

# On the Development and Preservation of the Dege Sutra-Printing House in the New Era

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**ABSTRACT:** *With a history of more than 300 years, located under the beautiful snowy Que'r Mountain, its magnificent calligraphy and painting collection, ancient Tibetan characteristic architecture and unique scripture printing technology are the great advantages of Dege Sutra-Printing House, the cradle of Kham-pas culture. In recent years, our country has made great efforts to protect and develop its cultural tourism resources, which is both an opportunity and a challenge. This paper first discusses the location, then the history of the development and protection of the Dege sutra-printing house, and lastly proposes that the construction and protection should be strengthened from three dimensions: national-level, social-level, local-level and individual-level.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Dege Sutra-Printing House, development, preservation*

## 1. Introduction

Dege, meaning “Four Virtues and Ten Virtues”, is located in the western part of the Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province and is the birthplace of the Kham-pas culture. The auspicious land of Dege gave birth to the world-class heroic epic King Gesar and left behind a world-class cultural treasure trove, the Dege sutra-printing house. The history and civilization created by the Kham-pas people living on the Khams-tibet plateau is deeply engraved in the space and time of the Dege sutra-printing house. The history, architecture, and sutras of Dege sutra-printing house connect heaven and earth, mountains and rivers, good and evil, East and West, and are an important part of the Tibetan cultural circle that is the mainstay of the Tibetan Plateau. It is an important part of the Tibetan cultural circle. The original ecological history and culture embodied in the Dege sutra-printing house, which has not been eroded by modern civilization, is the unique survival nature and life form of the Tibetan areas. Therefore, its development and protection are very important.

## 2. The Unique Geographical Location

Dege sutra-printing house is located in Dege County, Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, in the upper reaches of the Yangtze

River, on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau in northwest Sichuan, which can be said to be the heart of the entire Tibetan region. Dege County, together with Lhasa in Tibet and Xiahe County in Gansu Province, is known as one of the three major cultural centers of the Tibetan region, located at the junction of the G317 National Highway and the Jinsha River. Dege, known as the "good land" is the birthplace of Kham-pas culture, the birthplace of Tibetan medicine in the southern school, the hometown of King Gesar, the ancient tea-horse road extending from here to the Tibetan areas, the gorgeous and magical Karma Kardze paintings. It is a place of rich culture and exquisite scenery, and has the reputation of "Heaven Deghe, Earth Deghe".

Dege sutra-printing house is located in the Buddhist Sakya School's Gengqing Temple, Gengqing Town, Dege County, Sichuan Province, where the famous Dege Chieftain Fortress was originally located. It covers an area of about 1632 square meters, with a building area of nearly 5886 square meters and a total construction area of more than 9000 square meters.

### **3. The History of Its Protection**

The Dege Parkhang is also known as the "Tibetan Cultural Treasure Depot", the "bright pearl under the snowy mountains", and the "Encyclopedia of Tibetan Culture". Dege Parkhang means the house of the printed version of the scriptures, which is a valuable heritage of the Chinese nation and even the world culture.

#### ***3.1 Being Included in the Scope of World Heritage Protection***

Dege sutra-printing house became a provincial-level cultural relic protection unit in Sichuan Province in 1980, and the fourth batch of key cultural relic protection units in China in 1996. Under the context of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and China's Opinions on Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage in China, the State Council approved "Tibetan engraving and printing techniques of the Dege sutra-printing house" as the first national list of intangible cultural heritage in 2006. In 2007 it was included in the list of intangible cultural heritage. In 2009, the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee inscribed "Chinese engraving and printing techniques" on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

#### ***3.2 Continuous Restoration and Protection***

From the reign of the Chieftain of Deghe to the present, the Dege sutra-printing house has been under protection. In 1979, the Sichuan Provincial Ethnic Affairs Commission allocated 20,000 yuan to repair some of the beams and floors, and in 1981, the Cultural Relics Administration of Dege County invited Qinghai Province sculptors to recreate the Buddha statue, and in 1983, Dege sutra-printing house invited craftsmen to repair the diamond wheel, gilt peacock statue, and restore the auspicious eight treasures. From 1988 to 1991, it cost more than 3.2 million yuan to repair the main body, and in 1996, it cost 90,000 yuan to repair the Falun, the golden

roof, the peacock. In 2004, the Sichuan Provincial Commission for Ethnic Affairs again allocated 1.6 million yuan for the protection and restoration of the buildings, carved panels, and murals. Sichuan Province and Garze Prefecture archives attach importance to the protection of the scriptures, and continue to reserve relevant high-end personnel to repair and develop.

#### **4. Protection and Development Suggestions in the New Era**

##### ***4.1 National Policy Support***

In 2005, the State Council issued the Notice on Strengthening the Protection of Cultural Heritage, deciding that starting in 2006, the second Saturday of June would be celebrated as "Cultural Heritage Day" in China. With the acceleration of economic globalization and modernization, China's cultural and ecological environment is undergoing tremendous changes, and cultural heritage and living environment are under serious threat. The state should establish a more complete cultural heritage protection system, adhere to the protection of the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage, protect it according to law and science, and strictly enforce the law. [1]

Therefore, Dege sutra-printing house should take this opportunity to hire professional museum personnel to assist in the management, using modern technology to restore the historical picture of the scripture academy, forming a multi-functional integrated museum (currently under construction). In the information age, the digital construction of cultural heritage is very popular, and should be piloted for some individual cultural relics. Dege sutra-printing house should establish a strong network propaganda platform, try to carry out network management, create a network research platform, and allocate a certain amount of intangible cultural heritage special research funds or national social science funds to give corresponding policy inclination. The protection of the scriptures is a huge project. It is necessary to establish a corresponding database."Dege sutra-printing house digital space construction needs a long process; it can not be completed overnight." [2] Dege sutra-printing house should effectively grasp the key cultural relics maintenance project, improve the level of protection and display of collections of cultural relics, strengthen the regulation and supervision of the cultural relics market, resolutely ban the illegal cultural relics market. In addition to policy preference, the state should increase the financial support.

##### ***4.2 Social Capital Investment***

The injection of private social capital should be increased. Some companies should have established, which undertakes the development, construction and operation Dege sutra-printing house, passenger transportation in this tourist attraction, and the construction of tourist facilities. A large amount of investment and financing of tourism projects, real estate development, sales of tourism products and handicrafts, and domestic and international tourism business should be

undergoing. According to people favoring the old scripture, companies should use hunger marketing, limiting its distribution, seal some of the old scriptures, and reproduce the new scriptures, finally to achieve the development and protection, a win-win result.

#### ***4.3 Local Policy Making***

##### ***4.3.1 To Promote the Construction of a Regional Tourism Demonstration Area***

The unique geographic location has created a unique Kham-pas culture: Kham-pas people are bold, romantic, heroic, tough and strong in religious beliefs. There's a high proportion of the monk population.[3] This is an open and compatible multi-cultural region, the representative of the spirit of the ancient tea-horse road. It is the geographic center where people come and go in all directions, also the center of habitat on the Tibetan Plateau, the cultural center where Tibetan Buddhism and other religions blend, and the birthplace of Kham-pas culture. Therefore, Dege County should take the implementation of national poverty alleviation policy as an opportunity to establish cultural tourism to enrich county development, coordinate to promote ecological agriculture and animal husbandry, ecological energy industry integration construction, promote the development of Dege full-scale tourism concept, to further develop Dege sutra-printing house a comprehensive tourism demonstration areas. According to the author's observation, from Dege County to the surrounding tourist places, there's no fixed tourist shuttle or chartered cars, thus seriously restricting the process of global tourism. Dege sutra-printing house should gradually reduce the cultural activities without a strong religious color, hold cultural and technical training courses, understand the Party's ethnic and religious policies, make efforts to learn the Party's latest policies, insist on the combination of unity and self-control, and the combination of ethnic and regional factors, and hire renowned Tibetan scholars to teach Tibetan painting and basic knowledge of Tibetan language to further cultivate successors.

##### ***4.3.2 To Develop Cultural Tourism Products***

Dege County should better its urban construction in such a way as to highlight the Kham-pas cultural center status of the Dege sutra-printing house. At present, according to the author's observation, the color of the surrounding buildings is basically the same as that of the Dege sutra-printing house, and there are a number of stores selling silverware, clothing, etc., but no bookstores, cultural creative products, or cultural performance centers. Therefore, cultural development should be the focus of town construction in Dege County, and besides Dege sutra-printing house, visitors basically cannot see any other cultural derivatives. The county government should allocate a certain amount of research funds, invite the teachers and students of various ethnic colleges and universities, as well as representatives of other regions, annually hold regular academic seminars, with the help of traditional cultural outreach in Garze Prefecture, and promote the construction of the Kham-pas

writer group, the Khams research centers in Sichuan Minzu College, and the further integration of resources to expand the impact. For example, the spirit of King Gesar is an important representative of the cradle of Kham-pas culture. King Gesar is a heroic epic with more than 20 million words, far more than the Homeric epics of the West. In 2014, the Tibetan-Chinese translation project of the biography of King Gesar has been launched, and has already been completed, including the Battle of Mulling, the Heavenly World, etc.; 45 choral books of the biography of King Gesar by the rap artist Sangzhu, have been published, and the translation of the choral books for the elderly has also been started.

#### ***4.3.3 To Establish an Online Media Platform***

To establish a number of online media platforms as soon as possible to publish the daily printing and management work of the Dege sutra-printing house in real time, authorizing the publication of research papers, and microblogging articles related to the Institute. To establish a mature and efficient media account for the release of short videos, and regularly carry out activities such as online voting and giving thumbs for short videos. These digital image, text and drawings in the new network propaganda platform will provide a new fast lane of communication.

#### ***4.4 Be a Civilized Tourist with Faith***

The oldest engraving plates in Dege sutra-printing house has been in use for more than 500 years, and many of the plates and drawing plates have been overdue for many years and are very fragile. Dege sutra-printing house has introduced a number of tourism rules; visitors are strictly prohibited to bring in flammable and explosive and other dangerous items and photography is also prohibited. Therefore, tourists and friends should always set up to protect the intangible cultural heritage, comply with the relevant provisions of Dege sutra-printing house, especially not to take pictures in the scripture rooms, do not touch the scripture plate. This is the best of times; this is the worst of times. It is pleasant to find the meaning of faith in the Dege sutra-printing house.

### **5. Conclusion**

In short, Dege sutra-printing house has a long history. The carving history can be traced back to 1700 A.D. It belongs to the world's heritage, the first of the three major printing houses in Tibetan areas. Due to the natural environment, transportation conditions, social history and other constraints, its cultural influence has to be further strengthened. In recent years, along with the Queer Mountain tunnel, highway, and Gesar airport navigation's completion, the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railroad, we believe that in the near future, the Dege sutra-printing house will continue to become China's pride, China's business card, but at the same time, we should be vigilant about the great pressure tourism will bring.

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