

Analysis of the Characteristics and Effects of Red Music During the Agrarian Revolutionary War

Liu Hui*, Du Keke, Bi Junfei, Tian Yanhui, Zhai Huanqing, and Wang Tongjun

College of Information and Communication, National University of Defense Technology

Abstract. Red music during the Agrarian Revolutionary War was rooted in the leadership of the Communist Party of China and grew up in the revolutionary struggle. Based on a study of the background, style and effect of red music in this period, this paper discusses the role of red music in propagating revolutionary theories, mobilizing the masses and inspiring people during the founding and development of revolutionary bases such as Jinggangshan Mountain, Central Soviet Area and Shaanxi-Gansu Border.

1 Introduction

The red music of the Agrarian Revolutionary War refers to a large number of revolutionary music with distinctive characteristics of revolution, struggle and mass during the period from 1927 to 1937 when the Communist Party of China (CPC) founded the Jinggangshan Red Revolutionary Base and the Central Soviet regime as a practice and finally reached the revolutionary struggle in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region on the Long March, by taking the August 1 Nanchang Uprising as its horn in the context of the Kuomintang's frenzied reactionary repression and the Empire of Japan War of aggression against China. The red music of this period promoted the spread of Marxist theory in China, awakened, mobilized, organized and inspired the masses of people to join the revolutions and struggle indefatigably, fully demonstrating the significance of red music in the development of the revolutionary cause.

2 Background of Red Music During the Agrarian Revolutionary War

Against the backdrop of domestic trouble and foreign invasion and the bewildered masses during the period of the Agrarian Revolutionary War, the CPC realized that it is a must to attach great importance to ideological work, disseminate Marxism-Leninism and the ideas of the CPC, and awaken the people to rise up against the oppression of the "Three Mountains" and establish a new people's regime, with the goal of combining the basic principles of Marxism with the specific reality of China. This period was the stage when CPC used red music to initially promote the popularization of Marxism.

2.1 Red Music Advanced by the Spread and Practice of Marxist theory in China

In 1929, Mao Zedong clearly pointed out in the resolution of the "Gutian Conference" that "revolutionary literature and art shall be a powerful weapon in revolutionary propaganda, and that revolutionary literature and art must be integrated with politics and serve the masses"^[1]. During that period, the CPC promulgated a series of policies, which led to great achievements in the construction of red music and culture in the base areas, and allowed the CPC's revolutionary ideas to gradually take root in people's hearts. Under the direct leadership or influence of the CPC, the "Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers" ("Left League"), founded in Shanghai in 1930, has published a series of articles detailing the revolutionary music of the Soviet Union and musical works of Marxist nature, calling on the musicians to create "emerging music" acceptable to the workers and peasants, and guiding the professional musicians in the National Unification Area to carry out an in-depth anti-Japanese and salvation singing campaign. The "League of Left-Wing Musicians" was founded in Beiping, and progressive musicians such as Nie Er, Ren Guang, Zhang Shu, and Lu Ji established the "New Music Research Society", which was guided by Marxist literary and artistic theories and aimed at the liberation of the workers and peasants. They devoted themselves enthusiastically to publicizing Marxism's ideas and the creation and dissemination of red music, arousing the patriotic enthusiasm of the masses to a certain extent, and promoting the development of red music.

Red music makes the profound theory of Marxism more popular in the long-term development and gradual innovation. For example, the "Red Army Discipline Song" (later redesignated as "Three Great Disciplines and Eight Points of Attention") during the Central Soviet

* Corresponding author: 87295291@qq.com

Period was taken from the CPC's discipline requirements for army officers and soldiers and CPC members and cadres, which graphically interpreted the ideological line and policy that the People's Army under the CPC's leadership and CPC members and cadres should safeguard the interests of the general public. The red music of this period is rich in Marxist ideas, which can unite the spiritual power of the CPC and the people, and is also an indispensable form of entertainment in the life of the time. Red music consolidates the guiding position of Marxism in the ideological field with its unique artistic charm, serving as a product of the CPC's continuous promotion of the popularization of Marxism.

2.2 Red Music as a Major Means of Inspiring, Propagandizing and Mobilizing the Masses for Anti-imperialist and Anti-feudal Struggles

During the long struggle, the CPC realized that in order to resist the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang, it was necessary to establish its armed regime and open up its base areas. In the process of using various forms to promote the policies and revolutionary ideas of the CPC, red music undoubtedly played a powerful combat role in this life-and-death struggle. For example, "The Red Army, the Communist Party, follows the heart of God. People all over China follow the Red Army, with one horse and one gun for each man. Our Red Army has many forces. The sickle and axe are always crooked. The poor people cut open the road and walk. The revolutionary forces are boundless. The red flag is popular all over the world.^[2]" Most of the catchy lyrics were written using folk songs familiar to the local people, and they were sung with ideological education and propaganda to make the people realize that they must struggle in order to have a better new life.

2.3 The Tortuous Development of the Red Regime Serving as the Soil that Gave Birth to the Development of Red Music

The August 1st Nanchang Uprising was the first shot of the CPC to lead an armed rebellion against the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang. "At 31 in July, there was a lively noise in the middle of the night, with grenades and machine guns ringing until dawn. Is it not that the Kuomintang is mutiny again, or is it that the wounded soldiers are busy again? It scares me when I think about it. At dawn on August 1st, people got up early. Last night, machine guns. What was it for? It turned out to be an armed uprising by the Communist Party and a red army to solve the problem of the Kuomintang! I laugh happily!^[3]" This song vividly portrays the fierce scene of the uprising struggle and the people's expectation for a bright life.

In 1929, Mao Zedong clearly pointed out the problem that "revolutionary songs are simply not available" at the Ninth Party Congress held in Gutian, Shanghang County, and made it clear that "the Red Army is by no means a mere war-fighting force; in addition to fighting battles to destroy the enemy's military power, it also has the

important task of propagating the masses, organizing the masses, arming the masses, helping the masses to establish revolutionary power and even building the CPC^[4]" After the Gutian Conference, the Central Soviet Union and the red revolutionary bases throughout the country began to implement the Conference's resolution and started to carry out revolutionary music activities. From then on, the CPC began to consciously use red music to carry out propaganda work and promote red music to the masses. As a result, red songs such as "Song of the Shuttle Dart", "We Are Originally Workers and Peasants", "The Red Army Originally Surnamed Heaven and Earth" and "Spring Gong Lyrics" were composed and sung. Along with the deepening of the land revolution in the base area and the development of the new regime, the people made up and sang "Sanwan Descended to the Big Dipper", "Red Army Discipline Song", "Hired Peasant Suffering", "Pouring Bitterness", "Complaining Bitterness", etc. Based on these songs, the people in the base area set off the climax of the revolutionary struggle under the leadership of the CPC.

Besides, red music and cultural performance groups were established one after another. The establishment of a series of literary and artistic organizations such as the "Red Army School Club" and the "8-1 Drama Troupe" established on its basis, "Workers and Peasants Drama Club", "Blue Shirt Troupe" and "Blue Shirt School" in the Central Soviet Area has enabled red music activities to be carried out deeply and extensively. At the same time, the majority of CPC members, cadres and masses in the base area created red opera works such as "Volunteering as the Red Army", "Supporting the Army", "Location at the Front" and "Workers' and Peasants' Solidarity", which enriched the interpretation style and form of red music.

With the development of the revolutionary situation, the Central Committee of the CPC and the Central Red Army arrived in northern Shaanxi, the people in the border areas saw the dawn of a better life, and the people rejoiced and ran to tell each other, and red songs sang the heartfelt praise of the people in the border areas to the CPC and the revolutionary leader, such as "Our Leader Mao Zedong", "Embroidered Golden Plaque", "Glorifying Leader Mao Zedong", "Ten Embroidered Golden Plaques", etc., depicting a beautiful picture of the CPC, the government, the army and the people in the Border region with one heart and one mind and the prosperity of the revolutionary cause. The unique red music of Shaanxi-Ganbian has been elevated to a new height in terms of ideology and content, growing into a shining star in red music.

During the period when red music flourished in the base areas, the red music works of the left-wing music movement were also enriched and developed, the most important sign being the integration of film music into the red music system. Using this propaganda technique, the left-wing film group made many excellent films that deeply expressed the CPC's anti-Japanese advocacy, and left-wing musicians composed a large number of red film music works, such as "The Song of the Great Road" and "The Song of the Pioneers of the Open Road" in the film "The Great Road", "The Graduation Song" in

“Plunder of Peach and Plum”, and “The March of the Volunteer Army” in “Children Of Trouble Time”. These types of music had a wide social impact with the screening of the film and played a significant role in spreading the CPC’s anti-Japanese ideas.

3 The Styles of Red Music During the Agrarian Revolutionary War

The red music of the Agrarian Revolutionary War period is mainly songs, mostly taken from folk songs and tunes familiar to the masses around the world and re-filled with lyrics, but also with urban ditties and opera tunes, and a few with school music songs and old military songs, as well as songs and dances using folk operas and songs and dances, and some works using foreign tunes and so on. Regardless of the style and subject matter, the red music of this period broadly presents three characteristics.

3.1. Adhering to the revolutionary theme

The ideological themes of musical works in this period have profoundly exposed the dark side of society. For example, Nie Er’s “Song of the Newsboy”, despite its light and lively melody, can make people feel the heartache of the newspaper boy and reflect the darkness of the old society; and red works such as “Poor People”, “International Flag”, “Ten Strikes Against the Reactionaries” and “Breaking the Old World” ruthlessly expose the darkness of the old society. These works, such as “Song of the Autumn Harvest Riot”, “Go to the Front”, “A Pair of Straw Shoes” and “Song of the Division”, inspire the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people against imperialism and feudalism through reflecting the revolutionary struggle of the soldiers and people in the base areas.

3.2 Insisting on class value core

Since there is no such thing as “pure art”, the position of the music creator directly determines the direction and purpose of the musician’s creation. The position of Marxist musicians should be consistent with that of the proletariat, so that music is cast as an ideological weapon to serve the proletariat. After the establishment of the revolutionary cultural front headed by the “Left League”, it immediately launched an extremely sharp and complicated struggle against the reactionary cultural counter-current. In particular, in 1936, left-wing musicians proposed that the task and nature of musicians were “to serve as a weapon for the liberation of the masses, a means of expression, a means of reflecting the life, thought and feelings of the masses, and to take up the mission of awakening, educating and organizing the masses”^[5]. This concept clarifies the class nature of music composition, to reflect the life and will of the proletariat, and to serve the proletariat, which is an extremely important guiding meaning for the creation of red music.

3.3 Adhering to the mass creation

The classical music works are derived from the most real life of labor, from the cry of the people’s heart, “there is always art in the songs sung by ordinary people, folktales, wall newspapers in offices, and boastful stories of soldiers”. The red music of this period reached the grassroots and created a large number of popular red music works, whose language art was very close to the life of the masses, and was more acceptable and sung by the masses of people. For example, the works reflecting the new life of the people in the revolutionary base areas, such as “Soviet View”, “Song of Spring Farming”, “Song of Freedom of Marriage”, etc.; the works reflecting the people’s love and praise for the revolution, the leaders and the Red Army, such as “Liu Zhidan”, “Ten Sending Lang as the Red Army”, “Hope for the Red Army”, etc.

4 The Effects of the Red Music During the Agrarian Revolutionary War

Red music comes from the people, and it is a musical art with the voice of the lower-class working people as its base. During the Agrarian Revolution, the revolutionary struggle of the people led by the CPC gave red music new vitality in propagating revolutionary principles in the armed revolutionary struggle, awakening the class consciousness of millions of suffering people, sowing revolutionary seeds in their hearts, stimulating revolutionary enthusiasm and calling on the people to rise to struggle, and its effectiveness is mainly manifested in the following three points.

4.1 Casting red faith and spreading revolutionary ideas

“Whenever great things are to be accomplished, persuade the heart first.” Red music, which reflects the aspirations of the people and guides the direction of the people’s revolution, is even more important in the hearts of the people than guns. Red music not only enlightens the minds of the Chinese people, but also shakes the feudal ideology of the enemy in the revolutionary war. Red music was a gun, whose propaganda could attack the feudal confinement; red music was also a shield, which could unite the people’s power and become an unbreakable ideological fortress. For one thing, it profoundly reveals and reflects the social reality from the artistic point of view, and for another, it expresses the “unprecedented enthusiasm of the Chinese people for the struggle and their hope and confidence for victory in the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle” through musical expressions with full of emotions. It “plays a simple but exciting score, sings a simple but heroic song, and burns throughout with the flame of the traitors’ unjust rebellion”^[7].

4.2 Inspiring combat morale and motivating revolutionary spirit

Red music acts as an essential tool to carry out the revolutionary struggle, which can bring out the unlimited power of the masses and is a major means to “fight the enemy, destroy the enemy, and help the people to fight the enemy with one heart and one mind”^[8].

During the war years of blood and fire, the military and the people were united and made a common cause, and red music was used as a battle cry to boost morale, which played a role in breaking the enemy’s fighting spirit, motivating the people to join the battle, and uniting and coalescing people’s hearts. The widespread dissemination of red music stimulated the people’s great revolutionary enthusiasm and played an inestimable role in the revolutionary struggle. For example, the “Song of the Mutiny” and “Song against the Tudor Qingxiang” in the Macheng area, and the “Song of Down with Imperialism” and “Down with Japanese Imperialism” in the Soviet base area are all full of hatred for imperialism and confidence in overcoming imperialism and achieving revolutionary victory.

4.3 Promoting the mass line and adhering to the people’s position

Comrade Mao Zedong pointed out that “revolutionary war is a war of the masses, and only by mobilizing and relying on the masses can war be waged”. In the course of the development of the Red Revolution, the CPC members and cadres under the leadership of the CPC and the people’s army shared adversity and death with the masses of the people, established a deep affection with the masses, and jointly composed a song of praise. This indestructible revolutionary barrier eventually formed the cradle of the victory of China’s new-democratic revolution.

5 Conclusion

The red music of the agrarian revolutionary period is full of simple but powerful words and stirring patriotic enthusiasm, which once witnessed the creation, consolidation and development of the CPC and the People’s Army. This glorious course fully demonstrates that the people are the source of power for the continuous development of the revolutionary cause and the creator of history, and the work of the masses is the lifeline of the CPC. Red music, which came into being with it, has also turned into an essential part of the China people’s revolutionary cause and proletarian fighting literature and art. It has engraved a cultural and musical monument of the national revolution, enriched the treasure house of red music culture, and has great historical and practical significance in carrying forward the CPC’s glorious revolutionary tradition and strengthening the CPC’s style of construction.

References

1. The Collected Works of Mao Zedong [M]. People's Publishing House, 1993 edition.
2. Liu, M.Y.: “Exploring the Role of Red Songs in the Chinese Revolution from 1921-1927” [J]. Journal of Mudanjiang College of Education, No. 2, 2013.
3. Wang Y. H.: A History of Modern Chinese Music [M]. People’s Music Publishing House, 2010.
4. Mei S. C.: A Study on Red Music and the Popularization of Marxism [D]. Doctoral dissertation, Hunan Xiangtan College, December 7, 2019.
5. Sun X. Y. and Li M.: “The Relationship Between the Transmission of Red Songs and the Popularization of Marxism” [J]. Journal of Shanxi Datong University (Social Science Edition), 2015, No. 3.
6. Pan J. Y., “The Chinese Practice of Marxist Ideological Thought During the Agrarian Revolution” [J]. Southern Journal, No. 9, 2020
7. Deng G. H.: “On the Cultural Connotation of Red Music in the Soviet Union”[J]. The House of Drama, 2016, No. 09 (A).