

The Shaanxi Footprints and Spiritual Heritage of the 25th Red Army's Long March

—A Contemporary Interpretation Based on the Spirit of the 4th Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee

Zhibin Li

Party School of Shaanxi Provincial Committee of CPC, Xi'an, China

Abstract: The Communique of the 4th Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee listed “advancing toward building China into a country with a strong socialist culture” as one of the important deployments. As a core symbol for nurturing the national spirit and forging consensus on values, it serves as a crucial underpinning for implementing this strategic construction. The Long March is a pivotal practice in the formation and inheritance of red culture. As the only main Red Army force that completed its entire Long March in northern China and took the lead in reaching northern Shaanxi, the 25th Red Army's Long March through Shaanxi from 1934 to 1935 profoundly influenced the course of the Chinese Revolution. From the core perspective of “relational value”, sorts out the key processes of the army's entry into Shaanxi to establish base areas and its convergence and reorganization from three dimensions: military coordination, political interaction, and military-civilian symbiosis, based on its historical value and contemporary significance, proposes a three-dimensional transformation path: educational inheritance empowering Party spirit cultivation, Party-mass construction pooling joint efforts, and regional development activating red value. This not only represents the contemporary continuation of the spirit of the 25th Red Army's Long March in Shaanxi, but also constitutes a concrete practice of implementing the 4th Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee's deployment on building a culturally powerful country and promoting revolutionary culture, providing practical guidance for empowering high-quality development with red resources and consolidating the local foundation for building a culturally powerful country.

Keywords: the 4th Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central; Committee; Long March; Shaanxi Footprints; Contemporary Value



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1 Introduction

In the Recommendations of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development, in the section concerning the promotion and practice of

Author Introduction: Zhibin Li, currently pursuing a master's degree at the Party School of the Shaanxi Provincial Committee of the CPC, research focus on Political Science.

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core socialist values, it is pointed out that “We should strengthen and improve theoretical and political work, promote the development of campus culture, make the best use of resources related to Party history resources, and work to foster ideals and convictions among our young people.” (The Central Committee of Communist Party of China, 2025) In the context of the inheritance of red culture in the new era, “The great Long March Spirit is a vivid reflection of the revolutionary character of the Chinese Communists and the people’s army under their leadership, a concentrated manifestation of the unyielding national character of the Chinese nation, and the sublime embodiment of the national spirit centered on patriotism.” (Xi, 2016) As the only major Red Army force that conducted its entire Long March in northern China and was the first to arrive in Northern Shaanxi, and laid the foundation for the foothold of the Central Red Army, the 25th Red Army’s Long March footprints in Shaanxi are of academic significance, while research on its multi-dimensional interactions with local Party organizations, the masses, and other revolutionary forces in Shaanxi remains to be deepened. Its battles and red heritage in Shaanxi bear both historical value and practical significance for inheritance. From the perspective of the spirit of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, this research provides practical guidance for supplementing the studies on the history of the Long March, facilitating the inheritance of red culture and the high-quality development of Shaanxi, as well as consolidating the local foundation for building a culturally strong country.

At present, the academic community has achieved foundational research outcomes regarding the overall course of the Long March of the 25th Corps of the Chinese Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army (the 25th Red Army) and the establishment of revolutionary base areas, with continuous progress being made in the compilation of relevant historical materials and collaborative research between universities and localities. Specifically, these research results are primarily concentrated in four areas: first, the self-development of the 25th Red Army and the course of its Long March, including Liang Chenhui’s *A Study on the Military Reorganization of the 25th Red Army in the Eyuwan Soviet Area (1932-1934)* (published in *Soviet Area Studies*, Issue 1, 2024), Sun Wei’s *Contributions and Historical Experiences of the 25th Red Army’s Long March* (published in *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou*, Issue 6, 2021), and Shi Baoshan’s *A Discussion on the 25th Red Army’s Long March in Henan* (published in *Mao Zedong Thought Study*, Issue 5, 2013); second, the construction of revolutionary base areas and their strategic roles, including Shen Qianfang and Wei Pingguang’s *On the Strategic Fulcrum Role of the Eyuwan Border Guerrilla Area* (published in *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou*, Issue 6, 2013), Li Wenshi’s *Reasons for the Existence and Conditions for the Development of the Eyu Shaanxi Revolutionary Base Area* (published in *Journal of Socialist Theory Guide*, Issue 2, 1993), and Shi Zhongquan’s *Two Foundational Ceremonies: Deciding the Destination of the Long March in Hadapu and Arriving in Northern Shaanxi* (published in *Mao Zedong Thought Study*, Issue 3, 2013); third, ethnic work and ethnic relations during the Long March, including Ma Dan’s *Red Inheritance of Muslims in Shanjiayi* (published in *China Muslim*, Issue 6, 2021), Liu Wei’s *Night Talk in Shanjiayi* (published in *China Muslim*, Issue 3, 2021), Gao Zhanfu’s *Islamic Policies in Northwest China during the Red Army’s Long March* (published in *China Religion*, Issue 1, 2002); fourth, the inheritance of the Red Spirit and the preservation of historical memory, including Pei Yanli and Wang Jishi’s *Historical Contributions of the Dabie Mountain Old Revolutionary Base Area from the Perspective of Major Turning Points in China’s Revolution* (published in *The Party Building and Ideological Education in Schools*, Issue 14, 2022), Guo Miaolan’s *The Dabie Mountain Spirit in the Spiritual Pedigree of Chinese Communists Endures Forever—The Majestic Dabie Mountains Reflect the Journey with Red Hearts* (published in *Supervision in China*, Issue 18, 2021), and Dong Baocun, Jiang Weimin, and Zhang Mingjin’s *A Discussion among Four “Long March Witnesses”—An Interview with Zhang Zhen, Xiao Ke, Hong Xuezhong*,

and Liu Huaqing (published in *Literature of Chinese Communist Party*, Issue 6, 2006). However, existing research still has limitations: insufficient detailed sorting of key periods in Shaanxi, inadequate exploration of relational dimensions such as the coordination details between the 25th Red Army and the Shaanxi-Gansu Red Army, and relatively few studies on the 25th Red Army's connections with Shaanxi. These limitations provide clear directions for future research.

Focusing on “relational value” as the core, constructs a progressive framework of “sorting out historical imprints—analyzing relational value—exploring echoes of the times”, and adopts the methods of literature research, historical analysis and field investigation. Its innovation lies in breaking through the single research paradigm and conducting a multi-dimensional analysis of the in-depth connection between the Red Army and Shaanxi's local areas from the perspectives of military coordination, political interaction and military-civilian symbiosis. The difficulty lies in the textual research on historical materials of the township Soviet regime in the southeast of Shaanxi and the accurate refinement of the value of red resources such as Gepai Town.

2 Background and Core Course of the 25th Red Army's March into Shaanxi

The core motivation for the 25th Red Army's march into Shaanxi was an active decision made to implement the strategic shift instructions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. In February 1934, the February Directive issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China to the Hubei-Henan-Anhui Provincial Party Committee clearly specified the following criteria: where the enemy's forces are relatively weak; where the revolutionary influence among the masses is relatively strong or the masses are relatively easy to be rallied by us; where the terrain is conducive to our defense and combat operations; and where grain and general material conditions are relatively abundant. In 1934, the Hubei-Henan-Anhui Revolutionary Base Area was on the verge of collapse under the repeated encirclements and suppressions by the Kuomintang army, and the space for the survival and development of the Red Army was severely restricted. In accordance with the Central Committee's instructions on “establishing new Soviet areas and consolidating and tempering revolutionary forces”, the Hubei-Henan-Anhui Provincial Party Committee clarified the direction of the strategic shift of the 25th Red Army at the Huashanzhai Conference. Shaanxi, which occupied a strategic hub status in northern China, could connect the revolutionary forces in Hubei-Henan-Anhui and the northwest, thus becoming a preferred region for developing new revolutionary base areas.

Meanwhile, the 25th Red Army had long been confronted with the pursuit, interception and encirclement by large enemy forces, and the weak enemy defenses in the southeastern region of Shaanxi provided a crucial opportunity for the army to break out of the blockade. Moreover, the Shaanxi-Gansu Border and Northern Shaanxi Revolutionary Base Areas had already taken shape; the Shaanxi-Gansu Red Army led by Liu Zhidan and Xie Zichang had accumulated a solid mass base; and the complex terrain of the Qinling Mountains was conducive to carrying out guerrilla warfare. The superposition of multiple favorable conditions jointly provided important support for the smooth implementation of the strategic shift, and ultimately facilitated the strategic operation of the 25th Red Army—“What is most noteworthy is that there are almost no combatants over the age of 18 in this unit.” (Liu, 2004) to march into Shaanxi in December 1934.

On December 8, 1934, the 25th Red Army broke through the Kuomintang army's blockade line along the Henan-Shaanxi border, reached Tiesuoguan in Luonan County, Shaanxi Province, and officially stepped into the territory of

Shaanxi. It successfully shook off the enemy's pursuit, interception and encirclement in the early stage, thus opening the initial prospect for the subsequent launch of revolutionary activities in Shaanxi. After arriving in the border area of Hubei, Henan and Shaanxi, the Hubei-Henan-Anhui Provincial Party Committee found that this region was quite suitable for establishing a revolutionary base area in terms of both terrain and mass base. Far away from the Kuomintang's ruling center, this area was characterized by weak enemy control. Historically, "the masses lived in extreme hardship" in this region, and being deeply influenced by the revolutionary upsurge, it boasted a sound mass base. In terms of terrain conditions, it featured towering mountains, dense forests and strategically advantageous terrain, which were conducive to carrying out guerrilla warfare. On December 10, the Hubei-Henan-Anhui Provincial Party Committee convened an emergency meeting in Yujiahe, Danfeng County, Shaanxi Province, where it explicitly abandoned the westward advance plan and made a core decision to establish a revolutionary base area in the Henan-Shaanxi border region with southern Shaanxi as the center. During the meeting, the army suddenly came under attack by Kuomintang forces; the Red Army fought back resolutely and achieved victory. At the cost of more than 100 casualties, it killed and wounded over 300 enemy troops, effectively consolidating the initial foothold after entering Shaanxi. In mid-to-late December of the same year, the 25th Red Army actively carried out mass work in areas including Luonan, Danfeng and Shangnan (the Shaanxi side of the Shaanxi-Henan border). By advocating the slogan of "strike local despots and distribute grain", it confiscated the property of landlords and distributed it among poor peasants, gradually gaining the trust and support of local residents and laying a solid mass foundation for the establishment of the revolutionary base area.

In February 1935, the 25th Red Army engaged in and won a fierce battle against Kuomintang forces at Wengongling (Ridge), Lantian County, eliminating the military obstacles to establishing a revolutionary regime in the region. Subsequently, it founded the Gepai Town district-level Soviet Government—the first revolutionary regime in the Guanzhong region—marking the official launch of the political power system construction by the 25th Red Army in southern Shaanxi. In the same period, the establishment of the Hongyansi district-level Soviet Government in Zhashui County and the Northern Shiquan District Soviet Political Power successively promoted the initial expansion of the base area. On March 8, the 25th Red Army arrived in Huayang Town, Yangxian County, stationing its headquarters in Hongshiyao Village and the Political Department in the Qing-dynasty Garrison General's Mansion in Luojiaba. During this period, not only did it defeat the 2nd Shaanxi Garrison Brigade in the Battle of Shitahé on March 10, consolidating military control over the Huayang area, but it also established the Huayang Soviet Government governing 7 township-level Soviets, organized the Huayang Guerrilla Corps, and put forward the revolutionary slogan of "Organize yourselves, resist exorbitant taxes and levies, strike local despots, and secure food and clothing" propelled the revolutionary struggle in the Huayang area to deepen further. In early May 1935, two special committees—the Hubei-Shaanxi Special Committee and the Henan-Shaanxi Special Committee—were established; successively, the Hubei-Shaanxi Border Region Soviet Government, together with two county-level, thirteen district-level, more than forty township-level and over three hundred village-level Soviet political powers, came into being. With a population of nearly 500,000 and over 900,000 mu of arable land, the Hubei-Henan-Shaanxi Revolutionary Base Area was initially established.

In July 1935, the 25th Red Army organized an ambush battle at Yuanjiagoukou in Shanyang County, successfully annihilating more than 1,400 Kuomintang troops and completely smashing the enemy's campaign of encirclement and suppression against the Hubei-Henan-Shaanxi Revolutionary Base Area. This battle went down as a classic annihilation

campaign waged by the 25th Red Army during its operations in Shaanxi. Meanwhile, after learning that the Central Red Army (the First Front Red Army) had crossed the Jinsha River and marched northward, the Hubei-Henan-Anhui Provincial Party Committee captured Jiangkou Town in Liuba County on July 25. The army completed short-term rest and reorganization, logistical replenishment and recruitment drives among the local masses there before departing Jiangkou Town on July 30, advancing westward along the Qinling Mountains. It thus officially launched the strategic task of “meeting the Central Red Army and coordinating with the main force in its northward march” and withdrew from the core base area in southern Shaanxi. In August, the 25th Red Army fought its way to counties including Jingchuan and Chongxin in Gansu Province, engaging in fierce battles with Kuomintang forces on multiple occasions. It pinned down a large number of enemy troops, effectively alleviating the military pressure on the northward march of the Central Red Army. However, during this process, Wu Huanxian, Political Commissar of the 25th Red Army, was killed in action in the Battle of Jingchuan, which constituted a heavy loss for the army during its operations in the Shaanxi-Gansu region. Failing to make direct contact with the Central Red Army, the army decided to turn back, re-enter Shaanxi and march northward. Subsequently, the 25th Red Army set out from Lingtai in Gansu Province, re-entered Shaanxi territory, and advanced northward along the Ziwuling Mountains. On September 15, it reached Yongping Town in Yanchuan County, Northern Shaanxi, and achieved a victorious rendezvous with the Shaanxi-Gansu Red Army (the 26th Red Army and the 27th Red Army), marking the official conclusion of the 25th Red Army’s independent operations in Shaanxi. On September 18, the three Red Army units were reorganized into the 15th Red Army Corps of the Chinese Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army, with the 25th Red Army being restructured as the 75th Division of the corps, thus officially integrating into the Northern Shaanxi Revolutionary Base Area. In the end, the 25th Red Army was the first to reach Northern Shaanxi and consolidate the Shaanxi-Gansu Revolutionary Base Area, laying the groundwork for the Party Central Committee to find a foothold. Facts have proven that it was a correct decision for the Hubei-Henan-Anhui Provincial Party Committee to assess the situation accurately and continuously adjust its strategic direction in light of actual circumstances (Sun, 2021).

3 Core Relations and Historical Significance of the 25th Red Army with Shaanxi

The core relations between the 25th Red Army and Shaanxi are rooted in the revolutionary practice of its Long March in Shaanxi. They are not a one-dimensional historical connection, but an organic whole constructed through multi-dimensional in-depth interactions. Such interactions served as a crucial underpinning for the army to establish a foothold and expand the revolutionary situation in Shaanxi, as well as the core carrier for the formation of its historical significance.

3.1 Multi-dimensional Interactive Manifestations of the Core Relations

First, military coordination focused on the key objective of smashing enemy encirclement campaigns and establishing base areas. After entering Shaanxi, the 25th Red Army centered its operations on the Battles of Caiyuyao and Wengongling (Ridge), inflicting heavy losses on the 126th Brigade of the Kuomintang’s Shaanxi force and completely smashing the Kuomintang’s first campaign of encirclement and suppression against the Red Army in

Shaanxi. On this basis, it successfully expanded the border base areas in southeastern Shaanxi, such as Lantian and Shangxian, constructing a solid strategic barrier. Meanwhile, it took the initiative to form strategic coordination with the Shaanxi-Gansu Red Army, and finally joined forces and merged to strengthen the revolutionary armed forces in the northwest. This effort contributed significantly to smashing the encirclement and suppression of the Shaanxi-Gansu Soviet Area, providing strategic support for the Long March of the Central Red Army, and creating a new situation for the victory of the Long March and the Chinese Revolution.

Second, political interaction centered on political power construction and ideological rooting. The 25th Red Army established the first revolutionary regime in the Guanzhong region in Gepai Town, Lantian, and subsequently expanded to areas like Hongyansi in Zhashui to build a district and township Soviet system. It practiced revolutionary propositions through initiatives such as the Five Resistance struggle, striking local despots and distributing their movable property. Meanwhile, “During its march, the 25th Red Army carried out extensive publicity work by putting up notices, writing slogans and distributing leaflets.” “Whenever passing a walled village, it would send a letter to the village leader in advance to publicize the Party’s proposition of resisting Japan and saving the nation.” (Compilation Group for the History of the 25th Corps of the Chinese Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army, 2017) Upon entering Shaanxi, it accurately disseminated the nature and purpose of the Red Army, eliminated the cognitive barriers among the masses, and simultaneously integrated the forces of local Party organizations in the Shaanxi-Gansu Border Region, laying an organizational foundation for the coordination and cohesion of revolutionary forces.

Third, military-civilian symbiosis was based on interest alignment and emotional resonance. The 25th Red Army adhered to the people-centered stance through such heartwarming initiatives as distributing the property of local despots to poor residents, releasing victims of exorbitant tax levies, and protecting small and medium-sized merchants, thus quickly winning the heartfelt support of the masses. In return, the masses responded to the Red Army with practical actions, including enthusiastically enlisting and providing full logistical support, forming a close bond of “the military and civilians standing united against the enemy”, and building the most solid mass foundation for the 25th Red Army’s struggles in Shaanxi.

Underground Party organizations across various regions provided active and powerful coordination to the Red Army. They enthusiastically briefed the Red Army on local conditions and enemy movements in a timely manner, mobilized the masses, raised provisions and fodder, conducted enemy reconnaissance, transmitted intelligence, and liaised with local contacts. Most importantly, they arranged for the army’s wounded and sick personnel—who were the hardest for the troops to accommodate properly—to recuperate in hiding at the homes of the masses, relieving the Red Army of its worries and enabling it to focus on the battles ahead (Zhang, & Zhang, 2004).

3.2 Multi-dimensional and Profound Historical Significance

The in-depth core connection formed between the 25th Red Army and Shaanxi not only injected crucial momentum into the northwest revolution but also gave birth to multi-dimensional and far-reaching historical values spanning from local integration to overall restructuring. These values were reflected not only in the consolidation of revolutionary forces and base areas in the northwest region but also extended to the overall strategic support for the Central Red Army’s settlement and the adjustment of the national revolutionary pattern.

First, it united the core forces of the northwest revolution. By recruiting local people in Shaanxi to expand its ranks and merging with the Shaanxi-Gansu Red Army (the 26th and 27th Red Armies) to form the 15th Red Army Corps of

the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, the 25th Red Army integrated the main armed forces in the northwest, putting an end to the scattered combat situation and laying a solid military foundation for smashing the Kuomintang's "encirclement and suppression" campaign against the Shaanxi-Gansu Soviet Area.

Second, it consolidated the strategic foundation of the northwest revolution. Building on the victories in the Battles of Caiyuyao and Wengongling (Ridge), the army opened up border base areas in five counties in southeastern Shaanxi and established Soviet regimes such as Gepai Town. Most crucially, it consolidated the Shaanxi-Gansu Soviet Area—the only surviving Soviet area nationwide—transforming it into a "stable rear base" for the northwest revolution.

Third, it supported the Central Red Army's settlement in Shaanxi-Gansu. Proactively assuming the mission of pathfinding and coordination, the 25th Red Army pinned down more than 30 Kuomintang regiments, provided accurate strategic intelligence, and, most importantly, made the Shaanxi-Gansu base area the only safe haven for the Central Red Army, resolving the predicament of "having no base to rely on" and ensuring the achievement of the Long March's strategic objectives.

Fourth, it reshaped the national revolutionary strategic pattern. Being the first to complete the Long March in northern China and take root in Shaanxi-Gansu, the 25th Red Army promoted the shift of China's revolutionary center of gravity from southern to northwestern regions, making the Shaanxi-Gansu Soviet Area the core region carrying this revolutionary center of gravity, laying the foundation for the subsequent construction of anti-Japanese base areas, and profoundly influencing the direction of revolutionary development.

In November 1935, Mao Zedong and Peng Dehuai wrote to Xu Haidong, Cheng Zihua, and others, stating that they were "very pleased" with the 25th Red Army's heroic struggle history in Hubei-Henan-Anhui, its expedition in Henan, Shaanxi, and Gansu, as well as the praise for the army's excellent discipline and brave fighting among the people. They also claimed that the meeting of the three Red Army units—the Central Red Army, the 25th Red Army, and the Shaanxi-Gansu Red Army—"was a great victory for the Soviet movement".

4 Innovative Paths of Party Spirit Education Based on Red Culture

The red resources accumulated from the activities of the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi during the Long March are important material carriers that bear revolutionary historical memories and embody the core of the red spirit, as well as the logical starting point and fundamental basis for exploring and realizing contemporary core values.

4.1 Systematic Sorting and Combining of Red Resources of the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi During the Long March

The 25th Red Army left a wealth of diverse red resource relics during its activities in Shaanxi. These relics are not only material evidence of revolutionary history, but also important carriers for exploring and highlighting contemporary core values. To systematically clarify the constituent elements and basic historical value of various red resources, and provide a clear basis for the subsequent transformation and application of their contemporary values, the main red resources are sorted and classified as shown in the following figure:

Table 1 Red Resources of the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi During the Long March (1934 - 1935)

Resource Categories	Specific Contents	Historical value
Regime Construction Relics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gepai Town district-level Soviet Government in Lantian County 2. Hubei-Shaanxi Border Region Soviet Government in Yuanjiagoukou Village, Shanyang County 3. Huayang Town Soviet Government in Yangxian County 4. Hongyansi district-level Soviet Government in Zhashui County 	Laid the institutional foundation for the Hubei-Henan-Shaanxi Revolutionary Base Area and promoted the development of the Land Revolution in southern Shaanxi
Military Campaign Sites	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ambush Battle Site in Yuanjiagoukou, Shanyang County 2. Shitahe Battle Site in Huayang Town, Yangxian County 3. Wengongling (Ridge) Battle Site in Lantian County 4. Yujiahe Battle Site in Danfeng County 5. Tiesuoguan Battle Site in Luonan County 6. Manchuanguan Battle Site in Shanyang County 	Witnessed the 25th Red Army breaking through blockades and fighting across Shaanxi; laid the military foundation for the establishment of revolutionary base areas; several combat cases became classic battle examples of the Red Army
Organizational Office Relics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Former Headquarters Site of the 25th Red Army in Hongshiyao Village and Former Political Department Site in Luojiaba, Huayang Town, Yangxian County 2. Former Army Headquarters Site in Jiangkou Town, Liuba County 3. Former Army Headquarters Site at Dongyue Temple in Yangxie Town, Shangzhou District 4. Temporary Former Army Headquarters Site in Shangshawo, Fuping County 	Corroborated the combat and command trajectory of the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi; served as important physical relics for studying the organizational construction of the Red Army
Spiritual Propaganda and Revolutionary Cultural Relics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slogan Category: Red Slogan Cluster in Huayang Town, Yangxian County 2. Material Object Category: notes for grain borrowing with silver left behind by the Red Army, daily necessities, weapons, and documents 3. Relic Category: Former Red Army Hospital Site in Yuanjiagoukou and related medical supplies 	Intuitively reflected the revolutionary propositions and strict military discipline of the Red Army, witnessed the profound military-civilian bond, and provided important physical materials for researching the political propaganda work of the Red Army
Memorial & Educational Facilities and Conservation & Inheritance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educational Facilities: Red Army Memorial in Xunyang City, Yuanjiagou Red Culture Education Base, Shangzhou Moon Bay Long March Theme Park, Yujiahe Meeting Site Memorial Hall 2. Tourist Routes: themed routes such as “Passing on the Red Torch Perpetuating the Spirit.” 3. Conservation Measures: procuratorates in Yangxian County, Lantian County and other regions intervened in the renovation of damaged sites 	Served as core carriers for patriotic education and training of Party members and cadres; formed a sound mechanism balancing conservation and utilization; promoted the inheritance of the red gene

4.2 Multi-dimensional Transformation Paths of Contemporary Core Values

The above table has sorted out the types, relics and historical values of the red resources left by the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi, laying a solid foundation for the exploration and transformation of contemporary core values. As is widely acknowledged, the purpose of Party spirit education does not lie in pure knowledge imparting, but in the cultivation of integrated comprehensive competencies centered on the value-cognition-practice framework (Shi, & Xie, 2024). Building on the aforementioned resources, the multi-dimensional transformation of contemporary core values can focus on key dimensions, with specific paths outlined as follows:

4.2.1 Centering on the core of Party spirit education and promoting the educational empowerment of red resources

From November 7 to 8, 2025, General Secretary Xi Jinping, during his inspection tour in Guangdong, pointed out that “we should integrate the publicity and education on the history of the Party, present the stories of the older generation of proletarian revolutionaries, educate and guide the broad masses of cadres and people, especially young people, to inherit the red gene, carry forward the red bloodline, and always listen to and follow the Party’s words” (Xi, 2025). This requirement provides a fundamental guideline for transforming the red resources of the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi into educational resources for Party spirit cultivation. The core of red heritage inheritance lies in advancing the educational upgrading of red resources in accordance with the needs of Party spirit education. Focusing on core

relics, including the former site of the army headquarters in Gepai Town and the Caiyuyao Battle Site, we should thoroughly explore the core elements of Party spirit embodied therein, such as loyalty and dedication, strict discipline, and military-civilian solidarity. Drawing on the mature “red research study + immersive experience” model in Feng County, we need to innovatively construct a teaching system of “Party spirit education + on-site experience”. By virtue of concrete approaches, including digital scene restoration and the development of the distinctive Party spirit education course themed “Retracing the 25th Red Army’s March in Shaanxi”, these relic sites can be turned into tangible and instructive positions for Party spirit education. Hierarchical education should be delivered targeting key groups such as Party members, cadres and young people, so as to precisely boost the construction of Shaanxi’s multi-level Party spirit education system and the development of spiritual civilization, and ultimately realize the in-depth integration of red gene inheritance and Party spirit cultivation.

4.2.2 Guiding Development Practice Through Party Spirit and Realizing the Value of Empowering Red Resources

The core of the regional development dimension lies in converting the Party spirit embodied in red resources into spiritual motivation for driving development, guiding the transformation of red resources into development advantages by virtue of Party spirit, and achieving the dual enhancement of “educational empowerment + development empowerment”. Focusing on red landmarks such as Gepai Town and Feng County, efforts should be made to integrate Qinling ecological resources and folk custom resources to create integrated Party spirit education study routes featuring the “red culture + ecology + folk customs” model. By developing products such as red cultural and creative works and specialty catering to boost local employment, we can further deepen the integrated “red tourism-driven rural revitalization” model. The process of Party members and cadres participating in red resource development and supporting rural revitalization should be transformed into a practical classroom for tempering Party spirit. This approach not only propels Shaanxi to achieve its development goal of “making greater breakthroughs in fulfilling the cultural mission of the new era and striving to be a model in the western region” (CPC Shaanxi Provincial Committee, 2025), but also enables Party spirit education to demonstrate tangible effects in serving the overall development layout.

4.2.3 Innovating the Expression of Red Stories and Expanding the Communication Boundaries of Party Spirit Education

The core of the cultural communication dimension is to break the temporal and spatial constraints of red culture and Party spirit education, and enable the revolutionary stories and the core essence of Party spirit of the 25th Red Army to reach broader groups through diversified expression and youth-oriented communication, so as to realize the full coverage and normalization of Party spirit education. On the one hand, we should promote the innovation of empowering Party spirit education through red cultural and artistic creation. Drawing on the successful experience of red Chu opera and live-action plays in Hong’an, we can create Party spirit education literary and artistic works such as immersive stage plays, short videos and red songs themed on the struggles of the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi. For example, centering on historical scenes such as the heroic charge of Party members in the Caiyuyao Battle and the perseverance of original aspirations reflected in the profound military-civilian bond in Gepai Town, we can arrange small-scale touring live-action plays and carry out regular performances at heritage sites or urban-rural squares, making the Party spirit embodied in red stories come alive. On the other hand, we should build a new media communication matrix for Party spirit education, set up a youth-oriented operation team to create red-themed accounts on platforms such

as Douyin and WeChat Channels, and output high-quality content in the form of “scenario-based short dramas + Party spirit interpretation + heritage site visits”, encouraging Party members and the masses to share red memories and their insights into Party spirit. Meanwhile, combined with important anniversaries such as the July 1st Party Founding Day and National Day, we can hold Party spirit education themed activities including red culture festivals and revolutionary cultural relic exhibitions, and collaborate with intangible cultural heritage inheritors to develop red-themed intangible cultural heritage works, so as to realize the integrated communication of red culture and traditional culture and integrate Party spirit education into daily cultural life.

4.2.4 Forging a Co-construction and Sharing Pattern to Pool Synergies for Party Spirit Education

The core of the cross-regional coordination dimension lies in breaking administrative regional barriers and expanding the effectiveness of the 25th Red Army’s red resources in party spirit education through resource integration and linked development. On the one hand, it promotes intra-provincial cross-regional coordination, links Shangluo, Xi’an, Hanzhong and other places in Shaanxi Province that the 25th Red Army passed through, establishes a coordination mechanism for the protection, utilization of red resources and party spirit education, and jointly designs the “Panoramic Party Spirit Education Route of the 25th Red Army’s Long March in Shaanxi”. It aims to realize route interconnection, shared teaching resources and mutual promotion of publicity, thus building a comprehensive regional party spirit education position. On the other hand, it expands inter-provincial collaborative cooperation, takes the initiative to connect with relevant regions in Henan, Hubei and other provinces along the Long March route of the 25th Red Army, joins the national red party spirit education alliance, participates in activities such as “joint exhibitions, joint curriculum research and co-construction of brands”, and jointly applies for national-level demonstration zones for the protection and utilization of revolutionary cultural relics and demonstration bases for party spirit education. Meanwhile, it explores a collaborative model of “red resources + corporate sponsorship + party spirit education”, attracting social forces such as cultural tourism enterprises and technology companies to participate in the development of red resources and the creation of party spirit education products. Financial support is obtained through methods such as naming exhibitions and sponsoring cultural and creative development, forming a sound development pattern of “government guidance, market operation and social participation”, and pooling cross-regional and cross-field synergies for party spirit education. There are many memorial halls dedicated to the Long March. Therefore, local governments can achieve a cohesive force in party spirit education through cooperation.

5 Conclusion

Taking the Long March journey of the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi as the core research object, and following the progressive framework of “sorting out historical imprints—analyzing relational value—exploring echoes of the times”, systematically explores the internal logic and practical paths of inheriting and promoting red culture and innovating Party spirit education, forming research conclusions that embody both historical depth and realistic reflection.

First, the Long March course of the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi has an irreplaceable historical status and multi-dimensional value. As the only Red Army unit that fought its way through the northern regions in the entire course and took the lead in reaching Northern Shaanxi, the revolutionary practice of the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi from 1934 to 1935 not only fulfilled the historical missions of strategic shift, establishing the Hubei-Henan-Shaanxi Revolutionary

Base Area, and supporting the northward march of the Central Red Army, but also constructed an in-depth correlation system of military coordination, political interaction and military-civilian symbiosis with local areas in Shaanxi. This correlation not only united the core forces of the northwest revolution and consolidated the strategic foundation of the northwest revolution, but also supported the Central Red Army in settling in Shaanxi-Gansu and reshaped the national revolutionary strategic pattern, laying a crucial foundation for the shift of China's revolutionary center of gravity from the south to the northwest. Its historical contributions and spiritual core are important components of the treasure trove of red culture.

Second, the red resources accumulated by the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi are the core carriers and valuable assets for the innovation of Party spirit education. By systematically sorting out five categories of red resources, including regime construction relics, military campaign sites and organizational office relics, it clarifies the revolutionary historical memories and spiritual core they carry. The Party spirit traits embodied in these resources, such as loyalty and dedication, strict discipline and people-centeredness, help to overcome the limitations of an overly lecture-based approach in some traditional Party spirit education formats, and offer solid material and spiritual support for the in-depth integration of red culture and Party spirit education.

Third, the innovation of Party spirit education based on the red resources of the 25th Red Army in Shaanxi needs to construct a multi-dimensional collaborative path. The proposed four major paths, namely educational empowerment, value empowerment, communication expansion, and co-construction and sharing, form a complete cycle of "resource excavation—value transformation—practical implementation". The core essence lies in basing itself on the historical authenticity of red resources, and through innovative models such as "Party spirit education + on-site experience", "red spirit + practical service" and "red resources + regional development", promoting the transformation of red culture from historical relics into educational resources and from spiritual core into practical motivation, so as to realize the organic integration of Party spirit education with youth cultivation, grassroots governance, rural revitalization and cultural communication.

In the future, the inheritance and promotion of the red culture of the Twenty-fifth Army Group of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and the innovation in Party spirit education must continue to make efforts in three aspects: the depth of historical data excavation, the breadth of digital technology application, and the intensity of cross-regional coordination. Efforts should be further intensified to verify historical records on weak links such as the district and township Soviet regimes in the southeastern Shaanxi area, deepen the digital curation of red resources, and develop immersive experience products. Implement the overall protection project for the Long March route, and "build and improve the linear museum cluster" (Xinhua News Agency, 2021). The governments should promote linkage and cooperation between Shaanxi Province and other provinces along the Long March route of the Twenty-fifth Army Group, including Henan and Hubei, so that the red gene can radiate new vitality in the new era through intergenerational inheritance and provide an inexhaustible driving force for the regularization and long-term effectiveness of Party spirit education. This serves as a concrete practice to implement the arrangements of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China regarding building up China's cultural strength and carrying forward the revolutionary culture (Xinhua News Agency, 2025), offering practical guidance for empowering high-quality development with red resources and consolidating the local foundation for building a culturally powerful country.

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