Mountain Crescent Spring Scenic Area

Located five kilometres south of Dunhuang City, this area is famous for its unique landscape where “mountains and springs coexist, sand and water coexist,” and is known as one of the most exquisite desert landscapes. The Crescent Spring, shaped like a new moon, has flown for thousands of years in the desert, earning it the nickname “Desert's Eye.” The area integrates natural wonders and cultural history and is a National 5A tourist attraction.

Cultural institutions

Major local cultural institutions include:

Dunhuang Academy (The Cultural Creative Centre and Cultural Creative Store, “Seeking Dunhuang” Project and Exhibition Centre)

The Cultural Creative Research Centre of the Dunhuang Academy aims to create an international cultural creative platform, drawing inspiration from Dunhuang's cultural and artistic heritage, conducts research on operational models

and product designs, promoting innovative development of Dunhuang cultural creativity. The centre integrates Dunhuang elements into contemporary designs and collaborates with domestic and international resources to create high-quality Dunhuang cultural creative products.

Dunhuang International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Dunhuang Grand Theatre Construction of the Dunhuang International Convention and Exhibition Centre and Dunhuang Grand Theatre began in November 2015 and were completed in August 2016. Since their completion, the two venues have successfully hosted seven consecutive editions of the Silk Road (Dunhuang) International Cultural Expo, organized annually by various institutions including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), and the People's Government of Gansu Province.

Dunhuang City Museum

Founded in 1979, the museum's new building was completed in 2011. With well-equipped facilities and comprehensive functions, the museum serves to promote and showcase Dunhuang's history and culture. It is also a key research base for Dunhuang Studies. The museum houses 13,481 cultural relics including stone tools, pottery, bronze, porcelain, silk, Han bamboo slips and brick carvings, with the richest collections from the Han and Tang Dynasties, marking the prosperous and glorious history of the ancient Silk Road.

Dunhuang City Cultural Centre

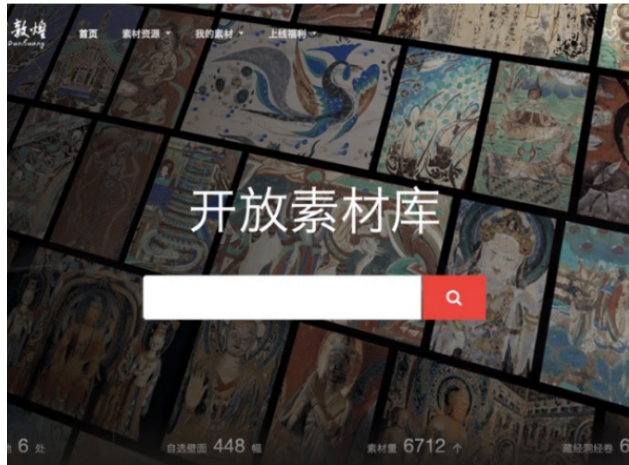
Established in 1952, the new Dunhuang City Cultural Centre was completed in 2016, and merged with the Dunhuang City Art Museum and the Dunhuang City Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Centre.

Digital environment

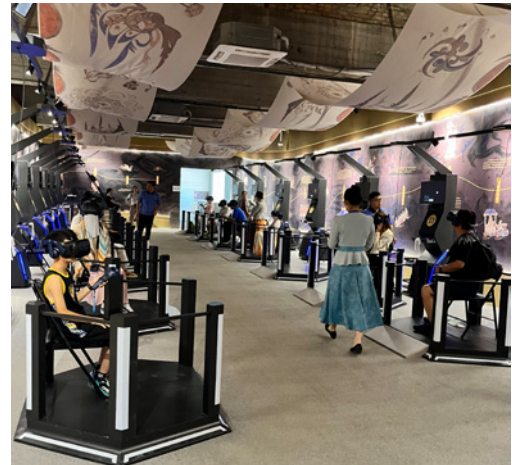
The Digital Exhibition Centre at the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang is a vital component of the "Mogao Grottoes Protection and Utilization Project." It leverages state-of-the-art digital technology and multimedia presentation techniques to showcase the artistic masterpieces and the grand historical and cultural narratives of Mogao Caves. This initiative seeks to prudently decrease the number of caves open to the public and to reduce the duration of visits, thereby mitigating tensions between tourism and preservation, balancing the needs for preservation and sustainable utilization for the Mogao Caves.

In alignment with the National Cultural Heritage Administration's "Internet + Chinese Civilization" initiative, Dunhuang Academy partnered with Tencent

to launch the “Digital Dunhuang Open Material Library” – an unprecedented, globally accessible platform for digital cultural heritage based on blockchain technology, in 2022. This groundbreaking platform offers over 6,500 high-resolution digital archives from the Mogao Caves and other grotto sites, as well as texts from the Dunhuang Cave of a Thousand Buddhas, freely available to all users worldwide.



Digital Dunhuang Website © e-dunhuang.com



Mogao Caves Digital Experience © WHITR-AP Beijing

2.9

Jiuquan Municipality



Jiuquan City is situated at the western end of the Hexi Corridor in Gansu Province. As one of the four prefectures established in the Hexi region during the Han Dynasty, it boasts a history of over two thousand years. Historically, it was a

vital transportation hub connecting the Central Plains with the Western Regions, a strategic frontier stronghold along the Silk Road, and a symbol of modern China's aerospace endeavours. The region has a total of 1,393 registered immovable heritage sites to date, including five UNESCO World Heritage Sites. In the modern era, the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre — the birthplace of China's aerospace program — has realized a cultural transition from ancient myth to contemporary space technology. The area has long been a zone of cultural convergence for multiple ethnic groups such as the Xiongnu, Turks, and Mongols. The historical and cultural landscape of Jiuquan presents a grand tapestry interwoven with military defence, Silk Road civilization, ethnic integration, and aerospace technology, making it a crucial geographical and cultural area for understanding both the historical function and modern continuity of the overland Silk Road.

Key cultural assets and resources

The following summaries selected major heritage sites and cultural resources of highest significance and relevance for promoting urban and rural development, enhancing regional brand identity, and stimulating the growth of the CCIs.

Tangible heritage

By the end of 2022, Jiuquan had 22 national key cultural heritage protection units and 58 provincial-level units, 14 municipal-level units and 850 county-level units. The total number of movable cultural relics in the city's registered museums is 29,587 pieces with 3,024 valuable cultural relics.

Major heritage sites include:

Suoyang City Site

The site is situated in the Gobi Desert southeast of Suoyang Town, Guazhou County, Jiuquan City. The site dates to the Western Jin dynasty (266-316 CE) and flourished during the Sui and Tang dynasties (581-907 CE). It served as a military, political, and command centre under the Western Xia regime (1038-1227 CE), which controlled the Hexi Corridor and exerted significant regional influence. The Suoyang City site comprises of ancient city ruins, tombs, reclamation areas, ancient military defence systems, beacon tower communication systems,

and ancient irrigation infrastructure. In November 1996, it was designated as a national key cultural heritage protection unit and inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2014.

Yulin Caves

Also known as Wanfo Gorge, Yulin Temple, or Shangdongzi, the Yulin Caves are located 70 kilometres south of Guazhou County in Jiuquan City. Carved into the steep cliffs on both sides of the Yulin River canyon, the caves are named after the dense elm forests that once lined the riverbanks. The construction and artistic activity took place from the 7th century to the early 20th century. The caves are highly similar to the Mogao Caves and are considered as part of the Mogao Cave art system. The site is administered by the Dunhuang Academy.



Suoyang City Site © WHITR-AP Beijing



Guazhou Yulin Caves © WHITR-AP Beijing



Current View of Yulin Caves © WHITR-AP Beijing

Old Yumen District (Yumen Oilfield Red Culture Tourism Area)

Located on the northern slopes of the Qilian Mountains, the old district is home to Yumen Oilfield, the first oilfield of New China, and the hometown of Wang Jinxi, the model oil worker known as the “Iron Man.” The district grew with the development of the oilfield and declined as the resource was depleted. Today, Yumen City is developing red tourism and revolutionary education around the preserved industrial heritage in the old district that reflects the modern history of Yumen.

Juyan Ruins

The ruins span across Jinta County in Gansu Province and Ejina Banner in Inner Mongolia, stretching 250 kilometres north to south and 60 kilometres east to west, aligned in a general northeast-southwest direction. The site consists of beacon towers, fortresses, and military farmlands. It served as a frontier military defence facility during the Han dynasty (202-220 CE). In 1988, the site was designated as a national key cultural heritage protection unit.

Jiuquan Drum Tower

Located at the centre of the old town in Suzhou District, Jiuquan City, the Drum Tower was listed as a national key cultural heritage protection unit in 2013. It is believed to be originally constructed during the Former Liang state (324-314 BCE). The existing structure is a three-tiered, four-eave wooden-and-brick building with a pointed roof, standing 25 meters tall. Today, the Drum Tower remains a central landmark and public gathering place in Suzhou District, hosting various cultural events and celebrations.

Yaowang Palace Complex

Located within Jiuquan Middle School in Suzhou District, the complex dates to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE) and was rebuilt during the Qing dynasty (1644-1912 CE). It was listed as provincial level protection units in 2011. Currently used by the middle school, the site is jointly managed by the Suzhou District Culture and Tourism Bureau and the Suzhou District Museum.

Intangible cultural heritage

Jiuquan have six national level ICH elements including the carving of Jiuquan “Night Light Cups,” Hexi Baojuan (Jiuquan Baojuan), Dunhuang Quzi Opera, Aksai Kazakh Aytes, Subei Mongolian Costumes, and Subei Blessing Chants, 72 provincial level, 387 municipal level and 776 county level ICH elements. Jiuquan is also home to four national level, 34 provincial level, 225 municipal level and 647 county level representative practitioners. Jiuquan is rich in ethnic culture with

two ethnic minority autonomous counties, the Aksai Kazakh Autonomous County and Subei Mongolian Autonomous County. Take Subei as an example, the county has a resident population of only 15,100 people – including around 3,000 ethnic Mongolians – yet boasts an impressive 99 ICH elements including two national level, 13 provincial level, 36 municipal level and 48 county-level ICH elements.

Representative ICH include:

Tao Inkstone Carving

The Tao Inkstone Carving craft originates from Tao Inkstone Village in Guangzhi Tibetan Township, Guazhou County. The village was established in 2008 to relocate people displaced by the Ditan Reservoir construction project. Initially, due to poor soil quality, villagers survived on social welfare and labour work. To ensure the community's stability and prosperity, the party branch decided to leverage the local Tao Inkstone carving skill through establishment of a Tao Inkstone company, which has become an innovation demonstration base for Tao Inkstone cultural industry artisans.



Jiuquan's Night Light Cup
© WHITR-AP Beijing, Clay Ocarina Making



Tao Inkstones on display in Tao Inkstone Village, Guangzhi Tibetan Township © WHITR-AP Beijing



Apprentice Learning Tao Inkstone Carving Technique © WHITR-AP Beijing

In 1976, over 20 beautifully crafted fish-like clay ocarinas, were discovered at the Huoshagou Cultural Site in Qingquan Town, Yumen City, dating back approximately 3,700 years. Historical records show that Yumen clay ocarinas were being made during the Qing Dynasty. In 2017, the Yumen Clay Ocarina Making Craft was listed as provincial level ICH element.

Night Light Cup Carving

Jiuquan's Night Light Cup is a drinking vessel made from jade. The jade cup requires 28 meticulous steps to craft. In 2006, the Night Light Cup Carving technique was included in the first National ICH listing and the Jiuquan Night Light Cup Factory serves as the official preservation and transmission unit.

Hexi Baojuan (Jiuquan Baojuan)

This is a type of folk literature developed from Dunhuang vernacular storytelling and sutra recital in the Tang and Song Dynasties (618-1279 CE). It is inscribed on the first National ICH listing in 2006, and the Suzhou District Cultural Centre serves as the official preservation and transmission unit.

Aksai Kazakh Embroidery

Embroidery is an essential part of Kazakh folk clothing culture and serves as decoration on various everyday items and ornaments inside yurts. While retaining the Kazakh culture characteristics, it has also incorporated embroidery techniques from other ethnic groups. In 2015, Badiha Bahadali, a representative practitioner of the craft, established the first ethnic embroidery cooperative in Aksai County, encouraging local Kazakh women to participate in the embroidery industry. In 2008, Aksai Kazakh embroidery was listed as a provincial-level ICH.

Kazakh Aitys

Kazakh Aitys was inscribed on the second national ICH listing. It is a form of Kazakh folk performing art drawing from Kazakh proverbs, sayings, poetry, and other literary works. During the performance, it is accompanied by solo *dombra* (a traditional lute) or *kobyz* (a bowed string instrument). Aitys is primarily practiced in Kazakh inhabited regions.

Kazakh Horse Racing and *Kokpar* in Aksai

Both the Kazakh Horse Racing and *Kokpar* (a traditional game involving horse-mounted players competing for a goat carcass) in Aksai are recognized as provincial-level ICH elements. These activities represent traditional ethnic sports and entertainment of the Kazakh nomadic people and occasions for them to showcase their equestrian skills and fine horses. The Aksai County has a dedicated racetrack where grand horse racing festivals are held annually.

Subei Mongolian Costumes

The Subei Mongolian community has historically been a melting pot of ethnic interactions, leading to the gradual refinement and enrichment of their traditional attire. The Subei Mongolian Costumes is recognized as a national ICH. They are distinctly different from those of other Mongolian regions, exhibiting strong regional characteristics.

Subei Mongolian Benedictory Prayers

The Subei Mongolian benedictory prayers (*zhu-zan-ci* or praise verses) were inscribed as a national ICH in 2021. These poetic verses, passed down orally through generations, represent one of the most iconic forms of Mongolian folk literature. They are typically recited during solemn ceremonies, festivals and celebratory rituals. The benedictory prayers come in diverse forms and themes, covering nearly every aspect of Mongolian social life. They reflect the Mongolian people's aspirations to ward off misfortune, seek prosperity and pray for peace and happiness through blessings and ritualistic worship.



Aksai Kazakh Embroidery
© WHITR-AP Beijing



Subei Mongolian Costumes
© WHITR-AP Beijing

Cultural and creative industries

Major local CCIs include:

Guazhou County Caosheng Ancient Calligraphy Cultural Industry Park

This is the only cultural exhibition park dedicated to the great calligrapher Zhang Zhi from the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 CE), who was renowned for his cursive script. The park was completed in 2012 and rated as a National 4A Tourist Attraction. The park covers an area of 681 acres with 260 million CNY worth of investment. It is the largest calligraphy-themed cultural industry park in North-west China.

Gansu Craftsmanship Cultural Media Co., Ltd.

Founded in 2018 by Lei Xia, a municipal level representative practitioner of Jinta Paper-cutting, with support from the Jinta County Disabled Association, this company specializes in handicrafts such as paper-cutting, beadwork, and flower wrapping. The company's primary business model is built on bulk orders from enterprises and governmental organizations. The employees are mostly under 50 years of age and include disabled individuals and women.

Jiuquan Night Light Cup Factory

Established in 2003, this factory is recognised as the main preservation and transmission unit of the Jiuquan Night Light Cup Carving Technique, which is listed as a national ICH since 2006. The factory specializes in processing and selling Night Light Cups, jade carvings, jewellery, golden accessories, building materials and glassware, among other products.

Tourism

Jiuquan Municipality has established 47 A-level tourist attractions including one 5A-level attraction, 12 4A-level tourist attractions, 29 3A-level, five 2A-level, and one 1A-level attractions.

The city has built 40 star-rated hotels, including one five-star hotel, 20 four-star hotels and over 1,300 non-star-rated hotels. There is a total of 330 travel agencies. In 2024 Jiuquan City received a total of 60 million tourists, achieving tourism revenue of 9.73 billion CNY.

Major tourist resources include:

Guazhou County International Gobi Sculpture Art Corridor

Located 14-21 kilometres southeast of Guazhou County, the Gobi International Sculpture Art Corridor is a free-admission scenic area and a popular social media hotspot. The corridor features a series of striking large-scale outdoor sculptures. In November 2024, the Jiuquan Guazhou Gobi Sculpture Art Corridor was officially designated as a National 4A-Level Tourist Attraction, recognizing its unique blend of contemporary art and stark natural beauty.

Boluo Zhuanjing Film and Television Base

With its unique history, frontier culture, and industrial heritage, the Boluo Zhuanjing Film and Television Base has become a popular destination in Aksai Kazakh Autonomous County. By improving infrastructure, innovating educational programs, strengthening policy support, and promoting digital media, Boluo Zhuanjing has successfully transformed into a tourist destination combining film shooting, study tours and cultural experiences. Since 2015, it has attracted over 200 film crews.

Yumen Pass Cultural Tourism Company (Yumen Light Industrial Experience Museum)

Since 2022, the company has managed and operated the Yumen Light Industrial Experience Museum, Yumen Oilfield Red Culture Tourism Area and the Magic Mountain Geological Park. It also handles the planning of commercial performances in Yumen City and provides facilities and equipment for performing arts events.

Jinta Desert Poplar Forest Scenic Area

Located eight kilometres northwest of Jinta County, the Jinta Desert Poplar Forest Scenic Area is home to the largest man-made poplar forest in Northwest China, spanning thousands of acres. The forest has significant aesthetic value and became a 4A-level tourist attraction in 2016. The poplar forest receives over 500,000 visitors annually, generating around 20 million CNY in tourism revenue each year.

Jinta Poplar Cultural Tourism Investment Group Co., Ltd.

This state-owned company, established in 2013, is responsible for the management and development of cultural tourism projects in Jinta county. It oversees major tourism projects and operates tourism resources such as the Jinta Poplar Forest Scenic Area, Four Lakes and One Stream Scenic Area, and the Ruoshui Circular Flow Scenic Area.

Silk Road Shengshi Cultural Tourism Development Investment Co., Ltd. (1969 Cultural and Creative Park)

A subsidiary of the Suzhou District Cultural Tourism Investment Group, this company operates the 1969 Cultural and Creative Park, which is made up of industrial buildings from a former boiler factory. The park includes the free admission Industrial Exhibition Hall and other ticked venues such as the Aerospace Technology Museum, Sports Factory, and 1969 Digital Cultural Centre.

Fukang Tianbao Cultural Tourism Company

This company is primarily involved in cultural tourism projects and the development and operation of related scenic spots. The Fukang Tianbao Scenic Area in Suzhou District includes the Silk Road Tianbao Chinese Stone Appreciation Garden, covering 28,000 square meters and featuring over 11,000 pieces of artistic stones and jade. It is the largest stone appreciation culture park in China and the first national level ICH space dedicated to stone appreciation art.

Jiuquan Cultural Tourism Group Co., Ltd.

Established in 2022, this state-owned company focuses on cultural tourism investment and operations. It is supervised by the Jiuquan Municipal Bureau of Culture, Sports, Radio, Television, and Tourism and managed by the Jiuquan State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission. The company's primary focus is on key projects in the Greater Dunhuang Cultural Tourism Economic Circle, including aerospace tourism development around the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre.



Guazhou County International
Gobi Sculpture Art Corridor
© WHITR-AP Beijing



Guazhou County International Gobi Sculpture
Art Corridor © WHITR-AP Beijing



Exterior View of Dongfeng Aerospace City, Jiuquan © WHITR-AP Beijing

Cultural institutions

In recent years, Jiuquan City has successfully created a group of public cultural service facilities, gradually achieving full coverage of the public cultural service system. Landmark public cultural facilities include the Jiuquan City Museum, Jiuquan Theatre, Dunhuang Public Cultural Comprehensive Service Centre, Dunhuang Grand Theatre, Yumen Iron Man Cadre College, “Four Museums and One Centre” in Subei County, Aksai County Cultural Centre and Library, Guazhou County Library, Hongxi Road Anxi Battle Memorial Hall, and “Two Museums and Two Centres” in Jinta County.

By the end of 2022, there were a total of 46 museums and memorial halls including 21 state-owned museums and memorial halls, 10 non-state-owned museums, and 15 “Rural Memory” museums.

There are three artistic performance groups in the city, six theatres and cinemas, eight cultural centres, eight public libraries, and 76 comprehensive grassroots cultural stations.

Major local cultural institutions include:

Aksai Museum

Located within the Aksai Kazakh Ethnic Cultural Park alongside the Aksai Kazakh Ethnic Culture Experience Centre, the museum showcases the history, culture, folk traditions, livelihood, and socio-economic development of the Kazakh people and Aksai County. The museum was opened in 2011 and designated as a National Second-Class Museum in 2024, recognizing its importance in preserving and promoting Kazakh heritage.

Aksai Kazakh Ethnic Culture Experience Centre

The centre blends cultural heritage with innovation, creating a space that integrates exhibition, education and tourism. Through revitalisation of intangible cultural heritage, the centre not only realise the exhibition and transmission of traditional culture but also enhances the vitality of intangible cultural heritage by creation and sales of cultural products. The experience centre stands as an unique landmark with the largest yurt in Asia within the building complex.

Aksai Cultural Centre

Established in 1960, the centre occupies 34,000 square meters and includes a cultural hall, library, art gallery, sports hall, ICH safeguarding centre, youth activity centre, and new citizen practice centre. It undertakes work related to the application, inheritance, and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, provides guidance for grassroot cultural projects, and organizes social, cultural, sports, and art activities.

Aksai County Horse Racing Track

Horse racing, a time-honoured Kazakh tradition, stands as one of the most culturally distinctive sporting events in Aksai Kazakh Autonomous County. Established in 2004, the racetrack features an international standard track with capacity to hold more than 6,00+ spectators, equestrian performance arena, football field, athletic track, fitness trails and cage-style courts. Its design blends modern sports standards with nomadic heritage, making it a hub for both athletic competitions and cultural tourism. In addition to horse racing, traditional ethnic sports such as “Kyz Kuu” (Girls’ Chase), “Kokpar” (Buzkashi) and wrestling are also featured at the racetrack.



Aksai Kazakh Ethnic Culture Experience Centre – the Largest Kazakh Yurt in Asia
© WHITR-AP Beijing



Aksai Cultural Centre – Kazakh Culture Exhibition and Transmission Space © WHITR-AP Beijing

Subei Museum

An important cultural landmark in Subei County with an area of 6,000 square meters including 4,480 square meters of exhibition space. The museum's design reflects the local historical and cultural features.

Subei Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre

The Subei Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre plays a unique role in promoting its intangible cultural heritage. The centre aims to encourage and support practitioners of intangible cultural heritage, strengthening the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. The centre houses 15 ICH transmission spaces and establishes a comprehensive art platform integrating dance, music and fine arts. It is an one-stop experience venue focused on cultural products, culinary culture, folk customs and contributes to the development of Subei's cultural tourism economy via integrating research, education and tourism

Guazhou County Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre

This centre is a sub-unit of the Guazhou County Cultural Centre, which was founded in 1953. It is the only county-level cultural centre in Gansu Province to be consecutively rated as a National First-Level Cultural Centre by the Ministry of Culture for 16 years. The centre currently houses an art gallery, ICH protection centre, business department, and exhibition department.

Yumen Wang Jinxi Memorial Hall

The exhibitions in the memorial hall primarily focus on the life of Wang Jinxi, the "Iron Man," and the development of Yumen and the Yumen Oilfield.

Yumen Cultural Hub

The Yumen City Library, Yumen City Museum and Yumen City Cultural Centre form the cultural hub of the Yumen new city district.

Jinta County Museum

Located south of the Cultural Plaza in the new urban area of Jinta County, this National Second-Level Museum receives about 70,000 visitors annually. The museum has established Boda Cultural Co., Ltd., which organizes educational courses related to aerospace science and cultural heritage, and host university research teams.

Jinta County Cultural Centre

Established in 1950, the cultural centre organizes over 15 cultural festival events and more than 100 public performances each year in collaboration with the county government and local authorities.

Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre

Established in October 1958, the launch centre covers approximately 2,800 square kilometres and located about 200 kilometres from Jinta County. It provides optimal natural conditions for rocket launches and is one of China's major satellite and rocket launch experiment bases. Since 1997, the launch centre is open to domestic tourists under restricting conditions.

Jiuquan Silk Road Culture Research Centre and Library

Known as the “Silk Research Centre,” it is one of the seven sub projects of the World Bank-funded Gansu Silk Road Economic Belt Cultural Heritage and Innovation Project. Once completed, it will showcase Dunhuang relics, intangible cultural heritage products and ancient books and manuscripts from Jiuquan.

Jiuquan City Museum

the Jiuquan City Museum is a national second-level museum. It opened to the public at the end of 2015 and receives around 300,000 visitors annually.

Jiuquan City Cultural Centre

Located in the heart of Suzhou District, the cultural centre plays a key role in organizing public cultural activities and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in Jiuquan. It also houses the Jiuquan Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Centre.

Jiuquan Vocational College

A public vocational college in Suzhou District, Jiuquan City that offers education at the higher technical level. Recently, the college has introduced ICH projects, such as Dunhuang polychrome sculptures, Night Light Cup Carving, and Stone Art Painting, to promote vocational education in traditional crafts.



Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre –
Manned Launch Site © WHITR-AP
Beijing



Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre © UNESCO

Digital environment

Digital infrastructure construction: Jiuquan's digital infrastructure is still under development. Various cultural institutions has installed multimedia facilities, but many of them are not operational. For instance, in Guazhou County, the Caosheng Ancient Calligraphy Cultural Industry Park has a limited number of multimedia and interactive platforms, but due to high maintenance costs and insufficient funding, the space is usually closed to visitors. The Suoyang City Site offers online services such as ticketing and tour route recommendations through a mini program. The Yulin Caves rely on the Dunhuang Academy's Digital Dunhuang strategy, offering an online platform with panoramic views of the caves.

Digital marketing and communications

Jiuquan's cultural departments and enterprises have made some attempts in digital marketing and communications, primarily using platforms such as WeChat. However, overall engagement and subscription number are relatively low. ICH practitioners mostly rely on personal accounts on social media such as Douyin and Kuaishou for cultural dissemination, lacking official guidance.

Online business vitality

Most creative products are sold offline, with limited online sales. The head of the Aksai Badiha Ethnic Embroidery Cooperative mentioned they are trying to set up an online store on Douyin. The founder of Subei Mongolian Galla Natural Source Trading Co., Ltd. is an exceptional case. He began live-streaming sales during the pandemic, accumulating a fair amount of followers and online sales.







Chapter 3

Opportunities And Challenges



Snow Line of the Qilian Mountains © eol.jsc.nasa.gov

3.1

Tianshui City (Qin'an County and Maiji District)

● Opportunities

○ Advantages in geographical location and transportation

Tianshui City is an important city of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Guanzhong Plain Urban Cluster, as well as a major transportation hub in southeastern Gansu. The city is well-connected with railway stations such as Tianshui Station, Tianshui South Station, Dongcha Station and Qin'an Station, and Maijishan Airport. Despite its location in the southeastern part of Gansu Province, and not part of the Qinggan (Qinghai-Gansu) Highway Circuit, Tianshui is situated in the middle between the provincial capital cities of Lanzhou, Xi'an, Yinchuan, and Chengdu, making it accessible to tourists from Gansu and from neighbouring provinces such as Sichuan, Shaanxi and Ningxia.

○ Rich cultural and natural resources

Tianshui City is abundant in cultural and natural resources. In addition to internationally recognised cultural heritage such as the Maijishan Grottoes, Dadiwan Site, and Fuxi Culture, the region is also endowed with scenic attractions including Xianren Cliff, Shimen, Guatai Mountain and the Eight Scenic Spots of Qinzhou. These invaluable assets not only bear witness to the city's historical legacy but also serve as a continuous source of inspiration for its CCIs. Intangible cultural heritage practices, such as Guansha Bamboo Weaving and Tianshui Lacquer Carving, have created new possibilities for the development of local cultural product, attracting investment into the cultural sector, contributing to the prosperity of Tianshui's cultural economy.

Cultural institutions such as the Maijishan Grottoes Research Institute, Dadiwan Ruins Research Institute and the Tianshui Museum have actively engaged in collaboration with universities. These partnerships have enhanced the academic value and public participation in cultural initiatives, while also fostering the study and innovation of cultural resources.

○ Government investment and policy support

The government has established a robust foundation for the accelerated development of the CCIs through strategic infrastructure investment, financial mechanisms, and the implementation of supportive policies. Funding provided by the World Bank has played a vital role in enhancing physical infrastructure, upgrading digital capabilities, and establishing platforms for the safeguarding and transmission of cultural heritage. A notable example is the World Bank-funded project in Tianshui – the Silk Road Pearl Tianshui Lacquer Carving Industrial Park – which is emerging as a central hub for the transmission and innovation of lacquer carving techniques, recognised as a national level ICH. The first phase of the industrial park has been completed, and the second phase involves the construction of specialised production facilities and a dedicated museum. The Qin'an County Government has also finalized three major infrastructure initiatives with World Bank support: Longcheng Ancient Town, Wuying Dadiwan Cultural Experience Zone and Shangguan Ming-Qing Street Scenic Area .

○ Opportunities for cultural and tourism integration

Seizing the opportunities of the new era, Tianshui has pursued an integrated for “culture + tourism” development model, effectively linking CCIs and the tourism industry. The government has successfully attracted investment and implemented major cultural projects, such as the Tianshui Grand Theatre and the Tianshui Eternal Show. Creative activities such as archaeological excavation experiences and pottery workshops at the Dadiwan Site have enhances its visitor appeal by offering immersive cultural experiences.

Rising living standards and growing cultural confidence have increasing demand for distinctive cultural products, creating unprecedented market opportunities for Tianshui's CCIs.

Since March 2024, the Tianshui Bureau of Culture and Tourism has capitalized on the popularity of “Tianshui Spicy Hotpot”, a local cuisine, to promote local culture and tourism. By appointing 22 online influencers as Cultural Tourism Ambassadors, and implementing integrated online-offline campaigns, the bureau significantly boosted the visibility of Tianshui's cultural tourism. By July 2024, follower number of Tianshui's cultural tourism social media grew from 13,400 to 52,000. The Bureau also improved service quality at scenic spots, organized diverse activities, and created artistic works to enhance visitor engagement. Market regulation and safety measures were also strengthened to ensure sector stability.

In addition, the bureau commissioned Tianshui Museum to organise Fuxi ceremonies, such as ancestor worship and master-pupil ceremony for ICH prac-

titioners. These efforts have strengthened the transmission of Fuxi culture, enriched traditional cultural practices, and injected new vitality into Tianshui's cultural tourism market, supporting sustainable development.



Tianshui Immortal Cliff © Maijishan Cultural Tourism WeChat Official Account

● Challenges

○ Homogenization of business models and products

The primary challenge in Tianshui's cultural creative economy is the homogenization of business models and products. The lack of distinctive products and industries severely undermines market competitiveness. This is particularly apparent in the inadequate integration of local cultural elements, where many ventures fail to incorporate authentic regional features, resulting in limited cultural depth and emotional resonance. For instance, despite the historical recognition of traditional crafts like Tianshui Lacquer Carving and Guansha Bamboo Weaving, the current market offerings lack diversities. There is a need for enterprises and creators to innovate by integrating traditional techniques with modern design concepts. Developing products that preserve traditional craftsmanship while appealing to modern aesthetics preferences is essential to attract younger consumers and hence market relevance.

○ Inadequate infrastructure and supporting services

The development of Tianshui's CCIs is hindered by several constraints: inadequate infrastructure and supporting services, specially in remote areas, which limits operational efficiency and scalability, as seen in the poor transportation access to the Dadiwan Site; outdated technology and digital transformation, shortage of talent, and weak intellectual property protection awareness. The inadequacy in infrastructure and services, particularly in remote areas, limits the scale and operational efficiency of the industry. For example, the inconvenient transportation to the Dadiwan Site hinders its accessibility, impacting the operation of related cultural and creative projects. Funding shortages and financing difficulties further thwart the research, development, and operational expansion of Tianshui's CCIs. The industry also faces challenge in responding to rapid digital transformation requiring technology upgrades, enhanced digital content production and operation, digital protection and sharing of cultural resources.

○ Restrictions in CCIs development and talent cultivation

The shortage of high-quality talent, particularly technical and creative professionals, poses a severe constraint to the development of Tianshui's CCIs. Sustainable growth of the CCIs not only benefits on rich cultural resources but also the capacity to creatively develop and utilize these resources through skilled human capital. Currently, Tianshui faces significant challenges in attracting, training, and retaining technical creative talent. Sectors such as Guansha Bamboo Weaving and Tianshui Lacquer Carving are affected by a shortage of professionals equipped with modern design sensibilities, digital proficiency, and market insight. This talent gap inhibits the integration of traditional culture with modern technology and creativity, a necessary condition for developing high-quality cultural products aligned with market demand.

Compounding these challenges is the weak intellectual property protection framework, which further stifles innovation across the CCIs. Many enterprises face the risk of imitation and infringement of their creative achievements due to inadequate intellectual property protection mechanisms. Such vulnerabilities dampen incentives for creators and enterprises, undercutting morale of innovators. This deficiency not only impedes sectoral development but also hampers the modernisation and transmission of traditional techniques and cultural resources.

3.2

Dingxi City (Lintao and Tongwei Counties)

● Opportunities

○ Rich and unique cultural resources

Dingxi City, particularly Lintao and Tongwei counties, possesses distinctive cultural resources, including the Majiayao Culture and a well-established calligraphy and painting tradition. In Lintao, for instance, the Majiayao Culture has achieved broad recognition among local communities. This is evidenced by the emergence of numerous civic associations, non-governmental museums, and active site surveys conducted in the vicinity of cultural relics. Such grassroots engagement provides a strong foundation for future development efforts and is conducive to sustaining public support for cultural initiatives.

○ Government investment and policy support

Both Lintao and Tongwei have received support through World Bank projects, the upcoming projects are deeply anchored in the region's cultural assets and are anticipated to substantially elevate the appeal of local cultural tourism, positioning them to become new cultural and tourism landmarks in the area. Field survey indicate a marked increase in local government confidence regarding the economic potential of these cultural resources has increased significantly. As a result, Majiayao Culture and the calligraphy and painting culture have been identified as priority areas for future policy and investment support, establishing a robust development of local cultural heritage.

○ Synergy between public and private resources

Taking Tongwei as an example, a growing number of creative talents have been gathering in the area, with increasing emphasis placed on leveraging local cultural traditions to enhance regional cultural capital and strengthen social net-

works. This aligns closely with the local government's policy priorities. It can thus be stated that a tacit consensus have been formed among grassroots initiatives, market-driven forces, and official policy bodies, enabling effective multi-stakeholder collaboration.



Majiayao Cultural Exhibition, Research, and Incubator Centre © WHITR-AP Beijing

● Challenges

○ Limitations in geographical location and transportation

Dingxi's geographical location is not situated within the core area of the larger regional tourism economy, i.e. the Qinggan Highway Circuit. As a result, there is limited interest from market capital in the region. There are also significant limitations in the existing interpretation facilities, and the area has not yet developed a star cultural tourism appeal, posing challenges in attracting long-term sustained capital investment.

○ Inadequate infrastructure and supporting services

Lintao County remains unconnected to the high-speed rail network, and the transportation links with other areas of the province are underdeveloped. Both

Lintao and Tongwei counties show relatively low level of commercial development, as reflected in the absence of large supermarkets and restaurants, indicating limited local consumption capacity. In this context, support for creative talents (including ICH practitioners) is insufficient. Assistance primarily relies on the routine operations of local cultural centres. Based on field research, it is clear that they are facing underfunding, staff shortage, outdated facilities and limited activity spaces. Cultural Centre staff often perform multiple roles, reducing their public outreach capacity. Notably, there is a lack of targeted incentive mechanisms or service-oriented policies to facilitate the transformation of traditional cultural resources into viable creative industries.

○ Limitations in CCI development and talent cultivation

Currently, Dingxi's development situation is inadequate to address the livelihood needs and social recognition of local creative talents, including ICH practitioners. Innovation within cultural heritage and other traditional culture sectors remains limited, lacking systematic guidance, supporting policies, and effective new media promotion, as well as the absence of leading enterprises and industrial agglomeration effects. Much of the intangible cultural heritage is still viewed merely as "heritage" and has not yet turned into a creative industry domain. Even where some innovation has occurred, efforts in areas such as creative R&D and the application of digital technologies remain underdeveloped.

3.3

Longnan City (Wudu District, Cheng County)

● Opportunities

○ Advantages in geographical location and transportation

Longnan is located at the junction of Shaanxi, Gansu, and Sichuan provinces, bordering Guangyuan City in Sichuan. In addition to attracting visitors from

within Gansu, Longnan can also attract tourists from Sichuan and Shaanxi on road trips. After the completion of the Wujiu Expressway in July 2024, the regional transportation will be greatly improved, further incorporating Longnan into the tourism networks of the Jiuzhaigou Circuit and the Northwest Sichuan Circuit. Cultural consumers can enjoy a “morning in Jiuzhaigou and night at Wudu” experience, with Longnan offering a chance to accommodate overflow tourists from Jiuzhaigou, thereby promoting urban cultural consumption.

○ Government investment and policy support

In 2023, both Wudu District and Cheng County of Longnan City applied for World Bank loans for local development projects. The World Bank project in Wudu is the National Exhibition Centre for Gaoshan Opera, which is planned to be located at the new urban development near the Wanxiang Cave Scenic Area. This centre is not only a professional theatre for the national intangible cultural heritage of Gaoshan Opera, but also serves as a comprehensive complex for the presentation of intangible cultural heritage. In Cheng County, the project focuses on the construction of a cultural complex where the existing crowded county museum, cultural centre, and ICH centre will be relocated to, attracting more tourists and local residents. These World Bank-funded projects in Wudu District and Cheng County are expected to drive the cultural development of Longnan.

○ Opportunities for cultural and tourism integration

Following the completion of poverty alleviation efforts in the city, Longnan, represented by Wudu District, has significantly integrated local cultural and tourism resources. The city has developed a large-scale cultural tourism “mega-scenic area,” while also improving the infrastructure of other scattered scenic spots. This initiative helps to build the city’s brand, enhances its competitiveness, and attracts more cultural consumers.



An Qiuping, the provincial-level representative inheritor of Cheng County Dough Figurines. © Wu Lei

● Challenges

○ Inadequate infrastructure and supporting services

Since Wudu District in Longnan City only completed its poverty alleviation efforts in 2021, the city's urban infrastructure is still in the early stages of development. The urban development is inconsistent where existence of urban slums and low quality roads in some parts of the city requires further improvements. In order to increase the city's visitor capacity, Longnan needs more mid-range and high-end hotels and specialty cuisine options to accommodate the influx of both domestic and international tourists following the opening of the Wujiu Expressway. While various cultural institutions, heritage sites, and tourism attractions in Longnan have already began digital infrastructure development, including big data platforms, visitor management platforms, and resource-sharing platforms, Longnan still requires more support in building its digital environment, including local infrastructure for basic networks and digital resources for online dissemination.

○ Limitations in CCIs development and talent cultivation

Longnan places high importance on intangible cultural heritage, such as the national-level Gaoshan Opera. However, the transition of intangible cultural heritage into the creative domain is a lengthy and difficult process, and not all intangible cultural heritage are suitable as cultural products. In addition, the talent cultivation period is relatively long. At present, there is only one ICH based cultural enterprise that has realized industrialised operation. Other cultural enterprises are in the early stages of creative production, unsuccessful in integrating local characteristics and their products remain relatively basic. Furthermore, there is a shortage of creative talents who can engage in design and innovation. To address this issue, some companies have begun collaborating with Longnan Normal University for cultivation of creative talents.

○ Insufficient leveraging of cultural resource and content development

Longnan's overall positioning is centred on cultural and wellness tourism, but it lacks a prominent city brand with a widely recognized, popular cultural IP such as Maijishan Grottoes, Mogao Caves, or Colourful Danxia Scenic Area. This is due to the relative scarcity of cultural heritage resources in the region. Longnan still needs to further unlock the value of its urban culture or spiritual content to develop a unique cultural identity.

3.4

Zhangye City (Ganzhou District)

● Opportunities

○ Rich and unique cultural and natural resources

Zhangye has historically been a vital hub along the Silk Road and a crucial strategic point. The city is renowned for its rich cultural resources and diverse natural and cultural landscapes. In 1986, Zhangye was designated a National Historic and Cultural City. In terms of tangible heritage, the city centre is home to historical landmarks such as the Dafo Temple, Sui Dynasty Wooden Pagoda, Ming Dynasty Bell and Drum Tower, Qing Dynasty General Gao's Mansion, and Zhangye East Warehouse. Outside the city, there are Mati Temple, Black Water Kingdom Ruins, Jiazi Dun Han Tombs, and Wulan Ancient Town. Zhangye also has a wealth of intangible cultural heritage, including Shao Family Rod Puppetry, Ganzhou Yellow River Lantern Array, and Ganzhou Folk Songs. The city's natural landscape includes the Qilian Mountain Water Conservation Area, Black River Wetlands and vast desert ecosystems. The topography varied from forest grasslands, desert dunes, Danxia formations, oasis farmland and wetland reed beds.

○ Representative cultural IP

The Colourful Danxia Scenic Area is a 5A Scenic Area and Zhangye's most distinctive and influential landmark attraction. Ganzhou District is currently developing the "Rainbow Zhangye, Joyful Ganzhou" city brand. The Colourful Danxia Scenic Area has attracted major influx of visitors and stimulated the development of cultural tourism complexes such as the Danxia Kou Tourism Town, further driving the growth of the cultural tourism industry.

○ Strong government investment and policy support

Zhangye has established a comprehensive policy system for the protection and development of cultural resources, providing clear and actionable policy support from multiple levels of government. Policies such as the Measures to Support the Development of Cultural and Tourism Industries in Zhangye, the 14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural, Radio, Film, and Tourism Development, and the Three-Year Action Plan for Improving and Enhancing All-Sector Tourism (2022-2024) aim to promote cultural products and serve cultural consumption. The Zhangye Cultural and Radio Bureau's implementation of the Revitalization Plan for Traditional Chinese Crafts is focused on the revival and transformation of intangible cultural heritage resources. In addition, the two World Bank projects – the Dongcang and General Gao Mansion Renovation and the Zhangye Silk Road Cultural Arts Centre – are exemplary cultural heritage conservation and cultural industry agglomeration projects in Zhangye.

○ Advantages in geographical location and transportation

As an important transportation hub in Gansu Province, Zhangye is well-connected with highways, including expressways leading to Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Qinghai. The Ganzhou Airport has steadily increased its flight routes, and the Lanzhou-Xinjiang High-Speed Rail passes through the region. The interconnectedness of highways, railways, and air travel provides Zhangye with a transportation advantage in developing the cultural and tourism industries.

● Challenges

○ Imbalanced tourism route development

Currently, Zhangye offers over 20 tourism routes, among which, the Qinggan Highway Circuit is the most popular self-drive tour. Tourists typically start at Qilian Grasslands, visit the Colourful Danxia Scenic Area, then continue to Jiayuguan and Dunhuang. They often bypass Zhangye's other cultural heritage such as the Dafo Temple and Mati Temple in favour of the more famous Mogao Caves in Dunhuang. The Colourful Danxia Scenic Area is located on the western tourism route, which has more developed tourism infrastructure and convenient transportation. However, attractions such as Wulan Ancient Town and Pingshanhu Grand Canyon are situated on the eastern tourism route, where transportation facilities are not as developed, and has relatively low visitor numbers.

○ Underdevelopment of cultural tourism industry

The tourism industry chain is underdeveloped, and the added value of the tourism economy is low. Tourists tend to stay for short periods resulting in low overall spending levels and repeat visit numbers. The destination lacks strong appeal for extended stays, high consumption, and repeat visits. The product variety and sales channels for cultural products are limited resulting in limited consumer engagement and low average spending per customer.

○ Limitations in CCIs development and talent cultivation

According to statistics, there are over 200 cultural enterprises in Ganzhou District, yet there is a lack of leading enterprises and breakout cultural and creative products. Financial support from the government remains limited and integration with digital technologies is weak. There is also a shortage of talents skilled in internet-based marketing, live streaming, and modern media communication. Many handicraft-based ICH practitioners operate through small household workshops rather than scaled enterprises, limiting their market integration and economic value. Practitioners of performance art mainly participate in cultural tourism shows, but their revenues are low with limited promotional impact.



Folk Museum in Wulan Ancient Town © WHITR-AP Beijing

3.5

Jiuquan City (Dunhuang City)

● Opportunities

○ Rich and unique cultural and natural resources

Dunhuang, located at the westernmost end of the Hexi Corridor, is a key cross-roads of east-west traffic along the Silk Road. To the east is Sanwei Mountain, to the south lies Mingsha Mountain, to the west stretches the Kumutag Desert, and to the north, the Gobi Desert connects with the foothills of the Tianshan Mountains, offering rich natural scenic resources. As one of the second listing of National Famous Historic and Cultural City, Dunhuang is home to three UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites, namely the Mogao Caves, Xuanquan Post Site, and the Yumen Pass Ruins, along with four historical and cultural areas, including Nancang Historical Cultural Street, Beitai Historical Cultural Street, Wenmiao Lane Historical Site, and Gao Tai Traditional Residential Area. Dunhuang also has a national-level ICH, Dunhuang Quzi Opera.

○ Opportunities for cultural and tourism integration

Dunhuang boasts numerous cultural landmarks and rich cultural heritage, making it a prime destination along the Silk Road tourism route. Its diverse cultural resources is not only favourable to developing the city's cultural industries, but also provides a foundation for cultural transmission and innovation within the Dunhuang National Cultural Industry Demonstration Zone. With high international recognition and significant cultural influence, Dunhuang has built substantial brand value. Its development strategy centres around three key roles: a hub for cultural creative and exhibitions, a demonstration zone for integrated cultural and tourism development, and a leading centre for cultural heritage protection and research Hub. These pillars serve as the driving force behind Dunhuang's CCIs. As a significant international brand under the Belt and Road Initiative, Dunhuang has in recent years focused on six major CCI sectors: cultural exhibitions and conventions, educational and study tourism, cultural performances, cultural tourism, creative products, and film, television and media, generating a CCI clustering effect.

○ Government investment and policy support

To align with the national trend of integrated cultural and tourism development, the Gansu Provincial Government issued the Dunhuang Cultural and Tourism Economic Circle Development Plan (2019-2030) in 2019. Additionally, Dunhuang is listed as a key project in the Dunhuang Ecological Civilization Construction Demonstration Zone Plan, which includes the Mogao Caves Digital Exhibition Centre (Phase II), Xuanquan Post Tourism Integration, and Xuanquan Post Site Protection and Development Plans. Among these, the World Bank-funded Gansu Silk Road Economic Belt Cultural Heritage Innovation Project – the Dunhuang Xuanquan Post Site – has a total investment of 148 million CNY, with 121.175 million CNY from World Bank loans and 26.69 million CNY self-raised funds.

● Challenges

○ Homogenization of business models and products

Dunhuang's CCIs are currently experiencing an “involution” phenomenon. The Internet has triggered the homogenisation of intellectual property (IP) and fostered fast-consumption habits, which have indirectly led to the dominance of low-cost, novelty-oriented cultural products in the market. Internet-driven thinking prioritises chasing trends, seamless production-to-sales cycles, and maintain high growth rates. As a result, fierce competition among cultural enterprises and institutions- such as the Dunhuang Academy, Dunhuang Culture and Tourism Group, and the Dunhuang Museum- compelled them to constantly release new products in an effort to capture market share. The environment is not conducive to cultivating high-quality, enduring creative products that enhance the Dunhuang brand. For example, in the performing arts sector, the city currently hosts four major performances based on the Dunhuang IP – *Dunhuang Splendour*, *See Dunhuang Again*, *Dunhuang in Motion*, and *Thousand Hands Thousand Eyes* – a concentration unparalleled elsewhere in China. However, intense competition has resulted in declining box-office revenues and shrinking profits, which in turn stifles artistic innovation and creativity.

○ Limitations in CCI development and talent cultivation

The overall industrial structure in Dunhuang is unevenly distributed, with tourism and CCIs accounting for over 70 per cent of the local economy. These sectors are highly seasonal, a concentration of low-cost labour, and suffers from brain drain of high-level talent. During the pandemic, Dunhuang has experienced an economy downturn and a rise in unemployment, and the regional socio-economic development was heavily impacted by the dominant CCIs and tourism industries. This has made the local economy highly vulnerable to cyclical fluctuations, resulting in sharp peaks and troughs. The separation of production and sales in Dunhuang's CCIs further weakens the talent agglomeration effect, making it difficult for local design, production, and marketing teams to thrive, thus exacerbating the talent drain.



Initial Section of the Silk Roads, the Routes Network of Tian-shan Corridor © Valery Kolchenko

3.6

Jiuquan City (Suzhou District, Jinta County, Yumen City, Guazhou County, Subei Mongolian Autonomous County, Aksai Kazakh Autonomous County)

● Opportunities

○ Advantages in geographical location and transportation

Jiuquan is an important city along the Silk Road Economic Belt in the Gansu section and a sub-centre of the province. It borders Zhangye City and Inner Mongolia to the east, Qinghai Province to the south, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to the west, and Mongolia to the north. Historically, it has been a critical transport hub to Xinjiang and the Western Regions. Its location on the Ganqing Highway Circuit attracts significant number of tourists. Suzhou District, as the municipal seat of Jiuquan, has relatively well-developed infrastructure and convenient public transportation network of high-speed railway stations such as Jiuquan Station and Jiuquan South Station, and the nearby Jiayuguan Jiuquan Airport.

Aksai Kazakh Autonomous County (Aksai), Subei Mongolian Autonomous County (Subei), and Guazhou County, are all located along the Ganqing Highway Circuit, and part of the Greater Dunhuang Cultural Tourism Economic Circle, benefiting from their proximity to Dunhuang. On 2 July 2024, the Yulin Caves to Xuanquan Post tourism road, part of the “Symphonic Silk Road One Line” travel integration project, and an important connection within the Greater Dunhuang Cultural Tourism Economic Circle, was completed. This road connects major heritage sites in Dunhuang and Guazhou including Xuanquan Post, Suoyang City, and Yulin Caves, advancing regional economic development.

○ Rich, unique, and diverse cultural and natural resources

Jiuquan City covers a vast area of 192,000 square kilometres, accounting for 42 per cent of Gansu Province's surface area, in varied landforms. In addition to World Heritage Sites like Suoyang City, the city boasts Moshan Geological Park, Old Yumen City, Satellite Launch Centre, Poplar Forest, Boluo Zhuanjing Film Base, hometown of the "Sage of Cursive Script," as well as the Kazakh culture of Aksai and Mongolian culture of Subei. These cultural tourism resources possess strong local and national appeals. They form a complementary and synergistic development relationship with other well-known cultural and tourism destinations in the province, such as the Danxia Geopark, demonstrating considerable potential for future growth.

Jiuquan City is rich in both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Take Guazhou as an example, as of June 2023, there are 465 immovable cultural relics protected units in Guazhou County, including two World Cultural Heritage sites, eight national key cultural heritage protection units, 13 provincial level protection units, and two national 4A-level scenic spots. Notable sites include the Yulin Grottoes, Suoyang City Site, Eastern Thousand Buddha Caves, and Qiaowan City. Guazhou is also the hometown of Zhang Zhi, the great calligrapher of the Han Dynasty known as the "Sage of Cursive Script." It was where the Tang monk Tripitaka endured life-threatening hardships during his westward pilgrimage for Buddhist scriptures, and the final battlefield of the Western Route Red Army. It is designated as a "Provincial Calligrapher Creative Base" and an "Educational Base for the Revolutionary Spirit of the Western Route Red Army," among other titles.

In the case of Subei, the county has a registered population of approximately 15,100 and around 3,000 ethnic Mongolians. Despite its vast land and sparse population, 99 ICH elements associated with the Mongolian culture were identified and inscribed from this relatively small Mongolian cultural circle. Specifically, there are two national-level, 13 provincial-level, 36 municipal-level, and 48 county-level ICH elements. In addition to common ICH categories such as clothing, culinary, housing, transportation, music, arts and crafts, there are also niche ICH elements including customs related to funerals, weddings, and childbirth, traditional fracture treatment methods, fire-worshipping rituals, transhumance and pack-transport traditions, chopstick dances, and customs of worshipping nature and deities.



Suoyang City © Conservation Institution of Site of Suoyang City

○ Opportunities for cultural and tourism integration

Jiuquan's tourism industry has seen overall positive development in recent years. Driven by the post-pandemic tourism boom in Dunhuang and the popularity of the Qinggan Highway Circuit, the city's tourism income has significantly increased. In 2023, Jiuquan received 46.07 million domestic and international visitors, a 199.2 per cent increase from the previous year, and generated 3.884 billion CNY in tourism revenue, a 369.1 per cent increase, encouraging local investments in cultural tourism activities.

Since 2020, Aksai has launched 15 tourism infrastructure enhancement projects. Thirteen projects — including a maker space and ICH experience and exhibition centre — worth 120 million CNY, have been put into operation. 12 preferential policies for “attracting tourists to Aksai” have been introduced. These measures aim to strengthen tourism and add value to the cultural sector.

Subei's Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection and Exhibition Centre is a one-stop cultural tourism experience venue integrating training, creation, exhibitions, performances and external exchanges of the arts. The Guazhou government has established a Cultural and Tourism Integration Development Centre

to manage the Caosheng Ancient Calligraphy Cultural Industry Park. Guazhou Mingyu Cultural Development and Investment Co., Ltd., a state-owned enterprise, has received over 80 million CNY in fixed assets allocated by the government to manage and promote all the major attractions in Guazhou County.

○ Well-developed cultural infrastructure

Jiuquan City, especially those in ethnic minority areas, have relatively well-developed cultural infrastructure and supporting services. The establishment of libraries, museums, and cultural centres, along with the organization of cultural activities, has led to broad acceptance and continuation of cultural resources and intangible cultural heritage among local communities.

The Three Museums of Yumen have well established public-oriented cultural measures. These cultural institutions actively organise events and cultural resources are naturally integrated into the daily lives of the residents. Cultural traditions, particularly intangible cultural heritage, demonstrates strong continuity. The practice of holding cultural activities around the Drum Tower area during specific seasons has received both official support and social recognition, laying a solid foundation for the long-term sustainable development of such cultural tradition.

Although Subei County is small in size, it has well-developed cultural infrastructure, with major buildings incorporating distinctive Mongolian cultural elements. The county library and museum have been recognised as a national level second class institutions, and both the intangible cultural heritage centre and the museum have been designated as education bases for primary and secondary school students citywide. The county regularly hosts cultural events, such as the Nadamo Cultural Tourism Festival, Camel Culture Art Festival, and the Gansu-Xinjiang-Qinghai-Inner Mongolia “Four Provinces, Twelve Cities” Basketball Tournament. Notably, Subei’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre is highly advance, housing 15 ICH transmission workshops. These workshops promotes the integration of research, education and tourism, thereby enhancing the area’s tourism appeal while providing strong support for the safeguarding and innovation of intangible cultural heritage.

In a similar manner, Aksai County has established a Kazakh Ethnic Culture Experience Centre, located in the same complex as the Ethnic Museum. Combining exhibition, experience, education, and tourism, the multi-functional space includes a library, art gallery, sports hall, ICH protection centre, youth activity centre, and new residents’ practice centre. The surrounding area also features venues for traditional sports such as horse racing tracks and wrestling arena.

● Challenges

○ Imbalanced development of tourism resources

Even though Jiuquan City is located along a major provincial development route, it is not a key attraction on this route. Tourists and capitals tend to flow toward other areas such as Dunhuang over Jiuquan. For example, the Greater Dunhuang Cultural Tourism Economic Circle Development Plan (2019-2030) is a tourism development plan currently being vigorously promoted by the Jiuquan Municipal Government. It aims to leverage Dunhuang's tourism industry to drive the growth of the "Greater Dunhuang Tourism Economic Circle." However, based on field investigations, the benefits generated by the "Greater Dunhuang Circle" have so far been limited. The construction of the economic circle remains predominantly centred on Dunhuang, and there are certain discrepancies between the policy planning and actual implementation outcomes in other regions.

Each county and city in Jiuquan have only one or two well-known cultural resources or tourism IPs, such as Satellite Launch City, Jinta Poplar Forest, and Bolo Zhuanjing Film Base. Most resources are scattered across distant locations without forming a connected tourism circuit. This leads to high transportation costs in terms of both time and money, low promotional visibility, and the absence of a mature tourism industry with supporting infrastructure — all of which hinder the ability to attract visitors.

○ Insufficient infrastructure and supporting services

Jiuquan City covers a vast area, but its districts and counties have relatively low urban development levels, limited infrastructure and resident consumption capacity, coupled with a lack of supporting interrelated industries. Particularly in regions like Aksai and Subei, where the permanent population is only slightly over ten thousand, the population is sparse over a large territory. Infrastructure and public services are concentrated mainly around the county seats. While tourism and CCIs are still in the development phase, various cultural and tourism facilities — such as hotels, dining, shopping, and entertainment activities — primarily cater to local residents and business visitors, offering limited options and little appeal to tourists. In the Greater Dunhuang Circle, counties close to Dunhuang see tourists preferring to stay and spend in Dunhuang, where infrastructure is more developed. Moreover, due to the proximity of counties within the "Greater Dunhuang Circle" to Dunhuang city, tourists tend to prefer staying and spending in Dunhuang, where infrastructure is more developed. The remote geographical location and relatively backward digital facilities also hinder effective external promotion. Additionally, the dissemination of ethnic minority

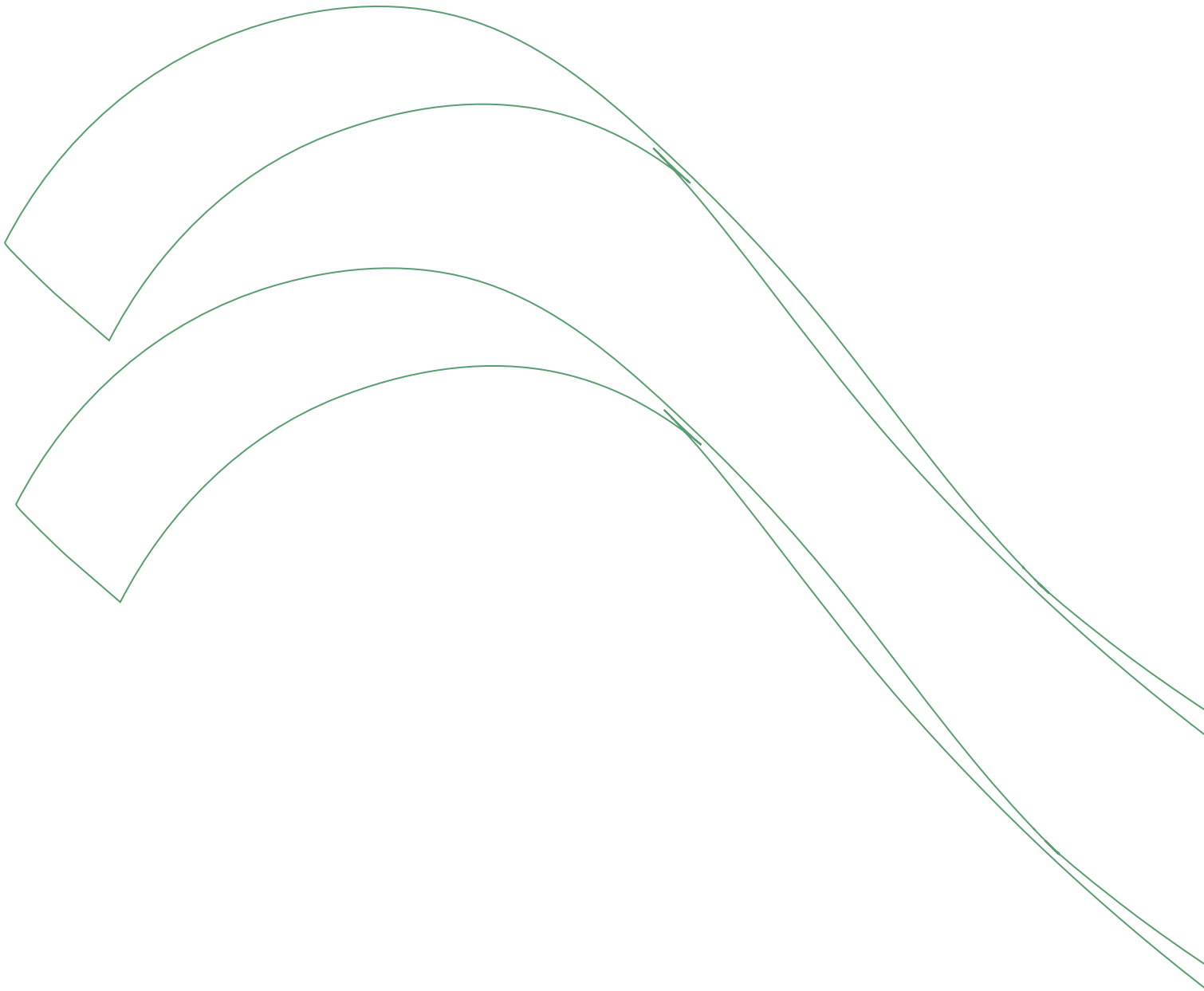
cultures and languages is impacted by policy measures, which to some extent restricts the preservation and development of traditional culture.

○ Limitations in CCI development and talent cultivation

Jiuquan City as a whole provides relatively insufficient support for creative talent. Ethnic minority areas such as Aksai and Subei have small populations to begin with, which also means an overall shortage of human resources and a lack of professionals in related industries. While these regions have done a relatively thorough job in exploring their intangible cultural heritage, the innovation of traditional culture — including intangible cultural heritage in other areas — remains limited. Guidance and supportive policies are inadequate and cannot keep pace with the development of the cultural and tourism sector. In general, the recognition, transmission and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage faces financial and policy constraints. The level of commercialisation is low, and there is a lack of effective business models to support the sustainable development of these activities. The absence of economic incentives makes it difficult for the younger generation to be motivated to engage in heritage preservation.







Gansu's Key Catalysers
under
the CCC Framework



Colorful Danxia © Shichun Wang

4.1

Overview: Rapid assessment of the key catalysers

When applying the CCC framework to analyse the conditions for growth and development of CCIs in Gansu Province, we systematically categorised the six key enablers and further identified the specific key elements within each enabler relevant to the target regions. This structured approach helps pinpoint the most decisive driving forces in different regions while also revealing critical shortcomings that require improvement.

To enhance the framework's applicability in practical policy-making, we have summarized a series of key qualitative indicators under the six enablers, forming a rapid assessment checklist that can be used to preliminarily evaluate the alignment and development level of various regions regarding the enablers. The rapid assessment is based on preliminary field research and can be further refined by incorporating quantitative indicators in the future, ultimately building a comprehensive toolkit for large-scale data analysis and local policy optimisation.

Given Gansu's vast territory, the target regions differs significantly in administrative level, area, population and development status. Their infrastructure conditions, transportation accessibility, cultural industry foundation, and tourism resource potential also vary considerably. These differences can affect the local demographic structures and influence each region's capacity to accommodate future population growth and economic activity. Conducting horizontal comparison across these administratively and geographically diver target regions poses challenges to the accuracy of the analytical results due to their inherent disparities in scale. For example, Jiuquan City, as a regional central city, administers one district, four counties, and two county-level cities. Even excluding Dunhuang, its jurisdiction covers multiple areas with varying resources and development levels. Compared to a precise evaluation of a single district or county, a macro-level assessment of Jiuquan inevitably carries a risk of reduced accuracy.

The key elements for the six enablers are summarized as follow:

Enabler 1: Urban infrastructure and liveability



a. Infrastructure: mainly referring to cultural and tourism infrastructure that supports CCIs including transportation accessibility, cultural production spaces, cultural hubs or incubators, accommodations and other tourism facilities, etc.

b. Liveability: factors that promotes liveability including affordable work space and housing, digital infrastructure, policy support for long-term residence, etc.

Enabler 2: Skills and innovation



a. Artists and creatives: level of concentration of artistic and creative professionals including performers, writers, artisans, artists, designers, etc.

b. Production-led CCIs: B2B-type design and creative services including architecture and urban design practices, digital media company, publishing houses, film studios, media production agencies, etc.

c. Consumption-led CCIs: consumer-facing cultural and creative spaces and activities including heritage and tourism activities, crafts and artist retail, culinary traditions and specialty cuisine, performing arts and entertainment venues, agriculture and agritourism, etc.

e. Vocational training resources: vocational training centres and courses, knowledge-sharing platforms and spaces, etc.

Enabler 3: Social networks, catalysts, technical support, and finance



a. Social network: local community networks, professional and trade networks, investor networks, professional organizations, civil societies, youth groups, etc.

b. Support system: support from government agencies, academic and research institutes, charitable organizations, and other support organizations.

c. Finance system: availability of government funding, civic grants and donations, private investments, partnerships with NGOs, market-driven investments etc.

Enabler 4: Inclusive institutions, regulations, and partnerships



- a. Inclusive institutions: presence of community-based organizations, educational institutions, cultural heritage boards, tourism boards, NGOs, accessibility-focused organizations.
- b. Inclusive regulations: heritage preservation laws and regulations, zoning policies, environmental protections, tourism guidelines, intellectual property laws, cultural representation standards, financial preferential policies, etc.
- c. Partnerships: public-private partnerships, community collaborations, international initiatives, academic research collaborations, corporate and tech industry partnerships.

Enabler 5: Uniqueness



- a. Historic resources: UNESCO World Heritage Site designation, cultural relic protection units or other officially recognised heritage or conservation area designation, landmark sites connected to major historical events, notable figures, architectural or engineering technological milestones, adaptive reuse projects, etc.
- b. Cultural resources: representative ceremonies, festivals, celebratory activities, traditional knowledge and practices, local gourmet, folklore and mythology, linguistic and other ICH, etc.
- c. Geographic and environmental context: unique natural surroundings, remote or distinctive locations, distinct ethnic groups and other communities, etc.
- d. Cross-cultural exchange: trade and migration routes, traditions of cultural integration, the influence of artistic exchanges, and characteristics of multi-ethnic cultures and communities.

Enabler 6: Digital environment



- a. Digital environment infrastructure: digital city branding campaign, investments in digital infrastructure, digital marketing and dissemination, etc.
- b. Digital preservation: digital archives, virtual repositories, blockchain for provenance tracking.

- c. Digital cultural production and interpretation: online educational platforms, digital storytelling, AI-driven guides, e-learning resources, Virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), interactive exhibits, gamification, etc.
- d. Accessibility and inclusion: Multilingual interfaces, assistive technologies, remote access to heritage content.
- e. Community engagement: Crowdsource content, social media campaigns, collaborative mapping projects.
- f. E-commerce: online commerce vitality supported by the government or individual, online marketing and promotion, online stores.

Rapid Assessment of the key catalysers

1

○ Target Area: Maiji District, Tianshui
○ City Type: Municipal District

● GREEN: WELL-DEVELOPED
● YELLOW: MODERATELY DEVELOPED
● RED: POORLY DEVELOPED
● GREY: NOT REPORTED OR NON-EXISTING

Enabler ①

- Infrastructure
- Liveability

Enabler ②

- Artists and creatives
- Production-led CCIs
- Consumption-led CCIs
- Vocational training resources

Enabler ③

- Social network
- Support system
- Finance system

Enabler ④

- Institutions
- Regulations
- Partnerships

Enabler ⑤

- Historic resources
- Cultural resources
- Geographic & environmental context
- Cross-cultural exchange

Enabler ⑥

- Digital environment infrastructure
- Digital preservation
- Digital cultural production & interpretation
- Accessibility & inclusion
- Community engagement
- E-commerce

2 ○ Target Area: Qin'an County, Tianshui ○ City Type: City-administered County

● GREEN: WELL-DEVELOPED
● YELLOW: MODERATELY DEVELOPED
● RED: POORLY DEVELOPED
● GREY: NOT REPORTED OR NON-EXISTING

Enabler ①

- Infrastructure
- Liveability

Enabler ②

- Artists and creatives
- Production-led CCIs
- Consumption-led CCIs
- Vocational training resources

Enabler ③

- Social network
- Support system
- Finance system

Enabler ④

- Institutions
- Regulations
- Partnerships

Enabler ⑤

- Historic resources
- Cultural resources
- Geographic & environmental context
- Cross-cultural exchange

Enabler ⑥

- Digital environment infrastructure
- Digital preservation
- Digital cultural production & interpretation
- Accessibility & inclusion
- Community engagement
- E-commerce

3 ○ Target Area: Lintao County, Dingxi ○ City Type: City-administered County

● GREEN: WELL-DEVELOPED
● YELLOW: MODERATELY DEVELOPED
● RED: POORLY DEVELOPED
● GREY: NOT REPORTED OR NON-EXISTING

Enabler ①

- Infrastructure
- Liveability

Enabler ②

- Artists and creatives
- Production-led CCIs
- Consumption-led CCIs
- Vocational training resources

Enabler ③

- Social network
- Support system
- Finance system

Enabler ④

- Institutions
- Regulations
- Partnerships

Enabler ⑤

- Historic resources
- Cultural resources
- Geographic & environmental context
- Cross-cultural exchange

Enabler ⑥

- Digital environment infrastructure
- Digital preservation
- Digital cultural production & interpretation
- Accessibility & inclusion
- Community engagement
- E-commerce

4 ○ Target Area: Tongwei County, Dingxi ○ City Type: City-administered County

● GREEN: WELL-DEVELOPED
● YELLOW: MODERATELY DEVELOPED
● RED: POORLY DEVELOPED
● GREY: NOT REPORTED OR NON-EXISTING

Enabler ①

- Infrastructure
- Liveability

Enabler ②

- Artists and creatives
- Production-led CCIs
- Consumption-led CCIs
- Vocational training resources

Enabler ③

- Social network
- Support system
- Finance system

Enabler ④

- Institutions
- Regulations
- Partnerships

Enabler ⑤

- Historic resources
- Cultural resources
- Geographic & environmental context
- Cross-cultural exchange

Enabler ⑥

- Digital environment infrastructure
- Digital preservation
- Digital cultural production & interpretation
- Accessibility & inclusion
- Community engagement
- E-commerce

5 ○ Target Area: Ganzhou District, Zhangye ○ City Type: Municipal District

● GREEN: WELL-DEVELOPED
● YELLOW: MODERATELY DEVELOPED
● RED: POORLY DEVELOPED
● GREY: NOT REPORTED OR NON-EXISTING

Enabler ①

- Infrastructure
- Liveability

Enabler ②

- Artists and creatives
- Production-led CCI
- Consumption-led CCI
- Vocational training resources

Enabler ③

- Social network
- Support system
- Finance system

Enabler ④

- Institutions
- Regulations
- Partnerships

Enabler ⑤

- Historic resources
- Cultural resources
- Geographic & environmental context
- Cross-cultural exchange

Enabler ⑥

- Digital environment infrastructure
- Digital preservation
- Digital cultural production & interpretation
- Accessibility & inclusion
- Community engagement
- E-commerce

6 ○ Target Area: Dunhuang City ○ City Type: Province-administered County-level City

● GREEN: WELL-DEVELOPED
● YELLOW: MODERATELY DEVELOPED
● RED: POORLY DEVELOPED
● GREY: NOT REPORTED OR NON-EXISTING

Enabler ①

- Infrastructure
- Liveability

Enabler ②

- Artists and creatives
- Production-led CCI
- Consumption-led CCI
- Vocational training resources

Enabler ③

- Social network
- Support system
- Finance system

Enabler ④

- Institutions
- Regulations
- Partnerships

Enabler ⑤

- Historic resources
- Cultural resources
- Geographic & environmental context
- Cross-cultural exchange

Enabler ⑥

- Digital environment infrastructure
- Digital preservation
- Digital cultural production & interpretation
- Accessibility & inclusion
- Community engagement
- E-commerce

7 ○ Target Area: Lintao County, Dingxi ○ City Type: City-administered County

● GREEN: WELL-DEVELOPED
● YELLOW: MODERATELY DEVELOPED
● RED: POORLY DEVELOPED
● GREY: NOT REPORTED OR NON-EXISTING

Enabler ①

- Infrastructure
- Liveability

Enabler ②

- Artists and creatives
- Production-led CCI
- Consumption-led CCI
- Vocational training resources

Enabler ③

- Social network
- Support system
- Finance system

Enabler ④

- Institutions
- Regulations
- Partnerships

Enabler ⑤

- Historic resources
- Cultural resources
- Geographic & environmental context
- Cross-cultural exchange

Enabler ⑥

- Digital environment infrastructure
- Digital preservation
- Digital cultural production & interpretation
- Accessibility & inclusion
- Community engagement
- E-commerce

8

○ Target Area: Lintao County, Dingxi
○ City Type: City-administered County

● GREEN: WELL-DEVELOPED
● YELLOW: MODERATELY DEVELOPED
● RED: POORLY DEVELOPED
● GREY: NOT REPORTED OR NON-EXISTING

Enabler ①

- Infrastructure
- Liveability

Enabler ②

- Artists and creatives
- Production-led CCIs
- Consumption-led CCIs
- Vocational training resources

Enabler ③

- Social network
- Support system
- Finance system

Enabler ④

- Institutions
- Regulations
- Partnerships

Enabler ⑤

- Historic resources
- Cultural resources
- Geographic & environmental context
- Cross-cultural exchange

Enabler ⑥

- Digital environment infrastructure
- Digital preservation
- Digital cultural production & interpretation
- Accessibility & inclusion
- Community engagement
- E-commerce

9

○ Target Area: Lintao County, Dingxi
○ City Type: City-administered County

● GREEN: WELL-DEVELOPED
● YELLOW: MODERATELY DEVELOPED
● RED: POORLY DEVELOPED
● GREY: NOT REPORTED OR NON-EXISTING

Enabler ①

- Infrastructure
- Liveability

Enabler ②

- Artists and creatives
- Production-led CCIs
- Consumption-led CCIs
- Vocational training resources

Enabler ③

- Social network
- Support system
- Finance system

Enabler ④

- Institutions
- Regulations
- Partnerships

Enabler ⑤

- Historic resources
- Cultural resources
- Geographic & environmental context
- Cross-cultural exchange

Enabler ⑥

- Digital environment infrastructure
- Digital preservation
- Digital cultural production & interpretation
- Accessibility & inclusion
- Community engagement
- E-commerce

From the results of the rapid assessment form, some general trends can be observed.

Firstly, prefecture-level cities demonstrate relatively high overall development level regarding infrastructure and liveability than county-level regions. This indicates that smaller urban areas or counties need to develop different infrastructural strategies and plug into broader regional networks to enhance key catalysers such as transportation accessibility.

Under Enabler 2, most target areas have at least a moderately-developed number of artists and creatives, proving Gansu Province's human resource potential to support development of CCIs. However, most of the existing CCIs are consumption-led, production-led CCIs and matching talents are acutely in shortage in almost all target regions. In addition, vocation training resources are not well developed in most areas, with exception of Dunhuang, Tongwei (supported by the presence of the well-developed calligraphy and painting industry) and Longnan (with support from local educational institution).

All target regions have relatively well-developed regulations and institutions, though few target areas have localized regulations and mainly rely on regulations and institutional support at the prefecture or provincial level enforced across the region.

In terms of uniqueness, almost all the target regions have rich historic and cultural resources, except for Longnan. In addition, many of the target regions exhibit strong traits of cross-cultural exchanges, aligning with Gansu's strategic location on the Silk Road economic belt. This demonstrates that the target regions, and by extension, Gansu province, has the resources and strong potential to develop heritage-based or heritage-driven CCIs.

In general, with the exception of Dunhuang, the digital environment in the target regions remain underdeveloped. Dunhuang, owing to its status as a national and international renown heritage-tourism destination, enjoys relatively well-established digital development. In areas with major heritage sites- such as the Maijishan Grottoes (Maiji District, Tianshui), Dadiwan site (Qin'an County, Tianshui), Majiayao site (Lintao), Dafo Temple (Ganzhou District, Zhangye)- digital preservation and digital cultural interpretation are relatively more advanced, though largely confined to the heritage sites themselves. Online commerce vitality is generally underdeveloped, relying largely on individual efforts on social media platforms.

4.2

Analysis of Gansu's key catalysers

Based on preliminary research, we further analysed the role of the enablers across various target regions. Combined with insights from the field research, this analyses has enabled us to identify distinctive characteristics and representative case studies specific to the Gansu region.

Enabler 1: Physical and spatial environment: urban infrastructure and liveability

Urban spaces support the growth of CCIs by providing physical places for creatives to work, live, learn, and connect, while also fostering creativity and collaboration. The clustering of creative talent and the development of creative spaces is a dynamic and mutually reinforcing process. Well-established urban infrastructure can attract creative talents, and the growth of CCIs driven by these talents, in turn, contributes to urban renewal, enhancing the city's image, stimulate economic revitalisation and overall creative capacity. This interactive process demonstrates the evolutionary nature of cultural and creative space making in urban contexts.

Museums, cultural centres, and other public cultural institutions are important components of cultural and creative spaces.

Currently, most cities and counties in Gansu have incorporated museums, cultural centres, and libraries into an integrated public cultural system. Most of these institutions are strategically located, well equipped, and easily accessible, making them important platforms for incubating CCIs and major venues for production

and exhibition of cultural and creative content. Projects related to intangible cultural heritage, especially those funded by the government, often use museums and cultural centres as primary spaces for creation and dissemination. Relevant policy support include incentives such as rent reductions and exemptions.

Case Studies:

Aksai Kazakh Autonomous County Cultural Centre includes a cultural centre, library, art gallery, sports hall, ICH safeguarding centre, youth activity centre, and a new citizens' practice centre. It is responsible for application, safeguarding, and transmission of intangible cultural heritage, as well as organising cultural, sports, and artistic events. Together with nearby venues like horse racing track and wrestling ground, it offers ranging cultural and traditional sports activity spaces for both local residents and visitors. While improving the quality of life for the local community, these facilities also provide essential support for cultural heritage transmission.

The Subei Mongolian Autonomous County Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre serves as a centralised venue for safeguarding, showcasing, and promoting 99 ICH elements from the region, integrating heritage research, education, and tourism. The centre also functions as a comprehensive arts platform, combining dance, music, and visual arts training with creative production, exhibitions, performances, and international exchange. The centre currently houses 15 dedicated ICH transmission and training workshops, offering one-stop services in cultural and creative products sales, local cuisine and traditional folk custom experiences.

Yumen City's integrated cultural complex combines the city's library, cultural centre, and museum. Situated in the centre of the new district, it is near the city's public square, the municipal government, and city park, benefiting from a prime location and high population density. This offers significant advantages for cultural exchange, and creates a strong clustering effect for cultural and creative activities. The complex is fully equipped and open to the public free of charge. It offers a variety of spaces for information access, leisure, public education, skills training, cultural salons, and light dining, providing favourable conditions for cultural and creative producers as well as the wider community.



Aksai Kazakh Autonomous County Cultural Centre © WHITR-AP Beijing

Development of CCIs drives the creation of new urban creative spaces and construction projects

The creation of innovative and creative spaces has effectively driven the renewal and transformation of historic districts, enhanced the urban image, stimulates economic recovery and innovation. As such, it has become a key approach for urban regeneration. In Gansu, the growth of CCIs has driven development of new urban spaces and construction projects such as cultural industry zones and film production bases. By activating existing cultural resources and repurposing underutilized spaces, these projects have significantly improved urban liveability, enriched residents' spiritual and cultural lives, and reshaped the urban landscape structure.

Case Studies:

In 2019, Suzhou District government initiated efforts to revitalise disused factory buildings in the city centre and enhance cultural service infrastructure. The industrial remains of the former Jiuquan Boiler Plant were reha-

bilitated and upgraded to establish the 1969 Cultural and Art Creative Park that integrates industrial elements, cultural creativity, aerospace science education, and tourism amenities. The park covers 98 *mu* (approximately 6.5 hectares), with a total investment of 290 million CNY and a planned building area of 42,000 square metres. It consists of preserved boiler plant buildings and is designed as an open urban block, featuring an industrial exhibition hall, aerospace science and technology museum, sports factory, digital culture centre, restaurants, folk music-themed bar, hotels, and sports stadiums. The park is open to the public free of charge and functions as a city park, providing residents with a vibrant recreational space.

The Boluo Zhuanjing Film Base is located on the site of the former Aksai county seat, which was abandoned in 1998 when the county relocated to Hongliuwan Town due to worsening environmental conditions. Since 2002, numerous films and more than 200 film crews have used the venue for productions. In 2022, it received approximately 300,000 visits and was designated as a national 4A-level tourist attraction in the same year. The once deserted Boluo Zhuanjing ruins has successfully transformed into a popular film production base and tourist destination. To promote the integration of “culture + film tourism” and develop new cultural tourism brand, Aksai County has invested over 30 million CNY in a visitor service centre and an education-tourism complex. These initiatives have significantly improved the site’s infrastructure and tourism services.

The Mogao Craft Village in Dunhuang was established by the Dunhuang Mogao Craft Workshop Intangible Cultural Heritage Transmission and Development Co., Ltd. The founder, Yongwei Du, is a representative practitioner of the Dunhuang polychrome sculpture making technique. The site is built on the grounds of the former Xindun Village Primary School in Mogao Town. Several buildings from the 1960s and 70s were preserved, creating an art district that combines traditional character with a renewed sense of vitality. The Mogao Craft Village aims to integrate resources from Dunhuang’s intangible cultural heritage, art education institutions, and educational tourism. It seeks to become a distinctive cultural landmark, art space, public platform for exchanges, specialised learning base, and a spiritual retreat for the wider public. The village offers opportunities for people to engage with Dunhuang’s cultural and artistic heritage, introducing intangible heritage into everyday life.



Abandoned Building at Boluo Zhuanjing Film Base © WHITR-AP Beijing



Performance Stage at Boluo Zhuanjing Film Base © WHITR-AP Beijing,



Mogao Li Craftsmen Village © WHITR-AP Beijing

Development of CCIs led to improvement in basic infrastructure and transportation accessibility

With the development of CCIs, tourism appeal of relevant regions has significantly increased, leading to a steady rise in tourist numbers. This growth has, in turn, accelerated the development of basic infrastructure, particularly transportation facilities. In cities such as Tianshui, Zhangye, and Jiuquan, transportation projects including high-speed rail, expressway, and airports have substantially enhanced regional connectivity and visitor mobility.

Improved awareness and actions to conserve ecological environment

Cities like Zhangye have effectively conserved its unique “Gobi Oasis” landscape and the ecological environment of the “Heihe River Water Town.” Dunhuang also serves as a model in desert management and ecological restoration.

Inadequate infrastructure for CCI workers and cultural consumers

Gansu offers ample spatial resources for cultural and creative production; however, the existing physical infrastructure and quality of public services still fall short of meeting the practical needs of creative professionals. Limitations in transportation and accommodation, underutilized exhibition and retail spaces, and the lack of specialised facilities for sectors such as handicrafts, film and television, and design, collectively highlight these deficiencies. From the perspective of cultural consumers, tourism-related supporting services — including dining, lodging, shopping, and transportation — require further development. Additionally, there is a lack of convenient and attractive spaces for experiencing and purchasing local ICH products.

Case Studies:

In Qin'an County, creative production activities are primarily based at the Dadiwan Cultural Heritage Research Institute and the Dadiwan Heritage Education Base. However, both sites have obvious limitations in transportation accessibility, infrastructure, and support services. Located at a distance from the county centre, the two institutions are served by only one shuttle bus from Qin'an Station. The lack of public transport system connecting the sites with the broader urban network undermines its ability to attract cultural and creative professionals. At present, the staffs are almost exclusively from nearby Qin'an County and Shaodian Village, where the Dadiwan site is located. The limited talent pool poses challenges to attract more diverse range of creative practitioners. In terms of facilities, essential services such as healthcare and dining are primarily reliant on local provision within Shaodian Village. A comprehensive service area centred around the heritage site has yet to be developed, resulting in underutilisation of regional resources and constraining the potential for coordinated development.

In Wudu District, local authorities are committed to promoting the integrated development of cultural and tourism resources, with a focus on creating a large-scale scenic area centred around Wanxiang Cave and leveraging synergistic effects with surrounding attractions. However, the overall infrastructure of the scenic area remains underdeveloped. Key facilities such as viewing platforms, administrative buildings, and parking lots suffer from insufficient capacity, indicating that the project is still in its early implementation phase. To address these deficiencies, Wudu District plans to prioritise the enhancement of road infrastructure within the scenic area, along with the construction of a new visitor centre and supporting parking facilities, to better accommodate growing tourist demand.

From a human resources perspective, most employees in the cultural and tourism sectors in Wudu District are local residents, with their workplaces and living spaces predominantly concentrated in the urban core of the county. Many creative professionals combine their living and working spaces, reflecting a lack of systematic planning in residential infrastructure for cultural and creative talent. This has resulted in a significant overlap between professional and personal environments.

Weak spatial linkages between CCIs and cultural resources

Gansu is characterized by its extensive territory, with major scenic sites predominantly situated in remote areas far from urban centres and geographically dispersed from one another. Existing tourism circuits are primarily designed as point-to-point itineraries, exemplified by the well-known Ganqing Highway Circuit, which links prominent natural and cultural attractions across north-western China. However, the province's CCIs remain largely concentrated in urban hubs, with minimal spatial integration into these established tourism corridors. This disconnection limits the cultural sector's ability to stimulate creativity-led development and restricts the potential spillover effects of tourism on local creative economies.

Furthermore, the rigidity of fixed tourism routes has exacerbated regional spatial imbalances. Destinations located outside these core circuits receive considerably less visitor engagement, and cultural industries in these peripheral areas suffer from inadequate exposure and footfall. A notable example is Dunhuang, the province's premier tourist destination, which has yet to effectively integrate the cultural assets of neighbouring regions such as Guazhou, Aksai, and Subei

into its tourism ecosystem, thereby missing opportunities for regional synergy and equitable development.

Case Studies:

The Colourful Danxia Scenic Area in Zhangye is a flagship attraction along the Ganqing Highway Circuit, known for its striking Danxia landforms and vibrant colourful hills. Benefiting from efficient transport links and dedicated tourist routes, many visitors proceed directly to the site and often continue on to Jiayuguan, bypassing Zhangye's urban centre. Consequently, although the Colourful Danxia Scenic Area represents Zhangye's most prominent cultural IP, it currently fails to channel visitor flows into the city itself. Its spillover effects on urban cultural resources- such as local museums, Dafo Temple, and other intangible cultural heritage- remain limited.

Lintao County is located south of Lanzhou and lies at a considerable distance from the Ganqing Highway Circuit. As a result, it lacks visibility in the current regional tourism market, limiting the transformation of its cultural resources into tourism assets. For example, local officials in Lintao have repeatedly mentioned in interviews that few tourists choose Lintao as a travel destination. Visitor records from the Lintao Museum also show that most of its guests are local residents. In addition, the county does not yet have a high-speed rail station with limited external transportation options, needing improvement in both accessibility and connectivity.

Due to its location, Suzhou District in Jiuquan City is mainly seen as a transit stop rather than a tourist destination. It receives fewer visitors than culturally prominent sites like Dunhuang. Its tourism income is limited by a small visitor base, with most tourists being local residents or passers-by. Apart from educational tours, most visitors are either local residents from the Jiuquan-Jiayuguan area or travellers passing through, resulting in low commercial potential.

Lagging tourism support services and limited visitor capacity

Most of the target areas, with exception of Dunhuang, lack high-end accommodation, distinctive commercial services, and unique cultural experience projects, leading to short stay duration and low tourist spending.

Enabler 2: Human capital: skills and innovation

The internal driving force of a creative city lies in the skills and talent dedicated to its cultural and creative sectors. A strong, reciprocal relationship exists between the development of creative urban spaces and the growth of creative professionals.

Cultural initiatives and creative industries offer learning and training opportunities through both formal and informal education, providing support for the development of local talents and improve professional capabilities within the creative ecosystem. The enhancement of creative skills contributes to the preservation, revitalisation, and utilisation of cultural heritage. It also strengthens the efficient operation and innovative capacity of the CCIs. At the same time, skill elevation of creative professionals can help generate more income and self-employment opportunities, attracting more creative resources and high-level talent to the city, reinforcing its status as a creative hub and supporting economic diversification and the vitality of the creative ecosystem.

Diverse educational activities support the transmission and development of intangible cultural heritage

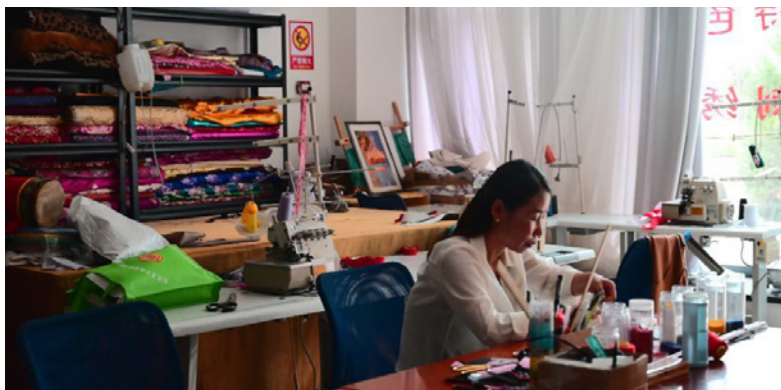
Gansu Province is rich in ICH resources. A systematic management and support mechanism has been established by the provincial government, providing spatial resources and policy incentives for ICH practitioners.

In the field of education, a dual transmission strategy combining formal and informal education has been adopted. The apprenticeship model is used to deepen the transmission and cultivation of traditional skills. Custom designed training courses and educational programmes have greatly increased young people's interest and engagement, particularly the "Intangible Heritage into Schools" initiative, introducing new energy into heritage transmission. In addition, efforts have been made to adapt and innovate intangible heritage via integration with contemporary cultural expressions.

Dunhuang city has actively implemented diverse educational activities aimed at safeguarding and promoting intangible cultural heritage. Yongwei Du, a practitioner of Dunhuang's traditional clay sculpture techniques from Mogao Artisans Village, teaches at Dunhuang College of Northwest Normal University. Du has successfully incorporated a comprehensive series of courses on Dunhuang's intangible cultural heritage, focusing on clay sculpture, into the college's curriculum. The Dunhuang Cultural Centre regularly facilitates educational outreach such as heritage-focused classes by ICH practitioners. More than 74 sessions of these classes were conducted, reaching over 2,300 students and teachers across five local schools. The Dunhuang Cultural Centre also provides public training programmes which include courses on traditional Dunhuang musical instruments, Dunhuang opera (Quzi Xi), and musical score preservation. These initiatives contribute to innovative ICH education.

Qin Yan, a practitioner of Ganzhou embroidery, established a cultural and creative company to provide structured training in embroidery and weaving techniques for unemployed, disabled, and low-income women. These women are trained as apprentices, and their handmade products can be marketed through Yan's company, supporting poverty alleviation and employment. To date, she has conducted over 100 training sessions across more than 40 workshops in six counties and districts of Zhangye City, reaching over 2,700 women artisans.

The Tianshui Museum actively invites ICH practitioners to give public lectures, broadening the knowledge of staff and promoting ICH awareness. In collaboration with the Dadiwan Museum, it has launched a themed educational programme titled "National Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Taihao Fuxi Ritual," aimed at safeguarding and transmitting this heritage through guided exhibitions. The museum also plays a central role in organising large-scale Fuxi worship events, such as the "Fuxi Culture Forum," the Cross-Strait Calligraphy and Painting Exchange Exhibition, and the Guatai Mountain Folk Fuxi Ceremony, thereby enhancing public understanding of ICH. In addition, the Tianshui Folk Customs Museum (Nanbei Zhaizi), under the administration of Tianshui Museum, serves as a key site for ICH presentation. It hosts free handicraft workshops that are open to the public and students, regularly offering hands-on ICH experiences that support both the transmission and innovation of traditional crafts.



Ganzhou Embroidery Supporting Women's Poverty Alleviation and Employment © WHITR-AP Beijing

Local universities supporting talent development in the CCIs

Local universities in Gansu Province play a key role in advancing the development of the CCIs and in training future talent. By offering a range of specialised courses related to intangible cultural heritage and CCIs, these institutions support the in-depth cultivation of cultural professionals and the strengthening of practical skills. They serve as key incubators for nurturing creativity, delivering theoretical knowledge while emphasised on hands-on learning. Through partnerships with the cultural and creative sectors, they provide students with opportunities to engage in practical projects. Thereby contributing to cultivation of highly skilled, innovative talent to both Gansu and the broader national CCIs.

Case Studies:

Longnan Normal University offers specialised courses in intangible cultural heritage, such as pyrography, tie-dye, Chinese and Western painting, traditional clay sculpture, and shadow puppetry. These programmes aim to equip students with both technical skills and creative thinking. The university also established the Southeast Gansu Intangible Cultural Heritage Transmission Research Centre. The centre has published various studies on the subject of history and ICH. It also provides students and researchers with opportunities for external academic exchange. In addition, the university runs a vocational training centre offering practical courses in fields like e-commerce and big data accounting. These trainings focus on developing skills for promoting local products, such as ICH elements and agricultural goods, through online platforms. The programmes are open to

both students and members of the public, including ICH practitioners and teachers. This supports broader skill development and innovation across different groups.

Gansu's Zhangye Hexi University, through its School of History, Culture and Tourism, has launched training programmes focused on ICH transmission and safeguarding. The university has also been selected to participate in the national ICH practitioner training programme. Zhangye's vocational education system supports cultural talent development through specialised courses highly relevant to heritage field, such as tourism services and management, and ethnic music and dance. In addition, seven local secondary vocational schools have integrated representative local ICH elements into their professional curricula.

CCIs promote the development of multi-talent social networks

New sectors such as cultural industrial parks, educational tourism operations, and cultural creative product design have emerged in Gansu's CCI development, driving increased demand for talent across various fields and expanded the range of required.

Core institutions such as museums, cultural centres, research institutes, and cultural enterprises play a vital role in talent development, establishing structured training programmes and advanced seminar systems. In general, Gansu's CCIs have built broad networks with government bodies, universities, tourism companies, local associations, research institutes, and third-party cultural and tech companies. The networks support efficient communication, resource sharing, and collaborative learning among creatives. They have fostered an open, dynamic talent development system that provides strong momentum for the growth of the CCIs.

Case Studies:

Cheng County in Longnan has established an integrated creative ecosystem through close collaboration between government, enterprises, and universities. The government coordinates cultural institutions to support talent development by offering public courses, exchange activities, and recruitment policies. Jia Rui Cultural and Creative Company focuses on product design and innovation, working with Longnan Normal University to develop vocational training programmes in areas such as e-commerce, visual design,

and traditional crafts. These programmes target interns, recent graduates, and employees, while also aligning with policies that support student employment by offering a three-year job protection period. Longnan Normal University plays a key role in offering ICH-related courses and establishing a dedicated research institute and vocational training centre. These efforts collectively contribute to the transmission and sustainable development of ICH by cultivating a skilled and creative workforce.

The Dadiwan Museum in Tianshui has actively organised professional training for its staff in cultural relic preservation and restoration. It has implemented two-week training sessions on historical and cultural knowledge, tailored to the distinctive heritage of the Dadiwan region. The museum also provides lectures related to its collection, focusing on the historical context, cultural significance, and artistic value of its artefacts. These sessions have contributed to the development of a more professional and culturally informed interpretive content for museum guides. In addition, the Dadiwan Museum collaborates with Gansu Qinrong Cultural Media Co., Ltd. to offer training in video production and editing. The programme covers short video creation, editing techniques, shooting skills, and common post-production methods. It provides guidance on various aspects, including raw footage management, subtitles, audio, transitions, special effects, filters, and cover design.

Zhangye city has developed a regular training mechanism to support its growing CCIs. For example, the Colourful Danxia Scenic Area collaborates with local universities such as Hexi University and vocational colleges to offer routine staff training. In addition to required pre-employment sessions, two full-time training programmes, each lasting seven to fifteen days, are organised annually during the low tourism season in winter and spring. In Ganzhou District, the local tourism investment company provides external professional training sessions covering topics such as high-quality development in the cultural tourism industry, service etiquette, fire safety, and risk management. Meanwhile, the Zhangye Dafo Temple Cultural Relics Research Institute focuses on the restoration and conservation of ancient texts. Using its role as a designated heritage transmission centre, the institute trains five to ten professionals with theoretical knowledge and restoration skills. This initiative supports the creation of a skilled local team for the conservation of ancient books and artefacts, serving museums and cultural institutions across the city.

The “Yumen Light” Experience Hall and the Red Culture Tourism Zone in Yumen City have built close partnerships with schools, training institutions, and travel agencies from Jiujia district in Jiuquan City, Lanzhou city in Gansu Province, Qinghai Province, Guangdong Province, and Beijing. Together,



they have developed a range of educational programmes focused on nature and ecology, cultural heritage interpretation, petroleum and new energy industries, and revolutionary history. These efforts support talent development and cultural dissemination. Yumen City commissions third-party companies such as Jiuquan Gushi Cultural Creative Industry Development Co., Ltd. and Gansu Jiaying Digital Information Technology Co., Ltd. for cultural and creative product development. Product design, artefact replication, book publishing, 360° VR exhibition filming, maintenance, and procurement are carried out by in-house professionals.

Shortage of skilled practitioners, imbalanced age structure, and non-full-time engagement of the intangible cultural heritage transmission system in Gansu Province

Despite the current robust growth of educational activities related to intangible cultural heritage in Gansu Province, which has attracted broad attention, the number of young people actively engaged in ICH transmission remains limited. There is a significant intergenerational gap among existing practitioners. The majority of ICH practitioners are local residents, and are over the age of 45, with a large proportion engaged on a part-time basis. ICH related skills often require long term training and cultivation,

Mastery of ICH skills requires long-term training, yet many traditions have experienced functional decline and failed to adapt to contemporary socioeconomic contexts. This has resulted in diminished market relevance and an inability for practitioners to achieve financial sustainability, leading many practitioners to adopt part-time engagement alongside other livelihoods.

Certain ICH element, particularly those originating from folk customs and amateur community practices have historically been sustained through non-professional participation. In many cases, practitioners now struggle to identify and train successors, further encouraging informal, part-time transmission models.

Institutional constraints also impede effective safeguarding. Current regulations prohibit individuals from serving as recognised inheritors for more than one ICH element. Only national and provincial-level ICH may receive government subsidies, which other practitioners are typically ineligible for financial support. Even when subsidies are provided, they are often insufficient to ensure viable livelihoods, thereby weakening incentives for professional transmission and sustainable development of these cultural practices.

As a result, the ICH transmission system faces three critical challenges: a shortage of skilled practitioners, an imbalanced age structure, and an increasing trend toward non-full-time involvement. These issues have become major obstacles to the sustainable development of the CCIs.

Case Studies:

Aksai and Subei are regions where ethnic minorities and Han Chinese live in integrated communities. However, with the spread of modern lifestyles, the use of traditional minority languages has significantly declined. This linguistic shift has directly or indirectly affected the transmission and development of local folk songs and customs. In terms of ICH practitioners, the long-term time investment and limited short-term economic return associated with becoming an ICH practitioner make the field unattractive to young people. Shanxi, a national level ICH inheritor of the Mongolian blessing chants, notes that although he has over 40 apprentices, only about a dozen can perform independently and none are under the age of 35 nor engage in the practice on a full-time basis. Young people show limited interest in engaging with ICH learning and practice.

Gaoshan Opera is recognised as a national-level ICH. However, it currently faces a critical gap in its transmission. At present, only one individual performer, Libao Yi, is actively engaged in its safeguarding, and he has no apprentices. This has led to a huge gap in continuity. Younger generations are disconnected with the cultural environment that cultivated Gaoshan Opera, and many are unfamiliar with the tradition. Talent loss is also a significant issue, as many skilled individuals have left their hometowns. The remaining seasoned performers, known as “opera models,” are mostly elderly and no longer able to perform. Middle-aged practitioners face financial pressures and often prioritise farming or migrant labour, leaving them with no time to attend to the performing and learning of Gaoshan Opera.

Dunhuang Quzi Opera is a valuable form of folk ICH, but its development faces significant challenges. Zhengqing Chen, an ICH inheritor of Dunhuang folk songs, currently mentors more than 20 apprentices, most of whom are around 50 years old. There are almost no young learners among them, highlighting the pressure of intergenerational transmission and the risk of future discontinuity.



Quzi Opera Training Class, Dunhuang Cultural Centre © WHITR-AP Beijing

Brain drain and shortage of highly educated innovative talent in the CCIs

Young and highly educated, innovative talents bring new energy to the cultural and creative sector, sustaining innovation and growth. However, within Gansu Province's CCIs, the general educational level of the workforce remains rather low. Most staff have qualifications ranging from high school to junior college, with few holding undergraduate degrees and almost none with postgraduate qualifications. In terms of regional composition, the workforce is predominantly local, with limited inflow of external talent. This is further compounded by a significant outflow of skilled individuals. These trends reveal a clear talent gap and structural issues within Gansu's CCIs, particularly in attracting and retaining high-level, innovative professionals.

Case Studies

In Jiuquan City's Aksai Kazakh Autonomous County, Subei Mongol Autonomous County, and Guazhou County, the CCIs are characterised by a workforce composed predominantly of local residents. Most employees are over the age of 35, with relatively few young professionals entering the field. Educational qualifications are generally limited to undergraduate level or below, and there is a notable shortage of highly skilled or specialised talent. Cultural spaces, institutions, and enterprises in these areas often rely on licensing agreements and external collaborations for creative product development, due to the lack of in-house design and innovation capacity. Staff responsibilities are typically centred on site operations and visitor management, which limits the potential to attract and retain external cultural and creative professionals. This reveals a structural constraint in building sus-

tainable and innovative capacity within the local heritage sector and CCIs. There is severe brain drain and weak regional competitiveness in areas such as Dunhuang and Tianshui. Due to the underdeveloped CCI chain, young creative professionals tend to migrate to major cities.

In regions such as Zhangye, Jiuquan, and Longnan, there is a serious shortage of professional talent in contemporary cultural creativity, digital art, film production and other related fields. The CCIs remain largely confined to traditional handicrafts and lack integration with technological innovation. In Dunhuang, the municipal museum faces staffing shortage due to public institution quota restriction, which limits its innovation capacity. The proportion of young employee is relatively low, and the museum lacks research-oriented professionals, making it difficult to cultivate in-house creative talent. Much of the museum's design and planning tasks rely on external licensed companies, and its cultural and creative products are mostly developed through outsourced collaborations. In general, the lack of skilled professional led to an imbalance of consumption-led CCIs over production-led CCIs.

The Dunhuang National Cultural Industrial Park has an official staffing quota of 21 positions, including three division-level leadership roles and six section-level leadership roles. Most of the staff are focused on administrative management, and human resource development and training efforts are primarily oriented toward ideological education, party affairs, and cultural policy interpretation, with limited CCI related training. In general, the updating of professional skill lags behind industry demands, and innovation capacity is constrained, thereby limiting the p overall competitiveness of the organisation in the cultural and creative sector.

Inadequate transportation accessibility hinders the development of CCIs at the Dadiwan Heritage Education Base in Qin'an County, which is currently serviced by only one shuttle bus, failing to meet the mobility demands of creative professionals and diminishes the area's attractiveness to talent. Creative workers consistently prefer to stay in major urban centres that offer more advanced infrastructure and concentrated resources.

Enabler 3: Networks and support infrastructure: social networks, catalysers, technical support, and finance

Social networks serve as essential platforms for information exchange and resource sharing. They stimulate creative inspiration, facilitate knowledge exchange, support innovation, and promote cross-sector collaboration. Together, these functions inject new vitality into the CCIs. By enhancing overall competitiveness and dynamism, social networks enable the sector to better adapt to rapidly changing market conditions and generate both commercial and social value.

The leading role of museums, cultural centres and other public cultural institutions in social networks

Public cultural institutions have played a prominent leading role within social networks of Gansu's CCI development. Museums, cultural centres and relevant organisations actively promote collaboration between institutions, schools, and society, building extensive social network connections. These efforts have effectively integrated cultural, educational, and commercial resources, expanding the scope of the CCIs. Moreover, public cultural institutions support the development of intangible cultural heritage by establishing exhibition centres, assisting in the creation of ICH learning centres, and organising cross-regional and international cultural exchange activities. These initiatives provide platforms for ICH practitioners to engage in transmission, promotion, and cooperation.

Case Studies:

Yumen City's three major cultural institutions have actively promoted collaboration between cultural venues, schools, and society through the "Four Entry" initiative, which brings culture into schools, communities, villages, and institutions. For example, Yumen Library has established stable partnerships with local primary and secondary schools and the provided access to its public spaces. Upon approval of activity proposals, individuals and organisations can hold study programmes, training sessions, and cultural events in the library free of charge. Yumen Museum has partnered with the Yumen City Youth League Committee to recruit students from primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions as museum volunteers during the summer holidays. Meanwhile, Yumen Cultural Centre not only opens its functional rooms to the public but also provides workspace and promotional support for the ICH practitioner of Yumen ceramic Xun, a traditional instrument.

In addition, these cultural institutions have integrated cultural outreach programmes with rural cultural tourism development, supporting the coordinated growth of rural cultural initiatives and the CCIs.

The Longnan Museum collaborates with the local ICH Centre, other museums, and cultural institutions, while also partnering with travel agencies and educational and cultural enterprises on cultural education activities. The ICH Centre has established dedicated studios for purple clay pottery, paper cutting, and dough modelling. These spaces serve as creative platforms that connect artisans, designers, and artists, helping to build creative networks. The centre also provides financial support for SMEs registered under ICH projects or by ICH practitioners, offering practical assistance to sustain and develop these traditional practices.

The Dunhuang Academy (DA) has established a close partnership with Ruitian Du, a representative practitioner of the Taoyan inkstone tradition in Jiuquan's ICH programme. As part of their collaboration, the DA authorised Taoyan Village to use its extensive image archive as a creative resource for inkstone design. The two parties also co-developed a series of custom-designed Taoyan inkstones. This partnership has strengthened their collaboration while supporting both the preservation and innovation of traditional culture.

Formation of multi-stakeholders' social network around the educational tourism industry

Centred on the educational tourism industry, Gansu's CCIs has developed a dynamic social network involving multiple stakeholders. Through close collaboration among state-owned enterprises, private companies, cultural departments, educational institutions, and local ICH practitioners, the educational tourism industry has strengthened the local market and actively expanded partnerships with organisations from other regions and provinces. This multi-stakeholder cooperation has facilitated the integration and utilisation of Gansu's rich cultural resources, while connecting academic research, educational practice, and the CCIs.

Case Studies:

Yumen Pass Cultural Tourism Company, a subsidiary of a state-owned enterprise in Yumen City, has developed a relatively mature operational mod-

el for the educational tourism industry through multi-party collaboration. Its educational-tourism programmes mainly serve primary and secondary school students from the Jiuquan-Jiayuguan area. While maintaining stable partnerships with educational tourism organisations in this region, the company is also actively expanding its cooperation with enterprises in Lanzhou and other provinces. During the 2024 summer holiday, it hosted groups from Guangdong, Beijing, Hong Kong, and Lanzhou. At the same time, the company works closely with local cultural departments and businesses in Jiuquan and Yumen. It partnered with operators of heritage sites such as the Huoshaogou Ruins and Changma Grottoes on historical themes itineraries. These collaborations not only attract more visitors but also help drive the development of Yumen's educational-tourism industry through revenue-sharing and other cooperative mechanisms.

The Dadiwan Research and Education Base, located in Tianshui City, is operated by Qinrong Company under the Qin'an County Media Centre, co-owned by Tianshui Broadcasting and Media Company. Covering an area of 15 mu (approximately one hectare), it can accommodate up to 1,000 participants at a time and has established long-term partnerships with neighbouring primary and secondary schools. In addition, the base collaborates with nationally recognised ICH practitioners, PhD students in archaeology, and university professors to conduct research projects. It also offers free accommodation for staff and provides support for patent applications.

The Colourful Danxia Scenic Area and Danxia Kou Cultural Tourism Town in Zhangye City have leveraged the unique Danxia landforms in developing the educational tourism industry. For example, Danxia Kou Town has partnered with various social organisations, universities, and associations to expand its educational tourism services. It has been designated as a "Landscape Architecture Practice Teaching Base" by Gansu Agricultural University, "Creative Base" by the Gansu Painting Academy, and "Writers' Creative Base" by the Zhangye Writers' Association. It also serves as a base for primary and secondary school students in Linze County, with partners including Zhangye Experimental Middle School and Beijing No. 57 Middle School.

In 2023, the Dunhuang Cultural Expo Centre established the "Dunhuang Cultural Expo Study Museum" as a research and study base and developed a series of educational courses based on local ICH resources. Through collaboration with the Dunhuang Cultural Centre and ICH practitioner, programmes such as Dunhuang clay sculpture, clay panel painting, and paper cutting were jointly designed and promoted. Building on this foundation, Dunhuang's travel agencies have integrated ICH-themed study activities into their tourist routes, promoting this innovative educational tour product to a broader customer base.



Dadiwan Study & Research Base © WHITR-AP Beijing

Formation of a radiating social network centred on cultural intellectual property

In Gansu's CCIs, the diversified utilisation and collaboration around cultural resource IP has become an important driving force for innovation and network-building. Local regions have drawn on their unique cultural heritage to promote IP licensing, creative development, and cross-sector partnerships. These efforts increasingly extend beyond traditional heritage fields into technology, fashion, cosmetics, and F&B sectors, engaging with emerging educational, film, animation, and digital museum platforms. This expansion broadens the channels for cultural transmission connecting with wider and more diverse audiences. Close cooperation between cultural institutions and enterprises around IP development has fostered stronger integration across different levels of the CCI chain, contributing to a more integrated and sustainable heritage ecosystem.

Case Studies:

The Dunhuang City Museum has developed a cross-sectoral IP promotion model through collaborations with well-known domestic and international brands. To date, it has launched over 20 co-branded products and held multiple joint events, gaining wide attention from media and consumers. It has also partnered with variety shows and animated films to bring Dunhuang culture to broader and younger audiences.

Jiuquan Cultural Tourism Group Co., Ltd. has established a cultural and creative division dedicated to the development and distribution of space-

themed cultural products. In the design phase, the group commissions external designers, artists, and creative professionals to produce works inspired by aerospace elements. For distribution, it has established collaborative consignment partnerships with major sites including Dongfeng Space City, Jiayuguan Scenic Area, Gansu Provincial Museum, Jiuquan Museum, and the Jiuquan Science and Technology Museum. The group is also planning to develop a 300-square-metre aerospace-themed cultural shop within the Jiuquan Cultural Centre, in collaboration with the Jiuquan Bureau of Culture and Tourism. Drawing on the model of the “Dunhuang Bookstore,” this space will integrate a city reading room with retailing of cultural and creative products.

Tongwei County is known as the “Hometown of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting,” where calligraphy and painting have become a recognised local cultural brand and IP. This cultural identity has given rise to related industries such as art trading and established networks of cooperation. For example, Yuexin International Calligraphy and Painting Village has developed an extensive social network. Artists based in the village maintain collaborative and interactive relationships with visiting artists from across the country, who visit Tongwei to exchange techniques and knowledge or to authenticate artworks. This exchange has led to the emergence of a local art brokerage industry, driven by the commercial potential of the calligraphy and painting market. Art brokers operate high-end studios within the village, collecting works from renowned artists nationwide. During major events such as the Tongwei Calligraphy and Painting Arts Festival, they invite these artists to the village for live creation sessions and cultural exchange activities.



Tongwei Yuexin International Calligraphy and Painting Village © WHITR-AP Beijing

Limited cooperation between government, enterprises, and individuals, and the absence of diversified financing mechanisms

Apart from well-known cultural resources such as those in Dunhuang, most regions in Gansu rely heavily on government and state-owned enterprise funding to support their CCIs. The role of market-based financing remains limited. While government subsidies have contributed to cultural preservation and transmission to some extent, cooperation with a broader range of enterprises has yet to be formed. As a result, the overall commercialisation of heritage-related activities is underdeveloped.

In some areas, CCIs are overly dependent on individual funding, making them vulnerable to fluctuations in personal or business financial stability, lacking stable and diversified sources of market-oriented investment. Even in cases where government funding and other revenues have increased, current financial support is insufficient to meet the growing demands of cultural resource development.

Case Studies:

The Aksai Kazakh Ethnic Cultural Experience Centre and the local cultural centre provide direct support for ICH practitioners, including subsidies for transmission and platforms for showcasing and teaching traditional practices. These initiatives have helped establish a local ICH transmission network. However, the financial support for this network relies heavily on government subsidies. Collaboration between the Aksai cultural centre and local enterprises remains limited, and there is a lack of effective commercial models to sustain and further develop cultural resources in the long run.

In Lintao County, market-based financing sources for the CCIs remain limited. The development of local cultural resources often relies on individual initiatives. For example, the Majiayao Culture Research Association and its affiliated Majiayao Painted Pottery Museum have been sustained primarily through the personal financial support of Zhi'An Wang, who serves as both the association's president and a business leader. Beyond this individual backing, it has been difficult to secure sufficient funding for continued development. The funding for Majiayao Painted Pottery Town also comes largely from local entrepreneurs in Lintao County who contribute to their hometown's development. Due to recent downturns in business performance, the town's planned second-phase development has been put on hold. This case reflects the limited role of market-oriented financing in supporting the long-term growth of Lintao's CCIs.

The Subei County Museum primarily relies on government funding and revenue generated from educational tourism. In 2023, the museum's free admission subsidy increased to 500,000 CNY, marking a significant improvement compared to previous years. The funding has enabled the museum to expand its exhibition content, hire additional staff, and improve service quality. However, in light of the museum's broader role in supporting the development of Subei's cultural resources, the current level of financial support remains insufficient. To meet growing demands, especially in areas such as cultural product development and digital promotion, the museum is still in need of more diversified and market-oriented financing strategies.

Enabler 4: Inclusive institutions, regulations, and partnerships

The effective engagement of diverse stakeholders and the establishment of institutional frameworks and regulatory environments conducive to the sustainable and stable growth of CCIs are necessary for the building of cultural and creative cities. This section shifts the analytical lens to the role of local governments in supporting social networks, with a particular focus on how public institutions can contribute to the prosperity and long-term development of creative cities. To this end, local governments must first define their roles and strategic positioning within the broader creative city ecosystem. This requires a clear recognition of their influence and responsibility in driving the development of cultural and creative sectors. Equipped with a comprehensive policy toolkit, local governments are well-positioned to support this agenda through urban planning, public service provision, financial incentives, and regulatory mechanisms. The effective deployment of these tools not only promotes the growth of creative industries but also reinforces the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration among stakeholders. Such collaboration is essential to enhancing cultural creativity within the overall framework of urban development strategies.

Multidimensional cultural policy framework as a driver of cultural and creative industry development

Gansu Province has established a multidimensional cultural policy framework encompassing four key dimensions: “Cultural Tourism and Public Cultural Ser-

vices,” “Cultural Heritage Resources,” “Cultural Industry Development,” and “Cultural Ecological Environment.” This framework aims to highlight regional uniqueness amid globalization-driven homogenisation pressures by leveraging Gansu’s rich geographical and historical heritage. It further aims to deepen the value discovery and diversified utilization of local cultural resources.

Cultural policies tailored to the unique characteristics of different regions can effectively promote the shaping of urban cultural brands in various localities, thereby attracting creative talent and external investment, laying a solid foundation for the thriving development of CCIs.

Case Studies:

Maiji District of Tianshui City has taken a planning-led approach to foster integrated cultural and tourism development. It has actively implemented a series of strategic plans, including the 14th Five-Year Cultural and Tourism Integration Development Plan of Maiji District, the All-for-One Tourism Development Plan of Maiji District (2019-2030), and the Rural Tourism Development Plan of Maiji District (2019-2030). By following the overarching development strategy of “one axis, two cores, four zones, and five development corridors,” Maiji District has focused on the integrated development of its two major scenic landmarks – Maijishan and Guatai Mountain – and launched comprehensive cultural and tourism development projects.

Strengthening IP protection to foster a fair and competitive cultural market

Gansu Province places strong emphasis on IP protection within the CCIs. Through institutional development and the reinforcement of local IP branding strategies, the province aims to safeguard innovation from infringement and uphold fairness in the cultural market. Policy support has enabled the systematic protection of local cultural assets, while fostering brand recognition in the cultural and creative sectors. This, in turn, has inspired creators to further explore and innovatively apply distinctive cultural symbols.

Currently, Gansu’s IP protection strategy is designed to provide dual-layer protection: it focuses not only on the safeguarding of cultural products and creative outputs from infringement, but also on empowering IP holders – such as ICH practitioners – through education and training. This approach enhances their

awareness of IP rights and equips them with the tools to proactively protect their legal interests.

Despite a clear policy direction at the strategic level, implementation often lags behind. Many initiatives remain in the planning stage and lack concrete, operational measures. This gap between policy intent and execution is particularly evident in some local case studies.

Case Studies:

In Zhangye City, the Colourful Danxia Scenic Area serves as a core branding asset in building a recognizable IP system, underscoring the importance of IP protection for cultural elements and tourism products. The Zhangye government has issued several policy documents, including the 14th Five-Year Public Service Plan, explicitly proposing the construction of a city-level IP system with distinctive local characteristics, branded under the concept of “Rainbow City.” This IP system, centred on Zhangye’s unique identity, is fully integrated into the scenic area development and tourism marketing. It showcases the charm of the “Rainbow City” through diverse representations across different stages, periods, spaces, and elements. By creating unique cultural identifiers and brand images, Zhangye is better positioned to protect and capitalize on its cultural resources, while preventing unauthorized usage and imitation.

Relevant planning documents emphasize the protection of cultural products and innovations, including important cultural and heritage sites, natural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, and traditional craftsmanship. The Implementation Plan of the Zhangye Municipal Bureau of Culture for the Revitalization of Traditional Crafts in China encourages traditional craft enterprises and practitioners to actively use IP systems, register trademarks for handmade and creative products, safeguard trade secrets and innovations, and cultivate renowned brands.

However, challenges remain. For instance, a local enterprise, Journey to the West Cultural Media Co., Ltd., encountered difficulties while promoting printed cultural products. Although it completed product registration, the trademark application for “This is Zhangye” was held up due to stipulations in the Trademark Law, pending re-examination upon rejection. This case highlights a lack of early-stage legal awareness and strategic trademark planning, resulting in a disconnect between product development and trademark registration. Consequently, it affected the market rollout and branding efforts of cultural products, pointing to a broader need for improvement in IP protection infrastructure and guidance in Zhangye.

Diversified financial support and preferential policies as key drivers of CCIs development

Gansu Province has adopted a dual-track strategy combining direct fiscal subsidies with preferential policies to support the development of its CCIs. These include not only direct financial assistance through grants and awards, but also measures aimed at reducing operational costs for cultural enterprises – such as tax incentives, preferential land use policies, and enhanced access to financing. This support framework has provided substantial capital relief for start-ups and SMEs in the cultural sector, enabling them to effectively compete in a dynamic market. Simultaneously, it has strengthened the overall appeal of the cultural industry. The province's diversified funding mechanisms and comprehensive preferential policy system have greatly contributed to the marketisation of cultural resources while facilitating the sustainable development of tourism, ICH safeguarding, and other cultural innovation initiatives.

Case Studies:

In terms of fiscal subsidies, Gansu Province has issued direct fundings to enterprises and individuals. According to the Administrative Measures for the Use of Special Funds for ICH Safeguarding in Suzhou District and the Evaluation and Recognition Measures for Representative ICH Inheritors in Suzhou District, national-level ICH practitioners received an annual subsidy of 8,000 CNY from 2008 to 2012, 10,000 CNY from 2013 to 2016, and 20,000 CNY from 2017 to 2022. Provincial-level practitioners were granted 1,000 CNY annually from 2009 to 2011, 5,000 CNY from 2012 to 2022, and 10,000 CNY starting in 2022, in support of their livelihoods and creative endeavours.

At the municipal level, the Wudu District Government of Longnan City has implemented financial support mechanisms for ICH practitioners, such as subsidized micro - loans of up to 300,000 CNY with interest relief for three years. Cheng County has offered tax incentives– such as additional tax deduction policies – for enterprises like Jiarui Cultural & Creative Company to promote R&D and innovation.

Urban network partnerships facilitate cross-regional cultural cooperation

Organically developed urban network partnerships are a key driving force for the development of the CCIs. These partnerships facilitate the integration of cultural policies with social governance, foster the development of robust public-private cooperation frameworks, and provide strong support for the growth of the CCIs. Local governments, creative communities, the private sector, and other key contributors to the creative economy in Gansu Province work collaboratively through intercity network coordination, promoting resource sharing and joint development. These partnerships not only enhance the regional influence of CCIs but also increase the mobility and dissemination of cultural resources.

Case Studies:

Gansu Province's CCI development extends beyond the provincial boundaries, actively seeking further development and cooperation opportunities. This not only enhances the influence of the local CCIs but also contributes to cultural exchange and cooperation, highlighting Gansu's contributions in the broader cultural landscape.

For instance, Jinta County in Jiuquan City has strengthened joint marketing efforts and deepened cooperation with Zhangye, Jiayuguan, the Jiuquan Satellite Launch centre, and surrounding counties and districts. This has established a shared interest community in resource sharing, interconnected routes, and mutual tourism promotion. They have also enhanced cooperation with mainstream media outlets, including major websites, to release information on the county's premium tourism routes, products, and promotional policies. They continue to advertise Jinta's cultural tourism in strategic locations such as Xi'an High-speed Railway Station, Jiayuguan Airport, Lanzhou Zhongchuan Airport, and highway service areas, enhancing the visibility of the "Golden Jinta, Beautiful Poplar Forest" tourism brand and increasing Gansu's overall recognition. Through these comprehensive measures and strategic deployments, Gansu's CCIs are gradually forming a development model with regional characteristics and competitiveness.

In terms of public-private cooperation, local governments in Gansu Province have actively promoted support for private CCIs, such as private enterprises and small workshops. Stable cooperation has been established between these sectors.

A typical example of this public-private partnership model can be seen in Tongwei County, where the local government has collaborated with Yuexin Enterprises in creating Yuexin International Calligraphy and Painting Village, a major project under the county's "Cultural Tourism Famous County" strategy. The development consists of four sub-projects: the Calligraphy and Painting Corridor, Yuexin Art Museum, Hot Springs Water World, and a Garden Resort Hotel. The upcoming Hanmo Cultural centre project, initially driven by Yuexin Enterprises, later involved the government in 2016 to support its filling process and attract investment. Adjacent to Yuexin International Calligraphy and Painting Village, the Hanmo Cultural Centre is designed to form a linked operation through geographical proximity. Other ICH projects in Tongwei County have also received direct support from the local government. The Xiangnan Township has supported small family-run straw weaving workshops based on the traditional handicrafts of Wengjiabao Village, promoting the transformation of these ICH projects into marketable products and facilitating mass production. The Hanmo Cultural Centre's training venues and pedestrian streets will offer favourable leasing conditions to artists in the early stages of operation.

Inclusive public cultural policies that meet cultural demands at multi-levels

Gansu Province's public cultural service policies have significantly enhanced the effectiveness of cultural welfare, focusing on the accessibility of cultural resources. Through measures such as providing cultural equipment at the grass-roots level, establishing digital cultural service points, and organizing cultural welfare performances, the province has met multi-layered cultural demands. These initiatives have increased social benefits, notably improving the coverage and quality of public cultural services. At the same time, these inclusive policies have opened up broader consumer markets for cultural creative products, promoting the collaborative development of upstream and downstream sectors of the industry.

Case Studies:

In Zhangye City, the cultural benefit policies and cultural tourism consumption card initiative have encouraged cultural consumption and expanded the coverage of public services, making cultural creative products and services more accessible. Zhangye has implemented several measures to promote the consumption of cultural and tourism products and services

through policies such as the Several Measures to Support the Development of the Cultural Tourism Industry in Zhangye City and the Three-Year Action Plan for Improving the Quality and Efficiency of All-Region Tourism (2022-2024). For example, the distribution of the “Jinchang Wuwei Zhangye Haibeizhou Cultural Tourism Welfare Card” and the “Zhangye Tourism One-Card” stimulates consumer demand and consumption resource concentration. The city also supports pilot regions for national cultural consumption, encourages productions of merits to participate in trade tours, improves the efficiency of supply space, and integrates resources from Zhangye’s theatres, museums, and other venues to meet public demand for high-quality cultural consumption.

The Gansu Disabled Persons’ Federation has summarized typical cases and successful experiences in the employment of people with different disabilities. It actively implements the Assistance Plan for Disabled Persons, focusing on brand development and industrial revitalisation, and through brand leadership, financial support, and promotional activities, it aims to achieve high-quality employment for people with disabilities. The plan incubates a number of cultural creative bases with good market prospects to absorb disabled workers, and supports those with certain foundations to participate in the safeguarding and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, and encourage and guide more social forces to integrate resources to assist people with disabilities in finding employment through implementation of assistance plan for disabled persons and “brand development + industrial revitalisation” initiatives. These efforts have helped residents of creative communities to recognize the positive impact of the CCIs.

The lack of flexibility in policy implementation and feedback mechanism

Although Gansu Province has implemented a relatively comprehensive policy framework and financial support measures for the development of the CCIs, the current policy implementation process lacks a flexible feedback mechanism, leading to difficulties in adapting to the ever-changing market demands and industry development conditions. Since policy formulation and execution are largely led by local governments, the structural deficiency of insufficient communications with industry practitioners, academia, and relevant experts limits the effectiveness of the policies.

Case Studies:

Policy formulation has not been able to fully draw from the successful experiences of other regions, often focusing on single aspects of support, such as skills training or local industry infrastructure, resulting in a lack of operational feasibility during policy implementation. For instance, in the development of CCIs in Zhangye, the policy is overly reliant on government-led meetings and internal reviews, lacking dynamic tracking and adjustment mechanisms for changes in market demand. This one-way policy direction model leads to a lack of timely feedback when addressing specific issues, making it difficult to effectively adjust strategies in response to the rapidly developing cultural and creative market.

The performance evaluation mechanism for policy implementation is insufficient. The absence of scientific assessment and dynamic adjustment methods means that while some policies may have good intentions, their practical effectiveness is often unsatisfactory, making it difficult to achieve the intended policy goals. For example, the financial loan policy provided to cultural and creative SMEs in Gansu covers loan support, but due to vague application conditions and the lack of practical operational guidelines, the publicity effect has been unsatisfactory. Cultural and creative SMEs often face high barriers and complex processes during the application, which prevents them from truly benefiting from the policy.

Enabler 5: Uniqueness

The organic integration of a city's distinctive characteristics and social relations can effectively drive the development of its CCIs. Against the backdrop of the homogenization crisis brought about by globalization, cities demonstrate their unique value orientations through cultural resources such as architectural heritage, museums, landmark attractions, and festivals. These resources attract tourists, investors, and creative talents, creating spaces and places where creative production factors cluster, enabling in-depth development and utilization of urban cultural resources. Demographic diversity and social-cultural networks are vital sources for exchanges and innovation in cities. A city's unique social and cultural infrastructure helps mobilize resources and maintain a sense of identity and vitality. Therefore, uniqueness is not only the fundamental source of a city's appeal but also key to the sustained prosperity of its CCIs.

The composite nature of cultural resources shapes unique and diversified cultural brands for cities

In a globalized world where homogenization often become the norm, a city's cultural uniqueness and unique resource portfolio emerge as critical drivers for stimulating cultural creativity. The Gansu region, with human activities dating back to the Palaeolithic era, has served as a military stronghold and a channel for external exchanges since the Qin and Han dynasties. In modern times, it became an important red revolutionary base. Gansu's historical heritage and unique geographic location, combined with the convergence of agricultural and pastoral cultures and the intermingling of multiple ethnic groups, have shaped a rich cultural ecosystem that has great development potential and diversified opportunities for the CCIs.

Case Studies:

Jinta County, located at the confluence of Ruoshui River and on the edge of the Alashan Desert, was once home to the important ancient fortress of “Jianshui Jin Guan” and “Dawan City.” It is also famous for the discovery of the “Juyan Han Bamboo Slips,” one of the most significant collections of early Chinese written documents from the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), which account for nearly 60 per cent of the national total. In modern times, it has become a symbol of space exploration, in proximity to the Jiuquan Satellite Launch centre. Its unique geographic location and rich historical background formed three major cultural brands: “Homeland of the Han Bamboo Slips,” “Cradle of the Modern Flying Apsaras,” and “Ten Thousand Mu of Poplar Forest.” Leveraging these resources, it has developed tourism activities such as the Poplar Culture Festival and annual cross country races, catering to diverse tourism needs for sightseeing, educational research, and outdoor sports. This, in turn, supports the sales of local agricultural products and the development of tertiary industry.

Maiji District, one of the birthplaces of Chinese civilization, is closely associated with historical legends such as Fuxi, Emperor Yan, and Emperor Huang. Representative cultural landmarks related to Fuxi and Nüwa culture include Guatai Mountain, Longma Cave, and Longyuan. The Maijishan Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and its surrounding scenic area serve as another cultural landmark of Maiji. The district is also rich in natural landscapes and eco-tourism resources, with major scenic spots such as the Gansu Maiji National Forest Park, Dongcha Town Taohuagou Provincial Forest Park, and Sancha Township Biyu Provincial Forest Park. As a result, Maiji District has developed prominent promotional brands like “Hometown of Emperor Xu-

anyuan and Fuxi,” “Northwest’s Best Forest Tourism Resort,” “China’s Excellent Eco-Cultural Tourism Area,” and “National Leisure Agriculture and Rural Tourism Demonstration District.” The development of these scenic spots has also led to the growth of diverse industries, including souvenir shops, photography services, incense sales, and rural homestays, promoting employment for many non-creative workers from surrounding communities.

Longnan City, located at the junction of the Qinba Mountains, the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and the Loess Plateau, boasts a unique geographical position that has resulted in diverse natural landscapes and complex climatic conditions. Known as the “Southern Jiangnan of Longshan,” it has established the cultural brand of “The Transition Zone Between North and South – Healthy Longnan,” focusing on developing tourism products such as natural sightseeing in the Wanxiang Cave and rural cultural experiences in the Yaozhai Valley. In the future, it plans to further integrate resources from representative scenic spots to create large-scale tourist areas combining sightseeing, adventure and leisure, aiming to become the western China hub for health and wellness tourism. Culturally, Longnan blends the cultures of Qinlong (and Bashu (Sichuan and Chongqing) regions, and various ethnic groups, including Tibetans, Di, Qiang, Hui, and Mongols, offering rich ICH resources and unique cultural experiences such as Zagan liquor and Sha Ga Mao weaving.

Landmark attractions have a strong radiating effect in the development of urban CCIs

Landmark attractions highlight the unique values of a city, attracting locals, tourists, and investors who identify with these values, thereby stimulating the vitality of the city’s CCIs. Every city in Gansu has at least one or two landmark attractions with widespread recognition and influence. These sites have become important symbols and representatives of the city’s cultural image and are the primary factors influencing tourists’ choice of travel destination. In the development of CCIs, these landmarks also have a significant radiating effect, driving the collaborative development of related cultural facilities and enterprises, fostering a diversified CCI ecosystem with recognisable cultural symbols.

Case Studies:

The Zhangye Colourful Danxia Scenic Area, a representative Global Geopark in the northwest (including three special conservation zones), at-

tracts a large number of visitors to Zhangye City with its unique Danxia landforms and colourful hill landscapes, making it a landmark attraction. In 2024, the scenic area welcomed 3.48 million visitors, generating more than 300 million CNY in revenue, with 95 per cent of tourists coming from outside the province. To meet the diverse tourism needs, Zhangye City has invested in the development of the Danxia Kou Cultural and Tourism Town, which leverages the influx of visitors to the scenic area by offering immersive live performances, local cuisine, hotels, and other tourism-related businesses. The town also features cultural spaces such as the Hexi Corridor Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum, the Jiangshan Night Pearl Rare Stone Museum and the Ganzhou Folk Tune Old Teahouse, which emphasize Zhangye's rich historical and cultural heritage beyond its natural scenery. The town has created over 300 jobs and provided business opportunities for local villagers, with 60 per cent of the businesses owned by residents of local Nantai Village, forming a positive model for CCIs driven by landmark attractions, boosting regional economy and employment.

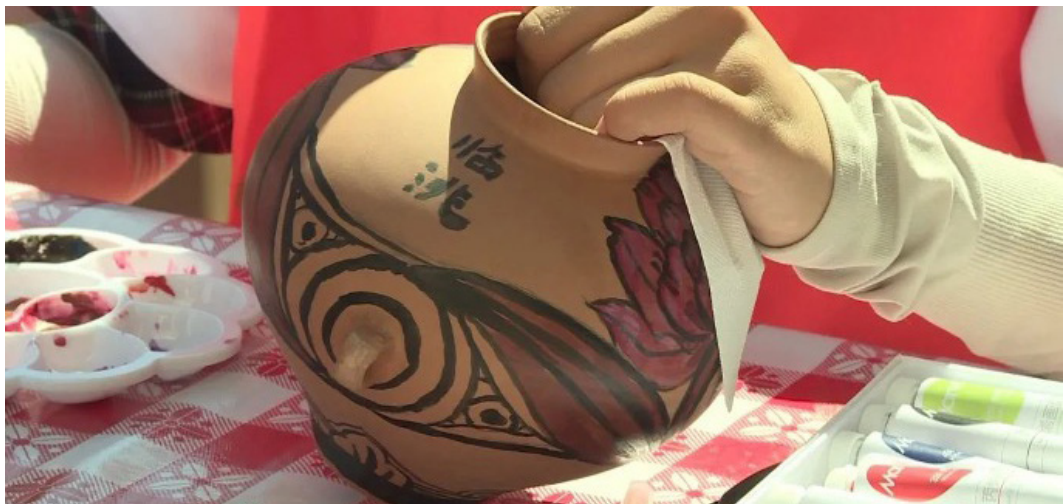


Zhangye Colourful Danxia Scenic Area © WHITR-AP Beijing



Danxiakou Cultural and Tourism Town © WHITR-AP Beijing

The Majiayao site, located in Majia Village, Taoyang Town, Lintao County, Dingxi City, is a representative archaeological site from the late Neolithic period (approximately 5200-4400 years ago). Large amount of painted pottery artifacts has been unearthed from the site, characterized by their exquisite forms and vibrant decorative patterns. This site has become a major cultural symbol of Lintao County, driving the development of local CCIs. In the production of cultural creative products, Lintao County actively integrates Majiayao elements into local specialties such as paper-cutting and painted pottery. Majiayao culture is also incorporated into dance, drama, and other performance arts during cultural exhibitions. Since 2019, Lintao County has regularly held the Majiayao Cultural Festival, organized lectures and exhibitions as avenues for interpretation and utilization of Majiayao culture. In addition, the Majiayao Site Park and Cultural Exhibition Centre further promotes the in-depth study and utilisation of this cultural IP through exhibitions and educational programs, while supporting the development of cultural products and ICH crafts.



5th Majiayao Cultural Festival Primary and Middle School Students Pottery Competition © Look at Lintao

Cultural resources related to collective memory and rituals enhance community cohesion and development vitality

Collective memory and rituals serve as crucial carriers of a city's unique history and culture. Owing to its long-standing history, multi-ethnic composition, and complex geography, Gansu has fostered a rich array of folk traditions, intangible cultural heritage, and historical resources. With strong governmental support

and broad participation from all sectors of society, these historical and cultural traditions continue to thrive in contemporary times. The collective cultural practices strengthen residents' sense of belonging and participation, shape distinct urban spirits, and provide closely-knit social networks for discovery and utilisation of cultural resources, thus stimulating endogenous momentum for innovation and development.

Case Studies:

Yumen was established because of petroleum and is known as the birthplace of China's first oil well, the country's first oil industrial base, and the hometown of the model oil worker "Iron Man" Wang Jinxi. The "Iron Man Spirit" embodied in these physical heritage assets represents a distinctive symbol of Yumen's urban cultural identity. Closely associated with the city's founding, the development of its communities, and the transmission of a spirit of dedication and perseverance, this collective memory has played a key role in shaping the civic identity of local residents and contributes to the city's cultural continuity amidst ongoing transformation and revitalisation. Relying on petroleum-related industrial heritage, Yumen Guan Culture and Tourism Company has developed the Yumen Oilfield Red Culture Tourism Area and the "Light of Yumen" Industrial Experience Centre. These projects not only showcase the petroleum industry culture and support the city's tourism sector, but also help preserve and continue the collective memory of the city life.



"Light of Yumen" Exhibition Hall © WHITR-AP Beijing

Tianshui residents have long embraced the cultural belief in Fuxi, and associated Fuxi sacrificial rituals have developed into a dual structure of official and folk ceremonies. In the official Taihao Fuxi Consecration Ceremony, the cultural connotation of Fuxi belief is expanded as a symbol of cross-strait (Mainland China and Taiwan) shared ancestry and bloodline ties. Meanwhile, the folk rituals integrate with local performance traditions serve as important collective cultural events for local communities. Grassroots organizations like “Shangyuan Association” and “Tianshui Folk Association for Fuxi Worship” have formed a civil network dedicated to safeguarding and organizing these ceremonies. Moreover, Fuxi rituals have been incorporated into local tourism festivals, creating a distinctive cultural brand. These rituals also serve as an important platform for showcasing intangible cultural heritage, expanding public engagement with historical culture and inspiring young people to connect with tradition.

Lazha Festival in Lintao County is a key festival in Han-Tibetan mixed communities and originated from ancient reverence and gratitude for the “God of Grains.” It embodies the people’s heartfelt expression of gratitude to the Mountain Deity and their sincere prayers for favourable weather and agricultural abundance in the coming year. Held from the seventh to the tenth lunar month, it includes traditional customs such as sacred rites and grain tasting. It also features folk performances and displays of handicrafts like dance, music, and painting. Today, this festival continues to be celebrated in certain agrarian villages, fostering cohesion among multi-ethnic communities, and attracting visitors with its distinctive cultural appeal, thereby creating new opportunities for the development of local tourism industry.

Creative rural development boosts the concentration of cultural industry resources in Gansu’s villages, promoting rural revitalization

Gansu Province faces challenges such as weak economic foundations, inadequate infrastructure, and population outflow in its rural areas due to urbanization and modernization. In recent years, with the implementation of the national rural revitalization strategy, Gansu has used cultural creativity to energize rural areas. By fully exploring local cultural resources, the province has organically combined traditional cultural symbols, folk craftsmanship, and modern design concepts to develop market-competitive cultural products. This process has actively engaged rural residents, ensuring that development benefits are shared by the local communities.

Case Studies:

Guazhou County of Jiuquan City relies on the national-level ICH of Tao Inkstone production to drive the development of the village's cultural creative industry. Known for its green hue, elegant shape, fine texture, jade-like sheen, and quick ink absorption, Tao Inkstone has enjoyed fame both domestically and abroad. To further promote the Tao Inkstone industry, in 2020, the Guangzhi Tibetan Township in Guazhou County established the Tao Inkstone Village Economic Cooperative, using a "Party Branch + Cooperative + Association + Party Members + Farmers" model. This created a professional Tao Inkstone creative production space and adopted a profit-sharing mechanism with a 3:3:4 ratio between the village collective, cooperative, and inkstone association, ensuring that villagers could share the development benefits. Since 2020, the inkstone workshop has produced over 800 pieces, generating sales revenue of over 600,000 CNY, effectively driving local employment and increasing farmers' incomes.

Zhangba Ancient Village, located in Pipa Town, Wudu District, Longnan City, has a history of over 600 years. The village leverages the most well-preserved ancient architectural complex from the Ming and Qing dynasties in Gansu, and the typical rural settlement style of the Longnan region, to develop a distinctive rural cultural tourism industry. To fully utilize the village's cultural resources, the collapsing historic buildings were renovated and transformed into multifunctional spaces, including guesthouses, theatre, restaurants, wellness and therapy centres, cultural creative park, pepper garden, and an olive garden. This has formed a multi-functional tourism development model integrating sightseeing, leisure, and wellness. Under this model, Zhangba Ancient Village is set to become a key tourism node in the southern part of Wudu, further promoting the concentration of regional tourism resources.

The ineffective transformation of folk cultural resources into market-oriented creative products or services

Folk cultural resources are deeply embedded in local communities and are mainly passed down through intergenerational or master-apprentice physical performances and oral traditions. Although cities in Gansu Province possess rich folk cultural resources, these resources are often integrated into the social and cultural fabric of local communities, and the forms of expression and aesthetic styles may not align with modern market demands. The lack of financial support and dissemination channels makes it difficult for these resources to enter main-

stream market through digital platforms and social networks, hindering their transformation into competitive cultural creative products or services.

Case Studies:

Wudu Gaoshan Opera, originating from Yulong Town in Wudu District, Longnan City, can be traced back to the late Yuan and early Ming Dynasties. Over hundreds of years, it has developed into a unique performance style and artistic form. Its singing style incorporates ethnic musical culture, with over 160 different tunes. The singing is characterized by the local dialect of Wudu, and the dance movements are derived from folk religious activities. The main audience for Gaoshan Opera is still limited to residents in Wudu District who practice Buddhism, Taoism, or Confucianism, with performances mostly occurring during temple fairs and festivals like the Spring Festival. With the rise of modern film and media culture, the audience base for Gaoshan Opera has been shrinking, and the performers lack motivation to innovate the art form. Consequently, Gaoshan Opera is currently facing significant challenges to its preservation and development, with its transmission and continuity increasingly at risk. .

Dibengzi, a highly popular traditional folk dance in Suzhou District, Jiquan City, is an ancient performance art that features both singing and dancing with varied formations and dynamic upbeat music. It is highly popular among local residents and has a high level of community participation. However, the transmission of Dibengzi currently relies mainly on public financial support from cultural centres and village committees, with media dissemination limited to the official public accounts and video channels of cultural centres. This restricts its ability to transcend geographical barriers and prevents it from being transformed into a resource that drives the development of CCIs.

Low level of innovation and limited market acceptance for certain cultural resources

The Majiayao culture in Dingxi, the Fuxi culture, and Qingyang's fragrant bags are still at the academic research or traditional handicraft stage and have not yet formed modern CCI chain. Gaoshan Opera in Wudu is mainly limited to temple fair performances with weak market conversion capability.

Weak capacity in brand IP development and lack of cultural innovation breakthroughs

The CCIs in the region face several structural challenges. In Dunhuang, homogeneous competition is intense within the cultural products sector. In Jiuquan, aerospace culture has yet to develop a mature market-oriented model, indicating continued need for strengthening in IP licensing and cross-sector collaboration. Furthermore, products such as Tianshui carved lacquerware, Zhangye folk crafts, and Dunhuang cultural creations lack innovation, resulting in limited market appeal. Performing arts projects in Dunhuang are engaged in significant internal competition, leading to declining profits and compromised quality in artistic production.

Enabler 6: Digital environment

Digitalisation contributes to the development of methods and tools that can enhance the efficiency of overall value chain in certain CCIs. Digital technology, as an emerging technology, offers new methods for heritage conservation and presentation, as well as for the operation and management of scenic areas, while also benefiting the dissemination and sales of cultural products. Gansu Province, relying on the “blockchain deposit + copyright registration” model, has completed a cumulative total of 427,000 pieces of digital copyright deposit, providing legal protection for the protection and dissemination of digital cultural content. Gansu Province, relying on the “blockchain deposit + copyright registration” model, has completed a cumulative total of 427,000 pieces of digital copyright deposit, providing legal protection for the protection and dissemination of digital cultural content.

However, the application of digital technology often requires substantial upfront investment and long-term maintenance. The overall economic development of Gansu Province remain relatively underdeveloped, and the construction of digital infrastructure is still in its early stages, facing significant challenges related to a lack of funding and talent. This has led to significant challenges such as insufficient funding and a shortage of skilled talent, which in turn constrains the advancement of digital technology in the region.

Enhancing operational efficiency in large-scale tourist attractions through big data technology

In Gansu Province, several large-scale tourist attractions have begun leveraging big data technology to achieve refined and intelligent management. These attractions utilize comprehensive monitoring systems to ensure orderly operations and employ visitor data analytics to optimize promotional and marketing strategies. Such applications have significantly improved both management efficiency and the overall visitor experience. However, the adoption of these technologies remains limited to a few major scenic sites, while most other attractions are still in the early stages of digital infrastructure development. As a result, the level of implementation across the province remains imbalanced and fragmented.

Case Studies:

Zhangye Danxia National Geological Park has established a comprehensive tourism service platform that integrates resources across the entire scenic region. Utilizing the S2B2C model, the platform provides visitors with official destination information, marketing content, and services. It combines functionalities such as information dissemination, inquiry, reservation, booking, and recommendation, enabling self-service ordering and payment. The site also employs 5G technologies alongside VR and AR tools to deliver immersive visitor experiences. Additionally, a real-name, time-slotted reservation and visitor flow control system has been implemented, using entrance tickets as carriers, sightseeing vehicles as the operational core, and site capacity as the guiding indicator. This system allows for unified online-offline management and staggered entry, significantly improves the operational efficiency of park admissions. The site has developed a comprehensive tourism big data platform – Zhangye Danxia Tourism Data Brain – that fully integrates tourism-related business and administrative data. This platform offers real-time, comprehensive, and region-wide data visualization services via a central monitoring screen, dynamically display resource status, site monitoring, visitor flows, marketing effectiveness, and emergency command functions.

Wudu District's Wanxiang Cave Scenic Area in Longnan City is currently developing a smart cultural tourism platform in alignment with the province's push toward digitalization in the cultural and tourism sectors. The project aims to systematically integrate the tourism resources of Wanxiang Cave and incorporate them into an overarching smart tourism platform. The initiative focuses on intelligent and precise management to guide scenic area operations. A digital supply-demand platform is also under construction to serve local businesses and stakeholders in the CCIs and tourism industries.

Local operators – such as restaurants, hotels, and specialty goods vendors – will be able to consolidate their resources on the platform to promote region-wide tourism. The scenic area’s management is inclined to utilise the smart platform for unified regional scheduling and daily promotional tasks. At present, the platform includes collaborative management for Yuhe Scenic Area, Wanxiang Cave, and Yaozhai Valley. Functions include visitor trend analysis, visitor profiling, video surveillance, and centralized dispatch coordination. However, due to financial constraints, the backend systems, data infrastructure, and hardware components of the smart cultural tourism platform are still under development.

Digital technologies offer new solutions for heritage conservation and interpretation, yet face challenges in sustainable operation

Gansu Province has made notable progress in the digital preservation of tangible cultural heritage, employing technologies such as 3D scanning and digital modelling to document artifacts and enable online exhibitions. However, the digitisation of intangible cultural heritage has yet to be systematically developed. Long-term sustainability of digital heritage projects is often compromised by limited financial resources and insufficient technical personnel, affecting their continued operation and public engagement.

Case Studies:

Dunhuang Academy initiated its “Digital Dunhuang” strategy in the late 1990s, evolving over more than three decades into one of the most comprehensive digital heritage projects in China. “Digital Dunhuang” comprises virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and interactive reality components, digitizing the Dunhuang treasures helps transcend the limitations of time and space, thereby meeting the public’s needs for tourism, appreciation, and academic research. By the end of 2023, the Academy’s digital preservation team had completed high-resolution digitisation of murals from 295 caves at Mogao and scanned over 50,000 historical archive negatives. A robust portfolio of digital assets has been created, including Digital Caves, a Digital Asset Library, the Digital Library Cave, Virtual Dunhuang Caves, and the Dunhuang Manuscripts Archive. The Academy has thus established the most comprehensive digital environment for cultural heritage interpretation in the country. The Exhibition and Display Centre also offers VR equipment rentals to enhance visitor experiences.



Virtual Dunhuang Caves Experience Center © WHITR-AP Beijing

The Digital Preservation Project of the Zhangye Dafo Temple, launched on 24 December 2023, as proposed by the Zhangye Dafo Temple Cultural Relics Research Institute and implemented by Dunhuang Academy's Institute of Digital Cultural Heritage (Gansu Hengzhen Digital Culture Technology Co., Ltd.) with a total investment exceeding seven million CNY. The project integrates advanced technologies such as 3D laser scanning, photogrammetry, real-scene modelling, Building Information Modelling (BIM), and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to create digital twins of key heritage assets including the temple's architecture, murals, and sculptures. The project scope includes data acquisition, development of architectural information models, virtual tour productions, establishment of a data storage centre, digital exhibitions, digital archives management, and an online interpretation system. By combining online and offline digital exhibition methods, the project aims to reconstruct the historical evolution and spatial layout of the temple, and highlight the artistic value of its architecture, sculptures, and murals. The project is currently underway, with scaffolding for the digital capture of the Reclining Buddha visible on-site.

The Caosheng Ancient Calligraphy Cultural Industry Park in Guazhou County is the only cultural exhibition complex in China dedicated to Zhang Zhi, a renowned cursive script calligrapher of the Eastern Han Dynasty. In the first-floor gallery of the memorial hall, QR codes are available for accessing an online exhibition, however, the digital content displayed lacks current relevance. The second-floor exhibition on Zhang Zhi's life includes

QR code-based audio guides and several multimedia playback devices for visitor engagement. The study and research area are equipped with interactive multimedia installations offering good experiential potential. Nonetheless, due to high maintenance costs and limited funding, this area remains closed to individual visitors and sees minimal use of its digital facilities.



Digital Interactive Experience Facilities in the Study Space of Caosheng Ancient Calligraphy Cultural Industry Park © WHITR-AP Beijing

Lack of specialized personnel and targeted training constrains the effectiveness of digital marketing and communication

As an emerging marketing model, digital marketing and communication offer heritage tourism and cultural product sales a means of transcending spatial and temporal boundaries. The Gansu Province 14th Five-Year Plan for Innovative Development of the Digital Economy (2021) identified “short videos + cultural tourism” as a key focus of online marketing, reflecting the province’s commitment to advancing digital marketing strategies. While public cultural institutions and scenic areas in Gansu Province have made some efforts in digital marketing via social media platforms, the absence of professional operational teams has led to inconsistent content quality and limited communication effectiveness. This challenge is particularly evident in the digital marketing efforts targeting ICH practitioners and cultural SMEs. Current training programs remain insufficient to enhance their mastery of e-commerce platforms and digital tools, thereby constraining the broader dissemination of ICH and the expansion of cultural product sales for online markets.

Case Studies:

The Subei County Museum has made initial efforts in digital promotion by launching official accounts on platforms such as Douyin and WeChat, through which it shares the latest updates and information on educational and research-related activities. However, these digital platforms are managed by internal staff on a part-time basis, and the museum lacks a dedicated professional digital marketing team. There is a pressing need to enhance the museum's digital communication capacity through more systematic online promotion efforts to expand its influence.

ICH practitioners across Gansu Province have shown growing awareness of leveraging social media platforms for cultural dissemination and product promotion, primarily through personal accounts on platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou. However, most practitioners are older and unfamiliar with the operation of social media, resulting in low-quality content with limited appeal. Training programs organized by government cultural departments often lack practical instruction on the use of digital platforms. For instance, Xu Jing, a practitioner of Ganzhou embroidery and dyeing traditions, operates a small enterprise – Zhangye Chuan Shi Jing Dian Cultural Development Co., Ltd. – and runs her personal handcraft brand “Xu Jing Handmade.” The personal Red Note account of “Xu Jing Handmade” currently has over 10,000 followers and regularly conducts online livestreams, generating one-on-one income through fan-based traffic conversion. However, due to limited understanding of platform regulations and the absence of dedicated operational staff, formal transactions on e-commerce platforms are often disrupted – such as frequent product takedowns – negatively impacting sales. In the future, targeted training and technical guidance may help ICH practitioners better utilize digital platforms for both heritage dissemination and online product sales.

Limited online commercial vitality of cultural products restricts the transformation of cultural resources into economic benefits

The rise of e-commerce has provided new channels for the sale of cultural products. In Gansu Province, online commercial activities have demonstrated certain potential and have also become an important means of government-led poverty alleviation. In addition to official e-commerce platforms, some ICH practitioners have begun leveraging short videos and livestreaming to promote and sell their products. These methods offer great convenience for individual practitioners and SMEs and have effectively expanded their market reach. However, due to

limited brand recognition, lack of technical support, and insufficient specialised training, the promotional impact of these online platforms remains weak, thereby restricting the transformation of cultural resources into actual economic gains.

Case Studies:

Online sales models in Dunhuang can be broadly categorized into two types:

The first comprises institutions such as the Dunhuang Academy, the Dunhuang Museum, and Dunhuang Cultural Creativity. Leveraging profound cultural IP resources and a diverse product portfolio, these entities operate online stores on platforms like Taobao and Tmall through IP licensing and commercial partnerships to sell cultural and creative products.

The second type includes physical entities with moderate foot traffic and limited product variety, such as the Dunhuang Night Market. These sellers primarily utilize WeChat official accounts and mini programs for online sales. Both models exhibit a high degree of overlap in product offerings between online and offline channels. While offline sales remain dominant, the commercial potential of online platforms has yet to be fully exploited.

Qili Cultural and Creative Co., Ltd. in Tianshui has developed a close-knit collaboration with the Guanjia bamboo weaving tradition. By utilizing big data to analyse consumer preferences and market trends, the company is able to craft precise marketing strategies and product positioning. It employs computer-aided design (CAD) and 3D modelling technologies to create a wider array of diversified and personalized products, expanding beyond traditional baskets and mats to include home décor, ornaments, toys, and more. Government authorities have actively promoted the bamboo weaving industry through e-commerce-based poverty alleviation efforts. Operating under a “cooperative + e-commerce + poverty alleviation workshop” model, with Runsheng Bamboo Weaving Farmers’ Cooperative as the core entity, the initiative has successfully mobilized 37 impoverished households in Guanxia Village to join the cooperative. On average, the cooperative produces 17,000 bamboo products annually, with each household earning an average income of 18,000 CNY per year.

The commercialization of Tongwei wheat straw painting is closely tied to developments in the digital environment. practitioner Yifei Ran sells his artworks both online and offline, with online platforms such as Douyin generating higher revenue than physical storefronts. Although earnings

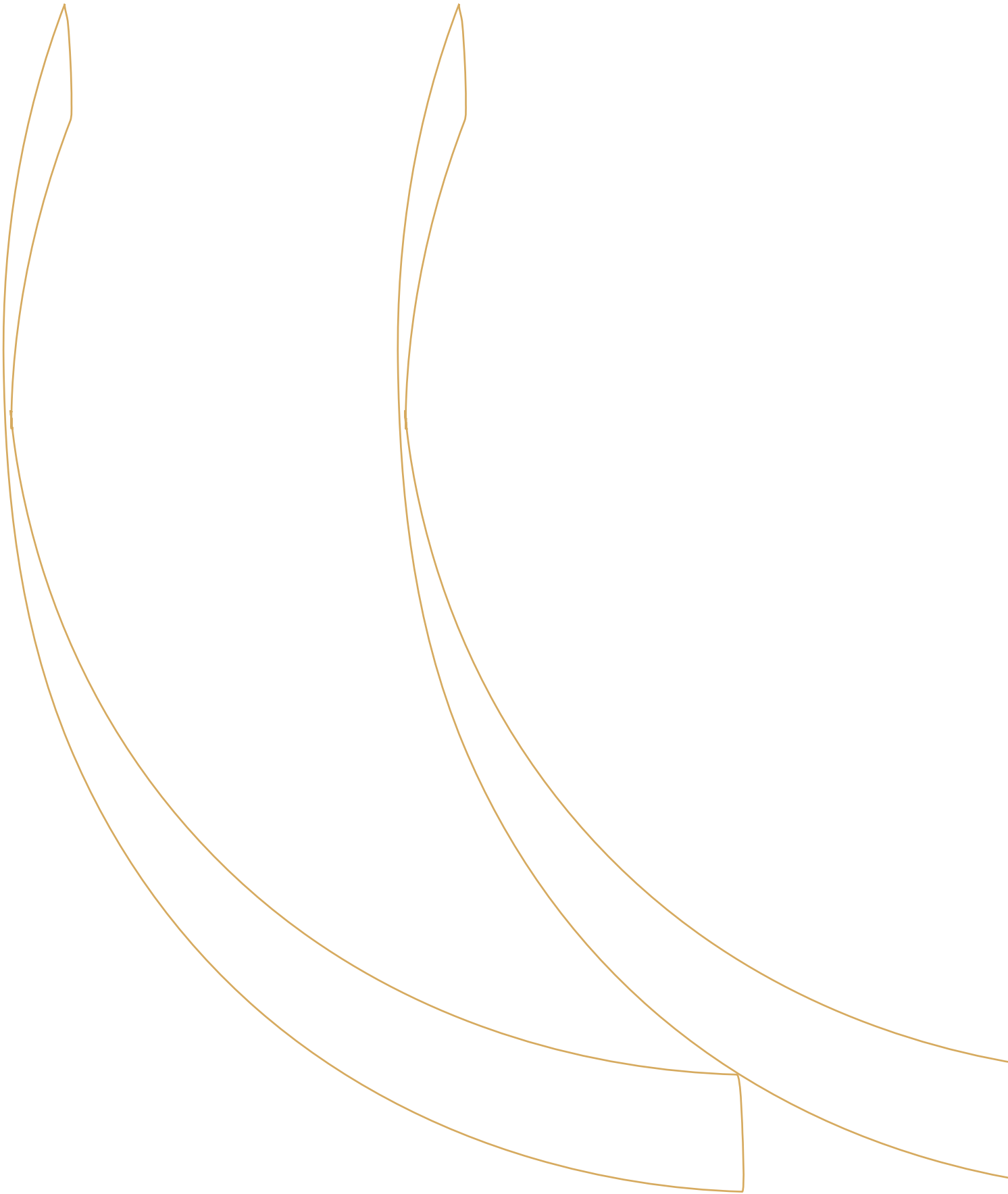
have declined over the past two years, a stable market presence has been maintained. In response, Ran plans to scale up production, diversify product offerings to include straw weaving crafts, and publish tutorial videos on Douyin to attract a broader consumer base. Nevertheless, challenges such as low production efficiency due to the handmade nature of the craft and underdeveloped online sales channels continue to hinder the commercialisation of wheat straw painting.



Dunhuang Art and Cultural Creative Store in Dunhuang Night Market © Dunhuang Culture and Tourism Group







Chapter 5

Outcomes



5.1

Spatial Benefits

The CCIs not only drive economic development but also have a profound impact on the spatial structures of urban and rural areas. They play a significant role in improving living environments, upgrading infrastructure, optimizing cultural service spaces, and shaping greener, more liveable, and open public spaces. In Gansu, various cities and regions have leveraged cultural resources and CCIs to achieve remarkable improvements in spatial environments, bringing more convenient and comfortable living experiences to local communities. Looking ahead, as the CCIs continue to grow and benefit from stronger policy support, both urban and rural areas in Gansu are expected to become more liveable and culturally vibrant, attracting talent and capital, and fostering a dual prosperity of economy and culture.

5.1.1

Improve living environments and enhance urban liveability

The introduction and development of CCIs contribute to improving residential environments through infrastructure upgrades, public space renovations, and the integration of cultural elements, making communities more attractive and residents' quality of life more desirable.

In Wulan Ancient Town of Zhangye City, the development of CCIs has facilitated the use of local cultural resources and drove improvements in surrounding roads and infrastructure, significantly improved the living conditions of the villagers in the ancient town. Through tourism development, public spaces have become cleaner and more convenient, attracting more visitors while improving resident comfort.

In Maiji District of Tianshui City, the renovation of old residential areas and bridges, along with increased green space and upgraded landscape decoration, has greatly enhanced the urban atmosphere and residents' quality of life.

Shuanglian Village and Majiayao Village of Lintao County, Dingxi City have undergone notable transformations driven by the growth of CCIs. Sewage systems have been upgraded, public toilets and accessible pathways have been added, and wall decorations now featuring Majiayao painted pottery and traditional farming tools, infusing the village landscape with cultural characteristics and reinforcing local cultural identity. cultural spaces in Lintao's county seat are strategically distributed, making it easy for residents to access spaces for learning and cultural exchange, thus improving overall liveability.

Tongwei County has enhanced its urban environment through new district development and infrastructure upgrades. The county has added tactile paving, streetlights, and traffic signals; the streetlights are well-illuminated and feature banners showcasing the city's cultural highlights, such as calligraphy and painting traditions and hot spring wellness. Public cultural stages have been set up near residential areas, offering spaces for performances and cultural exchange, thereby enhancing the community's cultural atmosphere and urban liveability.



The Decoration of Majiayao Village of Lintao County ©WHITR-AP Beijing

5.1.2

Creating cultural service spaces enhance public cultural provision

CCIs have played a key role in the development of public cultural service spaces, promoting the upgrading of cultural infrastructure such as museums, cultural centres, and art venues, thereby meeting residents' cultural needs. Optimizing cultural facilities, fostering the sharing of cultural resources, and expanding digital cultural services help establish diversified cultural service spaces and effectively strengthen public cultural supply.

In Zhangye City, the cultural service space of Zhangye Old Street centres around the Dafo Temple – Zhangye Museum area and includes a variety of cultural institutions such as museums, art galleries, and ICH exhibition centres. The improvement and operation of these public cultural spaces have significantly enriched the cultural life of local citizens and invigorated the community. Hosting various cultural activities, these spaces leverage the meaning of historical contexts and contribute to preserving the city's cultural fabric, enhancing its overall attractiveness. Local residents and tourists alike can not only visit historical sites but also participate in digital exhibitions, theatrical performances, and creative handicraft workshops. The clustering of these CCIs can help transform Zhangye into a vital hub for cultural consumption and improve residents' quality of cultural life.

In Longnan City, the city museum, cultural centre, art museum, library, and ICH centre forms a concentrated “four centres and one hub” cluster, creating a synergistic effect among cultural institutions. These venues are well-equipped with complete internal spaces and supporting facilities, including exhibition halls, multifunctional rooms, reception areas, monitoring rooms, rehearsal spaces, work areas, restrooms, and drinking stations. Together, they offer a mature environment for cultural and creative production, serving as a stronghold for cultural dissemination and public education.

In Dunhuang City, the Dunhuang Night Market and Shazhou Pedestrian Street integrate commerce and culture to form hybrid cultural-tourism public spaces. Located at the urban nexus, the night market includes areas for handicrafts, food, and performances, and is supported by facilities such as mosques, police stations, and hospitals, providing convenient services for both locals and visitors. Additionally, the Dunhuang Museum, cultural centre, and library form a stable network of public cultural provision, enabling residents to enjoy high-quality cultural activities.

In Jiuquan City, the public cultural service space of the Subei Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre offers a multi-functional layout: the first floor is dedicated to exhibitions and interactive experiences, the second floor provides rehearsal space, and the third-floor hosts cultural and creative production, visual arts, and more. Due to the sparse population of Subei, the centre is open to the public free of charge. It plays a significant role in intangible heritage transmission, cultural creative product development, public education, and training, achieving liveable, shared, and mutually reinforcing spatial benefits.

In Tianshui City, the government of Qin'an County has used special funds to build a cultural square and increase the utilization of public cultural institutions such as the cultural centre and museum. The cultural centre regularly organises performances, calligraphy and painting exhibitions, and other cultural events, enriching the local cultural life and improving the accessibility of cultural services. The public library, leveraging digital reading platforms and WeChat mini programs, offers convenient and efficient reading experiences, allowing residents to access cultural resources anytime and anywhere, broadening the reach and impact of public cultural services. Meanwhile, the infrastructure of township cultural stations continues to be upgraded, with free cultural services steadily advancing. Regular events such as traditional music and dance performances are held annually, providing residents with a more diverse and convenient cultural experience.

5.1.3

Improving infrastructure and enhancing transportation accessibility

The development of transportation infrastructure is a crucial support for the growth of CCIs. Enhancing the accessibility of urban and rural areas allows residents and tourists to more easily access cultural venues. Expanding public transportation coverage, optimizing walkable spaces, and addressing peak-season traffic congestion will further strengthen the cultural appeal of cities, improve travel convenience for both residents and visitors, and provide a solid foundation for local cultural and economic development.

In Zhangye City, CCI planning emphasizes walkability and public transport connectivity between cultural landmarks. Cultural areas such as the Dafo Temple and Zhangye Old Street are all within a 15-minute walking distance, with dedicated tourist bus routes improving the linkages between cultural sites. The govern-

ment also plans to launch a new tourist route from Dongcang to the Gao Zong-bing Residence to attract more visitors to lesser-known cultural spots, thereby boosting overall cultural tourism vitality.

In Dunhuang City, transportation infrastructure is relatively well-developed, including Dunhuang Airport, the high-speed rail station, and an urban taxi network, allowing visitors to reach major attractions within 10 to 25 minutes. However, during peak tourist seasons, the sharp increase in demand can overwhelm public transport services, affecting the travel experience of both residents and tourists. Optimizing seasonal transportation scheduling will be key to enhancing spatial efficiency.

In Longnan City, recent years have seen continued improvements in highways, railways, and air travel, resulting in a smoother and more integrated transportation network. Better transport has shortened commuting times for residents and supported the growth of logistics, commerce, and tourism. For example, with the opening of the Wujiu Expressway, Longnan is now part of the Jiuzhaigou scenic tourism circle, boosting its cultural appeal and attracting businesses, thereby driving local economic growth.

In contrast, the tourism industry in Guazhou County, Jiuquan, is heavily reliant on self-driving transportation. Key cultural and tourism sites such as the “Son of the Earth” sculpture, Yulin Grottoes, Suoyang City, and Shuangta Reservoir are, on average, 40 minutes away by car. This poses limitations in spatial accessibility, and during the March–September peak season, traffic congestion is common due to the influx of visitors. Moreover, the dependence on self-driving reduces tourists’ willingness to stay overnight in Guazhou, limiting the growth of the local tourism economy. Thus, improving the transportation network and introducing more public transit options will be essential steps toward developing Guazhou’s CCIs.

5.1.4

Developing green and open spaces to enhance the ecological environment

The spatial benefits of CCIs are reflected not only in improved infrastructure and cultural services but also in the creation of green, ecological public spaces. These offer residents comfortable places for activities and support sustainable urban development.

In Zhangye City, Ganquan Park serves as an important green open space, providing leisure and entertainment for residents while creating a synergy with the CCIs. The park is surrounded by creative product markets and performance spaces. It hosts a wide range of cultural activities, including performances, craft displays, and ICH experiences, forming a cultural ecosystem that integrates recreation, entertainment, shopping, and cultural consumption. This has significantly enhanced the city's cultural appeal and residents' sense of well-being.

In Dunhuang City, urban green spaces such as Danghe Park and Feitian Park provide residents and tourists with pleasant natural environments while incorporating elements of Dunhuang culture to create regionally distinctive cultural landscapes. Additionally, scenic areas around the city are equipped with public parking and major bus stops, improving the integration of ecological and transportation spaces and enhancing overall spatial efficiency.



Ganquan Park, Ganzhou District, Zhangye City © Ganzhou District Broadcasting Station - Comprehensive Radio WeChat Official Account

5.2

Economic Benefits

Under the framework of “Cities, Culture, Creativity,” analysis reveals that beyond spatial transformation through visual presentation and sensory experience, there has also been significant growth in the local endogenous economy. Six driving factors, spanning infrastructure, tourism, employment, and entrepreneurship, have jointly or individually contributed to the following developments:

5.2.1

Improving infrastructure to strengthen the residential economy

In Zhangye, a direct shuttle service now connects the city centre with the Colourful Danxia Scenic Area, and signage along Provincial Highway S313 has been optimized to improve travel convenience. In Wulan Ancient Town Folk Village, underground utility lines, street lighting, and building façade renovations have been largely completed. Traditional courtyards have been upgraded with roof insulation, allowing residents to adjust their living patterns seasonally.

Dunhuang boasts well-developed infrastructure, covering the Mogao Grottoes Protected Area, Dunhuang Cultural Industry Park, International Convention Centre, Grand Theatre, Museum, Urban Planning Exhibition Hall, and other comprehensive cultural tourism facilities, offering convenient transport and full-service functions.

In Tianshui, the Dadiwan National Archaeological Park is expected to receive four billion CNY in total investment, with plans for visitor centres, tourist roads, environmental improvements, parking, and a cultural-creative centre. In 2023, it received 20 million CNY in central government funding. In Maiji District, major infrastructure developments have included roads, parks, lighting, and sponge city initiatives, enhancing the living environment and service capabilities.

Qin'an County plans to build a cultural exhibition centre near the high-speed rail station and develop internal and surrounding cultural-tourism routes to connect core cultural resources, promoting integrated development of the county's cultural tourism. Longnan continues to improve transportation infrastructure, forming a multi-modal network of highways, railways, and air routes. These upgrades have shortened commute time, improved liveability, and boosted satisfaction through urban greening and environmental initiatives.

5.2.2

Integrating culture and tourism to drive the cultural economy

In Dunhuang, resources such as the Xuanquan Post Site, Yulin Grottoes, and Suoyang City have been linked with Guazhou County via the Xuanyuan Expressway to form the “Eastern Dunhuang Route” and “Symphony Silk Road Route 1.” Plans include cooperation with the Gansu Provincial Museum and the Gansu Han Bamboo Slips Museum to expand cultural influence through traveling exhibitions. In 2023, Dunhuang received 16.82 million visitors. Convenient transportation has further driven the tourism economy. Dunhuang Night Market, a national AAA-rated tourist destination spanning 69,000 square meters, attracts three million visitors annually and has become an iconic nighttime attraction central to the city's comprehensive tourism strategy.

In Maiji District, Tianshui, the government is accelerating the deployment of 5G networks and fibre-optic infrastructure, while improving e-governance, e-commerce, and business platforms. Leveraging rich natural tourism resources, the district has enhanced service capacity and promotional efforts. During the 2023 May Day holiday, Maiji received 2.133 million tourists and generated 1.312 billion CNY in tourism revenue, a 100 per cent year-on-year increase. The district focuses on rural economic development through rural tourism and the marketization of ICH. In 2024 the district received 24 million visitors, generating 14.745 billion CNY in tourism revenue. Through models like “company + ICH + CCIs,” Maiji has promoted handicraft training and branding, such as Wohu Village embroidery and standardized production of Sanyangchuan handmade noodles. Employment factories and public-interest jobs have also raised local employment rates and revitalized the rural economy.



Mogao Caves © Official Website of Dunhuang Academy

5.2.3

Enhancing local employment and improving workforce capabilities

Employment through tourism and scenic area development

Zhangye's Colourful Danxia Scenic Area hires 144 full-time employees and 43 contract workers, with seasonal staff peaking at 700–800, 90 per cent of whom are local residents. The site provides staff dormitories and offers regular off-season training lasting from seven to 15 days, in cooperation with Hexi University and vocational colleges. The Danxia Kou Cultural Tourism Town, built by Hexi Impression Cultural Tourism Co., employs over 300 people, 60 per cent from nearby Linze County. It has been recognized as a Provincial Model Base for Returning Migrant Workers and an incubator for rural entrepreneurship.

Mogaoli Artisan Village in Dunhuang combines ICH safeguarding, arts education, and research tourism, serving as a hands-on training site for universities. ICH practitioner Yongwei Du provides training in painted sculpture and mural techniques, receiving over 20,000 students annually, and fostering collaboration

between artists and local cultural resources to enhance Dunhuang's cultural influence.

Promoting employment through ICH and skills training

Zhangye's Yunheng Embroidery Workshop adopts a model of "poverty alleviation employment + ICH safeguarding + brand building," supporting women and marginalized groups. ICH embroidery training is free and accessible to all, organized by the Women's Handicraft Association, helping more people to secure skilled employment.

Zhangye's Dafo Temple regularly offers staff and service training programs to improve the quality of tourist services. This includes focused training for tour guides and forming a team of district-level professional conservators under the Dafo Temple Cultural Relics Research Institute.

In Longnan, the traditional art form Gaoshan Opera is not only a cultural activity but also a source of community employment. Many locals participate in amateur and professional troupes, forming close-knit cultural networks and sustaining this heritage. Though this network is largely made up of elderly and rural population.

Tianshui's heritage restoration and crafts sectors are attracting younger generations. Ju He, a 28-year-old apprentice of the third-generation practitioner of Maijishan Grotto mural restoration, leads a team of mostly university graduates in mural replication. The Yellow River Lacquer Carving Industrial Park also offers job opportunities for young professionals in art and design, with the youngest employee only 23 years old.

Expanding industrial chains and improving employment for women

Multiple target regions have introduced government subsidies and entrepreneurship support for rural women and minority groups, providing microloans for opening workshops, homestays, and specialty snack shops to enhance market competitiveness. Local governments have also actively promoted the development of 5G networks and e-commerce platforms, enabling women and minority groups to sell local specialty products (such as embroidery and handicrafts) online, broadening employment channels.

5.2.4

Optimizing new media platforms and fostering new digital economy models

Expanding online promotion channels to enhance cultural influence

Zhangye's Dafo Temple actively utilises online platforms for external communication and service delivery. Through its official WeChat account, it regularly shares cultural knowledge, updates on collaborations, and brand-related events, drawing wide public attention.

The Longnan Museum places great emphasis on digital outreach and recognizes the promotional value of social media check-ins. Its 2024 work plan and long-term strategies include goals for digital publicity. Via Weibo and WeChat, the museum shares content combining text, images, and videos to raise awareness on cultural relic protection, collection management, and cultural policies. Key occasions such as Cultural and Natural Heritage Day, official openings, traditional festivals, public education activities, and inter-museum exchanges are used to launch "Weekly Cultural Relics" video campaigns on platforms including WeChat Video, Douyin, and Kuaishou.

To expand the market for cultural tourism products, local companies in Longnan have opened online stores on platforms like Taobao and joined "Long Xiaonan," the regional e-commerce platform. These initiatives help promote specialty cultural products and expand market reach. By using online stores and digital marketing, sales of local specialties and cultural-creative goods have increased, further driving the development of the digital economy.

Applying smart tourism technologies to enhance visitor interaction

Aksai County has successfully attracted large numbers of young tourists through social media campaigns and live streaming. The Boluo Zhuanjing Film Base utilizes digital tools to improve visitor experiences and management efficiency, launching the "Travel Aksai" smart tourism service platform, which integrates over 40 cultural-creative products and dozens of tourist activities into a one-stop digital solution.

Integrating cultural professionals for digital content creation

In Dunhuang, online cultural content is primarily driven by tourists, influencers, and travel bloggers, supplemented by local artists and cultural professionals. Shared content includes travel vlogs, short videos, and travel photography. These materials have performed well across social media platforms, contributing to the city's cultural visibility online.

5.2.5

Strengthening government support and attracting international capital

Government support for cultural industry development

The Zhangye municipal government actively supports local cultural enterprises such as Chuan Shi Jing Dian and Yunheng Embroidery Workshop by providing rent-free venues for product display and sales, helping small and micro businesses grow.

Aksai County launched the “Bring Visitors to Aksai” policy, forming partnerships with over 2,600 travel agencies nationwide and issuing 220,000 CNY in incentive funds, significantly boosting tourism at Boluo Zhuanjing Film Base. In 2024, the county generated 850 million CNY in tourism revenue, with significant proportion contributed by the film base. The county also established a cultural-tourism innovation hub, incubating over 50 cultural tourism enterprises and providing e-commerce support to help expand sales channels and enhance the competitiveness of Boluo Zhuanjing's cultural products.

Enhancing cultural preservation through international cooperation and public participation

The Longnan municipal government partnered with Chongqing Xiangshe Homestay Management Co., Ltd. in the construction and management of scenic areas, investing 15 million CNY in site development. Revenue is shared, with 70 per cent going to the company and 30 per cent to local villagers, creating a win-win model that empowers rural economies through cultural industries.

The Tianshui Dadiwan National Archaeological Site Park adopted a PPP (Public-Private Partnership) model for financing, with a total investment of four billion CNY. The project includes visitor centres, tourism roads, performance plazas, and a museum on farming culture. It is expected to generate 50 million CNY in annual revenue. After being successfully added to China's 14th Five-Year Plan list for cultural heritage protection and utilization, the project now contributes significantly to high-quality regional cultural tourism development.

Maijishan Grottoes, as a key national cultural heritage protection unit, have benefited from strong government backing. Core financial support includes national and provincial heritage protection funds, covering cultural tourism, social security, public health, and housing. The Maijishan Research Institute has also established international partnerships, bringing in advanced conservation technologies and management training, which have greatly improved protection efficiency and quality.

Cultural activities promote international exchange and investment

The Fuxi Temple in Tianshui operates with a funding model combining government and private sponsorships. On the first and fifteenth days of the Lunar New Year, it offers free admission to local residents. For the Fuxi Grand Worship Ceremony, influencers with over 30,000 online followers receive free access to promote the event. The annual public worship receives about 3 million CNY in government support, supplemented by local business and individual donations to ensure long-term sustainability.

Private worship relies heavily on local donations, including offerings from food companies and farmers. For instance, the 2019 Grand Ceremony had a total budget of 18 million CNY, with five million CNY raised from local enterprises and individuals. Despite funding and policy challenges, diversified sources of financial support and strict limits on commercial activity have maintained the event's continuity and independence, strengthening the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage.

A strong network of organizations, including the Tianshui Museum, local cultural associations, and the Shangyuan Society, ensures both the traditional and official activities of the festival remain vibrant. These groups promote cultural exchange among Chinese communities worldwide, including in Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asia, and elevate Tianshui's profile in international cultural diplomacy.

5.2.6

Innovating cultural IP display and impacts on CCIs

Digital cultural-tourism promotion and unique IP creation

Zhangye City actively promotes its cultural-tourism brand by implementing the “Attract Visitors to Zhangye” policy and establishing a promotional model based on themed events, “IP Day, Performance Week, Exhibition Month, Marketing Season, and Promotion Year,” to develop an all-area tourism demonstration zone.

Longnan Fengwu Co., Ltd. has developed digital cultural IPs such as the “Gaoshan Opera Series,” “Yuhe Golden Snub-Nosed Monkey,” “Wudu Olive,” and “Wudu Sichuan Pepper.” These have been deeply developed using VR and experiential marketing to create culturally distinctive symbols.

Dunhuang Museum has leveraged IP licensing and cross-sector collaborations with major domestic and international brands. Examples include the launch of products like the “Dunhuang Silk Scarf” with Tencent, Dunhuang-themed game skins in Honor of Kings, and the “Digital Scripture Cave” project, bringing Dunhuang culture into the mainstream consumer market through creative innovation.



Longnan Local Cultural Tourism Creative Development Co., Ltd. ©WHITR-AP Beijing

IP licensing system and industry chain expansion

The Dunhuang Research Academy has built a robust cultural IP licensing system and partnered with brands such as Huawei, Tencent, Bestore, and LEICA to develop over 20 co-branded products. Through multi-channel marketing, the influence of Dunhuang culture has been greatly expanded. Additionally, collaborations with the Hunan TV variety show 100 Lights and the animated film Creation of the Gods: Yang Jian have introduced Dunhuang culture to younger audiences via television and animation.

The Silk Road Souvenirs initiative has used digital technology and modern marketing strategies, such as co-hosting a special “Colours of Dunhuang” livestream with Tmall, to promote Dunhuang relics in the digital sphere and drive the commercialization of cultural-creative products.

Developing rural cultural IP and integrating cultural-tourism

Qin'an County, Tianshui, has cultivated rural ICH industries, such as wheat straw weaving, pottery, and grass weaving, through heritage transmission and tourism-linked cultural product development, creating jobs and diversifying the rural economy. By integrating events like the Peach Blossom Festival and Nuwa Culture Festival, the county has developed rural revitalization demonstration projects such as Peony Garden, Xing Tree Bay, and Cultural-Tourism-Agriculture-Health Towns. These projects enhance village recognition and increase local income, demonstrating the value of cultural-tourism IP in rural revitalization.

Longnan Fengwu Co., Ltd. has made its cultural IPs, “Gaoshan Opera Series,” “Yuhe Elves” (golden snub-nosed monkeys), “Wudu Olive,” and “Wudu Sichuan Pepper”, major cultural symbols for tourism promotion. The company focuses on developing derivative cultural-tourism products and specialty agricultural product packaging, guided by a model of “IP Creation + Derivative Product Design + Online-Offline New Retail Channels.” It integrates local elements and applies VR and experiential marketing to establish influential cultural branding rooted in Longnan.

5.2.7

Expanding performing arts to enhance international influence

Strengthening innovation in traditional music and university collaboration

Ganzhou Ballads, a key traditional music form in Zhangye, have been digitally archived and published by Gansu Audio-Visual Publishing House through efforts led by cultural practitioners. These arrangements not only modernize the repertoire but also attract university faculty and students from institutions such as Lanzhou University, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, and Beijing Conservatory of Music to conduct field research and artistic reinterpretation. Cultural practitioner Jiancheng Li is a visiting professor at Hexi University. He actively promotes academic study of the ballads and integrates them into research topics. He also leads a performance troupe and works with professional directors and stage designers to diversify stage presentations, raising the profile and artistic impact of this intangible heritage.

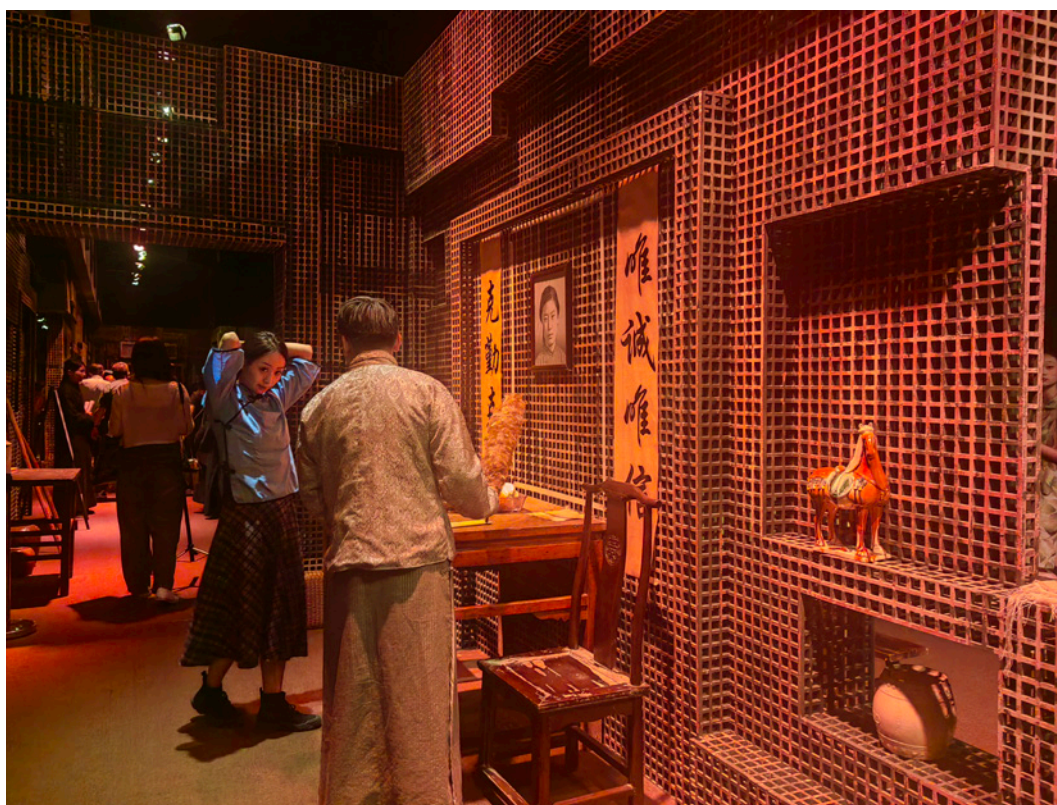
Expanding local cultural influence through dissemination and IP licensing

Gansu Xiyou Cultural Media Co., Ltd. follows a “Creativity + Service, Industry Empowerment” strategy to integrate diverse cultural resources and offer 360° full-service cultural solutions. Its promotional films and cultural products have received wide acclaim, especially short videos featuring Yugur ethnic culture and Zhangye’s cultural-tourism themes, significantly boosting the city’s visibility.

Longnan’s ICH centre collaborates with schools to organize heritage performances and site visits, fostering youth appreciation for local culture. By hosting study tours, such as the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles Rural Revitalization Talent Program, the centre expands national awareness of local arts. The Beiwai 33° Troupe, a local ICH group, has reimagined Gaoshan Opera by blending modern music elements to create a new performance style and broaden its audience.

Cultural policies supporting ICH development

Maiji District, Tianshui, has implemented policies to empower cultural industries and support rural revitalisation. These include government investment in the Yellow River Lacquerware Industrial Park and collaboration with Siku Cultural Development Group to produce Eternal Tianshui. These initiatives promote the commercialisation of cultural resources and integrate traditional performing arts into modern creative industries. Government support has attracted social capital and professional teams, increasing the market value and international competitiveness of cultural projects, paving the way for local cultural arts to gain global recognition.



Tianshui Eternal Show ©WHITR-AP Beijing

5.3

Social Benefits

Case studies from nine regions in Gansu Province demonstrate that CCIs are not only a significant driving force for economic development but also play a vital role in enriching cultural life, fostering community understanding, promoting social equity, and enhancing well-being and social cohesion. Through government policy support, participation of civil society organisations, and active community involvement, these regions have effectively developed and utilised their cultural resources, strengthening cultural identity and advancing social development. Looking ahead, further interregional collaboration and optimized resource allocation can ensure that CCIs continue to expand their social impact and benefit a broader population.

5.3.1

Enriching residents' cultural life and deepening community cultural foundations

As a key force in promoting social development, the CCIs have greatly contributed to enriching local cultural life. Through diverse cultural activities, improvements in public cultural infrastructure, and the promotion of intangible cultural heritage, these are expanding opportunities for public participation, making culture an integral part of everyday life.

The industries have enabled full utilization of cultural resources through multi-tiered cultural communication networks. For example, the Zhangye Museum and ICH Centre provide rehearsal and performance spaces for intangible cultural heritage transmission, while also actively promoting cultural outreach through programs targeting schools, communities, military bases, and rural towns. Public performances and educational campaigns have broadened access to cultural experiences, significantly enriching the spiritual and cultural life of residents. In Tongwei County, Dingxi, the “ICH Going to the Countryside” pro-

gram has brought craft-based ICH practitioners into rural areas to offer training sessions, while performing arts-based ICH practitioners have delivered engaging performances in villages through the support of museums and cultural centres. These efforts have greatly enhanced cultural life in rural communities, offering more opportunities for entertainment and learning.

Grassroots cultural activities across regions are fostering the development of a cultural society. In Maiji District, Tianshui, traditional festivals such as the Guatai Mountain folk ritual and Spring Festival “Shehuo” celebrations have been supplemented by public-benefit programs such as “Bringing Theatre to the Countryside” and the “Three Rural Campaigns” (culture, science, health). The district also launched the “Ancient Charm of Maiji” Intangible Cultural heritage showcase to promote techniques like wood carving, paper cutting, lacquer carving, and New Year paintings, along with traditional performances such as Maiji opera, martial arts, and Guqin music. These performances and craft demonstrations have sparked public enthusiasm and reinforced a shared sense of cultural identity. In Qin’an County, cultural and folk festivals are combined with sports competitions to enrich public life, for example, the 2022 Gansu Chess Championship and National Amateur King’s Cup Chess Tournament Gansu Preliminaries were held during the Nuwa Cultural Tourism Festival, increasing public access to recreational and cultural events.

The expansion of public cultural institutions has provided foundational support for cultural life. In Maiji District, Tianshui, policies ensuring free access to cultural centres, libraries, and museums have promoted cultural resource sharing. By integrating online and offline services, these institutions organise art performances, reading programs, and educational exhibitions. Courses in painting, musical instruments, and dance offered at cultural centres provide grassroots communities with access to arts education, fostering a stronger cultural atmosphere. Similarly, county-level cultural centres and township cultural stations in Tianshui have improved their facilities and offer free cultural services, regularly hosting traditional opera and dance events, thereby providing residents with diverse and convenient cultural experiences.

In summary, Gansu Province’s CCIs have enriched residents’ lives by integrating cultural resources, promoting public-benefit cultural initiatives, and developing cultural infrastructure. These cultural practices have enhanced residents’ cultural literacy and deepened their sense of identity, positioning culture as a vital force for promoting social harmony and sustainable development.

5.3.2

Enhancing community understanding and strengthening cultural identity

CCIs not only provide opportunities for residents to learn, pass on, and express local culture, but also foster a shared sense of cultural identity within communities. Through active participation in cultural and creative activities, community members engage in self-expression while deepening their understanding of local history, culture, and identity. This is particularly impactful for younger generations, who, through cultural practices, strengthen their connection to their communities and develop greater cultural awareness and confidence.

Cultural experiences foster community understanding

CCIs promote greater community understanding through educational travel, cultural exchange, and outreach programs, allowing residents to gain deeper insights into their own culture while enhancing inter-community dialogue.

In Subei Mongolian Autonomous County, Jiuquan, through engagement with visiting educational groups, local residents share personal stories and cultural customs. This mutual exchange not only deepens outsiders' understanding of Subei Mongolian culture but also helps locals rediscover and cherish their cultural heritage. Young people, in particular, have come to appreciate the unique value of their ethnic traditions through such exchanges, reinforcing their sense of cultural identity.

In Lintao County, Dingxi, the “museum-school cooperation” model has advanced the transmission and development of cultural heritage. Long-term partnerships between public cultural institutions and schools allow youth to interact directly with local heritage. For example, the Lintao County Museum and local schools co-developed a curriculum on the Majiayao culture, helping students understand the value of cultural heritage and inspiring them to actively engage in its preservation. This initiative has improved cultural education and strengthened students' integration into the local cultural fabric.

In Longnan, Chengzhou Dough Sculpture, a provincial-level ICH, has been preserved and innovated through studios such as that of practitioner Qiuping An. Local youth are introduced to the artistry and cultural value of dough sculpture through workshops and training programs.

In Dunhuang, vibrant cultural festivals and artisanal showcases enable deep community involvement in cultural transmission. The Dunhuang Museum not only displays historical relics but also organises docent programs and cultural lectures that engage both students and residents. These immersive experiences transform community members into active cultural practitioners and storytellers, strengthening their sense of belonging and reinforcing cultural identity.

Cultural practices reinforce belonging and identity

Beyond education, CCIs foster a sense of community by encouraging residents to take part in cultural activities that affirm local identity.

In Aksai County, Jiuquan, facilities such as the Kazakh Cultural Experience Centre, Aksai Cultural Centre and horse racing track have helped residents reconnect with their cultural roots. The promotion of traditional music, embroidery, sports and lifestyle through educational tourism has revitalized these practices. Women from ethnic minorities who participate in embroidery cooperatives and cultural programs not only gain economic benefits but also develop a deeper sense of self-worth and cultural pride.

In Guazhou County, Jiuquan, the Caosheng Ancient Calligraphy Cultural Industry Park has revitalised the transmission and promotion of calligraphy. Residents witness the growing domestic and international influence of this art form and take part in cultural and educational programs, such as calligraphy workshop at the local cultural centres. Calligraphy has become a vital tool for self-expression and historical storytelling, strengthening their sense of connection to the community and cultural identity.

In Qin'an County, Tianshui, the Dadiwan Museum launched a “Junior Volunteer” program and interactive activities that engage youth in heritage protection. Programs such as simulated archaeological digs at the Dadiwan Study Base spark interest in history and cultivate pride in cultural heritage. Moreover, the county has introduced intangible heritage into schools, establishing 30 student clubs focused on arts like Tai Chi, paper cutting, traditional stick arts, and straw weaving, providing platforms for cultural practice and reinforcing cultural confidence and identity among the younger generation.

Overall, the CCIs have transformed residents from “cultural spectators” into “cultural participants,” shifting cultural identity from passive awareness to active ownership. Whether through educational programs, heritage transmission,

or community festivals, residents engage in cultural dialogue, deepen their understanding of traditions, and strengthen community cohesion and cultural confidence. This cultivation of cultural subjectivity encourages residents to value their heritage and participate in its preservation and innovation, continually reinforcing a shared sense of identity.



Intangible Cultural Heritage Practice of Aksai Kazakh Ethnicity ©WHITR-AP Beijing

Master Restorer Changyou Mou and the Art of the Maijishan Grottoes

A powerful example of how CCIs enhance community understanding and identity is found in Maijishan Grottoes, where restoration practices have preserved valuable heritage and strengthened cultural ties.

Changyou Mou, a third-generation practitioner of the Maijishan grotto restoration technique and senior restorer from Tianshui, has spent over 40 years restoring 23 grottoes using local materials like wheat straw, flax, and loess, guided by the principles of historical authenticity and minimal intervention. His craftsmanship reflects a deep connection between local culture and the natural environment, reinforcing the community's understanding of its cultural values.

On 7 September 2022, Mou's story was featured on Tencent Charity's WeChat platform, highlighting both the traditional skills and personal dedication behind cultural preservation. This brought wide recognition to the profession and inspired a renewed sense of responsibility among local residents.

Mou has taken on an apprentice, Ju He, to whom he is passing down restoration techniques, ensuring intergenerational transmission and enabling young people to rediscover their cultural roots through practice.

Since the Maijishan Grotto Art Research Institute was merged with the Dunhuang Research Academy in 2017, the restoration team has grown to include multidisciplinary professionals. This modernization of restoration practices not only raises the standard of heritage conservation but also encourages local residents to recognize the global value of their cultural legacy, fostering a broader sense of pride and identity.

The Maijishan experience demonstrates that CCIs are more than tools for preservation. They are bridges that foster understanding, belonging, and cultural pride within the community.

5.3.3

Empowering vulnerable groups and promoting social equity and inclusion

CCIs play a vital role in promoting social equity and inclusive development, especially in empowering marginalized groups, narrowing the urban-rural divide, and promoting the equitable distribution of social resources. By providing employment opportunities, supporting skills training, and implementing targeted policies, these industries help rural residents, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged groups achieve more equitable development. They enable individuals to realize their personal value through cultural creation and integrate into broader social networks.

Through market-oriented operations and innovative models, CCIs allow vulnerable groups to leverage cultural resources for development opportunities and social recognition.

In Dunhuang, Mogaoli Artisan Village and Crescent Moon Spring Town offer platforms for artisans and artists to showcase and sell their work while also creating local job opportunities.

In Qin'an County, Tianshui, historical and cultural resources have been transformed into new drivers of poverty alleviation and development. By integrating ICH transmission, cultural tourism product development, and rural tourism projects, the county has promoted diverse models such as “farmers + online shops” and the development of Qin'an handicraft IPs. These have helped cultivate ICH industries including wheat straw weaving, pottery, and grass weaving, expanding villagers' employment options and encouraging rural economic diversification.

In Aksai and Subei Counties, Jiuquan, women from ethnic minorities have gained new economic opportunities and social status through the commercialization of traditional crafts and cultural heritage.

CCIs have created job opportunities for rural and remote populations, reduced the urban-rural gap, and encouraged the equitable participation of different social groups, thus making a positive contribution to social equity.

Government policies play a crucial role in ensuring equitable development within CCIs. In Zhangye, policies aim to enhance the participation of vulnerable groups by ensuring their rights and opportunities are protected. The 14th Five-Year Plan for the Protection and Development of Persons with Disabilities in

Zhangye focuses on employment for persons with disabilities. Initiatives such as the Ten Support Plans launched by the municipal Disabled Persons' Federation, including the Brand Building and Industry Revitalization Plan, are cultivating new cultural-creative brands that enable high-quality employment for people with disabilities. Policies also encourage the creation of cultural-creative bases that can employ persons with disabilities and support their involvement in the preservation and transmission of ICH, concretely promoting inclusion and equality. Additionally, Zhangye encourages social organizations to participate in public cultural services. Through government procurement of services, social forces are supported in delivering cultural programs. This diversified service model enhances innovation in cultural delivery while providing vulnerable groups with platforms for participation and self-expression.

In Longnan, a small business loan subsidy policy provides fair development opportunities for cultural and creative practitioners, regardless of their socio-economic status, ensuring they have access to the resources needed for growth. These equal opportunities enable artisans and cultural workers to develop their skills and compete in the marketplace, advancing the preservation and evolution of traditional craftsmanship. For instance, Wudu wood carving ICH practitioners Yujiao Wang has maintained and expanded her studio thanks to government support. She mentors apprentices and preserves the craft's heritage. This support not only fosters the development of traditional craftsmanship but also creates participation and benefit-sharing opportunities for people across social strata, embodying the principle of social equity. It helps reduce disparities between social classes, promotes balanced resource allocation, and enhances overall social harmony and stability.

Overall, CCIs have not only enriched the socio-economic landscape of Gansu Province but have also empowered vulnerable populations and ensured equal opportunities for community members to express themselves. These developments provide strong support for advancing social equity and inclusion and contribute to sustainable development across society.

Yanhong Pu of Zhangye and the Transmission of Paper-Cutting Art

The Potential of CCIs in Empowering Vulnerable Groups and Fostering Inclusive Growth

Yanhong Pu, a resident of Zhangye, was affected by illness from an early age, but she never gave up her passion for art and life. Through persistent study and practice, she mastered the art of paper-cutting and gained widespread recognition, earning titles such as “Rural Artisan of Gansu Province” and receiving multiple awards.

Pu actively participates in public welfare and training programs, teaching paper-cutting to others, especially rural left-behind women. This has not only increased their household incomes and improved living standards but also promoted the wider dissemination and preservation of paper-cutting art.

Her story exemplifies the important role of CCIs in fostering social participation and economic empowerment. As a microcosm of increasing participation by vulnerable groups in Zhangye’s cultural and creative sector, Pu’s experience demonstrates the valuable contributions such individuals can make to society and the potential of cultural industries to support inclusive social growth.

By providing more support and opportunities, society can further unleash the creativity and enthusiasm of marginalized groups, jointly advancing cultural prosperity and diversify social development.

5.3.4

Enhancing residents’ wellbeing and strengthening community cohesion

CCIs enhance residents’ wellbeing through diverse, participatory cultural practices, while also strengthening community cohesion by fostering deep social connections through cultural engagement.

The intrinsic power of culture enriches the human spirit, allowing individuals to experience fulfilment and happiness through cultural participation.

In Aksai County, Kazakh women find personal value through embroidery cooperatives, using their craftsmanship to express themselves.

In Subei County, local Mongolian ethnic youth groups rediscover their cultural identity and explore new opportunities through study tour programs.

In Guazhou County, residents establish cultural connections with the broader world through calligraphy. This sense of well-being derives not only from material gain but also from the richness of cultural identity and social interaction, helping people find inner peace and spiritual satisfaction in their daily lives.

In Longnan, the ICH centre offers free public courses and interactive activities, enabling both youth and tourists to engage closely with traditional skills. The sense of achievement and satisfaction gained from these experiences contributes significantly to overall happiness. Through the development of CCIs, residents now enjoy greater access to cultural products and services in daily life.

In Dunhuang, community cultural activities have become an integral part of daily life for many residents. From cultural-creative street markets to local festivals, people are no longer passive spectators but active participants. These cultural experiences allow residents to immerse themselves in Dunhuang's unique cultural atmosphere and foster a stronger connection to the city's historical legacy. CCIs have made culture more than just a relic in a museum, it is now a dynamic part of daily life, thereby improving residents' quality of life and happiness. This improvement in subjective well-being reflects broader efforts in community building and social equity. Through rich cultural programming, accessible public services, and comprehensive social support, residents enjoy a higher quality of life, which in turn increases their satisfaction and happiness. This well-being is not only a personal psychological state but also an indicator of healthy community development.

Culture is not merely something to be displayed, it is also a vital link between community members.

In Dunhuang, the cultural-creative stalls at the night market are not only windows into local cultural heritage but also key spaces for social interaction, fostering stronger neighbourly ties. Through collaboration and shared business activities, residents form close-knit relationships, bringing warmth and vitality to the community. Culture thus becomes an important bridge connecting people.

In Aksai, Subei, and Guazhou Counties, cultural events like festivals, study tours, tourism, and community programs bring people together through shared participation. These bonds extend beyond cultural events into everyday interactions and

cooperation, enhancing mutual trust and support among community members.

In Longnan, organizing and participating in cultural activities has further strengthened community cohesion. Study tours organized by museums and interactive exhibitions at ICH centres provide valuable opportunities for collaboration and communication. These activities not only allow residents to express themselves and explore their creativity, but also foster stronger social networks through collective involvement in heritage protection and cultural innovation. The safeguarding and performance of Gaoshan Opera, for instance, is more than a cultural tradition, it's a shared community event. Both amateur and professional troupes attract wide participation from locals, who form strong bonds through rehearsal and performance, working together to sustain this traditional art form.

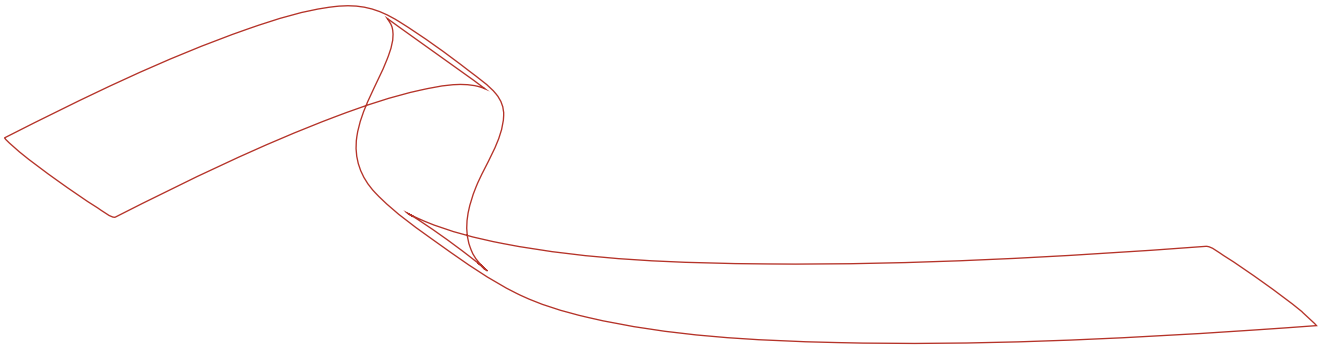
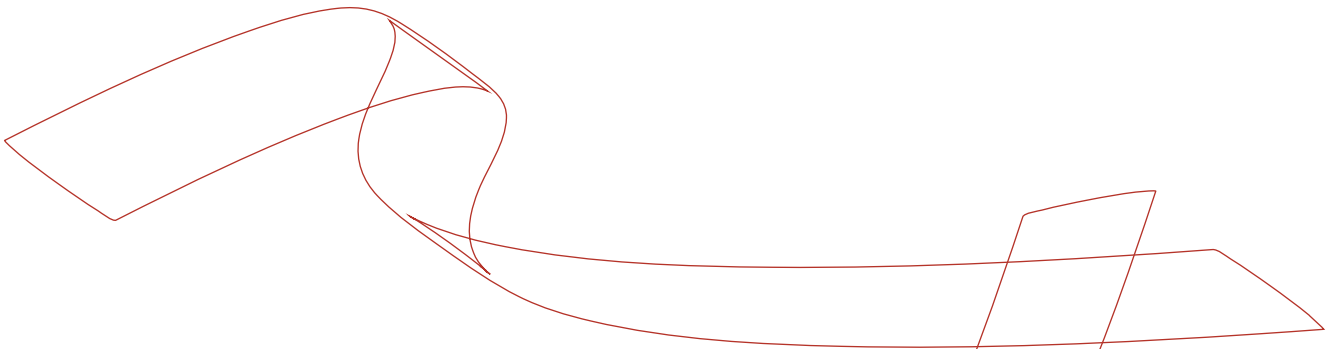
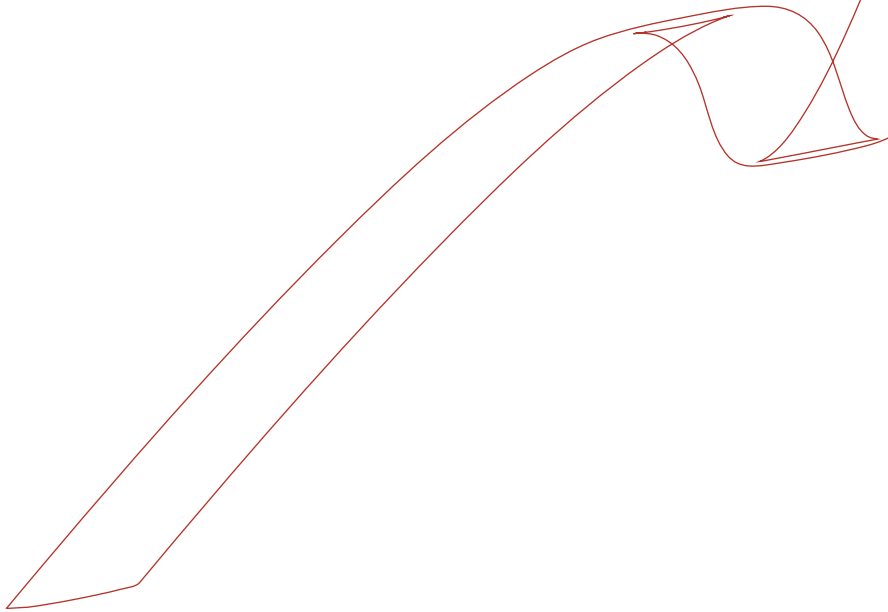
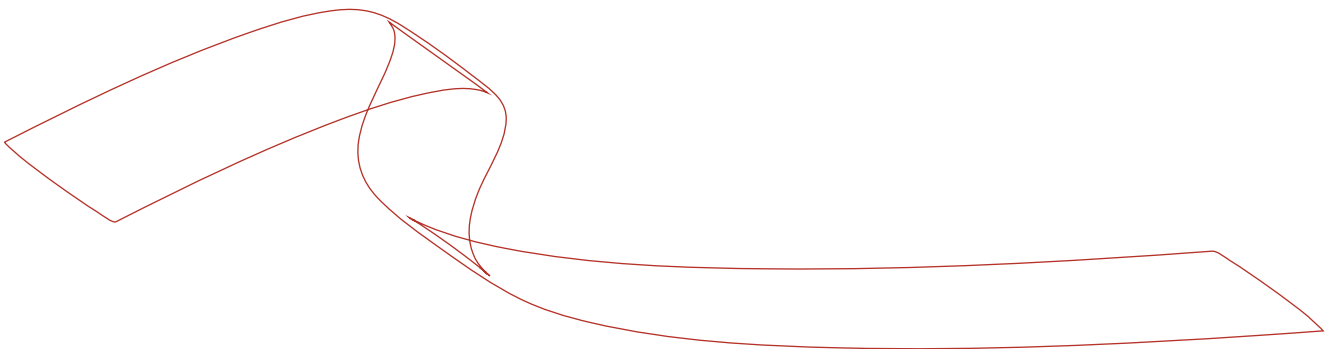
In summary, the protection of cultural heritage and the development of CCIs have significantly enhanced the well-being and community cohesion of people across Gansu Province. The prosperity of local CCIs not only improves residents' quality of spiritual life but also builds closer interpersonal networks at the community level. Cultural practices and CCIs help residents find a sense of belonging while promoting community interaction and cooperation, thus strengthening social cohesion and positioning culture as a key driver of social harmony and sustainable development.



Gaoshan Opera Series ©Wang Zhengying







Chapter 6

Policy Recommendations



Mogao Caves © Shichun Wang

6.1

Overview

This chapter outlines a comprehensive and integrated framework of policy strategies. Recognizing Gansu Province's unique position as a cradle of intercultural dialogue and a repository of immense tangible and intangible cultural heritage, these recommendations are structured to move from foundational development to holistic empowerment, ensuring that growth is inclusive, culturally rooted, and technologically advanced. The proposed policy framework is built upon seven core policy goals: strengthening institutional capacity and strategic partnerships; integrating investments and initiatives; boosting the cultural creative economy; fostering coordinated regional development; facilitating mutual learning among civilizations; synergize the conservation, management, and appropriate use of cultural heritage with the enhancement of local social wellbeing, ensuring inclusive, sustainable, and culturally-sensitive development.

The proposed strategies begin by strengthening the core foundation: incorporating heritage into local development plans (S1) and making strategic investments in physical and digital infrastructure (S2, S6). This foundation enables the activation of Gansu's cultural resources through the safeguarding of intangible heritage (S3) and the robust support of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) (S4, S9). These efforts are synergized to develop a cohesive provincial cultural tourism brand (S5).

Crucially, these strategies are underpinned by a commitment to people-centered development: enhancing capacity building (S7) ensures local ownership and skills development, while promoting an inclusive economy (S8) guarantees that the benefits of growth are widely shared, enhancing social wellbeing and ensuring no one is left behind.

Collectively, these nine strategies form a virtuous cycle designed to transform Gansu into a leading example of how cultural heritage and creative innovation can drive sustainable economic development, foster social cohesion, and facilitate meaningful dialogue among civilizations.

6.2

Policy goals

1.
Strengthen institutional and capacity building (including development and maintaining of strategic partnership)
2.
Integrate existing and potential investments and initiatives
3.
Boost the cultural creative economy
4.
Foster coordinated regional development
5.
Facilitate mutual learning and exchange among civilizations
6.
Enhance local social wellbeing
7.
Synergise the conservation, management and appropriate use of cultural heritage

6.3

Policy recommendations

Strategy 1:

Incorporate management and use of heritage places in local development plans

Gansu boasts rich cultural heritage resources, which serve as a vital pillar for its urban development and industrial restructuring. This strategy is proposed to synergize development and conservation efforts around heritage assets such that balanced and sustainable goals can be met.

Key actions

1.1 Establish common goals and priorities for development projects involving heritage resources to balance development, conservation, and other needs

Development projects involving cultural heritage resources need to balance multiple demands and objectives, and clearly identify the heritage resources involved and conduct feasibility studies. Stakeholders, including government agencies, developers, community representatives, heritage experts, and the public, should be convened to jointly establish the project's goals and priorities, ensuring inclusive and transparent decision-making.

1.2 Strengthen legislative framework to incorporate conservation and utilisation of cultural heritage in regional development strategies and plans

Utilize and improve existing regulations and policies that integrate the protection and utilization of cultural heritage with comprehensive development plans, such as the incorporation of the protection of historical and cultural heritage resources in the national territorial spatial planning system to establish a unified framework for spatial development and conservation.

1.3 Streamline administrative procedures and oversight for development projects at heritage sites involving multiple stakeholders

The current regulatory system in Gansu related to heritage conservation, utilization, and associated development projects involve numerous departments with overlapping responsibilities. The management structure varies across counties and cities, and different administrative bodies possess varying levels of understanding of project details. there is a need to simplify the administrative procedures and processes for development projects involving cultural heritage resources, coordinate the managerial responsibilities of different administrative departments, and coordinate participation mechanisms and information accessibility for all stakeholders, ensuring inclusive and transparent management and decision-making.

1.4 Implement a monitoring and periodic reporting system for development projects status and heritage sites conditions to enable dynamic adjustment and optimization of project goals and work plans

Once the framework, objectives, and key tasks of a development project have been established, ongoing monitoring of both project progress and its impact on the heritage site shall be implemented. Monitoring data and findings shall be reported regularly to relevant administrative authorities and involved stakeholders. Based on these reports, consultation meetings shall be convened to review the status of the project and the heritage site, reassess priorities, work plans, and funding arrangements, and make necessary adjustments and optimisations to the project.

1.5 Establish a multi-disciplinary expert network to provide consultation, and to guide and review the identified projects

Development projects involving cultural heritage resources need to balance multiple interests and demands, requiring experts from various disciplines to provide consultation, guidance, and regular reviews of project progress and status. In addition to experts from heritage conservation, architecture, archaeology, tourism, urban and rural planning, community leaders and organizations that live, work, manage, use or have other interests in the project/site that can represent the local communities should be included.

Goals served

- *Strengthen institutional and capacity building*
- *Integrate existing and potential investments and initiatives*
- *Foster coordinated regional development*
- *Enhance local social wellbeing*
- *Synergise the conservation, management and appropriate use of cultural heritage*

Expected results/outcomes

- *Coordinate resources and efforts to better protect, manage and utilise heritage assets for local economic development*
- *Enhance public-private partnerships in heritage-based development projects*
- *Avoid resources misallocation and grey areas in legislation in heritage-related cultural and economic on development initiatives*

Strategy 2: Investment in infrastructural facilities

This strategy aims to stimulate regional development through critical investments in local infrastructure that supports the development of cultural, tourism and creative industries in Gansu.

Key actions

2.1 Prioritize critical investments in small and medium scale infrastructures in project areas that are underdeveloped, below poverty line and connect with major regional centres, plugging into the major regional infrastructure network

Select strategic investment locations within Gansu Province, prioritize economically underdeveloped and poverty-stricken areas, leveraging small and medium-scale infrastructure investment projects to drive local economic and social developments. Selected locations should be strategically connected to more developed regional centres, enabling the formation of an inter-linked regional infrastructure network.

For example, the Greater Dunhuang Cultural Circle centred around Dunhuang, can be strengthened through key infrastructure linkages with surrounding counties and cities such as Aksai, Subei, and Guazhou to create synergistic development effects. Dunhuang can leverage heritage resources such as the Xuanquan Post Site and collaborate with Guazhou County- home to the Yulin Grottoes and Suoyang City- to jointly develop tourism routes like the “Dunhuang Tourism East Line” and “Symphonic Silk Road Line 1” via the Xuanyuan Expressway, enhancing resource connectivity and tourism integration. The Xuanquan Post Site is planned to partner with institutions such as Gansu Provincial Museum, Gansu Bamboo Slips Museum, thereby expanding its

cultural influence.

2.2 Construct physical infrastructure that facilitates the growth of the CCIs

Relevant infrastructure development may include facilities such as exhibition and performance spaces, training venues, and MSE incubation centres, as well as spaces dedicated to the production, display and sales of cultural creative products. Such infrastructure should particularly focus on building platforms that connect practitioners of intangible cultural heritage with market demand.

2.3 Support regeneration of historic towns and villages through infrastructure investment

Gansu boasts abundant historic towns and villages, yet regional developments remain markedly imbalanced. Economic, social, and cultural revitalisation of urban and rural areas can be achieved through improving infrastructure and services, transportation accessibility, and integrating these areas into tourism circuit planning, restoration of historic properties, developing tourism and community facilities.

2.4 Upgrade infrastructure at existing cultural facilities and heritage site to increase revenue and enhance appreciation of heritage values

Most cultural heritage sites in Gansu already possess a certain level of infrastructure. However, current facilities often fall short in enhancing visitor experiences, supporting the CCIs, and showcasing local intangible cultural heritage. Many cultural-creative spaces or shops within these sites are often filled with mass-produced tourist souvenirs, while distinctive local ICH products and original creative designs are not adequately displayed or presented to the consumers. A case in point is the Zhangye Danxia National Geopark, which attracts large volumes of visitors, yet it falls short in promoting other lesser-known tangible and intangible heritage assets within Zhangye, representing a missed opportunity to generate a broader regional ripple effect and strengthen both local economic benefits and heritage awareness.

Goals served

- *Integrate existing and potential investments and initiatives*
- *Boost the cultural creative economy*
- *Foster coordinated regional development*
- *Enhance local social wellbeing*

Expected results/outcomes

- *Improve local living conditions, increased income for the CCIs and development of the heritage tourism economy*

- *Advance urban-rural regeneration*
- *Connect underdeveloped region with major regional centres for more balanced regional development*
- *Expand and develop the cultural, tourism and creative industries*

Strategy 3: Safeguarding, transmission and innovation of intangible cultural heritage

Gansu is home to a rich and diverse array of intangible cultural heritage, supported by a network of heritage practitioners, folk performances, and art spaces. However, these cultural elements remain relatively fragmented. To ensure their effective protection, transmission, and innovation, it is imperative to adopt strategies aligned with urban development goals that enhance the visibility and international influence of local intangible cultural heritage.

Key actions

3.1 Optimise the age structure of heritage practitioners and improve overall competency level

Strengthen training on intangible cultural heritage knowledge for local youth in Gansu to enhance the competencies of young ICH enthusiasts, optimise the age structure of practitioners, ensuring sustainable development of traditional ICH skills. Beyond government financial support, local art spaces can collaborate with primary and secondary schools, as well as cultural centres, museums, and libraries, to launch social practice activities and boosting interest and participation in intangible cultural heritage among young people.

3.2 Strengthen promotion and publicity to enhance wider recognition

While safeguarding local ICH and festivals, visual design can be improved to better align with online communication trends. By integrating modern media and digital technologies, local intangible heritage can be combined with contemporary art and aesthetic trends to create more appealing and engaging forms of dissemination.

3.3 Design interactive experiences to attract ICH enthusiasts

In addition to static exhibitions, dynamic displays and interactive experiences should be introduced, such as trying on traditional costumes, photo zones, traditional craft workshops, and folk-dance classes, to enhance engagement and immersive experience. By promoting intangible heritage activities beyond Gansu, the province's culture can reach broader national and international audiences, attracting more outside enthusiasts.

3.4 Integrate "intangible cultural heritage + industry resources" to promote academic research and cultural tourism synergy

Establish research and exhibition bases for intangible heritage, regularly host academic seminars and forums to foster interdisciplinary collaboration, develop theoretical studies, and apply research outcomes to cultural tourism development. Encourage cooperation among universities, research institutions, and cultural tourism enterprises to create an innovative model that combines academic exchange, cultural product development, and commercial promotion.

3.5 Promote cross-regional development of intangible cultural activities to foster coordinated growth in Gansu

Develop ICH-themed cultural routes that include both well-known and lesser-known areas of Gansu, adopting a "leading the less-known with the well-known" strategy to boost overall cultural influence. Strengthen regional cooperation through common festivals and thematic events to enhance cultural resource sharing and regional integration.

Goals served

- *Integrate existing and potential investments and initiatives*
- *Boost the cultural creative economy*
- *Foster coordinated regional development*
- *Facilitate mutual learning and exchange among civilizations*
- *Enhance local social wellbeing*
- *Synergise the conservation, management and appropriate use of cultural heritage*

Expected results/outcomes

- *Optimize the ICH transmission system and promote deep integration with the young generations*
- *Strengthen the promotion and publicity of intangible heritage to enhance Gansu's international visibility*
- *Leverage ICH to enable high-quality cultural tourism development and achieve cross-regional synergistic and mutually beneficial growth*

Strategy 4:

Supporting CCIs

Gansu boasts profound and abundant historical and cultural resources. The development of CCIs can stimulate local capacities, invigorate urban and rural developments, meet the spiritual and cultural needs of the people, and promote the protection, transmission, and utilisation of Gansu's cultural heritage, thus contributing to sustainable development.

Key actions

4.1 Enhance the skills of cultural and creative workers, building a creative talent network

Strengthen education and training for creative professionals, particularly young people, with focus on developing digital skills. Promote dialogues and exchanges among scholars, creatives, and entrepreneurs to broaden cooperation. Foster interdepartmental collaboration by establishing communication networks that connect cultural management institutions, creative enterprises, local universities, and social organizations such as local women's associations and cultural associations. Facilitate talent exchange and cooperation across the CCIs, cultural heritage conservation, and tourism sectors to promote mutual learning, shared expertise and integration.

4.2 Accelerate the digital transformation of the CCIs

Establish an innovative digital transformation path characterized by the datafication of cultural assets, digitalization of cultural production, immersive cultural consumption, and contextualisation of cultural spaces. Attract digital creative talent and enterprises to stimulate the cultural and creative sector and foster new business models in the digital cultural industry.

4.3 Provide microfinance loans to support the development of creative enterprises

Lower thresholds and simplify procedures for loan issuance, offering more flexible financial support to creative workers, SMEs, persons with disabilities, and women. Increase funding support for cultural departments and formulate policies to attract private capital into public cultural services.

4.4 Support the cultivation and transformation of Gansu's intangible cultural heritage

Leverage Gansu's rich local cultural resources including traditional crafts, calligraphy, ink painting, jade carving, painted pottery, sculpture, wood carving, folk performances, traditional clothing, and cuisine to stimulate creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture, while creating local employment opportunities, especially for rural women.

4.5 Promote the integration of CCIs with ethnic minority cultures

As a historically multi-ethnic region, Gansu should strengthen the systematic safeguarding of intangible heritage elements and practitioners of ethnic minorities. Facilitate collaboration between creative professionals and ethnic minority artists to incorporate creative elements into ethnic cultures and enable market transformation, develop cultural products with distinct ethnic characteristics and strong market potential.

Goals served

- *Boost the cultural creative economy*
- *Foster coordinated regional development*
- *Enhance local social wellbeing*
- *Synergise the conservation, management and appropriate use of cultural heritage*

Expected results/outcomes

- *Leverage the CCIs to drive sustainable urban development and rural revitalisation*
- *Create employment opportunities to support flexible work for women, persons with disabilities, and others*
- *Realise the creative development and innovative transformation of Gansu's unique cultural identity*

Strategy 5: Develop provincial-wide cultural tourism

This strategy aims to enhance the role of the tourism industry in driving the economic, social, and cultural development of both urban and rural areas in Gansu, while promoting the appropriate utilisation and effective development of regional tourism resources.

Key actions

5.1 Develop the Silk Road tourism link

Leverage the unique characteristics of each city to foster a new tourism pattern in Gansu that features rich structural diversity, varied cultural-tourism activities, and a combination of large, medium, and small destinations. Develop new tourism routes, increase tourism-driven poverty alleviation efforts in underdeveloped areas, and implement innovative inclusive tourism models that empower locals to participate in and benefit from tourism development. Improve integration of tourism industry to extend tourist stays and enhance community livelihoods and well-being.

5.2 Improve all-for-one tourism services

Enhance infrastructure and transportation network development, optimize the business environment, and coordinate the functions of government bodies, scenic areas, enterprises, and the public to ensure inclusive and high-quality growth of the cultural tourism sector. Utilize digital technologies to upgrade the service system, including signage, navigation, and consumer platforms.

5.3 Strengthen branding and promotion of cultural tourism resources

Promote brand-building for Gansu's cultural tourism, enhance the visibility of renowned cultural IPs such as Dunhuang and Danxia, while cultivating new cultural tourism brands across the province.

5.4 Leverage the catalytic role of cultural heritage educational tourism

Educational tourism, combining academic learning with travel experiences, is a growing tourism model, with youth and family groups as the primary target group. In response to the educational tourism boom in China, the quality and sustainability of heritage-based education tourism can be ensured through better utilisation of heritage resources, development of study-tour bases, improve the supply of high-quality educational tourism products, and systematic training of instructors.

5.5 Establish Gansu as an international tourism destination

Capitalise on Gansu's geographic and cultural advantages as a key corridor on the Silk Road to integrate the cultural tourism industry into the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Deepen cooperation and exchanges with countries and regions along the BRI, and work towards fostering innovation and prosperity in the cultural tourism sector.

Goals served

- *Integrate existing and potential investments and initiatives*
- *Boost the cultural creative economy*
- *Foster coordinated regional development*
- *Facilitate mutual learning and exchange among civilizations*
- *Enhance local social wellbeing*
- *Synergise the conservation, management and appropriate use of cultural heritage*

Expected results/outcomes

- *Achieve balanced development between tourism development and heritage preservation*
- *Improve the livelihoods and well-being of local communities*
- *Integrate regional cultural and tourism resources leveraging cluster development impact while preserving local uniqueness*
- *Promote cultural exchange, mutual learning among civilizations, and international tourism cooperation*

Strategy 6: Strengthen digital infrastructure development and application

Gansu's current digital infrastructure is still in the early stages. Cultural resources remain fragmented, and online accessibility still have room for improvement. Digital infrastructure development can help to advance the popularisation of cultural heritage education, foster new business models in digital economy and enhance Gansu's cultural influence.

Key actions

6.1 Establish and improve digital infrastructure development to foster new business model in the digital economy

Accelerate the construction of digital infrastructure such as 5G networks and e-commerce platforms, provide relevant trainings and tools to enable rural and remote communities to leverage e-commerce for selling local specialty products. This initiative can broaden employment channels and establish a more inclusive and balanced economic development model.

6.2 Establish and improve online heritage databases with AI and large model integration

Advance the digital preservation of cultural heritage by building online databases. Utilize AI and large models for intelligent classification, organization, and archiving, enabling automated recording and dynamic updates to ensure accurate preservation and efficient retrieval of ICH information. In addition, blockchain technology can help to provide accurate locations of ICH and traditional knowledge, helping to protect intellectual properties of ICH practitioners and local creators.

6.3 Improve database transparency, public accessibility and user experience

While meeting government management requirements, increase data transparency and accessibility. Establish user feedback and evaluation mechanisms, optimise user interface design and workflow, and enhance user experience for researchers, cultural media, and the public. Provide access to selected database resources for heritage education and community participation.

6.4 Integrate regional databases and enhance their visibility

Promote the integration of cultural heritage databases across different regions in Gansu to establish a unified, shared platform that improves data inter-operability and management efficiency. Expand the social impact of the integrated database through media outreach and social media engagement, supporting collaborative construction and regional integration of cultural heritage.

6.5 Improve online exhibition design and facilitate interregional technical support

For economically underdeveloped areas in Gansu, enhance technical support for online exhibitions. Well-resourced regions can assist others with digital exhibition technologies, using VR, AR, and other innovative methods to enrich exhibition experiences. Establish mechanisms for cross-regional cooperation to promote the sharing and cultivation of technical talent.

6.6 Foster digital collaboration in the cultural industry and create heritage-based IP

Promote collaboration with the film, television, gaming, and animation industries to develop globally appealing digital IP based on Gansu's heritage, historical narratives, and regional characteristics. Encourage local cultural enterprises to invest in digital creative initiatives, driving the transformation of Gansu's cultural sector from presentation of traditions into a dynamic creative economy.

Goals served

- *Strengthen institutional and capacity building*
- *Boost the cultural creative economy*
- *Foster coordinated regional development*
- *Facilitate mutual learning and exchange among civilizations*
- *Enhance local social wellbeing*
- *Synergise the conservation, management and appropriate use of cultural heritage*

Expected results/outcomes

- *Advance the construction of Gansu's heritage database, improving cultural resource management and research efficiency*
- *Optimize new media platforms and foster new business models in digital economy*
- *Improve public accessibility and promote knowledge dissemination and civic engagement*
- *Build a cultural and creative ecosystem that supports the international promotion of Gansu heritage-based IPs*

Strategy 7: Enhance capacity building

Strengthening capacity building is key to cultivating local talent, especially high-level professionals, and retaining them at the grassroots level, particularly in underdeveloped regions.

Key actions

7.1 Increase investment in capacity training and talent exchange, and include such indicators in the local performance evaluation metrics

Currently, Gansu's investment in cultural and creative cities focuses mainly on "hardware" oriented construction projects, with insufficient targeted investment in cultivating local talents. Moreover, local administrative performance evaluations tend to emphasize on physical infrastructure development, human resource development is rarely included in the evaluation criteria. Therefore, talent development should be explicitly incorporated into the official performance assessment system.

7.2 Build talent exchange platforms, emphasis on local and grassroots talent cultivation, increase flexibility in human mobility

Due to Gansu's vast territory and imbalanced development, talent distribution is scattered. Grassroots and local professionals often possess valuable creative resources and skills but lack opportunities for promotion and exchanges. Facilitating multi-level connections between regions, institutions, external organizations and local talent, can help increase mobility of local professionals, contributing to broader regional prosperity.

7.3 Utilise subsidies, incentives, and social recognition to encourage talent participation and foster proactive capacity building

Gansu has a significant number of creative individuals who possess ideas and resources but lack sufficient incentives to invest more time and energy in creative endeavours. Authorities can motivate such talents by organising socially influential activities, projects, or recognition programs, supported by financial subsidies or rewards, to stimulate participation and growth.

Goals served

- *Strengthen institutional and capacity building*
- *Boost the cultural creative economy*
- *Foster coordinated regional development*
- *Facilitate mutual learning and exchange among civilizations*
- *Enhance local social wellbeing*

Expected results/outcomes

- *Cultivate a cohort of long-term creative professionals with the abilities to mobilize local resources, engage with external partners, produce content, and manage operations*
- *Improve overall social well-being across the region*

Strategy 8:

Promote inclusive economy

This strategy seeks to increase the participation of specific groups in the CCIs by aligning policies with market demands and recognising their unique strengths.

Key actions

8.1 Conduct in-depth research on the needs of diverse groups to inform tailored policies

Inclusive economy begins with understanding the challenges and real needs of diverse groups, which cannot be presumed or represented solely by official narratives. It is essential to engage third-party academic teams or non-profit organizations to conduct preliminary research through structured surveys, interviews, and long-term tracking.

8.2 Increase income for specific groups through structural subsidies and targeted employment opportunities

Approaches may include structural subsidies that enhance support within the existing redistribution system, and targeted employment initiatives that expand job opportunities and training for specific groups. Preferential policies such as tax breaks can be provided to organisations that offer such opportunities.

8.3 Encourage participation and self-expression of diverse groups in cultural and creative projects

Create opportunities for diverse groups to express themselves in various cultural activities. Official institutions should safeguard these channels of expression, establishing mechanisms that ensure continuous engagement and representation.

8.4 Identify and promote the unique strengths of diverse groups in cultural and creative projects for market transformation

The value of diverse groups lies not only in empathy or fairness but also in the unique creative gifts they may hold, for example, women, individuals with autism, or certain ethnic minorities. Policies and institutions should support these groups in recognizing their strengths and facilitate sustained efforts to help transform these strengths into market opportunities.

Goals served

- Strengthen institutional and capacity building
- Boost the cultural creative economy
- Foster coordinated regional development
- Enhance local social wellbeing

Expected results/outcomes

- *Stimulate economic growth and enhance social participation for disadvantaged groups*
- *Foster a more diverse and balanced cultural and creative market*
- *Cultivate inclusive and symbiotic relationships among diverse social groups*
- *Strengthen the comprehensive development of a vibrant civil society*

Strategy 9:

Refine policy and regulatory tools on supporting CCIs

Gansu's CCIs lack a comprehensive legal framework and policy system. This strategy aims to improve regulatory support, protect intellectual property rights, safeguard the rights of creative professionals, and promote standardised, professionalised, and internationalised development of the sector.

9.1 Establish a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for the CCIs

Gansu has yet to develop a unified legal framework for its CCIs. To ensure standardised and sustainable development of the sector, relevant regulations should be enacted to clarify market access requirements, supervision standards, and government support policies. Pilot legislative projects can be launched in culturally rich cities like Dunhuang, Zhangye, and Tianshui to explore local implementation experiences and promote the rule-of-law-based management of the industry.

9.2 Strengthen the legal system for the protection of cultural intellectual property rights

Although Gansu is rich in intangible cultural heritage and cultural resources, its intellectual property protection remains weak. Creative cultural products are easily imitated, limiting their competitiveness. To enhance protection, targeted mechanisms should be developed for safeguarding intangible heritage techniques, traditional craftsmanship, and digital cultural assets. Property rights registration and certification system should be established to prevent misuse or infringement of cultural resources, supported by a robust enforcement system and stricter penalties for violations.

9.3 Safeguard the legal rights and interests of cultural and creative professionals

Many of Gansu's creative industry workers (such as ICH practitioners, independent artists, and freelancers) lack adequate legal and social security protection. To improve their job stability and social welfare, a legal support system tailored to freelancers in the cultural sector should be established, including social insurance coverage, occupational safety measures, contract guidance, and legal aid.

9.4 Improve market regulation mechanisms for the CCIs

Some areas of Gansu are lacking market supervision, hindering the healthy development of the cultural and creative sector. A provincial-level cultural and creative market regulatory body should be established to oversee enterprise qualifications, maintain market order, and protect consumer rights. Product quality standard system should be implemented to raise market entry thresholds and prevent low-quality, homogeneous products from disrupting the market.

9.5 Advance financial support and incentive policies for the cultural and creative sector

Currently, cultural and creative enterprises in Gansu face limited financing channels and insufficient government subsidies. Localized fiscal support policies could include rent reductions or subsidies, equipment purchase subsidies, and funds to support digital transformation. Tax incentives should also be optimized to reduce operational costs and increase the appeal of the sector, benefiting enterprises, freelancers, and ICH practitioners.

9.6 Strengthen policies for talent development and recruitment in the cultural and creative fields

Gansu suffers from a significant talent drain, and current tertiary training programs fall short of industry needs. A provincial strategy should be implemented for the recruitment, training, and development of cultural and creative professionals. Policies such as housing subsidies and start-up funding can be used to attract high-end creative talent. Universities across the province should collaborate with cultural enterprises to establish relevant academic programs, ensuring better alignment between talent training and market demand, thereby boosting industry competitiveness.

9.7 Promote an international legal environment for the CCIs

Gansu's cultural products currently lack global reach, and its creative enterprises have limited experience in international trade. To integrate Gansu's cultural sector into the Belt and Road Initiative, the provincial government could establish a "Belt and Road" cultural branding platform, simplify export procedures for cultural products, support participation in international exhibitions and collaborative projects, and promote the digital presentation of Gansu's heritage abroad, enhancing both global visibility and international competitiveness.

Goals served

- *Strengthen institutional and capacity building*
- *Boost the cultural creative economy*
- *Foster coordinated regional development*
- *Facilitate mutual learning and exchange among civilizations*
- *Enhance local social wellbeing*
- *Synergise the conservation, management and appropriate use of cultural heritage*

Expected results/outcomes

- *Build a comprehensive cultural and creative industry ecosystem to standardize and professionalize its development across Gansu*
- *Improve the legal protections for cultural creators, enhancing their sense of job security and promoting social equity*
- *Increase the economic contribution and market competitiveness of the CCIs, making them a key pillar of Gansu's economy*
- *Develop a high-level talent hub and attract top-tier creative professionals to Gansu.*
- *Promote the internationalization of Gansu's CCIs and deepen cultural trade cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative*
- *Ensure the long-term safeguarding and innovative development of intangible cultural heritage, traditional culture, and digital culture in support of cultural sustainability in Gansu*





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The background is a vibrant orange with a fine, repeating dot pattern. Overlaid on this are four large, fluid, white calligraphic strokes that sweep across the page from top to bottom. These strokes are reminiscent of traditional Chinese brushwork, with varying line thickness and elegant curves. In the center of the page, three text elements are arranged horizontally, each partially framed by the calligraphic strokes.

Culture

**Sustainable
Development**

Creativity

GANSU

CCI

Policy Guideline