

The Protection and Revitalization of Revolutionary Artifacts from the Perspective of the Sinicization of Marxism

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Abstract: Revolutionary cultural relics are tangible historical artifacts accumulated over the Communist Party of China's (CPC) century-long struggle. They embody the CPC's unique spiritual lineage spanning more than a hundred years and vividly demonstrate the practical achievements of integrating the fundamental principles of Marxism with China's specific realities and its fine traditional culture. Although the protection and utilization of revolutionary cultural relics in China are currently progressing steadily, practical issues such as a fragmented protection mechanism, superficial value interpretation, homogenized revitalization models, and a decentralized governance system continue to constrain the full realization of their cultural functions and ideological value. From the perspective of the Sinicization of Marxism, this paper systematically analyses the practical bottlenecks in the protection and revitalization of revolutionary cultural relics, and constructs an integrated development system encompassing precise protection, theoretical decoding, innovative revitalization, and multidimensional empowerment. It seeks to provide solid theoretical support and feasible practical pathways for the inheritance and development of "red culture" in the new era, as well as for the popularization of innovative theories on the Sinicization of Marxism.

Keywords: Sinicization of Marxism; Revolutionary cultural relics; Cultural relics conservation; Revitalization and utilization

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1. Introduction

Historical materialism holds that social practice is the fundamental driving force behind the shaping of social ideology^[1]. As material carriers of historical practice, revolutionary cultural relics comprehensively trace the evolutionary trajectory of the Sinicization of Marxism, providing empirical evidence of the historical inevitability and practical rationality of the deep integration of Marxism with China's specific national conditions and traditional cultural context. Compared with the generalized and subjectively selective nature

of textual historical materials, physical cultural relics possess unique on-site authenticity and contextual integrity. They serve as a bridge linking abstract theoretical logic with concrete practical experience, and are the core vehicles for interpreting the historical trajectory, practical laws, and spiritual essence of the Sinicization of Marxism.

Against the backdrop of the new era, the protection and revitalization of revolutionary cultural relics have transcended the technical scope of traditional restoration and static preservation, becoming a strategic cultural project aimed at consolidating the foundations of the mainstream ideology, promoting the innovative development of “red” culture, broadening the reach of the Party’s innovative theories, and perpetuating the legacy of the “red” spirit ^[2]. Existing research largely focuses on individual domains such as cultural relic restoration techniques, the development of “red” cultural tourism, and applications in ideological and political education; there is a scarcity of systematic research grounded in the holistic theoretical perspective of Marxism that integrates the physical conservation of cultural relics, the exploration of their spiritual significance, and the interpretation of their theoretical value. Consequently, there is a research bias that prioritizes resource development over theoretical empowerment. Grounded in Marxist philosophy of practice and historical materialism, this paper elucidates the intrinsic logical connection between revolutionary cultural relics and the Sinicization of Marxism, examines the practical challenges currently facing the conservation and revitalization of such relics, and proposes targeted optimization strategies to facilitate the continued transmission of revolutionary culture and the popularization of the Party’s innovative theories.

2. The intrinsic logical mechanism of the Sinicization of Marxism and revolutionary cultural relics

The core of the Sinicization of Marxism as a scientific theory lies in the two-way empowerment and mutual promotion between theoretical iteration and social practice. Scientific theory guides the practice of social reform and construction, whilst rich practical experience continuously enriches and updates the theoretical content, forming a spiraling pattern of development in which theoretical innovation and practical exploration advance hand in hand. As the material fruits of a century of practice in the Sinicization of Marxism, revolutionary cultural relics are deeply embedded within the complete evolutionary process of this Sinicization, forming a closed-loop logical system characterized by “practical generation—material preservation—spiritual distillation—theoretical sublimation.”

2.1. Revolutionary artifacts as historical evidence of the localization of Marxism

Marxist epistemology demonstrates that all human cognitive progress and theoretical innovation stem from concrete social practice. Every major theoretical breakthrough in the Sinicization of Marxism is rooted in China’s developmental practices across different historical periods and constitutes a scientific synthesis of practical experience gained from revolutionary struggles, state-building, institutional reform and modernization. The Sinicization of Marxism is not merely a matter of academic deduction or theoretical speculation, but rather a problem-oriented process of practical innovation grounded in the principal contradictions of Chinese society, responding to the challenges of the times and resolving the nation’s developmental dilemmas.

Over the past century, the Party’s exploratory practices have been preserved and passed down in the form of diverse revolutionary artifacts. These relics fully reconstruct the dynamic process by which Marxist

theory has been adapted to the Chinese revolutionary path, the laws of socialist construction, and the Chinese model of modernization, and they provide tangible evidence of the practical trajectory of the continuous integration of the basic principles of Marxism with China's national conditions and its fine traditional culture. Compared with textual narratives, which are prone to subjective selection and vague formulations, tangible artifacts preserve the authentic historical reality and the integrity of the original context; they are able to reflect macro-historical processes through micro-material carriers, thereby filling the interpretative gaps left by purely textual research. The protection of revolutionary artifacts is, in essence, the safeguarding of the practical foundations and historical origins of Marxism taking root and developing innovatively in China.

2.2. Revolutionary cultural relics are the tangible embodiment of the Party's spiritual lineage

The century-long process of adapting Marxism to the Chinese context has not only driven institutional optimization and social progress but has also led to the continuous deepening of spiritual civilization. This has given rise to a systematic spiritual lineage, originating from the great spirit of the Party's founding and running through a century of the Party's history, which constitutes the spiritual core and value foundation of Marxism adapted to the Chinese context. In dialectical materialism, abstract social ideologies and spiritual values cannot be passed down from one generation to the next without material carriers; intangible spiritual wealth must rely on concrete physical media to ensure its enduring continuity and transmission across generations.

As direct products of revolutionary practice across different historical periods, revolutionary artifacts embody the distinctive spirit and value pursuits of their respective eras^[3]. Artifacts from the era of revolutionary warfare exemplify unwavering ideals and convictions, a spirit of selfless sacrifice, and a character of independent exploration; those from the period of socialist construction embody the spirit of dedication to ethnic unity, self-reliance, and a commitment to seeking truth and pragmatism; whilst revolutionary resources from the era of reform and opening-up highlight a pioneering and enterprising spirit that keeps pace with the times; the revolutionary relics of the new era vividly illustrate the contemporary ethos of putting the people first, upholding principles whilst innovating, and embracing a global perspective. Revolutionary relics have transformed the "red spirit" from an abstract concept into a tangible entity, laying a solid material foundation for the inheritance of the "red gene" and the perpetual continuation of the Party's spiritual lineage.

2.3. Revolutionary artifacts are an important medium for the popularization of innovative theories

The vitality of Marxism lies in its ability to keep pace with the times, whilst its influence stems from its popularization among the masses^[4]. The development of Marxism with Chinese characteristics requires not only continuous theoretical iteration and systemic refinement within academic circles, but also widespread ideological and emotional acceptance from society as a whole. Theoretical discourse is highly abstract and logical, which can easily create barriers to public understanding, thereby limiting the penetration and reach of ideological guidance.

Revolutionary cultural relics effectively break down the barriers between abstract theory and public understanding, transforming core Marxist tenets and scientific methods—such as seeking truth from facts, the mass line and the analysis of contradictions—into tangible, verifiable and relatable historical

scenes and narratives through artifacts. By delving deeply into the historical context, practical logic and ideological significance behind these artifacts, people can dispel the sense of detachment often associated with theoretical dissemination, strengthen the public's political, theoretical, and emotional identification with the achievements of the Sinicization of Marxism, and continuously promote the modernization and popularization of the Party's innovative theories, ensuring they take root in society.

3. Practical challenges in the protection and revitalization of revolutionary cultural relics

In recent years, China's governance system for revolutionary cultural relics has been steadily improved in terms of institutional development, resource surveys and cultural dissemination. However, current conservation and utilization efforts still face prominent structural shortcomings and institutional obstacles, making it difficult to fully realize the theoretical value, spiritual significance and educational function of these relics, and failing to meet the practical demands of high-quality development of "red culture" and the popularization of innovative theories.

3.1. Fragmentation of the protection system: Risks to historical authenticity and site integrity

China's revolutionary cultural heritage is widely distributed, comprises diverse types of sites and exhibits significant disparities across different administrative levels; a unified, precise and comprehensive standardized protection system has yet to be established. Firstly, small-scale heritage sites at the grassroots level, scattered red heritage sites in private hands, and resources bearing witness to the new era have long remained outside the scope of official surveys and protection systems; subject to natural weathering and human interference, they face a significant risk of damage and loss. Secondly, there is an imbalance in the allocation of resources across administrative levels: whilst key cultural relics at the national and provincial levels enjoy adequate funding and technical support, those at the municipal and county levels generally suffer from insufficient funding, outdated technology and substandard management and maintenance. Thirdly, utilitarian development undermines historical authenticity; in some regions, to accommodate cultural and tourism development, revolutionary sites have undergone excessive commercialization and stylized renovations, destroying the original appearance and spatial integrity of the cultural heritage and severing the complete spatio-temporal context of the practice of the Sinicization of Marxism.

3.2. Superficial interpretation of value: Insufficient depth in exploring the theoretical implications of cultural heritage

Current efforts to interpret revolutionary cultural relics are generally characterized by a tendency to "emphasize historical narrative whilst neglecting theoretical decoding." Most museum exhibitions, academic outputs, and public guided tours focus solely on chronological accounts of historical events, the promotion of heroic deeds, and descriptions of the physical form of the relics, whilst neglecting the profound theoretical logic and ideological core underlying these cultural heritage sites. Rarely are the core values of these relics interpreted from the macro-perspective of the Sinicization of Marxism. The connection between the artifacts themselves and the Party's successive theoretical innovations is poorly established, and there is insufficient interpretation of the practical experience of the "Two Combinations," the scientific methods of Marxism, and

the Party's original aspirations and mission embodied in these artifacts. Consequently, revolutionary artifacts have been reduced to mere historical commemorative symbols, losing their core functions of ideological education and theoretical empowerment.

3.3. Homogenization of revitalization models: Low quality of red culture reproduction

Across various regions, the revitalization and utilization of revolutionary cultural relics are generally characterized by rigid, entrenched models, severe homogenization and a lack of targeted approaches. Firstly, exhibition formats are outdated and inflexible; static displays, text panels and guided tours remain the norm, whilst there is an insufficient supply of immersive, interactive and digital experiential scenarios, making it difficult to cater to the cognitive habits and aesthetic demands of today's youth. Secondly, industrial integration remains superficial; "red" cultural tourism largely remains at the shallow stage of sightseeing and "check-in" activities, with insufficient deep integration with ideological and political education, the cultural and creative industries, and public cultural services. There is a utilitarian tendency to prioritize visitor numbers and economic returns over substantive educational content. Thirdly, communication discourses are outdated; traditional, indoctrinating, and didactic approaches lack innovation, making it difficult to achieve the subtle, pervasive permeation of the "red" spirit and innovative theories, thereby significantly reducing the overall effectiveness of the reproduction of "red" culture.

3.4. Fragmented governance mechanisms: An incomplete multi-stakeholder collaborative governance system

The protection and revitalization of revolutionary cultural relics constitutes a systematic undertaking spanning multiple sectors and departments, requiring coordinated action and integrated advancement across departments such as cultural relics, propaganda, education, culture and tourism, and Party history. At present, the powers and responsibilities of the various functional departments are fragmented, and there is a lack of regularized, institutionalized mechanisms for collaborative governance; issues such as sectoral barriers, compartmentalization of resources and disjointed working practices are particularly pronounced. The cultural heritage sector focuses on the restoration and static conservation of sites, whilst the Party history sector concentrates on tracing historical narratives, and the education sector centers on applications in ideological and political education contexts. Research and practice across these fields remain fragmented, failing to establish a comprehensive, end-to-end working system encompassing "resource surveys – scientific conservation – theoretical research – value interpretation – dissemination and empowerment," thereby constraining the full realization of the cultural heritage's comprehensive value.

4. Optimized strategies for the protection and revitalization of revolutionary cultural heritage

Grounded in historical materialism and informed by the needs of Marxist theoretical innovation and the development of "red culture" in the new era, this research adheres to the core principles of "prioritizing conservation, deeply exploring value, innovatively utilizing, and continuing the legacy." It aims to establish a multi-dimensional development framework comprising systematic conservation, in-depth interpretation, innovative revitalization, and comprehensive empowerment, striving to achieve the organic unity of the material preservation, spiritual continuity, and theoretical empowerment of revolutionary cultural relics.

4.1. Consolidating the foundations of protection: Establishing a precise and systematic cultural heritage governance system

Scientific and standardized conservation is the prerequisite for the revitalization and utilization of revolutionary cultural heritage. Sites housing revolutionary cultural relics must undergo comprehensive surveys of cultural heritage resources across the entire area and establish digital archives, creating a tiered and categorized database of revolutionary cultural heritage resources to enable dynamic monitoring and comprehensive protection of all types of revolutionary heritage. Differentiated, tiered protection strategies should be implemented: emergency restoration should be carried out for endangered artifacts; preventative conservation measures should be implemented for well-preserved sites; and routine management and maintenance should be ensured for scattered and micro-artifacts, whilst ensuring a balanced allocation of cultural heritage protection resources at all levels. Strictly adhering to the principles of “minimal intervention” and “restoring the old to its original state,” officials must prevent excessive commercial redevelopment and arbitrary renovations of the historical character of these sites. Officials must promote the clustered protection and integrated development of these heritage sites, fully reconstructing the practical contexts of each stage of the Sinicization of Marxism, and safeguarding the authenticity and integrity of our revolutionary history.

4.2. Deepening theoretical interpretation: Establishing a discourse system for the Sinicization of Marxism

With the exploration of theoretical value at its core, officials must establish the intrinsic connection between physical cultural relics and the Party’s innovative theories, thereby constructing a specialized and academic interpretative framework. We shall promote the interdisciplinary integration of Marxist theory, the archaeology of revolutionary cultural relics, Party history research and cultural dissemination, and conduct specialized research into the theoretical implications, practical experiences and spiritual values embodied in revolutionary cultural relics, thereby addressing academic shortcomings in the theoretical interpretation of cultural relics. Moving beyond a single historical narrative framework, we will focus on decoding the practical logic of the “Two Combinations,” the scientific methodology of Marxism and the Party’s governance philosophy embodied in these artifacts. We will transform revolutionary artifacts into tangible teaching materials that embody the Party’s innovative theories, and develop differentiated interpretative discourses tailored to young people, Party members and cadres, and the general public, thereby driving the interpretation of the value of these artifacts from superficial storytelling towards in-depth theoretical empowerment.

4.3. Innovative revitalization paradigm: Promoting the high-quality reproduction of red culture

In line with the laws of cultural dissemination in the new era and the cognitive needs of the public, officials will innovate models for the revitalization and utilization of cultural relics to achieve the living transmission of revolutionary cultural relics. Relying on technologies such as virtual reality, 3D reconstruction, and digital modeling, officials will upgrade the digital exhibition system to create immersive historical experience scenarios, online virtual museums, and real-life ideological and political education classrooms, thereby realizing the reconstruction of historical scenes and the concrete presentation of theoretical connotations. Utilizing new media platforms, we will create youth-oriented communication channels such as short videos

interpreting cultural relics, theoretical columns, and “red” cultural and creative products. By interpreting the “red” spirit and theoretical essence through accessible, everyday language, officials will break down cognitive barriers to the dissemination of theory. Officials will deepen the substantive integration of culture and tourism, moving away from extensive sightseeing-based development models. Centering on spiritual heritage and theoretical education, we will establish experiential “red” cultural tourism brands for study tours, driving the transformation of “red” cultural tourism from volume-driven consumption to value-based immersion, thereby comprehensively enhancing the quality of “red” cultural reproduction.

4.4. Optimizing collaborative governance: Establishing a long-term, diverse and collaborative development framework

Break down departmental barriers and refine cross-sectoral and cross-departmental collaborative governance mechanisms to consolidate efforts for the preservation and development of revolutionary cultural relics. Establish a regularized coordination mechanism encompassing revolutionary cultural relics, publicity, education, cultural tourism and Party history, coordinating resource allocation, academic research, publicity and interpretation, and educational applications to form an integrated, end-to-end development framework. Deepen collaborative efforts between universities and local authorities, as well as between universities and museums, by incorporating revolutionary historic sites and cultural heritage exhibition halls into ideological and political education practice bases at all levels, whilst developing corresponding school-based curricula and study-tour programs to achieve a deep integration of revolutionary cultural heritage resources with ideological and political education. Broaden channels for public participation, cultivate volunteer teams for revolutionary heritage outreach and grassroots research groups on revolutionary cultural heritage, and establish a multi-stakeholder governance framework characterized by “government leadership, academic support and public participation,” thereby comprehensively supporting the transmission of the revolutionary cultural heritage and the popularization of innovative theories.

5. Conclusion

Revolutionary cultural relics are precious material assets accumulated through a century of practicing the Sinicization of Marxism; they constitute core resources of “red” culture that integrate historical, practical and theoretical logic, and bear the contemporary mission of safeguarding historical authenticity, carrying forward the “red” legacy and disseminating innovative theories ^[5]. A century of theoretical innovation and practical exploration in the Sinicization of Marxism has given rise to a rich heritage of revolutionary artifacts, whilst the scientific conservation and innovative revitalization of these artifacts, in turn, empower the Party’s theoretical evolution and spiritual legacy. Faced with the new requirements for the high-quality development of revolutionary culture and the advancement of the Sinicization and modernization of Marxism, the governance of revolutionary artifacts in the new era must adhere to the guidance of historical materialism, coordinating physical conservation with the exploration of their intrinsic significance, continuity of tradition with modern innovation, and resource utilization with theoretical empowerment. By safeguarding the historical foundations of the revolutionary legacy through systematic conservation, highlighting the power of theoretical truth through in-depth interpretation, and ensuring the continuity of the revolutionary cultural heritage through innovative revitalization, we can breathe new life into revolutionary cultural relics in the new era, thereby laying a solid cultural foundation and providing spiritual support for the transmission of

the Party's spiritual lineage, the advancement of the Sinicization and modernization of Marxism, and the realization of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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