

Study on the Impact of the Construction of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway on the Food Culture of the Areas Along the Route

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Abstract: The construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway has greatly improved the transportation convenience along the railroad and effectively promoted the rapid development of the regional economy. The Sichuan-Tibet railway is not only an important transportation infrastructure, but also will have an impact on the culture of the areas along the route. This study collects a large amount of data on Tibetan dietary habits and changes in dietary preferences through field investigation and literature collation and analyzes the dietary production methods, ingredient choices, and dietary occasions in Tibetan dietary culture through the data, and finds that Tibetan dietary customs, dietary types, dietary productions, and dietary environments differ greatly from those of the major ethnic groups of Han Chinese. With the opening of the Sichuan Tibet railway and the development of the tourism industry, local residents will face the invasion of foreign cultures. Targeted strategies have been proposed to avoid cultural conflicts and promote diversified regional cultural development.

Keywords: Sichuan-Tibet railway; Tibetans; Food culture; Culture clash

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1. Introduction

In today's context of globalization, the protection and inheritance of national culture are facing serious challenges. With the China National Highway 318 put into use and the continuous advancement of the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway in recent years (Lhasa station to Linzhi station route is now open), it has greatly accelerated the development of the tourism industry in the western region of China. The Western region is rich in ethnic and cultural tourism resources, prompting more and more people to choose the Western region as a domestic tourist destination. After the epidemic, the number of tourists in China has increased year by year, accompanied by the network boom of "Special Forces-Style Tourism", which has greatly promoted the development of tourism in China's western region. It is worth noting that, due to the change in people's consumption concept and consumption level, tourists are paying more and more attention to the sense of experience and have higher requirements for the elements of tourism activities, which brings opportunities

for the development of the tourism industry and also faces the challenges brought by cultural differences. For example, the tourists' needs do not match with the local dietary culture, so the regional dietary culture should be responsive to the needs of the tourists to change their dietary culture structure. In fact, under the background of rapid development of tourism, local residents will face the invasion of foreign cultures, especially in terms of food culture, so the development of the tourism industry will be adjusted to match the taste of tourists to the diet. Hence, ways to avoid the conflict caused by cultural differences and ensure that the diversification of regional cultural development has become a problem that needs to be studied.

Li et al. pointed out in the analysis of the conflict between the development of tourism and the local ethnic culture in Dali that the cultural conflict may lead to the disappearance of the local culture ^[1]. Gonpo in the study of traditional Tibetan food culture, argued that this traditional food culture resource is expected to take on a new life in the present era ^[2]. In the field of Tibetan catering research, Li pointed out in his study that the Tibetan catering industry has a low degree of specialization, a lack of traditional dietary etiquette, and severe problems of hygiene in the dietary environment ^[3]. These problems may be amplified in railroad construction. In addition, Sun pointed out in his study in the field of international dietary cultural differences that there are significant differences between China and Germany in terms of dietary content, manner, and etiquette, which are of great significance for cross-cultural communication and the preservation of national culture ^[4]. This also provides important ideas for this study, which needs to consider the differences between different cultures in the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway to avoid cultural conflicts.

Due to the geographical environment along the Sichuan-Tibet railway and historical reasons, the Tibetan population is relatively large, therefore, this study will take the Tibetan food culture as the object of research, in-depth research on the impact of the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway on the Tibetan food culture, to alleviate the cultural conflict, and for the promotion of regional cultural diversification.

2. Impact of the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway on Tibetan food culture

The impact of the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway on Tibetan food culture involves cultural, economic, social, and other dimensions. The construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway not only strengthens the ties with Tibet but also promotes cultural exchanges between Tibetans and other ethnic groups ^[5]. With the strengthening of the connection with the outside world, more and more new ingredients, new dietary production methods, new eating habits, and other new elements have been integrated into the original Tibetan dietary culture, which has brought continuous development and challenges to the dietary culture of Tibetan residents. Based on this, this study focuses on the impact of the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway on Tibetan food culture from four aspects, which are dietary habits, dietary types, dietary preparation, and dietary environment.

2.1. Dietary habits

The Tibetan inhabitants have a deep faith in Buddhism, and their devout beliefs have permeated every aspect of their lives, including their eating habits. In the traditional diet of the Tibetans, some unique taboos are still retained. For example, the Tibetans mainly eat beef and mutton, while they respect horses, donkeys, mules, dogs, snakes, and aquatic seafood. They believe that life is equal, each small fish and shrimp is also a life, so killing a single cattle or sheep for food can eat for a very long time, while one needs to kill many fishes and shrimp just for one meal. In addition, the Tibetan funeral is mainly water burial, and they believe that the fish and shrimp in the water are the messengers of the deceased relatives to the afterlife. This dietary taboo is particularly prevalent among the masses in the farming and herding areas, and although the dietary habits of some of the townspeople may be different, they still largely follow this tradition.

With the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway, more and more varieties of ingredients have entered the Tibetan population, such as rice, pasta, fried foods, and sweets. The traditional Tibetan diet is based on coarse grains, beef mutton, and dairy products, emphasizing satiety and warmth. These new ingredients and diets have satisfied the residents' demand for diversified tastes, and in the long run, Tibetan residents have formed a new dietary concept, which includes new perceptions of food's taste, color, smell, and way of eating food. Secondly, the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway has shortened the distance between tourists and their destinations, making more and more tourists visit the area ^[6]. To satisfy tourists' demands for various tastes, the catering industry of Tibetans is also actively developing dietary cultural resources, such as cordyceps fish meatballs, a Lhasa delicacy that combines *Cordyceps sinensis*, ghee, and fresh fish. In this environment, more Tibetans are changing their dietary habits. Along the route, a wide variety of restaurants and snack stalls have become readily available, and with the convenience of transportation and diversified dietary choices, some young people have gradually lost interest in traditional Tibetan food.

2.2. Dietary types

With the opening of the Sichuan-Tibet railway, more ingredients will be transported to the Tibetan area. In the past, due to transportation constraints and the limited supply of ingredients from outside the region, regional residents relied mainly on locally produced ingredients to sustain their lives, and the Tibetan food culture also relied mainly on local natural resources and traditional ingredients, such as barley, yak meat, and mutton. These ingredients have unique qualities and tastes and are an important part of Tibetan food culture. However, under the influence of the Sichuan-Tibet railway and National Highway 318 routes, a large number of ingredients have been transported into the areas along the routes, providing more choices for local residents. This diverse supply of ingredients has changed the dietary structure of Tibetan residents, who have gradually come into contact with a wider range of different ingredients, including meat, vegetables, seafood, fruits, and condiments.

The increase in exotic ingredients has also brought more flavor choices to local people, enriched their dietary experience, and provided room for new food preparation methods and cuisine innovation. However, the over-introduction of exotic ingredients can have a negative impact on the local ecosystem and agriculture, and the diversity of food choices can also lead to the forgetting of traditional ingredients and the loss of traditional food preparation methods.

2.3. Dietary preparation

In the early days, traditional agricultural products in the Tibetan area included barley, potatoes, and ghee, and the main meats included yak meat, mutton, and pork ^[7]. Due to the limitations of geographic conditions and production methods, dietary production instruments applicable to their survival were developed, and common dietary instruments include ghee buckets, graphite, wooden bowls, silver pots, and so on ^[8]. Unlike the Han Chinese, their diet is more homogeneous and simpler to prepare, and many hardworking and simple Tibetan people will treat themselves to homemade cheese and meat after a day's labor. They usually cut the meat into sections and put them into a pot to cook, and then put a little salt and pepper, and cook them until they are medium done, and then take them out. No matter whether they are cooking meat or vegetarian, the cooking method and ingredients all reveal its simplistic nature, for the maximum preservation of the original flavor of the ingredients.

The construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway has created a fast track that has allowed modern cookware and equipment, as well as new ways of preparing food, to enter the Tibetan region. While the Tibetan people used to prepare their food mainly through simple cooking methods such as boiling, stewing, and mixing, they

may now increasingly use frying and baking to prepare their food. Taking the production of Tibetan ghee tea as an example, from the point of view of production tools, the traditional ghee tea production process is relatively primitive, mainly using tools such as teapots, tea cylinders, and wooden pestles, whereas the production of modern ghee tea employs more modern equipment, such as cream separators and electric kettles, which make the production process more convenient and efficient.

Changes in dietary preparation methods have had an impact on Tibetan food culture and have also contributed to local employment and economic development. The introduction of different ways of preparing food has brought about more consumer demand and contributed to local economic growth. However, this economic development has also brought about a certain cultural impact, resulting in the gradual loss of traditional food utensils and preparation methods.

2.4. Dietary environment

Dietary occasions for Tibetan residents are often closely related to agricultural and pastoral activities and religious ceremonies, with strict traditional etiquette for banquets, marriages, funerals, and other occasions. The traditional Tibetan diet emphasizes family dinners and community canteens. The Tibetan people usually live on the plateau, and because of geographical constraints, their diet is based primarily on agricultural and pastoral products, and most people eat at home or near farmland. In addition, religious ceremonies serve as an important part of Tibetan dietary occasions.

With the opening of the Sichuan-Tibet railway, more and more people are now able to dine out, especially in the cities, where industries such as Western restaurants, cafes, and bars have sprung up, and many hotels and restaurants have become the main places for them to eat and drink. Meanwhile, the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway has also led to the rise of cultural exchanges and tourism. Tourists come with different experience needs and want to taste authentic local food. As a result, some restaurants and hotels have started to provide experiences and demonstrations of Tibetan food culture, such as serving traditional Tibetan meals and drinks and organizing Tibetan-themed banquets. This trend provides more opportunities for local residents to make money and for tourists to learn more about and experience Tibetan food culture. While the transformation of food venues has brought new business and development opportunities, the gradual commercialization and modernization have led to the dilution and gradual loss of some of the traditional rigorous food etiquette.

3. Conclusion and strategy

With the opening of the Sichuan-Tibet railway, the accessibility of western China has been greatly improved while at the same time bringing great challenges to local ethnic cultures. Under the contemporary tourists' demand and consumption preference, the regional food culture is especially tested the most. Through the study, it is found that Tibetan dietary customs, dietary types, dietary production, and dietary environment have large differences with the major ethnic groups of Han Chinese dietary habits. With the opening of the Sichuan-Tibet railway and the development of the tourism industry, local residents will face the invasion of foreign cultures, so the following targeted strategies are proposed to avoid cultural conflicts and diversify regional culture.

In terms of education, the government should increase investment in education for the local population, especially in school education to increase the teaching of Tibetan food culture ^[9]. Educational institutions organize relevant courses and lectures to introduce the younger generation to the history, characteristics, and values of Tibetan food culture, which contributes to a better understanding of the ethnic culture. Through education, residents are inspired to take pride in and identify with the food culture, thereby increasing their sense of responsibility for its protection. Secondly, publicity campaigns have been launched to strengthen the

publicity of traditional culture, using various media platforms, such as television, radio, and the Internet, to widely publicize the uniqueness of Tibetan culinary culture. Documentaries, advertisements, and news reports have been used to introduce the diversity and uniqueness of Tibetan culinary culture to the public and to arouse people's interest in it and their awareness of its preservation.

The government has set up special funds to support the protection and inheritance of Tibetan food culture. The funds will be used to train local practitioners and raise their awareness of Tibetan food culture, and through training activities, local practitioners will learn traditional production techniques and recipes to pass them on. Additionally, the government has strengthened its supervision of food safety and hygiene to improve the quality and standardization of specialty foods.

For the social aspects, the government should strengthen publicity and promotion to raise awareness and enjoyment of local ingredients. The government should promote cooperation between enterprises and local farming, provide technical guidance and financial support, and help expand the scale and output of planting local specialty ingredients. In addition, by holding cultural exhibitions, festivals, and other activities, more people can experience Tibetan food culture first-hand. Traditional cultural festivals can set up special food display areas in the events, exhibiting traditional Tibetan food and production techniques, so that people can personally participate and taste them. This form of interactive experience can enhance the public's understanding of and recognition of Tibetan food culture, and have a publicity and protection effect.

Only with the joint efforts and participation of the government, society, and the public can the organic integration of economic development and cultural protection in the areas along the Sichuan-Tibet Railway be realized and achieve cultural diversification.

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