

Similarities and Differences between Shambha-La and Shangri-La in Terms of Cultural Tourism Resources

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Abstract: The tourism images Shambha-La and Shangri-La, created respectively by Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province and Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, have created a tourism miracle and attracted numerous tourists at home and abroad because of their unique characters and strong charismata. This article discusses and makes a comparison between tourism resources Shambha-La and Shangri-La from a cultural perspective and analyzes the reasons of their success.

Key words: Shambha-La; Shangri-La; tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

As an entirely new way of life, tourism is leading fashion and trends consciously and unconsciously in the 21st century. Tourism makes significant contributions to national economy and is conducive to social progress, cultural development and environmental protection. Therefore, it have aroused world wide attention and obtained active support from national and local governments in the world. The tourism images Shambha-La and Shangri-La, created respectively by Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province and Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, have created a tourism miracle and attracted numerous tourists at home and abroad because of their unique characters and strong charismata. This article discusses and makes a comparison between tourism resources Shambha-La and Shangri-La from a cultural perspective and analyzes the reasons of their success.

1.1 Origins of Shambha-La

Shambha-La, an ancient term existed in both Tibetan Buddhism and Bon, refers to an ideal pure land where human and Gods, human and nature coexist in harmony. In 1775, Panchen Lama VI

Lobsang Huadan Yi Xi wrote a popular work *A Guidebook of Shambha-La Kingdom* based on the classics in Tripitaka. According to the guidebook, Shambha-La is a kingdom with Kalachakra, Tantra and true mass, universe, time, space, calendar, mantras beyond modern technologies. It is a "heaven" on earth. This kingdom is full of peace and quiet; life is in harmony with nature; people have extraordinary wisdom and enjoy long life and they abandon paranoia, obsession and greed and bathe in sunshine and happiness from generation to generation. The Kingdom of Shambha-La is surrounded by double snow-capped mountains, having eight lotus-shaped regions with inner snow-capped mountains standing in the center. The king of Shambha-La lived in the Palace of Kabbalah, who led the people and maintained the world's supreme Buddha Dharma and would rule the world when all the religions outside completely eliminate. (He Xiaozu, 2005)

1.2 Shambha-La and Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture lies in southern Gansu Province, northeastern edge of Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau and situated at the junction of the Daikin Triangle Area between Gansu, Qinghai and Sichuan provinces. It is located at 33°06'30" N 100°45'45" E / 35°34'00" N 104°45'30" E. It covers an area of 45,000 square kilometers with 360.7 kilometers long from east to west and 270.9 kilometers wide from south to north. It consists of seven counties Maqu, Luqu, Zhouqu, Xiahe, Lintan, Zhuoni, Diebu and one city Hezuo. It has a population of about 680,000. It has become an important gateway to Qinghai and Tibet since ancient times. Historically, the Tang-Tibet Ancient Road, the Tea-Horse Ancient

Road and the Silk Road all crossed this area. This transportation hub has been called Han-Tibetan Corridor where Tibetan culture, Han culture, Buddhism and Confucianism coexisted harmoniously and formed its unique regional multi-culture. Gannan is a microcosm of the whole Tibetan economy and culture, a snow-covered plateau from the nearest central China. As a result, Gannan is known as China's "Little Tibet", "a springboard for Tibetan modernization" and "the fairyland Shambha-La". (Wang Wenhao, 2008)

Panchen Lama VI's argumentation urged the Tibetan people to pay great attention to their hidden history. And the term Shambha-La appears frequently in the Tibetan legends, poetry and vagrant rapper's lyrics. the Tibetan epic King Gesar reads "When all aspects of Buddhism is in a disadvantageous situation, Gesar will return with Buddhist magic army from Shambha-La and become the military commander of all the forces of justice to swing the forces of evil in order to restore Buddhism." Combining the Tibetan epic with Chinese historical studies some experts suggest that Gesar lived in an age when the primitive society began to disintegrate and the slavery society come into being; Ridge State under the leadership of King Gesar is Bai Languo described in historical data of Han covering today's Meander Zone of Yellow River; Animaqing snow-covered mountain worshipped by countless people are Ridge Magic Mountains where the soul of the legendary king Gesar lodged; and so on. Coincidentally, there is a cove surrounded by eight white peaks in Maqu County. Linking this to the Tibetan epic King Gesar, the local Tibetan people believe that the magic of Gesar station there to provide his people with safety. Legends about Shambha-La in counties and city of Gannan and the farfetched land of Shambha-La in the lotus of eight peaks confirm the good wishes of the Tibetan people.

In spite of these legends, I believe, Shambha-La is an ideal kingdom of heaven created by Tibetan Buddhist in order to express their good wishes. It is an

imagined pure land and paradise. It is natural that Gannan become Shambha-La in the mind of Tibetan Buddhists due to its fascinating natural scenery, unique Tibetan customs and the mysterious, auspicious and harmonious religious atmosphere of Tibetan Buddhism. Strictly speaking, Shambha-La is a pronoun for concentrated essence of Tibetan culture, showing the diversity of Tibetan culture with sacred, mystical, magical properties and perfect idealism. The peaceful atmosphere formed by Tibetan Buddhist monasteries represented by Labrang Monastery and the peacefulness and harmony of all ethnic groups in Gannan can be included in the contents of the paradise Shambha-La.

With the building of Shambha-La tourism brand and increasing improvement of people's living standards, Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture regards tourism as a pillar industry of national economic development and vigorously supports its development. The software and hardware construction of tourism infrastructure, tourism management and tourism services is continually improving and tourism industry in Gannan enters a new stage of development. The number of domestic tourists increased substantially from 235,000 in 1998 to 1.66 million in 2006 with an annual average growth rate of 38%; the number of overseas tourists increased greatly from 15,000 in 1998 to 83,400 in 2006; direct tourism income increased substantially from ¥8.932 million to ¥293.97 million. And in 2007, direct tourism income in Gannan reached ¥0.3billion. Tourism in Gannan has entered the fast lane and achieved a leap forward. Extremely attractive tourism resources in Gannan are becoming fascinating tourist destination of domestic and overseas tourists. Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture has been named "the most attractive tourist attractions in Western China" by Western Development Research Center of Chinese Academy of Sciences and Organizing Committee of The Western Development Activities. America's most authoritative travel magazines Vision and Adventure regarded it as

one of the world's 50 outdoor paradise "making life feel free". It is among the list of "Dream Trip: 50 Places to Go in One's Life" which was named by the magazines Chinese National Geography and National Geographic Traveler. (Wang Wenhao, 2006)

2. An Overview of Shangri-La

2.1 Origins of Shangri-La

The term Shangri-La is derived from Tibetan dialect "Shangri-la" in Zhongdian, capital of Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. It means "sun and moon in mind" and symbolizes a happy realm in which human and God, human and nature live in harmony. In the mind of Diqing Tibetan, Shangri-La is such a scene: it is surrounded by snow-covered mountains with towering peaks; below those peaks is a vast virgin forest in which live the most precious animals and plants in the world; grasslands surrounded by snow-capped mountains is divided into eight area by jade-like rivers, symbolizing the eight petals of the lotus covering land; in this quiet and harmonious rich land locate glorious temples which means honest and simple people there can have their own beliefs; the relationship between man and man, man and nature is in supreme harmony. It is the ideal living environment and noble, lofty realm in the minds of Tibetan people, which leaves countless people longing for Shangri-La in the world hopes and dreams. (Qi Zhala, 2001)

In his novel *Lost Horizon* (1933), the famous British-American James Hilton described a narrow valley called Blue Moon. Located on the cliffs of the valley is a Lamasery named Shangri-La which has the characteristics of Han, Tibetan and Catholic monastery. At the end of the valley lies a standard pyramid-shaped snow-covered mountain called Karakal. This mysterious world described in the novel came to be collectively known as Shangri-La. Shangri-La depicted in the book is a land of eternal peace and tranquility. Here are snow-capped mountains valleys, magnificent and mysterious temples, serene lakes surrounded by a forest, beautiful

prairie and cattle and sheep flocked paradise. The residents generally live longer; but once they leave here, they are no longer long-lived and some even die immediately. The Lamasery here accumulated numerous treasures, books, artifacts of both Eastern and Western civilizations. People lived in the temple have profound knowledge, cultures, theories and noble morality. They never attack each other and live in harmony under the principle of moderation. After the publication of *Lost Horizon* in the United Kingdom, the book leapt to the top of the best-selling books and was awarded Holden Prize for Literature. With Hollywood's \$ 2.5 million investment to adapt the novel onto the screen in 1944, the theme song This beautiful Shangri-La spread around the globe. The book leaves us two legacies. One is the utopian imagination of Shangri-La. The other is a huge suspense due to a large number of plausible clues in the novel: where is Shangri-La? (Zhang Wen, 2003)

2.2 Shangri-La and Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture lies in northwestern Yunnan Province, southeastern edge of Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau and situated at the junction of the Daikin Triangle Area between Sichuan, Yunnan provinces and Tibet Tibetan Autonomous Region. It is located at 26°52'N 98°25'E / 29°16'N 100°19'E. It covers an area of 23,870 square kilometers with an average altitude of 3 380 meters. It has a population of about 0.334 million. It consists of three counties Shangri-La (also called Zhongdian), Deqin, and Weixi Lisu Autonomous County with Shangri-La County as its capital.

Historically, Diqing was the North-South exchange corridor for Tibetan and other ethnics and the gateway of the Tea-Horse Ancient Road. Diqing is a national jewel of The Confluence of Three Rivers Scenic Area and is known as "Shangri-La, the fairyland on the earth" due to well-preserved nature and ecology, magnificent snow-capped mountains, serene lakes, turbulent rivers, vast grasslands, dense

forests, rich living creatures, exotic landscapes, holy monasteries and particular folk customs. Here exist multi-religions and multi-ethnic cultures.

Hilton's work provided clues for exploring the prototype of Shangri-La and sparked intense enthusiasm. Decades after World War II, some beautiful scenic spot were claimed as another Shangri-La and regarded as Shangri-La or The Last Shangri-La by outside visitors.

By the end of 1998, Miss Guo Suqin, editor of Yunnan People's Publishing House, who is keen to Shangri-La research, went to Diqing to look for materials about Shangri-La. She unexpectedly found that little Deqin County Library was in possession of nearly a thousand foreign original copies, including more than 300 books in French. According to the local scholars, those books were originally the survivors in Cizhong Catholic Church which were brought there by foreign missionaries or explorers or were sent to there by them after they went home and published books. When flipping through pages of those books, Guo Suqin found a beautifully printed map. Proficient in French, Guosu Qin translated the standard French names on the map into Chinese. This was a complete roadmap leading to the hinterland of Shangri-La. After many researches, Guo Suqin confirmed that Zhongdian County is Shangri-La have been looked for by people over the past years. Her work *Indelible Landscape Shangri-La: A French Explorer's Memories A Hundred Years Ago* become an important cultural support for Shangri-La in Diqing. In September, 1997, People's Government of Yunnan Province announced that Shangri-La was in Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. In December 17, 2011, the State Council of People's Republic of China approved that Zhongdian County was renamed Shangri-La County.(Guo Suqin, 2003)

The location of Shangri-La caused tourism hot in the county. A lot of tourists come here to experience the legendary Shangri-La. Under the support of Yunnan Province as well as local government,

Zhongdian County's economy has achieved great development and tourism has become a pillar industry instead of wood processing industry. According to statistics, from 1994 to 2008, the number of overseas visitors increased from 28,800 to 520,000 and the foreign exchange earnings from tourism increased from ¥ 10 million to ¥257 million with an average annual increase of 30.1%; the number of domestic tourists increased from 517,500 to 4.27 million and domestic tourism income increased from ¥203 million to ¥1.82 billion with an average annual increase of 31.5%. In 2008, the number of overseas visitors, foreign exchange earnings from tourism, and the total income of Tourism respectively took the second, third and fourth place in Yunnan Province. Currently in Diqing, there are 415 tourist hotels, including 65 hotels with A levels (1 AAAAA hotel, 3 AAAA hotels, 9 AAA hotels and 29 AA hotels); 24 travel agencies; 13 scenic spots with A levels; 2 folk dance costumes performances centers; 15 designated shopping store; 25 designated Tibetan home visits; more than 1,300 tourist guides. There are a large number of specialty restaurants, coffee shops, folk arts and crafts workshops in Dukezong Ancient City. Types of travel goods and local specialties become increasingly rich; cultural packaging and product quality are gradually improved; complete tourism industry system including food, housing, transportation, travel, shopping and entertainment has gradually formed.

3. Similarities and Differences between Shambha-La and Shangri-La

Shambha-La and Shangri-La are two distinct cultural concepts. They have many similarities as well as differences. It is necessary to analyze and compare them to establish correct concept and have a comprehensive understanding of Shambha-La and Shangri-La. (Zhuang Liwei, 2005)

Table 1. Similarities and Differences between Shambha-La and Shangri-La

	Items	Shambha-La	Shangri-La
Similarities	location	the Daikin Triangle Area between Gansu, Qinghai and Sichuan; northeast edge of the Tibetan Plateau; Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Gansu	the Daikin Triangle Area between Yunnan, Sichuan and Tibet; The southeast edge of the Tibetan Plateau; Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Yunnan
	scene	Lotus with eight petals surrounded by snow-capped mountains	Lotus with eight petals surrounded by snow-capped mountains
	religion	Tibetan Buddhism	Tibetan Buddhism
	status	Han-Tibetan corridors, Tea-Horse Ancient Road, military fortress	Han-Tibetan corridors, Tea-Horse Ancient Road, military fortress
	landscape	forests, grasslands, mountains, lakes, rivers, valleys, ethnic customs	forests, grasslands, mountains, lakes, rivers, valleys, ethnic customs
	state	paradise, pure land, harmony	paradise, pure land, harmony
	Differences	landform	Vast land
Dimensionality		the king's palace is located in the center of the huge kingdom	Lamasery is not in the center of the valley, but on the cliffs
population		Densely populated	Several thousands
humanities		countless bustling cities	no cities
politics		centralized monarchy	loose governance
culture		pure Buddhist kingdom	Multi-culture of Han and Tibetan, Chinese and Western
implication		Northern Elysium	The sun and the moon in mind
Configuration		surrounded by snow-capped mountains; divided by rivers resulting like lotus with eight petals; snow-capped mountains stands in the inner ring	surrounded by snow-capped mountains with towering peaks; beneath the peaks are forest with, precious living creatures; grasslands surrounded by snow-capped mountains is divided by rivers into eight like lotus with eight petals

4. CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, tourism resources Shambha-La and Shangri-La are two distinct cultural concepts. When developing tourism resource, we should define them accurately and establish a good

image of tourism cultures and correct concepts. We should have a comprehensive understanding of the tourism cultural images of Shambha-La and Shangri-La. And we should create true Shambha-La and Shangri-La according to its

unique advantages and strong charms to attract domestic and foreign tourists, improve their reputation and creating tourism miracles for the development of China's tourism industry as well as the social progresses, cultural development and environmental protection in minorities regions. (Li Xu, 2003)

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