

***SOME PROBLEMS WHICH AROSE IN ADAPTING THE IMMORTAL  
CLASSIC THE SEA OF BLOOD AS A FILM***

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A Talk with Officials in the Field of Cinematic Art  
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Some time ago I viewed the first edition of the film *The Sea of Blood*, the adaptation of the immortal classic *The Sea of Blood*. The film was produced well. It will serve its purpose; the scenes are well structured and distinctive.

After watching the film *The Sea of Blood* the great leader announced that the film is good, and it will create a great impression among the people if it is screened. Saying that he was moved to tears, particularly at the scene which shows the sea of blood and the scenes in which the mother leaves to carry out her first task and *Ui Nam* dies, he reflected upon the unforgettable past of the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle.

The leader was very pleased that the actors and actresses have raised the level of their performance during the making of the film *The Sea of Blood*. Pointing out that the personality of the Korean woman was well depicted in the characterization of the mother, he declared that the actress who played the mother's part performed with the skill one should expect of a Merited Artist.

The leader pointed out that though the film *The Sea of Blood* was well made, its content differed in many ways from the original. In fact, when we regard the film *The Sea of Blood* as an adaptation of the immortal classic *The Sea of Blood* written by the leader in the days of the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle, there are still many defects to be noted.

In the future we should not only adapt the immortal classics as films but also as other forms of literature and art, and through this work, raise literature and art in general to a new and higher phase.

If we are to adapt the immortal classics into film and various other forms of literature and art appropriate to our time, I think it is important for us to have a correct understanding of certain questions of principle.

Today I will address the creative workers and artists in the field of cinematic art about some problems which arose in adapting the immortal classic *The Sea of Blood* as a film.

1

The revolutionary tradition of our literature and art was established amid the flames of the glorious anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle organized and waged under the wise leadership of the great leader, holding aloft the banner of the *Juche* idea.

Our Party's revolutionary tradition of literature and art, this deep and strong root and eternal foundation of our *Juche* literature and art, shines ever more brilliantly thanks to the immortal classics which the

leader himself created.

From the early days the great leader regarded literature and art as a powerful weapon of the revolutionary struggle and elucidated the theoretical and practical problems arising in creative work and the practice of revolutionary literature and art. He created the Juche-orientated approach to literature and art, which has made an immortal contribution to the literature and art of humanity. He himself created the immortal classics and provided classical examples of literature and art which mirrored the requirements of the Juche age and the aspirations of the people.

The immortal classics which the leader himself created in the days of the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle include many works of various contents and forms, such as An Jung Gun Shoots Ito Hirobumi and Blood at the International Conference, which made a great contribution to the education of the broad masses of the people in independent, anti-Japanese patriotism. The Flower Girl, The Sea of Blood, The Fate of a Self-Defence Corps Man, Celebration Meeting and the songs The Song of the Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland, The Song of the Anti-Japanese War and so on, which powerfully encouraged the guerrillas and the people to the sacred war for national liberation. The immortal classics include all kinds and forms of literature and art—drama, opera, music and dance. In dramatic art it includes various forms, such as legitimate drama and comedy.

The immortal classics which were created and performed amidst the flames of the unprecedentedly arduous anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle provided correct answers to the problems of independence and the independent mankind which would arise in the struggle to liberate the nation, the class and the people, and as textbooks of life and weapons of struggle they made a great contribution to the education of the popular masses and the revolutionary struggle. In the philosophical profundity of its ideological contents and also in the breadth and depth with which it reflects life, the immortal classic The Sea of Blood perfectly embodies the basic requirements of revolutionary literature and art as defined by the Juche mode of thought on literature and art.

Defining the times in an artistic manner through the description of an ordinary, simple rural family and the fate of one woman, the immortal classic The Sea of Blood generalizes in depth the course of the Korean revolution and the essence of the revolutionary struggle, taking as its centre the anti-Japanese armed struggle and providing profound artistic answers to questions on the nature of the revolution and how it should be conducted.

In all aspects of form and content, system and method of creation the classic applies in full the requirements of the Juche idea and perfectly embodies the principles and methods of creation which should be maintained not only in dramatic art but also in all other kinds and forms of literature and art.

Because of the urgency and profundity of the social and political problems raised in the work, the breadth and depth of its reflection of

life, the variety and richness of its means and methods of depiction, The Sea of Blood holds a distinguished place among the immortal classics which the leader himself created as a monumental masterpiece of the highest order, which revolutionary literature and art must aspire to emulate. It offers a true integration of the Juche ideology and theory of literature and art, the Juche-orientated system and method of creation, and priceless artistic experience and achievements, clarifying new aspects and features of Juche-orientated literature and art which are fundamentally different from the literature and art of the past.

As you know, the restricted circumstances of the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle meant that films could not be produced. Therefore, if you adapt the immortal classic The Sea of Blood well as a film, you will bring about an epochal change in the glorification of our revolutionary tradition in literature and art, provide the basis for the creation of the new cinematic art of the Juche era and, furthermore, achieve a great advance in literature and art in general. The construction of a genuinely socialist and communist literature and art cannot be conceived of apart from the revolutionary tradition in literature and art, which is their deep and strong historical root and eternal foundation.

We may say that the adaptation of the immortal classic The Sea of Blood as a film in our day is a revolution destined to abolish the things of the past in all spheres of film art, both content and form, creative system and method, and to build a new film art which meets the requirements of the Juche era.

As I have said, the adaptation of the immortal classic The Sea of Blood as a film is of great significance for the transmission and development of the revolutionary heritage of our literature and art and raising cinematic art to a new and higher level.

This classic was originally a dramatic work and its time of performance was said to be about 40 to 45 minutes. Though the performance time was short, the impact was very powerful. The anti-Japanese guerrillas staged the play in various areas, performing it most frequently in Wangqing and Naidaoshan. I am told that my mother often played the part of Kap Sun at that time.

If the film of The Sea of Blood is made well, it will greatly contribute to the revolutionary education of the working people and this film will provide a model, marking a turning point and revolutionary upsurge not only in film art but also in all other fields of literature and art.

In an awareness of the importance of adapting the immortal classic The Sea of Blood as a film you should dedicate all your energy and knowledge to the work and complete it at the highest level, excluding all defects in its ideological and artistic values.

2

In order to complete the film The Sea of Blood you must firmly adhere to the correct principles for adapting a classic as a film in your creative work.

In adapting the immortal classic The Sea of Blood as a film, you

must, first of all, remain true to the original.

Remaining true to the original is the first requirement and the basic principle in adapting an immortal classic as a film.

When we speak of remaining true to the original, it means accepting the ideological and artistic values embodied in the original and representing its excellent ideological and artistic features just as they are.

In the past we produced many film adaptations of novels and dramas, and there are many masterpieces among them. However, this is the first time that we have adapted an immortal classic as a film.

This task is utterly different from adapting literary works written by individual writers; there are fundamental differences in the artistic goals. The purpose of producing the film *The Sea of Blood* is not restricted only to the informative and educational significance of the film itself. What is more important is this film's contribution to transmitting and developing our Party's brilliant revolutionary tradition in literature and art, which was established amid the flames of the anti-Japanese struggle, for generations to come and to creating an example which will mark a revolutionary turning point in our film art and our literature and art in general.

The leader's immortal classics are a perfect embodiment of the great Juche idea, which represents the most brilliant pinnacle in the history of human ideology, and also of Juche-orientated thought and theory of literature and art, which have illuminated the right path for socialist and communist literature and art; they are true examples of the literature and art of the Juche era which have achieved the highest possible level in ideological content and artistic representation.

In order to depict the true features of the immortal classic as it is without any distortion, you must possess a deep understanding of and accept the ideological and artistic nature of the original as the most reasonable.

The immortal classic *The Sea of Blood* placed great emphasis on the Japanese imperialists' punitive operation in Jiandao which was carried out both before and after the foundation of the anti-Japanese guerrilla army. The film *The Sea of Blood* gives a detailed picture of this punitive operation. The picture is well shown.

However the film which you have made contains many differences from the original in the characterizations. If you fail to give a true picture of the original, as in your new version of *The Sea of Blood*, by making the old mother join the guerrilla army in a different manner in the original, on the excuse of offering a cinematic interpretation of the original, you cannot retain the ideological and artistic features of the original and will, on the contrary, debase them.

If the relationship between the mother and the underground worker of the guerrilla army is omitted in the film *The Sea of Blood*, the film will be utterly different from the original. In this sense, it is difficult to call this film *The Sea of Blood*. It would be better to release it as *The Fate of a Woman*. Since, in contrast with the original, you have emphasized too much the role of the mother, failing to pose the

problem of the Womens' Association properly and to give a correct description of the young people's struggle, it would be reasonable to change the title in this way.

If you are to title the film *The Sea of Blood*, you must complete the film in strict adherence to the original.

If you wish to adapt the immortal classic *The Sea of Blood* as a film, you should not be careless in employing artistic fictions. Since the point of adaptation is, in general, to adapt a certain work into a different genre or form, the adapter should rely strictly on the original, while yet being permitted to use his creative invention. However, in adapting the immortal classic, you must not invent carelessly. When you are obliged to invent new elements, you must study the ideological and artistic features of the original and understand them in depth, relying strictly on the life reflected in the original. New inventions which are not based on the life expressed in the original are, in fact, quite meaningless; they will, in fact, cast slurs on the ideological and artistic value of the original.

In order to adapt the immortal classic *The Sea of Blood* as a film you must appropriately preserve the characteristics in the genre of cinema. Preserving the characteristics of the genre of cinema is another important principle to be maintained in adapting the immortal classic into various other artistic forms. If you do not maintain the formal characteristics of cinema, while insisting on loyalty to the original, you will not be able to represent the ideological and artistic features of the original appropriately.

Various genres of literature and art possess specific means and methods for reflecting reality; drama and cinema, in which reality is reflected by means of dramatic description, possess different languages and grammars of description. Whereas drama is an art of dialogue, cinema is an art of action. The words of a dialogue can be presented as a scene.

The story in which the mother, the heroine, lost her husband in the Japanese imperialist 'punitive operation' and left for Pyoljae village seeking for a way to live was described in a few words of dialogue in the original, but it provided a good cinematic scene in which the description of the mother as she looks into the noble features of her young son and daughter as they promise each other that they will never mention their father again moves the hearts of the people profoundly in harmony with the pathetic melody of the revolutionary song, the immortal classic, *The Song of the 'Punitive Operation'*.

The scene in which the mother, greatly discouraged at the news that her relatives in Pyoljae village are dead, gathers herself anew at the words of an old man from Pyoljae encouraging her to go and settle in a village from where Mt. Paektu can be seen and quickens her pace with hope in her face is also well rendered artistically.

These are vivid pictures which are dealt with in conformity with the characteristics of cinematic genre, while drawing on the original work.

Only when the principle of correctly preserving the characteristics of

the genre while remaining true to the original is strictly adhered to can an immortal classic be represented as it is without any defects and be transmitted from generation to generation.

3

If the immortal classic *The Sea of Blood* is to be adapted as a film, it is important to have a correct understanding of the seed of the work and to represent it as is in the original. Whatever works you may adapt, a correct understanding of the original seed and the thematic idea is a prerequisite. Only when you are clearly aware of the seed can you compose the plot and develop artistic images in accordance with the ideological and thematic requirements of the original.

The seed, the core of a work, is the foundation which determines the ideological and artistic quality of the work and the starting point from which to define the features of the artistic presentation.

The immortal classic *The Sea of Blood* gives a true picture of the process by which an ordinary Korean mother who lives under the harsh conditions of oppression and exploitation by the colonial rule of the Japanese imperialists gradually comes to realize the truth of the revolutionary struggle amidst the hard trials and storms of life, and grows into a revolutionary. The process of development of the character of the mother, the heroine, who has perceived the nature of the Japanese imperialist colonial system in which human dignity and independence are cruelly trampled underfoot and joins in the revolutionary struggle consumed with hatred for the enemy, is the process by which she grows into a revolutionary through assimilating the great truth of the revolutionary struggle.

The immortal classic *The Sea of Blood* provides a detailed picture of what the revolution is and why it happens and how it is carried out by describing the process through which the mother, who merely lamented bitterly, without understanding why she must endure such misfortunes-although she lost her dear husband, the pillar of the family, in a brutal massacre perpetrated by the Japanese imperialists-gradually comes to embark on the path of revolution in the severe ordeals of life. The revolutionary truth which the heroine has grasped is not easily attained; it can only be attained by forging the path of tortuous life through the sea of blood and the sea of fire. The ideological essence of the life which, clarified through the portrayal of the mother, provides the ground of the ideological core and the basic elements of the artistic images in *The Sea of Blood* is the actual seed of the immortal classic.

The seed of the immortal classic *The Sea of Blood* is, in a nutshell, that the sea of blood spilt by the suffering people must be transformed into the bloody sea of struggle. This seed is a statement of anti-imperialist revolutionary ideology and the revolutionary ideology of armed struggle which states that as the oppression of the Japanese imperialist aggressors become more severe, the resistance of the popular masses in defending human dignity and independence grows stronger and that the way for the Korean people to live is by struggling against Japanese imperialism with weapons in their hands. This profound ideology of the immortal classic is expressed in an

artistic fashion on the basis of the tragic reality of life in which the entire country has become a sea of blood suffering brutal oppression and massacre under the Japanese imperialists.

The work mirrors the historical reality of our country in the 1930s. In this period Japanese imperialism, launching its campaign of all-out aggression against the continent, intensified its reactionary offensive against the Korean people for the sake of '°security in the rear'±. The Japanese imperialist aggressors suppressed the revolutionary advance of the Korean people by arms and in any places arrested, imprisoned and massacred our innocent people at random. In particular, they imposed increased oppression and atrocities on our people in the Korean settlements in Manchuria, where the new revolutionary forces were developing under the wise leadership of the leader. This aggravated the national contradiction between the Japanese imperialists and the Korean people to the extreme; there was a radical upsurge in the anti-Japanese struggle of the broad masses of the Korean people resisting the brutal suppression of the Japanese imperialists.

Korea that was soaked in the blood of innocent people killed by the bayonets of the Japanese imperialists was literally a sea of blood, a sea of fire and a living hell for the people. The seed of The Sea of Blood, the idea that the sea of blood spilt by the suffering people, must be turned into a sea of bloody struggle is based on this real life and expressed in artistic detail through the character and life of the heroine.

Under the influence of the revolutionary organization and through the bitter experience of life the mother who had no knowledge of the revolution becomes aware of the barbarous and rapacious nature of Japanese imperialism and the contradictions of colonial society and realizes that she must not yield to mere lamentation of the catastrophe of the sea of blood spilt by the suffering people, but rise up to fight, in order to free from this bitter fate a ruined nation whose human dignity and independence have been utterly trampled underfoot. She then sets out on the road of revolution and grows into a full-fledged revolutionary who transforms the bloody sea of resentment into the bloody sea of struggle. This process through which the mother's revolutionary outlook on the world is shaped embodies the seed of the work.

Through the depiction of the mother who has lost her husband lamentably through the '°punitive operation in Jiandao'± of the villainous Japanese imperialists and grieves at the thought of desolate future in which she must bring up her innocent children, The Sea of Blood presents a picture of the tragic fate of the Korean people of the time who led a life of misery amid the cruel reality of the sea of blood. But the heroine mother was not a nonresister or defeatist who yielded to the Japanese imperialists or obeyed them. After having grasped under the influence of the revolutionary organization, the revolutionary truth that she must fight to the last against her enemies and carve out her destiny for herself, she sets out on the road of struggle to defeat the Japanese imperialist aggressors and, in the

course of this effort, the bloody sea of misery is transformed into the bloody sea of struggle.

Since the seed of the immortal classic *The Sea of Blood* is the truth of life and struggle acquired whole-heartedly by the heroine who has undergone through great miseries and trials in the sea of blood and the sea of fire, even today this moves the hearts of the people and serves as powerful encouragement to them on the path of true life and struggle.

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