

Discuss the practical significance of the construction of Mount Wutai Studies under the background of COVID-19 broke out

Haohong Song

Wuhan University, Wuhan 430072, Hubei, China

Abstract: *At the end of 2019, the COVID-19 broke out in the whole China. The epidemic had various transmission routes and strong infectiousness, which seriously affected the social operation. For a period of time, amid the general trend of slowing production and calling for the closing of doors, all kinds of religious gatherings were seriously affected. At the beginning of 2020, China's economy was boosted and epidemic prevention and control became normal. The special studies on the Buddhist culture of Mount Wutai in Shanxi Province, China, the Mount Wutai Studies, in religious practice, disease treatment, ecological construction, religious governance and other aspects are consistent with epidemic prevention, contributing disciplinary wisdom to COVID-19 prevention and control, and has the practical significance of improving the effectiveness of anti-epidemic and promoting the development of local people's livelihood.*

Keywords: *COVID-19, Mount Wutai Studies, History, religion, Buddhism*

1. Introduction

Mount Wutai is the Ashram of Manjusri Bodhisattva, and also the source of Manjusri Belief in China since the Han Dynasty. There are many temples in the mountain, and the academic atmosphere here is relatively free. The different schools of Buddhism also overcome the gaps and promote Buddhism together here. As early as 1987, the Shanxi Academy of Social Sciences and Mount Wutai Research Association jointly held the "First Workshop on Mount Wutai Buddhist Culture", the majority of scholars put forward the proposition of establishing "Mount Wutai Studies" in view of the advantages of the complete Buddhism temples in Mount Wutai. In 2009, Mount Wutai was added to the World Heritage List, and the call for a "Mount Wutai Study" grew louder [1]. The construction of Mount Wutai Science mainly relies on the textual research of scholars, but it is not just the abrupt work of experts and scholars. As the interpreters and inheritors of Manjusri Belief, believers from all walks of life also join in the discussion of the construction of Mount Wutai Science with their experience of inheriting the faith and their own experience and perception of Buddhism. Now, the discipline has been under construction for more than 30 years, and a series of authoritative monograph such as Cui Zhengsen's History of Buddhism in Mount Wutai (2000), Cui Zhengsen's Study on the Map of Mount Wutai in Dunhuang Gaves (2010), Cui Yuqing's Exploration of Mount Wutai (2015), and Chang Zheng's Histories of Buddhism in Mount Wutai (2016) have emerged, which have a large and profound body and deliberate thought about this culture. As for the development direction of Mount Wutai studies, Li Yuming (2001) pointed out: "The study of Mount Wutai is by no means limited to the study of Buddhism, but to carry out all-round, multidisciplinary and comprehensive research with Buddhist culture as the main focus [2]." Cui Yuqing (2015) further clarify: "in the predominantly Buddhist culture multidisciplinary research, (study of Mount Wutai) involved in many aspects in the area, such as of politics, economy, society, history, literature, art, architecture, medicine, geological, ecological, environmental protection, Buddhism medicine, and Buddhist music, which study is also a right path to grasp a comprehensive understanding and the overall theory of Mount Wutai" [3]. Under the environment of normal epidemic prevention, the study of Mount Wutai has contributed its disciplinary wisdom to epidemic prevention and control in religious practice, disease treatment, ecological construction, religious governance and other aspects, showing its disciplinary connotation.

2. Religious doctrine is externalized in practice

Qiu Yonghui (2019) pointed out that according to the World Values Survey (WVS) in 2007, the

Buddhist population in China accounted for 3.5% of the total population in China, while according to the World Religion Data Survey (WRD) in 2010, the Buddhist population in China accounted for 13.5% of the total population in China, and the data provided by another institution was as high as 18% [4]. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics shows that at the end of 2007, the total population of China was 132129 million [5], and in 2010, the total population of China was 1341 million [6]. Therefore, it is estimated that in 2007, the number of Buddhist believers in China was about 46 million, and in 2010, the number of Buddhist believers in China may be as high as 181 million. The data is likely to be inaccurate, but it shows that the spread of Buddhist culture is booming in China in recent years.

Mount Wutai is a famous Buddhist mountain in China. Thousands of pilgrims have limited knowledge of Buddhism, so they hope to find the way of thinking and spiritual comfort to solve the problems in their lives in the most simple and clear Buddhist doctrines, and to inspire their lives with a few "omnipotent doctrines". In the construction of Mount Wutai Studies, the traditional doctrines of Manjusri Belief are developed and refined, and the doctrines that are conducive to maintain social stability and purify the atmosphere are retained, making them easier to operate and comprehend personally. "Giving" is one of the six degrees of Mahayana Dharma. It consists of three parts: giving wealth, giving dharma, and giving fearlessly. At the beginning of the outbreak in China, the concept of "giving" in the Manjusri Belief was widely practiced, which improved the effectiveness of the fight against the COVID-19.

2.1 Financial alms

"All living beings learn to be equal, and their hearts follow the waves of all circumstances. What would people hate when they lose all skeletons?" Mount Wutai has always spread the Buddhist tales of Manjusri's pilgrimage to Wuzhe Room, which should be the most typical example of the Buddhism of Mount Wutai. At present, there is still the Manjusri Pagoda commemorating the sacred relics of Manjusri in The Pagoda Temple of Mount Wutai. Financial donation emphasizes that those who do good deeds should try their best to give away their belongings and help the needy, which was not easy for the poor monks in Mount Wutai. Wei Dedong (2015) pointed out that the average monthly income of a member of the five major religions in China is 506 yuan, and the average monthly income of the Buddhists in China is 397 yuan, which is the type of ascetic monks [7]. As far as Mount Wutai is concerned, the monks in the mountain temples are strictly disciplined and have little surplus wealth. It is not uncommon for ascetic monks from Qinghai-Tibet to make pilgrimages to Wutai. Their clothes are ragged, which aggravates the significance of Mount Wutai's "ascetic practices". In order to deal with the epidemic, the Buddhist circle of Mount Wutai, adhering to the belief of "compassion for the world and benefit all living beings", donated the support of the Dharma Association on January 27, 2020, and raised a total of more than 3.1 million yuan for the fight against the COVID-19 in Wuhan. Mount Wutai has long been the coexistence of monks and common people, the specific cultural atmosphere makes the citizens around Mount Wutai honest, kind, quiet and natural, the phenomenon here is extremely representative in Shanxi [8]. People in Wutai County also donated enthusiastically. At the beginning of the epidemic, 22 private enterprises there raised a total of 339,000 yuan for Wuhan's fight against the epidemic. We can understand the concept, giving, the core of which about charity is constantly widening now, growing up to be the consensus of the society, has a strong universality and ductility. Especially when the former national poverty county, Wutai County, tried to raise funds for Wuhan, we can realize the real infection of alms thoughts around manjusri dojo in China.

2.2 Dharma giving and fearless giving

The fight against the COVID-19 is differ from ordinary disaster relief. The COVID-19 epidemic lasts longer and affects a wider range. In the fight against the epidemic with drugs, attention should be paid to the psychological diseases that the society is prone to suffer from. Dharma giving emphasizes that I am eager to teach all that I can learn if others want to learn it. Fearless giving emphasizes the need to use my wisdom to help all sentient beings remove their fears when they are disturbed in their bodies and minds. Since the beginning of the epidemic, Buddhist circles across the country have been praying for relief and providing spiritual support for believers. The monks in Buddha mother cave, a temple in Mount Wutai, also at the end of 2019 and during the 2020 Spring Festival lighted up butter lamp in the temple so as to pray for Wuhan and to bring comfort to the whole society. With the spread of the global epidemic, many people have lowered their sense of self-efficacy and begun to doubt the value of struggle in their doubts and uneasiness. "Proper Buddhism maintains that 'fate' is in one's own hands [9]." It encourages people to strive ahead and eliminate fear by praying for blessings and enlightenment, which is a successful

religious practice to realize dharma giving and fearless giving. Many temples in Mount Wutai organized believers to carry out online sutra chanting through the Internet at the early stage of fighting against the epidemic in 2020, temporarily simplifying the solemn Buddhist ritual, calming the anxiety of believers in their practice, and contributing religious positive energy to social stability and maintaining the anti-epidemic order.

3. Disease treatment, psychological counseling

This COVID-19 outbreak is fierce, with a high rate of serious diseases and a long period of screening and treatment, and many people are facing the test of life and death for the first time. In the treatment of patients with physical pain, psychological counseling is equally important. Some seriously ill people face dangerous situation, because of psychological pressure, taking the initiative to give up life of the event is often heard. The Buddhist concept of compassion has something in common with the psychological counseling methods of modern medicine. To some extent, Buddhist teachings are more attractive to some patients than doctors' instructions, which are easier to relieve stress. The concept of compassion emphasizes benevolent care, empathy for their suffering and compassion for whole society. It seems that the evaluation of "the benevolence of the healer" in medical care can also be seen the affirmation and praise of "compassion".

Chen Ming (2014) pointed out that "Buddhist medicine is a non-independent medical and pharmaceutical system formed by absorbing the theories and clinical characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine with Buddhist doctrines as its guiding ideology [10]", and clarified the symbiotic relationship between Buddhist medicine and traditional Chinese medicine. Li Liangsong (2014) defined Buddhist medicine as: "Being based on the ancient Indian medical prescriptions, the Buddhist medicine guided by Buddhist theories, absorbing and drawing on the theoretical and clinical characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine and pharmacy, so as to form a unique traditional medicine and pharmacy system [11]. There are also examples of the application of Buddhist medicine in Mount Wutai." Manjusri Medical book (the book number is unknown), a Buddhist document, was unearthed in Dunhuang, China, it belongs to the medical history literature. The manuscript was preserved by Luo Zhenyu, a bible collector in Qing Dynasty, at the beginning of the 20th century, but it is not yet known where it is kept [12]. This condition indicates the broad prospect of the study of Buddhist medicine in the Manjusri Belief. In this fight against the COVID-19, traditional Chinese medicine has repeatedly shown miraculous effects. Many names of traditional Chinese medicine are derived from Buddhism, Bodhi, Manjusri Bamboo, Avalokitesvara Bamboo, Manjusri Orchid and other names, which truly record the inherent scientific origin between the two of traditional Chinese medicine. There is a great collection of Buddhist classics in Mount Wutai, and there is no lack of pithy writings on Buddhist medicine and medicine. It seems that local specialized discipline about Manjusri can also give play to their academic advantages and realize the two-way exploration of Buddhist medicine and Chinese medicine from the perspective of scientific research.

4. Ecological construction, harmonious coexistence

Fang Chunfeng (2018) pointed out: "At present, people are no longer satisfied with the simple offering and worship of Buddhism, but have higher expectations for the quality, connotation and environmental protection concept of Buddhist culture itself. Buddhism should pay more attention to culture, integrate ecology and environmental protection concept, etc., and improve the new connotation of Buddhist culture through interdisciplinary integration [13]. "Wen Jinyu (2020) stressed that," Actually, a community with a shared future is a harmonious coexistence and common prosperity between man and man, between man and nature, and between man and himself [14]." How to preserve the "pure land" of Mount Wutai and integrate the nature puts forward higher requirements for the construction of Mount Wutai science. It requires scholars to have a wider research horizon around the ecology of Mount Wutai, and it also requires the society to practice the research principles according to the rules and produce joint forces.

Mount Wutai is the "Geological Museum of China". The mountain is huge, with unique scenery. Rare species such as *Rhododendron mucronulatum* and golden eagle are distributed there, and it has the reputation of "cool and refreshing Buddhist sacred land". Local incense flourishes, the significance of emphasizing forest protection, fire prevention and ecological protection is self-evident. Emphasizing ecological harmony and co-existence has always been the aim of the construction of Mount Wutai science, and the abundant natural and geological resources have laid a solid academic support for the study of

Mount Wutai's ecological civilization. The outbreak of COVID-19 has once again highlighted the importance of maintaining ecological stability. When State President Xi Jinping of China visited Shanxi in mid-May 2020, he paid special attention to the protection of the Yungang Grottoes in Datong City, the cultivation of the day lily Garden in Datong and the treatment of the Fen River in Taiyuan. When inspecting Fen River, Xi Jinping pointed out that "regulating Fen River is not only related to the ecological environment protection and economic development of Shanxi, but also related to the historical and cultural inheritance of Taiyuan and even Shanxi", affirming the outlining role of ecological governance in Shanxi's future construction. The ecological construction of Mount Wutai is of great significance to the overall landscape of the scenic spot and the repair of ancient buildings. Mount Wutai, as the tourist and cultural signboard of Shanxi, should continue to adhere to the coordination of ecology and cultural resources, develop green industry, attract guests with a livable environment and profound cultural deposits, and boost the economy. The Mount Wutai Studies should shoulder the responsibility of the local "think tank" and set the right pulse and direction for the ecological construction of Mount Wutai.

5. Patriotism, love religion, and respond to policy

Buddhism had been enduring wars for a long time, which was related to its original intention to persuade people to be good. Buddhism in Mount Wutai also experienced four struggles to destroy Buddhism from the Northern Wei Dynasty to the Later Zhou Dynasty, and has continued to this day. Talking about Buddhism in China in the future, Ji Xianlin, the famous master of Chinese culture, said: "We (Buddhism construction in China) must grasp the spiritual essence of Marxism. Without this, we will be lost and unable to extricate ourselves [15]." Since the new era, China has always adhered to the principle of religious autonomy and self-management, guided all religions in China to the path of sinicization of religions, added the concept of social benefit to religious governance, and emphasized that believers should realize their life value in the journey of national construction. At the Eighth Session of the Joint Conference of National Religious Organizations in China, Monk Yan Jue also made it clear that "Buddhists' personal religious belief, ideal pursuit, future and destiny are closely integrated with the great dream of national renaissance and with the future and destiny of the great motherland [16]", affirming the support and cooperation of Buddhists to the strategy of religious sinicization in China. China's religious governance policy is in line with China's national conditions and reality, which ensures that under the rapid COVID-19 epidemic, religions across the country can be quickly mobilized to concentrate on fighting the epidemic and reduce the risk of infection caused by crowd gathering. During the study of Mount Wutai's Buddhist culture, scholars at Mount Wutai have always been exploring the similarities between Manjusri Belief and Marxism. As a subenvironment of the Buddhist circle in Shanxi Province, Mount Wutai has actively responded to the policy and achieved patriotism and love religion. During the epidemic, the Buddhist temple in Mount Wutai resolutely implemented the anti-epidemic plan, issued an open letter in time, cancelled the established dharma assembly, and urged believers to abide by the rules and regulations for self-education at home, pay attention to self-protection, simplified the offering process, and contributed religious strength to the evacuation of people and the relief of the anti-epidemic pressure. Like many countries in the world, a country's overall interests and development of religion is consistent. With the outbreak of the epidemic, Mount Wutai gathering activities and epidemic prevention will be insisted for a long time. It needs not only the intervention of administrative means, the more need to consider is that how Wutai religious governance institute improve believers' rational knowledge of national law and dharma, in cooperation with the academic level, provide positive guidance.

6. Construction issues in the normalization of epidemic prevention

In the first year of the 14th Five-Year Plan in China, Vaccination coverage has been increased disease prevention continued on a regular basis, and religious activities in Mount Wutai resumed in an orderly manner. Xi Jinping once said, "Dangers and opportunities always exist side by side. Overcoming dangers is an opportunity." Actually, the "opportunity" for the greater development of Mount Wutai lies in the "danger" of the epidemic. The epidemic prevention process provides time and opportunity for the better construction of Mount Wutai in the future. In the future, Mount Wutai will continue to rely on the research of Mount Wutai Studies to tell the story of Shanxi well, to develop a template for the religious governance of Shanxi, and to enhance the cultural discourse power of Mount Wutai Manjusri Belief in the national Buddhist circle. During the period of epidemic prevention, the following suggestions are proposed for discussion on the construction of Mount Wutai Studies.

6.1 Consider the concept of "folk religion"

Mount Wutai Buddhist culture should be more prominent in the concept of "folk religion", more down-to-earth, and enhance the sense of identity of the masses. Ma Tianxiang (2008) pointed out that "Buddhism has both a relatively sophisticated and profound philosophical form and a relatively vulgar and popular belief form [17]." The former "profound" form is called "theoretical religion", while the latter is called "belief religion". In Chinese history, several emperors visited Mount Wutai. Buddhism was regarded as the state religion in the Yuan Dynasty, and Mount Wutai was honored and distinguished. In order to use the profound doctrines of theoretical Buddhism to rule the people, the rulers endowed Buddhism with a noble historical status, which to some extent made it difficult for ordinary people to have the financial resources and knowledge to pay respect for Buddhas and get access to the true scriptures. Today, people's understanding of Buddhism in China is still more in the street or the word of mouth between fields, more from a simple belief of seeking happiness and safety. Mutian Diliang (1957) said, "But if we examine it carefully, we will find that there is still a great gap between the Buddhism of the monks and that of the family, and between the intellectuals and the common people. There was also a great distance between ordinary life and the acceptance of profound Buddhist philosophy [18]." In the new era and new environment, the greater development of Buddhist culture in Mount Wutai should seek opportunities in the direction of folk Buddhism. This requires scholars and monks in Mount Wutai to identify the doctrines conducive to the harmonious development of society in the Manjusri belief with the help of academic heritage and a broader perspective, to clarify philosophy in a common spoken language, and to extract a set of simple and easy-to-learn doctrines from the Buddhist texts for society. For example, giving during the epidemic period is a good example. When ordinary people talk about "giving money" and "giving law", they may refuse these things they do not know instinctively. However, if someone can interpret it as "giving money to charity" and "psychological counseling" respectively, their acceptance will be improved. Similarly, the general public may think that donating money and goods is "being good" rather than directly associate such behaviors with "karma" and "boundless beneficence".

6.2 Use resources in more ways

The construction of economy and people's livelihood in Mount Wutai should make concerted efforts in religious culture, ecological industry, red tourism, Buddhist scripture and medicine, etc., learn from each other's strong points and pay attention to overcorrection. At the very beginning of its construction, Mount Wutai Studies focused on the construction of people's livelihood and helped the local economy. It took the famous Buddhist culture as an opportunity to explore the economic source. The fame of Mount Wutai depends on the influence of Buddhist culture. For a long time, the surrounding industries indeed have shared the "dividends" of Buddhist tourists by virtue of the aura of "Cool Buddha Country", which has really driven the local economy. In the future, relying only on the religious platform to expand the source of customers may be a little weak, and only focusing on the promotion of Mount Wutai Buddha culture may only attract more people who believe in Buddhism, but have little attraction to that non-believers and people who believe in other religions. Non-believers account for the vast majority of the Chinese population, and a considerable part of those who do believe in religions other than Buddhism. Shanxi is a key battleground in the war of resistance behind during the Anti-Japanese War. During the period, Mount Wutai is not only an army base of 115th Division of the Eighth Route Army of the National Revolutionary Army in China, but also as a red revolutionary base has a glorious revolutionary pedigree. Mount Wutai has good natural conditions with Chinese rare spectacle, red tourism and the eco-tourism should also acquire the ability to construct the local economy. How to add the icing on the cake while publicizing the Buddha culture of Mount Wutai, attract more non-Buddhist believers to visit Shanxi and Wutai, and eliminate the stereotype of tourists that "Mount Wutai is equal to a Buddhist temple", which should be considered for the comprehensive construction of Mount Wutai in the future. As the sign of cultural tourism in Shanxi Province, China, during the 14th Five-Year Plan period, the better development of economy and people's livelihood in Mount Wutai still needs to balance the development of related disciplines, transform academic ideas into economic production capacity, and continue to make accurate efforts for local construction.

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