



REVIEW

The Development and Utilization of Red Cultural Resources

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, red cultural resources, or visual, artifactual, institutional and other expressions of China's revolutionary culture as well as the socialist culture fostered by the Chinese Communist Party since its founding, have been used to educate people, reduce poverty in older revolutionary areas where the resources are located, and enhance awareness of the practical utility of learning from history. At the same time, how best to develop and utilization red cultural resources has become a much-debated issue. In the context of this debate, a series of practical problems have emerged that urgently need to be solved. The present study argues that strengthening theoretical research; creating innovative infrastructural, technological, funding, and staffing solutions; improving institutional mechanisms; and strategically shaping the red brand will lead to a more rational and sustainable development of red cultural resources, maximizing their practical utility for Chinese society as a whole.

1. Introduction

Red culture can be defined as “a highly generalized and visualized expression of the Chinese revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture formed under the leadership of the Communist Party of China since its founding.”^[1] Specific manifestations of red cultural resources include physical forms such as relics and memorial places, institutional forms such as political and legal systems, policies, and regulations, and various other specific forms associated with intellectual, cultural, and spiritual life. Embedded in the culture, these resources have the logic of generation and belief of value. They play the role in educating people, helping reduce poverty, and fostering an interest in and commitment to learning from history. In turn, the best way to optimize the development of red cultural resources has become a hot

topic of discussion and debate. Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the need to make good use of red resources, carry forward the red tradition, and inherit the red gene. Accordingly, researching these cultural resources is needed, so that social concerns about their development and utilization can be addressed in a timely manner, and their utility for Chinese society as a whole can be maximized.

2. The Practical Utility of Red Cultural Resources

Red cultural resources are “high-quality higher education resources that integrate political resources, economic resources, and historical resources.”^[2] Correspondingly, red cultural resources can be used to educate people, promote economic and social development, and enhance awareness of the practical utility of history.

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2.1 Educational Utility of Red Cultural Resources

Different symbol systems shape different thinking paradigms, thus forming different value systems. Red culture has a rich history, powerful connotations, and a diverse range of manifestations in Chinese society. It embodies the collective wisdom and experience of the process of Marxist sinicization. Because it runs through the entire history of China's revolution, construction, and reform and opening, it is a special cultural symbol system. Regarding the use of this system for purposes of educating people, Xi Jinping pointed out that "It is necessary to establish and standardize some etiquette systems, organize and carry out various forms of commemorative celebrations, disseminate mainstream values, and enhance people's sense of identity and belonging."^[3] In this connection, the revolutionary spirit embodied by red culture links up with national spirit. Accordingly, the use of red cultural resources to carry out red education, red tourism, and various ritual activities can allow educated people to experience a real emotional bond with their country as well as their fellow citizens, and thereby further cultivate red cultural identity. At the same time, cultural identity is not only shaped by the values of a specific group or individual who "internalizes a cultural system into its [or his/her] own psychological and personality structure"; what is more, cultural identity is also shaped by the way groups and individuals conscientiously follow this cultural system, and use it to evaluate the normative function of "things and [to regulate] their own behaviors".^[4] In this sense, participation in red culture strengthens ideals and beliefs, supports political responsibility, stimulates patriotism and national spirit, and encourages groups and individuals to play an active role in the cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics.

2.2 Socioeconomic Utility of Red Cultural Resources: Alleviating Poverty in Older Revolutionary Areas

The areas richest in red cultural resources are mostly older, poverty-stricken revolutionary areas. Economic and social development in such areas is relatively backward. Red culture, however, promotes a form of socialism that can build a well-off society in an all-round way, reducing or even eliminating poverty, and creating rich, strong, democratic, and harmonious socialist institutions. By fully tapping into the spiritual connotations and longstanding heritage of red culture, and actively promoting the rational and sustainable development of red cultural resources, it is possible to integrate those resources effectively into the rich historical heritage of the older revolutionary districts,

leading to their economic and social development. In turn, this development will help alleviate poverty in the older revolutionary areas, while encouraging rural revitalization and development.

2.3 Red Cultural Resources and the Appreciation of History

The Chinese Communist Party's "extremely rich cultural relics and ruins are preserved and left for history. These physical historical materials may record the ins and outs of key historical events in the party, chronicle the experiences of the party's historical figures, or preserve unusual stories about the party's history and evolution. All of these aspects carry very rich historical connotations."^[5] The Communist Party of China has combined the basic principles of Marxism with China's specific realities and led the Chinese people to form a red culture that remains engaged in a historical process of revolution, reform, and construction. The crystallization of the collective wisdom of the Chinese people, in red culture, embodies the successful experience of China's ongoing historical evolution. Through the development and utilization of red cultural resources, it is possible to further excavate and sort out the historical materials of red culture, summarize key events in the red revolution, and learn from history in ways that can inspire and improve current social development.

3. Current Dilemmas Associated With the Development of Red Cultural Resources

With the upsurge of interest in and development of red culture, a large number of social human, material, and financial resources have been allocated for its development. A clear contradiction has emerged between the limited carrying capacity of red cultural resources and the substantial investments that have been poured into them. As a consequence of this contradiction, a series of practical problems have emerged that urgently need to be addressed.

3.1 Insufficient Theoretical Support

The development of red cultural resources requires multidisciplinary study, encompassing fields such as party history, party building, pedagogy, management, and economics. All too often, however, current research in this area is conducted from a single perspective, whether party building, cultural history, or tourism development. In short, domain-based research has not led to the construction of a comprehensive theoretical system that could help optimize red cultural resources. Most of the research on these resources is still in the stage of combing through the

relevant historical materials. The features, concepts, values, and meanings of those materials, as well as strategies for their development and utilization, thus remain controversial. There has been extensive investigation into particular materials but no larger synthesis, and no systematic theoretical system has been proposed for multidisciplinary study in this area. In addition, the practice of using red cultural resources to carry out red tourism and red education has taken the lead, without any protocols being developed for recording participants' experiences, let alone any theoretical framework for analyzing and interpreting those experiences. In sum, the lack of theoretical support for red cultural resources has restricted the practical transformation of red cultural resources into productive forces.

3.2 Problems with Infrastructure, Funding, Technology, and Staffing

Problems with infrastructure, including transportation systems, as well as funding, technological, and staffing problems have also restricted the development of red cultural resources. Most of the places where red cultural resources are rich are relatively backward; the roads leading to these places are dangerous, making the areas difficult to reach. A long journey is often required, and potential visitors may thus give up before reaching their destination. The result is a negative impact on red tourism. Likewise, due to the lack of systematic planning and sustainable investment, many red tourist attractions and red education centers have insufficient infrastructure, poor facilities, and weak security capabilities. For example, some red education centers do not have special classrooms, and classes must be completed at local farmhouses. At the same time, other practical problems have emerged, involving funding, technology, and staffing. As far as funding and technology are concerned, the situation of imbalance leads to clear consequences. The places with strong support have experienced rapid development with good results, whereas places without such support are lagging behind. Here it should be noted that, while the leadership and departments of the central government have noticeably increased their emphasis on and support for red culture and resource development, local supporting policies have been relatively slow to follow. In terms of staffing, the number of red cultural docents is limited, and they cannot meet the growing needs for historical and cultural instruction. Furthermore, many of these docents are

3.3 Poor Institutional Mechanisms

The development of red cultural resources requires multi-party cooperation and collaboration. An imperfect coordination mechanism for such multi-party cooperation

is the primary problem currently facing efforts to promote, develop, and utilize red cultural resources. The development of these resources involves multiple departments, including tourism, agriculture, forestry, water conservation, culture, and civil affairs. The development process, however, often runs up against the problem of poor inter-departmental collaboration. For example, in some places, attempts to develop red cultural resources have relied on the government-enterprise cooperation model; but those efforts have encountered problems with the implementation of the model, including problems with receiving funds for training and other initiatives. It appears that, because they do not want to be held responsible, various concerned departments will not play the role of fund-dispenser, and therefore the cooperative enterprises cannot access the required funds. Furthermore, the supervision mechanism is not perfect vis-à-vis the development and utilization of the resources. In some places, in order to pursue economic benefits that might accrue to the resources, unauthorized reconstruction and demolition of red cultural sites have seriously damaged their historical character, and hence their appeal. In general, regardless of the special mission of red cultural resources to educate people and enhance the broader society, a one-sided pursuit of economic benefits has in some cases undermined the resources' significance and value. Red cultural resources have been over-commercialized, and transformed into something entertaining or even vulgar, which has weakened their educational effectiveness.

3.4 Homogeneous Competition

With the increasing popularity of red tourism and red education, more and more local governments and institutions are becoming involved in this field. However, most of these initiatives are independent and lack cross-regional cooperation, leading to obvious homogeneous competition among the sites offering access to red culture. For example, the various provinces that the Red Army passed through have initiated programs in red tourism and red education all related to the subject of the Long March, creating homogeneous competition among multiple sites focusing on the same theme. Homogeneous competition of this sort became more apparent in all regions after the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued the "Construction Plan for the Great Wall, the Grand Canal, and the Long March National Cultural Park" in December 2019.

4. Suggestions for the Sustainable Development of Red Cultural Resources

Qian Mu has argued that "all problems arise from cultural

problems. All problems are solved by cultural problems.”

^[6] From this perspective, red cultural resources can be viewed as a core aspect of advanced socialist culture. The development and utilization of these resources are, accordingly, conducive to solving problems with imbalanced and inadequate socioeconomic development, and to promoting the creation of political, economic, cultural, social, and ecological structures and institutions needed to meet people’s needs for a better life.

4.1 Strengthen Theoretical Research

The foundation of the development of red cultural resources lies in red culture, whose longstanding sociohistorical connotations require in-depth research, “Basic theory meets the theoretical sublimation needs of practical innovation”, ^[7] the refinement of theoretical tools and frameworks for analysis, and the synthesis of research findings from multiple domains of inquiry. Only by doing basic theoretical research can we put the development of red cultural resources on a sustainable footing? The first key task in this connection is to strengthen cross-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research on red culture, in order to promote the integration of perspectives from party building, pedagogy, history, management, economics, and other fields. The second key task is to increase theoretical research on red culture and its resource development. Through policy tilts such as the funding of particular projects and capital investment, the collection of and research on red historical materials will be strengthened, new theoretical approaches to red culture will be elaborated by experts and scholars, and approaches to optimizing the development and utilization of red cultural resources will be fully explored and refined. The third key task is to pay attention to theoretically informed summaries and reports about practices linked to red cultural resources. Through theoretical training of relevant workers, and also through strengthening the cooperation among governmental institutions and universities, scientific research institutions, think tanks, and so on, theoretically guided summaries of the practical experience of red cultural resource development can be generated, helping to create a productive cycle that further deepens basic theoretical research.

4.2 Provide Further Support for Infrastructure, Funding, Technology and Staffing

The development of red cultural resources must first focus on solving transportation problems. Based on the implementation of the requirements of the “National Red Tourism Highway Plan (2017-2020)” issued by the Ministry of Transport in July 2017, planners must consider

methods for the optimal circulation of traffic where the red cultural resources are located, and try to connect the local resources in series. Through better three-dimensional traffic planning and construction, made possible via increased financial investment by governments at all levels, the traffic situation can be improved in connection with red tourism roads, railways, and waterways. At the same time, in areas where the development of red cultural resources is lagging behind, increased funding and better technological support should be provided. Likewise, supporting infrastructure, such as teaching space, conference sites, accommodation, and network platforms, need to be provided for red tourism and red education, with a view to improving the reception capacity of red centers. For their part, provincial, municipal, and county governments should further increase funding, technology, policies and personnel support for the development of red cultural resources. For example, governments at all levels should create policies for the approval and certification of the construction of red education centers, the vetting of employees’ qualifications, and the hiring of qualified staff. An example scenario would be one in which a full-fledged professional lecturer provided instruction about historical sites such as a memorial hall and a ruined old house. Another example scenario would involve the use of volunteer lecturer teams in areas rich in red cultural resources.

4.3 Improve Institutional Mechanisms

It is the new requirements for building a socialist cultural power that the rational and sustainable development of red cultural resources, so we need “continue to deepen the reform of the cultural system, improve the cultural management system, and promote the great development of the cultural industry”.^[8] The first such guarantee entails clarifying the management system. More specifically, the functions and responsibilities of each department need to be clarified, so that initiatives taking the form of special work projects or working groups can achieve coordination and effective interaction. Taking steps to ensure well-managed cooperation of this kind will provide an institutional guarantee for the healthy development of red cultural resources. The second guarantee entails establishing a red cultural resource protection mechanism. We should be in awe of these resources, not only establishing sound procedures for protecting them but also enhancing awareness that they are, in fact, being protected. Funds for the protection, development, and use of the resources should be included in the regular fiscal budget, with a certain percentage of the government’s overall budget being earmarked for this purpose. The third institutional

guarantee entails establishing the rule of law vis-à-vis the protection of red resources, and managing and protecting red resources in accordance with the law. This step will help establish, in turn, a standardized development mechanism for red resources. In the development of red cultural resources, it is necessary to limit political influence and maximize broader social benefits, clarifying that the primary purpose of developing these resources is to cultivate awareness of past traditions and to draw on that awareness to cultivate national red cultural confidence. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize the leading role of the government, enshrine governmental policy decisions in the form of laws and regulations, implement appropriate qualification criteria and access requirements for development entities, and ensure that market-oriented development and commercialization are avoided while introducing market-based competition.

4.4 Shaping the Red Brand

Red cultural resources are widely distributed, and the connotations of the red theme in each region are different. But in the final analysis, these resources represent the crystallization of the Chinese Communist Party's leadership over the past 100 years of struggle. It is an important part of the Chinese Communist Party's spiritual pedigree. A first strategy for strengthening the red brand, as it can be called, is enhancing cross-regional cooperation and promoting differentiated and coordinated development. Relevant provincial departments should take the lead in formulating rational and sustainable development plans for red cultural resources, guiding the establishment of red cultural resources development associations, and promoting the orderly, unified, and respectful development of red resources. At the same time, localities should make full, innovative use of the unique attributes of local red cultural resources, achieving differentiated development based on the geographical and historical resources of each region, combined with regional advantages. The second strategy for strengthening the red brand is to develop effective marketing techniques. Stronger cooperation with new media such as websites, WeChat, and Weibo, as well as traditional media such as TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, and so on, can help increase and improve the promotion of the red brand.

5. Conclusion

In the context of global cultural diversification, each country will have its own native culture. The red culture created by the Chinese Communist Party under the leadership of the Chinese people will surely become an advanced culture, leading the further evolution of the Chinese nation's culture. At present, the self-confidence that participation in red culture helps promote should be strengthened, through a strengthening of red culture itself. The longstanding sociohistorical connotations of red culture should be tapped into and emphasized, via rational, sustainable development of red cultural resources. In this way, the resources can be used to help educate people, alleviate poverty in the older revolutionary areas, and enhance awareness of the practical utility of history for addressing the problems of today.

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