



The development of monastery tourism in Zungchu County

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“Tourism first if the West is to be developed.” This idea has turned out to be the people’s common consensus in western part of China and is being put into action around Tibetan areas in Sichuan Province. Now tourism departments as well as local Tibetans are eager to explore the tourism resources in Tibetan culture.

Located in the famous travel routes in Rngba Tibetan District, Zungchu County is well known for its Gsermtsho scenic resorts, a world culture heritage site. The Bon religious district called Lcangla chus is situated between the Gsertsho and Sdedgu tourist tracks and seven main Bon religion monasteries are gathered there.

For the past few years, some monasteries have made an attempt to develop the tourism business but that has aroused the dispute from local society and therefore much attention has been drawn by the government.

Through a survey in the field, this thesis, a composition of both pictures and literary discussion, has now been worked out. In it the present situations and the future prospects of tourism in several monasteries have been analyzed and the feasible tourism modes of Bon religion in Zungchu County are offered and suggested.

The main aspects of the thesis are:

First, the form of tourism in Zungchu monastery is based on a contract model. I provide a survey of local monasteries in detail.

Second, the main conflicts are the following:

1. The convention in traditional monastery has been broken down by the conflict between modernity and tradition.

2. The conflict between commodity economy and traditional folk culture has deepened the influence of market economy on the monastery.
3. The economic conflict between monasteries and contractors has made the former a limelight concerning tourism.

Third: the main causes of the conflicts

1. The contract mode of tourism economy in a monastery is much against the idea of religion as traditionally being a non-commercial kind of culture.
2. Traditionally speaking, the notion of monastery tourism could hardly make any sense to local monks and therefore it is impossible for them to promote tourism by themselves.

Fourth: some examples of monastery tourism modes.

In Zungchu County, we have already gained some experience from the tourism development in several great monasteries and this has set up a typical mode for future monastery tourism.

Therefore, based on the experience we gained in Zungchu County, we should further learn other experience of tourism development in order to shape a representative tourist mode which not only reconciles modernity and tradition but also conforms to the religious and cultural spirits.

Here are some main modes of monastery tourism.

1. Blabrang monastery mode, a specialized one.
2. Skughbum monastery mode.
3. Diversification mode.

In the 21st century, when the western part of China is going to be widely developed, the western tourism to prosper and the monasteries in Zungchu County open to the tourism business, we should try our best to reconcile the conflicts between modernity and tradition so as to make possible a smooth tourism development. By doing so, we will not only present the national culture treasures but reach a balance between economic development and culture preservation.

As a result, it would manifest much of the cultural and practical meanings if a sound and reasonable mode of monastery tourism is successfully constructed.