

Research on the Development Strategy of Buddhist Cultural Tourism Resources in Inner Mongolia

--Taking Guanyin Temple in Baotou City as an Example

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ABSTRACT

Religious culture, as an excellent tourism resource, not only attracts tourists but also deepens the spiritual connotation of scenic spots. Starting from the current situation of the development of Buddhist tourism resources in Inner Mongolia, this article takes Guanyin Temple in Baotou City as an example to analyze the many problems that exist in the current development of Buddhist tourism resources in Inner Mongolia. In response to these problems, strategies for developing and utilizing Buddhist tourism resources are discussed. Combining the unique regional culture of Guanyin Temple, create a unique religious and cultural tourist destination. Its planning strategy hopes to provide reference for the development of religious and cultural tourism in Guanyin Temple.

KEYWORDS

Buddhist culture, Travel Inner Mongolia, Guanyin Temple

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Importance of Developing Buddhist Tourism Resources in Inner Mongolia

China is a country with multiple religions, and since ancient times, religion has played an important role in China and the world with its unique worldview. On the one hand, the sacred veil of religion has always made the dissemination and development of religion unique. On the other hand, in the process of religious dissemination, while maintaining its sanctity, it often collides with real life, making the contradiction between sanctification and secularization one of the difficulties in religious dissemination. With the general improvement of people's sense of world identity and educational quality, the inheritance and development of religion are facing enormous challenges.

In terms of religion itself, it has a positive role. Religion has a strong idea of punishing evil and promoting goodness, advocating morality and truth, which is of great significance for us to establish collectivism, promote social harmony, advocate democracy, and oppose individualism. In addition, religious culture is an important component of traditional human culture, integrating art, philosophy, literature, history, and other fields. Religion, like politics, law, philosophy, literature, art, and other forms, is based on economic development and has an impact on the economic foundation[1]. Therefore, effective utilization and development of religious and cultural resources are conducive to the promotion of traditional Chinese culture.

Religion, as a social ideology, has always held a very important position in the history of human culture. It is not only a pure belief activity, but also a way of tourism and leisure, with great tourism value[2]. Religious and cultural tourism mainly refers to tourism activities that use religious activities or religious attractions as the main tourist attraction, and generate certain economic or social benefits for the tourism industry through the participation of tourists. The tourism industry is a highly correlated and driving industry, and the creation of Buddhist cultural tourism brands can promote the economic development of Inner Mongolia. More than 300 million people worldwide travel for religious purposes each year, and this market generates over 18 billion US dollars in annual tourism revenue[3]. Religious tourism has become an important global industry. As a multi-ethnic settlement, Inner Mongolia has a unique Buddhist culture, which provides excellent tourism resources for Inner Mongolia. The development of Buddhist tourism resources is one of the important ways to promote the economic development of Inner Mongolia.

1.2. Strengthening the coordinated development of religious culture and tourism resources in Inner Mongolia region

Developing religious and cultural tourism can not only increase the economic benefits of tourism in Inner Mongolia, but also improve the economic situation of temples and temples. Religious activity venues can improve their operating conditions through donations, gifts, tickets, and other means, allowing religious venues to have more funds to improve the temple environment, thus forming a virtuous cycle.

Secondly, developing religious and cultural tourism is conducive to the continuation and promotion of traditional Chinese culture, as well as the dissemination of Inner Mongolia's ethnic and traditional culture. Religious paintings, sculptures, dances, music, and other religious stories are the crystallization of human wisdom and culture; The perfect embodiment of temple architectural art embodies the wisdom of the ancients. Religion is full of wisdom and philosophy, as well as containing many problem-solving methods. Developing religious and cultural resources is conducive to guiding people's attention to China's excellent traditional culture and enhancing our national cohesion.

Religion itself is an unreal experience that people have towards supernatural forces and their symbols. To some extent. It is even more powerful than the law in shaping people's social morality. So, in real life, humans have created images of "gods" and "gods", and worship them as idols. Under the emotional domination of helplessness and helplessness, people's religious emotions have been triggered to varying degrees. Therefore, in the process of religious activities, people often melt this mysterious color into the atmosphere created by religious rituals and places, consolidating people's reverence for public morality and ethics.

Finally, religion and tourism exhibit a two-way interactive relationship. Developing Buddhist cultural tourism is also beneficial for the protection of religious resources. Tourists can learn and understand the ethnic culture and characteristics of Inner Mongolia through tourism, and gain an understanding of Inner Mongolia. Therefore, the development of the tourism industry can also increase the visibility of religious holy sites and religious culture, which is conducive to the inheritance, dissemination, exchange, and research of religious culture, thus facilitating the protection and development of religious culture.

2. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST CULTURAL TOURISM RESOURCES IN INNER MONGOLIA

At present, due to the relatively large number of followers of Tibetan Buddhism in Inner Mongolia, both its own development and research based on it are relatively more complete compared to the development of Chinese Buddhism. However, the author notes that Chinese Buddhism has developed

rapidly in Inner Mongolia and has begun to occupy an important position in the religious field, with Guanyin Temple in Jiuyuan District, Baotou City being one of its representatives.

2.1. The Construction History of Guanyin Temple

Guanyin Temple is located in Erdaosha River, Baiyin Xile Town, Jiuyuan District, and is the only Chinese Buddhist temple in Jiuyuan District[4]. It is backed by the undulating and majestic green mountains, facing the endless and rolling eastward flow of the Yellow River. The temple was first built more than 150 years ago during the Xianfeng period of the Qing Dynasty and is known as the "Dragon King Temple". The temple has exquisite and solemn statues of the "Dragon King" and Guanyin Bodhisattva, but unfortunately, it was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. This Pure Land is a place where monks can establish their own path with peace of mind. Currently, there are more than 20 monks studying in the temple, and the founder of the temple is Shi Yi Le.

In 1996, at the invitation of many good men and women in Baotou, a 22-year-old righteous musician said goodbye to the current vice president of the Mount Wutai Chinese Buddhist Association, vice president of the Shanxi Buddhist Association, vice president of the Mount Wutai Buddhist Association, master Zangming of the Puhua Temple Abbot, and old monk Miaoliang. After that, he came to the Guanyin Temple, where there were only a few dilapidated houses and less than one mu of land, and led the masses of good people to be honest, thrifty, and hard to build From scratch, from small to large, the Yuantong Pagoda, which was almost destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and was shaken by earthquakes and eroded by wind and rain after renovation, has been transformed into a shining and grand clean treasure temple[5].

2.2. The Modern Function of Guanyin Temple

Nowadays, Guanyin Temple is not what it used to be. From a distance, the temple's color forms are ancient and picturesque, standing like colorful scrolls in Lucheng on the grasslands outside the Great Wall. Inside the temple, there are mountain gate halls, Heavenly King halls, Dizang halls, east and west side halls, Puxian halls, Wenshu halls, Longshu halls, Wuguan halls, Nian Buddha halls, Zushi halls, and Gongde halls, among others. Looking out at the Radiant and Colorful Great Round Tongbao Hall amidst the curling cigarette smoke, it shines and shines on each other with the east and west side halls, creating a harmonious and perfect, bright and tidy, grand and majestic atmosphere

On the Day of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the temple provides a large number of Buddhist books for free to all believers who come and go. This is not only a holy place for meditation on Buddhist culture, but also a clean and pure place to clean up the world's dust. The influence and contribution of this cultural radiation in patriotism, love for education, and promotion of Buddhism can be said to be well deserved by righteous musicians. Master's simplicity and benevolence have received widespread praise in the religious community and have earned him widespread praise and respect in society. The current Guanyin Temple is a pure Taoist temple with the most Buddhist activities, comprehensiveness, and standardization, which is well received, supported, and loved by many people.

2.3. Construction process of "Luohan Hall" in Guanyin Temple

Guanyin Temple was once the activity center of Chinese Buddhism in the history of Baotou area, and played a very important role in the development history of Buddhism in Baotou city. In order to improve the temple environment and promote Buddhist culture, in 2016, the temple began to restore and build new Buddha statues on its original site. Luohan Hall is one of the key projects of the new temple.

With the development of Buddhist tourism projects in recent years, there has been a nationwide trend of building temples and Buddha statues. The Arhat Hall under construction in Guanyin Temple takes

1250 painted clay statues of different sizes as the main contents and highlights of the project. The whole project has a large scale, a long construction period and a high investment (see Figure 1 for the picture of the completed project of the construction of the Buddha statue of Guanyin Temple in Baotou City. The shooting time is in the afternoon of June 23, 2023. The shooting place is Luohan Hall of Guanyin Temple in Baotou City. The photographer: the author).



Figure 1 Part of the Buddha Statue Construction at Guanyin Temple in Baotou City

In early 2016, palace painters and clay sculptors from Shanxi brought more than 10 disciples to Guanyin Temple in Baotou City, starting a five-year construction project. In an interview with the author, Master Su of Shanxi clay sculpture told the author: "The Arhat Hall covers an area of about 300 square meters, three floors in total, and the project investment is about 1 million yuan. Referring to the pattern of Shanxi Hongdong Guanyin Hall, the original idea is to break the traditional pattern of the temple, with handmade statues of different sizes as the main body, the hall is dedicated to Guanyin Bodhisattva and Sakyamuni Buddha statues, and there are 1250 large and small Buddha statues, named after '1250 Great Arhat'."

The "1250 Great Arhat" is based on the "Sakyamuni Buddha Saying Map", which aims to show all sentient beings. All Buddha statues are hand carved by masters. Except for lotus petals and leaves with fixed molds, all clay sculptures of Buddha statues are manually stacked with natural materials such as wood, iron wire, loess, red soil, and straw; The colorant is a pure natural mineral. To ensure the firmness of the shape and color of the Buddha statue, each statue is bottomed with tung oil and pig blood. Master Su, who is in charge of the Luohan Hall project, said: "If the palace does not collapse, the statue will not collapse and crack" (see Figure 1, for the picture of the construction project of the Buddha statue in Guanyin Temple in Baotou, Master Su and his disciples are coloring the colored sculpture. Shooting time: the afternoon of June 23, 2023. Shooting place: Luohan Hall in Guanyin Temple in Baotou. Photographer: the author).



Figure 2 Photo of the Buddha Statue Construction Project at Guanyin Temple in Baotou City

The layout of the Buddha statues in the Arhat Hall is rigorous, orderly, and magnificent. The Arhat Hall was initially expected to be completed within three years, but due to the complexity of the project,

this year is the fifth year for the construction of the Buddha statue. The "1250 Arhat" is expected to be completed in September this year.

3. PROBLEMS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TIBETAN BUDDHIST CULTURAL TOURISM RESOURCES IN INNER MONGOLIA

China is a country with multiple ethnicities and religions. For a long time, religious issues have been intertwined with feudal superstitions and other activities, which inevitably have negative effects. However, religious and cultural tourism, as an excellent tourism resource in Inner Mongolia, is conducive to promoting regional economic development and protecting religious resources. At present, there are still certain problems in the development of Tibetan Buddhist cultural tourism resources in Inner Mongolia.

3.1. Insufficient exploration of cultural connotations and lack of high-quality Buddhist tourism products

Currently, most of the activities launched by religious tourism projects in China are still in a symbolic stage[6]. The so-called "symbolic stage" refers to the construction of temples or the construction of Buddha statues in temples. The use of Buddha statues as a symbolic symbol to express Buddhist culture is somewhat straightforward and lacks a profound and implicit artistic conception. This single level form of tourism rarely allows tourists to personally experience and feel the charm of Buddhist culture, and tourists cannot appreciate the artistic conception behind Buddhism, making it difficult to obtain high-level tourism aesthetic experiences.

The construction of Buddha statues in other temples in Inner Mongolia has also achieved good economic benefits, such as the Miaofan Temple in Donghe District, Baotou City. However, for a considerable number of Buddhist tourism projects, there is a lack of awareness in the project development stage to create high-quality products, blindly pursuing a huge momentum, and ignoring the creation of Buddhist cultural atmosphere, giving people a feeling of "big but empty".

3.2. Lack of external promotion, market development momentum needs to be strengthened

Guanyin Temple is expected to be completed in September this year, but so far, no preparations have been made for the preliminary publicity. As long as there is a correct understanding of religion and moderate promotion of religious and cultural tourism, it will also have a good effect on the development and development of religious and cultural tourism. Buddhist culture, as an important cultural tourism resource in Inner Mongolia, has significant cultural connotations. However, in the tourism development of the construction of Buddha statues in Guanyin Temple, the religious and cultural connotations have not been well reflected. For most religious tourist attractions in Inner Mongolia, due to the lack of religious knowledge among tourists, tourism only stays at a simple level of sightseeing, and the main activities of visiting tourist attractions are mainly focused on burning incense, worshipping Buddha, seeking divination and fortune telling; Religious personnel only focus on activities such as reciting scriptures and accepting donations.

3.3. The quality of tourism professionals varies, and there is a lack of talent

Most first-time visitors to Guanyin Temple will be amazed by the grandeur of 1250 Buddha statues, but the true philosophy, wisdom, and deep cultural significance behind religious culture still need to be explored by tourists. Therefore, the lack of professional tour guides is a common problem faced by Guanyin Temple and religious tourism and cultural attractions in Inner Mongolia.

3.4. Tourism infrastructure needs to be improved

Road traffic is an important network connecting tourists and various temples of Guanyin Temple. Guanyin Temple in Baotou City, Inner Mongolia is located in Erdaosha River, Baiyin Xile Town, Jiuyuan District. It is backed by the undulating and majestic Daqing Mountains, and faces the endless and rolling Yellow River water flowing eastward. The surrounding transportation roads are closed, and the only way for tourists to enter Guanyin Temple is through Erdaosha River Village near Guanyin Temple.



Figure 3 The Road to Guanyin Temple in Baotou City

The roads in the village are muddy, unmanaged, and the parking space is extremely limited (see Figure 3, which is a necessary road to Guanyin Temple in Baotou City. Shooting time: June 23, 2023 afternoon. Shooting location: Erdao Shahe Village, Baiyin Xile Town, Jiuyuan District, Baotou City. Photographer: The author himself). Whether for walking or self driving, the existing traffic road environment seriously hinders tourists from traveling.

4. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM RESOURCES OF TIBETAN BUDDHIST CULTURE IN INNER MONGOLIA

As a social ideology, religion embodies profound philosophy and wisdom that have always permeated human social life, and its influence is very extensive and profound in human history.

4.1. Deeply explore the cultural connotations of religious tourism resources and create high-quality Buddhist tourism products

Religious tourism, as a form of cultural tourism, culture is the soul of tourism. Therefore, the religious and cultural tourism project of Guanyin Temple should deeply explore the core of religious culture and the unique regional culture of Inner Mongolia. Injecting new vitality elements on the basis of inheriting traditional culture, thus establishing new religious and cultural tourist attractions.

In terms of development methods, it is possible to shift from a focus on tourist viewing to a focus on tourist experience. At present, the development of Buddhist tourism in Guanyin Temple still relies mainly on the single level viewing of tourists. This form of tourism only allows tourists to have a brief visual experience, making it difficult for them to gain deeper religious and cultural experiences as well as tourism aesthetic experiences. Guanyin Temple can develop experiential activity projects. For example, it is possible to regularly organize interested tourists to participate in activities such as "becoming a monk" one-day tours and handcrafted Buddha statues. Only by deeply understanding the connotation of religious and cultural tourism, and appropriately cooperating with appropriate auxiliary means for development, can we attract more customers, promote the dissemination of religious and cultural tourism, enhance the attractiveness of religious and cultural tourism resources, and enable tourists to obtain unique experiences and feelings.

Religious architecture, painting, sculpture, etc. have a huge attraction to tourists and can meet their aesthetic and spiritual needs. With the increasingly fierce competition in the tourism industry, religious and cultural tourism resources can seize their most core cultural experiences, strengthen

external promotion, and enrich religious tourism products. This can not only promote and drive the number of tourists, but also promote tourism in the entire Inner Mongolia region.

4.2. Strengthen the promotion of religious tourism resources

The development of tourism and cultural resources in Guanyin Temple requires comprehensive promotion. On the one hand, we should pay attention to the publicity in the early stage of development, especially the Internet. For example, relevant websites or columns are set up on the Internet, and video, pictures, audio and other forms of publicity are used to enable tourists to understand the development project of Guanyin Temple in advance and get a lot of intuitive and detailed information. On the other hand, developing creative tourism products. The new construction of Guanyin Temple mainly focuses on the construction of Arhat Hall Buddha statue, which can develop creative tourism products suitable for the theme of "1250 Buddha Statues", such as small Buddha statues, Buddha utensils, etc., develop relevant cultural industries, form a distinctive cultural industry chain, and thus activate the development of religious and cultural tourism in Guanyin Temple. While enhancing the tourist experience, it can also enhance the vitality of Guanyin Temple.

However, in the process of developing creative tourism products, attention should be paid to avoiding the formation of overly strong commercial colors due to the development of tourism products. Religion, as a social ideology, has sacredness and solemnity. Some religious venues use various pretexts to deceive tourists for money or excessively develop commercial products, which can cause great damage to religious culture.

4.3. Strengthen the construction of tourism management team and cultivate excellent tour guides

At present, religious tourism sites, especially Guanyin Temple, in Inner Mongolia have not yet formed a complete tourism management team. Inner Mongolia is a typical ethnic minority region with relatively backward economic level and a lack of tourism management talents with high professional level. Religious tourism has profound cultural connotation. For tourists, the Arhat Hall with 1250 Buddha statues can only meet the temporary visual enjoyment of tourists. This kind of horse watching and fancy sightseeing form cannot meet the deeper aesthetic experience of tourists.

Therefore, Guanyin Temple should focus on cultivating professional tourism talents. It enables tourists not only to stay at the level of appreciation, but also to have a deep understanding of the structure of the Arhat Hall, the value of various sculptures and murals, and the cultural connotation embodied. Only in this way can religious and cultural tourism become a distinctive tourism project that sets it apart from other tourism projects, and create a unique tourism atmosphere.

4.4. Increase investment in infrastructure and improve the tourism service system

The road traffic planning of Guanyin Temple should continue the roads in the original area, build a reasonable road system on the basis of the original regional roads, and transform the only dirt road that originally led to Guanyin Temple into an asphalt road. Based on the concept of ecological and environmental protection, trees are planted on both sides of the main road leading to Guanyin Temple, and two large parking lots are set up on both sides of the main road to meet the parking needs of tourists. At the same time, the plan adopts an ecological parking lot to isolate parking spaces with green vegetation.

5. CONCLUSION

The religious tourism resources in Inner Mongolia have their own unique characteristics. For the development of tourism resources in Guanyin Temple, the focus is still on a deep understanding and

exploration of religious culture, as well as the utilization of regional cultural characteristics, in order to create a unique Buddhist cultural tourist attraction in Inner Mongolia and vigorously develop religious economy. At the same time, achieving a deeper aesthetic experience for tourists, achieving an organic integration of religion and tourism, and promoting economic development and cultural exchange in Inner Mongolia.

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